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Stratus

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the second edition of *Stratus: Journal of Arts and Writing!*

As UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON Educational Outreach celebrates its 100th anniversary this year, we continue to celebrate the art and writing of our students. *Stratus: Journal of Arts and Writing* promotes the visibility of the talent and efforts of our students, instructors, advisory board members, and staff.

At UW Educational Outreach and Professional & Continuing Education, we offer a wide range of courses and programs in the visual, performing, media, and literary arts, and we add new programs every year. New programs are developed in collaboration with our advisory board members, and often arise from suggestions from our students or from the general public. We are always interested in new ways to spur the creativity that is vital to success in today's technology-driven

world, and we invite your ideas for the future.

As part of our focus on the future, a key element of the Certificate Programs in Arts and Writing at UWEO and PCE 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.

As in the inaugural volume of *Stratus,* top graduates from a range of our programs are represented here in word and image. In this second edition, the wide range of works are connected by the theme and metaphor of *archæology,* an excavation of our experiences.

Our graduates' work is presented in three sections. First, we foreground creative work that explores and uncovers the *Self.* Next, we dig deeper into an archaeology of the *Family.* And finally, we showcase images and writing that reveal our relations to the social and physical *World.*

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

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STORIES: WHY BOTHER WHEN I CAN CATCH THE NEWS?

By Scott Driscoll

Instructor, CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION

Why read stories when I can catch the news?

SOMEONE actually said this to me. He admitted, "S'pose I should, but…" The "but" trailed off. As in, what's the point? Why read stories when reality is enough?

To put a finer point on it, as he would not have but as Tim Parks would, if stories delivered to us by an author, who invents a narrator with a point of view, reduce the story's moral complexity to the narrow and possibly didactic view of that singular author, and if other sources of information, such as printed or broadcast news, or say history books or essays, are just as capable of delivering us to complex moral situations, why do we need stories?

In *Arctic Dreams,* Barry Lopez notes that, "No culture has yet solved the dilemma each has faced with the growth of a conscious mind: how

to live a moral and compassionate existence when one is fully aware of the blood, the horror inherent in all life, when one finds darkness not only in one's own culture but within oneself." (I owe the unearthing of this quote to my writer friend, Louis Whitford.)

The mark of a good story is not one that solves a dilemma but one that poses a question in an interesting way. This according to Chekhov. But why can't news or commentary do the same?

Vaclav Havel, celebrated leader of the Czech Velvet Revolution, is quoted as saying, "Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out." His corollary to this statement, that you act not to achieve a desired result, but because it is the right thing to do, can be said to represent one way of attempting to live a morally compassionate life.

In the opening of *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting,* Milan Kundera writes about the historical event of the February, 1948, handover of the government of Czechoslovakia to the communists. Communist leader Gottwald stands next to Clementis in the photo taken that day in Prague's Old Town Square. It was cold. Clementis, lower in rank, solicitously put his fur cap on Gottwald's head. Hundreds of thousands of copies of this photo were sent around to commemorate this collegial moment. Four years later, Clementis fell out of Party favor and was hanged. Subsequent distributions of that particular article of propaganda had Clementis airbrushed out of the photo. All that remains of Clementis is the cap on Gottwald's head.

This is a book that is part novel, part history, part authorial musing, part humor, entertainment and eroticism. Does Kundera pose a question? No, he tells a story that illustrates a dilemma. The question, if there is one, must be dug out of the horror he artfully presents.

Or, just read news accounts of that day in 1948.

That should be enough, according to Parks, to allow us to ask how we can lead a morally compassionate life. We don't need Kundera or Lopez or Havel, et al, for that.

Okay, what if we were to think of story as a mirror held up to reality? Not an escape from reality, but a way of taking a second look?

"Persueus's strength always lies in a refusal to look directly, but not in a refusal of the reality in which he is fated to live," observes Italo Calvino in his essay, "Lightness." "He carries the reality with him," Calvino goes on to say, "and accepts it as his particular burden." One might be tempted to guess that Calvino would agree with Parks that any artfully presented story is nothing more than a conjuror's trick, or, worse, an abdication of our responsibility to learn how to live compassionately without a didactic author leading us by the nose.

Calvino's interpretation of the myth helps us understand what he had in mind. "To cut off the Medusa's head without being turned to stone, Perseus supports himself on the very lightest of things, the winds and the clouds, and fixes his gaze upon what can be revealed only by indirect vision, an image caught in a mirror." Calvino goes on to notice, "As for the severed head, Perseus does not abandon it but carries it concealed in a bag…It is a weapon he uses only in cases of dire necessity, and only against those who deserve the punishment of being turned into statues…Perseus's strength always lies in a refusal to look directly, but not in a refusal of the reality in which he is fated to live."

Reflecting on the value of lightness, Calvino admits, "Whenever humanity seems condemned to heaviness, I think I should fly like Perseus into a different space." He is not suggesting an escape from the heaviness of history, so much as a flight above it to a vantage from which stories that achieve levity can be used as a mirror to reflect the Medusa of reality without the viewer being turned to "stone" by the horror.

Reading stories enhances our ability to empathize.

Reading novels reduces violence.

"We are accustomed to reflections on the death of the novel," writes Wright Morris in *A Bill of Rites, A Bill of Wrongs, A Bill of Goods,* "but I have seen little reported on the death of the reader." Among the "melancholy facts of human culture," he suggests, is this: there are readers who hate fiction just as there are listeners who consume music but are tone deaf. Both, he adds, have the temerity to call themselves critics and avatars of taste.

To have the wonderment of a child is to fly on the backs of stories.

Stories lift us above repression. Artless reality represses.

On page one of his eponymous novel, *Elizabeth Costello,* J. M. Coetzee opens with commentary on the hard work of building scaffolding for his story: "There is first of all the problem of the opening, namely, how to get us from where we are, which is, as yet, nowhere, to the far bank. It is a simple bridging problem…People solve such problems every day…Let us assume that, however it may have been done, it is done. Let us take it that the bridge is built and crossed, that we can put it out of our mind. We have left behind that territory in which we were. We are in the far territory, where we want to be."

The chapter in which this excerpt appears is titled, "Realism." Coetzee complains that the "heavy lifting" of story telling is a burden he would rather not shoulder.

The protagonist, Anders, in Tobias Wolff's story, "Bullet in the Brain," is a book critic "known for the weary elegant savagery with which he dispatches almost everything he reviewed." Unable to resist critiquing the unoriginal performance of a thief during a bank robbery in progress—"Capiche—oh, God, capiche,"—Anders is shot in the head. He will not be as fortunate as Perseus. He makes the mistake of confronting his Medusa directly. For that mistake, Anders will die. But in the moment preceding death, he reflects on the loss of wonderment in original words. He remembers a childhood friend playing sandlot baseball. Said friend has brought along his cousin from Mississippi. When asked what position he wants to play, this cousin replies, "Shortstop. Short's the best position they is." Anders is "strangely roused, elated, by those final two words, their pure unexpectedness and their music."

News flash: Mouthy book critic shot dead in bank hold-up. What more do you need to know?

1 *Self*

BEAUTY?

By Angela Wang
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN MEMOIR, 2012

"But why do I have to wear it?! It's ugly and uncomfortable!!!" I whined. "It's not fair! Davie doesn't have to get dressed up!! Mommmm, the dress gives me a rash!"

My mother said nothing but gently shook her head and gave me the stern look. It was useless. I had to don the stockings with the poofy blue monstrosity. I glared at my smirking brother in his pressed shorts, white dress shirt, and clip-on tie. At least one of my mother's children looked cute.

I hated wearing dresses. As a tomboy growing up in the 80s, vivid nightmares of tulle and pastels haunted me. The scratchy dresses were always paired with airtight white stockings resulting in a permanent wedgie, along with squeaky patent-leather Mary Janes—an unholy

trifecta of itchiness that resulted in hours of awkward squirming. Easters, weddings, piano recitals always began with my dress tantrums. I still have a strong aversion to frilly things (shudder!) though my adult mind can now appreciate the theoretical relationship between effort and appearance. At least that proportional relationship holds true for those of us not blessed with natural good looks. Effort counts, and I didn't learn this until after I graduated from college.

Maybe the blame falls on the insidious brainwashing of the Disney Princess upon unsuspecting young girls who don't consciously realize that the Disney heroine is always pretty on the outside. Ever since I was a kid, I naively thought, "True beauty lies within." That's what all the stories tell us. And because I remained a naïve tomboy throughout high school and into college, I clung to that fairytale myth about inner beauty. Unfortunately the realization that "beauty actually lies in plain sight" came to me much later than for most other girls. I was basically an adult when I learned the truth.

My fashionable Aunt Alice would always urge me to make more of an effort in my appearance. When I was back in Asia visiting family over the summer every two or three years, she would be very generous and take me under her wing to see her hairstylist and buy me new clothes. She only had sons and spoiled me as a surrogate daughter. The summer after I graduated from college, she did the usual hair and clothes routine, but then took me to another stylist for a one-on-one make-up class. She thought it was high time I learned how to "do my face" properly.

At 22, I figured I had developed a sense of authenticity: What you see is what you get. I had my share of boyfriends in college and most importantly, I had been following my own secret litmus test about finding True Love. If beauty really lay within, then I took the formula one step further so that only one *worthy* of True Love would be able to see past superficial appearances into your soul to find your true inner beauty. It was an internalized Disney fable where my shining Prince would hack his way past the thorny briars of my physical appearance to finally glimpse and appreciate my real self.

My Aunt stared at me incredulously mouth agape as I explained my

theory to her.

"That's the most naïve thing I've heard. No one will ever notice you let alone see your 'soul' unless they find you mildly appealing on the outside first! Appearances are important in the real world!" she exclaimed.

"And good make-up is going to help me?"

"Good make-up is a matter of decorum. If you don't use it, you're being rude to the people around you. You need to be beautiful outside and inside."

"But this all seems fake," I protested.

"Angela, there is no such thing as an ugly woman on Earth, only a lazy one."

I relented and took the (very helpful) make-up lesson. But inside, I refused to give into superficiality. A year later, I found myself having nearly the same conversation in graduate school with Jae, a male classmate.

"You know you're a decent-looking girl in terms of Yale Standards. Oh and by the way, Angel-ahh, that wasn't a compliment."

My immediate response was first embarrassment then offense. I felt my cheeks burn and the blood rush to the tip of my ears as I choked down the mouthful of instant udon soup noodles. We were sitting in the dormitory kitchen eating dinner. I didn't think he was explicitly trying to insult me, but perhaps had a hint of undiagnosed Asperger's.

"Why thank you, Jae. You are also above-average in terms of the Yale Standard," I guffawed after recovering from the errant udon noodle stuck down my windpipe. A lie, but a weak comeback is better than no comeback.

Jae audibly verbalized exactly what he thought most of the time. He was eccentric and skipped a lot of class. An international student from Seoul, Jae wasn't exactly handsome with squinty eyes hiding behind thick glasses, a receding hairline, and bad teeth. He knew he wasn't good-looking and he didn't care. We had a few classes together and became friends mostly because we lived on the same floor of Helen Hadley Hall, an ugly red brick dormitory on Temple Street

that housed poor graduate students in New Haven.

After six months as a graduate student at Yale, I had already surveyed much of the general "talent" on campus. There were a few archetypical preppie J. Crew model-types, but these students were almost always undergraduates. Most students—and especially the graduate students—were largely on the geeky, freakish-looking side. I was surprised at the high proportion of non-attractive people at Yale relative to the large west coast state school I had attended as an undergraduate. Beauty and brains are generally mutually exclusive, and the corollary held true at Yale: brainy people aren't usually very good-looking, and good-looking people don't need to be brainy, so it's obviously rare to find people with both attributes. Graduate school was a perfect illustration of this concept.

Unfortunately for a naïve late-bloomer like me, graduate school was *supposed* to be the Mecca of my dating world because I hadn't really been paying much attention in college. And so I had already squandered precious time, and missed the "Mrs. Express Train" that most of my other undergraduate girlfriends had already wisely caught.

Some of us attend graduate school in search of Truth or to gain a deeper understanding of a certain subject or profession. I went to graduate school with some of those aspirations, but I mainly went with hopes of finding Love. Secretly, a few unspoken reasons of why single people go to grad school are: 1) To take a long, justifiable sabbatical from the real world; and 2) To mingle and date fellow graduate students who have already passed the admission hurdle and who happen to be as equally charming, attractive and intelligent as ourselves.

As a friend with zero mutual romantic attraction, I suppose Jae was trying to help me in his unique way, much like my hip Aunt Alice had tried the summer before.

"You should learn to do better make-up. You're spending all this money at Yale on useless academic topics. But at your age, you should be looking for a husband. In real life, guys are focused on how girls look!" Jae scoffed. "Back in Seoul, girls spend a fortune on make-up classes and plastic surgery. But you American girls don't even bother to wear make-up and go to class in sweats!"

Jae epitomized the double standard of appearance between men and women. And he continued to warn me about the perils of becoming a "Christmas Cake" that would expire after age 25. But who could blame him? He was a Korean guy from Seoul, where one in five Korean women has gone under the knife according to the *Economist*. Accounting for population, South Korea consistently tops the list of countries with the highest number of plastic surgeries per capita.

Those poor Korean girls, I thought to myself. *Thank God, I'm Chinese.* Finishing up my dinner, I tried to ignore Jae's offensive comments, but he brought up the same points about effort and appearance that my Aunt had emphasized the summer before. *Maybe I should wear contacts and make-up more often.*

Jae toned it down in conclusion. "Yes, make-up is crucial! But there may still be hope for you. 24 is not exactly young anymore, but you know yourself and you are funny. There's still time."

That was good to know, but I still wasn't ready to totally abandon my sweats and glasses.

***

The Spa Day is sacrosanct to the Hong Kong woman. After all, it's a priority to try to repair the workweek damage done to your face from the ravages of sleep deprivation, particularly as you age. Eyebags and crows' feet are no joke to the single career woman over the age of 30, particularly if she still wants to find a man. I never understood Spa culture until I moved to Hong Kong where Saturday morning Spaing is a competitive national sport, along with shopping and eating.

I was working a lot of hours and my skin was looking pretty bad. While I wasn't aiming for flawless milky-white skin, I was hoping to look less pimply and splotchy. So I asked around and was guided to a reputable clinic near my office.

I was finally initiated into the not-so-secret sorority sisterhood that is the Hong Kong Spa. I walked into the Spa and signed up for a number of packages and skin treatments. Much work was needed and much money was spent. The subsequent six Saturday mornings were

booked for facials, extractions and eye treatments. It was painful, but at the end of six weeks, my skin looked significantly better.

If you look carefully at a sample of Hong Kong women, you will notice that many of them boast beautiful, flawless, milky-white skin—translucent to the extent that you cannot reasonably tell how old they are. Why do Asian women scuttle about like insects from shade patch to shade patch armed with UV-reflecting parasols and Darth Vader-like masks? To avoid the Sun's evil rays, which cause unsightly freckles, liver spots, and premature wrinkling. Growing up in the US, I never understood the Asian obsession with pale skin. A bronzed tan seemed to be what everyone was going for in the States.

But all the Hong Kong TV and print commercials are full of facial whitening products. I recall my high school days, when my Grandmother saw me after a summer of tennis. She shrieked in despair when she saw me: "Aiyaaah! What have you done?!... You look like a field coolie who's been doing hard labor! Why are you so daaaark?"

My best friend in Hong Kong (who has successfully attained the Asian nirvana of pale poreless skin) tried to explain the mania surrounding the "whitening skincare" trend among women in Hong Kong and throughout Asia: "There's no guarantee that you'll be born with a beautiful face, but having great skin is like a trump card. You can't hide perfect skin, it just glows."

At the end of my set of treatments, I decided to try a set of eyelash extensions. Caucasians have no idea what it's like to have Chinese eyelashes. We Chinese women pine for your beautiful long curvy lashes as most of us are stuck with short, straight, barely visible lashes. Mascara and the eyelash curler help, but the result is fleeting. Enter the eyelash extension where a skilled technician individually glues fake eyelashes (made of plastic or mink) to your natural eyelashes one by one. The process takes about 2 hours and lasts 2 weeks. It can cost up to $300 US dollars to apply and $150 dollars every other week to maintain the lashes. You can't really wash your face or blink properly until the fake lashes are chemically removed.

Beauty is pain.

After my first date with my husband, he later told me he noticed

my "eyelashes." It was only after we had dated for a few months that I confessed that my lashes were fake. But I was glad that he appreciated them, and the effort it took to maintain them. It was a relief to be honest with him, and he appreciated my efforts all the same. Underneath the good skin and fake eyelashes, he finally saw me for who I really was: a naïve tomboy who liked to wear glasses and sweatpants all the time. And it was only after we got to know each other beyond appearances that we fell in love with each other's real selves.

My Aunt and Jae were half-right: people do notice effort and appearances, but there's more to True Love than superficial and fleeting impressions of beauty. While I've come to agree that outward appearances are important, staying truthful and consistent to your inner beauty is just as critical in developing meaningful relationships.

My wedding day was the last time I had eyelash extensions done and wore tulle. I'm really hoping I won't have to wear either ever again. But it was also the day where all of my own personal Disney Princess fantasies came true. And as soon as the whole thing was over, I was even more thrilled to be back in my glasses and sweats.

REDSTARTS BY BOB LANG
Certificate Program in Natural Science Illustration, 2012

THE END OF THEM

Danielle Dreger
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN WRITING FOR CHILDREN, 2012

Boston in late April smelled like decay. Post-marathon, after the city returned to its sleepy spring self (it was no New York. Jared should know; he had been born there), the city gardeners and landscapers came out in full force to mulch the flower beds in all the public spaces, as if the tulips couldn't wake without the scent of pulped bark and compost. He liked the tulips okay, but it was the smell of the mulch and dirt that made him think of spring.

This was his favorite time of year in Boston (and in New York), when every moment or thing was bursting with possibility, his heart included.

Today, on this late April afternoon, he sat with Libby, his quasi-girlfriend of six weeks, on a park bench overlooking the empty pond

in the public garden. The swan boats were still dormant, at least until next month when the tourists would arrive in droves clad in socks and sandals and fanny packs and for that Jared hated Boston in the summer.

The public garden was practically empty, aside from the homeless woman walking in circles around her park bench across the pond. Even from this distance he could tell that the ground was worn, like she had been circling this bench for months, maybe even years. The air was still, the city quiet, allowing Jared to say the words he had been holding in his throat for some time now.

"Libby, I'm gay." *Shit.* Those weren't the three words he meant to say, the ones ripe on his tongue. He was supposed to tell Libby, "I love you." It was the prelude to asking her to prom at Cambridge Prep next month where they would likely be crowned King and Queen.

Libby, who had been absently watching a pair of birds, possibly robins (she was no expert) flirt in the branches of a nearby weeping willow, turned to her almost-boyfriend in confusion. "What did you just say?"

Jared cleared his throat. "What do you mean?" Maybe she hadn't heard him correctly.

Oh, but she had. "What did you just say?" Libby repeated as she pushed a strand of her dark hair behind her ear, as if her curtain of hair had somehow manipulated his words. He was supposed to be asking her to junior prom. She had been waiting weeks for this.

"I, uh." Jared stalled. Here was no way he was going to repeat what he had just confessed to this sweet, earnest girl he had been dating. He swallowed hard and ran his hand through his short blond hair, careful not to mess up the peak over his forehead that he had carefully styled this morning. "I love you," he said weakly.

Libby sighed. "That's not what you said." Her voice was soft and her blue eyes already sad under the fringe of her dark bangs.

Jared felt her gaze on his face and his cheeks flushed involuntary. Shit. Why had he said that? He was going to have to come clean with her. It wasn't part of his original plan. He wasn't ready to admit this possible truth to anyone; not to himself and obviously not to Libby.

Libby read the mixed emotions on his face loud and clear. "What about prom?" she asked. "I was going to lose my virginity to you at the after party."

Jared cringed at her revelation. They hadn't even made it to third base yet and she was already planning on having sex. He was probably the only guy in their high school who didn't want to see her naked. "We can still go as friends."

Libby laughed a little too harshly. "What is the point?" She thought about that blue dress she had seen in the window of a boutique on Newbery Street. The color had matched her eyes perfectly. It would never be hers. She and Jared would never be crowned prom king and queen. There would be no dinner at Ruth Chris, no limo ride along the Charles River at sunset, no after party at the Park Plaza hotel. This was the end of them.

Jared reached for her hand and to his surprise Libby didn't pull away. "I'm sorry it has to be like this. I honestly wasn't planning on it but I guess I should tell you now before you went and fell in love with me."

What if I already did? What if you're the love of my life? "That's cool. Glad you told me." She felt like she had been punched in her stomach and couldn't get enough air in her lungs. Bile rose in her throat. This is my heart breaking. "I mean you have to be true to yourself, right?"

"We can still go to prom if you want. It's not like I have any other dates lined up."

Libby considered his offer and watched the homeless woman do her circuits. She was dangerously close to a bed of pink tulips. "I don't know," she said. *I still have time to find a straight date,* she thought. *I have three weeks. There's always Matt or Jeremy Parker or that quiet guy in English. He has really good hair.* "I think I'll keep my options open." She pulled her hand away and stood up.

Jared watched Libby begin to button up her red raincoat and pick up her black messenger bag from the bench before he thought to try and stop her. "I don't want you to go." *I want to talk it out with you and change your mind.* "Stay a bit longer, will you? I could use a friend right now."

Libby shouldered her bag. She had already formulated a new plan for prom. "I have all the friends I need. What I want is a boyfriend."

Before he could reply she was gone. It was just Jared and the homeless woman and the smell of mulch.

JOURNEY TOWARDS THE LIGHT

Margaret Coombs Farris
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN MEMOIR, 2012

I HAVE BEEN ON a spiritual journey for as long as I can remember. My awakenings have come in various forms—from subtle realizations to intense transformations. Some left me sad and confused; others had happier outcomes. Now, at the age of fifty nine, I see that my journey has been leading me to a place of inner peace, hope—and gratitude. My journey to the light has enabled me to overcome some very serious physical and emotional challenges.

A depressive nature and bipolar disorder bring out the dark side of my personality. This was particularly the case during the years when I drank and nearly destroyed the family. A lifetime of exploring ways to cope with my life eventually led me to a belief in a higher power. It took many years to get to this point, a point that I had resisted,

doubted, and challenged for a long time.

My life's journey has been one of *faith* as well *as absence of faith*—the stories here represent my spiritual experiences and what I have learned. As I became more and more disabled and lost much use of my body, I began to lose hope that I would get better. Eventually, I reached my bottom and felt that the world would be better off without me. But, God wasn't going to let me go just yet. With the spiritual experience that followed, I came out from a deep depression. The absence of faith eventually turned into the faith that would enable me to accept my life as it was.

I grew up in Spokane, WA, the daughter of the Dean (or head priest) of the Cathedral of St. John, and traditional in my Episcopalian beliefs. At that time, my God was a masterful and austere male figure, not exactly the "Jesus Loves Me" from Sunday school. Because I was embarrassed to be Margie Coombs, the daughter of the cathedral's dean, I took comfort in telling my Sunday school class that my dad drove a milk truck for the Carnation Dairy

From the early acceptance of my family's religion through the following periods of questioning and rebellion, my life became a series of ups and downs, anger, and questioning. I would soon understand that every enlightening experience was a preparation for future challenges—good and bad.

