



Howl

ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE

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COPPER MOUNTAIN COLLEGE

Joshua Tree, California

Howl

ART & LITERARY MAGAZINE



2018

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Art and Literature by
Copper Mountain College
students and community
members

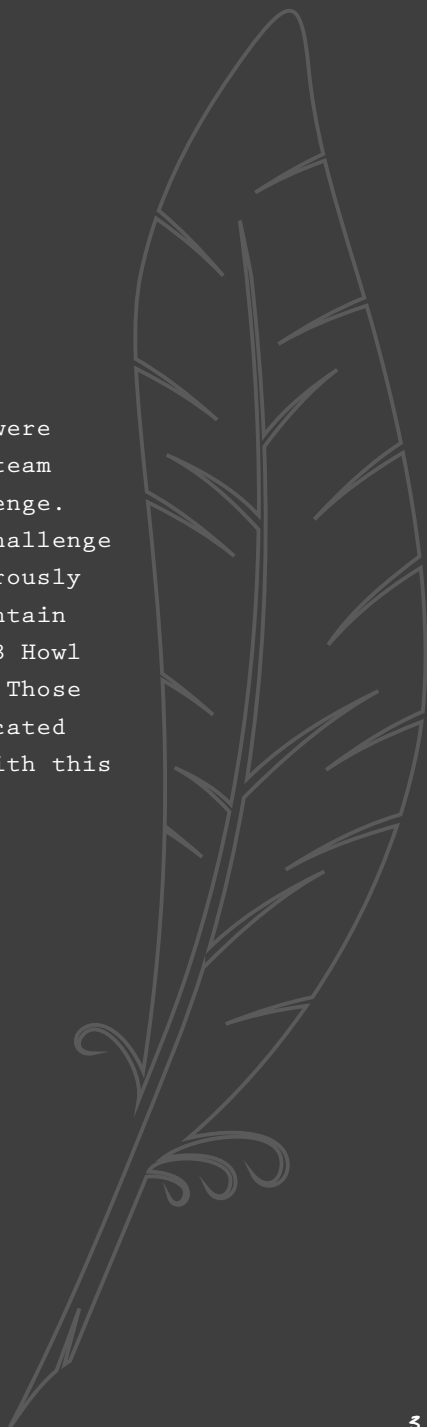
Joshua Tree, California

Howl 2018

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"The Feather"

Certain exemplary works were selected by the editing team for Howl's Writing Challenge. Winners of the Writing Challenge receive cash awards generously funded by the Copper Mountain College Foundation. 2018 Howl recognized five winners. Those works are tactfully indicated throughout the edition with this feather.



Acknowledgements

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FRONT COVER PHOTO Sarah Soos

BACK COVER PHOTO Michael Colin

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Top: Sherry Harwin, Tunisia Dorionne, China Ice, Gary Tufel Bottom: Ellen e Baird, Joshua Torres

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Letter from the Editor

Editing Howl is more than editing Howl. Editing Howl is receiving realized potential from students, faculty, staff, community members, and strangers. Editing Howl is raising funds from benefactors, businesses, and individuals. Editing Howl is networking with local artists and small business owners. Editing Howl is maintaining contacts and nurturing relationships. Editing Howl is discerning, trusting, listening, compromising, justifying, relenting, and coalescing. At the end of winter, the Howl team gathers to edit the final composition, and we realize this raw product came from our weeks and months of collaboration and compromise. The following are the individuals who make Howl possible; each contributes with his or her talents and skills.

China Ice is a happy medium. She has a powerful moral compass. She can quiet the room by being quiet. She makes mean deviled eggs and is generous with David's fruit waters. Spending time with China is like suspending time. Always curious and passionate, China seems to have a way of making the ordinary special.

Gary Tufel is resourceful and loyal. He sets things straight without effort. Gary seems to be blessed, and he shares that ease with those around him. Gary brings artwork to the team and spreads it out for us to fuss over. He holds no attachments to the gifts he finds. He travels and returns to Howl gatherings with Tim Tams and

raisins. Without ego or agenda, Gary carries the load for all of us and makes it appear effortless.

Sherry Harwin is fierce. I nicknamed her our raging cheerleader, and I think she has taken to the name. Put no small task in front of Sherry; she will whisk it away and come back for more. I never met a volunteer who is more committed and generous than Sherry is. We joke about Howl being for life, and, for Sherry, it is serious. She is ours until the end. If you want something from her, be sure you mean it and get in line. I try to get play time with Sherry, as I feel she has energy to spare. So far, our paths stay aligned with Howl's motives, and this year I may be able to steal her away for a spell.

Joshua Torres is a hard worker. He is secure and indomitable. Every time I think about Joshua being a Howl editor, I feel proud and lucky. He is in high demand, and I constantly express gratitude to him for making Howl one of his many priorities. At times, the team speaks loudly and quickly, and Joshua devised a system of communication to make his job easier. His abilities on the computer allow our team to push the boundaries and spread our concepts - sometimes unintelligibly - to the edges of comprehension or logic and bring them back in to focus with one hand, two Monster Energy Drinks, and five open windows. Howl can do a lot of things, and it does it all well because of the heart and brain of Joshua.

Tunisia Dorriane is a creative powerhouse. I used to know her when she worked with Howl under Greg Gilbert's reign. We met up again on campus, and I was delighted when she became my student. In class, she made a patchwork coat; on Valentine's Day, she wove greeting cards into heart shaped baskets filled with chocolates; for her individual

project, she illustrated key scenes from a novel, stating, "I don't like to draw; it takes too much time away from my writing." She is curious in a Carrollean way. I love her style. She interests me with her opinions and insights. She is always the brave one to ask the question. I hope to stay connected to her and her ventures. Howl is happy to have Tunisia back.

Those mentioned are the editors of Howl. However, there are others who help Howl with their abilities. The Copper Mountain College Foundation, with Sandy Smith as its director, makes all thing possible with its generous funding and vigorous raising of donations. Jolie Alpin in the Copper Mountain College's President's office advertises and promotes Howl to the college and the community. Dean Zachary Ginder supported Howl and its mission during uncertain times. Melissa Sabol donates much of her time and materials to make Howl the beautiful magazine we have come to admire. Our contributors submit their art, their words, their work, and their innermost thoughts and emotions for us to polish and present back as a reflection in a mirror. Our sponsors open up their shops and galleries, create and serve delicious food and drink, sing, play, and perform all to participate in the process. What an awe-inspiring process it is. I am humbled to have Howl be a big part of my life. Thank you to all of the people who do well when they play a part in creating Howl. Finally, thank you to my in home support team: my son, my boyfriend, my friends, and my family. Thank you for sharing in my excitement and spreading Howl far and wide. May next year be even bigger.

Ellen e Baird
Joshua Tree, California
2018

Art & Literature

CONSIDER BUSON'S MOONMOTH

By Greg Gilbert

On the one-ton temple bell.
A moonmoth, folded into sleep,
Sits still.
-Buson

Consider Buson's moonmoth
Its pale yellow moons at rest
Twin yins for a ponderous yang
That resonates with emptiness

Dust-mote-light twin moons
Fragile aviator folded still
Dreaming breezes of swirling
Elegance within the shell
Unmindful of the waiting timber

Is the priest aware of the small being
At peace upon the striking plate?



CARNIVAL!

By Michael G. Vail

The crescent-shaped bay's aquamarine waters lap at the edge of a vast desert. Just past the shoreline, two dozen weather-beaten skiffs rest haphazardly on the sand in the late afternoon sunlight. Huddled beyond the boats is a collection of makeshift wood frame buildings. Inside the dwellings, the fishermen lie exhausted in their beds. They had awoken before sunup to row out of the bay through the darkness. Crouching for hours in the shallow bellies of the boats, they prayed that a grouper or dorado would become trapped within the nets. Few of these prayers were answered today; most of the vessels returned with little to show for their crews' efforts.

Not every day is filled with this drudgery. On Sundays, the fishermen and their families don the best clothes they have and walk along the village's unpaved streets to the little adobe church. A young priest conducts the Mass, standing before a modest altar. Midway through the service, he mounts an unsteady wooden pulpit, turns his long, narrow face to his congregation and encourages them with tales of the rewards of heaven. At the conclusion of the Mass, the families return to their unpainted shacks to catch up on the latest village gossip with their neighbors and mend their nets.

As it happens, the most anticipated holy day of the year has almost arrived. On the following morning, the villagers will observe the Day of the Fish, a celebration whose origins reach back to the pagan rites of their ancestors.

To mark this holiday, a traveling carnival visits the village. It's only a collection of transparently fraudulent freaks and a rickety Ferris wheel, purchased third-hand years before in America. For the villagers, though, the carnival is a magical intrusion, a glimpse of the mystery and wonder of the outside world, delivered to their humble community by the half-dozen red and blue trucks which always appear on the holy day's eve.

While the fishermen sleep, the worn-out trucks rumble past the shacks and stop next to the graveyard and the church. In the fading light, the carnies erect the Ferris wheel and a large tent made of striped canvas. When these chores are finished, they gather around a huge bonfire. With no bars or prostitutes here, the men squat on the bare ground and noisily share bottles of raicilla.

As his companions pass the moonshine, a young man slips into the surrounding shadows. He follows a rutted road past the dark shacks. There is no electricity or indoor plumbing here; the smells of kerosene and human waste fill the air. On this night, he is feeling sorry for himself. He has been away from home for six months, and he doesn't get along with the other carnies. They make fun of the fact that he still has no beard to shave. "Maybe it's a girl in disguise!" they laugh, scratching their crotches and leering at him.

"Idiots!" he mutters as he trudges down the empty street, shaking his head in disgust.

At that moment, his foot slips into a large pothole, sending him tumbling to the hard ground.

"O-o-o-h!" he cries, reaching down to grasp his ankle.

A teenage girl sits across the road, in front of one of the unlighted shacks, watching him. She wonders if he has broken something. Yet she is too shy to stand and come to his aid.

He struggles to his feet. "Shit!" he exclaims as he tries to place some weight on the ankle. He begins to bounce about in the dark on his good leg.

The girl giggles in spite of herself.

He stops. "Who's that?" he asks the night. "Who's cruel enough to take pleasure in my misery?"

"I'm sorry. It's just that you look so funny...hopping around like a jackrabbit."

He bounds towards the sound of her high-pitched, girlish voice.

"Like a jackrabbit, huh?" he repeats indignantly.

"I said I was sorry!" She pauses. "Are you all right?"

"I'll live. How could you see me? There's no moon out tonight."

"I can see in the dark," she says.

"Really?"

"Oh, yes. My mother says it's a gift from God."

"Or the devil. Can you see my face?"

"Of course."

He leans closer to her. "I wish I could see yours."

She glances back at the shack's door.

"You'd better go," she says, lowering her voice and turning to him. "If my father catches us here—"

"Are you going to the carnival tomorrow?"

"Yes."

"I'll see you there."

For a moment, he continues to stare in her direction, trying to make out her features. Then he gingerly begins to limp down the road in the direction of the graveyard.

After he has gone, she stands and pulls open the dilapidated shack's door. It has only one room, and she must step over her sleeping parents and brothers as she moves to her pallet in a corner.

Slipping under a single sheet, she rests her head on a rolled-up blanket and stares at the ceiling. She can make out every mismatched board above her head. As she recalls the young man's handsome face, she sighs. She has never had a boyfriend. A tingle of nervous excitement

runs up her body. I'll never be able to sleep, she tells herself. She can't wait until the morning comes and the carnival begins.

Dawn breaks over the sea in a burst of blinding sunlight. The glare and heat fill the shack's east-facing windows and penetrate its crooked, crevice-filled walls. Even though her father isn't fishing today, the young woman and her mother rise in the dark as usual and began preparing breakfast. The sun rises while the family takes their places around a plastic table, sitting on assorted chairs and stools. They gobble up tortillas and fried fish and sip coffee from cups with broken handles.

Out of the corner of her eye, the girl watches her father. His skin, tanned by his livelihood, seems almost as dark as his black hair. A large mustache droops under his nose and over his upper lip. When he sets his intense stare on her, she quickly lowers her face.

Like her four younger brothers, she resembles her mother, a tiny figure who sits at the opposite end of the cramped table. The woman's Aztec lineage is evident in her round eyes, long nose, high cheekbones and flat chin. In order to avoid her husband's glare, she directs her gaze nervously from one child to another around the table.

When they have finished eating, the family begins to dress for the carnival. The women pull on their brightly colored Sunday skirts while the man and his sons button up their long-sleeved embroidered shirts.

It is already very hot as the man leads his family down the front steps of the shack and onto the dusty road. He is wearing a short-brimmed straw hat with a tassel hanging at its rear. When the man spots a neighbor, he nods solemnly, causing the tassel to swing crazily behind his back. It's as if some insect—a spider, perhaps—hangs there, fighting to escape.

The girl can already see the carnival in the distance. The canvas tent and Ferris wheel are taller than any other structures in the village; taller, even, than the bell tower of the church. She once again feels a tingle of excitement.

When the Mass is finished, the villagers file out of the sanctuary and form a semi-circle in front of the tent. The priest stands alone in the midst of this gathering. On a small, low wooden table before him sits a metal basin filled with seawater.

As the girl and the rest of her family join their neighbors, she covers her mouth with her hand. The young man is standing behind the priest with the rest of the carnies. He turns his head this way and that, studying each face in the crowd. She blushes as his gaze passes over her. But then she realizes that he can't possibly recognize her; it was dark as a cave last night.

"In the name of our Savior," the priest intones, blessing the basin's contents with his upraised right hand, "we celebrate the sea's bounty."

The girl and the rest of the villagers make the sign of the cross. The priest picks up the basin in his slim arms. Stepping among the families, he dips one hand into the holy seawater and shakes it from his fingers onto the heads of the congregants. She feels the coolness of the water dripping down her forehead and makes the sign of the cross again.

Once the priest has passed them, the villagers step away. Relatives and friends call to one another while the barkers inside the tent shout out their spiels.

"Over here, folks, over here!" commands a short, fat man with a red bandana wrapped about his large head. "Inside"—he points at a flap of black canvas behind him—"is the strangest sight your eyes will ever behold. It's a baby that's half man and half fish. Seeing is believing!"

Near the Ferris wheel, which is already surrounded by those waiting for their turn to ride, two old men appear. One holds an accordion in his hands, the other cradles a battered guitar. The pair nod their wide-brimmed straw hats at one another. Then they start to play. Shouts of exhilaration greet the simple, rousing sound of the music as it drifts across the lot.

The girl stands next to her brothers while her father passes out pesos to each of them. He glares at her as he drops the coins in her open palm.

"I don't want to see you talking to any men," he warns her sternly. "You're only fourteen years old."

She watches him silently.

"Did you hear me?" he barks.

She nods quickly and disappears into the crowd. As she walks away, she whispers under her breath.

“Only fourteen years old?” she repeats disdainfully. “I guess he’s forgotten that Mother was fourteen years old when I was born.”

She stops in her tracks. The young man is standing only a few feet in front of her. A cardboard tray full of churros hangs from his neck by a length of rope. He is handing one of the sweets to a little girl. After he takes her money, he adjusts the rope with a scowl. Then he begins to walk away.

She hesitates, watching his back. She’s not sure what to do.

“Here! Churros man!”

When he turns towards her voice, she is standing in front of him, offering a coin.

He hands her one of the sweets, wrapped in a piece of newspaper. As he takes the coin, he brushes his fingertips along the inside of her palm.

“Your voice sounds familiar,” he says. “Haven’t we talked before?”

“Maybe.”

“You’re the girl who can see in the dark.”

“How does your leg feel?”

He ignores her question. “Now that I can see you,” he says, “I know your gift comes from God. The devil couldn’t have anything to do with someone so beautiful.”

She stares at him, transfixed. This all seems like a wonderful dream to her.

“Yes, like one of the angels.” The young man takes her hand and squeezes it.

She pulls it away as she glances behind her. “My father—“ she begins.

“I can get off work for a little while. Will you come and meet me?”

“Where?”

“Over there.” He nods at the red and blue trucks which are parked side-by-side at the end of the lot.

She stares into his large dark eyes and bites her lower lip.

