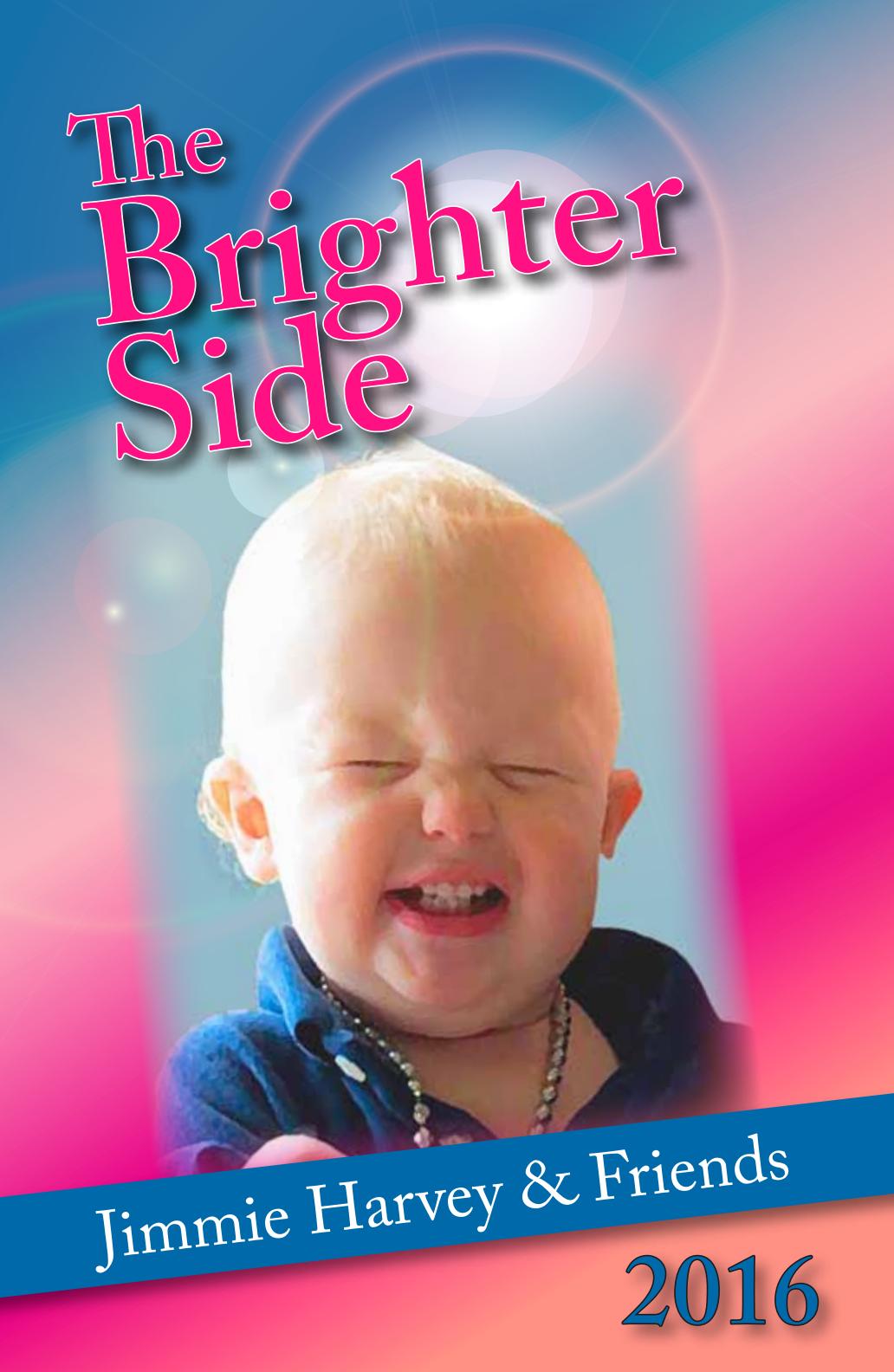


The Brighter Side

A close-up photograph of a baby with light-colored hair, wearing a blue shirt and a necklace. The baby is crying, with their mouth open and eyes closed. The background is a soft-focus gradient from blue to pink, with several glowing, semi-transparent circular lights of various sizes.

Jimmie Harvey & Friends

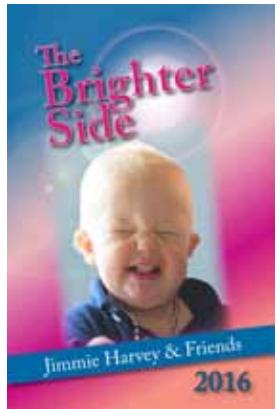
2016

*More heartfelt
thoughts and ideas
from
Jimmie Harvey &
Friends*

Published in the beautiful
Willamette Valley
Oregon
USA

December
2016





About the Cover

My two grandsons have got to be the most photographed kids on the planet. Grandpa Carl Gustafson took the cover photo of Chase Daniel Faris, (our oldest grandson) on his first birthday in August, 2015. His young laughing face captures the spirit of *The Brighter Side* in a big way.—MF



Carl Gustafson with cousin grandson Nathaniel Detzel.

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Cover design by Michael A. Faris

Cover photo by Carl Gustafson

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A note from the editor

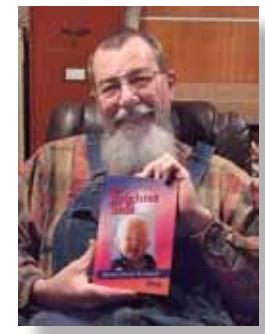
I am so pleased! This is our biggest book yet! We managed to get a couple more artists and several new poets this year. We also received entries from middle school students. There are a few short stories and essays, too. Hopefully, this trend will continue and we can look forward to even more original material in the years to come.

I tried to find more interesting pictures to illustrate *The Brighter Side*. Many were imported from unsplash.com, a resource of remarkable license-free photos. Some were supplied by contributors and a few I made myself. The tools available for taking and editing photos are simply outstanding. Every year it gets better.

Please, if you enjoy this book, pass it on to others and encourage more of your creative friends and family to join us in submitting some of their original works for next year.

Best wishes,

Michael A. Faris
Editor
About Time Publishing
mfaris1950@gmail.com



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Author Biographies

Jimmie Harvey Retired, living at Rogue Valley Manor in Oregon, after many years managing a temporary payroll processing center in California. She has published one novel and several short stories, along with many poetry books.



Edwina Taylor is retired after 25 years working for the insurance industry. She originally hails from the San Francisco area and has lived in San Diego and Eureka before settling in Springfield, OR, with her late husband in 1992. After almost 10 years as a widow, she met and married Bob Taylor from whom she has now caught the writing bug.



Susan Schneiderman always had professional responsibility for writing as a Continuing Education Program Director. This continues in a volunteer capacity as the Executive Secretary for the Resident Council at Rogue Valley Manor in Medford. She feels that the joy of writing on a more casual basis is making time to reflect on the experience of a gratifying life.



Veronica Yates is a writer by choice, a journalist, columnist and editor by experience, and a poet by inescapability. Her poems have appeared in the Syracuse Cultural Workers annual publication, Women Artists Datebook, Rosebud magazine, Writers' Journal, Lucidity Poetry Journal. She lives in Eugene, Oregon, where she finds joyful satisfaction in turning her attention daily toward the miracles in the everyday of things.

Heidemarie Sachet was born in Prague. Grew up in Germany within spitting distance of Loraine, France. Went to work and studied in Paris at age 19. After receiving her Diploma, she did the same in London. Worked as a translator in Northern Germany. Emigrated to the U.S. in 1965, and has lived in Eugene since December 1969. She is working on her memoirs.



Charles H. Snellings was born in Dallas, Texas, grew up in Irving, Texas, and went to School at North Texas State University (Now the University of North Texas) where he studied philosophy and English literature. He is a blues guitar player and records with his bands: Voodoo Chili and Charley Horse. He is a songwriter with 49 years of experience. He lives in Eugene, Oregon.



Michael A. Faris is owner and editor for About Time Publishing. He binds books, writes poems and stories, keeps bees and a garden in the country. He lives with his wife, Judy, and their two dogs just outside Junction City, Oregon.

De Layne K. Osterman lives in Junction City, Oregon. She lives a simple life surrounded by loved ones near and far. She shares her home with her children and grandchildren, one dog, and a cat, and her father-in-law lives next door. Her days are filled with love and laughter, and challenges of various kinds. Although life isn't always easy, the rewards are great, and out of both hard and rewarding times, she writes.



Judie Bunch has been writing most of her life. Many of Judie's stories were written while she was a commentator for Jefferson Public Radio. She and husband Jerry raised four children in Ashland, Oregon and have lived in the Rogue Valley 44 years. They now take care of 5 acres and 10 chickens near Talent, Oregon.

Ray Teplitz is a retired physician, professor of Pathology and Genetics, experimental biologist, photographer, ex-husband, but still father and grandfather. He is an ex-husband only because that remarkable person to whom he was married is, regrettably, no longer mortal. He has published a book of poetry "The View From Here" and taught poetry at the Extended Education Division of Southern Oregon University.



Christine Darton-Henrichsen: I photograph whatever catches my eye and not much escapes my attention when I have a camera in my hand. Gondolas floating on the canals of Venice, a patient fisherman at the Tidal Pool in DC, butterflies dancing on a flower are just a few of the moments I have captured on my journeys. My photos tell stories which I hope to share for many years to come.

We also wish to thank these contributors:

Bonnie Howard Jim Stocker

Casey & Katie Faris Kathy Richmond

Christine Darton-Henrichsen Paige Wicks

Claire Lemons Phyllis Skinner

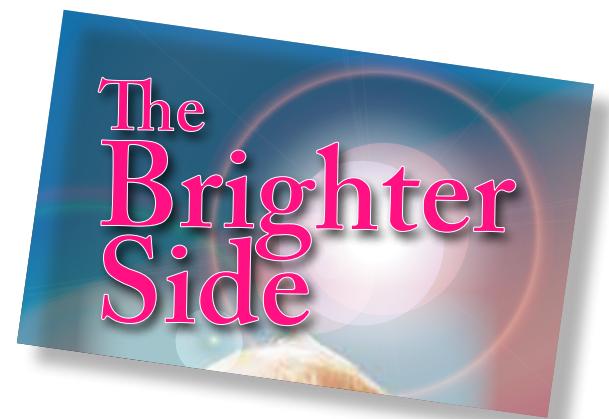
Dale Cripps Rogene Manas

David Vaughan Sandy Larkin

Fay Isaak Suzi Wollman

Gina Marshall Thom Fischer

Gracie Cates Tim Darton



**Jimmie Harvey
& Friends
2016**

The Whisper

I heard a whisper in my heart
I looked to see who spoke
'Twas God Himself that whispered
My troubled heart awoke
These words He softly uttered
And with them came His peace
For as He spoke I surely felt
All cares and troubles cease
"Fear not, my child, lovely
Don't tremble with despair
I have a plan far greater
Than woeful tales declare
Don't worry 'bout tomorrow
Or days that henceforth come
I truly have them covered
I'll leave you not undone
Hear Me gently calling
Come hide beneath my wing
I'll cover you with feathers
And cause your heart to sing
Let me carry burdens
That weigh your spirit down
Let me carry you, love
My light will be your crown
Fix your eyes alone on Me
And live each day by faith
Believing in my promises
And I will keep you safe
Worry not and do not fret

Though troubles may abound
And bring their menace nigh to you
And threaten to unwound
Just know that I am working
All according to My plan
It matters not the look of things
Nor trying schemes of man
For I am God, and God alone
There is none else but Me
I have a plan, now only trust
That what will be will be"
My heart responded to His voice
With upturned face and said
"I will trust, not worry more
Nor fear or yield to dread
For You have spoken thus to me
To comfort and to cheer
I will dwell beneath your wing
And by Your side stay near
For man is only man
What can he do to me
When I am safely trusting
And abiding within thee."
And so my heart is restful
I am quieted at last
For in His arms I safely rest
Until these storms be past!

July 29th, 2016

In response to all the political unrest
concerning the election of our next president:
Donald Trump versus Hillary Clinton

De Layne Osterman

Three

He's small, but mighty,
And he's never still,
From morning to nightfall
He's going until
He falls asleep
In spite of his go
And he wants only "yes"
Tho' he often says "no."
He's always hungry
And never gets full
And if it says "push"
He's sure to just pull.
He's upstairs and downstairs
And hither and yon
And under and over
From break of dawn.
He screams like a banshee
And whispers so low
I sometimes can't hear him
Tho' I see him go.
Like a storm in a teapot
His day's in a whirl
He's definitely all boy
And not a bit girl.
This little tornado
Right from the start
Has kept me unbalanced
And captured my heart

Suzi Wollman



Photo by Suzi Wollman

Avian Café

I opened a new café today
a café for the birds.
A small building
hanging on a wire
on a stand under a tree.
I filled it well
with different seeds
filtering through glass panels
into open troughs
an avian dining room.
I did not have to post a sign.
In minutes they all knew!
Suddenly the air was full
of twittering, flickering birds!
Hummingbirds, sparrows,
chickadees and wrens
vied for dining spots.
Happy and chattery!
I hope they like their food
and often come to dine
to dine and entertain me
to make my day complete.

Jimmie Harvey



Last Rose of Summer

Through the gate and down the stone path into our backyard, you will see a beautiful rose bush. It's a real joy, very perky with clusters of bright red roses, always filled with buds ready to open, so tall with new growth. It's amazing how this plant survives whatever winter storms Mother Nature throws at it. Come spring it just bounces back, renewed. I was inspired and wondered, could I grow other roses on my own?

After purchasing three new bare root bushes in the spring, they began to grow immediately. Two of them provided me with roses most of the summer. However, one plant was growing very slowly and it was getting into late fall. I'd been tending to them equally, when much to my surprise a small tight bud appeared on the bush, just as I was trimming the other plants back for winter.

Wouldn't you know? Now that we had a big wind and rain storm blowing in that evening, the little orphan rose was going to show off. I finished my yardwork for the day, yet couldn't stop thinking about that one lone rose, just starting out. The beautiful little bud would surely be destroyed by the hail that was predicted for that evening.

This was a crazy thought: it was almost dark, just

as something within me wanted to have a photo of that struggling bloom before the storm hit. I grabbed my camera, tucked it in my jacket pocket and headed out. The stem was near the fence behind the apple tree. Over the last few hours it had transformed from a new bud to a thing of beauty starting to unfold. The little rose was well worth waiting for. Just as the wind was beginning to pick up, I snapped the photo so that now we can all enjoy my first and last rose of summer.

Edwina Taylor



Photo: by Edwina Taylor

My Father's Chair



Photo: by Christine Darton-Henrichsen

My father was a driven man. Uprooted at a young age, he was taken to Denmark and raised in luxury for a few years only to be returned to the United States and dropped back into near poverty as his mother struggled to raise him and his younger brother alone. She was a cold, flinty woman who raised them more out of obligation than love it seemed. Sent to an orphanage along with his brother for a period of time while his mother got her life together, he learned to rely only on himself.

Hard work in school brought him good grades and hard work at night at an enameling factory brought money into the home. He escaped to the U. S. Navy as soon as he could and spent the next 20 years in and out of wars, climbing to the rank of Master Chief Petty Officer. He retired at the age of 39 and immediately entered college.

With a family of his own to raise and no time to waste he completed his degree in three years then began his new career as an educator at the high school level. Realizing that more education was needed in order to advance he reentered college and obtained his masters degree. Within a few years he was a counselor then a vice-principal and finally a high school principal. Along the way Dad found the time to take daily swims as well as golf and bowl on a weekly basis. In addition he joined and rose to leadership in multiple community and church organizations. It seemed he was rarely at home. Work was not enough. There was always a meeting to go to, a speech to give, a golf game, a bowling league, always something. He found time for his family and we knew we were loved but his time with us was fleeting. As I said, my father was a driven man.

I give you the preceding as a backdrop to a man, who for all his duties, responsibilities, travels and activities could be reliably found in one spot when he was at home – his easy chair. He loved that thing and all its successors over the years. He would eat, sleep, opine on world events, and dispense wisdom and justice all from the comfort of that chair. Many is the time I would find my father in his chair dressed in his suit, his robe or his swim trunks, sound asleep with the remains of a baloney and cheese sandwich on a plate resting on his chest and a cold beer nearby.



Photo: by Christine Darton-Henrichsen

The chair was perfectly positioned to watch TV, look out the front window, read the paper or answer the phone all without having to get up. I think if my mother would have allowed it he would have plugged in the refrigerator next to it. The chairs had personalities too. Some were easy to push back others not. Some scraped the wall others didn't. Some were soft. Some were slippery. Once in awhile a seat cushion spring would rebel. Dad tolerated this better than anyone else in the family and I don't know why as it was plainly evident when you sat in the chair the something was definitely not right. I think he may have thought of them as old friends whose ways you sometimes had to put up with. My father lived to be 88 years old and most of those years he had an easy chair. Those chairs brought him a great deal of comfort and it comforted me to see him there relaxed, happy and at peace with the world.

Tim Darton

digital background painting by Michael A. Faris

The Mensa Solution

There was a Mensa convention in San Francisco. Mensa, as you probably know, is a national organization for people who have an IQ of 140 or higher. Several of the Mensa members went out for lunch at a local café.

When they sat down, one of them discovered that their salt shaker contained pepper, and their pepper shaker was full of salt.

How could they swap the contents of the two bottles without spilling any, and using only the implements at hand? Clearly, this was a job for Mensa minds.

The group debated the problem and presented ideas and finally, came up with a brilliant solution involving a napkin, a straw, and an empty saucer. They called the waitress over, ready to dazzle her with their solution.

"Ma'am," they said, "we couldn't help but notice that the pepper shaker contains salt and the salt shaker has pepper."

But before they could finish, the waitress interrupted: "Oh sorry about that."

She leaned over the table, unscrewed the caps of both bottles and switched them.

There was dead silence at the Mensa table.

Kind of reminds you of Washington D.C., doesn't it?

submitted by
Judie Bunch
(author unknown)

Build Me a Castle, Tell Me a Sea

At your bedside,
I don't want to start it
but you make me break
bitter through this silence.

Whatever's going on
behind your eyelids shut,
I'm still willing to pretend,
your hand still warm in mine . . .

I. The Castle

Upon the greenest hill in Everlasting
stands our castle made of sandstone,
overlooking azure seas.

You raise your proud wings east—
watch the crashing waves, feel the salty spray—
a kiss of mist against your precious bronze.

You do not see the crumbling
stones beneath your golden feet.
Nor do I.

II. The Climb

I daily dance these broken stones,
head toward far mountain gleaming —
berryline and evergreen, and neon-spotted

salamanders rest here and there
on frothy emerald ferns completely unaware,
as you are, waiting for me cliffside,

soaked in noonday sun naive, devoted
to my promise — a scattering of buttercups
and hearts of blood I vow to gather

for our moonlight picnic by your sea —
of treasures I will draw with care
from the place you have neither seen, nor been invited.

III. Fading Light

You think I love our picnics
and I profess a fondness
for your hand-cut, stained glass windows—

though standing at your side
while you saw and shatter
is more than I can bear.

I prefer the dawn, or basking
in the cool of twilight, happy
for the company of undemanding fireflies.

And so I steal away this night,
race for the comfort of my treed cathedrals.
But you cry out, and plead — this once — to come along.

IV. And So the Begging Starts

At last you are invited,
called to learn to live inside;
and I am forced to take you there against my will,

among the trees where I must beg
for one more sunny afternoon —
for what is gone from you forever.

V. The Banquet

It is winter now —
our time to dine and spill
our pleasures and complaints

upon the darkest of mahogany:
banquet noble, large enough
for twenty, yet simply set for two.

You deny all others,
faces and reflections uninvited to the feast —
friendships so important to you once upon a time.

They will pass this night without
the notice they were promised —
words so certain they were due.

VI. The Vision and the Song

You arrive to me on time — a ghost
clad in ice-blue robe of egrets.
In slender hands you carry
your hand-carved bowl —
the one you made when you were ten —
the one you filled with seeds and nuts

now brimmed with only salt.
I stand snug in my favorite silly
smock of greenest apples, holding

breath and pine boughs
tight against my chest —
my arms confused with Christmas.

I lay the fragrant limbs upon our table,
spreading mountain scent
around your sea of salt.

I want to kneel,
but you demand we stand and sing
for just another sunrise — just another spring.

Veronica Yates

Prayer for Rain

The countryside is dry
brown, crisp,
crackling in the wind.
No soft green caresses the hill.
How long has it been
since rain dampened the earth?
Where is the water
to soften dry soil?
"Dear God," I pray,
"send us the much needed
drink for which the soil thirsts!"
Another dry day passes.
My plea has been denied!
On the second day
the sky begins to darken.
God listened! The rain is coming!
It's here! Pouring down!
The deluge continues.
It has been days since
we had no water from heaven!
God must've heard me
and responded.
How lucky I am!

Time passes, no letup
in the gushing rain.
I look around
Everything is greening.
I step out into the deluge.
"Okay," I think.
"Enough's enough!
Let us have some sun!"
But the rain continues,
flooding everything.
"God!" I plea,
"Enough's enough I"
"Please stop the rain!"
But it continues,
raining, flooding.
I scream, "Help! Help!
Stop the rain!"
An angel whispers to me.
"Be calm. God's busy.
He's answering pleas for help
from all over the world,
where people are cold and hungry.
He'll hear you soon.
Just realize you're one in millions,
and you're well fed and warm."

I sit back and think. *How could I be so selfish?*
Where is my humanity? What can I do to help?
I look out at the rain appreciate it, forgive it,
walk out to let it wash my selfishness away.

Jimmie Harvey

An Unfortunate Love Affair

My eyes were open wide and all my senses alert as I inhaled the atmosphere of Paris.

Map in hand, I walked around, discovering the different parts of the Cité. I watched the people in the street and on the Métro, and listened to the rapid cadences of their speech, trying to get the right pronunciation and accent into my brain and onto my tongue. In my attic room, I listened to the radio and hummed along with chansons sung by Edith Piaf, Jacques Brel, Charles Aznavour - I loved them all. Being able to live in Paris was a dream come true.

Something else, though, captured my attention - something so un-français, so un-Parisian that it took me by surprise. That something was the image of a cowboy who loomed large on billboards and posters.

My heart beat faster when I studied his handsome, chiseled profile, his casual posture as he sat astride his horse holding a lasso in one hand, and, of course, his clothes - so different from anything Europeans wore at that time. He had on a fringed leather vest, a kerchief around his neck, and as the coup de grace, the hat - its shape, its brim rolled up on the sides, the way it sat forward on his head - all spoke of a faraway, exotic world. Between his lips he held a cigarette, a Marlboro.

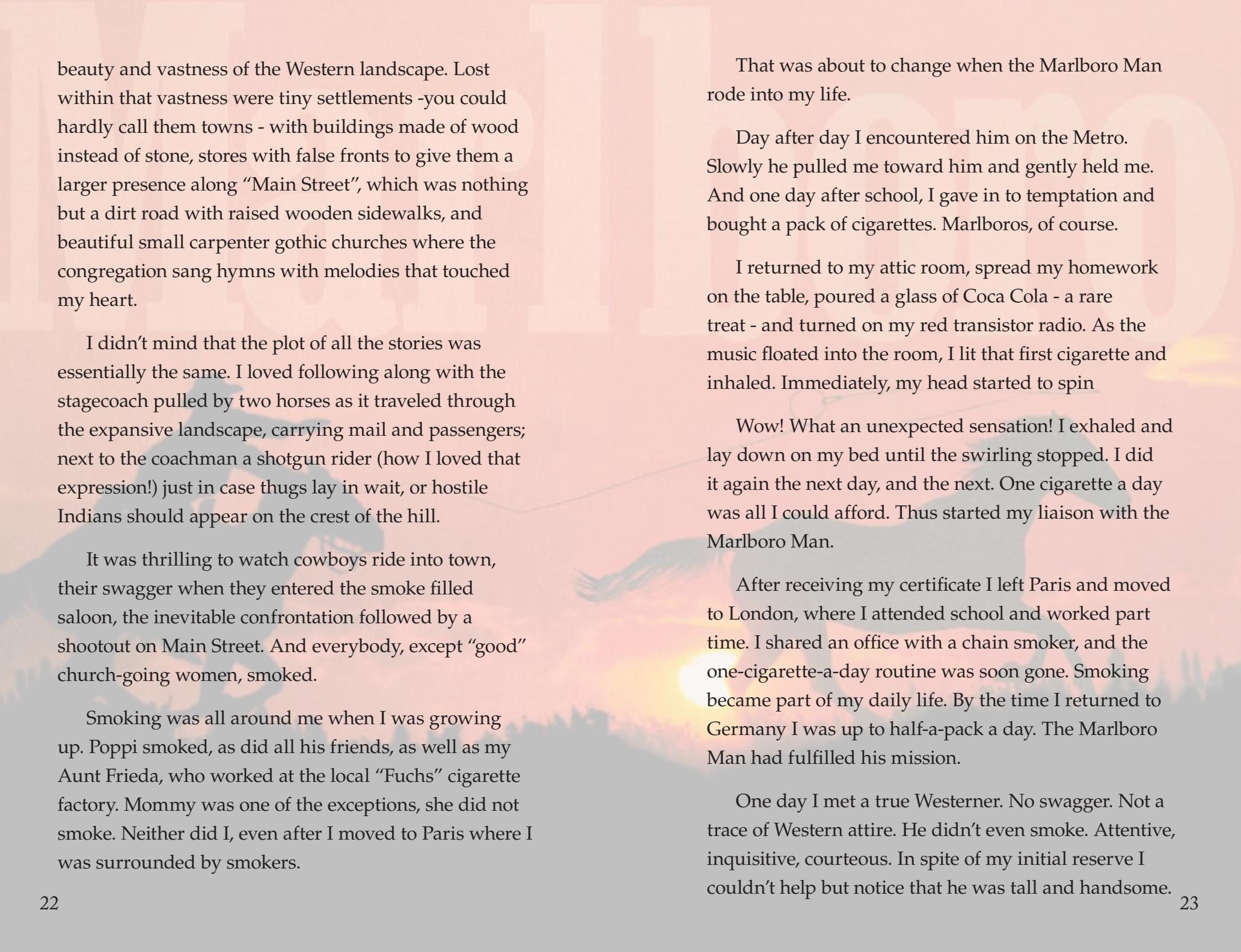
Long before my acquaintance with the Marlboro Man I had been captivated by the allure of the Mythical West, as had been all of Germany and my Poppi was no exception. He would lie on the couch, smoking and reading Western pulp fiction.

