

STRATUS:
JOURNAL OF ARTS & WRITING

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INTRODUCTION

W elcome to the inaugural edition of *Stratus: Journal of Arts and Writing*!

AS UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON Educational Outreach approaches its 100th anniversary, a new initiative is being launched to celebrate the art and writing of our students. *Stratus: Journal of Arts and Writing* is a testament to the talent and efforts of our students, instructors, advisory board members, and staff.

A key element of the Certificate Programs in Arts and Writing at uw Educational Outreach and Professional & Continuing Education is an emphasis on the student's success *after* the completion of our program. We strive to develop self-sufficient artists who can create and market artistic work for years and decades following graduation. A brief examination of UWEO history shows that this philosophy has long been a foundation of our educational programs in the arts.

As early as 1917, a small group of art students, with the aid of the University Extension Service, formed the Seattle Art Students' League. Within one year, about one hundred students had joined, with the aim of fostering education in drawing, design, and fine art. In 1918 and 1919, classes in music and literature were offered, including such classes as Poets of the New Youth and Italian and French Opera, alongside practical courses in sight singing and ear training. In the 1920's,

arts education at UW Extension expanded to include dramatic art, writing, and dance. These offerings continued to blossom throughout the 20th century, in times of peace and war.

In the 21st century, many of these core artistic genres of visual, literary, and performing arts continue to form the foundation of the UW Professional & Continuing Education certificate program curriculum. In addition, we've aimed to stay in step with the technological advances of our age by offering a range of programs in the media arts, including filmmaking, screenwriting, and audio production.

In this volume, top graduates from a range of our programs are represented in word and image. Their work is presented in three sections. First, we foreground creative work that emphasizes the *Connections* between individuals, families, and groups. Next, we celebrate the way in which we're bound to *Nature*. And finally, we showcase images and writing that demonstrates our human *Strivings*. And yet, while these sections have been separated, with three different titles, there are connections, and elements of nature, and human strivings that can be found in the artistic work throughout this anthology.

We aim to publish *Stratus: Journal of Arts and Writing* on an annual basis, and would very much like to hear your thoughts.

Roxanne Ray, Ph.D.
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PHILOSOPHY OF FICTION WRITING AND TEACHING

by Scott Driscoll

INSTRUCTOR, CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION

AFTER ASKING WHAT I did for a living, the cashier at a grocery store I frequented gave me a confused look and said, “Oh, you teach fiction? What’s that? Is that, like, making stuff up?”

There was no line—it was late, after class—so I told her the following story.

One sweltering Sunday morning in Darwin, Australia, I went to the beach to watch the annual Beer Can Regatta. A twenty-one year old drifter in search of work to make enough money to get back home, I had a dishwashing gig at a decent restaurant with a promise to graduate to waiter. I was feeling set. Watching the race seemed a benign way to kill time without spending precious money. This regatta had only three rules: all boats had to sail under their own power; they had to cross the finish line in order to win; and they had to be built, with the exception of sails and lines, entirely of beer cans.

Mid-morning, in heat ratcheted up to a breezeless tropical intensity and several Fosters on my way to being silly, I hooted along with a few thousand sunburned

drunks while the last boat launched and sank. When it was announced that there would be no winner—every boat in the race had sunk—I had what is known in the business as a realization moment: if I don't haul my butt off this sand and get busy with something I care about, so my woozy reasoning went, my life will go the way of these beer can boats. "Sunk" was looking like a pretty apt metaphor.

Wright Morris, a favorite writer of mine, is quoted as having said, "Where we were, what we saw, and how we suffered are a mystery to us until the imagination has given them form." Of course I didn't mention this to the cashier. With the notion of sunk, she'd gleaned what she wanted from the story. In nautical clichéd argot, *that ship had sailed*. So I drove home alone pondering her question. Is fiction writing about making stuff up?

The day of the beer can regatta, drunk as I say and sweating, I retreated to my boarding house room intending to write. Something. Anything. Under the cooling reach of the ceiling fan, with a view out the open window of the broad-leafed banana tree in the yard, I spread out on an otherwise clear table a Big Chief tablet, the only writing folder I'd been able to find at the local store. Hours later, forced to shower and change and prepare to embark on the long walk to my dishwashing gig, I pondered defeat for the second time that day. I had no idea how to tell a story. Aside from one sheet I'd torn out and crumpled, my Big Chief tablet was as virgin as the moment I'd laid it lovingly on the table. I had assumed inspired desperation would be enough to get me going. I had imagined a "fever" of words spilling across the pages, erstwhile readers riveted, calling for more.

Why hadn't I simply written the story about a regatta in which all boats sank? I had a protagonist with plenty of pressure on his situation and obvious flaws. I had an incident that had provoked a desire with at least a semblance of a quest toward an object. If I imagined the Odyssean travels and trials ahead of me as a quest, surely there'd have been obstacles and opposition enough for a second act and a crisis that would lead to some kind of a showdown with the monsters. What had I lacked, then? I can say it now. I didn't know enough to know what I was missing.

Back to the cashier's questions, is it about making stuff up? Well, I see it Morris's way. Writing for me is about applying form to the mysteries we suffer. The job requires inspiration for sure, or you'll never get started. And some invention, yes. The facts of life, it has often been noted, can obscure more than they reveal. But after that, it's about knowing how a story gets built, then pouring the raw material of life into the forms to see what truths emerge.

It's taken me a long time to learn this lesson. I'm learning it still. Voice, character, premise, it's all necessary, all part of the mix, but finally it comes down to conviction—when I find the material I care about deeply, and stiffen it with scaffolding, writing emerges, some kind of writing. At least my Big Chief tablet isn't a virgin anymore.

1 *Connections*

EXCERPT FROM A NOVEL: BETTER YOU GO HOME

By Scott Driscoll

INSTRUCTOR, CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION

CHAPTER ONE

Monday Afternoon at the Church: September 12, 1994

THE DESULTORY FLAP flapping of the monk's sandals convinces me that even if I do find my sister, my father, *our father*, will only repeat his usual epiphany: those people are dead; it's not your concern. *Obviously I'm reading too much into this flapping.*

"Tell me again why we're meeting here?" I watch the monk in his brown robe drape an ermine shawl over the shoulders of the wax Christ child mounted above the altar. Age and smoke have darkened the icon's face and raised hand to ebony. The stone walls are unadorned. Not much here for tourists except this chapel devoted to the Bambino di Praga. If you want to look it up, it's called Kostel Panny Marie *vitězně*, a German-built cathedral in Prague's Mala Strana district.

"Sick people," whispers Milada, "come from every place in world to pray to Bambino for cure. He is famous." Seeing my skeptical look, she laughs, then covers her mouth. The monk who'd been ignoring us with divine disinterest, *more sup-*

plicants, more suffering, whatever it's more of, it's our problem not his, warns us with a glower to show due respect. "We can pray, too," she adds when the monk has flapped away.

"A cure?" Despite my impatience, which I don't even attempt to hide, she reads the Bambino's provenance off a placard as though that will nail the lid on my incredulity.

"Bambino was brought here from Rome by Carmelites. Countess Kolovrat..."

Something about touching his cheek and her sight and hearing came back and it was a miracle, and ever since then the lame and the sick have been flocking like lemmings to our humble church in Prague to touch the Bambino, and she's a doctor, she knows better, *and you can't even touch him*. "FYI, he's behind bullet-proof glass."

"*Ano*, but still you can pray. I have prayed to Bambino before I take medical school exams. I believe you have say? Do not put all bets in one basket?"

"Eggs. Eggs..." *Never mind*.

I've come to Prague to enlist Milada's help to find my Czech half-sister, not to obsess over my health prognosis. I've never met my sister. I only actually learned of her existence this year. My father grew up in a farm village near the mountains bordering Poland. Lucky enough to be the only son bound to inherit a large estate. Unlucky enough to come of age in time to be conscripted into the occupying Nazi army. He fled to Iowa at the raw age of sixteen with his father and two younger sisters along with a woman from the farm next door and three of her children. He left his mother behind on the farm with three of his sisters. He left someone else behind, too, and this is the rub. He left Rosalye, the young "maid," pregnant. His daughter, my half-sister, was born four months after his arrival in Iowa and was sent away by her mother to live in an orphanage.

Last winter, within a month of learning I had a sister, I was also told renal failure was in my near future and transplant surgery my only salvation. Don't assume you know how you'll react. I'd led a pretty cosseted life, high marks in law school, a rapid rise to the position of city attorney in a suburban city south of Seattle. So okay, this is what is—my curiosity tends to be unquenchable—so what are you going to do now? You're going to fight the fight to stay alive, obviously, but why? Out there is a little girl who grew up with her father denying her existence. You're going to find her, that's what you're going to do.

...

"YOU BRING the letter with you?"

She invites me to bend down. I'm a very tall man. Despite having raised three boys, she's kept the compact figure of the Olympic skater she once was. She gives me a dry kiss on the cheek then holds me at arm's length for a better look.

"I know," I say. "Fifteen pounds of fluid." I ruefully pat my swollen belly.

"*Ne, ne*. You were too thin anyway."

"You look great." She's wearing the same black Italian leather jacket and thigh-cleaving slacks she wore when we first met in February. A reporter took a photo of her that day that was printed in the *Everett Herald* along with her essay on why she loves the Pacific Northwest. I tucked a copy of that photo into my passport pouch. In the six months since I last saw her, I've studied it as though she were the Holy Grail.

"*Vsechno je v pořádku*. Everything is fine. I am certain."

"Then you didn't open the letter?"

"Finally you are here. I am just so exciting to see you!"

I'd forgotten how dark complected she is, how Slavic looking, how her eyes have that extra fold at the corners, how I used to teasingly call it her Genghis Khan fold. I'd also forgotten how her eyes gleam like burnished stone when she's excited. The cheap black dye in her hair nicks her luster just enough that I have fooled myself into believing she really might have fallen in love with me like she claimed in her letters. Age is a subject she avoids. She was eighteen in August 1968 when she escaped, briefly, over the border into Germany. That makes her forty-four or forty-five, two or three years older than me. Her family, one boy still at home, lives in a concrete high-rise flat—I've seen photos, it looks cheerless—a flat that she loathes but is stuck with. Her husband took a usurious loan from the Russian mafia so he could restore the mountain *chata* where his ill father spent his final years. Living under the hammer of the Russian mafia was not how she planned to enjoy her freedom.

"You'll be happy to know I did what you suggested."

"*Ano*? And what your father has to say about you come to Prague?"

"Now he won't speak to me at all."

"I am *wary* sorry, Chico." She is, too, I see the pain register in her wince. "We could not sneak. He had to know we look for your sister."

Enough stalling, I suppose. "Alright. Let's have a look at the letter." A "no" from Blue Cross means the prognosis comes true: in six months I'm dead. Or on dialysis, which amounts to pretty much an expensive and exhausting delay of the same.

"*Ted' je dobrý čas*." Milada opens her handbag and pulls out a manila envelope marked "Urgent!" Inside the large envelope is a business-sized letter. The return address on the outer envelope puzzles me, until I realize it's my ex-wife's new condo.

The inside envelope has been cut open and resealed with tape. On the back, a hand-drawn smiley face is wearing a frown. *Frown?* *A frown?* Her note is written on a pad from Metro Bank—my ex manages loan officers—in large looping letters gauged for reading without a magnifier.

Before you read this letter, she says, *don't worry*. Should I scream or laugh? *I called the uw Medical Center and talked to Julie*. Julie is the social worker who makes the arrangements once you've been accepted for transplant surgery. *Please look at the date on the letter. I'm very, very sorry I didn't get this to you sooner. You know how sometimes I*

get your mail and you get mine even though I put in for a change of address? Well. I didn't know if I should open this. But I thought it could be important. I forwarded it to your amour (smiley face) I don't know the Czech word. Big hug, whether you want it or not. Your ex, ha ha. (I'm still Kasia.)

"Could you read it for me?" Her turn to look puzzled. "I broke the bulb in my magnifier." I dropped it trying to get through to her using a pay phone. Actually, I brought a spare bulb; I would never come that unprepared. But I'm essentially a coward. *Absorb the news, please? Feed it to me gently.*

A class of twittering uniformed elementary-school children chooses this moment to wing into the famous Bambino's chapel. They shush each other to avoid a swat on the ear from their chaperoning nun. They recite a prayer, and the radiance of their voices cheers me up, until I notice Milada frowning. My heart stops again, until she complains that she can't make sense of the English insurance-speak.

"How about reading it out loud?"

The nun gives us a baleful look before guiding her twittering sparrows elsewhere for their devotions. Milada waves the nun away with a rude hand gesture that reminds me of her impetuous side, not what you'd expect necessarily of an anesthesiologist who designed a portable machine for testing blood gasses and who has devoted much of her career—and suffered a lack of promotions from the Ministry of Health because of it—to coercing the government into paying for the installation of these machines in emergency vehicles. *How difficult she is to resist, yep, I can vouch for that.*

But now we are alone in the Bambino's chapel. She reads. My blood tests, writes Dr. Stan Pomerantz, the letter's signatory, show a creatinine level that averages around seven point five. For someone my size, it would take a consistent reading over eight to trigger concern of imminent renal failure. Pomerantz concedes that the rapidity of my kidneys' deterioration warrants further testing. Before they can complete their *consideration for approval* of dual kidney/pancreas transplant surgery, I need to come back in for another round of blood and urine tests and chest x-rays.

Consideration for approval? The date when I have to have the test results back to them is September 23rd. "That's a week from Friday. Ten days."

"You must return home for tests. That is best for you."

"What about Anezka?" A man from my father's village, a former state security minister known only as Jungmann—as though no other name were required—is also looking for my sister. Milada's letters warned that I'd better find Anezka and find her pretty soon if I'm to have any hope of getting her out of the country. That's why I'm here. That's why I'm not home on my couch. *Well, that and the obvious.*

"I will make appointment for you at IKEM. You must speak with Dr. Saudek. See what is possible here. On Wednesday he will go with me to conference in Brno and he will not come back for two weeks so we must see him tomorrow."

"Delay delay delay, that's their job, you know. Delay until you die."

"Kneel with me. Please, Chico." She tucks the letter back into her handbag *but*

of course I notice her doing it. “We will say prayer to Bambino. Then we will decide what we will do.”

“There’s nothing to decide.”

“You are being crazy like me.” She touches a finger to my lips. “Your family was Catholic. They would not say this is wrong. Now you must recite prayer exactly.”

Typed copies of a standard prayer, translated into a dozen languages, are taped with yellowing sticky-tape along the marble banister’s handrail. The lame and sick who feel inspired to ask for miracles are instructed to kneel at the rail and recite the prayer. Milada locates the English language version.

She won’t accept a no, so I kneel beside her. After breaking the sticky-tape seal, she slips the crinkled and smudged paper with the prayer on it out of its plastic sheathing. She reads it, intact with grammatical errors, and insists that I repeat it verbatim.

...

“HUMBLY UNDERSTAND, dear God, that I am aware that I asking for special consideration. Please know that I am willing to bear burden of my suffering if that is your will.” Willingly suffer? It’s a matter of faith, she reminds me. *“But if it pleasing to you, God, take away this suffering. Will you please humbly consider...”* Here the prayer instructs the supplicant to fill in the blank with a personal request.

“Now you must say request in your words.” The Bambino gazes down impassively, obviously, he’s seen this a thousand times before.

“First, thanks for not sending me a rejection. I *am* grateful for that.” Sorry, Bambino, I sound like the mumblers at city hall with too much time on their hands. “I gotta do this silently.”

I do have a request. Warn Blue Cross that if they drop me... warn them they’ll lose the contract for a hundred and twenty thousand municipal employees in the State of Washington, not just my office. Just remind them, you know. But get me on the list. Okay, one more request? Help me get Anezka out of here before there’s trouble. I’ve always wanted to be relevant, to do something that would really matter, you know. I’m not talking about settling zoning disputes. I mean really do something that matters and I want to start by saving my poor sister who my father pretends doesn’t exist.

But that’s being selfish. If it pleases you, I’d like to ask you also to help Milada make the bastards pay who deserve to pay, excuse my language. You know who she has in mind. Those bastards who committed obscene crimes against her family and my father’s village, I’m talking crimes against humanity, false arrest, torture, brutal stuff done to civilians. Now those bastards are in every ministry and they’re smirking all the way to the bank. Okay, this is Milada’s mission. I’ve told her that at best this is a long possibly hopeless cause and given my situation I can’t get involved, but as you can tell I’m feeling guilty. She says those who do nothing are complicit. You agree?

Milada strokes my arm. “*Ty budeš potřebovat protekci.*”

“That sounded lovely. Say it again.”

“Is not joke. Here if you have connections, I am saying, things can be done.”

I shake my head. “No. That’s not going to happen.” Despite knowing I feel that it would be a grievous betrayal of her trust to ask for something so precious from my sister, Milada persists in believing Anezka should donate a kidney.

“Tomorrow night you will have dinner with my family. We will phone to your insurance. Maybe they will give extension? Then we will go find Anezka. Hey, lucky you, finally you will meet my patriotic husband.”

“So I get to spend tomorrow with you? You’re not on shift?”

“*Já na ton trvám!* I cannot permit you stay alone. Perhaps you meet some hot young Eastern European tramp.” She slides her thumb over two fingers, the international sign for money. “For one day you are my prisoner, Chico. *Já na ton trvám!*”

She gives me a lingering kiss and promises to call me first thing in the morning. Then she leaves me kneeling in the Bambino’s chapel.

I watch her walk away. She has that Eastern bloc way of hunching her shoulders and shoving her hands into pockets to make herself less noticeable. *No matter what, don’t ever lose that fiery determination. It’s what makes you so damn beautiful.*

The children’s sing-songy chanting of their Catechism reaches me from deep in the cathedral’s recesses. My father, František Lenoč, *we only ever called him Frank*, was also pretty devout in his younger years. He once admitted to me *he’d never have admitted this to Mom* that church helped him remember his mother, my grandmother, whom he never saw again once he’d fled to Iowa. She had a chapel built in their farmhouse so she could worship nightly. The Dostals, her family, built the first and only church in the valley. There lingers unspoken guilt in him surrounding his mother’s death, guilt that no amount of confession, obviously, could expiate. These are his issues, not mine. I don’t miss going to church. But I do love the way the children’s voices reverberate within these stone walls. It’s nothing less than the clarion call of angels— joy itself. I love it, I love hearing it. There’s nothing like that at home. Home is the couch and endless videos. How many versions of “The Emigrants” or “Closely Watched Trains” can you watch? But that sound, that sound of absolute, unadulterated joy, that, I’m convinced, can only be cooked up in a pressure cooker like here. More than anything I’m going to miss that sound of joy.

NOTES FROM THE LAUNDRY PILE

By Samantha Claire Updegrave

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN NONFICTION, 2011

Friday October 22nd

IN A LATE evening daze, I pack Oscar's bags, sort through the clean piles of clothes heaped on the couch and think about the weather in the week ahead. In the morning we're going to a pumpkin patch, then I'll drop him off at his grandparents for the night, where his papa will pick up him the next morning for *his weekend* with our 16-month old son. All in all, he'll be gone for five days.

Oscar and I are coming off a challenging eleven-day stretch—he learned to say no and is not sleeping through the night in his crib—and I need to decompress, gather my thoughts, and breathe. But I feel uneasy. This week marks our transition from my ex-husband taking him every once in awhile, to every other weekend, to the 50-50 split residential time. Oscar's life is splitting in half — Time with Mama, time with Papa. This baby that I grew and held inside and birthed through my body into this world, is divided. I will only spend half of his life with him, half of his holidays and vacations, half of his day-to-day. Another part of me shatters and splinters off.

I open the computer and find this Facebook post by a mama friend: "Squeezing my family just a little bit closer tonight..." In the context of this night, these

changes, a million things well up with the start of tears—I want a family to hold close, but I’m knee deep in a long divorce. I want to scoop Oscar out of his crib and snuggle him like I’ve done all week. But I am so tired, too tired to cry and too smart to risk waking him up, so I move on to the weather and confirm that I’ve packed the proper ratio of short and long sleeves, cotton pants and corduroys, rain boots and sneakers. I slice apples, tofu and cheese for the morning and set them in the fridge. And sleep fitfully, nervous about the week, afraid of the silence and my own desires.

Saturday October 23rd

OSCAR AND I set out early, but I stop at his papa’s apartment to drop off a recipe he requested from the tin box that still holds our combined culinary histories, the index card for his famous sour cream apple rhubarb pie. Today, he’ll make it for and with someone else. Blinkers on, I jump out of the car to hand it over. He is wearing the same flannel patterned shirt that Oscar wore yesterday. I am struck by their similarity, both genetically and aesthetically, and I recall all the intimacy in our moments of sifting flour, rolling dough, shredding apples, and chopping frozen stalks of rhubarb.

That night, pictures of Andy Kotowicz appear on different friend’s Facebook pages, the news feeds all with sentiments like *take nothing for granted. Ever.* I immediately recognize him as someone I’ve seen often but barely know. Walked past him in his office. I remember taking pictures of him and his daughter at a friend’s wedding two years ago. It was the night I found out I was pregnant.

I start to put the pieces together. On Thursday night Andy picked up his 3 year old daughter from daycare in Ballard, and as they waited at a stop light, a speeding car slammed into his Subaru, knocking his car into the pick up ahead of him. The twisted metals were on fire. A witness heard his daughter’s cries, ripped the front passenger side door off its hinges and pulled her from the burning car. She survived with bruises and a broken arm.

Andy died 3 days later, on Sunday October 24th. He was 37 years old.

Tuesday October 26th

THERE’S A directness in a pile of laundry, and a pause. A week’s worth of living stuffed inside my pink hamper. Oscar’s sweatshirt with the sleeve glued to the pocket with dried banana. Mud crusted across the hips of my jeans and hem of my purple coat from Oscar’s rain boots at the pumpkin patch. I sort the lights from the darks, warm water from cold water, and Mama’s time from Papa’s time. The sorting brings tears that acknowledge the passing of my dreams, letting go of the

CONNECTIONS

future that I always assumed was in the making. My stepmom, whose husband also left when her children were young, confided that she found it harder to mourn the living than the dead. I nodded my head in understanding. As I wipe my eyes and nose on Oscar's dirty shirt sleeve, I remember my laundry this time last year, when the end of my marriage was still a shock. Three stray socks recovered from deep under the bed, a jacket in the back of the closet, and pillowcase from the basement couch. I imagine Andy's wife. Can she bear to wash his dishes from that morning's breakfast, or sort any of what's left? Sweaters and scarves and suits and kitchen towels almost still warm, imprinted with his hands. Is she standing over a hamper unable to move and breath?

Meanwhile, Oscar plays and eats and naps 10 blocks away, down the hill and across the park, at his papa's apartment. I won't see him for another two days. The stem of the uncarved pumpkin we selected from the muddy field already bears white fuzz and show signs of decay, but I can't bring myself to toss it in the compost. I ache at the site of his clothes, and don't change my sheets so that I can feel his presence in my room, his small indent next to where I sleep. I want to pull him close, feel his warm head nuzzle softly under my arm as he turns clockwise into sleep. Hear the patter of his feet in the other room, the sound of his sleeping breath from behind the curtain, his cries at 2 am when he wakes up and gets into my bed.

And now I know: Much better to mourn the living.

GHOUL

by JoAnne Tompkins

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN NONFICTION, 2011

A FEW DAYS BEFORE Halloween, Donna Jasmer's Seattle home attracts gawkers. Tombstones line the fence, a nine-foot black cat waggles its head by the gate as a monster spider beckons at the door. In the yard, a mad scientist in white lab coat looms above a prostrate body, a glistening red mass oozing from its side. A figure in blood-splattered linen floats behind.

