

The Blue Guitar



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Editor’s Note

Summertime and the living is anything *but* easy in Arizona, unless you can burrow far enough underground to escape triple-digit temperatures, or flee to theoretically cooler elevations, which this summer have fought their own kind of heat — wildfires that thankfully are finally under control. Out of the pan and literally into the fire. Then again, we could all be living in Kuwait, where a teacher friend said her plane couldn’t take off from the tarmac this past June because it was 145 degrees.

We’re the polar opposite of more wintery climes: We hibernate during the summer. So, while you’re hibernating, curl up, hydrate with an icy beverage and enjoy summertime reading that’s really cool — figuratively and literally, as the AC gently wafts its refreshingly chilled air over us.

This issue also features the start of something new at the back of the book: biographies and photos of our hardworking staff. Along with these come my sincere thanks. A huge thank-you to:

- Elena Thornton for her vision, wisdom, hard work, perseverance and endurance leading us as The Arizona Consortium for the Arts enjoys its third year of existence. Our group is stronger than ever and still growing. The Blue Guitar owes its existence to Elena. We wouldn’t be here without her.

- Richard “Rick” Dyer (if you wondered about our same last names, you’re right) for his brilliant design and clean-looking production of The Blue Guitar, issue after issue.

- Marjory Boyer, artist extraordinaire, for creating our iconic image that stands the test of time.

I couldn’t do it without you three.

Just as important, we couldn’t do it without the many talented writers and artists of Arizona ... AND our wonderful readers!

To all I say, please keep reading and please keep submitting!



Rebecca
“Becca” Dyer

Rebecca “Becca” Dyer
Editor in chief

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www.TheBlueGuitarMagazine.org

Summer 2011

1 Poem by Issac Real

Stillness

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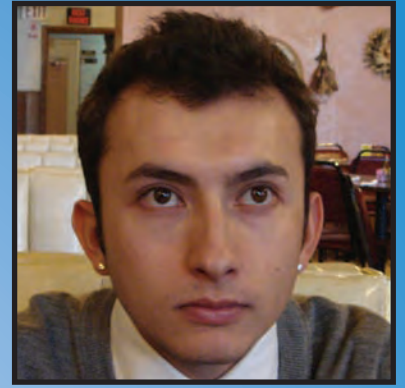
“It looks like an island,” he said,
As his lighter sparked a fireball
at the cigarette in his mouth.
He pointed the lighter towards the dead camel that bobbed
and floated, then crept towards us as we sat in flamingo pink lawn chairs,
behind black machine guns on the long strip of an Iraqi oil
platform in the middle of the gulf.

Around us, still dragon flies
pasted themselves to the sandy gray
sky, their transparent wings moving
too fast to tell. The Iraqi watchstanders chased
and grabbed at them, tied strings
to their tails, and held them like pinwheels
as they smiled behind bushy mustaches that could strain
a drink like baleen.

The silent current pushed
the camel past us, under us, on its side
as we drowned
in the heat watching it drift just past red
and black oil tankers and back out to sea.

The second of peace was broken
by his voice.
“I wonder what it did.”
“What?” I said
“The camel, it must have bit someone
and they killed him, the way they kill dogs
that bite kids.”

His cigarette looked like shed snake skin when it bit
his fingers and he picked up the butt and dropped it
overboard then leaned against the machine gun.
“I could never do it, kill something.” I told him.
He walked to the pinwheel and removed the string.
“You’re in the wrong place then.”
And we went back to watching nothing and shooting
nothing and never really wanting to.



Issac Real is originally from Salinas, CA and is currently a student of Creative Writing at Mesa Community College. He can be contacted at ireal1985@gmail.com.

4 Poems by David Chorlton

Alaskan Miniatures

© 2011

I
Snow clings to time
and rock beneath the clouds

where long rivers end
their journeys into light.

II
The fine green rain
in the forest
is to water
what the ferns are
to the trees.

III
A cellist with a snow cap
at each shoulder
plays with an eagle at the tip
of the bow
he draws slowly across
the low clouds.

IV
A woodpecker drums into the silence
trapped beneath
a spruce's bark.

V
Late on a summer night
a blush passes over
the forests across the sound

as a chill whets the peaks
to a sharper edge.

VI
A winter wren flies
between trees so close
together there
is no space for shadows.

VII
A raven at the crossroads
looks both ways: toward
the poles the Tlingit made

and at the cross
above the church in which
the Russians prayed.

VIII
An hour before midnight
the water is still pale in the cove
where darkness is moored.



David Chorlton came to Arizona in 1978, having lived in England and Austria. His poems appear in numerous magazines, including Main Street Rag, Skidrow Penthouse, Presa, Slipstream and Avocet, as well as online in The New Verse News, Untitled Country Review and a previous Blue Guitar Magazine among others. A copy of one of his recent poems was sent with the documentation for some seeds from Arizona to the Global Seed Vault in Svalbard, Norway, demonstrating that poetry sometimes reaches unexpected locations. Information on his publications can be found at: <http://www.davidchorlton.mysite.com/>.

Seeing Sitka

© 2011

The battleground is quiet today
with water lapping at the shore
and low cloud in the trees
where the natives once lost
in hours what had taken centuries
to build. There's light rain

at the moment, clearing later
to reveal the mountains. No trace
remains of the disease
the invaders introduced,
just their church
in which the prayers begged for a cure

and when it arrived
the natives prayed there too
to thank the new god
for saving them. The forecast
used to be for showers
of smallpox followed

by the scent of incense
though the weather doesn't change
by more than a few degrees
from day to day while the seasons
float up and down the sound
behind the ships

that stop here now.
Their passengers disembark
for a few hours before
sailing on with their souvenirs
into the short hours of darkness
when an eagle folds the night away

beneath his wings. He's perched
above the road
that runs along the edge of land
where the Bishop's house recalls
the time of porcelain settings
on the table with the samovar

when the talk was of trading
for the rubel, before
it made way for the dollar,
but whatever the flag the true
currency was always fur
torn from animals' backs.

One Hundred Fifteen Degrees

© 2011

We can't see the desert from the city
but we feel it
on days like today when the temperature
at ten AM is a hundred
dry degrees promising trouble
later on. After the hundred and ten
at noon, everybody counts
each additional degree all the way
to the day's high as if
at this point extra heat
makes any difference,
while we could be talking
about one more candidate for the presidency
being intolerable, bemoaning
every new cut in spending for schools
or lamenting the latest
casualty in the foreign war. Keeping
to the weather makes for calm
conversation between strangers, holding us
back from, for instance, discussing
climate change and polar bears
and questioning what
the loss of one more would mean.
Such talk would be a waste of time. You'd have
to ask the polar bear.

The Dow went up one hundred and forty-five points
today, while the heat
remained as it has been
and will be
through the coming cloudless days
during which the forecasters will indicate
on a map of the state
which forests are burning
and which can yet be saved
when the monsoon begins. It's easy to measure
losses and gains
when numbers stand in line
for an easy overview,
the way rainfall amounts would be shown
if there were any, but by the end
of the dry season
there is no index to show
whether junipers or oaks
went down most in the fires.

Days like this come every summer,
setting records
for next year to beat.
We'll be waiting
with a garden hose to keep the trees alive
and pouring water
on the vines. Nothing much
will change: leaves will curl
at their edges, plantings will be limp
and when sparrows bathe
in the dust, it will cloud up and sparkle
like drops of thirst in the light.

Birds from the Interstate

© 2011

Amid the sparse mesquite
all that moves
is a roadrunner
as he darts a stretch
then stops and darts again
chasing the heat in a circle.
There's a brown speckled breeze
in his feathers,
and his crest
points straight at the sun.

A freight train hauls a new shipment
from China past a flat
expanse of desert, where cracks
have risen to the surface
and the saguaros are riddled
with gunshot and drought.
They lean left and right
but grip the earth as gently
as white-winged doves grip them

when they perch at the tip
overlooking the land
on which billboards begin
by selling bets
as dice roll away from the road
in a casino cut
from raw chance and artificial lights,

then progress from
Marine recruiting
to redemption
to offering deals
that flash past too quickly
to read, while the ravens

who circle above them
want nothing
except the air and a place
to rest and caw black folly
at everything beneath them.

Long-Distance Summer

By Dustin Volz

© 2011

Sam nervously lit a cigarette and sighed. He awkwardly puffed at his addiction as he rolled his head back to look up at the faint dots in the sky. Even though we were sitting in lawn chairs in midtown Phoenix, less than two miles away from the wannabe city's hushed downtown core, the stars were visible and twinkled with resolve overhead.

I spent many summer nights on the backyard patio with Sam, gazing up at the sky longingly as the warm air threatened us with the inevitable return of the hot sun in the morning. Tonight I dreaded the rising fireball more than most nights, because once it inched above the horizon, I'd be without a home.

I hadn't been staying at his place long, but all the same it felt like home to me. It was the start of the summer following my first year of college and, in many ways, my first real time being on my own. On the surface, it was a matter of convenience – my refusal to return home to Philadelphia and the comforts of familiarity and my parents because of two résumé-building jobs I'd netted out in the desert. In truth, I was staying in Phoenix because of a festering desire to assert myself as an adult and prove – to myself more than anyone – that I could grow up. I wanted to keep the morsel of independence I'd experienced living 2,500 miles away from home for the past eight months, but this time without a dining hall or obsessively neat roommate.

The circumstances surrounding my stay at Sam's were rather unconventional, I suppose. I needed a temporary place to stay over the summer in between weeks working at an academic summer camp for high-achieving high school students. My friend Joe was staying at Sam's and said he'd ask if I could crash there for at least a little while. Joe was also from Pennsylvania and sympathetic to my plight, aware that I was desperately trying to cut the strings that held me back East.

I didn't have much money, and I didn't want to retreat to the safety of my parents' bank account. I was determined to do this on my own.

After scoping out my possibilities, I met with Sam, whom I knew casually around campus, outside my dorm one night. This was probably the first time I noticed his compulsive smoking habit, but I remembered not to let it bother me. I hated cigarettes. I grew up watching my mom smoke her daily regimen out on the back porch, but I needed a home and I wasn't about to let a frivolous peeve prevent me from securing shelter.

Following customary pleasantries and an explanation of my dire situation, Sam offered to open up his house to me without a moment's hesitation. He promised me that it wouldn't be an intrusion and that I'd have the freedom I yearned for. I asked him about rent, citing my empty pockets, and he told me to worry about it later.

So it came about that I was to live in Sam's walk-in closet for the generous rent of \$20 a week. The closet, now my bedroom, was attached to Sam's master bedroom and roughly the size of a parking space. I was provided a futon to sleep on, a mirror, a window, an air-conditioning vent and an extension cord that snaked under the door and into my humble chamber. For a closet, it was big. For a bedroom, it reminded me of something Harry Potter had been forced to stay in before he found out he was a magical wizard.

Even as I confidently murmured to those who'd listen that I might audaciously stay in Phoenix over the summer, I don't think I believed it until I'd actually moved into my bedroom closet. Once I did, I felt liberated, despite my small confines.

At last, I was ensured my independence from home.

* * *

Continued on page 9



Dustin is a print-oriented multimedia journalist attending Arizona State University's Walter Cronkite School in Phoenix where he has garnered a diversity of experience writing for various print and online publications. He has interned for The Arizona Republic as a copy editor and online-content coordinator, covered the state legislature for the Arizona Capitol Times and written a weekly column for ASU's student newspaper, The State Press. Currently, Dustin is a managing editor and owner of the Downtown Devil, a completely independent and student-run online publication serving the downtown Phoenix community, and a fellow for News21, a multi-university investigative reporting initiative. Dustin is from Media, PA, and loves a good cheesesteak.

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Before Sam opened his mouth on the patio that night, I knew it would be my last in his house. He wanted me gone immediately, even if I had nowhere else to go. My fate was written as soon as Sam asked me if I could go out back to talk with him about something. I could feel it in my gut. He never asked to go out back. It was one of those things that just always happened, organically. Discussions would take place, ranging from existential musings to consultations on dealing with my long-distance girlfriend, but we never went outside because of something specific we wanted to talk about.

“I think you know why we’re out here,” he said evasively. “I don’t know how to say it, but it’s, uh, not working out.”

My immediate visceral reaction was to question what I’d done wrong to let this happen. Was it because I never did the dishes? Or because I accidentally let his greyhound out into the street one too many times?

I breathed heavily and looked away, but I was surprised at how calm I was. I guess my expectation dulled the impact of his words.

“Did I do something wrong?” My voice cracked as I posed the question. My fortitude wavered. I sounded like a kid hoping to have my insecurity refuted.

“No, I dunno, it’s not you,” he said. His clichéd words struck my confused ears because Sam was never cliché about anything he said. “It’s worse when you’re not here, actually, ’cause when you are, I’m reminded of how much I like you. I’ve been going through a lot of personal things lately, and I need to sort myself out. And I need my room and my space to do that.”

I looked down at the grass, freshly wet thanks to new sprinklers Sam had installed, and tried hard to reflect over the past two months. I knew there had been problems, but I thought Sam was too laissez-faire to let anything really bother him. He could be moody, certainly, but never with me – I was the young, innocuous roommate, and he seemed to always grant me a reprieve for my slip-ups. He’d fight with Colleen about roommate issues, whether about rent or matters of complete insignificance, such as her cat’s having a cold. And he’d wear a sour disposition when Joe brought his girlfriend home, transparently bothered by his best friend’s inability to find enough time in his schedule to watch *The West Wing* DVDs or spend nights wasting time at local coffee shops.

Sam and I didn’t have issues.

“It’s because I like you that this is so hard.” Sam’s words, almost pleadingly sincere, brought me back to the moment. He had a knack for knowing what was on my mind.

I remembered my days in that house fondly, excepting the pungent smell of wet dog that rested in every room. It was a young college student’s dream pad, outfitted with luxuries like TiVo and a projector hooked up to Netflix and Xbox. Sam had a

healthy collection of alcohol and generously shared it with the rest of the house, eager to show off his cosmopolitan bartending talents with his eclectic concoctions.

As we sat under the clear night sky, nostalgia slipped into my gut. I remembered the exhilarating feeling that met me at the door when I came home from work and blasted Vampire Weekend songs on the wireless speaker system set up throughout the house. I remembered the joint trips to Costco with Sam and Joe, sampling all things free and purchasing comically large jars of peanut butter. I remembered the lunches at Lenny’s, the eccentric dinners Sam cooked, the lazy afternoons spent playing video games and the whiteboard in the kitchen we all used to update each other on what we were up to.

More than it all, though, I remembered the late nights on the patio.

Sam was a graduate student, and for what I lacked in life experience, he made up for with enthralling life anecdotes, each accompanied by a fresh cigarette. On our nights out on the patio he’d tell me stories of his life growing up in Phoenix, his first years of college down in Tucson and the hardships and loneliness that framed his homosexuality. He told me of his exuberant youth spent binge drinking and the struggles he endured coping with his father’s death from cancer, a grief he was still reconciling.

My mind lurched toward a specific night spent on the patio, when Sam confided in me his history of relationship failures. It’d been more than two years since he’d even been on a date, and it was hard not to share in his depression. His life had been wrought with futility, at least the way he told it. He didn’t pity himself, but he knew he hadn’t been cut too many breaks in life.

I was dragged into another early morning when we opted to go inside so he could give me a tarot card reading. I don’t remember if it was his idea or mine, but we both awkwardly regretted it afterward. The cards decreed that someone I trust would betray me, and all swords pointed toward my reader. Sam gave me an honest evaluation of what the cards meant, but we agreed to disregard my prophecies.

I slunk away to my closet that night and shut the door. I laid down in my futon and fought the strong urge to call home. I don’t know why, but I wanted to hear my mother’s reassuring voice and have her tell me everything would be okay. I wanted her to make my bed, fix my meals and wipe away the tears welling up in my eyes. For the first time since leaving, I felt homesick.

* * *

I looked over at Sam. We had shared a long silence during my meditation. I had grown sleepy and motioned that I was going to leave. I tried to escape before Sam could

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Summer 2011

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speaking again, but his words were quick to the draw.

“When you first told me you needed a place to stay, I thought, well, it’d be nice having another cute guy around.”

I looked at Sam’s puffy face as I struggled not to cough from the bothersome cigarette smoke he politely tried to exhale away from me. Despite his efforts, I began to feel dizzy as it grew thicker in the stagnant air.

“Why are you telling me this?”

“I don’t know. I probably shouldn’t have.”

He explained that it had nothing to do with his decision to let me stay in his closet and that he never once thought of me “that way.” I had, after all, repeatedly confided in him on nights like this one about the perils of my long-distance relationship with my girlfriend, who went away to San Diego for the summer.

It meant nothing, but it meant everything. My illusion of independence shattered with Sam’s unceremonious confession.

I looked at Sam and noticed his cigarette had gone out. He pulled out another from his pocket as I got up to go inside.

Alicia Bay Laurel

Phoenix Artist



“Carob”
Acrylic



“Date Palm”
Acrylic



Alicia Bay Laurel wrote, illustrated and designed the best-selling “Living on the Earth,” one of the first books on sustainable living, with a much imitated-book design and illustration style. She illustrated and designed eight other published books, five of which she wrote. As a singer/songwriter, she produced and toured four CDs. She currently works as a commercial illustrator for green businesses in Japan, and continues to tour, performing her music and teaching art workshops. She lives in Phoenix. Reach her at www.aliciabaylaurel.com and click on “contact.” Photo by Nils Juul-Hansen.

Alicia Bay Laurel

Phoenix Artist



**“Fig”
Acrylic**



**“Orange”
Acrylic**

My world view is about communing with nature, communicating with the Divine, and living a free-spirited bohemian life. Bohemian ethics are three: compassion before profit, creativity before conformity, and serenity before materialism.

– Alicia Bay Laurel

Alicia Bay Laurel

Phoenix Artist



**“Pecans”
Acrylic**

Alicia Bay Laurel

Phoenix Artist



“Pinon”
Acrylic

Alicia Bay Laurel

Phoenix Artist



“Pomegranate Tree”
Acrylic

Alicia Bay Laurel

Phoenix Artist



**“Prickly Pear”
Acrylic**

3 Poems by Kaitlin Meadows

I Did Not Understand, But I Knew

© 2011

he crept into the yard
to gobble the green-speckled bread
and over-ripe watermelon
that mother left
smashed open for the birds.
I caught him once
blissfully inhaling
fresh laundry
sun dappled on the line,
his well used hands
knotted carefully behind his back
so as to leave no prints.

when he knew I loved him,
he left a butterfly wing
and a smooth black stone
in the pocket of the jacket
I left for him in the garden.
once
he tied three daisies
to a whittled stick
he made to look like a lizard
and stuck to the gate where I waited
to catch the school bus.

one day he sat swaying
under the broken mesquite
in the far corner of the yard
where no one but me could see
and he spoke in a broken tongue
I'd never heard
and could not decipher.
I did not understand
but I knew
he was telling me the story
of how the universe began.



Kaitlin Meadows is an artist, activist, poet, storyteller, archaeologist and founder of "Manic Expressive Arts," a collective of feminist artists "dedicated to making art that makes a difference." Kaitlin is a committed member of Sowing The Seeds, a Tucson women's writing collective with a new anthology called *Our Spirit, Our Reality*. She is CEO (Creative Energy Organizer) of Kaitlin's Creative Cottage, a courtyard studio where she teaches art, creativity and writing classes for women wishing to re-charge and re-invigorate their Muse. Kaitlin has been widely published and has five chapbooks: *Lost Tribe Chronicles*, *The Indigo Kimono*, *Red Dragon Moon*, *Russet Tweeds*, and *The Wild Eyed Tiger Roars*. Learn more about her at www.kaitlinmeadows.com and contact her at: paloma@dakotacom.net.

