

# The Mockingbird

The Student Literary/Arts Magazine  
of East Tennessee State University



2013

Volume 40

## The Mockingbird 2013

The cover image is a detail from Matthew Allen's *Decline*.

*The Mockingbird* design is by Jeanette Henry, East Tennessee State University, Printing and Publications.

# The Mockingbird

The Student Literary/Arts Magazine  
of East Tennessee State University

Published annually  
as a joint project of the  
Department of Literature and Language  
and the Department of Art and Design



2013

Volume 40 edited by Catherine Pritchard Childress



A project like *The Mockingbird* requires the support and cooperation of so many people that one hopes the production of the magazine itself serves as an expression of gratitude, but we would like to offer our thanks to Dr. Bert C. Bach, ETSU's Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, who has authorized the magazine's production fund as part of the regular budget of the Department of Literature and Language. We thank also Dr. Gordon Anderson, Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, Dr. Judy Slagle, Chair of the Department of Literature and Language, and Professor Catherine Murray, Chair of the Department of Art and Design, for their continued support and commitment to this project. We cannot overemphasize the creativity and patience of the ETSU Printing and Publications Office and, particularly, Ms. Jeanette Henry, our designer. Thank you all for sustaining this project.



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# The Mockingbird

2013





# Editor's Note

*Catherine Pritchard Childress*

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The mockingbird is best known for the way it catalogs the songs and sounds of all the other birds and insects in its environment and then plays them back in different combinations—its own remix.

If indeed a single theme can unify a body of work made up of four different genres, spanning four decades of this publication and as many between the writers who are represented here, then it is that these writers have, like our native mockingbird, cataloged the voices, relationships, and experiences that occur around them and skillfully played them back to us—their own remixes—in the pages of this magazine.

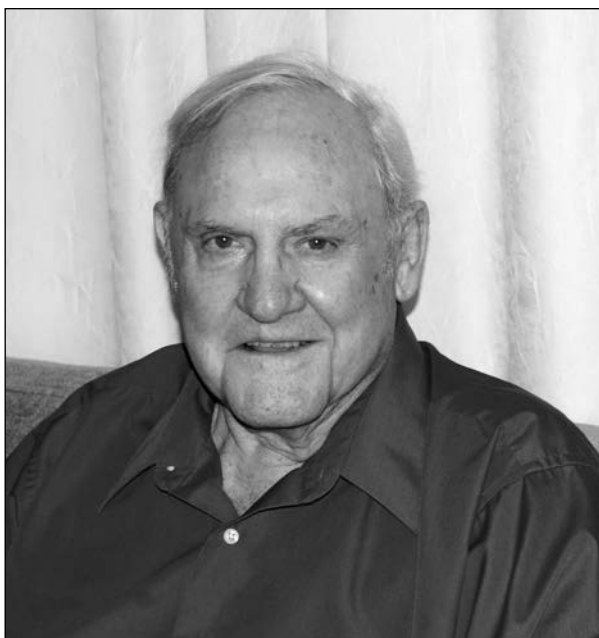
When I was invited to helm this fortieth anniversary issue of *The Mockingbird*, I was imbued with a sense of responsibility to the extraordinary literary tradition here at East Tennessee State University—a tradition long upheld by faculty members and students in the Department of Literature and Languages and the Department of Art and Design. As part of my effort to honor those who have come before me, I searched the pages of thirty-nine issues of *The Mockingbird* for literary work that represents our talented alumni as well as the instructors who directed their work. A small sampling of *The Mockingbird's* forty-year history is interspersed between the fine writing of our current students.

The outpouring of submissions for *The Mockingbird* 2013 attests to the fact that creative writing is still thriving at ETSU. Careful readers and talented writers, both undergraduate and graduate students, joined me in selecting finalists in poetry, fiction, creative non-fiction, and drama. No members of the student editorial staff read in categories to which they submitted work. My heartfelt appreciation to Emily Smith, Robert Kottage, Sam Campbell, Sara West, Heidi Marsh, Maggie Colvett, Jen Grant, and Jake Lawson. I offer a special thank you to Kyla Marlin, who read every page with me, at least twice.

A distinguished panel of judge,s including Ron Giles (drama), Rita Quillen (poetry), George Singleton (non-fiction), and Charles Dodd White (fiction) selected the winners of *The Mockingbird* 2013 Prizes. Stephen C. Wicks juried the Student Honor Show 2012 and selected the artworks which appear. I am grateful for the time and experience they graciously devoted to this project. Please see their short biographies on the last page of this issue.

I cannot stress enough the vital role Dr. Thomas Alan Holmes plays in production of *The Mockingbird*. He has patiently answered every question, responded to every late night missive, read every word, and solved many technical problems as this journal came together. Thank you. As with all of my endeavors, Dr. Jesse Graves has been my most loyal supporter. He provides a level of expertise in editing and creative writing that certainly enhance these pages. I am thankful for the support of these excellent faculty advisors, without whom I would not be able to proudly offer you this fortieth anniversary edition—

*The Mockingbird* 2013.



The 2013 issue of *The Mockingbird* is dedicated to Dr. Jack Higgs, East Tennessee State University Professor Emeritus. Dr. Higgs served as the first faculty advisor for *The Mockingbird* and guided its first issue into print forty years ago. This year we celebrate his many contributions to ETSU, including his sharing a love for language and creative thinking with students, colleagues, and the community of Johnson City. In addition to this issue of the magazine, we also welcome the inaugural event in the Jack Higgs Reading Series, sponsored by *The Mockingbird*, with the goal of bringing excellent writers to ETSU and making a lasting commemoration of Dr. Higgs' work.

## Gentility of Steel

for Jack Higgs

*Maria Bledsoe from The  
Mockingbird, 1992*

---

These four walls are no longer padded,  
They are no longer here—  
A mirage dispersed by the voice which  
reaches into the dust-covered corners  
of our minds.

*Write this down.*

Socrates is pacing the floor again  
Like a caged animal,  
Bars of apathy attempt to hold him back,  
But he bursts forth in song.

*Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to war,  
Listen to that word. War. War. War.*

His wisdom is his burden  
And shines from his eyes through sorrow,  
The gaining of knowledge  
requires the exposure of reality.

Listen to his voice,  
It is Homer, Aristotle, and Plato.

Grasp his spirit.  
It is Jefferson, Emerson, and Thoreau.

Run with his soul.  
It is Whitman, Lincoln, and Dickinson.

Tap his mind to find  
Jung and Freud.

He weaves a tapestry of life,  
Our souls vibrant colors,  
Our minds brooding shades.

*Write, rewrite, and rewrite. Think and  
rethink—don't be echoes or copycatters.  
Think. Everybody understand?  
Are you with me?*

The reactions and awakenings are like  
stirring winds coming together to  
create a storm of thought.  
*Paideia.*

Rustling notebooks and closing texts recall  
the four walls,  
Time defeats even the best.

*Hold on. We have two minutes.*

Three minutes later we leave our agora,  
rejuvenated, inspired, nurtured  
until our next meeting,  
For our Socrates speaks not spake.



# Reflections on the Flight of the First Mockingbird:

*An Interview with*

*Dr. Jack Higgs by His Daughter, Laura Higgs Kappel*

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In May 1974, the first volume of *The Mockingbird* was published, a collection of poetry, short fiction, and art submissions from East Tennessee State University students. At that time, my father, Dr. Robert Jackson (“Jack”) Higgs, was the faculty advisor for the magazine, and I was an elementary school student at the University School. Dad was a professor of English at ETSU from 1967–1995 and was beloved by many of his students and known for his boisterous lectures on American literature and other areas of specialty, including sports, Appalachian literature, and humor. Whether his voice boomed down the halls or across the campus during classes held outside, he engaged his students in a spirit of learning and left a legacy of high-quality teaching and excellence in scholarship that few could begin to match.

His publications include Appalachian literature anthologies *Voices from the Hills*, co-edited with Ambrose Manning, and *Appalachia Inside Out*, co-edited with Manning and Jim Wayne Miller, and books on the study of literature and sports, such as *The Sporting Spirit*, *Sports: A Reference Guide*, *God in the Stadium*, and *An Unholy Alliance*. He still makes appearances at university and local events and stays busy writing, reading, and conversing, or, as American transcendentalists would say, “plain living and high thinking.”

Since I am now an adjunct faculty member of the Literature and Languages Department, I requested to interview Dad for the fortieth volume of *The Mockingbird* to tap into his memories of those first days of *The Mockingbird’s* flight. The first volume had a yellow cover and picture of a bird with a fish hook in its beak. Of the over five hundred entries submitted, seventy were chosen: fifty-one poems, eight art pieces, nine photographs, and two short fiction entries. A copy of Volume I is available in the ETSU Library’s Archives.

The original editor, Kay H. Gregory, introduced this first volume with these words:

“Tirelessly the mockingbird struggled over high mountains, winging her way along the winding Nolichucky and charting her course over ancient buffalo trails. Exhausted, she settled herself in



academic halls. Here her nest is undisturbed, her imaginative orbs allowed to incubate to maturity, and her creative voice restored. Once again the mellow music of the mockingbird floats over the hills of Tennessee. In your hand you hold the first generation of the mockingbird, a medley of student perceptions. Gaze kindly on her maiden flight.”

Dad’s reflection of that first volume shows just how far the original ideas of *The Mockingbird* have flown.

**LHK:** How did the idea of *The Mockingbird* get started?

**RJH:** I think it dawned on a number of faculty that we needed a multiple arts magazine involving different departments to broaden interest and participation by students. Before the first volume of *The Mockingbird*, there was a literary magazine called *Olio*. It was a foundation upon which a larger endeavor was built and which was deemed necessary by the English Department chair, the faculty, and the Art Department. The ETSU administration was financially supportive and favorable toward the idea, providing money for prizes, thanks to the efforts of Dr. John Tallent, Chair of the English Department, and Denne Cade, head of the ETSU Foundation at the time.

**LHK:** What was your role in the genesis of *The Mockingbird*?

**RJH:** I was appointed to be Faculty Advisor by Dr. Tallent, and I worked with other faculty members encouraging student participation in the enterprise, feeling convinced that an enlargement of the literary and artistic creativity was necessary for us to even be called a university.

**LHK:** How were the pieces selected?

**RJH:** We had top-of-the-line judges: Jim Wayne Miller for poetry and Rachel Maddux, a novelist who had spoken at ETSU, as short fiction judge. One of her novels, *A Walk in the Spring Rain*, was adapted for film starring Anthony Quinn and Ingrid Bergman. The art submissions were judged by John Schrader, Charles Thompson, and Kenneth Williams, with the full approval of the chair of the Art Department, Dr. Dan Teis, who supplemented funds.

**LHK:** How was the name *The Mockingbird* chosen?

**RJH:** There was a contest established among students for the naming of the magazine, and the winner was Paul Friederichsen, a sophomore majoring in art. The name was not only inspirational but perfect. The mockingbird is the Tennessee State Bird and is symbolic of the nature of writing.

**LHK:** How so?

RJH: All writing is imitation of reality.

LHK: Doesn't the word "mocking" have a pejorative sense to it?

RJH: It does, but mocking means imitation, and quite often beautiful imitation. This meaning is consistent with the idea of *mimesis*, which means imitation, and which is the subject of one of the world's great books by Erich Auerbach entitled *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in the Western World*, published in 1946. The word "art" is an abbreviation for "artificial," which is different from "natural" which is in no sense a pejorative term but an admirable one, suggesting the human effort to understand the enigma of the natural world and to learn from it. Art is an imitation of life, of nature, and therefore *The Mockingbird* is the perfect title.

LHK: Was there any connection between the title of the magazine and Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*? In that novel, Scout asks Miss Maudie about why her father had said it was a sin to kill a mockingbird, and this was the response: "Your father's right," she said. "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

RJH: There was no direct or intentional connection, but the idea fits.

