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publisher/executive editor stefani koorey

production/design stefani koorey

design consultant michael brimbau

contributing writers

ada jill schneider kat koorey david marshall james michael lee johnson marie russian michael brimbau aurora lewis ray succre larry allen stefani koorey grim k. de evil denise noe mark sashine kathleen a. carbone

photography

michael brimbau stefani koorey shutterstock.com

print on demand partner

createspeace.com

publisher PearTree Press 2009 is coming to a close, and with it the decade. This year has seen great change in the world, as global financial institutions have failed and some have been rescued. Apparently, we just barely averted a second Great Depression. Unemployment figures are double digit and foreclosures are at an all time high. As of today, it looks like Congress is eating itself, working at making sure the corporations are benefiting from "reform."

And yet, amid these calamitous times, we are coming together to observe the new year, hoping against hope that 2010 will be a better time for all. The holidays are always a time for renewal: new year's resolutions, resurrection, forgiveness, generosity, and cheer. It is appropriate that we enjoy this season and celebrate change, revitalization, and possibilities.

The Literary Hatchet is four issues old now, and the journal has increased in popularity with each publication. Downloads are up and a rise in submissions reflects the variety of people who find this little document worth their creative efforts.

Once again we offer you wonderful pieces by David Marshall James, Mark Sashine, and Kathleen Carbone. And again, we have poetry by Ada Jill Schneider, Aurora Lewis, Michael Brimbau, Larry Allen, Michael Lee Johnson, grim k. de evil, and Kat Koorey. Newcomers Denise Noe, Ray Succre, and Marie DeSpirito Russian also grace these pages.

We wish you a good holiday season and a most excellent 2010!

Stefani Koorey

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This edition of The Literary Hatchet is dedicated to the late William Schley-Ulrich, gentleman and scholar.



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"Murder is born of love, and love attains the greatest intensity in murder."

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Pigeon's Blood Birthstone

by David Marshall James

Oh! Miss Lizzie! You're as pretty as a picture in a magazine!" Bridget Sullivan exclaimed, wiping her hands on a saturated tea towel.

"Why, thank you, Maggie," Lizzie Borden addressed the family's live-in maid after her pet fashion. She had just entered the kitchen, where Bridget was washing the breakfast dishes. "But, where are Father and Mrs. Borden?" she wondered, placing her peridot-green satin parasol on the seat of a ladderbacked chair. The parasol matched her polished cotton dress, which featured a sage-colored sprig print. Her straw hat-purchased just the week before at McWhirr's department store—with the tapered front and high back, was decorated with small clusters of silk flowers in assorted shades of green.

"Up at the crack of dawn, they were," Bridget clacked her stacked plates in the cupboard. "I fed 'em a good breakfast. They had ham steak, fried eggs, and toasted baker's bread with apple butter. Here, I've got coffee in the pot still, and I reckon you'll be wantin' one of them cookies I baked yesterday."

At first, Lizzie failed to reply, being vexed over several concerns. Yes, she expected nothing from her father—and certainly the same from her stepmother-on this, her thirty-second birthday. Her father had made that abundantly clear beforehand, in reference to his purchase of a rental property-a house in which they used to dwell-that he had given her and her sister, Emma, several years ago. Having paid what he considered an exorbitant amount, her father had posited that she had received a considerable gift in advance of her birthday, and she should therefore expect not a farthing more.

That issue, however, had been settled, allowing no expectations on Lizzie's score. Presently, Lizzie fretted over two other concerns, the first being her father's departure at such an uncustomary early hour, thus denying her of his simple, frugal birthday best wishes, as well as admiration for her painstakingly special appearance. "It's not as if Mrs. Borden ever appears half this well appareled," Lizzie thought acrimoniously. As for the second worry, Lizzie was most displeased at having no notion of where her father and Mrs. Borden—never one to rush out of the house at that hour of the day—had gotten off to, particularly without disclosure prior to this morning.

"Miss Lizzie?" Bridget attempted to part Lizzie's haze. "May I fetch you a cup of coffee and some molasses cookies?"

"Oh ... yes. I don't suppose Father told you where he was off to, so bright and early?"

"That he didn't, nor would I have ventured to ask. You know how stern he can be, when folks meddle about his business. Even so, I just happened to hear some chat about himself hiring a team, if that offers you any clue about the matter."

"Well," Lizzie spooned sugar into her coffee, "I would gather they're headed out to Swansea, to the farm, though why they've left so early, I've no idea."

"And I haven't either, except" Here, Bridget paused most purposefully, in an unspoken prompt to Lizzie to press for further information.

"Go on, Maggie, spill the beans," Lizzie bit into a cookie. "You know I'll not mention a word of it to either of them."

Now, you know I didn't mean to be listenin', but it weren't as if the two of them were whisperin'. Now, I can't say as where they're goin', but I did hear of a Mr. Pfiffer goin' with 'em, wherever that would be."

Lizzie chewed on this morsel of news. She didn't know quite what to make of it, but it was unsettlingly odd. It would have been out-of-the-ordinary enough for her father to be off to the farm so early—he generally conducted business in town on weekday mornings but for Mrs. Borden and Mr. Pfiffer to accompany him ... well, Lizzie didn't like that one bit. Suddenly, Emma drew up beside her, her silence in movement and ability to stand in the background and blend in with it being two of her most remarkable traits. "Lizzie, what can be the matter? You mustn't frown so, and run creases across your brow, especially on your birthday. After all, we are to have a day of fun in Providence."

Lizzie attempted to smile, yet she remained preoccupied with her worries, and, in her consuming mood of annoyance, she wished Emma had put forth the effort to adorn her typically dark attire, trimmed in minimal lace, with something festive for the occasion perhaps a hat with some colorful ribbons. More and more, Emma was coming to resemble someone who could pass for Lizzie's mother, and her reserved manner of dress only served to underscore that trend. "Yes, we must hurry on to the station. I'm ready. Are you all set, as well?"

"I am indeed. Well, Maggie, we shall leave the palace to you," Emma remarked sarcastically. "Here's a dollar, then, and let's have stewed chicken with dumplings for supper."

"Mrs. Borden said for me to take the cod from last night, dice it up, and fry fish cakes."

"Well, Maggie, then Mrs. Borden may have fish cakes. However, Lizzie and I shall have chicken and dumplings. It is our Lizzie's special day, whether Mrs. Borden wishes to celebrate it or not."

"She can stick a candle in her fish cake," Lizzie interjected scornfully.

"She will not like this," Bridget answered, but not without a mischievous twinkle in her eyes.

"If Mrs. Borden were so concerned about the supper," Lizzie declared, "then she should have stayed inside this morning. Nevertheless, she has chosen to gallivant about the countryside. She has therefore forfeited her right to protest our perfectly reasonable request for chicken this evening, which, as it stands, Emma is supplying. Oh, and here, Maggie, is an extra quarter for your troubles. I do so appreciate your ... listening, for me." Lizzie smiled, conspiratorially.

Although Lizzie was inclined to brood as the two sisters rode the train the short distance from Fall River, Massachusetts, to Providence, Rhode Island, that seasonably warm day in mid July 1892, Emma disabused her of indulging in a protracted sulk: "Lizzie, can't you see that Mrs. Borden intends to upset you with all this secrecy surrounding their early disappearance? She means to ruin your birthday, and you're doing a fine job of allowing her to win out over you."

Lizzie tapped gloved fingers against her chin. "You're right, Emma. Anyway, she probably went out to the farm to visit her relations."

"Oh? I don't understand that."

"Surely you haven't forgotten the cattle, Emma." The older sister, ever the essence of propriety, was nonetheless compelled to mask her giggles behind a fisted glove.

Upon their arrival in Providence, they proceeded to the dining room of the Prince Edward Hotel. Seated in maroon plush armchairs and surrounded by lush greenery in brass planters and floorto-ceiling murals depicting scenes of British landscapes and landmarks, they partook of the house specialty: tender medallions of veal in a mushroom sauce flavored with rich stock and cognac, rice pilaf primavera, asparagus au gratin, and light-as-a-feather yeast rolls glazed with honey. Naturally, they capped their celebratory luncheon with slices of birthday cake-rich and moist, filled with custard and frosted with sweetened cream whipped very near to the texture

of soft butter.

As Lizzie lifted her gilded Austrian demitasse, she remarked, "You realize, Emma, that we ought to have elegant meals such as this every day of the week, if we so desired."

Emma, desirous of sustaining the lightheartedness of the day, responded, "Perhaps the cattle will stampede against Mrs. Borden, and Father will fall into a ditch while attempting to retrieve her."

Lizzie, however, did not summon the anticipated smile. Rather, she rested her chin in her palm, sighing, "Yes—if only."

"Come along, Lizzie, let's have a look about Tilden & Thurber's. I've promised to purchase some little something for you to remember this birthday.