There Is No Virtue In Despair

© 2011

You cannot steal my elation
Nor quash the irrepressible belief
That I can be loved.
Though you have dug me
A shallow grave
Ringed with barbed wire
And broken glass,
My belief in love
Abides too
Deeply
To be wounded by your brute stabs
Or sulking, dark malice.
It prospers while you starve,
A quickening sponge of yeast
In the ancient crockery bowl
That has held the heart
Of much bread
In its belly,
Rising even as
The love between us
Falls.
You have made drama
Your profession,
A career of screaming and jeers,
A thin wire of fear
Always tightening
Around my gut.
But I have spilled out my last
Incoherent grief
From the full bladder of my tears,
My lamentations are no longer
A keening wail
That breaks glass.
I owe my courage

To an endless line of women
Who have already suffered this
For me,
Anointed these same abrasions,
Set their broken bones to harden into resolve.
I am going.
I am gone.
While you stare into the fire of your
Rage's banked coals,
I am escaping
On the safe route
They have taught me,
Over the calamities you promised
Were my fate.
They have taught me not to eat
From the night beast's hands,
Neither anger that tastes like blood,
Nor sorrow that stings like tears.
But instead, take my nourishment
From dew, from starlight,
From the bread offered by survivors.
Until I am strong enough,
Until there is coagulation
Along the suicide slits,
Until my courage builds
I will live in the safe house
They have built in the margins
Where you cannot touch me again
With your bully's love
Or own me
With your conqueror's pride,
Because now I know
And I will never forget,
There is no virtue
In despair.

Things Get Broken

© 2011

Things get broken,
Arms, teacups, marriages.
Things heal,
Sprains, cuts, heartache.
We are accident prone
But amazingly resilient,
Knowing the past is the only real path
To the future.
There are no detours or shortcuts,
Yesterday gave birth to today
And tomorrow will arrive tonight
While we are snuggled together,
Sweet from love,
Not accounting
Time at all.

You are the woven raft
That lifts me from the Nile of my drowning
And we float on the sleek water
Accommodating all flux of tide and moon.
We make a musical dance together
In our well-populated solitude,
Disregarding our history
To avoid its inevitable consequences,
Rewriting ancient stories
Chiseled into the faces of stone
As parables for our own lives.

You do not bring me
What I long for,
But leave a map
So I may find it myself,
Do not feed me
What my belly craves,
But leave a well oiled
Tool
So I can turn the earth,
Opening its promise
With a packet of seeds,
Growing my own garden,
Knowing I will invite you
To the feast.

3 Poems by Kelly Nelson

Taking the Bus to a Poetry Reading

© 2011

We all carry something:
a box of Melba Toast
in a Walmart bag, a stroller
and a smart phone, the holy bible, a big gulp, four poems
printed in sixteen point type, a baby,
an iPod, a sun umbrella, an unlit cigarette.

At the bus stop I opened my mouth
to chastise the guy who dropped
a wrapper on the ground but then
saw the wide, black cuff clamped over his
sock, above his bright sneaker and said nothing.

Giovany's red shirt and black pants
across the aisle are too clean
to be coming from work
so he must be heading
to his shift at McDonald's. Can he tell
from the way my foot bobbles
on the leg that's crossed over the other
that I'm going to, not coming from,
an event where I'm reading?



Kelly Nelson lives and teaches in Tempe. She volunteers as an usher and gallery docent at the Tempe Center for the Arts. Her poetry has appeared in *Blood Lotus*, *Convergence*, *Dirty Napkin* and *Furnace Review* and she read her work at the Blue Guitar Festival of the Arts at Mesa Community College in May. She can be reached at kelly.nelson@asu.edu.

After Driving Past Nineteen Kokopelli Signs in Northern Arizona

© 2011

Small chance in hell
I'd find the Stones He Left Behind
in this enormous
four-cornered rubble
of straight-up rocks
and sage scratch

and nothing
would convince me
to start looking.

The grinch
I've become
is content with the wind,
a tank quarter
full, the quiet
I can't see
the end of. I am
a small thing
and this place
reminds me.

Last Seventeen Seconds of a Graduation Speech

© 2011

The two paths diverge here, today. Would you rather be the Frenchman who shucked 2,064 oysters in an hour or the woman in Beirut who found 26 pearls within a single shell? Would you rather be recognized for your skill or for your lucky stumbles?

Ford and Chevy

By Tobi Lopez Taylor

© 2011

Everything that's good about an elk is bad about a horse. Conformationally, I mean. A concave neck and a long back are shortcomings in the horse; they restrict its agility. A few inches here and there can make the difference between a great three-day eventer and the nag you rent on weekends. An elk, on the other hand, is built like the worst horse you can imagine: ewe neck, long back, and uphill from head to tail, and then it comes and jumps your back fence, six feet tall, from a standstill. So much for form following function.

I don't see a lot of elk most of the year. I live on a ranch in southern Arizona, just outside of Benson. I've grown used to the palette – gray greens, dead-grass yellow, and Santa Fe pink. But then around June I begin to crave the deep greens you can get lost in. So I load up my art supplies, wave goodbye to my husband, and hightail it to my mother's ranch for the summer. It's about one hundred and fifty miles north of where I live, near Pinetop, and the drive is like a nature walk, or an anatomy lesson: the low desert gradually giving way to chaparral, which holds its own until it's overpowered by pine trees, the largest stand of Ponderosas in the U.S. Then I know I'm almost there.

My mother got out of the cattle business years ago, but she's kept the place only because no one's made an offer on it yet. I'm sure one of these years it'll go the way of the other ranches in the area, harboring acres of tract homes that look like they belong in Phoenix: pink pseudo-Santa Fe style, out of place in the desert and downright embarrassing among the pines. I know we'll be next, and I can't say I blame her. Mom barely broke even on the cattle for years – predators like bear and puma got the young ones, and when the elk tore down the first fence trying to get at her grass, she lost a lot of pasture. Bert and I couldn't help her, either: we have our own ranch to tend

to, at least until it too is sold. Now Mom lives most of the year on the east coast and keeps some caretakers on retainer, all of them waiting it out.

This summer I decided to live in the barn apartment instead of the main house. The help, Al and Betty, are getting older, and I figured the less visible I was to them, the better. Betty's cooking put ten pounds on me last summer, and it took most of this year to remove them. Al doesn't get around too well these days, but he feels duty bound to clean up every mess I make, whether it's from trimming a horse or weeding in the garden. Besides, I wanted to leave the apartment door open at night and hear the drowsy snorts of the horses. They sleep on their feet, like night watchmen, their heads going lower and lower. Then they're awake for a moment, snuffling and shaking, until they start to sink again.

During the day I go up to the largest cabin on the ranch, which serves as my studio. The light's good, and it's quiet. The barn cats come through and assess my progress through narrowed eyes, preparing me for the blandishments of the Scottsdale critics. And savage me they will: I never seem to learn when to shut up, when to smile when they tell me my work is getting to be more about less. My husband and I run a little bed and breakfast (we call it bedroll and breakfast) at our ranch, putting dentists on horseback and all but re-running City Slickers for them. There's no history to it – a cartoon version of the west. And my mother's ranch is the same, but without the dentists. Just Europeans.

One morning last week, Al and Betty went to town in one of their multitude of decrepit trucks, each vehicle in need of an organ transplant (transaxle, camshaft, water pump, whatever) from the others. I don't know how they get anywhere in the winter without being marooned. In fact, Al tells me that he

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Tobi Lopez Taylor is a fifth-generation Arizonan who lives on a ranch with five horses in the foothills of the Tucson Mountains. Trained as an anthropologist, she is an award-winning writer and editor whose work has appeared most recently in *Menopause Press*, *Concho River Review*, *Archaeology Southwest*, and *American Indian Art Magazine*. She is currently at work on a novel, "Carefree Highway," and a nonfiction book about Ed Tweed's Brusally Ranch. She can be contacted at tobi@tobitaylor.com.

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actually made a pile of money during the thaw by pulling people out of the mud with his backhoe. Go figure.

So one day while they were in town at the Wal-Mart and I was busily pursuing my bootless art career, I noticed that the dogs were barking like they'd treed something, maybe a fox. After it had gone on for a while I decided to investigate.

They were down near the front gate, all three of them ringing one of the biggest, oldest pines on the place. I called them back and peered up into the branches.

"This is private property," I said, "and I'm armed." I wasn't, but I look the part.

"I'm a tourist," he said, as though that would save him. "Please don't shoot." The man came down the tree haltingly. He wasn't much taller than I am, but stocky, blond and blue eyed. An authentic Aryan among the pines. He could have been anywhere between thirty and fifty; he had beautiful skin, damn him, and it wasn't giving anything away.

He walked over carefully and put out his hand. "Good morning. My name is Joseph Oster. I'm visiting from Germany. The Watsons sent me over to see if you could help me."

He probably wanted to hunt some big game; a lot of these Europeans do. They ran the elk and moose out of existence on their own continent, and now they're coming over here to play Buffalo Bill. The Watsons own the next ranch over, an overpriced half-assed bed and breakfast deal that makes what Bert and I do in Benson look high tech. But people love it. They have a waiting list as long as your arm, even though they have the sorriest bunch of horses I've even seen, and their guest quarters consist of a converted modular school building that they picked up for cheap at an auction. As much as I hate the pink houses, I'd take them over the Watsons any day.

"If you're looking to get an elk, it's out of season right now. I don't like them, but we don't kill anything out of season unless it's taking our stock."

"I don't wish to kill one, I merely wish to photograph it." He pulled a piece of paper out of his trouser pocket. "Only a few animals remain on my list." It was the Navajo County wildlife checklist that the Forest Service handed out to all the tourists. Seeing a lot of the animals was wishful thinking, unless you had plenty of time on your hands or something for a predator to eat. There probably weren't ten tourists who'd seen a bear, a bobcat, or a puma since the list had been started. No one had told them that the best way to see more wildlife than you ever dreamed of was to buy a ranch and let the predators treat your stock like a four-legged smorgasbord.

"I can't do anything for you," I said. "We're not what you'd call a going concern anymore. If you want to see elk, talk to the Watsons. They claim to be a full-service operation."

He was clearly disappointed that I wasn't willing to buy into the wildlife-on-demand thing, but he took the news well. "Thank you for your time," he said, as he turned and walked away. I watched the play of muscles in the backs of his legs until they were out of sight.

The next day I spent drawing, blanking my mind out in search of an idea. I'd drawn horses for so long it was a reflex now, the way the head slipped into the back, and into the topline, around to the hind legs, the belly, the forelegs, the neck. The horse's body made me believe in God: his length from withers to hooves equaled that from chest to buttocks. The rest of his measurements were variations of the head: the neck was the same length as the head, the body was three heads, the depth of the chest was two. Da Vinci needed circles and squares to show the harmonious proportions of humans. Horses were a law unto themselves.

I can sit in this rhapsody for hours, not noticing the circle of light around the walls of the cabin that signifies the course of the day. But I do think it was sometime around midday when my horses began to devolve, all because of Joseph Oster. I could see the horse I was working on metamorphose under my hand: its neck branched upward, and its back slipped beyond the boundary of my motor skills. The grand prix jumper I had started with grew a full rack of antlers and a tail as short as a beaver's. When I realized what I had done, I wanted to crush it into a ball. But with bristol board, that's hard to do, and I'd have to wait until nightfall to burn it. I stared at it for a while, as though auguring for signs. But no augury was needed, really.

When I got him on the phone, Joseph was less reserved. He kept interrupting me with "You will? You will?", and I knew I had him. "I can't do it for free, though." Then I told him a fee, double what my mother would charge, and wished I'd doubled it again when he so readily agreed. "Come over tomorrow evening, about two hours before dusk, and I'll be waiting for you. Bring some food, some fast film, and be ready to ride."

He was far too excited, I thought, for only an elk.

I'd just walked out of the barn leading our remaining geldings, Ford and Chevy, when I saw Joseph, complete with cowboy hat and slicker, heading around the corner of my studio. When he got closer, he said, "This seems much older than the Watsons' – what did you call it? – 'going concern.'"

"It is. It used to be a town named Forsythe. My dad bought it in the fifties, after it became a ghost town. He liked to call himself the Mayor of Forsythe, and said he'd bought his way into office, just like Kennedy."

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“A real ghost town.” Joseph had zeroed in on the term, disregarding the rest. Now he looked around at my father’s faded grandeur as though it were Pompeii. I’d seen the look before, and it disturbed me.

“Let’s get started before it’s too dark,” I said, and turned to give him a leg up onto Ford. Instead, Joseph swung aboard with the control of an athlete, or at least a German. “I take it you’ve ridden before?”

“My home is in Westphalia. We ride there before we can walk.” Westphalia, the home of the grand prix jumpers, the dressage horses that move with the grace of cats. I envied him. Here, I only had Ford and Chevy to look at, and they had the grace of hippos.

With considerably less grace, I scrambled onto Chevy and headed us toward the back gate of the property. I could see Joseph taking it all in, and manufacturing a specialness that wasn’t there. I sneaked a look at the way he rode, long legged and light in the saddle. My husband rides like that; horses seem to enjoy carrying him. Even Ford, named after our thirty-eighth president because of his ability to hit his head on things and walk into walls, was moving out at the walk and actually keeping up with Chevy (registered name: Chevy Chase), who seemed intent on jiggling his way through the day and jamming my spine up through my skull.

I let us out the back gate, and we headed along the foot of the mountain to where I’d seen the elk go to water in the evening. Even though riding is noisier than being on foot, the sound of horses seems to reassure the elk that nobody human is nearby. Many times I’ve ridden closer to deer, elk, and feral cattle than I ever could have accomplished by walking.

Joseph was gazing around intently, his left hand poised to bring the camera to his eye. This was no mere trail ride; it was a serious endeavor. He was no longer smiling, no longer aware of the horse underneath him, or the foreign continent beneath the horse’s feet. He had the look of a soldier, a bloodhound, a runner, an artist.

I’ve done this kind of thing on our ranch so much that I don’t even hear the stories I’m telling my clients. In my head, I’m sculpting or drawing, watching the light slip through the trees, processing the shapes that we come across into art. Without even knowing it, I guided us farther and farther off the ranch, where the trees grew thick and every snort from Ford or Chevy bounced around us until it disappeared into the near blackness. I was just starting to turn us back when everything erupted.

Joseph stayed on, but I didn’t. As the band of elk crashed through the trees, Chevy reared and caught his bit in the branch of a pine tree. When he shook his head to get free, he lost his balance and slipped over sideways. I kicked loose and landed on my pack, which was full of hard, pointed safety-type stuff

and hurt worse than I was going to admit. Chevy hightailed it for home then, stirrups slapping his sides, going off to follow the elk.

Joseph had kept Ford quiet in the midst of the stampede, his European riding skills making him the master of Ford’s weak personality. For a second, I thought he’d even had enough composure to take pictures, but I could see in his face that he hadn’t.

“Are you...okay?” he asked. I had to laugh at the American slang, the halting way he used it.

“Sure. Happens every day. Sorry about your pictures, though. It’s too dark to see much else tonight.”

He dismounted. “You can ride. I’ll walk back.”

“Ford’s tough,” I said. “We can ride double on him – if you don’t mind.”

“No, not at all,” he said – with distaste, or embarrassment, I wasn’t sure.

“You get on first, and I’ll get in front of you.”

“Okay.”

We rode in silence for a while, as I decided upon the fastest, straightest route to the ranch. Joseph was far enough back that he wasn’t touching me, and I think he was taking pains to do so, the way you see men do when they’re riding a motorcycle together. I could tell that Ford wasn’t happy with this arrangement, but it kept him from jiggling.

When we came to the edge of a small canyon overlooking a stream, I had a memory of something from my childhood. “Let’s get down for a second,” I said. “I want you to see this.” Leaving Ford among the trees, we crept up to some weathered boulders just above the cut of the canyon. I fished out a small flashlight from my pack and pointed to some petroglyphs of four-legged horned creatures scratched into the largest boulder. “Here are your elk.”

Someone had worked for a long time – the scratches were still deep in the rock these many years later. There was no line that didn’t work, that didn’t flow smoothly into the next. As a girl, I had copied them over and again on paper like someone else’s signature. They were the beginning of my art.

Joseph stared at them for a long time, appearing afraid to touch them. I wondered what he was thinking. I took his hand and gently ran his fingers across the scratches in the rock. “A thousand years ago someone else was looking for elk. Maybe this brought them luck.”

I looked over at him. The air seemed to grow thick, suddenly. We kissed like gawky youngsters, all chins and elbows, less romantic than silly. Joseph’s eyes were closed, and I could see the tiny beginnings of wrinkles above his sharp cheekbones. There had been time to have stopped him with a word, a movement, but I went ahead and let him. The last time I’d been kissed by anyone but Bert was probably before Joseph was born.

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Summer 2011

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Against my back, I felt the rough rock wall, its scratches being ground against me, probably imprinted forever. I stifled a giggle. I could imagine what we looked like: me, a grandmother of four, and him, a relatively young foreigner. He was better looking than Dustin Hoffman, but I was no Anne Bancroft, and never had been. Like so many moments in my life, this one would be better remembered than experienced.

Joseph pulled back. "Gesundheit."

"I'm sorry. I wasn't sneezing, I was trying not to laugh."

He was smiling now; the moment had passed for both of us.

"Can I take your picture with the elk?"

An hour ago I would have said no. "Of course."

The kiss had broken the spell, but it brought with it better things. Joseph and I laughed and joked the whole way back to the ranch. Near the gate, Chevy, bereft of elk, was pacing the fence. When he heard us crunching through the pine duff, he whinnied for his dinner and stamped his feet.

The only elk we'd seen standing still that day were scratched on the canyon wall, but Joseph seemed more than content. We untacked the horses and turned them out, watching them roll over and back and then rise awkwardly, shaking themselves like dogs.

Joseph handed me the money, and I pushed it back into his hand. "Coffee?" I asked.

"Please."

Joseph stayed outside with the horses while I brewed a pot in the apartment, returning with two mugs. We sat for a while in silence, listening to the horses graze and snort.

"This reminds me of my home," he said. "When I was a boy, I used to sleep outside with the horses. Even though my mother worried, the horses always took care of me."

I set down my mug. "I've got two sleeping bags, if you're interested."

I could see his smile, even in the darkness.

We took the bags into the pasture and laid them about three feet apart in an area that was already mashed down. Ford and Chevy came up to investigate, sniffing my bag and pulling on Joseph's with their teeth. Assured that we were not dangerous, just crazy, they ambled back to their own corner of the paddock.

The moon was high and small, casting little light. In the bag, Joseph removed his shirt and jeans and boots, stacking them neatly beside him. I could only bring myself to take off my boots.

We talked for hours about horses, and Germany, and what Joseph thought about America, until the words had slowed to a trickle and we were both almost asleep.

I think it was then that he reached for me in the darkness, as I'd half feared. He spoke my name. "Listen," he said. His arm was over me; he was only shaking me awake.

I rose on one elbow. There was a series of small crashes and thumps near the south end of the pasture. I could barely see Ford and Chevy, their heads high and ears pricked. Something had jumped the enclosure, the tall electric fence my mother had built to keep the elk out.

"I think your elk are here," I said. "Where's your camera?"

"In the apartment."

"I can get it, I'm still dressed." I started to unzip my bag, but Joseph stopped me.

"It's okay," he said. "Don't go."