LHK: What was your vision for what the magazine would be?

RJH: The vision was to encourage and promote creativity among the student body and to enhance appreciation of language and art. Another consideration was the effort to produce a magazine that would make the alumni proud of the talents of ETSU's students.

LHK: The cover shows a sketch of a bird's beak with a fish hook caught in it and with four vertical strings coming down. I noticed this image comes from one of the art submissions by Cherryl Hylemon entitled "Social Commitment." I presume the bird is a mockingbird itself, but the hook gives the sense of the bird being trapped. How does this image fit with the vision of the magazine?

RJH: The mockingbird is often tied up and unable to sing its enchanting songs, leaving imagery of a dark and troubling world. The fish hook is plucking the strings, making music, and the strings (cords) represent "chords" which produce the song of the bird. It is still playing chords in spite of being tied up. Art speaks to us of humanity and is still trying to get us to see what awful things human beings can do to one another. It is trying to make statements about man's inhumanity to man. There are as many desperate, dark scenes in the magazine as there are light ones. Even the cruelest scenes in art reveal to us that something

is badly wrong with the picture(s). Art, however, has a restorative, therapeutic pattern to it as well as satisfying imagery. There is an ethical element in art as well as an aesthetic. I found myself responding favorably to these images since they extend the range of art to endless possibilities. Art can be both bright and beautiful and dark and troubling. The contents of the magazine show that the bird has been freed for imaginative expression.

**LHK: What was the response to the initial publication?**

**RJH:** The original publication did not seem to catch on immediately. We had to promote the sales, which we did rather effectively. We set up tables on the sidewalk and sold copies to students coming by. The cost was less than a dollar. A major effort in addition to the hard work of the student editors was promotion of the magazine, which faculty encouraged by announcements. Strong publicity by the university was also a factor in its establishment. It was stocked in local magazine stands and local stores.

**LHK: Do any of the original submissions stand out to you?**

**RJH:** The influence of literary and aesthetic art is evident in the contents of this particular volume. Marita Garin won first place in the ballad competition with her poem “The Jesus Car,” which is being published in a collection on sports and religion by Rutledge Press (Taylor and Francis), perhaps the largest publisher in the world with offices in New York and London. This issue of *The Mockingbird* is listed in the bibliography of that book. The title of that poem is based on the appearance in our community of a car with Bible verses printed over its body. Marita’s poem neither encourages faith nor doubt, leaving freedom of interpretation to the reader, as the last lines about a race between the Jesus car and the Devil make clear:

Whoever won the race that day  
Was lost from sight forever.  
Perhaps somewhere in a distant place  
They are still riding together.

The second-place winner in the ballad was Frank Greally, one of the top writers in Ireland who has a column in the *Irish Independent* and who has served as an editor of *The Irish Runner*, a sports magazine, for thirty-two years. He was a student here from Ireland and a member of the cross-country track team known as “The Irish Brigade” recruited by Dave Walker. His poem, entitled “Easter 1916,” captures the struggle for Irish independence, confirming the truth of William Faulkner’s belief that all great literature must be about the struggle of the human heart in conflict and must address the old verities such as love, honor, pity, compassion, and sacrifice.

In the thirty-nine years since the publication of this first issue, the achievements of Garin and Greally are representative rather than exceptional of the achievements of the vast number of student authors and artists who have appeared in this literary magazine and who have continued their practice of art.

**LHK:** How would you envision the future of *The Mockingbird*?

**RJH:** It is my hope that the university will continue to support literature and writing which, in my honest opinion, is endangered at the present time in our nation and our world. What is needed is a re-evaluation of our founding values of balance, what the ancients called the tripartite ideal, the unity of mind, body, and soul.

Writing is regarded as the greatest invention of all time, and the two greatest works in literature are the King James Version of the Bible in 1611, written by prophets who are also poets, and the First Folio edition of the plays by poet William Shakespeare in 1623. Both are replete with metaphorical language, the essence of literary expression. As Robert Frost makes clear in "Education by Poetry," in our increasing devotion to things, we may be in the process of abandoning the heritage of the metaphor, which allows us to approach the unknown. *The Mockingbird*, by its songs, preserves that heritage. So it is my hope to help foster a continuance of that literary and creative tradition which is not only a sign of hope but of consciousness of the joys and possibilities of being. One of Emily Dickinson's lines is "I dwell in possibility," and that is very much what *The Mockingbird* does. It is not only wrong to ignore *The Mockingbird* but a sin.



## Blue Plums

Madison Brown

It's the Appalachian paradox:  
How mountains so lovely and vast  
Can feel nothing short of lifeless.

Although, there was that one summer  
Afternoon, when we were eating blue plums  
Beside the Nolichucky River, and I laughed so

Hard that, briefly, I forgot how to hate,  
And suddenly, leaving was the furthest  
Thing from my mind.

The very next day I realized  
That my disdain for my surroundings  
Came not from the sleepy

Sidewalks, or from the endless sky of bibles,  
Nor did it come from the air so full of  
Moisture, it feels like hot breath.

*My dear, everything here reminds me of you.*

Every red bicycle that passes causes my  
Heart to take up residence in the base of  
My throat, remembering the

Time you spent under my sundress,  
The time I spent under your sunburned skin.  
And all of those Coffeehouse songs,

Those jars of peach moonshine,  
Spark the inevitable, digging through  
Cardboard boxes shoved under a bed

In which I no longer sleep;  
Within them reside the envelopes of tears  
And the napkin poems that preceded them.

When walking down West Pine Street,  
Recollecting the day we smoked  
Behind the old movie theater,

I fight my entire body from  
Wondering if you think of me, too.  
These musings keep me right here,

Among the purple irises, where  
The birds mimic the lazy melodies  
Of a girl on strings who waits for you.



## Painting in First Person

Nell McGrady

He loved her with color  
and with his brush had laid  
her on the long thin canvas  
that crossed the wall.

I practiced still lifes  
and watched him watch her,  
watched his eyes meet  
hers, then circle across  
her shoulder and down  
the liquid hair that spilled  
off the painting.

“Delores,” the artist explained  
then begged my attention away  
from the tight skin,  
the charged breasts,  
the very odor  
she pushed in the air.

He taught patience  
in planning, in letting  
layers dry, pressed  
his head against mine  
to try my perspective.

I painted a pomegranate,  
a pair of peppers grown  
together, half a hungry  
artichoke, offered  
it to him  
that final lesson,

but he rolled up  
her hair, her fingers,  
breasts, and toes,  
and danced  
his woman home.



# Picture of My Father as a Young Man

Adam Lambert

Dust settled on picture glass  
is different from other dust.  
Different from the dust  
on a guitar, or a shoebox;  
Closer to the dust on a bottle  
of unopened Coke—  
like the one you saved  
from the world's fair  
in Knoxville, 1982. In love  
then, but not with my mother—  
with Burnadette. The one  
who still has your class ring.  
The first one to wash  
your clothes in college.  
The one who shared  
a small bed with you.  
The one you were first pleased  
to wake up to. That girl  
in the dusty picture,  
wearing your jersey, now  
married in Tennessee  
with your ring in her cellar.





# April 18<sup>th</sup>

Adam Lambert

“On this day in 1930, the BBC went on the air,  
announced ‘*There is no news*’ and played piano music.”

Only the week before there’d been major breakthroughs:  
Synthetic rubber was first produced,  
The Communist Party of Panama was founded,  
And James Dewar created the first Twinkie.

But in a small apartment near Liverpool,  
Or maybe it was a flat on Plymouth’s coast,  
The delightful newsman came on the wooden radio  
And claimed there was nothing.

For once, we all stopped,  
In the center of ourselves,  
Breathing and looking around  
Waiting for something to happen.

No one married or divorced.  
No building with its face blown off.  
No queen lay dead in her ornate bed.  
Nothing, except Chopin’s nocturne–

Opus 37, 1 to be exact–  
Pulling and pushing the tide  
The same way it must have moved  
Before we came and started talking over it.



# Words I wish we had

Adam Lambert

*Cafuné* is the first,  
the act of tenderly sifting through someone's hair.  
Afterglow's first affection.  
Mindless, lightheaded love.  
Almost a state of *Hygge*,  
a Danish word meaning  
the complete absence of anything annoying  
or emotionally overwhelming,  
and the presence of and pleasure from comforting,  
gentle and soothing things.  
Something you might accomplish on an *Uitwaaien*,  
which literally means a walk in the wind,  
but we'd probably call it a calming stroll,  
a walk one might take to clear their head  
of that regrettable moment of inaction  
that the Yagán people called *Mamihlapinatapei*,  
when neither of us wanted to go,  
but we didn't have the words to keep us together.



## Flute

Nicholas Smith

Anymore, there are no words  
for large or wonderful:  
we have chewed them all down  
to the very earth,  
as sheep will graze  
a field until it's dry.

Though,  
suppose that far away,  
encompassed by the heat  
of day and by dust devils,  
there lives a man  
who owns a flute  
that he made himself,

He is sitting down  
by a well in the sun  
among his sheep in Africa.  
He hears wind in the trees,

and ants crawling among  
the dry savanna grass,  
hears the calls of women  
after children far away,

and thus he knows  
another word for large,  
and knowing, begins to play.



## A Poem for the Palm of Your Hand

Nicholas Smith

Last night I dreamed the purple sunset  
Of Palau, and rose from sleep  
To find that cracked paper island  
On the aging globe in the study.  
It reclined there in block letters,  
Covered by curving coconut palms  
And flaming bougainvillaeas, east of Mindanao  
Under the trades. Micronesian women, nude  
And oiled, with lustrous black hair,  
Walked on a white beach among tan and white conches.

On another shelf I saw a small, brown whelk  
You'd brought home last year from the shore.  
I picked it up and pressed it to my ear.  
I heard the gurgle of surf,  
The rustle of palm fronds shifting in the trades  
Which blow west across Palau,  
And heard, in the end, the clear, small eddy  
Of your voice calling me back to bed.

I stood there silent and still for a breath,  
Replaced the shell, snapped out the lamp  
And walked through the dark hallway  
Toward our bedroom. Through flares of light  
Lingering on my eyes, I saw myself  
Lying under the sunlight which pours  
Across coconut palms and flaming bougainvillaeas  
Beside the ocean east of Mindanao. I saw myself

Somewhere in the benediction of the trades,  
Somewhere in the benediction of water and sky.

Then, I pulled back the sheet, edged into bed,  
Stretched a hand toward you  
In the dimmed and settled house. I reached  
To pass you my dream, leaned to tell you:

*This is what I am,  
This is what I've always been.*



# *cold steel infinity*

Luke Champouillon

cold steel infinity  
circles finger two,  
or four from the right

a baby cries at  
three in the morn',  
or properly three at night

father sleeps alone  
upstairs,  
mother cuddles  
infant

who dreams of creation  
on better nights and  
a sunrise shining  
brightly



# Fading

*Sam Campbell*

---

For the first time in Auber Burns's life the alarm clock did not wake her up. Even though she would normally have scorned the thought of waking up a minute before noon on a Saturday morning, she was already showered, dressed, and pulling on her running shoes. A morning jog was also uncharacteristic of Auber, who felt as though walking from the couch to the refrigerator sufficed as enough physical activity for an entire day. She felt fresh, revitalized from last night's sleep, and ready to face the day.

"That's odd," Auber muttered as she fished in her pocket to retrieve her phone. Her fingers grasped at the soft cotton lining, but felt nothing. She searched her bedroom for her phone, but after a few minutes she gave up, reasoning that she must have left it at Malcolm's house the night before. A dreamlike cloud cast a fog over her memory, and she was able to recall only bits and pieces of the night before, flashes of memory seeming to blur together.