Once in a while he would chuckle, punch the air with his fist and shout something like: "YES! One shot and five dead!"

For Christmas 1953 Poppi gave me James Fenimore Cooper's "Leatherstocking Tales", a big book whose cover shows an Indian Chief on his horse. I treasured that book. I read it many times and it still is part of my book collection.

My friends and I had devoured several of Karl May's tales of the "Wild West". We sang a popular song about the Blue Mountains without knowing where they were or that they even existed. We played "Cowboys and Indians". My role was that of the handsome, brave Indian Chief "Winnetou", and my best friend was my white sidekick, "Old Shatterhand". Here we were, girls in pigtails or bobbed hair, and flowered dresses, chasing each other through the summer meadows, playing a version of "Wild West Hide-and-Seek" and "Catch" until the vesper bell rang, our signal to return home.

My fascination with the Mythical West continued. I loved Western movies. They depicted a wondrous world, starting with music that evoked the breathtaking



beauty and vastness of the Western landscape. Lost within that vastness were tiny settlements -you could hardly call them towns - with buildings made of wood instead of stone, stores with false fronts to give them a larger presence along "Main Street", which was nothing but a dirt road with raised wooden sidewalks, and beautiful small carpenter gothic churches where the congregation sang hymns with melodies that touched my heart.

I didn't mind that the plot of all the stories was essentially the same. I loved following along with the stagecoach pulled by two horses as it traveled through the expansive landscape, carrying mail and passengers; next to the coachman a shotgun rider (how I loved that expression!) just in case thugs lay in wait, or hostile Indians should appear on the crest of the hill.

It was thrilling to watch cowboys ride into town, their swagger when they entered the smoke filled saloon, the inevitable confrontation followed by a shootout on Main Street. And everybody, except "good" church-going women, smoked.

Smoking was all around me when I was growing up. Poppi smoked, as did all his friends, as well as my Aunt Frieda, who worked at the local "Fuchs" cigarette factory. Mommy was one of the exceptions, she did not smoke. Neither did I, even after I moved to Paris where I was surrounded by smokers.

That was about to change when the Marlboro Man rode into my life.

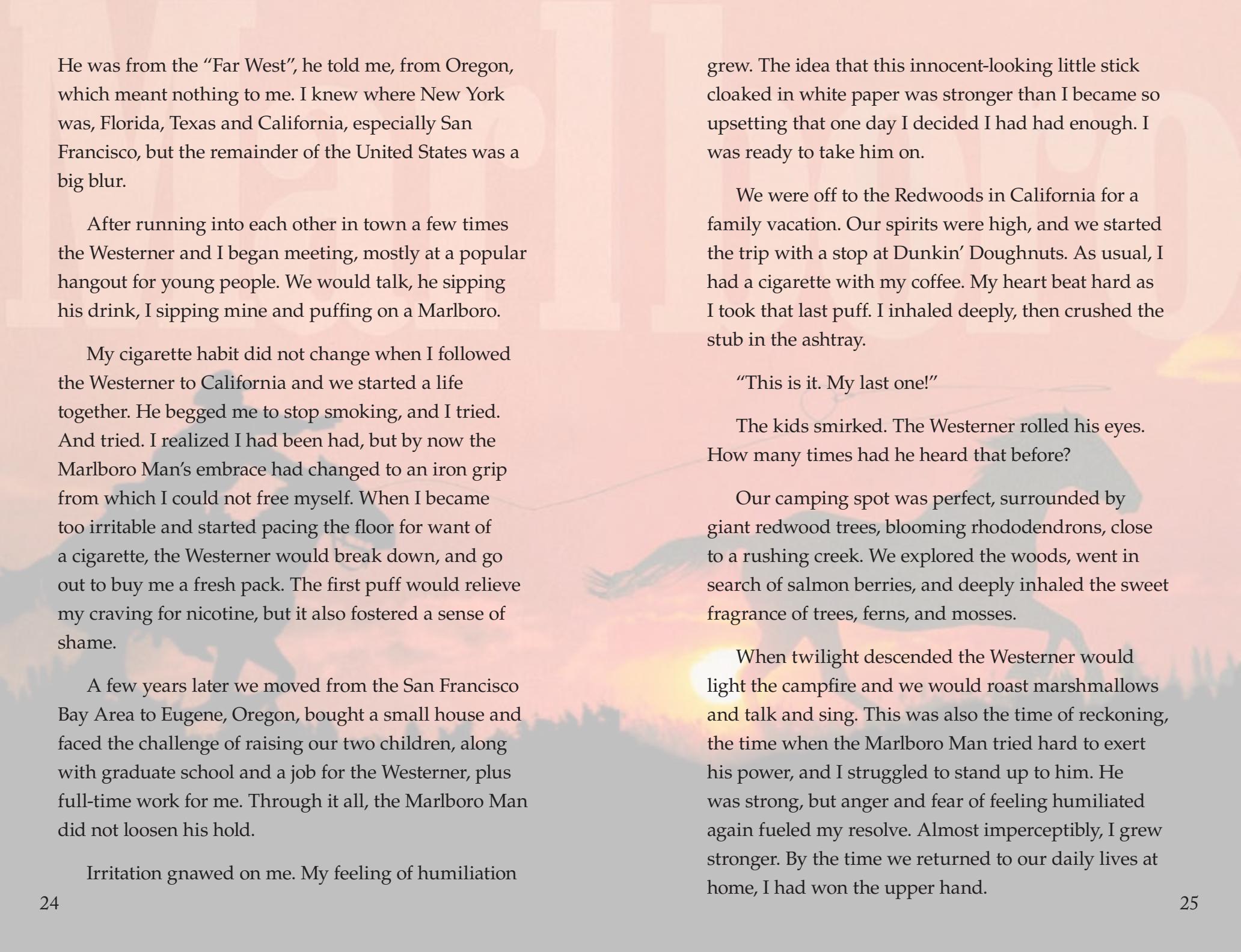
Day after day I encountered him on the Metro. Slowly he pulled me toward him and gently held me. And one day after school, I gave in to temptation and bought a pack of cigarettes. Marlboros, of course.

I returned to my attic room, spread my homework on the table, poured a glass of Coca Cola - a rare treat - and turned on my red transistor radio. As the music floated into the room, I lit that first cigarette and inhaled. Immediately, my head started to spin

Wow! What an unexpected sensation! I exhaled and lay down on my bed until the swirling stopped. I did it again the next day, and the next. One cigarette a day was all I could afford. Thus started my liaison with the Marlboro Man.

After receiving my certificate I left Paris and moved to London, where I attended school and worked part time. I shared an office with a chain smoker, and the one-cigarette-a-day routine was soon gone. Smoking became part of my daily life. By the time I returned to Germany I was up to half-a-pack a day. The Marlboro Man had fulfilled his mission.

One day I met a true Westerner. No swagger. Not a trace of Western attire. He didn't even smoke. Attentive, inquisitive, courteous. In spite of my initial reserve I couldn't help but notice that he was tall and handsome.



He was from the “Far West”, he told me, from Oregon, which meant nothing to me. I knew where New York was, Florida, Texas and California, especially San Francisco, but the remainder of the United States was a big blur.

After running into each other in town a few times the Westerner and I began meeting, mostly at a popular hangout for young people. We would talk, he sipping his drink, I sipping mine and puffing on a Marlboro.

My cigarette habit did not change when I followed the Westerner to California and we started a life together. He begged me to stop smoking, and I tried. And tried. I realized I had been had, but by now the Marlboro Man’s embrace had changed to an iron grip from which I could not free myself. When I became too irritable and started pacing the floor for want of a cigarette, the Westerner would break down, and go out to buy me a fresh pack. The first puff would relieve my craving for nicotine, but it also fostered a sense of shame.

A few years later we moved from the San Francisco Bay Area to Eugene, Oregon, bought a small house and faced the challenge of raising our two children, along with graduate school and a job for the Westerner, plus full-time work for me. Through it all, the Marlboro Man did not loosen his hold.

Irritation gnawed on me. My feeling of humiliation

grew. The idea that this innocent-looking little stick cloaked in white paper was stronger than I became so upsetting that one day I decided I had had enough. I was ready to take him on.

We were off to the Redwoods in California for a family vacation. Our spirits were high, and we started the trip with a stop at Dunkin’ Doughnuts. As usual, I had a cigarette with my coffee. My heart beat hard as I took that last puff. I inhaled deeply, then crushed the stub in the ashtray.

“This is it. My last one!”

The kids smirked. The Westerner rolled his eyes. How many times had he heard that before?

Our camping spot was perfect, surrounded by giant redwood trees, blooming rhododendrons, close to a rushing creek. We explored the woods, went in search of salmon berries, and deeply inhaled the sweet fragrance of trees, ferns, and mosses.

When twilight descended the Westerner would light the campfire and we would roast marshmallows and talk and sing. This was also the time of reckoning, the time when the Marlboro Man tried hard to exert his power, and I struggled to stand up to him. He was strong, but anger and fear of feeling humiliated again fueled my resolve. Almost imperceptibly, I grew stronger. By the time we returned to our daily lives at home, I had won the upper hand.

He did not take it lightly and often tried to sneak back into my life at unexpected moments, but I was able to hold him at bay.

And slowly, day by day, the Marlboro Man faded farther into the shadows until he was nothing more than a memory of an unfortunate love affair.



Photo: darrell-winfield-marlboro-man courtesy latimes.com

Heidi Sachet

Memories of He Hung My Moon

Illuminating my life, beads of happiness fail

Rings of brilliant joy gather in the holes of my being
and fill them to the rims

Trees of emotion shade my heart, while blades cover my
soul
shielding my dreams

Tongues of wisdom are my mentors, as eyelashes are
plucked to fulfill my wishes

Chains made of words wash my feet and clean my heels

Wires are crossed, and some thoughts are scrambled
but memories have yet to die.

Claire Lemons

Prayer for a New Baby

Oh baby, my baby
resting so peacefully here in my arms
taking your first myopic look at the world we share
with wide and startled eyes.
How beautiful you are!
How perfect! How precious!
You are a brand new tablet
awaiting the touch of the calligrapher's pen.
What will life write on that sparkling new page?

Oh baby, my baby
flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone
of me, from me – but not me.
Oh let me remember that!
Your tiny perfect fist, so fragile – so beautiful.
Look how tightly it grasps!
Holding in its tiny clutch
all my fears, my hopes, my dreams.
Give me grace to remember they must be your dreams.
I would give you the tools to build a good life.
I would gird you strong for the challenge ahead.
Let me not weaken you with too much help.

But baby, my baby,
just for this little time you nestle
so peaceful, so helpless, so warm in my arms
just for this little time
let me be everything to you.

Jimmie Harvey



Perhaps a Persimmon

Perhaps a persimmon
Not an apple or pear
Or maybe a mango
If I peel it with care

I could use bananas
Or peaches, you see
I'd mix them together
Then blend on puree

I pondered papaya,
Pined over plums.
Considered the coconut
And wild English Gum

I nearly chose strawberry
So wonderfully sweet
When I wondered the watermelon
Such red tasty meat

But I settled on chocolate
A fruit it must be
Hanging from branches
Of the chocolate tree

Michael A. Faris



Empires

What more can be said about grief or love? After the many years of love in a life perhaps too long, always mixed with some grief, for loss follows us at all times, questions arise.

Is love real or just a fiction of mere self-interest? Is this grief I feel, or self-indulgence? All of life seems at times the pursuit of doubt.

Late in our lives, Marlyn and I became separated by our illnesses. She required more care than mine allowed. Then, she became a patient in our community's health center.

On one of my daily visits, I entered her room to find her in animated discussion with an aide. I sped to her side and on seeing me, she turned and raised her arms, smiling for the anticipated embrace and the kisses that followed (and have not yet stopped).

That act of uniting was the epitome of our relationship. It had been built upon the empire of love, constructed stone by stone, like a great cathedral over the decades of our marriage. It embodied our aim of creating a unity as profound as we were capable. Her death has not impeded our efforts, despite the doubts about every item of existence which it has disinterred.

Doubt, love, love, doubt. At times, doubts strangle my grasp of life in the midst of grief. But, that flash of memory, when she raised her arms for me, coupled with her transcendent smile, has the power to reunite us and restore our vision.

Sacred, sacred.

Ray Teplitz

My Penny Thoughts

I think I might fair fairly well
If some my thoughts I fairly quell
Keep to myself my own reflection
Because upon my own detection
I have found that trouble finds me
When I find the things that could be
Left alone for though they taunt me
I'm better off when those I leave be
For so it's true some things are better
Left from verse or rhyme or letter
Leave that noisy din of troubled tale
And find the thoughts that cause them pale
Surely midst those waves of churning
I can find the lamplight brightly burning
News of love and peace and hope that's staying
Though from the wind my heart's found swaying
So I'll step outside the deafening fray
And turn instead towards light of day

And wander not in darkness grim
But let the light shine bright within
This lesson comes from hardships many
When sucked and pulled I gave my penny
My penny's worth of thoughts I thought
But cost me peace the peace I sought
I'll not forget this night of errors
Nor precious gems that slew the terrors
That set me free that gave me ear
That loosed me to the path of cheer
This path of cheer I'll surely bring
To life to live to everything
I bid it come I bid it reign
Cheerfulness my all to gain
So woe to you you troubled ways
You're banned from me for all my days
I've let the light of cheerful in
I won't be back your way again

De Layne Osterman

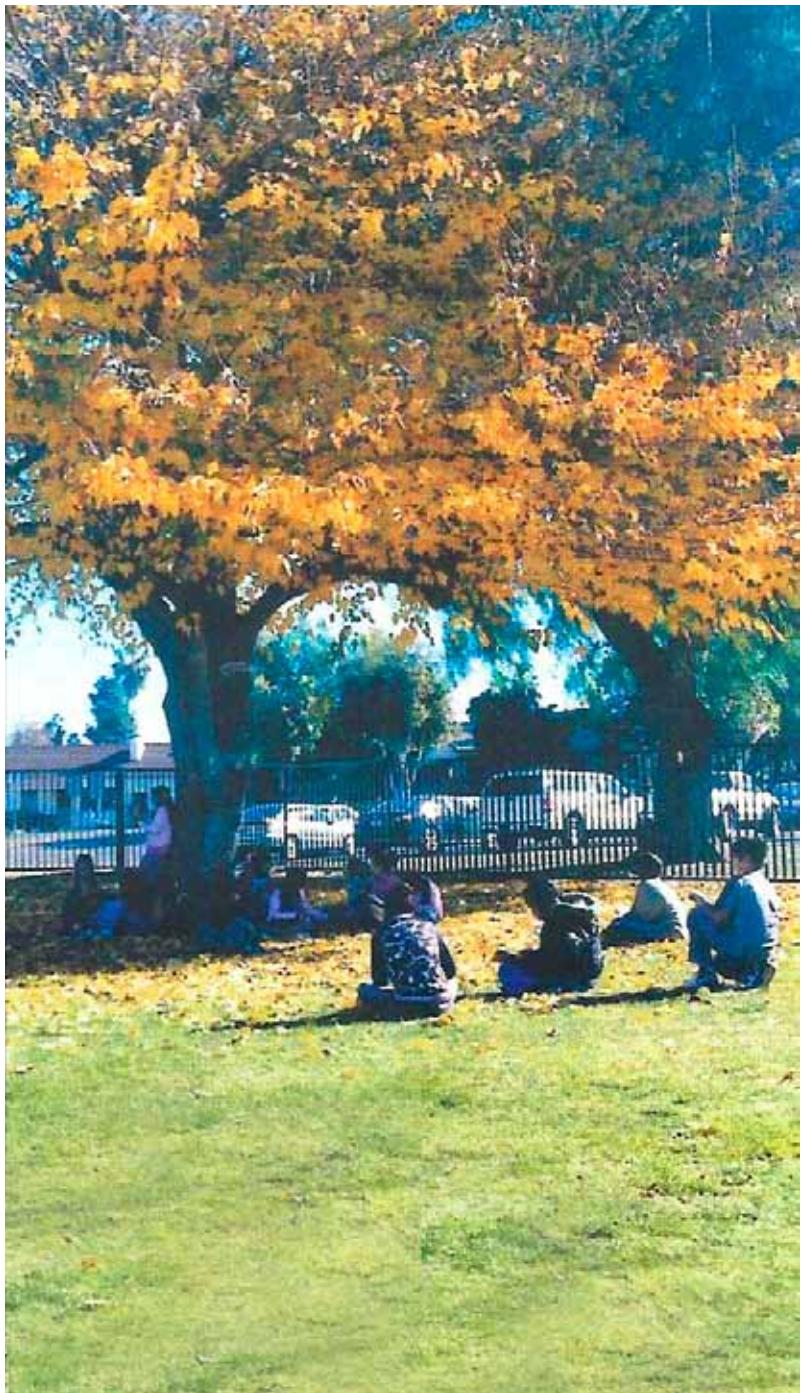


Photo: by Christine Darton-Henrichsen

Poetry Tree

The children sit scattered
like leaves beneath the tree.
Paper and pencils in hand
they strive to put on paper
what they see in their minds.

They whisper and laugh.
They sit silently lost in thought,

Some cuddle into the grass
and stare up through
the tangle of branches.

What words are spinning
through their heads?

What images are dripping
onto their papers?

Will their words match
their imaginations?

Just watching them
I smile and know that

The Poetry Tree has
captured them...
if only for today

Ms. Darton

Rain

It has been raining for days
From every sodden eave Rivulets flow
Creating streams of tumbling leaves
Orphan twigs and fetid water.
The sun's face is veiled
Behind a surly curtain of ominous hue.
Somewhere high the ether
Does it still shine? Maybe not.
The whole world
Has become liquid.
My footstep on earth's carpet
Is tenuous, uncertain
Testing eternity.
The carpet sinks, holds
Propels me forward
To yet another test.
Evolution seems reversed
We are returning to
The primordial pool lung to gill.
Foot to fin.



Jimmie Harvey

Promise of Spring



Photo: Srikanta H. U. via unsplash.com

Today was the promise of Spring Seducer!
A bright, and balmy day
coats come off Promised
The fading sun
hanging o'erlong in the west,
did more to light
than heat the day
And is
just now,
being forced away
By a crisp grey mantle
of gathering frost
But still protests;

First, with a holocaust of red and orange
And later,
With a gathering of stars.
A day of robins in damp grass,
after worms of buds
on bare tree branches Where none had been before.
The earth was fair in motion With the annual dance of
waxy shoots beneath.

But, this is not
the season come;
It is the prophet only.
And this day
of promise past,
the earth slips back
to sleep again.
The final hour of her winter's slumber:
Yet the season once awakened In the womb of earth
Matures
with growing restlessness;
Swelling
as mountain streams swell with the trickling fingers
of many-melting snow; Joining and rejoining Until the
promise is fulfilled;
And cascades forth
upon the heads of the believers,
All that the herald foretold.

Faux Spring

It happened today.
The sun broke through.
The temperature rose.
The breeze was light.
The world was smiling at me.
It feels like spring,
but I know better.
My calendar says February!
February is not spring!
I know that!
A few more days and
the sun will hide behind a cloud.
The wind will insist
“What’re you tryin’ to do?
This is my territory!
I decide when spring will come!”
And the cold, the drizzle,
the dark clouds will appear,
and we’ll be back to winter!
How do I spend my time
in this fake spring?
I rush outside,
embrace the warm air,
breathe deeply, smile,
fling my arms open
twirl, dance, skip!
This will not last,
but while it does
I’ll celebrate!
God is good!
The world is mine!

Jimmie Harvey

The Little Dancing Girl

Photo by Gabby Orcutt via unsplash.com

There was a little girl whose name was simply Grace
With hair of red and eyes of brown and most delightful face
She was a girl who loved to twirl and you knew at a glance
This little girl who loved to twirl simply loved to dance

Our little Grace had found her place to dance with all her might
You would find her dancing there morning noon or night
For when you heard the lovely sound of dancing music start
There was Grace with upturned face dancing from her heart

Not just any music brought our Grace to twirl around
But rather certain melodies with words that spoke the sound
Of grace you see and love and peace and filled with joyfulness
Worship songs played for the King and filled with thankfulness

Oh the light that filled the face with every single turn
Of little Grace the dancing girl who led each heart to yearn
For more of Him to dance with Him to find Him drawing near
His outstretched hand His loving hand dispelling every fear

Soon I knew within my heart He held each tear I'd wept
I found I could not linger there the sidelines firmly kept
But rather I joined in as well and danced beside the girl
I too began to worship Him matching twirl for twirl

On and on we danced into the morning noon and night
We tired not we wearied not our lamps still burning bright
With hearts so full we only knew the joy of knowing Him
His love was only growing as our dance became a hymn

The song grew sweet and strong as we leapt across the floor
Our upturned hearts while being filled only longed for more
More of love more of love and the One who loves us most
The One who gives us life this One of whom we boast

There was no fear as our Grace danced but only this pure love
There was no fear in me as well we'd both been certain of
The One with whom we danced as He spun us in each twirl
I always will remember Grace the little dancing girl

De Layne Osterman

The Choice is My Own

A 94- year-old gentleman, proud and well dressed with his hair nicely combed and his face shaved perfectly, even though he is legally blind, moved into a nursing home. His wife of 70 years recently passed away, making the move necessary. After many hours of waiting patiently in the lobby of a nursing home, he smiled when told his room was ready.

As he maneuvered his walker to the elevator, the aide provided a visual description of his small room, including the curtains that had been hung on his window. I will love it, he stated with enthusiasm.

Mr. Smith, you haven't seen the room yet; just wait.

"That doesn't have anything do with it," he replied. "Whether I like my room or not doesn't depend on how the furniture is arranged. It's how I arrange my mind. I already decided to love it.

It's a decision I make every morning when I wake up. I have a choice. I can spend the day in bed recounting the difficulty I have with the parts of my body that no longer work, or get out of bed and be thankful for the ones that do.

We would all do well, it seems, to become more thankful each day!

Submitted by
Susan Schneiderman

Master of the Manor

Folks, I feel I ought to warn ya –
I used to live in Californ – ya.
I thought I had eternal bliss
Until I moved to Medford,
For a life like this—

Verse:

We don't have to cook,
We don't have to clean,
We don't have to mow the lawn
Or fix the screens.

Time to read a book
Time to shoot the breeze.
Time to take an OLLI class from those
Who have degrees.

Everybody loves the Manor.
Living here is really swell.
Residents together
Can fix whatever isn't going well.

A group of seniors are sitting outdoors, smiling and holding cups of coffee or tea. They are dressed in casual attire, including a pink jacket, a red shirt, and a blue striped shirt. The background shows trees and a building.

Sarah Smith's in charge
Walking all about,
Taller than the rest of us
With lots of clout.

Medics in the clinic,
Doctors down the hill.
Walkers which can prop you
If you take a spill.

Everybody loves the Manor
Living there is really swell.
Staff is really great
In all they do, they do it really well.

Gardens all around
Pansies in the Spring,
Tomatoes by the bushel
Make you laugh and sing.

Food three times a day,
Food for every taste
Take trouser to the ladies
To let out the waist.

Everybody loves Chef Alan,
Calories don't count much here,
Plaza, Manor, Roxy,
Soup to nuts, it really makes us cheer.