At that elegant emporium, Lizzie bypassed the china whatnots and silver pieces, drawn instead to the jewelry cases. "Oh, Emma," Lizzie whispered to her sister, "I understand that I am merely dreaming, but do indulge me," and, with that, Lizzie encouraged a fastidiously attired sales clerk with gold-framed spectacles and immaculately groomed hair, smelling not unpleasantly of Bay Rum, to remove a ring with an enormous ruby from its tray in one of the display cases. "Today is my birthday, and the ruby is my birthstone," Lizzie explained, "so please indulge me while I try it on and make my big birthday wish."

"Of course, ma'am," the well-trained clerk removed the ring for Lizzie. "It's a pigeon's blood ruby solitaire, from Burma. Quite the finest in existence. I've never seen a more spectacular one in Tilden & Thurber's."

Lizzie clasped her throat, recalling the pet pigeons she had kept in the barn, until her father had decided that they were an attractive nuisance—enticing the neighborhood boys to break in and steal them—and thereupon took a hatchet to their heads. He and Mrs. Borden had



feasted upon squab that evening. Lizzie, seething with fury, had informed Emma that she had decided to sell their jointlyheld rental property, knowing that the action would enrage her father. "Well," Lizzie scoffed, "he should have thought about that before he killed my pets, after I begged him to leave them be." Thus went the quid-pro-quo cycle of escalating retribution within the Borden household.

Quickly composing herself, Lizzie admired the lustrous stone against her pale, delicate fingers, unblemished from any sort of heavy housework. "Sadly, we're here to make another purchase. I wish it were this—yet alas, not today. However, do mark my words: There will come a day in the not-too-distant future when I shall enter your door and you will hasten to these jewelry cases, in anticipation of my latest indulgence."

The clerk could ill restrain himself from regarding Lizzie with a curious expression, and he was visibly relieved when Emma took Lizzie's hand, gently removing the ruby solitaire. Following further perusal of the merchandise, they both settled upon a small gold hatpin with a square-cut peridot, set on the diagonal, for twelve dollars. "Here, Lizzie, pin it in your hat. It matches the colors of your dress and silk flowers so nicely."

"Thank you, Emma. I understand that it's a bit more than you were counting on spending, and I shall treasure it always."

During their return trip home to Fall River, the sisters encouraged one another with discussion of their plans for extended vacations: Lizzie to the seashore with a group of friends, Emma to Fairhaven and other locales to visit relatives. Lizzie's spirits were considerably bolstered by the several compliments she received concerning her costume particularly as to the hat and new pin all be they from matrons swathed in dark-colored frocks with yellowing lace and cheerless enamel brooches.

Upon their arrival home, Lizzie and Emma entered by the side of the house, where the screen door was unfastened, a telltale sign that their father and stepmother had returned, as Bridget would not have remained alone in the house with the screen door off the latch. Presently, she was mixing up the flour, lard, leavening, and milk in preparation for fluffy dumplings to be dropped in the boiling broth from the stewed chicken. "Maggie, has there been much gnashing of teeth over our additional plans for the supper?" Lizzie asked.

Bridget rolled her eyes: "Mr. Borden was wanting to make something big out of it, but I turned to Mrs. Borden, and I said, 'Ma'am, I am asked to buy and cook chicken. Am I to follow orders, or not?"

"Where are they now?" Lizzie inquired.

"Herself is upstairs, having a rest, while himself is in the next room. Maybe napping—I've certainly not looked in on him and don't intend to, till herself comes downstairs and asks me to set the table."

"We'll be fixing trays and carrying them up to the guest room, where we may have some peace," Emma informed her. "Neither one of us wishes to sit in the dining room while listening to the two of them belching and such after they've eaten."

"Have you heard anything more about their trip and why Mr. Pfiffer accompanied them?" Lizzie asked.

"Not any more to say than they must have been to Swansea, and I only reckon on that because himself walked in here with a clutch of fresh eggs. 'I need me one of them,' says I, 'to make the fish cakes,' to which himself scowled and gave me the smallest of the lot."

"Thank you, Maggie, for cooking the chicken," Emma stated. "We'll be up to our rooms till it's time to prepare our supper trays."

Unfortunately for the stealthy sisters, their father sat alert and waiting upon the horsehair-stuffed sofa in the sitting room, through which Lizzie and Emma were compelled to pass in order to reach the front stairs, which led up to their bedrooms, which were inaccessible to their parents' suite. "Why, it's the return of the prodigal daughters," Mr. Borden announced, folding up his newspaper.

"Hello, Father," Lizzie responded matter-of-factly. "And where have you been about today yourself, in too much of a rush to wish your own daughter well on her birthday?" Lizzie made a moue of her mouth.

"That, my daughter, is not the issue at the forefront, as it stands at this moment."

"And what is the issue, then?" Lizzie continued drily, twirling her closed parasol on its tip, against the carpet.

"The issue happens to be chicken."

"Oh, yes—Maggie happened to mention that you had come in with a clutch of eggs. I reckon you've been over to Swansea, then."

"What do you mean, sending the servant out for chicken?" Mr. Borden overlooked Lizzie's observation.

"Did Mrs. Borden enjoy the trip, as well?" Lizzie ignored her father, in turn. "I must say, Emma and I were very nearly dumbfounded to discover you both off from the house, before we had set off ourselves," Lizzie waved her parasol at him in a remonstrative gesture.

"Your Mother," Mr. Borden stressed the words, "gives the orders for all meals."

"I am well aware that Mrs. Borden," Lizzie countered, putting her own emphasis on the title, "makes that her business, so, if that is the issue at hand, I concede it. However, you have failed to answer any of my inquiries." "You may think that you're cute and fresh in your fancy clothes and hat, my daughter, but you have yet to find a man who thinks as much of you as you apparently think of yourself."

"I wouldn't be so sure of that, Father," Lizzie narrowed her eyes in reply to his scathing remark. "Why, just this afternoon, a man was trying out the most gorgeous ring on one of my fingers. Isn't that right, Emma?"

Emma, who was inclined to cower in the wake of her father's assorted rages and furies, nodded her head. Lizzie smugly tossed her parasol over her shoulder, "And just remember, Father, that husbands-to-be expect dowries, and houses to live in, and businesses to take over." Before her Father could lash out a response, Lizzie flounced out of the sitting room, Emma close upon her heels.

"Oh, Emma," her father called after her. "Before you sass up the stairs with your sister, there's a letter here for you, from your Uncle John."

Emma sheepishly retraced her steps to collect the missive, whereupon her father loudly announced, "Yet, alas, there's none for Miss Lizzie." Having launched this final salvo at the recalcitrant Lizzie, he resumed reading his newspaper.

Upstairs, Lizzie fumed: "Oh, he thinks he must always get in the last word. Well, he can stew in that chicken pot for all I care," and she flung her parasol across her bed. Emma grabbed her arm tightly: "Oh, Lizzie, I'm afraid Uncle John is answering all the questions that have plagued you today, regarding Father's hurrying out of the house and all, about what's what at Swansea."

"Very well then," Lizzie removed her hat, "what does our whisker-faced spinster uncle have to say?"

"Lizzie, you really oughn't to call him that. What would we do if he didn't



come down here and attempt to pry all of Father's secrets out of him?"

"As you will, then. Go ahead and read his letter."

Emma commenced:

My Dear Niece,

I have tried for all I'm worth to rent out the farm, but your Father will have none of it. He has been discussing with a Mr. Pfiffer, who's on the Governing Board of the Old Ladies' Home, that he means to donate the property for their benefit. He aims to settle his estate before his seventieth birthday in September, to transfer stock certificates to Abby, & etc. He is offering sale of livestock to Davis, with whom I work up here, and I am to visit soon, to make an assessment, so Davis may then tender an offer. Things are happening quickly.

By September, your father intends to have it all set in stone. He plans on settling something on you and Lizzie, including your house on Second Street, then on moving into a smaller place, so he and Abby can have separate lives. She has been proposing this ever since your house was burgled last summer.

I came right out and asked him, 'How much for the girls?' And he told me there would be thirty thousand apiece, as he had just bought back the house on Ferry Street. He considers that a fortune, taken together, and that you and Lizzie may make a bedroom for yourselves in the front parlor and rent out the rooms on the second floor to five or six paying ladies, and have a maid offer boardinghouse meals.

He believes you can manage on that, and the interest accumulated on your bequest. He says you both already have thousands in the bank, that you won't be starting from nothing. I shall be down before long, to appraise the cattle at the farm.

Your Loving Uncle, J.V.M.

"I'll be switched in front of the whole city before he gives Mrs. Flabby Borden eighty thousand dollars' worth of stock," Lizzie slammed the bedroom door.

"And most of his money and

whatever property he has," Emma observed gravely.

"Those old ladies can dance a jig down one end of Second Street and up the other, but they'll never have that farm," Lizzie blasted.

"It's not their fault, Lizzie. It's Father's."

"And it's not going to happen, Emma. Mark my words: It's not going to happen."