The cool, brisk, morning air caressed her face like a knife as she stepped outside. She could feel the moisture of the early morning clinging to the bare skin of her arms. The world was still asleep. No one was stirring except for Auber, not even the birds. Their absence cast a gloomy silence over the fog-shrouded neighborhood. The gravity of the silence pressed in, and her breath caught in her throat. The moment passed the instant her feet hit the pavement, and she set off at a run. It wasn't until she saw the park coming into view that she knew where she was headed. She was going to tell Malcolm the truth.

She and Malcolm had spent many days together in that park, and it was one of her favorite places to be. She ran past the fountain in the center, down the cobblestone path that led out of the park, and came to a stop a few feet from the street that led to Malcolm's cul-de-sac. For a minute, Auber thought about how odd it was that she wasn't out of breath. She wasn't in the best shape, and it was a good mile-long run from her house to this point. She should be doubled over and heaving by now. She looked around, almost desperate for a reason to just stand there a little longer instead of continuing on her way. Then, she spotted a slumped figure lying on the ground in the middle of a small patch of trees. She squinted, trying to recognize the shape.

Auber took a few cautious steps forward, and she realized it was a human being. The face was hidden from view behind a curtain of matted hair, and the skin was covered with a crusty mask the color of rust. It took longer than it should have for her brain to register that it was blood. She gaped at the figure, unsure of how to react, waiting in hopeful anticipation for her basic instincts to take over. Her head was spinning, and she couldn't move her gaze from the motionless figure no matter how hard she tried.

This was a rural area. Things like this—bad things; murders, assaults, random acts of violence—they don't happen here. At least, they didn't happen *here*, in Auber's small, on-the-brink-of-being-nowhere town.

Without warning her body complied with her wish and went into autopilot. She jerked forward and fell to her knees next to the person. The blood puddled around the body, sitting on the surface of the frozen ground, and as she knelt there it began soaking into her jogging pants. She placed a hand on the person's shoulder.

"Are you all right?" Auber asked, "Hello? Can you hear me? Are you okay?" Meaningless questions asked to no one. No one who was in any condition to answer, anyway. She shoved her hands into her pocket, grabbing wildly for her phone, forgetting that her phone was still missing.

"Stay here, I'm going to get help!" she told the body, as if the bloody heap were going anywhere. Auber jumped up and ran out of the park, toward Malcolm's side of town. She looked around, searching for anyone who would help her. She ran to Malcolm's door and pounded on it, screaming for Malcolm to come outside. She waited for what seemed like an eternity, shifting her weight from one leg to the other. She felt tears welling up in her eyes. She didn't want to admit it, but the person in the park was dead. There was no getting help. Tears shook through her body as she fell to her knees on Malcolm's doorstep. Emptiness festered in the pit of her stomach, and a feeling of hollowness stretched through her limbs. There was an inconsolable pain in her heart that she had never felt before.

She knew she still had to do something. She stood up on shaky legs and moved with broken steps towards the park, where the dead body awaited her. A figure moved in her peripheral vision, and she turned, just in time to see Malcolm walking out of his front door and towards the park.

"Malcolm!" she cried, running towards him. If he heard her, he made no indication. His face was neutral, and he looked tired. He walked past her and entered the park.

"Malcolm, don't," Auber tried to warn. But it was too late. She waited behind him as he stood rigid, his whole body tensing, when he saw the dead body.

“Oh, Malcolm,” Auber muttered, walking towards him and putting her hand on his shoulder, and squeezing gently. The heat radiating from his body made her shiver; she had not realized she was that cold. But now that she noticed, she could not ignore the chill she felt all the way to her core. She stepped closer to him, seeking more of his warmth, and said, “Call 911.”

Malcolm reached into his pocket and pulled out his cell phone, opened it, and dialed a number that was definitely longer than 911. Within seconds the shrieking vocals of Auber’s favorite band blasted from the bushes near the dead body. Malcolm snapped his phone shut and the ringtone stopped short. Auber smiled and walked over towards her phone, glad to have found it, knowing she must have dropped it on the way home from Malcolm’s house last night. She glanced up and saw Malcolm was now dialing 911.

“911, what’s your emergency?” Auber heard the nice, calm voice of the operator coming through the phone’s speaker.

“There’s a dead body in the park near my house,” he said, choking back his tears.

“What’s your location?”

He told her.

“A dispatch is being sent immediately. If I could ask you to please stay on the line with me while you—”

Malcolm snapped his phone shut and he knelt down next to the body. He shook his head, tears spilling over and flooding his perfect, tanned face, “No, no, no, no, no,” he muttered, his voice tight with tears.

“It’ll be okay, Malcolm,” Auber tried to reassure him, but she knew she could say nothing to ease his pain, so she just knelt down beside of him.

“I love you,” he muttered, mostly under his breath.

Auber licked her lips and looked into his dark, chocolate eyes and said, “I love you too, Malcolm.”

He shut his eyes and let out one sob. It was just one, but it was enough to bring about a fresh wave of tears to her eyes. The emptiness intensified as the tears began again, and with every tear that fell it was as if Auber lost a piece of herself along with it. She could now hear sirens in the distance, as emergency vehicles raced to the scene.

Malcolm stood up and stepped away from the body. Auber followed him, wanting to stay close. She knew they would have to talk about what happened, about what they had just said to each other, but now was not the time.



When the policemen arrived, everything began happening so fast. The scene was taped off, there was an outline placed around the body, photos were taken, and Malcolm was swept away from her for questioning. In a corner of her mind she wondered why she wasn't being questioned. Technically, she had found the body. The body was checked for evidence and then it was hoisted onto a stretcher in a black zip up bag.

For Auber, the world seemed to stop spinning. The policeman's voice seemed far off now as he rattled on about blunt trauma to the head and multiple stab wounds. For the first time since the police arrived, Auber found the strength to walk. She eased through the crowd of detectives around the stretcher. Now that the body was not lying in a huddled slump, it was easy for her to recognize the battered girl in front of her. Auber stumbled back and felt the breath leave her body as though someone had punched her hard in the stomach. She touched her fingers lightly to her cheek as she stared into her own dull, lifeless eyes. And slowly, almost unperceivably, she felt herself fading away.



# When I Die

*Daniel Morefield*

---

Feed me to the black bears of Rich Mountain.  
Drag me, limp, into the towering cedar and sycamore.  
Lay me in front of that grizzled altar  
and leave, not looking back,  
for you will turn to a pillar of salt.

The humble burlers of the arbortropolis  
will tear me, and I will become them.  
I will serve their purpose until they too  
are taken by the core and consumed.

I will serve their legs, they will walk and sleep upon me.  
Their appetite as well, welcoming others into the pearled  
system of sinew and fluids.  
I will swim with platelets.  
I will contribute to the strength of their teeth and claws.

All of our parts, in time, will slump into soil.  
Slowly receding from organism to energy.  
Entering the Earth and rocketing into the ecosystem,  
until we come to rest.  
A perpetual mass of energy suspended in space.



## Mistress Mine

Jane Hicks

He spends his day-nights  
Moving within her darkness,  
She, rounded and beautiful,  
Older than time,  
Larger than our lives,  
Dangerously moist  
And deep.  
Like all women,  
Keeps her secrets,  
Her treasures  
Tucked away, deep inside.

Her hold on our lives  
Is complete  
My days and nights are filled  
With waiting  
And the fear  
She may someday choose  
Not to return him  
To me.



## Silver Spoon

Sara West

The snow cream sat melting in the blue plastic bowl on the step below her left snow boot. Hers were new, and mine were new to me: her old ones, ugly brown things with black soles and toes, bent metal triangles through which the round strings had been pulled tight around my feet, too small for the shoes but by sheer will of my mother—the tip of her tongue squeezed through her lips as she tugged the laces—they would stay on my feet.

My sister cupped one red-gloved hand over her eyebrows and stared toward the barn. It sat abandoned as it had since we'd moved here and probably before. Our parents were never farmers, but my mother insisted that there was something rustic about keeping the barn there, even as the red paint began to peel away from the sides and the tin roof warped and rusted.

"The perfect murder weapon," she said as I leaned forward on the step to follow her gaze. "Icicles," she clarified.

"Yeah?"

"Yeah," she said. She moved her hand from her eye, her navy coat sighing as her arm fell by her side. She grabbed the handle of our mother's silver serving spoon—the one we'd been instructed *not* to use as we gathered supplies for snow cream making—and brought the slush to her mouth. She pursed her chapped lips and sucked the melt that sat at the edges of the spoon, then tilted the snow into her open mouth.

"I've heard that," I said, though I don't know if it was true. The idea didn't seem original to me, but then again I couldn't say where I would have heard it.

She nodded. "Sure, people would have thought about it before." She slurped around the spoon again, tilted another chunk into her mouth, and handed mother's spoon to me. I'd abandoned my gloves (and my hat and scarf) as soon as I stepped foot outside, buried now somewhere on the porch, and the silver was cold in my hand. I let it balance on the flat of my right palm, the shallow bowl between my index finger and thumb.

"And you're thinking of it now?"

“Sure,” she said, cutting her blue eyes back to mine. “Haven’t you ever thought of it?”

“Of killing someone with an icicle?” I gaped. “No.”

“Oh,” she said, the word escaping as a sigh. She looked back toward the barn. “I guess I thought everyone did.”

Secretly, I thought maybe I had, since I knew that people *did* think of it. Of stabbing someone and leaving behind no evidence, nothing but a brushstroke of blood in the snow as the ice fell, lost altogether in the thaw. But I was ten, and I didn’t think of killing people. I was the wild child, the hellion, the one who’d stolen the silver spoon from our mother’s kitchen; my sister, four years older than I, was soft-spoken and rule-abiding, found most often with her just-a-bit-too-large nose pushed nearly to the spine of the book she was reading. But while I pulled hair and pushed boys and hid my sister’s things, I didn’t want to kill anyone, not even those who hurt me, not even my father, who’d left a smudge of purple beneath my left eye, the eye I kept turned away from my sister.

I shook my head and plunged the spoon into the snow cream, stirring it around so that all the sweetness wouldn’t gather at the bottom. Even still, I scooped from the bottom and stuck the entire spoon basin into my mouth and stretched my lips around it. We’d added entirely too much sweetening (by my suggestion), and I was sure that half of what sat in the bowl was just a clump of cold sugar. It gritted between my teeth and made my cheeks pinch together as if I’d had something sour.

Lace stood and stepped from the concrete steps onto the snow-covered lawn that separated our house from the barn. She walked toward it. I dropped the spoon back into the bowl and followed after her. We leaned forward against the wind, and Lace pulled her grey toboggan lower over her ears. Her hair, cut just to the knobby bone at the base of her neck, stuck between the collar of her coat and the lip of the hat and stood out like broom sage. Mine, long and tangled, half-frozen and matted at the ends, caught in the wind and whipped around my head. I imagined it looped atop my head and made a turban like Aladdin’s, but really it just struck my eyes and wedged between my lips.

“What are you doing?” I called. I could feel the sugar stuck in my gums like sand.

She didn’t answer, so I scooped up some snow in my bare hand, balled it together, and threw it at her back. Bits of it stuck against the navy fleece of her collar, and she shivered but kept bent toward the barn. She stood beneath the lowest eave and looked up. The icicles pointed down at us. She reached up and the tips of her gloves brushed the longest one.

“What do you want with it?” I asked.

“I just want to feel it,” she said with her arm outstretched.

I combed my fingers through my hair, trying to push it behind my uncovered ears.

“Can you boost me?” she asked over her shoulder.

I dropped to one knee and bent the other out in front of me for her to step on. She was bigger than me, but she bounded up and over me so that I barely noticed her weight. Her hand hit the icicle, and it broke from its base and fell to the snow beside my leg. She dropped to her knees, and I tucked my other leg under me. We knelt with our heads together like we were beginning a prayer.

“What are you going to do with it?” I asked.