On the street, a car stops and a woman leans out a passenger-side widow. She snaps a picture before the driver moves on. It's unlikely the people in the car know the Jasmer family history, understand its chilling parallel to this diorama of slaughter.

"This was his holiday," says Donna, referring to a son murdered at 16. Though seven years have passed, each Halloween she adds to her display.

She is standing outside her front door, lit cigarette in hand. She takes a puff, looks at the cigarette. "I'm quitting smoking," she says before putting it back to her lips and, without irony, inhaling deeply. At the end of the exhale, she coughs—a smoker's hack.

Her eyes sweep the yard, lingering on the body rigid on the ground. "God he

loved Halloween. John would dress up like a ghoul and sit in the yard just to scare kids. When they'd go walking by, he'd leap up. They'd scream and go running down the stairs."

She chuckles, remembering. "We do this for him," she says. Her smile fades and she looks down a long moment, as if collecting herself, then stubs out her cigarette and heads inside.

The living room of Donna's turn-of-the century Craftsman is stark, its few pieces of furniture shoved against walls, a small rug empty in the middle. Danielle, her 19-year-old daughter, wanders through as Donna settles into the couch, tucking her legs beside her. Her soft 60-year-old body and blue eyes—magnified behind glasses—make her appear vulnerable, a little frightened, as if she is at an edge uncertain of her balance. When she speaks, it's nearly a croak, a voice so raw and rasping you can hear the wound in every sound she makes.

"John had been in counseling off and on since he was two," Donna says.

Without prompt, she has begun. Over the next few hours she works her way through the arc of her son's life, a journey she has made hundreds, perhaps thousands of times. She takes apart the strands and reweaves them, trying to find the moments that defined him, that spelled a shift, a future more promising than his early years suggested.

Hardly more than a toddler, John had fits of rage, shouted streams of profanity, tugged obsessively at his fingers. He was diagnosed with attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder and Tourette's syndrome, a tic-disorder which caused involuntary bursts of obscenities.

At four, he began throwing things. "Ten times the strength of a normal child," Donna says. He could pick up a twenty-pound weight and hurl it. "I was getting concerned because Danielle was a baby and I didn't want her to get hurt."

The family went to doctors, tried medications. The Jasmers quit going camping; they never knew what John might say or do. Even elevators proved treacherous—a brush against John might bring a rush of swear words.

John was expelled from multiple schools for assaulting schoolmates. But—and here Donna's face lights up—sometimes his attacks were to protect others. "One of the first times he got kicked out, he was in first grade. A fourth grader was picking on a second grader, and my son attacked the fourth grader." Pride fills her voice. "You're a little frickin' kid, you know. Why pick on someone twice your size? And win!"

John's inability to control his aggression left him ostracized, often sitting alone in a corner at school because teachers didn't want to deal with him.

More than a decade passed as Donna watched her son suffer. She encouraged him to turn out for sports, hoping the physical release would calm him. He tried wrestling but "it was too mild of a thing for him." In the heat of a match, he'd simply attack, unable to follow the rules. He remained an outsider.

"He so wanted to have friends, but he'd be alone crying in his room," she says,

her voice breaking. "His life was so sad. We didn't see an end to it." She looks away. Several times her mouth opens as if to speak, but she remains silent. Then words come. "I mean, if this had happened when he was in third or fourth grade—if I had lost him then—it would have been awful, but a part of me would have thought...maybe...maybe he was spared." She shakes her head.

But as John entered high school, his symptoms improved; "freshman year, the meds and everything started to work," she says.

She sits upright, brightens. The history she's traversed these past couple hours has been painful, but it's an ache she'd gladly bear again to make clear the curve of her son's life, to set in full relief its upward trajectory at the end.

"He found rugby. He was so happy because it was no pads, no nothing. Just get out there and kill." He also joined the football team where his physical strength and willingness to strike hard were valued.

Though Donna knew her son drank and used marijuana at times, he seemed more settled. He made friends and got a job at McDonalds. For the first time in his life, he seemed happy. Over the next two years, the Jasmer house filled with boys hanging out, playing video games, gorging themselves on the hamburgers and cookies Donna made for them.

Things were going well, Donna says. John talked of enlisting in the Army after high school, maybe becoming a police officer.

Then he hit a snag. The June following his sophomore year, John was accused of raping the girlfriend of his good buddy Jenson. But he insisted the sex was consensual and the girl quickly recanted. Even Jenson seemed forgiving. When Donna apologized to Jenson for John's transgression, he told her not to worry about it. "Broads come and go," Jenson said. "We're buds for life."

Over the next several months as John approached his junior year, boys were forever coming through the Jasmer household—no one more than Jenson who showed up multiple times a week. He ate and slept there, called Donna "Mom." After all John's years of loneliness, she felt thankful her son had such a good friend.

Donna and Jenson became close. She thought of him as another child. She never questioned Jenson's friendship. Why would she? Nothing hinted at his dark plans, nothing suggested he was conspiring with Josh, another good friend, to end her son's life.

On Thursday August 21, 2003, two-weeks before school was to start, John came home from work and made his mother a promise. Once school starts, he said, "I'm really going to crack down. I'm not going to smoke any pot and I'm only going to drink at Christmas." He promised to pick up his little sister from school every day and get her home before heading to football practice.

Donna pressed him; she didn't want to get her hopes up if he didn't mean it. But he was adamant and by the end of their talk, she believed him—he was growing up, he was going to take school and family seriously.

When she left that evening to take Danielle and a friend to pick up a movie,

John was preparing to go out for a run. As she drove to Blockbusters, she felt energized too, as if she could take off running. John had been through a lot of tough times, but he was a fighter and now he'd made it out the other side. As the two girls gossiped in back, she let herself imagine it—John having a good life, a life with friends, family, a decent job.

"It was just so *great*," Donna says. "I was so happy."

A few hours later, John lay sprawled in freshly-turned dirt, bludgeoned and slashed, sucking violently for air, still alive after 28 stab wounds. One of the attackers, Josh, couldn't bear to see his friend in such agony. He placed his hand over John's nose and mouth and suffocated him. Then, to be sure the suffering would end, he plunged a knife deep into John's neck.

Donna wouldn't know for a week that her son lay buried in a pre-dug grave. Even after Josh confessed and led detectives to the body, John remained in the ground. "It was Indian land," she says. By the time jurisdiction issues were settled, it was Sunday on the Labor Day weekend. "They didn't do anything. I had to keep watching it on TV that my son was there, my son was there, my son was there."

Days passed and details leaked out. Jenson and Josh had plotted the murder for months, considered different methods of death, discussed making John drink Drano. At one point, the two boys donned white lab coats, posed as science students and wandered the halls at the University of Washington hoping to score chloroform.

On Tuesday, September 2, twelve days after his murder, John's body was removed from its grave. At the funeral parlor, Donna finally saw her son. "They had dressed him," she says. "But he felt crinkly when I touched him. They'd put him in a rubber suit so he wouldn't ooze. I remember I touched his face and it kind of peeled off."

She says this offhandedly as if it produces no pain. But then her face twists, her body spasms and she begins a hacking spree so prolonged and violent the tears welling in her eyes could be from the sheer physical buffeting. When it stops, she shoves herself up, moves to the window and surveys her Halloween efforts.

She points out a small area that has escaped depictions of mayhem. Taking on a sudden cheery tone, she yells to her daughter. "Danielle, we *have* to get a ghoul. There's an empty spot. Let's try to find one. A ghoul would be perfect."

The forced gaiety dissipates and silence saturates the room. A twitch jolts through her as if she's touched a live wire. Then stillness. A moment later, she turns back toward the room, her skin ashen. She gazes absently at the vacant living-room floor and whispers under her breath—as if to remember, as if she just might forget—"I need a ghoul."

A REAL GREMLIN

by Kye Alfred Hillig

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION, 2011

IT'S A FRIDAY night and my new landlord, Tyler of Scotland, knocks on the door. He is only a couple years older than me. He talks like if he stops he'll die. I let him assault me with conversation because I owe him one. He rented me the place cheap, super-discounted. If he hadn't I'd probably be homeless. I grew up wiping my ass with hundred-dollar bills, and have no stomach for squalor. God bless the warmth.

I invite him in. He grabs me by the wrist and pulls me into my living room. He's always leading me around this way.

Since I can't afford furniture, we sit on two packing crates.

"I may have been followed here by cloaked druids. I believe that they want my heart in a frying pan. They want to live forever... (deep rattling cough)...Anyhow, what do you think of the place? Sorry about the chicken smell."

"Well, that's what you get when you live above a restaurant. I wouldn't mind so much if I wasn't so fucking hungry. What were you saying about druids?"

"Don't worry about that or your hunger. I'll throw some noodles in your pot in

a bit. But for now, I think I've got something that'll take your mind off of it." He digs through his coat pockets and comes out with some wadded up tinfoil.

"What's that there?" I ask.

He unfolds the tinfoil. Inside are tiny squares of paper with Goofy illustrated on them.

"Arts and crafts?" I ask.

"No, no, no. This here is Golden Dragon. It keeps druids away or makes them come. I can't figure out which. I never come down."

"Acid, eh?"

"Yes-siree, bob. I, unlike the druids, truly do live forever, but only in this moment. You wanna give it a spin?"

I look at the warn spot on the carpet where the old tenant's television used to sit. "Why not. I might as well live forever right now. I have nothing to do until my ice cubes freeze anyhow. Just put it on my tongue?"

"Yeah, grab a couple, don't be shy. No reason to be."

I place them on my tongue and wait. A couple minutes go by. I start thinking that Tyler of Scotland is fucking with me. I think of breaking his jaw, how it would look wired shut, applesauce through a straw for months. The curtains move. When I breathe in, they lift towards me. When I breathe out, they settle. Tyler of Scotland laughs at me, like I'm a kid who just discovered what his dick is for. A halo glows around his head. I reach towards it thinking I'll take some of his light for myself.

He slaps my hand away, laughing. "Let's head out to the alley and fuck with some cats. However, should we encounter some of the dreaded and cloaked, we'll have to return." We float out my door. "Aren't you going to lock it?"

"Why? They gonna steal my crates?"

We laugh...and laugh...and laugh...

We glide down the stairs on a breeze and out through the clinking steins of the restaurant into the night. The stars buzz around the sky like bugs. One flies into my hair and takes residence. Across the street is a line of row houses. A man with a limp pushes a cart down the sidewalk. One of the wheels squeaks along with his limp. The rhythm gets caught in my head. This man unknowingly makes rock'n'roll.

Tyler of Scotland crosses the street without looking for traffic. I follow. All the stoops are littered with cigarette butts. Upon inspection, I see them for what they are: maggots. I stomp them out. They can't have me, not tonight.

Tyler turns to me. "We have to get the microfilm before it falls into the wrong hands."

I wonder if I have it somehow. I pat down my pockets. "I don't have it, man."

"I know you don't. They do." He looks up at the row houses. He climbs one set of stairs and peeks in somebody's window. "We gotta go in. They have it. I know they have it."

"I don't know, man. A lot of these assholes are in the militia. They got whole cabinets full of rifles and swords."

"There's no fucking militia in Tacoma! These fuckers are slaves to the druids!" He tries the front door. It's locked. He tries the window and pushes it open. He smiles back at me. "In we go."

I follow him through the window. The house is dark and smells like cat piss. Tyler of Scotland flips over couch cushions, searching.

I shuffle through kitchen drawers. "Is the microfilm yours?"

"You bet your ass it is."

As he pulls up the edge of the living room carpet, I check the top of the fridge. There's a plastic bottle.

"I got it! This is it!" I say.

He runs over. I open it up and we peer in. Inside is a black length of film coiled upon itself, hissing. I quickly close it.

He slaps me on the back. "Good work, Hawthorne!"

A toilet flushes. Our heads shoot up.

Laughing, we tumble over each other down the stairs towards the door. I crack my head against the wall. Tyler of Scotland violently fiddles with the door chain.

The door flies open. I jump to my feet and follow Tyler of Scotland out the door. We run like Hell. I don't look back to see if we were being chased. The restaurant is closed, so we go in through the alley entrance and up to the apartment. We catch our breath near the pay phone down the hall from my room.

"We could have gotten shot!" I say.

"What? Nah, we were fine. You get the microfilm?"

"Yeah, I got it. Now what do we do with it?"

Tyler thinks for a moment, resting an elbow against the wall. "Put it in your freezer behind the ice cube trays." "Why my freezer? Why can't we put it behind your ice cube trays?"

"Believe me. Yours is colder. It's better this way."

So we hide it behind my trays.

I lay on my carpet for a while. It allows me to sink down into it like a seed. Tyler talks about how his old man was a garbage collector for the city and had to retire early when he lost a hand to a boat propeller on Rainbow Lake. Says his old man bought the space above the restaurant to make some extra income, then immediately died of a heart attack. He left the apartments to Tyler of Scotland. "He was a very short man, shorter than I. We buried him in a cigar box." As Tyler of Scotland speaks, his words individually inflate and float up as black balloons, collecting on the ceiling. He stops talking. The balloons collectively 'POP!' and black confetti rains down, covering my eyes.

When I wake up in the morning Tyler of Scotland is gone. My jaw muscles ache and my back is stiff from sleeping on the floor. The front door is open. I close it.

I turn on the faucet. The pipes creak. After a minute, brown water runs thick. I

wait for it to turn clear and drink as much as I can stand. My stomach growls with pollution.

Remembering the microfilm, I open the freezer. From behind the ice cube tray I pull out a bottle of blue pills. I read the label: Harvey McDonald, to take two every eight hours as needed for pain. I chew up a couple and wash them down with more faucet water. Nothing happens.

That night, I get another knock at my door. It's Tyler of Scotland again. He has a girl with him. She wears a miniskirt, a Goldfish necklace, has long legs that go all the way up, and a big smile; way out of Tyler's league. She sits on one of the crates, crossing her legs. She looks about ten years our junior.

"Mandy is a sophomore at Pacific Lutheran. She's also the wiper-girl at Les Schwab on the weekends." Tyler sets a hand on her bare thigh.

"Yeah? What are you studying?" I ask.

"Psychology. My dad's a shrink, so it kind of runs in the family, like breast cancer. Not that I'll get that lucky."

I am about to speak when Tyler of Scotland cuts me off. "Enough of this yacking, Hawthorne. We're not gonna curl each other's hair tonight, are we? Let's get down to business."

"Business?" I ask.

Tyler pulls another wad of tinfoil from his pocket. I nearly climb the wall in horror.

"Fuck, man," I say, "I've got an empty stomach. I'm not sure that's such a hot idea."

"Bullshit, Hawthorne! Are those panties of yours fitting a little tight this evening?"

Mandy laughs. I think I might take them both by their collars and kick them down the stairwell. They could go wheelchair shopping together in their lift van. "Fine."

We all take a couple of hits. Before long Mandy and Tyler are sucking face on the floor. His hands keep creeping their way up her skirt. She slaps his face and he pulls back a centimeter. Moments later, he tries again. I don't know where to place my eyes. I live in a tiny box. Not enough space for an Ant Farm. The only retreat is the bathroom.

I go to the bathroom and close the door. I look at myself in the mirror, inspecting my teeth. One by one, I touch them all with my middle finger. "Fuck you, tooth. And fuck you, tooth. And you and you and you." My canines seem long. I bite my hand. Tastes like rubber. It bleeds a little. I drink the blood.

When I come out of the bathroom Tyler of Scotland has his shirt off and Mandy is down to her bra. Her body is boney, but I like it. I can't fathom what she sees in a gutter-duck like Tyler of Scotland. They lick each other's faces as their hands explore freely.

I've never had a prom.

I lean against the wall. A song floats into my head and I sing it without question as they start fucking, Swing low sweet char-i-ot coming forth to carry me home! They laugh, but keep on. I slouch down in the corner of the room. I feel like a spider and crawl up to the corner of the ceiling. My eight legs weave a web. Mandy and Tyler seem far away down there rolling naked over each other. Each one of her moans breaks free as a fly. Every fly buzzes around the room, but eventually ends up tangled in my web. I eat them all. It's not enough. I want more. I want her.

Tyler yells out, "Isn't it great that we're in Heaven and can't feel any pain?"

Mandy keeps gyrating, but says, "What?"

"I said, 'isn't it great to be in Heaven?'" With a smile on his face, he pulls back a fist and cracks Mandy right on the bridge of her nose. The air sucks out of the room.

I fall from my web back into my body. Mandy is crying and covering her face on the carpet.

"You fucking bastard!" She yells, "How could-?"

Tyler looks confused and is still half smiling. She starts throwing on her clothes. Blood is running down her face. Niagara Falls.

"Where are you going? What's wrong with heaven?" He asks.

"If this is Heaven then what the fuck is Hell?" She snatches up her purse, slipping into her high heels, and making for the door.

"What the fuck are you doing, Tyler?" I finally say, "You can't punch a chick."

"Keep it to yourself, Hawthorne, or gather up your shit."

"Jesus, man. What's with you?"

Mandy's long gone. Tyler looks lost. He wanders down the hall to find the answer to my question. I close the door and lock the bolt.

I decide that I'm not going to answer the door unless someone's yelling fire. If someone knocks, I'll act like I'm sleeping. When it comes time for rent I'll just slide it under his door and that will be that.

The next day, I keep looking at the spot where they fucked and he hit her. All I want to do is to strangle the son of a bitch, make his face burst purple. A wiper-girl doesn't deserve that shit. I've never hit a woman, but women don't like me, so I don't have much of a chance to.

I go down to the restaurant and order some toast. I eat it at the counter and apologize to the waitress that I don't have enough for a tip. She shrugs and sweeps up my crumbs with a bleached rag.

I sleep half the day. The sound of the pay phone ringing in the hall wakes me up. I stumble out in my boxers thinking it's one of the jobs I put in for calling back. Soon I'll be back in the high life. "Hello?"

"Hawthorne! Great, listen. I wasn't sure that you'd answer."

"What is it, Tyler?"

"Your never gonna believe what I found, never in a million years."

"What?"

"I found a real gremlin. No...shit...I'm bringing him over. Bust out the good China."

"What? No! Don't bring him over. Don't bring a gremlin or a woman with nice legs or anything in tinfoil, ok? I just need to rest. This has all been a bit-" "Be there soon!" Dial tone.

I pace the apartment. I look out the windows and watch cars go by. A real gremlin? Gremlin? What in the fuck is he talking about? I guess this is better than living under a bridge. Worse shit happens there. People freeze to death in the cold and nobody gives a shit. A couple hours pass. My stomach growls. Then a knock comes at the door.

I look through the peephole. Tyler's fish-eyed face bulges unkempt and uncomfortably close. He's wearing a plastic crown. I open the door. Holding Tyler's hand is a black kid. The kid's face is distorted by Down's Syndrome. He wears a Big Bird thumbs-up shirt.

"A real gremlin, man," Tyler says, "Isn't that fucking crazy?"

"Tyler, that's not a fucking gremlin. That's a retarded black kid. Where are his fucking parents, man?"

Tyler of Scotland grimaces. "Gremlins don't have parents. I caught him in the food court at the mall. He was roaming around looking for victims, but don't worry, I've kept him in line."

"Tyler, Jesus! You gotta take this kid back to the mall. His parents are gonna be looking for him. You could go to jail."

Tyler of Scotland shakes his head. "Nah, man. It's cool. We're just gonna go down to the Dairy Queen and split a Blizzard. You should come!"

My stomach lurches, commanding me to tag along. "No, man. I'm not gonna come. This is horse shit. Bring that kid back or I'm gonna-"

"You're gonna what, Hawthorne? Eat your snacks from a trash can? Listen, if you change your mind we'll be down the street. Come on, Snygle, let's go."

I watch them walk down the hallway. Tyler of Scotland tugs the kid along by the wrist. The kid moves his feet twice as fast to keep up with him. Once they're out of sight I close the door. I pace the room some more. I look out the window. Snow is starting to fall. I put on my thick winter jacket and pull the hood over. Fourteen blocks to the bridge; I've walked farther. I walk out to the hallway, pick up the pay phone, and dial nine-one-one.

WINTER OLYMPICS

by Sandy Barnes

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN MEMOIR, 2011

“YOUR MOM HAS asked that her medication be stopped and her pacemaker turned off. She requests only comfort care,” the nurse from the Rockford Memorial Hospital reported to me on the phone on a Tuesday morning in February. My younger sister, Pam, had spent the previous weekend with mom in the hospital, watching the Opening Ceremony of the Winter Olympics. Mom seemed to be stable when Pam left on Sunday to return to her home in Lafayette, Indiana.

I had talked with my mom, Claire Ginsburgh, the previous day. She could barely talk. Her voice seemed rough and far away.

“I’m having trouble breathing,” she barely got out.

“Do you have somebody helping you?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said. I could barely hear her. “I have a mask.” Her voice trailed off.

I didn’t like the idea of my eighty-five-year-old mother dealing with a respiratory mask in the hospital by herself. I had already decided that I would return to Illinois the very next day. Now I felt that would not be quick enough; I took the next plane out of town.

My younger brother, Charlie, in Chicago, and sister, Pam, in Indiana dropped everything and headed to Rockford. Charlie, single, childless, and devoted to my mom, had power of attorney for mom's health care and wanted to reassure himself that she was competent. Mom's trusted doctor told my brother that he'd better get there soon.

Now middle-aged myself, I had watched my parents age. But can any of us ever face a parent's death? Somehow we figured that they would always be around to support and be a strength for us. Or even just to criticize what we wear or what we buy at the grocery store.

I packed my bag, including my funeral outfit, and left immediately on a one-way ticket. I had already made two weeklong trips to Rockford since the beginning of January. I had been there so much that I joked that I should register to vote there.

It was sobering to consider that I needed to have that darn funeral outfit anyway. I had only bought the black pants and the dark herringbone jacket out of obligation from somebody in my yoga class who sold clothes out of her home. I had worn the outfit at my father-in-law's service in 2006, my father's memorial in 2007, as well as other memorial services for family friends. I hated having to wear these clothes.

My mother had long advocated "death with dignity." No staying alive with machines for her. She long ago made us promise that we would not keep her alive artificially. She lived in an independent living unit within Wesley Willows, a retirement center. My siblings and I had long been begging her to move "across the street" to the two-room apartments where they provide meals and other services. She resisted. She did not want to leave her attractive two-bedroom "cottage" where she could display her beloved antique china, pictures and furniture. She loved the small, screened porch in the back with plenty of room to grow her dozens of house plants. The neighbors in "the cottages" watched out for each other; many were retired ministers or widows of ministers. Like my father who refused to move to a more supported setting, she did not want to give up her independent living unit, even though many mundane routine housekeeping tasks were becoming difficult and confusing for her.

"I'm doing fine. Just fine," she assured us. "Not yet."

Right around Christmastime, she had fallen in the bathroom and was not found for some time, maybe as long as two days. Pam, always vigilant, had badgered the staff at the front desk, reporting that my mom was not answering her phone. The staff assured her that they had checked on our mother and she was fine.

Charlie came to visit her the day after Christmas with his two cats, Bogart and Bacall. My mother really enjoyed those two cats; she loved fussing over them when they visited.

He thought he was coming to fix the phone, but that's not what he found. He described the scene to us later. He knocked on the front door. He got no answer, so he knocked again. He let himself into the quiet house, and saw that the hall

bathroom door was closed, and called out "Mom, it's me, Charlie! Take your time. I'll bring in the cats." He listened at the door to see if he could hear anything else.

He went back to his car and returned, carrying two cat kennels and their supporting equipment. Still quiet, door still closed. He called out next to the bathroom door, "I brought in Bogart and Bacall! They're waiting to see Grandcat!" He paused. "Are you OK, Mom?" Nothing. He looked around. Everything seemed in order except that the chair that was usually in the bathroom was by her bedroom door. Getting a bad feeling about it, he called out again. He heard nothing, maybe just a little sound.