Two days later, the sisters departed on their planned excursions. Lizzie, however, traveled only as far as New Bedford, at which juncture she took a room in an inexpensive boardinghouse in order to maintain solitude while formulating a plan of action that could overturn her father's intentions. Only one thought predominated her list of possibilities: Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Borden must expire before any will was forced into effect. Or, before any property was deeded over to the Old Ladies' Home. Or, before any stock certificates were signed over to Mrs. Borden, who could then dispense them freely to her abundance of poor and, as Lizzie viewed them, ever-envious relations. Lizzie's fury exploded when she thought of them with Father's money, sneering at her relative misfortune. Oh, no: that could never, ever come to pass. Time was fleeting, and of the essence. Lizzie could act now, or forever hold her peace.

Instead of journeying forward to join her friends at the seashore, she returned to Fall River. She had been gone from the house less than one week; however, the mood in the residence was rapidly metamorphosing. Behind-the-scenes events were transpiring and in the offing, and her stepmother fairly hummed with her insights into these supposedly private arrangements. Lizzie kept to her room as much as possible, surreptitiously listening to whatever conversations on which she could safely eavesdrop.

Bridget could offer only morsels of the larger events at which Uncle John had spread before Emma, in his missive: "Herself has been happier, Miss Lizzie, ever since your birthday. She's keeping a sweet secret, for sure. I'd wager a pot of gold coins upon it."

Meanwhile, Lizzie's father remained enigmatic in his silence, which was in and of itself against his grain. Ordinarily, he would have been more apt to be after her about something. Since her return from New Bedford, however, he had been uncharacteristically stoic. The proverbial calm before the storm had settled over No. 92, Second Street. Would the prevailing winds blow gently into Lizzie's sails, propelling her into the future she craved, like the rich, sweet icing on the custard-filled cake at her birthday luncheon? Or, would howling gales smash that future upon the rocks? Miss Lizzie Borden held her fate in the palm of her hand.

A week passed following her abbreviated trip, and then Uncle John, her late birth mother's brother, appeared on a Wednesday afternoon. She strained mightily to overhear his conversation with her father. Uncle John could garner responses to interrogatives that went unanswered when she posed them to her father. Furthermore, he intently covered all the pressing subjects over which she had been so flustered.

That afternoon, her uncle rented a team of horses in order to ride out to the farm, clearly fixed upon the livestock appraisal for his employer. Beforehand, he had partaken of a warmed-over dinner while chatting with her father. Lizzie had slipped downstairs and crept as close as she dared to the dining-room entrance. Listening in, she learned that her father was indeed planning to draft a new will; that he would be transferring all his stock certificates to his wife; and that he would be making some sizable charitable bequests.

As if the gall were not burning Lizzie's throat badly enough, her fears about the settlement upon her and Emma were confirmed. That blow soon fell, when her father stated: "Abby and I have wearied of Lizzie's tricks, both large and small. Of course, the worst one came last summer, about this time, with the thievery upstairs. Since then and even before, little things have either disappeared or have been rearranged, causing much aggravation for Abby. I cannot believe that someone outside our household is slipping in here, unbeknownst to one and all, and carrying out all this mischief and mayhem. I've no cause to believe the servant would do it-she seems sensible enough, and has threatened to quit on several occasions, until Abby begged her back. For her part, Lizzie has made no secret of her displeasure with Abby. I fear that Lizzie is possessed of a sad state of mind, determined to make our lives as difficult as she can. That's the principal reason I am compelled to create separate households, thereby removing us from our daughters. I tell you one thing, John: I shall not sit back and allow this to continue. After searching my soul, I've concluded that this is the most Christian thing to do, considering this intolerable situation."

Lizzie turned and proceeded toward the stairs as if she were sleepwalking. The realization that she must utilize her last resort had crashed down upon her head like a wicked blow from a sharp instrument. At least now, there could be no doubt. The inequity and injustice of her father's conduct had been firmly established. Yes, she was justified, beyond a shadow of a doubt.

The following morning, she crept

furtively downstairs, this time to eavesdrop on the breakfast conversation in the dining room. Meantime, Bridget kept to the kitchen, unless summoned to the dining room by Abby's ringing of a small bell. Lizzie learned that her uncle planned to call on relations across town, and that Bridget would be outside washing the windows. Lizzie could be in the house alone with Mrs. Borden, if her father would set about his usual morning rounds downtown. Today, he was evidently suffering from an intestinal distress. Lizzie had to devise a compelling reason to insure his absence.

Prior to taking his leave, her uncle who had spent the night in the guest room across the second-floor landing from Lizzie's bedroom—knocked on his niece's closed door: "Lizzie?" he spoke softly.

"I am dressing, Uncle," she fibbed.

"When are you planning to resume your vacation?"

"When I have settled matters here." "What matters are those?"

"Oh, I think you know."

"Lizzie, promise me that you won't do anything rash. If you say or do the wrong thing to your father or mother, you are going to find yourself in a very bad spot. You could be cut off completely."

"She is not my mother."

"What's that?"

"Mrs. Borden—she is not my mother. She is my stepmother."

"Lizzie—it's that kind of talk that could land you out on the sidewalk, with neither pot nor window."

"Father doesn't realize that he can be cut off, too."

"Lizzie! What is the meaning of this?" Her uncle attempted to maintain the volume of his voice.

"Make of it what you will. Are you calling upon my visiting cousins today?"

"I have hoped to."

"Do give them my best. Are you planning on returning for dinner?"

"Yes, I believe I shall." "Well, I wouldn't bother."

"Lizzie! What are you about? Open this door and let me speak to you faceto-face."

"I told you—I am dressing. You'd best hurry along."

With greatest misgivings, John Morse left the Borden residence. He stopped at the Post Office, nearby on Third Street, to forward a report on the cattle to his employer in South Dartmouth, a butcher who was anxious to learn how good a deal Morse could make off his brother-in-law. Morse had mentioned that Old Man Borden was anxious to clear out the herd so that he could dispense of the property. The butcher—and Morse—held high expectations of a tidy profit.

After exiting the Post Office, Mr. Morse almost literally ran into Mr. Borden on the sidewalk. "Why, John, I though you were making haste to see your niece and nephew."

"And I thought you had about decided to have a lie-in this morning, with your stomach so upset and all."

"That I was," Mr. Borden sighed, "but Lizzie fairly pestered me out of the house, saying this letter needed to be gotten off to Emma. So, I decided to move ahead and check in at the banks this morning, instead of waiting until this afternoon."

Profound dread swept over Mr. Morse. Something was terribly amiss in Lizzie's actions over the letter. She could have easily handed it to him, as he was right outside her door. For some reason, she wanted her father out of the house. "John, the color has drained from your face. Are you quite all right?"

"I have just remembered something

that I must check on, so you'll excuse me if I hurry along. I shall see you at dinner." With that, Mr. Morse walked as fast as he could back to the Borden residence. Upon his arrival, he looked, surreptitiously, around the rear of the house, where he viewed Bridget Sullivan hovering over a bucket of sudsy water for cleaning the outside windows. He opened the screen door at the side, out of her view, without knocking, eyed the kitchen, crossed the sitting room, and peeked in the dining room and front parlor. "Perhaps," he thought, "Abby has gone up to her room."

At that instant, he heard a horrible thud directly above him, in the guest room. He dashed for the front stairs, but only cleared two-thirds of them before he witnessed a gruesome scene: Lizzie was bent over on the opposite side of the bed he had slept in the night before, swinging a hatchet into Abby's skull. The victim had fallen on her knees, and her form was visible from his vantage point, where he could see under the bed.

Breathlessly, he backed down the stairs. Lizzie, focused entirely on wielding the hatchet against her stepmother, never noticed him. Indeed, she appeared to be in a frenzy, striking repeatedly into Abby's skull. Dazed, he stumbled through the house and outside the way he had come. Reaching the sidewalk, he moved forward, wondering what to do. He could summon a constable. Lizzie would be caught out-and hanged. Emma would never forgive him. She would probably die of a broken heart. Mr. Borden would never forgive him either, having to live out his days with the scourge of a murderous daughter weighing upon his brow.

Mr. Morse hurried onward, en route to visit his other niece, as anticipated. He would act as if nothing were out of the ordinary. He would leave this unholy mess to Mr. Borden. After all, Lizzie was his daughter. Mr. Borden ought to be the one to decide how this matter should be handled. It did not occur to Mr. Morse, until more than an hour later, that Mr. Borden's life might also hang in the balance.

Lizzie, panting for breath, raised herself triumphantly over her first victim. "If only you had fought for what was right for all of us," she said, "instead of just for yourself, this never would have happened, Mrs. Borden. It's too bad that you couldn't have been a true mother to Emma and me. A true mother would have taken our best interests to heart. You have no one to blame but yourself, Mrs. Borden."

Lizzie looked down at her hand, still gripped firmly around the hatchet's hilt. A large drop of blood had settled on one finger—the same finger on which, a few weeks before, she had worn the ruby solitaire. A thin shaft of light pierced the crack between the closed shutters, and the blood glistened like a rare jewel. Lizzie recalled what she had said to the clerk in Tilden & Thurber's. And then she smiled.