Bowling on the lawn
Try a little golfin'
Keep the body moving
To postpone the coffin.

Play a little bridge,
Music on the stage,
Stimulating lectures
By the wise and sage.

Memories may be fading,
Vision isn't up to par.
Nametags we will wear
So we remember who we are.

**Fay Isaak, Jim Stocker
(lead off by Phyllis Skinner)**

Two Chairs

Many of us at this asylum are down to one from what was once a family. For a while, there were two, and now, just the one. You make adjustments to verify and validate the change.

Yet, it struck me as strange that she, the "loner" neighbor down the street, would have only one chair with which to take the morning or evening air,

I realize that when you are one, a single chair is all that is needed. However, having one or two chairs is a statement, a clue to how a life is led.

I no longer have a chair out, because taking the morning or evening air was a joint affair. We shared the pleasure. The sharing was the point, even more than the event, whatever it might have been.

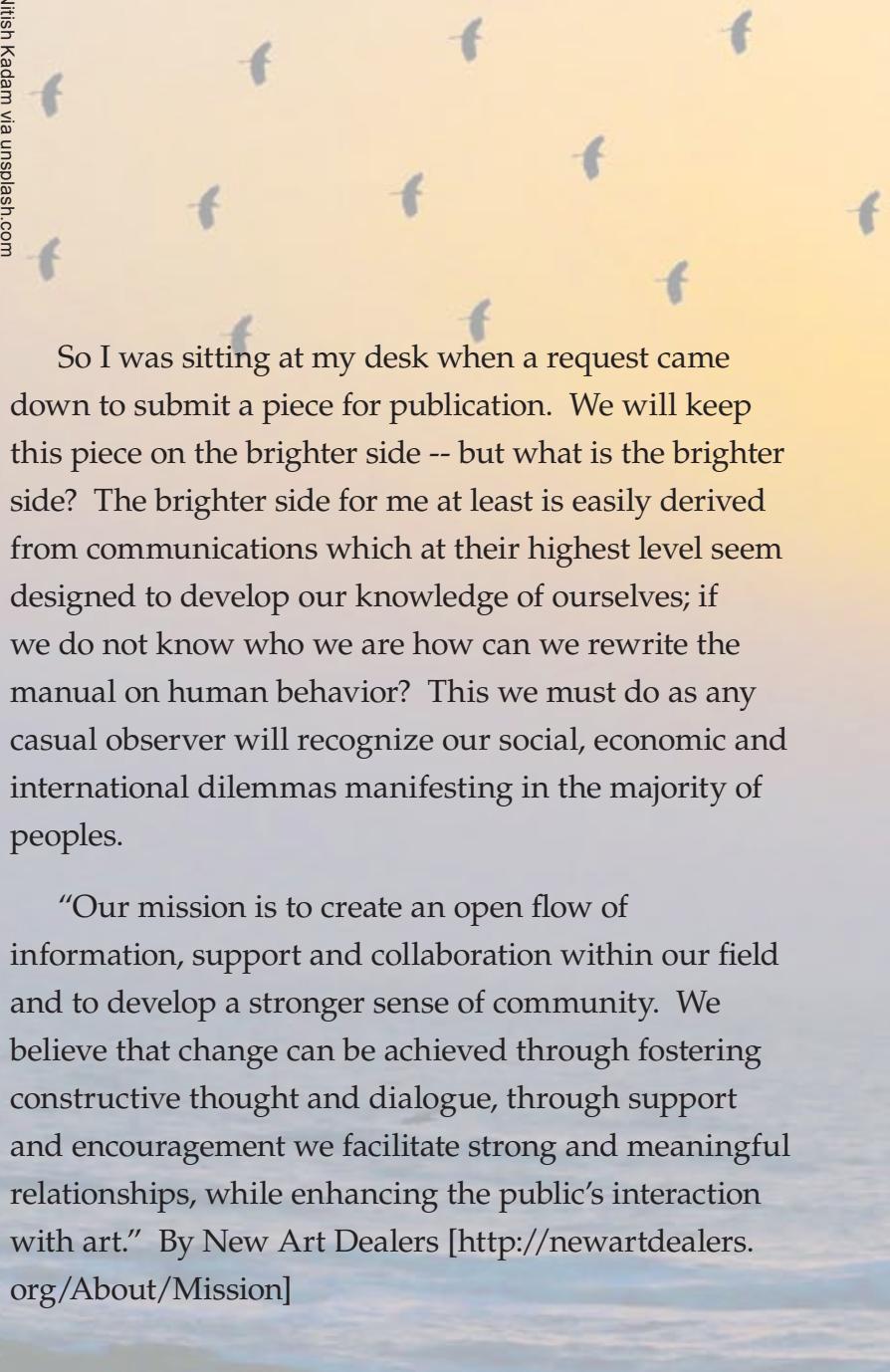
Although, the beloved is gone, if there is an air to be pleased, then it requires two chairs, doesn't it?

Now, after all, two chairs is an invitation.

Ray Teplitz



Elusive Thoughts From A Salty-Saint



So I was sitting at my desk when a request came down to submit a piece for publication. We will keep this piece on the brighter side -- but what is the brighter side? The brighter side for me at least is easily derived from communications which at their highest level seem designed to develop our knowledge of ourselves; if we do not know who we are how can we rewrite the manual on human behavior? This we must do as any casual observer will recognize our social, economic and international dilemmas manifesting in the majority of peoples.

"Our mission is to create an open flow of information, support and collaboration within our field and to develop a stronger sense of community. We believe that change can be achieved through fostering constructive thought and dialogue, through support and encouragement we facilitate strong and meaningful relationships, while enhancing the public's interaction with art." By New Art Dealers [<http://newartdealers.org/About/Mission>]

One of the many things that the iChing has taught me is that if we always have two sides to our coin we never lack in something to do in regards to the brighter side. This illuminates my belief that when the arts are stimulated by concise and gracious embracement then the world we all know will rise from its ashes. Our awareness and knowledge of the brighter side is heightened, bringing wisdom to everything we say, everything we do and everything we are.

*Something great has come for all!
The Something great has come for all!
The world we all know has had a great fall.
And up from the ashes He did rise,
The King of all -- mighty and wise.
Now a man I mean and one you can trust
For He has conquered the evil ones:
Greed, ego and lust.
He loves us for sure
And through Him is the cure
Of all that ails us.
He is one.
Thank God -- He has won. ©*

I wrote this little poem as a young man roughly fifty years ago -- I recall reclining in solitude on the front lawn and looking up through autumn leaves of sycamore trees feeling a profound emotion come over



photo by Nitish Kadamb via unsplash.com

me which in that moment was meek and meant for me alone. My story has never diminished in impact when retold, I suspect due to its core of utter truth which befuddled me for years though I take solace in the knowledge that questions reveal more than declarations ever could. I have come to understand that communication of our truer, brighter selves serves as a stimulation for the arts which can only bear positive fruit such as that dangling on the end of a golden olive branch

Dale Cripps



photo: Henry Fournier via unsplash.com

My Beautiful Life

I wake, stretch and smile.
Another day – another beautiful day –
More pleasure and happiness!
Looking forward to my adventures,
I smile as I shower and dress.
What will I do?
How can I make the air around me
glow with happiness and love?
How can I reach to others,
share my good fortune, help them to know
that life can be good if they only accept it?
Look only for the good,
the satisfactory in life.
Ignore that which makes you sad.
Deny the hurt, the depressing.
It'll go away if you don't accept it.
Be glad for all the positive
Accent it, promote it.
Treasure it, share it.
Look what a difference it makes!
I'll be there to share with you,
my friend.

Jimmie Harvey



Photo: Alex Blajan via unsplash.com

The Jeweled Egg

In a clearing in the woods near a quiet stream was the small town of Shadyglen. The families were descendants of the original people who had settled there many, many years ago. In fact, the oldest resident, Old Thomas, was the great-great-grandson of Paulo, the town's first mayor.

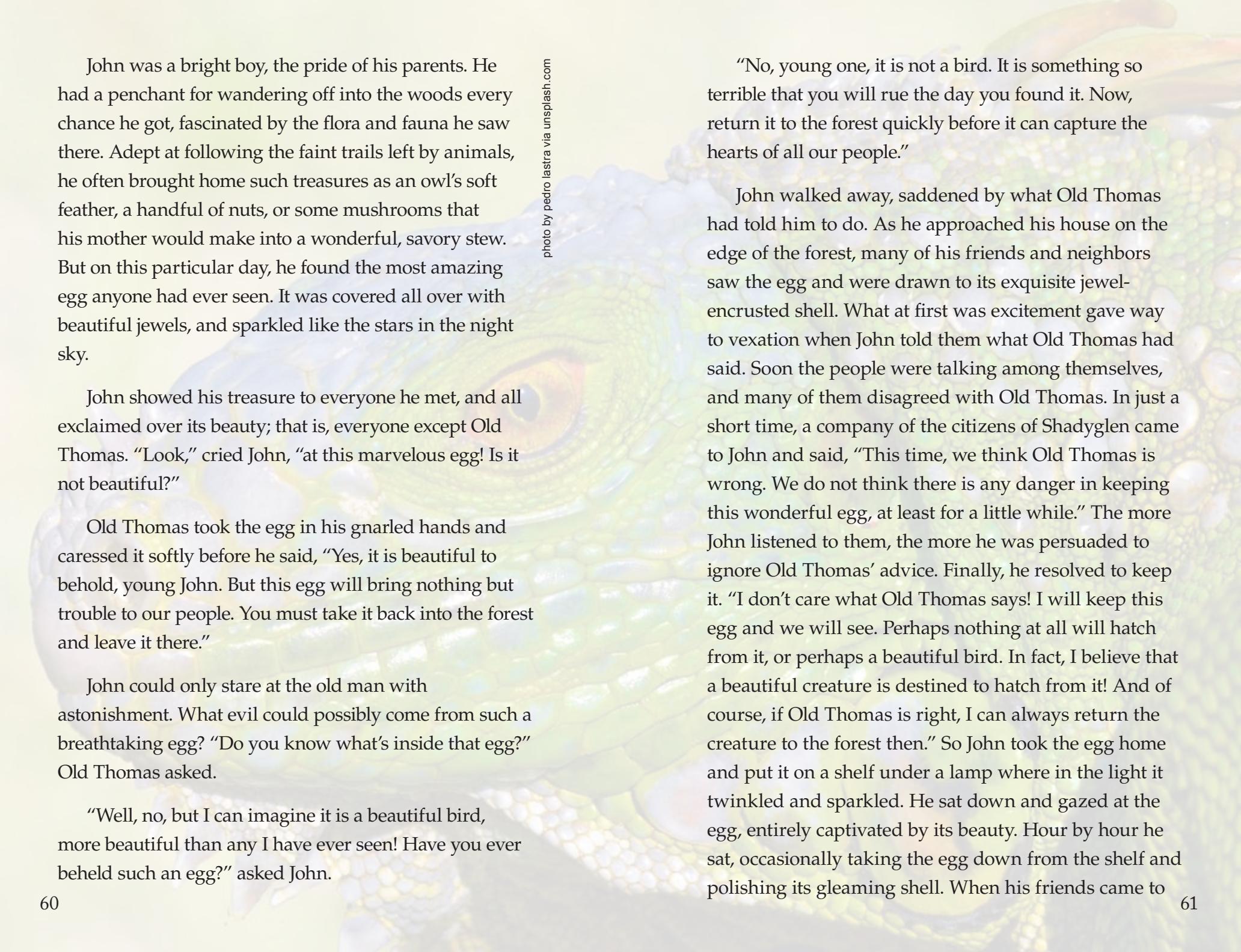
Life was sweet in Shadyglen, where the rain fell softly upon the carefully kept fields, and then only after dark. Sunshine aplenty benefited the growing crops and growing children alike, and toddlers laughed as they played in the safety of the little burg. Everyone knew everyone else, and most families were related to all the other families by marriage or by blood. Old Thomas was generally accepted as the resident sage, and people came to him to hear advice or to settle disputes, of which there were few.

The latest crop of young people of Shadyglen was fast reaching the age of accountability, and everyone looked on the children with benevolent smiles. Each generation carefully followed the age-old practices that had served them so well, and there was little strife in the lives of the townspeople.

That is, until the oldest child of the current crop did something remarkable and turned life upside down for the whole community. He found a jeweled egg in the forest.



photo from google images



John was a bright boy, the pride of his parents. He had a penchant for wandering off into the woods every chance he got, fascinated by the flora and fauna he saw there. Adept at following the faint trails left by animals, he often brought home such treasures as an owl's soft feather, a handful of nuts, or some mushrooms that his mother would make into a wonderful, savory stew. But on this particular day, he found the most amazing egg anyone had ever seen. It was covered all over with beautiful jewels, and sparkled like the stars in the night sky.

John showed his treasure to everyone he met, and all exclaimed over its beauty; that is, everyone except Old Thomas. "Look," cried John, "at this marvelous egg! Is it not beautiful?"

Old Thomas took the egg in his gnarled hands and caressed it softly before he said, "Yes, it is beautiful to behold, young John. But this egg will bring nothing but trouble to our people. You must take it back into the forest and leave it there."

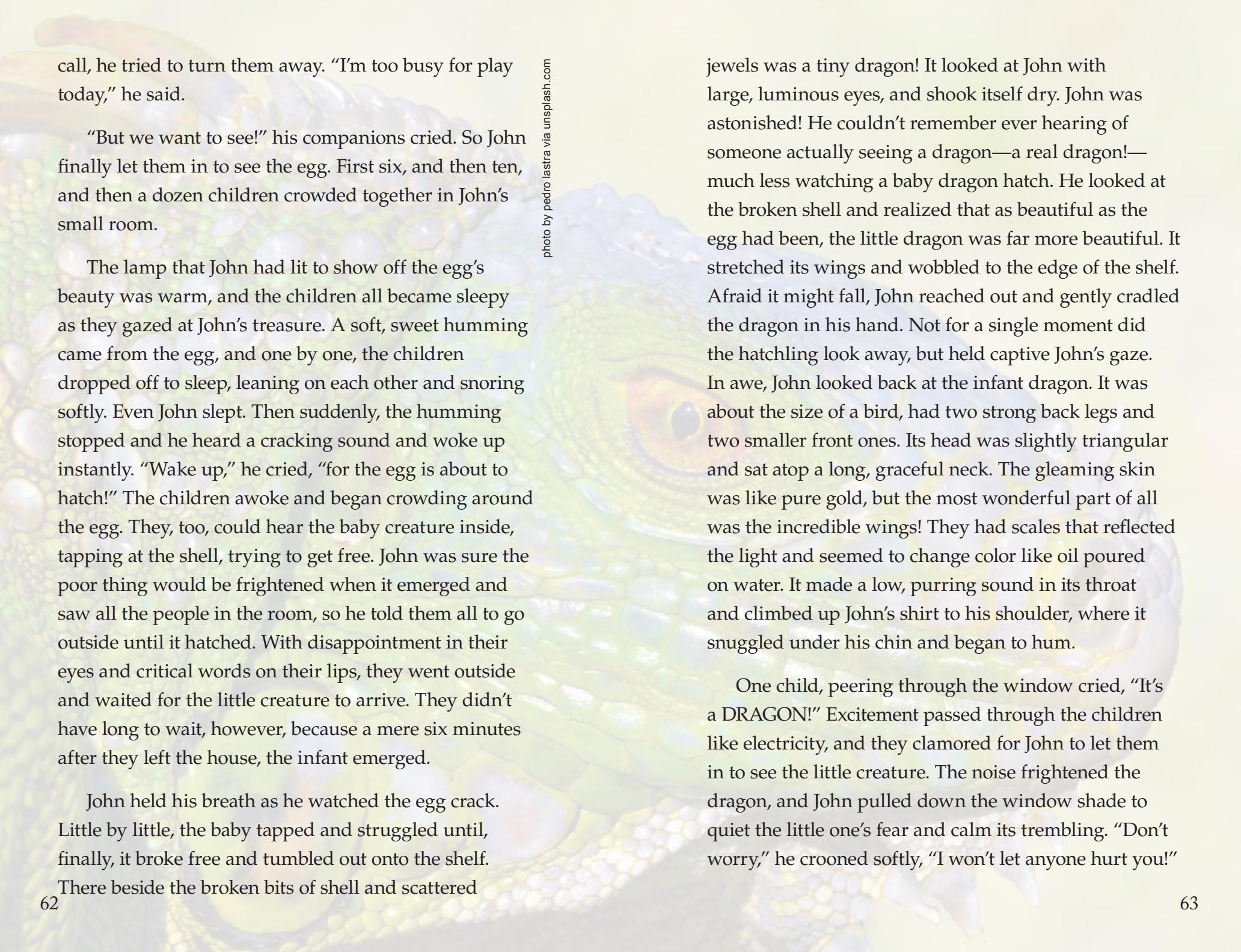
John could only stare at the old man with astonishment. What evil could possibly come from such a breathtaking egg? "Do you know what's inside that egg?" Old Thomas asked.

"Well, no, but I can imagine it is a beautiful bird, more beautiful than any I have ever seen! Have you ever beheld such an egg?" asked John.

photo by pedro lastra via unsplash.com

"No, young one, it is not a bird. It is something so terrible that you will rue the day you found it. Now, return it to the forest quickly before it can capture the hearts of all our people."

John walked away, saddened by what Old Thomas had told him to do. As he approached his house on the edge of the forest, many of his friends and neighbors saw the egg and were drawn to its exquisite jewel-encrusted shell. What at first was excitement gave way to vexation when John told them what Old Thomas had said. Soon the people were talking among themselves, and many of them disagreed with Old Thomas. In just a short time, a company of the citizens of Shadyglen came to John and said, "This time, we think Old Thomas is wrong. We do not think there is any danger in keeping this wonderful egg, at least for a little while." The more John listened to them, the more he was persuaded to ignore Old Thomas' advice. Finally, he resolved to keep it. "I don't care what Old Thomas says! I will keep this egg and we will see. Perhaps nothing at all will hatch from it, or perhaps a beautiful bird. In fact, I believe that a beautiful creature is destined to hatch from it! And of course, if Old Thomas is right, I can always return the creature to the forest then." So John took the egg home and put it on a shelf under a lamp where in the light it twinkled and sparkled. He sat down and gazed at the egg, entirely captivated by its beauty. Hour by hour he sat, occasionally taking the egg down from the shelf and polishing its gleaming shell. When his friends came to



call, he tried to turn them away. "I'm too busy for play today," he said.

"But we want to see!" his companions cried. So John finally let them in to see the egg. First six, and then ten, and then a dozen children crowded together in John's small room.

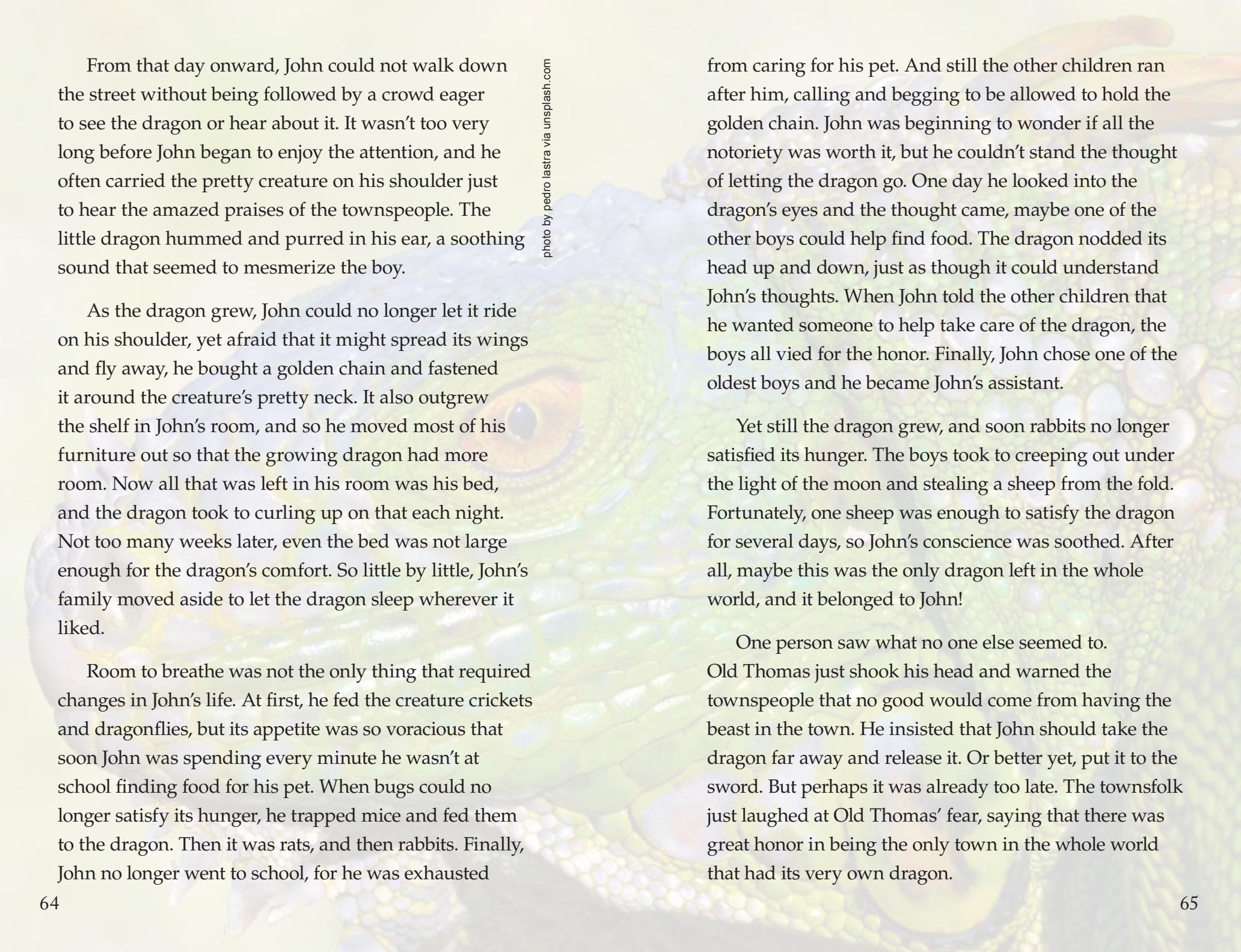
The lamp that John had lit to show off the egg's beauty was warm, and the children all became sleepy as they gazed at John's treasure. A soft, sweet humming came from the egg, and one by one, the children dropped off to sleep, leaning on each other and snoring softly. Even John slept. Then suddenly, the humming stopped and he heard a cracking sound and woke up instantly. "Wake up," he cried, "for the egg is about to hatch!" The children awoke and began crowding around the egg. They, too, could hear the baby creature inside, tapping at the shell, trying to get free. John was sure the poor thing would be frightened when it emerged and saw all the people in the room, so he told them all to go outside until it hatched. With disappointment in their eyes and critical words on their lips, they went outside and waited for the little creature to arrive. They didn't have long to wait, however, because a mere six minutes after they left the house, the infant emerged.

John held his breath as he watched the egg crack. Little by little, the baby tapped and struggled until, finally, it broke free and tumbled out onto the shelf. There beside the broken bits of shell and scattered

photo by pedro lastra via unsplash.com

jewels was a tiny dragon! It looked at John with large, luminous eyes, and shook itself dry. John was astonished! He couldn't remember ever hearing of someone actually seeing a dragon—a real dragon!—much less watching a baby dragon hatch. He looked at the broken shell and realized that as beautiful as the egg had been, the little dragon was far more beautiful. It stretched its wings and wobbled to the edge of the shelf. Afraid it might fall, John reached out and gently cradled the dragon in his hand. Not for a single moment did the hatchling look away, but held captive John's gaze. In awe, John looked back at the infant dragon. It was about the size of a bird, had two strong back legs and two smaller front ones. Its head was slightly triangular and sat atop a long, graceful neck. The gleaming skin was like pure gold, but the most wonderful part of all was the incredible wings! They had scales that reflected the light and seemed to change color like oil poured on water. It made a low, purring sound in its throat and climbed up John's shirt to his shoulder, where it snuggled under his chin and began to hum.

One child, peering through the window cried, "It's a DRAGON!" Excitement passed through the children like electricity, and they clamored for John to let them in to see the little creature. The noise frightened the dragon, and John pulled down the window shade to quiet the little one's fear and calm its trembling. "Don't worry," he crooned softly, "I won't let anyone hurt you!"



From that day onward, John could not walk down the street without being followed by a crowd eager to see the dragon or hear about it. It wasn't too very long before John began to enjoy the attention, and he often carried the pretty creature on his shoulder just to hear the amazed praises of the townspeople. The little dragon hummed and purred in his ear, a soothing sound that seemed to mesmerize the boy.