Charlie opened the door to investigate. When he turned on the light in the windowless bathroom, he found my mom laying on the floor, semi-conscious and naked, her nightgown lying on the floor next to her in a pool of vomit. He immediately called for aid. Over the next few weeks, all of us, including my mom, tried to figure out what could have happened to her.

"I don't know what I could have been doing!" she would exclaim, shaking her head in confusion. "I don't remember anything."

"Maybe you threw up and were trying to clean things up," I suggested.

"Maybe you moved the chair to get something out of a cupboard," my sister speculated.

My mother shook her head. We tried to think up likely scenarios. We never could figure out what had happened.

As a result of the fall, my mother suffered some nasty pressure wounds on her lower back and some kidney failure, both of which kept her in the hospital or the skilled nursing facility. We hoped that she soon would be able to move into one of the small apartments, but the social work staff advised us to wait a while before considering this.

At times, Mom seemed to be on the mend. Charlie spent two weekends in January with her in the skilled nursing ward, watching the Pro Bowl and the Super Bowl. They enjoyed a special supper box of lox and bagels put together by the Temple Sisterhood as a fundraiser during the Super Bowl. My mother had gaily shared the goodies with some of the other patients.

One day, my mother declared to the staff that she knew it was Election Day and she insisted that she wanted to vote. Not only that, but she wanted all of the patients in the skilled nursing unit also be able to vote. The staff figured out how that could be done by transporting the patients to the polling place in the other part of the facility by the use of their walkers or wheelchairs. My mom would not have given up and, if the residents had not been able to vote, she would have done whatever was needed so that they could vote next time. That story cheered me; that was the mom that I knew.

I admired my mother though often we seemed to choose different rhythms for our lives. I never did do things in the same way as she did. She supported and encouraged my large family. She visited regularly. She delighted in her grandchil-

dren and helped me out a lot. We shared the same values, though I chose to live my life with a different tone. I didn't concern myself much with appearances and tended to take a more relaxed flexible attitude with my household and my marriage. I think my mother found it hard not to criticize yet she always respected my home and my husband.

During the weeks I spent with her in January, the promos for the Winter Olympics would come on and my mom would cry out in delight, "The Winter Olympics! Yes! I'm ready! Let them begin! I'm right here!" She had always loved the Olympics. Summer or winter, my mom tried to watch every single event.

Mom was in good spirits. She participated in the rehab programs cheerfully. She told me, "You know, they had us making cookies at therapy yesterday, how about that?" She was very pleased about my upcoming visit to Japan to visit Nobuko, an exchange student from my high school days. She wanted me to bring a piece of her silver to Nobuko.

She never once talked about wanting to return home to her cottage. In fact, because she wouldn't talk about it, it occurred to me that she might be on a journey to somewhere else.

Charlie and Pam arrived in Rockford that Tuesday evening after the call about my mom ending treatment. My mom indicated she wanted to wait until I arrived before discussing the situation. They picked me up late Tuesday evening at the bus from Chicago.

The next morning, we went to Rockford Memorial Hospital. Mom's room was at the end of the hall in the oncology ward; sometimes this room was used for hospice patients. The ice skating preliminaries droned on softly in the background. My mom was ready though she looked thin and pale. She waited until she had our full attention.

"I want you to know that this is *my* decision," she rasped. "I'm at peace," she said, using all of the emphasis she could manage. "And I want you all to support me on this."

I stared in sorrow. This would be it? My mom dying? Yet she had the presence of mind to make her own decision regarding her care. I could do nothing but be present for her as she continued her journey.

She turned to Pam and added, "And that means you. I want *you* to support my decision." My sister most likely would be the one to challenge her, and to convince her to try just a little harder to regain her health. "No squabbling! No fighting!" Mom also directed this to Pam.

"No, Mom. No. It's your choice. I understand that," Pam reassured her.

My mother relaxed, looking pleased.

"One other thing," she continued "I want the baby bootie pattern to go to Naomi. Make sure she gets it."

My mother and grandmother knit old-fashioned baby booties all their lives. They both believed that every baby that they knew about should have a pair of

handmade booties. My mother always made sure I had plenty of booties to give away to all of the new babies that I knew. Excellent booties too, they did *not* fall off. But none of her children or grandchildren knew how to knit them.

"I'll see that she has it," I assured her. Naomi, my youngest daughter, loved to knit. She was also a Girl Scout, just like her grandmother.

"Good," she said with satisfaction. "I'm tired. Why don't you guys all go have lunch and come back later."

This deathbed speech was the last conversation that we had with our mother. That same afternoon, she could just say a few words. Later, she could only make eye contact and smile. After that, she became increasingly unresponsive.

The Winter Olympics were in full swing. We watched the Nordic skiing, the toboggans, and the speed skaters. We cheered for all of the athletes in those crazy sports, and I would report all of the highlights to her. "Mom! Apolo Ohno won another medal!" We sat and talked to her as she slid down deeper into unconsciousness.

Because she was MRSA positive (she tested positively for the stubborn bacteria that infected many hospital patients, especially those who were elderly), we all had to wear lemon yellow paper gowns and powder blue gloves. A few times, she did have visitors. She would look up and see people in identical yellow gowns looking down at her sadly. She couldn't tell them apart, and she hated all those long faces and sorrowful looks. She made it clear that she wanted none of that. "Up! Up!" she cried out, trying to break up the mournful mood. She didn't want people to come and look down at her with misery and grief.

We kept things quiet. We did not encourage people to visit. Those inquiring marveled that Claire had called it; that she had been able to make the decision herself. She chose when to stop the difficult treatments and when to go for the comfort and calm of the IV morphine. Don't we all want to make that choice? How many of us will actually get to do it?

It calmed us as well. We didn't face any difficult issues in regards to her treatment. In hospice care, they only take vitals once per shift, and there were no meal trays unless requested.

One afternoon, I mused to my brother, "You know this train only has one destination." My mom had set the train in motion and the tracks led off into the horizon.

We spent the rest of the week peacefully watching the snowboarding and pairs skating. We cheered for all of the athletes. Mom slipped away, bit by bit. My brother worked on pictures to use at the memorial. What better way to go, I thought, than together with your grown children? No drama or hysterics, just watching the Olympics. She had so looked forward to them.

I found it very tough to just sit with her, holding her hand. Pretty soon, I was breathing with her, coaxing her along. "C'mon, Mom, take that breath. You can do it. Just one more breath. OK. OK, here it comes. Whew, you did it!" Doing that for a while completely exhausted me.

My mom always did like doing things her own way. She had prided herself on

stepping up and taking on responsibilities in the community. Claire Ginsburgh got things done. For the Girl Scouts. For the public nursing home. For the Jewish community. For the public schools. But we could all see that her time was upon her. Earlier she had confided in me that she had let things go in December, not taken care of things like she should. Like order her prescriptions. She felt bewildered at this; this was not like her. I, too, now felt bewildered. How could the world lose—how could *I* lose—my competent, caring mother?

No particular thing happened from one day to the next. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, we continued to be with her in the hospital. Through the ice dancing and the hockey, her Olympics played on in the background.

We planned the memorial during the week and she was in on the details. She didn't particularly like the rabbi. Instead, we enlisted Brian, the chaplain for Wesley Willows; he was an older minister, a rather grizzled veteran of the Salvation Army. My mom liked him. We reserved the large, bright room in the new building at Wesley Willows.

We got a laugh over Brian's consternation about a Jewish service. "I'll have to buy a book to know what to do!" he sputtered with real alarm. We told him not to sweat it; Pam would take care of those details.

The days stretched on. My mom was unresponsive as the national anthems played with the medal winners standing on the podiums. Mom's breathing became increasingly irregular. The doctor marveled that she still held on as her kidneys had clearly failed. On Sunday afternoon, my mom's breaths came slower and slower. One of the unit nurses came in, put her stethoscope on her chest, and said quietly, "I'm not hearing any heartbeat."

The nurse advised us that there likely would be a few big exhalations at the end. She stayed with us. Charlie, Pam and I all held hands with each other and with our mother. We heard those loud exiting breaths—rough loud sighs, her skin so pale. I didn't see anything special, no spirit rise. But I saw the end of my mom's long struggle with her failing body. I felt so empty. It was really over?

We had been there so long, my mom slipping away. Had she now crossed that finish line? How could both of my parents be dead? Where *were* they? I had long since stopped depending on them. I was always the one who pulled away. Yet their loss surrounds me every day.

My brother said he would stay with her until "they" came to get her. My sister and I gathered our things and left the hospital.

...

I KEPT thinking that I was so glad that I had made the trip to Rockford a few months earlier in October. My mom had a pacemaker surgically implanted in August with immediate positive results. She felt better and made a lot more sense. I

visited Rockford on short notice. "Mom, I'm coming when you are doing well. I'm not waiting for some awful thing to happen!" I told her. As usual, Charlie and Pam came to Rockford when I visited. We had fun that weekend. We went shopping and out to eat. We told stories about when we were small. We rode into the Mid-western autumn countryside to an apple place with lots of fruit, music and baked goods. We gobbled up the warm apple doughnuts outside; we didn't even wait to get to the car.

After my mom's death, we had the memorial as planned. As we worked on the program, we started to include more and more scouting references, much to my brother's chagrin; he didn't think it was appropriate. I included the "Girl Scout Law" as part of my remarks. My sister read the "Girl Scout Promise" and sang "Make new Friends." My daughters, Ilana and Naomi, along with my niece Teresa, led "Taps" at the end.

My mother was truly a sister to every other Girl Scout.

The Winter Olympics had lost one of their biggest fans. Who would think, as my mom watched the promos with happy anticipation that she would not live to enjoy the Closing Ceremony? She had always loved the athletes from all the nations walking in together.

My twenty-one-year-old daughter Naomi honored my mother's last wish and learned to knit the booties. She gives them to family members as soon as she completes them. "I guess I'm going to have to do this forever," she grumbles, but is secretly pleased. "Yup, you are," I answer. I think she really enjoys being the one in charge of booties.

I miss my mom, but I marvel that she did her death just right. My brother eloquently pointed out at the internment the following summer that both our parents felt that they had led complete lives and that they had accomplished their goals.

My mother feared being alone at the end, but she wasn't. Her children stayed peacefully with her, alongwith the ski jumpers blasting down the mountains, soaring into the air, and the figure skaters spinning and spinning.

Z

by *Gabriel Moseley*

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION, 2011

MY UNCLE HAD finally decided to call it quits. He had thrown in the towel. It was only a matter of time. Or at least, that's what I thought when I got the call from his garrulous landlord, who told me, breathlessly, that Ted hadn't paid rent, that none of the tenants had seen him, and that he wouldn't answer the door, no matter how loud you knocked. He had even called the library to check up, and they said Ted hadn't shown up for work in weeks. Old Ted had, by all appearances, disappeared.

The landlord sounded agitated. He probably assumed the worst, just as I did. He was also, I suspected, a little concerned about the rent.

It was strange that this burden fell to me. I hardly knew the man. I had paid Ted a perfunctory visit when I first moved to New York but had barely spoken to him since. Yet I remember that visit clearly. We met for lunch in a greasy diner with cracked, red leather booths.—His favorite haunt. All the waitresses knew him by name. He wasn't impolite, he asked all the obligatory questions about my promotion, but I could tell it didn't interest him. Work, and indeed the real world in gen-

eral, seemed to bore him. He only lit up once he had steered our conversation towards taller tales, assailing me with sweeping narratives about explorers and their feats, men as 'tough as nails.' He spoke animatedly once he reached this preferred topic, gesturing with his bony hands, his white hair wild, untamed, his slate blue eyes piercing and direct. My family had lost contact with Ted decades before and after that brief encounter I understood why. Eccentricity is not my family's *modus operandi*.

When the landlord asked if I would come to the apartment, to have a family member present when he opened the door, I hesitantly agreed, even though I had some pressing business at the firm. We had just started a pharmaceutical litigation that involved international patent infringement, a case that promised to be both complex and lucrative. But family is, after all, family.

I admit, in some shadowy corner of my mind, I also harbored a hope of seeing some compensation for the trouble. Ted, as far as I knew, had no one else in his life. And, like my father, he had come into a great deal of money.

With this fiscal prospect in mind I decided to drop everything and took a taxi over to the apartment, after checking the address. Ted had chosen the South Bronx for his home, an omen of mental instability in itself.

The landlord met me at the door, extending a clammy hand. Ted's apartment was on the sixth floor and, because the elevator was 'busted,' we had to take the stairs. The landlord walked with a crooked gait.

I couldn't help noticing the disrepair as we climbed the poorly lit staircase. Brick peeked through the crumbling walls, along with a few exposed wires. The place sagged from age and abuse. You would never know that Ted had money. Why live here? And why work in a library for that matter? It would drive anyone to suicide.

We reached the apartment and the landlord knocked loudly.

No reply.

The landlord pulled out his ring of keys, selected one, and fit it into the keyhole. The lock clicked, but the door wouldn't budge.

"It must be bolted from the inside," he said.

"I guess you're right."

Bolted from the inside could only mean one thing.

"Do you have a master-key or anything?" I asked.

"Not for this kind of lock. Not in New York."

I nodded.

"Should we kick it in?" I asked.

"Sure. If you're going to pay for it."

I chuckled to myself. A true businessman.

I braced myself, kicked hard, and the door flung open, splintering around the lock.

The scene inside was not what I expected.

Ted's apartment had been converted into a hermit's lair, blanketed with curiosi-

ties. Stacks of books towered from floor to ceiling, with loose pages strewn across the floor. Compasses, GPS devices, sextants, and other paraphernalia lay cluttered on the desk, along with leather journals, thick as cinderblocks.

And then there were the maps. Maps of varying sizes plastered every available surface of the room. There were maps on the ceiling and maps on the floor. Some were global atlases, while others were of specific regions. A few were astronomical. But I immediately noticed an overall focus on South America. A prominent map of Brazil was tacked over the solitary window, obscuring the light.

As if this were not strange enough, each map had been covered with Ted's scribbled cursive notes. Many had numerical data, conveying latitude and longitude. The notes were all linked to one another by a series of twisting arrows, arrows that also pointed to specific spots on each map. Locations highlighted by concentric circles. Everything, it seemed, was interconnected in this cartographer's wet dream. But Ted was nowhere to be seen.

Wading through the papers on the floor I searched the bedroom and found a window open, the window that led right to an adjoining fire escape. The mystery of the deadbolt, at least, was quickly resolved. But where he went I could not say.

I returned to the living room, searching for some semblance of logic to this madness. I noticed that many of the books had explicitly related titles, such as *The Mythic 'Z': Fact and Fiction*, *The Atlantis of the Amazon*, and *In Search of Z*. There were books on the indigenous languages of Brazil and several well-worn copies of Percy Fawcett's memoirs. Although I couldn't understand many of the notes or the meaning of many of the arrows, it was not all that hard to deduce. Ted was searching for the city 'Z,' the supposed lost city of the Amazon.

I remembered reading a story about 'Z' in the *New Yorker*. Colonel Percy Fawcett, a world-renowned explorer and cartographer, had heard rumors of a vast stone city hidden in the jungles of Brazil, somewhere deep in the Amazon basin. He had named that hypothetical city 'Z.' His exploits had been wildly popular, in his day; his memoirs were the basis for Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lost World* and, supposedly, the inspiration for the character Indiana Jones.

Fawcett had become increasingly obsessed with the idea of 'Z,' believing the city to be rich in spirituality as well as gold. I vaguely recalled some nonsense about white Indians and vortexes of energy. He had gone looking for it with his son in the mid 1920's and never returned. And despite a great deal of research and several ill-fated rescue missions, their fate had never been discovered, piquing the curiosity of many a would-be explorer.

The map of Brazil, faintly illuminated by the sun behind it, charted Fawcett's journeys with cryptic titles: *River of Evil*, *A Prehistoric Peep*, *Good Savage*, and *The Veil of the Primeval*. There was also a conspicuous 'Z,' surrounded by a several concentric circles. In the bottom right hand corner there was a tag: New York Public Library.

The landlord was upset. He snooped around the apartment, shuffling through

stacks of papers, complaining about the mess. But I said nothing. I stood still. It was deranged, of course, this hallucinatory research. But it was touching. Ted had worked with energy and devotion. With insatiable curiosity. He had put his soul into this crazed quest.

I picked a map up off the floor.

I knew I should call the police. Ted was probably wandering the streets, searching for 'Z' amidst the endless skyscrapers, amidst the nebulous jungle of his own mind. But for an idle moment I thought about what it would be like, to be an explorer, to map uncharted territories, to confront the unknown. And I thought, in that instant, that Ted had found a fiction worth living.

GRAY SKIES GLORIFIED

Mary Senter

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION, 2011

EVEN THOUGH THIS is Seattle, it's not supposed to rain in July. My tickets say *Lollapalooza '92, Take the Day Off, Kitsap County Fairgrounds, Rain or Shine, Wed. July 22, 1992 1:00 PM*. I was totally psyched about this show, but when I bought the tickets I assumed it would be a glorious sunny day. Now I'm not so excited. I hate being cold and wet. Plus, I can't afford to get sick. I work two jobs and go to the community college. I've got rent to pay and car insurance and everything else. It was bad enough that I had to take today off.

But God, I had to come to this show, I mean, it's Lollapalooza! I just wish it wasn't so far away. I didn't even know how to get to Kitsap County until I pulled out my map. My boyfriend Danny and I just got off the ferry at Kingston and we're driving in my '85 Civic down a curvy two-lane road choked by tall evergreens, ferns and blackberry bushes.

It's raining so hard the car ahead of me puts up a spray so that I can't even see the road. Water and gray are pretty much all I can see out of all my windows and mirrors. It's practically the longest day of the year, yet it's dark here on this road in

this weather, even at 12:30 in the afternoon.

We missed the ferry we meant to catch and we're gonna be really late. I had no idea it would take so long to get down here. We better not miss Pearl Jam. They're my favorite band. I've got *Ten* playing in the tape deck right now.

Danny doesn't care about any of the bands on the line-up. He basically came along for the ride, he doesn't care what we do, especially since I bought his ticket, and I'm driving. He likes heavy metal; Queensryche, Metallica, Tesla. I'm all about alternative, especially the Seattle Sound; Alice in Chains, Nirvana, Pearl Jam and Soundgarden.

I start to see cars parked along the road ahead of me and decide that this must be the overflow. I pull onto the shoulder. We've got to be two miles away. I wish we hadn't missed that ferry.

"Did you bring a raincoat?" I ask, pushing down the door lock.

"I don't own a raincoat. Did you?"

"No, but I wish I did. We're gonna be drowned rats before we even get there." It didn't occur to me that it would be pouring over here. It was just overcast when we left. I grab my backpack out of the back seat that has a couple of Dr. Peppers and some Doritos for later. I also grab my blanket and wish it was a tarp, instead. I'm wearing jeans and a flannel and a pair of Doc Martens. Danny's in jeans and tennis shoes and a light jacket. He brought nothing with him, not that I can see, anyway. I'll bet he's got a prescription bottle filled with joints hidden somewhere on him. I can't believe I'm going out with a twenty-three-year-old stoner. He never even offers me a toke. Maybe if he did, I'd smoke with him, but probably not. Adults shouldn't do drugs. I quit smoking pot in high school. Now I only smoke cigarettes, but rarely. I'm trying to quit. My family doesn't even know I smoke. They would flip.

We take off walking through the wilderness until we come to a chain link fence and then some signs and finally the entrance. Danny reaches out for my hand timidly, as we walk. I let him take it. I let him take a lot of things from me, and I'm not sure why. I gave him my virginity just a couple weeks ago. I wasn't using it, anyway. I already gave up on finding "Mr. Right." By the time I reached twenty one, it seemed more like a burden, than a gift to be protected and coveted. He's a nice guy, don't get me wrong. And we have a decent time together. But I don't love him. Now we're walking hand in hand, awkwardly, like we're in middle school.

We really have nothing in common. He's the kind of guy you can walk all over. No balls. Totally not my type. Of course, he's my first real boyfriend, so I'm not exactly sure what my *type* is, right?

Lush is playing already when we finally get on the fairgrounds. They sound pretty good. I'm not familiar with them, but it's nice to have females represented in a male-dominated venue. We follow the throngs of people to the main stage area. There's already a huge crowd; thousands and thousands of people, I'll bet. A sea of heads bob up and down in unison. Bodies are being passed above heads,

through the crowd. Danny and I find a spot way in the back and spread the blanket over the muddy grass. I sit cross legged, wet and grumpy.

Danny and I sit there, barely talking and I wonder if this concert would be more fun with someone else. But he is here with me. He's my boyfriend and our relationship is safe, comfortable and easy.

Pearl Jam comes on next, and they sound fantastic. Eddie sounds incredibly sexy, and I wish I was closer so I could actually see him. The rain lets up and I want to dance, but I'm so cold, I'm shivering, my muscles are stiff and sore and I don't want to move. I'm miserable and I tell Danny that maybe when Pearl Jam is done playing we should go. He nods in compliance.

When their set is over, we sit and listen to Jesus and Mary Chain for awhile, but I don't really know them and I have to pee, so we make our way over to the string of Honey Buckets. I peel my saturated jeans down my legs and hover over the seat. At least with the cold weather there isn't much of a stench rising from the liquid below me, despite the heavy use. I hurry anyway, just because I don't like to linger in the porta potty. I can barely get my pants back up and the feeling of the cold, wet denim is not pleasant. Even my cotton panties are soggy. Yuck. I turn the lock, squirt sanitizer on my hands and then kick the door open and pile out, the heavy plastic door slamming behind me. Danny isn't standing where I thought he would be. I look up and down the corridor, but I don't see him. I wait, assuming he's gone somewhere to get high. Twenty minutes pass, and he doesn't show.

I watch the crowd. The rain is falling hard again. A thick cloud of steam rises from the sweaty bodies in the cool air and looks like a smoldering fire. They're having fun and they don't care that it's raining.

"Why are you standing here all by yourself?" A smooth, deep voice asks. I assume he's talking to someone else. When I look over, a gorgeous pale-skinned guy with long, curly dark hair and a goatee is smiling at me. His cheeks are flushed and his skin glistens with sweat and rain. There's a smear of mud on his chin and forehead. He isn't wearing a shirt except for the flannel tied around his waist. His frame is lean, but not thin. He has no hair on his chest and a tattoo of a black sun on his shoulder. On the bottom he's got thermals and baggy pants (cut off at the knee), wool socks and boots that I assume are black, but are now covered in thick brown mud. He's holding a huge half-full Evian bottle in one hand and a smoke in the other. I try to think of something interesting to say, but nothing comes.

"You been in the mosh pit yet?" He asks.

"No. Not yet."

"You've gotta come. It's fantastic! I'm Jack, by the way." He says as he puts the cigarette in his mouth and extends his hand out.

I take his hand, which is surprisingly warm. "Hi. I'm Karen."

"Karen, why do you look so bummed? We're at the best show of our time. Twenty years from now, they'll look back on this like it's Woodstock. This is the Woodstock of our generation."

"Really?"

"Yeah. Do you think any of those people thought they were going to the concert of the century? No. They were just goin' to hear some music and maybe get stoned, drop a little acid. But look what it turned in to. What we've got here is the same thing."

"I wish it wasn't raining." I reply. *What a stupid thing to say.*

"The rain makes it all the better. It's about suffering. It's about putting it all out there, right? Listen to Cornell. His larynx is fucked, but he still wails. His style of singing is fuckin' hard, man. Rips up your vocal cords. But he doesn't take it easy because he's afraid of hurting himself."

I listen. Soundgarden has taken the stage. He's right. There is something wrong with Chris Cornell's voice. It's strained, warbly. But he's still giving it everything.