She reached to pull the icicle from where it had sunk in the snow. It was long, nearly the length of her forearm, with a sharp, tapered end, and it was foggy like the glass of the bathroom mirror after I’d showered the night before. When I glanced at her, Lace was looking into it like she could see her reflection. I could see nothing there but the faint grey cast of the sky.

She stuck the index and middle fingers of her left hand into her mouth, gripped the stitches of her glove between her teeth, and pulled her hand free. Her fingers wiggled against the cold, and the glove waved its phantom fingers as it fell into the snow, red on white. She brought her index finger down on the sharp point of the icicle, holding it there until she pulled back and held it out to me, showing me the purple divot it had made in her pale skin.

I looked and pulled her hand to mine and ran my index finger over the mark. She said, “It’s sharp,” and her eyes glinted like she had an idea.

I repeated, “What are you going to do with it?”

I thought that with force it could pierce the skin; it could pierce the skin of whomever she wanted, maybe our parents, and we’d be left here in this house by the barn and maybe people would think we were witches, like in the book Lace read to me in the summer about the two sisters, the one who killed the whole family by poisoning their sugar with arsenic and the other who didn’t use the sugar and who everyone thought committed the crime, but no one could prove it and the sisters lived together in the woods, unpunished and left alone forever. Only quiet Lace would use the icicle and maybe there would be a rumor that it was wild Mallory, and maybe we’d let them keep thinking it, because the icicle was our arsenic but unlike poison, it wouldn’t be found.

I shivered against the chill and my own thoughts. The way Lace looked at me made me think she'd had the same fantasy, and I hoped I was wrong. A smile pinched at the corner of her lips, and she opened her mouth to say something, but then we heard our father's truck tires spin the gravel at the bottom of the driveway, and at the same time we climbed to our feet. Lace dropped the icicle and pulled her glove back on, stuffing two fingers into the same opening, pinching them out and re-aiming and landing again with the glove's ring finger hanging limp.

"The spoon!" I pulled her arm and tried to rush her back to the porch steps. She allowed herself to be pulled, her eyes unfocused on our father's truck bumping up the driveway. "Come on, we have to hide it!"

Her eyes dropped and she lunged back, her properly gloved right hand skimming the surface until she found it, her arsenic, lying there in the sugar-snow, and it was in her hand as she followed after me, pumping her arms and legs, her snow suit slick and hissing and skimming itself, until she made it in front of me, snow still stuck to her collar.

The truck stopped. She reached the steps a second before me, and already she'd made the spoon disappear into her coat.

"Get your gloves," she said.

The truck door slammed. I had no idea where my gloves were, or my hat, or my scarf, or anything besides the coat and the bibs and the boots I had on my body. I fumbled with the cold metal zipper, trying to zip up as his boots crunched the snow alongside the house.

Lace searched the snow around the front door for my missing accessories with her free hand but came up with nothing. Her eyes were wide on my face as our father rounded the corner; I knew she was looking at the bruise there, thinking maybe of how it had already begun to yellow around the edges, thinking maybe of how it would be gone soon, or replaced.

Our father cleared his throat, and we both turned toward him. I smiled.

"Where are your gloves?" he said. My hands were still frozen on the zipper, pulled halfway up my chest.

"I had to take them off so we could mix the sugar into our snow cream," I replied without knowing I'd been rehearsing this moment since the tires hit the gravel.

He took a long stride toward the bottom step, nudged the blue bowl with his boot toe. "And you just made it?"

“Just a little while ago.”

“It’s half melted,” he said.

I didn’t reply. Lace said, “It melted fast.”

“I see,” he said, looking at her. She stared back. Her right arm was pinned behind her. Looking again at me, he said, “And did you use your head to measure?”

I didn’t understand. “Well, yes. I just guessed how much to put in.”

He closed the distance between us, placed his gloved hand (still cold, even clothed) over my bare head; I felt every finger press against my scalp. I understood. He dropped his hand and grabbed my bare one, looped his index finger and thumb around my wrist, and tugged me up the steps onto the porch. Lace stood and backed up to the side of the door, arm still behind her. Our father pulled open the screen and pushed the heavy door to the inside so hard it struck the wall, but my mother did not appear, acted, as always, like she hadn’t heard. He pushed me into the living room before him, turned, and looked back at Lace, who was frozen in place like her icicle, waiting to be struck, to be moved by a great hand and knocked into the snow, but he did not move her. I watched her face, and I thought, *Don’t do it, don’t hurt him, don’t kill him, it won’t work*, though I thought maybe I didn’t mean it then, thought maybe if I willed her not to do it then I’d be absolved of wanting to do it myself, of believing I could. His other three fingers fell against my wrist as he faced her.

“Get inside,” he said, moving to the doorframe to allow her to pass. She looked at him, steady. “And drop that icicle,” he said. Her face crumbled, her eyes dulled and she dropped her head, and with it, dropped the icicle off the front of the porch and stepped in ahead of us.

Later, the silver serving spoon fell from her coat and bounced on the hardwood floor of our kitchen. The icicle sunk into the snow. In the morning, the sun rose and it was gone.





## Photograph from an Old Album

Greta Talton

It would have been simpler if the father  
had held the baby. Then eyes wouldn't wander  
between two separate pictures: the child,  
unfocused in the foreground;  
the man, distinct, at center right,  
Proximity it seems was not their way.

But surely this was meant to be  
a picture of the baby. The chair in which  
they've set her is so huge, so immediate,  
and such an effort has been made  
at dressing her and dressing it:  
she in white, with a collar that turns up  
around her face like angel wings;  
the chair, with a lace-edged blanket draped  
like an enormous sleeping cat across the back.

Yet the child looks out in fuzzy shock,  
while the father behind a picket fence  
of weathered or never painted wood  
stares firmly past the camera—  
one elbow on the gatepost,  
one hand on his hip. To him belong  
the elements of composition;  
the grays and browns,  
the house with crooked shutters,  
the grassless yard, the fence;

While for the child sprung from  
that improbable chrysalis, there is only  
this one poised moment in late day sun,  
as unaware she looks beyond, then fades  
beneath her father's heavy signature.



# A Great Collapse

Jake Lawson

Our barn showed us the holes  
in beams, wormy chestnut—carpenter’s gold—  
the hand shaved, rock edged  
lumber that clustered Appalachia before the blight.

My cousins and I raced the tight-wire of trusses,  
itching in hay, skywatching through rusted holes  
in tin. Turquoise eggs freckled from nests  
wedged between the roof and shelved planks.

White-washed boards elbowed out in the splitting  
sun, letting light worm down to sift through dust--  
not bright enough to shine through foggy mason jars,

a place for razor-straps, rusted sickles, broken  
whetstones. Abandoned moth-eaten clothes  
made luxurious beds for litters of puppies,  
stalks of dead tobacco--twenty years  
old--left for the red clay to inherit.

One summer a storm ripped planks  
from the barn’s side, and I took the fallen lumber to build  
a bridge over the marsh, where  
our weight and age became too much,

the danger revealing itself. I gazed  
at the window for the next storm  
when lightning blasted the center beam,  
illuminating every inch inside, like a photograph,  
A flash of sharp threat, soft wood  
chipping away to dust.

Until then I didn't notice the beams  
taking the stoop of an age-old crop-picker,  
the roof shifting inward like sand.  
Too weak to hold heavy lofts and deep black corners,  
a haven for snakes draping their dry skin.



## Laura

Janet Leigh Robinson

How mountain she is. Tall,  
dark white, shadowed snow.  
Eyes a deep grey dawn,  
night lingering in morning.  
She has been hollowed out,  
refilled, depleted again.  
The hollows have shrunk,  
caverns shrouded in bone.  
Don't mistake these bones  
for skeleton. They are iron.

She hears only sounds  
that slide between  
the crumblings of conversation.  
If you speak to her, work  
your mouth around until  
it becomes cave, encompassing  
only that which she can touch,  
food, water, dying.  
All else offends her.



# Utah Territory, 1861

Jerianne Paul

That winsome Belvidere'd town  
all bag of nails when he'd come  
trailing that feathered parade of his—  
teals, both cinnamon and blue-winged,  
shovelers, harlequins—all marching  
before his bangtail mare no sane man dare saddle.  
Toward auction that trickster'd drive his herd,  
all quacking and tearing up Jake,  
all there make quick work of shelling like peas  
feet tar-dipped for the long haul  
with an apple peeler, razor-edged,  
cracking black from yellow webs.  
Traded green-backed ducks for green-backed bills  
which he'd tuck away between  
the pages of one of them Mormon Bibles.  
Airtights, seed and cornmeal sacks  
all stored away on a mustang's back.  
He'd scarf down a meal of biscuit  
and cold ham with some Valley Tan,  
Then we'd watch him slink away—  
belly through the brush like a hawk-seen rattler  
when Sheriff would make his rounds—  
back out to badlands, homestead's way.



# Spring Frost

*Sponsored by Artopia Art Supplies*

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*Emily Eversgerd*

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2D Foundations Award

# This Shed Had a Tree Fall on It

*Sponsored by the Mark Russell Foundation Art Fund*

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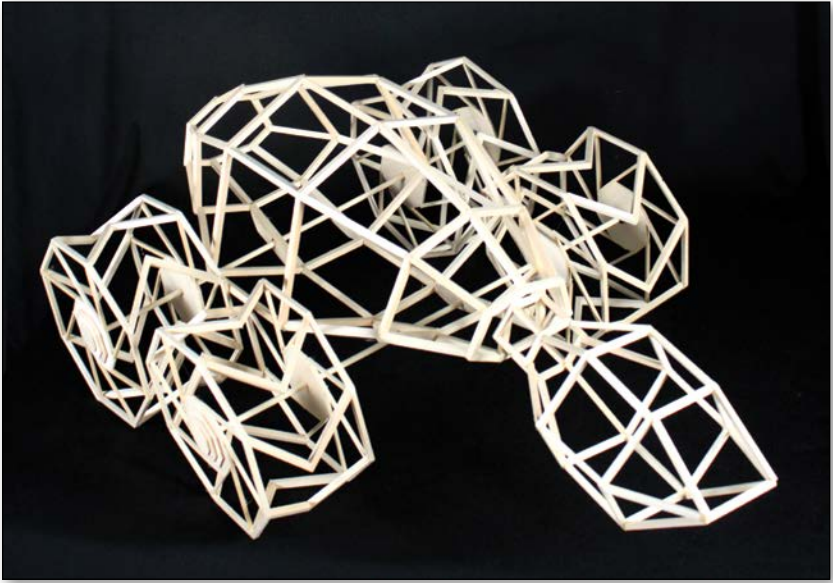
*Alyssa Spooner*