As the dragon grew, John could no longer let it ride on his shoulder, yet afraid that it might spread its wings and fly away, he bought a golden chain and fastened it around the creature's pretty neck. It also outgrew the shelf in John's room, and so he moved most of his furniture out so that the growing dragon had more room. Now all that was left in his room was his bed, and the dragon took to curling up on that each night. Not too many weeks later, even the bed was not large enough for the dragon's comfort. So little by little, John's family moved aside to let the dragon sleep wherever it liked.

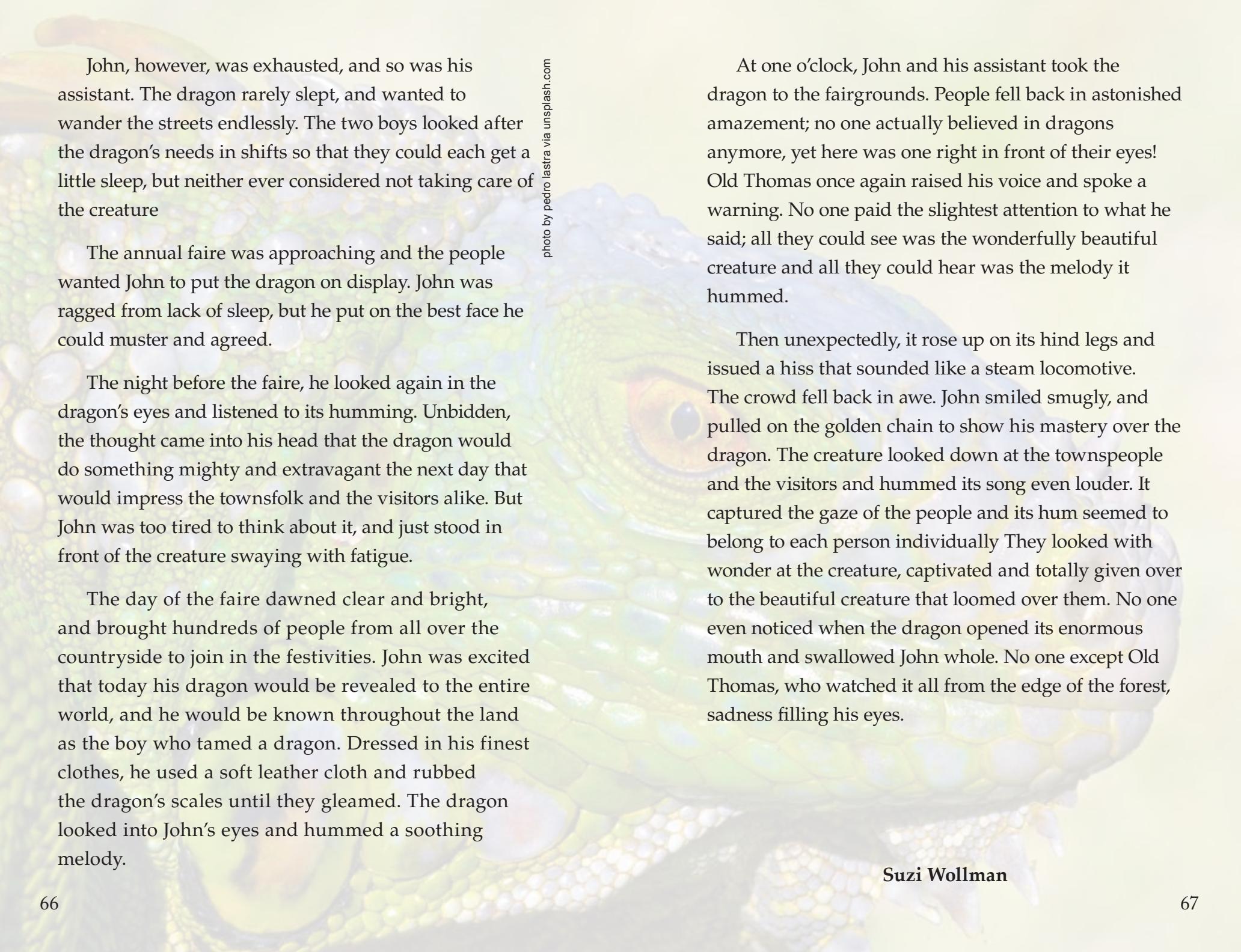
Room to breathe was not the only thing that required changes in John's life. At first, he fed the creature crickets and dragonflies, but its appetite was so voracious that soon John was spending every minute he wasn't at school finding food for his pet. When bugs could no longer satisfy its hunger, he trapped mice and fed them to the dragon. Then it was rats, and then rabbits. Finally, John no longer went to school, for he was exhausted

photo by pedro lastra via unsplash.com

from caring for his pet. And still the other children ran after him, calling and begging to be allowed to hold the golden chain. John was beginning to wonder if all the notoriety was worth it, but he couldn't stand the thought of letting the dragon go. One day he looked into the dragon's eyes and the thought came, maybe one of the other boys could help find food. The dragon nodded its head up and down, just as though it could understand John's thoughts. When John told the other children that he wanted someone to help take care of the dragon, the boys all vied for the honor. Finally, John chose one of the oldest boys and he became John's assistant.

Yet still the dragon grew, and soon rabbits no longer satisfied its hunger. The boys took to creeping out under the light of the moon and stealing a sheep from the fold. Fortunately, one sheep was enough to satisfy the dragon for several days, so John's conscience was soothed. After all, maybe this was the only dragon left in the whole world, and it belonged to John!

One person saw what no one else seemed to. Old Thomas just shook his head and warned the townspeople that no good would come from having the beast in the town. He insisted that John should take the dragon far away and release it. Or better yet, put it to the sword. But perhaps it was already too late. The townsfolk just laughed at Old Thomas' fear, saying that there was great honor in being the only town in the whole world that had its very own dragon.



John, however, was exhausted, and so was his assistant. The dragon rarely slept, and wanted to wander the streets endlessly. The two boys looked after the dragon's needs in shifts so that they could each get a little sleep, but neither ever considered not taking care of the creature

The annual faire was approaching and the people wanted John to put the dragon on display. John was ragged from lack of sleep, but he put on the best face he could muster and agreed.

The night before the faire, he looked again in the dragon's eyes and listened to its humming. Unbidden, the thought came into his head that the dragon would do something mighty and extravagant the next day that would impress the townsfolk and the visitors alike. But John was too tired to think about it, and just stood in front of the creature swaying with fatigue.

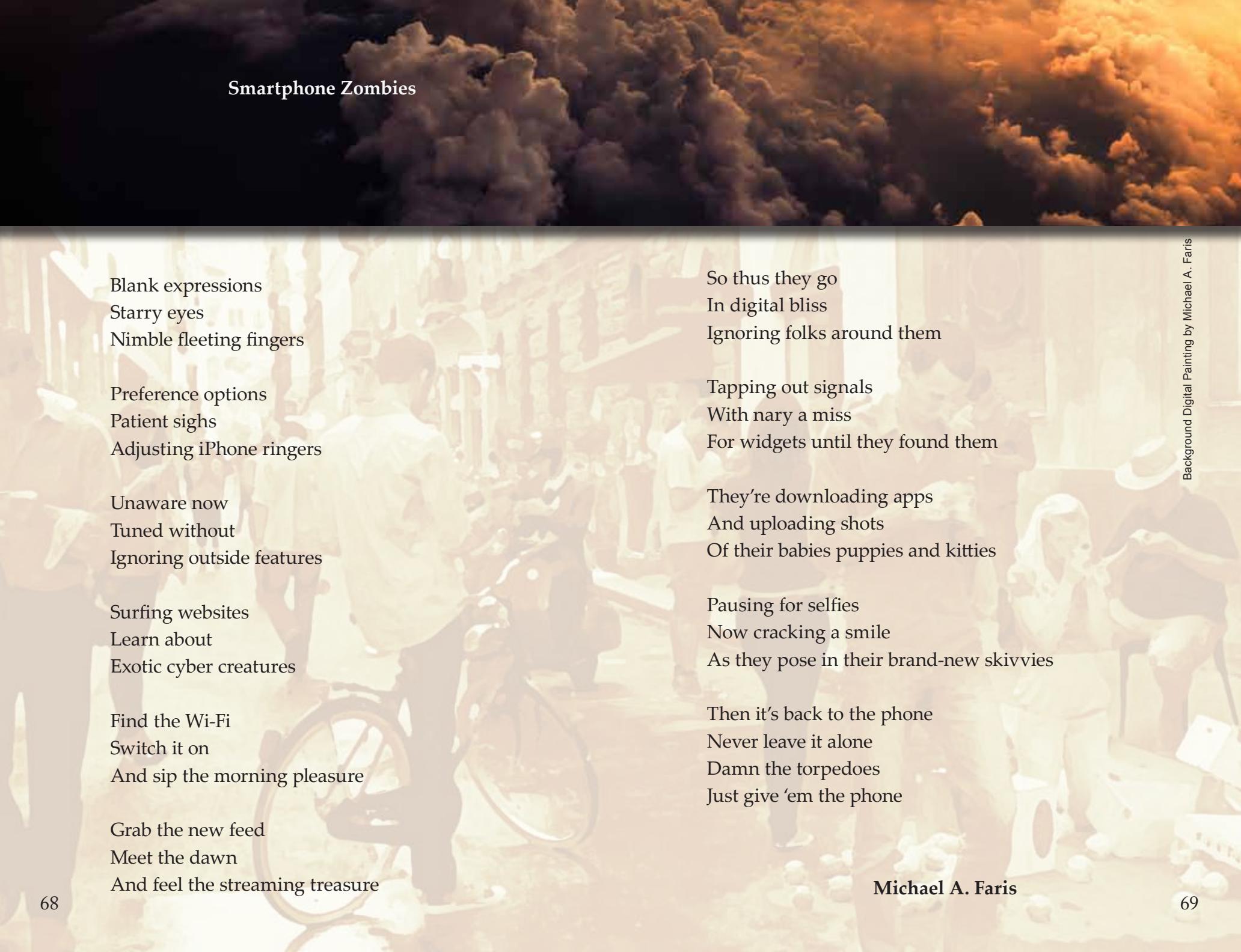
The day of the faire dawned clear and bright, and brought hundreds of people from all over the countryside to join in the festivities. John was excited that today his dragon would be revealed to the entire world, and he would be known throughout the land as the boy who tamed a dragon. Dressed in his finest clothes, he used a soft leather cloth and rubbed the dragon's scales until they gleamed. The dragon looked into John's eyes and hummed a soothing melody.

photo by pedro lastra via unsplash.com

At one o'clock, John and his assistant took the dragon to the fairgrounds. People fell back in astonished amazement; no one actually believed in dragons anymore, yet here was one right in front of their eyes! Old Thomas once again raised his voice and spoke a warning. No one paid the slightest attention to what he said; all they could see was the wonderfully beautiful creature and all they could hear was the melody it hummed.

Then unexpectedly, it rose up on its hind legs and issued a hiss that sounded like a steam locomotive. The crowd fell back in awe. John smiled smugly, and pulled on the golden chain to show his mastery over the dragon. The creature looked down at the townspeople and the visitors and hummed its song even louder. It captured the gaze of the people and its hum seemed to belong to each person individually. They looked with wonder at the creature, captivated and totally given over to the beautiful creature that loomed over them. No one even noticed when the dragon opened its enormous mouth and swallowed John whole. No one except Old Thomas, who watched it all from the edge of the forest, sadness filling his eyes.

Suzi Wollman



Smartphone Zombies

Blank expressions
Starry eyes
Nimble fleeting fingers

Preference options
Patient sighs
Adjusting iPhone ringers

Unaware now
Tuned without
Ignoring outside features

Surfing websites
Learn about
Exotic cyber creatures

Find the Wi-Fi
Switch it on
And sip the morning pleasure

Grab the new feed
Meet the dawn
And feel the streaming treasure

So thus they go
In digital bliss
Ignoring folks around them

Tapping out signals
With nary a miss
For widgets until they found them

They're downloading apps
And uploading shots
Of their babies puppies and kitties

Pausing for selfies
Now cracking a smile
As they pose in their brand-new skivvies

Then it's back to the phone
Never leave it alone
Damn the torpedoes
Just give 'em the phone

Michael A. Faris

Seed Wart

I once knew a girl with a seed wart on her neck. Her name was Carla. I got a glimpse of it one time when she took off her scarf in the school cafeteria. It was small and long and she said seeds came out its end. I thought, wow, that's great. I wouldn't mind having one of those.

You had to be a good friend of Carla's before she showed you her wart, and we weren't good friends. She was tall and played a trumpet, hit a baseball better than the boys, and was a great pitcher, too. All the boys wanted her on their team. I was short, always a left-over when teams were formed, and I played the piano, but not very well. That year, I mostly went to the library during lunch recess, and wrote poetry about Larry Fay.

My best poem was under my bed in a small cedar box. It began, "Larry Fay with eyes so blue, I love you." Larry's eyes twinkled when he smiled, and he was short like me. Once that year in gym, I got to dance with him to "Glow Little Glowworm" but we hardly looked at each other, and I don't know if he even knew my name. I would have just died if anyone found out I loved him.

We had a new teacher in sixth grade. The first day of school we sized up his bald head, his short body and black horn-rimmed glasses. "M-m-my n-n—name is Mr. L-L-Lockwood," he stuttered. In the back of the room a freckle-faced kid belched and snickered, "and m-my n-n-ame is P-P-Porky P-P-Pig."

Mr. Lockwood didn't say anything. He just stood there, looking lonely. I felt so bad for him. From then on I sat in the front row and smiled at him so he'd know he could count on me.

The boys didn't pay any attention to our teacher after that, and there were rumors that he was going to be fired. Harry, Billy, and Duane ran around the room, stood on top of desks, threw spit wads and rubber bands, belched, and made arm-pit noises. Mr. Lockwood kept calling the office for help, but after awhile the principal stopped answering him. Poor Mr. Lockwood. He finally just sat at his desk and buried his head in books about Hawaii.

Several girls including my best friend Joyce transferred to another classroom. Joyce said, "I'm sorry but Mother wants me to learn something this year," and gave me a hug. Joyce is also short like me and we like the same books. "I'll miss you," I said, but we promised to see each other in the library. I stayed with Mr. Lockwood because I thought he needed me. And besides, Larry Fay was in the same room.

For my twelfth birthday Mother invited my friend Joyce to lunch and to surprise me, Joyce invited Carla. "Carla? At my house?" I gulped. Well, maybe if I showed her my autographed picture of Roy Rogers, she'd show me that wart.

Joyce, Carla and I wore lipstick, dressed up in circle skirts that hung down to our ankles, and Mother let us put on her London Fog eau de cologne. My skirt had big

orange and green roosters on it, and I wore a brand new pink angora sweater, but Carla said my fabrics didn't match so I took it off.

Mother made spaghetti and petit fours with pink frosting roses and we sat at a card table in the front room so we could listen to music on our record player.

I was going to play my Roy Rogers records for them but Carla only wanted to listen to Louis Armstrong and his trumpet

which we didn't have. Instead, she just wanted to talk about movie stars and how she was going to be in the movies someday. Then, I was about to show them my autographed picture of Roy Rogers when Carla said how Gene Autry is the real King of the Cowboys, not Roy and anyway, she thinks Gene is handsomer and sings better than Roy. She looked down at me, undid her scarf and tied it back together real fast before I could see her wart. Well, I thought, there goes that.

When it was time to go home, Carla went to my bedroom for her coat. A little bit later, we heard her laughing really loud, so Joyce and I ran in. My cedar box was on the bed and the lid was off. The box was empty. Carla was lying on my bed and Joyce started pulling at Carla's clenched fist and yelling, "Give it back, give it back, Carla."

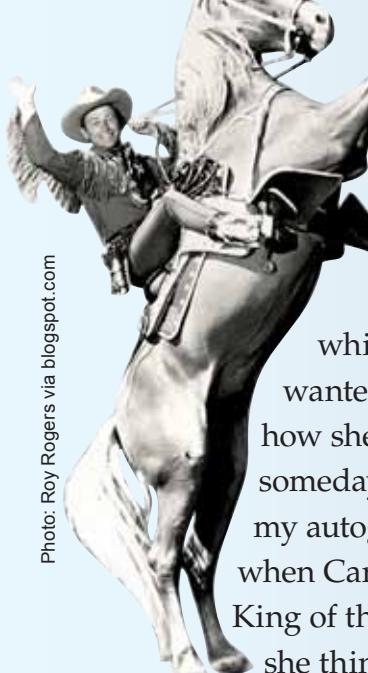


Photo: Roy Rogers via blogspot.com

"No, no, no," Carla shrieked, then saw me and laughed. "You love Larry Fay, you love Larry Fay," she sang. I was so embarrassed. My throat was filling with hurt and I was going to cry, so I pressed my fingers against my eyes to stop the tears. "That was long time ago," I said, grabbed the poem from her, tore it up and put it into my pocket. "I guess I forgot about this stupid thing," I said....(I'd tape it together when I was alone, I thought, and hide the box way back in the closet where it wouldn't be found.) Staring Carla straight in the eye, I opened my dresser drawer, took out my pink angora sweater and put it back on.

"Mother," I called. "Carla needs to go home right now or she'll be late. May Joyce and I stay here and play my Roy Rogers records? And maybe she can spend the night." Just to be polite, I said, "Thanks for coming, Carla," as she stomped out the door.

The next summer a kid told Joyce you could protect yourself from warts by turning around twenty-five times in a dark room and saying "coal oil" over and over. Oh, I just love Joyce. If other people who have seed warts are as mean as Carla I told her, I sure don't want one. So, as soon as it got dark that night I went to my room, closed the door, shut off the light, and started turning.

Judie Bunch

The Itch You Can't Scratch

This story happened in the late sixties or early seventies when camping was done with bottomless canvas tents and plastic ground cloths. We lashed outdoor gadgets, dug trenches in the sod and harvested renewable resources to enhance our comfort in the woods.—D.V.

Wednesday evening was rainy and a little cold.

The Boy Scouts were buying food at the local Safeway store on high hopes of having good weather for the camping trip scheduled for Saturday and Sunday.

The Troop of twelve youth and seven adults arrived at the camp site next to the archeological dig for native American remains along the Long Tom River. The youth divided into two separate patrols and settled into setting up camp in the oak grove next to the dig site. The adults set up camp in the open field next to the dig more for security of the site than anything else.

The guiding principle of the camping event was to encourage and support the youth to be in charge of their own activities focused in an outdoor scouting format. Things progressed along that path as tents were pitched and dining tarps or flys were set up for weather protection.

The Scouts, who busied themselves with staking the tents and anchoring the flys, found a vine growing up the sides of the oak trees near where they were making

camp. They clipped what they needed and progressed to the building of camp gadgets, latrine areas, hands washing stations, tripod tables and many other useful things using an abundance of these little sticks for pegs, table tops, cross supports and many other assemblages.

The weather was excellent and I don't recall rain falling the entire week-end.

I was one of those youth at that camping trip and I did my darndest to get it through the heads of my fellow youth that these vine like plants were poison oak. My camping buddy and I refused to handle the small sticks. We were set to tasks that didn't require touching them.

Soon, the camp was established and program activities took over. We got to view the dig site and hear how valuable understanding our past might be. We learned that one of our adult leaders was going to cook nutria in a Dutch Oven for us all to sample for dinner. There was little structure after the first few hours so my friend and I took a little hike. We hiked the half a mile to his house and got a flash light he forgot and I asked him for a bar of soap.

He looked at me questioningly and I reassured him everything would work out just fine. I explained I was going to bathe in the stream we crossed on the way back and wash all the poison oak residue off my skin. He bobbed his head back and forth and said "Okay." and we went about returning to camp.

Sure enough, we came to the small tributary, ankle deep, where we both stopped, stripped naked and washed our selves with soap and water, feeling smarter than the rest of those idiots who were going to be sorry less than 24 hours after the camping trip was over. Later we would witness worse behavior concerning the epidemic of skin rash that would follow.

This feeling of being smarter than the rest and taking myself out of danger was suddenly shattered by a feeling of total embarrassment and humiliation.

As I was half way covered with soap foam from head to toe, standing in the middle of this small stream, my naked bather buddy not ten feet from me, I looked up at the crest of the small hill that was between us and the campsite, not a quarter of a mile away, to see the head then the shoulders of our Scoutmaster, looking at us.

He walked toward us enough for us to see his hands on his hips as he watched the scene before him. I was frozen in total incredulity not even thinking one of the adults was interested in where my friend and I were and what we might be doing.

I do remember sort of collapsing the exposed washing posture some what so as to hide my private parts. I glanced at my friend just after catching the gaze of the Scoutmaster and he too was in a protect the vitals posture.

The frozen moment of these times when the cat and the mouse face each other dissolved in an instant as the Scoutmaster, after a ten second stare simply turned around and walked back the way he came. He disappearing from the hill top and my friend and I were left soaped up and looking at each other with a big question mark on our faces.

The only thing we were able to do is finish our baths and head back to camp.

The entire time we were walking back to camp, we discussed what our punishment was going to be once we arrived. Strangely enough, there was not one word said to either of us as a result of our running away from camp or the wanton display of nakedness we had perpetrated. It sort of grated on us to be so "outside" the rules and not be "called on the carpet" for our transgressions.

"Oh, well!"

The afternoon ranged on into evening and the sampling of the nutria delicacy.

We held an entertainment campfire with skits and songs we performed for our own edification then, sweet desserts provided by the adults affected the children like sleeping pills.

Sunday morning breakfast was followed by a Scout's Own religious service then, striking camp with tents and tarps taken down. Bundles of twine and, yes, the

poison oak sticks were tossed into the fires to burn causing smoke to billow into the air and into the lungs of those foolish enough to inhale the unhealthy oil laden noxious fumes.

Throughout the week-end I was vocal at every opportunity to warn anyone who would listen. Even when the smoke was billowing from our campfires I didn't let up with my warnings.

We all packed our things and went home late on Sunday.

All but two of the youth on that campout didn't get poison Oak, my friend and me. Eight of the youth were affected with cases treatable at home, four had to seek medical intervention with shots and two were so severely affected they had to be hospitalized overnight. Four children didn't go to school for the next three days and one missed an entire week due to the itchy rash.

All in all, I would sum up the experience as "An Itch I Can't Scratch."

David Vaughan



Photo- Poison Oak Bobelaine Sanctuary by Laura Sheffield

The Last Battle

If it should be that I grow weak, and pain should keep me from my sleep, then you must do what must be done, for this last battle cannot be won.

You will be sad, I understand; don't let your grief then stay your hand. For this day more than all the rest, your love for me must stand the test.

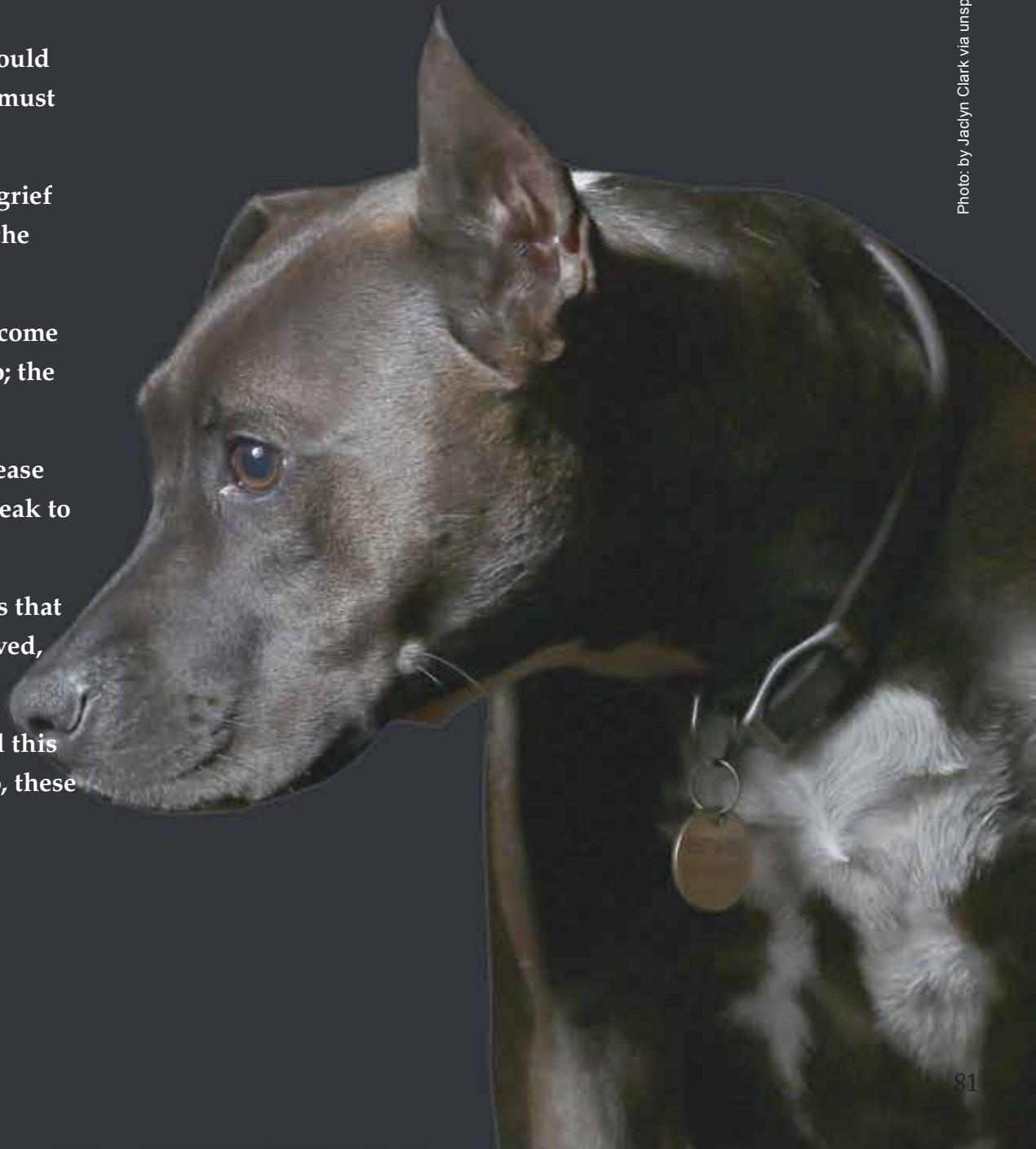
We've had so many happy years - What is to come can hold no fears. You'd not want me to suffer so; the time has come, so let me go.