"That's how I am when I sing and play. Me and my band; we rock hard."

"You're in a band?"

"Yeah. We're called The Stain. We're playing at Rock Candy on Saturday. It's our first big gig. You should come."

I don't even know what to say. "Sure, I can probably make that." I can't, of course. I have to work at the restaurant Saturday night. Maybe I can switch with someone. I'd love to go. I never go out anymore. I'm always doing the responsible thing, the adult thing.

"Okay, now you're coming with me. You need to mosh."

"I...I'm waiting for someone."

"Oh. They're in the shitter?"

"No. Well, I'm not sure where he went."

"You can catch up with him later. If he left you here waiting all this time, he doesn't deserve you, anyway. Let's go."

I'm not sure about moshing, or taking off with this guy, but my adrenaline starts to flow and for the first time in a long time I'm excited. "Okay. Hey, can I bum one of your smokes?"

"You bet."

He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a box of Camels and a brass Zippo. He flips the lid open and I pull one out and put it to my lips. He flips his lighter and offers the flame, cupping it with his hand to block the wind. I lean in and inhale deeply. The smoke fills my lungs deliciously. I detect the faintest taste of lighter fluid and I pull the cigarette from my mouth and release the air from my lungs slowly. The smoke blows away in the breeze. I enjoy the feeling of the cigarette between my index and middle fingers. The nicotine hits my brain and I get a little light-headed and tingly. I smile at Jack as he holds the water bottle out to me.

"Maybe you'd like some of this, too?"

"Water?"

"Vodka."

"Sure." I take bottle, unscrew the cap and pour it into my mouth, not putting

my lips to the edge. I swallow quickly and it burns all the way down into my belly.

"Why don't you finish it. I've got this." He reaches into his waistband and pulls out a silver flask and holds it up as if to toast something monumental.

We walk toward the stage and I take swigs and we navigate our way through the midway passing booths for Rock the Vote, abortion rights, souvenirs, and hamburgers.

I stop when we pass the Jim Rose Circus Sideshow. A guy is lifting a cinder block by his nipple piercings. *That has to hurt.*

"What do you think of that?" Jack asks me.

I look up at him with big eyes, "Would you ever try that?"

"Sure, why not. Have to get my nips pierced, though." He winks at me. He puts his hand on the small of my back and leads me toward the stage. Assertive. I love that!

We come to the edge of the crowd near the front. Suddenly I'm frightened. I don't want to go in there. I could be trampled, killed. He pulls me in and he doesn't let go of me. I relax, grab his loose shirt sleeve and begin to mosh with the crowd. I'm flailing my arms and nodding my head to the beat and I'm twisting and bumping into sweaty wet bodies. I get shoved hard from the back and lurch toward the ground, but someone rights me before I hit.

I close my eyes. I am the music. I am the lyrics. *It gives me the butterflies, Gives me away, till I'm up on my feet again... Outshined, Outshined, Outshined, Outshined!* I hardly even feel the blow to my mouth. I don't know if it's a noggin or an arm or a foot that hits me. I taste metal, but I keep dancing. I catch a glance of Jack out of my peripheral vision and see his eyes widen when he looks at me. He tugs me out of the crowd and plops me down onto the ground.

"What the hell happened to you?" He yells over the music.

"What?" I yell back. I'm not following. I'm breathing hard and sweating and my ears are ringing.

"Your mouth is bleeding." I'm reading his lips.

I put my hand to my mouth and pull it away covered in blood. *Shit.* I look around for my backpack, and I remember that Danny was holding it when I went in to the porta potty. I have tissues in it. I even have a small first aid kit. But that won't help me now.

Jack leans down and offers me his hand. I take it and he pulls me up. He points with a head tilt and I go with him. We walk until we find a taco cart that has a bunch of napkin dispensers. He takes the vodka bottle and pours the little bit that remains onto a napkin and cleans up my face. It stings.

"A little swelling of that beautiful lip, is all." He says and then he brings his head down, level with mine, closes his eyes and plants the most amazingly tender kiss onto my swollen bottom lip. I start to melt. A feeling washes over me like being swaddled in a cozy blanket. My head spins. Maybe it's the vodka, maybe it's the adrenalin. My lids get heavy and I begin to fall into a lustful trance. But then

he smiles so big and bold that the edges of his eyes crinkle up.

He pulls away from me, exuberant. "C'mon!" He says. "I love this song!"

He pulls me through the crowd, saying "excuse us" and "pardon us" the whole way. Some people are pissed, others don't care and just move. We must pass through sixty or seventy people until we are right there, practically center stage, in the thick of it. We're crammed so tight that I can smell the deodorant of the girl next to me, and I'm glad she's wearing it. *Smells like Teen Spirit*. The security staff is hosing us down. Water drips from my bangs and I don't even care anymore. So much steam rises from the hot crowd I can't even see the stage most of the time.

I'm bobbing up and down. I'm smiling and I can't stop smiling. This is what it's all about. This is how you're supposed to experience a concert.

"Having fun?" Jack yells in my ear. His voice is so loud that it hurts, even though I can barely understand what he said.

"Yes!" I holler back.

"Wanna go surfing?" He asks. But his words don't register and it isn't until he has crowded in behind me and put his hands in my armpits that I realized what he means. He hoists me up over the crowd and I roll awkwardly, a hundred hands on my breasts, shoulders, stomach, ankles until I realize what is happening. I maneuver onto my back, outstretch my arms and throw my head back, exposing myself to whatever will come. *Light as a feather, stiff as a board*. I close my eyes and open my mouth and taste the rain. I'm not afraid of being dropped. I know these strangers have me. I'm flying. On stage Cornell wails and we both give ourselves fully to the moment.

When the crowd finally releases me, I'm on the other side of the stage, a million miles from Jack. I'll never make my way back there. My heart is pumping. I feel more alive than I ever have. I buy a pack of cigarettes. I blow smoke rings into the cold, grey sky and I don't care who sees.

I think about Jack. I wonder if I'll bump into him again. I scan the crowd for him every so often, but I can't find him. I think about Saturday...

I feel a tap on my shoulder. "Hey, stranger." My heart stops for a moment, but the voice is too familiar.

I turn and it's Danny, looking a little bloodshot, and boring.

"Where have you been? I've been looking all over for you."

"I got lost." I say. But in my mind I say *I got found*.

UGLY AMERICANS

John Haugen

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN NONFICTION, 2011

STEPPING OFF THE bus in Chetumal that warm December morning, Tom and I had travelled as far as we could through Mexico. We'd worked our way to the southeastern corner of the Yucatan Peninsula, where Mexico meets Belize and the Caribbean Sea. Along the way, we'd argued about one thing and then another until we seemed to argue about everything. The trip had been our reward for a tough fall quarter. The past few days, it had come to seem more like a punishment.

Chetumal, a city of one hundred thirty thousand, hunkered in the swampy lowlands. The Mexican Navy moored two destroyer-size ships in the mouth of the river at the city's south edge. Nearby, we found a hotel.

We upended our duffels onto the bed. No sign of mold, yet. Gathering snorkels, masks, and flippers, we left the hotel walking due south toward the water. We quickly reached the river. The destroyers loomed to our right. A half mile across the river, something burned, sending up a plume of yellow smoke.

We walked along the beach, toward the open sea, searching for that perfect place. No swimmers cavorted in the feeble surf; the beach belonged to us. Where

the sea grass became sparse as a freshman's mustache, we stopped.

Tom donned his gear and waded out. I sat in the sand to pull on my neoprene booties. When I stood up, I noticed a bearded man strolling toward me.

"Hey man," he said. "What are you guys doing?"

"Gonna snorkel the reef," I said.

"There's no reef here, man. This is a bay." Fifty yards out, Tom toiled along in water that barely lapped over his back. He looked like an albino crocodile. By the time he gave up, Jim, the beachcomber had moved on.

"This is totally fucked," said Tom, shaking wet sand from his flippers.

"Why are you always so negative?" I said.

"This is shit. We came here to snorkel...and this. This!" With an upturned hand, he indicated the beach, the weeds, Chetumal. "Snorkeling was your idea, John. Let's just bag it. You can stay here. I'll go someplace else...Chichen Itza."

"C'mon man," I said, "that guy I was talking to, he told me about a place with incredible snorkeling." I described the Cayes in Belize, strewn along the barrier reef.

Unpleasant as Tom could be, I didn't want to split up. I needed a companion; even the prospect of eating alone at a restaurant scared me. Tom might decide to continue on his own, but I had no interest in solo travel. I'd stick it out a while longer.

"Sure," said Tom. "Belize sounds good. Can't get any worse."

We were college friends. We'd both transferred to the same college the previous year and had met the first day of orientation. The trip idea had hatched the following summer, and we'd started the real planning when we returned to school that fall.

When Christmas break began, we flew to Tucson, and my parents drove us down to the border. Things had gone pleasantly on the train, during the few days we spent in Guadalajara and then on another train to Mexico City.

A day or two after arriving in Mexico City, Tom's wallet disappeared from our hotel room. We blamed the maid. More accurately, Tom blamed the maid and I interpreted for him. He could vent his anger only through me. I resented his pushing me into conflict but understood the necessity. We wouldn't get far on my money alone.

The wallet turned up under the bed a few hours later. Had it been there the whole time? We'd searched the room twice. Tom felt bad. I allowed him to assume the guilt. He'd been quick to believe the worst of our maid. I wondered if she were used to this kind of treatment.

With my help, Tom bought candy and flowers; we left them at the front desk for the maid. That should have fixed things. Perhaps it did—with the maid. But something had changed between Tom and me. Our early camaraderie had disappeared.

Later that day, we found ourselves in a *supermercado*. It was the *Día de la Noche Buena*, Christmas Eve. We had heard that stores and restaurants closed on Christ-

mas Day and realized we'd need supplies.

Other last-minute shoppers manhandled laden carts through the crowded aisles. The store was laid out like any U.S. grocery store. Check stands stood up front, then a wide space for checkout lines and then the aisles, stretching front to back. From every check stand, a line of carts snaked far back into the grocery aisles.

We collected our meager provisions—rolls, pastry, cheese, juice, *cerveza*—and took our place at the end of one of the lines. It did not move fast. It didn't even move slow. In ten minutes, it did not advance at all.

"This is fucked," said Tom. "I'm not wasting my time in this line."

"We need food," I said.

"This is a total waste of time."

"What are we gonna eat tomorrow?"

"I don't give a shit."

"I'm staying," I said, "I don't mind waiting in line. What are you so impatient for? We're on vacation."

"All the more reason not to waste my time. See ya at the hotel, John." He walked out, chin up and shoulders square, never looking back.

We made it through Christmas Day wandering the empty boulevards, then returning to our hotel room to drink Presidente brandy and stage a light show on the ceiling with our single flashlight. Tom savored the food I'd waited in line for. We pretended the argument had not occurred.

On our way to the Yucatan, we flew into Villahermosa, capital of the state of Tabasco on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The area was flat and swampy, subtropical. From the airport, our taxi barreled along causeways built inches above the water. A rising sun turned the flat sea to a sheet of gold, backlighting oil derricks scattered to the horizon.

By the time we'd finished breakfast, a storm had blown in. Outside, Tom suddenly realized how much they'd charged us for orange juice. He thought I should set things right. What was the big deal, I countered. Even with the overcharge, we'd paid less than half what we'd pay at a Denny's in Tucson. We stood chest to chest in lashing rain, shouting about the price of juice.

And now, a day and a half later in Chetumal, we'd returned from snorkeling and walked back to the bus station. We planned to buy tickets to Belize City for the next day. That beachcomber had said the bus left each day around ten. I hoped things improved. It was getting difficult to pretend.

I hunched down to the ticket window. "*Dos boletos para Belize City, por favor.*" I counted out pesos and collected the tickets. "*Muchas gracias, señora.*" The Mayan woman behind the counter smiled slightly.

Turning away from the window, I nearly bumped a stocky young man. He nudged me with his forearm. "Oy, mate," he said, "you speak the language?"

"A little," I said, showing with my fingers a pinch of Spanish.

"Could you help us? Me and my mate, here," he thrust his other elbow toward a

gangly fellow, "we want to get up to Can-Coon." He pronounced it as two separate words.

I bought the tickets. Their bus would depart in a couple of hours. The four of us moved away from the ticket window, out into the high, echoing waiting room. Afternoon sun slanted through arched doorways onto the tile floor.

"Thanks, mate. I'm Neil," He offered his hand. "This is A.D. We're R.A.F., Royal Air Force."

"Can't understand a word, can I?" said A.D., nodding back toward the ticket window with a raised eyebrow, his grin a flash of crooked teeth.

"Can we get you lads a beer?" asked Neil.

We'd moved down the street to a little cantina. Sitting under a thatched roof in the open air, the four of us clustered around a metal table. A foot away, people walked past in the growing dusk.

Neil had a tanned, pock-marked face and the unkempt, greasy hair and sideburns that were the British National Hairstyle. He wore a large watch on his thick wrist. A.D. had the tan and the same hair. They looked fit and outdoorsy.

"So, you guys are headed to Cancun," I said. "Are you doing some diving?"

"Well...let's just say we like to get the equipment wet, plumb the depths, that sort of thing," said Neil. He smiled.

"Excellent," I said, "I love diving."

"In fact, this is a snorkeling trip for us," said Tom.

"If you're heading for Belize, you'll want to catch a launch out to Caye Caulker," said Neil.

"That's exactly where we're going," said Tom.

"You'll have good company for the New Year. Lot of R.A.F. boys'll be there, no doubt, providing unsurpassed examples of the terms 'shitfaced' and 'rat-arsed.' They could have come with us and had some real fun, but they decided otherwise, the wankers."

"What's with all the R.A.F. around here?" said Tom.

"Got a base just outside of Belize City, near the airport—fancy that. Also, conveniently near the nation's largest brewery, Beliken. We're nearly all on leave for the New Year. Back in a week, more's the pity," Neil paused. "When you're finished in the Cayes, stop by and we'll show you around the FG. After five o'clock any day at the Foxy-Goff."

Tom and I summarized our history to that point: college students; Christmas break adventures. We described the maid incident and my narrowly escaping eye surgery in a creepy hospital recommended to us by the U.S. embassy. The waitress brought another round. I fished out my cigarettes and offered them about. All passed, then A.D. reconsidered.

"Here, could I take a peep at that, mate?" He extracted an unfiltered cigarette and studied the green and black packet with furrowed brow.

"Alas," he read. "Like 'Alas, poor Yorick.' Very interesting. 'Alas extra,' in fact."

"No," I said. "It's not 'alas' like that. It's Spanish, the plural of 'ala,' which means wing. That design on the front? Those are supposed to be wings."

"I thought it might have been some kind of health warning for Shakespeareans."

"I love Hamlet," said Tom, "but I like The Brothers Karamazov better." What he really loved was showing off.

"And I like any cigarette named after Shakespeare," said A.D. "You've got your 'Alas' and then your 'Outrageous Fortune'—that would be your king size." I laughed.

"I'm starting to wonder about you, mate," said Neil. He reflected. "Actually, I'm continuing to wonder with increased intensity."

"Speaking of being true to thine own self," said A.D. "where's the loo?"

"*El cuarto de baño?* I think it's over there. I, too, must be true to myself," I said. A.D. and I scraped our chairs back and wove through tables toward a doorway in the shadows.

A single five-watt bulb struggled to illuminate the men's bathroom—and failed miserably. The misshapen filament trembled like a crybaby's lip. It cast enough light to make out a floor, a trough-like urinal and a sink. The far end of the room disappeared in darkness. Floor composition remained a mystery. It might have been dirt.

As we proceeded with our business, a sudden inspiration took me. I said, "You and Neil—you guys are great. Me and Tom—you probly can't tell—we're not gettin' along." A.D. made a sympathetic noise. "We're thinking of splitting up," I blurted. "Do you think I might tag along with you guys? Up to Cancun?"

"Really?" A.D. grinned, I think. In the dimness, I could see his eyes glistening and thought I caught the glint of bad teeth. "Up for a bit of adventure, then, are you?"

When A.D. and I returned to the table, we found Tom saying, "How, exactly, does the R.A.F. happen to be in Belize?"

"Now, that is the question, in't it?" said A.D., sitting down. "I wish I knew."

"Look here, A.D.," said Neil sternly. "My mate and I were having a chat, weren't we? You just drown your sorrows a fair bit." He turned back to Tom, "The R.A.F. is still in Belize because the Guatemalans can't leave well enough alone."

"There's a longstanding border dispute," said A.D.

"Getting to that, wasn't I? Now gere off." Neil waved a beefy hand at A.D. as if shooin' a fly. "Right, Belize has been totally independent since 1981, but the Guatemalans don't recognize the country. Walk right in if we weren't here. Strangely, they just have no desire to tangle with Harriers."

"Common sentiment, that. I'd lay odds the Argentines share it," said A.D.

"Why?" I said.

"The Falklands, son, godforsaken, windswept isles in the South Atlantic," said A.D. "Sheep, rocks."

"Oh...right." I seemed to remember hearing something about that.

"But they were our godforsaken, windswept isles."

"That was Harriers, tearing the fockin' guts out of the Argentine Air Force. Took out twenty four birds without a loss." Neil lifted his right hand slowly from the table top, simulating a Harrier rising vertically on its vectored thrusters. "We'd scare the living shite out of the Guatemalans."

He swept napkins and glasses aside. "Imagine this: some general in Guatemala City says 'it's time to take what's ours.' So the orcs come creeping over the border, thinkin' they're in control. Then, out of the jungle rise the fire-breathing dragons." Both hands rose slowly and hovered, angled downward at what I assumed was a sinister angle, rockets or 30 mm cannons trained on the hapless Guatemalan orcs.

"Well, they're all Indians, aren't they?" said A.D. "Probably think it's the feathered serpent returning from across the sea."

"Too right," said Neil. "Worked for the fockin' Spaniards."

I glanced around the bar. Neil and A.D. did not seem to have noticed that most of the other patrons were Indians. Three guys at one of the nearer tables wore track pants and looked like they might be weight lifters.

"That was the Aztecs," I said. "The ones Cortez tricked. Down here it was the Maya."

"Oh, it's still Indians," said A.D. "Haven't changed a bit in five hundred years. You walk into any village around here and—"

"Hang on," said Tom, "could we back up a minute? I don't get something." The rest of us looked at him. "If Belize is independent, don't they have their own army? Why do you guys have to stay here?"

I assumed this was a diversionary tactic, but it worked. My fear of getting pounded by Mayan weight lifters subsided as Neil and A.D. attempted to explain the geopolitics of Commonwealth and colony. The terms "dominion," "realm" and "sovereign" came into it. Then there was something about forty-some independent states and a common culture and cricket playing.

"Sod the cricket and gin," said A.D. "The key item to grasp is that Queen Elizabeth is Queen of Belize independently of being, say, Queen of Jamaica or Barbados or England."

"I still don't get it," said Tom

"I think you boys need more beer," said Neil. He raised his arm and glanced around. "Where's the bloody waitress?" He looked back to Tom and me. "I myself am counting the days till I'm through with Belize. You lads are familiar with single malt?"

"Scotch, right?" I said.

Tom groaned, "Don't ever drink Cutty Sark out of tea cups." He shuddered.

"Oh, yeah," I said, "you told me about that—you and that guy who goes to Evergreen now."

"Dan Huffman," he nodded. "I can't think about scotch...or even look at a tea-cup."

"Cutty Sark is rubbish," roared Neil. Across the room, the bartender looked up. "Course it made you sick: it's blended to make it palatable for poofsters, pansies and nancy-boys."

"Single malt, on the other hand, is enjoyed by burly men in tartan crouched among the heather," said A.D. "They dry the malt over peat fires, giving it that smoky taste."

"So, you're going to import it to Belize, I'll bet," I said.

"Bollocks!" said Neil. "I'm going to drink it, day I'm finished. Bottle of Glenlivet."

"The whole bottle?" I said.

"Wouldn't that kill you?" said Tom.

"Didn't the last time," said Neil.

"He did pass out," said A.D., "and when he woke, poor git couldn't remember anything from about six hours before he started drinking."

"Still can't," said Neil.

The waitress appeared with four more bottles of Noche Buena and waited while Neil counted out Belizean dollars.

"See that?" said Neil, glancing out of the corners of his eyes toward the waitress's receding back. "That little tart fancies me."

"That waitress?" said Tom. "She was, like, 50 years old. Maybe she couldn't see you."

"If that tart was 50, I need *my* eyes examined," said Neil. "A.D., it is well past time for this little holiday. These lads may not understand the manly need to drink and fock, repeatedly."

"John does," said A.D., nodding toward me. "He's coming with us."

"Is he?" said Neil, turning to me.

"Where are you going?" said Tom.

"We're gonna drink and fock and pass out, and repeat, as often as possible," said Neil.

"Wait a sec.," I said.

"Like I said, we're going to visit the whores in Can-Coon," said A.D.

"Best whorehouses in Mexico—Can-Coon," said Neil. "Couldn't get those other poofsters to come along. They're going out to Caye Caulker."

"Don't know what they're missing, do they?" said A.D. "You are coming?" He turned to me.

"What is going on?" said Tom, "Whore houses?" He looked from me to A.D. and back.

"You said you two were splitting up, and you wanted to come with us to visit the whores."

"Whores?" I said, "I didn't know about any whores."

"You did say you wanted to come with us," said A.D.

"And you also said you liked whores, I remember that distinctly," said Neil.

"You guys were gonna ditch me," said Tom.

"No!" I said. "No, no, no. I never said I was going anywhere. And I never said I liked whores. You guys are hallucinating." I turned to A.D. "I said we—Tom and me—were not getting along."

"Right," said Neil, drawing it out into an expression of sarcastic disbelief.

"And I said I might go to Cancun with you guys. Might. To go diving."

"Too right," said A.D., laughing. "We plan on a good lot of diving: muff diving, offshore drilling, clam diving, diving in the canyon."

"All of it synonymous with that venerable indoor sport of couch rugby," said Neil.

"So, you guys aren't doing any actual scuba diving?" I said.

"I thought they were, too," said Tom.

"Do we look like divers?" said Neil. "You are clearly not acquainted with any real divers. They tend to be a little more interested in pointless exertion."

"What's this about not getting along?" said Tom. "I love this trip. You don't think we've been getting along?"

"It doesn't seem like it," I whined. "You keep saying you'd do so much better if you spoke Spanish. What about 'can't get any worse?' What about...what about the orange juice?" Suddenly, it seemed rather silly.

"I thought that was funny," said Tom. "I didn't know you took it so seriously."

"Bugger all!" Neil exploded from his chair. "A.D., mate, we've got a bus to catch."

"Sure you're not coming? Best whorehouses in Mexico," said A.D. "Last chance."

"No," we both said. "Caye Caulker. Snorkeling."

"I don't like to say it," said A.D., moving toward the sidewalk.

"Say it, you prat," said Neil. "Better yet, I will. They're poofs."

"Wankers."

"Leave more for us."

Minutes later, we'd seen them aboard the bus, still idling in a cloud of semi-particulate

diesel smoke. The driver had appeared and had arranged things about his seat: jacket over the

back, plastic shopping bags tucked here and there with the precision of a pre-flight checklist.

A.D. slammed open a bus window. "Remember," he shouted. "Tuesday, week, five o'clock, Foxy Goff. We'll get you sorted on the Commonwealth." Then they were gone.

"Sorry about all that," I said.

"I'm glad you finally said something, you wanker. Almost got yourself shanghaied for the Great R.A.F. Whorehouse Tour."

"I'll bet you're sorry you're not going."

CONNECTIONS

"I'm sorry I won't get the T-shirt. I like that slogan, 'Great R.A.F. Whorehouse Tour.' Seriously, Caye Caulker sounds great. It's been bugging me that I can't talk to anyone."