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# Turtle Truck

*Sponsored by the Mark Russell Foundation Art Fund*

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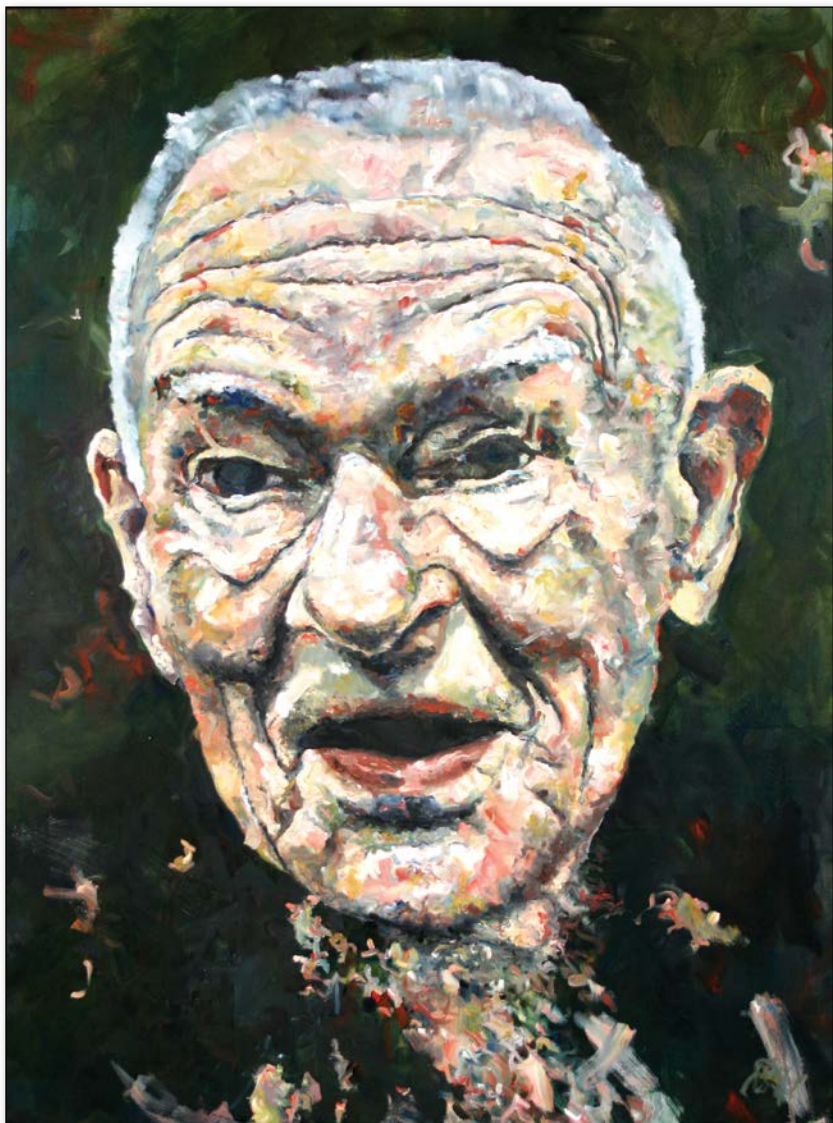
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# Desire

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*Derek Laurendeau*

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# Station 13: Atonement

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# Plato's Chair

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Jody Mitchell

# Tortoise Man

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Heather Justice

# Rococo Head

*Sponsored by Target*

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*Rima Day*

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# Bottle I

Sponsored by Highwater Clays



Nancy Fischman

🔪 1<sup>st</sup> Place, TACA Craft Award 🔪

# Jormungandr

*Sponsored by the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists –  
State of Franklin Chapter*

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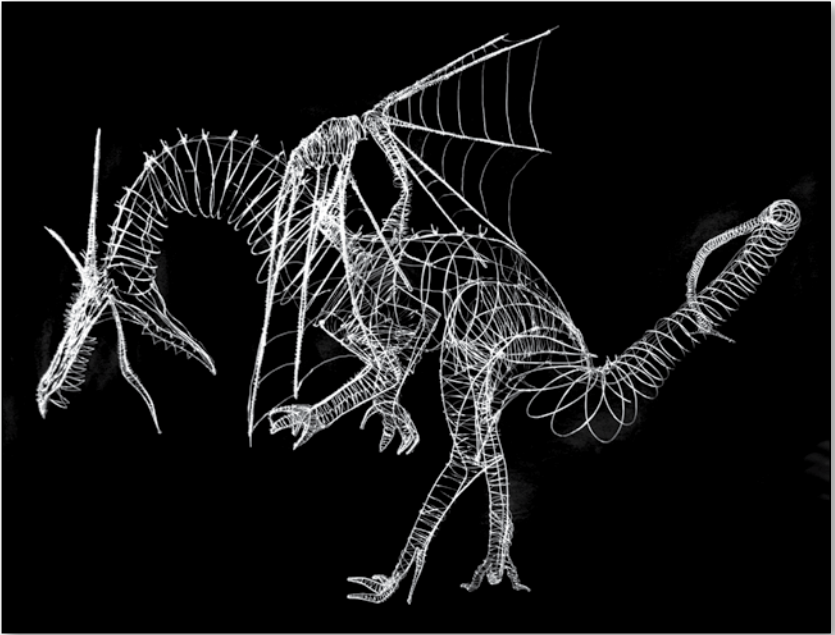
*John Hodgson*

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# Dragon

*Sponsored by the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists –  
State of Franklin Chapter*

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*Alyssa Spooner*

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## Have You Heard the One about the Methodist Who Walks into the Southern Baptist Convention?

Sara West

I've begun to realize that the Methodist Church is something like the red-headed stepchild of the Catholic and Baptist Churches. Of course, I didn't realize this while I was growing up in the Methodist Church, where we learned to recite the Apostle's Creed by heart and hardly cracked the covers of our Bibles. In my whole childhood there, I think I saw only one or two people in the congregation actually bring their Bibles, and they didn't even have Thomas Kincaid Bible cases or anything. In our sermons, there was no "Open your Bibles to Proverbs" (a book I actually know the location of, since it's in the middle), but just a man in a robe with a sash of varying colors that were reported in our programs. Purple: Royalty, 2nd Sunday after Lent. Or something like that. I'm not sure what it means, and it only mattered once when family was an Advent family and I got to light a purple candle. I'll just continue to assume that the church secretary puts the color there so the preacher will know what sash to wear when he gets up in the morning.

Before coming to college, I guess I was denomination-sheltered. I went to a Methodist preschool. I hung out with my Methodist friends. Every time I heard a piano, I wanted to sing the Doxology. You know, traditional Methodist things. And since everyone knows you shouldn't talk about money, religion, or politics with anyone else, it's not like I asked people in school how their churches worked. All I knew about the differences between Baptists and Methodists was that Baptists wouldn't talk to you in a liquor store.

My church was and still remains the political seat of our county. I didn't realize this before I could vote, and when I turned eighteen I was impressed by the sheer number of United Methodists on our county's ballot. Add that to the fact that half our congregation lives somewhere in or around the collection of mansion-sized houses that most of the town calls "Snob Hill." Now, put that many political parties and rich people in one congregation. Then, just for kicks, put that congregation into a church with our new and slightly (considerably, for the Methodist Church) more conservative preacher. Prepare for a show-down. By the second time our new preacher's sermon ran past noon, two different families left the church and never came back. By the third sermon on

homosexuality, half the church yelled AMEN and the other half never came back. A year later, the remaining members of the church complained to The Powers That Be that attendance had dropped so much since the new preacher had entered our midst (thus greatly reducing their voting bodies) that something had to be done. A week later, the preacher was gone.

I suffered through my freshman year of college. The church split happened, and my family stopped going. I stopped reciting the Creed and singing the Doxology and forgot half the lines of “Blessed Be the Ties that Bind.” Despite my distaste for much of organized religion, I missed that connection with Christ. The next year, I joined the Baptist Collegiate Ministries branch at school, after being told many times that it was open to all denominations. It’s called the Baptist Collegiate Ministry because it’s funded by a collection of Baptist churches in the area. Although the last thing I needed was another organization pinned down by someone else’s purse strings, I was desperate.

Not everyone who attended BCM that year was a Baptist. In fact, there were at least two other Methodists, two Catholics, a Presbyterian, and several Church of Christ members. Still, the majority was Baptist, and the first thing I realized was that everyone brought their Bibles. But the thing is, no Baptists needed to bring their Bibles to worship services because they all already knew what all the Bible verses were. And if they didn’t know the exact verse, chapter, and both the NIV and King James Version translations, they had no problem flipping open the Bible and finding the verse they needed. When I finally fished out the Precious Moments Bible I’d gotten at my Christening, I had to use the table of contents to find where half the books were. But that’s not all. Suppose the director would share the story of David and Goliath. That’s an easy enough story, one that I was taught in Bible School years and years ago. I found that Baptists can’t just sit and listen to someone else talk about it, though, because they know all the verses in that chapter, and on top of that, they can tell the speaker every other section of the Bible that has a reference to that event, no matter how obscure.

After years of a 4.0 GPA, I felt inadequate. I went on Amazon and finally sprung the money for one of those Life Application Study Bibles which has not only the verses printed for you with little explanatory notes at the bottom that explain who’s writing to whom and who is talking when it’s not Jesus or Moses. I decided that I was going to read said Bible and be a Bible genius like my peers! I learned—somewhere around 2 Kings, if I remember correctly—that reading the Bible straight through was never going to happen. I skipped to John, and I think that’s where my bookmark remains.

Through BCM, I learned all the new and popular Christian songs. My knowledge before then barely extended past “Shout to the Lord,” and by the time I went on my second BCM conference, I was ready to sing all the words by heart as if I’d been singing them instead of things like “We are the Church.” However, this conference’s theme was “Old-Time Religion,” so instead of the contemporary music I was now used to, we sang old hymns. Old Baptist Hymns, which, contrary to popular belief, are not the hymns that every denomination sings. In fact, I’d heard exactly one song we sang at that conference, and we didn’t even sing the Doxology. Having a conference with “Old Hymns” that didn’t include the Doxology was next to sacrilege in my mind.

In addition to Bibles and hymns, Baptists are also far more concerned with missions. Or, I should say, mission trips. In my home church, we have a missionary. One man in Venezuela. He’s actually not someone from our town, or even our church, so he’s more like an adopt-a-missionary. We used to take up an offering for him every few months, but it’s not like anyone went to visit him. We were fine in our pews without our Bibles.

My first mission trip was to Charleston, where we slept on air mattresses in a church gym (I was still in awe to learn that churches had gyms). During the day, we helped paint an older woman’s home. Right after that, we packed up and did a Bible camp for underprivileged children in an apartment complex. I had never entertained the thought of missions before it was announced we would go to Charleston, which is one of my favorite places in America. However, my eyes were opened to an entirely different part of the city, and I loved that. As soon as we all piled out of the minivan on the first day, a group of ragamuffin Appalachian college students, our Charleston mission leader said, “Everyone stay together, a police officer was shot here this weekend.” My roommate, also a member of my home church, suddenly had eyes as wide as half-dollars.

I was not the only Methodist on this mission trip or the next. The next trip was to Atlanta, where we stayed in a homeless resource center. We didn’t have to sleep on the floor this time, but we did have to make sure we always kept the doors closed because mice and cockroaches frequently got into the bunkrooms. One of my Methodist buddies got sick, and her mother had to come on the second day to drive her home. Not every Methodist can live the Baptist life, I guess.

However, the most enlightening trip I took was a summer trip to the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando. It was the only one-week mission trip offered in the entire summer, and because I spend most of my summer knee-deep in grease at a neighborhood restaurant, I had to keep my missions experience short. The first sign that I should not have attended this trip was a conversation I had with my BCM director while filling out the application.

“It asks for my home church. Should I put United Methodist?” I tapped my fingers on my computer’s keyboard. I wear a Methodist necklace, and I slid the cross charm back and forth on the chain while I filled out the application.

He leaned back in his chair. “It shouldn’t be a problem. But when you have your interview, don’t mention it.”

“Don’t mention I’m a Methodist? You really think I shouldn’t?”

“I’m not sure. But don’t wear that necklace.” He laughed as if it was a joke, but I’m not sure if it was. I wore the necklace anyway.

It wasn’t a problem that I was Methodist working at the Southern Baptist Convention until I got to the Southern Baptist convention. My first run-in with the Baptist church came when I was registering the SBC guests. One of the options on the registration form was “Ordained?” and we were to ask the person and then click yes or no on my computer screen. I was asking every person who came to my booth. I got some weird looks, but I didn’t think anything of it. Before our first break, however, I was pulled to the side by one of our supervisors.

“You don’t need to ask the women if they’re ordained or not,” said the balding, slightly hunch-backed little man.

“Why not?” I asked.

He literally took a step back from me. His mouth opened and closed a couple of times before he finally found the words, as eloquent as they were. “Because...they aren’t...ordained.”

It hit me what he meant, and I nodded. “Okay, I’m sorry.” I wasn’t sorry. I was sorer that none of them had said yes, just for the Hell of it. I guess it wouldn’t do to lie at the Southern Baptist Convention.