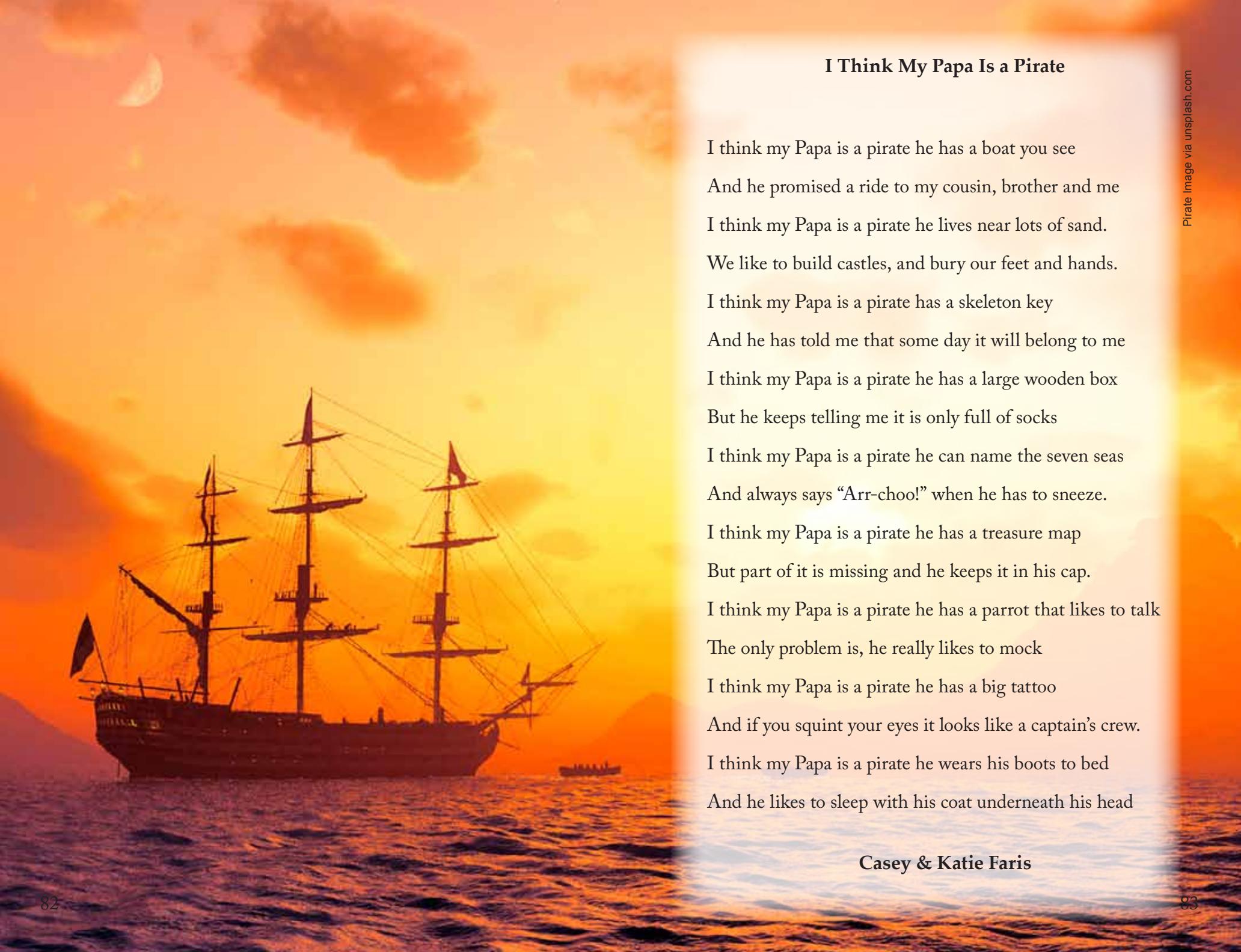
Take me where my needs they'll tend and please stay with me until the end. Hold me firm and speak to me until my eyes no longer see.

I know in time that you will see the kindness that you did for me. Although my tail its last has waved, from pain and suffering I've been saved.

Please do not grieve - it must be you who had this painful thing to do. We've been so close, we two, these years Don't let your heart hold back its tears.

Submitted by
Bonnie Howard
(author unknown)



A large, three-masted sailing ship is silhouetted against a vibrant orange and yellow sunset. The ship has its sails down and is positioned on the left side of the frame. The sky is filled with soft, glowing clouds. In the distance, a small boat is visible on the horizon. The overall atmosphere is whimsical and fitting for a pirate-themed poem.

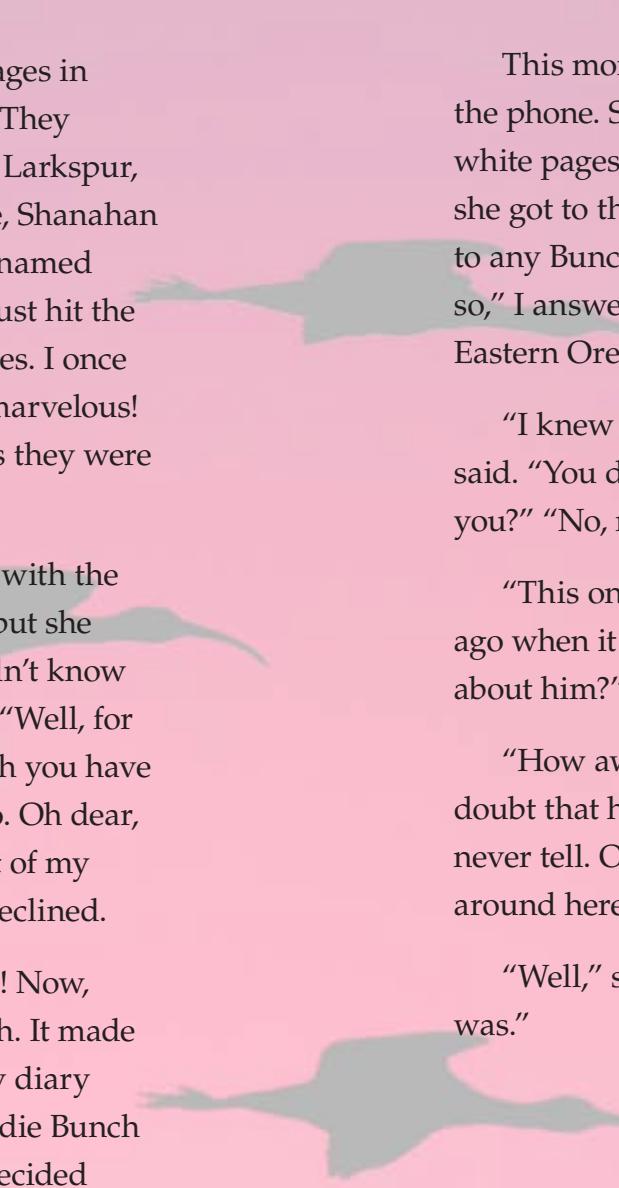
I Think My Papa Is a Pirate

Pirate Image via unsplash.com

I think my Papa is a pirate he has a boat you see
And he promised a ride to my cousin, brother and me
I think my Papa is a pirate he lives near lots of sand.
We like to build castles, and bury our feet and hands.
I think my Papa is a pirate has a skeleton key
And he has told me that some day it will belong to me
I think my Papa is a pirate he has a large wooden box
But he keeps telling me it is only full of socks
I think my Papa is a pirate he can name the seven seas
And always says "Arr-choo!" when he has to sneeze.
I think my Papa is a pirate he has a treasure map
But part of it is missing and he keeps it in his cap.
I think my Papa is a pirate he has a parrot that likes to talk
The only problem is, he really likes to mock
I think my Papa is a pirate he has a big tattoo
And if you squint your eyes it looks like a captain's crew.
I think my Papa is a pirate he wears his boots to bed
And he likes to sleep with his coat underneath his head

Casey & Katie Faris

Sprinkle Thy Name



I'm running my finger down the white pages in the telephone book, reading people's names. They float on the air like beautiful songs—Larkin, Larkspur, Lillibridge, Pennington, Pinkerton, Perkypile, Shanahan and Shellabarger. Wouldn't it be awful to be named Lena Bump or Percy Zik? Names like that must hit the kitchen floor with plops like overripe tomatoes. I once saw the name Icyminda Sillywilliam. How marvelous! I'll bet everybody else in the S section wishes they were Icyminda.

When I was in high school I had a friend with the last name of Longbottom. I loved my friend but she said her brother was hoping to date me. I didn't know what to do. I asked my mother and she said, "Well, for goodness sakes, Judith Ann, it's not as though you have to marry him." But, someday I might want to. Oh dear, how could I be Judie Longbottom for the rest of my life?...Huh uh! When he called I gracefully declined.

Later on, I was introduced to Jerry Bunch! Now, there was a name! Bunch, I whispered. Bunch. It made me smile; made my heart sing. I still have my diary from those days where I practiced writing Judie Bunch over and over. This was the name for me, I decided before I even fell in love with its blue-eyed owner.

This morning, a woman doing genealogy called on the phone. She had been running her finger down the white pages of the telephone book, and stopped when she got to the Bunches here in Talent. "Are you related to any Bunches in Colorado?" she asked. "I don't think so," I answered. "Most of my husband's family lives in Eastern Oregon."

"I knew a minister named Bunch in Colorado," she said. "You don't know any ministers named Bunch, do you?" "No, no ministers," I assured her.

"This one was in a plane over Colorado a few years ago when it blew up," she went on. "Didn't you hear about him?"

"How awful," I said. "No, I've never heard of him. I doubt that he was related, you know. But then, you can never tell. Occasionally, you'll find Bunches sprinkled around here and there."

"Well," she said quietly before she hung up, "he sure was."

Judie Bunch

Escape

I cannot wait to leave
I am smothering
a thick blanket of caring
shutting off my air
at every turn
an out-stretched hand
an open heart
helping me
loving me
holding me too close.

I yearn for freedom
like a bird in a cage
whose every need is met
loved
admired
imprisoned by caring

but I want my wings
to fly free
unfettered by heartstrings
free to touch the stars
and not be home by nine
to escape to who-knows-where
throw back my head and laugh
without looking first
for the sign that says
“Silence!”

to give the primeval scream
that echoes to the corners
of the universe
and is unanswered
to explore the innermost haunts
of my mind
the black recesses gone mouldy
from airlessness
inhabited by small, strange creatures
that scream in the night and make
improper suggestions.

to run to the ocean's edge and
talk with the silver inhabitants
slithering by
breathing salt water
laughing at my clumsiness.

to sway in the top of the hemlock
lashing madly on the end of
that buggy whip
which is the tree's mark.
to stand at the top of the Statue
lording it over the harbor
helping to hold the torch
barefoot
without a coat.

to ride the 'gator in the Amazon
without a harness
holding with just one hand
taunting the screaming
blue, green and red parrot
scolding me
telling me it's bedtime

to sleep with the camel
in the desert sand
with no one around
for a million miles
and no water
to brush my teeth.

to startle Paris
in my stocking feet
speaking Russian with
my Chinese friend
and all the time
laughing
and not caring.

but first, I must
escape the small town
and the fetters
of love.

Jimmie Harvey



Keeper of the Castle

Yon castle's moats have all gone dry
Her walls are tumbling down,
The crimson banner on tower high
Is torn like tattered gown.

My castle fair, my home so royal
Has all but met the morrow,
But I your friend, your keeper loyal
Will try and ease the sorrow.

I'll tend your garden 'till winter frost
Has taken all its beauty,
But Spring and I will tend what's lost
'Tis right it is our duty.

Oh Castle, fortress, medieval prince,
How gallant your deeds of glory.
And I your keeper in these years since,
Will stay to tell your story.

Michael Casey

Silver Filigree

The bony skeleton of the ancient oak
stands tall above the meadow
the tracery of leafless boughs
in silver filigree against the morning sky.

It's almost Easter time.

The restless waking
sends a rustle through the trees.

The brilliant springtime palette
overlays the winter's somber hues.

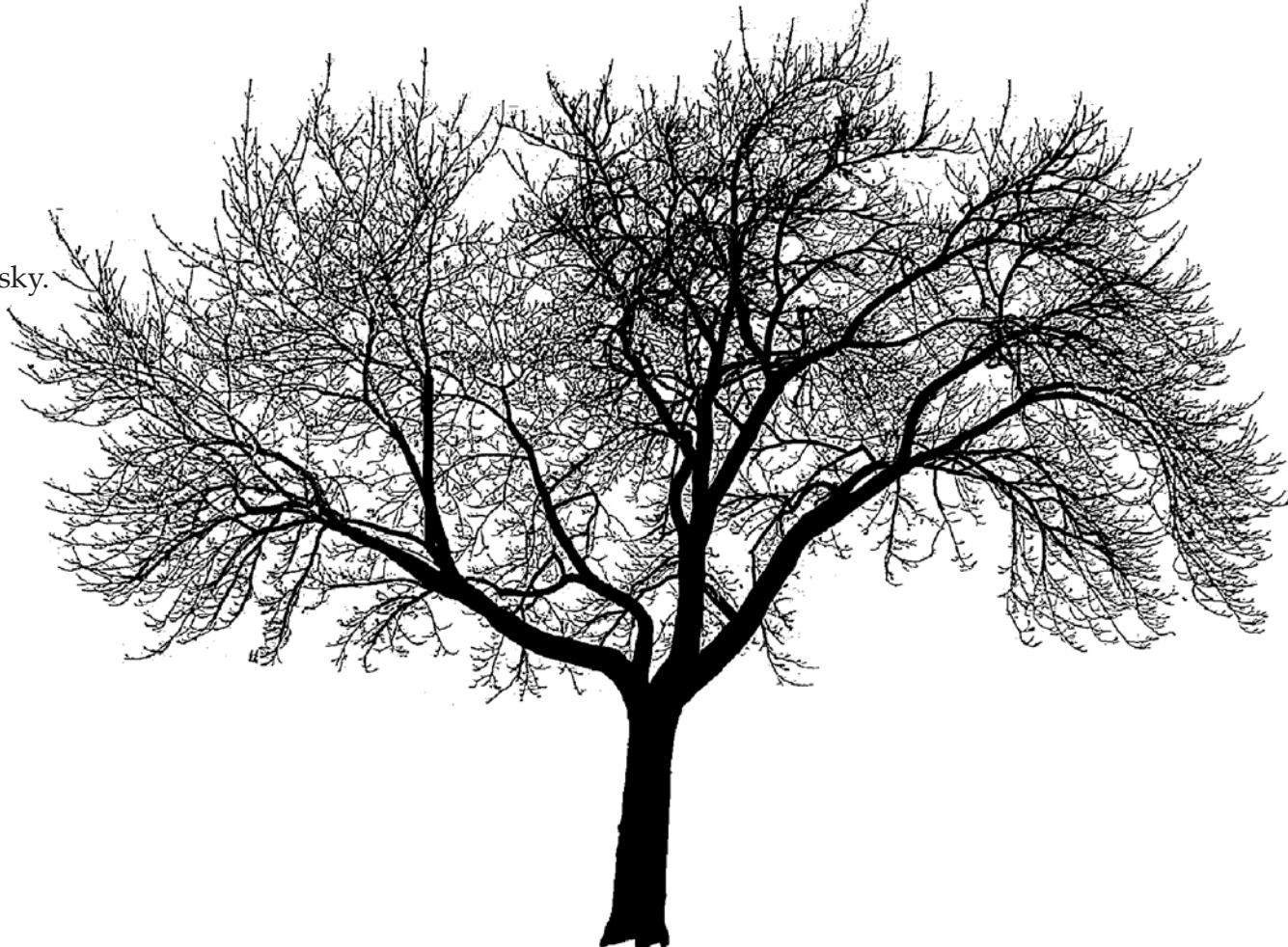
Overnight the flowering plum
has dressed herself in brightest pink
and peeking 'round the rocks I see
an iris and a daffodil
playing hide and seek
with a bed of crimson tulips.

On the hill's crest in the meadow
the saucy mustard plant
emerges from her winter lair
in a lacy yellow gown.

The ancient oak observes
once more the springtime ritual
played out around her feet.

Soon she too will join the rites -
her branches swell and soften.

In her shade will rabbits rest
and her greening boughs will hide
the homes of countless nesting birds.



It's nature's way and well I know
the ordained cycle must be met.
But, oh, how I will miss the drama -
the tracery of silver filigree
against the morning sky.

Jimmie Harvey

My Father, My Hero

I am very thankful for my parents. Although I have not always agreed with them or always followed their advice, I still love them and I am glad to be their boy.

We were at a week long camp at Camp Baker outside of Florence, Oregon on the coast. The days were spent in classes earning rank advancement from Tenderfoot to First Class and earning merit badges for the rank of Star, Life and Eagle.

There were other activities to participate in, including swimming, fishing, archery, rifle shooting and of course there was a place to buy a soda pop, a candy bar or even an ice cream sandwich!

At this particular camp, I was probably thirteen or fourteen years old and I remember spending many hours in classes. I earned the most number of badges I ever earned at camp as I was working on Life rank. I was also proud of the youth in company with the Troop. They all were busy having a great summer camp experience.

One of the things we do at camp is hold a campfire program where each group of youth perform skits or lead songs around a bonfire at night. Usually, these are all rehashes of skits or songs we have done or seen before. We are very polite and laugh and clap in support of the actors and their presentation. This program lasts for forty-five minutes to an hour, and it can drag on.

This particular campfire was dragging on and everyone pretty much wanted it to be over. My Father was the last person on the docket and I was a little worried. I hoped whatever came next wouldn't be an embarrassment.

My Father mounted the stage and began his monologue.

He recounted a time in his life when his family was very poor and living in a rural community. There was great excitement because a big top circus was all set up to perform shows in the town. This was a big deal for small towns when he was a kid.

He told us that his family was so poor they couldn't afford tickets to attend a show. That is when he and his brothers hatched a plot to slip under the corner of the big top tent in order to watch the show that way.

All five brothers slipped under the tent flap and tried to get a good view of the performance. The plan was working perfectly until my Father found he was being grabbed around the collar by one of the security officers patrolling the interior tent perimeter. His four brothers escaped and were gone into the night.

My Father recounts that the security guard was a kindly sort and after the guard calmed him down, my dad was offered the chance to see the next show if he was willing to work for it. My dad agreed and was put to work scooping all the droppings left by the animals from the grand parade.

After that, he was given a pale of water and a brush with a long handle and was instructed on how to wash an elephant.

The elephant, named Nuts, was a trained and gentle animal and would respond to commands to kneel down, etc. My Father so commanded and the animal kneeled down. Enthusiastically my Pop washed the top of the head, the top of the back, the behind, and the top sides of the animal. He stood near the head of the beast and commanded it to stand and it did.

With the feeling of near success, my Father continued washing on the outside of the animal. He washed carefully around the ears, eyes and trunk. Just after dipping his scrub brush in the pail one last time, he moved underneath and started washing the back of the front legs when this yahoo came by yelling "Peanuts"...

The response from the audience at the campfire was uproarious and extended, applause went on and on with a good deal of cat calls and whistling. There was a District Executive, a Scouting professional, in the audience and he came up on stage and shook my Fathers hand saying that was the funniest campfire story he had ever heard.

We left camp late the next day and from the moment my Father finished his story until the time we left camp, my Father was a complete and total celebrity admired by everyone.

We saw the District Executive on the trail while we were doing the pack out. He stopped my Dad, shook his hand and thanked him again for his story. I don't think I've ever seen my Pop so proud of himself, but to me, he was my Hero!

David Vaughan



photo-Alexandre Chambon via unsplash.com

Photo By Becky Phan via unsplash.com

Weekend Dragons



photo: Dragon via publicdomainpictures.net

Shhhh. Quiet. Don't repeat this, but. You know the clumsy cliche about the male response to wifely requests for fixing things around the house? We the aloof male are supposed to be affronted by these invasions of our time off. I now freely confess. I loved being asked to fix whatever needed fixing. It made me feel useful and gave me the opportunity to slay the dragon hassling my beloved. I enjoyed being confronted by a problem which could engage my weekend mind and body.

My jobs ranged from repairing a leaky faucet to assembling a bookcase for the continuously enlarging library in our home. Sometimes, the pool scavenger needed attention or a dog taken to the vet. Whatever, it was my chance and my heart and hand leapt at the deed.

This was part of a game we played, of course. We knew that she could do most of the "deeds" spelled out for me. Maybe, she couldn't fell, cut and split the old dead oaks we used to fire our house-heating stoves, but I'm sure she could have driven the tractor we used to care for the orchard she ran, growing, certifying, harvesting and selling.

The rewards I received were plentiful and more than compensated the interruption of my waiting compulsions. I look back at those gratified conclusions with satisfaction and joy, remembering the princess whose favors I would gladly chase, if only she were still alive.

Ray Teplitz

Mom



Mom is traveling a path I cannot take
I cannot walk with her
I cannot hold her hand
She really doesn't need me
Her world is populated by memories
By dead relatives and friends
They talk with her
And walk with her
And hold her hand
I love her still but my Mom is gone
Sometimes she smiles and remembers me
But the memory is quick to fade
Her smile turns to confusion
And she asks for others long gone
To hold her hand on this long journey

Christine Darton-Henrichsen

Kathy Richmond

"Art is not what you see, but what you make others see."
—Edgar Degas

Paintings by Kathy Richmond



Kathy Richmond

Kathy is a retired graphic designer living in Eugene. She spends much of her spring and summers tending the flowers that she renders beautifully in her fine oil paintings. Her quiet, relaxed lifestyle is reflected in her art, which emanates a warmth and softness that is uniquely Kathy. When she is not painting, she enjoys soft music, wine and good conversation with her friends.

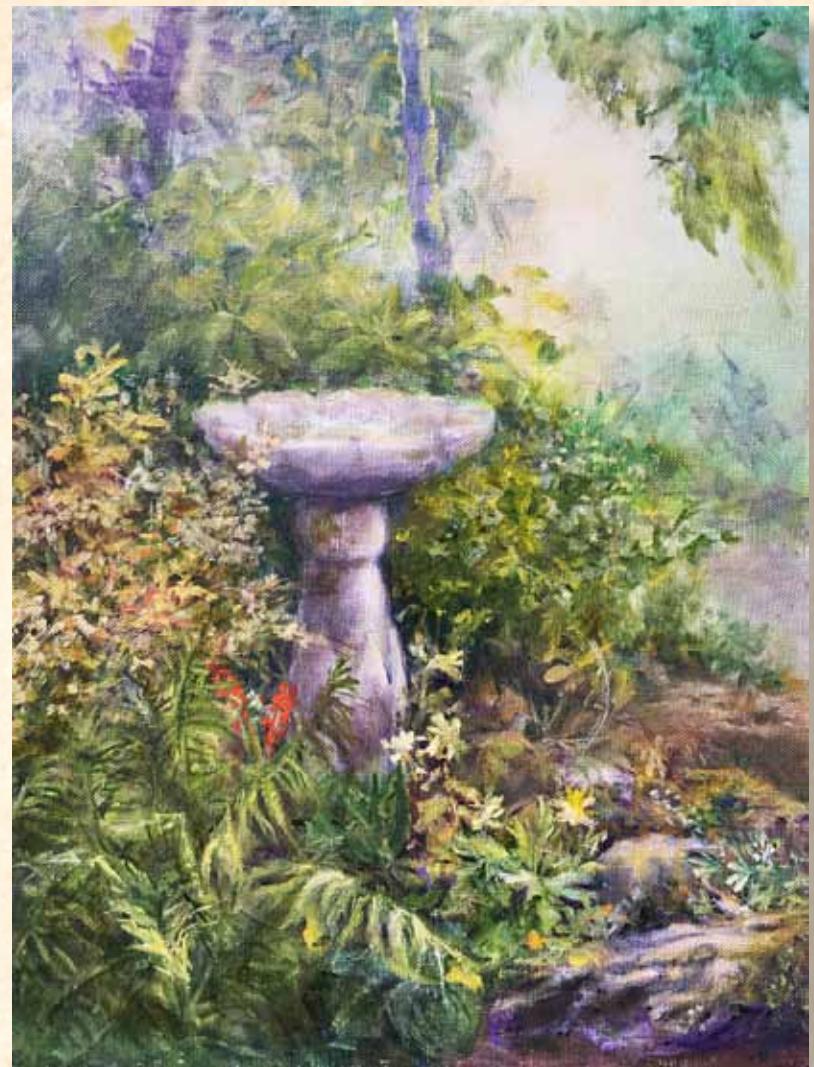


Teapot with Flowers



The Charming "Miss Iris"

104



Backyard Spa

105

Portrait

A sultry summer afternoon
purple thunder from eggplant clouds
lightening knives slitting them open
releasing torrents of silver rain.

