

The Blue Guitar



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Photo by Richard H. Dyer Jr., The Blue Guitar Magazine
Performer Gabriel Bey at the Oct. 30 Fall Arts Festival.

Editor’s Note

North to South, East to West, geographically and metaphorically, we’ve got it covered in this issue of The Blue Guitar, reflecting in our writers and artists the rich diversity that is Arizona: multicultural backgrounds, range of generations, the many talents and the variety of themes and concerns that inform such wonderful works.

A big thank-you to all of our artists and writers! An even bigger thank-you to our readers! What would we do without YOU! Enjoy!



Rebecca
“Becca” Dyer

Rebecca “Becca” Dyer
Editor in chief

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A Poem by Michelle Nickol

Sabino Dry

© 2011

where wet swept through
a charcoal stain now
low on boulders
like smudge after fire

between all that
worn tooth-smooth
pebbles halt where strewn

still in place

old ones, none of us has an agenda right now

sitting in the cliffrim's shade
I fold my hat brim up
lean downstream with other things
that lean down

some bending some streambroke

once separate & aspen-flecked
now a clotted pelt of leaves rots ash gray
plastered hard against the dry stream's edge

nothing *knows* its place
then, wedged in tight
the seeing clear from inside out



Michelle Nickol writes: "I like to go outside with pencil and paper. Sometimes a poem comes. I haven't figured out why yet. But, I think it's a good thing."

2 Poems By David Chorlton

Touching Darkness

© 2011

I

It takes the insects years
to journey through the fallen sycamore
in lush
late summer grass
beside the trail at thunder's edge
where night moves slowly
up canyon
and the broken trunk of an oak
fills with webs and darkness.

II

The greys above the juniper
range from pale
to the metallic
shade of dusk, drawn along
a ridge that darkens until darkness
is a sound
after every other sound subsides.

III

Water in the mine
carries darkness deep
into the mountain nobody has entered
since a warning sign
was posted at the mouth
and flows out of the silence
just enough to reach
where sunlight leans
against the columbines.

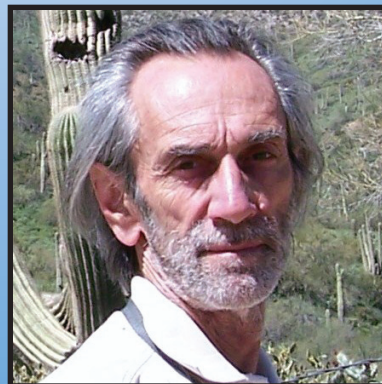
IV

Through an eye that opens after sunset
the bats stream all
along the canyon, as if
infinity had wings. Sometimes lightning
from above the mountain
flashes to reveal
their faces when
they hover
at a moment's nectar.

Late Summer Storm

© 2011

With one broken yellow and two
straight white lines to guide it,
the road disappears
into narrowing perspective
and low cloud
closing in along the wires
where kingbirds watch
the darkening air for insects
while the mountains disappear
from around them. The landscape
becomes a tumbling scale of greys
sliding across each other
as a curtain of hail
rattles the asphalt free of the ground
and the sky is drawn
like a handkerchief through a ring,
for a trick
in which all things are changed;
even the stalk of a yucca
is a lightning flash with roots.
Between land
and sky, no boundary
exists; the distant
now is close at hand; the future
flows toward us
at the speed of water
when the earth is too hard
for it to soak in.



David Chorlton was born in Austria, grew up in England, and spent several years in Vienna before moving to Phoenix in 1978. The desert has become a vital element in his poetry, and he is happiest when visiting favorite spots in Arizona's Sky Islands. Nonetheless, he has recently sent his imagination back to Europe, and his newest book is fiction: "The Taste of Fog," from Rain Mountain Press, set in 1960s Vienna.

A Poem By Christopher Emery

The Italian Eatery With Japanese Menus

© 2011

Goose, stuffed
with salmon—
basted in mint cranberry

The French, Russian-
speaking maid
offers an ear

she can read
Japanese, I'd assume

I point to the menu
but her response leaves
a white wine after taste
of confusion...

what does one drink
with salmon stuffed duck?

Ill at ease
I head towards
signs I can't understand
to err in syntax

yellow piss
mists
off porcelain

I turn to see
the bluest green eyes
I've ever seen...

in the men's room

she can read
Japanese, I'd assume



Christopher Emery was born and raised here in Arizona, got his B.A. and M.F.A. at ASU, and now teaches for ASU and PVCC. Contact him at MacrocephalyBoy@cox.net.

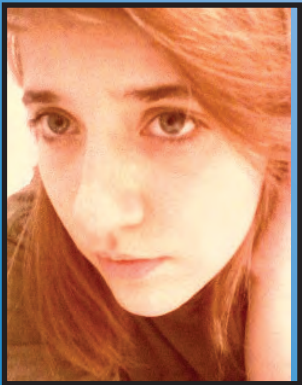
A Poem By Hannah Richard

There Were Bloodstains Still

© 2011

A gray dawn's rising
Like plumes of his cigarette painted breath
On an ice morning, colored like
Dead eyes
Collecting an arsenal of flies.
And the black absorbing colorlessness
Of locked death is
Obliterating the sunshine from his iris
And he takes another drag again.
The callous collecting of belongings
Is made impassive by the flames
That licked away
The dead's possessions.
Pissing away forgotten memories;
If it were so easy then, to forget
He would smoke dead cigarettes
From the drawer.
Gray dawn is dwindling
And his tired eyes
Would be bloodshot if he still knew how
To keep
Oxygen in blood and rivers flowing
In veins, in vain
A record player plays
Left behind and painted brown by
Deoxidized time.
Though he never discovered
Dead fingers on the trigger
He keeps such an image in his mind

Abided by an arsenal of flies.
Soon the noon is coming
And a shoot out is trembling, waiting
In the distance and the bated breath of passerby
Is released in shaky, smoky sighs
Because he has given up
But not quite given in.
The midday sun never beat like this before
And the cotton mouth is dried soon
He'll rise
To drink from a river, a river he never saw to
And a river never thought of as
The sun is setting black against the brown horizon,
Deoxidized by time.
But the record plays on and on
Until he finds a corner store selling
The brand of cigarettes
The dead would buy
If not trapped by an arsenal of flies.
Time moves on and on like a well known song
Singing, his shadows rises and bows
To the ghost he misses
And shadows dance while he's smoking.
Cotton mouth are his eyes.
Gray dawn is breaking once again
And all he does is sighs,
Surrounded by the stench of smoking
And soon encompassed
By an arsenal of flies.



Hannah Richard has won several writing contests, written two puppet shows for the Surprise Library, been published three times by the Maricopa County Teen Zine, twice by the Writer's Slate and now twice by Blue Guitar. She currently lives, writes and takes care of her seven pets and family of seven in Surprise, Arizona. When she is not writing, drawing, rehearsing for a theatre production or otherwise gallivanting with whimsy, Hannah spends her off time reading, sleeping, and drinking coffee. Quaintly, all at once. You can contact her at Hannahdraws@yahoo.com.

A Poem By Shane Frampton

Anna Politkovskaya

© 2011

The drunkards line the streets
The orphaned starve
And men, once soldiers
But now poor, lame shells
Live in the fatally cold alleyways.
Willfully ignorant or uniformed, the result is the same.
Some say I'm the last of a dying breed.

He came, and with him, hope
Or so the beggars my people have become thought.
Shadows stir behind the Russian Parliament.
Who will reveal it? I must.
Some say I'm the last of a dying breed.

The elections draw near.
Some don't agree with Vladimir.
Into incarceration they go.
And I? Perhaps offered wealth
Will change my mind?
It is not so.
Putin is a shameless liar
And I; Perhaps
I am the last of a dying breed.

Moscow – a party is raging
Thousands of rubles for the oligarch's amusement
Just outside the stony building's warmth
Lay soldiers
Fighting for the Russian glory
Against the numbing, life-robbing Russian winter.
I speak out against this, because
I am the last of a dying breed.

Anna, one of Russia's most fearless journalists, was gunned down in Moscow in the fall of 2006—on Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's birthday.

Terrorist attacks strike yet again,
They seem as frequent as the daily paper.
Could it be that they are just as controlled?
It is so.
Some speculate.
I know.
And I will speak it from the roof tops
Because I am the last of a dying breed.

I have children. I have a family.
Each day I run the risk of losing them,
Each day they see their mother risk never returning home.
But I cannot stand by as freedom dies
Under the banner of democracy
in Putin's Russia.
Perhaps I am the last of a dying breed.

Some take comfort in the media's optimistic forecast.
I know better.
The police brutality will indefinitely escalate
Because terror and law wear the same badge
In Putin's Russia.
But there is an easier way in apathy for us
Its cost is only the lives of our grandchildren.
I refuse this way, and someday
This will all end badly, and I will pay.
I am the last of a dying breed.

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Shane Frampton writes: "I have lived most of my first eighteen years divided between a small New Mexico town named Edgewood (where our first stoplight was a big deal) and the much larger town of Gilbert, Arizona. While I dream of traveling the world, I have yet to venture outside of the Western United States. I am attending college at Chandler-Gilbert Community College, and like many others, I hope to use my writing talents for a career someday. I first became aware of the courage of Anna Politkovskaya when I came across her posthumously published book (called "A Russian Diary") at the library. After reading through it, I felt a deep connection to her work and her brave spirit, and I knew that she deserved to have her story more widely told. It was not long after that when I wrote my poem titled after her. You can contact me at shane.frampton@yahoo.com."

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Our media
Once the voice of the people
Once a voice of reason
Once arrayed against a communist regime
Now as a war hero
Celebrates Stalin
And those too young to know
The error of this way
Will make this error their way.
But I will not, for
I am the last of a dying breed.

I have gone toe to toe in the dark alley
With murderous, deranged warlords
And I share the voice of truth and reason
But only time can tell-
Will my words continue to fall on the ears
Of the drunkenly, fearfully apathetic?
Will I set my people free with truth?
Will anyone continue on in the cause
Of illuminating the dark, shadowy alleyways
Of Putin's Russia?
Or could it truly be that
I am the last of a dying breed?

Eddie Sparr

Cave Creek Artist



"Betty"
Metal sculpture



Creativity is a common thread in Eddie's family. He was born on January 27, 1972 in Los Angeles, CA to Carolyn and Edwin Schenck. Eddie depicted traits of an artist at an early age. One of his hobbies, in fact, was rediscovering images out of found objects. He saw beauty and uniqueness in just about everything. In college, Eddie pursued a degree in graphic design at the University of Northern Colorado. He studied under Professor Gene Hoffman, who helped him fine-tune his pairings of materials to each other. Upon graduating college, Eddie entered into a trade of fabrication. He started out as a sign apprentice and ended up an owner/operator of a sign company. This experience allowed him the opportunity to understand fabrication techniques, such as welding and structural compatibility, in addition to expanding his knowledge of different materials, such as steel, aluminum, urethane, vinyls, and much more. Today, Eddie is a full-time artist, with a dark surreal style. His creations show emotion within emotionless objects. Contact him at eddiesparr@gmail.com.

Eddie Sparr

Cave Creek Artist

“Scrounging” is the word Eddie’s father used to describe the passion Eddie has for collecting the objects he uses to create his art. At an early age, he would relentlessly search to collect shells, rocks, insects, rusted pieces of metal, coins and stamps. Each of these objects held a unique value and purpose in Eddie’s mind. He did not see them for their originally intended use. Rather, each objects fundamental state; their form, even sometimes the color or sheen, as an example. Recently, Eddie embarked on his Humanity Collection. In this collection, he unites materials in a technique which makes his art resemble characteristics of being both mechanical as well as biological. He creates a feeling of mystery within these objects. They are alive, yet machine-like; void of emotion, yet saturated with it. Seemingly as if they deny their very own feelings. Afraid that “Big Brother” is examining their every move. Ironically, these creations, composed mostly of found, sometimes discarded materials, become reunited to the world again, this time with another use. Although having a new purpose, they all continue to maintain a feeling of void and pain. “Our future, if society is not careful, will become more of a void in all our lives if we continue to allow our environment to deteriorate. Its lushness and beauty will fade.” Eddie attempts to reincarnate the use of each of these objects, not only to depict the imagery of his work, but additionally by recycling, making his own attempts to clean our environment. “If everyone does not make similar attempts, our environment will become this void.” It is a message to the world; the very reason this artist has been born. “We are all in need of saving the world.” Eddie’s work captures this message not only through the materials he uses, but also by the emotions felt when you absorb their true meaning.

- Eddie Sparr



“Decay”
Metal sculpture

My Reunion With Truth

By Susan Bennett

© 2011

“Hi, my name is Susan, and...”
The voice interrupted, “Oh hi, it’s me, Lucy.
Can you hang on a second?”

It was Thanksgiving Eve, of course I could. I thought, Whew... this is going to be all right, she sounds nice. Yay!

“Okay, I’m back. Just had to grab something out of the oven,” Lucy said. “Yeah, I’ve been waiting for your call. Well, waiting for that investigator woman to give you my number, but really, I’ve been waiting for years. I’ve always known about you, and thought that one day you’d call.”

I sat back on the couch, tears welled up in my eyes as I asked, “You’ve always known about me? You were waiting for me?”

I had felt unwanted and my world had gotten so small. The person I thought loved me the most kept the biggest secret from me – but here’s someone telling me they were waiting for me. It was overwhelming, and I felt so much hope and excitement for this relationship.

“Lucy, how did you know about me?”

“Oh Susan, I’ve always known about you, from as far back as I can remember. I was a child when my mom, Kathy, told me about the baby she had given up for adoption. You were born the week before Christmas, right?”

While it pleased me that she knew when I was born, my heart fluttered when I heard her name. “Kathy, my birth mother’s name is Kathy?” I asked. “And I have so many questions. I know she’s deceased, the investigator told me that, but tell me about her and you and your family.”

“Okay, her name, uhm – our mother’s name was Kathleen Fay Bardlow. She was sent away to Tucson when she was about six or seven months along. It was her mother that made all the plans.”

At last! I picked up my pencil and started taking notes. First, in large fancy cursive I wrote Kathleen. My mother who gave life to me was named Kathleen, I reflected.

As she spoke, I wrote down everything in detail. I tried to remove myself from the situation and not think, but just write.

I asked question after question and Lucy gladly shared everything she knew. We talked for almost four hours that night, each switching phones as they would run out of juice.

I discovered I have a big birth family, and my mother went on to marry and have more kids, Lucy being the next one born after me. My grandparents each came from big families, and my aunts and uncles have many children. I began to feel like I missed out on an entire life.

In my adoptive family, I grew up with no grandparents on my dad’s side. My grandparents on my mother’s side passed away when I was thirteen, and my mother was an only child. I did have my brother, but we were seriously lacking in extended family.

I shared this comparison with Lucy, trying to explain my sadness on missing out on this wonderful large family, and how I’d just lost my mother.

“Lucy, I was with my mom when she passed away, and I had just found out that I was in fact adopted. I had clues growing up but I never pushed it, and my mother had a story for my beginning and why I was born in Tucson and not where they lived.”

“Wow...well, I can tell you that...” she tried to explain, but I went on to get my point across.

“Lucy, it has been so hard these past months dealing with being adopted and knowing that my medical history was all wrong. She lied to me, but I loved her so much. My mother didn’t have enough faith in our relationship to tell me something so important. It means the world to me to find you and

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Susan Bennett became a Late Discovery Adoptee in 2008 at 43 years old. She is an author whose first book, *Late Discoveries*, is available now at Amazon.com and limited bookstores. She is the Southwest Regional Director for American Adoption Congress (AAC), and also the editor of their E-Newsletter, *The Beacon*. Susan lives with her husband, Mike, in Gilbert, Arizona. For information on AAC or local support groups, Susan can be contacted at susanbennett@latediscoveries.com.

Continued from page 11

learn all about my family.”

I needed to know them, I wanted to fit in and be a part of their lives. Even though my birth mother was gone, there was still the remainder of a family, my family.

The illusion I was putting together came tumbling down when she told me of her childhood and family.

“Oh Susan...now listen to me. I need to tell you some things. You were so much better off! Honest, you need to hear that. My grandmother had serious mental health issues and was abusive to everyone. She needed to be on medication, and I don't think she ever was. Each of her children had many challenges and multiple marriages – they're very dysfunctional.

“Kathy married my father, about a year after you were born. Then I came along and next my siblings. When I was five or six, I became fearful when my folks would fight and I knew something was wrong. We would all hide under a blanket and my baby brother would cry, he cried so much... all the time, really.

“It was around then that I learned about you. I think I was in first grade, and Kathy told me that she had a baby that her mom made her give away. It was so confusing for me as a child thinking that my gran made my mom give her baby to some stranger. I felt so bad for Mom, she was a sad person and always teary. Then I learned that most of it was over losing you.”

I held my hand over the phone so she couldn't hear me cry. There was so much sadness and loss in all these revelations. They weighed heavily on my chest, pressing my hope down lower and lower.

Lucy went on to share more. “It was just before Christmas one year and I was so excited to put up the tree. Mom was in her room. When I went to get her, I asked if we could finish

the decorating. Well, she could hardly talk and I knew she'd been crying. I'll never forget her answer, she said, 'I'm sorry, I can't stop thinking about my baby. I miss her and I hope she's okay.' It was that way every Christmas; she was missing you and worried about you. Not long after, they divorced.”

At that moment I realized how difficult it had been for Lucy. Christmas is every child's favorite time of the year, and my mother – our mother – couldn't get over the loss of her firstborn child.

Lucy continued, “Just to let you know how hard it was, I want to tell you this and I don't want you to feel bad or think bad of me. I was about ten, I told my mom, 'I wish you had given me away and I had been adopted.' I was so sick of it. But, there wasn't anything she could do, and she only talked to me about it. She treated me like a friend, a confidante, rather than her daughter.”

As I sat with my rounded No. 2, and pages of information, I began to feel a deep sorrow. I didn't have this great family waiting for me after all. My birth mother was a despondent woman who died at a young age. It was not like I'd hoped, and I was acutely disappointed.

Later that night when I opened the email Lucy promised to send, I was emotionally stunned to see someone who looked exactly like me. I had never seen that before. Streams of emotion flowed as I touched the screen, as if the monitor was my mother's skin. There she was, my mother. I always thought I knew who my mother was, but now at forty three years old my heart and soul feels the connection simply by seeing her face.

While this is not the reunion I envisioned, I feel I am reunited with the truth. It fills me and has given new direction to my life as I finally feel like I fit in my own skin. It was like a flash flood that day after an Arizona monsoon. A river of tears guiding me down a new path, it moved me forward and set me free.

A Poem By Michaelae Lockhart

A Barrio Christmas A Posadas Story

© 2011

On a cold desert night, Maria and Jose
Found that they needed a warm place to stay.
I'd hope they would choose the right place to go,
And maybe they'd visit our humble barrio.

I cannot yet imagine their terrible fright,
Left all alone on that chill December night.
They could not even pay, without any dinero—
But that's how they found our little barrio.

Our neighbors were so poor—they had nothing to bring,
But soon a fine group had gathered to sing.
Some said they were angels, but one thing I know:
We're always like that in our kindly barrio.

Jose might have begged; Maria surely would weep.
Their boy soon grew up, with more promises to keep.
And then just as they would already know—
That one day He'd leave our small barrio.

It would have been wonderful to have Him stay,
But His Father's work then called Him away.
From a crumbling adobe to the Cross He would go,
But I'm sure He's still here in our poor barrio.



Michaelae Lockhart brings a diverse background to her writing: a passion for history, a fascination with human drama, and a love of literature. Her versatility encompasses favorite historical periods to contemporary social issues. A former teacher as well as a talented nature and landscape photographer, she often inserts elements of visual lyricism into her writing. Novels and short stories include historical adventure, romantic magic realism, and suspense, with an upcoming mystery series set in the scenic beauty of the Southwest. A U of A grad, Michaelae lives in Tucson. Visit her website, www.michaelaelockhart.com, or contact her at lockhart2@cox.net.

Arizona Winter Sunrise

By Michaele Lockhart

© 2011

In southeast Arizona, our desert regions offer a mix of rich contrast and intriguing contradictions—always powerful, sometimes poetic. Today, on a somber December morning, the sun has arrived much later than usual. This is our winter. The cloud cover still lies unexpectedly low and heavy, hiding the mountains that surround our valley. Rain storms early last night plus a temperature that now hovers in the mid-twenties promise that these clouds will mask a fresh snowfall.

The Rincons, the mountain range to the east, sleep in profound shadow, a formless mass of charcoal gray. A layer of black drapes across their ridges like an ill-fitting beret. To the north, the Santa Catalina Mountains remain enveloped in paler shades and softer tonalities. They've stayed shrouded with clouds as fluffy as angora wool. Beyond the city's western edge dawn has carved the morning with blues and grays, creating the familiar serrations that we call the Tucson Mountains.

Checking today's weather, I've stepped outside onto crunchy crystals and into the glitter of new ice, but the world around me transforms subtly, minute-by-minute. To the east, above the tree-line and farther above the thinning strata of black clouds, the sky shimmers to pearlescent aquamarine. It has delivered the day's first assurance that the sun will, indeed, "rise." As though in response, warm tints of dusty rose have brushed the hazy monochromes of the western horizon.

To the north, the sky over our familiar Catalinas has lingered in darker hues of inky blue-black. Those who've slept huddled against the eastern edge of our valley will be the last to see and feel the gentle warmth of morning's sun.

Already dressed in the requisite layers for warmth, I've grabbed my favorite cameras and lenses and dashed out into this morning of frost and fantasy. I must capture the ephemeral beauty that a winter sunrise will always provide. As my husband describes it, "She's off chasing clouds and shadows again."