We were both still watching when the dawn came and the elk sprang lightly over the enclosure toward the canyon, where an ancient artist had captured them on a canvas made of stone.

Sara T. Moore

Tucson Artist



**"Seahorse"
Smoke art
2011**



**"Snail"
Smoke art
2011**



**"Praying Mantis"
Smoke art
2011**

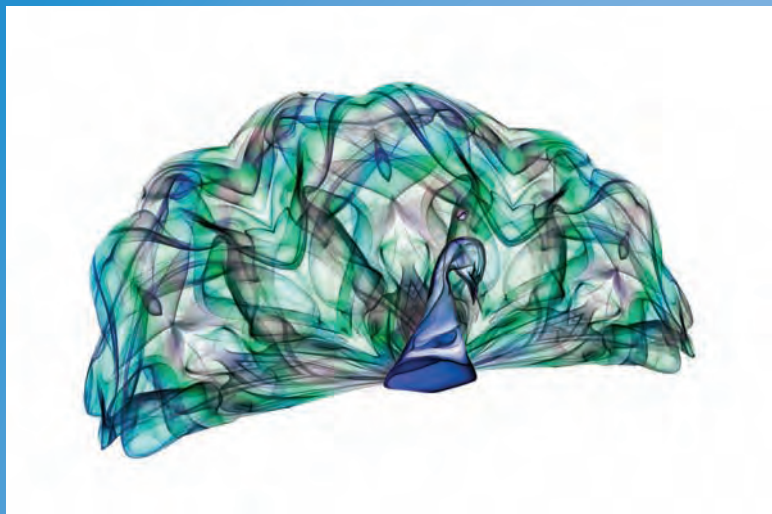
What is Smoke Art? All the pieces you see begin as photographs I have taken of incense smoke, which becomes the medium to create an art print. Upon viewing the photos, images will become apparent to me, as I tease them out of the twirls and swirls that are naturally formed. Some pieces will remain in a more natural, abstract form, while others may end up as a literal interpretation of a concept. Either way, much of the work involved is done in the digital darkroom, where I work with the design and color of the image
- Sara T. Moore



Sara Moore, a former public school teacher turned artist and photographer, lives in Tucson, AZ. She has explored different forms of art her whole life but, about 10 years ago, she picked up a digital camera and never looked back. In exploring her passion for photography, she stumbled upon some interesting photos of smoke and was immediately struck with the idea of creating smoke art. All of her pieces begin as photographs she has taken of incense smoke, which becomes the medium to create an art print. Sara is represented by Xanadu Gallery in Scottsdale, AZ and her work can be purchased online at www.SmokeArtbySara.com. She can also be reached by e-mail at smokeartbysara@yahoo.com.

Sara T. Moore

Tucson Artist



**“Peacock”
2011**



**“Swan”
2011**



**“Metamorphoses”
2011**

The type of smoke art that I have developed involves the use of a medium I have not seen being manipulated in the same way anywhere else. What I love most about my smoke art is that it allows me to combine my two passions of photography and art. Since my pieces begin as photographs of smoke, their style retains some of the organic qualities of the smoke. I love that the work has a feeling of movement, fluidity, translucence, and layering. The compositions are minimalistic, with white backgrounds that stand in contrast to the rich, gradients of color I like to incorporate in the subject.

- Sara T. Moore

4 Poems by Carrie Backe

At the Mailbox

© 2011

His horse whickers softly,
And patiently paws
At the sun-baked earth.
He's been here
Many times before.

Yesterday the mailbox
Was empty.
Also last week,
And the month before.

Saddle creaking,
The cowboy dismounts and wipes
Sweaty hands on
Dusty jeans.
He's done this, too,
Many times before.

He bends, sighs, and
Scrapes open the
Battered "US Mail" flap.

One scarred knuckle
Pushes up
The brim of his battered Stetson,
For a better look
Inside.

Just then,
A breeze swirls into the mailbox,
And a grin lights up
The cowboy's
Weathered face.

From an envelope,
The fragrance of lilac
Drifts his way.



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 tcbacke@hotmail.com.

In the Middle of Summer

© 2011

Bicycles flopped on the lawn,
Under the big old maple tree.
Scabbed, bare legs crossed
On prickly brown grass,
Kids are watching ants at work.
It's too hot to do anything
But scratch mosquito bites
And wait for the ice cream truck.

Litter — A Poem

© 2011

In a city,
In a vacant field,
White plastic
Grocery bags
Are blooming.

Snagged on every
Weed and bush,
Mesquite and manzanita,
Barrel and fishhook,
Inflated by the desert wind.

They look just like
The cotton that used to
Grow there.

Crime in the Name of Progress

© 2011

On a dead diner
A rusty "EAT" sign
Dangles from one hinge,
Creaking in the desert wind.
Broken, grimy windows gape,
Blind to the empty landscape.
Tumbled weeds beat
Against the scarred door shut
With a useless padlock.

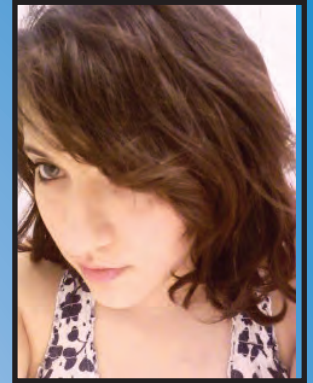
The interstate killed it.

1 Poem by Hannah Richard

My Condolences

© 2011

There is a weakness trembling in my fingers
Traveling through my body, into my incisors
My mouth is growing numb from spoken words
That collapse like widow's eyes unheard.
I was never painting intricate speaking specialty,
Songs for losing grips on reality.
I'm better suited in the audience, my technique
Is what I call good at listening.
Oh, if only, I weep, if only
The widow wasn't so lonely
Wasn't so rifled with the sickly weakness
If only I could break down the sounds,
What am I trying to say
With hums and solitary hymns growing short
Of breath in the freezer that is second thoughts
And not quite second chances?
Impossible odds and adversaries lurking
They are the chiaroscuro shadows and the lights
Are but plumes of my insecure breaths,
Questioning everything I say to you,
Alone in a cannibal's meat locker, where I lock
My thoughts away.
In the dark, we play this game
On our lonesome subconscious
It leaks a gaseous fluid
Dripping, dropping into my plumage
Molting me before my time,
Taking away what once was mine
And stringing up this blackbird
Whispering condolences.
Oh, sweet widow, I have been astray
Led by bliss in arrogance thinly veiled as ignorance.
My heart is quaking, and I am freezing
Finally, I've sold my clothes
So you can see the bones.
How did I ever think I could form the words
When I couldn't form the feelings I had offered?
An ear that you criticized, no longer right
Not good enough to hear a deeper meaning
And sing it back to you, obedient
I'll hang.
We both will walk away from this,
Bloodied now but sooner scarred,
Each of us
With nothing left to say.



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 once 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 Cora Holley

The Californian

© 2011

Red sandals clap the tiles;
Seacove shopping Street;
With a certain sophisticated air,
seen in the lingering style of her hair,
now shaped by marine and salty breeze,
gray bouncy hair –
a blonde streak there;
revealing she's still living fun;
skin tanned and furrowed by the sun –
The Californian.

Twin poodles prancing from the leash;
With a certain sophisticated air,
seen in the dress she dares to wear,
and even in the way she holds her phone;
Not lonely, though she is alone.
Morning cappuccino zone.
Ties the poodles to the table –
she will, as long as she is able –
outside the coffee shop;
Snow clouds of cream float, Java style,
before she gets a chance to dial;
Proceeds to drink it while it's hot;
dogs in their designated spot;
their trusting eyes ... she will advise ...
They've lived and loved for years on years;
Observed her both in joy and tears;
The Californian.

The whispered hush of paperzines;
now, crumbled biscuits toasting in the sun;
Lonely people talking on the phone;
some enjoying solitude from home,
anticipating future on their own;
Others watching, longing for the past,
remembering times they were together last;
tears upon the table dropped,
now the rain of love has stopped.
(Spills on the ground are never mopped).
But caffeine makes it all okay;
sunshine burns remorse away;
The sky, the sun ...
The Californian.

Solid golden bangles,
entwining suntanned wrists –
conjoined for years, in love and tears –
Presented by her loved one,
five years gone, and sadly missed;
This coffee table where they kissed ...
now dropped with tears of many years ...
But life goes on –
she's walked on beaches;
given speeches;
had some fun –
The Californian.

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Born in Ireland, Cora Holley now lives in Arizona with her husband and children. She has a London College of Music Diploma. Cora writes inspirational stories, both fiction and non-fiction, but her passion is for poetry writing. She is a member of East Valley Christian Writers and Mesa Christian Writers. Cora is a contributing author to "The French School, Bray, Remembered" by Jennifer Flegg, and has had a devotion published on the Internet (<http://www.mustardseedministries.org/>). Contact Cora at: corralejoholley@cs.com.

If her shoes I could trail,
I would finish the tale;
In her grand sea-view house, I'd be happy to browse –
Here lies Ocean Parkway,
number forty-two;
Umbrella Pines and grape ripe vines
break the shoreline's meandering miles;
Her house looks down on craggy cliffs;
a lush prolific garden high;
The scent of citrus sunburst leads you to a grove
of shady trees, and vines that twist and twine,
once planted there in love.
And through the window, one could view
(the time – just five, and twenty-two);
the sun – pure liquid gold – pours in,
descending towards the Occident;
reclining in the window nook,
in quiet contentment, reads her book;
digesting T.S. Elliot; imbibing solar rays;
No one's watching now; she likes her simple ways;
Cool casual yellow cotton frock
with pockets deep – her favorite smock;
bare sun-bronzed feet and literature – pure parnassian fun!
Freshly squeezed satsuma juice ... pours like liquid sun!
Cool ceramic pitcher ... was not designed for one;
nor was this castle on the rocks;
Built long before those people came –
when only Gulls and Sirens sang –
Now music booms, and motor-cycles roar;
breaks the calm from nine 'till four;
“But this is home” –
The Californian.

Forever Hold Your Piece

By Hilary Gan

© 2011

On a day in the early morning he is in bed, but he is not asleep. The light coming through the solitary window is still grey. He is alone, or maybe his wife is still sleeping softly and she feels far away from him, or maybe he doesn't have a wife and there is only a cat at his feet – it doesn't matter, really. It is a Saturday, or maybe a Sunday, or maybe he is on vacation. It does not matter. Anyway he is up too early.

He rolls over and tries again to go back to sleep, but the bed is too warm, or maybe the air isn't cold enough, or maybe his pillow needs replacing, and he realizes he will not be able to fall asleep again. After a moment he slides his legs out from under the white down comforter and shivers at the chill of the laminate floor against the soles of his feet. He stands and stretches, and fumbles for a shirt from the closet, and tugs it over his head and eases it down from where it bunches beneath his armpits before he pads down the stairs to the kitchen. He lights his cigarette, or pours a cup of coffee, or maybe he even makes himself a wheatgrass smoothie – that also does not matter, which of the morning vices he chooses.

He sits down in a chair at the bare kitchen table, strangely alert. The stainless steel clock on the wall is ticking, and the sound seems louder than usual in the early morning quiet. He wonders what he'll do with so much time on his hands. He taps his fingers on the table, agitated, and then he gets up and stabs out his cigarette or dumps his coffee down the drain or chugs the rest of his smoothie – whichever item he had been entertaining, he disposes of it impatiently. He opens the refrigerator. There is yogurt there, and milk for cereal, and Eggo waffles in the freezer. He decides to make himself some eggs. Eggs sound good, and toast.

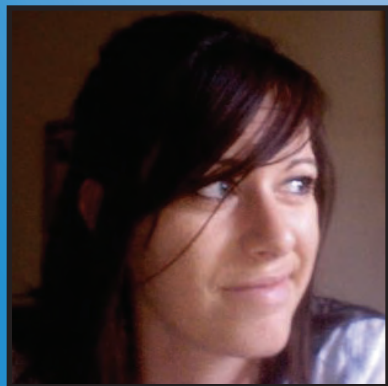
He takes the last two eggs out of the carton and throws the

carton away, and then he cracks the eggs carefully against the edge of a bowl. They swish gracefully up the sides before settling together in the curve of the striped porcelain. Two yolks like two suns in a clear sky. They look so nice there in the bowl that he decides to make them sunny-side up.

He heats a frying pan and cuts a pat of butter, or margarine, maybe, or maybe he pours out a tablespoon of olive oil – whatever it is, he swirls it around the pan until it coats the pan evenly, and he waits until it bubbles before he picks up the striped bowl and eases the eggs into the pan. They sizzle, and he smells the grease and feels the heat rise. He takes two pieces of Wonderbread, or maybe rye bread, or twelve-grain whole wheat, from the plastic bag, and he puts them in the toaster and pushes the button, and then he spins the bag and tucks the plastic tail neatly underneath the package. He plucks a shining metal spatula from among his matching collection of ladles and serving spoons, and he adjusts the heat under the frying pan and he waits, leaning his arm against the counter and looking over the newspaper or last week's mail. Or maybe it is just the counter he is inspecting.

The clear sky of the egg white begins to solidify and turn the color of new paper, and the grease turns the slightly curling outer edges a soft brown. He goes to pick up the spatula and he finds that his hand has fallen asleep from the pressure against the counter. It hurts to close it, that overwhelming feeling of blood rushing in where there was none just a moment ago, the tingle of a little too much life, and while he is wincing over picking up the spatula, the edge of brown begins to creep in towards the yolks, and still his hand does not feel quite right. His brain leaps wildly to fears of paralysis, a heart attack, some other incurable disease, even though it is only that his

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Born in the backwoods of the Empire State and sentenced to a lifetime of walking into furniture, Hilary moved to Arizona in 2003 and intends to write her little heart out from that locale evermore. Her debut story, "The Pragmatist," appeared in Jersey Devil Press; it was nominated for a Pushcart Prize and selected as a storySouth Million Writers Award Notable Story. She likes dirty blues music, fluffy kittens, and egomaniacs. Contact the writer at hilary.gan@gmail.com.

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hand is asleep; and while he is busy being afraid the pan begins to smoke and the toaster pops. In some corner of his mind he realizes that he is just going to stand there and watch his eggs burn; he knows this will happen as if it has already happened, but he doesn't know why. He is still thinking of his hand, flexing it, as he watches the yolks dry up and crack and the white turn to brown and then to uneven black folds. The acrid smell of the smoke stings his eyes and his throat, and the pain in his hand has stopped, but still he is standing there. I must not have wanted eggs, he thinks.

This thought seems to mobilize him and he turns on a fan, or opens a window, or waves a fistful of newspaper at the smoke detector so it won't go off and wake up the neighbors. When he grabs the pan with a towel and shoves it under the faucet it hisses like a carwash and sends up great billows of steam, and everywhere is the smell of burnt food.

It is a small thing; after a minute the kitchen is a little smoky, but that is all. A small moment, was all, and he washes the pan with a steel wool pad and forgets about it. He has cereal, or yogurt, or maybe just the toast instead. It does not matter. Maybe he sits outside to eat it in the early morning as a red sky dawns, or maybe he does the crossword with his right hand and eats with his left, or maybe he even turns on the television – it does not matter. But a stray cloud, or one of the clues to the crossword, or an offhand comment on the news reminds him vaguely of a feeling he had, once, or the smell of the skin on the back of her neck, or maybe it was only some illusion of desire for something best forgotten, put firmly away where it could not disturb his reality; and the creeping sense of loss that tickles his spine and sends a twitch along his arm – well, it does not matter.

4 Poems by Esther Schnur-Berlot

Changing Conversations

© 2011

Five decades of telephone talkathons
and shmoozy conversations
are no longer
cluttered
with affairs, careers and clothes

We obsess and assess
our time worn faces
flirting –
with Collagen, Restalin, Botox
or do we wear our deep lines
with grace
We talk in whispers
of that dreaded disease –
aging.

Run on conversations
run the gamut –
neglected by children
or childless and alone
daunted by new destinations –
adult warehouses
and final exits.

Burying soul mates
we return to the memory
of our girlish past
penciling in – our women only
dates.

The cell phone falls
from my ear
steaming coffee –
has gone cold
I add a dash of Splenda
to sweeten
the bitter taste of winter.



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

The F — Word Is Back

© 2011

Feminism is leaping

out of the cage of conformity

as black birds fly

into the face of danger

refusing to be black mailed

Into submission

by the age old taunt

harlot

women are refusing

to accept – disguised piety

gender apartheid

no longer content (as if they ever were)

with car keys in hand

the woman of Riyadh

have refused to be

invisible silent children

they have taken to the highway

if the prophet Mohammed's wife

Aisha could lead an army of men

on camel

willing women will – pave

the road into the 21st Century

Dying on the Vine

© 2011

My garden
lies fallow.
A patchy fog
descends over
threadbare meadows
where naked
brittle arms
hang denuded
off tree trunks.
A wispy moon
hovers above
casting – a sliver
of silver light.
Strolling breezes
gather hues
of drying
amber leaves
blanketing the earth
from winters frost

I patiently wait –
for the pregnant
earth to blossom

On My Own

© 2011

Quiet Max,
My father-in-law warned

*If you talk too much
You'll use up all your words*

Having come to that end
I began stealing from whomever
entered my dreams

their eccentricities
 their failings
 their accents

You would have thought that
that would have pleased them

But writing a tell-all about
 my family
including cousin Sondra's abortion
brought on a rebellion
The dream makers went on strike

Now on my own –
I have nothing to say

Billy Blip

By Andrew Pentis

© 2011

One, two, and three. The volume on Billy Blip's radio fluctuated between those numbers and no higher. He fingered its black dial while telling his passengers about his cat at home and his jokes for the road.

Billy Blip drove from two a.m. to seven a.m. for the International Inn, which is still located just four miles south of the airport. He steered the shuttle bus early every morning Monday through Thursday for 26 years, taking travelers to and from the terminals to catch their flights. He spent Friday through Sunday with Betty Blip, his wife, and Bonnie, their cat.

Billy was at the wheel Wednesday morning, on his third trip from the Inn to the airport, when he began chit-chatting; the four-mile route was just long enough for him to squeeze in his routine.

Billy leaned toward the man headed to Atlanta, sitting in the front seat of the shuttle and told him that Bonnie had just delivered a litter. Then he relayed a recycled joke about the knights at the roundtable and circumference and another about a girl swallowing her bubble gum. The man from Atlanta nodded along and a lone boy in the backseat pretended not to listen as he read the local paper. "That's it," Billy said. "I'm done. I did good today."

And just as Billy said this, as he always did, he pulled the shuttle up to the curb of the second island, a cross-walk from the terminal's ticket counters. Then Billy opened his door, went to the back and popped open the trunk. The Atlanta man and the boy, who hadn't mentioned his destination, grabbed their own bags, to each a duffel. Neither wanted their driver lifting the luggage.

Billy Blip was 67 years old.

Billy said so long before reentering the cab of his stunted bus. He outlined with his right thumb and index finger the

thick, unframed lens on his glasses, pushing them to the bridge of his nose. Then he sighed and saw yet again that familiar sight: his passengers walking through sliding-glass doors and disappearing in the early morning. Billy always watched them go.

Aside from that circular, four-mile jaunt from the Inn to the airport, Billy Blip didn't drive. Betty ran the errands, which mostly consisted of buying groceries at the town market, and Billy stayed home. He actually hadn't left the area since he was a twenty-something Marine based in Raleigh in the 1960s.