"It'll be all right. Your father will never find out," he says. "I'll see you in a half hour."

In a daze, the girl wanders through the carnival. Finding herself at the Ferris wheel, she hands her last coin to the carnie. She is oblivious to the cries of the other riders as they rock back and forth above the village. The thrill in her heart is much more frightening than any feeling which this contraption could produce. She is so distracted that she forgets the churro, left behind in the gondola when she steps out.

Walking alone as the crowd thins out, she passes the church and the graveyard. Finally she reaches the far end of the clearing where the trucks are parked. Moving in the shadows between them, she feels as though she is lost in a maze. She remembers a tale she once heard of a labyrinth her ancestors had constructed in one of their great cities. When the Spaniards arrived, they herded the captured and now unarmed Aztec warriors into the maze, where they were hunted down like animals and murdered.

Why would I remember that story now? she tells herself. The thought unsettles her.

"Hello."

Startled, she turns. The young man is standing behind her, a wide grin filling his thin face.

"You surprised me."

"Just like you surprised me last night."

He takes her hand and leads her into the sunlight. The trucks separate them from the carnival. Beyond the village, the desert stretches towards a distant range of boulder-strewn hills.

He has spread a red and black quilt on the sand. He kneels on the quilt. Reluctantly, she sits beside him.

"What's your name?" he says.

"Xochitl."

"I'm Julio."

As he watches her, she glances away towards the hills.

"You've never been with a man before, have you?"

Swallowing nervously, she turns her eyes back to him.

He puts his arm around her slim shoulder and pulls her to him. Cupping her face in his free hand, he kisses her on the lips. He feels her arms across his back.

“You’re so beautiful,” he whispers.

He unbuckles his belt and pulls down his trousers. She doesn’t resist as he raises her skirt above her waist. Their sex is clumsy, quick and without tenderness.

Her father has followed her here. While Julio penetrates her, he crouches behind one of the trucks, glaring at the pair. He is so filled with rage that he can barely see. He raises his face to the sky.

“God, why did you give me a daughter?” he hisses, between clenched teeth.

When Julio has finished, he gets to his feet and hitches up his trousers. Xochitl pulls her beautiful skirt over her chubby brown legs. The sounds of the carnival—barkers shouting, musicians strumming their instruments and singing, villagers laughing—float between the trucks.

“I’ve got to get back to work,” he tells her curtly. “They’re going to be looking for me.”

She stares at him.

“Julio...” she begins.

“I’ll see you later,” he says nonchalantly over his shoulder. “I’ll find you before we leave.”

For several minutes, Xochitl remains seated on the quilt, as still as a statue, trying to understand what has happened to her. She senses that, somehow, the last few minutes will change her life.

Finally she stands. Instead of returning to the carnival, she crosses the road and enters the empty church. The carnival’s sounds follow her through the open doorway. Moving to the first row of pews, she kneels and produces a rosary from a pocket of the skirt. Pinching the beads between her thumb and forefinger, she begins to mechanically recite the formalized prayers which the priest has taught her.

It is past sunset before Xochitl returns to her family’s shack. After leaving the church, she spent the afternoon wandering along the shoreline. Her life had seemed so simple before. There was her family

and the sea and the desert. There were the neighbors who she had known her whole life, and there was Mass on Sunday. But her life had grown infinitely more complicated, all in one afternoon. She'd been forced to think about right and wrong, about guilt, about love and about herself. Nothing seemed to make sense anymore. It was as if her sex with Julio had left her in the state of an unborn child, uncomprehending and helpless.

While she walked along the bay, she saw the caravan of carnival trucks in the distance, driving away from the village. As she watched, their headlights switched on in the twilight.

"Goodbye, my love," she said aloud. A wind began to rise from the desert.

She pauses now on the steps that lead to the shack's open doorway. Her father will be angry because she was gone so long. Perhaps he will beat her; he has beaten her many times before.

It is black inside the shack, but she can see. Her father crouches next to the doorway, waiting for her return. Sweating profusely, a strange look fills his eyes. Xochitl's body shakes as she stares at him. He is gripping a large metal wrench with both hands.

She turns and steps back down to the road. Her eyes are filling with tears. Why would he want to hurt me? she asks herself. She begins to run. Xochitl passes the darkened church and the graveyard. The sandy lot, empty now, is covered with trash.

She stops running. Ahead, the road disappears into the desert. She knows it continues for many kilometers. There is a town down the road, with stores and restaurants and a hotel. Railroad tracks pass through the town, and trains stop at its station. Xochitl has heard that the trains go all the way to the border with the United States.

She turns back to the village. The tears run down her cheeks. She knows she will never see this place again. Xochitl turns her back on the village and begins to follow the road.

END.



UNTITLED

By David Greene

LIKE A TEA POT

By Lowen Baird 'Digger'

A mad person is like a tea pot.

If you leave it on for too long, it will explode, but if you try to touch it, it will feel hot.

I LOVE YOU MUM

By Aubrey Leahy

In a faraway land,
A woman, discovering
A lump in her breast ,
Undergoes a mastectomy.
Her 30-year-old,
(ooing on seven)
Son flies into town to
Offer comfort and joy.
On the second night
After her surgery, and
In much mental and
Physical and spiritual pain,
The oft-told dinner
Party drollery is born.
“Mum. What’s for dinner?”
I Love You Mum
But...

13 years later,
Now 42 but still
Playing The
Whining schoolboy
Son visits Mum,
Now in hospice.
The old child laments,
“Woe is me for
I am screwed.

No one wants to meet me
at the airport."

"Uber, Uber, Uber,"

Her friends shout and
Opening his parsimonious
Purse he begrudgingly
texts a taxi.

I love you Mum

But...

Like an unemployed,
unenlightened Buddha
Which, with the
Steeple-thumbed hands
Clasped above
His wobbling belly,
He closely resembles.
Dry-eyed and watching telly
but not communicating
Ready to shed crocodilian tears
When others approach.

I Love you Mum

But...

The rest of the saga too wretched,
incomprehensible and unbelievable to relate...
but you get the idea...
Mum is now at Peace.

HI-DESERT LIVING IN THE 1980s

By Jane Jarlsberg

JonBen and I discovered our low-rent housing thru the local "grapevine" in Joshua Tree. We were living in North Hollywood in an old box van outside a friend's house and our resources were drying up there. Our friend and guru Michael Zamora had moved in with his elderly mother Susie Q in Yucca Valley and began to explore the territory with us in mind. He met Octomay, a 90-year-old desert rat who had been married for years to a local trash collector. Her husband had long since passed on but left behind his legacy of junk, piled haphazardly in Octomay's backyard in nearby SunFair. She had acquired several rental properties along the way and we were charmed by a run-down corner lot homestead at Broadway and SunFair Road smack in the middle of the main four corners of this ghost of a developer's desert dream town. When we moved into the cement block two-bedroom home in June 1986, there was still a corner store that served as grocery store, meeting place and laundromat across the street. The washing machines had all been recycled from various closed businesses but still were coin-operated. Life was good and rent was only \$150 a month. We spent a few days clearing debris from prior tenants and moving broken-down vehicles to the back lot out of sight. One old windowless van served as a convenient hideout for local youth smoking pot or cigarettes, but we soon put them on notice to find a new hideout. A couple of old

bedsprings served as supports for an old mattress where we slept under the stars on hot summer nights. The starry nights astounded us and often the full moon would keep us awake into the wee hours. Salt cedar trees ringed the street corner of the lot and provided limited shade on the breathless summer days. I would lay down on an old “daybed” dragged out there and listen to the flocks of turkey vultures landing and taking off over my head. Dozens of vultures frequented many of the taller trees in the area on their migration routes. Their wingspread seemed 10 feet across and the sound of their wings made me think of ocean waves.

The house needed a lot of cleanup too, and several windows needed to be replaced, but once the swamp cooler was restored to reliable functioning, we delighted in our good fortune. Secondhand furniture furnished our little four-room cottage comfortably. We figured that if we could survive our first summer in the hi-desert, we were set to remain there for years. We began setting down roots.

One of the main reasons for escaping LA was to free ourselves from the drug scene we found ourselves in and find a home for affordable rent. After two years or so of spending every cent we scraped together from odd jobs, from credit cards and from friends for cocaine, we wanted to break the hold that drug had on us. JonBen and I had never had trouble finding interesting work and soon met people who needed house cleaners or minor construction work done. We were able to piece together enough to pay the rent and eat. A small garden in the side yard helped supplement this.

Eventually Michael moved into one of the little outbuildings and his Social Security helped keep us solvent. His regular “shipment” of “Maui Wowie” helped enhance our enjoyment of the desert environment. We held “family gatherings” most nights and read to each other, continuing our spiritual explorations. Discussions were lively and esoteric. The sound of music often filled the rooms from my little boombox. Eventually, my daughter and her two-year-old daughter came to stay with us when her husband left her in Van Nuys and she was on welfare. Then JonBen’s 18-year-old son dropped out of high school and decided to join us. We scraped together a living between all of us and loved having our family around us. Poverty was the least of our problems! We welcomed a stray cat or two, took in a friend’s dog or two, and life was full.

NOTHING SHED

By Nathan Cordova

These forgotten few, not one tear shed for the memory they gave.

A single memory never known.

Lives lost to time.

Futile will be them calling from the dark.

No voices to be heard.

No physical plane they can break.

Remembered not then, now, or ever.

WORK PERFECTED

By Robert Howell

Love is patient and quiet,

Until an appointed time.

Then it demands everything from you.

It makes you beautiful.

It makes you happy.

It makes you free.



DREAMLAND AND WAKELAND

By Turq Dorian

DREAM ELUSIVE

By Robert Howell

Orange haze sunset, Tokyo horror on the box.
A coyote howls outside and I pull my woman close,
Feeling the devil inside.

GREAT MISUNDERSTANDINGS

By Brianna Hams

The harvest moon hung low in the sky on that August evening, pregnant in its roundness and orange as an overripe pumpkin. The air was unusually thick with humidity, telling of a far-off thunderstorm rolling in. Cicadas worked up a riotous cacophony from their various hiding places in the tall grass and fireflies danced around each other, forming floating orbs of flickering light. It's a special kind of night, Edie Daltrey thought to herself as she stood on her back porch. A smile slowly overtook her freckle-specked face as she absentmindedly fiddled with the frayed hem of her knee-length yellow dress. She had no doubt that her brothers would soon crowd into the bathroom to fight over the mirror, slicking back their hair in turns because they had only one tin of pomade between the three of them. Once they deemed their pompadours high enough and donned their leather jackets, Frankie, Jack, and Albert would all pile into Daddy's pickup truck and go looking for trouble. Then, it would just be her and Daddy at home.

Edie's heart swelled at the thought of having Daddy all to herself. Mama died not long after Edie was born, so all she really knew of love

came from Daddy. Still, being the only girl in the family never garnered her much extra attention, what with Daddy's constant efforts to keep her brothers in line and the fact that his job took a lot out of him. Daddy was the town's only butcher. He spent the majority of his time breaking down sides of beef, carving up whole chickens, and wrapping up people's orders in white butcher paper and cotton twine. In turn, Edie spent most of her time alone, lost in the fantastical expanses of her own mind. She found that life was a whole lot easier if she turned every lonesome moment into an amazing adventure. Hunting krakens during her baths, tracing out routes to the lost city of Atlantis in her composition book, and chasing giant rabid dust bunnies with the vacuum cleaner were always more fun than simply washing behind her ears, finishing her geography homework, and doing her chores.

Edie's thoughts of her solitary exploits suddenly vanished when she heard the deep rumble of Daddy's voice from within the house. She went towards the noise, letting the screen door slam shut behind her as she skipped down the hallway to discover the source of the sound. Edie entered the living room and saw Daddy standing at the front door with one arm banded across the open doorway. Her brothers stood in a single file line in front of him.

"Back by midnight," Daddy told Frankie as he handed him the keys to the pickup. Daddy then held out a square foil packet for Frankie to take. A condom, Edie recognized; she might've been only twelve, but she wasn't an idiot. Daddy said, "I know you're gonna go get your rocks off whether I approve or not. At least this way you don't get some poor girl knocked up—" Daddy paused and looked past Frankie to Jack and Albert and said, "That goes for both of you too."

Frankie accepted the condom with a nod and murmured, "Yes, sir," before ducking under Daddy's arm and making his way out to the truck. Daddy handed a condom to Jack and then handed one to Albert as well. They each gave a "Yes, sir," and ducked under Daddy's arm, following Frankie out to the truck. Frankie turned the key and started her up while Jack complained about being stuck sitting in the middle again and Albert took shotgun.

"You get so much as one scratch on my truck, and I'll carve you up like USDA Prime!" Daddy called after them as the truck thundered down their long gravel driveway and sped off into the night. Daddy let out an amused huff, ran a hand through his salt and pepper hair, and

shut the door. He turned the deadbolt until the tumblers fell into place, locking it. Only then did his attention finally fall on Edie.

"There's my girl," Daddy said in a tired voice, his thin lips stretching out over his slightly crooked teeth into a familiar smile. The adoration in his murky green eyes made Edie square her shoulders and hold her head a little higher, preening under his gaze. Daddy opened his arms and Edie bounded into them like an over-excited kangaroo. She buried her face in the front of Daddy's shirt and inhaled his scent: clean sweat and raw meat and Barbasol aftershave. Edie noted that she was getting taller; her head came up just about an inch shy of Daddy's shoulder now.

"Go sit in your chair," Edie said, planting one hand on each of Daddy's hips and pushing him toward the den. "I'll bring you a beer."

"Thanks, kiddo," Daddy replied and did just that. He shuffled into the den and sat down in his recliner. He made quick work of kicking off his boots, his neck popping as he tilted his head from side to side. Daddy pulled the lever on the side of the chair that brought up the footrest and settled back into the recliner with a sigh, crossing his legs at the ankles.

Meanwhile, Edie zoomed into the kitchen and grabbed a bottle of Budweiser out of the fridge. She popped the top with the special end of the can opener and set it down on the counter. Edie turned on the kitchen faucet and held her hands under the running tap for a few seconds before combing her damp fingers through her frizzy brown hair to smooth it down. She turned the water off, pinched at her cheeks to get some color in them the way she'd seen Vivien Leigh do in *Gone with the Wind* and tried her best to straighten out the wrinkles in her dress. Then she took a deep breath and grabbed the Budweiser bottle off the counter. By now her imagination was running wild.

The fantasy was one Edie indulged in so often that slipping into it was as easy as blinking. A flutter of her eyelids and Daddy wasn't Daddy anymore. More importantly, she wasn't Edie anymore. Instead, Daddy was her handsome husband home from a long day at work, and she was his sweet young wife bringing him a cold brew. In her mind, they'd sent their triplet troop of troublemaker sons off to raise hell somewhere else for a few hours so the two of them could finally enjoy some private time at home.

As she made her way into the den to give Daddy his beer, Edie forced her steps to cross over one another in what she hoped would make for a slow and sensuous gate. She'd practiced in front of her bedroom mirror for hours, trying to glide across the floor the way Liz Taylor did in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* but unfortunately she had yet to master it. Her body simply didn't possess the curves necessary to move in that way. That was a gift that only the later stages of pubescence could bless her with, and such a blessing was still a few years off.

"Put on a record, would ya Kiddo?" Daddy asked as Edie handed him his beer. He raised the bottle to his lips and took a long gulp. Edie watched his Adam's apple bob up and down, felt her stomach twist, and her face go hot. She quickly went to turn on the record player, almost tripping over Daddy's boots in her haste.

"Davis tonight?" Edie asked as she ran her fingers over the tops of the records Daddy kept in an old milk crate near the record player. There was a little bit of everything in that old wooden crate; from Bobby Darin to Johnny Cash to Billie Holiday and all the way around again. They even had the soundtrack to *West Side Story*.

"Not Davis," Daddy intoned with a sigh. "Put on Coltrane."

Edie fished through the albums until her fingers found the right one and plucked it from the crate. She pulled the vinyl disc from its sleeve and set the record on the turntable. She then flipped the power switch and gently set the needle down on the rotating record.