Within moments, the tops of trees—sprawling Palo Verdes, soaring palms, uplifted arms of saguaro cactus, Afghan pines, and eucalyptus groves—plus the occasional white church dome or spire, are touched with light, illuminated as if the master stage director of this tableau were lighting colored candles, one-by-one. The trees, pale at first, soon glow fluorescent lime-green in the foothills' shade. The domes and spires become beacons of light, shining against the darkness of canyon shadows and gleaming in contrast to an occasional bold orange sycamore.

To the north, tufts of clouds part over Mount Kimball and

Finger Rock. For a brief moment, these landmark outcrops luminesce with splashes of orange, pink, and gold. Just as quickly, this magic—the tinge of morning's alpenglow—disappears. Clouds have once more enveloped our mountain peaks.

The same thermal air-currents that brought this weather system to our desert last night will now take it away. The cloud curtain has risen, retracted as if pulled back by powerful cables. The snow-covered Catalinas have revealed themselves, like an over-sized confection, iced and dusted with powdered sugar. Shreds of cloud remain and cling to the mountainside, trapped in canyons and snagged on rocky crests.

The black canopy over the Rincons retreats as well. Sunlight has spilled into the valley, slanting across the land. Saguaros are gilded with light, first singly, then in groups, from one hilltop to the next, throwing down elongated shadows that stretch to embrace their neighbors. Bougainvillea spill over patio walls, their fuchsia flames reaching against the morning's sky.

Though it's still quite early, the sun has warmed the air considerably. I've removed my jacket—the first part of my cold weather gear to go—and my flannel shirt will follow next. This undressing, too, constitutes part of our desert winter.

On a whim, a brief sortie has taken me into the magical terrain of Sabino Canyon. Ahead I see that ice remains on one of many shaded bridges that cross the creek. Snow crystals glimmer on the spines of a cholla cactus, then vanish in an instant with the first touch of sun. Where I walk, cotton-tail rabbits hustle along the trail and lizards sunbathe on rocky ledges. Cardinals and Pyrrhuloxia tease me, hopping out of sight and into their homes hidden deep in brushy thickets. Ground squirrels pose expectantly near the doorways to their subterranean homes; I oblige and take their photographs too. Palo Verde needles, washed from the trees by last night's storm, crunch under my feet. Their delicate fragrance has mingled with the refreshing scent of creosote bushes and I inhale this gift from nature's bounty.

Many years ago I read a story about a teen-aged girl, blind from birth and raised in squalor and neglect. She learns of the natural world and the existence of birds from her teacher and mentor. "Before this moment," she tells him, "I thought the air, as it warmed, began to sing. Like a kettle of water, placed on the fire, begins to boil." Here, on a ridge in Sabino Canyon, the earth and the air have warmed a few degrees. With my eyes and ears opened to the beauty surrounding me, I am treated to a concert and the chorale of birds, insects, whistling ground

Continued on page 15

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squirrels, and the breeze rustling through winter's dry leaves.

Winter days are short and the shadows long. Seasons help define the landscape and our lives, and winter has now painted our desert home in the vivid, shortened brushstrokes of light and time. Small vignettes of this artistry are now mine, safe in my cameras.

The morning has passed too quickly. Nearing midday, the sun has risen higher in the sky and erased the chiaroscuro from these mountainsides. Surface snows have melted or fallen, their white clumps returned to take their designated places among the mountain pines. The brilliant colors of moments ago have paled and will soon be washed from the valley floor. The morning's drama has ended; the tableau has played out. It will appear again and again, of course, but subtly changed each time.

Happy and tired, I've returned home with film canisters and digital cards rattling in my pockets. I have captured some of the beauty I sought. Other parts will forever remain elusive, luring me on. Nature always withholds small portions of her majesty, as if she were guarding some secret deep in her soul.

I kiss my husband when I return; he's still lazing over the morning's newspaper, a mug of coffee grasped in one hand. I've settled in to clean my trusty lenses, touching each one tenderly with the careful respect those magic lengths of glass deserve. Pleased with my day, I sigh and smile and consider the promise of tomorrow.

4 Poems By John O'Hagan

Thoughts on the Love of the Jacaranda

© 2011

you should sit
under the jacaranda tree
in late spring
when dappled light dances
on bare arms
and the violet mantilla
draped loosely overhead
ripples softly in the breeze
shaking off spent blossoms
that float down
covering the earth
in a miracle sprinkling
like spring-time snow
indigo-tinged flakes bathed
in hues of twilight blue
flowers even as they die
holding us in their clasp
pungent as damp moss
and sweetly fragrant
sweet as honey from the bees
that in the lattice lace overhead
still buzz vibrato
their universal hum

in this place
where you sit
suspended between effulgence
and decay
patiently between birth
and death
there is for this moment
no space for fear regret or pain
only the softly falling blossoms

Genus Scarabaeidae

© 2011

day long
from daybreak's chill
through searing midday heat
to each day's darkening demise
the scarab toils tenaciously
in its ancient sacred task
named by pharaohs
'he who comes into being'
symbol of each day's renewal
he rolls a giant ball
from east to west
a struggling crooked line
across rocky harsh terrain
obstacle strewn and steep
diurnal detour after detour
relentlessly moving forward
sisyphian in his singular vocation
inspiring us in our realization
that not every valley is exalted
nor rough places planed smooth
life's path neither straight nor easy
but sacred none-the-less
sisyphus or sacred scarab
condemned or called
we are just dung beetles
dealing bravely with that
which comes our way
day long

Desert Dusk

© 2011

this is the thin time
in desert's diaphanous dusk
when darkened shapes
stand stark against
a liquid sky
faintly marked
by early evening star
drawing night's silk shroud
over the dying day

this is the thin time
in twilight's warp
when bats come out to fly
flying shuttles
weaving frantically
they stitch a fading sky
and pick at threads of memories
embroidered tightly still
deep within the fabric
of a mind that's had its fill

this is the thin time
between the chatter of the quail
and coyote's fearful cry
when our gilded mountains
turn a greasy grey
and I yield quietly
to darkness
at the ending of my day

Away From Home

© 2011

The Southern Cross still marks the silky sky
Signing my home, Dark Continent, so far
From journey's alien end where now I lie,

A stranger lost yet, like some binary star,
Antipodean in gravity's strong grasp
That tugs my recollection's door ajar,

Now open in my mind, scraped by a rasp,
Apartheid bruised, apart wrenched from my home
So loved and lost, now held in memories' clasp.

The Ibis cries, raw nature's metronome,
Drawing me from sleep to Bushveld plain
Where sun's gold rain bathes all who wake to roam

The land untilled and raw, or sowed with grain,
Some soon to find its way to Kaffir beer
Sold in deep darkening slums to ease the pain

Of serving Eden's beautiful veneer.
Soft jacaranda blossoms' pungent scent
And phosphorescent waves that crash and tear

Mask with their beauty simmering discontent
Among the valley of a thousand hills
And city canyons, pay and spirit spent,

While we eat Boerewors hot off the grill,
Fat trickling as we smack our greasy lips
To celebrate Blood River's Zulu kill,

Or wave our Union Jacks at naval ships
To welcome our King George so grand
On one of royalty's colonial trips.

Those heliotropic days within our clan
So innocently cultured in a place
Still ravishingly raw since dawn of man,

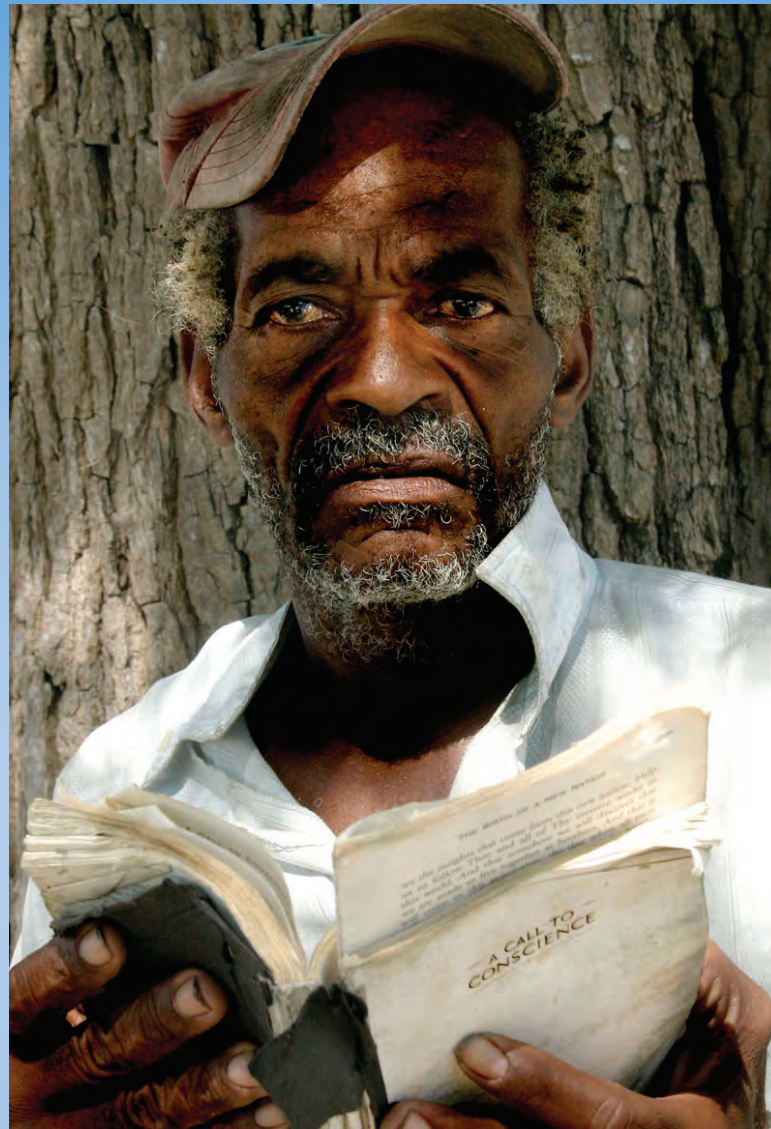
Where beat of drums in valleys dark erase
The sunny sound of cricket bat on ball,
And Boer and Brit alike, resigned now brace

For coming storms and terrifying squall
While heavy mountain skies turn angry black
And thunder threatens with each rumbling call:

But then a southern sun stabs through a crack
As aging guards unlock their prison doors
And we at last accept no going back.

John O'Hagan

Tucson Artist



"A Call to Conscience"
Digital Photograph
2010



John O'Hagan: South African born, amateur philosopher, poet and photographer. Retired to Tucson with his quilt-maker wife after a varied international career. Interested in the similarities and differences between poetry and photography as mediators of reality, and how the notions of "eye" and "contemplation" shape both. Email: ohaganjohn@msn.com.

John O'Hagan

Tucson Artist



**“Glass Blower”
Digital Photograph
2010**

A Call to Conscience was taken in Bridgetown, Barbados. The Glass Blower was taken in Louisville, Kentucky, as was Summer Relief. All three digital photographs were taken in 2010.

- John O'Hagan

John O'Hagan

Tucson Artist



"Summer Relief"
Digital Photograph
2010

5 Poems By Carrie Backe

Summer Storm

© 2011

Standing on the shores of
Lake Michigan I
Watched the gray-turning-black-and-blacker
Clouds
Assemble, gather, roll
And rumble,
Lumbering across the water,
Their great gray shoulders
Charging in from the horizon.
Their magnificence grew
With every mile,
Announcing, pronouncing
What was coming.
The winds picked up,
Restless to join the attack.
The clouds tumbled faster,
Growing, growing.

The cedars bowed in homage.
Frantic gulls screamed and
Circled.
Which way to hide?

When the torrent began--
Fat, fast-falling blobs--
People ran for cover.

If I'd been home in
Arizona,
I'd have lifted my face,
Spread my arms wide,
And praised
The Lord.



As a retired transplant to Arizona, Carrie finds inspiration for her poetry in the nature of all the places she has lived and traveled. Before retirement, she was a textbook editor, a Spanish teacher, and a proprietor of a used-book store. Carrie and her husband enjoy keeping up with their 5 kids and 10 grandkids. In addition to writing, Carrie also loves reading, playing cards, and working hard crossword puzzles. Contact Carrie at tcbacce@hotmail.com.

Eulogy for a Dead Saguaro

© 2011

Like the ancient ones of the tribe
Who walked off alone to die,
Not to be a burden,
Your naked ribs are left,
Bleached and exposed.
Without the privacy of a burial.
Pride and personality gone,
The meat has fallen off
Your drying bones.

I cringe to look upon
Your broken skeleton,
Sinking into a
Pauper's sandy grave.
A pathetic end
For one who
Once was king.

September on the Dolores

© 2011

In the autumn,
The river's silver life blood
Rushes away and shrinks
In upon itself,
Settling down
For the winter,
Leaving exposed
A heap of
Dry, bleached,
Stony bones.

For Ofelia Zepeda

© 2011

I first read your words
On the walls of the Heard.
I had to have more.
I felt, I knew,
That I understood,
That I knew you,
Or, maybe,
You knew me.
I felt connected.

So, I bought a book.
More of your poetry

Had to be mine,
To take home, read,
Inhale,
Study and marvel,
To consume, emulate.

You will be my mentor,
And someday I also,
May write a poem about
Sweat
And be admired.

Real Readers

© 2011

Real readers
Read the footnotes
And the title page,
The copyright page,
And the acknowledgements,
The thank you's and
The author's notes.

Real readers
Know the meaning of
Cover to cover.

5 Poems By Richard Fenton Sederstrom

Some Aspen

© 2011

Some aspen still
Stand, autumn clad
Whose third green is also gold.

Birch also stand,
Telling in their skeletal
Bareness the Hallow-

Een fable of winter
Dying, the possible
Truth we scurry

Through and beyond,
Those of us who can.
Only the oaks

Remain in pure strength,
Tans, russets, browns,
Leather clad

Or calloused cracked
Hands of laborers,
Artisans of evolution

They still conjure
A fable of life in us,
Glory of green imagined.

Junco

© 2011

The junco at the side of the path
will multiply
in an explosive trice,
and does to a dozen or so —
Smudged gray like the cloud stuffed sky.
Then it is a promenade
of a tiny second's stately process
before they take to their tails.

Pure white chevrons slap
into a chaos of lunatic
precision. That gray and pudgy
sky and the gray and pudgy
Poet hum into laughter. The gray
and pudgy birds hear this
of course, and in pure silliness
we take off all over again. Consider:

Your own girth and grayness.
Take flutter.
Fly in sacred place.



Richard Fenton Sederstrom lives in the Sonoran Desert of Arizona and Mexico and the North Woods of Minnesota, the places in which he was raised. "I am fortunate to have retired from all respectable pursuits, especially teaching. Now I return to the classroom as a visitor, where, instead of teaching out of pedagogy, I teach out of confusion and into it, the way teaching should be done." He has published poems regularly in Big Muddy, The Talking Stick, Red Owl, and Saint Anthony Messenger. He has also been published in Tar Wolf Review, The Tule Review, English Journal, Plainsongs, Mother Earth Journal, and Ruminant, among other journals and magazines. His book of poems, "Fall Pictures on an Abandoned Road" came out last December, and his new book, "Disordinary Light," has just been published. Contact Richard at richard_sederstrom1221@q.com.

The Poem as Ears, a Duet

© 2011

For Jim Wenzel, tutor of old to my eyes and ears

After you have finished
With the contrariness of my recent poems,
And I know that of all people you will,
You may ask again what is the use of poetry,
And I hope you do.

*I was over there picking raspberries again—
But there aren't so many in that area this year—
When I looked toward a little rise
And saw two of the biggest ears I have ever seen!*

Because I have a new answer for you,
and this time it comes from your own eyes:

*I couldn't help looking at those two ears
Because they were so big!
Then their heads rose above the undergrowth
and showed them to be two fawns, still spotted.*

A poem may be as awkward
Looking as the ridiculous ears
On the popped-up heads of the two fawns you saw,
To remind us again how real the startling moment was then,

How real the startling moment is again
In the fragile magic of words,
How real the startling promise of the fawns,
Their ears, the words,

And the real, *real* promise of that grace of being,
Summoned to return to your own eyes
And our ears again and again.

*But I still can't get over how huge
those two pair of ears were when I first saw them.
The ears must have to grow fast for their survival*

Just like our ears, the ones that hear inside
For our survival.

A Capitalist

© 2011

Why would the boat
Tailed grackle do that,

Tong his beak around
A three quarter inch cube

Of Potatoes O'Brien,
Unless he wanted

To prove to himself
That he could do it,

And that the next
Grackle could not,

And would not get
The chance anyway

Because the first
Grackle had filled

Its craw for the sake
Of the indigestible?

In Asphodel Meadows

© 2011

Junco is a traveling bird.
He travels north of where I sit right now.
He travels south of where I sit right now, but
He does not travel *to* where I sit right now, reminding me

That I need not travel to where I sit right now
Nor may I be where I sit right now, if, like Junco,
I choose to fly
And be where I sit right now.

I can travel to Junco if I wish. I can learn to spot Junco
In his chosen spot in the woods if I choose,
And Junco has license to adventure in his regard to me.
It is a kinship of the distant sort that I most desire most days.

Junco and I have such color of freedom to share,
Sharing the gray of our years, such philosophy of freedom
That one of us has learned how much the matter is
Of where he knows he is and where he knows he isn't.

We have learned in our travels from meadow to meadow
Or from corner to edge of some meadow
The virtue of sharing our minor secrets
With our timely cousin not too far removed,

The sojournal asphodel, lovely to behold
In her seasons, grave keeper
Of secrets we three share, that often where we are
As not where we are, but

In the meadow, or wood between the meadows where
The three of us spend so many of our untimely hours
Together or apart
Or apart and apart together.

Mike Durham

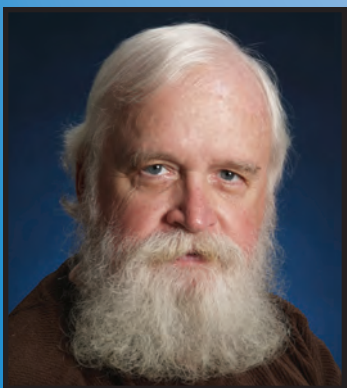
Phoenix Artist



My writing and illustrating goal is to merge the two skills and produce manuscripts on a variety of children's and adult topics. I work in mixed media of oils, watercolor, computer graphics and photography.

- Mike Durham

"Dance"
Mixed media



Mike Durham graduated from undergrad work in Idaho in 1971; he holds two master's degrees, one in social welfare and one in management. He worked for the states of Idaho and Arizona in developmental disabilities, child welfare, and corrections from 1976 to 2003. He and his wife, Shannon, raised five children. He attended Arizona State University Herberger School of Art, Fall 2003, and the Mesa Community College Art Department, Spring 2004-2007. He completed course work in drawing, painting (watercolor and oil), and Maya animation. After retiring in 2003, Mike began writing in earnest. Mike is also a political activist to the Arizona Legislature, primarily on the issue of cold-case murders. As a freelance photographer and a writer, Mike had articles published in the Nampa Idaho Free Press-Tribune and the Idaho Register and a political issues column in the Ahwatukee Foothills News. He is a regular National Novel Writing Month and Script Frenzy winner since 2007. He is a new member to the Arizona Authors Association. Contact Mike at mike.durham@durhammike.com.

5 Poems By Karen Call

Sun slants in the West

© 2011

trees and cacti stand *then sway*

make ready for monsoon.

My Morning Man

© 2011

I share the bathroom
with a man I've never met.

In the early morning he runs the water
till it must be a steamy torrent,
as I peer, bleary-eyed into the mirror.

I brush my teeth and he shaves,
the water's syncopated rhythm
on and off,
back and forth.

We move,
footsteps tapping
in skittish dance.

Last night he sang as if in a karaoke bar,
water blasting in the shower,
a woman calling out to him.

Someday
will I go into the bathroom
and see his face
through the mirror
on the apartment wall?



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

Where Time Pauses

© 2011

The air stills.
A bird settles in the detritus
of the crack where the walls join.
Feathers flutter, dust particles
drift and glint in the sun.
She looks, accepting me as a partner
in this respite, turning,
then tucking her beak under her wing.

Figures below rush between buildings,
engaged — in a hurry — so busy.
A breeze brushes my cheek
and my eyelashes flutter.
The sun's rays pour like molasses
over me. I stretch my arms,
tight muscles seeking heat.

Across wide sand stretches
matchbox cars glide down
gray ribbon rails
white stutter strips
holding them together.

I rest a moment,
content to lean against the wall
and watch,
hidden on my sandstone ledge
away from the world,
gazing at life,
in this secret place
where time pauses.

Bougainvillea Sprawl

© 2011

Like an octopus in slow waters
the towering branches of our bougainvillea
stretch and undulate in every direction
in the warm fall breeze. A leak
in the drip system delivered
more water
and the bush drew it in.

Fuchsia blooms
on each green-leafed stem
are stark against the desert-brown yard.
Like skinny-necked dinosaurs
they peer into the neighbor's yard
casting slim shadows over barrel cactus.
Long serpents,
they slide along the dusty wall,
stretching, reaching, and climbing
over and through the jasmine bush.

Billy's Blackberry Pie

© 2011

Six-year old Billy hiked in Oak Creek Canyon.
Sun sliced through branches
as he picked blackberries for his
Birthday Pie.

He threaded his way through bushes;
red rocks and cliffs loomed overhead.
Clouds banked for afternoon monsoons.
A breeze fluttered through the trees.

He looked under leaves
For the ripe berries the birds missed.
Juicy, fat blackberries called to him.
He stuffed them into his mouth,
and dropped them into his ice-cream bucket.

He turned and came face to face
with a black bear standing on hind feet
stuffing berries into its mouth.
Each screamed.
Billy dropped his bucket
as they ran in opposite directions!
Breathless he reached his Mother.