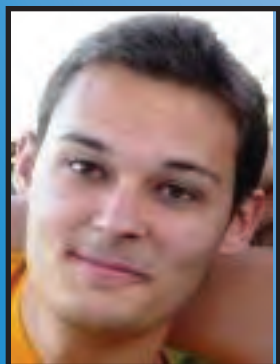
At this point in his life, all Billy had in his life was Betty, Bonnie and his low-paying, low-maintenance job. Billy didn't need to work. But he did need to get out of the house. And he didn't mind waking up early. In fact, he didn't sleep past six a.m. one morning after his corps training as a young man.

The only sign of Billy's service (and really the only sign of his personal life) that his morning passengers saw was his blue hat. Gold stars lined the bill and something relating to his old unit was sewn in gray thread on the front. His long white hair fell out the back but fell short of reaching his shirt collar.

Sometimes passengers asked him about that hat. Most often, though, Billy wouldn't stop talking long enough for one to jump in; he was too busy turning the radio's volume up and then down to tell his jokes.

That was the case on Thursday, during Billy's last drive on his last work day before the weekend. At six-thirty a.m. in front of the Inn, he picked up a woman in her sixties who was an expatriate living in Panama. She wanted to

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Andrew Pentis was named the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication's May 2010 Outstanding Undergraduate Student in Print. Andrew is a sports journalist, but he aims to carve out more time to write fiction. Learn more about the writer at andrewpentis.wordpress.com or send him an email at apentis@gmail.com.

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tell Billy all about living there, among the locals, and not in the high-rises situated on the hills overlooking them. She wanted to tell him about the torrential rains and the respite from angry Americans. But just after the woman handed her bag to Billy for storage and found the handle to the front door, Billy was already midway through a story. He must have started up while standing behind the shuttle, talking to no one but himself and the rising sun and cool morning air.

Billy told the woman about Bonnie's three-kitten litter. He said Bonnie birthed it while lying next to him in bed and explained that this is unusual, that cats typically make themselves scarce during labor, that Bonnie must have trusted him. Like the Atlanta man the day before her, the Panama woman nodded along and pretended to care. She was actually dog person.

Then Billy told his two jokes – the one about the origin of the knights table and the other about the girl with a tummy full of chewing gum. The woman found neither especially comical but nervously giggled at both. Just as her light laughter subsided, Billy stopped at his usual spot at the curb – at the second island, one cross-walk from the ticket counter to let off his lone and last rider. He watched her disappear through the moving doors, returned to the van and adjusted his thick glasses. Then, as he anticipated the end of his work week, his return home to Betty and Bonnie and her three kittens, Billy did something strange; Billy wondered.

He considered leaving his shuttle at the curb and walking through those doors, looking up at the flight board, picking a destination and, simply, going. Just the mere thought had Billy feeling like a young man again. For the first time in as long as he could remember – which wasn't especially long – Billy had an impulse, and so he acted on it. "Somebody's gonna watch me get through those sliding doors," Billy muttered to himself as he stepped off the curb at the second island and into the cross-walk.

But just as fast as he would adjust the volume dial on his shuttle radio every morning for almost three decades – from three to two and one as he readied a planned riddle – a bus from a competing inn smacked into Billy's right hip, and Billy's heart stopped, his death not more than a Blip on most everyone's radar. Billy was gone.



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

The May 15 Third Annual The Blue Guitar Spring Festival of the Arts, held at Mesa Community College, included entertainment by, top photo, SMUDD, a rock and roll band; middle left, Jonathan Gabriel, folk/rock singer and musician; middle right, Michael E. Singer, musician, singer and luthier; and bottom photos, pianists from Arizona Classical Kids.



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

Above, poets and writers who read their works at the May 15 Third Annual The Blue Guitar Spring Festival of the Arts, held at Mesa Community College, included, from left, Lynn Black, Cora Holley, Jonelle Farr and Kelly Nelson. Below, art was performed in dance by Grupo Folklorico l'naru, who presented the music and dance forms of Puerto Rico. Bottom left, Evonne Bowling, director of MCC's Fashion Merchandising and Design Program, shared MCC students' fashion designs and wearable art. Bottom right, local artist Renee Bau displayed her paintings.



Foreign Exchange

By Tye Rabens

© 2011

I'm an American sitting at a bar in Chengdu, China, where the cloud-dulled winters lay dreary on hearts and the hot peppers taste delicious. An incomparable burn. I drink the gin and tonic slightly faster than a sip. I'm with my friends, a group of foreign students and local artists.

It's a memory now, we're still in the night club, and they're still drinking and dancing around me in erratic revolutions. Their gravitational pull on me constricts, then loosens. We're binary stars with a fading center of mass. The American semester schedule is forcing me to leave the next morning, before them, and in memory, my friends are reliving five months of mutual experiences. We resurrect our lives together that are already fading, laughing and not acting sad. Maybe my friends were thinking, *We need to prove this was real before it all slips into the past tense*. At least I was.

Sip. In memory, the gin and tonic tastes good and bites me. Regrets and anticipations bite me also in the cold, deep space of present tense. So many things I could have done with my fleeting time across the globe, but didn't.

I'd come across the Pacific Ocean in late August of 2009, hoping not just to learn a foreign language but also to make myself less foreign to me. I aspired to take a step closer to being a Citizen of the World.

Recollection: I think, increasingly buzzed and with a flight to catch in less than 12 hours, *I've lived in this place for a semester and already forgotten what it means exactly to live in my hometown*. I knew I'd forget this lifestyle as a 留学生 (foreign exchange student) even more quickly. Pseudo-adjusting to a place without quite becoming native to it. Not fully existing where I was, but not because I should have been elsewhere.

Right now: I've just returned to America. Although I'm

excited about my family, friends and prospects here, part of me never made it on the aircraft departing Chengdu. No. That's a lie. It feels more and more as if I was never there.

Recollection: The nightspot where I assembled with my friends is across the street from all the flashy, expensive, vapid nightclubs in Chengdu that I quickly came to detest. But this place, LAN Town, has a unique atmosphere, a smoky mix of traditional Sichuanese teahouse, Eastern hash den and Western college hangout.

I met my ex-girlfriend here (recollection: watching *No Country For Old Men* with Chinese captions, her on the clock at work yet falling asleep in my arms). That was before I realized how incompatible she was in too many ways. I went to China to study, not to support someone, but somehow still found myself in a moving-too-fast relationship.

我以为她是个玩意儿而已。(I thought, wrongly, that she was a toy, that's all.)

"Foreign" is looking at the pictures of European supermodels that paper the walls of your girlfriend's 12'x10' one-room apartment in southern China, wondering what she admires about their beauty and why, and then, when she re-enters the room, you kiss her anyway. Afterward you watch raunchy Japanese cartoons together, and you translate the subtitles because she can't read English and neither of you know Japanese.

Actually, that's not "foreign" to me at all. That's my life, a part of it anyway, and one of my most vivid memories. "Foreignness" is subjective, like anything abstract, and to me, having my first sexual relationship in some normal American way with a girl my parents could say "Hi" to (and not "你好"), that is foreign to my life. And unless I make continual efforts

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Tye is a freelance journalist, poet, musician and ASU undergraduate (Fall '11). He also hosts a creative writing class at Lodestar Day Resource Center in downtown Phoenix. In his spare time, Tye enjoys hiking, camping, cooking and trying to follow citizen journalism across the globe. He plans to revisit China eventually. Contact Tye at trabens@asu.edu.

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to preserve the memories of her, they'll become distant and foreign, too. Her name is 菲菲 and already she's just characters to me.

Right now: A magnificent Arizona thunderstorm breaks up the utopian Sonoran winter, welcoming my return to the American Southwest. I was born in this desert. I re-realized its beauty. The sensual details of my 老家 (old, native home) affect me once again: the mixed smell of impending rain shower and aloe. The next morning's naïve dawn sunrays, quilted pale gold on palo verde limbs.

Recollection: I want to make sure I recognize everyone who is here, right now, at LAN Town, forming elliptical shapes with me. I get up from the bar in an altered state and walk through a crowd made of humans, dimly lit and daedal. Their lives seem tangential to my own — beautifully glancing blows. People who pulse me but don't electrify the skin. Although I made the trip with no expectations but to explore myself, instead I exchanged pieces of myself for those of others. The things between us are unforgettable, exactly because they can't be articulated. We're comet tails.

Right now: I worried that everyone would get bored of my China stories before I finished telling them. It's just the opposite. I feel like a rerun, telling people at the first opportunity what I was doing last semester, how recently I got back, how fantastic it was for me. It feels disingenuous and cheap. You can't share the change that comes from losing your sense of "Foreign." Nobody asks you to try.

And that's just how it is. The stories, the memories can't and won't be easily transferrable. I can't explain on cue or in bulk. Things like ... arriving on a Chinese campus with a full, ripping bag of luggage, realizing my Mandarin isn't as good as I'd thought ... defining the English word "awkward" for my class of 54 Chinese students by acting out examples ... walking into a seedy disco called Panda Club all alone at 1 a.m., house music assaulting me in decibels, not knowing how the night ends.

Things like ... the raw green jasmine tea leaves, floating in a tall, thin glass. Sip. I remember, *The gin is better back home*. Sip. I remember: Drinking mountain tea outside and talking about Chinese history with professors, old, cigarette-worn men, us sitting together under a cool and indifferent afternoon sun. My favorite things about having lived in China are the things I'll never explain perfectly, never be asked about and slowly forget.

Shimmer

By Joshua Daniel Cochran

© 2011

Dust hung in the cab motionless, even though the truck jostled them raggedly. Sun-roving bursts of light on the windshield made it impossible for them to not blink every other moment, glares shivering and flashing as the truck bounced along, barely recovering from one shuddered jolt before the next one came. The driver, a lean-faced man with a day's stubble, thought they were on an old road leading from Burro Spring to some poor bastard's long-gone rancho, or following the crooked trail of an ancient, perennial Indian camp. Less of a road than a granite shamble in the mesquite-choked foothills, scattered with taller saguaros thick from long-forgotten rains.

The truck bounced hard and scared a hawk out of nearby creosote bush, fresh in her summer molting. He watched and pointed it out for the scowling young woman waggling in the seat beside him.

"Red Tail," he said, but she had already missed the best – the great flap of wings audible even over the creak and jolts of the truck. Two bursts of effort, then soaring.

The woman squinted from behind her enormous sunglasses, holding the enormously diaphanous hat upon her head – a flattened white disk that occasionally poked into the driver's shoulder. Why she wore it in the truck was beyond knowing. She sat up straight.

"The most common hawk out here," she said in monotone and shrugged. "Perhaps in the world."

And he could feel her roll her eyes at him for bothering, the same way she rolled her eyes when he stopped for morning coffee, OJ and one of those microwavable breakfast burritos made out of god-knows-what. The two of them hadn't really talked the whole time, not more than was necessary – finding the right turn off the highway, which road to follow,

measuring the sample sites in the glory of morning and taking the data and then moving on to the next. Besides introducing themselves at the pick-up spot in the pre-dawn darkness – Hi I'm Rebecca, Hi I'm Jeremy – there was little else beyond that and the directions and the measurements and the data.

A brutal day in the Sonoran Desert outside Tucson. Mid-June. Arizona Hot. They traversed the desert north of the city where a new retirement community was planned, and only the mechanical buzzing of cicadas in the miles surrounding them – of mesquite, wispy creosote bushes and dead-looking bursage and the lording saguaros and ever-thriving cholla – accompanied them. The cicadas quieted as the truck passed, and then began again behind them – not taking any chance in the matter of mating. The desert is harsh enough. Beyond the cicadas, a silence of heat ruled the space between the man and the woman. Oh, there were other sounds. The pathetic little truck ruttled and scraped against the branches and tumble of boulder beneath, the dust wafted in and out the cab lazily, and Jeremy, half-lidded, didn't seem inclined to keep the ride smooth.

Eventually, when both of them hit their heads on the roof after a particularly enormous bounce, she'd had enough.

"Stop! Jesus, stop!"

There were still a few bounces left in the truck before it settled completely. Balanced at a strange angle, she was positioned slightly above him in the passenger seat, still holding the hat on her head and staring with her saucer-like sunglasses too big for her face.

"The company just bought this truck," Rebecca said, a trembling authority. "You should take it easy." Her sunglasses slid down and her eyes met his in a flicker, and they were

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Undaunted by decades of disjointed intercourse with humanity, Joshua Daniel Cochran lives on, writing as if words are the answer to a question he doesn't know. He has quite a few accolades and publication credits, but nothing seems to help the three novels in his desk, generating dust. Joshua currently resides and teaches in his hometown of Tucson, Arizona, and hopes to die there one day. Reach him at aleakypen@gmail.com.

green, flashing out strangely luminescent from the alabaster paleness of her skin.

“Well if it’s so fucking new, why is the A/C broke?” Turning away from her, staring into one of the blinding bursts of light on the windshield, he put the car in reverse and rocked it flat again, wiped the sweat from his eyes and then went forward in first gear, much slower and smoother, though he found himself grinding his jaw.

The next sample site was a good half-mile from the road, so they got out and packed all the equipment. Meaning, Jeremy packed all the equipment, carried it all. Even though it was technically his job as field tech, usually the biologist helped out a little. And she was as young as he was, maybe younger. But no, not her. She adjusted the white gauzy robe she had around her upper body, the little flaps that covered her hands, and still the enormous hat. She put on sunscreen while Jeremy stood all saddled with equipment – the ropes and poles and tape measures and data forms – from his straw cowboy hat to his hiking boots, spitting shelled sunflower seeds in a senseless arc. This is how it was at the first site, he thought to himself smiling. Sunscreen before the sun had even risen! They’d used flashlights to find the coordinates and it was a doozey and she got some cholla cactus in her leg within the first twenty minutes – a great ball of nothing but golden, painful spines. Matter of fact, he thought, maybe she was still mad by the way he yanked the cactus out of her leg using sticks – on the count of two, though he told her there’d be three. But it’s the only way to do it. He spit another shell and she dusted her moist hands together silently.

“So why you wear all that?” he finally asked, motioning across at her. He’d been wanting to all day, but it was too strange. Some things you don’t want to know.

“All what?”

“You know what. All the sleeves and layers and mittens for your hands. And that hood thing.”

“Yes, yes?”

“Well, what’s it for?”

“Extreme sensitivity to the sun,” she said almost breathlessly, tying off a string at her waist. “Melanoma and all.”

Jeremy stared at her in a kind of senseless awe.

“What?” she said.

“Nothing,” he said after shaking his head so drips of sweat flicked to the ground. “Maybe Arizona isn’t the place for you.” He smiled at her. “What about Portland or something like that? Seattle?”

“I am from Portland,” she said flatly and showed him her costume, a bad Casper the Ghost, with her eyes hidden behind the saucers. “All set?” she asked, breaking his thoughtless wonder.

“Yes’m,” he said in jest, and bowed just a bit, but got no reaction. After they began to move it was his turn to roll his eyes.

And he followed her, her excruciatingly slow lanky and overly cautious walk through the desert. She held her thin arms above her waist most of the time and stumbled here or there over a stone or packrat den. The swaths of her clothing snagged on the branches. And he had to follow her. Part of him wanted to rip the maps from her, tell her to follow him and stay as close as possible, and then they’d be there in a third of the time. In five hours they’d done three sites. He could’ve done five or six by himself.

She consulted her GPS unit again and changed direction by a good twenty degree swath. And he followed her. They walked on and on and it was past noon and the height of heat. They’d been walking for too long and the desert floor tore at their feet. Sure, the air was only 112° but the ground was 140° or more. When she stopped to look at her maps and the GPS, Jeremy stood in the thin dark of a saguaro’s shade, the great cactus rising twenty feet into the blinding blue sky. He noticed she didn’t do the same but just stood out there in the middle of everything enshrouded in white and squinting behind her giant sunglasses.

“You never really been out here in the desert, have you?” he asked her, spitting out another sunflower shell. She looked at him annoyed, flipping the maps in her hand.

“Of course I have,” she snapped and went back to her map. “Just not like this,” she added softer. “Not as hot as this.”

“Look,” he said. “There’s some shade over here. By the mesquite. Let’s sit down for a minute and get our bearings.”

“I can do just fine getting my bearings right here, thank you very much.”

He shrugged and went over the mesquite and took off all the gear. The air hitting the wetness where the bands strapped against his skin made him shiver in ecstasy. Kicking away some dried lupine with his foot, he sat down and took a swig from his warm canteen. He watched her standing there, occasionally looking around at the foothills in the distance, the peaks of the Tortalita Mountains beyond, as if that would help her.

“Come on,” he said again and patted a bit of shade next to him. “It’s not much anyway, and you could use a water break.” He watched her shoulders slump in resignation. Eventually she came over and sat down, legs sidesaddle. “Can I see the maps?” he asked, and she reluctantly handed them over.

“We’ve got to be near this ravine, but I just can’t find it,” Rebecca said, tapping at the map, leaning in close enough so he could smell the sunblock and the clean salt of her sweat. “This is the ridgeline we’re on, and the site is right down over there, but I swear we went that far, probably further.”

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“What’s the GPS say?” he asked and wiped some sweat going into his eyes. But she would only look at him behind the dishes of her sunglasses. Eventually, she took the plastic rectangle and placed it in his hands.

He pushed on a few of the buttons. Nothing.

“When did the battery die?” he asked.

“Oh, about ten minutes ago,” she said like it was no big thing. She took off her hat and revealed a dirty-gold ponytail matted thick with heat and sweat. It curled its way down and against her slight neck.

The man spit into some cactus. He fumbled through his pack and took out batteries, Double As, but when he opened the GPS, his face bloated in sudden anger.

“Triple As?” he yelled in the silence. “Who the fuck uses triple A’s?” He turned on her. “And how’ve you been leading us around?” He swallowed and tried to calm his voice down. She seemed the flighty type. “I mean, how do you know where we are? I have some years experience here in the field – why the hell did you pull rank back there this morning and insist that you navigate? Huh?”

“Because I need the experience. Okay?” she said, lifting her chin at him.

“Well, experience isn’t just doing something,” he said.

“You’ve got to be taught, do it slow. Ask some goddamn questions when you don’t know what you’re doing.”

“I don’t appreciate you taking that tone with me,” she said, her lips flattened.

“Lady – ”

“My name is Rebecca.”

“Well, you can call me Jeremy, you know,” he said back.

She’d never addressed him by his name, not even once all day long. “Rebecca, do you know how to triangulate with a compass?”

He laid the maps out on the ground and picked out three peaks visible in the distance and found them on the map, took out his compass – explaining things to her the whole time, more so he wouldn’t show his anger than to be kind. He took a reading toward each peak while standing out in the sun and called the coordinates to her. When all three were done, he showed her how to reverse the coordinates, how to draw a line from each peak and then there would be three lines, a little triangle from three coordinates meeting together.

“That’s exactly where we are,” he said, pointing at the little triangle. “And look, not hardly a half mile from the next site.” He pointed through the brush and bramble into the shimmer of horizon, where heat distorted what was and what wasn’t into the same swimming brightness. “We go that way for about ten minutes. Then we can get this over with.”

During the sampling, things became routine, almost robotic with the woman. They set up the grid in a matter of minutes, and Jeremy insisted that she come over to see a shed rattlesnake skin. Her face remained blank and unimpressed. Back to recording the vegetation volume samples. They worked for a biological consulting firm, hired by a huge new development coming in – golf courses, shopping malls, the works. Their job was to show the Fish and Wildlife Service that there was nothing out here but rock and dirt, and Jeremy was often confused to a sadness and anger knowing he would be the last to see this desert before it was destroyed and bladed to flatness and cheap housing for a bunch of people about to die.