"Want one?" I shook a cigarette out of the pack. Tom declined. As I lit it, I imagined A.D. muttering "Poor fockin' Yorick," over and over as he struggled to drag an unconscious Neil out of the gutter. Things could be worse.

2 *Nature*



CHATTERBOX BY BART RULON

Instructor, Certificate Program in Natural Science Illustration





BELTED KINGFISHER BY BART RULON

Instructor, Certificate Program in Natural Science Illustration



BEACHCOMBING BY SUSAN JONES

Instructor, Certificate Program in Natural Science Illustration





WHEN I'M BIG BY SUSAN JONES

Instructor, Certificate Program in Natural Science Illustration





BEAR FINDS A KITTEN

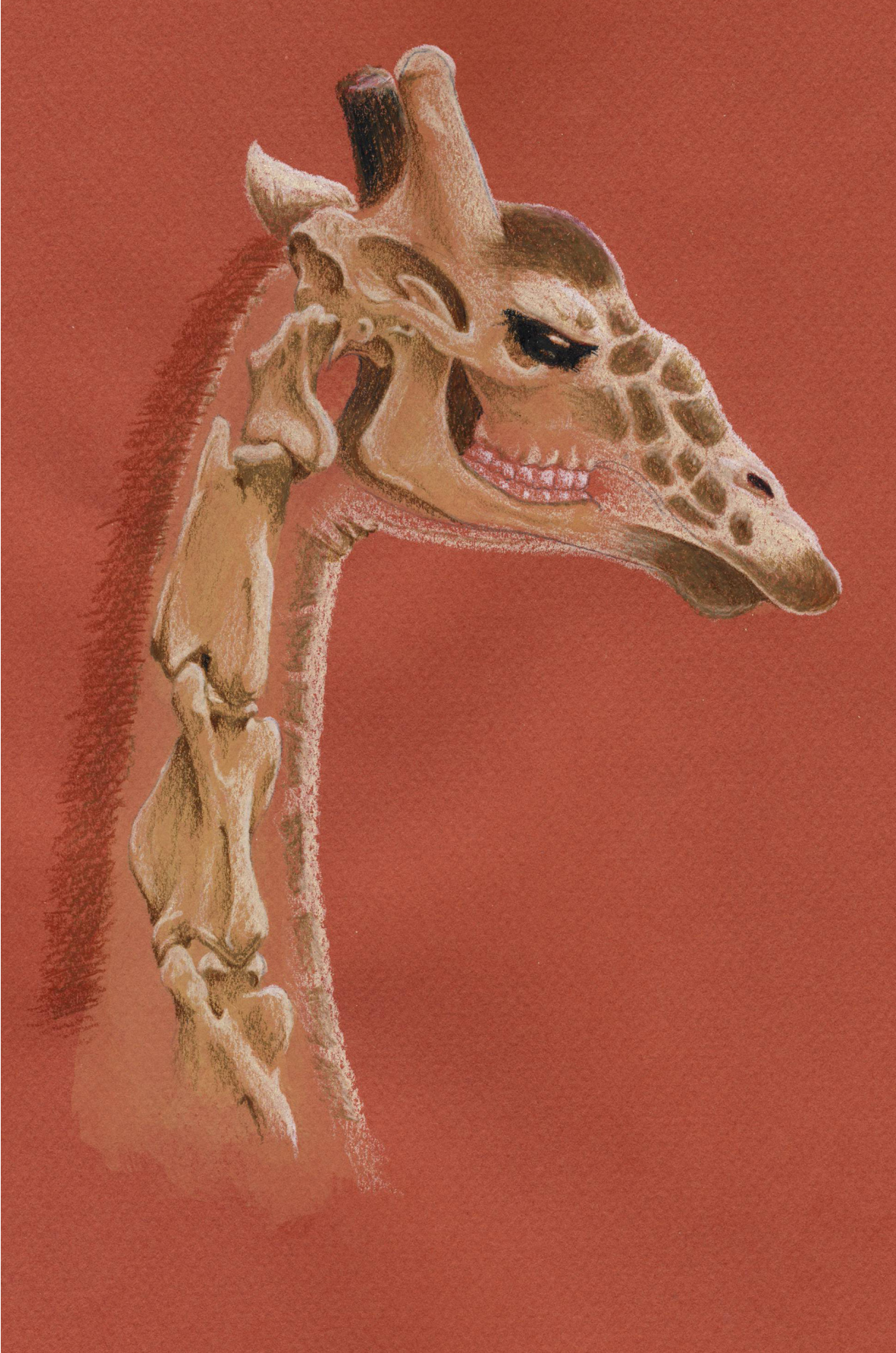
by Wendy Winkler

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN WRITING FOR CHILDREN, 2011

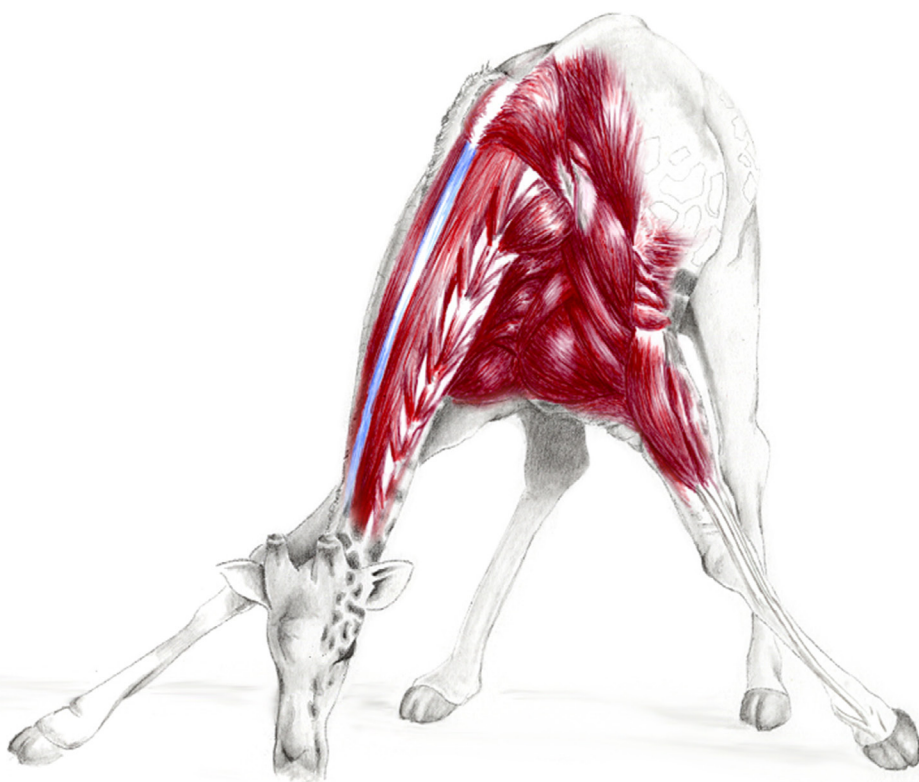
Bear finished his midnight snack of blackberries when he heard a noise. It was a tiny sound — maybe it was a mouse singing? He sat back and listened. It was louder now. Maybe a rabbit had eaten too much clover and had a belly ache.

Bear looked around. The noise was getting louder. He looked behind him and there it was. But what was it?





GIRAFFA CAMELOPARDALIS (COMPOSITE AND VALUE MUSCLE) BY ALEX TU
Certificate Program in Natural Science Illustration



DIARY OF A MAD LEPIDOPTERIST

by Louis Whitford

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION, 2011

October 3rd

SOMETHING VERY PECULIAR happened today. I woke up rather late and rushed to my meeting with Old Sourpuss. The codger hasn't had a worthy article published in eight years. To think they promoted him to dean last year—probably just a way to give his decaying gray matter a dignified place to ossify. In any case, I wouldn't have even gone to the meeting if I'd known Old Saggyjowls was going to go soft on me. You should have seen the patronizing look he gave me. "Is everything okay at home?" he asked, looking at his watch. I'd expected him to berate me, once again, for using students in my experiments. More blather about my failure to follow protocol, the Internal Review Board, la-di-da-. That's what you get for trying to excel in this department. Just try to make a real contribution to science around here; the slings and arrows of administrative hokum they cast your way will kill your spirit. Reversing the flow of time is easier than following policy here. It is not me, as has been said, but them, that make a mockery of this supposed institution of higher learning. In any case, my students, all adults, signed on willingly. Old Cuss has been dropping by my lab when I'm not there, prodding my graduate students for secrets. So I walk into the meeting and expect him to be at my throat and I'm ready to go right back at him, but he goes tender on me.

Is everything all right at home? Hell no. Not at all, (I'd never give him the pleasure of knowing Annie left me) I get straight to business. "Why did you request a meeting?" Then the devil crossed the line. "We're suspending you, with pay, until a university psychiatrist gives you a clean bill of health. I'd advise you to finally consider retirement. We could keep it quiet that way." The vampire said this with a straight face, feigning sympathy even, just to infuriate me. "Ever heard of tenure, you shill?" I screamed. "Tenure?" He scared easily. The wuss pushed a button on his phone and security appeared at the door in seconds. Old Fluffball let me carry on while his thugs stood guard, just stood there nodding, arms crossed, six pens in his shirt pocket standing at attention (why six when he hasn't written a thing in eight years is a worthy subject of inquiry). I took a moment to remind him that it was I who had been published in the journal *Nature*, not him, that it was MY research that made it into the popular press, not his, and finally that NOBODY cares about the pygmy fruit bat. EVERYONE cares about butterflies. My research gets funded and published. It was sad watching the expression on Old Batbrain's face as I went on. His jealousy oozed through that fawning look of concern. Ever since my publication, "The Transfiguration of the Peruvian Swallowtail," with its implicit suggestion that the right injection of DNA combined with a powerful steroid could produce metamorphosis in other species, he's been afraid of me. He's not the only one either. Others have been poking around my lab hoping to steal an insight, maybe hoping to steal the Nobel Prize right out from under me. I've been called everything from a bold pioneer to crazy. Well, so was Galileo. Instead of locking me up they intend to lock me out. So it goes. I'll finish my research on myself. We'll see who is laughing last.

October 6th

GOT MY official notice of suspension today. I've already framed it and hung it above my desk. There's a space right next to it for the Nobel Prize. Do they even give certificates? Well, there must be something to frame. The university notice arrived by certified mail. If I'm seen anywhere in the Biology Department building prior to my recertification, whatever that means, I'm in violation of an official order and my transgression will be dealt with as a matter of law. It wasn't enough to just have Old Fangtooth himself sign it. It's even signed by our esteemed president. Looks like I'm top of the dean's list. Whoo hoo. What the idiots don't know is that I already absconded with one blood centrifuge, all the steroids I could ever need, and plenty of Swallowtail DNA. Don't worry, bloodsuckers, I'll be gracious when I get my Nobel. Maybe I'll even acknowledge the early support I got from you. Meanwhile, you can keep your lousy tenure, bat brain. Eat guano.

October 7th

IT IS strange indeed to stay home after dutifully heading to the office every day for nearly 40 years. I miss the commotion of the students, the exchange of ideas. I used to think I'd be fine without them, just my research and no graduate students to screw things up. Well, turns out I miss them after all. The house feels too big. Before Annie left it seemed about right for the two of us. I spent the morning packing up all the rest of her stuff and putting it in the garage. It was making me feel lonely. Later, I spent an hour or so just gazing out over the ocean. I sat on the bench we cuddled in to watch the sunsets together. It really is such a lovely spot. The bluff, or cliff as she called it, hasn't eroded at all. I remember when Annie told me not to put the bench so close to the edge, that someday there would be a landslide and we'd plunge 300 feet to the ocean. Ha! Nearly 40 years later and nothing. And no Annie. I thought the bluff was more likely to collapse than my marriage. I spent the afternoon going over my butterfly collection. It belongs in a museum.

October 10th

A REVELATION! It suddenly occurred to me that I wasn't getting results in my students because they lacked the DESIRE to change. Of course I didn't expect them to simply fly away. But they should have lost measurable bone mass while gaining measurable bone strength. How many sleepless nights I puzzled that one over. Eureka! They didn't want to change. Off to the centrifuge. Spin a little of my blood with DNA, mix with a good dose of steroid, and I should wake up a little lighter. I'm on the verge. I can feel it in my bones (double entendre intended!)

October 11th

GREAT NEWS! While I don't have the proper tools to measure bone density (I do miss the lab) I am three pounds lighter on the scale. I've never changed weight that drastically in a day. Mixed with the good news though was a report in The Times, THE TIMES, if you can believe it, that Old Bat Fart might be up for the Steigler Prize for a lifetime of contribution to science. The dunderheads. The prize is supposed to be for important and ORIGINAL research. Bat Fart may be a lot of things but original ain't one of them. Plenty of muddleheaded scat collectors in this business. I must heed this warning though. No way I'm going to allow him to overshadow my triumph.

October 13th

INCREASINGLY I'M convinced of the power of the mind. I can feel the physiological changes with each injection (Four now; I almost glide around the room with the energy of a twenty year old) but I suspect the physical changes will be small without a major psychological component. With a strong enough jolt from the mind, I'm convinced I will become a butterfly, truly— wings, thorax, abdomen, proboscis, six legs. It isn't metaphor I'm after, it's metamorphosis.

October 14th

THE TIME alone has afforded me long hours to examine my lifelong fascination with the species *Lepidoptera*. Just this morning I unearthed my earliest memory of this infatuation and with it more evidence of the transformative power of the mind. The mind has the power to conceal memories from their owner, memories that once in the conscious mind can change a person profoundly. I've heard of these repressed memories, especially of childhood abuse, being released by a strong trigger. To think that I, too, have been such a victim of my own mind. It came to me suddenly, with such overwhelming clarity and power, that I could only have experienced it myself.

I was a child vacationing on the French Riviera with my parents. The family was living in Paris then. I was slight, with shoulder blades that danced obscenely whenever I moved my arms. The other kids vacationing at the sea called me chicken wing, so I took to keeping my arms stiffly at my side, but they called me tin man and ran off like a pack of hyenas. In tears I climbed the rocky butte and down to the sea where I discovered the cave. I allowed myself to be enveloped by the darkness. Feeling my way forward, I inched around a narrowing bend and saw amber light high above. Then it happened. A thousand butterflies took flight at my intrusion, seeking a skyward freedom. No longer chained to my solitude I became a butterfly child and imagined myself flying by the strength of my awful chicken wings, following the diurnal clan of cave dwellers. The sound of one butterfly's wings is inaudible, but the sound of a thousand butterfly's wings was deafening. I ran, trying to fly, wanting not to be left behind once again, driven to euphoria by the fluttering symphony, but I stumbled, and falling silently forward I glimpsed the dance of shadow and light of my friends flying through their portal. Subconsciously that ache has been gnawing at me ever since. Let the study of *Lepidoptera* be done. I have been holding the matchstick so long without realizing it. The time is approaching when I will strike it to flame!

October 15th

ANOTHER REPRESSED memory has escaped the vault! I feel like I barely know myself. This one too arrived without provocation. I was organizing my collections, reaffixing labels, straightening pins, even gluing one delicate wing back in place.

Again we were in Paris (what job brought us there?) I couldn't have been more than seven or eight. German tanks were rolling through Montparnasse (the same neighborhood Annie and I stayed in on our honeymoon!) The memory was so real and alive that I could actually hear the sound of the cobblestones crushing under the bloody tank treads, sinking like piano keys at the hand of an infernal maestro. My mother pushed me away from the window and closed the blinds and sank to the floor. I tried to comfort her but my father grabbed me by the collar and sent me to my room to pack a suitcase. Soon we were moving through the outskirts of town sitting in a furniture truck, hiding in a harp case. Years later, in America, hearing my parents talk about all the friends who'd lost their lives I realized just how lucky we'd been. Hearing the list of names I occasionally heard a familiar surname. It would always send me to the mirror to look at my face. Why them and not me? As I reflected on this I saw the faces of my Parisian friends neatly organized in glass covered boxes, like butterflies, their tiny heads secured in place with a pin, name and species glued loosely below. I thought then that I must have been spared for a reason. I think I've found it.

October 16th

ANNIE CAME by. I thought it was the newsboy and I opened the door to reprimand him for leaving the paper where it could get wet. My heart nearly fell out when I saw her. For a moment I thought she was coming back. She was just checking on me, heard they pushed me out of the department. I told her of my breakthrough and shared the two recent Parisian memories. She wasn't impressed. Said I'd never lived in Paris, that I was born and raised in Peoria, Illinois. How could she know? She hadn't even been born yet. Suddenly I knew Guano breath had sent her. She denied it, but I could tell. So he knows she's left me. I'm sure he raised a glass of the good stuff to that one. (Enjoy it now, for soon you'll be remembered as the guy who tried to bring me down just as I was on the cusp of one of the greatest discoveries of modern times!) Annie even shared his patronizing look of concern, the same pathetic slow nod as I told her of my memories. She tried to convince me the cave memory couldn't be real, suggesting it was a conflated memory of a cave I visited in Wisconsin that was filled with bats. Bats! A diabolical suggestion and clearly the work of you-know-who. And she tried to talk me into seeing the school shrink. Me? Playing their little mind games? Fat chance. As much as I miss her I had to push her away, now that she is under his spell. Being unkind is foreign to

me, but with my newfound strength of will and purpose, I did a pretty good job. I don't think she'll be back. Good thing, too, because if anyone can pierce my armor, it is Annie. I can't allow even the mere shadow of doubt to restrain my will.

October 19th

EVEN THE newsboy is staying away now. Four days without a paper. I left my house for the first time in two weeks to walk to the store. Had to get The Times to see if Old Doctor Darkness got the award. He didn't. I grabbed a bottle of bubbly to celebrate but I doubt I'll drink it. No appetite for the stuff. I've been eating very little. Mostly soup. Cold out of the can. Flowers have been looking very tasty though.

October 22nd

FOURTEEN INJECTIONS now and I've lost over 25 pounds. Yet I feel stronger than ever. Increasingly I'm convinced this will work. Laying on my stomach I peered over the bluff today, a harrowing sight with the waves crashing on the rocks below. I know the day will come when I alight from our bench (It's still OUR bench) with no fear, fluttering my wings and soaring gracefully over the tempestuous Pacific. Today though I had my familiar fear of heights. I suppose that will change as my transformation continues.

October 24th

ANOTHER FLASH of inspiration has struck, born of the worst nightmare. This afternoon I built a makeshift chrysalis over my bed. This is more metaphorical than practical but I need more verisimilitude. I must truly believe I am experiencing metamorphosis or all the DNA injections in the world will mean nothing. The mind is far too powerful. I cut half the bamboo from the front yard (Annie would kill me if she knew) and bent it to form a frame, binding it with twine. I covered it in large banana leaves (another infraction) and I must say, modestly of course, it does bear some resemblance to the chrysalis of the Peruvian Swallowtail (who knows best?). When I crawl inside it is dark, almost womblike. This better keep the damn night terrors away. Last night I was so immersed in my fright that I thought the cold sweat enveloping me was actually the ocean and me nothing but a wrinkled skin bag of broken bones, smashed in the shallows at the base of the cliff. What a fright.

October 25th

WHAT A relief. No dreams whatsoever. The chrysalis worked. Good thing I live alone. It looks like the work of a crazy man. Just wait until they see me soar into the azure blue. I sat at the foot of the new bed/chrysalis and imagined myself emerging, a brown, wrinkled creature crawling on six furry feet. In my mind's eye (too cliché, I know) I saw my new self begin to palpitate strangely (how long have I waited, slowly gathering strength. So excited!) I begin to expand slowly. Gradually the wrinkled tissues, the iridescent green edges, open; the pleated veins grow firmer as they fill. I'm becoming a winged thing almost imperceptibly. The wings, still frail, still damp, keep strengthening. Finally, pulsating like a poppy petal in the wind, the two wings separate and I begin to fly. Fly! Of course I won't really emerge from my makeshift chrysalis. It will take a leap of faith over the bluff to provoke the physiological changes. Still I like to imagine the process taking place romantically here in the bedroom (most exciting thing happening here now that Annie is gone. Sob.)

October 28th

INCONCEIVABLE. THE new issue of the journal Nature arrived with the mail today. Old Humdinger is listed front and center on the cover. How did he con them? Probably offered my tenure position to the son of the committee chair. Why do they taunt me? So close to one of the great scientific discoveries of our day and they torment me with this? Just this morning I was beginning to consider slowing this down, to begin keeping precise data. Write a bona fide scientific paper. You see, it occurred to me that butterflies, regardless of their provenance, have a difficult time writing papers (My nightmare, I must confess, also called my rush to fully transform into question.) There is no conceivable way to slow down now. I must double down. Fruitbat is stealing my limelight. Dramatic action is needed.

After some reflection (and two cans of Raviolios, cold, from the can) I see this more clearly. NO NEED TO PANIC! This is simply a test. Dramatic action is still called for—but nothing less than originally planned. I simply must take the plunge sooner than expected.

October 31st

I'VE LOST 35 pounds now. Proof the experiment is working. By my computations, three more injections and I should be ready to transform—that and the belief that I WILL transform. The phone rang all morning, making it hard to think. I finally unplugged it. Why they thought I'd answer it if they called just once more I'll nev-

er know. Stupid humans. I computed the amount of time it would take a slender body with the mass of 127 pounds to fall 314 feet, taking into account the resistance of air at sea level. I should have 1.3 seconds to unfurl those iridescent wings. Plenty of time!

October 33rd

I HAD my first dream since I began sleeping in the chrysalis. It was unlike any dream I've ever had. I was clinging to the wall (a butterfly?) of a mud hut. Below me, an African tribal elder was telling a story to a much younger me, still a child. He told the story of a young shepherd who'd been born at sea but raised in the desert. The young boy (me) clung to the old man's knee, my face (how cute I was) filled with awe. The ocean was the far edge of wonder to the shepherd. It brought no image to his mind. The shepherd was told the sea was as vast as the sky, only made of water that swelled like desert sand. One day, while tending his herd, the young shepherd came across a solitary cactus topped with a blue flower. Cupped within the petals there was a small pool of water. It tasted sweet. When he placed the flower to his ear he heard a distant rumbling. Each day the shepherd returned to the flower until it faded and fell to the sand. The next year the flower returned. It was thus for years. The young shepherd grew old. One year in late spring a butterfly sat on the flower. As it took flight the old shepherd followed it. He pursued it for many days and nights, leaving the desert and climbing green mountains. Coming to the top of a hill he heard the sound of his flower and beheld a vision of water stretching an infinite distance, a mirror of the sky. He ran to its edge and smiled with the joy of knowing he was very small and standing on the many petalled shore of his blue flower.

A much clearer message could not have been sent. Do butterflies have dreams like this before they emerge from their chrysalis? It is time for my mind to lead my body to the many petalled shore. The primary source of reality is indeed that of the mind!

October 34th

THE TRAP is laid. Old Bug Eater has been invited over to talk tomorrow. Said he was worried about me. Wants to talk, like old friends. Old friends, my frail ass. He's coming to taunt me with the news of his publication. He's coming to suck the blood from my very soul. Any fool could see that. What does he take me for? Imagine the look on his face as he sees me standing on the bench, arms spread, then three quick steps forward and a leap over the cliff. He'll think he's driven me to one despairing and final act of folly. He'll look down expecting to find a pile of

NATURE

blood and guts. The great Peruvian Swallowtail rising from the swells might just be enough to stop his heart. I almost feel sorry for him. I'll circle close just to see his face when he realizes he's just been immortalized as a dark and minor footnote in my story.