She took him back for the bucket
and made his blackberry pie.

Trout Fishing in Alaska

By J. Michael Green

© 2011

“You be careful, Son. Bears been fierce lately.”
“Don’t worry, Dad. The salmon are in and bears are more interested in fish than a scrawny human.”

The skiff was beached near the upstream tip of the long, narrow island—really a large sand bar—and Bart and his father were at their usual camp on the highest point of the island. It was nine o’clock on a warm, bright Friday night near the summer solstice, when the sun dipped below the horizon for a few minutes before rising to start another day; the sky remained light in the transformation between dusk and dawn. The tent was pitched, supplies cached in the only tree on the island, Remington Model 70 leaned against the tree trunk, and fishing gear ready.

“Monday morning about six?”

“I’ll be ready.” Bart watched his father motor downstream to their home place. He adjusted the shoulder holster holding the Ruger .44 magnum and soon had his line in the water, baited with fresh salmon eggs. He was fishing for trout, his favorite eating.

He soon had two nice Dolly Varden on his stringer and decided it was time to eat. After a dinner of fried potatoes and trout, he switched to a heavier rod and begin casting a lure for a late arriving Silver Salmon.

It’ll sure be nice to start college next year. I hope me and Elsa can both get scholarships.

He checked his watch and realized it was after five. He switched rods and within fifteen minutes had landed another trout. After breakfast he cleaned his dishes and ensured that the camp was tidy, then decided to empty his bowels before sleeping the day away. He removed his shoulder holster and fishing vest and laid them on the picnic table along with the rifle. Their latrine was about twenty yards through the

shrubs on the other side of the island.

On his return to the camp he rounded a large bush and stopped. A brown bear cub was sitting on the picnic table. His pulse increased by thirty points and his mouth went dry.

Damn. Where’s the mother?

He reached for the Ruger before remembering both weapons were in the camp. Not having any choice, he retreated to the far end of the island to wait out the bears. The root system of a driftwood log provided a half-comfortable seat. By noon he was having difficulty keeping his eyes open and decided to check on the bears.

He warily approached within fifty yards of the camp, yelling and beating on the ground with a stick. The cub was on the picnic table. The sow roared and charged. Bart waved his hands and yelled. She didn’t slow—this was not a false charge. Three long strides and he was in the water, wading to waist deep about twenty feet from shore. She stopped with all four paws in the water, her massive head waving back and forth and her mouth dripping saliva.

His heart was pounding like he had played a quarter of basketball with no whistles to slow the action. Though the air was cool and he stood in near-frigid water, sweat formed on his upper lip.
Damn, she’s big.

The sow sat on her rump and watched Bart. He began struggling through the water toward the far end of the island. The sow rose and lumbered along the beach keeping pace.

Shit, this water is cold. Better call Dad and have him bring the .378. He patted both shirt pockets. Damn. Phone’s in the vest and the cub’s sleepin’ on it.

He continued wading half the length of the island before the sow turned back. Afraid to get out of the water he continued slogging through the shallows, slipping on the mossy rocks and

Continued on page 30



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.

nearly tripping over larger boulders. Once he was confident the sow was gone, he returned to shore and hiked to the log. Bart always carried a film canister full of matches and he desperately needed a fire. He scavenged until he found dry wood, kindling, and dry grass, and a fire was soon warming him even though his clothes were damp.

He dozed until late afternoon and awoke, still damp and chilled, to see the bears about fifty yards away eating a dead salmon that had washed ashore. He eased out of the tree and inched toward the opposite side of the island, heading for the camp. Vegetation and the slight rise soon screened him from the bears and he began walking faster along the shore. A pair of surprised gulls squawked their displeasure and went airborne, dive-bombing and swearing at him in gull-ese. A roar and sounds of a large animal running through the brush forced him into the river. The sow again stopped at the water's edge and the cub soon joined her.

Now what? Long way to camp. Maybe she'll lose interest before I get there and I can get the guns and the cell.

He was now walking into a strong current as well as fighting the cold water and slippery rocks. Twenty minutes later he nearly fell when a rock dislodged. He checked the shore and realized he was less than forty yards from where he started. The cub had found a dead salmon and was tearing off strips of meat while the sow watched both the cub and Bart.

Get out water. Hypothermia. Build fire.

His brain, affected by numbing cold, was operating in survival mode although fear was in the background ready to surface and augment survival. His loudest voice was muted by the cold. "Get! Hell! Off! My! Island!"

The sow swung her head to face him. Her lips pulled back from her teeth.

Damn. Laughing at me. Hell of a fix. Can't swim to shore. Bears there. Can't swim home. Too far. Can't do this.

He turned and slid into the water, swimming downstream with weak strokes. He rounded the tip of the island and crawled to shore. His muscles were contracted from the cold and he shook uncontrollably. He slowly stood erect. The bear had not followed.

He added wood to the fire and was soon warmed even though his clothes were damp and his teeth still chattered. Every few minutes he checked for the bear. A spawned-out salmon struggled against the current next to shore.

Not dead yet. Edible but barely.

Bart soon had the fish gutted and skewered on a small limb over the fire. It was after eight on Saturday night and he had not eaten since breakfast. He ate quickly without noticing the gamy taste.

At the darkest part of the night, really early dusk, he decided to make a pass over the island to look for the bears, staying

along the shoreline in case he needed to become an aquatic mammal again. No signs of the bears until he neared the camp where the cub slept on the table and the sow slept near the table.

The sow stood on her hind legs and roared. *Damn. Must have scented me.* Bart began to retreat; the sow saw the movement and charged. He waded out to waist depth but the sow didn't stop at the shore. He lowered his body and swam downstream until he reached the log and quickly added more wood to the fire. Fear of the big brown beast and uncertainty about his future kept his stomach and heart full of occasional flutters.

Shit. This is getting old.

He remained at the tip of the island watching for the bear and occasionally dozing between the log and fire. The sun was well above the horizon when the cub came bounding down the shore, splashing through the shallows. The sow was lumbering behind the cub.

Bart retreated to the back side of the log, waiting to see where the bears would head. The cub stopped to investigate a gull-eaten salmon and the sow continued along the shore until she was within forty yards of the log. The fire smell alarmed her and she stood on her hind legs for a better look. Bart did not move. She dropped to all fours and moved toward the log, watching and sniffing.

Twenty yards was all he could handle. He ran into the water knowing it was shallow for at least twenty yards. The sow followed and was gaining until he angled into deeper water. She stopped before she lost her footing; water was lapping around her snout.

Stalemate.

Human and bear stared at each other for fifteen minutes, neither moving. Bart's nerves were about shot and sweat was again forming on his upper lip.

The cub was exploring the shore as a dying salmon floated downstream. It waded out to retrieve the fish but the current caught it. It bawled as it was swept downstream. The sow turned to see her cub in the river and launched herself into the water. Bart struggled into shallower water and watched the sow push the cub toward shore. They found a beach on the mainland a good hundred meters downstream.

He waded out of the water but did not stop at the fire, jogging to his camp on the other end of the island. He soon had a fire going and a set of dry clothes.

Ain't never takin' another dump without a gun in my hand.

Bart had his gear on the beach and was fishing for one last trout. The sound of an outboard motor reverberated off the trees. His rod dipped and he pulled back to set the hook. The boat nosed to shore just as Bart landed a twenty-six-inch Dolly.

"How was the fishin'?"

"Great."

Bubba Wingate

By J. Michael Green

© 2011

“Back away, Bubba!”

Bubba Wingate was a bear of a man: six foot six and 290 pounds of muscle. Unlike most men of his size, there was nothing jovial about him—he didn’t have a mean streak, he was just mean. He ruled Bear Springs, a small farming and ranching community, where he had lived his entire thirty years except for a two-year stint as a guest of the state for beating a tourist nearly to death.

“What you gonna do, Tom? You ain’t tough ’nuff to take me on.”

“No, I’m not. But I do believe this .357 is tough enough.” The click of the hammer being cocked was unnaturally loud in the parking lot of The Hideaway and was audible over the muted music filtering through the masonry walls.

Bubba had both hands propped against the wall; hidden by his bulk was a petite young lady. He slowly removed his hands and turned to face Tom. “You got the balls to pull the trigger?”

“Yup. It don’t take balls to kill someone. I done it before.”

“That was war. That was Korea. Long time ago.”

“A man don’t forget how.”

The young lady eased away from Bubba and moved along the wall until she was well away from him.

“Darlene, come over here and stand behind me. Bubba, if I ever hear about you hasslin’ my granddaughter or any of my kin, I’ll come after you. And you won’t survive.”

“Better not let me catch you without your pea shooter. I’ll find an opportunity to put some hurt on you.” He sauntered across the parking lot to his truck, not even slowing his pace as he slammed a ham-sized fist into Rob Ostroski’s truck fender, leaving a dent the size of a small watermelon. He scattered gravel as he sped out of the lot.

The following Monday morning Tom, seated at the big corner table in Ma’s Café, was only half-enjoying the daily breakfast of the town’s old-timers. His back was to the wall and the big pistol was in a shoulder holster under his jacket. Five old friends were seated at the table, eating country breakfasts or sipping coffee. Andy Welch, a dairy farmer, joined the table and looked hard at Tom.

“Heard you had a run-in with Bubba Saturday night.”

“Yep. He was givin’ Darlene a bad time. Backed ’im off with my pistol.”

George Johansen, the town’s best mechanic, put his cup down. “I know at least three girls that man has raped.”

Bob Ostroski, a wheat farmer, looked up from his plate of eggs and sausage. “How many men has he beaten? Has to be dozens.”

George looked around the table. “We need to get him gone. How ’bout trumpin’ up some charges and gettin’ him sent off to jail?”

“Lyn’s too hard.” Tom looked around the table. “Too easy to get tripped up. ’Sides, he’d just get out and hunt us down for a beatin’. Y’all know what he’s done to anyone who filed charges or testified.”

George picked up his coffee mug—Ma didn’t have cups in her restaurant, she had mugs for working men. “Damn sheriff and his deputies are ’fraid of Bubba. They won’t even write him a ticket.”

Ma Smith dropped a short stack in front of George and refilled coffee cups. “You men have to do something about that animal. We women are tired of being terrorized. Maybe you need a permanent solution.”

The men all made eye contact as Ma returned to the kitchen, but they remained quiet with their own thoughts.

Bob was the first to speak. “Y’all know he comes to town on Thursdays for Ma’s chicken fry. Maybe we need to have a meetin’ with the lad.”

Bubba lived on the small ranch that had been in the family for five generations. When Bubba was four years out of high school, his father had been thrown from a horse and died from a skull fracture. His mother drowned two years later in the creek behind the house. Although nothing sinister was ever proven, locals considered both deaths suspicious. Mary Lou, Bubba’s sister and two years younger, had left for college three weeks after graduating; she had returned only for the funerals of her parents.

Bubba finished his chores and whistled while he showered and shaved. He donned his least dirty dress clothes and drove the eleven miles to town. He parked in his usual spot near the wall of the hardware store, and left the windows down on his truck since he knew no one would have the courage to bother it. He was still whistling when he stepped out of the truck and turned toward Ma’s.

Thirty-eight men and three women materialized from the shadows of parked cars. The noise from twenty-four hunting rifles, eleven shotguns, and six handguns shattered the stillness. Forty-one people melted into the darkness, leaving Bubba lying in a pool of blood.

The only question on people’s minds was if Mary Lou would return for this funeral.

Jesa Townsend

Phoenix Artist



“Flowers for Love”

Oil
2011



Jesa is becoming just as well known for her art as her soulful jazz vocals. After living overseas for three years in Italy and Scotland, she is now based in the States, in the Valley of the Sun. She is happy to live up to her nickname as a “sweetheart with a plan,” looking to the future and happily filling it with creative pursuits. To learn more about Jesa, please visit her website: www.PaintingsbyJesa.com.

Jesa Townsend

Phoenix Artist



“Hippie Day Dream”

Oil
2011

Jesa Townsend

Phoenix Artist



“She’s a Colorful Girl”

Oil
2011

This classically trained musician’s paintings are all self-proclaimed labors of love done in her own distinct style. Jesa tackles abstract art, bringing an impressionistic point of view to life through the creation of vivid and extreme color combinations. It’s been both her experiences in humanitarian work and her extensive travels that have influenced Jesa’s artwork most.

- Jesa Townsend

Jesa Townsend

Phoenix Artist



"Stars or Flowers"

**Oil
2011**

8 Poems By Anne Robey-Graham

Out Too Late on a Winter's Evening

© 2011

Frosty little puffs of breath exhaled quickly
Vapors briefly etched against scattered dots of light
Melted into beads briefly clinging to the flowing woolen tail

Of the
Muffler
Knitted by someone else's hand.

Icy little spasms in her stomach,
Swelling in ragged time with the staccato of hurried steps
Throbbing, briefly gripped, remembering the news report

Of the
Murder
Committed by someone else's hand.

Oily little pools of water,
Slapping acrid brown specks on the back of white legs
Rippled with the droplets briefly flung from the door,

Slammed in the
Greeting
Extended by someone else's hand.

My Arizona story, like many others, started with a move to Arizona with my husband for a better job and fresh start. Unfortunately, after being airlifted from Prescott to Phoenix for bypass surgery that went wrong, he unexpectedly died. So, Arizona also became a place of loss, heartbreak and grief. Fortunately, it did not leave me there but also became a place of healing and second chances. From the pink sunsets, to the scent of orange blossoms, to the critters who joined my walks, to everything that makes Arizona the special place it is, I have been renewed here. My writing moved to a new level in Arizona as well. After finding myself a widow at the age of 48, I began to ask other widows for tips on how to survive my grief. What they shared was so powerful, I interviewed widows and collected their stories and thoughts. I took 10 things people typically say at a funeral, made each one a chapter, wrote about it and then added words from other widows about their experiences. I self-published "Widows' Words of Hope" in 2005 and it was just picked up by Tau Publishing in July. Also in July, I saw a lifelong dream fulfilled when I signed a contract with Kirkdale Press to publish my first novel, "The Church Sign." Set in Prescott, it is a romantic mystery and will be released as an e-Book in October. I am also an adjunct professor of communication and higher education. I teach at Mesa Community College and online for Capella University, Northcentral University (which is based in Prescott Valley), and Kaplan University. After being widowed, I started over by studying for my doctorate in higher education at ASU. I also hold an M.A.Ed. in Adult Learning from University of Phoenix and a B.A. in Communication from University of Colorado. Although I chose Arizona, in some ways it feels as though Arizona also chose me. To experience loss, healing and renewal in Arizona has given me an appreciation for the legacy of all of those before me who fell in love with the desert, too. My deepest respect goes to the hardy souls who lived and loved here *before* air-conditioning.



Dr. Anne Robey-Graham is a professor, speaker and writer of a novel, "The Church Sign," a nonfiction book, "Widows' Words of Hope," numerous articles, short stories and award-winning poetry. She teaches communication and graduate education. She holds an Ed.D. in Higher Education from Arizona State University, an M.A.Ed. in Adult Learning from University of Phoenix, and a B.A. in Communication from University of Colorado. She considers Colorado home but she has also lived in Virginia, Tennessee, Indiana, Maine and Arizona, as well as Calgary, Canada. After being unexpectedly widowed, Anne fell in love with and married a wonderful Canadian man — they met online! — who was also widowed and a professor. Together, they enjoy living in Arizona, teaching, and spending time with their family and four delightful grandchildren. Contact her at annerobey@cox.net.

Dad's Whistling

© 2011

A little girl stares in the darkness
Wanting to be brave
To quiet
Her own fears
Oh, Daddy's whistling
Now everything's okay
Go to sleep, little lady

A bright teen scowls in the darkness
Wanting shorter skirts
Wilder music
Her own way
Unperturbed, Dad's whistling
Everything's going to be okay
Go to your future, young lady

A proud mom smiles in the darkness
Wanting to hold tight
To good times
Her own kids
Enjoy Grandpa's whistling
Everything's okay
Go to their concerts, happy lady

A busy wife sighs in the darkness
Wanting more time
More money
Her own goals
Too busy for whistling
Everything's okay anyway
Go to work, busy lady

A broken widow sobs in the darkness
Wanting relief
To find again
Her own place
Silence drowns out any whistling
Nothing's okay anymore
Where do you go now, sad lady?

A lonely daughter sits in the darkness
Wanting this trip home
To briefly escape
Her own despair
Then she hears Dad's whistling
You're going to be okay
Go on and hope again, sweet lady

Good Morning, America!

© 2011

"Millions of viewers!"
We sit alone, shoulders hunched
Cozy robes tied crookedly.
Drooping eyes, sleep hardened in the corners.
Aroma tingles, the dark brew scalds
Leaving a fuzzy, scorched taste mingled with
Unbrushed teeth and coated tongue.

"Cropped, fuzzy sweaters are a Must for Fall!"

One foot hooked around the leg of a stool,
today's Fashion Consultant glances at
blue scribbles on yellow paper, and
runs a wet tongue over dry lips.
One hand flashes scarlet and sparkling stones
as she pats her soft, smooth hair as if petting puppy fur.
A slash of oily scarlet now smeared
on the corner of an enamel cap gleams at
the camera.

The model shoves her hands into denim pockets and
shrugs her shoulders up
until the cropped, fuzzy sweater
hangs unevenly on her lean, bony shoulders.
Her lips pucker in a pout for
the camera.

The cold dark liquid pastes another ring
onto the inside of the mug that will make us
angry tonight, soaking and scrubbing, again.
We turn to see what else was caught by
the camera.

"Baghdad Welcomes US Troops!"

Scenes flash across the screen –
crowds of thin, dark faces,
in robes and head coverings,
many hands waving at
troops of young, white faces,
in green and khaki uniforms,
long guns waving for
the camera

Fades away

As we see ourselves in
a cropped, fuzzy sweater, blue
fluffy and warm against the skin.

In a Dark Booth

© 2011

We sat in a dark booth
Near the back
You smiled and listened
I prattled on for hours
We laughed together
Heads almost touching

Like old times
Like better times
Like years when
Love was fresh and
Hope was alive

We sat in a dark booth
Near the bar
You twirled your glass
I twisted my napkin
We looked around
Heads facing away

Like those times
Like harder times
Like years when
Love was quiet and
Hope was still

We sat in a dark booth
Near the kitchen
You dabbed your tears
I drowned my anger
We looked lost
Heads facing down

Like these times
Like silent times
Like years when
Love was gone and
Hope was dead

Meet me in a dark booth
Near the door
Let's listen to our hearts
Let's learn to hope
Once more

Lifting Them Higher

© 2011

Little kids squealed with delight
As their uncle
Lifted them higher
Oh, what they could see
Sitting on his shoulders!
So different than
What they could not see
Standing on the ground

An uncle
Lifted them higher
Helped them see
New scenes
New hope

Teenagers beamed with pride
As their uncle
Listened to their stories
Oh, what they could share
Sitting across from him!
So different than
What they could not share
Standing across from their parents

An uncle
Lifted them higher
Helped them see
New scenes
New hope

Sad children shared their grief
As their uncle
Lessened their sorrow
Oh, what they could express
Sitting with him!
So different than
What they could not express
Alone with their heartache

An uncle
Lifted them higher
Helped them see
New scenes
New hope

Grateful nieces and nephews
Celebrate his birthday
Loving their uncle
For lifting them higher

Make Him Stop!

© 2011

You have no idea
How angry I get
With you
When you hide a bruise
With him
When he hurts you
With you
When you just take it
With him
When he won't stop

Tears
Bruises
Pain
Sorrow
You on the floor
Begging him
Hiding it once more

I can't even imagine
How scared your boy gets
With you
When you're bruised again
With him
When he hurts you again
With you
When you take it again
With him
When he knows he'll do it again

Tears
Bruises
Pain
Sorrow
You on the floor
Begging him
Hiding it once more

I know you are ashamed
How disgusted the cops are
With you
When you're bruised again
With him
When he hurts you again
With you
When you take it again
With him
When he knows he'll do it again

See through the tears
Display the bruises
Stop the pain
End the sorrow
You standing up
Facing him
Hiding it never again

Only you can
Make him leave
To make it stop

Tracy, Story of an Anorexic

© 2011

At four they praised her,
grace
dancing on her skin,
light and laughter sparkling in her eyes.
Total strangers reached out to touch her and
murmured, "How charming, such a pretty child."

At ten they told her,
fear
churning in her stomach,
anger and disappointment hardening her eyes.
Neighbors shook their heads and
murmured, "How shocking, such an angry girl."

At twenty one they found her, too soon,
blood
seeping from her wrists,
tears and desperation clouding her eyes.
Roommates tightened their mouths and
murmured, "How shameful, such a selfish brat."

At thirty two they saw her,
alone
running around the lake,
pain and starvation rimming her eyes.
Cousins turned away from her and
murmured, "How pathetic, such a scrawny thing."

Today they can see her,
sweet
baby in her arms,
love and tenderness sparkling in her eyes.
Total strangers smile at her and
murmur, "How charming, such a pretty child."

Tell Me About Today

© 2011

Today you reported what I said in 1984
Or was it 1974?
Or 1994?
Or maybe last year?

I don't remember.

Who can know if I really said it?
Or did someone else say it,
Why did we talk about it,
Why did you write it down?

I don't remember.

I'm not the same person I was in 1984
Or 1974
Or 1994
Or even last year.

I don't remember.

You're not the same person you were in 1984
Or 1974
Or 1994
Or even last year.

Instead, tell me about today

Who you are today:
What disappointments you,
Delights you,
Fills your dreams?

Tell me about today

What thrills you today:
Hearing your sweet harmony,
Holding your son's hand,
Hugging your husband's heart?

Tell me about today

What is changing today:
New ideas rolling around,
New friends lifting you up,
New book you can't put down?