May 1969, 16 years old

I was sitting in our book-lined study in the deanery of the cathedral in Spokane, WA. The elegant study was dark and wood-paneled. As I sat on the footstool, listening to our houseguest, I was riveted. He was The Very Reverend Martin Sullivan, Dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London, and I was a young woman full of questions and awe.

"What do you mean you didn't believe in God?" I asked, incredulously.

"Margie, I came to a point in my ministry when I didn't believe in anything I thought I knew about God and Christ," said Martin.

I was curious also how he survived his position within the very traditional doctrines of the Anglican Church. I thought that people who were strong in their convictions were fascinating, especially those who challenged authority.

When I met him, he'd just left London, and there'd been an article in the *London Times* criticizing him for allowing the cast of *Hair* to perform in the cathedral. The news was that there would be nudity in the cathedral—a travesty, (and not true). He thought the flap was hilarious; he enjoyed stirring up the establishment.

That May, I was in the midst of period of questioning—politics, ethics, religion, as well as the perennial quandary—the existence of God. Our house was filled with the American and British deans who were in Spokane for a conference. Martin Sullivan spent quite a bit of time talking to me. Also, he witnessed my first "hit you over the head" spiritual experience.

"Yes, Margie," Martin said. "There was a time when I had a real crisis of faith; I had been a priest for a long time, so I didn't know what was happening to me."

"It was as if I had been leading my parishes with a donkey cart. I'd put all the religious trappings—the rituals, politics, hierarchy, etc., into the cart, and it merely got heavier and heavier. I realized that I needed to get rid of everything. I was losing my way, so I threw everything out of the cart and was left with an assortment of half-believed truths."

"After a while, I began to see, with increasing clarity, that I had two core beliefs—and hope. I knew that God existed, and that Christ spoke meaningfully. Based on these two doctrines, I could begin to put my life back in order. So, I put items back into the cart without anything that didn't seem true," he said.

Martin sat back in the chair, smiled, and looked at me, sitting at his feet, listening intently. He went on. "What I realized, was that what the world needed was a new religion."

As he spoke, I felt a transformation in myself. It was as if I was hearing something that I could wrap my head around; my 16-year brain was seeing God with a new simplicity. Martin's spiritual experi-

ence helped him to perceive God's place as uncomplicated. It resulted in a profound understanding in me that "hit me over the head." This was different from my other experiences because it was so dramatic.

After Martin left Spokane, I became more active in the church. It would be one of a number of times I would try to accept the church.

June 23, 1998.

It was a typical Seattle day: overcast, drizzling rain with a cold wind. Our car was quiet and solemn. I was going away for a few weeks, and after they dropped me off, the boys, Alex and Jon, were going to Spokane to stay with my family. My husband, Mike, would stay behind and work.

My family was fed up with my drinking. I believed I was a hopeless drunk, who would lose everything and die a horrible, lonely, alcoholic death. I couldn't get what people in A.A. were talking about. I didn't doubt I was an alcoholic; I knew I'd eventually get sober – but I was still digging down to my bottom.

I was lying to everyone, trying to convince them that I wasn't drinking, but it wasn't true. My life was totally out of control. I was very afraid I'd get in an accident, hit a child or hurt one of the boys.

"Mom," asked our 11-year-old son, Alex, "Are you going to stop drinking at that new school you're going to?"

"I'm going to try my hardest, Sweetie" I said. "I love you very much and want you to grow up with a sober mom. I don't like myself the way I am and want to learn what I can do to stop."

"But, Mom, how come you have to go away, especially for so long?" asked Alex.

I was heartbroken. Through my selfishness and depression, I had put my family through so much; I felt that I didn't deserve their love and support. "Honey, it's exactly twenty-eight days, and you two will be staying at Aunt Cate and Uncle Peter's house. Nana is teaching vacation bible school, and I'm sure she signed you up for that." I said.

"Oh boy!" said Alex, sarcastically.

"Does Aunt Cate still have her dog?" asked Jon. "Did you know that she doesn't have all her teeth?" he asked, seriously.

I responded, "Yes, Jon, Rosie is an old dog, and sometimes they lose their teeth when they get old."

"Oh," said Jon.

I spent twenty-eight days at Residence XII, a women's recovery center in Kirkland, WA. When I first got there, they left me alone to give me time to adjust. Then, the work began, and I realized that it was the first time I'd really spent time on myself.

As I worked on steps one, two and three, I began to accept my obsession of the mind and allergy of the body. For me, I never saw the spiritual experience of the "burning bush" that some people see; rather, my experience came slowly. In Alcoholics Anonymous, there's a phrase that can be used to describe my process of getting sober:

I came
I came to
I came to believe

The spiritual experience that evolved inside of me wasn't a frantic time. In fact, the spiritual experience was a gentle process, as if it just happened as I was doing the work of getting sober—one day at a time.

After twenty-eight difficult days, I felt like a different person. The spiritual experience enabled me to embark on this new life with a deeper understanding of myself in relation to God. In order to get sober, I realized that I would need to change my concept of God. No longer did the elderly, male, severe concept of God make sense to me. The God that evolved during the early days of my sobriety let me be kinder to myself, and gently led me through one of the most profoundly spiritual experiences of my life up to that point.

November 2010

A tomblike silence permeated the household, except in the basement where our son, Jon, was watching a movie with a group of friends of

his. He came up to see how I was, and I was sitting on the side of the bed.

"Mom, how'ya doing." He never went too far away. "Mom, can I get you anything. Do you want me to open the blinds?"

It was the first time in three days that I'd tried to get out of bed. I spoke with Jon for a few minutes and asked him if he would call his friend, Kara, upstairs.

Kara, Jon's best friend, was an insightful, edgy young woman. She was a talented writer and poet. She came upstairs—sometimes we talked, and sometimes we just sat there holding hands.

Four months earlier, I'd broken my neck by slipping on the floor in a restaurant. After weeks in Harborview and more in a nursing home, I went home. But, I started to decline. I didn't feel as though I would ever get better. Mike moved his office into the living room; he cared for me around the clock. As I began to lose hope, I stopped eating. Mike was desperate; he took me to all my doctors to see if they could help. All they could do is adjust meds.

Mike sat me down and quietly explained to me, "Margie, by not eating, you are slowly killing yourself. I can't make you start eating. But I love you, and I don't want you to die. Won't you please drink the Ensure I got you—it's chocolate.

As I sat on the side of my bed, holding Kara's hand, a change slowly began. As God began to seep in, with it came the beginning of hope.

But Mike was still concerned. He called my sister, Cate, to see if she had any suggestions, and as busy as she was, she said "I will be there as soon as I can."

This time together would become a turning point in both of our lives.

While we waited for Cate to come from Spokane, my friends Karen and Linda would come over. We prayed all of the prayers we could think of and then made up a few. The peacefulness I felt started to grow, and I decided I wanted to live.

Cate's visit continued the spiritual experience that Kara had begun. She helped to give me hope and the will to live. We read our favorite prayers from *The Episcopal Book of Common Prayer.* One of those

prayers we shared was the one both dad and grandpa used before they preached:

Oh God, the protector of all that trust in thee
Without whom nothing is strong, nothing is holy
Increase and multiply upon us thy mercies
That thou being our ruler and guide
We may so pass through things temporal
That we finally lose not the things eternal
All this we ask through Jesus Christ, Amen

After a few days of love, prayer, and support, I asked Mike, "Did you say that Ensure is chocolate?"

My journey towards the light has taken a lifetime, but it has left me full of love and gratitude. The path has not been easy and sometimes all-consuming. I grew up with all the elements of a privileged life, but was in reality I was a scared, sad, and embarrassed to be who I was.

My family was one that was admired and envied in the community. While there were numerous advantages, such as education, unfortunately, our exterior lives masked dysfunction, denial, and lies. The most profound examples of this were my parents' alcoholism and their denial of my mental illness and depression. Throughout my journey, as I've uncovered the truth about myself and others, I've learned about the power of forgiveness.

My journey has made me the person who I am today. Acceptance of a God of my choice and understanding has helped to make my spiritual experiences more personal—more a part of me.

REDDISH EGRET BY KIRSTEN WALQUIST (DETAIL OVERLEAF)
Certificate Program in Natural Science Illustration, 2012


K. WAHLQUIST

LEAVING LITTLE SAIGON

Roz Duavit Pasion
LITERARY FICTION CAPSTONE, 2012

Before taking his first steps, Donnie J. Yang's future had been mapped out before him.

He would become a Professional: a Doctor, or a Lawyer. Anything less would be a failure.

When the time came, he dutifully pursued the study of Law. But it was the sixties and he was in his twenties—the obedience and compliance that reaped rewards at home contrasted sharply with the zeitgeist of the decade. When Congress announced the possibility of suspending draft deferrals for students, the tenuous balance of Donnie Yang's life tilted into the wind.

He was the first born son and only child of Luli and Tian Yang, immigrants from Taishan, a coastal city in the Guangdong Province of

the People's Republic of China. His parents immigrated to America sponsored by their parents; who'd come to America as contract workers to build the transcontinental railroad.

Luli established herself as a fish monger at the Alice Street Wet Market. She was known to be both shrewd and enchanting. Luli could guess with great accuracy the total weight of all the fishes in a customer's basket before placing each one separately on the scale—then calculate the amount of the purchase without a cash register. Initially customers balked, challenging her with abacuses they'd brought from home. But eventually they didn't bother; she'd proven herself time and again. Instead they reveled with childlike awe at the spectacle she made of every transaction.

Tian, Donnie's father, was an apothecary. He owned a shop in one of the burgeoning block-long strip malls specializing in oriental imports for Orientals. He too was reputed to have mysterious talents. Tian brewed a potion rumored to quell rash behavior. Businessmen sipped the tonic before important negotiations, and lovers dabbed it on their tongues when the urge to confess indiscretions threatened the logic of remaining silent. Much of the peace and prosperity enjoyed by their community was attributed to Tian's elixir.

To his parents and their friends, UC Berkeley was the Harvard of the west, and Donnie's acceptance into the law school translated into status for his family. For him it was just another item to check off his parents' wish list. He'd done everything expected of him: spelling bees, violin lessons, competitive chess, for his eleventh birthday he became a Mensa member.

If he attended law school that should be enough to end of his feelings of obligation. He was a first generation Chinese-American and the cultural blueprint of Confucian society was gradually fading, yet his sense of familial duty persisted in the form of inner conflict.

Six mornings a week, in predawn solitude, Donnie cruised to Le Boulangerie de Petit Saigon on the same Kelly-green Schwinn he'd peddled throughout the Bay Area since high school. Under fading street lamps the merchants of Little Saigon took brooms and hoses to the

sidewalks and streets. There was Mrs. Pham and her niece swishing and spraying under the canvas awnings that provided shade for tiers of fruits and vegetables assembled into colorful patchworks: the reds of chili peppers, lychees, rambutans; the oranges of mangos, papayas, persimmons; the yellow-greens of cherimoya, chayote, bok choy. Tucked into the middle of the block, Mr. Nguyen rolled up the metal blinds at his foot massage parlor. Next door, the iron grates clattered open in front of Mr. Bui's jewelry store. Donnie waved as he passed, this was the best time of the morning.

At Le Boulangerie Chef Tran was elbow deep in flour preparing for the morning bake off. They always started with the croissants, the pastry that established the bakery's reputation. Standing face to face across the butcher-block island, they rolled out dough and triple cream butter into long rectangles, then cut and shaped them into crescent moons. Gauzy layers of dough then rose with the sun.

"Gentle Donnie, slowly. Roll the dough as if you were your massaging your lover's back. She must be coaxed or she will turn to lifeless paste." Donnie blushed under his toque. Chef Tran handled all pastries with a romantic flair characteristic of the French pâtissiers he'd trained under in Saigon. "Watch me," Chef said, then he demonstrated on the fleshy mound before him. Donnie tried again although imagining a lover made him too tentative. The taut line formed by Chef's lips during intense moments of work lifted at the corners as he shook his head with an expression of mock despair. Everything about the bakery contained traces of the indelible French authority that defined Chef Tran as a pâtissier. Like the sign hanging behind the counter, lettered in Chef's flourished script: Banh Sinh Nhat dung toan Crème au Buerre va Crème Chantilly. Chef hadn't translated it into English until Donnie brought it his attention: Birthday cake filled with butter cream or Chantilly cream.

By first light, Oakland's most coveted croissants lined the pastry cases accompanied by bahn sinh nhat, brioche, choux a la crème, éclairs, khoai mi, moon cakes, madeleines, macaroons, palmiers, profiteroles, napoleons. Their warmth fogged the glass. Bakery devotees jostled for position, their index fingers poked the air while they made

their requests, "I'll take a dozen of those, three of these, and one of this, this and this." Pink boxes stuffed with decadence were wrapped then knotted with butcher's twine; a safeguard against plundering fingers. Faces awakened with anticipation. Chef Tran mingled with his customers—slipping palmiers wrapped in lace doilies into each hand—thanking them for their patronage. Donnie savored the ritual from the kitchen threshold; his satisfaction peaked as the cases emptied.

When the flow of customers slowed, Chef rejoined Donnie in the kitchen to prepare for the next morning. Chef turned on the transistor radio sitting in the window sill above the sink and tuned his ear to news of the war. Donnie observed as Chef's erect posture slumped like a sack of flour, heavy against the edge of the counter. Finally, the voice of a perky young woman extolling the virtues of Palmolive dish washing liquid, interrupted the somber litany of air raids, troop movements and casualties.

"Maybe you should turn it off, Chef," Donnie said. Over the past year—between instructions on whipping lofty meringues, tempering chocolate and caramelizing sugar into liquid amber—Chef Tran reflected on his life in Vietnam, his arrival in America 1954 as a refugee, and the family he left behind in Saigon. Like many refugees, Chef thought his family would be able to follow within months of his arrival, but the months had stretched into years and hope passed into uncertainty.

"Unrest is growing; it's better to know," Chef said.

"But Chef, what can you do?"

"I send care packages. Pastries and fortune cookies with special fortunes. My favorite is: 'You are brave and will live a long prosperous life!' It is for strength and hope. I put a note in each box, telling the soldier that I have a wife and a daughter in Saigon. I thank them." Donnie was shaken by his naive insensitivity. The Vietnam War was a constant and dominate preoccupation for him, yet it had remained abstract, political and foreign until that moment.

"Do you really believe in the war, Chef?"

"Mrs. Phan, on the corner, her sister is there. Mr. Bui's mother

and father. Mr. Nguyen, like me, is the only one of his family here. Enough talk. Go, you'll be late for school."

Taking the job at Le Boulangerie de Petit Saigon was the first time Donnie openly defied his parents. He had a full scholarship, why create unnecessary distractions? But working with Chef Tran was education, not distraction. He was earning a margin of independence and Chef had become a portal to understanding a war he was trying to make peace with.

It was 1966, the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement were loaded backdrops against which civil disobedience played out with increasing violence and regularity. It didn't take a degree in Law to see justice wasn't blind. Everyone knew their options: if you were poor you'd be drafted into the army; if you were smart but didn't have money, you went into the Air Force; if you wanted to be the first to fight, you joined to the marines. If you had money, you went to college. Protesting in anti-war rallies on the lush greens of Memorial Glade was the closest thing to the defoliated fields of Cu Chi Donnie and the other students would experience of the Vietnam conflict.

Returning home to the Jackson Street apartment he shared with his mother and father, Donnie could hear the television blaring from their living room as he climbed the stairs of the four story walk-up. It was the nightly news. From the entry he watched the silhouettes of his parents under dimmed lights, huddled together, standing too close to the set. He could make out hushed fragments of Mandarin and English directed at the television. In front of them, the black and white image of a paternal Walter Cronkite flickered. Demand for troops in Vietnam was surging. Congress was debating whether to continue student deferment.

Donnie continued to watch, sure there would be coverage of the anti-draft protest that exploded on Sproul Plaza earlier that day. They were protesting the draft in general, and its inequities in particular. He'd studied about the systemic injustices that fueled the confrontation. Working-class, rural, and black kids were being drafted in disproportionate numbers; they were the of casualties of the war

overseas and the collateral damage of ongoing battles here at home. Donnie recognized that as a student he was privileged, but he knew first hand what it was like to be in the minority, hovering on the margin of acceptance.

Military recruiters stood shoulder to shoulder brandishing red, white and blue banners with letters three feet tall: AMERICA, LOVE IT OR LEAVE IT! Donnie huddled with a band of student protesters chanting, "Hell No! We Won't Go!—Hell No! We Won't Go!—Hell No! We Won't Go!" What started as an anti-draft rally—students exercising their right to assemble—was escalating. Leaders of loosely organized protesters passed out tear gas grenades stolen from the riot patrol. One was shoved into Donnie's bare hands. National Guardsmen clad in helmets and gas masks, armed with Billy Clubs, formed a veil thin human barrier. If order was threatened the Guard would respond with retributive force. Violence was averted that day: rhetoric was the only weapon pulled from the arsenal. Donnie secretly hoped he'd been captured on film, linking arms with hippies and peaceniks. "Hey, hey, LBJ, how many kids have you killed today?"

Luli's voice registered above the TV volume, "You call sister. Call Ying. She take him."

"Calm Luli, we cannot send Donnie to Vancouver," Tian said.

"We can! Why no? Other boys go to Canada."

"Because I won't go," Donnie said, moving out of the dark. Protesting at the rally emboldened him. Being part of the crowd, feeling the adrenaline crush his meekness. He thought about Chef Tran, his wife and daughter and all of the other Vietnamese in Little Saigon whose relatives were in harm's way; about his friends from high school who were drafted, some now dead; about the dream of freedom that was not exclusive to Americans but shared by all who believed in the primacy of human rights, civil liberties and equality. He had as many reasons to go to war as to protest against it.

His mother spun, trembling, raising her hand, poised to slap him across the mouth. "Not your decision."

"You're the one always saying how lucky I am to be born in American. This is part of the deal, I can't be an American only when it's

convenient."

"Ayee!" Her voice rose like an approaching siren. "Shut your mouth!"

"In law school, they teach us how to argue. That was your idea too. Remember?"

"Enough, Donnie," his father said.

"You go to Auntie Ying. Study there."

"I won't go." This was one decision that was his and his alone. He addressed his mother but looked to his father for support, scanning Tian's face for a sign of allegiance. Instead, he saw a man divided. Luli must have seen it too.

"You fool, nobody ask you," Luli said.

The next day Donnie never made it to school. After his shift at the bakery, he met with U.S. Air Force Major Hank Reese. When he'd finished his undergrad in Political Science at Stanford, Selective Services routed his profile to every branch of the military with the recommendation to recruit.

Reports of corruption and epidemic drug abuse by military personnel overseas was fueling criticism of the increasingly unpopular war. Drug smuggling in the Golden Triangle had taken root in Air Force installations throughout Vietnam, Laos and Thailand posing a threat to legitimate operations. Under presidential mandate, all stripes of the military set out to clean up their ranks. If they didn't do it themselves the State Department would come in and do it for them. They'd all approached Donnie but he'd committed to law school, again able to defer military service. At that time Major Reese's offer made an impression; now it was an option.

"Have to say, I was surprised to hear from you Yang."

"Thank you for meeting me, Major Reese."

"So, you've reconsidered our offer?"

"Yes, sir."

"What's changed?"

"I've been in law school for a year; I'm not cut out for it, sir."

"Yang this war is getting mighty unpopular. Most guys like you,

guys with options, aren't showing up at my door. What gives?"

"With all due respect, sir, my reasons are personal."

"They're always personal, Yang. The Air Force wants you; your motives are my business."

"I'd rather not receive a draft notice, sir."

"I like your initiative, but I hate to think our offer is the lesser of two evils."

"No, sir. I just needed some time to figure things out for myself." He hadn't figured everything out but couldn't wait for all the answers to make a decision and risk it being made for him.

"Okay Yang, the offered stands. The U.S. Air Force will train you as a Special Investigations Officer. You understand you'll be working Internal Security undercover?"

Internal Investigators were working to quietly eradicate graft within the military before the media got hold of its dirty laundry and hung it out stateside to dry. It was as much about PR as policy.

"Yes, sir."

"Being a narc won't win you any popularity contests."

"I've never been popular, sir."

"What about your family, your parents on board?"

"I'm twenty-two, sir. I don't need their permission."

"No you don't, but you might want their support."

"That's not likely, sir.

"I'll get the ball rolling on our end—I suggest you get things squared away at home."

"Yes, sir."

"Any particular skills, Yang? You'll need an undercover AFS: Air Force Specialty."

"I know how to bake, sir."

"Jesus Christ, Yang. Does that mean you can cook too?" For the first time during their conversation Major Reese cracked a smile.

"I can learn, sir."

"Most of our Officers' Clubs overseas have an Executive Chef on base. Christ, some of those places are goddamn tropical resorts. I'll take care of it. And Yang, leave 'Donnie' at home. Go with DJ."

"Thank you, sir. It'll be an honor to serve."

He told Chef Tran before telling his parents. Donnie waited until his departure was imminent, not wanting a long farewell. When he arrived at Le Boulangerie de Petit Saigon that morning his heart was beating as if he'd just sprinted across town, sweat beaded then trickled over his skin. He felt tired and the day had just begun. The transistor radio was on in the kitchen and Chef had started the croissants without him. Chef looked up from the dough motioning him forward.

"Sorry I'm late, Chef. I…" He couldn't meet Chef's gaze and the spiel he'd practiced unraveled before he could pull it from his throat.

"Come, there's work." Chef placed a hand on Donnie's shoulder guiding him to the table. Donnie remembered Chef telling him that when his mind was restless with worry he'd find solace in the rhythm of work. Rolling dough became a meditation. Donnie got through the morning rush.

When he returned to the kitchen, the transistor was off and Chef was seated at the butcher-block island with an empty stool next to him. He'd had prepared two iced coffees: opaque, black espresso dripped onto the melting cubes covered in sweetened condensed milk.

"No radio, Chef?"

"Oh, the important news today is not on the radio I think." Chef's face was open, not searching but receptive.

"I made a decision. I joined the Air Force." Donnie read in Chef's expression surprise and concern but mostly there was pride. Tears grew thick on the rims of Chef's dancing eyes, an alchemy of emotions than needed no explanation. "You'll send me some of your special care packages, right?" Donnie asked, trying to leaven the moment.

They walked out into the sunshine of Little Saigon. He took in the neighborhood that had come to feel like home and realized he'd never before considered visiting its namesake. It was time.

"Where's your bicycle, Donnie?" Chef asked.

"I sold it, Chef. Won't need it where I'm going."

2 *Family*

THE SMOKY HILLS

David Lister
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN MEMOIR, 2012

On the second leg of a road trip in search of my father's past, my mother and I arrive at West Bond Street and South Santa Fe Avenue in Salina, a small town in the Smoky Hills of north-central, Kansas. The region is named for a haze that hangs over the hills in the morning, as if ancient spirits rise from their graves to linger on the horizon. These hills are a popular location for archaeologists and paleontologists to excavate pre-historic Native American sites and fossils preserved from the Ice Age.

Like the scientists who explore these hills, I am searching for artifacts from the past connected to my father, who lived in Salina during grade school. At my home in Seattle, I have my father's tie clip, ashtray, bottle of cologne, and bookends that he built as a child. The

bookends are shaped like the front of a barn and have black cowboy boots with a white star painted on the side. They speak to his rugged, mid-western boyhood growing up on the farm, shucking wheat, working oil rigs, and bailing hay.