October 35th

WHAT A beautiful day. I'm brimming with confidence. My heart is aflutter (pun intended). I've taken my last injection and a double dose of steroid (just to be safe). The front door is open so Old Bat Nuts will walk in and see me on the bench out back. I've left a note instructing this diary to go to Annie. Given all the detailed data I've collected over the years I'm astonished this is the only record of my grandest experiment ever. It will have to suffice. I've signed over permission for Annie to accept the Nobel Prize on my behalf. I realize they don't give the prize to the deceased, but surely those who are merely transformed must qualify. There. The sound of his Mercedes in the drive. Off to the bench. I love you Annie, so much. Don't worry. You will see me fluttering about your garden. Time to strike the match to flame—and soar!



GREEN AND RUST BY JENNIFER NERAD
Certificate Program in Photography





PLANTScape BY JENNIFER NERAD
Certificate Program in Photography



3

Strivings

MADE BY HAND

by Larry Cheek

INSTRUCTOR, CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN NONFICTION

I AM LINGERING INDECISIVELY in the sailboat room of Fisheries Supply, turning a chainplate over and over in my hands, hurting my teeth because I'm clenching them so tight. What I'm holding is a plain, flat, stainless steel strap fourteen inches long, and they want ninety-eight bucks for it. I need four of these for *Nil Desperandum*, the boat that's slowly been taking shape in my Whidbey Island workshop over the past three years.

Chainplates have important work to do on a boat. The steel guy wires called shrouds that stabilize the mast are hooked to the chainplates, which in turn are bolted to the hull. If a chainplate fails, down comes the mast. I recall an ancient children's chant about the want of a nail and a kingdom lost, and the principle applies here. Still: ninety-eight times four, and they're ugly besides.

I hang the prodigal chainplates back on the rack and head home, determined to find an alternative.

Barely a mile from my house on a rural island near Seattle a hand-lettered roadside sign recently sprang up: *Renaissance Metal Shop/Unique Fine Art*. Chainplates

hardly qualify as art, but the recession is tough, and I figure an artist would probably welcome the work. The Renaissance man turns out to be a quiet, unassuming craftsman named John Moritz who says he learned welding at his father's knees and then taught himself the art end of metalworking. He's been crafting stylized sculptures of herons and dragonflies, a few of which are planted in the weeds out by the road. I show him a scale drawing of the chainplates I envision—instead of straight bars, these would taper, like a longitudinal section of a baseball bat—and ask if he can make them. “No problem,” he says. If I can find the material he'll charge \$75—for all four.

On my next expedition into Seattle I scrounge a sheet of heavy silicon bronze for \$150 and deliver it to Moritz. Two days later he calls to report that my chainplates are ready. He seems oddly anxious as he hands them to me. “I hope it's all right that they look handmade,” he says. The edges are very slightly uneven, in the way hand-cut fettuccine distinguishes itself from factory pasta. I think they're beautiful. “Of course it's all right,” I say. “The whole boat is handmade.”

In the boat shop I spend a couple of hours polishing the honey-hued bronze and drilling bolt holes. Then I install the chainplates on my half-finished boat, even though I'm more than a year from actually needing them in place, and I'll surely have to unbolt them later because they'll get in the way of construction. But I want to admire them.

For the next couple of days I wander out to the shop several times, twice in pajamas and socks, just to stare at the boat's new jewelry. Even though I didn't make the chainplates, they're making me feel great.



First, I saved a hundred and sixty-seven bucks—not a piddling sum in the course of a boat project that's chewing through the family cash reserves like a runaway Weed-Eater. Second, I just contributed something to the microeconomy of my own neighborhood. This doesn't make me feel like a benefactor, but rather like a gear in a sustainably functioning community, which is better.

The third good thing about these chainplates is what I want to focus on, which is the simple fact that they *are* handmade, and on close inspection cannot be taken for anything else. I encourage close inspection; that's why I bolted them to the outside of the hull. (The factory alternatives were designed to reside inside, hidden from view.) They bronze handmade chainplates define *craftsmanship*.

Industrial production has given humanity a panoply of benefits, from cheap toothbrushes to the iPhone. These are good things. I wouldn't romanticize an al-

ternative universe of handmade everything, where if I happened to need a new broom I would have to make it (and if I needed to harvest a branch for the broomstick I would first have to commission John Moritz to make me a saw blade). The great gift of industrial civilization in the last two centuries has been to increasingly emancipate us from the time demands of routine work that doesn't interest us. Not only can I buy a perfectly decent broom at the hardware store for ten bucks; if I'm willing to drop \$200 I can deploy a floor-sniffing robot to liberate me from wielding that broom.

But we have gone too far. We have cultivated so much manufactured precision in our environment that the machine now sets the standard of normalcy, while the handmade exists on the sidelines, a mere charming decoration. And this has accelerated our alienation from the natural world and devalued the craft of hand.

You see this playing out in architecture. For the last sixty years, most new urban skyscrapers and suburban office parks have incorporated some sort of large-scale sculpture or fountain in their plazas or lobbies—often commissioned later, after people complain that the building feels “too cold.” Not surprising. Most large modern buildings are pure machines, designed with straight lines and right angles for relentless efficiency and executed in glass, steel, concrete, and cut stone. This is the antipode of the natural environment to which we've become habituated over some two million years of hominid evolution. The art work is an effort, nearly always too little and too late, to humanize the environment, to introduce the suggestion of a more individualistic human creativity at work.

We need more humanity in our built environment because it contains more energy. When we don't know exactly what to expect at the next turn, we're more engaged, more fully alive. It's why old city neighborhoods are always more interesting than suburban housing developments, why an Ácoma Indian potter's vase rightly commands fifty times the price of a K-Mart counterpart. Commercial products must be shaped by common-denominator forces; a manufacturer that markets an idiosyncratic cell phone, broom, or chainplate won't sell many of them. But the richness of our environment, I think, grows in inverse proportion to its manufactured predictability.

I know a pair of talented guys in Seattle who've built a remarkable business salvaging urban trees that have been fatally wounded in storms or doomed by development, and turning them into custom furniture. Their design philosophy is built around letting the wood tell its story, as simply and directly as possible. A natural crack will be stabilized but not filled or hidden. For a newspaper article I interviewed a homeowner who'd commissioned a kitchen bar from the remains of an oak her husband had planted in their backyard fifty years earlier. A canyon-like crack ripped right down the middle of it. She told me, “As I spend time with it, I see the beauty of the hard life the tree had. And it helps me find the beauty in my own life's scars.”

The New York Times commissioned the story because the guys' business had pros-

pered through the recession even though their custom furniture was decidedly pricey (figure \$3,000 to \$10,000 for a dining table). One reason was obviously its green appeal. But customers also seemed to be cherishing the various ways in which the furniture connected to the natural world and displayed the craftsman's decisions.

We have a natural craving for things that contain stories; the richness of our environment depends on them. A machine may hold the story of a civilization, but a handcrafted object encloses the story of an individual. We need both, and because the machine is so prevalent and compelling, we might do well to make extra effort to seek out and appreciate the handmade. It would help restore some balance.

Throughout the building of *Nil Desperandum* and its smaller predecessor *Far From Perfect*, I've often struggled to convince myself of the truth of exactly what I advocate here. I'm an amateur boatbuilder; my skills are modest. The wooden pieces



I fabricate sometimes look even more handmade than Moritz's chainplates. When I made the portlights (boatspeak for "cabin windows"), I struggled for four days to refine their oval mahogany frames, come as close as possible to the precise machine-crafted portlights I could have bought if I'd been willing to drop another \$250 each. But they never approached machine precision. The

rain-shedding bevels on the low side of the ovals, calculated by eye, vary from one to another, and the width of the frames isn't uniform. It's as if a painting of a boat had sprung into three-dimensional form to become the actual object. I had to let go of the perfect vision imprinted in my mind, surely a product of studying the portlights in hundreds of factory boats, and give myself permission to accept the imperfect.

I succeeded (not without some suffering and mopey self-deprecation) by deciding to focus less on the noun—*portlights*—and more on the verb: I *made* portlights. I feel a little braver, a little more all-around capable, a little more complete. I *will make* other challenging things. They're autobiography as much as they are boat parts.

A little after the portlight episode, John Moritz's sign and copper dragonflies suddenly disappears from the roadside. I need a couple more bronze parts, so I try his e-mail address, hoping he's just moved somewhere up the island. But his reply springs back from another island. "Sorry to miss your work," he writes, "but I'm in Haiti for a year, helping the people affected by the earthquake."

I don't mean to sentimentalize chainplates, because they're simply hardware, and they have an unsentimental job ahead of them. But Moritz's story is indelibly built into them, and because of it I now like them even more.

DUCK AND COVER: NUCLEAR HOLOCAUST IN THE FIRST GRADE

by Bill Hughes

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN NONFICTION, 2011

WE KNEW WE were going to die, every single one of us six-year-olds in Mrs. Hublou's 1955 first-grade class, at Washington Elementary School. We knew it as surely as we sat there, and nobody had to tell us. We'd just seen the future with our own eyes, through the lens of a filmmaker.

Our classroom was prepared to show a film that day. In the rear was a small table with a large, 16-millimeter projector resting on it. A pull-down movie screen hung in front, like a brightly-lit window set in a wall of slate blackboards, behind the teacher's desk. With the blinds closed and the lights turned off, the room was dark inside.

Film days at school were always a thrill. The subject was less important than the simple fact we got to watch a film, a welcome change in our daily routine. Also, television was a new technology, so some families did not yet have a TV set at home. Seeing stories unfold on a small screen was still a novel experience for many of us.

Bursting with anticipation of young children awaiting a treat, we fidgeted impa-

tiently as Mrs. Hublou readied the projector. Its cooling fan made the usual comforting, humming sound, a prelude for what would follow. Finally, she flipped the projector's switch and it sprang to life, clacking noisily as the film began spooling through it. The screen flickered brightly in the dark room, revealing the test pattern on the first few frames. We held our breaths.

Through the projector's speakers, a narrator solemnly announced, "This is an official civil defense film produced in cooperation with the Federal Civil Defense Administration and in consultation with the Safety Commission of the National Education Association."

We saw a cluster of buildings, populated with nicely-dressed dummies, seemingly engaged in ordinary activities, just like real people. The dummies had houses, pets, cars, toys, furniture, and appliances. There were swing sets and bicycles in their yards, and clean laundry hung outside on clotheslines. Dummy Town was much like ours, except theirs was in the desert, and it was fake. They had a good life—for dummies. We were all a little bit jealous.

Suddenly, there was a blinding flash of light. The dummies and their village exploded into flames from the searing thermal radiation of the blast. When a violent shock wave arrived an instant later, the flaming pretenders simply blew away, like dust tossed into the wind as a lightning bolt lit the sky, taking their world of houses, pets, cars, toys, furniture, and appliances with them.

The film ended, and the screen went dark. Not a single giggle or twitter arose from the two dozen first-graders, struggling to grasp what they had just seen. One second the dummies were there, and the next they were gone. We all felt a deep sense of loss. There was no one left to say "I'm sorry," or ask "Are you all right?" There was only darkness, heat, emptiness, and horror.

Mrs. Hublou turned on the lights, and quietly prepared another film. Almost sadly, and without speaking a word, she mounted the second reel, threaded the film through the projector, and turned off the lights once more.

"Dum, deedle dum dum. Dum, deedle dum dum," a cheerful chorus sang. A cartoon turtle appeared, wearing his shell and a military-style helmet on his head. "Dum, deedle dum dum."

The chorus continued, bursting into song about the film's hero:

*There was a turtle by the name of Bert
And Bert the turtle was very alert
When danger threatened him he never got hurt
He knew just what to do
He ducked!
And covered!
Ducked!
And covered! He did what we all must learn to do.*

STRIVINGS

You and you and you and you!
Duck and cover!

We were watching a 1951 children's civil defense film titled "Duck and Cover," narrated by Dick "Two Ton" Baker. The main character was Bert the Turtle, who always retreated into his shell at the first sign of danger. When danger ominously appeared as a cartoon monkey in a tree, mischievously dangling a firecracker overhead on a string, Bert instantly dropped to the ground, taking shelter inside his shell. The firecracker exploded with a bright, atom-bomb-like flash of light, incinerating the offending monkey and shattering the surrounding landscape. Although at ground-zero, Bert was spared because he'd ducked and covered.

"Be sure and remember what Bert the Turtle just did, friends," said Two Ton Baker, in his soothing, baritone voice. "Every one of us must remember to do the same thing. That's what this film is all about. Duck and cover. Now, you and I don't have shells to crawl into, like Bert the Turtle, so we have to cover up in our own way. First, you duck and then you cover. Duck and cover underneath a table, or desk, or anything else close by."

"Duck and cover. That's the first thing to do. First, you duck. Then, you cover. You duck and cover tight. Duck and cover under the table. It's a bomb! Duck and cover!"

"It looks something like this—there is a bright flash, brighter than anything you have ever seen. If you were not ready, and did not know what to do, it could hurt you in different ways. It is such a big explosion it can smash in buildings and knock sign boards over, and break windows all over town. But, if you duck and cover like Bert, you will be much safer."

Slowly at first, doubt began creeping into our collective consciousness, as many of us began sensing problems with Bert the Turtle's defensive strategy. Surely, our friends in Dummy Town would have ducked and covered, if only they hadn't been dummies.

"You know how bad sunburn can feel. The atomic bomb flash could burn you worse than a terrible sunburn, especially where you're not covered," Two Ton warned us.

"Sundays, holidays, or vacation time, we must be ready every day, all the time, to do the right thing if the atomic bomb explodes," Two Ton said, as a happy family appeared on the screen, picnicking in a small meadow.

In a heartbeat, a blinding flash of light turned the screen white.

"Duck and cover!" shouted Baker. As if on command, the family of picnickers on the screen dropped to the ground, covering themselves with picnic blankets and newspapers.

"This family knows what to do, just as your own family should," crooned Two Ton. "They know that even a thin cloth helps protect them. Even a newspaper can save you from a bad burn. But the most important thing of all is to duck and cover

yourself.”

“If there is a warning, you will hear it before the bomb explodes. But sometimes—and this is very, very important—sometimes the bomb might explode without any warning. Then, the first thing we would know about it would be the flash, and that means, duck and cover fast, wherever you are. There’s no time to look around or wait. Be like Bert.”

“You might be eating your lunch when the flash comes. Duck and cover under the table. Then, if the explosion makes anything in the room fall down, it can’t fall on you.”

“We think that most of the time we will be warned before the bomb explodes, so there will be time to get into our homes, schools, or some other safe place.”

“You may be in your school yard playing, when the signal comes,” Two Ton said, as air raid sirens blared menacingly in the background.

“Always remember, the flash of an atomic bomb can come at any time, no matter where you may be. You might be out playing at home, when the warning comes. Then, be sure to get into the house fast, where your parents have fixed a safe place for you to go.”

None of our parents had made special, safe places for us to go in case of an atomic bomb, at least not in my class. Most of us figured we’d hide under our beds, or if we had a basement or cellar, we might go down there. A few thought their families would be safe in the mountains, or on boats in Puget Sound.

“If you are not close to home when you hear the warning, go to the nearest safe cover. Know where you are to go, or ask an older person to help you. Older people will help us as they always do, but there might not be any grownups around when the bomb explodes. Then you’re on your own.”

“Dum, deedle dum dum. Dum, deedle dum dum,” sang the chorus, cheerily. “Duck and cover! Duck and cover! Duck and cover!”

Days after we saw those films, a kid in our class wet his pants outside during recess. There had been lightning, signaling an approaching downpour. We never knew if he had been frightened by the flash and thunderclap, or it was just an accident. Either way, his mother walked to the school, and took him to their nearby home for the rest of the day. Nobody made fun of him, or spoke about it afterward.

There were numerous duck-and-cover drills at Washington Elementary School in the years after we saw those films. During many, we simply took cover beneath our classroom desks. In others, we filed into the school’s basement, an approved CONELRAD shelter that was also open to the public in case of a real attack. There, we quietly assumed fetal positions on the floor, pressed against a wall or innocently spooned with rows of classmates awaiting the all-clear signal.

In 1959, our school’s bomb shelter was abruptly converted into a cafeteria, under the federal government’s new national school lunch program. Without explanation, our school’s civil defense emphasis also shifted from nuclear attack to earthquakes, and other natural disasters. Perhaps those in charge finally determined the duck-

and-cover strategy was ineffective against high-yield thermonuclear weapons. Or, they realized the public no longer bought the naïve duck-and-cover strategy.

To my knowledge, Bert the Turtle was never seen after that, at least not at Washington Elementary School. I hope he finally found the courage to take off his helmet, venture outside his shell, and spend his remaining years basking in some tropical turtle paradise. I hope he made friends there and no longer felt the need to duck-and-cover.

As for the fated residents of Dummy Town, I hope they found happiness atop their mushroom cloud. Perhaps they became carefree world travelers, skipping through the jet stream with luggage in hand, crisscrossing the globe for eternity. I hope they take time to dance beneath the stars and cool glow of the Aurora Borealis. Maybe they'll write home someday, sending us postcards and letters, telling wonderful stories of the incredible sights they've seen.

THAT ERA of nuclear terror left a mark on all of us who lived then, and felt the fear of certain annihilation. There was never any doubt in our minds the bombs would drop. The question was when, not if an attack would come, and few believed the duck-and-cover tactic would save us.

As Two Ton Baker warned, "There might not be any grownups around when the bomb explodes." I am now certain that if nuclear war ever happens, there will be no grownups around, because grownups would prevent it. We know better. Only dummies would start a nuclear war.

If there is ever a nuclear war, I will not jump under my lunch table or cover myself with blankets and newspaper. No indeed, if it happens, I hope it is on a warm and sunny day, so I can sit in my garden with someone I love. Together, we will pour a bottle of fine wine, toast the future, and watch the nuclear sunrise in its entire splendor.

I will dream of a film day many years ago, and the chorus will sing "Dum, dee-dle dum dum. Duck and cover!"

WHITE ELEPHANTS AND YELLOW RAIN

by Sudoku Hibachi

QUIET BUT DEADLY, the herd, which had hunkered menacingly on a far horizon for decades, was once again on the move. The rhythmic pounding of their hooves, now faint, grew louder by the day. The steady beat of that toxic tocsin combined with the random plinks of my Geiger counter to form a polyrhythm of paranoia. But just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you. And I should know because I've been stampeded by members of this herd twice before.

I've started to wonder whether my first encounter with a member of the herd explains my diabetes diagnosis in my early forties. Experts have noted that the herd's radioactive effluvium initiates the disease, and word is that their first foray into my world, during my late teens in my home state of Pennsylvania, was much more toxic than initially reported.

At that time, soon after the Ides of March, 1979, I remember begging my mother to let me spend a few weeks in the Deep South with her only sister, but she refused. I suppose if she had relented, she would have had to admit to herself just

how bad her own exposure to the beast's excretions had been. Ironically enough, she had been making a health-related pilgrimage due west to Pennsylvania's "Candyland" to visit Hershey Medical Center on the day that a nearby Heffalump began experiencing serious indigestion. The creature lived less than ten miles down West Chocolate Avenue from Hershey, and its home on Three Mile Island was a mere ten miles southeast of the state capital, Harrisburg.

I at least was west of Philadelphia and not right in the beast's backyard. However, many of my fellow college students judged themselves too close to the monster for comfort and booked flights home to faraway states to put greater distance between themselves and Leviathan. Unfortunately, my trip home to central Pennsylvania would just bring me closer to him.

In a lame effort to keep the student body from completely deserting the campus, the college's resident nuclear physics expert reassured us that the amount of radionuclides being released from the damaged reactor at TMI was so small as to be practically insignificant. However, every time the wind shifted east, in the direction heading from the beast toward the college, the line on the radiation-tracking graph the expert posted in the lobby of the main science building began sloping upward.

This was not reassuring. Because I had chosen to base my high school science fair project on John Gofman's *Poisoned Power*, I was well aware that even minuscule increases in radiation can increase the risk of cancer. As a result, I knew better than to believe our resident expert's fairy tale.

A handful of years after my worst nightmare became reality in my own home state; I was subjected to a reprise of the same ominous rhythm. This time the hoof beats came from the east—from a beast whose name was Chernobyl, the Russian word for wormwood, a notoriously bitter herb. And Chernobyl would soon leave a notoriously bitter taste in the mouths of many.

Once again, spring had sprung a nuclear disaster. This time, late April showers were bringing radioactive flowers. And, because of my awareness of the amazing ability of radioisotopes to travel far and wide and of the sobering hazards of low-level radiation, the remoteness of the accident site gave me little comfort.

I steeled myself for the onslaught of Soviet radioisotopes by carrying a bouquet of watercress everywhere I went and liberally grazing on it to pump as many safe minerals into my system as I could before the radioactive plume made it to my Philadelphia home. Fight fire with fire and bitter herb with bitter herb, I reasoned.

Although Chernobyl was much farther away from me than Three Mile Island, the events unfolding deep in the Ukraine were elevating nuclear disaster to an entirely new level. Whereas the TMI mishap occurred in a contained reactor, the Chernobyl disaster occurred in a reactor without a containment dome. After a test of one of the Chernobyl reactors resulted in two unexpected power spikes, two explosions then blew the top off the uncontained reactor, exposing its flammable graphite components to the air and resulting in a radioactive fire that raged for ten days.

Because the nearby city of Pripyat received much of the 190 tons of radioisotopes released by the burning Chernobyl reactor, the authorities realized early on that Pripyat had to be evacuated. Eventually, the populations of large areas of Belorussia, Russia, and the Ukraine had to be evacuated as well.

Soon after the fire had been wrestled under control, at the cost of the horrific deaths from acute radiation poisoning of dozens of workers, a yellow rain began to fall on the surrounding countryside. Children splashed in the puddles formed by this yellow rain unhampered by protective parents, who had been reassured by the Soviet government that the rain's tinge had nothing to do with burning reactor fallout but was instead merely the result of spring pollen. But soon after the downpour fell, the "pollen" transformed full heads of hair into bald pates, and the independent press began featuring pictures of grotesquely deformed animals.

Millions in the most affected parts of the Soviet Union—Belorussia, Russia, and the Ukraine—were unaware of the need to take basic precautions to avoid some of the fallout's earliest effects. Ignorant of the risk of thyroid cancer, particularly in children, posed by drinking milk tainted with radioactive iodine from Chernobyl, they continued giving their children fresh milk from local cows. As a result, the Chernobyl disaster has resulted in at least 6,000 known cases of thyroid cancer, most of them in children. Since the catastrophe, the percentage of children considered healthy who were born to irradiated parents in the most affected areas decreased from eighty percent to less than twenty percent. And, in the years immediately after the disaster, those in the most affected areas reported a disproportionate increase in the number of graves of children in local graveyards.

Although children were particularly hard hit, many adults also suffered severe effects from Chernobyl's fallout. For example, in Belorussia, which became the independent republic of Belarus in 1991 after the fall of the Soviet Union, the number of breast cancer cases doubled from 1988 to 1999. Out of all of the organs in the human body, the breast is the most sensitive to the cancer-inducing effects of radiation. (Maybe all of those pink-ribbon-wearing marathon runners should be running around the nearest nuclear plant—or mammogram machine—while carrying an anti-nuclear protest sign!)

A literature analysis published on the twenty-fourth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster concluded that nearly one million people worldwide died from exposure to radioisotopes released by the stricken Chernobyl reactor, which emitted 200 times more radioactive toxins than initially estimated. This revised amount was hundreds of times larger than the fallout from the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings combined. More than half a billion Europeans received notable contamination.

Fallout from Chernobyl entered the food chain through rainfall as far away as the United States, particularly in the Pacific Northwest, where levels of radioactive iodine in milk were twenty-eight times normal levels in the two months after the disaster. And by the early 1990s, the number of cases of thyroid cancer in Con-

neciticut children had nearly doubled compared with pre-disaster levels.