"Mrs. Woodsworth was back this morning," Daddy drawled as the music began to play. "Came in to yell at me about her god-forsaken pot roast coming out too dry again. Christ, I wonder what it is about the sentence 'put more butter in the damned pan' that woman just can't seem to understand?"

"I'm sorry you had a hard day," Edie said in a breathy voice, trying to sound like Marilyn Monroe. "I'm sure tomorrow will be better."

"Why are you talking like that?" Daddy asked, quirked an eyebrow at her. "Are you catching something? Does your throat hurt? Did you play with a sick kid at school?"

"No, Daddy," Edie sighed in defeat, abandoning her impersonation. "I'm fine. Just fine."

"Well, all right then," Daddy nodded and took another long pull off his beer bottle. He extended a hand out to Edie: "C'mere, Kiddo. Sit with your old man for a while." Edie clamored up into Daddy's lap, laid her head on his shoulder, and let out a shaky breath in an effort to calm her racing heart. Daddy wrapped an arm around her middle and patted her hip dotingly. "You're growing up so fast, Kiddo. Middle school's next year for you; then high school after that. Pretty soon you'll be heading out to the drive-in with all your friends and going to dances. Not too long until you'll be going out on dates, and I'll have nothing to do but wait up for you and clean my shotgun."

"It won't be like that," Edie assured him. "I'll always be here. I'll always get you your beer, and we'll always listen to records together. Always, I promise."

Daddy sighed, took a sip of his beer. "You say that now, kiddo, but... well, there are times in life when girls need certain things from men that they can't get from their fathers."

Edie's heart sunk low in her chest for a moment, then leapt up into her throat. She straddled Daddy's lap and put each palm to one side of his face. "I will always need you," Edie whispered desperately, fighting back tears. "For everything. Everything a girl needs from a man... I'll just get it from you."

"Edie, that's just not how things work." Daddy set his beer down on the side table and folded down the recliner's footrest, which forced Edie even further into his lap. "You don't understand it now but someday..." Daddy's voice trailed off and that was when everything quite literally went sideways.

"But I do understand!" Edie replied earnestly. Before she could think twice, Edie mashed her lips against Daddy's, tried to slip her tongue past the solid barrier of his teeth and into the hot cavern of his mouth. Daddy's lips parted in a gasp and he immediately jerked away from her. Edie felt a fearsome pain splash over her right cheek as Daddy smacked her square across the face. The force of the blow was so great that it caused her to violently tumble out of his lap. Edie yelped as she went head over feet and her body crashed into the record player, causing the needle to veer off the record entirely. Daddy rose to his feet, spitting and spitting as if he was trying to get a bad taste out of his mouth.

"Edith Marie Daltrey!" Daddy shouted as he continued to cough and spit and wipe his mouth on the back of his hand. "Don't you ever do that again! You hear me?!" He roared at Edie. "Not ever!"

Edie curled up into a ball and began to cry. The only thing she could bring herself to say was, "You don't love me. Why don't you love me?"

"Dear God," Daddy exclaimed softly as he looked down at his cowering daughter, suddenly white-faced with horror over what he'd done. He stepped towards Edie, but she only sobbed harder and flinched away when he reached for her. In the end, he just scooped her up as best he could and held her close to his chest as he did when she was just a baby. "I'm sorry," He said over and over again. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I do love you, Kiddo. I love you so much. I swear I do."

"No, you don't!" Eddie continued to cry, sobbed so hard that her whole body shook. "You don't love me!" she wailed hysterically. "You don't love me! You won't even kiss me like you love me!"

"Edie, c'mon now. Calm down," Daddy sighed frustratedly. "You gotta understand, Kiddo. A man only kisses his wife like that."

"Then make me your wife!" Edie demanded pathetically. Daddy set Edie down, held onto her shoulders until he was sure that she had regained her balance. She was shaking like a leaf.

"No, Edie," Daddy said in a steady, firm voice. "I won't make you my wife. And I won't ever kiss you the way you just tried to kiss me. Fathers and daughters can't kiss like that. It's wrong."

"It doesn't feel wrong to me," Edie said boldly. The tears rolling down her cheeks were now tears of anger rather than hurt.

"Feelings don't matter when it comes to this," Daddy told her. "It's wrong and that's the end of it. Now, listen to me carefully. We are never going to talk about this again. Not to each other and not to anyone else. Is that understood?"

"Yes, Daddy," Edie replied obediently, speaking through clenched teeth. She couldn't believe it. Until that moment Edie had never felt furious and devastated at the same time. It was a feeling she wouldn't ever forget. The seeds of her anger quickly bloomed into hurt and confusion. How could Daddy possibly reject her? How dare he! After she kept his house and cooked his meals and behaved better than her

brothers ever did. She just couldn't fathom it. For as long as Edie could remember she had been training herself to be the kind of woman Daddy needed in his life: a perfect woman just like the ones she saw in the movies. And he looked her dead in the eye and told her no.

Daddy let out a sigh, said, "I think it's about time that you go get ready for bed."

"But it's only 7:45," Edie said, her train of thought quickly derailed by a simple glance at the clock on the wall.

"I don't care," Daddy replied. "Go upstairs and get ready for bed."

"But Daddy—" Edie tried to protest, only to be interrupted.

"Don't sass me, Edith Marie," Daddy said sternly. "You are a child and children are to do as their told. Go upstairs and get ready for bed. I won't say it again." Edie hung her head and obeyed. She climbed the staircase slowly, stopped at the middle landing and listened as Daddy put on another record; Davis this time.

Tears filled Edie's eyes, and she let them fall freely. She cried as she ran her bathwater and as she scrubbed at herself with a soapy washcloth. She cried as she wrapped up in a big fluffy towel and padded down the hallway from the bathroom to her bedroom, leaving wet footprints in her wake. She cried as she combed the tangles out of her hair and put on her nightgown. She cried as she finally laid her head to her pillow and drifted off into a fitful sleep.

Downstairs, amid the loud sounds of the record player and the gust of the summer wind against the windows, Daddy sat in his chair turning the now horribly scratched Coltrane record over in his hands. With every turn his grip tightened until finally the record simply snapped in half. He let the two pieces fall to the floor, buried his head in his hands, and wept.

DESPONDENCY

By Kat Grovesteen

I inhale it like a cigarette.

It fills my lungs,

And blackens that space behind my eyes.

A bright day shadowed,

By the thunder in my mind.

The sudden catch of an anxious heart,

Jumping off a bridge.

Like the bad taste of medication,

The pills stick in my throat,

I choke them down.



LUNA'S TRANCE

By Janna Browne

Moon dogs moon dogs

Running

Under the full moon's light

Wild and mysterious

Hardly ever serious

Always playful

Forever grateful

Under the moon

Not a star in sight

Only the beautiful moon light

The desert stars always shine so bright

But not tonight

Moon dogs moon dogs

Basking under the sweet moon light

Until the moon fades away

No longer in sight

Moon dogs moon dogs

Once under the moon

Don't worry moon's dogs

She'll be back soon



BLACK DOG BY MOONLIGHT #2

By David Greene

ZOLOFT ZOO

By Brianna Hams

The zoos are filled with animals.

Old and new and stuffed.

Like pennies their blood tastes.

Of feathers fanned and fur fluffed.

I often go to these zoos and pretend that I don't see.

The way they give Zoloft to the animals.

The real animals.

Like me.



NOT BAD FOR A MOON

By Dave Maresh

The Moon was formed from extra earth
And has spun and spun since its birth
The Moon has eyes
The Moon has luggage
The Moon has eyes and luggage
And The Moon has places to go
People to see
Giants in the System who love her voice
And her little songs
She will be east
Then she will be west
Among the Moons
She is the best
The Moon sits on a merry-go-round
Where accidents occur
The Moon is a girl, you see
She often dresses up to dance
And when she does
Some call her loony
She is not a pretty girl
But she is a graceful dancer
She has a lute and she carries it about
She has notes that penetrate the earth
It's been like this since her birth it seems
These notes enter the minds of artists
And those who may dream
The Moon is a rock
She is an island say I
You must see her
You must try

UNTITLED

By Kayla Pedroza

I was never jealous because she meant more than I did. I understood that.
I was jealous because that meant I was alone, and I never understood that.

EMPTINESS AMONGST THE NIGHT

By Jenn De Falco

Unheard hello, a whisper breeze of heart.

Unseen secure affection broken in.

Acceptance sworn between the torn apart.

Confusion binds to rip the part of sin.

Departure from alliance must again,

Imagine freedom perfect people fight.

Defender Angel, Demon! War to gain!

Between creations, perfect never right.

Behold! Before, a final resting place.

To fear the day a darkness surely cries.

Temptation worthy, present, show the face.

Tonight a light prepares a mercy lie.

The time to come is quickly swept away.

Destruction won, so farewell, gone today.

DRENCHED

By Kylie Howell

Summer Rain:

Warmth, Wetness.

Afternoon Rain with a cup of tea,

Smoking.

Fire and rain are so contrary it feels like she is disobeying the world's rules.

Light sprinkles hit her cheek.

Rain hitting the road at an angle,

An angle of someone stabbing her in the back

Over

and

Over

Like a past lover.

The rain hits the road.

Bounce off,

Bounce back.

The rain hits her cheek.

"Comes back to your senses

It's just fucking rain

Stop being sad"

She murmurs to herself, tea held close to her face. Warmth kissing her lips.

She grabs the cigarette and slowly brings it closer;

A drop of rain falls,

putting it out moments before she can touch it to her lips.

"Perfect," she sighs as she flicks it out into the storm.

Maybe it's a sign.

NAMELESS DEMONS

By Kat Grovesteen

Glare at the blank page,
Splatter it with black,
The oil that oozes up from inside me.

Shape it to a likeness,
Give it a collar; a chain,
But no, not a name.
I prefer not to name them.

I'm good at keeping the door cracked.
I keep the key around my neck,
In case I need to shut them in.

Or shut myself in?

I'm not sure which side of the door is the inside.
They bang on rough wood,
Scrape with sharp nails.
No, they don't have a name.

Now, if only they didn't know mine.

FTM

By Turq Dorian

Better be jackknifed, better be whole,
Do I choose my body, or my soul?
Rather be stitch-mouthed, rather be loud,
Is it the cracked egg or the burial shroud?
Hermes melted into Aphrodite:
Now she is the cage, and he is the bird—
The inner geode shines most brightly,
But preacher says the rock is much preferred.
They laid him down in lace and organdy—
Praying hands clasped, scarred wrists bound—
And baptised him in waters burgundy,
Smiling as the young man drowned.
The cage must be opened if the bird is to be fed,
But with the cage left open the bird flees—
The cat springs—
The bird is dead.





JT RISING

By Caroline Lechman

SORRY, MIKE, I LIED

By Louise Burns

Mike, a student, a veteran, and a dad himself, asked me one day, “Why did you decide to not have kids?”

I’ve gotten this question a lot since I came of child-bearing age and I have two standard responses: I’m the youngest, I don’t know anything about kids and they scare me, or I came from an abusive home and I didn’t want to continue the cycle. Both answers are true. I gave Mike the second one and we moved on to other topics and other days.

But months, even a year, later, this question is still in my dreams, causing me to peer through the glass darkly to see a memory from when I was eleven or twelve.

I arrive at the home of my sister and her husband. I always liked this little house; while it was square on the outside it had a circular feel on the inside. The front door opens directly into the living room and across the room to the right is another entryway. On the left are a small bathroom and a storage center with a closet and cupboards. On the right is a bedroom, then a laundry room and door to the little backyard. A short hall then opens towards the left becoming what would be an area for a dinette but holds a crib and changing table. Go past the kitchen and through another doorway and you’re back in the living room. Neat.

I’m there to babysit. It was common back then for someone my age to be without an adult and be responsible for a child. My nephew, eighteen months old, bundled in footed pajamas, ready for bed. But since Auntie is here, it’s time to play! And so we do. A beautiful boy, with ginger hair and honey brown eyes, pudgy as all babies seem to be.

Meanwhile, my sister and her husband are getting dressed for the night. I don’t know where they’re going but they’re dressing up a bit. As a couple, they would seem mismatched: my sister, petite, curvy with long black hair; her husband, a foot taller, wiry, all angles; my sister of the sharp tongue with sharp barbs, and him, a Vietnam Vet with even sharper hands.

In the hopscotch of pre-teen memories, I'm not sure what started the argument. They were in the living room and we were playing and cuddling by the crib. They were smoking pot. I recall it happened fast. Violently. I grabbed the baby and we "hid" under the crib, thinking we would be unseen through the bars of the lowered side rail. But we could see out. I could see him, with those sharp hands, beat the sharp tongue out of my sister. Black hair whirling, blood and spit spewing, around the circular house. And again. I turned my back and covered the baby the best I could. A soundtrack follows of grunts, screaming, sobbing...I'm not sure whose.

Someone, a neighbor, called the police. They came. Cellphones weren't around then. My sister was treated somehow and her husband was arrested. The details are gone, locked away. My mother came and took me, with the baby, home.

Time passes, I'm not sure how long. The baby is still with us. One day my sister shows up at the house. She tells me they're getting a divorce and giving the baby up for adoption. I wept. "You can't!" I cried. She said it was done; there was nothing I could do. The boy of ginger hair and honey brown eyes left that day to a different state to the home of a distant relative of the husband, not to be seen again until he became an adult.

The husband went to the VA for mental treatment and drug abuse. My sister went on to marry 5, 6 or 7 more times. The boy, well, he had a rough life too. He went to prison for killing his own baby in a temper tantrum. Nature or nurture some may ask.

Sometimes God allows us to see through the glass clearly. And we see that sometimes it's easier to not have children than it is to lose a piece of your heart.

Sorry, Mike, I lied.

WILTED EDEN

By Gabriel Hart

A sign hung on the gate
"The zoo is closed today"
They came to see the animals
Then they became the animals
Touché
Now nobody knows
What side they stand at every cage
Cause at your initial glance
It appears a large expanse
At the expense of the horizons growing grey

But no storm could ever give life to
This wilted Eden
We were warned when it became impossible to move
Why do you all want to be part of
This wilted Eden?
It will never bloom

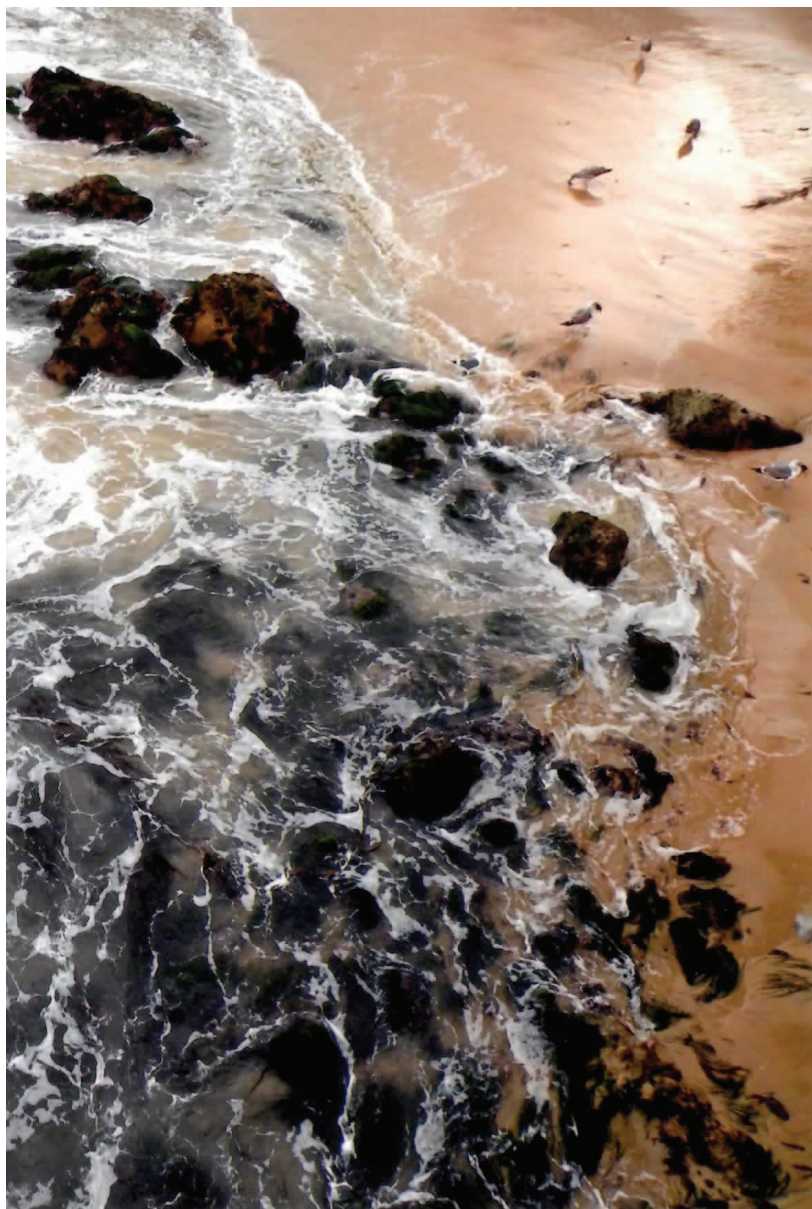
I tried to get down to my roots
But I was pulling my leg
I ended up on all fours
Yes, I ended up on the floor
To beg
I looked up for acceptance
But asked a question instead:
"Why do the idiots dance
On the other side of the fence
Who pays their rent and why am I fading away?!?"