I went off in a huff to the exhibit area on the floor above the registration tables. It was full of free things: pens, bracelets, notepads, and bags. Free stuff always helps to elevate my mood, so I palled around with a couple of girls, and we collected every free thing we could find. On the way around, we noticed a couple of sign ups, the traditional pen and ballot drawing for different things like iPods and TVs and such. We filled them all out, and then we wandered up on the gold mine of all prize drawings: an iPad. This drawing was fancy, so we had to sign up on a computer. I had to fill out my name, age, and location. After I filled out my location, a list of Baptist Churches in my area was pulled up. An older lady with ginger beehive hair hovered around me while I scrolled through all the churches a couple of times.

“Isn’t your church on there, honey?” she asked.

“No,” I said. I hesitated to tell her my church, and thought for a minute I would just pick a random one off the list, but since I was already upset about the ordaining thing, I replied, “I don’t see it.” I told her the name of my church.

The woman’s hand was halfway to the computer mouse when it stopped.

“Methodist?”

“Yes.”

“Why are you here?” Her hand was still frozen above mine.

“I’m working at registration,” I said.

“I see. Well, since your...church isn’t on this list...let me talk to someone.”

I might have walked away, had I not been so stubborn. I watched as she conversed with another woman with a similar beehive in blonde. After a few seconds of conversation, the blonde lady came over to my computer and told me, “Unfortunately we’re just going to keep this drawing open to members of the Baptist Church.”

Even though I knew it was going to happen, I blushed and smiled and walked away. I grew progressively angrier as the convention went on, and I grew tired having to click that stupid “Ordained” checkmark and how everyone told me how I had such a beautiful “Tennessee Twang.” I thought about writing “I AM METHODIST” on my nametag to see how many comments I would get, but I didn’t. It probably wasn’t worth all the anger that it had caused. The trip, all in all, was fun and, I shouldn’t have let those specific occurrences color the whole trip, but I did.

I’m not trying to be Baptist. I’m not even trying to be Methodist, although that’s what I am and what I say I am. I’m trying to find a way to fellowship with Christ with other believers. I have no desire to fight against church politics, to learn old hymns, or to sign up for iPad drawings. Those are not the things that religion should be about. I have learned that in Christianity, there are many divides: within a church and within the Church. When I say the Apostles Creed now, “I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic church, the communion of Saints...” I’m no longer sure how much I believe in the Church. With that rag-tag bunch of Christians back at my undergraduate school—the Baptists, the Methodists, the Catholics, the Presbyterians, the Pentecostals—I felt more a part of a church than I have in many years. Because for an hour or so each Thursday, in our little chapel on campus, with our Bibles that some of us never open and others have memorized, singing songs that until college I’d never heard, there were no denominations, there was no divide, there was simply God.





# All That's Left

By Joseph Bowman

**MICHAEL** – At the center of this show. Actions and thoughts are often represented by the council of his mind.

**ALEXANDRA** – Michael's self-absorbed date. Very talkative and not at all concerned about Michael.

**THE DIRECTOR** – Leader of the council of the mind. Speaks for the members, as well as **MICHAEL** sometimes.

**YIN** – Represents the portions of the mind that counteracts with **YIN** but more often in a facetious manner.

**YANG** – Worrisome, Often gets through to **THE DIRECTOR** more than **YIN**.

**LONG-TERM MEMORY** – Forgetful, often fumbling through the gigantic folder containing all of Michael's memories.

**SHORT-TERM MEMORY** – Often interferes with **LONG-TERM MEMORY** in the most whimsical manner.

**RANDOM COUPLE** – Briefly appear only to make for an awkward situation

## A One-Act Play

### Scene 1

*On an elevated platform UPSTAGE CENTER sits a large rectangular table full of businessmen that overall represents MICHAEL'S MIND. At the center of this table is THE DIRECTOR, and sitting around him are some of the other members of the mind: LONG-TERM MEMORY, SHORT-TERM MEMORY, etc. In CENTER STAGE sits MICHAEL patiently waiting at a table set for two.*

**YANG** (*Pacing back and forth*): Where is she? It's already . . . (**MICHAEL** checks the time, looking worried) A quarter past, and there's no sign of her. No calls, no texts—

YIN (*Interrupting*): No smoke signals, no carrier pigeons, no droids with holographic messages installed into their mainframes. Quit yer worryin', would ya?

YANG: It is my job to worry . . . This is already a disaster—

THE DIRECTOR (*Calmly*): Send her a text . . . Tell her you're already seated at the restaurant.

(MICHAEL *takes out his phone, lets out a sigh, and continues to text.*) Now, let's review what we remember from the first date.

LONG-TERM MEMORY: Ummmm . . . (*Looking over notes*) She likes cats.

THE DIRECTOR: . . . And . . . ?

LONG-TERM MEMORY: Oh! Ummmm . . . she likes . . . food?

YANG: We spent at least four hours on our first date, and all we have to show for it is that she likes cats . . . and food?

LONG-TERM MEMORY (*Still looking through the notes*): . . . Her favorite color is green.

YIN: Great. All we need is a green cat made of chicken tortellini and we'll be looking at a solid three to five years of being in a committed relationship.

LONG-TERM MEMORY: She has a very nice face.

(SHORT-TERM MEMORY *takes a piece of paper from LONG-TERM MEMORY's notes and starts folding it into a paper airplane.*)

YANG: We're screwed. We are so screwed.

LONG-TERM MEMORY: Look, I'm only here to make sure things are on file for the long haul. If you want me to keep track it, then don't give it to STM.

SHORT-TERM MEMORY (*Finishes folding the paper airplane, throws it off to the side, and chuckles, slightly amused. Suddenly paying attention*): Wait, what?

(*The sound of the phone vibrating can be heard. MICHAEL checks his phone.*)

THE DIRECTOR (*Reading*): Stuck n traffic b there in 5 min.

YIN: Stuck N traffic? B there in 5 min?! *Really?* She couldn't take the extra keystrokes to write IN and BE?

YANG: She's stalling!

THE DIRECTOR: Why would she be stalling?

**LONG-TERM MEMORY:** We disagreed on . . . (*flips through notes*)  
something . . . Aha! She is not fond of network television.

**THE DIRECTOR:** And this would cause her to make up excuses that would  
cause her to be late to a second date?

**YANG:** Okay, when you say it like that it sounds dumb, but—

**THE DIRECTOR:** Do we have enough time for a bathroom break?

(*MICHAEL checks his phone.*)

**YIN:** Depends. Number one or number two?

**THE DIRECTOR:** We've got enough time.

(*MICHAEL stands up and begins to walk off stage.*)

**YIN:** Be quick! I'm sure you wouldn't want to keep a woman who can't  
completely spell out her words waiting.

**YANG:** Don't even get me started.

(*Curtains.*)

## **Scene 2**

(*MICHAEL walks back onstage only to find another couple sitting at his table.*)

**THE DIRECTOR:** What . . . What is this?

**SHORT-TERM MEMORY:** Isn't this where we were sitting?

**LONG-TERM MEMORY:** I'm pretty sure it is.

**YIN:** Of course it is! Do you see any other tables around?

**THE DIRECTOR:** I should say something to them.

**YANG:** Don't do that! What if they say "No" or something?

**THE DIRECTOR:** What should I do, then?

**YANG:** Flag down a waiter! Let him deal with it!

(*MICHAEL starts looking around*)

**THE DIRECTOR:** I don't see any waiter.

**YANG:** We have to act fast. GO UP AND SAY SOMETHING TO THEM.

**MICHAEL** (*MICHAEL walks up to the couple*): Excuse me . . . Hi. Um, I don't  
know how else to say this, but—

**THE DIRECTOR** (*Interrupting*): You guys are kinda sitting at my table.

**YANG**: Nicely done. (*The couple gets up and walks off stage. As MICHAEL sits back down, YANG continues*) You don't think that came across as mean or jerkish, do you?

**THE DIRECTOR**: Maybe, but they're probably just really embarrassed.

(*Enter ALEXANDRA.*)

**YANG**: There she is! Quick! Shake her hand!

**MICHAEL** (*Putting out his hand*): Alexandra! Hey!

**ALEXANDRA** (*Smiling*): Hey, you!

**YIN** (*As MICHAEL is grabbing ALEXANDRA's hand*): Don't shake her hand! Go for a hug!

(*MICHAEL pulls in ALEXANDRA for a hug while still holding her hand.*)

**THE DIRECTOR**: Way to go. You both have collaborated on a really awkward hug. Way to start out the second date.

**ALEXANDRA**: Sorry I'm late. I had to drop Oliver off at the vet, and I got caught up in traffic.

**MICHAEL**: It's really quite all right. Oliver is your . . . . (*LONG-TERM MEMORY starts flipping through his notes before finding a sheet of paper and shows it to THE DIRECTOR*) cat?

**ALEXANDRA**: Oliver is my dog. I'm ALLERGIC to cats. Remember?

(*Everyone sitting at the long table shoots LONG-TERM MEMORY a look. LONG-TERM MEMORY starts jotting down new notes. Shortly afterward, SHORT-TERM MEMORY quickly takes the note, wads it up, puts it in his mouth, and starts chewing it. Nobody seems to notice. As ALEXANDRA continues to talk, LONG-TERM MEMORY makes more notes.*) I had to take Oliver to the vet today to get another worms shot. He keeps getting these bad diseases, and these vet bills are starting to really pile up. Last week- (*ALEXANDRA continues talking. MICHAEL slowly starts to zone out.*)

**YANG**: Did we turn off the lights before we came here?

**THE DIRECTOR**: Shhhh!

**YANG**: No, seriously! What if we left the lights on?

**YIN**: Then, we'll have to pay a couple extra bucks on the next electrical bill. So what?

YANG: It's not just a couple extra bucks. That stuff builds up over time.  
First we're leaving the lights on, then we're leaving the fridge open, and then we're—

ALEXANDRA: Hey!

MICHAEL (*Startled*): Y-yes?

ALEXANDRA: Have you been listening to me?

MICHAEL: Of course I have.

ALEXANDRA: What did I just say?

MICHAEL: You were just talking about your... dog?

ALEXANDRA: What's my dog's name?

MICHAEL: It's . . . (LONG-TERM MEMORY, *panicking, starts flipping through his notes. THE DIRECTOR walks over to SHORT-TERM MEMORY and grabs the wad of paper out of his mouth.*)

THE DIRECTOR (*Reading*): Oliver.

ALEXANDRA (*Excited*): You were listening! It's so rare to find that in a guy nowadays.

MICHAEL: Well, I-

ALEXANDRA: Hold that thought. I'll be right back. (ALEXANDRA *exits*).

YIN: Pretty good so far, don't you think?

YANG: Well, it's not terrible. Maybe we could do better on a third date?

YIN: Let's not push our luck.

(*Curtains.*)

### Scene 3

*Curtain opens to the familiar scene. MICHAEL and ALEXANDRA have finished eating their meals.*

THE DIRECTOR: All right, gentlemen. The date is nearing the end. What should we do?

YANG: I'm not exactly sure about how I feel about this girl any more. Upon further review of her, she appears to be quite neurotic and incapable of being in any sort of relationship.

YIN: Agreed. Not to mention, I'm pretty sure we've learned more about her dog than we've actually learned about her.

LONG-TERM MEMORY: I can confirm that, actually.

THE DIRECTOR: So, what our next plan of action? Pay for lunch and break it off?

YIN: Sounds good to me.

YANG: Should we pay for her lunch, too?

YIN: Well, we are kinda breaking this off with her, and it seems like the gentleman-like thing to do.

THE DIRECTOR: So, we are all in agreement?

ALEXANDRA: Michael, there's no really easy way for me to say this, but I just want to let you know that I'm not really ready to be in a relationship right now.

THE DIRECTOR: What?