Cleopatra's Needle with Oranges

Tapered and monolithic, often embellished with hieroglyphics, an obelisk is a four-sided pillar of stone. Not erected alone. but rather in pairs, they were found at the entrance to ancient Egyptian temples. FYI: In encyclopedias, the asterisk next to Egyptian Obelisks will refer to the U.S. Naval Officer, Henry Honychurch Gorringe (whose name rhymes with orange). He is the gentleman responsible for moving the obelisk, AKA Cleopatra's Needle, from Egypt to Central Park in NYC in 1881. A formidable task it was, to move the 200-ton red granite needle by ship across the Mediterranean Sea, then the storm-tossed

Atlantic Ocean, to the Hudson River, and finally, across a railway trestle specially built, to where it now stands, not far from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Over 1000 years old during Cleopatra's lifetime, the needle's 68-foot-high twin is in London. The two obelisks, originally erected in Heliopolis, were moved to Alexandria by the Romans, and installed in the Caesareum. a temple built by Cleopatra to honor Marc Antony. Both obelisks were toppled eventually but fortuitously fell face down, thus preserving most of the hieroglyphics from weathering. When Henry Honychurch Gorringe (whose name rhymes with orange) died, erected over his grave was a fitting mantle, a miniature copy of *Cleopatra's Needle*.

—Ada Jill Schneider

Rainbow Clown

Take fear the Rainbow Clown with a frozen smile, somehow funny somewhat vile.

Take watch the black dress priest with a ledger from god, he digs your grave with a grin and nod.

Peel back your eyes to the statesman's fist legislator's son, with the stroke of a pen loads, triggers the gun.

Use heed with the pure lover's mien a touch and a tear, a stony heart is what you should fear.

Take fear the Rainbow Clown.

-Michael Brimbau

Give In

Don't give, give in. Surrender the whole will to fate, destiny. The private path intimate to each separate individual. Unique, preplanned simultaneously with each experience, each insight into self. No need to try to give something to the world~ to leave something lasting. Nothing lasts~ except all things. The ego bound by general man-made rules can play false games~ a life unfulfilled, unknown, unseen. It can blind and hinder the development of the true self. The search of life~ the path most men miss, leads inward and only inward. A destination~ a struggle toward mapping the deep, uncharted bowels of the self stripped of the weight of its own weaknesses and the world's impositions.

The good and the bad intermingled evenly two worlds merged and whole as one. Inward leads outward honestly, sincerely, wholly colouring the world with the beauty of self. Completely complete~ a pupil of the universe, at the discretion of nature and fate~ fate, which is only the inner William Schley-Ulrich exerting its power evenly with nature~ a balance, a law. Don't give, give in. The eqo made individual and strong and true to itself has suffered and survived eternity. The whole spirit merges with a cause universally important and understood and provided by William Schley-Ulrich and wisdom. Surrender to this self and give a gift to forever.

—kat koorey

Cafe Underworld

part one

BY KATHLEEN CARBONE

Leah Coffin stood outside her classroom, back pressed against the wall beside the windowed door, and just listened for a few minutes. The room, full of junior girls, was lively; she could feel the wall rumble into her back as they laughed. She glanced down at her note pad. Twenty eight students this year; a reasonable amount. Last year there had been thirty nine! Including that drama queen Eleanor Taylor—thank God she was now in Miss Hulot's class across the hall.

Leah peeked in and saw that they were, as she'd expected, crowded around the desk of she who would be the popular girl this year. The popular girl had something, a magazine or a pulp tract of some sort of nonsense that held them all captive. There would be this year's favorite matinee idol to dream over, and all the latest society page gossip.

There was also the self appointed look out. This was a girl, not as fashionable or as clever the Popular Girl. But while Popular and her peers were up to no good, she would always keep half an eye out for any approaching teachers. This was Lookout Girl. If she could not fit in with Popular Girl's crowd through looks or social status, she could make herself useful and gain acceptance this way. Leah spotted her instantly. Dark dress, probably hand-me-down, unfashionable beribboned hair not in the least bit up to date or as chic as Popular Girl's. And bespectacled to boot.

She hovered over Popular's shoulder and occasionally looked back at the door. Leah easily evaded her furtive glances as she inevitably pushed her glasses more firmly upon her nose just before she turned to look.

Leah waited until they were all poring over the magazine, intent and silent. Then she opened the door sharply. It squeaked to an ear piercing decibel and she'd never had it oiled for this auditory impact. The girls all leapt. The owner of the magazine opened her desk and flung it inside, desktop slamming shut. The others scurried to their assigned seats, obsequious. Good.

Leah Coffin began every school term in a like manner. At thirty, there had been nine such early September scenes played out. And although she had garnered a tremendous amount of savvy and self confidence since that first term, she still looked very much the same. Only a pair of silver rimmed spectacles had been added two years ago. Too much reading late at night.

She was taller than most women, standing five foot six, slim hipped and agile from riding bicycles to and from her Beacon Hill rooms. But she bore the broad back and shoulders of an ocean swimmer; one who was not unfamiliar with a set of heavy oars either. Her hands attested to this too, they were squat, calloused at the palms, and strong as a young man's. She cared little about such things as would send most unmarried women her age running to their glove box. On the contrary, it was an asset for a school teacher, and more than once she had shown an unruly classroom that she could break a heavy wooden protractor with one hand. She once put a stop to a fist fight between two senior girls by breaking her own wooden chair over the art table. It had shattered into matchsticks, a splinter flying into one of the combatants eyelids. Miss Coffin had coolly pressed the hysterical girl's head back against the wall beneath a lamp and plucked out the splinter with surprising facility and gentleness. These stories were now Boston Latin Girls High School legend.

Leah stood for a moment and eyed them, expressionless, then proceeded to her own desk at the front of the room. She placed her portmanteau on the desk and let them wait. There was palpable tenseness in the room as the girls sized up the situation and their new instructor. They would be ascertaining the size and disfigurement of her infamous scar; from the corner of her eye she could see several of the girls already straining for a look at it. They were also waiting to judge by her tone, her eye contact, her demeanor and her dress as to how much they would be able to get away with this year. Would she be a sympathetic pushover or a tyrant? Leah knew that there were tales circulating that claimed both ends of the spectrum about her. It was inevitable for a teacher. She was loved by some, feared by some, but respected by all. And this she would maintain at all costs. It applied to her life beyond the confines of the classroom as well, a fact that she was only partially aware of.

She took her time settling her things at the desk, finally breaking the tense silence with her voice. It carried to the furthest corner of the room with a mellifluous buttery tone of strength and sweetness that quite took her class by surprise. There was also just a hint of Nantucket brine in the way she accentuated adjectives, a Yankee coyness that even sharp-witted Bostonians could not quite be sure of. Was she poking fun at herself, or slyly insulting them?

"Good morning, girls. Welcome back to school. Don't look so glum about it! Isn't it wonderful to be alive and to be one step closer to attaining the brilliant scholar-hood you so aspire to?" She took assignment sheets out and walked to the front desk of the first row and placed them on that student's desk. "Take one and pass them back, thank you."

She spoke quietly as she went to each successive row. All eyes followed her, young girls on the perimeters of adulthood; they carefully marked the neat fashionable cut of her dark green dress, her neat brown hair pulled up and away from her face in a smart coiffure, her fine leather shoes, and a simple but elegant gold brooch at her throat. Her straight, lithe posture accentuated a self awareness that was not in the least self conscious. One had to be a bit of an exhibitionist, or at least have a flair for showmanship, to teach successfully. Any fear of public scrutiny would mean disaster for the year to come. They would smell a lack of confidence like blood in the water and be on it like sharks. A slight smile curled along her mouth as she placed the papers on the desks. Leah Coffin had never been hampered by any such personal shortcomings.

"Yes. You are all now one year closer to graduation and then you can forget about school. You can marry the man of your dreams and settle down, or get jobs, maybe even go to college. And I will be stuck here." Several giggles were heard as Leah returned to her desk and observed the roll.

"I'm Miss Leah Coffin. You all know my name and have heard about my scars and my abominable father, Captain Ahab. I will answer any questions you have about me today and get it out of the way. Now, what do you wish to know?"

There was a shocked silence as this was the last thing the students had expected. Leah wanted to see who would be the first to ask. They were shy at first, giggles bubbling up in nervousness.

When there was a lull, and the silence was becoming tense, a voice finally came from the far corner, from another bespectacled girl.

"Is it true that when you were a child you were aboard your father's vessel and it was stove by a whale?"

"True"

"Were you injured by the brute?" Leah peered over at her. The girl's

voice was sympathetic, like that of a nurse or a pastor's wife. She was darkhaired and wore unremarkable clothing, save for the spectacles and a shiny gold ring on her right baby finger. Leah could see it sparkle from across the room. The girl was not as pretty as Popular Girl, but Leah guessed that this would not matter to her. She exuded the introspective nature of an artist or perhaps a writer. Leah had a quick inspiration that this girl was going to be her bright star this year. Someone she might actually get through to.