And the swarm descends to pollinate
This wilted Eden
But too late to even find blood in any veins
Someone struck a match to burn all of
This wilted Eden
But then the floods came...

THE TRUTH

By Kylie Howell

I have thus far not figured out the world
Beguiled by ideas of others
Shrouded by my own caprice
It eludes me
Like the hunter and the deer
Too fast is she for he, and he goes home hungry
I am hungry for truth
The visceral truth
Or perhaps idyllic
I am inexorable in my search
I have searched within
In the cracks and the crevices, I have only seen in dreams
The truth is elusive
It is hiding
It is deep within
Each of us
Not everyone finds it
Not everyone wants to find it
I'll tell you when I find mine



UNTITLED

By Sarah Soos

TAINTED THOUGHTS

By Jenn De Falco

In the echoes of the night,
I struggle to do what is right.
The wolves hear my cry
as I ache
to die!
Words cannot express,
truly,
I am hard pressed.
It is not death I fear,
but life and all its tears.

OVER NIGHT

By Jean-Paul L. Garnier

Stretching his legs, Barry knocked over a towering pile of books, stacked so high it was a miracle it hadn't fallen on its own. Looking around his apartment he saw nothing but such piles and his desk, which stood empty except for an old manual-style typewriter; none of the modern intrusions such as TVs or radios. "I'm such a Luddite," he thought, unashamed.

Ignoring the books, he continued his stretching and preparation for his morning jog. As one who spent most of his time sitting down, either reading or writing, he was getting out of shape. A friend had suggested that he go out and get more exercise, so he took the suggestion to heart and decided to go for a brief run each morning. Today was to be his first and he was glad that the forethought of sore muscles had reminded him to stretch; maybe his legs would hurt that much less.

Opening the door into the bright morning, he was greeted by the sound of helicopters overhead, an unpleasant but common sound in the urban environment. He ran up the driveway feeling good about having taken the first steps towards fitness, and wondered how long he would last. Regulating his breathing, he sped down the street, enjoying the wind in his hair until his route was thwarted by a red light at the intersection. He jogged in place the way he had seen others do, always thinking that they looked somewhat ridiculous. A black sedan pulled up next to Barry and the man inside rolled down his window, gesturing to him. Barry, glad for his headphones, pointed to them, and noting the green light, trotted across the street. I'll never get anywhere if I stop and give directions along the way, at least that was the first thing that came to mind. Immediately he felt guilty about this. His friend that had suggested the jogging had partly done so under the guise of getting him out of the house. If he was to avoid strangers then part of the reason for the exercise would be moot. Ashamed of his reaction he removed the earbuds and put them in his pocket.

As he crossed the street he noticed people in the waiting cars pointing at him. Was his discourtesy so apparent that others had noticed it? Maybe he just had a funny gait; it had been ages since he had gone running. He looked over his shoulder and watched the black

sedan make a U-turn; no doubt the fellow was lost looking for the freeway. Feet pounding the pavement, he rounded the corner up the street towards the school. The air was filled with the sounds of recess, shouts and laughter, balls hitting chain link fences. As he approached, the playground fell silent and a throng of children pressed themselves up against the gate, all staring at him, none making a sound. Confused and creeped out, Barry picked up speed and did his best to round the next corner as quickly as he could. Rejoicing at reaching the end of the block, he almost didn't see a woman with her grocery cart standing at the stoplight, nearly smacking right into her. The look she gave him in return was not one of anger but of awe, almost tinged with a bit of praise. Barry trudged on, baffled. Everyone was acting so strangely; usually people didn't even notice him.

It had only been a few blocks and Barry was starting to feel it in his legs. He knew then that he really was out of shape, for his inner-self had already begun to tell him to return home. Determined, he blocked the thoughts out and continued to run, even picking up the pace a bit. A black sedan pulled up and drove in pace with Barry. Looking over he saw that it was the same man that had gestured before.

"Mr. President, could I please have a word with you?"

Mr. President? What could this man be thinking? Who does he think I am?

"Wrong guy, buddy," said Barry as he ducked into the foot tunnel that crossed under the freeway. The tunnel always smelled like piss and he had to hold his breath to get through it, but he could never hold it long enough to get all the way to the other side. Taking in a deep breath of the foul air he emerged from the tunnel and took off towards the park. Excited faces in a passing news van stared and pointed at him. When he turned to avoid them two teenagers sitting on the bus stop bench took out their phones and started taking pictures of him. What was this? He couldn't look so ridiculous that even teenagers were interested in him. Several blocks up the street at the light, Barry saw a black sedan take the corner, headed his way. Looking the other direction he saw that the news van had also turned and was closing in on him. A wave of anxiety took over and forgetting his fatigue, he bounded back into the tunnel. He ran halfway through, figuring that both vehicles would be waiting for him on the other side, decided to feint and double back toward the exit that led towards the park. At least this might buy him some time

to get away, back to the house. But now he was heading in the opposite direction trying to avoid his pursuers, his fear fueling his muscles.

He saw the teenagers get onto their bus. It seemed that everyone on the crowded public transit was also staring at him; some were even taking pictures. Avoiding the main road he headed up a hill into the residential part of the neighborhood. There were alleys up this way and maybe he could cut through them to get back in the direction of his house. Running up the hill zapped his energy reserves and he was starting to have a hard time regulating his breathing, but he reached the alleyway he was looking for, and it was marvelously free of pedestrians. He made it another two blocks before seeing anyone. A person out walking their dog called out to him and waved. Ignoring them he took advantage of the now-downhill slant and picked up speed back towards the freeway. Five blocks to go and he would be safe back at his place. He felt like he needed a breather and looked for a place to hide and rest for a second. Seeing a garbage truck parked next to a wall he decided to hang back between them, just out of sight from the street.

Regaining his composure, he jogged back into the street, convincing himself that he was probably just being self-conscious about the shape he was in. Making it another block without incident, he was now feeling that things might be back to normal. Then he spotted the sedan; it was several blocks off, but definitely headed towards him. I'm being silly running from this car; the man has obviously just mistaken me for someone else. Resolved to ignore the sedan and its driver, he headed on in the same direction. Reaching the freeway overpass, and only three blocks from home, Barry was brought to a standstill. The news van screeched up in front of him and blocked his path. He stood frozen as a cameraman and a reporter jumped out of the vehicle, both with their sights on him.

The black sedan parked on the opposite side of the street and Barry felt as if the world was closing in on him. Stepping out of the car a man in a black suit crossed the street in his direction. The reporter and cameraman had set up and were beginning their newscast to his right, freeway behind them as backdrop. Only then did Barry hear the helicopters again. There was a swarm of them above and Barry realized that the sound had never ceased since he had left the house. He looked up to the copters but his gaze was stopped halfway as he saw a billboard with his face on it, next to the words "Our Man."

The news camera swung around and pointed at Barry as the newscaster approached him.

“Mr. President, how does it feel to be the world’s first head of state elected by lottery?”

Barry didn’t hear what she said, or respond. His confusion over the billboard had made him forget about the man in the suit who was now almost on top of him. When he lowered his eyes he caught sight of the man’s lapel blown out by the wind; beneath he saw the outline of a pistol. Without thinking he leapt at the man, afraid for his life. The man in the suit and Barry fell to the ground in awkward embrace. Barry was scrambling for his life, afraid and reacting with animal-like instinct. The man in the suit was trying to subdue him but did not seem intent on causing harm. Then a gunshot rang out and Barry rolled off of the man and fell dead in the street.

“It went off accidentally! I was here to protect him,” moaned the man in the suit, looking dejected and gaunt.

“Did we get all that on tape?” cried the newscaster. “Keep that camera rolling!”

The camera panned to Barry’s dead body and then back over to Evelyn the newscaster.

“What started as an amazing day has ended in tragedy. Mr. President, Barry Mitchell, the first president to be elected by lottery, has just been shot in a fatal mixup with the secret service. To date this is the shortest presidential term in our history, and a bad start to the lottery system.”

The words were drowned out as sirens began to fill the air. Noting this, the camera man panned upward until his lens reached the billboard with the words spelled out, “Our Man”.

END

SATURDAY IN OCTOBER (YEARS AGO)

By John Sierpinski

The boy-man kicks at the dirt-kissed
leaves while his young wife marches
through the maple and oak, snapping
the spines. They help their
two-year-old daughter by each
holding her hands and lifting

her up and down between them.
She laughs—high pitched—
like toddlers often do. Leaves
scatter like discarded old
love letters over their shoes.
He's still hung over a bit—

an electric misfiring in his
brain and body. They are
nineteen years old. They are
at Mauthe Lake in Wisconsin's
Kettle Moraine State Forest.
Somehow, the ache in his body

feels good. His wife is already
losing her patience. The once
pale sun folds pathetically behind
the conifers. They do not even
have enough money to eat
in the diner in Kewaskum.

Later, it will be hot dogs
and mashed potatoes, again.
He will wash that down with
beer. When he comes out
of their little girl's room
after reading a story, his

wife is watching the small
black-and-white TV. Ricky
is saying to Lucy (in their
bedroom, the one with
twin beds, a nightstand
in between,) "Sure anything
you want. Honey, I love you."

LIE ME NO LIES

By Joanne Hanson

“Wow. Jo, you should have been there.” “Oh man. I never saw anything like it!” “Boy. You sure did miss out on something today.” “I saw it, and I don’t believe it.” “You’re never gonna, never gonna believe it.” “It was amazing, really simply amazing.”

“Quiet down!” I hollered at all of them, wondering what the heck was going on. The whole group just kept on talking.

“Man Jo, you should have been there!” my friend George said. “It would have knocked your socks off. If you ever get to see it, just remember to hold on to your hat. I saw it and I don’t believe it.”

“Oh, no kiddin’ Jo, it was unbelievable and scary and the biggest thing I’ve ever seen,” Florence said, chiming in also.



"It was so cool," her brother Daniel said, while his twin brother Darren stood there shaking his head up and down. "Yah, oh so cool," Darren added.

Doyle was jumping up and down, spinning around with both hands clenched. He seemed to be vibrating or humming or maybe he was purring. "It was so cool. Man, I wanna go back and see it again. Nobody's gonna believe it, nobody."

I found them over in Florence's backyard after I'd finished my chores and looked around for them. This was my group, or at least most of them.

First, there were Florence Buckman and her two younger brothers, Darren and Daniel, then there's Doyle Berryman who, though older than us by a couple of years, is sometimes the youngest-acting. Next is George Bailey, whose dad works for my dad now and then on our chicken ranch.

George, Florence and I are around ten, give or take. George is ten and a half, Florence just turned ten, and I'll be ten shortly after school starts in September. My birthday is in October. The twins are a little over eight, and Doyle is almost 13.

We all live in a region called Sunshine Acres. It's about five square miles, rural, so the blocks are real big. We are just south of Whittier, California, and north of Norwalk. My folks have the chicken ranch, Doyle's folks both work in town, and they have a small fruit tree farm, with lots of fig trees, lemon trees, a couple of orange trees, and a bunch of black walnut trees. George's family lives the farthest away, about a country block away or so, and both his folks work too. Mrs. Bailey is a school secretary, while Mr. Bailey, who used to work at the Studebaker plant until it closed, now works part time as a mechanic, and like I said before, he helps out at the ranch sometimes.

Mrs. Bailey helped take care of me after my mom died, at least until Dad remarried; then my stepmom took over. They all were still friends, and that's how I met George. His sister Vickie use to hang with us, but now that she's a teenager, it's "beneath her to associate with all us kids." We understand and really don't mind because she wasn't real adventurous, so now we can be a little wilder and explore more.

Flo lives across from Keltner's Market, which is about halfway between all of us. That's how we all met and started hanging out. Doyle

and I go to the Lutheran School in town, and all the rest go to the local public school. Keltner's is a little mom-and-pop place where the kids can go, and where the parents can get things they run out of and don't want to drive all the way to the market that's a couple of miles away. Also, he lets the kids buy cigarettes for the parents without any hassle. He does a little bit of cash and carry for some of the families who only get paid once a month.

You would love Keltner's. It's small, packed with stuff you don't find everywhere. He sells a lot of candy, especially the two-for-a-penny stuff. Also, some of the sodas, like Nehi soda, and Vernor's cream soda, that are so hard to find, and the big fat dill pickles that are in the big glass jars that look like big barrels. Those pickles were so good and so sour they would make your toes curl. They were five cents each, so we had to save up for those, although I was lucky cause my dad gave me a good allowance for helping out on the ranch, so I was able to buy candy and pickles for my friends sometimes. Mainly I bought horse statues, and mom made me put money away in the piggy bank, with the tipping hat, that my grandparents had given to me for Christmas.

We were young, and it was summer, and I couldn't make heads nor tails of what they were talking about. They all seemed demented at the moment, and though I knew they were a little strange – that's why we all got along – they really weren't as crazy as they were acting.

"Come on. One at a time," I kept saying. "One at a time. You guys sound like the chickens."

Slowly, they all shut up, and I pointed to George to tell me what they were all riled up about. Usually he was the sanest of the bunch. Not today, though.

"Jo, you won't believe it. I was there and I saw it, but I don't believe it!" He shouted. "It was incredible." They all looked entranced or loony, depending on perspective.

"George, so help me, I want to know what the Sam Hill you're babbling about."

One of the problems of having to do chores is I missed out on a lot of cool stuff. Sometimes, I would be late going home, and my dad would be furious, but it's hard sticking to a work schedule when you're nine-and-a-half years old.

"Let's try it again, George," I said patiently, "What are you all going on about?"

"I'll tell her," Flo said calmly. "Look, we found this really big spider, Joanne. You have to see it before it runs away. You won't believe it."

I knew she was being serious because none of my friends call me by my given name unless they're trying to make a point. I really don't like my name. It seems too girly for me. I'm a tomboy. I wear jeans and a t-shirt, with a flannel shirt if it's cool outside, and I'm always in cowboy boots except in school. Then, I have to wear a skirt, blouse, and those silly penny loafers that every girl hates. I won't wear a dress; they are too darn confining. I need to be able to move around, even when I'm dressed like a girl.

So, when Flo called me Joanne, I knew this was serious business.

"We heard about this spider from one of the guys that was down by the hobo camp, and so we went down to see if he was pulling our leg or not, and there it was: the biggest spider I've ever seen, right there, in the pathway. The web is monstrous, blocks the whole path. We wanted to stay longer, but the train came by, and I guess the engineer saw us, so he tooted the whistle, and the spider started to move, and well, we all took off and ran back to my house."

"A spider? You're all going on like this for a spider? All this commotion over a silly spider? Come on, we've seen big spiders before. What's the big deal?" I was really confused. We had all played with spiders and all other types of creepy crawlies, and nobody ever got this stupid over it. At least not as stupid as everyone was acting right now.