Tell me about today

What floods you with love today:
Who draws you close,
Inspires you to grow,
Showers you with love?

Tell me about today

How God touches you today:
Do you favor His love,
Find His forgiveness,
Feel His peace?

Tell me about today

Go ahead
Write this down today
What I said today
So you can remind me
In 2014

I probably won't remember
But I will still say
Even then
Tell me about today!

‘Goodbye Marla’

By Brittany Zelkovich

© 2011

The story of Marla and me, well, it sure is something. I’d been driving all night from my last show in Myrtle Beach to get to the forgettable motel in Raleigh by morning. My Wrangler coughed and sputtered its usual protests, begging for an oil change, but still got me into town in one piece. Man did that stiff and creaky bed knock me out. Let me tell you, any bed is better than sleeping in the back seat of a Wrangler.

When I woke up I showered off the travel grime and dressed in my tore-up jeans and Led Zeppelin t-shirt. I leafed through the cheap Bible that rested on the nightstand, lit cigarette hanging from my lips, and then stepped out into the Southern Summer.

Once in the bar I bought a drink and roamed the bar, scanning the crowd for any possible good time. When you’re a musician, women flock to you like Apostles to Christ, and man, Christ had it good.

I started setting up, which is a laugh, adjusting the lone microphone and taking my trusty acoustic from its shabby case. Imagine Chris Cornell with dreads meets the Blues. That’s me.

“My name’s Jason Avery — I’ll be entertaining y’all for the next hour or so,” my introduction. When I left the stage, to better applause than I’d anticipated, and sat at the bar, I noticed her.

She wore a midnight blue dress that sparkled in just the right light. The straps, which thinned up as they reached her shoulders, lent me a view of skin kissed by the Southern sun’s honey. She caught me staring, for that’s what I was doing. Before she looked away she shot me a tiny smile, giving me all the encouragement I needed.

I bought a tequila sunrise along with my beer and made my way to her table. Her eyes, a deep brown, followed me across

the room. She bit her lip, blushing, and looked away once she realized where I was headed.

“You looked like you could use another,” I told her, setting the cocktail on the table.

“Well, thank you.” She accepted the drink with a smile, but said no more. I chuckled, familiar with the hesitant lady routine.

“Mind if I sit?”

“Not at all.” She smiled again. “My name’s Marla.”

“Marla,” I said with a nod, letting her name familiarize itself with my mouth. “I’m Jason,” I told her.

“I know,” she purred, setting my blood afire.

“Here’s hoping you remember it,” I said, tapping my bottle against her now half empty glass.

“Oh, I don’t think I’ll be forgetting it anytime soon.” She downed the remains of her tequila sunrise, ran a manicured hand down my arm and murmured, “I’ll see you around, Jason Avery.”

The following Friday found me back in that cramped little bar. Today I know that I went looking for Marla, but had you asked me then, the beer brought me back. I sat in a booth where I could watch the door and eagle-eyed every pretty face, just waiting for the right one.

She showed up five minutes before my set, inflating my already augmented ego. Marla bee-lined it for the bar in a blood-colored number that added a fire to her brown eyes.

“You showed up just in time,” I told her, walking past her to the stage.

“Did I?” she asked, innocent as could be. Her smirk reassured me of her intentions as I stepped onto the modest stage.

The Friday after that Marla showed up again. She told me

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Brittany Zelkovich, an Arizona native, is in her third and final year at Chandler-Gilbert Community College, where she is finishing her Certificate in Creative Writing. Along with myriad short stories, she is currently working on her first novel. To learn more about the author and to read more of her work, check out her blog at iemergedinlondonrain.wordpress.com.

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that my voice haunted her, and that's why she kept coming back. She wore a black flowered dress that gave her a summer soaked look. We danced, only a little drunk, in the narrow aisles of the bar, my hands on her hips. When her eyes met mine, I knew what she wanted to say.

"Let's go," I told her. I took her hand and led her to the Wrangler, the first of many Friday nights spent in nondescript motel rooms.

One weekend, after a month of Friday nights, we decided to take a trip to the beach. We filled the long drive to Wilmington with music we loved. Her long dark hair billowed around her face in the wind of the Wrangler. She wore cut-off shorts and a tank top, leaving most of her skin bare, revealing enticing freckles from summers past. Marla sang along with every song and I reveled in the freedom of her wind whipped voice.

Once at the beach Marla tore off what little clothes she'd wore, revealing the red polka dot bikini underneath. Without waiting for me she ran over the pale dunes and into the warm waves of the Atlantic. I took my time, walking barefoot on the sand, watching her play in the waves. Her skin absorbed every ounce of sunlight; her bikini lending innocence to her far from pure curves.

Hours of lying on the UV soaked beach led into an afternoon storm. Lightning and thunder drove the sunbathing crowd to find shelter in vehicles and restaurants, but not us. We raced back to the Wrangler laughing, rain pelting us the whole way. Without the top or doors on, the jeep itself gave no shelter. I started the Wrangler, the engine's roar lost in a barrage of thunder.

Maybe it was the storm, or the spell of a whole carefree day in Marla's presence, but somehow I came to the decision to park the Wrangler under Johnnie Mercer's pier. There, under the concrete shelter drenched in rain, we explored every inch of each other in the miniscule backseat.

The motel room smelled like ocean the next day. We hadn't showered on our arrival the night before, too tired and spell-bound by the day's events to even consider it.

Marla's hair lay in a damp tangle on her pillow. Her skin smelled of salt with the clean fragrance of rain, leaving her skin smooth and inviting. I lay beside her, an arm around her waist, breathing her in. She moaned in her sleep and snuggled closer to me. I couldn't help the spike in my pulse at the feel of her.

The sun filtered through the drapes, illuminating the bed as she gained consciousness. She hummed a happy sound and rubbed herself against me.

"Trouble maker," I whispered in her ear. She shivered a laugh while I kissed her neck. That was all the encouragement we needed.

We spent the morning tangled in second-rate motel sheets, but bathed in soft sun beams nothing seemed more like heaven.

I knew there was no future in Marla. She never spoke of herself in any real detail, and always turned questions around on me. We never went back to her place but always to different motels around town.

All that and the faint tan line on her left ring finger should have been ample reason for me to get the hell out of Raleigh. But, as all true artists are, I'm a sucker for tragedies.

One night, parked in front of some rich guy's house, we made such a ruckus in her hatchback that the bastard called the cops. A knock on the rear windshield caught our attention, after a while. I rolled the rear passenger window down and stuck my unkempt head through.

"Can I help you, Officer?" I asked, trying to keep the grin off my face.

"I need you to step out of the vehicle, Sir."

Marla cackled from inside the car, and I had to shush her.

"I'm afraid Officer, that may not be in my best interest."

"Son, I'm giving you two minutes to get out of that car." He paused to let his words sink in.

I nodded to show him that I intended to comply. I yanked on my pants in a hurry, and tumbled out of the car, my button fly still undone.

"You the owner of this vehicle?"

"No, Sir." I stood, arms behind my back, shirtless against the car.

"Is she?" The officer asked, fed up.

"I believe so." I grinned. The policeman glared at me. He shined his flashlight into the car, where Marla managed to get dressed. She climbed out of the car at the cop's request and stood beside me, a shit-eating grin on her face.

He asked for IDs, which we provided. He grumbled when everything checked out.

"Ya'll can't do this here," he said, handing our cards back. "Go get a room."

"Yes, Sir, Officer." We held back chuckles as he walked back to his car. Once he pulled away Marla howled a laugh so loud I thought for sure the cop would be back.

Back in the car, instead of taking us to the motel room, Marla drove up a block, where we started all over again in the back of her Subaru.

The next morning, Marla's phone rang early. She rushed to pick it up, locking herself in the bathroom before she answered.

"Hello?" She answered, cold as hell. Silence followed, but I got the impression that the person on the other line was angry. "I don't know what you're talking about," she said, her voice bored. Another lengthy quiet followed. "As if I tell people about you, Richard," she snapped.

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Fall 2011

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The silence that fell over the bathroom carried into the rest of the dreary motel room. I tried my hardest not to make a sound.

“Is there a real reason you called, Richard?” the dangerous tone in her voice made me worry for the man’s life. He answered her, I guessed from her prolonged silence. “Fuck you,” she seethed into her phone. I heard the crisp clack of her smashing the phone shut, and then the soft sound of water running in the sink.

I hadn’t moved through all of this, and when she opened the bathroom door, I did the best acting of my life. She climbed in bed, rubbing my back and pulling the sheets over us. I moaned a convincing sleep-addled sound as she lay against me. I could feel the wet on her face and knew that, whoever this guy was, he had a sure strong power over Marla.

Two Fridays after that, we lay on yet another cheap motel bed, sweaty and gasping. We held each other, trying to get our hearts back under control. Her breathing slowed, in time with mine, as we fell asleep. Before I succumbed to the comfort of dreams I whispered in her ear, “I got signed ... I’m staying in Raleigh.”

That morning Marla kissed me an early goodbye, her lips cold and hard. Half asleep, I asked her about my gig on Friday night. She said she’d try and make it.

I knew Friday that I had seen the last of Marla. She came into the bar part way through my set, wearing jeans and a faded t-shirt, and left before the house had finished cheering. I’d seen in her eyes, even from the small stage, that she came to say goodbye.

I told myself to forget her. I had known from the start that one of us wouldn’t stick around; I’d just figured it’d be me. In her absence I spent my days writing songs and my nights drinking. She never did show up at one of my shows again.

Months passed and I had to admit that I couldn’t stop thinking about her. I started driving around town looking for any signs of her or her car. I wondered if she thought of me every time she climbed into her Subaru, of that night we’d made good use of the hatchback.

Such thoughts plagued me, so much so that I tore out the back seat of the Wrangler so that the upholstery could no longer tor-

ment me.

After two months of obsessed searching, I finally found her. The Subaru sat in the sun by a park off Glenwood Avenue. My eyes roved the park looking for her soft curves. She sat in the sun wearing shorts and a red tank top, soaking up the last rays of summer. Her hair, down and a little windswept, framed her face. She had never looked better.

“Hey Marla,” I said as I came up behind her. She jumped up quick, glancing around before looking back at me.

“What are you doing here Jason?”

“I saw your car — I had to talk to you.”

“About what?” Defensive, she crossed her arms over her chest.

“About your disappearing act.”

“I can’t do this here, Jason.”

“Well, seeing as you’re real good at making yourself scarce, this is our only chance, Marla.”

“You don’t know everything,” she yelled at me, waving her hands. The sun glinted off the band of gold on her left hand.

“Oh, I see now.” I shook my head, “I’m beginning to wonder how I ignored it all this time.”

“Mama?” a small voice, afraid and unsure, interrupted us.

“It’s okay baby,” Marla cooed, “go back and play.” The little girl with Marla’s eyes stared at me. “Go on, sugar.” With a just glare the girl turned and headed back to the swing set. I gaped at Marla.

“I’d just separated from her father when I met you,” she said with a shrug and a quivering chin. She looked away from me, “but we patched things up.” Her eyes swam in a million unspoken apologies, “I never thought you’d stay in Raleigh, Jason ...”

“So all these months I was just your good time?”

“And I yours,” she countered, her voice shaking. She tried to convince us both that this had been nothing but fun. But we both knew better, and now it was too late.

I turned to leave, to march back to my mangled vehicle so I could drive back to my pathetic apartment.

“Jason!” She chased after me and grabbed my arm. The look on my face dropped her hand from my shirt.

“Goodbye, Marla.” The chill in my voice shocked us both, leaving her frozen in sunlight and giving me the name of my first single, maybe you’ve heard it.

Last Gasp Love

By Kaitlin Meadows

© 2011

You know that feeling when you're a teenager and no one asks you to the big dance and your Mama says something like, "Be patient Honey — there's someone out there for every one" or "When the time is right, the right one will come along," and you think, "Do I have to wait until I'm 80 for crying out loud?" Well yes, maybe, as it turns out! Because it's never too late for last gasp love!

I worked at Rest Haven, a group hospice care facility for many years. Hospice care usually begins when the medical prognosis indicates you have six months or less to live. It means you opt to die at home, in the company of family and friends. Group hospice is a way to do that in the company of people other than your family but usually in a pleasant facility with individual rooms, a common eating and socializing area, and several spots for solitary reflection.

People say, "It must be so hard to do hospice work because no matter how hard you try, no one is going to go home well," but I find it an amazingly rich and rewarding experience mostly. Big or small, rich or poor, black or white we're all going to die and the grace with which we do so is often how people remember us after we're gone.

Often people in hospice die the way they lived. If they were gracious, kind, caring people when they were well — that's how they die, gracefully, gently, trying right up to the very end not to trouble anyone by being whiney or demanding.

But, occasionally, you run into someone who was a very difficult person in life and is determined to carry on that tradition right up to the moment of their death.

One of my patients was of the later description. Howard P. Blatz was his name (I suspect the P. was for pompous!). Howard P. Blatz was a retired General, a career military man. Grumpy, persnickety, ornery, arrogant and bossy don't even

begin to cover it. He was an extraordinarily miserable human being. At 80, he was dying of lung cancer after a 3 pack a day habit that spanned 65 years. He'd never married, had no friends, and was the scourge of the care facility because he made it abundantly clear, on a daily basis, that he thought it should be run with military precision.

He awoke every day of his life at 5 a.m., did two hours of calisthenics, dressed meticulously in his full military uniform — pressed, starched, & tucked in — with spit polished shoes. He ate and shat and brushed his teeth on a strict schedule and spewed disdain for the other patients who had no "self discipline" in that regard. He proudly proclaimed himself a teetotaler and a virgin — "Never had any, never wanted any, and never gonna have any" was his mantra. He talked endlessly about his military skills — "Killed me a hundred of the enemy," he'd say proudly, "Picked the lock of Emperor Hirohito's impenetrable desk," he boasted. "Too mean to die," the staff lamented.

His only visible weakness was his love of tobacco and his insatiable need to have it. With a portable O2 bottle strapped to him, it was critical that he NOT smoke but we'd still occasionally find him dragging on a butt he'd stolen from the ashtray in the visitor's lounge tucked in his secret hideaway, the "locked" storage area in the farthest corner of the hospice where we kept cleaning supplies and the gifts well-intentioned folks gave us to "ease the suffering of the dying." These gifts included various food delicacies and fine wines — as well as foot massagers, aroma therapy candles, and tomes on faith and redemption.

Taking pity on him, the staff occasionally gave him a box of dark chocolates hoping to redirect his oral cravings, but he just stored them all in his bedside table, saying it was a "moral weakness" to indulge.

One autumn, a new patient arrived in a flurry of excitement

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Kaitlin Meadows (www.kaitlinmeadows.com) is an artist, a rebel, and an archaeologist who offers an oasis of creative play and art-making at her studio, Kaitlin's Creative Cottage, in Tucson, Arizona. Check it out at www.thundermoonstudios.wordpress.com. She is President of the StoryArts Group, Inc. a 501 (c)(3) non-profit arts organization that produces monthly storytelling events (www.storyartsgroup.org) and Vice President of the Tucson Kitchen Musicians (TKMA) a 501 (c) (3) non-profit composed of 300 members and volunteers who have hosted a free, two-day Folk Festival in Tucson for 27 years (www.tkma.org). Kaitlin is a widely published author who most recently is included in the anthology "Our Spirit, Our Reality" (www.sowingtheseedsdetucson.org).

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at Rest Haven. She was a wonderful diva, a retired Russian stage actress she said. We all called her Nadia Claustrophobia (that wasn't her real name but it was close enough and it gave us a good chuckle). Nadia was a cross between Natasha on the Rocky & Bullwinkle show and a very naughty Greta Garbo. She always dressed in tacky finery and was prone to provocative conversation, usually about sex (which she called "carnal love" with a thick accent that made it seem even naughtier). In her feathers and furs, with her dramatic gestures and grand stories, she was quite the character. She'd outlived 6 husbands by her count and a hundred passionate lovers (including earls, viscounts, and members of Congress, she claimed, not to mention the movie stars she was "too discreet" to name).

Nadia was an amazing woman who loved her melodramas. She was dying of complications related to diabetes, a long life of excess and overindulgence in all of the sweets of life. She tended toward great extravagant gifts of kindness, once giving the nurse's aide who emptied her bed pan a ruby ring, "From the Prince of Siam," she said benevolently. Yet she was also prone to terrible dervish tantrums, often involving props. No longer allowed sweets of any kind, she was grudgingly permitted to smoke, to "calm her nerves" as she claimed, "Because aristocrats are always high strung!"

Nadia was always the star player in very elaborately staged dramas: mock suicides, religious conversions, ghost sightings, bouts of dyspepsia, and midnight séances. The other patients were endlessly regaled with stories of her high adventures and scandalous love affairs and she especially loved telling about the abject despair of her rejected swains. Everyone listened attentively — except, needless to say, Howard P. Blatz. He was NOT impressed and avoided her like a curse, which only prompted her to try even harder to get his attention. She'd scurry by on the little motorized scooter she'd elaborately disguised as a throne,

flirting and cooing, asking to hear his war stories again and again.

She fluttered her very well-decorated eyes at him one day and asked if he could help her fix something amiss in her room — a "sticky drawer" I think it was. And when he left her room (two hours later!) she made a big fuss of saying, loud enough for all to hear, "Oh Mr. Blatz, I have nothing to offer you for your chivalrous kindness — perhaps one evening you'll honor me by allowing me to entertain you in my room?" Which I think was Ms. Claustrophobia's code for "Yoo-hoo Howard — wanna get lucky!"

Well that invitation must have worked its way into his grizzled old heart somehow, because a week later both of them were missing at bed check time and we were all quietly amused. We knew they hadn't left the facility and they were consenting adults after all, so we decided to give them some privacy, trying not to imagine the gory details of geezer love.

Next morning I was a wee bit concerned when neither of them materialized for breakfast. I searched around a bit, growing more concerned as I exhausted every place I thought they might be. Finally, outside the "locked" storage closet, I found Howard's portable O2 tank and Nadia's tapestry-draped scooter. I knocked. Nothing. I knocked again. Nothing. I cracked open the unlocked door. I couldn't believe my eyes! There they were, entwined on the floor. He, buck naked in the middle of his badly rumpled dress uniform, a bottle of expensive French Burgundy in one hand and a half smoked Virginia Slim in the other. She lay, in an elaborately flounced and feathered negligee, beside three empty boxes of chocolate. Both of them were dead as could be but had big smiles on their faces.

So, you never know, boys and girls. Don't give up. There's apparently somebody out there for everyone and when the time is right, the right one will come along. Maybe they'll even bring a box of chocolates, a jug of wine, and a cigarette!

Kip Sudduth

Phoenix Artist



“Garden Tattooed Roman”
Digital montage
1973-2011

Garden Tattooed Roman is a digital montage of silver gelatin film and a color ink jet overlay (Leica D.R.P. rangefinder), 1973-2011.

- Kip Sudduth



Kip Sudduth is a painter/photographer/mixed-media artist living in Phoenix. He is also an adjunct professor of art at Estrella Mountain Community College, teaching photography. He says: “Vision and quality of touch conveys a strong sense of material presence of space and, conceptually, the idea of time. Surface patterns merge the elements into a visual language of unity. In the 1970s I apprenticed with the Italian painter Manlio Guberti, who would agree in defining artistic creative endeavors as the ‘conceptualized heightened experience through textural relief, there is the possibility of increasing visual experiences for the viewer.’ I use heightened tactile experience in all the work I do. I first experimented with photography in 1964. I thought the first roll of film I developed and the first contact print I made was MAGIC. I have never lost this excited anticipation. My art has always been based on Chance by Design, time-space continuity, the unity of the elements seen and felt through a textural experience. The experience forces the viewer into the work, allowing the process of visual self-discovery. Images are found not only in real time, but form in space allows for new possible visual experiences. The sense of touch conveys recognizable realms, but when you shift the visual experience, that vision becomes multidimensional.” Contact the artist at gsudduth@cox.net.