"You are?"

"Diana Atlas, Miss"

It was important not to show favor or presumptions, however. Leah answered her unequivocally.

"The animal became panicked for some unknown reason, rammed the port side, and swam away. Nothing dreadful ever occurred; we were able make repairs and sail home unharmed"

"What of the scars, then?"

Leah rolled the sleeve of her dress back and revealed a long pink snake-like scar that wound about her right forearm and down to the back of the hand. The girls stared, several of them in the back rows standing to see.

"Sit, please," Leah requested and they instantly obeyed. Good. She walked slowly up and down the rows and allowed each of them to see.

"Miss Coffin, how did it happen?"

"My father was not a whaleman. He was the captain of a merchant vessel out of Salem. My mother, brother and I frequently traveled with him. When I was twelve, we were returning from the West Indies with a cargo of sugar, molasses and tobacco plants. My brother and I were kept busy with schoolwork in our quarters most mornings, but we were allowed to eat on deck when the weather allowed. And then we worked like green horns before the mast. We had to peel potatoes, feed the livestock, cook, and scrub and oil the decks, mend sail, tar the masts and rigging. It was never a pleasure cruise.

"One afternoon, I finished my lessons and went up on deck. It was a hot, bright sun and the sea was calm as glass. Not a breeze. I sat at the waist rail, and all of a sudden a school of dolphins appeared. Like puppies, they leap and call out to one another; you'll not find a brighter animal.

"One of the crew did not share my affections however, and as several of the animals leapt near the bowsprit, he procured a harpoon. Claimed it would make a fine fish fry. I was horrified and I called him a murderer. I don't remember much else. When he reared back to throw the dart, I tried to grasp it. It flew, and nearly took my hand with it.

"My father stitched me up but it swelled like a blowfish and we thought that I might lose the hand. I was lucky. We made it to a hospital in New Bedford and they saved my hand. But I had to learn to write again when it had finally healed. It took many weeks, but I swam and rowed and carried heavy cleats and lead tie-offs in it until it became strong again. So. That is the story of this lovely masterpiece," she concluded, holding her arm up.

She unconsciously balled her hand into a fist and the room fell silent again. But soon the hue and cry was raised again. It was a delight for them to be able to ask a teacher such personal questions. In fact it was unheard of.

"Miss Coffin, did the man kill the dolphin?"

"No, I'm happy to say that the dolphins escaped."

"Were you punished for calling the man a murderer?"

"Yes. My father gave me a week long lecture. But I think he considered the injury enough punishment. And as it was, I never interfered with a crewman holding a harpoon again."

"Miss Coffin is it true that you were nearly bitten in two by a right whale off the coast of Peru?"

The room burst into laughter and all eyes turned to Lookout Girl who flushed with embarrassment.

"Not true."

Lookout Girl stared at her shoes until another voice piped up, taking the attention from her.

"Miss Coffin, is it a fact that your father taught you to pilot a vessel and that you have sailed around Cape Horn?"

"My brother and I learned to navigate when we were older, yes. He has become a much better captain than I ever would have been, I'm sure. I have not conquered the Horn, but who's to say I won't?"

The flurry of questions quieted as they all considered the possibility of their strange new instructor going back to a seafaring life, one of command, at that. And then from the center of the room came a voice that cut through the silence with clarity and just a hint of honeycoated smugness.

"Is it true that your *grand* father was the whaleman? That he was Lewis Templeton Coffin, and he was known to beat crewmen if the ventures were not successful? That he once skinned a man alive?"

There was a collective gasp and the room went silent. It was Lookout Girl again, no doubt trying to regain her status from the previous faux pas, and making a foray into the realm of the smart ass. All eyes flew to Leah.

She did not miss a beat; everybody had heard the tales and someone always brought it up. The questions revealed as much to her as they did the students. She turned and walked slowly down the center aisle of desks. And as she walked, she smiled, if one could call it a smile. It was actually more of a baring of teeth. As such, it was more dread-inspiring than had she flown into a rage. She moved silent as a cat, and her voice was quiet and lulling. One could hear a pin drop in the room.

"My family never confirmed or denied the rumors to me. However, no charges were ever brought against him, and no crew ever mutinied under his command. But I do know that strange things happen when you are at sea for months. My grandfather died when I was still a child, and the only tales he ever told me personally were about his tattoos and his scars. And his scars made mine look like a sugar cookie."

She stood over Lookout Girl who was visibly making an effort to hold her eye without cowering.

"You are?"

"Pamela J. Mills" She pronounced it Pam*el*a.

The room was silent; Lookout Girl's eyes fell inexorably to the teacher's scarred hand, less than a yard from her throat.

"That's the best answer I can provide, Mills."

"Thank you, Miss."

"And that's enough for today. Now it's my turn. Where is the journal you were all poring over when I entered?"

The pall of silence continued as the girls all eyed one another guiltily. Leah went to Popular Girl's desk.

"You are?"

"Mary Nichols, Miss."

"Hand it over."

Mary Nichols opened her desk and withdrew the offending tract. It was, as Leah had suspected, the latest copy of a theater rag. *The Critic*. September, 1904.

Leah took the small magazine from her and walked silently to her desk and sat. She opened her bottom right drawer where, she knew, *The Critic* would soon have a handful of companions. It happened every year. Leah dropped it in, catching a brief glimpse of the front page. The latest sensation. This one was as usual, blonde and sleek, glancing winsomely over one lacy shoulder in the cover photo, the title proclaiming, "Boston Discovers Nance O'Neil."

Π

Two cardinals, blood red and dusty brown, dove and soared above the Taunton River as an October dawn blushed beyond the Hill. They passed over sleepy downtown Main Street and up toward higher ground where they knew that a plethora of breakfasts awaited.

The diligent red male led the way through leafy treetops and his dowdy wife followed, scolding. Threading their way between the well-kept eaves and chimneys, they darted down to the first stop of the morning; a tidily mown backyard that harbored several fat wooden feeders.

He was quicker than the female and swept onto to the feeders pegs before her. When she arrived, she sat patiently at the end of the roost as he investigated the larder. Extracting a generous serving of the seed and suet, he deposited it into her waiting open mouth with a husband's industrious care.

From the back bedroom, Lizzie watched the cardinals at their breakfast. It was one of the cheerful things that greeted her mornings; the blaze of color and the tender ministrations of the birds made her heart warm to them. She had named them Mr. and Mrs. Cavanaugh after two nosy and bickersome neighbors, and frequently imagined conversation for them as they swooped about her yard looking for treats and nest feathers.

She watched as the female, more nest-conscious than her colorful mate,

spied a blue mitten that Lizzie's maid had dropped in the grass. The little bird leapt down from the feeder and investigated the warm fuzzy prize.

Lizzie mused, sipping tea from a china cup.

"Mr. Cavanaugh! Come away from that feeder and help me with this lovely woolen' she scolds.

'Coming, Dearest' he answers her, 'Did you know they've added some suet and sunflower? Where on earth do these ugly two feet find such treasure?'

'Look at all this wool! It's like they have nothing better to do than cast off yards of bedding and warmers. Yards of it!"

The red male now joined his bride and they both began to nip and tear at the blue wool. It would make fine insulation for their tiny nest, a few streets over. The two of them packed their hollow mouths with strands and strands of blue fiber; there seemed to be no end to it.

After a few more sips of tea, Lizzie saw the cat. It had slithered from beneath the back porch across a swath of lawn and now it crouched behind the bare azalea bushes. A large orange tom, a neighborhood stray that she had fed and even petted a few times. But he stubbornly refused to deny his taste for hunting despite the dish of kibble on her back steps. She rapped at the window instinctively but to no avail; the cat's scrawny hind quarters tensed and shivered in anticipation, its large head slowly cocked to the left and down and, in utter silence, it leapt.

Lizzie dropped the china tea cup. Down the stairs, her hip aching and slowing her, through the kitchen and passing by her startled maid, she threw open the back door, raising her soft voice into a warning to the birds. But she had not been quick enough. Both cardinals lay motionless in small puddles of blood, as red as the feathers that surrounded them.

Lizzie's hand covered her mouth as she slowly approached.

The cat had been alarmed by her voice and she turned to see it sitting quietly beneath the bushes once again, its orange fur gold in the morning sunlight. It was pristine save for one small spray of blood across its whiskers, and when it saw Lizzie, it licked the evidence away.

III

The train carrying the O'Neil Company lumbered unhappily into South Station behind a slightly disabled commuter. Its coal engine had stalled and was spewing a noxious black smoke that blew backward into the theater car, further upsetting its cargo of hungry, travel-weary actors.

She had to hunker her six foot frame down to observe herself in the tiny mirror that hung in her private Pullman. Her head, her face, her hands; everything about her seemed too big. Not only in the cramped confines of a train compartment, but even in hotel rooms, salons, staterooms, and restaurants, all seemed to cage her. She always felt like she was sweating or needed more air. The only place she actually seemed to fit was on a stage.