We all had tarantulas at one point or another, and of course the little gopher snakes and fireflies, and anything else we could put in a bottle. Mostly, we kept them long enough to scare our families and the teenage girls in the neighborhood, some of the boys too. Sometimes, they died before we could turn them loose, but mostly we let them go before anything like that happened.

"No, not any like this one," Flo said while everyone nodded their heads real hard and fast.

"Okay, let's go see this 'big' spider."

They all looked excited, but they sure didn't rush to the path we used to cut through the big field. I've seen them move slower, but not often.

After we got down to the railroad tracks, the path splits. You turn to the right and it takes you down to the peacock farm, about half a mile down. They are beautiful birds, but noisy. They have a scream that pierces your eardrum. Past that is the old Quaker Church where the Quakers still arrive in their horse-and-buggies. Their church is small, and I don't think many attend it nowadays, but the property is real big and is surrounded by a barbed wire fence. There are some trees there that are so tall, it looks like you could climb up and have a face-to-face talk with God.

If you turn to the left, like we did, you would go down towards Imperial Highway, which was a four-lane road, and it runs from far away left to far away right. On the far side of the highway was a great big pig farm, and if you followed the road to the right for a couple of blocks you would find the Metropolitan Community Hospital. Here they had a bunch of people who were held because they were deemed unable to live in a normal society. The place was old and made from bricks and bigger than any of the other buildings in the whole area. It was four stories, set like in a park, with a large lawn, and big old trees. If you forgot about it being a mental institution, it had a beckoning appearance, like a beautifully manicured mansion or a park for the wealthy. You couldn't put that feeling aside for long, though, because most of the time when you were close to it you could see one or two of the inmates out by the corner fence just preaching away. We never could hear what they were talking about, but every now and then you could hear "God" this or "God" that, so we all called it preaching. None of them were criminals; they were just unable to care for themselves.

The highway was about a mile or so down, and between us and there was the hobo camp. This was a really neat area, surrounded by tall reeds and real tall grasses. The hobos had made an area close to the tracks with a couple of big logs and some old wooden blocks that were like the wood the tracks sat on but weren't long enough or were broken. I guess the hobos thought it was a good spot because they were close enough to a big highway and close enough to the railroad, so it was the best of both worlds. It was isolated enough that they could build a fire and not have it seen from anywhere close.

The path here was wide enough for two of us to walk, but it's rough and uneven, so it was best to keep looking down and watch where you're stepping. Lots of kids had sprained their ankles down here, and we all made a pact to never come down here alone, just in case.

I hadn't realized it, but it finally dawned on me that I was all alone, or at least there was no one beside me on the path. Just as I started to ask why everyone was so far back – "Jo! Stop! Now!" – Doyle shouted, and then the twins hollered out together. They always seemed to talk as one person. Eerie, huh?

"Wait Jo, Stop," they said.

I looked up and started to turn around to talk to them, when in front of me, I saw it.

"Oh my Lord," I stuttered quietly, though I wanted to scream. You have to put up a good face in front of friends, you know? Bravery was really hard that day, because about ten feet in front of me was a web that could have probably held the Jolly Green Giant, and right smack dab in the middle of it was this big yellow and black spider. The legs were totally spread out. It looked like it could cover a dinner plate. The body was about the size of a Zippo cigarette lighter, except it was shaped in an oval, not a rectangle.

I lost my momentum, thankfully, and I thought I was going to swallow my tongue. I was flabbergasted.

Slowly, I backed up, and with each step I could feel the hairs on the back of my neck relax and lie down.

"Wow, you guys sure called it," I said, backing farther away and closer to my friends.

"What are we gonna do with it?" George asked.

"Nothing! It's not bothering anyone, so we won't bother it," I said.

"But Jo, nobody's going to believe us," Flo said.

"I don't care Florence." Yep, she knew I was serious when I used her real name too. "We leave it alone."

We all walked on home, and because it was coming on dark, we didn't stop and talk too much. We all had lots to think about.

After dinner, Mom asked if I was all right. I had been real quiet, and I guess my folks noticed. I wasn't sure I should tell them or not, but before I could think, I found the words pouring out, and I couldn't stop them.

"We found a big spider today. It was yellow and black and bigger than any spider I've ever seen." In great detail, I told them all about what had happened, leaving nothing out.

Now, Mom had only been my mom for about a year or so, and I was still at the point when I was trying to impress her and tried ever so hard to make sure she liked me, so she wouldn't leave me like my real mom did. I know it sounds silly, but I think every kid who has lost a parent wonders what he or she did to make that parent leave. It's not true, and we know it, but we can't help but feel it.

"Joanne," Mom said to me, "its okay to exaggerate a little from time to time. We all tell those fibs or little white lies, but you can't tell big lies and expect people to like you or respect you. You'll get a bad reputation, and soon no one will believe anything you say."

"But Mom," I started.

"Your mom's right," Dad said. Looking at each other, my dad shook his head and turned to me and said, "No television tonight and tomorrow, also, no playing with your friends tomorrow."

"But I'm telling the truth. I swear it's true, every bit of it. You can ask all of the others; they saw it too."

"No," Mom said, "It's clear, you all got together and decided to scare everyone, and you will lie to make every one believe it. You all must learn that this type of behavior will not be tolerated. We can't teach your friends, but we can try to show you what's right."

Dad cleared his throat, and I knew that neither one would believe anything else I said.

"No phone either," Dad said as he walked away.

I was so mad. I wanted to yell and hit something, but I was smart enough to know that would only lead to more trouble. So, I took my punishment quietly, but I seethed inside.

~ ~ ~

"Where've ya been?" Doyle asked me two days later, when I was finally able to come outside and be with my friends.

"I told my folks about the spider, and they didn't believe me, so I got grounded, with no phone privileges," I told him.

"Why would you do such a fool thing? You know they only believe what they can see, and sometimes not even that," he added.

"I know, I just wanted to share, and I couldn't stop myself," I said sadly. "Go get George, Flo and the boys, and meet me at Keltner's," I told him. "And hurry!"

While Doyle went to get the crew, I went to Keltner's. Thirty six hours of seething had given me an idea, and I couldn't leave it alone.

"Mr. Keltner," I said when I got there, "do you have any of those big dill pickle jars around? One that's empty?"

"No lass," He answered, "But I have one that's almost empty. It's got about six or eight pickles left in it."

"I'll buy them all," I told him. "If you will, please wrap them up real tight in the butcher paper? I'll pick them up later."

"Sure," he said and did so. There were six of them, which worked out well, considering there was six of us.

Soon Doyle returned with everyone who had gone the other day to see the spider. I told them that when we were done we all got a pickle.

"Done with what?" George asked, looking at me as we walked away from the store.

"We're gonna go get that spider, if we can find it," I told them all.

"But," Darrel and Daniel said together. "You said we couldn't catch it," Darrel said. "Right," said Daniel. "Ya said so, ya said so."

"I know, but today's a different day. I don't want to hurt it, but I do want to catch it if we can, and as soon as possible."

We all trekked out to the path and headed to the hobo camp area. I was in the lead, and I'm sorry to say I was still really hurt, and mad, and it showed in the speed I was walking.

"Hey, J-bomb. Slow down," George called to me. He started calling me that a couple of years before when we had learned about

the A-bomb and started practicing the duck and cover in school. I didn't get mad very often, but he said when I did it was like a bomb going off. Since then I had worked on my temper, and I didn't explode any more, but I hadn't learned to completely control it. He called me J-bomb to help me stay calm. George was a good friend that way.

"Sorry guys," I said, slowing down. "I just have to get this done."

"Okay, sure," Doyle said, and everyone else nodded.

We would need a lot of luck, and thankfully we had it. It looked like the spider hadn't moved a bit since the other day, but its body was smaller, so we figured it was still digesting its last meal, whatever that was.

"How we gonna do this?" Flo asked.

"Easy," I said, knowing nothing about this was going to be easy at all.

The plan we came up with was fairly simple, and I never want to do anything like it again. George and Doyle got two fairly good sized sticks, and each stood on opposite sides of the spider. Quickly they took the sticks, entangled them in the web and used the web to catch the spider. They put the whole mess into the jar, while I broke off the sticks and closed the lid. Surprisingly it worked, and before we knew it the spider was inside working hard to get the web off of it.

I had already prepared the jar, washing it out real good and poking holes in the lid. I had made the holes bigger than we usually made them, but I wanted to make sure the spider got plenty of air. Most of the spiders we were familiar with could have climbed out of the holes, but this one sure couldn't.

Carrying that big jar was my duty because it was my quest, but my hands got sweaty, and I was afraid it would slip out of my hands and shatter. Didn't favor that thought at all. When we got back to Flo's house, I borrowed her brothers' wagon and a small blanket to cover the jar with and continued the journey home. Flo came with me to hold the jar, making sure it didn't bounce out, and to keep the blanket over it.

When we got to my house, I left Flo with the wagon and the jar outside the gate. I went to get my folks.

"Come on out guys," I said to them when I found them. "I have something to show you."

"The chores come first," Dad said.

"Please, you really need to come out," I begged them. "It's important to me."

They reluctantly followed, and when we were all standing around the wagon, I nodded, and Flo left. I turned to them and said, "Yes Mom, I know the difference between a white lie, a fib, and a big fat lie. I want you to know that if it's important, I will lie me no lies."

With that, I removed the blanket.

Both my parents were shocked, and Mom sort of stumbled back and grabbed my dad's arm.

"Well I never!" she said, and Dad smiled and shook his head.

"Shall we keep it?" I asked. "It could be a good reminder to us all."

"That's not necessary," Dad said. "I think we all got the message."

It was not my finest hour. With parents as old as they were, I should have been more forgiving. My feelings had been hurt, and I had to prove to them that I wouldn't lie about important things. They had to learn to believe me and give me the benefit of the doubt, even if it seemed impossible.

The whole crew went with me and took the spider back to where we found it. I took off the lid and quickly rolled the jar away from me as fast as I could. I decided the spider could keep the jar if it wanted to.

The dill pickles weren't as good as they usually were. They didn't smell like they had before, and the taste was foreign to me. They were still juicy, but they were tart rather than sour. That was our last pickle party. I had lost my taste for them.

MUSEUM EXHIBIT — TITANIC

By John Sierpinski

Sarah, my daughter at eighteen,
is text messaging. We stand
together in front of glass cases.
We have just finished watching
a video of the greatest ship of its
time resting on the ocean floor.
Milk-blue-and-green water reveals
a barnacle-covered hull, scattered

remnants like a broken teapot,
white cups, a still- corked bottle,
the porcelain head of a doll. I
don't know about Sarah, but I
see the fast approaching iceberg,
people and their kids pushing
for lifeboats (there were too few),
and then the bow knives upward

while the band plays until lights
go out. People shiver in life boats.
People hang on to pieces of wood—
death screams. At the start
of the exhibit we were given
paper boarding passes. Sarah
is in first class and survives, I am
in steerage and perish. I look down

at the screen of Sarah's phone:
"Qt lking @ artifacts & cm dwn."
She looks at me. "Dad, this is great,
but I need to go." At home in my
office there is a photograph of Sarah
when she was nine years old.
It was taken at the botanical gardens.
The dark ocean, bone-splintering
cold, spill over it.

SAILOR'S WIFE

By Brianna Hams

I feel the waves come crashing in
Like an army invading the land
The salt accumulates on my skin
And for dear life I reach out for your hand
Then I am swept out into the ocean's blue
With nothing but the stars above
I pretend the water is you
So I am forever drowning in your love
This way I keep my heart faithful
And my eyes from playfully straying
And while the loneliness in me is hateful
For your safe return I am always praying
But in a world of strong storms and an unsteady sea
I know you will never come home to me

THE RAT TURNS INTO THE BULL

By Kylie Howell

Goosebumps over discolored flesh,
Just as easily felt
Permanent bumps like scars
Telling my emotions from the outside
I cannot hide my skin
I cannot hide my past
The scars show how the past affects us
Like how you sliced through my window
Just like my wrists, the window will never be whole
And there you were, standing before me like a snake
And I was the rat for your consumption
I got away the first time by sheer luck
But you see the weakness on my face now
You know what you did
And you smirk, and slink away
Rat, always at a disadvantage.
But I was here to take control
No longer a rat but a bull
Huffing and puffing the goosebumps turned to courage
And red flooded my face
And with your back only inches from me
I tapped you on the shoulder
And swung



STILL LIFE

By Zara Kand

WHEN NATURE CALLS YOU ANSWER

By Stephanie Whitfield

HELLO
SAYS THE FLUFFY WHITE CLOUD
WHAT DO YOU SEE
IN ME?

HELLO
SAYS THE SONG BIRD
AS HE CALLS
FROM THE TREE

HELLO
SAYS THE WAVING TREE
MY ROOTS ARE WHISPERING
'I LONG TO BE FREE'

HELLO
SAYS THE SOFTLY ROUNDED HILL
I AM JUST RIGHT TO CLIMB
SO YOU CAN SEE

HELLO
SAYS THE WANING EVENING SUN
MY COLORS ARE BOLD
DON'T YOU AGREE?

HELLO
SAYS THE HOWLING WIND
I AM BIG AND STRONG
AND GUSTY

HELLO
SAYS THE LARGE PALE MOON
WOULD YOU LIKE TO TAKE A WALK
UNDERNEATH ME?

WHY HELLO LITTLE CLOUD
MAYBE A DRAGON
A LIZARD
OR AN ELEPHANT
I SEE

WHY HELLO
BEAUTIFUL SONG BIRD
YOUR CHARMING CALLS
DELIGHT AND MESMERIZE
ME

WHY HELLO
TALL AND STATELY SHADE TREE
I HEAR YOU
AND APPRECIATE
THEE

WHY HELLO
LITTLE BROWN HILL
I WOULD LOVE TO CLIMB YOU
IF YOU'LL LET
ME

WHY HELLO
GOLDEN EVENING SUN
YES, YOUR COLORS ARE BOLD
I CANNOT
DISAGREE

WHY HELLO
LOUD AND HOWLING WIND
I KNOW YOU ARE KIND
YOU DON'T SCARE
ME

HELLO AND GOODNIGHT
PALE YELLOW MOON
I THINK I WILL TAKE A WALK
THANK YOU
FOR INVITING
ME.



SLEEP BECOMES THIN

By Kat Green

GREEN EYES

By Kat Grovesteen

She was a dream,
As lucid as the sea,
And we sat in the sand
And laughed on the wind.

And her eyes,
A serene lagoon of green.

And a kiss,
Salty like the sea weed,
That washed up on the shore,
And danced under the waves.

And she was a dream?
That girl and me,
And her green eyes by the sea.

THE DANCE

By Jenn De Falco

Like children we played a quarter in May.
The music did portray the attack of the disease.
She wants to belong if only for this day.
You know I can't, so help her release please.
Myself and her will unite and destroy.
No delay is found and tonight is goodbye.
Instead of justice, predict was annoy.
Attain and describe the price was too high.
But thy love for her will surely not fade.
To become anew and received by grace.
Tonight is not away from what is made.
The goodbye I can't describe its face.
I myself care when not, for empty love.
For you belong my eternal true dove.

THE FIRST WORD

By Kat Grovesteen

The first word is the hardest

To fill the page of snow

Small marks like fox tracks

along the blank page

telling a story of

cold whispers,

flakes of ice.

MY EXPERIENCE IN THE HI-DESERT

By Jane Jarlsberg

I discovered the California hi-desert during the height of the spring wildflower season, Memorial Day weekend 1977- the beginning of a love affair that lasts until this day. Having grown up in central Michigan as far away from the desert as you can get and spent much of my adult life so far in the Los Angeles area near the Pacific Ocean, I never thought I would be happy very far from a large body of water. However, on that camping trip with Santa Monica Unitarian friends, my new husband, Joe, and my two young kids, I opened a door to the “wild life” 3,000 feet above Palm Springs in Joshua Tree. The multi-colored blooms that carpeted the sandy floor of the Joshua Tree National Monument surprised me in their variety and lushness. Who would have guessed they lurked beneath the hot and dry surface waiting for the right timing of soaking rain, angle of the sun and hard winter freeze? Timing appeared to be right that year! So, delighted to witness this light and color show, I was afraid to walk for fear of trampling the perfection under my feet. We even struggled to find a protected spot in the “Indian Cove” campsite where Boy Scouts and other fellow nature lovers shared the search. The love affair has continued with the desert and its unique wild vastness, but not with my second husband, which ended in divorce a couple years later, but I give him credit for helping introduce me to Joshua Tree and opening the door to a “wild life” I never imagined before.