My restless soul prowling, searching, reaching
for what?
Yearning, soul-ache there must be more to life.

I want to dissolve through the pane that separates me from the deluge, become a part of the wild elements raging through my world.

I turn instead and mount the dark, narrow stair

open the door to the past.
to the musty relics hiding their secrets in my attic.

Around me lies the mushroom colored past held gently together by the tatted tracery of cobwebs.
I am the interloper in this silent long-dead world, urged on by the insistent drumming of the rain.

Thunder punctuates my gloomy thoughts.
Why am I here?
What devil lures me to this secret world this yesteryear which was not a part of me?
I turn to go.

'Tis then I see hidden darkly in a corner

wearing a cape of dusty 'webs its ornate frame evincing the heavy hand of time, the portrait of a lady.

Billows of dust respond to the pouf of my breath. A certain eye-glint belies the somehow familiar solemn countenance disturbing, intriguing enticing.

And then I realize it is a portrait of me but a hundred years ago gazing at something beyond my shoulder amused, challenging the smile-hint barely veiled knowing secrets I shall never know.

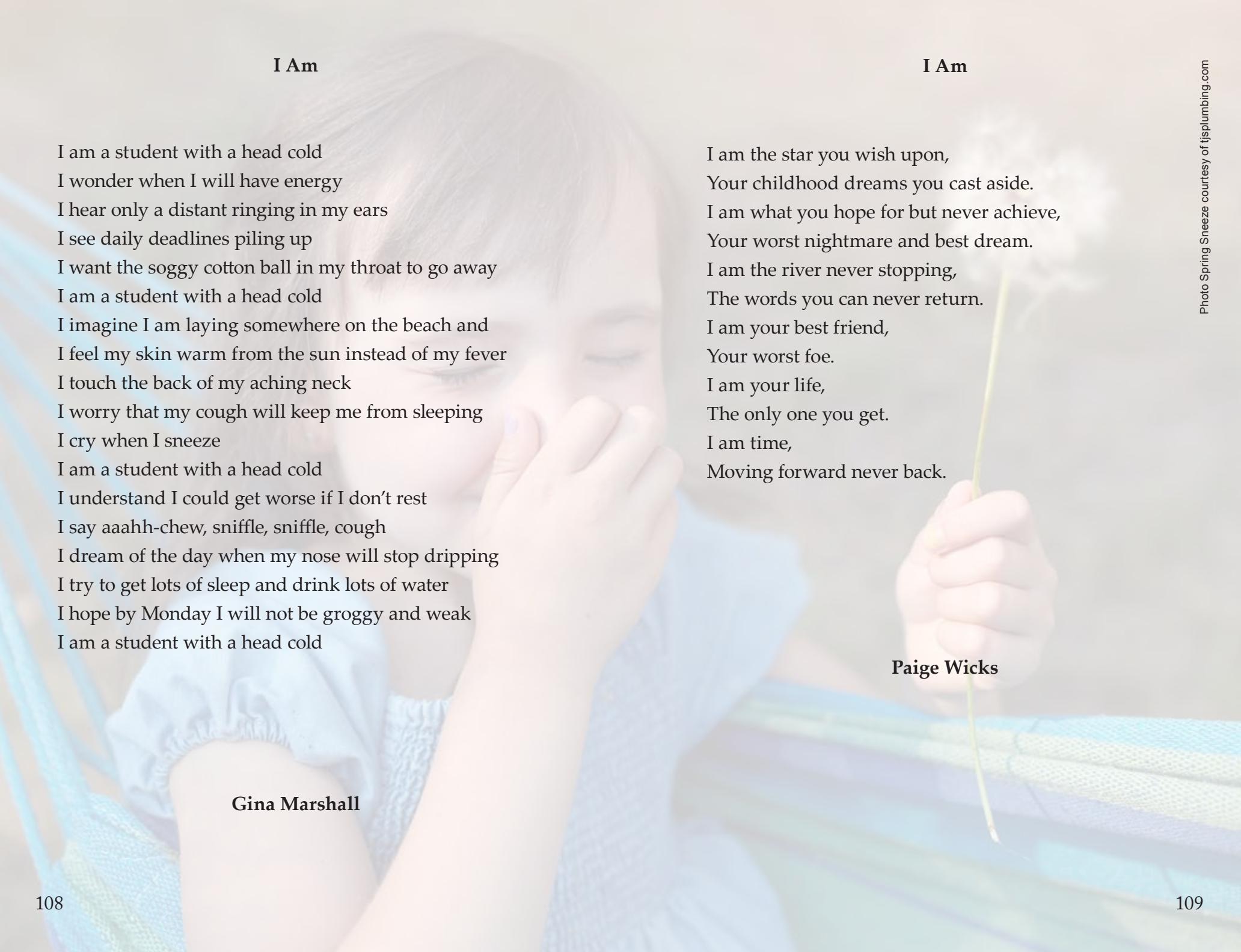
A drum roll of thunder lightening tears the air apart.

Is the portrait laughing or are the elements playing tricks on me? I look again an enigmatic smile like the Mona Lisa but me - me!

What lesson have the elements sought to teach me this molasses summer afternoon?

I have not learned it. The restlessness is not cured. I cannot take this portrait into the world of fresh air and sunlight - if it still exists - but I'll be back.

Jimmie Harvey

A close-up photograph of a person's face and hands. The person has long, light-colored hair and is holding their right hand up to their nose, with their fingers partially covering their mouth as if they are about to sneeze or have just sneezed. Their left hand is visible at the bottom left, wearing a blue and white striped cuff. The background is blurred.

I Am

I am a student with a head cold
I wonder when I will have energy
I hear only a distant ringing in my ears
I see daily deadlines piling up
I want the soggy cotton ball in my throat to go away
I am a student with a head cold
I imagine I am laying somewhere on the beach and
I feel my skin warm from the sun instead of my fever
I touch the back of my aching neck
I worry that my cough will keep me from sleeping
I cry when I sneeze
I am a student with a head cold
I understand I could get worse if I don't rest
I say aaahh-chew, sniffle, sniffle, cough
I dream of the day when my nose will stop dripping
I try to get lots of sleep and drink lots of water
I hope by Monday I will not be groggy and weak
I am a student with a head cold

Gina Marshall

I Am

I am the star you wish upon,
Your childhood dreams you cast aside.
I am what you hope for but never achieve,
Your worst nightmare and best dream.
I am the river never stopping,
The words you can never return.
I am your best friend,
Your worst foe.
I am your life,
The only one you get.
I am time,
Moving forward never back.

Paige Wicks

The Bully

One day at Sunny Elementary, Tyler stood around Bobby and pushed him in the puddle in front of him. Bobby wasn't very strong and fell forward in the gigantic mud pool. "Ha,ha! You little wimp! You're the weakest thing I've ever seen," yelled Tyler. All of the kids laughed too. Bobby layed in the puddle and almost cried, but he held it in. He ran inside the school, soaked in mud. His teacher Ms. Tundra turned his way, and her face fell as she sighed. "Oh Bobby. What happened this time?" she asked. He explained what had happened at the playground in a whisper. He walked down to the office and changed into some new clothes, then came back to class. The next day, Bobby was not excited for school. He brought some spare clothes just in case he got pushed in the puddle again. He slowly waled down the halls and silently began entering the classroom. "Well look who it is," Tyler said giggling. Bobby sat down with his head toward the ground. Later at recess, Tyler kept poking Bobby in the head. Bobby was tired of this and turned around with glaring eyes and spoke in the loudest voice that has ever came out of his mouth. "TYLER STOP! I'm so annoyed by you that my brain just might explode any moment! I do not appreciate your nonsense, and I will not live with it any longer," Bobby screamed in his face. Tyler still shocked stood there, as Bobby started heading for the swing set.

Gracie Cates

Joy



Joy runs around the house

Leaping and laughing,

And having fun

Joy smiles at everyone who crosses her path

She jumps again

Frozen in time

Over and Over

Never to frown again

Sophia Calevi



Memories of Christmas Past

Once again, the dark days of the year are here, but I am comforted by the thought that, soon, we will celebrate the return of the light. In anticipation I open my chest of Christmas memories. Its treasures fill me with warmth and happiness as they rise and dance around me - images of flickering candle light, the fir scent of advent wreaths and Christmas trees, the sound of bells and Christmas carols, and the crunch and taste of Christmas cookies - traditions that go back to my childhood. The images flow together as one, but once in a while some dance out of line to remind me of special moments.

Christmas Eve 2006 was one of those occasions. Our house was full of chatter and laughter. A beautiful little noble fir sat in the bay window of the Dining Room. Six-year old Sebastian helped his Opa and Uncle Dominic decorate it with ornaments, electric lights and real candles, a cherished tradition which I brought with me from Germany and refuse to give up. I was busy in the kitchen, arranging vegetables on a platter, filling a terrine with ragout, keeping an eye on the puff pastry in the oven, ready to scoop berry mousse into glass bowls, and arranging homemade cookies on a platter.

For as long as I can remember, my mother had prepared “ragout fin” with chicken and mushrooms in a sauce with lemon juice, white wine, and creme fraiche, served in puff pastry cups, and I continued the tradition. A few years ago I tired of the same old menu. I wanted to experiment, be creative. I called up our children, Manja and Dominic, and was stunned by their fierce protest. Change Christmas Eve dinner? No way! They could have joined Tevje in FIDDLER ON THE ROOF, insisting on “Tradition!” So I continue to serve the same food every year, with small variations, not too many, mind you, lest I receive some disapproving comments. Some things seem to be beyond discussion.

I don't know what had come over me, but a week before I decided to make my three favourite Christmas cookies. I pulled out my tattered German cookbook and the old German nut grinder. I toasted almonds and hazelnuts, ground them up and made three separate batches of shortbread dough. With a nod to modernity, I no longer prepared them by wielding two knives, as I had learned, but borrowed a Cuisinart from my neighbour: much faster, no mess.

After the dough had rested overnight in the refrigerator, I shaped almond crescents by hand, cut hazelnut bars with a knife, and used various cookie cutters for the Bavarian rum cookies. When they

were all baked and cooled, I dipped the crescents and hazelnut bars in melted dark chocolate. The rum cookies were glued together with jam and received a gentle dusting of powdered sugar. I had forgotten how much work it all was and that I really did not enjoy baking. Still, I was pleased with myself - the platter looked beautiful, and I knew the cookies would go well with the berry mousse.

My friend Maike stopped by briefly. We exchanged gifts - her home-made quince liqueur for my home-made raspberry liqueur. After a round of testing the consensus was that they were different but equally good. Cheers to everyone!

We were all dressed in our Sunday best. Dominic's friend Alison kept an eye on our fourteen-months old grandson August who cruised through the house like a whirling dervish, his eyes and fingers everywhere while Manja was setting the table with the white damask cloth she had given me some years back, and the white-and-black china I had brought with me when I emigrated to the US. The silver was polished, the glasses sparkled. The four red Advent candles on the table center piece were lit.

Paul opened the champagne, filled the glasses - Sebastian had sparkling cider - and we all toasted to a Merry Christmas. Then Dominic broke out a box of traditional English “crackers,” small cardboard cylinders covered with foil that were twisted at each

end. Two people pull until there is a popping sound, and out comes a little surprise.

Sweet Uncle Dominic! Two days before, he, Alison and I had taken Sebastian to hear David Bull read "A Child's Christmas in Wales," accompanied by celtic fiddle and guitar music. We had attended this annual event for years.

As always, at the end of the performance Mr. Bull asked someone in the audience to come forward and pull on a party cracker with him. Sebastian wanted to really badly and was very disappointed when someone else got there first. But now here he was, being able to pull with everybody. The crackers popped and out tumbled little favours: tiny playing cards, whistles, note pads, and paper crowns for everybody. And little strips of paper with riddles:

"Why did the turkey join the marching band?"

"Why?"

"Because he had the drum sticks."

Sebastian doubled over with laughter and the adults laughed about Sebastian, and then we turned on some music and sat down to dinner, kings and queens all of us with colourful paper crowns on our heads. We joined hands and said "Guten Appetit! Guten Appetit! Guten Appetit! Amen!" - to which

Sebastian added: "Let's eat with our feet." It was pretty close to six o'clock, the traditional Christmas Eve dinner time in my German family.

After dinner Sebastian and his dad, Adam, went to the computer to find Santa's location on Google Earth. The stage was set. All actors knew their roles.

"Google Shmoogle!", I said. I wanted to see for myself if I couldn't detect Rudolph's shiny nose in the sky, so I put on my coat and shoes. Sebastian and Adam decided to come with me. The others, wimpy one and all, decided to stay warm and dry inside instead of facing the drizzly cold.

The three of us walked through the neighbourhood, checking the sky for the blinking of Rudolph's red nose, and trying to peek into people's windows to see if perhaps there were presents under anybody's tree already. It didn't work too well because we were being careful not to trespass.

It began to rain harder. Thick clouds covered the sky. The only blinking red signals came from the transmission towers on Blanton Heights. Dispirited, we decided to give up and go home.

As we approached the house we thought we heard the tinkling of bells. Sebastian and Adam raced toward the front door. It was unlocked! Bells were ringing away somewhere.

"Sebastian, the back door!", Adam shouted as they ran through the house.

Too late! The back door was wide open and Santa was gone. Sebastian was almost beside himself with excitement.

"Did I hear some bells?", asked Uncle Dominic as he and Alison descended from the upper floor.

Manja also came down, having just changed August, and Opa Paul appeared from somewhere, wondering what had happened, and we all gathered in the dining room.

The candles on the tree had been lit. Their warm glow illuminated a mountain of presents, large and small, too many to remember. There was a wooden rocking horse for August, with a real horsehair tail; a coat for Manja; a subscription to the New Yorker for Adam, a fuzzy scarf and a book for Alison, marzipan and pear brandy for Opa Paul, and not one but two books for Oma Heidi, and - get this - TWELVE presents for Sebastian, including a photograph of a new bike which would be waiting for him under his tree in Seattle.

The only disappointment was that Uncle Dominic did not find the BMW he had wished for, but he did get some really nice sheets so that he could dream about it in comfort.

August loved ripping the paper and there were pieces of wrappings everywhere. He slipped on the ribbons and fell. He tried in vain to mount the rocking horse by himself. He became grumpy and was put to bed. Sebastian's eyes drooped and he finally consented to go to his mattress on the family room floor, where he had been camping out with Opa.

Paul, wedged between the armchair and the cardboard fort that he and Oma Heidi had built two years ago and which now delights little August. The house became quiet. The conversation slowed. The candles burned down and were extinguished. Soon the adults, too, began to yawn and went to bed, tired but contented, and filled with goodwill.

Heidi Sachet



Empty Desks

While most ten-year-olds were reading Harry Potter, this one took to hiding behind the murky cover of *The Tell-Tale Heart*. She sat back row, far corner, windowless—

an empty desk in front,
another at her side.

1.

Hunched within her self-made shadow, one could not discern the finely chiseled cheekbones, nor the color of her eyes, but her hair—even at a distance—called her out: chocolate flaps hung here and there scissored-careless, a jelled tuft of russet cowlick sprouting its defiance at the crown.

The few who said they'd seen her eyes, claimed them gray, or were they brown? Most did not recall much more than downcast lids of porcelain no one cared to ask about.

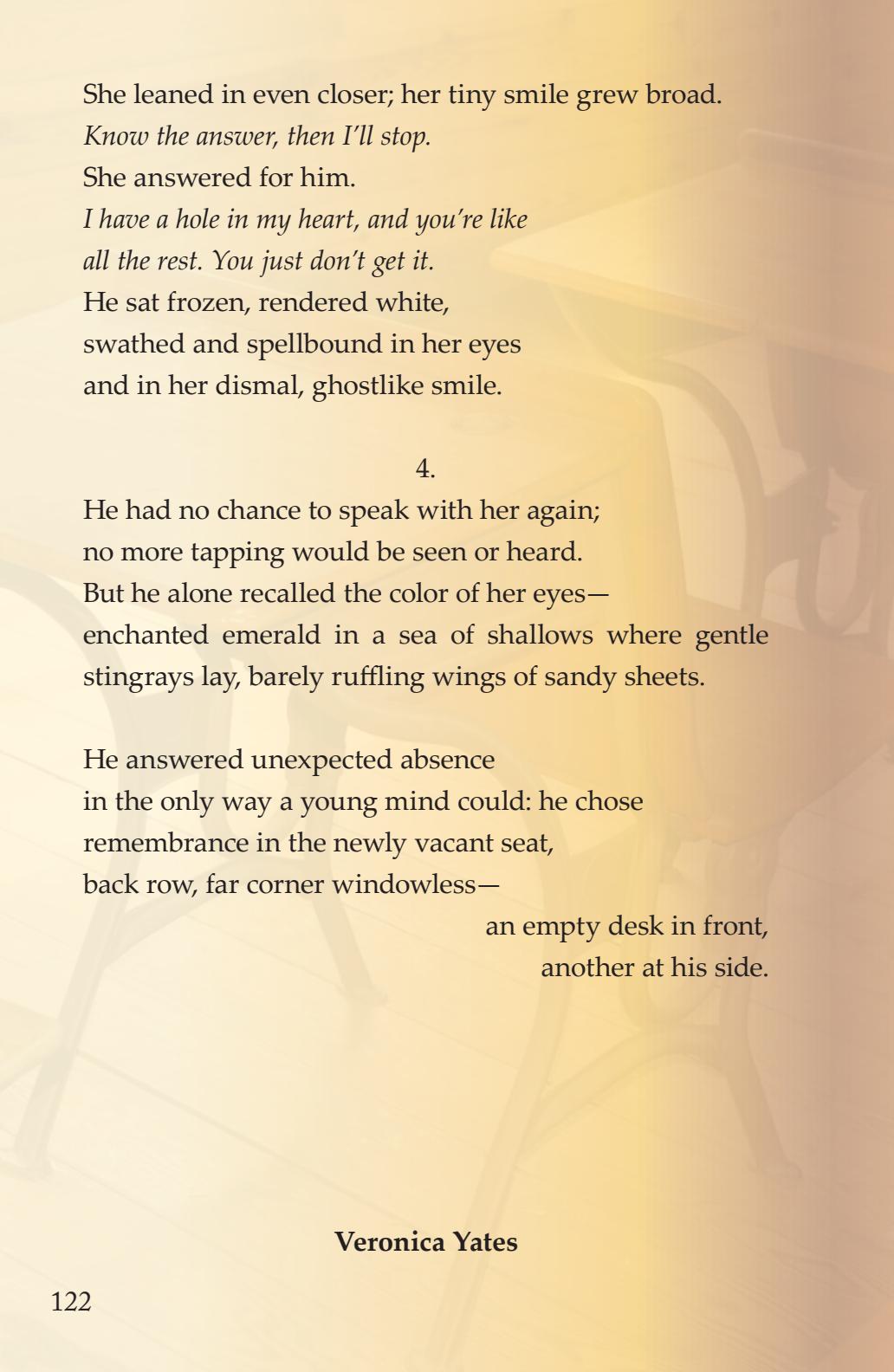
2.

She rarely spoke and never sang, but drummed her fingers on the desk, tapping nonsense out of sync, and when complaints arose she did the rarest of all things: she smiled with lips so wafer thin; the tiniest of bend emerged, holding safe in place the etchings from opening to the daylight.

3.

One day a new boy strode in late—one who knew no better than to take the seat so long left vacant by her side. Annoyed—he ordered—more than asked, *Why don't you stop that tapping?* She leaned in close, the smile so dry released. *I'm counting every beat to find out just how many times a heart can beat before it breaks.*





She leaned in even closer; her tiny smile grew broad.

Know the answer, then I'll stop.

She answered for him.

I have a hole in my heart, and you're like

all the rest. You just don't get it.

He sat frozen, rendered white,
swathed and spellbound in her eyes
and in her dismal, ghostlike smile.

4.

He had no chance to speak with her again;
no more tapping would be seen or heard.
But he alone recalled the color of her eyes—
enchanted emerald in a sea of shallows where gentle
stingrays lay, barely ruffling wings of sandy sheets.

He answered unexpected absence
in the only way a young mind could: he chose
remembrance in the newly vacant seat,
back row, far corner windowless—

an empty desk in front,
another at his side.

Rogene Manas

"When I let go of what I am,
I become what I might be." —Lao Tsu

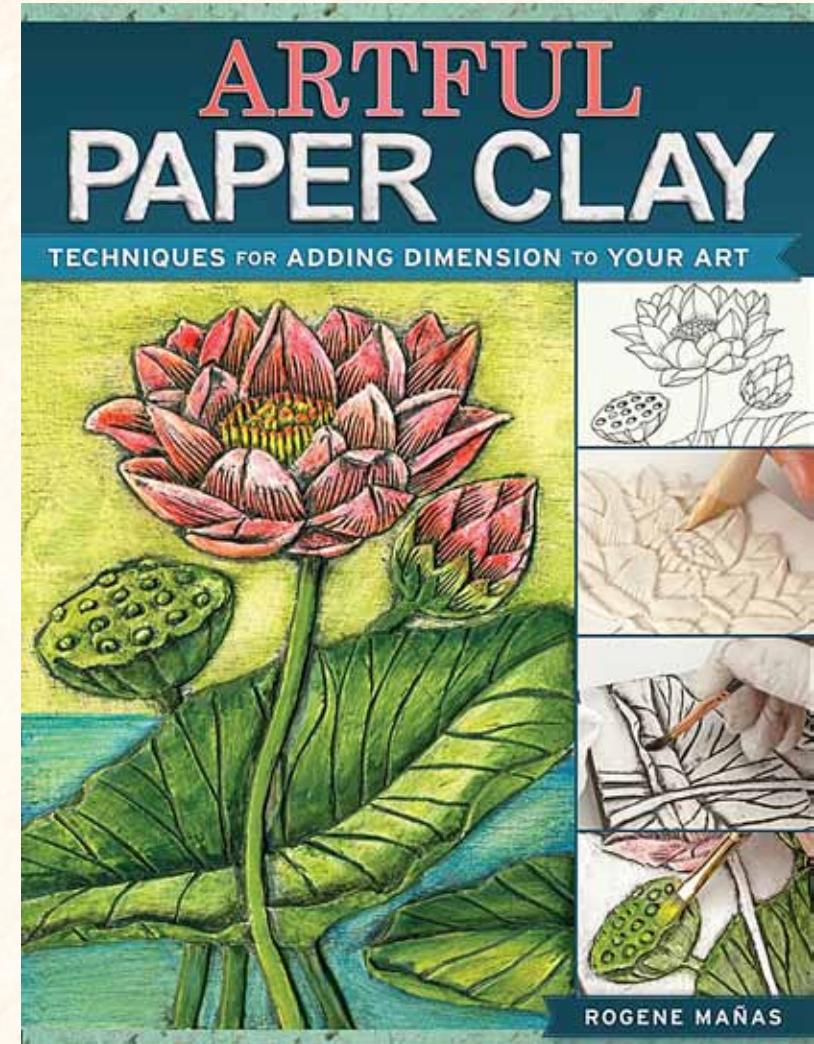
Veronica Yates

Rogene Manas



From a Facebook post after the recent election, Rogene said the following:

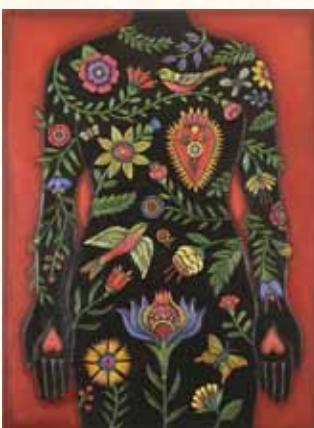
"I have decided to take a higher view. Ultimately, we are one. And like any "one", we have a good side and a not so good side that is still growing and developing. As one, we need to recognize and embrace that side of our country. We need to guide and nurture it into the light. We need compassion, empathy, and understanding. We know that ultimately love is the ONLY way. Love of our luscious and very fragile earth, love of all beings large and small, love of one another and love of ourselves. It is a utopian view, I know, but it's the only way for humans to survive. And I believe we are capable of evolving into a better life for all. It will take generations. We can grow together. We can lead to light".