Although the bitter beast that seeded these cancers is now defunct, its death throes are perpetual. During the Chernobyl disaster, about 200 tons of nuclear fuel and debris burned through the reactor building's floor. It hardened in one spot into a mass shaped like *an elephant's foot!* Although that footprint is so radioactive that it can't be approached by humans, nuclear scientists did manage to get instruments close enough to it to determine that was emitting a level of radioactivity 2,000 times the yearly limit for nuclear workers. A small army of such workers is still employed at Chernobyl to maintain the site and keep the mass from being revived by coming in contact with water. Keeping a death watch over the creature will consume not only their working lives but also those of their children and grandchildren.

Shortly after the explosion and fire, a concrete sarcophagus was built around the burned-out reactor in a panicked effort to stem the flow of radiation. Birds now fly through window-size holes in the deteriorating sarcophagus. Replacing it with something more permanent would cost \$1.4 billion. Not counting that massive cost, five percent of Ukraine's gross domestic product is spent each year on mitigating the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster. Three hundred years must elapse before economic activity can return to Ukraine's contaminated area, which is the size of Switzerland.

Chernobyl was eventually recognized as the worst nuclear reactor accident in history, until now. Bad as the Chernobyl disaster was, the current crisis in Japan is shaping up to be thousands of times worse than Chernobyl. Only one reactor was damaged at Chernobyl, but the Dai-Ichi plant in Fukushima has six reactors, the first three of which have experienced total meltdowns. When the Chernobyl reactor exploded and burned, it was only three months old and contained relatively little radiation compared with Fukushima's, which have been in operation for forty years and hold about thirty times more radiation than Chernobyl's.

If any of the reactors at Fukushima melt down far enough into the ground below them, they could come in contact with groundwater and explode. Such an explosion would send mushroom clouds of radioactivity into the jet stream. As a result, many millions of people throughout the Northern Hemisphere could get cancer. On the basis of official data, one physicist has estimated that Fukushima's reactors contain enough radioactive fuel to kill everyone on Earth ten times over.

As if the 9.0 earthquake off the coast of Fukushima on March 11, 2011, wasn't bad enough, the quake was followed by a dark wave that swept up everything in its path as far as six miles inland. That wave was followed by another dark yet imperceptible wave containing a soup of radioactive isotopes generated by the earthquake and tsunami-damaged Fukushima reactors.

After Fukushima was hit, radiation in seawater just offshore of the plant spiked to several thousand times the maximum safe level. One section of the hot zone was so radioactive that police had to back off from searching for disaster victims, which

caused the loss of many lives that otherwise might have been saved. Thousands of bodies remained uncollected in the hot zone because officials feared exposing recovery workers to its intense radioactivity. In the rush to leave the zone, evacuees had to abandon their animals. As a result, hundreds of thousands of creatures were left behind to die of dehydration, starvation, and radiation poisoning.

Two-hundred miles away in Tokyo, officials warned the area's thirty-five million inhabitants that levels of radioactive iodine in tap water were twice the allowable limit for babies. As a result, bottled water quickly disappeared from the shelves of many stores. In China, there was a run on iodized salt, even though you'd have to eat 2.5 kilograms of the stuff to cram enough safe iodine into your thyroid to keep it from absorbing radioactive iodine. And online hucksters were soon scalping potassium iodide tablets to alarmed customers worldwide seeking protection from the onslaught of radiation.

Much like the yellow rain that fell in Belorussia after the Chernobyl disaster, a yellow rain soon began to fall around Tokyo after the Fukushima disaster. When worried residents called their local weather agency to report the phenomenon, Japanese officials, like their Soviet counterparts, attributed the yellow rain to spring pollen.

As the full scope of the disaster became evident, foreign embassies, multinational corporations, and the U.S. military began flying employees and their dependents out of Japan. In Tokyo, private jet transportation was much in demand by the worried wealthy determined to escape the fallout and the aftershocks.

Meanwhile, just east of Seattle, I had barely absorbed the shock of hearing that the third-largest earthquake ever reported had struck just off the northeast coast of Honshu before the ramifications of the nuclear disaster unfolding in its aftermath began to sink in. Thirty-two years after my first exposure to a nuclear catastrophe, the Ides of March were once again proving ominous. Just as I had after the Chernobyl disaster, I was once again following the news reports blow by blow and living the reality that there is no such thing as a purely local nuclear disaster.

Even being on the U.S. West Coast was too close to Fukushima for comfort. Although the mainstream media provided reassurances that American's exposure to Fukushima fallout would be insignificant, the alternative press warned otherwise. And because many of the EPA's radiation monitoring stations were either offline or malfunctioning, official measurements of the amount of Fukushima fallout that was reaching the West Coast were suspect.

Just in case levels were higher than those being predicted and reported, I scrambled to locate my stash of iodine and began consuming a dose that I hoped would be protective but not harmfully excessive. I also started researching and consuming radioprotective supplements like curcumin and ginkgo biloba. And after hearing that most public reservoirs in the United States are uncovered and would thus be exposed to Fukushima fallout, I decided to switch from filtered tap water to bottled water from a local artesian spring. I also began taking extra care to avoid

exposure to the nearly constant spring rain.

A few weeks into the catastrophe, public health authorities in Japan began warning the locals to avoid consuming leafy greens and fresh milk, which were notably contaminated. European health authorities soon echoed these warnings to their own populations, but U.S. public health authorities remained mute. Instead, the U.S. mass media reassured Americans that their radiation exposure from Fukushima was little more than what could be expected from a cross-continental flight. They neglected to explain that exposure to a fleeting external source of radiation is very different from eating radioactive strontium or cesium and having it take up permanent residence in your body, where it can be expected to emit hazardous radiation for decades. And in response to rising public alarm that the contamination spreading out from Fukushima was exceeding levels deemed “safe,” health authorities in Japan, Europe, and the United States simply hiked the allowable levels in food and drink.

At my local supermarket, I managed to talk myself into buying extra canned milk instead of fresh milk that most likely had been freshly contaminated with radioactive iodine. And, after thoughtlessly buying a bunch of fresh spinach at the local produce stand, I resolved to break my newly developed spinach habit. This experience prompts the question, “How could any technology that can poison fresh milk and spinach half a world away ever be considered safe?”

Bad as the situation was for people in North America and Europe, it was considerably worse for people in Japan and the rest of Asia. Hardest hit were the so-called “Fukushima Fifty,” the term used to describe the hundreds of nuclear workers who struggled to bring the reactors under control fifty workers at a time. The skeleton crews of fifty had to be regularly replaced with fresh workers to minimize radiation exposure to any one worker. Nevertheless, at least one of the Fukushima Fifty reported to his mother that he expected to die from radiation exposure. And, a few months after the catastrophe began, several workers had died, although their deaths went unreported in the mainstream media.

As the disaster mounted, TEPCO resorted to hosing or dumping seawater over the reactors to keep them cool, even though management knew the plant would be a total loss because of corrosion caused by sea salt. This cooling strategy proved about as effective in ending the disaster as peeing on the reactors would have been.

Both TEPCO and the Japanese government were extremely reluctant to provide the Japanese and overseas public with the information they needed to protect themselves and the performance of international nuclear watchdogs was equally lackluster. As former *Japan Times* editor Yoichi Shimatsu described the International Atomic Energy Agency’s reaction to Fukushima, “These people are as cruel and cynical as the Aztec witchdoctors who used to cut peoples’ hearts out. We cannot allow these people to run the world anymore. They have a death wish, they are in denial, and they have no right to govern this planet any longer. It is clear that they are the priesthood of a false cult, of a god that has failed, a nuclear god. We

have got to take a hard look at that. We just cannot believe anymore.”

Many have already rejected the false nuclear cult and have started fighting back against nuclear power. Neither the Japanese citizenry nor their counterparts overseas are taking the latest nuclear assault lying down. Although you'd never know it from mainstream media reporting, anti-nuclear street protests have become a regular weekend event in Japan. The biggest such protest, on April 10 in Koenji, a Tokyo bedroom community, drew a crowd of 15,000 and was directed against the Hamaoka plant southwest of Tokyo, which is overdue for a major quake. (Earthquake-prone Japan is studded with fifty-four nuclear plants.) On May 6, the Japanese prime minister demanded that the Hamaoka plant be shut down immediately for safety enhancement. The plant's owner-operator initially demurred but soon gave in to the government's demand.

On April 22, a group of Japanese protestors visited TEPCO's Tokyo headquarters to present a petition demanding the closure of all Japanese nuclear plants. They also demanded an increase in aid for disaster victims after TEPCO insulted and humiliated victims by offering the princely yen equivalent of U.S. \$12 as compensation for their losses. Weeks after the disaster began, 164,000 evacuees were still in makeshift shelters struggling to cope with those losses.

In Australia, where uranium has been mined on aboriginal land for years to supply TEPCO's reactors, Fukushima has strengthened the aboriginals' resolve to block a new mine at the site of the world's largest known undeveloped source of uranium. And in the face of Fukushima-inspired street protests in Germany by 100,000 activists, the German government announced a decision to abandon nuclear power more quickly than over the twenty-five-year period it had initially planned. It also took seven of Germany's seventeen reactors offline for safety checks.

Meanwhile, back in Japan, the disaster continued to unfold. After the contamination had intensified and spread for a month, the Japanese government finally announced that it was expanding the evacuation zone around Fukushima. But when residents tried to evacuate from the expanded hot zone, they soon learned that the area had been blacklisted by moving companies!

Like movers shunning the area around Fukushima, multinational financiers have begun shunning Japanese investments. Mid-April marked the biggest real estate default in Japanese history: Morgan Stanley defaulted on a \$3.3 billion loan on a central Tokyo office building and handed over the keys to other investors. At the same time, increasing demand for chartered flights out of Tokyo indicated an intensified rush to get out of Japan among the elite.

To stem the panicked tide and help get Japan back to normal, TEPCO announced a plan to end the Fukushima crisis within nine months. In reality, TEPCO would be doing well if it could end the crisis in nine years—or even nine decades. Like the area around the Chernobyl disaster, much of northeastern Japan is likely to remain a radioactive no-man's-land for centuries no matter what TEPCO does.

At this point, I must confess that during the last spike in oil prices, I actual-

ly entertained the idea that the next generation of “safer” nuclear reactors might solve our energy problems. But how can you make an inherently unsafe technology safe? What level of safety is enough when you’re dealing with a radioisotope like plutonium that is deadly in minuscule quantities and that takes 24,000 years for half of its radioactivity to decay? No matter what kind of reactor you’re looking at, I concur with Albert Einstein: “Nuclear power is one hell of a way to boil water.” It was only concocted to help justify nuclear weapons R&D, and it only exists today to promote a near-monopoly on energy and help make companies like GE filthy rich.

So in response to those who claim we must use nuclear power because no safer alternatives can supply our needs, I say “Just try harder.” If there’s a will, there’s a way, and I’m all for finding that way as soon as possible—and preferably before the next nuclear disaster in the progressively worsening series of such disasters. If solar or wind power won’t fill our needs, let’s invest in wave power, geothermal energy, biodiesel, cold fusion, Tesla technology—anything but nuclear power!

If the choice comes down to nuclear power or life, I choose life—lived more creatively.

THE EARTH WILL MOVE

by Jeffrey Moore

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN NONFICTION, 2011

MARCH 11, 2011—14:46 JAPANESE STANDARD TIME

THE EARTH MOVED.

Forty-five miles east of the Oshika peninsula of Tohoku, Japan, a 110-mile swath of seafloor jumped upwards 26 feet, generating what scientists are calling the fifth largest earthquake in human history. For more than five minutes the tectonic plates of the western Pacific grated against each other. In that time, Japan moved 8 feet to the east and the Pacific seabed 79 feet westward.

So great was its force that the Earth shifted on its axis nearly 10 inches, shortening the length of the day. The total energy released was equivalent to 600 million Hiroshima bombs, more than twice the energy released by the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake.

The sudden upheaval of the seafloor displaced an enormous amount of water. A circular tsunami wave spread outward from the epicenter, crossing the sea at nearly 600 miles per hour. As it neared the Sanriku coast of Japan the wave slowed and rose in height. The deeply scalloped coastline of steep mountains, long narrow coves, and fjord-like bays funneled and amplified the force of the wave. Twenty minutes after the initial quake, Ofunato City was hit by a broad wave 10 feet high with water running up as high as an 8 story building. In Miyagi a 33 foot high wave swept over the tsunami walls surrounding the bay and swamped the city, killing thousands. The highest wave was recorded in the Taro, Iwate district of Miyagi at

a height of 145 feet. More than 80 percent of the townspeople perished. All but a few buildings were flattened or carried away by the inky waters.

The wave drove inland as far as six miles. Overall, it swamped more than 180 square miles of land.

It was a typical December day in Cannon Beach, Oregon. The fog clung to the sea until well after noon, and lifted only reluctantly, revealing a flat gray sky over a slate gray sea. A thin breeze tanged the air with brine and kelp. Kate McGill sipped her coffee, staring westward at the elusive horizon. With her finger she played with the drops of water that beaded on the deck railing. Her elderly mother called from the kitchen.

The earthquake struck with such speed and violence she didn't have time to think. The old beach cabin thrashed about, tore apart and fell on them. One minute, two, three. By some miracle Kate managed to pull herself free of the debris.

"Mom! Are you OK? Mom!"

No answer.

"Mom! Mom, answer me!"

Suddenly, the old air raid sirens began to wail. A tsunami alert! Kate had been through the drills. With luck she had 10 minutes—maybe 15—to run to the new City Hall, to the tsunami shelter on the roof.

She circled the house pulling aside debris as she went.

"Mom! Mom? Please, Mom! "

No answer. The sirens wailed. She had to decide and decide quickly. She looked at the house, hesitated.

She ran.

The Earth will move.

More than 50 million people live in the earthquake prone areas of the United States, most in the Pacific coastal states. For those of us who live in earthquake country, the issue is not a matter of if the next big quake will strike, but when. It's inevitable. Will we be prepared?

Most of us are familiar with seismic activity in California. Decades of earthquake experience, scientific study and geological monitoring have developed a sophisticated system for earthquake safety in that state. However, living in the maritime Pacific states of Oregon and Washington has inherent risks as well, perhaps greater than those in California.

The maritime Pacific region is an active seismic area. It lies directly on top of the Cascadian Subduction Zone, where one tectonic plate subducts, or dives under, another tectonic plate. Off the coast of Washington, Oregon and British Columbia, the Juan de Fuca plate both separates from the Pacific Ocean plate and subducts under the North American continental plate, creating a complex system of faults, ridges and fractures.

Like Japan this area is prone to the large violent earthquakes known as megathrust earthquakes, which occur only in subduction zones. In fact, all of the largest earthquakes, magnitude 9.0 and greater, have been megathrust events. No other

type of seismic activity can create such a massive destructive force.

And also like Japan the Cascadian Subduction Zone has the conditions that can create a massive tsunami.

Kate raced up the street with a resolve bordering on terror. Fear burned in her lungs. Tears burned in her eyes. At the corner she dodged left, sidestepping the splintered wood that littered the road. She kept her eyes down to avoid the fissures in the pavement.

"No time! Don't think! Just run!"

At the next corner she turned again, looked up the road, and stopped.

"Good God! Where am I?"

She didn't recognize a thing. A large blocky building lay slumped across the way, its lower floor pinched down by the weight of its upper floors, its roof touching the ground at one corner. Thick gray smoke poured out the windows, rising lazily into the pallid sky. Fractured fences lay flat in the street, scattered playing cards. The pavement was cracked and heaved. One section of sidewalk stood upended like a gravestone.

An old woman sat on the curb hugging a red shopping bag to her knees. On the bag was a smiling pink cartoon piglet, its ears flopping forward like bangs, balancing in his trotter, a plate of pancakes. The crumpled words, Pig'N Pancakes, marched across the bag.

"Run!" Kate yelled to the woman, "Run! Tsunami!"

The woman looked at her but didn't move. Kate turned and ran again, leaving the woman behind. Astonished at her own callousness she pushed on, one foot in front of the other, breathing hard. She could feel the panic rising in her chest. She was disoriented, didn't recognize her surroundings, unsure whether she was even heading in the right direction. She couldn't stop. Somehow she had to reach the City Hall.

Water is heavy. A cubic yard of water weighs nearly 1700 pounds, about the same weight as a Volkswagen Beetle. Two cubic yards of water is equivalent in heft to the typical American family sedan.

In normal surf, a waist high wave can knock an average adult off her feet. A shoulder high wave will dislodge anyone, no matter how strong. A typical wave this size contains more than a cubic yard of water and weighs well over a ton. When it breaks it releases a tremendous amount of energy.

The typical ocean wave is generated by wind interacting with the surface of the sea. Ordinary wind generated waves are limited in size and act in observable and reasonably predictable ways. Its height can vary from a few inches to dozens of feet depending upon the strength of the wind that created it, which is why storm-driven surf can be so dangerous and deadly.

When a wave approaches shore, its leading edge slows down as it encounters the upward-sloping seafloor. The following faster-moving water will overtake it, piling up on top of the slower-moving water. This is why a wave, any wave, becomes taller as it nears shore. On a smooth beach the waters from the back of the wave will continue to pile up and overtake the slower waters until the wave breaks.

The town around her lay in rubble. Familiar landmarks were gone. Shops and houses now shards and splinters. A roof, fully intact, sat upon a pile of debris like a hat. A black

dog, looking lost and forlorn, paced in the street in front of it. Every built object tumbled in disarray. Sirens blared. But the trees stood unaffected, pert and defiant in the ruins.

With the salt breeze on her neck, Kate realized she was headed east. The hills rose ahead of her; the sea was at her back. Far ahead she saw people moving, picking their way between the ruined buildings, sprinting south. She hurried to follow.

Kate had not run like this since school. Her legs were on fire. Her lungs burned. At the next corner she turned south. Panting and coughing, she dragged herself forward, leaden legs dragging granite feet.

The wooded flanks of Haystack Hill loomed ahead. She scanned the uplands to the east, searching for City Hall.

"Good God! There it is! What a glorious sight!"

A tsunami is very different from a wind-generated wave—in size and shape, in scale, and in destructive power. It is an earth-generated type of wave, usually created by an undersea earthquake. With the sudden shifting of the seafloor, water will be displaced and a tsunami wave train will be created, radiating outward.

A tsunami can be gigantic, 5000 times wider than an average wind-generated wave. Despite its size, it is nearly impossible to detect, because its height is relative to the depth of the water. In June of 1896, the fishermen of Sanriku, Japan were 20 miles out to sea when the 15-inch-high tsunami passed beneath their boats undetected. Upon returning to port the next morning they found themselves among acres of flotsam and floating bodies. The Meiji Tsunami had struck the city with a wave 125 feet high, leaving 28,000 dead and devastating 170 miles of coastline.

In the open ocean a tsunami may be just a few inches high, invisible in the normal rising and falling of the sea's surface. Its wave energy, however, extends from the surface to the bottom even in the deepest waters. The deeper the water, the shorter the height of the wave, and the faster it will move. In a 20,000 foot deep sea the wave may be only a foot tall and move as fast as a jet airliner. Because of its proportionately long wavelength, a tsunami can travel thousands of miles at great speed and lose very little of its total energy.

Nearing shore a tsunami will slow, compress in length and rise in height. One foot of height may grow to a hundred, and the wave will slow to a little as 30 miles per hour. The proportions will change but the sheer volume of water enmeshed in the tsunami will remain the same. That much water, moving at such a speed is perhaps the greatest single destructive force on earth.

And there it was, the City Hall, tall and erect, towering above the jumble below. And there was the beautiful white stairway, the route to the rooftop—and safety—standing out like a bone over the fractured town.

Kate ran with renewed energy, with desperation. So much time had gone by. How much time did she have? Drained, she pressed on, slowing as she dashed uphill, knowing that her life depended on this last charge. Sprinting, jogging, walking, stumbling, Kate closed the gap with each feeble step. Each step a tick of the clock. Two blocks to go. One block!

Not all tsunamis look like a monster wave. A tsunami surging onto shore usually

acts very differently from a typical wave. It can appear as a rapid and steadily rising tide, with the water level climbing several feet in a matter of minutes. It might come ashore as a single large swell or as series of breaking waves. Or it may seem to be a slightly large wave that comes ashore, and instead of slowing down, just keeps on coming and coming.

In 2004 in Phuket, Thailand the tsunami washed ashore as a broad six-foot high wave, swarming up the beach over the swimming pools and through the lobbies of the resort hotels. The wave didn't abate for almost ten minutes. The initial wave front backed up by a constant flow of water drove more than a mile inland, carrying away anything, and anyone, caught in its path.

The shape and topography of the shoreline, the presence of rivers or estuaries, the configuration of the seabed, and a multitude of underwater features all determine the manner in which a tsunami encounters the shore. Rarely, and when conditions are right, will a tsunami form a single large, looming, breaking wave, but it does happen. For the low-lying coastal communities of the Oregon and Washington coast this is a distinct possibility.

Regardless of the form of the wave, the brute power of a tsunami can easily destroy most seaside towns on the Pacific coast. Even towns on the inland waters of Grays Harbor and Puget Sound are vulnerable. The majority of buildings in all of these communities are light timber framed structures, one to five stories tall. This type of construction, though appropriate in cost and scale, simply cannot withstand the force of a tsunami.

A furiously powerful wave can destroy a structure in a number of ways: by the direct forces of water inundation, by the impact of waterborne debris, by the damping effects of waterborne debris, by the scouring of the ground when the wave recedes, and by secondary events such a fire spread by burning debris or localized winds created by the tsunami.

To withstand the blunt force of a tsunami, the pressure of millions of gallons of water moving at high speed, a building must be properly engineered and massive enough to withstand the impact. In addition, the edifice must be able to survive, intact, the earthquake that preceded the tsunami. Wood framed buildings, common in the maritime Pacific, perform well in earthquakes, but fail catastrophically in a tsunami.

In addition to the direct force of the wave, a structure must cope with the impact forces of flotsam on a massive scale. This includes debris from buildings and bridges, cars and trucks, trees, shipping containers and ships. The storm surge from Hurricane Katrina, for example, drove floating gas tanks through town, setting relatively undamaged parts of the city on fire.

As the debris field moves inland it will swirl about forming clumps of materials that can dam the flow of water, protecting some areas and making others more susceptible to damage.

And finally, when the big wave recedes, it pulls everything back out towards the

sea, dragging broken buildings, broken bodies, and a broken town with it. As it scours the ground, pulling the land itself out to sea, and undermining the foundations of those structures still standing.

On the roof hundreds had gathered, staring anxiously out to sea. The afternoon faltered. The sun dropped lower behind the blanket of mist. The ocean took on the hues of slate. Then, where sky meets sea, a thin dark line appeared, a smudge spanning the entire width of the horizon. The line, absolutely uniform, swelled in height as it closed in on the shore, roiling in on itself. The surf receded. The beach, shimmering in the golden late afternoon light, spread wide. The wave in utter silence rose up, shadowing the shore. It was terrible in its beauty, a glowing azure, backlit by the setting sun.

Kate fell to her knees again. As she struggled to her feet, she heard the collective gasp of those gathered on the rooftop. She heard the gargantuan crash of the wave as it broke. She felt the ground beneath her feet shudder as the wave pounded the beach. She had to reach the stairs.

If buildings themselves cannot withstand a tsunami, ordinary people have even less chance to survive. Your only viable option is to get out of harm's way. This means one thing: get to high ground— and quickly. If you can't get to high ground, get to the top of a stout building. If there are no strong buildings in your town— and there aren't in most Pacific seaboard towns —then you are in deep trouble. This is the sad truth for Americans living in tsunami evacuation zones. It need not be this way.