They set up their poles in silence and both shared a rare laugh when the line took them through the crown of a foothills palo verde and beside a small saguaro. The volume count would be high here, more for the developer to compensate in supplementary landscaping and natural areas. And they measured at each decimeter in height, every meter along, species and volume or none. Usually none. Then in a grid, then again, then pack up to go. The whole thing could take an hour or less. At least this time the line didn’t go through any cholla.

Barely finding their way back to the truck, they set out their late lunch beneath the solid shade of an ironwood tree. Jeremy looked at it and cleared out the dried forbs beneath it for them to sit and looked for an owl’s nests in the crooks of its great arms but there was none. When he sat down – Rebecca was busy extricating herself from all her protective clothing – he mentioned that the tree was probably fifteen hundred years old.

“Just think of how many animals have sat in this very shade, how many natives collected the nuts and roasted them...” He seemed lost in thought and spit out another shelled sunflower seed. “All that time.” But she didn’t say anything. “Isn’t that crazy?”

“I don’t know,” she said and stepped over into the shade.

“And they’re just going to blade it right over. Not even use the wood. Some of the strongest wood in the world. They burn it in pits, you know. With all sorts of other trees, saguaros, crushed animals. Have you seen the pits?”

“I’m just doing my job,” she snapped at him and took off the hat, her sunglasses. Her eyes cut into his face so he had to look away. “This is what we’re being paid to do, what you’re being paid to do too. So don’t get all preachy on me.”

They opened their lunch coolers and began fumbling with the contents.

“I just like being out in the desert,” Jeremy said, almost too quiet to hear. He popped the can of soda open and held his mouth over the opening to catch the fizz. He unbuttoned the

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top few buttons of his shirt. He smiled at the breeze hitting his chest. The sound of Rebecca crunching on some chips made him cast a sideways glance at her. Still all in white, but just pants and a thin shirt still wettened and showing the slight difference of color of her skin beneath, along her ribs. He thought perhaps she could be considered pretty. Not with all the protective gear, but like this, her legs sidesaddle again... he liked the pouty shape of her mouth and the green of her eyes, almost too green. He unwrapped his sandwich and sour tuna smell washed around them both and he took a bite and gagged on it, spitting out messily to the side.

“Gah. Jesus, that’s rank,” he said. When he turned back, she was smiling at him.

“What’s wrong?”

“I don’t know,” he said, throwing the rest of it away from them, downwind. “Maybe the mayo went bad.” He stared at her while she laughed. “What?”

“Any moron knows mayonnaise isn’t going to do well in this heat.”

“Any moron, eh?” he said. “Well, most morons can read a map and find the way back to the truck before we both die. Besides, it was that special kind of mayonnaise, the kind in the little packets that don’t need any refrigeration.”

She laughed, covering her mouth and looking at him between breaths of air.

And he thought she was pretty again, and cursed himself for such thoughts. Instead, he busied over the remainder of his lunch – a bag of salty, crushed-up chips and the warm soda. When she offered him a piece of her own sandwich, he shook his head.

“What is that stuff?” he asked the strange-looking offering.

“Couscous,” she said and munched away. The crunch of lettuce was even audible and he noticed an ice-pack in her cooler and felt like a fool.

The rest of lunch was relatively silent. Jeremy took off his hat and placed it upside down some twenty feet away and sat back down next to her. He took a pebble and tossed it toward the hat and it flew wide, missing. After ten throws, he’d managed to hit the rim and one actually went in but bounced out.

“Shit,” he said.

“So,” Rebecca said with a sing-song tone to her voice. “Is this what people from Arizona do for fun?” She watched him flick another rock and it missed.

“The morons, anyway,” he said and smiled at her eyes, squinty and mischievous. “Why don’t you give it a try,” he said. And she did. They tossed pebbles at the hat and made fun of each other when they were wide, or cooed when they came close. Jeremy managed a few in the hat and when Rebecca tossed one and it landed perfectly inside she clapped her hands

together and laughed. Jeremy liked the sound of it and laughed too. “That’s my girl,” he said. “Just like that.”

She tensed up beside him. He threw another pebble and missed.

“Maybe we should go now,” she said, her voice flat and business-like. She sat up straight and brushed the brambles from her now-dried shirt.

The next and last site of the day was difficult and took almost an hour to find. A lush arroyo at the base of a rocky bluff, there were dozens of species, hundreds of hits along the grid. They worked the data collection in near silence. For the first twenty minutes or so, Jeremy tried to get her to laugh again, that trickling laugh, or say something. He tried telling a few stupid jokes he’d heard other men tell with ease, but his words came out wooden. He eventually shut up and concentrated on the task at hand, the buzzing cicadas, the crunch of dried ground beneath his heel, but he couldn’t think beyond her sudden change. She ignored him outright, hidden in her negative shadow of white cloth, and muttered “Mamillaria Microcarpa, one decimeter” or “Acacia Greggii, third decimeter” as they went along the grid.

By the time the site was finished, their shadows played out long and gangly and intermingling on the walk back to the truck.

Packing up, Jeremy felt a sinking of dread in his stomach. The drive back to the highway would be at least an hour, then another hour after that into Tucson. She wouldn’t look at him as she shed her protective gear, wouldn’t speak to him, and he wondered what he had done. Then a flash of heat rose into his neck and face and he was suddenly angry. After all, what right did this woman who knew nothing of himself or the desert or maps have to ignore him like this? To treat him like some ‘moron’ as she’d said. She waited in the truck while he banged and thrashed all the gear into the bed of the truck and then got into the cab, slamming the door as hard as he could so some piece within it could be heard breaking and trickling down the inside. It felt good for some reason.

“What’s wrong with you?” she said.

“What’s wrong with me?” he said and started the truck, revving the little engine too much. “What’s wrong with you?” He gave her a look and started off down the dirt track slowly, making sure not to bounce too much, though he liked it, liked to ride the dirt roads like an amusement ride, bouncing and sliding and skidding through the dust. He eventually looked over at her and she’d taken off her hat at least, even her sunglasses. She looked away from him out the window. “What did I do?” he

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said at the slender curve of her neck.

“Nothing,” she said, still looking out the window. “Forget it.” And he waited for more but that was all and they rode along in silence as the shadows elongated and slanted in the waning sun.

And he gave up. He’d probably never have to work with her again, so let her get all pissy. What did he care? He took out a lone cigarette from the unused ashtray and put it in his mouth.

“Mind if I smoke?” he said, and he nearly dropped it from his mouth when she turned at him, eyes aflame with green.

“It’s that stupid thing you said back there at lunch,” she snapped, then turned to look out the passenger window.

“What stupid thing?” His mind reeled and he looked around to perhaps find the answer scrawled on the roof of the cab or in the surrounding desert. Several stupid things flashed through his mind. “Is this about the mayonnaise?”

“When you said that there’s my girl stupidity,” she nearly spat.

“Well,” he sighed and took the cigarette out of his lips. He knew that his brain often didn’t work as fine as he imagined it to. He didn’t want to make a long, terrible drive even worse by saying something rash or mean, but he didn’t know why the hell she was so angry. The cigarette in his lips made his mouth water in anticipation. But he had to speak, say something. “Well, I didn’t mean anything by it, if that’s what you’re getting at.”

“It was just such a stupid, chauvinistic thing to say, that’s all.”

“Oh my God, are you serious? You one of those modern women, huh? Mad at the whole history of the world like it’s us that did it. Me.” The heat rose into his neck and suddenly he didn’t care what he said. The truck moved faster and bounced with more frenzy against the ruts and boulders. “What the hell is wrong with saying something like that?” And she looked at him again with an icy stare.

“Well, for one thing I’m lesbian,” she said and turned away.

At this, his mouth shut with a click of teeth and the silence between them returned solid and unchanging for quite some time – Jeremy staring with a semi-scowl out the windshield, Rebecca staring out the passenger window. Eventually, Jeremy came to an understanding and this understanding was that he no longer cared what this woman thought or how he might have slighted her with such an innocent remark, after a small moment of happiness in a long day of sweat and work and silence and tension.

“You’re not a lesbian,” he said at the windshield. “You’re a woman. And I’m a man.”

“What the hell is that supposed to mean?” she said incredulously.

“It means that you are a woman, a woman,” he bulged his eyes at her. “Just because you like other women doesn’t make

you something else than that.”

“Are you really that stupid?”

“So you’re not a woman?” he asked.

“Of course I’m a woman – ”

“That’s right,” he interrupted. “You were born a girl and grew into a woman. You’re a biologist for shit’s sake, you should know about these things. And you’re a woman, not some lesbian. There’s no such thing.” He smiled at her poisoned expression. “Look, what I’m saying is that men are men and women are women. And if you’re a woman who happens to like women, you’re still a woman. Words like gay and lesbian are just that – words.” He had to stop for breath. And he didn’t look at her face staring at him, but remained focused on the road, or the speckles of dust on the windshield.

“That may have been the dumbest thing I have ever heard,” she said softly, her own pale skin turning red at the throat. “Do you think it’s just a fun thing to do?”

“No. Just don’t pretend to be something you’re not, is all I’m saying.” If he’d been watching her more closely, he might have cringed.

“The more you talk, the dumber you sound,” she said in an acid voice. “You do realize this, don’t you?”

“I suppose I’ve known it all my life.” And he fell into a silence for a while, letting her calm down for a while, but the words itched at his tongue. “Listen,” he said uncertainly, trying again. “Women who have loved a woman, or men who have loved a man – they’ve been around since the beginning of time. That’s all I’m saying – trying to say.” He silently hoped to end the conversation, to have her understand.

“You think being gay is some temporary thing, like we can help or control it.”

“You’ve always been a lesbian?”

“Yes. Of course.” She widened her green eyes at his open-mouthed glance.

“And you’ve never been attracted to a man? Never?”

They bounced along and he waited for an answer. He stole a look at her profile. Beyond her, the sky was beginning to turn. Just like that, the light, the very air turned a tinge of orange and rust. The furthest clouds westward were ablaze in orange yet tinged with pink along the fringes.

“Of course I’ve been attracted to a man,” she said under her breath. “Dated a few men.” Then she turned on Jeremy and grabbed his shoulder, pulling at him. “A more interesting question would be if you have ever been attracted to another man.” And she let go of his arm in a kind of satisfaction. He had flinched and stiffened beneath her touch. “Have you?” she almost demanded of him.

Instead of speaking, he put the cigarette back in his mouth and pushed in the cigarette lighter with a flickering motion and

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waited for it to pop out. He honestly tried to think about what she said. Memories and mind roiling across a great expanse of a lifetime and the strangeness of physicality. When the lighter popped, he pushed the reddened tip of it hard against his cigarette and pulled, pulled the smoke into his lungs with a ferocity he didn't understand. But something was terribly wrong, terribly. Poison. It felt like poison. He choked and coughed and nearly swerved off the road and almost threw up. When he pulled the cigarette from his mouth, he saw he'd lit the wrong end, the filter smoked halfway down. And as he continued to cough and gag, he could hear Rebecca laughing lightly beside him, a secret laugh. He looked at her profile through eyes blurred with burning tears and spoke with a ragged throat.

"You knew I had it in backward," he managed to croak before descending into another bout of coughing that reddened his face and tore up his throat. "Why didn't you say anything?" His voice just a scraping sound. But there was only that secret laughing.

"Oh, you're a man, all right," she said toward the sky, wiping a tear of joy from her eye.

"And you sure are a woman," he said gravelly, his voice weakened. He tossed the cigarette into the ashtray. "I only get one. I used to smoke a lot. Been looking forward to that all day. Thanks." He didn't hide his anger anymore and felt like punching something. He tried to think back on when he'd been so angry and couldn't remember such a time but he really didn't know why.

So the ride and the day diminished to a quiet solemnity between bouts of Jeremy coughing violently. Neither of them spoke the rest of the drive out. The buzzing cicadas tapered away and the lonely crickets took over in the deepening pools of purple shade at the base of trees. The typical holocaust Arizona sunset illuminated all, every scraggy rock or dead stick or cactus. The world turned golden and amber as the sun dipped below the jagged horizon. Rebecca's face and errant hair flowed in the breeze of motion. They rode with grim expressions – first man and woman in a splendor of the indescribable. And in another breath, the color drained and the air cooled ten degrees, taken over by a blue hue, turning ever gray and black with eventually only the harsh spray of headlights in the inky night and green dashboard glow against their faces. They were close to the gate leading back out into the world of pavement and breakfast burritos.

"You never answered my question," Rebecca said looking out the windshield at the road and surrounding trees and shrubs and cacti bleached unnatural in the jostling headlights.

"What?" he croaked and cleared his throat and said it again.

His mind had been floating along someplace with no name. He was no longer angry, no longer anything really, just floating along in a chunk of steel. He didn't understand what she was saying.

"Have you ever been attracted to a man?" she said gently.

"Oh, yeah." And the question did return to him and so did its answer. He felt no need to lie. "I suppose I've found men attractive like I can notice a handsome man over an ugly one, that kind of thing," he said and sighed. "But a sexual attraction or love? Wanting to be with and..." He gulped. "You know. Naked and have sex with a man? No." And after a while of no response, added – "Never. But that doesn't mean that someday I wouldn't."

"Come on!" she said and shook her head. "No. You're heterosexual for sure," she said like it was a diagnosis of some terrible disease, and he noticed her face illuminated by the dashboard, the ghost of a smile across her features.

"How the hell do you know?" he said too loudly, so quieted down. "People can love anything, even themselves. So for you to say I could never love a man is..." He had to stop what he was saying to gulp and take a breath of air. He no longer knew where his words were leading.

"You could never be gay, Jeremy," she said. The first time she said his name. "You're a man for sure."

When he looked at her this time, their eyes met briefly and then simultaneously returned to the road and the steel gate and cattle guard coming into view. When they got out, opening it together, they both gasped at the moonless sky above them. Jeremy turned off the lights so they could better see the surreal opulence of so many stars hemmed in raggedly in all directions by the shadow of mountains. And they didn't say a word to each other. After a few minutes, he got in the truck and waited for her. He waited until she was back before turning on the lights and blinding out the night.

The change from so much motion bouncing along dirt roads all day to the smoothness of the highway almost disoriented them at first. Jet lag. A drunken feeling. It grew quiet now and the desert air chilled in the speed so they rolled up the windows against it and so even closer in the darkness and sound of their own breaths and motions. The radio was broken too.

Jeremy wanted to try to say something, but couldn't really think. She considered him a fool, for sure. So why bother saying anything? The hour-long drive was filled with their thoughts, unspoken. When they pulled in at the drop-off spot, he stored the gear in the back of his truck while she loaded her protective gear and cooler and such into a little import thing. He noticed a rainbow sticker on the bumper even in the weak wash of

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streetlamp.

“Been nice working with you,” she said, shutting the trunk with a click and smiling across the distance.

“Don’t lie,” he said and smiled. “It’s been a hell of a day.” He coughed again, the poison taste still there in his throat, but he didn’t spit. Reaching into his truck he pulled out a can of beer and popped the tab, taking a long swig. He gasped afterward and sighed. “Some beer?” he asked, tipping the can at her. “It’s warm, but still wet.”

After looking down for a couple of seconds, she slowly made her way over to his truck. They stood there awkwardly for a moment until he got a beer but she said she only wanted a sip of his. Rebecca took a sip and they stood there until he managed to find words in his brain.

“So I know you’re lesbian and all,” he began, eyes on their feet and the pavement. “And that’s great, you know. You probably have a nice woman waiting for you at home.” Then he could look at her, to see her smile, a secret smile beneath the green of her eyes iridescent even in the weak wash of lamplight.

“Yeah, she’s pretty special.”

“And so are you...”

Rebecca tilted her head slightly, just enough for Jeremy to sense something other than what was. He put his arm around her thin waist, pulling her close. His eyes were closed, so he couldn’t see her mild expression of shock. And at first, her body yielded. Jeremy only stopped when the pressure of two sunscreen-coated palms on his chest kept him from leaning forward any further. He opened his eyes and relaxed his arms and she slipped away, moving a strand of hair from across her face. She flickered a smile at his blank expression.

“Thank you, but... no,” Rebecca said, her green eyes suddenly unable to meet his own. She moved away.

He stood there and watched her get in her car, tipping the beer can at her in salute before she pattered away. And he stood there a long time doing nothing. He stared at where her car had been. Eventually, he shook his head at some thought, let out a croaking laugh, and finished his beer. He got in his truck and sat there, wondering on things. He turned on the radio, the oldies station, opened and drank another beer. He sat in his truck and wondered about the strangeness of what was and what could never be.

Joan McConnell

Gilbert Artist



“Twilight”

Acrylic on canvas

2010



I was born on Long Island in New York, the youngest of three sisters. My parents divorced when I was fairly young, and the many hours I played alone while my Mom worked were spent drawing and painting. I married my childhood sweetheart in 1986 and eventually moved to Arizona where we raised our son. I've worked as a Human Resources Specialist for the past 17 years, but I'm hoping at some point to make my art my new career. I have volunteered for Hope for Women's Art for the past 3 years, teaching Art at local shelters to survivors of domestic violence. I also serve on the Executive Board as Treasurer.

Joan McConnell

Gilbert Artist



"Venice"
Acrylic on canvas
2010

From the first time I wrapped my baby fingers around a crayon, I have loved to draw. In elementary school and beyond I enjoyed my art classes more than all of the others, and dreamed of being an artist. My parents supported my love for art and saved many of my adolescent "masterpieces." As I got older, and began my life as an adult, my dream of being an artist took a back seat to raising my family, and gradually I put it aside and didn't think about my dream anymore. When my teenage son took his first art class, I told him how much I'd enjoyed it when I was in school. I showed him some of my early work and he challenged me to get back to my art, and I've been painting ever since. I work with acrylics on canvas, primarily painting landscapes and seascapes. I draw my inspiration from the impressionists and nature itself, trying to capture the essence of reflection and light. Working with bright colors enables the paintings to take on an energy that draws you into each scene with a different perspective. My paintings are meant to convey a sense of tranquility. I want people to see nature in a different light, letting the painting draw them in. Someone once told me that I paint the world as I want to see it, vivid, yet peaceful. I've recently started dabbling in pet portraits, hoping to branch out in my craft.

- Joan McConnell

Joan McConnell

Gilbert Artist



"Long Island Sunset"
Acrylic on canvas
2007

Joan McConnell

Gilbert Artist



"Turbulent Sea"
Acrylic on canvas
2007

Joan McConnell

Gilbert Artist



“Purple Haze”

Acrylic on canvas

2008

Donated to the Boys and Girls Club for auction

3 Poems by Lilvia Soto

Poison Letter

© 2011

Near Kiryat

close to the border with Lebanon

a beautiful pre-teen

of golden pig tails

and proud smile

writes to her Lebanese contemporaries,

signs her shell

From Israel and Daniele.

Two soldiers on a tank observe,

her friends wait their turn,

her mother, beaming with pride

encourages

the poisoning of her daughter.



Lilvia Soto lives in Tucson, Arizona. She has a Ph.D. in Latin American literature, and has taught at Harvard and other American universities. She has published academic essays, short fiction, poetry, and literary translations in anthologies and journals in Spain, Canada, the United States, Mexico, and other Latin American countries. She has two poetry manuscripts about the Iraq wars, and is currently working on a collection about the recovery of familial memory and cultural roots. The poems in this issue are from her bilingual collection *Under the Words / Bajo las palabras*.

The Soldier's Words

© 2011

The soldier says he could
write poems if he wanted to
but doesn't understand
that in the Empire he defends
poetry is high treason
and words for his pen
are not standard issue.