ALEXANDRA: I've just got so much going on, and I don't think I can handle something else to juggle.

THE DIRECTOR: But—

ALEXANDRA: But you're a super nice guy, and I feel really bad about dumping you like this. Do you mind if I pay for lunch?

THE DIRECTOR: I guess, but—

ALEXANDRA: I have to go, but hey, maybe I'll see you around some other time?

THE DIRECTOR: Well, I—

ALEXANDRA: Okay, see ya later! (*Exit ALEXANDRA. There's a brief moment of silence. THE DIRECTOR and MICHAEL are stunned by what has just happened.*)

YIN: Man . . . that was cold.

LONG-TERM MEMORY: So, I guess we don't need these notes on her anymore. (*LONG-TERM MEMORY starts to hand the notes to SHORT-TERM MEMORY, who looks eager to dispose of them. THE DIRECTOR descends from the elevated platform and sits with MICHAEL, who is still sitting at the table somewhat baffled.*)

**THE DIRECTOR:** Michael . . . ? (*The lights slowly dim. Spotlight on MICHAEL and THE DIRECTOR*) Michael? (*Michael buries his hands in his face*) It's okay, Michael. This wasn't your fault. There's no use in getting upset over something like this. Just because she beat you to the punch doesn't mean you're anything less of a man. (*MICHAEL lets out a sigh.*) There will come a time and a day when you'll have what you want, but at the end of it all (*THE DIRECTOR puts his hand on MICHAEL's shoulder*), we're going to be all that's left.

(*Curtains.*)



# Lemons on the Avenue

DeVan Burton

My friends and I knew we'd grow  
tall and wide, not up. Drink Colts and live  
with our mothers. Rushing to catch the bus.  
Old Man Wolfe, from the neighborhood pack,  
asked what we were going to be when we grew up.  
Thomas laughed. Ray burped. And I stood stupid.  
Our mentors lined the street corners where rusty  
lemons crowded the avenues.  
The men stared, clutching paper brown bags  
they claimed were what the doctor ordered.  
The city soon removed the lemons  
from the avenues and the men were gone too.  
Some returned to the state; others found new property  
to mark. We, at the prom with our dates  
when Wolfe died. Thomas grew like a chimney.  
Smoke rises from him daily. Ray drinks Slim-Fast to shed  
the pounds while he lives in his mother's basement.  
And I search textbook after textbook, attempting  
to answer Wolfe's question.





# Walk-Off

Keith Brake

Red clay caked on the manager's cleats  
As he made his way down the first base line  
Of the worst-kept park he had ever seen.  
He hated when series ended like this;  
Losing was bad, but walk-offs were worse.

There would be no postgame shower, no lecture,  
These boys were just barely professionals,  
But they knew their mistakes, knew that Ronnie  
Lost his curveball at the worst possible time,  
That Lance was caught flat-footed in right field,  
That no one could hit the league's worst bullpen.

Three weeks on the job, his routine was set;  
Reports on the bus, call John tomorrow,  
Get cuts and call-ups, tell him Castillo  
Can't hit cleanup then travel to Greeneville  
On the Fourth of July. *What a birthday.*

The old bus groaned to life, ready to bear  
Its charges back to Tennessee. They crossed  
The state line in muted tones, all watching  
As the mountain passes by in the darkness  
While the valleys were set ablaze with life,  
The dark speedway looming on the road's edge.

The manager looked over the faces  
On the wrong end of the walk-off double.  
He wasn't sure who would be there next time,  
But he promised himself and his players  
That when they came back next week, things would change.



# Bonnaroo 2007: A “Coming of Middle Age” Story

Robert Kottage

I turned forty-one in spring of 2007. Numbers like that have never bothered me—after twenty-one, who cares? Might as well be eighty-one. But I did not officially turn middle-aged until June of that year, when I spent four days with my girlfriend Cate, her sons, and their friends, at the Bonnaroo Music Festival in Manchester, Tennessee.

Even before I bought my ticket, I found the idea of the venue a little alarming. It’s held on 700 acres of dusty farmland, with several separate stages. 80,000 people show up for it. I also knew you had to park, stake a place near your car with enough room for your community pavilion and a half dozen private tents, and then start setting everything up. And once you’d chosen a spot, you could pretty much forget about moving until Sunday night—no changing your mind and going home, in other words. You’d be hemmed in by hundreds of other cars all around you as soon as you killed your engine. While I deliberated about buying a ticket, memories of 1999 Woodstock reunion news reports floated into my mind—rape, looting, arson. Naked mud-sliding. Public service announcements advising everyone to avoid the brown acid. But no—I was getting my Woodstocks confused, as I am wont to do.

In the “pro” column was one band: The Police. As a fifteen-year-old back in 1981, I had planned to see them—during their *Zenyatta Mondatta* Tour—at the Civic Center in Springfield, Massachusetts. I’d been cleared for takeoff by my parents, amazingly—that is, until some joker who worked with my dad informed him that kids smoke marijuana at these shows. We did? Well, of course we did. My dad was a bridge inspector for Conrail. He didn’t really think about what went on at rock concerts, or care about it. And he didn’t know who The Police were. If he’d made the connection that they were the writers of “Message in a Bottle,” whose repeated fadeout chorus of “Sending out an S.O.S. / Sending out an S.O.S.” once caused him to bellow “I’m gonna send out a goddamn S.O.S. in a minute” and change the station furiously—then he might have thought pot a prerequisite. Anyway, I had missed my chance to see them when I was fifteen. And within a couple of years they had broken up more decisively than any band can break up without the aid of death,

prison, or Armageddon. The Police—particularly Sting and Stewart Copeland—hated one another’s guts, and would never reunite.

Twenty-one short years later, I was unloading a tent in some Tennessee field, ready to hear them play the songs I’d had memorized for decades.

“I’m glad those security check dudes didn’t search the cars,” one of our party said.

“I knew they couldn’t,” said my girlfriend’s son, Chris. “Look at this crowd. They’d have been here all week doing that shit.”

I suspected I would soon have evidence that my father’s coworker was right about the marijuana.

Our group consisted of three of Cate’s sons—Chris, Jordan, and Stephen—plus Jordan’s fiancée, Betsy, and four other friends of the boys. Outside of Cate and me, the average age in that crowd was about twenty-five.

I noticed that a tent near ours flew a red, yellow, and green Bob Marley flag, and took it, correctly, as an omen. The next four days were redolent of pot and patchouli. One young guy in our group went wandering off the first morning and came back with some kind of cannabis dessert ball—something that looked like a wad of peanut butter rolled in birdseed. “They’re selling them at a stand out there,” he said, red-eyed. Cate then coined the term “Ganja Gobstopper.” Another day, some glassy-eyed kid wandered into our pavilion tent, hugging people. “Whassup, man. Hey, brother.” Eventually, Chris told him, “I think you got the wrong tent, my man,” and gently turned the guy 180 degrees around to find his way out. Someone’s girlfriend in our group, a wan hippie named Amber, stood informing me about the merits of marijuana—how it opened up the corpuscles in the brain, or whatever, and how this was apparently helping her to read her way through Leonardo da Vinci’s notebooks. “You know he designed a fucking helicopter?” she asked me. “People must have been like: *What?*”

I began to feel very old. Kids around me everywhere were going to be seeing The White Stripes, The Black Keys, The Flaming Lips, Spoon. When I mentioned that I couldn’t wait to see The Police, it was as if I’d confessed to having a Barry Manilow poster in my room. And it didn’t help that my girlfriend and I were teetotalers in this crowd, not smoking or taking anything, unless you count the muscle relaxers I was popping because my back had gone out. As I said: I began to feel very old.

“Here they come,” one of Chris’s friends once said as we came back into camp. “Bonnie and Clyde.”

And so we saw The White Stripes. Jack White said something into the mic about the drummer, Meg, being his sister, and when I repeated it to Cate, someone

nearby stared at me as though I were insane (so they'd been married, so what). We saw Ween—saw a pigtailed girl in the crowd riding on some guy's shoulders, stripped to the waist and smiling shyly, while Gene Ween pointed and Dean Ween gave her a wolf-grin. We saw The Flaming Lips, with their space pod bubble stage show, until one too many kids had stepped on Cate's hand where she sat on the ground and we decided to take the ten-minute walk back to our tent. We turned in early, crawled into the sleeping bag, turned off the flashlight . . . and then were forced to listen to the manic dynamics of Tool blasting at us from a mile away.

"Damn," I said. "It's like I'm right there with my head in the amp."

"I hope you're having a good time," Cate said.

"Yes."

Eventually, Saturday night managed to arrive—the third of our four days there. By 9:00 p.m. we'd set up our camp chairs in the dark, waiting for The Police to come on. The stage was perhaps a football field away, as I recall. Drove of diehard fans had arrived long before us and planted themselves up front. But by then I was done with the crush of those crowds and was prepared to have a more mellow experience.

"You think we're too old for this?" I asked Cate.

"I don't feel a need to do it again."

"These kids sure kick up a lot of dust, don't they? And everyone is in a stupor. Plus I've never heard of most of the bands. You've gotta wonder what possessed people like us to come here. And look at these little video screens we'll be watching the band on—we'd have a better view of this concert if we were watching it at home on TV. You know that, right?"

But then, while I was in mid-complaint, Stewart Copeland came out and hit the gong behind the drum set—*BOOOsssh*. The crowd in front of us made their distant, excited crowd noise. Andy Summers began playing that quirky opening guitar riff everyone has heard a million times on the radio. A miniature Sting appeared on the video screen, clapping his hands in rhythm, looking as spiky-haired as he would have looked in 1981. And then I jumped up from my camp chair and hollered along with everyone else.

The song was "Message in a Bottle." Take that, Dad, I thought—you'll never understand us kids.



# Garden Party

Natasha Snyder

The winter's secret close held  
is becoming gossip on the hillside  
as the tulip poplars bend their heads to whisper together  
and the ballerina willows sweep and sway, weeping left off  
for another day.

The debutantes are all transformed  
from shy sprouts with downcast heads  
to eager flower decked beauties arrayed in new leaves, even  
the matronly oak has a new hat of twigs with bits of string  
woven gaily through;

And the redbuds and the dogwoods  
wave their virginal bouquets  
to the gangly jonquils standing grouped together,  
late blooming wallflowers at the spring's garden party.



## October Dusk

Rita Quillen

the evening dark  
falls around me  
its warm breath  
casts a shadow on my face

sitting on my front steps  
I am a candle flame  
drawing moths and mosquitoes  
holding the moments in my cupped hands

he sits quietly by me  
memories of the day's work  
swift moving color shared  
like fall leaves in the yard

the potatoes from the garden  
lie scattered in the grass  
tomorrow we will sort them  
and store them for winter

his hand rests on my neck  
as he slowly stands  
he offers the other dirty hand  
to help me up

our eyes meet in the fading light  
we go inside  
surrendering to the night  
the smell of earth still strong.



# The Rabbit Pot

*Laura Simpson*

---

The girl squatted and plunged her hands into the white Styrofoam cooler. The yellow-tinted water sloshed and swirled as the girl brushed her skinny fingers together. Trying to be rid of the fish smell would take soap and fresh water. Standing, the girl shook her hands to her sides, rubbing the excess water into the rough edges of her blue jeans. Balanced between two rusted sawhorses, the rough plywood held her haul: three catfish, each nearly two feet long. The girl was proud of herself. Wait till he saw.

He was coming up from behind her. The crunch of the gravel recognized his slow pace and rose up to meet his footfall. He walked through the open door and turned to look at the girl. He nodded towards her catfish and turned his back to her. The girl shifted her weight from one foot to the other and walked forward. The old garage was littered with tools and parts; rusted oil cans, half-used caulk guns, green plastic funnels, empty coffee cans stuffed with nails and bolts, and a giant, white standalone freezer that was filled to bursting with deer meat; above them hung an antique cherry cradle. The girl climbed onto the busted seat of an old blue and yellow Snapper lawn lower. The scratchy yellow foam cut into her bare feet.