If there is no natural high ground, then the next best thing is an artificial high ground. A strong enough and tall enough building can act as a natural high ground, but it must be able to withstand all the forces that a tsunami can exert on it, and it must be able to survive an earthquake large enough to generate a tsunami. Few structures meet these criteria. Most large buildings in areas vulnerable to tsunamis provide an uncertain haven at best.

A building, or even an open air structure, specifically designed for seismic and tsunami forces can provide adequate shelter for ordinary people in the event of a big wave. Throughout Japan and in Indonesia these structures exist. The strategic placement of these tsunami shelters along the coast of Japan played a key role during the recent Tohoku earthquake and tsunami. Their presence may have saved thousands of lives.

The wave rolled quickly through town, picking up everything that floated and carried it away, like the froth on the surf. Everything that didn't float was carried too, but under the surface, rolling and tumbling up the hill towards the highway, towards City Hall.

Just paces ahead the throng of townsfolk mobbed the stairway, swarming upwards in a steady flow of desperate energy, helping hands and weary defeat. Kate joined the swarm and found herself being pulled rapidly along, dragged forwards and held upright by the arms of her neighbors. As the wave carried the ruined town towards them, the swarm carried Kate up the stairway in rapid ascent.

Tsunami shelters or tsunami evacuation buildings do not exist at all in North

American despite the obvious need. According to the National Tsunami Hazard Mitigation Program, there are more than 113 communities and 1.2 million people in the United States at risk from tsunamis.

In the maritime Pacific states of Oregon and Washington, low-lying coastal communities are at particular risk from both trans-ocean tsunamis and local tsunamis generated by seismic activity in the Cascadian Subduction Zone. Revised estimates published by the U.S. Geological Survey, show a 1 in 3 chance of a major earthquake, magnitude 8.2 or higher, within in the next 50 years.

Many seaside towns lie within the high hazard zones adjacent to the ocean and river channels with long distances to safe higher elevation ground. Many of these communities are very active in tsunami education and evacuation planning.

With new studies and data from the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami it has become clear that the threat from a Cascadian seismic event is much greater than previously thought. In 2009, new tsunami inundation maps were revised to reflect the risk. The small coastal town of Cannon Beach, Oregon has plans to change its situation. They have opted the replace their aging and vulnerable City Hall with a new civic structure, a Tsunami Evacuation Building (TEB).

"The increased tsunami risk has meant that ... coastal communities can no longer rely solely on the strategy of evacuation to higher ground but must look at tsunami evacuation buildings, structures and berms." from the *White Paper on Tsunami* "Evacuation Buildings: A New Risk Management Approach to Cascadia Earthquakes and Tsunamis."

The Cannon Beach TEB is to be centrally located within the town's largest hazard area for tsunamis and can provide refuge for 800 to 1000 people on its roof. It will be built to robust seismic standards since it must remain functional even after a major earthquake. Plans are to site the building so that it will be visible from most points in the town and can serves as a beacon of where to go for safety.

TEBs should now become an integral component in tsunami hazard planning and should be constructed in many towns along the coast, especially in places that have little natural high ground. They need to be deliberately planned and strategically placed to provide needed shelter in the proper locations. Any structure or building that needs to be larger, stronger, or higher than a standard wood-framed house is a good candidate. Parking garages, schools, auditoria, sports centers, and hotels all would work well as a TEB. Public facilities that must be replaced due to structural integrity, age, size, or inefficiency should be built beyond simple building codes to provide the needed tsunami refuge for the citizenry. Let us consider Cannon Beach's example and opt for safety and a Tsunami Evacuation Building.

The wave caught Kate in the hips pinning her to the stairway, pressing her face to the pale concrete steps. The water swirled around her ears, blotting out all other sound. Something thick and heavy struck her hard in the ribs. In her pain she could feel the hands of her neighbors slipping away. In her pain she could see the light slipping away. She blacked out.

The sun set in a blood red sky.





CITY SERENADE BY LAUREN RIKER
Certificate Program in Photography, 2011





BLUE VASE BY LAUREN RIKER
Certificate Program in Photography, 2011

FLIGHT FROM EGYPT

by R. Paul Robertson

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION, 2011

CHAPTER 1

DRIVING NORTH TOWARDS Cairo, Chris Peterson passed the Giza pyramids across the Nile and reached the intersection of the Corniche and Abbasiya Road. He turned east and drove five miles to the US Naval Tropical Disease Unit where for three years he had been running a drug study comparing the efficacy of chloramphenicol and ampicillin as treatment for typhoid fever. Reaching the Unit he parked and walked towards Cairo's Abbasiya Fever Hospital. This was the best part of his day. He loved rounding on his ward of children. He had learned enough Arabic to talk with the kids. Hearing an American doctor struggle with their language amazed the shy children and provided mild comedy for their family members who congregated on the floor of the hospital, watching over their children day and night.

In front of the hospital an Egyptian physician, Fawzi Wahab, who worked closely with Chris, greeted him in his usual fashion. "*Ahalan wa sahalan!* Welcome, my friend!" They exchanged smiles and the prolonged handshake that had taken Chris a few months to get comfortable with.

"*Saida. Eziack enta? Quies?*" Good morning. How is your health? Good? Chris was pushing the limits of his Arabic greetings, which brought a smile of pleasure to Fawzi's face. They mounted the steps of the old Egyptian hospital ward made of red bricks, mortar, and little else. The door hung tenuously on its frame and the

red tile roof was missing many pieces. The screens on the windows were closed, which was a private joke between the Egyptian medical staff and the two doctors. The previous year Chris had gotten the idea to screen the windows to keep out the omnipresent flies that crawled all over the children. The screens looked good and Chris thought the Navy had accomplished a needed bit of public health. But he was puzzled to find flies still everywhere in the ward. Arriving early for rounds one day ...around 0700 hours...he discovered why: the screens were wide open. Fawzi explained, "The families believe it is healthier to have fresh morning air, not filtered air." The families knew Chris was proud of the screens. They were used to his coming to rounds at 0830 and made sure the screens were closed by 0800 so he wouldn't lose face. Chris had smiled at Fawzi and shrugged *maalish*.

While rounding on the ward Fawzi and Chris stopped at the bedside of a new patient who had been admitted overnight, a beautiful little girl named Aishya. Chris greeted the listless girl, shooed the flies away from her face, examined her, and noted very warm skin, sunken eyes, a rash of rose spots on her abdomen and enlarged spleen. He gently pinched up her skin and released it, and observed tenting rather than flattening. Dehydration. He listened to her heart with his stethoscope and paused. "Fawzi, did you hear anything unusual when you examined her heart last night?"

"La-ah, I did not".

"Listen. Do you hear it?"

"Ah, yes...*ayiwa*...I hear the rubbing sound."

"I'm pretty certain it's a pericardial rub. Typhoid pericarditis is rare, but it occurs. We must be careful not to give her too much IV fluid so she doesn't go into heart failure."

"Aiywa...yes, we will be careful. Good pick up, Chris." Fawzi, a decade older than Chris, had received his medical education in Alexandria. He was an experienced and excellent clinician, absolutely essential to Chris' research project, and his co-author on the manuscript describing the typhoid study they recently submitted to the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

The two doctors moved on to examine other children. A young boy named Mahmoud wearing a blue gallabeya stood up when he saw Chris approach, bowed slightly, saluted in the British fashion with an open palm, and extended his hand, saying in Arabic: "*Maasalama*, Doctor! I am leaving today! Thank you for chasing my sickness away!" He had been extremely ill, developed typhoid meningitis with seizures, and nearly died, but responded very nicely to ampicillin. Chris smiled, tousled his hair, and made a mental note to highlight this case in their manuscript which he was now revising for publication.

Fathy and he moved on to the adjoining lab where the study's samples were processed. They checked up on the lab techs' progress and found everything was in order. Jerry Jenkins, PhD, director of the lab, was a career naval officer, 13 years older than Chris, and senior in rank to him. Chris greeted him, told him about the

favorable progress of the manuscript, and asked if the lab techs could perform the additional lab studies involving drug sensitivity assays the journal wanted for the revised manuscript.

"Chris, you gotta be crazy. We're already doing all the culture work to identify the organisms. We're not set up to do drug sensitivities. That's a lot to ask."

Chris felt his temper surging. "Look, Jerry, we both know this is not a big deal. It's standard practice in bacteriology labs."

"Easy for you to say! I've got lots of important studies going on that will establish the epidemiology of schistosomiasis in this part of the world. That information will lead to vaccine development that will eradicate the disease."

Chris knew this was an oversimplification. Vaccine development takes years, if not decades, and Jerkins didn't have the knowledge to carry out this kind of work. But he also knew he had to handle Jerkins with kid gloves. He was Chris's superior officer and resented the fact that Chris had no post-doctoral training and yet was doing so well with his typhoid study. It also seemed unusual to his older colleagues that three years ago this young physician from Minnesota was given such a prime assignment. However, during his four years in medical school he worked part time in a faculty member's lab and published three manuscripts. It was his creativity and intense focus on problem-solving that the Navy recognized and rewarded with a research assignment in Cairo after internship.

Nonetheless, Chris reflected on his need to be mindful of his relationship to Jerkins. I need this guy to support my study with the bacteriology lab work he's already doing. True, that's what the Navy pays him for. But he can screw things up by passively-aggressively delaying the work. It will be a major coup to get the work published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. The reviewers were really impressed that none of our 154 patients treated so far died from typhoid. We just have to satisfy the one reviewer who wants drug sensitivities. We've got to get this work published so that kids who get typhoid in this part of the world can be treated safely with ampicillin, rather than run the risks of the severe side effects associated with chloramphenicol. Chris also knew this publication would open many doors for him to pursue post-doctoral training in infectious disease.

That morning in the lab Chris considered all these factors and formed plan B rather than argue uselessly with Jerkins. He drew the lead lab tech aside and asked him to make subcultures of his typhoid samples in transport tubes. He would take them to a friend's lab in Boston when he returned to the States next fall. The tech was aware of the animosity between Chris and Jerkins and grateful to Chris for taking care of his son the previous Christmas when he had contracted a serious case of pneumonia. A nod, a wink, and all was arranged with no further words spoken. Chris and Fawzi left the building and bid one another *maasalama*, parting ways for the day. If the current political situation in Cairo led to an evacuation of Americans from Cairo, Chris knew the subcultures he needed would be ready for transport.

The current crisis between the Arab world and Israel had been heating up since May 15, 1967. Egyptian troops moved eastward out of Cairo across the Sahara into the Sinai Peninsula, threatening Israel. No one really knew whether he was simply making gestures to drum up support from other Arab nations or was serious about attacking "the Israeli devils". Clearly, Americans in Cairo were beginning to feel *persona non grata* because the US was identified as the strongest ally of Israel. The times were so unsettled that the Navy had evacuated Chris's young family, wife Claire and three-year old Jeannie, to Athens the day before.

As Chris drove home that afternoon, traffic in Cairo was in its usual state of dust-laden chaos. Two lane roads carried five cars abreast, barely inches apart from one another, moving like a school of fish down the road. Drivers' eyes caught each other's and car horns continually beeped their signal "Too close!" No blaring sounds, just friendly honks as reminders of impending collisions. Traffic consisted mostly of old Mercedes taxis, huge early model American luxury cars, and broken down buses. The buses were lopsided because of broken suspensions, caused by the many *fellahin* peasants outside grasping onto window frames to ride free. Easily 30 or 40 more rode atop the bus shouting conversation to their neighbors. When a bus stopped, scores of people came tumbling out of windows and off the roof, and scores more would scramble on board at the same time. Major street theatre, but it worked.

Well, not always, Chris recalled. In my first year in Egypt Jerkins was driving that car I was in when we had the accident. As we approached a busy intersection, a boy chasing a soccer ball suddenly ran in front of the car. Everyone in the car was jolted by the impact and looked at each other in panic. In Cairo this was a very sticky situation. We knew that *fellahin* driving donkey carts resent the intrusion of buses and cars on the roads. On many occasions tourists involved in auto accidents are pulled from their cars and stoned. God, remember that guy who hit a man and was not only stoned but hanged in a village outside Cairo?

"We gotta get out of here, Chris! God knows what this crowd is going to do. Even if we stop, there's nothing we can do for the kid. If he's OK, he's OK. If not, we're going to get our asses kicked big time!" Jerkins kept the car in motion and slowly drove off, all the time hearing and feeling angry fists and rocks hitting the car. This experience still brought anxiety and guilt feelings whenever Chris thought about it. What if we had stopped? Would people understand that the kid just ran in front of our car?

Arriving home Chris turned on the radio to catch up on the day's news. Things were deteriorating rapidly. The US was sending arms to Israel from its base in Libya. Nasser was quoted as saying America did not send its usual wheat contribution that summer and proclaimed that "America is Israel and Israel is America." The UN was still negotiating with Nasser, but Israel had made it clear they were ready to attack Cairo and would not wait long for the situation to settle down... days perhaps, but not weeks.

Later that evening Chris heard reports on BBC that Egyptian military trucks and heavy artillery were rolling through downtown Cairo to take up defensive positions. War had started and Israel had bombed Cairo, Ismailia, and Port Said. Fighting on the ground in the Sinai raged and Syria claimed it was bombing Tel Aviv.

That night Chris took the precautions of filling the bathtub with water, turning off the gas, leaving all the windows slightly opened to avoid blast implosion, and painting his car's headlights blue. He turned off all lights and went to bed around 20:00 hours, but couldn't sleep. His thoughts turned to his young family. Beginning to feel very lonely, he recalled a time they spent together at a villa on the Red Sea. Jeanie especially liked the beaches on the Mediterranean and the Red Sea. She could always be counted on to suddenly rush into the water, enticing Chris and Claire to chase her for a bout of tickling and squealing, followed by their final triumphant capture and return to the beach warmly hugging one another, making what they termed a Peterson sandwich.

This reverie was interrupted by knocks on the front door and gruff Arabic voices. "*Enta Amerikani hena?*" Chris lay very still, not answering. More knocks and loud voices. Finally silence. After a few minutes Chris slipped out of bed. Who the hell was that at the door? Burglars? Arabs chasing down Americans to beat the crap out of them for being Israeli allies? Police looking for scapegoats to put into prison? Got to get dressed and be ready to move out. This is getting dangerous. Car's full of gas, but I need to figure out the best time to get back to the hospital to pick up my samples. Now or after sunrise?

Just then the phone rang: Jerkins with a terse message. "The Embassy is putting all Americans on full evacuation alert. Egypt has broken diplomatic ties with the US. Train tickets to Alexandria will be issued to everyone and can be claimed at the Embassy at 08:00 tomorrow. We'll board buses bound for Ramses Station just before noon."

"OK, Jerry, thanks for the heads up. But I need to get my samples to take with me."

"Sorry, Chris, I can't release them. My orders from the CO are to pack everything up and secure the area."

"Jerry, that makes no sense! I need to take the samples with me! We may never get back to Cairo."

"No deal...orders are orders." Chris could hear the smirk in Jerkin's voice.

"Is Fawzi around?"

"Yeah, he's right here. Hang on."

"*Sayida*, Chris. I am sorry for all this trouble."

Chris was getting anxious and knew he was on the verge of being rude. "Thanks, Fawzi, but I need to come in and get the samples."

"Chris, everyone knows the Americans are meeting tomorrow at the Embassy to go to Alexandria on the noon train. You can't take your samples with you because the Army will confiscate them. They will take everything that looks official or at all

suspicious. I will take care of them.”

“Oh, come on, Fawzi. What will you do with them? How will you get them out of the country?”

“Chris, you have done a wonderful job leading the study, but now you must think like an Egyptian and trust Allah. I have a plan that I think will work, *insha’Allah*. The best thing for you to do is to go to the Embassy and not worry.”

This conversation seemed very strange to Chris. Fawzi was being uncharacteristically vague. “Fawzi, is someone there besides Jerkins?”

“*Ayiwa*. The army is here using our hospital for wounded soldiers.” The phone clicked and the line went dead.

Chris hung up and sank into a chair, enervated. He poured a tumbler of bourbon to relax and began to size things up. Okay, Peterson. Now what? Just back off and trust the will of Allah? Not that simple for a good Lutheran boy from Minnesota. I’ve been breaking my butt for three years to get this study completed. Dealing with passive-aggressive Jerkins has been bad enough, but now, this damn war and what the hell can I do about it? Drive to the hospital to collect the samples? That’s crazy. Still, I’ve been known to pull off crazy things before. But what about my family? They’re in Athens waiting for me. They’re my first responsibility. How can I rescue my samples and still be loyal to Claire and Jeannie? Chris set his jaw and made his decision. I’m going to have it both ways by driving to the Unit to get the samples, bypass the Embassy and the army inspection, drive directly to the train station, buy a ticket, and board the noon train to Alexandria along with everyone else coming from the Embassy.

Chris got into his car just as daylight broke and drove toward Cairo. At the turn off to Heliopolis he began getting hostile stares from other drivers. He arrived at the Unit and found the door to his ward wide open. He entered the main ward where he saw dozens of wounded Egyptian soldiers lying on the beds, being attended to by his nurses. He made his way over to one of the nurses he recognized as a regular.

“*Ahalan*. Have you seen Fawzi?” She averted her eyes and ignored him. He felt a firm hand on his shoulder, turning him around. It was Fawzi, forefinger to his lips, gesturing him to follow. Fawzi escorted Chris by the arm over to the laboratory door, took a key from his pocket, opened the door, and handed him a large box.

“Chris, here are your samples. Take them to Boston and Allah go with you. You are being foolish to think you can smuggle them onto the train. This is very dangerous; if you are caught the army will put you into jail. Goodbye and see you later...*insha’Allah*.” One last lingering handshake.

Chris carried the box to his car. He knew the way to Ramses Station but wasn’t sure of the best route. He chose one he thought would have the least traffic. Driving through alleys and side streets he came onto a clearing with a busy open marketplace filled with people. Men sat at tables smoking hashish in hubbly-bubbles and merchants hawked loaves of pita bread, bags of fruit, caged chickens, and

cups of coffee. He slunk down into his seat picked up a little speed when the way seemed clear. Traveling down a stone-cobbled road, a *fellah* driving a donkey cart suddenly pulled in front of him. Damn! Just what I need, a frigging donkey cart. He slowed down and saw from the corner of his right eye a little girl with a goat waving at someone on the other side of the street. She suddenly dashed into the street in front his car. Thump! My God! What just happened? He hit his brakes and skidded to a stop. This is just like when Jerkins hit that kid. I gotta get out of here! Shit, no...I can't just leave. I'm a goddamn doctor! Gotta get out and see if I can help! Nervously, Chris opened the door latch to get out of the car. Immediately a group of men yelled at Chris, threw the car door wide open, and pulled him out onto the street. They began shoving him back and forth, knocking him off balance as he tried to see if the little girl was hurt. Two men grabbed him by the arms and a third punched him in the face when a policeman ran up shouting *maalish*, *maalish*, pointing to the goat Chris had hit. The little girl stood crying with her friend on the other side of the road. The policeman yelled *Imshi!* Get out of here! Chris jumped into his car and immediately drove away.

With hurled rocks clunking against his car, Chris got through the marketplace and drove onto a main road that led to Ramses Station. A few minutes later he was there, his heart racing. He stopped, grabbed his box, and ran into the station. He found a relatively quiet corner, leaned against the wall, forced his rapid breathing to slow down, and tried to ease his frantic thoughts. Then he approached the ticket counter where a clerk took his money and gave him a one-way ticket on the noon train to Alexandria, which was waiting on the tracks. He mounted its stairs, found an empty seat, and plopped the box beside him. It was 11:05 hours.

As he waited, a crowd began to form on the platform next his window. Several thuggish looking men were calling to passersby to join them. They brought a bunch of kindling wood, a can of gas, and an American flag. Chris saw that it was a demonstration being prepared for the evacuees coming from the American embassy. Soon police arrived, and then the Americans appeared. As they boarded the train, the crowd got louder and louder, chanting anti-American epithets. The fire was ignited and the jeering got even louder when the flag was thrown on it. The train finally began inching out of the station. The men in the crowd had removed their shoes and were shaking them at the Americans, this being the ultimate Arabic insult of showing the enemy the soles of their footwear.

The train slowly left the station, then sped up as the tracks were cleared of demonstrators. Chris settled back into his seat, embracing the box and thinking to put his jacket over it in case Jerkins came by. Be just like him to threaten insubordination for smuggling the samples out. Soon the Americans were informed that a small Greek cruise ship was waiting in Alexandria to take them across the Med to Athens. Chris relaxed and decompressed. At this point he would have settled for a ferry, a sailboat, a raft, anything that floated. The gamble had paid off. Soon he would be on the Med, sailing towards Athens, his family, and his future.

MY PLACE ON THE PAGE

by Dayna Reid

CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN NONFICTION, 2011

I'LL KILL YOU!" My father's familiar voice rages from the kitchen.

Disoriented, I slowly awaken to more shouting and a noisy crash, followed by several violent thumps against the trailer wall—the wall shared with my bedroom.

I crawl out of bed and bump shoulders with the walking doll I got for Christmas. I wanted the doll advertised on TV that walked on its own but instead received one that has legs I have to manually move. I toddle my way out to the kitchen where I see the source of all the commotion. Garbage is scattered everywhere, the basket that held it is on the other side of the room, and my mother's neck is pinned to the wall by my father's hands. Her face is red and no sound comes from her open mouth.

A moment passes. Next to my father's foot, rests a plate—the one that held my jelly bread earlier today. They notice me standing there in the entryway.

Immediately, they begin to ask me questions that puzzle my four-year-old brain: "Did you have a bad dream?"... "Do you want a drink of water?"... "Do you need to go to the bathroom?" I am led back to my room, with reassurances of "Every-

thing's OK" . . . "Go back to bed, Sweetie."

"Day-nahh J-sho, isth-at you?" My mother's voice slurs from down the hall as I enter our studio apartment.

My third-grade math text tumbles to the floor as I fling my stack of schoolbooks on the couch. "I hate it when you're like this." I reply in disgust. I wish to get away from her and her stupid behavior, her stupid questions, her stupid statements. But in our tiny city home there is no escape, no place to retreat.

We slipped away from my father four years earlier with no explanation to him or me. Now I only see him on special occasions and receive an infrequent letter in the mail.

I know my mom is brilliant—she reads constantly and is able to answer any question anyone asks her, on any topic, accurately and without hesitation. But when she drinks, it's as if her brain has packed up its belongings and left the space between her ears.

I pick up my math text and move to the kitchen nook, which is the only space other than the bathroom that allows me to distance myself from her repetitious babble. I plant myself at our small kitchen table, and bury my nose in the hard-cover refuge.

"You're not invited." Julie, the coolest girl in my fourth-grade class, declares for the benefit of her friends.

She lives in my building and pretends to be my friend when no one else is around. I stand there in front of Lowell Elementary among Julie's chosen ones who have been invited to her house after school. I have said nothing, quietly hoping to be included; I am silently yearning to belong, to fit in, to be cool. She senses the question on my face and, with a glance, makes sure I know that I am not part of the group. I casually reach for my most recent paperback escape, open to the book-marked page and begin my walk home.

"Quiet! The librarian shushes a group of rowdy students from my junior high school.

They are seated at a table a few feet from where I stand near the teen titles. I love this magical place, the portal to countless pages of exquisite retreat. From the time my first grade teacher, Mrs. Tudor, taught me how to read "See Spot Run," I have found sanctuary in the pages of both fictional story and factual narrative. Whether dealing with rejection of my peers, the drunken craziness of my family, the two-week-old news of my mother's terminal bone cancer, or my father's sudden move back to care for me when my mother dies in the doctor's projected three months, books provide the comfort, the solace, the escape, that I need to recharge my mind to face another day.

I carefully remove the title, "Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret." from the shelf, walk over to the only comfy chair in the reading room, and open to Chapter One.

FINIS