As a boy growing up in suburban Kansas City, I didn't work a hard life on the farm like my father. I spent my time reading Sherlock Holmes and Edgar Allen Poe, watching *Unsolved Mysteries* on TV, trading baseball cards with friends, and playing soccer and basketball. I didn't build things like my father, or work the land, or travel the world as a Navy corpsman. My life took a different route; one I feel does not live up to my father's rigorous masculinity. I have returned to Salina to collect pieces of a father that I hope will help me relate to him, to fill a hole in my identity that has existed since his death on my third birthday.

"You know," my mother says, stepping out of the car. "You can tell me if you ever want to drive. I like driving, but I understand if you'd like to take a turn. I mean, I know it's sometimes weird for a man to be driven by a woman."

My mother says this whenever we drive together, but it bothers me that she still worries about embarrassing my sense of manhood. She's always concerned about appealing to a stereotypical male dominance from her era, that a man must drive the car, manage the money, or make the major decisions of a family. This is what our father represented to her before he died. But despite being a single parent for most of her life, my mother still does not see herself as a woman of power. She wants to remain dependent on me or other men, or to at least give us the opportunity to maintain our traditional, male role while in her presence. The irony is that I grew up unaware of the traditions of paternal dominance that she tries to offer me when we're in a car together.

I look in her direction before responding, saddened by her frail self-image.

"You know I don't care, Mom."

"Yeah, I know," she replies. "Just- just making sure."

After this brief, awkward moment, we turn to look at the houses on

South Santa Fe. I gaze in awe at these ghostly structures filled with possible ties to my father, and I am eager to discover new artifacts to add to my collection at home. I hope to capture pictures of his house, to peer inside the window that he used as a child to witness a stormy night, or to gather a chip of bark from the tree he climbed during the summertime. The tree on the corner of this street stands fifty or sixty feet high, the branches canopied over the lawn like a protective mother, shading it from the scorching sun. I want to re-live my days as a boy and climb it, to feel the rough bark that my father probably scaled as a boy, to smell its leaves and capture some long lost scent of my father's that the tree has absorbed into its skin. The branches of this tree stretch out into the past, reaching toward a history of the land and the people who have lived here, linking me ever closer to my father's spirit.

"I don't see it," my mother says.

I look at the numbers on the houses. 104, 108, 110.

"Yeah, 106 is missing," I add. 106 South Santa Fe was my dad's house during elementary school. It is here that he learned how to be a man from *his* father, listening to stories of his dad climbing telephone poles during thunderstorms and blizzards to fix phone lines cut by the ravaging winds of the plains.

"Hmm," my mother muses. She stares at the house on the corner. "I'm sorry it's no longer here. I hope you don't feel that you wasted a trip." I frown at this sad statement, frustrated by my mother's tendency to look at what is missing instead of what is present.

"Well," I respond with a sigh. "At least we can see what the street and the neighborhood is like. Or maybe we're in the wrong spot."

A woman walks out of the front door of 104 South Santa Fe and walks across the yard towards a bag of leaves and a shovel that leans up against a tree. My mother looks at me and raises her eyebrows.

"Should we ask?" she says, hinting at the woman who has entered our view. I'm usually afraid to bother people in the privacy of their homes, worried I will be seen as an intruder. My mother, however, is the opposite, willing to ask and share anything with strangers. Her actions always lead her to her destined goal, whereas mine usually

lead me astray due to my fears of invading another's personal space.

"You may not be here again," my mother prods. I know she's right, and I don't want to miss the opportunity that I came here for.

"Um, excuse me," I say, tripping up onto the sidewalk. "Sorry to bother you, but do you know where 106 South Santa Fe is?"

The woman looks at me with a squint in her eye. "106? Um, well, I think it's gone, actually. I think it was demolished years ago."

A huge gust of wind blows through the yard as she says this, the tree's branches trembling as if they will break, and I stumble by the power of the wind that pushes my gut to the side. It feels as if my father's spirit has been angered by this woman's proclamation.

After the wind calms down, she continues to explain that she thinks 106 was sold in the mid-70's. She believes that her house now encompasses where 106 used to be, but she has only lived here for about ten years, so she can't be certain.

I stare at the grass as she speaks, wondering what artifacts might lie underneath her land. I want to take her shovel and dig, to search for remnants of my father's house, like a beam from his bedroom wall, shards of a broken window, a lost toy truck, or perhaps a splinter of wood from the bookends he may have carved in the back yard one summer evening.

My mother grimaces. "Oh, darn it! We really wanted to see it. It was his father's house, but his father passed away when he was a boy and we're doing research on him." I roll my eyes, embarrassed by my mother's attempt to gain sympathy.

"Oh, that's too bad," the woman replies. "I'm sorry it's gone."

We continue some small talk for a few minutes, say our goodbyes, and drive to the library to search the housing archives for an account of what happened to my father's home. However, no records remain on his house, and we discover that his school, Salina Elementary, has been closed for years.

The rest of the day we wander the streets of downtown, take photographs of 19th century architecture, and relax in a city park. The town is quiet except for my mother and I and an occasional car, but no other pedestrians. We can hear our feet hit the pavement as we

walk and the wind howls in our ears as it blows by. The wind is often vicious here on the plains, with gusts gaining spontaneous speed and whipping your hair across your face unexpectedly. When my face is burned by the whip of the wind, I close my eyes and imagine my father's ghost streaming by and nudging me to prove that he is here, that I am on the right track to finding his remains, that I have purpose in this journey. I often depend on these visions to keep me moving towards my goal.

"David?"

I open my eyes to my mother's inquisitive glare. She looks tired, worn out by the heat that rises from the street in slow, heavy waves.

"Yeah?"

"Are you ready to go?"

I don't know how to answer this at first. No, I guess. I'm not ready. I don't want to leave this town without something to show for our efforts, for our long, arduous drive. I want some hint of my father's existence to reveal itself so I may take it back with me to Seattle.

Unfortunately, Salina feels as though it is transforming into a ghost town. It's a Saturday afternoon and the streets are empty and shops are closed. Neither my father nor his family lives here any longer. His house and his school have disappeared. My father's presence has all but been erased in Salina.

"Maybe we'll have better luck in Lyons," my mother says. Lyons is the next destination on our trip, the town where my father went to high school, and the last place he lived before heading off to the Navy in San Diego. It will be my last chance at finding pieces of my father's childhood in Kansas.

Later that night, I am unable to sleep in our hotel room, the 90-degree heat and 100% humidity weighing down my mind and causing me to think of South Santa Fe, of the yard where my father's house would have stood. As my mother snores, I sneak out of the hotel room and drift across town to 106 S. Santa Fe as if in a dream, determined to unearth my father's past. I will not to leave this place empty-handed.

Upon arriving to the site of his home, I grab the shovel against the

tree, glide across the yard as swift as smoke, and dig. The night is so quiet I can hear my breathing and the swaying of trees in the wind. The ground is unnaturally soft and breaks up easily. Each toss of dirt is a release of weight off my shoulders, and I feel like the archeologist I always dreamed of being as a child. I often hoped that I could excavate my father's grave, brush away his death, and revive his spirit within me.

And then I hear it—a crack. Metal against metal. I throw the shovel to the side and fall to my knees, frantically brushing away the dirt to uncover the treasure I've hit. Finally, a cracked, wooden box with a rusted iron handle reveals itself. I open the lid to find a black and white photograph of a boy of 7 or 8 with a determined face, sitting in the grass and carving a piece of wood. My legs weaken and I collapse into the hole, wondering if this boy is my father building the bookends I now possess.

As I return to my feet, I hear voices. My heart stops and I take off running in the dark, leaving the hole exposed. Halfway down the street I stumble on the brick road and fall to the ground, banging my head. I black out and awaken the next morning in my hotel room. My mother is reading the newspaper.

"Did you sleep well?" She asks.

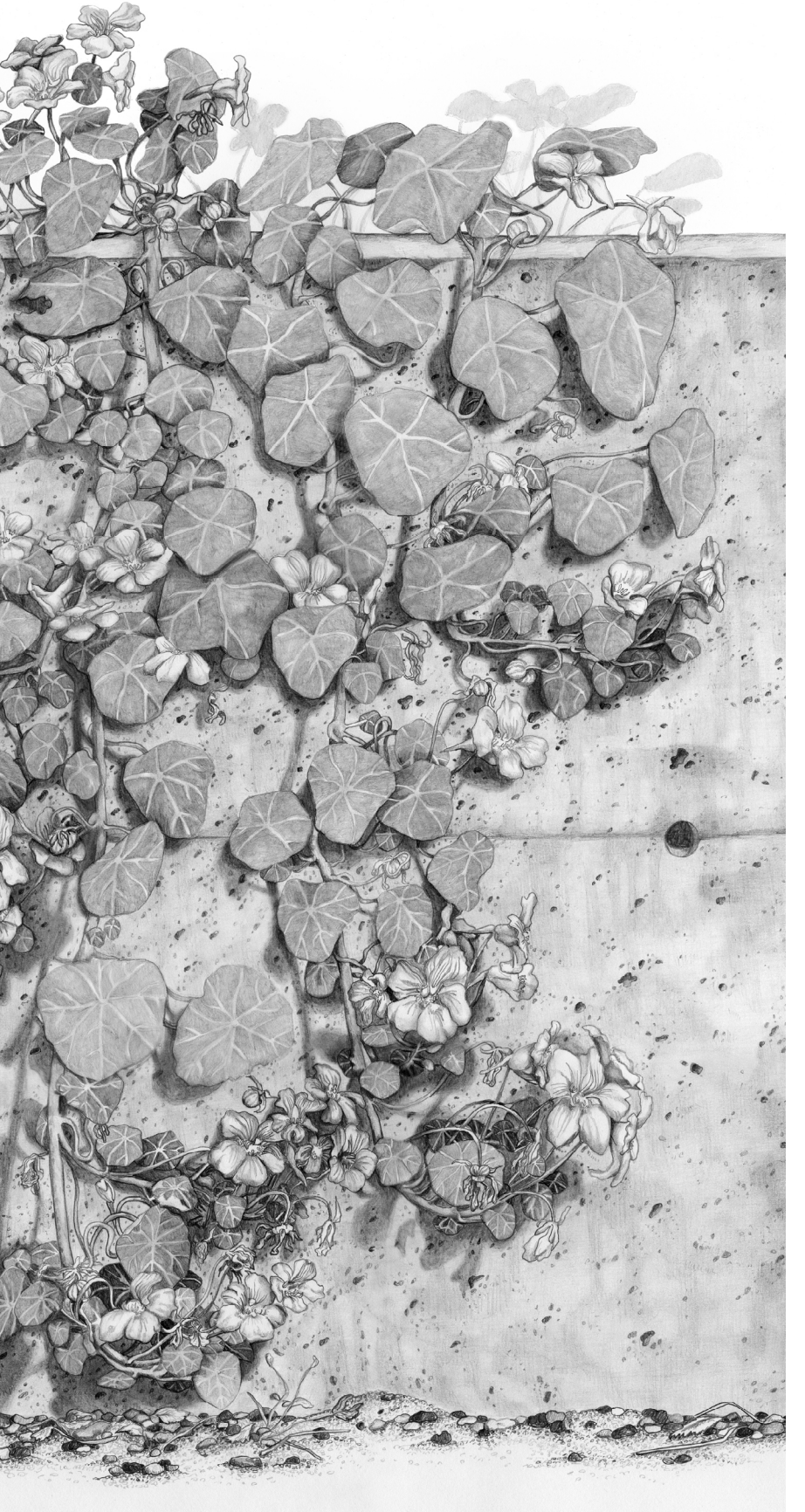
I rub my eyes, look around for the photograph, the box, but see nothing.

"Well," I say, "I've got a bit of a headache."

"Do you want some Tylenol? Or maybe a shower will help. That always helps my headaches in the morning."

Yes, I think, *a shower might help.* I need to cleanse my mind, which is unsettled by the ghostly haze of this town.

NASTURTIUM BY MESA SCHUMACHER
Certificate Program in Natural Science Illustration, 2012



SIMON, SUKA, AND RUDY

Ken Robinson
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN SCREENWRITING, 2012

EXT. — MORNING — STREET NEAR ENGLISH BAY, VANCOUVER, B.C.

RUDY PURGE *is grooving to a song in his head as he boils along the promenade on English Bay when he sees a young woman on a bench. She is* SIMON BALAMUTOV, *20, an Aleut Indian. She wears black jeans, boots, a red-and-black wool jacket and a red baseball cap. She has raven hair and is leggy and beautiful. On the bench next to her is a backpack and at her feet is her dog,* SUKA.

PURGE, *late 60's, wears a heavy tweed topcoat. His trousers are ragged at the cuffs. On his feet are laceless black and white tennis shoes with their tongues hanging out. His grey hair is an exploded bird's nest. He wears Coke-bottle glasses. He is a speed-talker who moves like an apparition.*

RUDY

Hey Newfie! Got a smoke?

Simon, startled, looks at this stranger with the wild eyebrows and unshaven face. She rummages nervously in her jacket pocket and produces a short white stick thick as a pencil.

SIMON

This is all I have.

Takes the stick. Inspects it.

RUDY

What is it?

SIMON

Driftwood.

RUDY

Driftwood? Like from the ocean?

SIMON

Yes. Children in my village smoke it.

RUDY

Never heard of it. Well, it ain't tobacco. But if it can be smoked, I'll try it. Got a light?

He plops on the bench next to Simon. She is wary and slides over a little and does not look at him. She slips her hand into her jacket pocket and removes a hunting knife which she sets on the bench next to her, covering it with her hand. SUKA *makes a menacing throaty noise, eyeing* RUDY.

RUDY

Ain't seen you around here before. You Chinese?

Rudy takes a sidelong squint at Simon's face.

SIMON

Aleut.

RUDY

Aleut. I figured you were some kind of ethnic.

SIMON

Eskimo.

RUDY

I meant some kind of Indian. I get it. I been in the north country. I've seen plenty of natives. You look better than most of them.

Rudy reaches out to pet SUKA, *who growls at him. He pulls his hand away.*

RUDY

That's a pretty big dog you got there. Malamute?

SIMON

Yes. Suka. His name is Suka.

Rudy sucks on the driftwood.

RUDY

So, no light?

SIMON

(her voice is low) No. I don't have anything.

RUDY

I noticed the backpack. What the hell. You running away or something?

Simon looks like she is trying to figure out which way to run.

SIMON

I just got here today.

RUDY

I been here since seventy-six. I was about your age when I first got here. O, that was a time! Yes sir! Anyway, I'm Rudy. What's your name?

SIMON

Simon.

RUDY

Yeah. Time went fast. But let me tell you. It was fun while it lasted. You could get any kind of cosmic consumable you wanted in those days and nobody hassled you. Nobody.

SIMON

I have to run...

RUDY

What's your hurry, kid?

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK

Simon stands, not sure how to respond and not sure which direction to head. Rudy stands too. Waiting for Simon to follow, senses her reluctance.

RUDY

Right. You just got here. Look, kid. Don't be afraid. My teeth are pretty well worn down. But there are bad people around here. If

you're with me, they won't hassle you. Let me show you around. Town is this way. That way is the water.

Rudy takes a few steps. Simon stays put, but slips the knife back into her pocket.

RUDY

You coming?

SIMON

I have to find something for my dog to eat.

RUDY

No problem. You really do need to come with me. We can take care of that. I want to get something to eat myself.

Simon and Suka walk a few steps behind Rudy, who is speeding ahead like a bird more graceful in the air than on the ground.

RUDY

(over his shoulder)

Maybe we can find us a real smoke. I've got lots of friends here. Most of 'em live on the street like me.

They stop at a traffic light and wait to cross. Rudy points at a dumpster down an alley beneath a sign that reads "LaBelle French Cuisine".

RUDY

Those dumpsters? Like a free store.

Crossing the street, Rudy leads them into the concrete canyon of the city. An irregular pattern of office buildings and dark and light spaces looms there. Simon and Suka keep pace, but at a safe distance behind.

Rudy has raised his voice to make sure his followers can hear as he takes on the role of tour guide.

RUDY

Okay. Now about a half block from here, there's a department store that has a lunch counter. Mostly they toss salads--that's a joke--anyway, they throw out salads and sandwiches and sometimes you can get part of a milkshake.

Traffic is heavy at mid-day and people notice the odd couple and the dog. **A MOTORIST** *yells.*

MOTORIST

Hey! Get a leash on that mutt!

RUDY
Screw that guy.
SIMON
What does he mean?
RUDY
He means you have get a rope or something and keep your dog tied to it. We'll find one.
SIMON
I have money.
RUDY
You don't need money. We'll find something.
SIMON
I have money for food.
RUDY
We'll get something without money.
SIMON
Stealing?
RUDY
No! If you want coffee, the motels usually have some left over in the pots.
SIMON
You can just take it?
RUDY
Yup. But sometimes it's cold. One thing I can't stand is cold coffee. Or soggy sweetrolls. It's one of the three worst things in the world.
Rudy and Simon enter the alley where the dumpster sits.
SIMON
What is the third worst thing?
RUDY
Married sex. Yeah…I was married. My 'lifestyle' wasn't suited to marriage. My wife didn't like any of my girlfriends. I was hard as a railroad spike in those days and wanted to share.
They open the dumpster lid and find several boxes of old glazed donuts. Rudy bites into a shriveled doughy mass.
RUDY

Does your dog like donuts? This one is harder than woodpecker lips.

Rudy offers the doughnut to Suka.

I used to be able to buy 'em fresh. In those days I had enough money to burn a wet mule.

SIMON

Pokes the tip of her tongue on the broken icing of a donut. She drops the donut and Suka licks it.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK

Rudy motions for them to move along the street and begins walking.

RUDY

Okay. I got a friend who washes dishes at this hotel. It's a couple of blocks that way.

SIMON

Still reluctant, but edging a bit closer to this strange man.

I need to find a place to stay.

RUDY

We can work on that too. We can get your dog something at the hotel. Sausages. Eggs. Protein you know.

They weave through pedestrian traffic downtown.

RUDY

If you get hurt, you can get free medical care at a clinic here. I go there sometimes. Flashbacks. Angel Dust...and probably some other things.

Simon attempts to scruff Suka.

SIMON

I need to find a toilet.

RUDY

Sometimes you can use the gas station. Or the library. That's a good one if you don't have the 'can't help its' and are on the wrong side of town when the call comes.

SIMON

I mean I need to find a toilet right now.

RUDY

Oh! Around the corner then. Go in the hotel. There's a ladies' room

off the lobby on the right. I'll wait here.

Simon and Suka enter the lobby tentatively, somewhat in awe of the opulent surroundings. The desk clerk raises his hand in surprise to see someone entering with a dog.

DESK CLERK

Lady! Unless that is a service dog, I am going to have to ask you to take it outside.

Simon stops momentarily, then turns to leave. Rudy is at the door.

RUDY

What happened?

SIMON

A man at the counter yelled at me. He told me to leave. They don't want dogs inside here.

Rudy removes a cord that holds his pants up. He gives it to Simon.

RUDY

Tie your dog up to the rail here.

Rudy holds up his baggy pants with both hands.

SIMON

Really?

RUDY

Yeah. Just go back in. I'll be here.

Simon goes back into the lobby.

DESK CLERK

Wait a minute. Are you a guest of the hotel?

Simon goes back out.

RUDY

Now what happened?

SIMON

He wants to know if we are guests of the hotel.

RUDY

Oh. Yes. Tell him we are thinking about checking in. First, we want to make sure it's a nice place. Now just march in like you own the place.

Rudy gives a friendly wave to the clerk through the glass in the big front door. Simon enters the restroom and Rudy waits with Suka, reaching

awkwardly to pet him. Suka growls at him. The desk clerk suddenly appears at the door.

Rudy begins acting as if he is blind, twisting his head and listening.

DESK CLERK

Since when are Malamutes used as service dogs?

RUDY

They gave me a Malamute? Well, I hear they're the best. Very loyal. They'll attack anyone who threatens their owner.

The desk clerk shudders and shakes his head.

DESK CLERK

Hurry up then and get out of here.

In the restroom, Simon studies the fixtures, toilets, sinks, mirrors and little bars of soap and stacks of terrycloth towels on the counters. She sees herself in the mirror, takes off her baseball cap and fluffs her hair. She unwraps a small bar of fragrant soap and washes her hands and face. She pockets one of the little round soaps. She almost forgets to use the toilet.

Meanwhile, Rudy is getting nervous under the scrutiny of the desk clerk, who is temporarily distracted by other hotel guests.

Finally, Simon comes out of the restroom. Rudy is now moving from foot to foot with his own need to use a restroom. But he is afraid to push his luck and use the hotel facilities. They leave the hotel.

EXT. CITY SIDEWALK—AFTERNOON

RUDY

It's none of my business, but you were in there a long time. And speaking of business, I need to do mine.

SIMON

It was beautiful in there. There are lots of sinks and I counted five toilets with walls around them and paintings on the walls and fluffy towels to dry your hands and stacks of ladies things and little round soaps and cream to put on your hands and...

RUDY

I thought the guy at the desk was going to call the cops. I need to work on pretendin' to be blind. He didn't buy it. That's the Hotel Vancouver.

SIMON

It's nice. I would like to stay there. I took a soap. See?

She shows Rudy her treasure. They continue their stroll through town like wealthy tourists. In the alley behind the hotel, Rudy slips behind the dumpster.

RUDY

Wait a minute. Stay there.

Rudy pees on the wall behind the hotel. He comes around the dumpster and knocks on a steel door. A thin, bearded man, SNIDER, 55, with a pronounced limp and a heavily lined face and wearing a white rubber apron opens the doors.

RUDY

Snider!

SNIDER

Hey. Rudy. What's up?

Rudy pets Suka on the head. Suka growls at Rudy.

RUDY

We need a little chow for our friend here.

SNIDER

Hang on.

Snider closes the door but returns momentarily with an aluminum to-go pan of spaghetti and meatballs.

RUDY

Thanks pal. Next time.

Snider goes back inside.

Simon and Rudy watch Suka slurp up the spaghetti. They continue their walk.

RUDY

If you've got the price of a ticket, you can go to a movie. For a few hours, you are as safe and warm as a baby in the womb.

SIMON

I have never been in a theater.

RUDY

Never? Listen. There's even a place here in town where they make movies. I've been there. It's a bus ride from here or you can hitch.

Wanna go? I've got time.

SIMON

Maybe I should stay here. I need to find a place to stay.

RUDY

We can work on that. Let's talk on the bus ride. Come on. It'll be fun.

INT.CITY BUS-DAY

Rudy and Simon and Suka are on the bus riding across town. Simon looks around the inside of bus. Her expression is almost giddy compared with the rest of the passengers, who have the dull gaze of wax figures, numbed by habit.

SIMON

I've never been on a bus. I like it.

RUDY

Where did you say you're from?

SIMON

Alagnak. It's on the coast on an island.

RUDY

Never heard of it. How come you got a man's name?

SIMON

In my family, sometimes first granddaughters are named for their grandfather.

RUDY

What's the family name?

SIMON

Balamutov. It's Russian.

RUDY

Mine's Purge. I'm Rudy Purge. That's a funny name too. It's funny considering I got rid of everything. Wife, kids and a home.

If I had a granddaughter, she could be just about your age. Eighteen?

(beat)

So. You must have a family you left behind.

Simon looks at Rudy.