As a workshop teacher, Rogene loves helping people discover and develop their creative abilities using innovative and forgiving mixed media methods. Rogene teaches workshops in Oregon, California and Mexico. Her work may be seen at Guardino Gallery in Portland, OR, and on her website at rogenemanas.com.



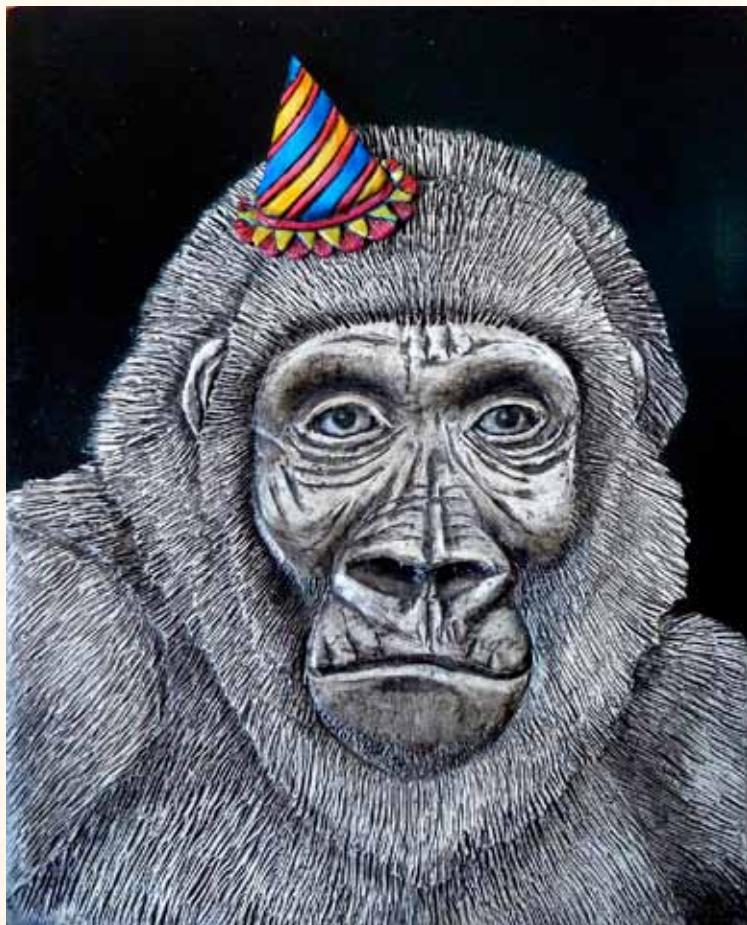
Painter, mixed media artist, author and teacher Rogene Mañas specializes in paper clay bas-relief on canvas and panels. As a graphic designer, illustrator and owner of her own international card company, Rogene transitioned to art making more than 15 years ago.



She was an accomplished landscape painter, but began working in a folk art style after spending winters in Mexico. Her unique and innovative methods of using paper clay lead to the publication of her new book, *Artful Paper Clay: Techniques for Adding Dimension to Your Art* by North Light Books. In 2011, she was featured on OPB's Oregon Art Beat after her work was spotted in a Portland gallery by the show's producers: (<http://www.opb.org/television/programs/artbeat/segment/painter-rogene-manas/>).

The Going Away Party

These animals are part of my project called The Going Away Party. I hope to have about 50 or more when I am finished...but I may never finish since more animals are being added to the endangered species list everyday.



128



It is a very sad situation. Innocent creatures who have been here forever are going to disappear. And what will be left are those that can survive and thrive with humans.

Rogene Manas

129



Autumn

An early Autumn evening – my peace interrupted as
a lawnmower growls into action in a neighbor's yard

I think back to a time when...

Lawnmowers clacked

Screen doors smacked the door frames as we
escaped for a few more minutes of play

"Play" meant a baseball game in the street or

Climbing trees in the canyon or

Just sitting on the front lawn sharing secrets with my
best friend Janie

Days gone by but never far from my thoughts

The growling motor stops now as do my thoughts
of a time when I was a child and lawnmowers simply
clacked

Christine Darton-Henrichsen

Winter Night

Like a crystal marble
The moon nestles in the black winter sky

Trees stand exposed
Thrusting bare branches into the night

Patches of snow lay scattered on the ground
Like clouds fallen to earth

Tracks of night visitors
Dance across the snowy carpet

All is still as the moon makes her silent journey
Across the winter sky

Christine Darton-Henrichsen





Improvisation

Our musical performer for the evening was extolling the great improvisers of the classical and jazz forms. He improvised for us and set me wondering about the subject.

If improvisation is the act of spontaneous development of a theme, aren't we almost always involved in its production, its creation?

We are engaged in conversation, making up a scenario as we go along, having no script from which to read. Isn't that the case?

It isn't as though our exchanges are conceived ahead of time. We have to be prepared to respond to questions, or a line of thought to which we may have had no previous exposure, since it is coming out of someone else's mind, a mind that is improvising the thought at the moment. Examples abound.

Improvising is one of the things our minds have been evolved to do, so marveling at our proclivity to do so is moot. But, marveling at our masters at the ability, that's another matter. We have been lucky at having met with the Bachs and Beethovens in our midst.

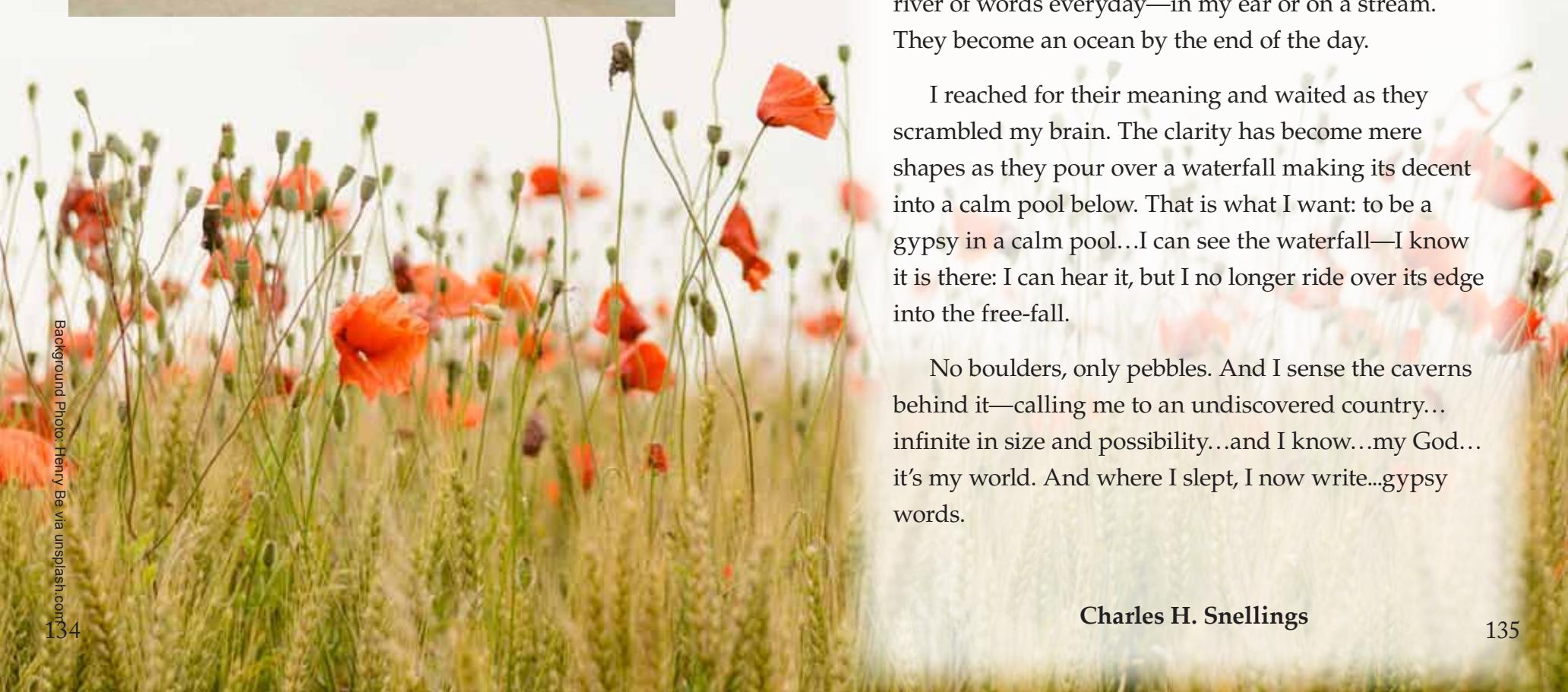
We await the new masters with exquisite anticipation.

Ray Teplitz

Gypsy Words



Photo: Burning Man 2013 Mutant Gypsy Wagon via [wikimedia.org](#)



Background Photo: Henry Be via [unsplash.com](#)

I want to fly...and yet the thought of that is scarier than following the line of least resistance. I need reassurances—training wheels under my wings. Propped up by obsolete thoughts. I have been thinking too much...worrying.

Though what I really want is to be a gypsy—oh that thought disturbs me, It is forbidden, and part of me doesn't want that...it wants to be a part-time gypsy.

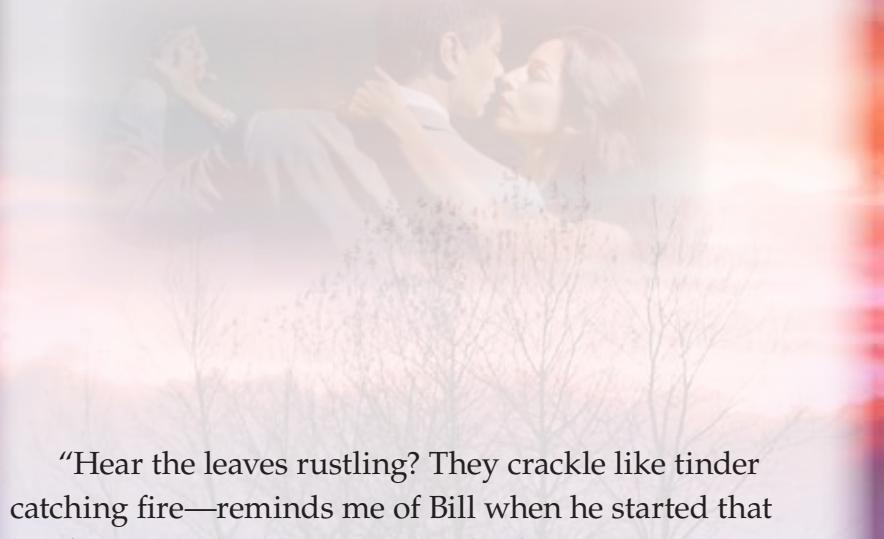
Faces surround me and say words in the now. A river of words everyday—in my ear or on a stream. They become an ocean by the end of the day.

I reached for their meaning and waited as they scrambled my brain. The clarity has become mere shapes as they pour over a waterfall making its decent into a calm pool below. That is what I want: to be a gypsy in a calm pool...I can see the waterfall—I know it is there: I can hear it, but I no longer ride over its edge into the free-fall.

No boulders, only pebbles. And I sense the caverns behind it—calling me to an undiscovered country... infinite in size and possibility...and I know...my God... it's my world. And where I slept, I now write...gypsy words.

Charles H. Snellings

The Woman Who Last Danced with My Husband



"Hear the leaves rustling? They crackle like tinder catching fire—reminds me of Bill when he started that bonfire on the beach. Don't you think so, Maggie?"

No, I say, although I remember the event precisely.

"Ladies," Bill had said, "Fall's in the air and we have fire!" Jayne had begun dancing, twirling around the fire—silly, I thought, until Bill joined her. I'd envied Jayne for her lack of inhibition, but not enough to become part of it. Something I now regret.

Already I'm annoyed at her mere mention of my husband. Jane has a way of extrapolating past incidents, transmuting them to the present and rekindling memories I'd prefer to forget. Sometimes I dread walking with her, amid her wearisome auditory observations. Today, harbinger of gusts, she blathers on

about wind pockets ahead, claiming she can hear leaves being torn from maple branches. Within seconds, a blast of wind snarls my no-muss-bob into a tangled bird's nest.

Don't misunderstand. Jayne is my dearest friend, although we started walking only six months ago—shortly after Bill was killed. It happened at a four-way stop. That day, it was Jayne whom I'd reached, and, ironically, the only friend accessible, the one who didn't own a cell phone but clung to a cassette answering machine armed with a scratchy, newscast ploy not the least bit entertaining.

"Hurricane Dave headed our way . . . Hi, it's Jayne. Leave a message." (clunk) "Oops, just a minute" (chuckles). "Hell-o-o!"

"Jayne," I'd said, "I'm at Saint Martha's Hospital . . ."

She'd arrived in record-breaking time—under fifteen minutes in rush-hour traffic. "It's O.K. to cry," she had said. I wouldn't and I haven't yet. I just walk around with fire in my stomach and tightness in my throat, as if years of emotional debt are working up to projectile vomit. Walking with Jayne somehow exacerbates this. And, just once, I'd like to forego hearing about skittering pinecones ahead, the ones we'll soon be crushing underfoot. Even the anticipation of sound obsesses her.

Only the ring of a cell phone repulses, and she's proud to be without. She orders me to turn off mine.

You need one, I tell her, but she ignores me.

"Heads up, skateboarders!"

I see nothing, but soon hear wheels clattering on pebbled concrete like a rickety rollercoaster. Two boys in the distance, probably middle school age, are leaping curb to street—a thwack announces every landing. But Jayne's already shifted focus to a howling dog inside the house we're passing.

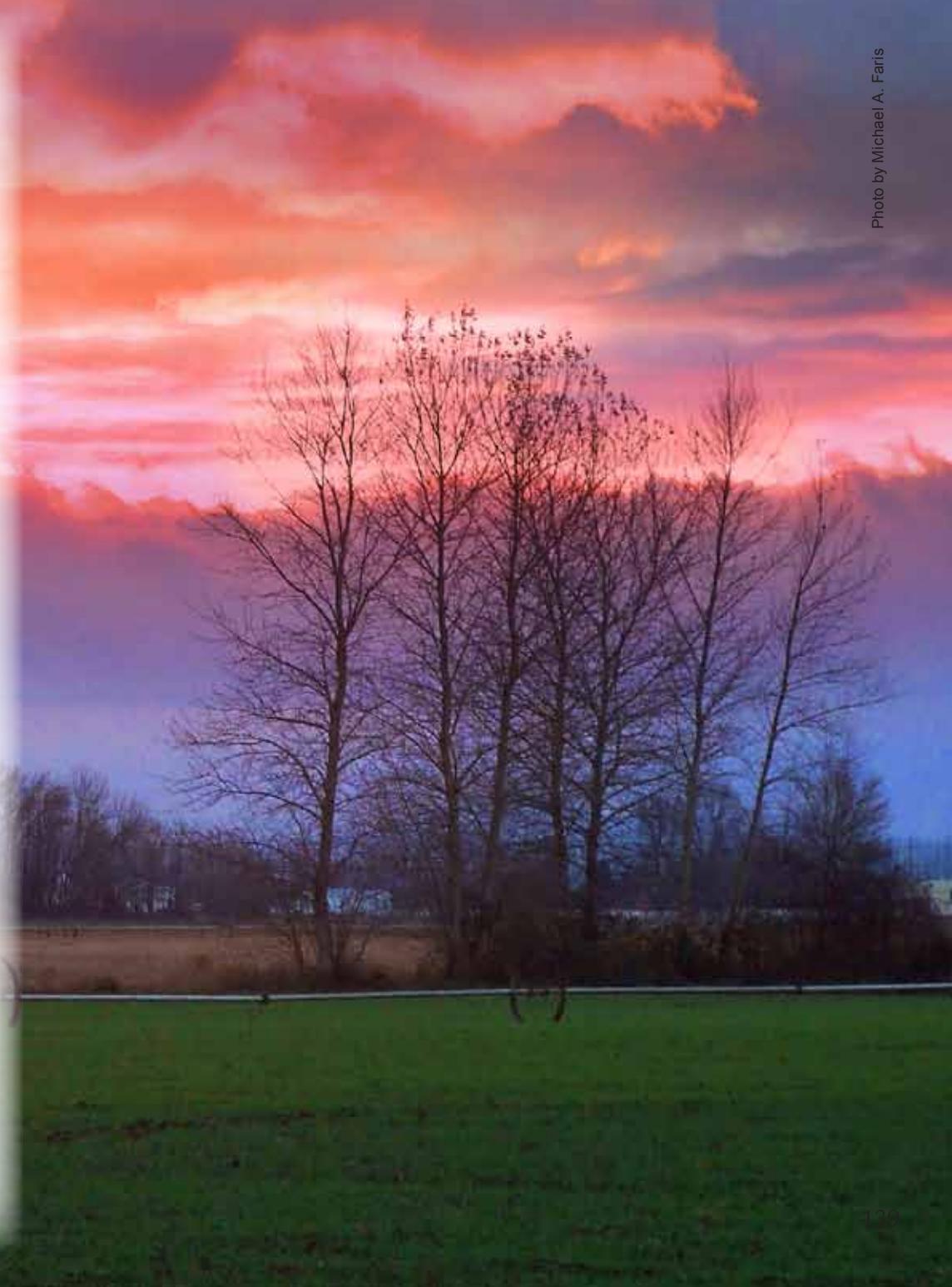
"I bet it's a Huskie . . ." And down she goes, stumbling into a sidewalk gash—a gaping hole clearly marked by an orange hazard cone. Blood splatters on the pavement; fractured bone pokes out below her shorts.

"O.K. to turn your cell on," she winces, her ghostly face, tacky with perspiration.

"Damn you, Jayne! He didn't watch where he was going either!"

She squeezes my arm, and then it happens—without a sound my tears begin to flow.

Veronica Yates



I Haven't a Q

We Quinlin sisters have been shopping for monogrammed stationery from Medford to Redding and can't find any Qs. Elegant paper is in plentiful supply with silver and gold As, Bs and Cs. Packages of Rs, Ss, and Ts decorated with purple butterflies line the shelves. Boxes of Xs, Ys and Zs embossed with pansies and morning glories are displayed in colorful rows. Shopkeepers search under, behind and through dusty drawers and back room shelves but all the Qs, plain and fancy, are missing. We sisters are dismayed. Was there a closeout sale on Qs and everybody snapped them up?

You know, it isn't as though that many people have Qs for initials. In the 40s and 50s we Quinlins lined up alphabetically in Portland for gym class and were flanked on one side by Palmers, Pinkertons, and Pomeroy's while Roths and Rosenblooms nudged us on the other. If our desks were arranged alphabetically, we Qs would have a whole row to ourselves. Check out the Q section in our high school yearbooks: The only pictures you'll see on the page are ours.

In fact, from quack to quotient the list of words beginning with Q in Webster's is really short. Our teachers used to whisper "quail," "quarter" or "quilt" into my sister's and my ears when we played the word game, "I'm going on a train ride and I'm taking something starting with the first letter of my last name."

I guess they thought we couldn't come up with our own word, having such an obscure letter for an initial.

Tonight, my sister called me from Portland all excited. "You won't believe this!" she chortled. "I know where the Qs are!"

It seems a tired looking woman sat beside her on the bus after work. They got to talking, and my sister who had been Q shopping that day, mentioned our dilemma.

"Oh, my goodness," this woman said, "I have all the Qs at home!" She works at a stationery distribution center and "Qs haven't been in demand for years," she said. "Why I've got Qs dating back to 1968 stacked to the rafters in my basement. I just threw out the 1950's they were so moldy. Tell me what you want and I'll have it at the bus stop tomorrow."

Just before the woman got off the bus she confided to my sister that she's going to be freeing up a lot of space in her basement. Now, not to alarm you unnecessarily but tell me, when was the last time you Xs, Ys, and Zs shopped for monogrammed stationery?

Judie Bunch

It's About Time

or

"Time, Don't Run Out On Me"

In quests to create fresh and lively rhyme
I'm probing at the depths and lengths of "time".

I've checked my Timex watch with hands rotating
And know time's on my side for wordsmith mating.

Decided that the time has come for verse,
Since, old before my time, I could do worse.

To thwart that "thief of time", procrastination,
I'll take some time for couplet presentation.

Though "March of Time's" left scant time on my hands,
There's still time left for footprints in time's sands.

I'll pass the time in rich iambic meter,
Since no time's like the present for a tweeter.

I've known those times for all good men to heed
Their country's call to serve in time of need.

I've savored good times, bad times, times-a-wasting
Hot times in old towns, long times 'tween drinks a-tasting.

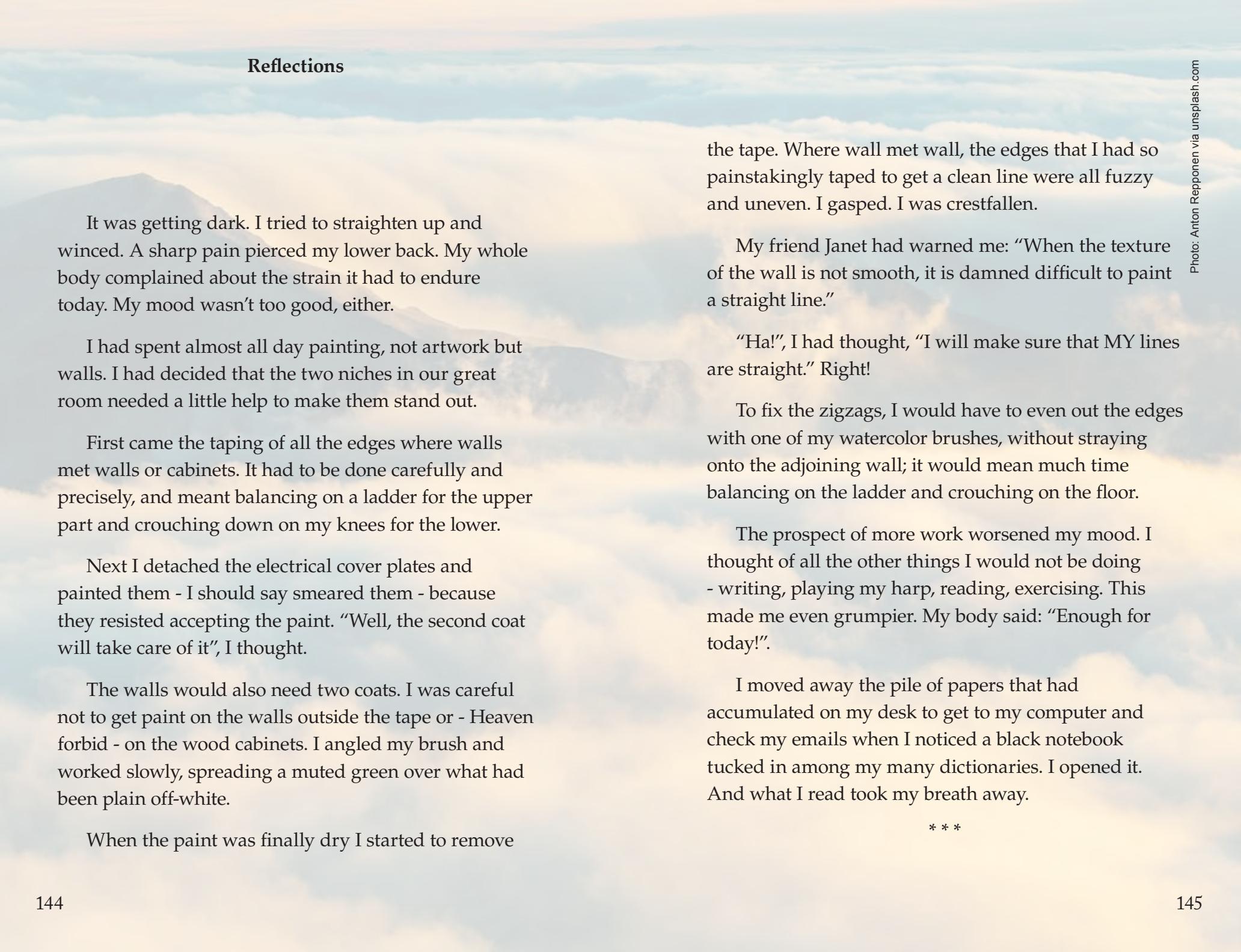
Seen best of times and worst of times speed by.
Watched time heal wounds, time-outs as sports games fly.