On my recent return to the hi-desert with my granddaughter Sarah, dog-friend Buster and traveling cat extraordinaire Sweetie to camp out in Joshua National Park - tho the locals still call it the “monument,” as I tend to - we planned to arrive in the first half of May hoping to catch the peak of the flowering season, but we missed it by over two weeks...is it the effects of “global warming” that eases the seasons to change earlier? Or just a natural cycle affected by the weather patterns of 2008-09? At any rate, the yucca plants boast huge green scalloped blooms, the ocotillo burst their red flames at each tip and the squaw tea bushes joined the yellow-blossomed creosote shrubbery greeting the happy visitors at every turn. Zebra tail lizards, jackrabbits, “horny” mating ravens and cactus wrens, and kangaroo mice joined in the fun as

we marveled at the jumbo rocks regurgitated from the ancient volcanic activity, providing a noble shadow onto our latest campsite in Hidden Valley.

Little did I know in the mid 80s, when looking for cheap housing out of LA I moved to Joshua Tree and nearby 4-corners Sun Fair, that this natural wildlife was a convenient cover for a different kind of “wildlife,” the kind impoverished, bored and idle humans manufacture for themselves in the remote and seemingly unreachable homesteads staked out in an optimistic post-WW II era, when land was up for grabs for a small commitment of time, cement and lumber. 20 X 16 foot cabins dot the landscape, many empty and cannibalized by “speeding” vagrants. Some of these humans became my friends. We have all heard the term “desert rats” given to hard-up folks who attempt to scratch out a livelihood from the harsh crusted desert floor, littering it with collections of broken-down vehicles, barely functioning washing machines, fencing and other building materials collected when ambition was fresh and immediate, debris now all clearly visible from dusty roads winding across the hills and valleys, turned brown and dry after the spring season evaporates like the infrequent summer showers. In the safety of the night, when most do not venture very far from home for fear of getting lost and maybe turning up as a meal for the opportunistic coyote or occasional mountain lion, another kind of wilderness – of soul and determination – shoots up the nasty-tasting but exhilarating methamphetamine to raise hopes of action and accomplishment. Partying with friends or alone, we are compelled to do that mechanical job again on that old Toyota engine that would run great if we just had the right tools; deep clean the cabin or rake the front yard sand into even and flat pathways bordered by rocks hauled off the desert landscape nearby. Usually ending with a “crash” - long nap - to awaken hours and sometimes days later with all the sense of purpose obliterated by the longing for more “speed;” this cycle often takes otherwise good human beings down an addictive path leading to lost lives, wasted energy and a blending of the human and animal wildlife indistinguishable from each other – scurrying from dark place to dark place – shadow... to night – in search of restoring energy and life purpose.

PILLOWS

By Kylie Howell

My pillows have memories
My pillows have lives.
My pillows are sacred
And only mine.

One is coated in blue hair dye, from the time I didn't want to wash my sheets.
She is bright and blue and full of life, even when I cover her up.

One is covered in red kiss marks, from a past love's wrestling match with my lips and
no one ended up clean.
Although she is a little bitter, she loves her marks, they show a time when love felt real.

The third is covered in drool from sleep-filled nights. She is my favorite.
She cradles my head as
I depart into another realm.
She knows my dreams,
she lives in them.

The fourth and final pillow that has harbored in my bed for the past odd 6 months,
I don't know that she is anything special.
Maybe she is my nightmares,
she doesn't speak much,
she holds the bad in for me,
the most special thing anyone could do.

LOVE FOR POETRY

By Elaine Fontenot Lister

Metaphorically speaking
our love is poetry
our love is po-e-try:
The mind of our heart
liberated from the
boundaries of our bodies
and they each hold a key
to unlock the mystery
of this gravitational pull
that neither of us have the power to stop
and
our love is like poetry
definitely a simile
or maybe more
'cause it's neither in space or time
nor can be confined
it's so sublime
a love of a lifetime
flows like a well-metered line
if we were words we'd be a deft rhyme
like alliteration
our love will last long,
long,
like laughter lingering
in a low-lit room...
... on a dewy day
divinely designed for our duet,
dancing in dusk-dark,
dauntless and undeterred
digesting the dream
destined for a love supreme...
if this love ain't poetry
I don't know what is...

SHE STABBED MOSES: A True Story in Narrative and Verse

By Paul R. Abramson

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

Well, the king has spoken,
And the jester has had his say.
An ancient sadness falling,
A bridegroom led astray.
Wish I could read those signs,
Ship of fools 'n double time.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

She was drunk. SHE couldn't even walk. I'd go to the car to help my mother carry her into the house, HER feet dragging behind her. We'd give her black coffee to try to sober her up. But SHE'D cry and cry and cry about a baby that died. What baby? I'd ask my mother. My mother never knew. Eventually HOWEVER she would sober up and cook fantastic meals, fantastic meals. But by evening she'd be drunk AGAIN.

One time when my mother brought her home the following morning
she went into her bedroom and found her husband in bed with another
WOMAN. She ran to the kitchen...grabbed a knife...

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

Strange dazzling sparks descend

That hold me in their sway.

When I beg for nothing,

You make me shield my face.

Now I stand accused,

Survived the time and place.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

SHE STABBED HIM, MOSES.

APPROACH VECTOR

By Dave Cochran

one minute to five, in the pre-dawn light
the city looks like a circuit board
from up here approaching from the west
trying to sleep trying not to sleep
looking for something to distract
me, glass pressed to my face.
i try to rest try to write
try to record
above houses rowed and stacked
like memory while I keep
a pointer to one byte
one allocation of address-space
where my son is still asleep.

NEVER TOO OLD

By Aubrey Leahy

Lina Whitney, née Lobis, was born in Lithuania 95 years ago and, although these days and nights many things slip her mind, those her mother drummed into her still prevail. Matters regarding manners, deportment, courtesy, exercise, grooming and other social skills learned in an earlier century now long disappeared, are kept alive by her in the California long-term care facility in which Lina now resides. Fleeing from Riga early in 1940 when the Russians annexed her country and after enough trials, tests, and escapades to inspire several best selling novels she eventually arrived to live in The United States. Although political boundaries have changed and it is now possible to do so, Lina has never returned to her homeland. A soupçon of accent hints still at those Baltic origins. Lina fluently speaks, writes, and dreams in Latvian, French, German, Spanish and both American and English English.

The main corridor is long and extends well over thirty yards past the lobby desk to the faraway wall with twenty-two doorways on

each side of the elegantly patterned carpet. Behind most of the doors lie mini-suites, home each to two residents which, due to advancing creakydom, always prove to be their final homes. The other doors lead to offices and staff rooms. Each morning at precisely 10:30 Lina, always immaculately made up with and wearing a petite Chanel or Givenchy tres chic tailored outfit, would emerge. With her four-wheeled red Rollator walker to the fore she would stroll down the carpet as though she were royalty, transporting her eighty-four-pound and slight-of-stoop frame in regal progress up and down the corridor five times each morning. No more. No less. At the end of her exertions she would repair to the lobby where a large bulbous glass urn with a silver tap sat filled with ice, fruit, soda, and sugary water and available for all to freely use.

Lina, since fleeing her home, had readily become accustomed to dining and drinking only from porcelain or crystal. She had, through sheer good manners, quashed her distaste for the plastic cups and would, resting on her walker's seat, partake of the provided elixir, then wend her way back down the long corridor to prepare for luncheon.

Lina's mind, being the wonderful thing it is, yet with the onset of shall we use the term adult forgetfulness rather than early dementia, remembers her name but not always her room number. Since all doors were identical she could not always recall which one was hers. Her pre-prandial walk involved strolling in a zigzag procession, stopping at every doorway and reading each nameplate. Eventually seeing her name, she would then know she was back home. All very discreetly and elegantly done.

I first met Lina one morning as her routine neared the thirst quenching stage. As it was 114F degrees outside I was pouring myself a much needed quaff. There followed a sweet exchange that brought hope that civilized behavior is not yet quite extinct.

Using the world's oldest pickup line I inquired if I could buy her a drink.

Lina said, "It has been such a very long time since a man offered to buy me a drink."

I quipped, "Oh I doubt that very much. I am sure they who did must number in the hundreds."

A
ten
heartbeat
long
and
thoughtful
pause
before,

with the sweetest, shyest, and most knowing smile from a 95-going-on-30-year-old Lina replied,

“Well. Not hundreds. Maybe there were two or three...or six...or possibly seven,”

Then, pointing at the pitcher, “Thank you. You may buy me a drink. I will have one of those.”

After pleasantries were exchanged Lina excused herself, explaining she had a luncheon date to get ready for.

I watched as Lina, a touch more upright than usual, promenaded back to her suite, surely, directly, and without hesitation, not pausing to label-read once as she returned to the castle she now calls home.

Could have sworn I heard her smiling.



UNTITLED

By Aubrey Leahy

TEXAS HAIKU ONE

By Lisa Powell

Sharp flints, broken
glass: dryland crops of
vacant lots.
Nails coming loose, heels worn
uneven but these boots are
still boots worth having.

After Louisiana, after Texas,
Mojave.
Weeds blow through; you
can't count them.
Tired and twisted, sand
blasted—a keen
whistling

full of words,
full of noise now,
full of what used to be
songs. A name has fangs. A voice
has teeth, like those
uphill steps in the sidewalk.
Caliche dust on leather; Cuban
heels on hardwood:
the Dry Creek Boat Dock and Saloon, clinging

to the lime escarpment high
above mansions built
on borrowed river bottom.
At the hour when neon looks
its best, colors still pulsing
in parts of the sky, you might see a star
hanging

like a bit of chrome off
a dented fender.
It is the moment that stretches: after you buy
the bottle and before
you drink it.

UNTITLED

By r.soos

her eyes

reflect a fine glaze
from the air streaming over
this burning desert

ॐ

a hush

invites a new song
over the charcoal embers
still warming these bones

ॐ

my guitar

strums in the background
waking the blues I had lost
in harsh desert light

ॐ

still

black behind the moon
knowing stars exist back there
light hides sober thoughts

ॐ

escape

the desert chorus
whispering in the night winds
and dream far away

ॐ

mountain-ash

footsteps fall along
this trail whistling with cool wind
exposing fresh rock

ॐ

rest

on the porch beneath
an awning blocking direct
flames from desert sun

ॐ

backyard

rabbit playground fills
with quail bobbing quick prayers
and chipmunks seek shade

ॐ

after noon

desert sun centers
white heat on those who breathe
prayers for darkness

ॐ

silhouette

when a voice cries out
in the desert we seek for
shadows on the sand

ॐ

undress

cholla needle wound
scars preserved as delicate
lace around fingers

ॐ

prophet

joyous music strings
outward from eternity
till words break the spell

infinite

it must be music
holding this all together
this sound our reward

ॐ

mojave winters

welcome birds to stick around
and keep company with dying people
craving love from anyone except
their neighbors

also dying

wounded by lives accompanied
by anger and loss of humor
and wounds kept hidden from
all passersby

many decades

watching out the window
for a bird once known to bring
a sense of fulfillment high
in the desert

cool and living



stiff limbs

climb these hills with pain
awakening joy within
this exile from

the inner turmoil
wandering within the home
locked behind the door

pain proves each new breath
is alive with the promise
of yet one more dream



behind these eyes

an arthritic hand shakes off all memory
of familiar voices firing off vindictives
no longer understood within me

the singers stride toward me
over the desert sands sounding an alarm
I struggle to recall and despise

the young faces live smirking in sight
of the ancient call of death hovering
nearby waiting for inheritance

promising power in these dark skies
waiting for a temperate hemlock
to encourage me to stand naked

encouraging the stones of destiny
to allow the ravens to find this body



winds

scorch the roof I work
tumbling underlayment
back toward the earth

suns

scorch the roof I work
burning pain through this dense cloth
burning skin from bone

words

scorch the roof I work
singing loud through my voices
the beauty of pain

shacks

left on the desert
were mansions of wild dreams
for our grand fathers



love

rebuilds our desert
with survivors out weekly
picking up after

sightseers drive home
and fully wash the desert
from their fleeting lives

ॐ

wait

coming with the dust
winds turn desert into ash
for a day or two

then the seed takes root
and the seasons start again
life becomes new songs

ॐ

river

necklaces around
creosote sparkling sunlight
from desert floors

THE LOST MEN

By Michael G. Vail

The demon comes every night. He is white and his eyes glow in the dark. And he comes every night, after Mother and Father fall asleep. Jim never sees the demon, even when he's still awake. I ask him.

"Do you see it?" I ask.

"What?" he says.

"The demon, over in that corner. At the end of the bed."

He hasn't seen it, but he screams. Father drags Jim out of bed and hits him on the backs of his legs with the wooden coathanger. Jim tells him I've been trying to scare him, and Father jerks me up and slaps the backs of my legs. He stops after a little while, if he doesn't smell funny. Once when he smelled funny, he didn't stop until Mother held onto his arm and made him stop.

The demon didn't come until Jim was born. Father didn't hit me, either. He was happy. Mother was happy, too. After I fed the pigs and chickens, I'd help her shell the peas. She'd keep standing and going to the window and saying "Your father should be here soon."

Father never smelled when he came back from the fields. He'd pick me up when he got home, and the soil rubbed onto my clothes. Mother didn't care. "Guess I'm going to have to do the wash again tomorrow," she'd say. Father smiled. "That's what you get for marrying a poor dirt farmer." Then they'd smile at each other and kiss.

The demon has been in the bedroom since Jim was born. Even back in Oklahoma. He never speaks. He stands at the end of the bed and stares with his glowing eyes until Mother stands over me in the morning. Then the demon climbs into the closet and waits.

The demon wasn't there before Jim came. I'm hoping the new baby that's on the way will make the demon go away, the same as Jim made it come. That's what I hope, but I don't pray for it. Mother says it's selfish to pray for little things.

"When your father hits me, I'm tempted to ask the Lord for strength," she says. "But it's only a little thing. I prayed when the wind came, but I'm sorry I did it now. It was just a test, like moving to

California and the new baby are tests. Life's only a test by the Lord, to choose the ones who are worthy."

So I don't pray for the demon to leave. Once, after we got to California, Father drove us to the ocean. I wanted to run into the waves, so the demon would have to let go of me and drown. I asked if I could go into the water. Mother said: "We don't have clothes to spare for swimming. That's for movie stars and the President. Not for folks like us."

Father grabbed her arm and turned her to him. "We're as good as anyone else," he said. "The way you go on, you'd be better off dead." She pulled away from him and held onto my shoulders so tight that I almost cried. Later, she said Father was right.

"I would be better off dead," she told me. "It's only for you and Jim that I've got to live." She began crying, and I clung to her waist and cried.

She cried after the wind killed the horse. We had a brown horse with white spots on its back. It was a gift from Grandfather. We'd ride the horse together, out to Father plowing in the fields. He'd see us, and whistle, and the horse would run right to him. We brought his dinner with us. The sun was always high and hot, and the dirt felt smooth and fine if you touched it.

Once, Father took me out to the fields on a Sunday, after church, and bent over the ground and picked some of it up and let it fall into his other hand.

"It's old soil," he said. "It's worked as hard as men could expect. I only hope it's not completely worn out when it's your time to make a living on this land."

"Why's it getting worn out?" I said.

"The men before me overworked it." He looked strong, squatting in his white shirt and Sunday trousers. "They asked it to do too much. They had no respect for it." He stood and wiped his hands together. "They practically ruined the soil for good and then they sold it to folks like us and moved on to new soil."

"Where'd they go?"

"West," he said. "They're lost men, Joe. They ruin all they touch. In another fifty years, they'll wear out California. Then they'll learn to

be fishermen. And they'll be good at that, too. If there's enough of them by then, they'll fish the oceans of the world clean."

I wanted to hear more about California and the lost men. But Father wouldn't tell me anymore. He took my hand and led me back to the house, and Mother stood on the porch and kissed me on the forehead and said dinner was almost ready.