He didn't see them
flying
the jagged flight
of Baghdad swallows
deafened by the explosions.

He did not sense them
trembling
on the lips of a baby
born by Caesarean
the day before the war began
so he could flee in his mother's arms
from the menaced city.

He did not hear them
choking
in the throat of the boy
who begged
*Water, Mister,
please, Mister, water*
when soldiers invaded his village.

He has not heard them
howl
when a man sees his children
blown up in front of his eyes
or whimper
when a boy loses his brothers
and both of his arms.

The soldier doesn't know
the words of poems
curse
when a fly alights
on the face of a moribund child,
and gag
with the stench of death
in a ransacked hospital.

He does not know
they are silent
when a soldier sits
on a dirt road
a small body in his arms.

two skies

© 2011

I

from one fall
laments
for the death of a beloved dog
of the lover's bird
of the lover herself
praises
for the pleasure of the hand that caresses the lover's cat
tears
for the death of the son
the brevity of youth
the loss of freedom
songs
of dawn, night
the river of life

they are the breath of poets and philosophers

Lorca, Basho, Paz
Baudelaire, Catulo, Yeats
Wang Wei, Neruda, Whitman
al-Mutanabbi, Nezahualcōyotl

words with a far away flavor
that float down on the plazas
alleys and balconies
of Chihuahua

wisdom from other lands and times
that drops in the hands of
grandmothers taxi drivers
young scholars

a gift from the government of Chihuahua
an invitation to the festival of reading
and the written word

II

in a distant land
children playing in front of their houses
or running along the seashore
pick up the words
that fall from the skies
of Qana, Tyre, Sidon

*evacuate your villages
become refugees
or cadavers
you will be*

with their parents and grandparents
they abandon their homes
on the road
the bombs of Israel
rain on them

next to fallen bridges
torn roads
buses in flames
lie
the cadavers of the exodus

the skies of Lebanon
do not open for groans of grief
gestures of forgiveness
remembrance of pleasure
odes to a new dawn
only for cannibal lust
only for vulture words

Note: In the summer of 2006 the State of Chihuahua, Mexico, held its 7th Book Festival. One of its events was to scatter from a helicopter thousands of poems from different cultures and historical periods all over the city. The same summer, from July 13 through August 14, Israel dropped fliers all over Lebanon warning people to abandon their villages and join the exodus out of their country. They were told if they did not leave their homes, they would be bombed. Thousands fled, their houses and villages were destroyed, and they were bombed in their cars and buses while attempting to escape.

Team Dixie Diner

By J. Michael Green

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Team Dixie Diner was more motley than the normal motley crew of Marines. Recon is an all-volunteer outfit and it attracted a variety of characters. Some thought they were the toughest men who ever walked, some needed to test themselves, and some just wanted to be the best. As bad as some of them were in Stateside billets, they were damned good Recon Marines.

Chester, our point man, was from Bar Holler, West-By-God-Virginia. Coal country. He grew up “huntin’ and fishin’ and just trompin’ through the woods.” A little over a hundred years ago he would have been a mountain man along with Kit Carson and Jim Bridger. He joined the Army after high school and spent a few years with 82nd Airborne. He went home and began working in the mines and was miserable. Viet Nam was nearly at its peak so Chester decided he should compare the Army and Marine Corps. The man was a natural in the bush. He could read sign better than any man in the battalion. More important, though, was the sixth sense he’d developed during years of hunting. He was not a big man but appeared larger than he was because of his stature and confidence.

Ronnie, our “slack” or second point, was from Denver. A tall, gangly, loose-limbed sort, he displayed a lot of grace when we had time for sports. His family spent weekends in the Rockies, hunting and fishing in the summer and skiing in the winter. He had a strong baritone and sang in a high school band and always led our songfests when we had time for frivolity. He joined the Corps right out of high school and heard about Recon. He’s another natural in the bush and this was his second tour in ’Nam. He had been a corporal twice and was a PFC for the third time. Booze and fighting were his undoing.

Herb, a Navajo from Arizona following in his father’s footsteps, was our radio operator. His old man had been a Code



The author at the Dixie Diner in Vietnam in 1968.

Talker during WWII and had earned a Silver Star on one of the Pacific Islands. Herb was a cowboy, more comfortable on a horse than on foot, but he could move through the bush like a spirit. The jungle was alien to him, but his childhood training in the scrubland of Northern Arizona had taught him how to hide and move gently without leaving signs. He also had the leg strength to carry the 25-pound radio in addition to the other gear we all carried.

Then came The Mule. A Louisiana Cajun from the Bayou country. The rest of the team was skinny, maybe 20 to 30 pounds underweight from too much exertion and too few calories. We ate canned C-rations instead of going to the mess hall since the cooks made everything they prepared taste like a mixture of boiled cardboard and dirt. Not The Mule. When we

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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.

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were in the rear he ate at the mess hall three times a day and ate C-rats between meals. To save weight on patrol we carried one meal a day. The Mule carried a case – a case – of C-rats. Twelve meals for a five-day patrol. This man had a physique: large biceps, big pecs, well-defined abs, even lats. We made him carry the M-60 machine gun. Our M-16s weighed about seven pounds and the bullets were .223 caliber. The M-60 was a 30-pound weapon and the bullets were .308 caliber. The difference in weight between 500 M-16 rounds and 500 M-60 rounds was a whole bunch. We calculated one time that The Mule carried about 125 pounds when we started a patrol, and the rest of us carried 90 to 100 pounds.

Larry was new to Viet Nam and our team, Nicky New Guy in Marine slang. He was a lumberjack from Western Oregon, a brute of a man with hands that could squeeze a rock into pebbles. Like most over-sized men he was soft-hearted and kind. He had only been with us for a few weeks and no one knew him well. The Mule was due to rotate back to the World in less than a month, and we had Larry pegged as our machine gunner. He had the muscle to carry The Pig.

Our Tail-End Charley was a bantam rooster from New York City, a Puerto Rican by heritage and birth. Angel was a little man with the heart of a lion. He was always yakking and laughing and joking and playing practical jokes but could turn into a snarling fit of fury at the drop of a hat. The TC position was very important to the team and Angel was well suited for it. He had to watch our rear to make sure we weren't being followed and that we left no signs of our passage.

Me? I was the team leader, third man on patrol right behind Ronnie. I'm a desert rat from California. My father owned an automotive repair shop, and I found I had an aptitude for mechanics. I spent two years at our local junior college and received my AA, but the war in Viet Nam was heating up and I wanted my piece of it, so I enlisted. Naturally, the Corps made me a mechanic and sent me to Camp Pendleton. Duty in Southern California was good, but I joined the Marine Corps to fight, not repair motors. I volunteered for recon.

We were an eight-man team, but Glenn was doing the ritual partying on R & R.

Dixie Diner had been tasked with conducting a five-day patrol in the mountains south of Camp Rock Pile. This part of Viet Nam was karst – limestone deposits eroded into deep valleys – and dense, triple-canopy jungle. The Rock Pile was a circular monolith about 1,000 yards in diameter and 1,000 yards tall. Camp Rock Pile, housing a Marine infantry company, was in the valley along Route 9 below the monolith.

We caught a convoy to The Rock in the afternoon and were assigned a bunker for the night. The following morning we walked out of the wire in the midst of a platoon during their

morning sweep of their perimeter, hoping any NVA watching would assume we were part of the platoon. The platoon moved about 500 yards southwest into the tree line and turned southeast. We stepped aside and let them pass us, then stayed in ambush position for about a half-hour listening for anything unusual and watching the grunts' back trail.

Once we were confident that the NVA weren't following the grunts, I signaled Chester to move out. Stealth was our primary method of remaining undetected in the bush. When we spoke at all, we didn't speak above a whisper. We didn't cook because of the cooking smells; there's nothing like a can of cold beans and franks for your only meal of the day. We moved slowly, sometimes less than one hundred yards an hour. Chester would move two or three or five slow, careful steps, then listen and scan the ground, the flanks, and the trees for anything out of the ordinary. Move a few steps, look and listen.

We moved about 2,000 yards and gained about 2,500 feet in elevation the first day and found a sheltered thicket to spend the night. We were now in our Recon Zone and could begin searching in earnest for evidence that NVA had been through the area. Our briefing two days before had reported the presence of an enemy regiment somewhere in this area, and it was our job to find them.

Before noon of the third day we found a small recently-used trail and Chester soon found a spot where we could observe the trail without being seen. We watched three groups of four to ten men moving east along the trail. We decided to follow the trail a bit and see where they were headed. We never used trails because many of them were booby trapped. Plus, we could easily bump into NVA coming the other way. Instead, we moved parallel to the trail, silently moving between trees and brush and rocks.

We followed the trail about 2,000 yards and stopped when Chester heard voices. We found a decent observation post above the voices where we could see a little piece of the trail. It sounded like a base camp below us. Sounds of laughter and wood being chopped for cooking fires indicated that our presence wasn't known. We watched four more small groups moving east along the trail, all carrying AK-47 rifles over their shoulders.

It was miserably hot, what we called the 99s – 99 degrees and 99 percent humidity. Sitting still in the shade helped but sweat continued to bead on our foreheads and run down our backs and arms. Our camouflage paint itched like a case of poison ivy. Most of us draped olive drab bath towels around our necks to both cushion pack straps and allow us to wipe sweat from our faces.

It was getting late and we hatted out for a less-crowded neighborhood. We climbed the ridge behind us and found a

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small clearing where we could shoot a couple of sights with the compass and confirm our position. We called in the coordinates of the base camp and requested an artillery fire mission for just before dark when we would be out of the area.

We moved about 2,000 yards north and found a harbor site just as the cannon-cockers fired the mission on the base camp. There were probably some irate NVA back there.

At first light we continued through our RZ, not finding any fresh signs. We were moving north and west in the direction of Camp Rock Pile, knowing the mission would end the next day. Chester signaled for us to stop and waved me forward. He had found a small trail that had recently been used by a few men. The men were moving north and were probably in an OP watching Camp Rock Pile. We knew there were NVA all around us but not where or how many.

We continued moving north and west and had traveled nearly 1,000 yards placing us near the crest above Camp Rock Pile. The jungle had become quiet, which usually indicated the presence of humans although our slow movement and lack of noise seldom alarmed the local fauna. The terrain had steepened and we had to ensure each step we made was stable before we placed weight on that leg. We entered a flat area with little ground vegetation, a steep drop to the left, and a ten-foot-high rock outcrop to the right. Chester stopped to scan the area and decided it was safe. He moved along the base of the outcrop to where the foliage began to thicken.

Once we entered the thicker brush we had to reduce our intervals from about 15 yards to less than five yards to retain visual contact with the man in front of us. We had moved about 25 yards inside the foliage when Chester stopped and waved me forward. Another trail, this one not used for several weeks.

That's when all hell broke loose.

Someone fired an M-16, a full magazine on automatic. The muffled sounds of someone yelling filtered through the dense brush. We all hit the dirt and wondered whether this was to be the day we died. I whispered to Chester to back off, watch the trail, and protect our front, then began to crawl toward the noise. There was no more gunfire but the yelling continued. No, not yelling, I thought. Screaming ... it's someone screaming! Every Marine on the team was doing what I was doing: crawling toward the sound of a firefight. As I neared

the outcrop, the screaming grew louder. Then laughing. Laughing? Now I was confused.

I reached Ronnie, who had left the trail before I had. He was on his stomach, his rifle on the ground, and his head on his arms – and he was laughing! My other teammates were on their knees, and they were laughing too. The whole damned team was laughing. I struggled to my feet and moved past the foliage.

Angel was doing pirouettes around the little clearing, screaming at the top of his lungs with a wild look in his eyes and plunging his Ka-Bar, first over his right shoulder and then over his left, at a little brown mass sitting on top of his pack. The little brown mass was dodging the Ka-Bar and banging on Angel's head.

A friggin' rock ape.

I couldn't help it. I laughed.

I was leery about getting close to Angel the way he was flinging his knife hither and yon. I stood at the edge of the clearing and waved my arms but he made three circles before he noticed me. Angel had to be exhausted after several minutes of dancing, leaping, and thrusting his knife. He weighed maybe 125 and was carrying at least 90 pounds of assorted weapons, food, and water in addition to the monkey on his back. He finally stopped dancing and screamed for me to shoot the NVA although he used a considerable amount of vulgarity to get his point across.

I had to do something before those nasty looking claws or teeth made Angel into a medivac. Since the little monkey had no intention of jumping off Angel's pack, I had to prod it several times with my rifle barrel before it shrieked and jumped back onto the rocks. The monkey was maybe three feet tall and sixty pounds. It seemed to be berating me for spoiling its fun and even threw a couple of loose rocks at me.

It was a good five minutes before Angel was calm enough to tell us what happened. Turns out the monkey had jumped on his pack as he walked past the rock outcrop and he thought it was an NVA. He'd pointed his M-16 over his head and held the trigger down until the magazine was empty. When that didn't work, he pulled his Ka-Bar and started stabbing at the monkey. The monkey was beating on Angel's head with open palms the whole time.

It was another ten minutes before everyone was calm enough to become a Recon team again. We reported our position and beat feet out of the area since any local NVA would know we were there and would be looking for us.

From that day on Angel was known as Monkey Boy.

Into The Light

By William W. Don Carlos

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“Get up Tommy, it’s time. And don’t make me have to climb them stairs again. I expect you to get yourself up.”

Tommy yawned as he pushed back the quilt from his face. He stared through what looked like a tent opening at the attic ceiling. The early morning light cast long shadows in his room. Spaceship and airplane models hovered, suspended by wires in the rafters above his bed. They looked more lifelike in this light. His yawn was part shudder in the cold air. The chill autumn drafts that found their way into the farmhouse made his breath look like white vapor trails. Tommy lay there, forming an *O* shape, blowing softly. When he got it just right it looked like engine plumes – a space battle above his bed. Outside, he heard the growling sound of the tractor starting. He listened to its *put-put* as the cold engine came to life. He added more warm breath as exhaust for one of the airplane’s engines. As he heard the sound of the tractor sputter he imagined the plane had just been shot high up in the sky.

Pa pounded on the door and Tommy jumped, reacting as if it was a direct hit. The sounds of the tractor and his daydream had cloaked the thump of his heavy boots and cane on the wooden steps. The doorknob creaked and turned. The door suddenly swung open, banging against the faded wallpaper. “You’re gonna rot in that bed, boy. Come on now and help me finish this whole mess you started.” He stood there, holding a steaming cup of coffee against his belly; his profile half-darkened in the shadows at the top of the narrow attic stairs. Pa was dressed in the same old pair of stained, faded khaki trousers, brown boots, western-style shirt, and a blue denim jacket. The smell of coffee and cigarettes intruded into the crisp air as he leaned in with a gruff unshaven expression that meant business.

Tommy watched him turn, leaning on his cane grunting

and struggling to descend the stairwell, his limp syncopating the slow rhythm. Tommy stood on the bedsprings and began marching in circles trying to match the cadence after Pa’s head had disappeared from view. Tommy tried to imagine what it must have been like for Pa when he had the accident. He had slipped one day as he climbed onto a manure spreader. The description was ghastly – the coppery smell of blood mixed with the pungent cow dung, flies swarming, Pa screaming and flailing like he was being butchered. They said he shouldn’t have made it. He somehow got back to the truck, bound his left leg just above the mangled flesh and bone with his leather belt and drove himself to the neighbors. Ma says he just never was the same after that. Something more was torn from him besides chunks of his leg. Pain pills sometimes made him happy, other times he would fly into a rage. It kept him home from the war. Or as older brother Joey liked to say, it kept the war at home.

The boy hopped to the floor. The cold wood stung his feet; he jumped to the rug just in the nick of time. At his feet lay his brother’s Boy Scout flashlight, next to some of his treasure-pile: a stack of *10 Story Fantasy* and *Dynamic Science Fiction* magazines. He picked up the latest one, the *10 Story Fantasy*, September 1951 issue. The cover story was *Tyrant and Slave-Girl on Planet Venus*. He rubbed at the sleep in his eyes then stared at the illustration. The brave hero was just about to save the slave girl from the whip-wielding clutches of the evil tyrant. Tommy’s flashlight batteries had given out some time after that. The tyrant’s shiny helmet gleamed. As he sat down on the edge of the bed and turned to read the ending he heard the clump, caw-clump, of his father’s boots on the porch. Out in the yard, Lady was barking. As he listened to the sound of the boots on the porch he carefully put the magazines back in the hid-

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ing spot. Sometimes Tommy had to rescue them from the trash where Pa would throw them.

He whisked downstairs right past the opened bathroom door where his toothbrush waited with a tiny mound of powder on the bristles. He could hear Ma at work in the kitchen. He tucked in the other half of his shirt and sat down in front of the oatmeal bowl at the big round table. It steamed and bubbled like a swamp. He stared at it. He imagined that the bubbles might be from survivors, still alive, sinking in quicksand, but he also imagined that it could be far worse down there. The steam rose enveloping his face, tickling his chin. "There is much danger here," he muttered softly as he carefully lifted the first spoonful.

"What did you say, honey?" Ma said.

He looked up, at the back of her apron as she worked at the sink. "Is that Joey on the tractor, Ma?"

"Yes dear."

"What ya doin', Ma?"

"Tommy, you need to hurry up now. Pa's going to get after you again." She posed for a minute before her reflection in the glass of the old ticking clock. She smoothed her hair, then pinky-scraped a tiny speck of lipstick from one of her teeth.

"You cannin', Ma?" He watched the morning light streaming through the kitchen window over her shoulders. It reminded him of ray beams. On each shaft of light thousands of dust motes danced. When he squinted the motes were like a swarm of space ships descending into the kitchen. He covered one eye to better focus. He thought about what he had read under the covers last night. He imagined the tyrant's evil invasion fleet was quietly entering the house, sailing on the golden beams of light.

"What? Oh, why yes, honey. Your Pa just came in here and emptied a whole crate in the sink. I've got to can all the apples before they rot out there on the porch." She turned to face him. "And just what do you think you're doing?" she said, drying her hands on the dish towel before raising them to her hips in mock concern.

Tommy's eyes lowered to the warm oatmeal. "Oh, nothin'."

"*Nothin'*, huh? What are you daydreaming about this time, young man?"

With a small elbow on the table he leaned the side of his head against his knuckles. "Miss Johnson says the sun shines on the apple trees and they store up the energy. Miss Johnson says that's what apples are: sunlight all stored up," Tommy said.

"And now I'm gonna store up all that sunshine in the storm cellar." She hurried toward him smiling. "When the days get dark and cold, we'll just open those cans and eat some of that sunshine." Tommy grinned as she gently brushed the dimple on his cheek and combed his black hair with her fingers.

"You sure look pretty Ma. Will you bake me a sunshine pie?"

"Thank you, honey. No, I don't have time today." She smoothed the apron over her dress against her hips. She stopped to glance at the ticking clock. "You've got to hurry now and mind your Pa today Tommy. He's liable to have one of his fits if you don't."

He stared past her at the sunlight. "Ma, do you think that a sunshine pie would be as bright as the H-bomb?" Tommy asked.

"Why, what do you mean?" She paused and then knelt down beside him. "Now Tommy, I don't want you to go worrying over that again."

"Miss Johnson showed a movie on the projector in class about 'Bert the Turtle.' He taught us about what to do if you see the flash of an A-bomb. He's on them Civil Defense posters she put up outside our classroom."

"Why sure, Tommy. I heard him on the radio..."

"The song's called 'Duck and Cover!' This is how teacher showed us." Tommy jumped from his chair and crawled under the table, crouching down tightly with his arms over his head, a bit like the shape of the tortoise inside its shell.