The girl watched as he pulled four peppered grey tufts of fluff from a brown canvas bag. One by one he laid them across the white topped freezer, their limbs pressed together pleadingly; their eyes reflecting fragments of flint. He reached up to grab the knife from the shelf above his head. Running his thumb down the belly till he reached the bladder, he slowly pressed until the furred creature released small droplets. They clung to the fur like dew. He then pushed the knife into the softness and pulled up. Slide and pop. Slide and pop. The knife dug through and released as he worked his way to the chest, pulling and gripping fistfuls of matted fur.

“Go get the rabbit pot,” he said.

“Where is it?”

“She’s got it, in the kitchen.”

He flipped the small creature around and stuck the knife right below the shoulder blades. The cut slid down the spine. He pulled and separated the fur, like one unlacing a corset. He took it by its waist and removed the furry stockings with a hard tug, and hung it by the ankle from a rusty nail beside him. He pulled the naked creature to him and began to saw on its ears. The fur was still connected to its head. Copper blood trailed down his wrists, catching in his dark arm hair as he nicked out the eyeballs and tossed them to the ground. With one swift motion he slit open the skin from tail to throat, and with a yank of the furry tail the internal systems spilled out onto the freezer top.

“I said, get the rabbit pot” he mumbled as he snapped the pink and grey ankles.

The girl sprang from her perch and ran through the yard. The birds above her sucked and gulped the dry air. Summer stretched across the yard, curling and licking its fingers as it wrapped around the living. Hard grasshoppers fled her path as she crunched through the yellow grass. The roar of the cicadas made her own throat go dry. Out of the corner of her eye something moved. The little one was sitting under a dogwood tree watching an ant crawl across her finger. The little one stood up and trotted to the girl and poked her scabby finger into the girl’s face.

“It’s a bug”

“I know”

“Where are you going?”

“To get the rabbit pot”

“She’s already got it ready.”

They walked through the white storm door together, the little one setting her bug on a curled hydrangea leaf.

She was squatted in front of the refrigerator scrubbing and dipping her rag into an old tea jug full of soap suds. The decorative blue and purple pansies were barely visible any more. She turned when she heard the crash and rattle of the storm door.

“It’s hot out there.”

“I know. Good day to clean out the fridge.”

“He needs the rabbit pot.”

“It’s by the sink.”



She turned back to the refrigerator and dipped her rag into the soapy tea jug.

The girl walked over to the sink. In the bottom of the silver basin sat the old dented rabbit pot. Its white plastic handles were stained orange from the rusting screws that held them in place. The girl carefully lifted the pot up; the ice cold water sloshed onto the white linoleum.

“I’ll get it in a minute”

“No, here.” The little one stretched to her toes and pulled down a roll of white paper towels. The little one followed the girl to the front door, mopping sashes as they went.

The naked pink and grey masses plopped into the pot one by one as he removed them from their nail. Small bubbles popped and skated and vanished across the surface. He wiped the sweat from his face with his forearm; brown and white fur stuck to his knuckles and black cotton shirt. “Why do they look like that?” The little one wedged her face between him and the girl. Her tiny hands clutched around a pink plastic cup of water. The little one rested her small chin on its curved brim and leaned towards the rabbit pot. The girl was annoyed.

“Shh.”

“Hey, why do they look like that?”

“Because I skinned them. We don’t want furry gravy, do we?”

“No. Do we?” The little one turned to the girl.

“No.”

Darkness pulled itself up over the mountain, heaving in the dry air, and rolled against the garage door. He flipped on the florescent light and turned towards the girl’s catfish. Their shiny green and brown bodies looked sticky to touch; black whiskers curled around their fat heads.

“They look good. Big.”

“Yeah, they do.” She came up behind them and wrapped her arms around the little one’s shoulders. The girl teetered on a cinderblock and smiled up at the three of them.

“Why they doing that?”

“Doing what?”

“That!”

The little one shrugged out of the embrace and stepped up with the girl onto the cinderblock, pulling her pink cup onto the plywood. “They’re moving! They’re trying to breathe! Why are they still moving?” The little one turned to the girl. Her small dark eyes widened in horror. The girl looked at him, then back to the little one.

“Shh. They just are.”

“Hey, hey, why are they still mooooooving?” The little one wailed and turned back to the catfish.

“It’s just a reflex. They have gills to breathe under water. Their gills keep going for a long time after you catch them . . . It’s all right.” He turned and picked up the rabbit pot.

“It’s all right.” She turned and walked into the darkness with him and the rabbit pot leaving the little one and the girl standing alone in the garage.

The girl stared into the darkness for a long time. He had left the skinning knife on top of the cooler. Stepping over busted bags on concrete, drop cords, and black trash bag stuffed with winter clothes, the girl quietly reached up and slid the knife across the cold, white enamel. The girl knew to wait for him to get back to fillet the catfish. But how proud he would be to see her do it on her own. The girl caught her reflection in the blade; her face was distorted and covered in blood and fur. The little one whimpered. Turning, the girl dropped the blade, rattling and skidding across the slick surface.

The little one had stretched up over the plywood as far as her pale arms could reach. Silent tears streamed down her cheeks; her tiny hands quivered as they poured her pink cup of water along the gills of the catfish.



# Seasonal

*Maggie Colvett*

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ferried on the breeze  
was she dark-lipped and fertile  
did bucks come running

did they catch a whiff  
of her luscious hindquarters  
that dank sexy heat

did her reeling scent  
overpower the warning  
scents that propelled it

though who by her moan  
her provocative lowing  
could hear other sounds

what was it to them  
to the bucks who came running  
what was it to see

two squares of forest  
break away and manifest  
as printed jackets

two men raise her legs  
suspend her over the ground  
and lower her back

one brace her shoulders  
and one kneel between her legs  
attending to her

slitting tail to breast  
and thrusting a thick red arm  
in her cooling gut

so to deliver  
her liver; also her lungs,  
heart, stomach, kidneys

what did the bucks see  
do they know about kidneys  
or camouflage print

what was it to them  
who would be choicer prizes  
who lingered to watch

her soft white belly,  
nearly bloodless, gathered by  
jacketed strangers



# Postdiluvians

*Maggie Colvett*

---

A kitefin shark smells something out-of-place:  
not a whale, but mammalian, warm blood gone cold,  
salt-cured and peculiar.

She follows the spoor of grass-fed flesh  
to a reef near the edge of the water,  
and a lost goat stares and stares at her  
with eyes unreally huge, its head swinging limp  
on a rope that got snagged in the rocks.  
Above them, a pinewood stake is bobbing,  
tugging at the slack like a balloon.

Meanwhile, a team of horses stalls against a cliffside,  
formidable bodies mounted in action  
by tension of tensors and bone.  
Locals crowd the diorama.  
Twisted like kelp in those freakish knees  
is a figure they know for a diver  
— his dangerous hands waving empty, now,  
its fingertips shriveled and loose.

An octopus solves a latch with ease  
and startles a household of algae:  
they've painted the walls and tables already  
and filled in a half-finished loom.  
Tentacles try discarded sleeves and probe the new environs.  
Their fumbling upsets a lidded jar  
and a wobbling bubble lifts to the ceiling  
and breaks in a scatter of tiny golden beads.

Wooden carts roll driverless,  
rolling incredibly slowly,  
hitching on coral and rocks as they slip  
into darker and darker water.

Saltcellars scuttle on little crab legs.

Dolphins are starting to click and murmur.  
Why these new hills? Why's it dark where they live?  
What sends those unlucky tourists down?  
And what moves that shape on the face of the water,  
that unstoppable shadow, unhurried and huge,  
that unnerving smudge on the skylight?

Snakeskins and mothwings are losing their scales.  
No one left can tell them from the sand.



# Voie

*Maggie Colvett*

---

The unseen oracle of Métro  
is seated in each of her metal-grilled shrines,  
from which she divines  
the unseeable surface.

She summons and states  
every station:

“Saint-Lazare?  
Saint-Lazare.”

“Madeleine?  
Madeleine.”

“Concorde?  
Concorde.”

and by her voice  
the world,  
which has been narrow as a train,  
is opened.







## Judges' Biographies

### *Rita Quillen — Poetry*

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Rita Quillen's poetry received a Pushcart nomination as well as a Best of the Net nomination in 2012. Her most recent collection *Her Secret Dream*, new and selected poems, is from WIND Press in Kentucky. Previous works are poetry collections *October Dusk* and *Counting The Sums*, as well as a book of essays *Looking for Native Ground: Contemporary Appalachian Poetry*. She lives and farms on Early Autumn Farm in Scott County, Virginia. She was a finalist for the Poet Laureate of Virginia 2012-14.

### *Charles Dodd White — Fiction*

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Charles Dodd White currently lives in Asheville, North Carolina, where he teaches writing and literature at South College. He has been a Marine, a fishing guide, and a newspaper journalist. He is the author of the story collection, *Sinners of Sanction County*, the novel, *Lambs of Men*, and co-editor of the contemporary Appalachian short story anthology *Degrees of Elevation*. His next novel, *Benediction*, is due to be released in early 2014 by Fiddleblack Press.

### *George Singleton — Non-Fiction*

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George Singleton is the author of five collections of stories, two novels, and one book of writing advice. His short stories have appeared in such magazines and journals as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper's*, *Playboy*, *Georgia Review*, *Southern Review*, *Kenyon Review* and *Zoetrope*. His non-fiction as appeared in *Garden and Gun*, *Bark*, *Oxford American*, and elsewhere. His work has appeared in twelve editions of *New Stories from the South* and in *Grit Lit: A Rough South Reader*, among a number of other anthologies. He received a Guggenheim fellowship in 2009, and the Hillsdale Award from the Fellowship of Southern Writers in 2011.

Singleton has taught English and writing on the secondary level, at technical colleges, at four-year institutions, and at MFA graduate programs. In the fall of 2013 he will hold the John C. Cobb Professor of Humanities endowed chair at Wofford College.

### *Ron Giles — Drama*

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Ron Giles's poems have appeared in various journals, including *Silk Road*, *Paper Street*, and *The Alembic*. A one-act play, "Moses Otis Is Not a White Man," is forthcoming in *Aethlon*. He is a retired member of the Department of Literature and Language at East Tennessee State University. He lives in Johnson City with his wife, Gwendolyn.

## Stephen C. Wicks — Art

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Stephen Wicks juried the Student Honor Show 2012 at the Slocumb Galleries, ETSU. The winning artworks are featured in *The Mockingbird*, the literature and art student magazine at ETSU. Wicks currently serves as the Barbara W. and Bernard E. Bernstein Curator at the Knoxville Museum of Art. He came to Knoxville after almost four years as curator at the Columbus Museum (2003-2006), the second largest museum in the state of Georgia. Prior to that, Wicks served as curator of collections and exhibitions at the Knoxville Museum of Art (1990-2003). During his twenty-year career, Wicks has organized dozens of exhibitions devoted to contemporary art, including *Forest of Visions* (1993), *Awakening the Spirits: Art by Bessie Harvey* (1998), *Richard Jolley: Sculptor of Glass* (2000), and *New Directions in American Drawing* (2006), as well as the ongoing historical exhibition *Higher Ground: A Century of the Visual Arts in East Tennessee* (opened 2008). He is active as a guest curator, juror, panelist, lecturer and writer, most recently serving as a primary essayist for *Lines of Discovery: 225 Years of American Drawing*, a major survey of the Columbus Museum's drawing collection. Wicks received his Bachelor's of Arts in Art History from the University of Tennessee and his Master of Arts in Art History and Museum Studies from Case Western Reserve University; he was the recipient of back-to-back Cleveland Museum of Art Fellowships.

<http://www.etsu.edu/cas/litlang/mockingbird/>



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