MOTHER

Carol G. Pierson
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION, 2012

1. DIAGNOSES

Schizophrenia; Paranoid type; Chronic; In acute exacerbation. Cannot rule out paranoid traits. No social support, homeless and long history of mental illness.

—Physician's Certificate, St. Agnes Hospital, March 16, 2005

2. History of Present Illness

The patient, a 73-year-old Caucasian female, was brought into the hospital in an agitated state by two uniformed police after being found wandering in traffic around the Washington-Baltimore Airport (BWI). *She was dressed in a long coat over four layers of clothes. She was pushing a wheel-*

chair that contained $107,000 in cash and money orders and some other personal items. The patient was malodorous and disheveled and looked older than her stated age.

When hospital staff tried to lead her to an examining room, she grew combative and tried to scratch a member of the staff. Reports indicated that she had been diagnosed a paranoid schizophrenic in the 1970s.

The patient refused to have labs taken and was loud and intrusive in her resistance. She showed no evidence of limitations or medical illness except a gash in her left calf. She did not engage in conversation but did endorse a delusion that staff had grabbed her and broken her arms. It could not be determined whether she was responding to internal stimuli or expressing hallucinations.

Her insight and judgment were deemed poor. Collateral information from her daughter in Connecticut revealed a long history of suspicious behavior and paranoid delusions about conspiracies, where people are trying to persecute her. She has three children and has only maintained contact with her son who is a resident of France. The two daughters live here in America and the patient has not been in contact with them for several years.

—Intake Record, University of Maryland Medical System
March 22, 2005

3. My Mother, Malodorous

Wanda R., the social worker assigned by the Maryland Department of Aging to work with my Mother, had tracked me down through Google, which had led her to my 20-year-old *New York Times* wedding announcement. She called to ask me to get involved, told me that Mother was in mortal danger wandering around Baltimore with over $100,000. That it was a city where people had been killed for five dollars. Most of what she said was not all that surprising; of course Mother was wandering around in traffic, how else would someone know to rescue her? Though it was surely not the police she had in mind. And I knew that she had scratched at the hospital staff for good cause: she was protecting her money. But *malodorous,* that was new. This was the woman who used to gargle 10 times a day with Glyco-Thymoline to make sure her breath was fresh. Malodorous meant she

had really gone downhill in the five years since I'd last seen her. Malodorous was serious stuff. I feared for her.

4. Judiciary Release

Patient was diagnosed a schizophrenic with dementia and incipient Alzheimers by two doctors. She was taken with the doctors' statements to a commitment hearing. She was released by the administrative law judge as she was not deemed a risk to herself or to others or to be in imminent danger. Her property at the time of discharge was still in the custody of the BWI *security. She was given instructions and directions to* BWI *Airport and informed of the fact that her property was in their custody and she could go to collect it.*

—Release Interview, North Arundel Hospital, March 21, 2005

5. Escape

Wanda and I were pretty stunned that the judge just let her go. She told me Mother had checked into the airport Marriott, paying them in advance for their maximum stay, 30 days. She had given the manager Wanda's number as her emergency contact, another bad sign. She hadn't spent her whole life avoiding commitment just to hand herself over now, especially to someone who wasn't even a doctor. But then the 30 days were up and Mother wouldn't leave and so the manager had called Wanda who called me. Of course, I didn't want to get anywhere near Mother, the malevolent psycho who had a long history of doing nasty things even before the summer she tried to kill me.

So no, I couldn't help Donna M., Manager, BWI Marriott, except to tell her to get the professionals involved sooner rather than later or she'd find herself manipulated into all sorts of shit. She had Hotel Security escort Mother out, and I picture the scene, good old Mother looking at the same time imperious and helpless, like some abandoned Queen, with her collection of critical papers on her wheelchair, festooned with bags filled with ground flax seed, her cod liver oil, her vitamin pills (at least that's what she always said they were), and the ever present Glyco-Thymoline. Donna M. said she'd offered

to call a cab but Mother had refused, probably thinking she'd save money…hoping that later some luckless limo driver would play her charming savior and whisk her in style to her next adventure.

6. Once Stunning

…she is an attractive woman, probably at one time had been stunning, with a stylish haircut and ragged but expensive clothes, who had held it together for so long because she was highly intelligent, a PhD.

—Psychologist Statement, Anne Arundel Hospital (no date)

7. Caught

But she never made it back to BWI. She was picked up by the police, this time walking along the edge of a busy highway, pushing her wheelchair, this time cited for endangering drivers and herself. She was soon back under the care of Wanda, who, this time, was able to keep Mother at the hospital to treat her now badly infected calf.

8. Trial by Jury

Patient has asked for a jury trial and wants to represent herself at the next hearing. She hates her lawyer, says 'she trashes me.' She still refuses all medication so staff is sneaking her pills into her prune juice and they are working, her paranoia has diminished.

—MSW Statement, Anne Arundel Hospital
April 21, 2005

9. Hula Dance

I am 5 years old, living on my great-grandparents cattle farm outside of LaGrange, Missouri, population 500. We live in an old farmhouse about a quarter mile from the big house. It is early spring 1961. Mommy and Daddy are back from their winter trip, this time to Hawaii. The floods have subsided and Daddy is preparing to plant alfalfa for feed. The rest of the family won't be coming back until summer.

The mailman is driving up to our house. Mommy tells me and my little sister Dede that we are in for a big surprise. The bell rings.

Mommy opens the door and the mailman hands her a long flat box and says "Special Delivery from Hawaii!" Mommy takes the box and brings it upstairs to her bedroom. When she reappears at the top of the stairs, she is wearing leis and a grass skirt. She hula's down and puts one lei around each of our necks. She says we looked scrumptious and that we should plan a dance with all three or us for Daddy, for when he comes home. She says she's brought back a record of the song "Hukila" and we'll figure out parts for all of us.

We spend the rest of the day rehearsing. By the time we hear Daddy's truck roll up, we are giddy. The back door slams and we hear the water running in the mudroom as he cleans up. He seems to be taking forever, but finally he walks into the living room. He stands for a minute looking tired and confused and a little angry at the scene before him. Dede and I each take one of his hands and lead him to his position. I smell the vodka on his breath.

Mommy puts on the record and begins her dance. Daddy's expression doesn't change, so she hula's right up to him, almost touching him, then raises her arms to bring a lei up around his neck. We are oohing and aahing. He still isn't looking at her. Mommy is now on tip-toe trying to get the lei over his head. He reaches up, pulls her wrists down and says "For Chrissakes." Then he turns, walks into his study and closes the door.

Mommy's face sags as she shakes off the skirt. I reach out to help her move it from under her feet. All of a sudden she looks really mad. "This skirt is made of real grass from Hawaii" she says. "We'll never go back. It's irreplaceable." I jump back. "You have to learn how to take care of delicate things, so you will carry it upstairs, but if you break even one single strand, I will beat you until you can't sit down."

I carefully fold the grass skirt in half and start up the stairs. She walks just behind me, scolding me for pushing her and Dede into this ridiculous dance, for being thoughtless towards my Father when I know this is his cocktail time.

We lay the skirt back in its box. We throw away crushed leis. Mommy closes her door and tells me to lie down on the floor for a spanking. I have to be punished for destroying everyone's evening. I

have to be taught to think about other people. Dede takes her position holding my feet down. This is so unfair but I know it doesn't matter. Spanking me will bring Mommy back down to earth. I know how to fix this.

10. Dad

But I couldn't fix my father. He became a full-fledged alcoholic. Mother took us to live with her sister in Chicago. Dad tried to kill himself. We all moved to Newport Beach, California to heal. He drank; they fought. Mother took us children to Mexico City for a trial separation. After a year, we moved back to Los Angeles to join him. He drank; they fought more. He finally left for good when I was 10. I had to wait until I was 16 to get out.

11. The Commitment

Wanda set up another hearing, this time with a different judge and this time armed with two more doctors' statements and my statement about her history of violence. This time, the judge committed her. Wanda found an opening for her at Somerford, a pleasant residential facility in Annapolis that had a garden walk where Mother could get fresh air, and that's where she stayed for five months. The morning before she had her fatal stroke, she finally joined in the activities; the staff reported that she was even dancing. She was found the next morning on the floor of her room, in a coma, and died five days later.

12. Somerford

I visited her once at Somerford. I went with my brother Tom who flew in from Paris; we could not get Dede to come along, even though she was just a two-hour drive away, which would make sense given how especially mean Mother had been to her. Tom and I met Mother in her room. Then she led us to the activities lounge to talk. She was wearing khaki pants and a blue button-down collared shirt with long sleeves, uncharacteristically preppy clothes that Wanda had thought would be appropriate without over-spending. She was very

thin, but looked good, still had the ram-rod posture she had beaten into us kids and that we all still carried. After we found a place to sit in the lounge, Mother took some time to figure out who we were before we settled into a wary silence.

I looked around at the other patients and was pretty horrified, despite my intention to be positive. Her new companions seemed to be in much worse shape than Mother, with vacant eyes and the undirected shuffle I imagined you'd have to expect in people with dementia. Mother was excited to see us but seemed confused by it all. "What are you doing here?" she asked. Who were we again? When were we coming back? The silence returned and I went back to looking at the floor, assiduously avoiding eye-contact with the sad patients who prowled around us.

13. Lost and Confused

Mini-mental exam results indicated advanced dementia; patient could not draw a clock, count numbers backward or remember more than three words. Patient is very lost, confused, wandering; wears flip-flops with socks; carries paper; picks up napkins and stuffs them in her pillowcases. She has to be instructed to shower and brush her teeth. She appears to be responding to Risperdal, though she still cannot sit in a group for more than 10 minutes at a time.

—Patient Report, Somerford, September 2, 2005

14. One More Memory

I thought up a distraction. "Would you like to introduce us to any of your friends here?" I asked Mother.

Mother looked at me and Tom and said with contempt, "Why would they want to meet you?"

Tom looked hurt and I started to feel bad too, my face flushing and jaw numb, that crushing sensation from childhood, the one just before I'd lose my control and start crying. After her crack, I knew I'd never be coming back and Tom might not either. So I sat up straighter and leaned forward towards Tom, gave him a big smile and, in my best imitation of Mick Jagger, said "Because we're young and we're

gorgeous and they're just dyin' to meet us." She smirked and nodded her head. Then we went for a walk.

15. Living Will

If there is no reasonable prospect of my recovery from physical illness or impairment expected to cause me severe distress or to render me incapable of rational existence, I request that I be allowed to die and not be kept alive by artificial means and that I receive whatever quantity of drugs my be required to keep me from pain or distress even if the moment of death is hastened.

—Los Angeles, California, April 8, 1981

16 Last Rites

Mother had her stroke and was put on a breathing machine. Dede drove up to make sure they pulled the plug. And that was that. We had the funeral service at First Christian Church at Brockhall, the church that Wanda said was closest to Episcopalian. First Christian came with the new minister, Travis Hurley, performing his first memorial service for a $150 contribution. Wanda showed up with the Executive Director from Somerford and another nurse, so there were six in all. The three of us kids had one moment of suppressed hilarity during Travis' sermon, where he admonished us not to be sad because we'd all be together again in the great beyond. With that as our send-off, we drove to Dede's house to drink ourselves into oblivion.

17. Questions for a Mother, Homeless 2001-2005

Why did you live in a car? Were you cold? How did you eat? Where did you keep your clothes? Where did your mail go? How did you get your checks? Did anybody bother you? Did you have any friends? How did you get the gash in your leg? Did you try to call me? Did I answer? Was I cold or dismissive? Were you angry? Did you want me to get fat? Do you think of me? Do you miss me? Do you wish you'd been a better mother? Do you cry or wail or laugh? Did you love me best?

APPLE BLOSSOMS & RADISHES BY BARB THRALL
Certificate Program in Photography, 2012

THE RIVER

Mina Mitchell
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION, 2012

AGAINST THE MOONLESS firmament, Sergeant Jae Lee watched the desolate stars shimmer in the night sky. From where he was lying on the river's bank, he could see the warrior Orion standing with his hunting dogs. Jae spent many hours here, shrouded in darkness, gazing across the river. He sometimes imagined what it would be like to live on the other side, in China, where the lights were constantly glowing.

When it became dark, Jae often pictured everyone in China turning on their lamps and reading whatever they chose. If he was there, perhaps he'd read about the constellations and the gravitation of the moon. He found it mesmerizing how the river so easily separated him and China. The effect was much greater than mere geography.

He and his fellow countrymen were banned from crossing into China—unless they happen to be elitists from Pyongyang traveling on legitimate business. He heard stories of defectors who'd paid Korean soldiers a good amount of money to ensure their access into China.

As a patrolman in the North Korean Army, Jae knew everything there was about the border: the best time to cross was during the winter when the river froze in the narrow, shallow areas; the most dangerous crossings were the heavily guarded posts, which were the main thoroughfares for Pyongyang's luxurious goods.

Sergeant Liang, Jae's clandestine Chinese friend, had once told him about the open markets in China. The vendors, Liang said, spread their merchandise out like ornaments: rows of rubycolored apples, grapes and jujubes; spiky green durians and golden pomelos. He said the bustling streets were lined with shops selling coveted items such as jewels, Rolex watches and Levi's.

For a moment Jae felt as if someone was squeezing his heart, urging him to flee to China—but then it was gone. He shuddered, for he feared the repercussions if anyone discovered his counterrevolutionary ideas and his friendship with Liang. He would be executed for treason and branded a traitor for conspiring with outsiders. He sat up and ran his hands through his thick black hair, and glanced at his watch. Noticing that it was getting late and his dinner break was nearing its end, he hoisted his rucksack onto his slender body, strong from the daily regimen of Tae Kwon Do, and jogged back to post, saving his thoughts for another day.

It was just before dawn when Jae arrived at his sister's home—a small dwelling without electricity or running water. Since the fall of the Soviet Union blackouts were common. Rarely did the electricity stay on for more than an hour or two a day. For years the Soviets had provided cheap fuel to North Korea, allowing the Koreans to run their generators and lights, but such comforts had come to a halt when the Soviet Union collapsed in the late 1980s.

Jae found his sister, Jinah, asleep. Exhausted, he sat beside her and studied the rise and fall of her chest, and listened to the heavy wheezing that escaped her lips. Her long black hair blanketed her shoul-

ders, her hands rested peacefully on her stomach. She looked pale, the usual brightness gone from her cheeks.

Seeing his sister this ill worried him. Some nights he woke up sweaty and panicstricken, his eyes scanning the room for her, fearing she'd suddenly left this earth like their parents did during The Great Famine in the mid-1990s. He'd awoken one morning and found his parents in an embrace, their bony bodies entwined, as if they had known they wouldn't make it through the night. He dreaded finding his sister this way.

Jinah stirred. *"Oppa,* you're here. What's wrong?" she said. She saw anxiety in his dark eyes. Although it was past curfew, Jae had received a special permit from The Worker's Party allowing him to stay with his sister during her illness. Normally he slept on post with the other enlisted men.

"I spoke with the doctor, he's limiting the medication. There's none for you this week."

"Sometimes I think it would be easier if we left for China," she said, her voice hoarse from excessive coughing. "That way, when we're sick, we don't have to worry about finding medicine."

"We'll figure something out. I promise."

"Oppa, let's go to China." Their conversations of China had become routine as of late, but the words were more a dream than reality.

"You're too sick. In your condition, you wouldn't even make it to the main road, much less across the river and into China," Jae said, rubbing his temples. "It's too risky. If we're caught, the regime would execute us."

"Sometimes we have to take risks when our outlook becomes too bleak, don't you think?" Jinah said. "There's nothing for us here. No food, no medicine. It's like we're waiting for death to come, but at least if we go, we can chose when our time ends."

Jae closed his eyes and sat in silence as his sister's words made their way into the inner most crevices of his soul.

"Oppa," Jinah said, taking her brother's hands into hers. "If by chance I don't make it, promise me that you'll go on to China, no matter what happens. Promise me."

Jae remained quiet and then he nodded. He tucked the thin quilt around her shoulders, and unrolled his bedding and lay down to sleep. Before drifting off, he thought about China and all its riches: the markets overflowing with food, the liveliness of the big cities, the access to doctors and modern medicine. Maybe he could persuade Liang to help them cross the river.

The next night when Jae returned to the river, a steady breeze brought in a thin layer of fog across the water. In the night sky, the Evening Star, brilliant and white, extended across the deep valleys. Jae parked his patrol boat in an inlet hidden behind tall brushes and trees. He nodded at Liang, who was sitting in his boat, waiting for him.

"Ah, brother, what tasty treats have you bestowed upon us today?" Liang said, speaking Korean with a thick Chinese accent.

"Friend, I brought a carton of *Baeseung* cigarettes, North Korea's finest, courtesy of Captain Yi. Well, he doesn't know that of course," Jae joked, extending his hand.

"Baeseung?!" Liang chuckled. "You brought me 'Ever-Victorious' cigarettes? Dear Comrade, you have quite the sense of humor tonight! Here, I brought you Chen's homemade pork buns." Liang presented the petite package which Chen, his young wife, had wrapped earlier that morning.

Jae accepted it and bowed his head in thanks. The gift reminded him of the first time he'd met Liang. It was two winters ago. The night was unseasonably chilly, the wind sharp, the rain snow-like. Jae had been patrolling a remote area of the river when he saw someone dressed in military fatigues drifting facedown along the river's edge. He steered the boat toward the body and shut off the engine, letting the strong current push the boat up toward the body. Steadying himself, Jae leaned over and lifted the lifeless-looking man out of the water and onto the boat. He checked the man's pulse and when he couldn't detect one, he began chest compressions. After two thrusts, he heard the sternum bone and ribs crack. Not wasting any time, he continued with the compressions. Jae noticed the man was a Chinese soldier: a red flag with five golden stars was sewn on the man's upper

right arm. It was the first time he'd come in contact with an outsider and now he was in the midst of resuscitating him. This intrigued Jae, but he didn't dwell on it for long. As a soldier, he felt an obligation to save this man's life. Minutes later the man began coughing, and Jae quickly turned him on his side as vomit came out of his mouth. He attended to the soldier until he could sit up on his own, but it was painful for the man as a couple of his ribs were broken. Then for a long while they sat. Jae was too nervous to speak, the man too weak and in agony.

"Thank you, Comrade," the man said a while later. He gingerly reached into his pocket and pulled out a package of wet cigarettes. He told Jae that he could keep them, a gesture of gratitude. Jae nodded and cautiously reached for them.

That night a friendship forged between the two soldiers; they discovered that they enjoyed each other's company. Jae and Liang talked for a long while about life in their respective countries. From then on they began meeting weekly, in secret, in the same remote location on the river. It was during one of those meetings that Liang revealed that he'd attempted suicide the day Jae pulled him from the river. Liang explained how a week earlier he'd was ordered by his superior to kill a North Korean woman who'd tried coming into China. Visions of Liang firing upon the woman disturbed Jae. His friend had killed a person whose only crime was finding a better life. Liang explained that this was the first time he'd ever killed someone and he hoped he'd never had to do it again. The woman's death was violent and abrupt, he'd said, and soon the nightmares followed, haunting him to the point where he wanted to end his life. Jae shook away the sad memory.

"How is Jinah these days? Is she feeling better?" Liang said.

"She seems the same. No better, no worse. If only we had access to the medicine she needs."

"A person can feel so helpless when a loved one is sick, don't you agree?" Liang said.

Jae hesitated for a moment and then said, "Brother, do you think you can help Jinah and me into China?" He braced himself for his

Liang's response.

"Wha—what?" said Liang. "Comrade, your request is not that easy, and meeting like this is already too risky. Not only that, but Chen and I are expecting a baby in early spring. I have my family to think about now."

Upon hearing the news of Chen's pregnancy, Jae hopped into Liang's boat and embraced his friend. He knew the couple had been trying for some time and he was happy for them. Even more so now because it meant he didn't have to hear Liang complain about how making love to Chen had become a chore; creating a baby wasn't as easy as they'd thought.

"Why didn't you tell me earlier?" Jae said. "All this talk about escaping life when there's new life within Chen's belly."

Liang grinned. "Friend, I'm the happiest man in the world. There's nothing that'll keep me from my new family, nothing. Chen and I've waited so long for this."

Jae realized that with the baby coming, it would be even more difficult convincing Liang to help. But for now, he would celebrate his friend's announcement. Jae grabbed cigarettes out of his rucksack, and lit one for Liang, who laughed. "Congratulations brother, to new life and new-found courage as we embark on the journeys ahead." The two soldiers smiled and drew deeply on their cigarettes.

At the end of his night patrol, Jae headed to base camp before returning to Jinah's. He'd received word that Captain Yi was holding an emergency meeting. When Jae entered the auditorium he could hear murmurs from his fellow soldiers; they were just as perplexed by this impromptu gathering. All eyes were on Captain Yi when he took the podium. The room became quiet, only the sporadic hum of the generator could be heard. Beginning next month all soldiers currently patrolling the river will be transferred to posts further south, the captain announced. In keeping with a strong military presence along the border, the captain continued, it's crucial that new eyes keep vigilance over the river; eyes become lax when embedded in routine!

Although it wasn't mentioned, Jae knew the shake-up was a result of Pyongyang's recent nuclear test—there was worry that the

new economic sanctions, put in place by the international community, would cause mass emigration across the border. Everyone knew these sanctions meant even tighter food rations. The deep scars of The Great Famine years ago remained, and no one wanted to be that hungry again.

Before heading home, Jae wandered along the river. He didn't want to transfer south; it would make crossing into China nearly impossible. It was clear he and his sister had to leave this desolate place. Soon. These imaginary stories created between him and Jinah were no longer a dream but an inevitable reality.

From where Jae stood he could see thousands of specks glowing in the distance: China. He looked behind him and all he saw was blackness. He picked up a rock and threw it across the river as far as he could. He felt night's darkness prickling his skin, calling him back. He turned around and headed home.

When Jae arrived at Jinah's, a bowl of cold porridge was waiting for him on the table. From where he ate, he could see his sister lying on her side. Her back was turned to him and she appeared deep in sleep. She must be feeling better. Although his meal had been sitting out for a while, he was thankful for her effort. He ate enthusiastically, feeling better about what lay ahead. He decided when Jinah woke he would tell would her about their plans for China. She would be happy about his decision. After cleaning up his dishes, he went to her. He sat down beside her and noticed she wasn't breathing; her lips were tinged blue, her skin gray. Jae desperately tried to resuscitate her, but it was of no avail.

"No, no, you can't leave me!" he said, shaking Jinah's lifeless body as if that alone would bring her back. "We were going to China to get medicine for you." He sobbed uncontrollably, his body shook, and remorse sheathed him. He lay down next to her, hugging her and closed his eyes.

Jae recalled the time when he was ten and his sister was eight, and they dipped their toes into the cold ocean. Enjoying the coolness on their hot skin, they waded deeper, even though the waves became stronger the further they went. Suddenly, out of nowhere a heavy

wave crashed over them. Jinah lost her footing and sunk beneath the water, the ocean covering her. The same feeling of panic that had washed over him moments before his sister bobbed to the surface was what he felt now, as he held her lifeless body. He couldn't face the sheer devastation of walking through life without her, never again hearing her tender laugh; that loss was the most heart-wrenching of all. Looking at his sister, Jae felt her calling him to flee, to leave these unbearable conditions, this place of heartache and death.

The following week Jae and Liang sat in silence atop the bridge, neither one wanting to speak of the border changes ahead, and for Jae, Jinah's death was too devastating to divulge.