Cathy Delaleu

Gilbert Artist



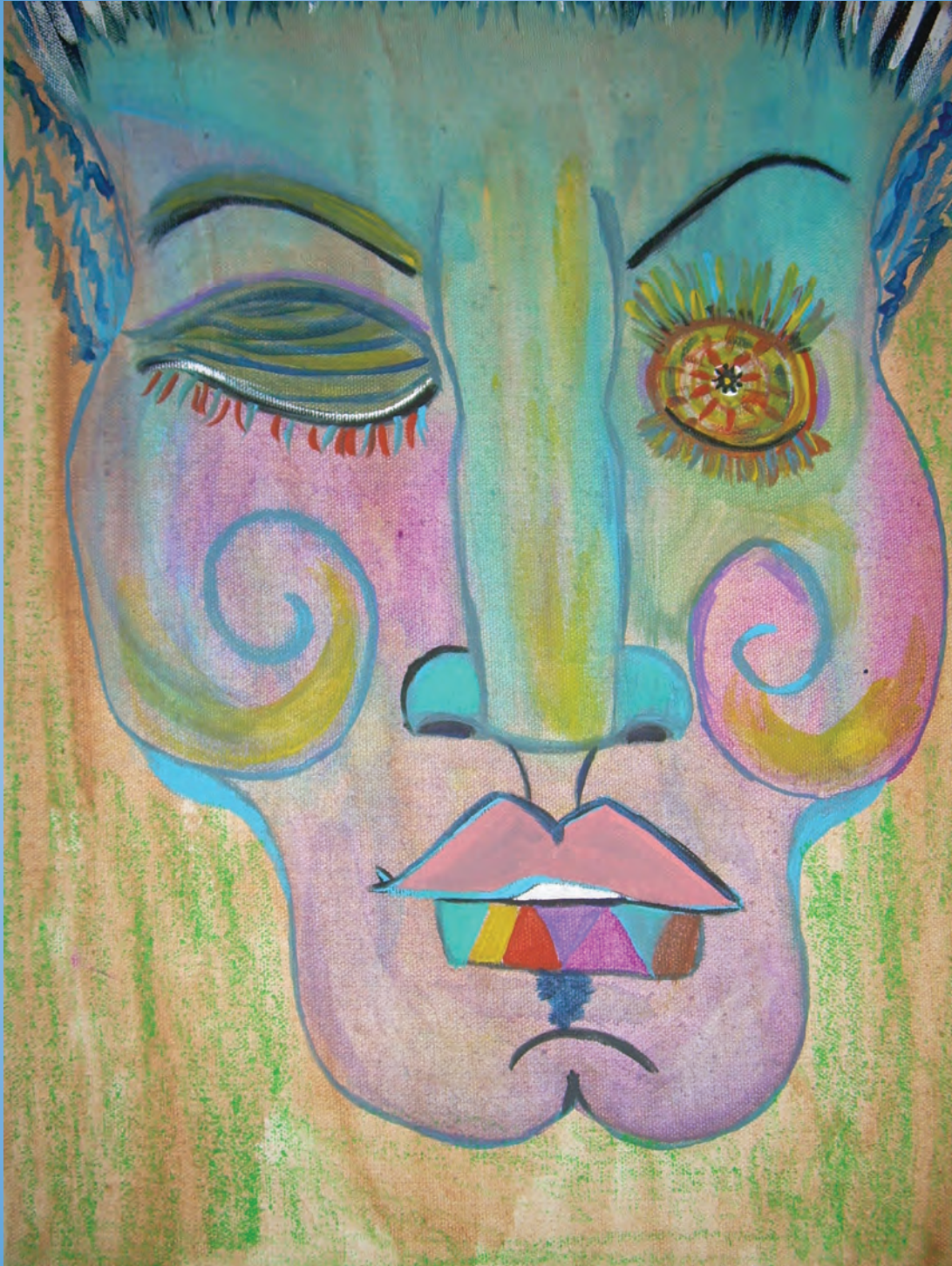
**“Chocolate Diva”
Acrylic**



Cathy Delaleu was born in Brooklyn, New York, spent her early childhood in Haiti, her teenage and adult years in Southern California and New York. She now resides in Arizona, where she spends most of her time writing and creating art. She has read her poetry at various events throughout the city of New York and a few venues in Arizona and California. Her ultimate goal is to turn her novels into scripts for movies or plays. Her poetry book “Wrapping Thoughts Beneath Emotive Rain” is on sale on Amazon.com or feel free to visit her website: www.delaleuwritings.com.

Cathy Delaleu

Gilbert Artist



"Masquerade"
Acrylic

Cathy Delaleu

Gilbert Artist



“Madd Skillz Poet”
Acrylic

Cathy Delaleu

Gilbert Artist



"Celebrate"
Acrylic

Cathy Delaleu

Gilbert Artist



"Recognition of Haitian Heritage"
Acrylic

Born with a rambling tongue and literary hands. First and foremost a writer then naturally everything else falls like sweet petals. Here to promote artistry of the mind, body and soul.

- Cathy Delaleu

The Band Plays On

By Barclay Franklin

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A few years back, my mother sent me my old high school yearbooks. It was a real nostalgia trip to leaf through them and remember names and faces from so long ago, but what pulled me up short were the pictures taken of the band, brass ensemble and orchestra I'd once been a member of.

Yeah! Those were the glory days — the days when our 112-piece band marched at halftimes during football games; the days when the brass ensemble played for luncheons and women's teas at some of the fancier hotels and eating establishments around my hometown of Sharon, Pennsylvania; the warm spring evenings when the orchestra played endless repeats of "Pomp and Circumstance" for graduation ceremonies at the high school. There I stood, in a half-dozen of those yearbook photos, holding my trombone, the same horn I played from seventh grade all the way through five years of college. Music had been a vital part of my life.

I might never have given up playing if there'd been a band to play in wherever I went. Once I graduated from college, I moved west to Colorado and a new job. I still had my trombone, but there wasn't a band in Alamosa to join up with, unless you were young enough to belong to the high school band. A friend's son wanted to belong to the school band in Alamosa, but he came from a large family. There was no money to buy an instrument. In a moment of unguarded generosity, I gave him my trombone. For the next ten years, I wouldn't play a lick of music.

I moved to Clarkdale, Arizona. Now and again, the urge to play something would hit me. I scratched the itch by signing up at the local community college to take beginning guitar lessons. I bought a standard guitar and went to my first class, which was held off-campus, at Mingus Union High School.

The instructor not only taught guitar picking (and grinning) for the college, but he was also the band director at Mingus. I took one fall semester of guitar from him, and enjoyed it enough to sign up for another 15 weeks of lessons the following spring semester.

Guitar was fun, but I realized early on that I wasn't ever going to be great at it. Picking the strings with one hand while I fumbled to chord with the other was a lot harder than playing the trombone. I was always pretty good at working my mouth and right hand, skills that a trombonist needs, but doing opposite things on a guitar with each hand was a bigger challenge.

Toward the end of the spring semester, the instructor came to class lamenting about the upcoming Fourth of July parade in Prescott. The Mingus Band was slated to march in that parade, but there was only one trombone player. "Not enough," the band director moaned.

Ignoring the "never volunteer" rule I tended to live by, I volunteered that I once played the trombone. Before the guitar class ended, I not only had a guitar case to stuff in my Volkswagen bug, but a trombone case and the music for Sousa's "Stars and Stripes, Forever" as well.

After such a long layoff, my lip didn't have much starch left, but all during May and June, I worked on scales and easy songs and the Sousa music. Afternoons and weekends I met with the Mingus Band and practiced marching and playing on the hot blacktop of the school's parking lot. Finally, the big day arrived.

We took a school bus to Prescott, a ninety-minute drive up and over Mingus Mountain on a twisting two-lane road. Before we even got out of the Verde Valley — before we even got to Jerome — the bus broke down. We had a long delay while a

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Barclay Franklin writes: "I grew up in western Pennsylvania, moved to Colorado for my first job. I'm a retired Medical Technologist. Got married in Colorado and moved to Louisiana, finally ending up in Arizona in 1968. I have an undergraduate degree in Medical Technology from Thiel College in PA, and a master's degree in English (with an emphasis on creative writing) from Northern Arizona University. Have been living on a ten-acre ranch here in beautiful, uptown Cornville since 1986. I currently work for the Bent River Books & Music Store in Cottonwood." Barclay is also the author of five novels, "A Race for Glory Run"; "The Bride Price"; "The Chording of T.O. Malone" (about a guitarist); "Up the Hill, Through the Long Grass"; and "The Shepherd's Moon." All but "A Race for Glory Run" (out of print now) are available on Amazon.com. Contact her at wordwork@wildapache.net.

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second bus and driver were located. Looking back, I think it was an omen of worse fates to come.

When the new bus arrived we unloaded all the instruments and gear from the disabled vehicle and loaded it all into the new bus and were off again, this time reaching Prescott without further incident.

We were assigned slot #137 in the marching order of the parade and it took a long time before we actually got to march. I was under the impression that temperatures in Prescott, at an altitude of some 5,000 feet, would be cooler than in the Verde Valley, but I was mistaken. It was HOT!

Beads of sweat were dripping from my brow before we even reached the Courthouse Square, where most of the audience clustered. I was also short of breath because of the higher altitude. By the time we had marched around three sides of the square, my legs felt like unset gelatin and my arms were shaking like a Colorado aspen leaf.

I could feel blisters the size of quarters forming on both heels, and I was playing Sousa's "Stars and Stripes," but not forever. I was lucky to manage the chorus of the piece about every other block.

The next morning, I crawled to the tub on hands and knees. I soaked in hot water until my leg muscles would finally stretch out again. On the following day, I turned the trombone back in to the school, having once more learned my lesson about volunteering.

Another ten years went past when a friend mentioned she played the baritone in the Cottonwood Community Band. Against my better judgment I heard myself saying, "I used to

play the trombone."

Next thing I knew I was forking over \$100 for a used tenor trombone and going to their band practices. I couldn't play any of the music during that first rehearsal, and because the other trombone players seemed so adept, I almost quit again, but everyone was so nice I came back a second, third and fourth time.

After several such practices, I began to recognize the notes and remember the slide positions the notes required. My lip began to hit both the low notes and the higher ones with fewer and fewer embarrassing blats. Music was part of my life again. I was hooked. Being hooked, I spent a significant sum of money to buy a bass trombone, like I'd played in high school.

For many years I was a happy member of the Cottonwood Community Band. There's a true feeling of camaraderie born of sharing cold evenings playing as a pep band for football games; playing for the opening of a new cultural park; or swallowing nerves to play a formal concert. There have been sour notes and sweet. Easy pieces and difficult ones. Good gigs and bad. But above all there's been a sense of personal growth, and a feeling of pride that comes from joining together to make wonderful music.

Thomas Wolfe once wrote a book titled, "You Can't Go Home Again." Maybe that's true. Older and wiser, you are never as willing to take the chances you took in high school. I never played the trombone as well in later years as I did when I was in high school, but the satisfaction level is greater now than it was back then.

The only thing I refuse to do is march in any parades. All my gigs are of the sit-down variety now. Music has once more become a vital part of my life. In that way, I feel I really have gone home again.

Correspondence Theory

By Michael Gregory

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Maybe life is one long flashback.
— Breytan Breytanbach

1

What does it take you asked to communicate
and what I wonder will it take to make you
if not convinced at least consider me
not just another scribbler contending with couplets
for the honor of being as you say
hung on the wall more editorials
on the limits of your love or consigned
to flame with all the other basket cases
who believed their immortal lines
captured your likeness or your heart.

Though I'm not much good at small talk
there's something to be said for plain English
just telling the stories our bodies know by heart
without ringing up all those mythic figures
or intimating that we're reincarnations
metempsychosing each other as it were
(there's Molly asking *who's he when he's home?*)
but what else can I possibly say to bring you
out of that solitude of untold years
so deep even tears can't find you?

2

If we leave the small laughter of stars
(the moans of Venus in her glorious transit
Pegasus with his wings and over-sized head
even that shameless Irishman O'Ryan

his whatchamacallit dangling in plain sight
Serious his blue-eyed hound at heel)
and leave those good knights and ladies lying
in bed awake on either side of the sword

would I then dwell in your topographies—
the satin highlands of your shoulders and breasts
the tattooed silk of your fragrant lowlands
a garden spirit in gardens of delight,

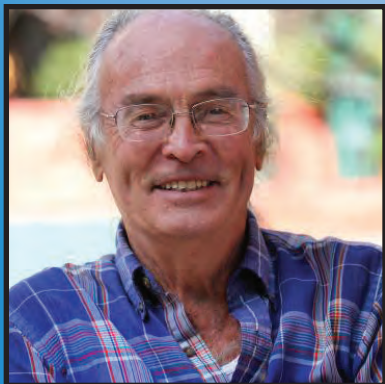
explore there with you what makes us unique—
selfish genes and accidents of birth,
the myths we make of our given and place names
(you up against Daisy Mae syndrome

me stuck in a country and western song
Valentine's Day starred in your datebook
Halloween and Winter Solstice in mine)
the celibacies we celebrate alone,

recall together with you how simply a child
is disciplined by merely threatening
to withhold love, how that child finds vengeance
by weeping, how silence becomes in your hands

a weapon, how a girl can't be free
from her father's ban on promiscuity
until she gives him her virginity
one way or another, or remind you

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Michael Gregory is the author of several poetry books and chapbooks including, "The Valley Floor," "Hunger Weather 1959-1975 and re Play." "Correspondence Theory" is included in "Mr America Drives His Car," forthcoming later this year from Education in Reverse Press. Recent publications on the Internet include poems at Seven Circles Press, protestpoems.org and Fiera Lingue. The founding director of the Central School Project cooperative community arts center in Bisbee, Arizona, until retirement he was for many years an internationally-recognized toxics activist and has authored numerous papers on environmental politics as well as being an active participant in development of such citizen right-to-know programs as the North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. He holds an interdepartmental BA in History, English and Philosophy from the University of Toledo, an MA in English from Penn State, and has done post-graduate work at the University of California, Irvine and the UCLA Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology. Since 1971, he has lived off-grid in the high desert grassland of southeast Arizona, ten miles from the US-Mexico border. Contact him at aztoxics@gmail.com.

how at night softly as ectoplasm
the corporate freighters slip into harbor
between the battleships anchored out in the fog
blanketing National City?

3

And what we have in common this time:
conceived and born in the belly of the beast
the middle of that American Century
when the oily art of public relations
(after forty years of field trials
run on its propaganda prototypes)
was being perfected in the marketplace,
while reason (already on the shit list
for being the engine of bureaucracy
factory efficiency bourgeois
boredom and millions ruthlessly slaughtered
defending the principle of the bottom line)
was reaffirming her bad name whoring
for war selling a bill of goods for God
country and hi-tech salvation made possible
through by-product spinoffs of the killing

The first kids in kindergarten after
plutonium poisoned everything forever
reared on games and stories of violence
competition short-term goals for success
knowing already in elementary school
it would fall to us to protect the country
from the enemy invasion when it came
while liberal guilt sucked the braintrust
back to the arms of the center (born again
to original sin, Freud this time not Marx)
asking themselves after signing the oath
how to save democracy from the people
as our mothers rehearsed us on what not
to say in public or private how not to be common
how not to be ourselves how to pass

Puberty at the height of togetherness hype
for nuclear family values replete
with metaphysical overtones: do not
bend fold staple or mutilate
do not talk politics sex or religion
do not ever say what's most on your mind
especially not while people are eating:
uniformity called unity
conformity a patriotic duty
to counter the rising rate of suburban divorce

the rising red star circling the earth
the rising hemlines on unwed mothers-to-be

The first wave of rock and roll teenagers
bodies coming of age with one-track minds
only too willing to lose our heads to the beat
pushing sax and electric guitars to the edge,
a little ashamed our fathers were working class
in the land of opportunity
but street-smart before we were old enough to drive
picking up from forty-five per minute
revolutions of radio rhythm and blues
whatever wisdoms we thought we might need to know
while starting to understand the score to feel
the switches in scale tempo key and timbre,
the nervous response to high fidelity
becoming a metaphor of our longing

Matriculated when the older guys
in class were there on the G.I. Bill
back from their slog in the recent Big Muddy
unimpressed by the beatnik dress and diction
we wanted taken for an existentialist
attitude, using words like *being*
essence nothingness and *existence*
as if we knew what we were talking about,
judging everyone not least ourselves
by turtle-neck condemned-to-freedom standards,
Miles Monk Bird Coltrane Diz
the inclement weather we lived and loved in,
but all of us more or less true believers
conventionally nonconventional
harnessed to the horses of instruction
carrying simple notions of correspondence
all the way down from physics to phys ed
past the liberal and performing arts
by way of transcendental social science
philosophy departments offering lectures
in neoscholastic terminologies
never quite coming to grips with the incoherence
between feeling and intelligence
the meaninglessness of life inscribed by death

Detached from time and committed relationship
by bursts of impulse-image technology
enrapturing our single separate persons
listening to the heart's syllables
the snake beginning to uncoil there,
starting that early to read between the lies

bear the costs of conscience and not let
government of by and for the smug
goad us into the market they said would provide
the goods that God being dead no longer can:
the pre-fab post-electric-shock
thorazine Milton meltdown kingdom come
ordained by the Human Resource Placement Office

4

Never adjusting well to nice clean
white normality assembly-line
morality clocking in day after day
doing whatever it takes however demeaning
however out of synch with real time

to keep the paychecks coming bust ass
our whole lives but never get ahead
then if we're lucky a gold timepiece
handshake and a few years off
for good behavior before we cash out

Never willing to identify
with occupation or preoccupation
never willing to be white collar coolies
expending ourselves in frigid cubicles
processing endless streams of wasted trees

facing our own planned obsolescence
programmed into the cult of the future tense
we use to compensate for the disappointment
being hard-wired for instant gratification
under such circumstances is bound to produce

Never very good at faking it
in bed or anywhere else wanting to touch
and be touched to the quick now and now
but never able to hold a job or lover
long enough never time enough

to think it through to get it down: notes
scribbled in traffic phrases recollected
at quarter rest stops in between
trying to make ends meet without too much
friction free fall blowback or slip up

A line here and there while loved ones sleep
moments stolen to try to catch in words
without the self-delusions id and will,
the falsities ego and reason, are prone to
the prize always almost just out of reach

rushes of insight sensation meaning and feeling
flashes of preternatural clarity
blue ice rumbling down glacial slopes
intricacies of insect wings in moonlight
intimations of continuity

luminous patterns in the DNA
traced like breadcrumbs to the last sign
of that mind before the one that comes back
remembering itself as it might have been
as if we could let go without losing it

so what we get more often than not is pretty
episodic homiletic or worse
merely arch when wit was what we intended
lyrical if we're unusually lucky
epic only by leaps of imagination

5

Dispersed like mendicants of an earlier age
dispelled by a new economic order
schooling ourselves to make do with precious little
learning to live well beneath our means
dancing like Sufis with hunger as our food

Called in times disgraced by scarcity models
in a land flowing with milk and honey
to semi-voluntary poverty
sense of community and self-restraint
crucial in building our common wealth

Making an art of saying No to ourselves
trying to find what we could do without
learning the hard way that the man of good will
may not be the righteous man let alone
the one the coins say will cross the Great Water

Living in vehicles instead of houses
feet on the ground but engines still running
our children raised between here and there
with fathers who don't share their last names
as if our domestic angels had all been killed

Weaving back and forth across the line
that separates independence from exile
knowing we can always be found guilty
of something, wanting that pig in our heads gone
while innocent eyes in our lights escape unharmed

Roadtesting totems and rules of thumb
giving eternal truths the acid test
turning the mind/body split inside out
seeing if possible not the other but both
in order to protect ourselves from belief

On backroads in beat-up old cars through strange states
on the lookout for what can be taken
for granted what must be assumed to be real
crisscrossing the continent for peace
freedom love whatever we called it

Our dream of America the Beautiful
before her abduction by parties in uniform
her addiction to hardcore kinks
love's body before the sound bites
trade marks and corporate designs

6

The wars we've lived and are living through:
the Holocaust and other thermal devices
the parallel lines where that buck didn't stop
the madness of Mutual Assured Destruction
the ethnic cleansings and subtler genocides
the villages they had to destroy to save them
the humanitarian aid for slaughter
the tac squads and death squads and torture schools
the thousands disappeared into mass graves

Under the desks in class under the table
at work under God by executive order
all those sweaty palms and sticky fingers:
the Declaration of Human Rights never
ratified by the U.S. Congress
the global ban of patents on life forms
never ratified by the U.S. Congress
the Genocide Treaty ratified but only
after amendments twenty years later
guaranteed the stars and stripes would never
have to face charges in the World Court

Hardly a breather between the Cold War
and Culture Wars when Uncle Strangelove
wasn't bombing someone or paying someone
to do the dirty work: the White House
a wing of the Pentagon the Pentagon
a five-star property of Wall St.
conspicuous destruction the most efficient

means of keeping the wheels of production turning
while necktied ministers of the state religion
in collusion with millionaires on the Hill
unbuckle the regulatory restraints
put on the financial Frankensteins
who caused the Crash and Great Depression
so the cycles of scams and bailouts
can roll again from Vietnam
to Afghanistan every ten years or so
—high risk real estate junk bonds
high tech start up dot coms
layoffs bankruptcies foreclosures
each bubble bigger than the last one
more taxpayer money in corporate hands
more people fleeced and lives ruined

The war on poverty sold out for napalm
the peace dividend invested in teargas
to keep the heads bowed down in the Middle East
southeast Asia Central America Watts
Harlem Detroit Newark South Chicago
to put the red flag down for the long
count to keep the meter running to give
the sick economy a shot in the arm
to pay for the glitz and greed and disbelief
suspended under a B-grade father figure
asleep at the wheel dreaming Buck Rogers plots
building the biggest national debt yet,
the shadow economy of violence
(military spending domestic crime
a shoot-em-up entertainment culture)
far exceeding the GNP,
the great communicator of hogwash succeeded
in the cockpit of the free world
by a dynasty suffering from
impairments of free speech,
signaling in winks and code words
to the lay orders who voted them in
while putting the country even deeper in hock

The gulf where our bombs and radioactive bullets
were no smarter than us: the cities burned
the millions raped and maimed the brainless babies
stillborn in border-town free trade strips
the free-fire zones the *jefes* swear contain
no people only terrorists,
lend me your ears more than a figure of speech:
death as method extinction as tactic love
of order gone ballistic, desire itself

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a debt owed to the government, the young
sent off to combat, marriage, prostitution
by men with bleary eyes over bird-beak smiles
our lives eaten up with fear and hate commands
of the national insecurity state
increasingly controlled by and for
minorities of fundamentalist bigots

The myth of imminent military invasion
by a hideous malevolent alien
cooked up by a bloated arms industry
grown out of all proportion since Yalta
(*Of course the people don't want war said Goering
but get enough to believe the threat is real. . . .*)
propaganda more subtle now than ever
a politics of fear turning the country
into the spitting image of the state
they said had to be eradicated,
hard to find anyone who doesn't believe
under the spell of news spasms timed
to create moods of widespread consensus
prolonged by rituals of grief and vengeance
there really is one crisis after another
that only generals and admirals
and neocons on their payrolls know how to manage,
keeping the permanent war economy state
on the brink of utter catastrophe
while upping the output of nonrenewables
squandered in perennial destruction

Billions spent on better mousetraps
billions to field-test the latest spear
twenty-five million US citizens
active or formerly active military
millions more paramilitary
thousands in office good for nothing
but to rise on occasion, light up
the little screen and big board, toot
their horns take a stand for the right, make us
feel again the old glory the passionate
story of market truths and consumer goods
without doing squat to better the common lot