I've learned there's always time enough to bide,
Since more than not, time turns out on our side.

Yet there's so little time to do so much,
If time is money, Where's my Midas Touch?

So, sadly, folks my time for rhyming's sped,
My time's run out, it's truly come and fled.

Jim Stocker



It was getting dark. I tried to straighten up and winced. A sharp pain pierced my lower back. My whole body complained about the strain it had to endure today. My mood wasn't too good, either.

I had spent almost all day painting, not artwork but walls. I had decided that the two niches in our great room needed a little help to make them stand out.

First came the taping of all the edges where walls met walls or cabinets. It had to be done carefully and precisely, and meant balancing on a ladder for the upper part and crouching down on my knees for the lower.

Next I detached the electrical cover plates and painted them - I should say smeared them - because they resisted accepting the paint. "Well, the second coat will take care of it", I thought.

The walls would also need two coats. I was careful not to get paint on the walls outside the tape or - Heaven forbid - on the wood cabinets. I angled my brush and worked slowly, spreading a muted green over what had been plain off-white.

When the paint was finally dry I started to remove

the tape. Where wall met wall, the edges that I had so painstakingly taped to get a clean line were all fuzzy and uneven. I gasped. I was crestfallen.

My friend Janet had warned me: "When the texture of the wall is not smooth, it is damned difficult to paint a straight line."

"Ha!", I had thought, "I will make sure that MY lines are straight." Right!

To fix the zigzags, I would have to even out the edges with one of my watercolor brushes, without straying onto the adjoining wall; it would mean much time balancing on the ladder and crouching on the floor.

The prospect of more work worsened my mood. I thought of all the other things I would not be doing - writing, playing my harp, reading, exercising. This made me even grumpier. My body said: "Enough for today!".

I moved away the pile of papers that had accumulated on my desk to get to my computer and check my emails when I noticed a black notebook tucked in among my many dictionaries. I opened it. And what I read took my breath away.

* * *

June 24, 2009

Kept seeing busted veins on my breasts. Went to see Dr. San Marina who ordered blood test and ultrasound at Riverbed Hospital.

About 7 p.m. Dr. San Marina called. He suggested I had "Superior Vena Cava Syndrome". The CT scan had revealed a blood clot and a nodule on the right lung. I should go to the ER at Riverbend Hospital right away and have the ER physician contact him. He wanted a PET scan done of my lungs. I had never heard of a PET scan before and went on the internet to educate myself. Then Paul took me to Riverbend.

From about 7:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. I was confined to the gurney. Every hour or two various people came to hook me up to various machines.

Paul and I did not speak much during the long stretches alone in the room. Separated by a curtain from the hall, I could hear the business of an emergency ward being conducted, feet scurrying, voices consulting, giving instructions, complaining. I lost sense of time, with the AC's soft blowing.

Questions and frightening thoughts raced through my head. My blood pressure soaring.

Have I adequately expressed my love for my husband, my children, my grandchildren?

Have I shown my friends how much they mean to me?

The worst thought is of my death before Dominic's wedding in July.

* * *

June 25, 2009

A new day after a sleepless night. Paul just left. I feel so alone. The swelling and choking sensations in my neck and head are not going away. I am afraid. I try to be in the moment but find it difficult to concentrate on "now".

My sister Renate called. Paul had informed her. Dr. Romm was in the room and I could not talk. I could hear that she had been crying.

Dominic and Ali came by. Those beautiful young people, getting married in three weeks. I could read Dominic's concern, my sensitive, emotional son. I love him so much.

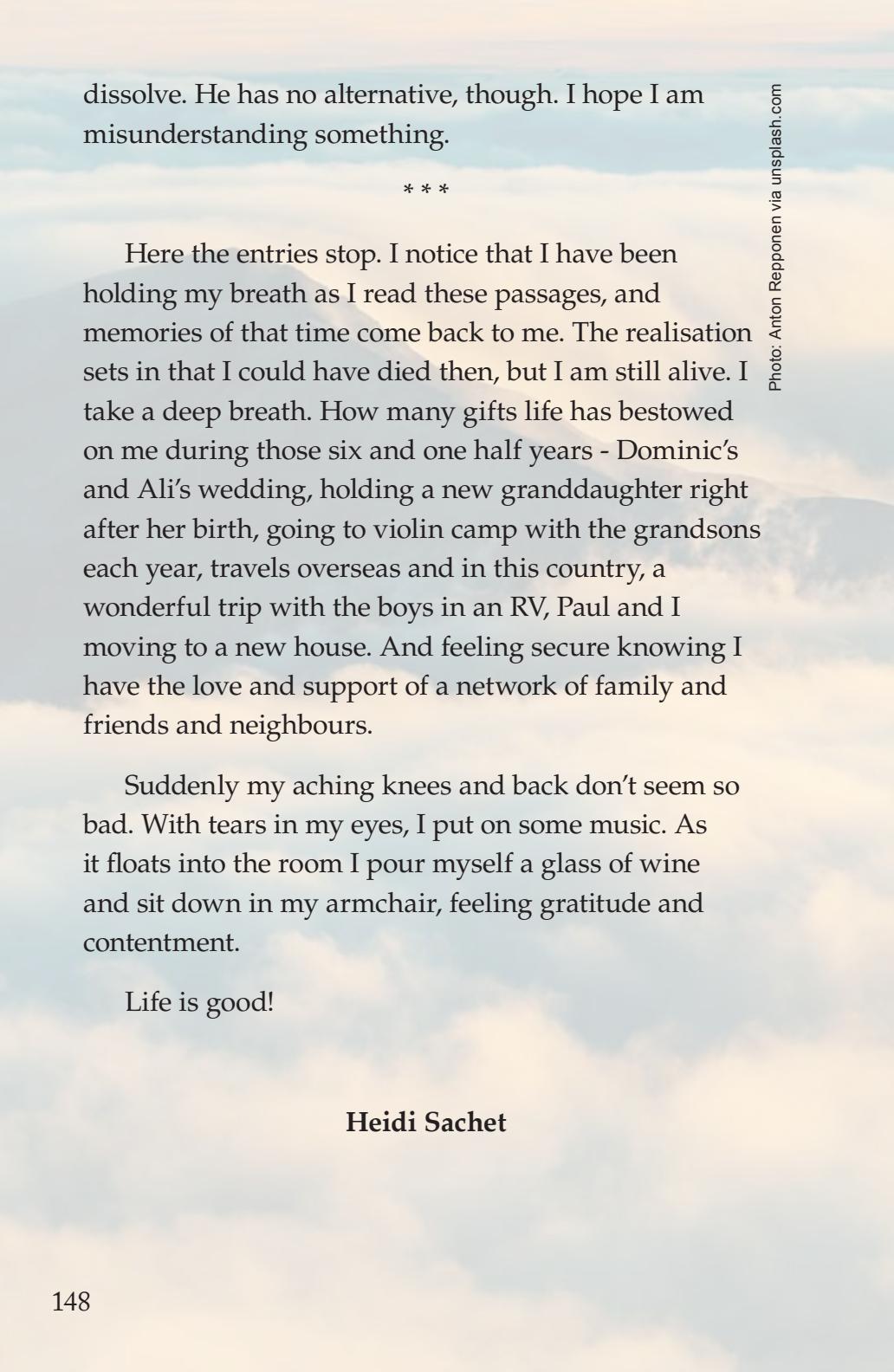
Manja called and spoke with Paul. She suggested we contact experts in Seattle. I wish I could reassure her that I will be fine. How I would love to hug my beautiful daughter right now

My friend Jo called. She will come by tomorrow.

* * *

June 26, 2009

Dr. White was not reassuring. He said the clot was substantial, he gave little hope that it would



dissolve. He has no alternative, though. I hope I am misunderstanding something.

* * *

Here the entries stop. I notice that I have been holding my breath as I read these passages, and memories of that time come back to me. The realisation sets in that I could have died then, but I am still alive. I take a deep breath. How many gifts life has bestowed on me during those six and one half years - Dominic's and Ali's wedding, holding a new granddaughter right after her birth, going to violin camp with the grandsons each year, travels overseas and in this country, a wonderful trip with the boys in an RV, Paul and I moving to a new house. And feeling secure knowing I have the love and support of a network of family and friends and neighbours.

Suddenly my aching knees and back don't seem so bad. With tears in my eyes, I put on some music. As it floats into the room I pour myself a glass of wine and sit down in my armchair, feeling gratitude and contentment.

Life is good!

Photo: Anton Reponen via unsplash.com

Heidi Sachet

Sandy Larkin

"Creativity is allowing yourself to make mistakes.
Art is knowing which ones to keep."

—*Scott Adams*

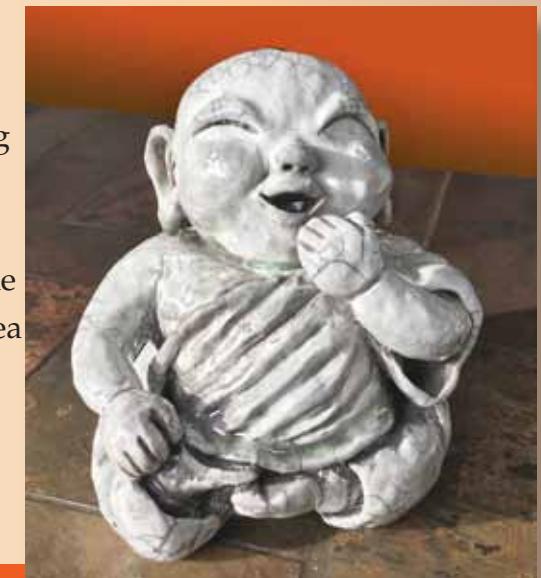


Photography by Michael A. Farris

Sandy Larkin

Always moving, always creating, Sandy throws herself into each new project with enthusiasm. Whether forming a shapeless lump of earth into a lively expression, or rendering color onto canvas, her work exudes energy.

She paints in strong colors using deliberate strokes to create a variety of styles. Often, she will express an idea in more than one medium, carrying a common theme throughout.



10,000 Steps, My Daily Adventure in Living



many blessings, I leave the house with great anticipation. Walking has become so much a part of me that my day is not complete unless I treat myself to this plethora of experiences.

I look forward to walking through the seasons. Each one has its special offerings and rewards and I want to be sure to experience them all.

Spring is so joyous, filled with new life, color, and

Many years ago I decided to walk for exercise. I have been walking all my life, obviously, but with intention, for the past 30 years. Little did I know the world that awaited me as I took my first step out the door. Each outing is a unique experience. I never know whom or what I am going to encounter. It may be uplifting, enlightening, surprising, sublime, sad, heart rendering, and even scary. Knowing that I will receive these

texture. Crocus bloom as early as February, followed quickly by the daffodils with their faces to the sun. If they don't get enough sun they turn their heads in search of that glorious elixir. I, too, find myself searching for the healing rays of the sun. Winter has kept me bundled up as I walk through rain, wind, and cold; the sun on my face feels absolutely glorious. So, I am not so different from all the spring flowers. I am in search of the precious gifts Mother Earth provides all of life. Whether its plants or mammals, we need her tender love.

In the Pacific Northwest, spring spills into summer without hardly realizing it. Temperatures remain very pleasant and tolerable, never really hot, which makes walking a continued joy. The flowering trees of which there are hundreds, burst forth in great abundance. The colors are amazing! Various shades of pinks, purples, and oranges to name but a few adorn the streets and yards. It seems as though every homeowner loves to garden. I have never lived in an area where the yards are so full of plants, bushes, and trees that continue to bloom starting in spring and going through fall.

Fall puts on its own special foliage show. The variety of trees make the change of colors spectacular. The oranges, reds, greens, yellows, rust, and even decaying browns create a visual extravaganza for my eyes. I feel I am walking through a gallery of paintings with each step I take. As the wind blows the dying leaves off their branches, I am reminded of the tenuous nature of life. A sense of gratitude often overwhelms me as I contemplate



the life I am blessed with. In the fall the deciduous trees shed their leaves, some with seeming reluctance while others just let them go with the first gust of wind. The result is a long period of lovely leaves litling through the air gracing my walks. Scuffing through the dead leaves, stirring them up, smelling their dried odor, I am reminded of the importance of living in the present. The fall leaf piles harken me back to my childhood in upstate New York. We had an abundance of maple trees so the ground was ablaze with color. Outdoors beckoned us to frolic in the leaf piles. We piled our yard leaves as high as possible so that we could go to the roof of the porch, which was our launching pad and to jump into the huge leaf piles. Squirrels dashed to and fro busily storing their winter provisions. Leaves went swish swish under my feet. Bird nests so hard to see in the spring, were laid bare

in the naked trees. The fall sun gently spread a warm glow over all of life.

Winters in the Pacific Northwest are rather unique as compared to others places I have lived, namely, in the South, the Northeast, the Midwest, and the Southwest. It is never very cold here in Eugene, OR. I have lived in all the extremes of weather, the horrific winters of the Northeast; wind, rain, sleet, and tornadoes in the midwest; the interminable humidity of the south; and lastly the extremes of heat and perpetual sun of the southwest, not to mention intense dust storms called Haboob!

We have trees in Eugene that are labeled "Heritage" trees, they don a simple silver tag that protects them from being cut down. They are almost always very large and probably very old. I see them all over Eugene on my walks. In my immediate neighborhood we have several Heritage trees, large old oaks. Their heights and breadth is something to behold. In the fall, they are naked and showing off their powerful outstretched arms. I am awed by them and grateful for their seasonal display. Stately fir trees remain constant through all seasons.

It is comforting to know they are protected. I think age deserves protection. Now that I am an old person, I understand the need to care for and protect our elderly. There are cultures that honor their elderly. I wish there was more of that kind of thinking in our society. Our culture is fixated on youth which is rather ironic since no

one can stay young forever. No matter how much people try to stay young, growing old is part of life. If you are fortunate, "blessed" as I would choose to say, you will be old one day.

Not only do I walk through the seasons, I walk through all kinds of aspects of life. There is the expected and the unexpected occurrences such as while walking through the parking lot outside of Trader Joe's, I heard a tune coming from an old Mercedes being driven by a curious looking old fellow. The lyric of the song got my attention, "Come together right now over me" by the Beatles. Discreetly, I stopped walking and feigned doing something with my phone just so that I could get a look at the driver. He got out of the car, and I could see that he had long white hair, was dressed in a suit, and though a little over weight, quite the dapper guy. He was probably my age, since that was a tune from my era. It put a smile on my face.

Another time I saw an elderly lady with a walker trying to cross in the middle of a busy street, not at the crosswalk. I stopped and watched as she stepped off the curb. "Oh no, I have to do something," I thought. So I, too, stepped off the curb waving my hands at the oncoming traffic in my lane, she was crossing from the other side. Luckily, her lane of traffic saw her and stopped to let her get through. Thankfully the traffic saw me and slowed down until we were both safely on the sidewalk. She finally looked up from her very stooped posture and grinned, saying, " Well, we made

it this time." We both chuckled. In retrospect, she reminded me of my mother in her last years of life. Very stooped, and just kinda cute in her little old lady way.

Usually, I walk alone and enjoy the opportunity to ponder life as I pass by a litany of humanity. The wide variety of fellow humans I encounter is quite entertaining; and sometimes frightening. I see people walking their dogs, or riding their bikes, or walking alone like me. I have been graced with many smiles, hellos, and brief chats along the way.

I don't make eye contact with all people, only the ones that I have deemed would be safe and that is not many. Unfortunately, there are a lot of homeless and drug addicts on our streets and they are unpredictable so I do not look at them. I have had the scary and threatening experience of men coming into my space asking for money, I just lower my head and rush on. I am such a fast walker that I know I can get away, at least for now. Sadly knowing there are people that will harm me if given the chance, I choose my routes very carefully and will turn around to avoid an unsavory person ahead.

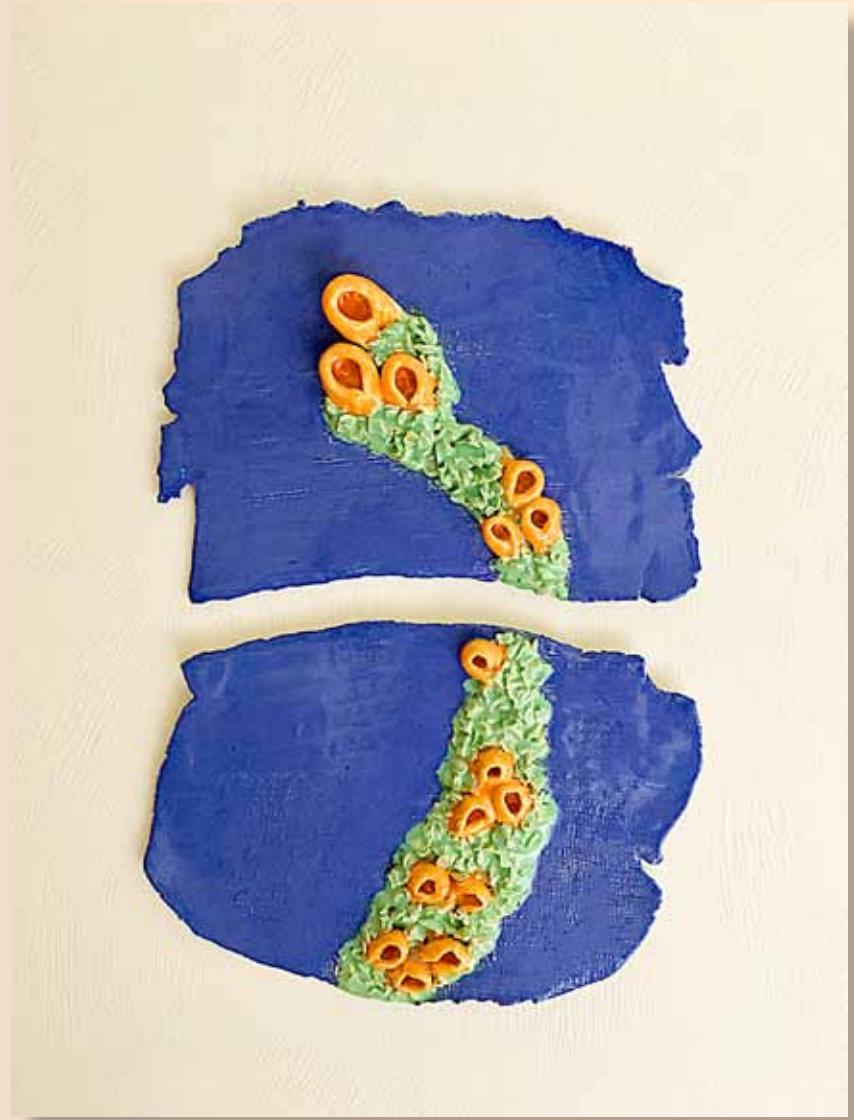
I have walked for so many years, I can easily surpass the recommended 10,000 steps daily, and often walk as much as 15,000 to even 18,000. I love the physicality of walking - the way my legs move me along, my heart rate is steady, my feet lift off the ground with purposeful intention. It is an affirmation of how much I appreciate

being alive and how grateful I am that I have taken such good care of my body that I can do this daily.

In 2014, my husband and I took the most amazing walk together. We did a pilgrimage, and walked the Camino Frances in northern Spain. It was a journey of 350 miles over a month with a few rest days along the way. At the end, I felt as if I could walk forever. It was a walk of a life time and I am eager to do something similar soon.

I look at my walks as an adventure, an opportunity to walk into peace, freedom, and gratitude. Walking provides me with a way to live life with intention, resolution and joy.

Sandy Larkin



Living Out Loud



"If you ask me what I came to do in this world. I, as an artist, will answer you: I am here to live out loud."

-Emile Zola

What does it mean to "live out loud" as an artist? From early childhood I wanted to create with my hands. My Father was a terrific role model. He seemed to be able to build anything he wanted to make. He was sensitive to my desire to create and always encouraged me to try, no matter what the obstacles. He would say, "Your work is an expression of who you are, so give it your very best effort. And, never say you are done, until you know you have nothing more to give."

My chosen methods of creating are painting and sculpture. I know every time I embark on a new artistic expression, I am investing a large part of myself into the piece. The act of creating a work of art requires me to reach deep within myself. I am eager for this journey of self discovery, and want the outcome to be an honest representation of who I am.

During the activity of creating, whether it is through paint or clay, I am completely aware of how much I am digging into my soul. This awareness demands that I abandon all expectations and allow the medium to connect with my feelings. It is my desire that those feelings translate into a piece that resonates with viewers, where they find themselves in an unexpected place and feel a sense of connection or contemplation.

In my desire to transcend the obvious, I am exploring non-representational abstract art. Some people might think abstract art is easy. Not so! It is the hardest way to create art. It requires shedding one's expectations of how something should look, and then, boldly go into unknown territory.



When I find myself in this place of the unknown I am tempted to retreat to the known, the safety of what is familiar and recognizable. It is an endless battle to remain in unfamiliar territory and continue the journey



of expression. I often become frustrated and feel like quitting, but something always drives me on to achieve resolution. I cannot rest until I have given it all I have to give and am ready to call it finished.

Reaching that place of satisfaction, knowing I have no more to give to this effort, the act of saying, "This is it," is not as easy as one might think. It takes courage to put your stamp of approval on a piece which says this is me, this is what I have to say. It is like standing in front of the world naked, saying "Here I am in all my glory, with all my faults, my dreams, and convictions ready to be evaluated."

For me, "living out loud" is to live honestly with myself, never compromising, always striving for the most honest expression coming from deep within my soul. I choose creating art as my vehicle for that search.

Sandy Larkin



Back in the Day



Photo: Winger Washer via Pinterest

As the story goes, when my grandmother was a young woman, she got her arm caught in the wringer washer. In this day and age, we don't hear about such happenings, but back in the day, this was more often than not a common occurrence. As far as I can remember, my grandmother never used an automatic clothes washer or dryer. All laundry was washed in the wringer wash machine on her back porch, and then hung on the clothesline in the back yard to dry. Doing laundry was a once-a-week affair, which demanded full attention and careful handling. And yet, as hard of work as this was for my grandmother, I'm sure she counted her blessings also, because before the wringer washer was invented, the main method of doing laundry was with a washboard!

Another memory I have of my grandmother took place in her kitchen. One would find no automated dishwasher in this big room. Oh, there was a dishwasher, but it wasn't a machine...it was my grandmother! The kitchen sink was a single unit, very simple and straightforward, and was never filled with soapy water, even one time. For you see, my grandmother was allergic to dish soap, so she washed all the dishes, not only by hand, but also with no soap. She never let the dishes stay dirty in the sink for long; as

soon as we were finished eating and the dishes carried into the kitchen, my grandmother would commence to wash them. And, if my memory serves me well, the dishes were always allowed to air dry, and then were promptly put away until they were needed for the next meal.

Back in the day, there was no such thing as a computer. Communications were a lot simpler, even though, compared to today's standards, they were quite limited. But no matter how sophisticated or high tech we become in our ultra modern society, nothing can come close to the treasured and almost lost art of letter writing. I'm talking about pen to paper here. My grandmother was one of those people who was a faithful letter writer over the entire span of her 91 years of life. I remember receiving letters and cards from her as she got older that were barely legible, words running off the page; and yet, I still treasured those handwritten and heartfelt words of love that she so faithfully sent to me. No matter how eloquently an e-mail letter may be written, it's nothing like getting an old-fashioned, hand penned, postmarked and stamped personal letter in the mail. My grandmother was one who blessed many in this way, and passed on the legacy of letter writing to my mother and to me.

These are just a few examples of differences between my grandmother's life and the life we know today. In some ways, we're richer in our world of mass

technology and modern machinery. But, in other ways, I think we've somehow lost a sense of personal touch and heart to heart connection. Easy isn't always the best; modern isn't always profitable. And so, in spite of all their hardships, I believe that people were often more in touch with their own realities and the realities of others when my grandmother was alive. Not that I would want to go back in time and live in the past, but perhaps bring into our present day lives the good qualities of life that people captured back then. To slow down a bit, remember to breathe, and take time for the things and people in our lives that bring us pleasure. Living more simply in a complicated world can help us stay in touch with our own realities, even as it did, back in the day.

De Layne Osterman

The Message

"So little time!" the infant cried

She held it to her breast

"So little time! I know," she said

She laid it down to rest

"So little time!" the candle burned

With flickering leaping bright

Its aromatic dancing churned

With warm inviting light

"So little time!" the old man said

He leaned upon his cane

The sinking sun burned fiery red

Then disappeared again

"So little time!" the earth did cry

Its oceans sparkled spinning

Spinning on to God knows where

Perhaps a new beginning

"So little time!" Ye'd best prepare

Each minute draws us near

The Rainbow Bridge is calling now

Its message loud and clear

Michael A. Faris





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