Jae began tapping nervously on his package of cigarettes, breaking the stillness. "Brother, I need you to help me—"

"I heard this morning that our countries are tightening up the borders along the river," Liang said, "and there's international pressure to sanction your country."

Silence followed and the two soldiers puffed on their cigarettes, drowning out the unspoken disparity between them. Jae turned his face toward the heavens. How exquisite the moon looked despite the sadness surrounding him. The lapping of the waves against the bridge magnified his sorrow; he felt as if he were drowning, fighting for his last breath.

"I was able to get some antibiotics for Jinah," Liang said, reaching into his pocket. "My brother is a doctor. He thinks she has pneumonia."

"She's gone," Jae said, his slender face somber.

"Brother, I'm so sorry." Liang's voice trembled. He was unable to say anything more.

"If only we had left this place earlier, maybe she would still be alive," Jae said. His heart felt heavy. "Brother, I need you to help me. If we plan carefully, I know we can do this."

Liang hesitated for a moment, pondering the idea. "I can't, you know that. There's too much at stake."

"I saved your life," Jae said. "Now it's your turn to save mine. If it weren't for me, you wouldn't be standing here awaiting the birth of

your first child." At once Jae regretted his words.

"Are you crazy?!" A spray of spittle flew from Liang's mouth and landed on Jae's tightly creased uniform.

"Perhaps to you!" Jae said with fierceness in his voice. "Each night when you go home, your table is abundant and your family is waiting for you. I head to my side of the river and I have nothing. I'm all alone." Jae watched Liang kick a rock across the dingy bridge.

"Sergeant, isn't it my duty to return defectors back to the North?" Liang said. "If we're caught, do you know what could happen to me and my family? And you would be executed!"

Jae cursed. The consequences that followed were unimaginable. He'd heard of stories where the regime cut off limbs and held dissenters over fire, slowly burning them to death.

"This is a risk I'm willing to take," Jae said, thinking of his promise to Jinah. He had this urge to start anew, to go someplace else and restart his life again. He picked up the rock that had landed by his boot and tossed it into the river. Jae lit another cigarette, inhaling deeply, and puffed rings of smoke into the air. He watched as the plumes dispersed over the gleaming river. Tears brimmed Jae's eyes, a feeling of defeat overcame him. He knew he couldn't stay here, death and sorrow haunted him; there was nothing left for him. He decided he'd leave without the help of his friend. He felt their friendship retreat, the boundaries suddenly redrawn. Without speaking to one another, Jae watched as Liang started his boat and pulled away.

On the night of the next new moon, when the sky was at its darkest, Jae set out across the river. He stationed his boat under the bridge and looked toward China, which was five hundred meters away. Jae glanced back toward his homeland for the last time and then dove into the chilly river. He swam stealthily and with each stroke he grieved: for his parents and their early exit from his life; for Jinah, who he'd loved most in this world and missed deeply; and for Liang, grateful for the brotherhood that had been briefly borne unto them.

Jae could see the rocky shore and after a few concerted strokes he felt China at his fingertips. Freedom at last. Working quickly, he pulled himself onto the shore. He then ran toward a grove of pop-

lar trees. Once he made it into the woods, he leaned against a tree and caught his breath, thinking which direction to go. He decided to head North, creating distance between himself and the river. When he reached the road, he could hear frantic shouting and dogs barking nearby.

Out of nowhere he heard a man's voice. "Stop!" A soldier shouted at him in Chinese. "Stop!"

Jae saw the Chinese soldier and pivoted. He ran, telling himself to keep going. Do not give up. His legs burned, his sides ached, and with each intake of cold air, his lungs stung.

"Stop!" another soldier yelled, this time in Korean.

Jae came to a sharp halt, stumbling over his feet as his momentum slowed. He was breathing hard, gasping for breath. Once he steadied himself, he turned around. Liang and two other soldiers stood a few feet away with their rifles cocked.

"Go back!" Liang demanded, waving his rifle toward the direction of the river.

"What? He's a defector!" a young Chinese soldier shouted.

"Go back!" Liang repeated. Jae stared at his old friend. For a second their eyes caught and unspoken words hung between them.

The young soldier appeared confused and then a sea of realization washed over his face. "Sergeant Liang, you know this North Korean soldier!"

Before Liang could respond, Jae lunged toward his friend, protecting him from disclosing their friendship. Caught off guard, Liang thrashed desperately, pushing him away. Seeing Liang struggle, the young soldier raised his rifle and fired, the bullet pierced Jae's back.

Jae slumped over, a warm sensation washed over him. He closed his eyes. He could hear the gurgle of the river in the distance, and knew the brightly shining stars on this clear night were bidding him farewell. Falling into a deep slumber, he realized then, that even in China the lights were beyond his reach.

SLAG MOUNTAIN

Rob Birchard
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION, 2012

Luke looked at the floor as he headed toward the last empty table in the grade school lunchroom, about twenty feet from Mike, who was observing him. Luke could only see out of his right eye that day because his left eye was swollen shut. His cheek and jaw were bruised.

The white paint of the lunchroom's cement outer wall had blistered and peeled from seepage the previous winter; now June, the custodians were preparing to repaint as soon as school let out. That would get rid of the smell of stale milk, as well.

Mike tensed and muttered, "Beat the shit outta him. Wonder who did it, what he did." Luke was a skinny third-grader. Mike, who was in fourth grade, had freckles and thick, straight copper hair and was already good-looking in a rough way. "I get my marks in big fights I

win." No one questioned Mike about where he got his marks; he had never been popular.

Turning toward the lunch line, he noticed Albert, who was from his neighborhood and also in fourth grade, though Albert was in the advanced class. He too was glancing around for a place to sit. Mike pushed a chair into the aisle with his foot but when Albert sat down across from Luke, he dragged it back in. "They ain't friends." He decided to keep them in view as he ate.

"Luke don't like to come to the lunchroom," Mike said to himself. "Scare't of everybody. Albert don't like it here neither. But he knows he can always sit with me."

Albert separated his baloney and tuna fish sandwiches with a bag of Wise potato chips, then lined up the jello next to the ice cream bar. He gave a nervous smile at no one in particular and started eating.

"Tryin' not to look at Luke's face."

After a minute, Mike heard Albert say, "You've kind of got a black eye."

"Yeah." Luke spoke to his sandwich.

"Does it hurt?"

"Yeah, a little." He winced as he spoke.

"What'd you do?"

Luke looked toward the wall. "Fell down. I fall down a lot, sometimes."

Mike smirked, which was safe because he could throttle them with one hand tied behind his back and because neither boy was paying him any attention.

Brightening, Albert said, "I was riding down Fool's Hill last week and I fell off my bike and skinned my elbow. My father says now I know why they call it 'Fool's Hill.'" He pulled up his sleeve to show Luke the scab. "It itches."

"Uh-huh." Luke finished his sandwich, squashed the crumbs and licked his finger.

"You want half my Klondike?"

Luke lifted his eyes as far as the ice cream but said nothing.

"It'll make your face feel better because it's cold." Albert cut it in

two pieces and placed half on Luke's tray.

"You're sure it's OK?" Seeing the nod, Luke took off the wrapper, squeezed the filling between his teeth and tongued it into his swollen cheek. "It's like eatin' snow."

"I ate lots of snow last winter during the blizzard. I'm Albert. I'm in fourth grade. What's your name?"

"Luke. I got Miss Ward this year." He nibbled the cookie crust.

"Had her last year. She's the nicest teacher." He lined up some squares of green jello on his plate.

"Sometimes I get jello too," Luke said, then hastily added, "but I can't eat no more now, I'm full."

"Make me puke." Mike took the half-eaten cheese sandwich on his plate and squeezed it into a pulpy ball; bread and mayonnaise pushed out between his thumb and index finger. He scraped the mess from his hand onto the floor, nudged it under the table and stepped on it. He looked around for something to clean his hand but there wasn't anything, so he wiped it against the edge of his chair. Then he returned his gaze to the boys.

Albert had rearranged the jello line into a pyramid. "My mom teaches Homey Kinomics in the high school. My dad teaches too, but not in town. What's your dad do?"

"Works at a hotel where we live."

"Wow, you live in a hotel? What the name of it?"

"Francine House. You probably seen it downtown, on Main Street."

"I just stayed at a hotel in Atlantic City. Do you have a maid to clean your room?"

"Clean it myself. But I don't make no mess."

"My mom cleans my room."

"My mom's a bar lady. She gives drinks to everyone."

"Fun!"

Albert extended a line of jello from his tray to Luke's, an aggressive move. Luke flicked his finger against the advanced troop and it landed on Albert's tray.

"Bam!"

"Plunk!"

"Eeeeeee…ploosh!"

"Wobble wobble!"

"Ka-blooie!"

"BOYS!"

They looked up to see Mrs. Gifford, the fifth grade teacher. "Clean up that mess and go to your rooms. For Heaven's sake."

They repaired the collateral damage and picked their way slowly among the tables toward the stairs. Mike was left staring at nothing.

"I just live in a house," Albert said, "but we have a back yard, with a hammock."

"What's a hammik?"

"You string it between two trees and lie down in it and swing back and forth. I like to read there. You want to come over after school and try it?"

"You mean it?" Luke looked right at him.

"Sure. It's big, we can both fit."

"OK."

Albert said, "You should tell your parents, right?"

"No…. Pretty much I always get home late."

"Let's meet in front of the school, it'll be a blast!"

"OK, Alb…." Luke stopped and his purple bruises turned fuchsia.

"Albert," said Albert.

"I never met nobody with that name."

"Some people try to call me 'Al,' like Al Capone. You may know some 'Al's.' But I'm really Albert. Albert Johnson. And you're Luke, for Lucas, right?"

Luke nodded.

"What's your last name?"

"San-to-ri-ni."

"How do you spell it?"

"It's long."

After they disappeared, Mike stood up and kicked his chair clear across the aisle. "Fuckers. Goddam fuckers."

He came down the stairs to the square in front of the school before

Albert or Luke appeared. The third-grader arrived a minute later.

"Mush-face, get over here."

Luke jumped; Mike had never spoken to him. The bigger boy grabbed him and pushed him up against the metal steps of the fire escape.

"I'm gonna hurt you, baby."

Luke looked around for help but said nothing. Mike was checking to see that no teachers were on patrol when he saw Albert pop out of the building. Albert saw him right away and they stared at each other. When Luke ducked to escape, Mike felt this and extended his leg, tripping him, then put one foot on his back. The smaller boy stayed still this time. Other kids started moving away; win or lose fights, they had all seen Mike when he was mad.

"Miss Ward, Miss Ward!" Albert retreated up the steps and into the building. The school office was right next to the front door and the person who came out first was not Miss Ward, but the principal, Mr. Chamberlain, a pale, thin man in a dark suit who looked angry even when he wasn't. The younger students believed what the older ones told them, that the principal could freeze you with his eyes if he wanted, like a leopard staring down a gazelle. He collared Mike and spun him around.

"Michael Shaughnessy, this is the second time this week you have come unpleasantly to my notice. Let that boy go. I'm calling your father now."

Albert had cautiously followed the principal and Miss Ward out, but if the principal said anything more, he didn't hear it. In the quick decision to rescue his new friend, he had crossed Mike.

When Mr. Chamberlain hauled the attacker inside, Albert yelled to Luke and they disappeared up Washington Street. They ran about half a mile until they were near Albert's house.

"Don't feel bad," Albert said as he caught his breath. "He pushes everyone around."

"Thanks for getting Mr. C. I din't know what to do. That Mike, I ain't never even talked to him. Where's he live?"

"Next street over from here. But don't worry, you'll be safe with

me." They walked along Valley Avenue and up the slate pavers to the kitchen door.

"My mom won't be home for an hour; she's shopping at the Acme." Albert took the key from behind the window shutter and opened the door. "Come in while I change my clothes."

In his bedroom, Albert dumped his books on the desk and grabbed a pair of shorts. Luke ventured in a couple steps and picked up a model car from the dresser.

"My brother's room is just down the hall, but he seldom lets me go in."

"Uh-huh."

"Your brothers and sisters do that to you?"

"No."

"Then they're nice!"

"I ain't got no brothers and sisters."

"Ah, an only child."

"No, I ain't lonely."

"I meant you're the only one. You need an older brother! Anyway, let's go outside."

They ran out to the hammock, which was strung between the apple tree and maple tree. Albert jumped into it.

"Here it is! You push me, like a swing."

Luke pushed a little.

"Harder!"

He got it.

"Whoa!" Albert rocked back and forth. "My father likes to sing, 'Sailing, sailing, over the rolling sea.' It's his hammock, he got it in the Navy."

After a minute, Albert said, "Your turn."

They changed places but Luke had trouble getting in.

"The easy way is to sit, then lift up your legs. That's right."

"Slow, OK?"

Albert nudged as Luke grasped the sewn edges of the bleached canvas. Soon he was smiling and Albert pushed more, but when Luke relaxed his grip, he cried, "I'm slippin' down!" He accumulated at the

low point of the hammock.

"You have to hold yourself in the right spot. I'll help this time." He stood behind Luke, leaned over, put his hands under the boy's arms and pulled. When Luke was as high as he could go, Albert still held on.

"There. Now grab the ropes above your head, you won't slip again."

Luke threaded his arms between Albert's to reach the ropes.

"All set?"

"Yeah."

"I'm going to let go now."

"Uh-huh."

They tried it again. Every time Albert had contact, he kept his hand on Luke as long as he could. "I'm right here." The afternoon was warm and he worked up a sweat.

In a while, Luke said, "I'm dizzy, Albert."

They stopped.

"Let's rest," said Albert. "Sometimes I nearly throw up when my brother swings me. It's called getting seasick. I think he does it on purpose."

They sat in the bottom of the hammock, but Luke turned pale. "I wanna lay down." He steadied himself on Albert's arm and did so.

"I'll lie down, too." Albert stood up and threw one leg across the hammock over Luke's shoulders, then pulled himself into position, so that his legs were around Luke. Luke put his arms on top of them and laid the back of his head on the older boy's stomach.

"You'll get better this way," Albert said.

"Yeah." Luke closed his eyes and Albert twined more closely. Soon the younger boy turned his head so his uninjured cheek touched Albert's damp shirt. Albert rested his hand lightly on Luke's bruised face. They didn't move or talk until Albert's mother pulled her car into the driveway with the week's groceries.

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Saturday they met at Newberry's.

"Let's go to Slag Mountain," said Albert.

"Ain't you afraid of the witch?"

"Luke, I don't think there's a witch. That's just kids' talk."

Slag Mountain was sixty feet high. The summit was half a mile behind Bergen American Tool and Dye. For two generations and three wars, from 1900 to 1955, Bergen had dumped its detritus there – oil, gasoline, solvents, machine parts, fly wheels, engine blocks, small gantries, gun mounts, tank treads and a couple boxcars; all within a matrix of tons of dirty, black sand which the company had used to score and shape its products.

The mountain had risen in the middle of 50 undeveloped acres as the small New Jersey farm town grew around it; now abandoned by men, it was still much loved by boys. Sheltered and covered in scrubby woods of sugar maple, beech and poison sumac, with rhubarb at one edge of it and wild green onions on top, it was a place of peace or conflict, according to your inclination.

The boys reached the end of Fourth Street, where it all began.

"I'll help you up this steep bank." Albert extended his hand and Luke took it. When they were well out of sight, Albert still held it lightly; Luke didn't pull away. About half way to the top of the mountain, there was a plateau where kids sometimes built forts. The boys followed a trail to a small clearing surrounded by a dense wall of blackberry bushes. They sat on a fallen log.

"This is real nice, Albert. I din't never come here before."

The trees had grown tall enough to provide shade and, along with smaller plants, they had put down a thin layer of soil whose the foresty fragrance softened the acrid machine smell underneath. No breeze blew on the warm, overcast June day and the sound of 18-wheelers braking for the stoplight in front of Bergen carried through the humid air as if through water.

Albert put his arm around Luke's shoulders and stroked his hair; the younger boy nestled against him, turning his face to Albert's chest. Albert nuzzled him and inhaled skin, shampoo, breakfast cereal and old T-shirt.

After a quarter of an hour, Luke said he was sleepy and Albert sug-

gested they lie down. As they stood, they heard the sharp crack of a stick and whirled around. There stood Mike.

"You fuckin' pansies." Mike was holding a broken tree branch. "You really pissed off my old man at me."

He stepped into the clearing and raised his stick. He was wobbly and smelled like alcohol. Albert pushed Luke behind him and both ducked when Mike took his first swing. He advanced, they backed up, but in a few feet they were against the brambles.

Though Albert had never won a fight against his brother, he had learned tactics. Mike swore and swung again; Albert deflected the blow with one arm, put his head down and charged at Mike's stomach. He hit him hard and the drunken fourth-grader fell backwards to the ground. Mike had to pause to catch his wind and Albert landed on top of him. Luke dove, grabbed the branch from Mike's hand and started beating their attacker's face and shoulders.

Mike howled.

Albert spread-eagled himself across Mike's stomach and pinned him while Luke connected a couple more times.

"No fair! It's two against one! Stop, it ain't fair!"

Luke stopped but got on Mike's chest and straddled him. When Mike squirmed, Albert said, "If you get up, we'll hit you again."

No one moved or spoke for a minute. Finally Albert said, "Stay still, Mike." Albert took the branch from Luke and placed it where Mike couldn't reach it. Then he shifted to Mike's left side. "Other side, Luke." Luke lay down at Mike's right side. Albert reached his arms across Mike, one over his chest and the other under the back of his head. Luke did the same.

"What are you doin'?" Mike was shaking now.

"Indian Red Belly Torture. Remember, I can still clobber you with the stick," said Albert. Then he pushed up Mike's shirt and exposed his stomach.

There on his ivory skin was a crisscross of eight red, swollen welts. Albert froze.

After a few seconds Luke said, "Shit." It was a minute before he continued, "Mike, I know."

"Nuthin' goin' on."

For the first time in his life, Luke's silence was eloquent.

"Nuthin,'" Mike repeated. "What are you doin?"

"Mike, take off my shirt," Luke ordered. "Go on, dammit to hell."

Mike freed up his arms and Albert was afraid he would get away, but instead he did what Luke told him to do. The welts on Luke's front and back could have been delivered by the same belt as his own had been, though they hadn't. "Hanh..." The sound Mike made was between a laugh and a cry. He began to whimper.

Luke spit on his hand and tentatively, gently started to rub Mike's sore belly.

Mike was crying now. "No, nuthin', never. BASTARD FUCKER! I'm gonna kill him one of these days. SLIT HIS FUCKIN' THROAT! I can defend myself, everyone knows that." His voice rose and fell; Luke continued to rub and after a long time, Mike relaxed.

When it was quiet, Luke said softly, "My mom's got some stuff called Jergen's Lotion. Makes it feel better. We can take turns with each other. Albert and I was gonna start doin' it anyway. Right, Albert?"

Luke's question pulled Albert around. "Right," he said. He was still looking at the welts on the other two boys; he didn't look at their faces. His hands were wet and Luke had to grab his arm harder to keep hold of him. He said hurriedly, "My brother hits me, or he threatens to, and my parents don't say anything. I'm, like, invisible. Sometimes he really hits me. So we need each other. And sometimes my dad gets mad at me. And mom…"

Luke cut him off. "No hittin'," he said. "Bein' sweet to each other."

Now Albert shifted his gaze to their faces, back and forth from Luke to Mike. He nodded hard.

"So now there's three of us and just us has to know," Luke continued. "We'll find the most secret places."

Mike, whose cheeks were still streaked with tears, whispered, "Really? You won't tell my dad?"

"Will you tell mine?"

Mike was a minute taking this in.

"Come on, Albert, help me." They lay down on the soft ground. Luke pulled Albert's arms toward him and they hugged Mike between them.

"Just the three of us," said Mike. His face got red but he started to smile. It was the first time he had been invited in anywhere.

ACCEPTANCE

Anne Frantilla
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN MEMOIR, 2012

As I drove down Bothell Way with my 16-year-old daughter Caitlin beside me, she said tentatively, "I'm thinking of dropping out of high school. It just doesn't seem worth it."

I blinked but kept my eyes on the road. Past experience saying the wrong thing, setting off escalating angry arguments, made me pause. I thought of the sarcastic language my mother used when I made choices she didn't approve of. And how she used to make it about her, as if I were making choices about what music to listen to, which friends to be with, how to spend my time, only to offend her. In my efforts not to be a mother like my mother, I often worried I made other, worse mistakes. Mothering guidelines based on how not to mother left out a lot. I scrambled the past few years to figure out what I was leaving

out. And how to parent a daughter growing more unlike me daily, thrusting me into unfamiliar and uncomfortable places. A parent support group helped. Even so, my response did not come easily.

"That is a decision you could make," I said calmly.

She was silent for a few moments. "That's not what I expected you to say," she said finally.

I felt the tension drop through the bottom of the car. Relieved, I changed the subject and we finished our errands.

Since her tirades started three years ago, my lens had changed. Before, I assumed she would excel in high school and go on to college. In middle school I watched, horrified, as her grades slid. I tried desperately to get her to care. I wrote to the teachers. I bribed her to do homework. I constantly asked her about her assignments, receiving slippery answers. In her career essay for her eighth-grade English class, she wrote that she wanted to be a bartender. She sent her history class into peals of laughter when she announced her goal of marrying a rich husband. She was not me; she did not carry my dreams with her. As her behavior slowly slipped from defiant to risky and high school graduation slid under the horizon, my camera shifted and sharpened its focus to her safety. In her junior year in high school, keeping her alive held my attention more than her grades. Giving her choices back to her—accepting they were not my choices—helped me find my focus in this car conversation.

I let go of the hopeful memories of my grade-school daughter, so poised and able, excelling with her words and humor. I let go of watching her travel to Ireland playing her flute with the high school band. I let go of helping her with college applications. I let go of who I wanted her to be, but not of working to keep her safe. Forced to be ungenerous, enforce rules, and separate who I was from who my daughter was becoming, I struggled to be her mom. I gambled that the determined, funny and magnetic daughter I loved would come back into my life in a different way at a different time.

High school hung by a thread after the car conversation, with her black days and nights of drinking filling up the weeks. A drug-dealing boyfriend based in south Everett swirled in the mix and signs of self-

destruction hung at every turn.

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I did not attend high school open house Caitlin's senior year. My husband did not watch the historic presidential election returns declaring Barack Obama president. Instead, that day in November 2008, my husband Peter and I drove through the snowy night over Barlow Pass for a parent weekend with Caitlin. She was at wilderness school-the kind of school you saw advertised in the back of *Sunset* magazine. Who sent their kids to those places? Us, we found out, we were those parents. We sent our kids to wilderness school because we could think of nothing else, no consequence, no punishment, equal to the task of making them rethink their life-threatening choices—whether it was drugs, alcohol, or drug-dealing friends. We wanted to fix our children, and wilderness school promised to help us do that.

Counselors' names were paired with their personalities. Dancing Red Hawk, in charge of parents for the weekend, drove us to the camp with the platform tent in the middle of the high desert in Oregon over a bumpy, rut-infested road. Partnering with Lion in the Grass, she kept the parents on track, answering questions and calming worries. They took pictures as we met our sons and daughters with huge hugs and loudly beating hearts. As Caitlin hiked towards us, shouldering her huge 60-pound pack, she looked strong, her face clear and healthy. Touching her and hugging her after six weeks apart connected our hearts.