We used to ride the horse to Grandfather's grave. It was up in a lot of brush. You couldn't get there in a car. I wondered why they buried him up there. Mother said it was the place he wanted to be buried. The grave was marked by a block of stone with his name carved on it.

We went to the grave for the last time a week before Jim was born. It hurt Mother to ride, but she said it didn't hurt enough to stop her from going.

Someone had stolen the headstone. Mother almost fell off the horse when she saw it was gone. We didn't even get down from the horse. She turned it and we rode back to the house as fast as the horse would go. Mother helped me get down and left me there. I watched her and the horse disappear across the fields. Father came back with her. She climbed off the horse, kneeled beside me and put her arms around me. When she stood, Father was gone.

I was lying in the dark that night, almost asleep, when I heard Father come back. After I woke up in the morning, Mother wouldn't talk about where he went. She said the baby was hurting her, and she wanted me to let her be.

"Old Jennings lives just down the road from the gravesite," Father told me that afternoon. "He saw strangers around there a couple of days ago." He turned away and talked to himself real low, resting one hand on the side of the house and looking at the fields.

Later, I heard him talking to Mother.

"Just because Jennings couldn't recognize them doesn't mean I can't find out who it was," he said. "Hell, Jennings is half-blind."

The next morning, I asked Father if it was Negroes. "Heck, boy," he said, "Jennings may have bad eyesight, but he can still tell white from black."

The demon is white, and I have no trouble seeing him in the dark. His eyes glow. He doesn't speak. He stands and stares until he climbs into the closet and Mother shakes my shoulder and I get up and we go out to the fields and pick strawberries. Sometimes we pick oranges. I like that better.

When we stop working to eat our dinner, there's plenty of shade under the trees. Under the trees, the dirt is soft. But not as soft as in Oklahoma. And many of the other women smell funny.

Father smells funny after he comes home from work and washes the grease and oil from his hands and arms and gives the dirty clothes to Mother. I know if it's Sunday because Father doesn't go to work or smell. On Sunday he fixes the car he drives to work the rest of the week and we don't go to church anymore. But Mother says that doesn't matter.

"God watches us whether we go to church or not," she says. "He knows if we are worthy of Heaven. He watches and He knows." Then she groans and holds her stomach, since the new baby's hurting her, and I tell her to pray. She tells me we shouldn't pray for small things because it only angers God.

"I prayed when the wind came," she says. "But I shouldn't have. It was a test. When I die, the test will be at an end."

Jim was born before the wind came. One day, Mother cried out in the kitchen. I ran inside and she said she'd better go to the bedroom and lie down. She said, "Go get your Father."

I ran across the fields and told him Mother wanted him. He ran back to the house ahead of me and went inside. Before I reached the house, he was back outside and cinching the saddle onto the horse. While I watched, he rode down the road.

There were tears in Mother's eyes, but she smiled at me from the bed.

"He's gone to get Mrs. Wilkins," she said. Her voice was strange. It was high and quick. "She's the one that was here for you. She's the one that was there for every baby in this county." Mother held my hand. Every now and then she squeezed it, and said, "It won't be long now, Joe, it won't be long." She stopped speaking and squeezed

my hand again and groaned. "It won't be long," she said, sounding lonesome and afraid.

Father came back in a car. It wasn't Mrs. Wilkins who was with him, but a man, a young man with a funny way of talking.

"Mrs. Wilkins is sick," Father told her. "She's got rheumatism so bad she can't raise her arms. This is the new doctor from town. He was visiting Mrs. Wilkins. It's a lucky thing for us he was already out this way."

"No," Mother said, talking loudly. "No. I can't have it, don't you see, Mrs. Wilkins is the one and you're a stranger, you and those others, come here and--"

Father took my hand and led me from the room and closed the door behind us.

"Your Mother's not feeling well," he said. "Go out and unhitch the mule from the plow and bring her in and feed her and close up the barn." Then he opened the door, and Mother was sweating and moaning, and the doctor was standing over her, and Father closed the door. I unhitched the mule and put her in the barn. It was almost dark when I finally got her fed, since she wouldn't always move when I wanted her to.

No one came out of the room. I sat in the kitchen, put my head on the table top and fell asleep. When I woke up, Father was standing before me, holding the new baby. Father said his name was Jim.

"Why'd you name him Jim?" I said.

"That was your Grandfather's name." He said I wouldn't be able to see Mother for a while. She was sick. The doctor stayed for a long time. He ate supper with us. Father fixed it. He didn't go out to the fields all day. He stayed in the house and went in and out of the bedroom. After dark, the doctor got into his car and left. The next morning Father let me see Mother.

She was lying in bed, with Jim next to her. She didn't have any color in her face, but she tried to smile. I asked her why she looked so pale.

"She's not pale," Father said.

Mother began to sob, and Jim began to cry, and I cried. Father stood over in a corner, looking out the window. He was whispering. He whispered all that afternoon. "Damn doctor," he whispered. "Goddamn doctor."

We had a horse in Oklahoma. If we had a horse now, it would scare the demon away. Me and Jim and Mother could ride it to where the strawberries grow. If we had a horse, we could get rid of the car. Father could ride the horse to work. I bet the demon is scared of horses. There wasn't hardly any sign of him before the wind killed the horse.

Not even Father knew the wind was coming. We were eating supper. Jim was too small to eat. He was in the bedroom, sleeping in his crib. We were eating when the sky got dark, and the wind began, sweeping across the fields and rattling over the house, shaking the windows. The noise woke Jim up. He began to cry, and I began to cry. Mother said, "Hush!"

Father turned his head this way and that. He didn't say anything, but went outside. When he came back and slammed the door shut behind him, there was dirt all in his hair and on his face and clothes.

"Pray to God it doesn't last more than a day or so," he said to Mother. "Otherwise, there won't be an inch of topsoil left within a hundred miles of here."

But the wind didn't stop. It went on and on, for days and days, and for days and days Mother and Jim and me didn't leave the house and Father didn't plow. He'd pace back and forth with a strange look in his eyes. Once, I went into the bedroom and he was sitting in a corner by himself with his head in his hands. It scared me to see him like that.

When the wind finally stopped, everything had changed. The dirt was gone. Only sand remained. The sand was everywhere. It had gotten inside the house and the barn and the well.

Father took me out to the barn and I helped him walk the horse and the mule. They'd gone half-crazy because of the wind. I could hear them from the house, even above the rattling, kicking at the walls of the barn and crying out. Sometimes they did it all night. It scared me almost as much as the demon. He'd begun standing over the end of the bed. I tried to tell Father about it, while he led the horse and I led the mule in a circle in the sand before the barn. Father acted like he didn't

hear me. He kept staring out over the fields and the sand. He had a strange look in his eyes, the look he has now when he smells funny. But he didn't smell then. He just stopped every once in a while and looked out at the fields until I asked him if the wind was over.

"No," he said, slow and deep. His throat must have been dry.

"How do you know?"

He looked down and watched me. Then he raised his hand and slapped me across the face.

"I know, goddamn it!" he said while I held back my tears. "Don't you sass me. I know."

It did come again, even worse than before. The wind and sand and dust slammed into the house. It blotted out the sun and went on into the night. When me and Jim went to bed the sand crashed against the window. When Mother woke me up it whistled and crashed, and the demon stood in the room all night and Father began to smell.

Mother had stopped praying. She saw me kneeling next to the bed one night before I went to sleep. She pulled me up and said, "Don't, Joe. It's all a test. God would be angry for you to pray over such a little thing." So I prayed to myself. I prayed that the wind would stop. After it didn't, I stopped praying too and waited for the test to end. It couldn't last much longer, I thought. There wasn't anything left to the farm.

Then the horse died. It was late at night. I couldn't sleep because of the demon and the wind, so I lay there a long time. I heard the horse and the mule, kicking at the barn's walls and crying out. The kicking stopped for a while, and it started again. I heard Mother, sobbing, and Father told me to get dressed and light the lantern.

We stepped out into the wind and opened the barn door. The mule ran past us and almost knocked me down. Father took the lantern and went inside. The horse was laying there. It didn't move or make a sound. Its eye was open but it had no life in it. Father bent over and felt its head and then its neck.

"It's broke," he said as he laid his hands on its neck. He stood and stared at the horse for a long time. Finally he turned and we went back to the house through the dust and sand. I climbed back in bed. While Mother cried, the demon came out of the closet and stood over the bed

and watched me. His eyes glowed almost as bright as the lights on the front of the car Father bought to take us to California.

Mother wanted to visit Grandfather's grave before we left. The wind wasn't so bad anymore and I thought we would.

We tried to, but the road was narrow and the car got stuck. It was stuck in a big rut and it rocked back and forth. All our things that were tied to the top of the car started falling on the ground.

"I'm turning back," Father said.

"No," Mother said. "It's just a little farther."

"Hell if it is," Father said. "Another five miles, at least."

"We can walk," she said. "It won't take any time."

"What--and leave everything we own setting in the open to be stolen or blown away?"

"No," Mother said. "I'm not moving until I've seen it."

Suddenly Father slapped her. Jim began crying, and I began crying, and tears came to Mother's eyes. But she didn't cry. When Father got the car out of the rut, he turned it around.

END.

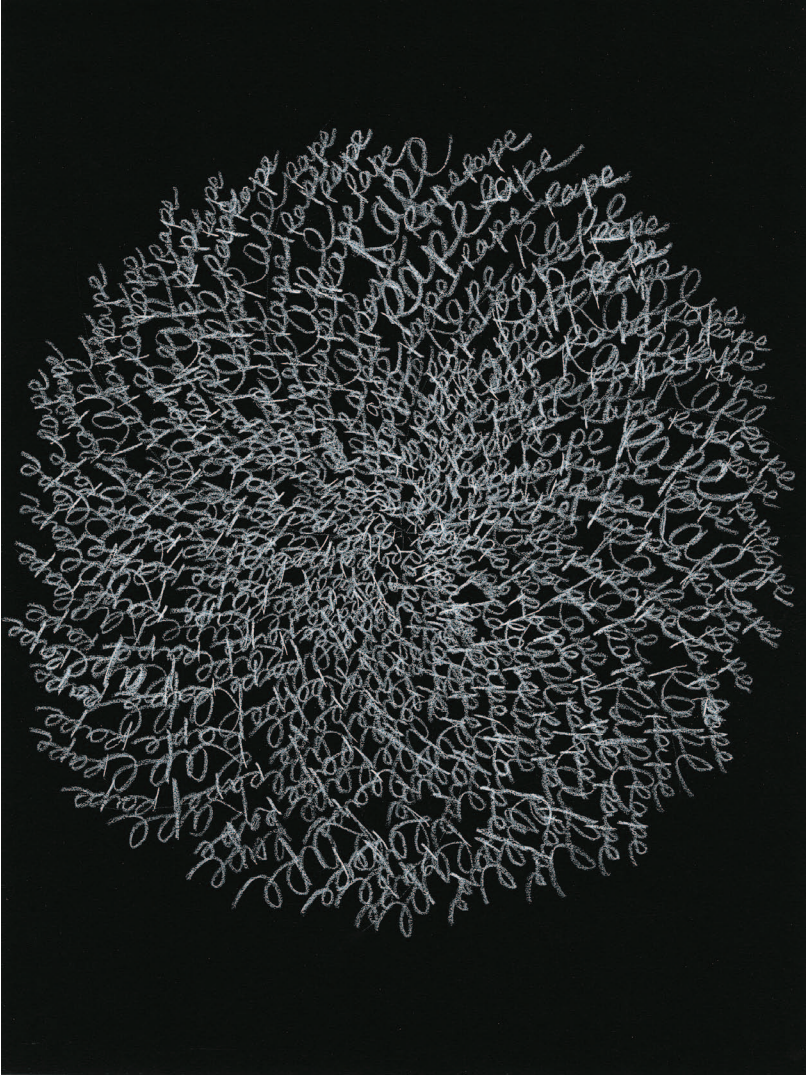
SOCIETY SOCIETY

By Kayla Tyree

I don't know how ya managed
to run rampant
our youth damaged
because you commanded
tsk tsk
my children, listen
you must make a decision
what do you stand for?
what do you envision?
I stand for all people
I stand for respect
I stand for love, beauty, and no neglect
take a step back and see
our babies are being exposed to a man's sexual greed
on all youth, and age they feed
taking away souls, do you know what this means?
a life of heartache for what was stolen
our poor children are left broken, and open
are we not supposed to love each other?
are we not supposed to look after one another?
but instead,
our ashamed mothers
push it up under the covers
while our children repeatedly suffer



this is supposed to make us tougher?
I understand trials and tribulations
but, where in the handbook does it say
“you must withstand molestation”
I don’t understand your temptation
with the sensation
of distorting the mind of a child and their adult sexual expectations
I can’t take it
you demons, I can’t relate with
taking a child’s innocence isn’t something you play with
their lives have just begun
and you’ve already ruined the fun
you have built us to be numb
to not tell
to hide
to run
speak up, speak out, and open your arms
be observant of your neighbors and what goes on in those barns
speak up for the children who have no voice
who have no will
who have no choice
I see you all as my family
and it hurts me to say
child abuse happens every single day



ABYSS: RAPE

By Tania Abramson

ZENITH

By Kylie Howell

I felt so high I didn't know my feet even touched the ground anymore
I was floating
Felt the air caress every space and crevice of my naked body
Every muscle shivered like a lion roaring
I looked into your eyes and saw fractals
Changing and growing faster than your heart was beating
You grinned at me like I was iridescent
And I was,
My skin glowed and shined with a sort of cherry-red passion
I was like an alligator swimming through a lake,
Lurking and gliding
In my element and glowing
I floated further and further away from Earth
Admiring the tiny people below
My eyes began to see the future
And it was in front of me
And I was there and you were there
And we were happy
And life went on

SISTER INGENUITY

By Elaine Fontenot Lister

Maya, Toni, Zora & me
souls unbound, spirits free
birthing words that give life and heal
penning emotions that can cut and kill
Maya, Toni, Zora & me
a force of sistah ingenuity
a tidal wave of voices in a turbulent sea
we feel the sublime
it's in the root of the vine
in the core of the shell
cracked to uncover the need
to share the wonder of our chance in time
to connect with African minds of the bloodline
for it's thicker than water
stronger than the chains that bound us together
when we were extracted from the cradle of civilization
from out of our ancient existence
but we survived the middle
descending into a strange land
that did not recognize

but planned mass demise
yet triumph was not our enemy's friend
and in the end
the struggle of the fittest endured Jim, alive
at times holding our peace
and burying our presence just to survive
but shared onyx voices are mighty
even in a low murmur
and the poignant distinct pitch of our kindred spirits
resounded through space
and linked our souls and pain
and love and strengths
and struggles and stories
and never, all at once, did our collective will retreat
a steady pulse of purpose kept us on a jagged even pace
and "we ain't no ways tired"
Maya, Toni, Zora and me
write the words to
Triumphant Endings

LOVE ME LIKE I'M DEAD

By Gabriel Hart

Impermanence is an unreal thing
So unreal that it's the realest thing of all
I invite
All spite within me
Killing myself to believe everything is acceptable

You're even better than the real thing
We share a car, bar receipts, a dog and all the heat
To trick ourselves into thinking
Gravity is not everything

Does Mother Earth spit or swallow every time a good one disappears?
What does it take to be a Saint
Immaculate
The same way I see you, dear?