She adjusted her hair. It was at moments like this, trying to fit her enormous frame into the square confines of a tiny mirror, that she had to struggle not to find and focus on real or imagined flaws. Her remarkable profile, so compelling and expressive on stage, now just seemed to be hawk-nosed, wide-eyed and lantern-jawed. Her full, honey-colored hair was wild and unruly no matter how she tried to tame it. No wonder she had never been described as beautiful. The critics used words like "magnificent," "gifted," and "bestowed" to describe her. Once the term "a force of nature" had even been ascribed to her. A force of nature! Was she an actress or an earthquake? A woman or a hurricane?

She smiled, crinkling her nose and the corners of her eyes, but the smile soon fell from her face. She could hear the other actors coughing and complaining from the outer car. Peg hysterical, Ricca infuriated, Blessington hung over. Only Agnes Ranken would have a cool head under yet another extenuating circumstance that was going to jeopardize their run. Straightening up, she inadvertently knocked a small glass off the rim of the miniscule wash stand by the door. She paid no attention to it as she swept out into the narrow corridor.

"We're late again" Ricca informed her, "The scene change for Act Three is never going to carry off now."

"Yes it will. This is Boston, not Caribou, Maine."

"Oh thank God! Nance!" Peg cried from behind Ricca, "The wardrobe assistant never got on the train in Albany!"

"Is the wardrobe here?" Nance asked.

"Yes."

"Then look on the bright side."

She squeezed between the fretting actresses, down the aisle past an uncomfortable looking John Blessington, who had fallen asleep sideways on one of the seats, a battered suitcase beneath his head. Two empty wine bottles rolled into the aisle and she kicked them loudly under the actor's seat. His eyes opened blearily.

"Is this Buffalo?" he croaked.

"You know for a man in his thirties, John, you look sixty-five this morning."

Nance went to the middle-aged assistant stage manager. standing at the end of the car with a note pad and a yellow pencil behind his ear.

"Hal! Did the scenery make it to the theater? The correct theater?"

"Jose wired this morning that he had it at the station."

She sighed. "All right. Hal dear, when we stop run out and tell me if there is anything resembling a police officer on the platform, will you?"

to be continued



[poetry]



Privilige

Chaos in the universe? Fate? Serendipity? Why wasn't I born into sumptuous royalty? To live in a veritable museum brimming with intricate privileges of responsibility? Where dust motes stream through stained glass windows, and the past echoes off terrazzo tile in expansive baronial halls.

Among the metal suits of armor, I would line up my little brother Sid's lead soldiers, and showcase his confident, knee-scuffed baseball uniform, his *Louisville Slugger*, and mint 1948 Stan Musial Rookie Card.

An elaborate ancestral oil portrait of *Dad the Foreman*, self-assured in his carpenter's overalls, would be framed in baroque gilt. A small, dated brass plaque would explain that on this extraordinary day he received a \$2 tip and treated us to ice cream cones.

Next to it, a magnificent silk, hand-woven, 15th century-type tapestry triptych of *Mom, the Lady of the House*: on the left, in front of the kerosene stove, stirring crepe batter; in the center, wearing a Stone Marten fur draped around her shoulders; on the right, posing in front of her GE washing machine.

As for me, my future might have been history, my name and title on illuminated scrolls. Yet, who knows? Cherubim, looking down from my hand-painted heavenly ceilings, might find me resenting my monogrammed life and trying to daydream my way out.

—ada jill schneider

[poetry]

Sleeplessness

as smoke fills the room and nothing seems right she's not coming 'round the vapor kills the mood and sleeplessness is staining bloodshot eyes cry into the night won't she know me more no, she won't know—no, she won't go set free all the hope Pandora can't win, she won't be Lady Peaceful—Lady Happy history's permanently written Sharpie'd on the wall of a restroom stall and there's no going backwards only set things to go forward the future is set, fast forward toward the only words that make sense the fates' cast the stone they cast the spell and the Gods' Gods fell welcoming a new view

-grim k. de evil

Karloffillitis

The props lady caught it first, Then the aged lighting director. An angry villager carrying a torch Took it come to his wife and children.

Another week and the grade school principal Chased a small child into the woods, Walking stiff legged with arms outstretched, His speech reduced to a slobbering grunt.

The janitor showed the classic symptoms.. Huge broad shoulders, boxy feet, A horribly large forehead... Knobby growths on his neck.

Only two people were saved. A little girl with golden hair Picking daisies by the river, And an old blind man Who lived alone in his shack.

The disease spread like a shroud Covering every village and town. Nearly everyone went mad, And the world turned black and white.

—larry allen

THE DEVIL~S SALE

BY AURORA LEWIS

rom Senegal to Gorée she sailed in the hull of a slave ship. To the Island of Martinique then on to New Orleans she went. With her she brought the magic of the bones to toss upon the ground, a monkey's paw, the jaw bone of a rabid hound. In her shack at the river's edge she called on the devil to make a pledge to give her soul at the gates of hell. In return the crack of a whip she would never feel. From that day she was known as Queen spreading her evil as was deemed. A wench whose face with beauty was graced, but evil hide behind her eyes and words of kindness were only lies.

Shaking and sweating, foam on her lips, from a goblet of blood she wantonly sipped. Dancing around the fire to demonic chants her followers twitched and moaned to her rants. She raised the dead with their vacant stare who did her bidding from a bit of cloth or a lock of hair. They hid themselves from the light of day and prowled the night stalking her prey. Her Master tried to burn her at the stake, but she turned the flaming wood into a giant snake that slithered along the ground into the swamp, down below where demons romped.

Soon word of her evil spread far and wide, no slave master would cross her path for fear of feeling the power of her wrath. A baby born still, a crop destroyed, a fortune lost, it was her choice. The slave owners left her be, to cast her spells commanding those she called from hell.

A tale is told of a man who did not heed the warnings of her evil deeds. He

heard of her dark beauty, her luscious lips that none would taste. He came to her door and kicked it in, shouting and hollering from too much gin. She bid him come and take a seat or lie in her bed and find some sleep. He felt his nature rise with lust and take her he felt he must.

She smiled as he yanked her hair, and tore her dress, leaving her body bear. When he had taken her there on the floor, she quietly whispered, you'll do this no more. He laughed and said she was no witch, nothing but a scheming bitch. She begged his pardon then covered herself, walking over to her conjuring shelf. She asked him if he'd like some wine, she made it herself, grapes grown on her own vine.

Smiling and watching her move about the room he said to himself, he'd have his way with her again, soon. As she poured his drink from a jug, bodies arose from the stinking mud. They trudged across her field past her gate, and through her door. They ripped the drunkard, tore him apart, then each devour pieces of his heart. Queen tossed her head and laughed another one dead who had crossed her path.

In time she withered growing old, gasping for life, but her soul was sold. The hoofed one greeted her at the gates of hell. To burn in perpetuity, was the devil's sale.

I Will Love You Forever

The day before my birthday I asked for a sign To tell me my husband Was at peace, And questioning whether he could Still love me after death. I went to bed as usual Thinking of Bernie Wishing he could be with me For my birthday.

> It seemed that suddenly I saw Upon my marble table A card which read:

> > GO WELL FOR I WILL LOVE YOU FOREVER

Then I heard another person Next to me Sleeping softly. I could have sworn It was Bernie.

> Was it a dream Or was it real ?!

—marie de spirito russian



[poetry]

Sonnet to My Monster

There is this monster riding on my back Claws dug deep refusing to let me go Whispering such lies as if I don't know I want to pry it loose then drown it in a sack Hang it on a meat hook, or twist it on a rack This parasite attached to me I detest it so I watched its birth, then watched it grow I want it dead, dropping in its tracks What can I do to make this monster leave So I can be at peace, unbound, and free? Should this monster die I will not grieve I'll dance upon its grave for all to see Denouncing its affection I once believed It calls itself Love, living only to torture me

—aurora lewis

Like Snow

The shell covered her from the rain as all the others stood, getting soaked. She didn't fully understand what he meant by the phrase before leaving her, but she wasn't caring about it much anymore. She looked out to the crowd as the weather turned for the worse.

The sound beat down on the shell and deafened her from noticing the towering man behind, standing in black, leaning over like a pillar, like a dying, thinning tree. His long arms branching out, his legs so tightly together they became a trunk. A gust of wind lifted her shell. She gripped on and her feet left the ground for a moment. She loved these days the most. Another gust and the man yelled to her screaming out silently.

The air was cold and came up to her face, surrounding it, from the gape of the shell and the sidewalk. The rain stopped suddenly. A moment of stillness, quietness, then a gust of wind and flakes of snow came from around the street corner. The hair on her neck stood up and she turned around. The man behind her was gone. She walked into the wind, into the whiteout.

-grim k. de evil

S4 THE LITER

HATCHET

My Cave

I'm a hermit in a cave eyes closed amid the darkness heart empty as the shadows mind cold as the stone surrounding embracing the void without touching touching without feeling feeling the space between darkness hearing the echo of my heartbeat freezing my mind into suspended animation waiting for a miracle to cure my aching muscle my cave grows larger as I wait holding more darkness there is no day or night my world is silent, lightless my body is a ruin, lifeless my breath is steam my soul is lean hungry for a love that cannot find me.