My husband didn't sleep well in the platform tent Saturday night, waking up tired and sore. I loved being out in the sagebrush, new geography to me. The pink and orange sunrise greeted me in the morning under a huge clear sky, the desert stretching flat almost as far as I could see.

We felt our way through the structure of the weekend, seeking hope. In a circle around the fire, the large group learned about bow drilling, a difficult method of starting a fire without matches. Therapists met with each family under a stunted, bent pine tree. Aspen,

Caitlin's therapist, held her accountable, something few of her many therapists could do. I asked about a blackout episode when her purse was stolen.

"Yeah," Caitlin said. "Down at Hemp Fest someone invited us to a party in the Central District with lots of alcohol. I didn't know anyone there but I was down."

"Listen to what you just said, Caitlin," Aspen said, stopping the conversation.

"Someone said there would be alcohol so you were down," Aspen continued. "You would go anywhere, anytime, with anyone if there was alcohol?"

In the album of terror I kept in my mind, I saw my daughter waking up disconnected and confused, with no memory of the night before. A risky neighborhood, drinks possibly spiked, new images crashed their way into the album—of guys with knives, guns, and rape.

Caitlin was silent. The hour under the bent pine passed too quickly. We wanted resolution and there was none.

Then, family groups separated to work on different issues.

The communication skills exercise required us to identify our "thinking errors," ways of thinking that eased our discomfort—such as guilt disappointment, or worry. "Because our thoughts affect the way we feel, and our feelings affect our behaviors, thinking errors have a profound effect on all our relationships," the worksheet told us. Identifying our thinking errors was the first step in positive change, we read. I felt my defenses go up. I worried this could be an opportunity for both my husband and my daughter to unload on me and let me know all things wrong with my behavior. I knew I used lots of "thinking errors"—I just wasn't sure how to identify them.

The list of 16 thinking errors included:

- Anger
- Assuming
- Being Right
- Blame Shifting
- Excuse Making
- I'm Unique

- Ingratiating
- Justifying
- Lying
- Making Fools Of
- Martyr Complex
- Minimizing
- Personalizing Issues
- Redefining the Problem
- Super Optimism
- Victim Playing.

The three of us sat on our camp chairs, other family groups below us, the cold desert spread out beyond. We worked in quiet, wrestling with all these ways of thinking, completing the task of identifying the top three errors for ourselves and what we thought the top three were for our child.

"I'll go first," Caitlin offered. "I put my thinking errors as Being Right, Lying, and Minimizing." Her desire for the weekend to go well for all of us spilled out of her.

"I had two of those for you, I said, "but I put Redefining the Problem instead of Lying."

"I can see that," she said.

"I had what you had for yourself, Caitlin," my husband Peter said.

"For myself, I put Assuming, Being Right and Martyr Complex," I said.

"I put those same ones for you," Caitlin said, "except I had Being Right first."

I looked at her. She knew me pretty well.

Assuming was defined as spending a great deal of time assuming what others think, feel and are doing. Thinking about my behavior, I saw myself assuming someone didn't like me. Could I change that? And could I refrain from always proving the correctness of my opinions and actions? Was I really acting like a martyr, constantly giving and keeping score, becoming bitter and frustrated when no one noticed? That gave me something to think about. I often felt resentful

because of the mounds of work I did trying to fix everything. What if I stepped back and just tried to fix myself?

"How did it go?" Dancing Red Hawk asked, catching me at a moment when I was alone.

"Good," I said. "It gave me a lot to think about. I realized Caitlin wasn't the only one who needed fixing."

Dancing Red Hawk put her hand on my shoulder. "That's good to hear because not everyone sees that. Thanks for telling me."

✶✶✶

During these hard years, on this dark road of my daughter's rebellion, I sought refuge in familiar places. I often retreated to our family cabin on a small island nearby. I came with my dog to recharge my soul, as often as I dared leave the rest of my family at home. The solitude helped me carry the heavy weight of my daughter's flaunting of our rules and her binge drinking. This refuge filled me with gratitude.

Perched on a bluff, heated by a wood stove, the cabin faced south on Possession Sound. I found quiet there. The quiet relief from cars, cement, and machines. The quiet of eagles circling high in the sky, the whirring of hummingbirds, the hoot of the barred owl and the silence of the bats at dusk. The soft hushing of the waves lapping the shore below, the wind, softly whispering or raging noisily through the trees.

On the island, I felt safe from my daughter's rants, the loud and hateful words I was told not to take personally. Safe from the crazy-making of her pawned flute and the nonsensical excuses about absences, and far from the sirens screaming in the night, leaving me to wonder if they were for her. I could sleep deeply, soaking up energy from the quiet, the wind, and the trees. A comfortable, simple place, the cabin held the familiar. The little foot ferry took me over, filled with anticipation of solace, and brought me back, with reluctance, to the concrete world.

After my aging parents were no longer able to come to the cabin, I removed their clothes, religious posters and chipped dishes. Some of my mother's books, though, asked to stay. A small red-bound book

of poems from a Nisei colleague, a huge coffee table book of Georgia O'Keefe art, and a two-volume set of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* were among the books with words and images requesting to remain. Requests that I granted.

At night, I watched the Mukilteo-Clinton ferries crossing back and forth on the black water passing each other, back and forth, to their docks. Spotting the train winding along the tracks bordering the shore, I realized suddenly that my mother came to the island alone, also. The thought startled me. I heard echoes of the letters she wrote during my years in Michigan.

"…The wind is blowing fiercely," she wrote. "All sorts of white caps this afternoon, but I love to hear the sound in the trees, almost as if it had some secrets."

"Just sitting at the cabin looking at the sun over the water," another letter said.

"The tulips are something to enjoy…the anemones too," she wrote one spring, time on the island filling her letters.

I also heard regret in her letters—of not expressing her love more, listening better, or being more present. And she regretted the words she used, "...those terrible, terrible hurtful words I said." She wrote of her hope that she and I could be close. "I don't like having you so far away…and hope it won't be but for awhile."

She came to the island for the same reasons. To let the quiet seep into her spirit and heal her hurt. She, too, saw herself as an imperfect mother. Was I, so fearful of emulating her critical and manipulative mothering, repeating her behavior? Could we overlap in our behavior but be different kinds of mothers? I felt my fight against her dissipating into the black night, floating out across the water.

My mother had pain in her life also. If I could stop thrashing around against her long enough, I could see her sitting at the island, alone, looking into the black night from this bluff. Compassion for her washed over me. I saw her as a daughter, growing up without a mother, parenting without an example, and doing her best. In the dark quiet, I saw my imperfections lined up beside hers, different, but connected all the same.

APRIL BY GARET WOLFE
Certificate Program in Photography, 2012

3 *World*

WHO'S AFRAID OF JESSICA MCCOY

Andrea Eaker
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION, 2012

IN COMMUNITY THEATRE, you get a variety of talent levels.

Actually, that's being too kind. Most of them are awful. But Jessica McCoy wasn't awful. She was good. Really good.

I was cast as her husband, Nick, in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* and was sure I'd out-act her. She was new in town, and I agreed with the other two cast members that she'd auditioned separately probably because she was related to someone on the board who didn't want us to know until the last minute that she was mediocre. But during the first read-through, we all kept missing lines because she was a distractingly, tauntingly, good actor.

She called me Nick and shook my hand with the same brisk impersonality she seemed to use on everyone else, even the techs. The

fact that we were supposed to be married onstage didn't seem to justify any extra attention. I won't lie: I was hoping for attention. She had curvy hips that somehow conveyed compactness, and small, no-nonsense breasts like tangerines. She didn't always bother to go into the changing room to put on her costume, and I saw more of her skin than I had of some girls after three dates. But I never really saw her.

For one thing, she was always wearing stage makeup. She usually showed up earlier than any of us, and was made up by the time we arrived. On the few occasions I beat her to the theater, she was so quick with the cold cream, it was as if she were constantly between masks. She was good with the pancake, though: she always looked fresh. I never saw any cracks around her eyes or in her forehead. Her eyes were green, probably contacts. And I never saw her roots, either. Her hair was always dyed the color of honey in the sun, right down to her scalp. She smelled like newly uncapped syrup, teeth-achingly sweet. Her feet were narrow. Without shoes they looked like things that should have wings or feathers, as if they were too insubstantial to survive on their own.

It was both encouraging and irritating, the way she treated me the same way she treated everyone else. She was universally kind, in a remote, disinterested way. I imagined when she was in high school, members of the football and chess teams received equal attention. Now, it was actors and sweaty light techs.

One night, as she was twisting her hair into spiky hot rollers, she told me she worked as a repair technician for high-end medical equipment. I told her I sold educational software packages, and she nodded politely. I imagined her climbing on top of an MRI as she had described, and added my own details of how she straddled it, leaning to reach the instrument panel, clasping with her thighs to stay balanced.

I think I felt the way most of us did about her. We couldn't stand her. It was because of her talent, but also because of how she kept that veneer of beauty and niceness so firmly in place. We probably all wished her ill—nothing dramatic like a car accident or cancer, but maybe a missed entrance. Or a shortage of her hair dye. Something like that, so she would be a little more human, a little more like

the rest of us. But it never happened and she kept her seamless and smooth movement through all of our lives.

Before I read the script, I had PG-13 fantasies about acting the part of her husband. Onstage kisses where tongue would be needed for authenticity. Maybe an argument, where I could grip her arm and feel her slender bicep flex under my fingers as she pretended to struggle.

But there were no onstage kisses with Jessica. No grasping her arm. The single direction to touch her came at the very end of the show, when I kissed her forehead. It didn't count as a kiss. It was like putting your mouth on wallpaper.

Jessica's character was a lush, although I'd never seen her drink. Halfway through the play, the script called for her to drink a glass of brandy. During rehearsals, she sipped, just like an ingénue should. But then during the dress, she gulped the iced tea and wiped her mouth with the back of her hand, stifling a little belch. The director applauded over the monologue the female lead was trying to deliver and told Jessica that was brilliant, and she should do it again every night. The female lead seethed, but Jessica didn't seem to notice.

Jessica did it on opening night, just as directed, tilting back her head and swallowing the entire glass of iced tea in three gulps, her throat muscles loosening and contracting as the audience watched and laughed. And then, attention all on her, not an eye in the house on the actress who was actually *speaking,* Jessica stifled a little belch, and giggled at herself, like a child. The audience laughed along. There was even a spatter of applause.

Our theater is old. It's full of dust, and in summer, there are insects. Flies and midges and confused bees who try to pollinate open tins of eye shadow. During the second Saturday performance, a wasp drowned in Jessica's iced tea.

We were in the middle of the scene where she was supposed to gulp down the faux brandy. She looked into the glass. Then she turned to look at me.

The other two characters had the rest of the page, so I didn't have a line coming up. I was watching her. I had forgotten what Nick should be doing in this moment. I was looking at Jessica, not her character,

wondering what she was going to do. I realized I probably looked rudely gleeful. I probably looked as if I was thinking: *This is what you deserve for trying to upstage us all, for treating us all the same.* I tried to change my expression.

Then she blinked at me, and her upstage eye took longer to open. It might not have been a wink. But either way, the movement dislodged her contact lens, and when it slid aside I saw the light tigerish brown of her real eye. Her lips parted enough to see beyond the paint, into her mouth. It seemed as if the lights were cutting past her makeup, too, and I imagined I could see her face. For just a moment I thought I saw her. The her under what the audience and everyone else saw. Then she turned downstage and began to drink.

She held nothing back. She tilted up her chin and opened up her glossy mouth and took in everything that had been in the glass. The liquid—all of it—traveled down her throat, and she swallowed down the little corpse without even a shudder or a clench in her face or hands.

She set the glass on the table and looked at me again. I turned away from her, although I wasn't sure if I was cringing because of the wasp, or something else.

Behind me, she belched, giggled, and upstaged us all, again.

THE OZETTE TIME CAPSULE

Helen Carlson
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN MEMOIR, 2012

At age nineteen, archaeology tantalized me. I wanted to work on an archaeological dig somewhere and not just read about it in books. In high school, I had viewed the King Tut exhibit with a sense of wonder when it came to Seattle, Washington. Later, I explored the ruins of Tikal, Guatemala, amazed by the ancient Mayan civilization. Those experiences inspired me to study Native American art history and archaeology in college. Then, in a University of Washington class about Northwest Coast Indian Art taught by Bill Holm, we received an invitation to a Makah potlatch in Neah Bay, Washington. I felt honored to be invited to a naming ceremony in the village. At that time, the Makah tribe had plans to build a museum in Neah Bay to showcase the art and artifacts excavated from the Ozette village, and

it seemed like a great opportunity to check out the project. Later, Donald Grayson, my archaeology professor at the UW, encouraged me to apply for a summer field school position at the Ozette Archaeological site on the Washington coast to practice the hands-on aspect of archaeology. I wanted to discover artifacts that would inform our knowledge of historical events and places. My work would help the Makah Nation with their research into the past. I applied to the Ozette field school and they accepted me for the job in the summer of 1977.

The Ozette site, a Makah village at Cape Alava, the western most point of the continental U.S., became known as the Pompeii of the West. About three hundred years ago, a mudslide triggered by an earthquake covered several houses in the large coastal village and sealed everything off from the air preserving wood and other organic materials. This meant that a lot more had been preserved than is usually found from the pre-contact era. Excavators watched branches with leaves still green emerge from the mud along with woven cedar bark baskets and dog wool blankets. Covered by mud and clay, part of the village washed out on the beach after a winter storm. Originally a salvage operation after the storm, the Ozette dig became a collaboration between the Makah Nation and the Washington State Archaeological Research Center (WARC). The excavation compiled information about Makah village life before contact, and the museum would display exhibits about it.

We used wet site techniques at Ozette, excavating with water pumped out of the Pacific Ocean and fed through small garden hoses and large fire hoses rather than the usual trowels and shovels used in dry sites. We washed the material we dug from our assigned one meter squares through screens to filter out the dirt and debris. By the time I got there we were excavating mainly house structural remains, cedar wall boards, posts, and drainage trenches lined with whalebone.

I joined about ten other field school students from all over the country. The rest of the crew hailed from Washington State University. The magic of Ozette touched many, including me, pulling us back more than once.

Ozette sits on the edge of the Olympic National Park about twelve miles south of the tip of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. The trail meanders through forest, meadow, and bog before it reaches the rocky beach. Isolated and beautiful, the coastal wildlife shows nature at its best.

It took about four hours by car and ferry to get to the trailhead, then a four mile hike to the site. Several stretches of the trail wound along a hand split, cedar plank boardwalk, slick when damp, treacherous after rain. I carried everything on the checklist I'd been sent in my back pack, including, rain gear, camera and film, clothes, sleeping bag, flashlight with extra batteries, reading and writing materials. I hoped I hadn't forgotten anything, since it would be a long way back to get it.

Through shadowed rain forest of Douglas firs and red cedars draped in moss, filtered sunlight dappled the trees and forest floor. Stinky skunk cabbage with huge leaves the size of sofa cushions and bright yellow blooms grew alongside the swampy stretches of the boardwalk. I walked carefully since one step off looked like it would mean ankle deep mud.

By the time I reached the prairie, a flat expanse of boggy meadow, I calculated I had walked about halfway. The prairie, formed by a glacial moraine, had been settled by a Scandinavian homesteader at the turn of the century. At the western edge stood the bleached, ramshackle remains of an old building. Deer wandered through the prairie occasionally, nibbling on the tasty variety of plants along the way. I took off my pack, sat down on a log, and took a swig of water, warmed during the hike. I needed to rest and it seemed like the perfect spot.

Birds twittered and flitted around chattering noisily in the prairie and the forest itself, accompanying occasional voices and the sound of other hikers walking on the cedar planks. Aside from that, silence reigned on the hike, good for reflection and contemplation. I thought of the Makah people who had lived at Ozette until the 1920s when they were forced to send their children to a government run school in Neah Bay. They returned to the Ozette River to fish for salmon every summer and gathered cedar bark for baskets on the ridge above

the village site. They hunted whales and made sure the right to hunt whales was written in their treaty. I wondered if we would see the gray whales pass by along the coast on their migration path as they traveled from Mexico north to Alaska.

Not long after I left the prairie and resumed hiking, I became aware of a new scent, a fresh, salty odor. I could smell the ocean before I could hear it, and I could hear it before I could see it. At first I thought it might just be another breeze blowing through the tree branches, but then the waves crashing on the beach got louder and the air felt damper and chillier. I was on the home stretch, almost to the beach.

I paused at the ridge to look at the offshore Ozette Island. This island, I had read, sequestered the village wooly dogs whose fur the Makah wove into blankets and robes. Shrouded in fog, it seemed mysterious and isolated, even more so than the beach below. I heard the quiet sounds of nature, I realized, no steady drone of motorized car engines.

I hiked down the hill and along the wooded bank checking out the campsites near a stream at the base of the hill. The trail took me to the rocky beach, strewn with kelp and driftwood. I soon glimpsed smoke among the trees and found a rutted, muddy road leading up a slope. An old jeep was visible near a row of buildings with shake roofs. Shacks of various shapes and sizes dotted the hillside. A hexagonal cottage sat by the road on my right and a large expanse of grass with a concrete pad painted with a bulls eye caught my eye on the ocean side. Could that be a helicopter pad?

I saw a flicker of movement behind the jeep. The archway looked like the entrance to the compound. A short figure, clad in billowing white, trudged through the archway, carrying what looked like a tray. A shorter figure followed behind, in a mud colored outfit.

"Hi, I'm Jessica," the girl in white said. "I'm Cook's helper. This is my little sister, Rachel. Do you want a cookie? I made them."

"Hi I'm Helen, and sure, I'd love a cookie," I replied, picking out a treat from the tray. Jessica looked about eight and wore an apron so

big it had been flapping around in the breeze. Rachel looked to be about six, and her play clothes had turned to the color of dirt, probably from digging in the mud. Both were blond, but Jessica's hair was short and curly, and Rachel's was longer and straighter.

"Come on, we'll show you where Mother A is," Jessica told me.

"Mother A?" I asked.

"That's where all the girls sleep," Rachel said.

OK," I said, as I followed them into the Ozette compound.

"There's the dining hall, the lab, Little A, Doc's House, over there, and the site is out past the lab. My dad runs the site and we live there." Jessica pointed to the building over the archway. "Mother A is up those steps on the right. You can't miss it. I'll tell Mom and Dad you're here."

I climbed up the steps to my new home for the summer. Mother A turned out to be the mother of all A Frames, a cabin with enough bunks to house nearly all the female crew members. I found an empty bed and threw my gear on it. I heard a knock and the creaky door opened. A red headed, balding man with a large mustache, wearing jeans and a plaid flannel shirt, stepped into Mother A.

"He-llo! I'm Paul Gleeson, Ozette Site Director. Welcome to Ozette! You must be Helen Carlson! We're glad you've come to play on the beach with us this summer! I think you met my daughters earlier," Paul welcomed me.

"Thank you, I'm so excited to be here!" I replied enthusiastically.

"Come on, I'll give you a tour and introduce you to the crew. My wife Madge is our stratigrapher and she's out on the site right now." Paul turned and headed out the door. I followed him out the door along the muddy trail to the site. We stood looking north out over the site where one meter squares marked with string were scattered. One person worked in each square, squatting or sitting in the mud. I saw Jessica slogging through the mud with her cookie tray, delivering cookies to the crew in their squares.

"That's Madge over there at the far wall," Paul pointed across the site. "She's the one scraping the wall with a trowel. She looks at the layers in the walls to date things and see what's in the next square.

We'll go say hi so you can meet her," he explained.

"Hi, I'm Madge," a dark haired woman wearing rain pants coated with mud stepped towards me. "You must be Helen. I'm glad to meet you. You're on my dish crew. We're still missing John, our third dish crew member. He should be here any day."

Paul walked around the site pointing out different areas of the sixty foot long plank house, mentioning artifacts that field school students previously excavated from the mud. We looked at the site grid map and he assigned a square to me located near a wall of the plank house. He speculated it might contain forgotten items that slipped off a sleeping platform 300 years ago. The likelihood of excavating a really great artifact increased in the center squares of the structure, but other students, who arrived earlier, received those highly coveted squares. I felt a bit envious, but tried not to show it. I had a whole summer to find something, so I decided to focus on the hunt and not worry about what other people found.

WHUMP WHUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP...I heard a steady thrumming sound in the distance.

"What's that noise?" I asked Paul.

"That's the chopper bringing us some supplies," Paul replied. "Everyone will head this way in a minute, so you can meet them then. We usually go greet the Marines and help them unload our supplies when they land. They fly in our stuff for training runs since we're out in the woods near the beach. Sometimes they drop guys off in the woods for survival training, too. I've heard they eat slugs sometimes."

Yuck. I swallowed, disgusted, thinking about the giant, six inch long, yellow, banana slugs I had seen slithering around.

The chopper noise suddenly got louder as the double rotor Chinook helicopter flew over us. We hurried over to the helipad to help unload the supplies. After the chopper landed and the blades stopped rotating, we formed a chain of people to pass the supplies along. Paul introduced me, and then we went to work. Several guys rolled barrels of fuel off the back end of the chopper and hauled them over to the excavation pump shed. The rest of us carried cases of food and drink to the dining hall. By the time we finished it was close to dinner time.

The dining hall held the whole crew with numerous tables. Cook and Jessica served the meal in assembly line fashion, filling our plates cafeteria style. The dish crew did the clean up and the rest of us took off for a walk on the beach, a game of volleyball in the sand, or to hang out.

"Have you ever seen the green flash?" Donn asked me with a grin on his face. A carpenter with Norwegian heritage, he often came to help out at Ozette during the summers.

"The green flash? What's that?" I thought to myself, is this guy crazy or on something?

"Some people think it's a myth, or something you see after becoming under the influence," Donn replied seriously, scratching his balding, tanned head. "But, it's real all right. I've seen it. In fact, I look for it every night at sunset. It's an Ozette ritual."

"Really," I couldn't think of anything else to say.

"I've seen it," piped in Lish, a petite, curly haired blonde. "I wasn't even drunk!"

"It's an atmospheric condition that only occurs in a cloudless sky, right as the sun sets on the horizon. You can imagine it's a rare event here on the Washington coast with the amount of clouds we usually see around here. That doesn't stop us from looking, though!" Donn said with a chuckle.

We found a huge driftwood log on the beach big enough for eight to ten of us to sit on, and waited for the sun to set. No one saw the green flash that evening, but from then on, I joined the others in looking for it night after night.

Working in the mud of my square that first day made me glad I brought boots and foul weather gear. Low fog hung over the site in the morning, like many of the days that summer, and the layers I wore felt good. A wool shirt over long underwear helped me stay warm, even with wet hands from spraying my garden hose. The mud seemed permanently caked on my boots and rain pants. I tried to hose it off, but some always stuck on. It reminded me of camping.

When the fog burned off and the sun came out, I could see Ozette Island to the south, Cannonball Island to the north, and the Bodel-

tahs off in the distance behind the sea stack in front of the site. Visible at low tide, just south of the stack, remnants of a canoe drag stretched out for a hundred feet or more in to the bay. The Ozette people cleared rocks away to form a path where they could drag the canoes on to the beach more easily. A resident eagle often sat on the stack searching for fish and observing all the human activity. I tried to sneak up on the eagle to photograph it several times, but it always took off before I could get a good shot.

We all shared the duty of giving tours of the site to people who hiked out. The tourists left their backpacks on the beach and came up to the site at set times during the day. I had to chuckle one time at the clever crows.