Sycophants on both sides of the aisle
voting for corporate deregulation
consumerism bigstick diplomacy
dumbing us down with cut-rate classrooms
miracles of science passion-play sports
sex and infotainment until it's hard
to find anyone but wackos and wingnuts

keeping even one eye on Uncle Sugar
dismembering the Bill of Rights
with his *Secret Government* video game

Our schools an anti-intellectual joke
meant to keep kids off the street
off balance locked down in narrow courses
funneling into the system leading not
to what used to be called education
certainly not to creative liberation
the integration of body mind and spirit
but to time clock and credit card
in order to justify subsidies for research
into novel ways of subverting nature

Our bodies turning on themselves unable
in the blood soup of renegade chemicals
electromagnetic mishmash and mutated genes
to tell disease from health, good cells from bad
our moral fiber twisted into legal
briefs religious tracts and arms brochures
our sacred desires spun into market demands
our future condemned by nuclear winter or aberrant
planet wobble to hells of fire and ice—
a global greenhouse filled with off-gases
or a global deep freeze from a few
degrees drop in the average annual mean

Our inner cities a national disgrace
clogged with human waste and misery
occupied by armies of sadist police
our mentally ill and chronically poor turned out
with runaway kids and shellshocked vets
begging for food and shelter so we can play
Great White Father to captive markets,
brokering nations into client states
under threat of hostile takeover
forced by the terms of economic war
to privatize their countries' public resources,
put their people in permanent debt to the banks
turn their subsistence farms into export crop
chemical agribusiness factories
until they raise so little food for themselves
they have to import high-priced staples from us,
precluded from even beginning to think in terms
of economic independence or freedom
to use their resources for their own needs
let alone social political
or intellectual equity

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Our prisons hotbeds of patriotism and rape
growing faster than the cells on a President's nose:
the highest hard time rate in the First World
millions of young men of all colors
locked up in privatized cages (more blacks
than the South had slaves), denied the vote
so come election day the law-abiding
who put them away in the first place can count
on that many ballots against them not cast—
three percent of the US population
twelve percent of black men in their twenties
under some form of criminal supervision
the only crime of most besides being poor
non-white or both, believing the killing should stop
this leaf makes better smoke than that
privacy is a basic human right
equal opportunity is a scam
freedom without equality a lie

7

From shower scenes to the silence of the lamb
(*A large OJ and two sliced throats, please*)
murder as the American artform

schoolyard massacres by unshaved boys
our homegrown version of suicide bombers
hip to how it will play on the world news

pure killing machines as video idols
pumped-up automatons of all genders
fetishes made of selected body parts

zapping zillions of unAmerican creeps
(*blood the food of those gone mad said Olson*)
death devolved to a special effect, a thrill,

something that happens to the not-Us
the images on screen and paper bleeding
virtual blood while real people die

in extremis: not only our mercenary
armies in the cradle of civilization
as we know it, the land of money and oil

not only our neighborhood killing fields
city streets bloody with hate and rage
frustration and grief taken out on each other

but in apartment complexes, rented
rooms, cubbyholes, bodies falling
apart inside, consciousness going to pieces

more of us than we like to admit ending up
cold poor tired hungry alone
desexed by the young forever machine

experience dismissed opinions ignored
or ridiculed their very existence despised
for the common fate it makes so obvious:

withered stars of an obscene ritual
reduced to believing there is no purpose or meaning
their past present and future equally wasted

our fathers asking forgiveness with their last breath
our mothers fragile, hair blue and skin gray
almost all of us in isolation

the opposite of love: so drugged out
there is no choice but to do what the good nurse
makes you do to quiet the family members

so mortified at the inconvenient fact
they foreclose on our rights to dignity
during our north by northwest passage

8

Or given that something rather than nothing
does seem to be the reality,

maybe instead of headlines prayer and schoolbook
teasers what we need to remind ourselves of

among these millions of things we have in common
these equal millions of things we call unique

is that old barebones conundrum
cutting to the quick of all relation logic

ethic metaphysic all inspiration
making us look at ourselves in perspective

seeing in depth with our own humorous eyes
the question *Why two when one would do?*

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God (you should pardon the expression) being
sufficient might (as Jeffers said) be *still*;

but since there are, and two together is
a kind of miracle, and you are there

and I am here, maybe get into what *that*
means (keeping in mind *not this, not that*):

the dialectical possibilities
of binary systems the magic of metaphor

imagination and participation
the paradox Blake called the *cloven fiction*

—intransitive couplings of nominal
and nominative, reason and intuition

the grammar of positive and comparative
subsumed into the superlative—

the crux of physics biology and mind
chemistry destiny justice and care

extension and cognition the dyad
in subsistent relation with itself

body and psyche gender and sex cleaving
to one another substance and energy

masquerading as identities
the interplay of *atom* and *item* (that

which cannot be divided) with *atmos* and *atman*
(the breath of life which rendered endlessly

remains one) —*mysterium coniunctionis*
—*coincidentia oppositorum*

the urge of cells to conceive and split
the poem to coalesce out of the tangled

limbs and visions broken free in the storm
the prepositional options for coming together

(despite the natural tendency of the brain
to simplify the world as polarities,

the shadowplay of the unconscious to cast
such bifurcations as tropes to figure the world),

for having will and courage enough to enjoy
incorporating each other into each other,

for knowing wisdom and compassion sufficient
to lose each other in one another

(bearing witness and calling to witness
together composing the first person plural)

given the obvious primacy of chaos
inertia and plain old heifer-headedness.

Envoi

Riding a dying star across the awful reaches of night
where the birds of paradise turn into iridescent fish
I watch appalled as you drown yourself for each husband in turn,
for love of each love and lover each father whose desperate need is death
disguised as holy devotion, for love of each whose seed you bear
for love of each whose child you kill by killing a part of yourself
—coming in spite of yourself to see that men are cursed with a social disease
that drives them mad to leave in order to join the boy's club band
marching away first from the mother then feeling then love itself
—coming in time to so despise the old wives' tale
that some do in fact return to enrich kith and kin
for whose sake they have labored long leaning into an offshore wind
that you found yourself not as far as you thought from the hand that cradles the rock,
able to trust only women children some animals and the dead within us

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In helpless anger and shame I watch as you learn by drowning to swallow
the abuse and despair of your personal life and slimy horrors
of our common ancestry, learn by sleeping on
the blood-stained desecrated earth and disturbed graves to hear
the secret lives of our dead, the lies and crimes of our nation and race,
to bear the disgusting facts of our time: war, murder, rape,
contamination, desertification, piousness, betrayal,
the insane equation of freedom with unfettered greed and infinite debt,
democracy with power in the hands of the plutocrats,
the sacrosanct military breeding program that harnesses love
to a means of production for upping consumption while dishing up cannon fodder
in order to protect profit, power, privilege and prestige

In anguish and empathy I watch you resolve to turn your drowning to use:
remembering to remember the past atrocities and present disgrace,
insisting despite everything that man kind does exist,
telling our virgin daughters that *Yes, in fact there are good men,*
gathering the dismembered parts of our slaughtered sons and brothers and fathers
the battered and passionate hearts of our abandoned daughters and sisters and mothers
the freewill offerings of lovers together in one consciousness,
trusting wild imagination and untrammelled spirits to find
the vital truth cold reason calibrates in conventional forms,
giving place in your own genetic structure your own emotional body
—which is the living body of this earth
—which is the body of love incarnate

to space and time and caring for rebirth under a new sign,
a constellation as yet unknown— a fully functioning family
conceived and raised in equity, a polity of compassion and peace,
love's perfect body incorporating the body politic,
not separate individuals but true communities of equals,
not in- but interdependent, equal not only in opportunity
(that liberal carrot) but actual access to goods, and actual power—
the power of our desire actualized in producing the common wealth,
industrious not from being programmed to want what's good for the greatest number
but from our common sense of identity with the process of being alive,
faithful to ourselves and each other, a global communion embodying
each person's and each future generation's potential and promise

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Endnotes

1.

What does it take to communicate. Sharon Doubiago, "Out-law," "Psyche Drives the Coast: Poems 1975-1987" (Port Townsend, Washington: Empty Bowl, 1990), p.3. editorials / on the limits. Doubiago, "His Love," Psyche, p.152.

2.

that shameless Irishman. "BECAUSE A FIR TREE/SHOOK HANDS WITH ORION/That famous Irish constellation," Kenneth Patchen, "Because It Is" (NY: New Directions, 1960), p.27; also, "'O'Ryan,' Father called Orion, 'that Irishman.'" Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood* (NY: Harper and Row, 1987), p.209; also, Charles Olson, "'O'Ryan 1-10," "Archaeologist of Morning" (NY: Grossman, 1971; pbk., 1973), n.p.

garden spirit. "thou my garden of delight & I the spirit in the garden," William Blake, "The Four Zoas: The Torments of Love and Jealousy," "Night the Seventh," ed., David V. Erdman, "The Poetry and Prose of William Blake" (NY: Doubleday, 1965), p.352.

to withhold love. Cf., "conditional 'love' is always the method of authority." David Riesman, "Authority and Liberty in the Structure of Freud's Thought," "Individualism Reconsidered" (NY: Free Press, 1955), p.229.

a girl can't be free. "In a culture where there is no ruling principle of love, no goddess to whom the first fruits of labor are dedicated, it happens that the father is the one to take the virginity of a girl. . . .in our culture it is, for the most part, a covert operation that happens in the mind of the girl. . . .In order to leave home, then, a girl has to sacrifice her virginity to him (or to God). . . .the father's law that she not be promiscuous. . . leaves her unfree to choose," Nor Hall, "The Moon and the Virgin" (NY: Harper and Row, 1980), p.101.

3.

between the lies. "The art of being civilized is the art of learning to read between the lies," Kenneth Rexroth, "Greek Tragedy in Translation," "With Eye and Ear" (NY: Herder, 1970, p.143.

death as method. "death as enforceable method. . . extinction as a social method," Daniel Berrigan, "No Bars to Manhood" (NY: Bantam, 1970), p.70.

4.

murder as. . . artform. "the triumph of murder as an American performance art," John Taylor, "Murder: The Ultimate Art Form," *Esquire* (September 1994), p.82.

7.

blood the food. Charles Olson, in Ed Sanders, "1968: A History in Verse" (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 2000), p.44.

8.

God. . . might be still. Robinson Jeffers, "Apology for Bad Dreams" *New Masses* 1(1):10 (1926); "Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers" (NY: Random House, 1938), p.174-177.

cloven fiction. Cf., "what genuine imaginative work tries to abolish: the 'cloven fiction,' as Blake calls it [in the "Book of Urizen"], of subject and object," Northrop Frye, "Blake's Bible" (1987), ed., Robert D. Denham, "Myth and Metaphor," (Charlottesville: University of Virginia, 1990), pp.270-286; 280.

two together. "The more I live the more I think / two together is a miracle." Adrienne Rich, "Twenty-one Love Poems," "The Dream of a Common Language" (1978).

Envoi

cradles the rock. Rita Mae Brown, "The Hand that Cradles the Rock" (NY: New York University Press, 1971).

El Corrido de Panchiyo Gutierrez

By Hugo Estrada Duran

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“Fue en un carro de la Chrysler, un automoblie 300, se suvio Chuy y Mauricio, felizes y muy contentos. Como ivan a imaginarse que los bajarian ya muertos.”

In a town called El Empalme, there lived two boys: Francisco “Panchiyo” Gutierrez and Ysrael Guzman. Both grew up on the street Los Niños Heroes, behind the ever looming spire of the biggest church in town, la Iglesia Cristo Rey. The very same church where Ysrael took his first communion and did his confirmation. Panchiyo? This one wasn’t so respondent to the word of the Lord. He was chased from the church yard by an angry priest after Panchiyo commented aloud that his robes looked like a dress and that made him look like a maricon, a nancy boy. Both boys led relatively peaceful lives, joyful children they were really, Panchiyo with a hearty laugh, mocking yes but infectious all the same and quite a knack for mischief if the stories were to be believed. But Ysrael was his polar opposite, a quiet, mild-mannered child. Imaginative but reserved. Those who remembered him in his younger days always remarked that there always seemed to be a lot going on upstairs.

Ysrael’s shyness could and was probably the result of his father’s bitter temper. A retired Federal de Caminos (that’s highway patrol man for the rest of you) who had a knack for bragging about the three men he’d killed as an officer in the shootouts he was involved in during his lengthy career.

“There I was, no backup, revolver in hand, bullets whizzing by my head. Aquel cabron con una matraca, that puto Jorge crying ’cause he took one in the arm. So I go around the back of the car, get down on the floor and shoot at the fucker’s legs, took ’em right out from under him. Yelled like a maricon that he give

up. And then BLAOW! You shoulda seen his head, compadre, like a piñata full of confetti exploded all over the fucking road!”

“But this maricon,” looking towards his son sheepishly poking at his plate of beans, “he can’t even finish his pinchis frijoles, but just ask him if he wants a candy bar and watcha his eyes light up, hmp! Basura!”

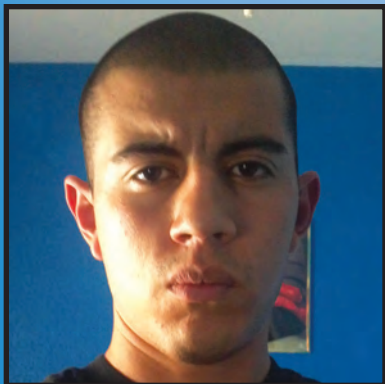
Yes, it can be argued that Ysrael Sr. was a brutish man, even a violent one at that whose own life ironically enough would end in violence when the nephew of one of his illustrious three executions caught up with him as he was coming out of a cantina in Ciudad Juarez, plunged a rusty knife into his belly seventeen times, but the old ogre still had enough oomph to put two shots into his assailant’s chest. Badass till the end!

Panchiyo didn’t fare better in the fatherly department. He had a high-paying post in the maquilas on the edge of town but he took what he earned to drink and whores. They murmured (and by they I mean everybody but the Gutierrez family) that he was found in an alcove near San Carlos, his hands were duct-taped together and a couple of green plastic bags were wrapped around his head. He had a bullet hole in his chest and a bullet hole in his forehead. Panchiyo never talked about him, no matter how drunk or high. He kept that to himself, a trait he wished his mother shared but sadly she was fond of going on long tirades about the infeliz that he was, the desgraciado, the malandro mañoso, how he only served to give her four mouths to feed and how she had to feed them by taking in other people’s wash.

“No me menciones a ese cabron! Yo lavando cagada para poder comer y el alla con las putas!”

Strangely, none of that dissuaded Panchiyo’s reverence for his father, it only helped to exacerbate it.

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Hugo Estrada Duran writes: “I was born in the small port town of Guaymas, Sonora. In 1995, when I was seven years old, my family emigrated to the United States and settled in South Phoenix. I graduated from South Mountain High School in 2006 and began studying English Literature at Arizona State University that same year. I developed a greater interest in writing after reading Twain, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Thompson. I graduated in May of 2010 with a degree in English Creative Writing. I currently work with Special Needs/Self-Contained students at a West Side elementary school while writing on the side.” Contact Hugo at hestradaduran@gmail.com.

Maybe it was the fiendish ways of his father, or the way in which his mother took to the cross every time her husband went out the door, praying feverishly for his safe return (was it because she loved him? Maybe so, in some sort of abusive co-dependent relationship kind of way. I however choose to believe that it was more a matter of her asking for divine protection of the income Ysrael Sr. provided). Or maybe it was something else entirely, who could say? Whatever the case, by the time the boy was eight it was evident that Ysrael was smitten with the church. Wouldn't miss Sunday Mass even if the four horsemen were galloping up his street. Even while the other boys his age and in his neighborhood (Panchiyo included) were off throwing oranges at buses, smoking their first crab weed blunts, and hollering at the very much indignada older women who went past the ice cream shop La Michoacana.

"Come! Vamos! Let's go make a desmadre, they would say." But Ysrael the ever dutiful altar boy would simply refuse their invitation. He'd go inside and watch cartoons.

Look at this one, his aunts would say. "Este va ser padre!"

And his father, much to Ysrael's surprise, did not knock on him too much for his churchy habits (the old man probably figuring that if his eldest became a priest then that would buy him at least a few cosmic karma points with which to pay off his debt). His carefree dismissal of the other boys' invitations would have resulted in social suicide for our young Ysrael, especially given his knowing affection in matters involving the church, but miraculously it was Panchiyo's steadfast defenses that saved him.

Yes, Ysrael was religious, but the emphasis should be placed on the *was* up until around the time his father met died. Church, the prospect of it, lost its appeal to him. He could not exactly recall the moment he decided to abandon his faith, but rest assured that a schism between him and God had occurred. From a very young age Ysrael took refuge in logic and in facts. And there was no better way for him to explain the poverty he had seen around him as a young boy. His grandfather and his old-timer friends who would sit in the front patio on hot summer afternoons under the shade of the mango trees and play dominoes would always end up fighting over politics: "Ese Ladron! Thief! Hijo de puta! It's his fault the pueblo doesn't have anything. El presidente steals and steals while the rest of us can't even afford shoes for our children. Tell me, what kind of country is that? Who would allow such blatant theft to run rampant!?" And under the tutelage of those debates Ysrael was able to slowly but surely push God out of his mind, after all what just God would permit his having to wear the same tennis shoes for two summers in a row? Until his feet were so blistered that his mother had to dab them with oils and ointments and make him bite on a sock so he could bear the pain. What just God would allow him to wear the same faded and torn shirts and pants he wore to school, until he

was so ashamed and so fed up with the teasing that his mother would literally have to beat his behind red in order to get him out the door in the mornings. What just God would make him suffer under a constant diet of beans, rice and tortillas until he could not remember what the taste of meat was like? And while the other children would pull out ham and cheese sandwiches from tin lunchboxes Ysrael was left by himself, poking a stick on the ground and trying to ignore the rumbling in his belly. Thus, to Ysrael God was either nonexistent or a trickster figure that enjoyed wrecking havoc on his life, and the sooner he forgot about God the sooner he could attempt to dispel his misfortunes.

But Panchiyo, troublemaker though he was, had faith precisely for the very same reasons Ysrael didn't. He viewed the death of his father and the calamities that assailed his family with an optimism that Ysrael could never fully understand. Although he never went to church, his favorite time of year was during the November posadas and the Carnival to the Virgen de Guadalupe when the streets would be brimming with people and processions of devoted faithfuls so much so that cars couldn't even make their way through. The chill November air would hang over El Empalme like a blanket and the night sky would be ablaze with fireworks leaving a funky corn smell that dissipated throughout the streets. He was a jittery little blonde boy but that's why people liked him. And that was the thing about Panchiyo, he was always well liked, had a plethora of friends everywhere. "It's better to be camarada and have muchos amigos," he used to say.

To them it was a peaceful life. When they weren't skipping school, some of their other friends from the adjacent neighborhoods, Victor, Jose, Manuel, would tag along, but for the most part it was just Panchiyo and Ysrael. They used to go off to the fishermen docks in Miramar, where they used to smoke the low-grade pot Panchiyo would steal from his cousin. But times change, as times are wont to do. Ysrael's father died, and the family was left nearly destitute. Ysrael chocked it up as the logical outcome of his father's bitter temper, and didn't think twice about it. He didn't even attend the funeral. Since his mother couldn't work because of a hernia, it was up to Ysrael to support his ailing mother. A few years later, as both mother and son were beginning to climb out of poverty, another death rocked the family. This time it was Ysrael's paternal grandfather, who died of a heart attack after the opposing political candidate to the Municipalities presidency won the office with a supposed 90% of the vote. But grievous though the news was it wasn't all bad since grandpa Paco left in his inheritance a deposito de cerveza, a mini liquor store, for the remainder of the Guzman clan and Ysrael began to work there. The store saw good profits once Ysrael was able to take charge of the duties the old man had neglected in his elder years. Grandpa Paco had hired the sons of a friend to run the store when he couldn't manage it anymore but they only

drank the beer and scared off customers. The only catch for Ysrael was that the deposito was in Guaymas while his sick mother remained in El Empalme. He made the effort to go see her at least once or twice a week but the shop demanded so much attention from him that he was exhausted. Still though, he found the time to make it home and see his mom, and hang out with his friends, and as he matured grew into his tall lanky frame in between beer boxes and in between towns.

One night Panchiyo drove from El Empalme to Guaymas to pick up Ysrael after he was done closing el deposito. They had made plans to meet up with some girls later on and it was just a matter of Ysrael closing down the deposito early so both of them could be on their way. On their way from Guaymas back to El Empalme they stopped at about the halfway point. Right before they crossed el Puente Douglas that spans the length of the bay, Panchiyo pulled over to the shoulder of the road. The sun had already set behind the mountains that flank Guaymas on the western side and the night felt ominous, as if all the wickedness in the world was longing to spring up out of the sea itself and threaten to envelope everything, to consume it all. The shoulder of the road was nothing more than a strip of land that bordered the sea where old fishing shacks torn asunder by hurricane winds and dilapidated boats eaten away by the salty sea found their final resting place. On the mountaintop, on the other side of el Puente Douglas, CRISTO VIVE was painted in huge white block lettering. But Panchiyo and Ysrael didn't notice it. It had been there since they could remember and they had become so used to it that to them it was just a piece of the scenery like the shrubs that adorn the base of the mountain. They both knew why they pulled over, although neither one found it necessary to say so. They made their way to a small altar adorned with old cracked glass candles, withered flowers and the occasional portrait of what must be a beloved family member to someone, although the faces were unknown to Panchiyo and Ysrael. Both of them leaned up against Panchiyo's car and lit a cigarette. There was a group of four other faithfuls paying their respects and asking for the blessing of San Judas de Tadeo. They were drunk. At least they looked drunk. Ysrael couldn't really tell. They stroked the feet of the statue, touched his cheek, kissed the robe of the Saint, all the while murmuring, "Por favor. Por favor. Tan bueno, quidanos."