—kat koorey

Seven Pins on the Board by Mark Sashine

There are no humans in that Devil's home. R. L. Stevenson *Olalla*

1

Dogs were wet. Rotten leaves overwhelmed the passages between our apartment buildings; the strong liquor of autumn made worn women's shoes shine like pearls and drew the kids away from the cast iron rails, swing sets and rocking chairs of the playgrounds. When the stray dogs took over, even the novices among them knew the way down the tiny hallway to the kitchen where my friend's mother or sister always kept bowls of food and water. The dogs could count on meeting someone on the couch in the living room to express their gratitude. I could feel their jealousy in the persistence of their effort to push me off. Sometimes I respected their wishes and sat on the floor. My friend picked me up on the street corner the same way he picked up them. It was a warm and cozy place with TV. After a bowl of hot soup, his sister looked even attractive, if you didn't notice her spiked hair. I contemplated dating her once. If I had done that I would've remembered her

name. But the dating never took place and the questions I wanted to ask before the growing sense of discontent became unbearable, remained unanswered. That's how it started: through not asking.

2

Our college hallways resembled the nave of Notre Dame where a regiment could be placed without disturbing the Mass. Echoes from the voices of thirty thousand students hovered under the pseudo-Gothic ceilings, covered with frescoes, all picturing men in black robes making scientific discoveries. Outside there was a day of the Free Labor. We were shoveling the gravel for the soul improvement and arguing.

"This shoveling is meaningless. How come you always drag me into it?"

"Free social labor is our future. It's just not properly organized. Next time it'll be better."

"It'll never be better because it is insane. There is no such thing as free labor. They took other people's lives and now it is our turn."

"This is for my father. He suffered for this."

On the old photo of us together that shovel dominates the entire foreground. Maybe his father suffered for the oak handle polished by at least five generations of the free laborers. Or maybe it was the nail, that thick piece of rusty steel curved on the outside and hammered backwards flush into the surface, so that never through a lifetime could you disconnect the shovel blade from its handle. The nail says to you that the Free Labor days would never go away and there always would be rain, loudspeakers and that everlasting acidy dust. Through the years that dust covered our faces until we could see each other no more.

3

We were drinking in the People's Police precinct. All cells were open and the city drunks and junkies sat among us. Chairman Mao died on that night.

"Another bloodsucker is dead. Here is to all of them ending in the same place!"

The police sergeant made a big gulp, untied my citizen's patrol sign and poured me a glass. "Sorry, man, your friend was so proud to pick up that junkie and now we will let him go. Big day, special day. What's with your friend, anyway?"

"What do you mean?"

"He has Plumbum brains. You know what I mean."

I knew that all too well. Plumbum means lead in Latin. He was a movie character, a teenage boy, obsessed with law enforcement. He volunteered in helping the police to hunt down drunks and other unsuitable characters. The kid was a natural snitch and everyone in the department hated him. At the end of the movie the little madman turned in his own father to the police for some minor violation.

"You mean he is out of control?" I asked.

"He is nuts. We do our job but there's nothing to like or admire. We bust those poor bastards for money. Most of them need a warm place, loving care and a good listener; not a night on a cement floor. Your friend likes it. He radiated pride when he brought the guy here. And he doesn't drink anything."

"Is that so bad?"

"One odd thing by itself is OK. But the clueless abstinent with a Plumbum wish is someone to watch closely. If I have learned anything here is to sniff out freaks, pardon my French. You have your hands full. Here's to you."

"Thank you. He says his father suffered for the idea and he wants to make up for it."

"Father, eh? The name doesn't ring a bell. Children of those who really suffered wouldn't engage in the manhunt. You didn't hear that from me."

"You have my word."

He joined the police officers singing an obscene song. My friend never sang anything. Neither did Plumbum, as I recall. He read the youth movement magazines. What did my friend read? Wasn't his father some kind of a children's writer?

4

He was published in those magazines, all right. I read some of his writings in the library. Highly patriotic, big deal, very boring. He was a perfect zombie, a *nomenclature* "social realist" on the state retainer. I checked the records and found that he was a member of all government-sponsored literary unions. How come he lived in such a dump? How come his children were not studying foreign affairs in an elite university? The name suggested a Jewish origin. Could that be the reason? But there was quite a few *ReichsJude*, the loyal servants of the authorities. Lack of the literary talent should only help in his career. Of course, he didn't look like a spiritual leader. That frog's mouth, those narrow, bleakly gravish eyes. Children's magazines shouldn't publish his photos to spare the young readers. I wasn't spared. Here he was, looking at me from the page I tore out. My friend didn't look like that face. Whom did he look like? I don't remember.

5

We rented a banquet hall for my friend's wedding. As a best man I was preoccupied with seating and other details. When dances reached the culmination I went out to the gallery for some fresh air. Lo and behold, the children's writer was there, smoking.

"Good wedding," he said. "My son told me about you."

"He didn't say much about you, Sir."

"Really? He isn't exactly like me, you know. Straightforward but secretive he is. I was very straightforward once. Paid for that dearly. Maybe he learned a lesson."

"Didn't he follow your example?"

"He just doesn't know. You both don't know. Engineers, eh?" He turned to whisper, "They called us *engineers of human souls*. Ever heard of us? I was a columnist, a famous one. They brought us in to weed the garden. Boy, we did a good job. Now my son doesn't want to know. Neither do you, I presume. Your mother should know. Women, they never forget. Want to know more? I can tell you."

"He said you suffered a grave injustice for your loyalty to the idea." The man chuckled, "That's how he puts it. Let it be if it makes him feel better. He thinks that if he doesn't drink, doesn't smoke, serves the purpose and follows the rules, he'll have a better destiny. But everything is relative, you know. Loyalty, justice ... " He yawned.

I excused myself and headed for the door. In the mirror, I noticed someone watching me. It was my friend's mother. Fear in her eyes was so overwhelming that I nearly fainted. It was more like horror, as if she was desperately afraid of me and for me. Never again was I invited to their home. The last I heard of my friend was that he joined the military.

6

Newspapers are time bombs. The old country did not adopt an Orwellian approach of rewriting the columns. People were called all kinds of names: dogs, prostitutes, beasts of evil. It was the medieval language: hysterical, erratic, full of fear and malice. Families were accused of conspiring with the enemy. Children were branded bad seeds, even the infants. Every column called for blood. You could physically feel those pages soaked with blood. And blood there was: rivers of blood, millions dead, generations of people slaughtered. I sat in the calm library halls and sometimes looked around, afraid of the monsters resurrected by the evil I had touched. Many of those articles were anonymous. Quite a few had proud authors. The loudest name was the one I knew.

That columnist contributed to every campaign. Year after year he spilled venom on the pages with enough hatred to burn the paper. It was not even a style; just senseless barking. More materials came: documentaries, court reports, cross-references, photos, lots of photos. Those were the distorted faces of the wrongly accused, faces of their wives, mothers, children. There were also photos of the *interrogators*. They willingly came out into the open, gave interviews, praised themselves, referred to all those articles in the newspapers and used the same words. It was howling of the berserk werewolves.

And death was everywhere; death from starvation, shooting, firing squads, suicides, family murders, mass executions, death on the roads of mass deportations, death from torture. The carnage lasted for nearly twenty years.

His last column was called *Weeding* the Garden. It started the campaign against the *cosmopolites*, the people accused of unpatriotic thinking. Jewish people were the primary target because of their "foreign" origin. Bounty hunters were unleashed to find the *hidden bad* thinkers, among those who adopted aliases or pseudonyms. Looks like the dog got its fleas; an article in the same paper of about a month after his accused him of hiding his Jewish identity and his connections to the Jews abroad. He was called all the necessary names, fired from his job and stripped of all privileges. The Mangler sucked him in.

I can suspect that when the campaign subsided the man tried desperately to get back on the roll but he was in the double jeopardy: a lucky criminal from any point of view. New rulers pushed him into oblivion. He couldn't handle that. Rage and horror contributed to a progressive mental disorder.

Did my friend know? His mother knew, no doubt. To protect the family she concocted a story about their father being a victim, a sufferer for the idea. Maybe she told her children that he was persecuted as a Jew. She was not Jewish but the excuse was good. That man was a witness. That's why she was so afraid. I could tell someone about him and that could reach the ears of those who were still in power. She knew very well how easy it would be for them to eliminate the family.

7

Remember your Shakespeare? *I* loved my friend. He went away from me. There is nothing more to say... I don't know where my friend is now. I hope he is alive and cured. He felt the disease creeping in and those dogs were his form of protection. There were no priests to confess to or shrinks to take his pain away; maybe that's how he kept his checks and balances. Under different circumstances he could become a recluse monk tending for animals. As it wasn't possible he ended up as a soldier. I am sure that he has no children of his own.