"Look at those crows everyone! They're so hungry they're unzipping someone's backpack to steal their lunch!" I pointed to the cawing birds.

"Hey, that's my lunch!" a kid yelled as he raced down the stairs to chase away the crows. The entire crew watched form their squares and we all laughed at the greedy birds as they flew off with chunks of sandwich so heavy they could hardly get off the ground.

Over the summer, I spent most of my weekends at the site. It gave me a chance to get to know the area better and understand why the Makah people chose this protected spot for their village. Once I hiked south on the beach to see the petroglyphs at Wedding Rocks; another time I went north to the Ozette River.

On one of my days off, a group of us hiked into the forest with Melissa, a Makah weaver from Neah Bay, to gather cedar bark for weaving baskets. She offered to teach us how to make plaited cedar bark baskets like the ones we were excavating and she knew where to gather materials up on the ridge behind the Ozette site. We hiked up the hill away from the foggy beach, and when we reached the top of the ridge, the sun hit us and warmed us through our layers of damp, clammy clothes. Melissa demonstrated the art of pulling cedar bark and emphasized the importance of only taking a small area from each cedar so the tree would not be damaged. She gathered only what she needed for herself as well as enough to teach us how to weave a plait-

ed cedar bark basket when we returned to camp.

The musty smell of the forest made a nice change from the beach. The cedars, firs and moss smelled earthier than the salty odor of kelp and ocean air. Other than a few birds flitting around and ferns and tree branches rustling in the summer breeze, it remained quiet. We sat just far enough into the woods that we couldn't hear the ocean anymore, so it felt like a different world, like we had gone back in time.

The possibility of finding a fabulous artifact, like the killer whale fin inlaid with sea otter teeth they found earlier at Ozette, inspired my search every day. Over the next few weeks, as I washed away the layers of dirt and mud, I came upon a thick deposit of blue clay. This clay, sticky and dense, we removed by shovel. As the clay peeled away, I found a layer of whale bones, which lined a cedar board trench along the edge of my square. They had built a drainage trench along the side of the house to channel the rain water off the roof and down to the sea! I marveled at the engineering involved and the use of the materials at hand.

Towards the end of the summer, I found a small incised bird bone about three inches long that may have functioned as a drinking tube like a straw. The color of light soil, I almost missed it as I sprayed the sea water across the dark mud and blackened twigs in my square. I sat on a chunk of wood and watched something pop up and fly across the square. On closer inspection, I saw a tiny groove in the dirt about three inches long and a half an inch wide where something had laid for a few hundred years. It didn't take me long to find the bird bone where it landed a few feet away, its lighter color contrasting with the dark mud.

"Look what I found!" I shouted to everyone on the site. I proudly showed off the treasure in my hand.

As summer came to an end, I had to go back to college in Seattle. On my last hike out, Jessica and Rachel waved goodbye, and I knew I would make my way back to Ozette someday. In that rustic setting, I learned more about living hundreds of years ago than studying in classes. As a small community, we learned to work together and con-

nect with nature, like the Ozette villagers did many years ago. I came away with the realization that the experiences we shared and friendships we made turned out to be some of the most valuable treasures I found.

Years later, I saw that bird bone artifact on display at the Makah Museum in Neah Bay. The tag said: "INCISED BIRD BONE: POSSIBLE DRINKING TUBE." Even though it seemed like such a small artifact, the tiny treasure I found helps to tell the story of the Ozette Village.

THE DAILY TOUCH AND GO

Darcy Boddy
CERTIFICATE IN LITERARY FICTION, 2012

STELLA CONNECTED THE hose to the exhaust pipe as illustrated in the borrowed library book, but saw the cat had gotten into the garage and had to call the whole thing off. Typical, she thought. Someone or something is always ruining my plans. She decided to get dressed and go to work, nothing better came to mind. She took off the nice coat she had planned to die in, and headed to the shower.

Her favorite Dove soap had run out last week. Every day she had put "buy soap" on her to-do list, and every day she was too tired to get off the bus earlier and walk the three blocks to Hogan Drugs. She didn't want to take the car. She was saving the car for other things. Instead she had used as little soap as possible for weeks. When the delicate sliver eventually slipped from her hands, she watched it slide

between the slates of the shower drain, imagined its release into the debris and refuse of the city, silently dissolving in some dark corner of the vast urban sewer system. The journey seemed odd and beautiful.

After her shower, a cup of Ovaltine, and four saltines with peanut butter, she put on her lesser coat and headed to work. She was the court reporter for a fine superior court judge named Bertie Buck, a man of dignity and somewhat overrated intelligence. Her days were spent listening to others, pecking out the scribble of letters on her keyboard that amounted to testimony. Stella didn't hear the testimony, she heard the sounds, the phonetic parts of speech that had become her trade. She had been a court reporter for 17 years. She could type 200 words of speech a minute without remembering a word of it.

"Good morning, Stella. How was your weekend?" The Honorable Judge Buck extended courtesies in lieu of friendship.

"Excellent, your Honor. And did you and your wife enjoy the symphony?"

"Very much. Great piece by Chopin. Lots of notes. You get your money's worth with Chopin," which the Judge pronounced a little like Joplin.

Stella scooted herself behind her small machine on the second tier of the bar below the Judge. She felt his eyes move appreciatively over her cable knit sweater. After this she could count on being ignored the remainder of the morning as the Judge launched into the docket with his jocular clerk, Andrew Hoite.

"Mr. Hoite."

"Your Honor." Andrew gave a staccato nod of respect as he arranged the morning's motions.

"I see we have State v Grimley on the calendar today. How long do you think the jury will have this one? Ten minutes?" Judge Buck chuckled. "Second offense for this guy. Hope this does it for him."

As was his talent, Andrew avoided an opinion. Stella looked at his hyper-starched shirt and expensive suit trousers his parents had probably bought for him. There was white tissue stuck to his back pocket she had no intention of telling him about. The bailiff unlocked the

court room doors and let in the respective parties. Prosecutor Longcamp entered with an air of preordained victory while Grimley, or what appeared to be a Grimley, shuffled in with his discount lawyer.

At first the round of perfunctory motions lulled the court into a languid monotone of order. But suddenly Grimley's lawyer fell into a fit of coughing that turned him red, and then careened him to the floor, until even Longcamp felt concern enough to peer over the liberal lawyer. Andrew efficiently bypassed the sheriff's office and called 911. As the lawyer coughed and spasmed on the floor, Stella took a moment to sip a glass of water she kept within arms reach.

Several minutes later EMTs affixed an oxygen mask over the lawyer's mouth, put him on a gurney, and whisked him out of the courtroom. After several moments of settling down, Judge Buck spoke.

"Well, Mr. Grimley, I suppose you will want to delay trial to obtain another lawyer."

Grimley cleared his throat and rose to speak, carefully buttoning his tweed jacket first.

"That's okay."

"I'm sorry? Mr. Grimley, don't you want a lawyer?"

"No thanks. I pretty much know what to say."

"I strongly advise you to retain counsel, Mr. Grimley, these are serious charges and you already have one conviction."

"I appreciate the advice, your Honor. I really do. But I think it was my previous lawyer that allowed me to be wrongly convicted on that first charge…"

"Objection!" Longcamp was on his feet.

"Objection to what, Charlie? C'mon. We are just trying to sort this fellow's legal situation out. Consider it off the record." The Judge looked at Stella as she stopped typing. "Better keep typing, Stella. It's not off the record exactly."

"So you intend to represent yourself, Mr. Grimley?"

"I'd like to give it a shot if that's okay."

"You understand there's not a do-over here. If you proceed without counsel you must stand by what the jury decides and take your lumps. You can't claim later that you weren't advised to seek counsel. You

understand all that?"

"Oh, yes. I have to call it one way or another. I'd like to try this time without a lawyer, but thanks for the offer, Judge, Your Honor."

"Alright then, so noted. Now Charlie, rather Mr. Longcamp, I want you to play fair and clean here. We must consider that Mr. Grimley is not fully informed on the law. Let's be gentlemen, shall we?"

"Certainly your Honor."

"That's right. Okay, the first motion I have in front of me is..."

Stella took down the sounds noting that some were actual words, especially those of Mr. Grimley. At lunch she Googled him, and found he had once held a position in the aeronautic engineering department at the university. He seemed to have won several awards for human flying machines. He had published a paper on the potential for human flight. She looked up his prior conviction, something about pushing someone off a building. She had thought of this method of death herself. It started out rather simple and clean, but the time it took to hit the ground was a drawback. And too short a fall might result in mere injury. She wondered what the address was of the building this fellow had "left" from.

Grimley appeared orderly and relaxed in the afternoon session. The jury was finalized and Stella took the time to notice their faces. She wondered if any of them had spotted the curious lack of concern Grimley had in the jaws of a chopping legal system. Grimley was charged with "encouraging the suicide of John Doe by affixing a mechanism to Doe's back and walking him to a bridge deck while under the influence of..." some drug that sounded like the ether Stella asked for at the dentist. Stella had considered dating her dentist, Harold, in order to obtain more ether, but he turned out to be a real stickler for rules.

Without the constant interruption of defense counsel to egg him on, Longcamp lost much of his usual momentum and rested his case by the end of the first day. Grimley had listened earnestly, taking notes on a long yellow pad, or was he drawing? A few times the Judge had asked Grimley if he understood Longcamp's accusations, and Grimley would stand and say "I think so, your Honor. Thanks for

asking but the man's entitled to his opinion." The politeness utterly defeated Longcamp.

That night Stella got off the bus two stops early. She had used a password to get into court records obtaining the last known address for Grimley, Stanley Grimley. It was several blocks from her apartment. She wore her sneakers to walk the extra blocks causing her to feel as if she were in disguise. She watched Grimley – no, Stanley, through the uncurtained window of his second level apartment as he fixed dinner and did the dishes. It was clear a second story jump would produce only injuries, not death or flight. He would have needed the bridge deck to get the full effect of his experiment, she saw that now. Satisfied, Stella picked up one Dove soap bar on the way home.

The next day Grimley began his case. He was quite friendly with the jurors, walking up to the jury box and greeting them with a smile.

"I apologize this is taking up a lot of your time. Thanks for being here if you had a choice. I thought I'd cover a few points Mr. Longcamp made and then take questions."

"Objection!" Longcamp shot from the cannon of his seat.

"Yes, yes, Mr. Longcamp, sustained. Mr. Grimley, you can't take questions from the jurors. You need to put on your case."

"Your Honor, considering the enormous court resources this trial is consuming over a misunderstanding, it might be easier to just cut to the chase and ask these jurors what they'd like to know."

Stella almost laughed. Grimley was a refreshing fellow.

"No, no Mr. Grimley. You must guess if you will what they want to know, anticipate their questions. That's what putting on a case means."

"I see. Seems an indirect approach, but alright." Stanley turned to the jurors again. "Mr. Longcamp said that I was responsible for the death of Kevin, ur, John Doe, but actually Kevin and I were great friends. He had an excellent mind, and enthusiasm for human flight that we shared after watching a National Geographic show on this man who had sown a suit, well his mother had, that was kind of like pajamas made out of parachute material and…."

Stella's fingers flew as she listened to Stanley Grimley speak of his desire to fly like a bird, to be free of earthly bounds, to transcend gravity if only for a moment in time, three minutes would be enough. As Grimley spoke, the jurors started to wake up, some smiled, some seemed to want to raise their hands and talk of their own hobbies. He went on in this vein while Longcamp tapped his government pen on his wingtip shoe, and exchanged looks of ridicule and disgust with the assistant prosecutor.

"…and then Kevin, ur John, lost his nerve and told me to give him some…" and here Stella couldn't punch out the right squiggles, "…you know, just to relax him but I guess it was too much because he didn't do the flapping motion we discussed…" and then Longcamp interrupted like a child with attention disorder and rushed to finish the characterization, that Grimley possessed a wanton disregard for human life. It did seem to Stella that Stanley had crossed the line most people would understand.

Longcamp cross-examined him as the defendant. He exposed Grimley's lack of precaution, the urging on he had done to get his colleague into the suit, to put on the mechanical wings that Grimley had not even attempted to test out, trespassing on bridge property and of course the death of John Doe himself who had died with an impaired mind caused by Grimley illegally obtaining…and then that word again that was causing Stella all the trouble.

That night, Stella got off the bus two stops early, this time with a dinner of Chef Boyardee ravioli and San Francisco style garlic bread for two. Stanley Grimley's apartment was a little dark from the street but she pressed the security button and found him at home.

"Yes?"

"Mr. Grimley. This is Stella from Judge Buck's court. May I come in?"

"Stella? Do I know you?"

"I'm the Judge's court reporter. I wore a yellow cable knit sweater today??"

"Canary yellow! Yes. Come in."

Stella climbed two sets of tile stairs set in diamond pattern, not

new but clean. She was out of breath at the top when she saw Stanley was standing in the door frame in an Argyle sweater.

"I just finished with my calisthenics. Keeps one in good shape."

"I'm so glad I found you at home."

"I guess the court does not consider me a flight risk."

She thought this was quite funny, possibly the only funny thing she'd heard all year.

"Well, I brought dinner."

"Oh, does the court usually provide dinner?"

"No, but a potential new business partner might."

"Business partner? You? Stella—"

"Stella Rosemead. I'm interested in helping your experiment get off the ground. I thought I could be your next test subject. Ravioli?"

"Oh yes, thanks. Not too much sauce. The bread looks nice."

"Let's warm it in the oven, shall we? There is something you'd have to assure me though."

"If it's your safety in the suit, you know, really Stella I can't promise anything…"

"No, no. I'm not worried at all about my safety. It's just that I have a cat…I need to know he'd have a home if something happened to me."

"I love cats."

"Good. Then..." Stella extended her hand. "…dinner and then the bridge?"

GATES HALL (ABOVE)
& SUZIE AT NIGHT BY GARET WOLFE
Certificate Program in Photography, 2012


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THE SEATTLE POLICE'S DRONE PROGRAM:

DRONE NEW WORLD, OR AID TO SOCIETY?

John Madziarczyk
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN NONFICTION, 2012

"LET'S POWER IT up", says the officer. The City Council is meeting in committee, looking at the civil rights and public safety issues posed by the Seattle PD's new drone program. The council chamber itself is empty except for two city councilmen, their aides, the clerks, and the officers showing off the drone. They're meeting at a conference table in front of the grand sweeping bank of seats that the council normally occupies. In the visitors section, though, there's a lot of action. Camera crews are there, reporters, a few interested citizens, and fellow officers showing support. Still, it seems like a non-event, like police of a small town demonstrating a newfangled device in front of a village council meeting. The drone is a coffee table-sized mesh of arms, helicopter blades, and a central stabilizing unit remi-

niscent of the back of a hornet. It has three arms, each ending with an upright soda can that has rotors on its top and bottom. The camera is a small squarish oblong box that hangs off of the body. In a second they power up. It whirs a little bit, the green, white, and red safety lights turn on, and then they turn it off. The police aren't allowed to fly the drone in the City Council chamber due to safety issues, so this is the best they can do.

"It can only fly four hundred feet" in altitude because of FAA regulations, Assistant Police Chief O'Donagh tells the Council. The drone is limited in its powers and abilities, partly because of regulations, partly because of the limitations of the design. It can send streaming video back, but because of its battery life it can only fly for ten minutes on one charge. It can't fly over crowds for safety reasons and it has to remain within the line of sight of the operator. But that's only where things stand now. Technology will surely keep up with interest, and the technical capabilities of this drone have already been outpaced by other models. In the future, ten minutes will become twenty, and twenty will become half an hour, and then more. How those more powerful drones will be regulated will likely depend on the Seattle PD's initial policies. Right now, though, the Seattle PD's drone is just a toy, a questionable expense, even, at $41,000. Because Seattle is the first major city to use drone technology, other cities and municipalities will look at what we come up with when making their own rules and regulations.

The Seattle PD envisions the drone being used for emergencies where putting officers on the scene would either be dangerous or impossible. At the presentation, the Seattle PD brought up the standoff that took place recently in North Bend, in the Cascade mountain range, where a man wanted for killing his wife and child was holed up in a bunker he had carved into the side of Rattlesnake Mountain. It was believed to be heavily booby-trapped. In that situation, the police could have used the drone to go in there and take pictures that would help them to assess the situation. In talking with Detective Mark Jamieson, of the Seattle PD's Public Affairs department, he brought up hazmat monitoring as a potential use. Drones can be equipped

with radiation and chemical detectors, flown above toxic spills, or into apartments and homes where there's a suspicion that dangerous material is present. According to Detective Jamieson, drones are already being used in Canada to aid fire departments by gathering overhead pictures of toxic spills.

The ACLU of Washington is concerned that mission creep may happen and that the overall policy regulating the drones will be made by the Police Department without enough input from the City Council or the public. Mission creep refers to new, unplanned tasks or activities beyond the original intent of the mission that are thought to be useful or needed. The Seattle PD, in presenting to the City Council, tried to allay such fears.

The police say they will announce through the internet, on the Police Blotter blog and through twitter, when they've put a drone in the air, and that they'll be holding community meetings to hear citizens' concerns. Washington State has a specific requirement for police to destroy surveillance data they've gathered within twenty four hours if there's no justifiable need for it, and Seattle itself has a longstanding prohibition against police filming citizens because of their religious or political affiliations.

The story often cited in the world of drone producers and professionals as a success is a recent case of cattle rustling in Lakota, North Dakota, involving an armed standoff. Six cattle wandered onto the ranch of Rodney Brossart, a man who belongs to the sovereign citizens movement, who believed that his ranch was not part of the United States. Because it was his country, he believed he had a right to keep the cattle. According to *U.S. News and World Report,* Brossart and three others used high powered rifles to chase police off the ranch. Other local news sources reported that Brossart made a statement to the effect that if police officers came onto his property they would not be coming out. Because the ranch was very large, it was difficult to locate him without putting police in danger, so they called in a Predator Drone used by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Service to help find him. The drone found him, and the police were able to successfully apprehend him without incident. However,

drones aren't just the being used by the police and the border patrol.

Hobbyists are using them, as are universities, and they're poised to move into the commercial sector. People can now build them in their backyards and fly them from there, taking pictures of the world and exploring the sky. The drones themselves are still fairly expensive. A plan on DIYDrones.com using a pre-made electronics pack hooked up to a homemade RC plane kit is described as running "under $500." Universities are using them in their scientific research.

KSAT news in San Antonio interviewed Professor Thom Hardy of Texas State University, who is overseeing the school's drone program. Hardy said drones can be used for counting deer and monitoring how land use affects watersheds, among other potential projects. In the private sector, Hardy said that farmers can use them to check their crops on a daily basis, instead of having to go out and manually look at all of their land.

Even though drones have a wide variety of uses, according to the Center for Democracy and Technology right now there is no federal agency that is looking at the privacy concerns the drones bring up. The FAA, which just released its drone regulations on May 14th, looks at the issue from a purely technical standpoint. Its concern is to establish rules that will protect people on the ground and in the air. Right now, the prohibition on flying drones over groups of people, the 400 foot height limit, and the requirement that they remain in the line of sight of the operator happen to ensure some limitations on potential invasions of privacy, but all of that might change as technology advances.

A drone doesn't have to fly over groups of people to gather surveillance on them, though. The Seattle PD said at the City Council hearing that they're seriously considering buying an extra drone for the Port of Seattle as part of a program funded by an '08 anti-terrorism Homeland Security Grant that will also establish a line of video cameras in front of the Port. The FAA rules say that you can't fly drones over people, but not that you can't fly drones close to them, take their pictures with high-powered cameras, or take streaming video of them, and then feed those images through facial recognition software. Both

the Port of Seattle and other ports throughout the Puget Sound area have been sites of protests in the last six years, first against military shipments to and from Iraq and Afghanistan and now over labor issues, in concert with the Occupy movement.

The Seattle Police Intelligence Ordinance that prohibits police from filming political and religious groups has been publicly questioned in light of this year's Mayday protest property destruction. There have also been indications, although they're up for debate, that the 20/20 Plan of Mayor McGinn to reform the Seattle PD in line with the recent Justice Department investigation may include a push to loosen those rules.

All of this takes place on a national background that says there are very few rights to privacy in public places under federal law. As it stands now, there really are no rights to privacy when you're walking in public, or even when you're in your own backyard. The Supreme Court has ruled that if a police department aircraft flies over a public area and sees something against the law, the police can act. But like anything else, there are subtle distinctions in the law that put a twist in the subject.

Three landmark Supreme Court cases have defined the parameters of an individual's reasonable expectation of privacy in public places: Katz v. United States, California v. Ciraolo, and Florida v. Riley. Katz established the basic test for privacy in a public place, while Ciraolo and Riley changed the emphasis of that test. The test in Katz had two parts: does the individual in question think they have a reasonable expectation of privacy, and does society see this expectation as reasonable?

Katz was arrested because of evidence from a wiretap on a phone booth he used for illegal gambling. The court ruled that even though the taps were on a public facility, and so could be seen as just providing an extension of what any bystander could hear, Katz had a reasonable and socially sanctioned expectation of privacy when using a phone booth. However, the other two cases changed the focus of the test from whether society agreed with the individual's opinion to whether that opinion was reasonable and rational in the abstract.

The two are not necessarily the same thing. The standard of reasonableness argued by lawyers before the Supreme Court could be quite different from the standard of reasonableness of people in the United States as a whole.

In the case of California vs. Ciraolo, the police department flew an airplane over Ciraolo's backyard at 1,000 feet and took pictures of his marijuana crop. The Supreme Court ruled that because it was possible for private individuals to fly planes over backyards, and that passenger jets do this on a regular basis, it was unreasonable for Ciraolo to expect he had privacy from high altitude overhead surveillance of his backyard. In the case of Florida v. Riley, the police flew a helicopter four hundred feet above Riley's greenhouse, less than the height of Seattle's Smith Tower. The greenhouse had a few slats missing, and police saw marijuana growing. They got a search warrant for his greenhouse and arrested him. The justices found that because the helicopter wasn't breaking any laws and Riley left the slats to his greenhouse open, his expectation of privacy was not reasonable. However, in the dissent Justice Brennan reasoned that the simple possibility that a private individual could fly a helicopter at 400 feet over a piece of property and observe it doesn't invalidate a person's reasonable expectation of privacy.

Justice Brennan also stated that "The reason why there is no reasonable expectation of privacy in an area that is exposed to the public is that little diminution in 'the amount of privacy and freedom remaining to citizens' will result from police surveillance of something that any passerby readily sees." The use of the helicopter allowed the police to monitor the property in ways that went do far above and beyond what the average person could do that they cut into Riley's fundamental right to privacy. However, the characterization by Brennan of the helicopter cutting into those privacy rights is arguably subjective itself and not necessarily agreed on by people at large. Any restriction of surveillance based on public sanction, via the second part of the Katz, would have to be based on values either explicitly expressed by the public or convincingly proven to exist on a mass scale. In either case, the proof would have to go beyond the opinion of one

judge. Otherwise, the restrictions would not kick in, and any actions that infringed on those values would be approved by default.

Professor Ryan Calo of Stanford's "Center for Internet and Society" made the case in the Stanford Law Review that because drones present the potential for an invasion of privacy more tangible than having your data sifted through in an anonymous warehouse by the NSA, citizens may be galvanized into taking action, and that may lead to changes in the law over what they will and won't accept from surveillance. That may potentially change the view of the courts that public spaces are open for whatever kind of surveillance police want to use. Drones bring another dimension to privacy issues, the third dimension, in a much more evocative way than aircraft, and height is at least more tangible than the hidden dimension of cyber space.