“Were they possessed by the Holy Spirit? Or just stoned?” wondered Ysrael. “Is there really any difference?” His mind began to wander and he recalled, from a time when he was very young, maybe five or six, the first time he recognized the pain of the faithful. He remembered being at this exact altar.

His mother, father and grandfather had come to pray for an ailing family member, who it was Ysrael could not recall. As they were finishing paying their respects to the Saint they saw a procession of two people, a man and a woman making their way from El Empalme to Guaymas. Nine kilometers on foot. The woman walked while she held two lit candles and let the wax run precariously down into her hands, but the man was on his knees with arms outstretched, entranced in the piousness of his unwavering faith, murmuring some “Our Father” or “Hail Mary.” Ysrael could not remember; to him now, they both sounded the same. The man's jeans had torn and his knees were bleeding profusely, leaving a small trail of darkened crimson circles on the rocky shoulder of the road. But what amazed Ysrael, at least what he now understood had amazed him, was the sound of the man's voice. It was loud and dolorous but not because of the pain. It wasn't the same kind of voice that Ysrael used when he got spanked or yelled at for throwing oranges at the passing buses in front of his house. It carried more power, it echoed out of some deep black recess within the confines of this man's core. He had sinned, he was sorry he had sinned, and that was the cause of his pain, of his sorrow.

The drunken faithfuls finished asking for blessings and left. They got in their car and peeled out violently.

“Fucking Indios,” said Panchiyo. “Don't respect nothing.”

He walked over to the shrine, kissed the Saint's feet, crossed himself and knelt down. Ysrael heard him mumble something although he couldn't make out what it was. He lit another cigarette and waited for his friend to finish. Once he was done, Panchiyo walked back to the car and they both took off.

“Why you such a bitch man? You should at least pay your respects to the Saint. I know you ain't all hot about religion anymore but still, it's the principle of the thing ya know?”

Ysrael kept quiet. Once they were over el Puente Douglas and past Miramar, Ysrael asked, “So where exactly are we going?”

“It's the house of a Judicial by la Calle Ancha. He was a heavyweight pusher in the Guaymas precinct, I think he knew your dad. He used to nickel and dime coke out there before los del Cartel del Golfo made it too hot for him. Now they're using it as a safe house, they got about 800 kilos of mota in the back.”

“How do you know these guys?”

“We go way back. I used to hang with them when they used to send you to Los Mochis for the summer. Remember Joel and Eliazar? They work for el Judicial, they're gonna be there.”

Ysrael remembered them. Joel was a cool enough guy, kept himself low-key and was peculiar in his interest in history. The guy was a wiz at keeping track of facts, dates and numbers. It wasn't Joel Ysrael was concerned about, it was Eliazar.

The only reason Eliazar would be there was because one of

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his uncles was connected with the cartel moving through Sonora, that's probably how he got the post. But Ysrael didn't like him, he was always high, always jumpy, always on something or other that made the little fucker twitchy.

"Joel offered me a job, all I had to do was keep guard at the house, which pretty much amounted to playing Playstation and drinking beer, but before I could give him my ok he gave the job to Eliazar. It's all good though 'cause part of the reason Joel asked me to go tonight was 'cause he has some other shit in the works he wants to talk to me about. Pushing product or moving product or some shit I don't know."

As they pulled into the street where the Judicial's house stood, the CD player started acting up, so much so that Ysrael thought it better to turn the thing off and switch to the radio instead.

"This just in: Further developments in the case of Esmeralda Arroyo, who is now being dubbed as la Madre Asesina. It seems that the Federal Officers who have questioned her have obtained specific information from several acquaintances of Arroyo that confirm the fact that she was indeed pregnant up until recently but had expressed a disinterest in raising her child."

"Turn that shit off," said Panchiyo. "That cabrona lived two houses down from my tias, they found her kid in a ravine by where I used to play beisbol in the summer. Wrapped in plastic bags, can you believe that shit?"

They parked underneath the only flickering streetlight on the whole block. The windows of the house were barred and the whole of the outside façade that faced the street was nothing but crumbling decaying brick. Ysrael thought it funny how such a rundown house could be host to the convoy of cars parked outside: two Expeditions, one black, one maroon in color. A couple of trucks, of which Ysrael couldn't make out the makes and models but all varying in color, and a white Chrysler 300 that looked unusually clean given the dust that caked everything around the house. For the most part the cars all had plates from either Sonora or Sinaloa, with the odd Durango and Baja California plates in the mix.

As they got out of the car they noticed the commotion that was going on in the adjacent house. The neighbors were blocked off by a 10 foot tall wall of solid concrete so that Panchiyo and Ysrael could not make out what was going on on the other side. They heard the unmistakable resounding of the trumpets and the tuba, the accompanying bursts of an accordion and the cheering of a crowd.

"Must be a heavy parranda. We should be over there man, I still don't see why you wanna be here?" said Ysrael.

"Because there's gonna be bitches here. It's been two weeks since Maria me corto and I been fiending for some pussy since then. But if you wanna go over there and try your chances with

Grandma Rosalia be my guest, more putas for me."

They walked past the cluster of trucks in the front yard to the entrance of the house. The front door was actually on the side, facing the 10 foot wall, and as Panchiyo and Ysrael made their way to the door they noticed a man sitting on a chair with a laptop on his lap getting angrier and angrier.

"Queuvile wey!" yelled out Panchiyo.

The man's mustached faced quickly turned into a smile.

"What's going on brotha?"

"Nothing much man, just came to see about what we talked about. Where the hyenas at?"

"They went next door, I think they're celebrating a baptism. They got bored over here so when the lady next door came over and asked to see if the Judicial was in and wanted to go see the newly baptized kid they jumped on the idea and said they'll be back."

"Orale. You remember Ysrael right?"

"Ysrael? Yeah, the little guy who used to live on la calle Niños Heroes? Where you been man? What you doin' with yourself nowadays?"

"Moved to Guaymas with some cousins. Mi abuelo left me one of his depositos there and I stay on top of that since Mom can't work anymore. She still lives in the old house, but me I'm in Guaymas all day."

"That's great man, glad to see you're doing honest work. Speakin' of beer, come inside guys, Eliazar is in there."

Joel opened the door and led them from the front living room to a narrow hallway towards the back of the house. He knocked on the door at the end of the hallway and someone from the other side answered "Is open!" Ysrael noticed that the room was bare except for a small fiberglass table in the center and five or six chairs strewn about. The walls were a dark green color that looked greasy and slimy, a fact probably accentuated by the meager light of the solitary light bulb that barely shed any light on the table. In one corner there were boxes of Tecate piled up, the contents long gone, the cardboard yellowed with age. On one of the walls, next to the window that was covered in wrinkled and ripped aluminum foil there was a picture of the Sacred Heart on top of a small shelf that held two candles. Next to the door there was an AR-15 rifle. Joel told them to grab a chair, then reached into a cooler next to the boxes and pulled out two cans of beer and handed them to Panchiyo and Ysrael.

"I'll be back in a little bit, I gotta go keep watch outside till el Judicial comes."

He took his leave and Panchiyo opened up a case of dominoes on the table.

"Who wants to get whooped?"

Eliazar just sat there. His eyes were bugged and twitchy, his

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nose red and he couldn't stop snorting as the mucous constantly tried to make its way out of his nostrils.

"Man fuck dominoes that's some maricon bullshit. I got a real game we can play." Eliazar reached under the table and drew out a .38 special Smith and Wesson revolver. Chrome and shiny, a beautiful weapon really, considering Panchiyo and Ysrael's surroundings.

"Put that away, we ain't playin' that shit," said Panchiyo without alarm in his voice.

"Don't tell me I'm drinking with a bunch of maricones! If you don't want to play then fine, I'll just play your turn then."

Eliazar lifted the gun and opened the cylinder, letting all six bullets fall on the table with a clear jingle-jangle. He picked one up and put it in a chamber, he closed the cylinder and put it to his head. His thumb reached for the hammer and he pulled it back as gently and as calmly as if he were turning off a light switch. He had on a stupid grin; as if completely unaware of what the damage a .38 caliber slug would do to his head. Ysrael glanced at Panchiyo, who had noticeably tensed up. He knew what Panchiyo must have been thinking and he was thinking the same thing too, "If I can make it under the table, then I can lunge for the rifle by the door." But fear had cemented Ysrael to his chair. Eliazar hesitated, the grin on his face vanished as if he had had a brief moment of clarity and had just realized what he was about to do. He took the revolver from his head and pointed it across the table to Ysrael. Eliazar pulled the trigger and the hammer moved forward as quickly as a fly.

Click

Nothing happened. Ysrael then felt something warm make its way down his pant legs but he was too frozen with fear to look down. By this point Panchiyo was no longer blinking, his blue eyes seemed to be raging under his furrowed brow but he hadn't even broken a sweat. Eliazar moved the revolver to the left so that it was then directly in front of that blue fire. He cocked the hammer back and once again tugged at the trigger.

Click

The hammer of the revolver slammed down but the chamber was empty. Eliazar then lowered the gun, cocked his head back and started laughing. It wasn't a mechanical laugh, not out of nervousness or repentance, but more demonic and malicious. Like salt or vinegar being poured into a wound. In a flash, Panchiyo lunged from his seat, Ysrael was still too catatonic to move, and went for the gun.

"What the fuck you gon do? You gon shoot me? You ain't gon fucking shoot me maricon." Eliazar sneered.

"You bet your fucking ass I'ma shoot you. You play with my life cabron, not like that."

Panchiyo, still standing, cocked the gun and fired. The explo-

sion lit up the rest of the room. From where Ysrael was sitting, he could have sworn that Panchiyo fired directly into Eliazar's neck but Eliazar flinched a split-second before the trigger was pulled so that the bullet only tore a hole the size of a walnut on the right side of Eliazar's neck. The blood began to gush out in quick bursts as Eliazar clasped his hands to his throat. His eyes went white with fear and he started making gurgling noises that only added to the blood flow. Panchiyo tucked the gun into his jeans and ran over to Eliazar. "Go get the fucking car! This cabron is gonna die if we don't get him to a fucking hospital."

But Ysrael was still unable to move, his eyes fixed on the torrential cascade of blood that poured out of Eliazar's neck.

"Go get the fucking car pendejo! You want to get caught and charged with murder?!"

Something in those words snapped Ysrael back into reality. He got the keys for Panchiyo's Sentra and ran out of the room, almost trampling Joel, who wanted to know why a gun had gone off. Between Joel and Panchiyo, they carried the barely conscious Eliazar onto the back seat of the Sentra and Ysrael drove them all to the hospital. In the back seat Eliazar began to fade fast.

"I'm cold man, I'm getting really cold." But he could barely choke this out.

Once they made it to the hospital they checked Eliazar in to Emergencias, but as they were about to leave all three were detained by hospital police because of the nature of Eliazar's wound. Panchiyo made up a story on the spot about how the four of them were simply hanging out when Eliazar decided to pull out a gun and shoot himself. "Said he was suicidal. Girl just left him I think."

But the Agentes de la Judicial did not buy Panchiyo's alibi and they threw out his story when the doctors came back and reported that the angle in which the bullet entered Eliazar's neck could not have been from a self-inflicted attempt because Eliazar's arms were not long enough to put the gun at the position in which it was fired. That was when the officers frisked all four and found the revolver still tucked into Panchiyo's jeans. Before they took all three of them to the precinct, Panchiyo gave up and confessed. He told them that he had shot Eliazar in self-defense. That Eliazar had become heated after a game of dominoes and he was the one who pulled out the gun; Panchiyo just wanted to wrestle it away from him and before anyone knew what happened the gun went off. He told them he had called Ysrael and Joel to help him drive his wounded friend to the hospital. This sufficed for the Agentes de la Judicial. As long as they had one man in custody with a relatively plausible story, the Judiciales were content with letting Ysrael and Joel go.

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A couple of days later Ysrael was driving from Empalme into Guaymas over el Puente Douglas. He had spent the previous night at his mother's house on la calle Los Niños Heroes but now he had to go back to Guaymas and open up the deposito. It was early dawn and the sun was beginning to crown behind him as he passed through Miramar on his way west. He hadn't seen Panchiyo in a few days, ever since he had stopped at Ysrael's mother's house on his way to his own to pick up some clothes. They talked about what happened and how Panchiyo had gotten out of jail.

"Some amigos mios," Panchiyo said. "Vatos locos, friends of the Judicial went to see Eliazar in the hospital. They said he was all bandaged up playing the role of the victim. He couldn't talk, doctors say he probly won't be able to ever again. Anyway, they told him that what he was doing was wrong, and it would be more convenient for him if he told the truth about what happened. So he did and so they let me out. I was just worried about his uncle trying to get even you know? So I've been skulking about for a few days but Joel told me El Judicial wanted me to do a job for him, that and the money will help me disappear for a while, at least long enough until the heat dies down."

"What exactly are you gonna do?"

"I don't know yet, Joel is gonna tell me in a few days, he said it's probly driving something somewhere."

"Aite hermano, take care. Con cuidado. If you need anything you know mi casa es tu casa."

"Good lookin' out."

That had been three days ago. Ysrael figured Panchiyo was just squatting in one or another girl's apartment. Killing time until he had to put in work. So engrossed was he in his own thoughts Ysrael didn't even notice that he had not turned on the radio. He flicked the dial to hear some old celebrity advertising diet pills. Following the commercial the jingle for the news came on and the announcer began to read the morning headlines.

"Today, in the early morning hours at approximately 3:42 a.m. a 2004 white Chrysler 300 was found riddled with bullet holes in the intersection between El Periferico and San Ignacio in Guaymas Sonora. Witness reports state that the Chrysler was approached by a black Expedition, lacking a visible license plate. Four men exited the vehicle and opened fire on the afore-

mentioned Chrysler with a variety of high caliber rifles and automatic weapons. None of the suspects in the black Expedition have been identified. Inside the Chrysler was found the body of one Francisco Gutierrez, resident of calle de los Niños Heroes in El Empalme. Federal officials are ruling out robbery since they discovered 80 kilos of marijuana in the trunk. We'll keep you updated as this case develops."

Ysrael felt numb. He swerved on the road, causing a fishing truck next him to honk and swerve violently to avoid a collision. The old man stuck his hand out the window and yelled something indiscernible as he sped off. Ysrael pulled over to the side of the road, as he felt unable to control the car. His eyes welled up, his heart was pounding violently in his chest at first. Some unknown force was pushing his eyes shut no matter how much he wanted them to stay open. He smashed both fists against the steering wheel until it seemed like the whole car rattled, until it seemed like the steering wheel itself was going to give way to his frustration and anger. He looked out of the driver-side window and the last thing he saw before his grief and melancholy overtook him was the altar to San Judas de Tadeo.

The cemetery in El Empalme is dusty, with the loose dirt getting into everything, caking your clothes, your shoes, your hair, your nostrils. The graves seem to be overflowing past the decaying cement walls erected to contain the dead. On the day Panchiyo is buried he is taken into the cemetery through its main gates, past rows upon rows of crypts and crosses, almost as if these were being cultivated. The procession gets to the plot of land reserved for the familia Gutierrez and after a brief moment of silence, after certain female members of the Gutierrez household wail out their lamentations, after the Father whom Panchiyo called a maricon, a nancy boy so many years ago, goes through the ceremonies of burying the dead, "ashes to ashes, dust to dust," after all that, Ysrael stands and when the throngs of people finally begin to dissipate, as the friends upon friends of the late great Francisco Panchiyo Gutierrez find their way out of the cemetery and back to their cars and only the close-knit Gutierrez clan remains, mamma Gutierrez who has seen her husband and son undone by the savagery of other men, it is then that Ysrael steps forward. He kneels down at the grave and crosses himself. The dust is everywhere.

The Junction

By Hugo Estrada Duran

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You know it will hurt them. You know it's going to be devastating to one of them, but more importantly whatever you decide you know it's going to hurt you too. You know Jackie isn't the type of girl who's down to share; she's told you that on more than one occasion. Remember what she told you the first time you both laid up together? "Don't do me dirty, don't do me dirty after this..."

She tells you the same thing before you leave. You tell'em both, Jackie and Monica, that everything is going to be fine.

"Don't worry, all the narco shit is all hype. It's all been blown out of proportion. Plus, it's not like I'm going to the border anyways, I'm going south of there."

But they still don't listen; they're still worried about you. And you're worried about them. That they might run into each other on some off chance on some off weekend. Or that one of them knows somebody who knows somebody that will end up introducing them to each other. Man if that happens you don't even want to imagine the shit storm that you'll have to clean up when you get home.

She's what you tell yourself you've always wanted, long black hair, hourglass figure, your dream girl. Shit she's what everyone, from your moms to your boys, wanted for you. Monica was educated, or rather, in the process of obtaining an education and there emanated an aura of finesse from her, a certain feel of prosperity unparalleled by the girls from South Phoenix you messed around with in your younger days. Monica was a Chicana, born to parents from Morelia Michoacan, nice folks hard working as hell, but their daughter had annexed a different culture, to the point where Diaspora had for the most part erased her heritage. Sure she would go to her parents' hometown every summer for one or two weeks and spend time with a senile and withered old grandmother and they would watch novellas and sit on the patio and drink lemonade and listen to the murmur of slow rumbling trucks outside, but she always complained when she got back, "I just never understood how people can live like that, why can't they just lift themselves out of their poverty? Ugh another week without my phone and I would of died, no joke." And it was these little outbursts, these small moments of unabashed stubbornness, an inability to consciously humanize the misfortunes of others that just ate you alive when you were with her. But she didn't know about Jackie, and in so much as she didn't know, Jackie knew jack shit about Monica.

And by attraction standards Jackie was the complete opposite, another species in her own right. Independent, hood for

lack of a better word although if you pointed this out she would be quick to temper (a fact that only added to your attraction of her), the first time you told her you loved her she blinked those huge caramel reservoirs that she called eyes and just as you thought she was about to repeat it she reached back and punched you in the arm, hard and said "Don't be such a faggot, sheesh!" She was crass both in appearance and demeanor, not in any mean sense of the word but there was just something off about her. Her chin was weak; her teeth were slowly being forced into their proper place by a mouth full of steel. Her hair, when she took the time to do it, was a bouffant that was left stiff and lifeless by can after can of hairspray and God knows what else. But you both had a common history, through good times and bad, and isn't that after all what's most important? You ask yourself. Common history will make you forget and forgive every trespass this bitch ever committed against you, that and a great set of eyes, light light brown, almost like honey, so clear they'd make your heart hurt.

The weekend before your trip you make plans with both of them, Monica on Friday and Jackie on Saturday. Your date with Monica is uneventful, since you're not in her sorority circle you spent your time in the back of the club texting Jackie and chatting up Monica's friends. You hate the club, not just this one but clubs in general, something about the ambiance and the clusterfuck of people, assholes trying to look their hardest, watered down overpriced drinks, the slew of drunk and babbling fat girls bumping and grinding to played out music blasting from shitty speakers just brings out the worst in you. You spend time with Monica too but her little girl antics make it exhausting. "Look at what she's wearing! Doesn't she know those shoes don't go with that dress?" "If I had rolls like her I would totally NOT be caught dead in that dress." "Can you believe Jose is here with Alma? He just broke up with Crystine and now he's over here man whoring it." She tries to make you dance, pulls you out onto the dance floor while her friends jeer and laugh like immature middle schoolers and salsa and meringue resonate through the speakers. But you shake your head and post yourself back against the wall. It's not that you don't know how to dance, but rather you don't know how to dance with her. She moves too artificially, she's too preoccupied with remembering the correct way to move her feet, with thinking about what other people are thinking about the way she moves that she doesn't even seem to enjoy the act of dancing itself. She has no rhythm. She makes a face at you and without incident withdraws back

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into the crowd. “Good” you tell yourself. “At this point in the game, it’s best to avoid a fight.”

But what really shakes you up is your Saturday date with Jackie. The night in itself is as uneventful as the night before but as you’re cruising down 16th street nowhere to go, both of you drunk off your respective asses, you glance out of Jackie’s passenger window. Granted you’ve seen this scene an infinite amount of times before, it’s just row after row of the old style 50’s and 60’s brick and concrete houses of South Phoenix, the type they built before all the white folk started moving in and building their houses with matchbook frames and stucco walls. The whole scene flashes before you like the backdrop of the some old cartoon, repeating itself over and over, except for one house, the last one near the corner, the side door leading into what appears to be the kitchen is wide open and as you glance in for a split second you see an un-nerving figure; tall with baggy jeans and a crisp white shirt, sneakers and a hat but with two oval shaped coals where the eyes should be and a malevolent grin that stretches past what you know a grin should stretch. And for that brief moment, although you can’t discern a pupil or anything else in the blackness of what appear to be its eyes you know it’s looking right at you, looking at you and grinning. You shudder and look away, trying to make sense of that which is incomprehensible.

The bus ride seems unbelievably long and it seems like they are still using busses that were commissioned back in the 70’s because the seats are too close together and you haven’t been able to stretch your legs for 7 hours. The sky is gray and overcast and the cheap dull purple tint of your window just makes the whole horizon look drearier as the sun begins to break lazily over the mountains. You’ve made it through Nogales and Hermosillo, and about a dozen other little towns that probably aren’t on any map and you still can’t get your mind around the overwhelming poverty. You can’t get used to seeing every available wall space tagged up with symbols and marks so convoluted and erratic that they don’t even resemble letters let alone a language. You can’t get used to the dirt or the traffic or the sinus scorching smell of exhaust that every vehicle leaves behind. It seems like everyone has a car now, and they are all crowding the perifericos trying to get to work, to school, to the store, home. Here and there you catch glimpses of old women with worn out splintered sticks for brooms sweeping the sidewalks in front of their stores or the patios in front of their houses. You try to catch as many glimpses as you can of early morning Guaymas street life; this is after all the town you were born in although not the town that saw you grow. But the bus simply picks up speed as it weaves

its way haphazardly through the morning traffic, barely making a stop at the terminal. You’re close to home now. Empalme, nine kilometers south.