It just goes on and on and on
The true delusion
That we won't just get spilled
'Cross the sky or the lawn
But ain't that love?
I said ain't that love?
Our heads in the sand
Waiting for the rest of our body
To catch up

But hey! I was only trying to get gone too!
Surrendering to something bigger than me or you
Some of us
Just can't help
Getting seduced

I was looking for truth, now I'm praying for truce
Trapped under the same roof

Screaming for a sign
Alignment
Affection
Its effect
Its holy proof

Well I guess it's a defect I love as hard as I do
And hey
I admit
I've chased an ambulance or two
We're here alive and well, just not the heart or the head
Our history unfolded like an unmade bed
I spend nights on the couch wishing for mouth to mouth
Dreaming the cold wind is your gift of oxygen
But ain't that love – its own inspiration?
I guess "vanilla love sex" has an expiration

Remember when we were kids and we'd secretly wish we could die for
just one day?
With the exception that we could somehow bear witness to everything
that they might say?
Well instead can I be granted just one tantrum, cause baby I learn from
the best
And let's see how close you listen
Let's see if you can pass this one last test

There's a difference in loving somebody gone and somebody that is still
here
When you're here they just pick you apart until you almost disappear
Then when you're gone they go and fall in love with all our parts they
used to dread
And I think it would just be so cool
If you could finally love me
Like I am dead

THE ONLY HUMAN AT THE ROBOT POETRY SLAM

By Dave Cochran

I don't get robot poetry.
Humans aren't equipped
For recursonnets in Objective C
Or skaldic Python script.

Today I saw a poster
For an open API night,
Now I'm listening to a toaster
Who was listed as the highlight;

I thought that I could follow-
I can read both code and verse,
Dionysus and Apollo,
The verbose and the terse.

Robot verses scan exactly,
And must both compile and rhyme,
And express each thought compactly
In at most, quadratic time.

It's lyrical and sinuous
And willfully abstruse,
Full of deftly woven images
And skillful code reuse.

I can't follow at first hearing
The elegance and grace;
But with care, verse engineering
Brings some pieces into place.

Sometimes it seems like English,
Sometimes Common LISP or Scheme
Other times I can't distinguish
Or it Neckers in between.

The complexity and denseness
I knew would be a strain;
But I have several fewer senses
And cannot root my brain.

I must therefore be
A different sort of mind.

At least the organiser was kind
And put out a chair for me.

Notes:

Recursionnets: A portemanteau of 'recursive' and 'sonnet'.

Recursive: A thing is recursive if it is defined in terms of itself or its type. For instance, a recursive definition of the Fibonacci sequence (1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55...) is that you can calculate the nth item in the list by adding together the n-1th and n-2th. This footnote is a footnote to another footnote, and so is also recursive.

Objective C: A programming language. Used to be the main language for iOS apps.

Skaldic: A tradition of Old Norse poetry prevalent from the 9th to the 13th centuries, notable for the extreme technical complexity of its verse forms, and riddle-like use of kennings (fixed metaphorical or allusive names for things, eg; báru fákr "wave's steed" = "ship"; Kvasis dreyra "Kvasir's blood" = poetry), which were often nested within one another.

Python: A programming language. Very easy to learn.

Open API: Application Programming Interface; the specification of the basic building blocks of a programming language, or of a third-party code library intended to extend the functionality of a language; an open API is one made available to any and all developers; for instance for an open-source code library, or to allow developers to integrate their applications with web services

Toaster: A device used by humans to warm bread, partially dehydrate it, and caramelize it.

Dionysus and Apollo: A dichotomy developed by Friedrich Nietzsche in his *Birth of Tragedy*, in which he analyzed ancient Greek tragedy as playing out the tension between the rational, ordered, and just (Apollonian) and the intuitive, chaotic, and immoral (Dionysian).

Verbose: A style of programming characterised by long, descriptive variable names, detailed comments, and the explicit breakdown of computations into their simplest components, possibly at the expense of elegance and efficiency.

Terse: A style of programming characterized by minimalist elegance, using the least amount of code to produce the desired functionality, possibly at the expense of readability and debuggability.

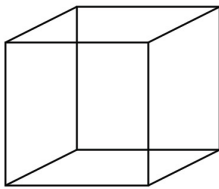
Compile: Computers do not understand most programming languages; they only understand a small number of low-level languages like Assembly that are very hard for humans to understand. Most programming languages are designed to be understood by humans. A compiler is a piece of software which converts code in a high-level, human-comprehensible language to a low-level language that the computer understands.

Quadratic time: This refers to the way a program's runtime increases with the size of the input; it means that an increase in the size of the input at most proportionate to some constant multiplier times the square of the input size.

Code reuse: Structuring code so that the same lines of code might be repeatedly used for different purposes. **Common LISP:** A programming language; a variant of the LISP language.

Scheme: Another LISP variant

Neckers in between: Refers to the Necker cube: a wire-frame drawing of a cube which gives the viewer no cues as whether it is being seen from above or below - with the result that staring at it, it will appear to "shift" from one orientation to the other, though the drawing is unchanged.



Root: To 'root' a computer system is to gain full admin access to all files, settings and processes on the system.

Chair: Humans' skeletons do not have self-stable locking positions, and so for a human to be in an upright position requires energy expenditure, as muscle contractions must be used to prevent falling over. A chair is a piece of furniture that humans use like a partial exoskeleton in a stable locking position, allowing them to be upright for long periods with much less energy expenditure.

Writers' Biographies

Paul R. Abramson

pages: 88

a Professor of Psychology at UCLA and the lead singer and lyricist of the band Crying 4 Kafka. Paul and his wife Tania Love Abramson own property in Joshua Tree.

Lowen Baird 'Digger'

pages: 25

G'day my name is Lowen, but you can call me Digger. I spend most of my time trying to be someone different from myself; here's the down side: I'm always changing from Toad from X Men, to Bean from Sonic, to Charmy also from Sonic, Gambit to Pyro, to Casey Jones from Ninja Turtles, and to Captain Boomerang from Suicide Squad.

Janna Browne

pages: 42

Words are my art form. Nutrition is my passion. Yoga brings me peace. Nature is my wholeness. Sacred are we. One with the universe.

Louise Burns

pages: 52

"If you have other things in your life—family, friends, good productive day work—these can interact with your writing and the sum will be all the richer." David Brin

Dave Cochran

pages: 90, 118

Dave Cochran is a science fiction writer, podcaster, academic recidivist and tutor, teaching Computer Science, Cognitive Science, Linguistics, Logic, and Mathematics at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland. He lives in Scotland with his cat and up to 50% of his teenage son. He likes dadaism, punk rock, Python programming and the Pauli exclusion principle. Find him at @talkymeat on Twitter, and his podcast The Squidpod at <http://robotsquid.net/squidpod>

Nathan Cordova

pages: 30

I began to write after my first college writing class. My teacher's name is Mrs. Callister. She was the person to encourage me to write. With her support I have a published submission in HOWL. No support was greater than my wife's. She pulled me out of a dark place when no one else could. I am a witness to her power. Completely she is... completely my rock. No other place to be than here. I have had imaginative conversations with my dad that have helped spur my writing style. Vito, Vang...thank you much as well.

Jenn De Falco

pages: 47, 57, 82

Jenn is an English and History major and studies at Copper Mountain College. Her full name is Jennisa D'Giovonni Lynn De Falco and she was born in 1970. Her grandmother Honey Lee would become one of the biggest influences in her life. When she was little her grandmother

would read books to her which opened up many new and exciting worlds for Jenn. The love of reading and writing become her life's passion. One of the things she was taught and will always remember is, "The world sits in the palms of your hands through books." Jenn and her husband Shane live in Twentynine Palms with their son Joseph.

Turq Dorian

pages: 50

Turq Dorian is the pen-name of Tunisia Dorionne, who is an English major at CMC, an English tutor, and a member of the Howl publication committee. In her spare time she writes a multimedia webcomic, *Dead Gods*, which is not yet ready for publication...

Jean-Paul L. Garnier

pages: 58

Jean-Paul L. Garnier lives and writes in Joshua Tree, CA where he is co-owner of Space Cowboy Books, a used science fiction bookstore and independent publisher. His short stories and poetry have appeared in: *Specklit*, *Eye to the Telescope*, *Scifaikuest*, and many other anthologies and webzines. Recently he earned a certificate in creative writing from Wesleyan University. <http://jplgarnier.blogspot.com>

Greg Gilbert

pages: 14

Greg Gilbert is a Trustee and Professor Emeritus at Copper Mountain College where he founded *Howl* literary magazine, now in its second decade. Greg writes daily, mostly prose but some poetry. He and his wife Candace, also an educator, reside in Yucca Valley.

Kat Grovesteen

page: 41, 49, 81, 83

Kat can be found running around campus probably covered in dog hair. Her favorite place to be is in a Spectrum Club meeting because they have free food. She hopes to someday sit down long enough to write a book half as good as *A Wrinkle In Time*. In the meantime, she writes small poems featuring mental-illness, paganism, and LGBT+ themes.

Brianna Hams

page: 34, 44, 75

Brianna Hams is a twenty-six-year-old Joshua Tree native pursuing an English degree at Copper Mountain College. She is oddly fond of telling her secrets to olive trees, loves the smell of freshly sharpened pencils, and collects novelty salt and pepper shakers. She hopes to live the kind of life that will result in the Westboro Baptist Church picketing her funeral. She would also love to meet Justin Bieber... and then proceed to punch him directly in the face.





Joanne C. Hanson

page: 64

I learned to read while sitting on my mother's lap. She would read Hans Christian Andersen to me and point at each word as she read. She would explain the scene to me and paint a verbal picture, so I always saw the picture Andersen was painting. These moments have become more precious to me because she passed when I was six. Every word I read and every word I write bring back those days of being held by her.

Gabriel Hart

page: 54, 116

Gabriel Hart is an author, musician, and Los Angeles expatriate who now resides in Morongo Valley, CA. His modern-day Wall of Sound punk group Jail Weddings is currently working on their third full-length album Blood Moon Blue. Hart will finally see his two debut novels *The Intrusion/Virgins In Reverse* be released in Fall of 2018 by Rare Bird/Barnacle Books. In the meantime, he is working on his follow up to last year's *Cinema of Life* chapbook (Space Cowboy Books), entitled *Nothing To See Here*, which will be his among his first entries in a wider narrative of High Desert Anti-Tourism Propaganda.

Kylie Howell

pages: 48, 55, 76, 86, 113

Art helps free the soul of troubles. My art speaks for itself.

Robert Howell

page: 31, 33

Born in 1968 in the back seat of a '68 Charger on the Texas-Louisiana border. I live to go fast. Transplanted to the San Fernando Valley in 1973 I have made Cali my home with friends and family all across the states. Divorced father of four beautiful children, Devan, Mallory, Holden and Matthias I am taking new direction in life. Former OEM Division Manager of RYCO Hydraulics, and Fire Fighter One with San Bernardino, Ca., I am finding that direction here at Copper Mountain College. To those sharing my experience here, I look forward to making new and lifelong friends. Best wishes on your own ventures. BOBO

Jane Jarlsberg

page: 28, 84

Jane Jarlsberg is a great grandmother peace activist, Uber driver, videographer who fell in love with Joshua Tree back in the 70s after discovering the magic of the spring wild flowers. Now she is back after buying her first ever home last June and has jumped into desert life with both feet over the last several months. Now is the time to also start back up writing her memoirs, of which this submission is part. Thank you for the kick in the butt to get going on the book again!

Aubrey Leahy

pages: 26, 91

Even though he recently qualifies for the title of An Ancient, Aubrey now believes he can run faster, swim deeper, quaff more, fly higher, be funnier, critique less often, is more virile and can think quicker and write better than ever before... Sssshhhh...be kind now...

Elaine Fontenot Lister

page: 87, 114

Elaine Fontenot speaks to women where we hear: deep within our hearts. She has taken her life lessons and eloquently found her voice, transforming them into words of encouragement and affirmation.

A former parole agent and former NBA wife, she holds a Bachelor of Art's Degree in Sociology from Azusa Pacific University. She is completing her first book, "A Butterfly's Journey Through a 7 Foot Life: Principals and Practices for Wellness, Success and Amazing Love." She relishes most her job as "Mom" to two awesome human beings.

Dave Maresh

page: 45

Dave Maresh was born in 1948 in Fullerton, CA. He is a graduate of Cal. State Fullerton and The University of Redlands. Married with four grandchildren. Michelle is also a teacher in the school district's home schooling program (ICE) Dave has written fifteen novels, four short stories and three children's stories. "I am writing poetry nowadays. I like open styles, freeverse. I am in the Cholla Needles writing group. I have always been a writer.

Kayla Pedroza

page: 46

I am 17 and the second child of five. I have one cat, four turtles, ten geckos, and two rabbits. I am about as funny as a fart at a funeral. Singing and writing are my two favorite things in the world.

Lisa Mednick Powell

page: 95

Lisa Mednick Powell teaches English part-time at Copper Mountain College. She has a Master's Degree in Creative Writing from The State University of New York. In her secret other life, she is a musician and singer-songwriter who has worked on stage and in the studio with known and unknown geniuses worldwide. Her latest album is called "Blue Book." She and her husband perform as a duo under her name with Lisa on keyboards and Kip on bass. When they perform with a full band, playing country hits from the 60s and 70s, they are known as Arroyo Rogers.

John Sierpinski

pages: 62, 74

John Sierpinski has published poetry widely in literary magazines and journals from Backstreet Quarterly and California Quarterly to North Coast Review and Spectrum to name a few. His work is also in three anthologies. He was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2013. He is currently putting together a collection. He wrote on the outside of a paper lunch bag in his day job working career, but has become more serious about his writing since then. He is moving from Wisconsin and will become a full time resident of Yucca Valley/Joshua Tree in January.

r. soos

pages: 96

r soos roams the alleys and washes of Joshua Tree in search of lost bleached bones, lost poetry, lost songs of the Conejo and the lost diaries of John Samuelson.



Kayla Tyree 'ODA'

pages: 110

I grew up here in the desert. I have been writing poetry and songs since I could write full sentences. I have used writing to get through some of the toughest times of my life, and also through the best. I enjoy sharing my art with friends and family to encourage a smile, deep thought, or even just the joy of some sick wordplay. I now take a bigger step with sharing my art with a larger audience, I hope to encourage any readers of my art to find a smile, some sick wordplay, or some deepening of your perception. xoxo ODA

Michael G. Vail

pages: 15, 102

Earlier in my life, my profession was that of a writer and editor. For the last 34 years, I have managed facility planning and construction programs at some of California's largest school districts.

Stephanie Whitfield

pages: 78

I am 25 years resident of Twentynine Palms, held against my will in an area I have come to appreciate until my 2 younger children turn 18. My oldest son is a Navy man and I couldn't be more proud of him. I am a writer, painter, minster, chef, forever student, Assistant Special Education Teacher and a home school mom to one teenager who is my eternal delight and brings sunshine and rainbows to me every day. My other teenager who I love just as much, is the reason I have so much patience and understanding. His sarcasm and wit match mine in every way. Hailing from the SoCal Coastal area, I long to return as the mermaid I know I once was. My fins are pretty dried out.

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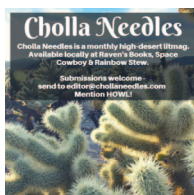


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2018
Volume XXII

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April 14th :: 6-9pm

ARTFX

55836 TWENTYNINE PALMS HWY, YUCCA VALLEY

MUSIC: SPENCER KEIZER /// ART: VARIOUS ///

FOOD: MOJAVE MONACO

April 21st :: 6-9pm

29 PALMS CREATIVE CENTER

6847 ADOBE ROAD, TWENTYNINE PALMS

MUSIC: AMERS HABITANTS /// ART: PALMS & PAWS ANIMAL
SHELTER STUDENT ART SHOW /// FOOD: POT-LUCK

May 5th :: 6-9pm

SPACE COWBOY BOOKS

61871 TWENTYNINE PALMS HWY, JOSHUA TREE

MUSIC: CHASING CALYPSO /// ART: LESLIE SHAW &
DAIN LUSCOMBE /// FOOD: ZARA KAND

May 12th :: 6-9pm

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MUSIC: RANDY SMITH /// FOOD: BRUCE'S COYOTE CAFE



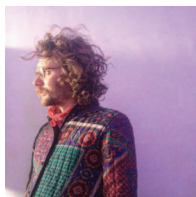
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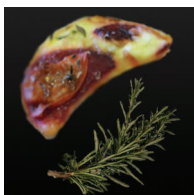
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For more information please visit the Foundation at:
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ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

The CMC Foundation oversees the college's Alumni Association, composed of graduates, former and current students, faculty, and friends. Alumni donations are used to fund student scholarships and other campus programs and activities. Contact the Foundation for more information on the Alumni Association and gift-giving options.

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