Drones have uses that go well beyond surveillance. They have legitimate uses in police work and, the private sector, but they also pose serious potential dangers to privacy. Like it or not, in the private sector, in universities, and in police work, the drones will be here to stay. It's up to the public to decide how they want to formulate regulations to guide the uses of the drones into productive channels. Can they step up to the plate and channel the impending rush and profusion of new technology? If not, the future situation they will face will be drones regulated by default, with all of the uncertainty that implies.

THE MESSENGER

Niyantha Shekar
CERTIFICATE PROGRAM IN LITERARY FICTION, 2012

Every day as the sun rose in Ranjha, a small village facing the Indian Ocean, the men set sail in search of fish to send into town, a surplus allowing them to feed their families. The women woke up just before the men did and started on their daily chores with a discipline that had been passed down for ages. The older boys accompanied their fathers while the younger boys and girls slept in, a luxury they recognized only later in their lives. The homes of the villagers were unspectacular—the few made of brick and cement standing out amongst and faring slightly better during the monsoon season than the mud and straw huts that lined the coast.

One evening, after the villagers had retired for the day, the district collector Ramanathan Iyer drove into Ranjha in his white Fiat

and parked outside Appu Rajan's house, the most recently painted and sturdy of them all. Appu's father, unlike his son, was a masterful fisherman who revered the ocean, understood its mood swings and the world beneath, and captured and sold fish with such skill so as to leave his son with a house to be proud of. Ramanathan Iyer took out a big cardboard box from the backseat of his car and carried it in, the open flap of the box colliding with his nose along the way. Appu, recognizing the man, let the unannounced entrance slide and signaled to his wife to get the collector a cup of tea. Ramanathan Iyer set the box down and pulled out a device—black and heavy—consisting of a handle with curved ends, connected by a short coil of wire to a base with a circular dial. He placed it carefully on the table besides him, took the cup of tea from Appu's wife and told the couple that they were now the proud custodians of Ranjha's first telephone. "Take care of it like your own son," he said, glancing at the little boy sitting in the corner of the room. "The honorable chief minister," he bowed and the Rajans did the same, "has gifted this telephone to your village. I will call every month to make sure it is in working order. Two of my men will be here tomorrow to set this up for you," he said before slurping down the tea and driving away in his Fiat.

Bestowed with the village's first telephone, Appu strutted around town, loudly explaining the wonders of the device to anyone who would listen, and artfully navigated any conversation so that it ended with him enunciating each digit of the telephone number. His bubble of self-importance was impervious to the chatter of jealous villagers, but his eight-year-old son, Pappu, was aghast with the sudden turn of events in his life. Formerly jovial friends, listening in on their parents' conversations about the lucky, undeserving Rajan family, felt obliged to begin excluding Pappu from their games of hide and seek. Pappu's father was hardly home and his mother was too busy cleaning up, cooking and standing in line at the village well to care for the telephone. Thus the role of guarding it fell upon him, and this soon grew into picking up phone calls and delivering messages that had been left behind. Shopkeepers, who used to throw in a free piece of chocolate whenever he accompanied his mother to their stores,

now regarded him with distaste. Pappu brought them news about the money they owed, about lenders from town threatening action if they didn't pay up. They drove him away with a flick to the ear or forced him to wait around by ignoring his presence. As the phone number made the rounds, calls started coming in with regularity. Pappu had to convey a wide range of messages, from young men and women who ran away to elope and called in to say that they were not coming back, from thugs who wanted a cut on the profits made by the fishermen they had helped in the past, and from mistresses in neighboring towns who wanted to know when their men planned to visit next. The constant interruptions, the running from one house or store to another at all times of the day, and the searing summer heat took a toll on Pappu. Fair, chubby, and lively till not too long ago, he was now tanned, thin, and tired, and at an age where he didn't know he could complain.

One day, as Pappu was walking by, eyes looking upwards, he was hailed by Valli *paati,* who at 84 was the oldest person in the village. "You'll trip and fall, looking up at the clouds like that," she said with genuine concern on her face. "Kannan, the postman, told me that it would help me remember all the messages I need to deliver," he said still staring at the sky. "That mischievous Kannan!" she laughed. "How about you stop looking up, and I'll give you some buttermilk," she said, in between bursts of laughter.

Soon, Valli *paati* became Pappu's greatest ally. When his mother took a break from her household duties or when his father returned home in a pleasant mood, Pappu would get respite, a few minutes to do what he wanted, to wriggle away from the grip of the telephone. He would run over to Valli paati's hut, to ask for his buttermilk and to talk to her about his day—the food he had seen in the different homes when he interrupted people's lunchtimes, the simple toys he saw babies being entertained with, the chocolates he was tempted to lift from the stores where he was not welcome, and the fights he temporarily halted as those involved united in their dislike for what he had to say. Pappu was a wonderful source of gossip and nonchalantly revealed telephone conversations: that the milkman was strug-

gling to pay off his loans or that the young brides shipped away with their husbands hated having to tend to them in towns so alien, so far from home. The old woman saw in Pappu so much of her own son, a son who she hadn't seen or heard from in years, ever since he left the village looking for work. She always offered Pappu a refill when he looked up beseechingly at her, understanding his reluctance to go back home and feeding her own need for company.

A couple of days after his ninth birthday, the shrill, jarring ring of the telephone woke Pappu up at six in the morning. His father had already left for sea and his mother had headed to the village well to beat the competition for the scarce water. In a fit of rebellion, he covered his ears with his pillow and let the phone ring till it ceased to. Just as he resumed his sleep, the phone rang again. He got up, grabbed the receiver and asked what was so important that he be woken up at this hour. "Oh," he said quietly, as the voice on the other end informed him that Valli *paati's* son had been hit by a car the previous night and had died on impact. "We've already cremated him," the voice said and then added with a cruel directness, "Just let Valli *paati* know."

Pappu stood still, the receiver in his hand long after the voice had hung up. He felt jitters running through his body, and when he finally made his way towards Valli *paati's* hut, the chilly morning air did nothing to put him at ease. The old woman was sweeping the floor right outside her home when she saw him walk slowly towards her with his head bent. "Why are you up so early, child? Do you have a message for me?" she laughed. "Why don't you wait inside, I'll be right there."

Pappu walked into her hut quietly and drew circles on the sandy floor with his toe as he waited the terrible wait. As he looked around the hut, his eyes landed on a small, framed photograph propped against the back wall, besides the rolled-up bedding. The woman in the photograph looked familiar. Her hair was long and dark, falling luxuriantly over her shoulder, rebelliously unbraided. A demure smile lit up her face. Her arms were wrapped around the waist of a young child, his oily hair patted down and parted towards the right, a frown on his face supporting a struggle to escape his mother's grip.

"My son was just like you," Valli *paati* said following Pappu's gaze. He hadn't noticed her come back in. "Rakesh wouldn't stop talking, just like you," she said with a playful smile. She took out a steel tumbler to make a warm cup of tea for her messenger and asked excitedly, "Do you really have a message…for an old woman like me? Tell me, was it my son?" Eyes still focused on the photograph, Pappu recited everything the voice had told him, not missing a word, the art of delivering messages verbatim perfected over the past few months, only this time talking quicker, hoping that if he spoke fast enough, the truth would be less painful and that things would go back to normal.

As Valli *paati* crumbled to the floor and succumbed to a pain that would never end, Pappu stood rigidly, the oscillating sound of the tumbler hitting the floor ringing in his ear. The sand beneath his feet felt crude, and his discomfort only increased as he noticed how settled the pieces of sand were between his toes. He could hear from the neighboring huts the sound of other kids waking up to a new morning, their mothers shouting at them to stay out of trouble. He looked at the little boy in the photograph one last time, and then walked out of the hut, knowing that the telephone he was supposed to guard was probably calling out to him, its ring unrelenting, commanding him to pick up.

THE LAST SPEAKER

Rebecca Ramsey
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Exiting the bus, the student stood in place for a few moments, as he waited for the nausea of the past hours to fade. The evening shadows caused the stones in the square to appear deeply rooted. Perhaps the men drinking at the nearby café wondered why a stranger was stopping in their village, but they quickly pretended not to notice. Taking his backpack from the baggage man, he hoisted it up and set out across the square towards the only hotel. In his tired state, it looked to the student as though he were being led to the place by his own shadow, which stretched far in front of him.

Later that night, sitting at the hotel's small restaurant-bar, he was disappointed by the conversations around him. He listened, as all linguistics students do compulsively, but he understood nearly ev-

erything that was being said. He had come to the country and to the village to find a dying language. As part of his research grant from The Project, he had received training on best methods for finding these last speakers. It advised first to simply listen to conversations around him. Naturally shy, though, he had been reluctant to take the next approach and initiate conversations with the locals. It was fortunate, then, that the butcher's son was so garrulous. He was a retired businessman, returned to the village to live out his days as a town notable. He wasted no time in promising the student a meeting with his father, one of the last two speakers of the local tribal language.

The student was thrilled to start the work he had travelled so for to do. Every morning, he worked with the butcher taking notes and making recordings. In the afternoons, the butcher's son would meet the student at the café. The two men drank coffee together and talked about the village. None of the buildings in the central square were less than sixty-years-old. Though there were a few children, it was mostly populated by older men and women, though most of them younger than the butcher.

It was a surprise, then, to learn that a second speaker was still alive in the valley, especially since neither the butcher nor his son had mentioned him. The hotel proprietor was the one who told the student about the farmer who lived on the mountain. The man had long kept to himself and never came into the village now. He was part of an old family in the valley and several of his relatives still lived in the village. The student sought out the farmer's niece, whom he had learned visited her uncle every week. She was intrigued by The Project and agreed to take the student on her next visit.

The old farmer was hunched over a row of corn, moving slowly but deliberately. The sounds of the startled birds had already alerted him that a car was approaching, but he did not turn towards the road until he heard the vehicle shut off. After his visitors got out of the car, the farmer approached and extended his calloused hand. His niece introduced the young man as a student doing research on endangered languages. The farmer noticed immediately that the young man spoke

with the accent of the former colonizers. He had not heard it in years. When the student began to explain why he had come, the farmer motioned for them to follow him onto the deep, shaded front porch that extended across the front of the house.

Without pausing to reply, the student continued to explain about The Project, which gave research grants for field work documenting languages verge of disappearance. All over the globe, native tongues were dying. Their speakers were dying and the children either could not remember how to speak the languages or had never learned. Knowledge slipped out of the world each time a language was forgotten. The student did not elaborate on what this knowledge was, but he believed that it included the keys to great mysteries.

The farmer nodded, but kept his eyes focused on the landscape in front of them. He did not need to look at the young man's face to read his zeal.

The student spoke for some time about the importance of the language the farmer had spoken when he was a boy. As one of the only two speakers alive, the farmer was a breathing link to the past. Without his cooperation in The Project, the language would disappear. Luckily, two speakers remained. The farmer stiffened at the mention of the butcher, but stayed silent. The student had already recorded several hours of tapes with the butcher and he spoke of the man's son as a friend.

"A conversation between you two would be invaluable to The Project," the student concluded breathlessly. "It will show future researchers so much about the language and its culture."

"I see," the old man replied at length.

The student also suggested that the farmer record phrases and stories as the butcher had. That way, their voices could be used to compare the phrases and to more fully understand the intonation and cadence of the tribal language.

"When would you like to start?" the farmer asked. "You are welcome to come again with my niece on her visit next week."

"Well, if it would be acceptable to you two, I would like to start tomorrow."

The farmer laughed and looked at his niece for her response.

"Why not?" said her eyes.

The student sat clutching the jeep door to steady himself as the farmer's niece wound her way around the potholes. The incline of the road down the mountain made it seem even more perilous than it had before. She did not hesitate to run over patches of smaller bumps, to swerve precariously around holes, or to break suddenly and proceed slowly over the very biggest craters. Trying to keep his stomach calm, the student listened as best he could to what his companion was saying. She was not a talkative woman, he could tell, but she seemed intent on explaining to him about her uncle and his life.

"He was in the war, you know. The Hero's army recruited him directly out of a political prison and he served for nearly two years before his injury. Of course, they didn't know that at the time. All the family sure of was that his letters from prison had stopped."

The jeep slammed hard against the edge of a pothole.

"The country was in chaos. Newspapers were erratic and the radio was out half the time. My mother told me that they used to keep a wireless on all day and night and the old men would take shifts waiting for the news to come on."

The student nodded, but he wasn't sure that the motion looked much different from what his head had been doing for the past half-hour anyway.

"I don't really remember much, though. I was just a little girl. When my uncle returned, he and his wife struggled, even though they were the ones who inherited the big farm. They were both in poor health and the children were too small to be much help."

She paused, though it was unclear whether it was to concentrate on the road or add emphasis.

"And of course, that's when the bad blood started. Between him and the butcher. All any of us knows is that the butcher came to the funeral with a large gift and then my uncle never spoke to him again."

"And why do you think that is?" the student asked.

"Well, we were all starving, so it did seem a bit ungrateful on Un-

cle's part. But then, it would have been a more welcome gift while my aunt was still trying to stay alive. Wouldn't it have?"

Knowing that he would not be able to work in the fields that day, the farmer had risen later than usual, as though it were a holiday. There were no longer any animals on the farm to tend, just an ancient cat that seldom left the house. He dressed carefully, concentrating on pulling each one of the buttons on his shirt carefully through, so that they lay in an even line down his chest. He made coffee. On the table, he laid out a yellow cloth his mother had woven. He went outside and opened the shutters on all the windows of the first floor. He stepped back to look at the windows on the upper floor, where he never went.

When his niece and the student arrived, the farmer was waiting on the front step. The day was still cool and the stranger wore a thick sweater.

The three settled in the kitchen and the farmer poured them coffee. Then he sat and listened to the student speak about dying languages and lost heritage. He used the word heritage a lot. A professor had written a book about the connection between native languages and personal identity. The professor said that communities ached with the loss of their languages.

The farmer looked at his niece who sat stoically drinking her coffee. Had he really stolen from her? When the farmer and his wife had children, the village teacher told them to use only the colonizer's language, which had already become the national language. With the oldest boy, his wife had at first been unable to resist singing songs and telling stories in the tribal tradition. But soon they were all too tired and too scared to pay much attention to the past.

"They spoke it over our heads when we were young," the niece said. "It was the language for grown-ups."

The student nodded as though he had expected this.

The farmer was glad his niece had not understood what was being spoken when she was a child. But he did not say so.

Next, the student pulled out a tape recorder.

"I want to record a few phrases today, just to get us started. I will

first record the translation and then you will repeat the phrase in your language three times. "

The farmer read the typed list of phrases to himself: I love you. How are you? Please pass the salt. Welcome to my home. What will the weather do tomorrow? How do you get to the market? I am sick. I miss you.

Was this the cultural heritage the farmer had denied his children? The student did not give him a chance to protest, but started the machine and read the first phrase.

"I love you," he said sharply.

The farmer cleared his throat. The words were not difficult to find, but the sounds formed uneasily in his mouth. When he finally got them out, the student simply nodded and mouthed, "again."

After they had recorded the sentences, the student asked for a story.

The farmer hesitated. He could describe changes in the village, how it had ebbed into a town connected with the entire country and then waned as larger places drained it of inhabitants. He could recount the first movie he had seen and the first news that his country was independent from the colonizers. He could try to describe the blunt realization that freedom had left him alone without family or friends, wounded in a hospital far from home.

He looked at his niece. They had become close over the past years and she did not need him to speak to understand his meaning.

"I think my uncle is tired for today," she said. "Maybe we can do this again tomorrow."

That night, the farmer went to bed late. He was weary, but knew he would not be able to sleep. Lying awake in the bedroom that had been his parents', he considered every word he knew in the tribe's language. He remembered conversations he had had with his mother, his grandfather, his crippled sister who never left the farm her entire life. He heard the shouts of his brothers as they brought in the harvest. He tried to conjure up the advice his father had given before the arrest, the last time they would ever talk. He whispered the same phrases he had used to persuade his wife to marry him. Shouting, he

repeated the words of his best friend as he lay dying in the war.

The farmer felt a lifetime of spoken memories pouring out of him. If only they could have heard. If only one of those he had lost were the other last speaker. Instead, the words were reverberating unheard off his bedroom walls, never to be shared again. They went cascading out the window and echoing off the mountains. The tones of his childhood, his youth, his love filled his ears as they had not done in decades.

"I would like to take you out for dinner with the other speaker in the village. It will help my research if I can hear the two of you interact. Surely you know each other."

The student's voice quivered in understanding of the delicacy of the second request, which touched the farmer. The old man had become interested in recording as much as he could onto the little tapes, but he still did not want to speak with the butcher. Though there had never been enough between them for a formal rift, he felt the injustice of it all as though his wife were only recently dead. If it had been any other man, the farmer likely would have gone down into the valley and eaten a meal with whoever still knew the language. But now there was just the butcher.

The butcher had only used the tribal language at home. His father, who raised herds of goats, sent each of his three sons to the school in a nearby village. When they were boys, the farmer remembered that the butcher had pretended not to understand the other children when they chattered in a pidgin which meshed the tribal language with the colonizers' tongue. But that was a quarrel among children. How could he explain to the student that he simply had no interest in talking with the butcher now?

The student looked expectant.

The farmer's niece had driven the young man again, this time bringing one of her granddaughters. The toddler explored the farmhouse tentatively as they talked. Watching the little girl, the farmer thought how unlikely it was she would ever speak the tribal language. She would not feel the pang of loss because she would never know

that there had once been another way of gossiping with her friends or complaining to her mother. It seemed unlikely she would ever even hear about her old uncle who had lost his wife and children before her parents even met. Perhaps he would be an anecdote told by the family about their relative who had served in the war. Who had come back changed and quiet. Who had come back to watch his family die.

"I prefer not to," the farmer explained.

They had called the general The Leader, though after the new government had solidified its power, he would become known as The Hero. At first, only the zealots for independence had been with him, but the revolution engulfed the country more quickly and more fully than anyone would have guessed. Before his arrest, the farmer had not been much involved in politics. He and his wife had three children and a fourth on the way. Most days he worked on his family's land as well as his own small plot. Still, he managed to form the wrong connections without the right friends to mitigate them.

In jail, he was forced to write his wife in the colonizer's tongue. His own language did not have a written alphabet. The letters were a constant source of anxiety for him. Would he reveal too much and worry his wife? Could he be punished further if the guards read the letters and took offence at them? He wrote notes as bland as he could to the woman he loved.

When he was liberated, the farmer felt obligated to join The Hero's army. The new inductees were told that they would soon triumph. Within a year, in fact, the colonizers were gone, but the conflict was far from over. Another general wanted power for himself, backed by leaders in the neighboring country. At the end of his second year in the army, the farmer was put in a hospital to recover from a leg injury. Everything was deprivation. He was unable to send or receive a single letter during his convalescence.

Peace came slowly and to small pockets. As soon as he could, the farmer made his way back to his home. The war had not touched the mountains as much, but shortages of food and supplies hit them harder than any other region. He was at first overjoyed to see the

familiar mountain tops and sloping valley, but life in the village soon came into heartbreaking focus.

Arriving in his hometown, the farmer found uncomfortably silent streets. Well-known as he and his family were, he received little more than a nod from most of their neighbors. It should have been a market day, but there were only a handful of vendors in the main square selling shrunken produce. The butcher's shop was empty of customers, though a few cuts still hung in the window, tantalizing the unfortunate. The butcher would not lower his prices. In the darkest months of the post-revolution, the farmer would become closely familiar with the price of each cut of beef and each slice of pork.

Working was the farmer's only escape from the desperation around him. He had moved into his parents' old room at the big farmhouse, having become the head of the family after the deaths of his father and brothers. His wife struggled to regain her health after the birth of their fourth child. The doctor came every few weeks to check on her and to examine the farmer's injury. Each time he offered the same advice: Eat better. With no medicine, it was really the only advice he could give any of his patients. It was just as universally impossible to follow.

After a few visits to the mountain farm, the student felt deflated. In the evenings, he still met the batcher's son at the café, but the student noticed there was less to say. He wanted to understand the trouble between the speakers, but his new friend barely grasped it himself. Most surprising of all was the son's claim that his father would be pleased to sit down with the farmer. Whatever hurt the farmer felt was either forgotten or never really understood by the butcher. He seemed to have accepted their silence as just another part of passing time.

The farmer had passed a dreamless night before the student's visit. He woke early and took a walk through the disregarded fields around his home. The tentative sunrise seemed reluctant to redefine the colors of the landscape. Saving the crops would be more work than diligent

tending ever had been, but he no longer cared. When he died, the farm would become wild again. The younger generations were too busy with their lives to bother about it.

The student did not smile when he stepped out of the car. The farmer nodded at him from the front porch, where he had been waiting and watching the jeep's progress. They exchanged a few pleasantries in the tribal language, something the student always tried to do. His niece followed at a distance, equally reserved. The farmer had prepared a little food for them to chew as they sat with the recorder between them.

"We have some sad news," the student began. He looked at the farmer's niece to continue, but she said nothing. "Last night, the butcher passed away in his sleep."

Only a ticking clock interrupted the silence of the house. For the first time in several days, the farmer's thoughts were quiet. It was as though a stillness had extended over the entire valley and only the three people at the table could end it.

It was then the farmer announced he would tell his life story. The student turned on the machine and the farmer began to speak. They listeners sat was trance-like looks as he continued for over an hour.

He explained how he had ached over the tiny cuts of meat he had bought for his wife and all the times when he could buy nothing. Her face was so brave when he returned empty-handed. Her eyes were infinitely sad when he cooked what small pieces he could afford and gave them only to her, not a bite for the hungry children.

The butcher probably did not know how sick she was. When the farmer visited the shop, they exchanged greetings and polite inquiries. Whether he could afford to make a purchase or not, the butcher always wished him a pleasant day. He could not have known. He did not want to know. There were sick mothers and hungry children all over the valley. How could one man really change any of it?

When the farmer's wife died, people from the village came to share the family's grief as befitted such a well-known clan. They filled the house, offering condolences in the tribal language, but mostly disciplining their children and gossiping the more common colonizer's

tongue. Few among them could bring the lavish gifts that had once been customary. They lingered and tried to comfort instead.

The butcher, however, did send a large gift. For the funeral, he contributed a side of pork.

The farmer could not eat one bite.

When they played the tape back, nothing of the farmer's sorrow seemed audible. The tone of his words was so different from the colonizer's language, that it enfolded any emotion, carefully cocooning his memories.

That evening, the farmer sat on his porch and watched the twilight fade over the valley below. He had not made dinner. He had not weeded the fields and would not again.

He tried to remember the last conversation he had had in the tribal language. It had probably been one evening after market day in the village café. They had all stopped speaking it very much, but there were certain jokes that could only be told with those words and some subjects that felt awkward in any other language.

When darkness was surrounding him, the farmer imagined an epidemic that would rip through all the languages on Earth. It would ravage them until not a single word was left. Maybe the people would try to nurse them back to health, but there would be no cure. Newspapers would print only photographs. The radios would play nothing but music without lyrics. The televisions would flash pictures and sounds, but not a single sentence. Then, perhaps, he could sit on his porch and watch the valley below and be free of a lifetime of memories. He could remember without pain the faces of the people he had loved and hated and lost.

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