You haven’t been back in 18 years, since you could barely speak. And at the behest of your tias you decide to spend one measly week trying to catch up on 18 years that have left you behind. “That’s the immigrant experience isn’t it?” You tell yourself as the bus pulls away from the street onto the main road connecting both towns. You don’t belong here and you can feel that fact coursing through your veins. With every palpitation of your heart, as the bus gets closer and closer to what is supposed to be your hometown You. Don’t. Belong. But if you don’t belong here, away from the blondes, away from the stoners and stuck up rich kids, away from the glares and stares and frowns and smirks and murmurs they threw your way when you walked up and down the halls of your university, with people who have hair as dark as yours, eyes as brown as yours, who share your accent and your history and your origin, then how can you be sure you belong anywhere else?

You are still amazed at how people can live this way. Back at the bus terminal you get off to buy a Coke and the first thing that catches your eye are the shacks, actual wooden shacks. Now as the bus weaves its way, with complete disregard for the human cargo on board, through the gargantuan hills that border Guaymas on the east side you can see more and more shacks peppered throughout the hills, almost enshrouded by a thin morning fog, all whitewashed in a sad ensemble of mismatched colors: dull pinks, dull purples, dull greens, dull oranges, all painted this way to convey the illusion of cheerful poverty. And as the shacks become more and more distant you begin to notice the people who are outside, going through their morning routines; feeding their chickens, sweeping their porches, hanging their laundry, going to work or school, they all begin to lose the features on their faces. From every face there gleam two oval coals and they all seem to be grinning, so wide, so maliciously that you wonder if it is not your tired mind that is playing the trick on you.

This makes you feel almost nostalgic, but for the wrong reasons, and as you try to wrap your mind around the people at the base of the hills the road suddenly goes down and all that is left before you is the wide expanse of the sea. That aromatic smell, salty, hits you like a fist, catches you off guard, until it becomes so overpowering that it consumes everything. Your eyes try to keep up, try to find an end to that immeasurable expanse of water but it’s hopeless. You see dots, no doubt fishermen, cruising the mouth of the bay, off to find the morning’s catch, vrooming off into the distance. And just like that you feel a sense of escape, everything that has plagued you for the past few months,

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the girls, the faces, the trouble vanishes with the morning fog.

The week goes by in a flash. Scattered memories and hazy recollections are all you have of the events that transpired. Your cousin, the no good lazy bastard who is pushing past thirty-five, who still lives at home with his girlfriend and their kid, with another on the way, takes you all over town. You go off to some ranch way out in the boondocks and meet all his malandro friends and he lets you fire his .45 and his Ruger, he shows you his Cuerno but says he doesn't want to fire it, one clip will set him back six hundred pesos and besides it's mostly for show. You watch, as the night winds down and he starts snorting out of his little baggie while you pound back Buchanan's and seltzer water. Somewhere in the back of your mind you feel like you should tell him something. Tell him to clean up his act. Let him know that he's about to have two kids and he's still living at home with his mom, your tia, the sweetest woman in the world, maternal to no avail. Practically raised you when your parents were busy working in Hermosillo. But you don't. You tell yourself you are in no position to judge. Besides, why kill his buzz?

One of your girl cousins, the one closer to your age, takes you out to one of the night clubs in the center of town and you laugh internally at the cheapness of everything: the dirty scuffed floor, the peeling paint on the walls, the static that hisses obnoxiously from the cheap speaker system. Yet halfway through the night you feel like the gringo. Everything is songs you don't know and dances you don't dance.

On one of your last days one of your uncles, your tio Raul, says he has a surprise for you. He wants you to visit an old friend, so he takes you back into Guaymas and up one of the hills that faces the bay. Your destination is one of those shacks on the hilltop, it looks like it is well concealed from the elements, encroached on by two huge crumbling walls of concrete built into the cliff but that may only be because it's dark. Your uncle is going to pick up his wife two houses over and wants you to speak to a friend of your grandfather. Tio Raul tells you the old man has been excited ever since he was told you were coming down for a visit. You go up a hill, through a thin alley wishing the smell of the sea were enough to quench the stench of dog shit but alas this is not so. You knock on the wooden plank door, to your surprise you remember which one it is, but no one answers. You begin to wonder if it is too late, too late to intrude on an old man or too late to turn back, you can't make up your mind on which. But before you can turn back you see a figure through the cracks in the wooden plank door waddling towards you.

The old man is withered and his face is unbelievably dark. Something makes you recall that he was probably a fisherman at one point. His hair is ghostly white and his posture is so

slouched that it is robbing him of at least a foot in height. He opens the door and smiles, a warm healthy smile that invites you in. It's amazing; you never understood how people can live this way, the walls are padded with cardboard; the one by the phone has several numbers scrawled on it with thick black marker. The floor is nothing but dirt and the main room has four beds one in each corner, it's almost as if the house is built into the cliff itself.

Everything is politeness at first. "How is everything on the other side?" "Fine" you tell him. "How are your parents?" Divorced, each doing their own thing, but he already knows this. "Are you in school?" "Not at the moment, I'm taking a break" you say.

He lets out a small chuckle, "That's good. You have all the time in the world. But something's off. I can see it in your face. Last time I sent you must have been some fifteen odd years ago but I still know trouble when I see it. Que pasa?"

You don't feel like opening up. It's not the old guy's fault, he's as nice as an old man can be but the week has exhausted you beyond words.

"You don't wanna talk eh? How bout some Anisette? Is special, for Chrismass time, but wit you here is like it's Christmas early you know? Your mama let you drink over there?"

He pours you a large amount of Anisette in a pink plastic cup with fading yellow flowers and you begin to sip from it. And it's as easy as that. It's like someone flipped a switch. You tell him about the faces, to which he scowls and looks away. You tell him about both of them. You tell him about the fights with Jackie, all the bullshit. You tell him about the night you went to her place, a Saturday with nothing better to do since the old waves of nostalgia washed over you, suffocating you until you could think of nothing else to do but be with her.

"Can I come over?"

"I don't know, my brother ain't home yet, remember what happened last time? He wasn't too happy with you showing up smelling like weed and all."

"I promise it won't be that way, I just wanna hang out, just talk you know? And I won't smell like anything this time, scout's honor."

"O.k. but remember I have curfew, he said you need to be out by 12:30."

You tell the old man about the night, and for a second all you can remember is the cold in the air, no wind no clouds, no gusts, just an overwhelming cold that hung like a curtain over the city. You gloss over the unimportant details; you went, talked for a long long while, caught up on who's doing what, who's doing who, who's pregnant, who got kicked out of their parents house and for what. You listened to music for what seemed to be a very long time, she likes what's new and trendy on the radio, you

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think it's vile and putrid and just when you feel that it's time to leave you see through the steel grated front door a truck parking out front and she begins to shake.

"He's here, he's home. Fuck man!"

You tell the old man how you saw her older brother walk into the living room, with a cock sucking grin on his face, just staring the both of you down with the sadistic look of a negligent parent who's just caught two children doing something wrong.

"What time where you supposed to be outta here? What time's your curfew?"

"She said her curfew is at 12:30."

"And what time is it now?"

You glance at the clock hanging over the mantel and say 12:43.

"Anthony we were just listening to music....."

"I wasn't talking to you was I?"

And as you get up to go you felt the blood under your face boil and your teeth begin to grit but you didn't say anything, you didn't want to aggravate things further. You left her the CD you'd been listening to and walk past him towards the door, your jacket grazing his. You walked outside of the house towards your car when you felt a shove come from behind that's when you turned around and headbutted her brother in the nose. It all went downhill from there.

You tell him about how both of their bodies feel fake, like plastic. Even when you're up against both, and working your fucking hardest to feel something, anything, the only thing there is the pressure. No warmth, no connection, nada. You're a stranger to both of them, just going through the motions.

You tell him about your little rendezvous with Monica shortly before you left in the back seat of your car, when the windows got so fogged up that it looked like the car was burning from the inside. And that one particular moment, when she was laying on top of you, and some old Jackson Five song was playing on the radio, when nothing was between you, not her outside world, not your contradictions, not your clothes, not her inhibitions nothing but the bitter cold of those frigid Phoenix winter nights, and how with her laying on top of you, her face a few inches away from yours, you came to realize she was real. How there was something behind those big deep brown eyes the consciousness of this individual, how there was something more to that glitter. And she asked you "what's wrong? What is it?" and you just shrugged it off with a "nothing". That was when you realized she was a person, one who had confided in you, placed all her trust in you and all the while you hadn't even been regarding her as one, a person, she was just something there to pass the time.

You tell him how happy you are when you see her but in the end when you both part there is a feeling of relief, like you can't

see yourself permanently affixed to someone like that.

"I feel like I don't belong. I mean, it feels like I'm fighting it. When I'm with one all I'm thinking about is the other one and vice versa tu sabes?"

The old man sat up through both stories but it's late now. You let out a sigh, wondering if he can conjure up any advice from his eighty-two years on this earth, on this hill. He rustles in his chair for a long while and just when you feel like you've worn out your welcome he looks up at you with heavy deep set blue eyes that betray the senility of his age.

"You're too young to be worrying about putas mijo."

"Pick one you're unhappy, pick da othar, you still gon be unhappy. Keep 'em both an you risk loosin 'em both and then you really gon be unhappy so waddaya gonna do? You're fucked either way huh? Think 'bout yourself, remember who you are and what you want and the choice will be easy."

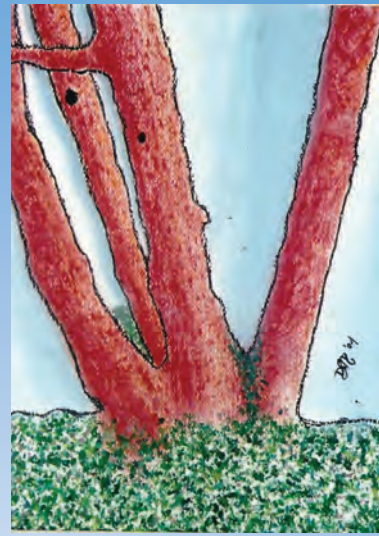
The old man lets out a toothless chuckle before he starts nodding off. You wait to see if he's asleep and when you're sure he is you find an old blanket on one of the beds and toss it over him, then you pick up the bottle of Anisette and the cups and stash them in the cupboard from where they came. You quietly make your way out, shutting the wooden plank door just as your uncle is making his way up the alley to look for you.

On your ride from Guaymas back to Empalme, over el Puente Douglas, your mind is serene, no more fissuring, everything is as it should be. You keep expecting to see the same distorted faces on the heads of the little fisher boys throwing their nets into the ocean hoping to catch those unlucky lazy shrimps that dozed off too early, but you don't. All you can see is the moon mirrored back on a calm sea with the pulsating lights of the maquilas off in the distance.

A few days later and you're back home. The bus ride back is more comfortable for some reason. You tell them both that they can't meet you at the terminal, you tell them you have family coming through to see you and that you will make plans with them as soon as you get settled in.

You know what you must do. You ask her to meet you up Mill Ave, in some trendy new age spot, you know she likes that kind of stuff. You choose the spot because you know it's always packed and you figure that she won't make a scene with so many people around but when you get there you realize that no amount of people is going to mitigate the fact that you're about to tell her you've been messing around with someone else for the past year and a half, and that this is it. She is sitting by a table close to the patio. She looks timid and meek, just like the first time you ever laid eyes on her. Her eyes are down. Did she gauge what you were going to say from the tone of your voice when you called her? It doesn't matter you tell yourself. No turning back now. You walk to the table. She looks up at you and smiles.

Bringing out the artist in others



These seven trees on paper represent all the mediums I work in, when I create in mixed media. They are a series, all created in 2004 at an art retreat in N.J. Top row from left are: crayon; pen and ink; oil pastel; and gel pen. Bottom row from left are: charcoal; water color pencil; and chalk pastel.



Debra Lee Murrow writes: “I exist to serve by encouraging creativity to reveal God.”



Debra Lee Murrow is a fine artist specializing in pen and ink. She started her style of art in 2000 after a revelation of the power of words and hence her art is made up of words and phrases mixed together to create the context of a larger art piece. She uses a brush pen and a variety of different mixed mediums — the seven trees represent the variety of mediums she uses to create on her “COLORME” designs. Debra details out a “pre-made” canvas in black and white, so to speak, for others to “be the artist” and create over her designs. People have categorized her drawings to fall under “adult coloring.” These drawings/ paintings range from postcard size to large canvases. She uses her art to help people/organizations raise money and to give a fun and interesting twist to any party, wedding, funeral, birthday ... and much more. Along with creating on paper and canvas, she has discovered the wonders of Shrinky Dink material — it’s a plastic sheet that you bake after creating on it. It has been a favorite of hers and many others since about 2005. She creates necklaces, ornaments, birth announcements, room decor and many other fun projects. Her work has been displayed and sold all over at art fairs, silent auctions and artist workshops. Debra has also taught her style of art through her workshop called “The ‘COLORME’ Art Spa” to church groups, women’s organizations and social outing companies, among others. Host a “COLORME” Art Spa in your home. Contact her at colormedebralee@gmail.com and www.debraleemurrow.com.

Open Mic: A celebration of the arts

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

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

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

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

About The Arizona Consortium for the Arts

The Arizona Consortium for the Arts is a Non-Profit Organization approved by the Arizona Corporation Commission in February 2008. We hold a 501c3 tax-exempt status. We are all-volunteer. We are educators, artists, performers, writers and supporters of all artistic endeavors, and are proponents and supporters of the rich, vibrant and diverse community of the Greater Phoenix area as well as the entire state.

The Arizona Consortium seeks to create a multicultural, multi-disciplinary arts center that will provide a home for our activities and foster artistic growth for people of all ages in conjunction with exhibiting artists, writers, actors, dancers and musicians who will share their expertise in a gallery, theater setting. Please

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

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



and the establishment of our future center.

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



Coming March 25!

The Blue Guitar Spring Festival of the Arts
will be at Mesa Community College
on March 25, 2012.

Admission free!

For more details, go to the
Arizona Consortium for the Arts website,
www.artizona.org



Snapshots from the Oct. 30 Fall Festival of the Arts



Poet Hannah Richard



Poet Esther Schnur-Berlot



Author Patrick Michael Finn



Poet Joshua Hunter Hensley



Performers Joshua Hunter Hensley and Josh McNaughton



Performer Tammy Zappier

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

Fall 2011

Fall festival held at the Arizona Historical Society Museum



Performer Michelle Malayeva



Performer Nataly N. Kuinova



Performer Ruthy Mevashev



Performer Jonathan Gabriel



Performers Nikki and Grace Tordil



Performer Gabriel Bey



Performer Ruben Vargas



Entrance to museum's courtyard

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

More snapshots from Oct. 30 Fall Festival of the Arts



At right, artisan vendor Jake Beckman of AKA Jake



Artisan vendors Kellee and Tom Garlin
of Pocket Full of Posies



Performers from Argullo Boricua

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

Mike Rothmiller

Prescott Artist



“Children of Bora Bora”
Photograph
1995

During the fall of 1995 I was on Bora Bora, Tahiti to host an adventure television series. My first priority was selecting filming locations on its isolated beaches and within the lush mountains. On a Sunday morning I ventured out early on my rented Vespa to circumnavigate the island. A few miles out I detoured onto an unpaved, rock-strewn road and stopped at a secluded lagoon. With my camera in hand, I walked through a grove of palm trees and when nearing the beach I heard the laughter of children. Rounding a large bush I caught sight of the children playing in the idyllic stillness of the lagoon and knew it was a fabulous photographic opportunity. I took a single image before the children noticed me and scurried from the water. It was weeks before I returned home, had the film developed and knew I had a memorable image. The image was taken with a Pentax SP 500 using 64 ASA color film. The image appears monochromatic, yet it has not been retouched or altered in any fashion.

I've always been interested in various visual art forms. Whether its photography, painting, welded metal sculptures or producing television; it has always been my goal to capture the moment and capture the viewer's attention. I attempt to stimulate their mind and provide a vivid memory. If they remember my work, I have succeeded. If not, I've failed. In my photographs I strive to capture the feel of the moment and immerse the viewer in the subject matter. I thoroughly believe a successful image tells a story. Over the years I've been fortunate to have my photographs grace the pages of magazines, newspapers and appear on television. Each of those successful photographs met my basic criteria; capture attention, stimulate the mind, tell a story and provide a vivid memory. And sometimes, they're just fun.

- Mike Rothmiller



Mike has been an ABC TV reporter, an executive producer and television host for ESPN, PBS and other international markets. He's written and produced over 25 documentaries for television, numerous TV and radio commercials, two movie scripts and he's a New York Times Bestselling author. His most recent book was endorsed by Presidents Carter, Clinton and Bush. He also invented the Imagination Zoo toy line. He's served on numerous non-profit boards and is currently the National Vice Chairman of the American Kids Cancer Fund. In the corporate world he managed three divisions of Sony Electronics. His art includes photography, welded metal sculptures, plein air and abstract painting. When not pursuing his art, he serves as a life coach for people experiencing expected and unexpected career transitions, career advancement and aspiring writers. He can be reached at <http://coachforlifeinstitute.com/>

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

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Meet the staff of The Blue Guitar magazine



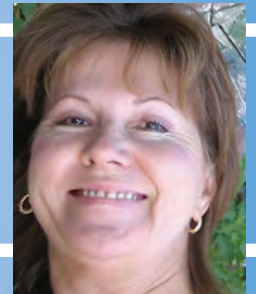
Elena Thornton, publisher: Founder and president of The Arizona Consortium for the Arts, Elena is an educator, artist and poet and lives in Phoenix. Reach her at info@artizona.org.

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

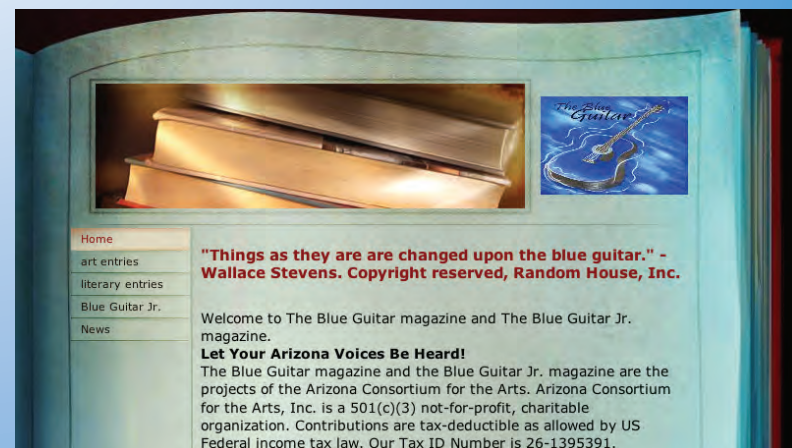
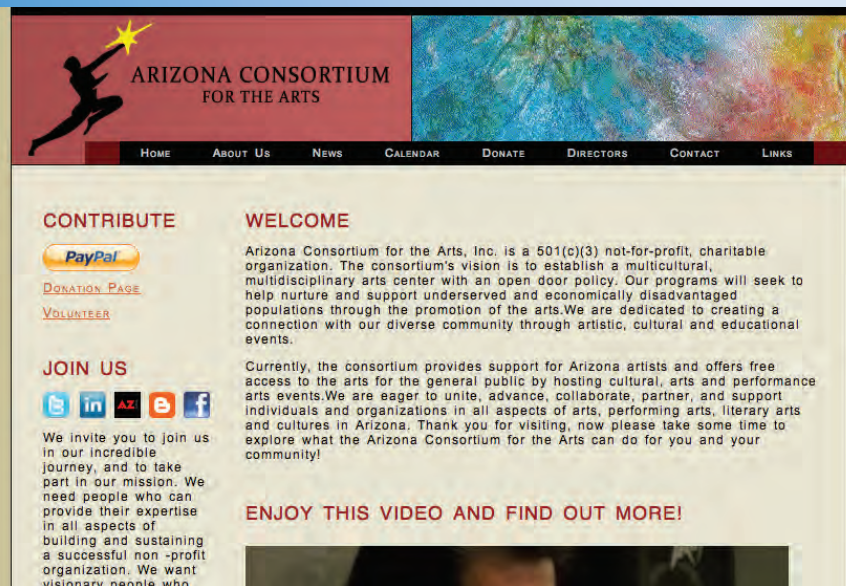


Richard H. Dyer Jr., production editor: Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is the managing editor for four weekly newspapers in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor.

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



Check our websites for news on the arts



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

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

www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org

Fall 2011



A Call to Writers for Spring

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks literary submissions for the Spring 2012 Edition from Feb. 1 through March 9.

Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted,

but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

A Call to Artists for Spring

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks art submissions in all mediums for the Spring 2012 Edition from Feb. 1 through March 9. The art entries, which will be juried for inclusion in the Spring Issue, should follow the theme of “This Life.” Any artists who work in any visual art media and are 18 years or older and are Arizona residents can submit. It is free to submit and up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail. Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist’s name and contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. To submit or for further information, e-mail Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

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

“Things as they are are changed upon the blue guitar.”
— Excerpt from Wallace Stevens’ 1937 poem “The Man With the Blue Guitar.”
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Coming this summer...

A magazine of, for
and about poetry

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Volume 3,
Number 3

Fall Issue
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