"Wherever you are Tommy, you're going to have to make the right decision. When you see the flash it will be extremely dangerous. There'll be no time to stop and think. It sure won't be a slice of sunshine pie."

"Momma, do you think danger could come at any time like that? Do you think President Truman can stop them Russians?"

His mother sat at the table and pressed the apron down flat on her lap. "Come here, young man. We forgot our devotionals," she said, lifting him into her lap. She reached for the open Bible on the table turning the pages to *Zechariah*.

She ran her finger underneath the words as Tommy read slowly: *Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their sockets, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.* Gee, Mom, that sounds just like the H-bomb, like in *Revelations*. Tommy remembered some of the tracts he had rescued from the garbage. He liked to smooth them flat again and look at the pictures; careful not to let Pa see that he'd kept them.

"I told you honey, the angels will come to destroy evil in this world in a blaze of light."

"When, Ma? Do you think we are in danger out here in the country?"

"Pastor Robinson says it's soon. He's coming to visit for a Bible study while you and Pa are gone to town. I'll ask him again about it."

"Ma! You know Pa don't want him around here anymore."

She pursed her lips. "Now don't tell your Pa, OK?"

"I heard Pa cussin' at him from the porch last time." Tommy had spied from the stairwell. He remembered the smell of coffee and the young pastor's cologne in the living room and his shiny

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shoes. His gray suit looked unwrinkled even after he sat next to Ma on the sofa. They had spoken for a long time with soft voices. The boy liked to lean against the railing at the top of the stairs and listen to the sound. She'd been crying and he couldn't quite understand why. He saw the pastor quickly pull his hand from her shoulder and smooth back his jet black hair and adjust his tie at the sound of Pa's truck coming up the drive. Pa had thrown a fit all right – the worst yet. The pastor left in such a hurry that he forgot his hat. Tommy later found it all smashed up in the incinerator barrel out back.

He reached over to pet her arm, the smooth skin where the bruises had been. She stood him up and put both hands firmly on his shoulders, fixing his gaze. "Now Tommy, we're not going to speak of this around your father. Look at me now. Pastor Robinson cares for you and me in a special way." She stood up and removed the apron brushing at invisible creases in her pressed checkered dress. She looked like an angel or even one of the winged *Neptunian Maids*, as if there could be beautiful fragile wings carefully folded against her warm body concealed beneath her dress. She gently stroked his chin. A blush ripened her cheeks. "He will probably bring you some more candy and magazines like last time, but you mustn't tell Pa."

"Golly, do you think?" Tommy clapped his hands with glee. Visions of *Charms Sweet and Sour Pops*, *Gold Mine Gum*, *Necco's*, and *Kit's Taffy* filled his mind. He loved to stare up at them on the shelf behind the counter at Carmichael's even when Pa said he didn't have any money to spend. He put a finger to his lips. "Don't worry Ma, I won't tell."

Her answer was interrupted by Pa's voice booming from the yard: "Tommy, you done yet?"

"Oh, he'll be right there, Vernon," Ma called.

"We're burnin' daylight. Joe's out already doin' his chores, out feedin' cows; meanwhile that boy's just about as useless as tits on a bull."

Ma groaned and rolled her eyes. They looked at each other. "You better hurry up now, Tommy. When you get to Brumley's Feed & Supply you can get a little something for yourself. Don't tell him I gave you this. Now, pinky-swear me." His tiny finger locked around hers.

He stuffed the thin dime into the pocket of his corduroy overalls. "Hey Ma, what time did you say it was?" Tommy cocked his head slightly and simpered, waiting for her to complete the code – another one of their secret rituals of affection.

"Why, it's half-past kissin' time, time to kiss again." She pecked him on the cheek sending him out the door with a pat on the seat of his overalls. "Now get going."

The screen door banged loudly behind him. Tommy leapt from the porch and ran across the yard to Lady's dog house. The air was slowly warming in the sunlight. The grass was shiny,

wet, and slippery. He stopped and stood there in silence, watching his Pa lift Lady's puppies one-by-one into the apple crate. He knelt to pat the chubby flesh of one that had escaped over the edge and waddled toward him. It immediately began chewing on the hem of his overalls. He had discovered them soon after they were born a few weeks ago. Each one had a different pattern of colors. Their eyes were open now and they were into just about everything. Lady had given birth to them in the storm cellar and he had heard their tiny cries. She later moved them to the dog house, carrying each one carefully in her jaws. Jumbled together in the crate, they looked like his old bed quilt. In a couple of days he had named them all, picking out his favorite.

Sometime after that, Pa had returned from his trip to the next county. He had gotten his leg brace tightened and was in a lot more pain until he got pills from town.

Tommy cried when Pa had declared that they had to go – each and every one. He now scooped up a little pup in his hands and looked at the bottom of one of his boots to see if he'd stepped in the wrong place. The smell was keen. Steam rose from the piles and from the grass all around them, warmed by the morning light. Tommy could sense that he was exploring a distant planet in this haze. He tried to imagine he was from a race of giants, reaching down and visiting a planet of itty bitty pups.

Pa glared down at what Tommy was holding for a moment with a deep unshaven frown. "Tommy, I thought I told you to keep this dog crap cleaned up. You ain't got no time for chores if you just spend all day reading them sissy magazines? Why can't you be more like Joe?"

Lady was at his side, intently sniffing his big hands as he lifted and tossed each tiny body into the crate. The fur bunched up on their faces as he lifted each one. Tommy thought of the fat, wrinkled old men in blue denim overalls who leaned back in their metal chairs on the sidewalk in front of Brumley's Feed & Supply in town.

"You want the blanket, Pa?"

"What?"

"You want the blanket for the pups?"

He kept scooping them up with one of his big hands without looking over. "Naw. They don't need no blanket."

"Will Brumley's have a blanket for 'em? I thought you said that the momma's smell on a blanket keeps the pups from cryin' at nighttime."

"That's for purebred dogs. Here now, you stop bothering me with questions. And stop standing around. Give me that last pup." With a grunt he leaned on his cane reaching toward the boy. "No. You can't hold it while I'm drivin'. Help me lift this crate." He bent over and his hat slipped off. "Damn it," he said. Beads of perspiration rolled off the fat of his neck. A gleaming

bald patch crowned the remains of his red hair.

Then Tommy took one end of the crate and helped Pa lift it into the back of the truck. Lady barked and some of the pups began to whine. Pa swung his cane in her direction and she backed away to avoid being struck. "Hand me that wire." His big tough hands twisted the piece of baling wire round and round to tighten down the lid on the crate. He reached for the cane and turned his back on them walking around to the driver's side. "Get in," he said evenly without looking back. Tommy scrambled into the cab and plopped onto the cold, dusty seat.

Pa put his cane in first and then pulled himself in with his massive arms. Tommy looked at how his belly pushed against the steering wheel. He knew enough to keep himself from giggling. Pa was usually in a little better mood after breakfast. Tommy sat on the huge cab bench, watching while Pa tried to get the sputtering engine going. The truck jerked and shook in place while the engine warmed. Tommy turned back to watch as Lady pulled at her chain and barked as they drove off. Tommy glimpsed the motionless silhouette of his mother in the window. He waved through the back window. The truck kicked up dust in the lane that obscured the house. He imagined that he and the pups were in a rocket ship and the dust was exhaust trailing behind them on a blastoff to the stars.

"Turn around, boy, and sit down." The truck bounced along the dirt lane as they traveled down the lane toward the gravel road that led to town. The tall grass lining each side was beginning to fade as autumn set in.

The old red truck came to the mail box. It was here that the road split. Tommy peered over the edge of the window, off into the ditch. "Remember when I found a nest full of pheasant eggs last spring? I'm sure they must be gone by now."

Pa grunted.

Tommy remembered how irresistible it had been, how he kept coming back to inspect the perfectly shaped eggs hidden in the grass. Pa later told him the visits made the pheasant hen abandon her nest. The eggs quickly spoiled. Pa had gotten mad at him for causing their deaths. When Tommy pointed out that Pa would have just shot them in the autumn, Pa's free hand had knocked him pretty hard.

To the left lay Sommerset. The truck paused. Dust from the gravel road caught up to them. He watched Pa put some tobacco in his lip. "Are we gonna stop at Carmichael's General Store?" He pinched at the dime in his pocket. He knew the Saturday matinee was out of the question. He had stared at the big poster for the upcoming feature: *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. Maybe they were only going to Brumley's to drop off the puppies. That was still OK. You could buy most anything at Brumley's. There were rows of cages filled with rabbits, parakeets, ferrets, and mice. The smell of the cages, feed, and hay made Tommy

sneeze. Pa always stopped there to talk to folks for an awfully long time.

"Nope."

The truck lurched to the right and then turned onto a dirt track about a quarter-mile down the road. The dirt track led back west to a pasture alongside an abandoned limestone quarry.

"Pa, why aren't we goin' to town?"

"Because we ain't."

The pasture was bumpy. Both of Pa's hands held the wheel. The rough two-track followed the fence line, down the gentle slope of the pasture. The old red Ford pushed back a row of tall dry grass, like a jeep in Africa on safari, like one of the Frank Buck episodes at the Saturday matinee: *Frank Buck's Bring 'em Back Alive*. Tommy stared out his window. It was easy to imagine that lions could be crouching in the tall grass. If the truck got a flat tire, he was sure he'd have to stay with it while Pa limped off for help – maybe even all night. He thought about that and figured that he could make it all right, except that he might have to find some good wood and build a fire. He could see a large Black Angus bull in the cattails down along the edge of the water. It reminded him of pictures he'd seen of hippos and crocodiles in the National Geographic magazine at Davey Miller's house. Davey lived in the town, had his own bike, and could ride it over to a friend's house whenever he liked. Davey's dad had caught them looking through the magazine and mentioned it to Pa. All the way home they had ridden in silence. Then he'd taken off his belt and spanked Tommy's bare butt. It was all on the account of the naked colored ladies with no top on. That's what Pa told him.

Pulling up near the quarry, Pa pushed in the clutch, put on the brake, and turned the key off. The engine's final rumbling echoed briefly off the tranquil quiet of the lonely spot.

Tommy had only been to the quarry a few times. He was never allowed to go on his own but he had gone fishing there with Joey. They would crouch near the edge to stare down into the limestone pit that had long ago filled with rainwater. He'd been told that the stabbing black depths went down over a hundred feet. Tommy once paced the distance from the porch – a hundred steps or more, shuddering to think of the depth, of all that cold, of all that dark. Tommy liked to imagine what might lurk beneath the surface, watching with great glowing eyes. He once heard old Brumley tell about the Model-T that lay rusting on the bottom. Whatever was cast in there would quickly be forgotten beneath the calm mirror of the surface. A tiny submarine could descend to the bottom; even a small spaceship could secretly be resting there before returning to its home world. Even though summer was over there was still plenty of plants and green muck in one small shallow area. That made it seem even more mysterious because the water suddenly dropped off

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straight down into gloom. It was easy to drown in a quarry. Even Joey did not dare to wade out very far. At the right time of day Tommy had seen how the water suddenly changed to a much darker green color at the drop-off point. The quarry had been abandoned long enough that trees lined the far side of it. The water's edge was just below ground level – enough that the wind didn't disturb the surface.

The truck was parked next to the ruins of a wooden gate. A rusty old *Danger! Keep Out!* sign hung from just one nail on the last standing post. Tommy could hear the wind rustling in the nearby pasture grass and the high pitched yelps of the pups.

Tommy turned from the window squinting up at the peppery unshaven jowls hanging from the big man. "I thought we was going to Brumley's to sell the pups, Pa."

At first Pa just stared straight ahead. He started slowly. "I told you we're going to take care of it. I said I'm not the one who started this whole mess, now didn't I?" He leaned against the steering wheel half turning his girth toward the boy. One of his big fingers pointed at the boy as he spoke. "You was the one to let Lady loose on the farm when them wild dogs was runnin' loose."

Tommy looked down, pursing his lips before he answered. "Yes Pa."

"And I told you not to, didn't I?"

"I guess so."

"I know so. Now don't you go a poutin' on me, you hear? And I can't take any more of that sassy talk. Don't you even start with me, boy." He squinted to scrutinize Tommy's downcast face. "You sure as hell better not start cryin'. And don't you even think about wettin' yourself this time, especially sittin' in the truck. If you're gonna act like a girl, you're liable to get yourself dressed like one; you hear me?"

"Yessir."

"Tommy, if you can't grow up and start acting like a man then you just ain't worth a tinker's damn. A man's gotta be worth somethin'. Everybody and everything's got to have a purpose in this world."

"But you haven't had a steady job for a long time, Pa."

"Here now, don't you start back-talkin' me, you understand? After the accident I couldn't work for a long time. After that I drove a truck 'bout as long as I could stand the pain." He grimaced with his mouth open and sucked air through clenched teeth as he leaned against the wheel. "Open that glove box."

Tommy pushed the metal button to open it. Pa spat out the tobacco and coughed. He reached for the whiskey bottle. "Now I have to live like a cripple." He took pills from a small box in his shirt pocket and washed them down with a couple gulps of whiskey. He wiped his chin and put the bottle between his legs.

His voice got louder now. "And all the time I have to listen to you tell me how it's gonna go...like a mongrel yelpin' in my very own house." He slipped on a pair of old work gloves and rubbed at his injured leg in the metal brace. "On the farm everything and everyone's got to have a purpose, boy. You know that. And you know that there just ain't room for all these pups with us or with anyone else."

"But I thought we were gonna sell 'em?"

"You can't sell them ..." He gestured widely with the bottle before taking another big swig. "And you brought the useless little bastards into this world, see?"

"But Pastor Robinson told me there's no such thing as a bastard." Tommy's small hands brushed back the tears that had welled up with his anger. "I'm not a bastard!"

"Listen here boy. Now you listen real good. I'm talking about them pups." There was a turning knob mounted on the steering wheel like on the tractor so you could spin the wheel with one hand. He squeezed the knob then relaxed his grip. To Tommy it always looked like a small metal head, like an evil giant crushing the skull of one of his robot slaves. The man fixed an unblinking gaze on the boy and smiled, showing his teeth. "I never said that you were a bastard. Why I've done my damndest. I've raised you just like Joey." His voice boomed and echoed off the still dark water of the quarry and the rocks surrounding them. Tommy imagined it was like the surface of Venus – not the farmland that he grew up in. He inched further away on the bench wishing he could get away. Pa clapped Tommy on the shoulder leaning toward him. His voice lowered to a more menacing tone. The strong whiskey smell made Tommy start to retch. It was as if Pa did not want anyone else to overhear him. "Now we ain't gonna speak of that preacher again, are we?"

"No Pa," Tommy sputtered.

"What did I say?" Pa said, jabbing him in the ribs with an index finger.

"We're not going to talk about him again."

"That's right boy, not even with your Ma. She's all done carryin' on with him and his Bible." Pa sat back, lifted the bottle, took another gulp and stared straight out the windshield at the water. In a smooth deep voice he said: "Now, I said we was gonna deal with what you started, didn't I? We're gonna deal with it today. So, pull yourself together; go on now: get out."

Tommy cast a furtive glance over at Pa, the metallic brace, at the heavy wooden cane leaning against the seat between them; the massive hairy arms now resting on the steering wheel, at his big gloved hands. At unexpected moments those hands seemed to come out of nowhere – like the time he sassed back at the dinner table, or the time he had spoken up after the radio announcement that General MacArthur got fired, or for other reasons he never could figure out. Joe hardly ever got hit. For

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Tommy it was usually just a matter of time. One of those huge hands would knock him right out of his kitchen chair. Ma would protest, but not too much.

"I'm going to teach you that all choices got consequences, boy." He took another slug of whisky tossing the cork out of the open window. "If you do something – if you start something, then by god, you damned well better finish it." He heaved himself out, straightened the braced leg, reached for the cane, and slammed the heavy metal door shut. He limped stiffly around to the back of the truck without looking back. He tilted back as he finished off the whiskey bottle.

He belched. "Tommy, get out here and help me."

Tommy stood for a moment with the truck in between them. He peered through the tall grass toward the bank as three ducks swam further out on the water. He gazed at the rippling V-shaped trails that formed on the calm water behind them.

The empty whiskey bottle sailed just over his head into the grass. "Wake up, moon beam. Don't waste my time with your day dreamin'. Are you some kind of space cadet? Staring at all them comics; well, I'll tell you a story. Driving truck – I come home again and find that you let Lady run 'round and got pregnant. Hell, it's kind of like your ma." He heaved the crate from the truck and it landed roughly on the ground.

Tommy ran to the crate examining the puppies' wet noses pushing between the slats. He looked up, scratching under his cap. "You gonna set them puppies free, Pa?"

Pa's face showed no expression. He stared beyond the boy out over the water. "Bring me a rock, boy."

Tommy looked around and among the tall grass near the edge. He loved the limestone pieces he had collected here before. Many contained fossils, fragments of shells or plant stems frozen in time. Once he had even found a piece of a shell embedded in the faded yellow crust and chipped it free. Tommy imagined a war of dinosaurs. Maybe they had been smashed by gigantic forces of destruction into little pieces. He wished he had brought along a hammer. He loved to chip off limestone flakes and skip them across the surface.

After examining it thoroughly for specimens, he slowly carried it in both arms up the embankment. Pa leaned on his cane and against the old truck with a long blade of grass stuck in his teeth. The baling wire was pulled back and the lid of the crate was open. Inside the puppies pushed and pulled in what looked like a rough-n-tumble game of *King of the Hill*. They were too chubby to climb over the edge.

Tommy stopped with the stone in his arms, staring at the crate, and at Pa. As he drew a slow breath through his open mouth, a new realization oozed out of him.

"You ain't gonna hurt them pups, are you Pa?"

Pa just stood there silently.

Tommy opened his mouth wider. "What are you gonna do?" He dropped the stone with a heavy thud in the soft earth between them. Fat tears began to roll down his face.

Pa pulled the long blade of grass from his teeth. "Well cry me a river. It ain't my fault they was born into this world, Tommy?" His eyebrows squinched together. "Is it?"

Tommy stood speechless, slowly shaking his head.

Pa pointed down at the crate. "*Bastards* is what they are. Lady – why she's purebred. Them half-breed pups ain't worth a thin dime at Brumley's or most anywhere else. This world's already got too many mouths to feed. This way's better for 'em, plus I don't have to waste a shotgun shell. They won't suffer long." He gestured with his cane to the stone. "Now come on, helper ... I said, *come on*."

"No." Tommy gritted his teeth and locked his legs in his little boots. He lifted his gaze and looked at Pa through his angry tears.

The man's face looked hard as an Indian's flint. He tossed the blade of grass, pausing for a moment. "What did you say to me?"

"No Pa," Tommy said, his jaw started chattering.

"Now boy, I'm talking to you. You bring that goddamned rock over here right now and help me sink them pups, or you're gonna get the worst skinnin' of your entire life. I'll flay the hide off you, you understand me?" He threw his cane down and unhooked his belt. He drew it from the loops in one quick motion. He looped it in his hands and pulled the loop tight and flat. It made a snapping sound as he did so, like the crack of a bullwhip.

Tommy flinched at the sound. He backed away, looking quickly to the sides. He picked up a rotted board from the ruined gate.

The man leaned against the old red truck and laughed out loud. "Tommy, what do you think you're doin'? Why, if you clench them teeth any tighter, somebody could use you to crack nuts." He pointed at the boy. "But before they do, I'm gonna take that board with them nails in it and I'm gonna kill them pups before I use it on you." With his muddy boot, he kicked the crate. Sounds of high-pitched whining cries and shrill barking erupted from within.

Tommy felt his legs begin to shake. His voice warbled: "I ain't gonna let you..."

Pa struck the side of the truck with his belt. His eyes were wide now. "Ain't gonna let me do what?" That final *t* sounded like a gun cocking. "Tommy, I'm gonna tell you something right now. You'd better just hope that I don't give you what you've had comin' for a long time. Maybe you belong in that crate along with 'em." The big man lurched forward. "Now come here you little bastard."

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Tommy yelped and threw the board at Pa. The board bounced off his metal leg brace. He stepped away from the truck and stumbled over the board. He fell hard and fast. Tommy heard him crash as he turned and ran.

“Ow – goddamnit. Get back here! Hey boy, don’t even think about runnin’. Now you know I can’t catch you.”

Tommy burst through the tall grass onto the two-track that led toward home. No going back now. He hadn’t run far when he doubled over, gulping deep breaths of chill air and terror. His rib cage heaved. He had never dared run from Pa before, never even imagined it. His body shook. He slowly turned to look back.

Pa was pulling himself to his feet against the truck. His hat had fallen off. His rage somehow seemed to even change his appearance. His red hair was the very color of molten anger. The bald spot resembled a shiny helmet. Entranced, Tommy stared as if he was gazing at an open comic book by flashlight. The ships had landed. The invasion fleet was here at last. The tyrant raised himself to full height, wildly swinging his whip.

Tommy bit at his lower lip. He wished for any kind of gadget just now. A ray gun would do just fine, or even just an unbreakable silver cord – simply to tie him up. He crouched in the grass. He heard Pa swearing and then he heard an enormous splash.

He jumped to his feet. “No!”

He ran past the truck. On the surface of the water to the right he saw circular waves widening from the impact. He veered through the tall grass, lightly skipping over large rocks among the cattails. With all his might, he leapt toward the center of the ripples. He plunged in, gasping at the gripping shock of the cold water. He struggled to the surface, trying to swallow huge gobs of air. He could hear Pa shouting.

“Tommy, what the hell do you think you’re doin’? Now get your ass out of there.”

Tommy turned quickly to see his father swinging his cane to break a path through the tall grass toward the edge.

“Feel for something to stand on, Tommy.”

“I can’t, it’s too deep.” He kicked his feet, but was terrified to stretch downwards and feel nothing beneath him. The moss felt like slimy, green tentacles – on his arms, around his legs, pulling him down into dark depths. He could see the bald head above the cattails. The tyrant almost had him now. He flailed in the water, screaming.

“You good-for-nothing little bastard: just look what you’ve done now.” The man waded in up to his knees. “Now what! I can’t swim with this leg brace. Here, try to grab the end of my belt.” He held the belt by its square-loop buckle, flinging its length out to the Tommy as a life-line. “Come on now, boy, you can do it.”

The belt splashed in the water, just a few feet away. “I can’t, Pa. I can’t get it.”

The man waded in deeper, casting the belt length out again. This time Tommy felt it hit his hand. He grabbed it tightly. Pa yanked on it so hard, he almost pulled it from the boy’s grasp.

“Now stand up like a man, you little son-of-a-bitch.”

Tommy pushed himself up from the slimy mud as the heavy cane came down. It caught him flat across the side of his head, knocking him back into the water.

“Stand up, goddamnit.”

He slipped in the mud and struggled to stand again. He put his left hand to the side of his head, shrieking. His hand was covered with the blood that poured out of his ear. It felt warmer against his skin than the water that dripped from his body. On that side all he could hear was a loud ring. His face felt flush, puffy with rage and fear.

“How could you?” Tommy cried. “How could you kill them pups?” His body shuddered like some kind of terror-stricken, *Venusian slave-girl* – not a brave, comic book hero.

“Let me tell you somethin’. This time you’ve gone too far. You come here now, so I can hit you again.” Pa swung the cane again. He slipped in the mire and fell with a huge splash.

Tommy quickly seized the cane and flung it – spinning through the air, out toward the center of the water. He felt the leather belt come down with a decisive crack, full across his head and shoulders, catching the wounded ear. Now there were tiny streaks of light across his field of vision, like fiery remnants from a titanic space battle. He reeled, stumbling backwards. Just like *Captain Video* on Davey Miller’s TV set – he knew he had to fight, or he was doomed.

“Tommy, sink-or-swim, you’re gonna get that cane for me before we’re through.”

Tommy backed away, deeper into the water, as the large dripping man advanced. With each step the boy could feel the slimy tentacles wrapping tighter around him, pulling him down. His boots sank deeper into the mud that seemed to be suctioning his feet.

“And I’m gonna be the only one who finishes this business. You’re gonna learn a lesson ... one last lesson. Choices got consequences. I’m gettin’ me another rock. Nobody’ll ever know what happened here, ’cept me.” He wrapped the leather end of the belt slowly and tightly around his massive hand, so as to strike the boy with the metallic buckle the next time.

Tommy stepped back again, still deeper. The belt buckle struck close enough to splash water in his face. He pushed back again – it was almost to his chest now. He rubbed water from his eyes, then caught sight of movement along the shoreline. He looked at the path that the man had made through the tall grass. The wooden fruit crate was tipped over and chubby puppies

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chased each other's tails, tumbling and frolicking in widening circles of exploration. One had even waddled to the edge for a drink.

Tommy glanced up at the large, ugly man, then at the pups. He could feel the cold stony lip of the drop-off with his feet. The water was well above his chest as he glanced over his shoulder, dreading the far greater depths behind him.

The man had paused, following the boy's gaze. He was grinning. "Oh, I'm gonna get them pups all right. Those pups will sink out-of-sight and out-of-mind but I got me one little bastard to take care of first." He swung and the belt slapped the surface of the water between them. He lurched in deeper, struggling for a moment to free his brace from the muck.

In a flash Tommy made his decision. He seized the end of the belt, thrusting his hand through the buckle loop. He dug his heels and tugged with all his might.

"Now I got you," the tyrant said, pulling back with a much greater force. The pain shot up Tommy's arm into his shoulder socket.

The mud shelf gave out. Each struggled to swim on his own. Tommy felt the strong tug of the belt on his wrist before he could free his hand. He got one last gulp of air before he was towed beneath the surface. After a couple of seconds he opened his eyes. The eerie, ice-cold world was filled with gloomy shadows, swirling clouds of bubbles; the swaying of millions

of green alien tentacles from far down below. The huge man flailed, trying to unhook the brace while sinking slowly, almost gracefully, like a doomed space patrol battle cruiser. Beams of golden light stabbed into the blue-green murky water, flickering amidst millions of churning silvery bubbles. Tommy could see the shiny bald head of the tyrant at the other end of the leather belt. He was struggling with one hand to release the heavy metal brace from his leg. The chill pierced Tommy's bones as he sank into shadows – towed deeper by what felt like a tractor beam. Tommy watched the bubbles rise to the retreating surface. He flailed frantically, fighting the swelling urge to exhale. Tommy turned to face the gloom, still trying to free his hand. In that moment it looked to him like the tyrant's head exploded, engulfed in an eruption of a huge cloud of wiggly bubbles. They swarmed over Tommy's body, tickling his face, pointing the way home. The other end of the belt came free. Tommy glimpsed the still form of the tyrant, his shiny helmet slowly disappearing into the darkness. For a moment the boy hovered above the void, floating like a man in space. Tommy yanked the belt again. It floated loosely around him still attached at the buckle to his wrist. The tractor beam had ceased when the tyrant perished. Golden ray beams flashed in the darkness all about him. With one last surge he kicked his little legs, following the bubbles – a myriad fleet of shiny spheres. The old belt trailed him like a leather bull whip. He was rising upwards, upwards into the light.

Ehren Fritz Gerhard

Tempe Artist



“Barrel Fire”
Oil on panel
24 x 24 in
2011



Ehren Fritz Gerhard was born in Indiana, Pennsylvania. In the course of his life, Ehren has lived in over six states, which has given him an enriched sense of place and pride in his ecological surroundings. His work focuses on the intensity and spirit of natural ecosystems. After receiving his Bachelor of Art from Florida Gulf Coast University, he is currently pursuing a Masters in Painting and Drawing at Arizona State University with a Teaching Assistantship in 2-Dimensional Design. Contact: ehrenfritzgerhard@comcast.net or www.ehrenfritzgerhard.com.

Ehren Fritz Gerhard

Tempe Artist



“Hypertension”

Oil on panel

48 x 48 in

2011

The spectrum of feelings offered by an endless valley, rugged mountaintop, or impenetrable thicket are necessary for my view of the world. They remind me of our pasts, human and animal, a fight for survival amongst harsh realities. Nature's fight for life is something that intrigues and calls my attention; the shelter of a tree, the vulnerability of an open plain, ecological systems that continually create, destroy and rebirth themselves, the persistence of life amongst a death struggle.

- Ehren Fritz Gerhard

Ehren Fritz Gerhard

Tempe Artist



"Inner Light"
Oil on panel
24 x 24 in
2011

Ehren Fritz Gerhard

Tempe Artist



"Monsooning"
Acrylic on stretched paper
42 x 60 in
2011

Ehren Fritz Gerhard

Tempe Artist

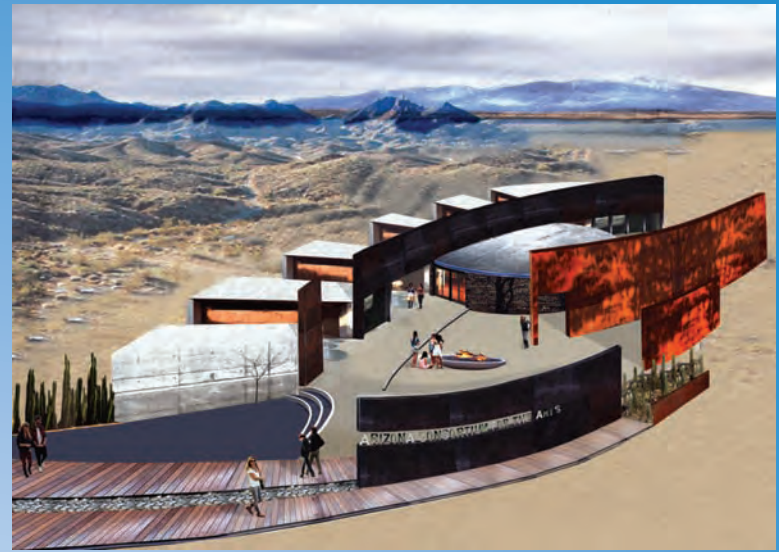


“Northern Clouds”
Oil on panel
24 x 24 in
2011



Photo by Dayvid Lemmon

Architect Effie Bouras



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

Spotlight on the Community: Q&A with architect Effie Bouras

Mechanik Design represents collaborative modes in building and art, fronted by Effie Bouras, PhD. (B.Eng, B.Arch, M.Arch). She has designed the consortium's dream multicultural arts center. She can be reached at info@mechanikllc.com or at www.mechanikllc.com.

Q: How did you know you wanted to be an architect? What spurred you on to become one?

A: Building as an art, its historical precedence, and its structural mechanics have always been strong interests; architecture seemed like the logical choice, and it was known to me at a very young age.

...

Q: How did your favorite teacher inspire you to pursue your endeavors?

A: I have several favorites; however, all of them have several qualities in common: They were all incredible masters of their craft — that type of dedication was inspiring. What was also so impressive was the fact that although they had such command and talent they were not judgmental of others, they were focused and disciplined.

...

Q: What keeps you inspired now? What fuels your creative energies?

A: Simplicity and complication — the juncture between the two is interesting.

...

Q: Do other arts inspire you?

A: No, the fine arts in itself does not always inspire — sometimes mechanics inspire, the nature of movement, other times it could be philosophy, a film ...

...

Q: How do you get your best ideas?

A: No formula really; sometimes, questioning objects and objectives creates a conversation within which ideas, good or bad, ferment. Out of this “surface chaos” sometimes ideas and clarity, in which to implement them, evolve.

...

Q: What prominent architectural trends do you see developing Valleywide (statewide, nationwide, globally)?

A: An increasing focus on landscape — it seems that many are turning to landscape to answer the great queries of our current state of building. Maybe this evolves from a realization that the city needs to work as an organism, and landscape offers a way to be the “great connector” between seemingly disparate fragments of the city.

...

Q: The world has almost 7 billion people now and population continues to grow. What's the biggest challenge that poses for architects and architecture in the future?

A: This is an interesting question, because as we grow, many cities in North America are becoming increasingly horizontal. Although there is an effort made in some cases to repopulate our emptying downtown cores, via the re-purposing of existing building stock through renovation, for example, the favored method of habitation remains what was made popular in the mid-century with the rapid development of outlying neighborhoods built on cheaper land; a suburbia amoeba, if you will. There are reasons for this phenomenon, of course, some advantages and disadvantages which I will not go into here. I think the biggest challenge is several challenges, actually; how do we re-purpose our existing building stock? Or do we even? Many industrial sites, for example, are abandoned and in some cases toxic. There are several examples where this is successfully being negotiated; however, one is Fresh Kills landfill in New York, which is in the process of conversion into not only a park but an interactive experience that engages local and national interests and needs. Another is the High Line in New York, an abandoned industrial railway line that served the meatpacking district during the early 20th century. So the question remains, how do we engage these unused/underutilized “patches” of our landscape into existing areas that are still thriving? The second big question I think feeds off of the first — how do we do this sustainably? Not only in terms of an environmental perspective, but economically and culturally as well?

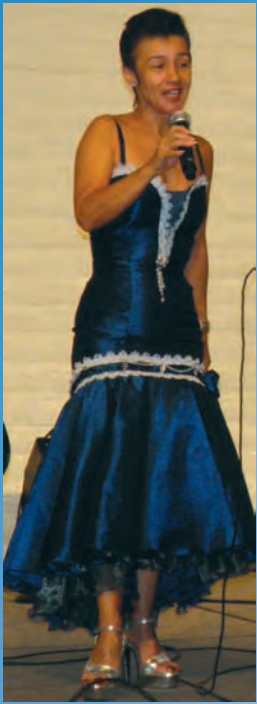
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Q: If you could give one piece of advice to people just starting out in architecture or any other art, what would it be?

A: Define yourself, and look outside of your craft for answers.

...

More photos from the Spring Festival



Photos by Elena Thornton, The Blue Guitar Magazine

Left photo, Natalia Spannaus performs a song from “My Fair Lady” at the May 15 Third Annual The Blue Guitar Spring Festival of the Arts, held at Mesa Community College. Right photo, Maestro Zhanna Tevan and her students from Arizona Classical Kids.

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 now have 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’s vision is to create a multicultural arts center, where children, teens and adults will become inspired, to develop their creative abilities, 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 to The Blue Guitar magazine.



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

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Meet the staff of The Blue Guitar magazine



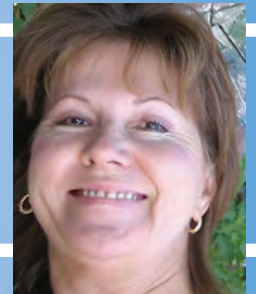
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Rebecca Dyer, editor: A Tucson native, Rebecca is a poet and journalist now residing in Mesa with her husband, Rick, Blue Guitar production editor. Reach her at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org.

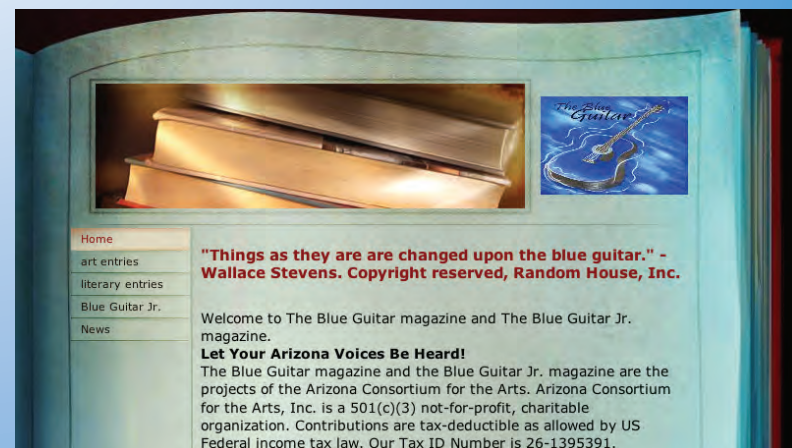
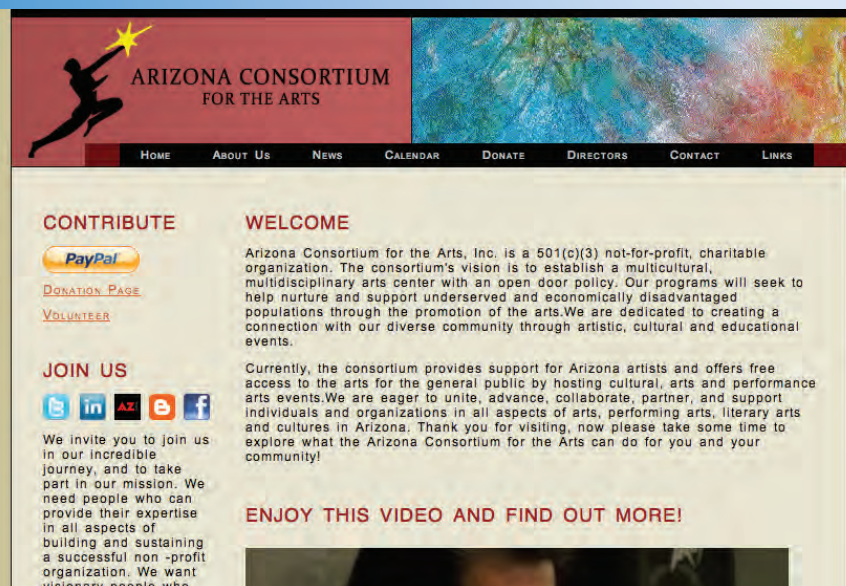


Richard H. Dyer Jr., production editor: Richard (married to Rebecca, above) is the managing editor for four weekly newspapers in the East Valley, a photographer and a welded-steel sculptor.

Marjory Boyer, cover design artist for The Blue Guitar: Marjory, of Scottsdale, is an award-winning artist, muralist and an acrylic painting instructor. Though her website is under construction, 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

Summer 2011



A Call to Writers for Fall

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks literary submissions for the Fall 2011 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 15. Submissions are sought in all genres — fiction, poetry, plays, creative nonfiction. Writers must submit original work and must live in Arizona. Simultaneous submissions will be accepted, but the writer must notify the magazine as soon as possible if the work is accepted elsewhere. It is free to submit, and submissions may be made in multiple genres. Please include your name and the best way to contact you on your submission. To submit or for further information, e-mail Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.

A Call to Artists for Fall

The Blue Guitar magazine seeks art submissions in all mediums for the Fall 2011 Edition from Sept. 1 through Oct. 15. The art entries, which will be selected by a jury for inclusion in the Fall Issue, must follow the theme of “The Human Condition.” Any artists who work in any visual art media and are 18 years or older and are Arizona residents can submit. It is free to submit and up to 5 images can be submitted. Artists are encouraged to submit images of work by e-mail.

Images must be identified in the e-mail with the artist’s name and contact information, titles of works, dates and mediums. To submit or for further information, e-mail Rebecca Dyer at rebeccadyer@theblueguitarmagazine.org. For more information, visit www.theblueguitarmagazine.org.



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



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FREE!

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