As for his father, I hope he is dead. It would be good for all of us if this shadow disappears from the face of the Earth. Those other faces, they are on my board forever. Pins protrude from the inside out. It hurts to touch. *I loved my friend*.



Shaking Your Hand

I shake your hand,

so clean, still warm,

with fingers long and

attractive, to relive

our loving, my lovely;

then leave your hand

beside your severed

head, resting upright

upon my desk.

—Denise Noe

One

I am a man. I perceive your shining body small, delicate, waiting. You want me. We gently rock you moan. I am on top. I have power to amuse, excite begin or end. I am on top. I am a woman. I feel your weight give and take. Burn my kiss into your soul. I lie beneath you but I have power because you want me. I am man, I am woman. I am alone. One person. I hear the sighs feel the glow taste the power. I want, I have, I am. One.

–kat koorey

Crawling the Mainland

[poetry]

"Anymore and I'll be crawling." he said, waving off the inquisitory look of his wife and the wine. "I'm staying up. I'm having another glass." she replied. "By yourself?"

"I'm pursuing death on a blush sea. I'll swim after and catch him." "That's awful. Come to bed."

With that, in a guise of faux sobriety, he retired, stiff and with an iron head.

Portions of him, soft armor or his form's white billows, dot by fleck, sloughed, that in a lake of flannel and cotton he swam with shut eyes, where his motion's proceeds fed 1,480 crawling mites atop a pillow.

In the early morning, with tails flit and snouts moistened, they met again, as he offered his hand and helped her rise from the kitchen floor.

"I must have crawled in here." she said. "Did you track down death?" he asked. "No, I think he must have been with you."

-Ray Succre

The Queen for Me

Treason entered my heart when I first espied Queen Anne. It was more than lust, though she inspired a goodly amount of that with her dark hair, delicate features, and spare, small-breasted figure. My love was won by the tiny sixth finger that she tried to keep hidden under her hand.

I did not even dare breathe a word of my love in the confessional. So I was not discovered. They died instead: Mark Smeaton, Henry Norris, Francis Weston, William Brereton, and her brother, Lord Rochford.

And she dies today.

Innocent. A chaste woman is Anne Boleyn; though I know the men would have had her if she had been willing. Yea, even if I had been her own brother, gladly I would have lain with her at the risk of my own life and not regarding the outrage against God and Nature.

For today I risk my life. The King will have me drawn and quartered if he discovers the bribe I paid. With only darkness as my cloak and love as my armor, I fill the black sack with the treasure I purchased at great price and may yet pay for with my life.

Safe at home, I reverently lift out Her Majesty's head and place it on my desk. Eyes shut and features in repose, her skin snow white in death, she is still beautiful. My heart trips and swells. Trembling with excitement, I pull the glove off my hand. Then I slide my finger -- my sixth finger -- across my Queen's face. Her eyes open instantly and they are as brown and lively as ever they were in life.

I bow deeply. "Your Majesty," I say.

"Sire," she replies with a smile.

—Denise Noe

TIME WAITS FOR NO ONE

NEW YORK, 1924

All Lizbeth needed was a leisurely lunch break after her busy morning of shopping in Manhattan. A crisp late autumn day, the wind whisked through the caverns of the tall buildings. Slivers of gray sky peeked through the man-made mountains, threatening to cover them with snow. The city was bustling along in tandem with the blustery air, barely stopping, full of prosperity and promise. Lizbeth was getting older, and cities were starting to overwhelm her now; time had moved past her once and for all. So many automobiles, so many people heading in every conceivable direction, so much haste; it made her dizzy. This is what it is like to get old, Lizzie thought. The more of your life that was behind you, the shorter the rest of your life seemed. Time sped up, and so did the world around you. Some kind of silent conspiracy existed between time and the world, so once a person was past their prime and no longer of use, they spun

you quickly off into another place like so much discarded waste. Yes, a visit to a warm, glowing restaurant for a hearty meal would fortify her for an afternoon of browsing.

One of her regular spots was less than a block away, and her bloated, tired old legs moved faster in knowing their destination. She tucked into one corner of the smallish bistro, neither boisterous nor crowded, a place to dine on French cuisine alone and undisturbed. Thus far, this was as pleasant as most trips were, uneventful, a time to luxuriate in the anonymity of a large city; just another well-heeled lady stopping for her lunch break amidst a day of shopping. The lunch was substantial and delicious as always, but she could not resist the piece de resistance of having a Napoleon pastry with her coffee to finish.

"Excuse me, but may I speak with you for a moment?"

Lizbeth looked into the deep brown eyes of an elegant woman. She was in her fifties perhaps, not much younger

excerpt from Silent Rebel

BY T.K. ROUSE

than herself, her striking white hair immaculately coiffed. The woman wore dark gloves, with a large solitaire diamond on her ring finger. Whatever was it that suddenly reminded her of Nance?

"Please," Lizbeth nodded toward the empty chair on the other side of her small table.

"You went back," the woman stated, her brown eyes hard and steady.

Inexplicably, the blood suddenly ran cold in Lizbeth's veins. "I'm sorry," she managed to push forth. "Have we been introduced?"

"You should not have gone back," the woman continued. "There was no reason for it, except that you were angry and afraid. You should have stayed away, let things work themselves out. But you were stubborn, and you had to have your way. All you cared about was your things. Lace handkerchiefs! Bits of porcelain..."

She was right, of course, and Lizbeth could not look into those eyes any longer. It seemed impossible; she did not know her, and yet, she knew so much. Had she recognized her? Even so...

"What is it like," the woman pressed onward. "When you see that mill? All those people who work so hard to make your profits. You'll be all right; you have always been all right. But when that mill fails, what will happen to them? How does it make you feel, that mill? Do you care about it at all; do you care about those people at all? I know you'll see it again, and not only in *this* life."

Lizzie Borden was speechless. Her heart raced.

"Oh well," the woman smiled. "I can see you are not ready. You are still the *Silent Rebel*. There is always time enough for Truth. But remember, *time waits for no one*." And with that, the woman continued on her way.

Lizzie pushed the half-finished pastry away from her, placing one hand on her chest as if to slow down the pounding within. *Silent Rebel!* Those were Nance O'Neil's words, the way she described Lizzie so long ago. Was this woman a friend of Nance? This was New York, after all, and Nance lived here, or so that was the last she had heard. But Nance had said she would never betray their friendship. Whoever that woman was, what right did she have to judge her? Lizzie was generous, but she was generous in her own way. And how on earth had she known, how had she known how Lizzie had gone back? After a moment, she felt a bit better. Surely it was all nonsense, some kind of misunderstanding. Obviously, the woman thought she was someone else, and Lizzie, being so used to being judged and condemned, had taken the words personally. In Fall River, the whole town had condemned her, but this was the first time she had ever encountered such a thing on her travels. She looked around for the mysterious woman. The whole of the bistro was within her view, but the woman was nowhere to be seen.

Later that night, alone in her hotel room, Lizbeth Borden wrote —

It has been said that I have a repellent disposition. It has been said that I must be a monster, an aberration. But is it only me who is so wrong, when this whole world is so full of hypocrisy? It's only when I tell the truth, and people cannot bear to hear it. Truth has always got me into trouble. It's only when I've lied that I've gotten away with things. As a child, I learned there was good truth and bad truth. Everyone says it's always good to tell the truth, but that just isn't the way life is.

They whisper behind my back, they judge me. None of them know what it is like to be inside of me. Yes, of course it hurts. It has always hurt, because I know the whole truth. And I know how utterly impossible it is to explain Truth to a world that hides from it at every turn. It is far easier for them to brand me a monster. If I were ever to tell them all of my truth, they would just cover their ears in horror, and brand me a liar.

I was acquitted, and it was fair. I spent almost a year in Taunton and yes, it was difficult. But I had been in a jail for all of my life; what was one year of honest incarceration? Any debt I owed to worldly justice was paid in full. They declared that I was not guilty. What is real justice, anyway? I don't think it exists in this world. Not much about life is fair. All of a life can be a prison. We do what we have to do in order to survive. The things we do, we must live with them. The choices we make, we make them. We all do what we have to do.

Do I regret what I did? No, not really. What other choice did either of us have, Emma and me? I knew very well that Emma was not going to do anything. Yes, she could complain and worry and see the dark side of everything until it drove me insane; but would she ever do anything about it? Of course not. My sister never had any courage. She would speak back to Abby, but never to Father. I was the one left to speak up. I was always the one who was left to DO. And something had to be done before we were forced to see everything go to Abby and her wretched family...

Lizbeth stopped and read it over. She was haunted by the mysterious woman. Her dark brown eyes had seemed ageless, made from some kind of substance that seemed to transcend time. *Oil*, she thought to herself. Yes, that was it. Subterranean; as old as all life on earth. Yes, those eyes knew just about all there was to know.

She wondered, *Was there any point? Would anyone even care?* No. No one had ever cared, not really. No one would understand. Everyone would jump to their own conclusions and go on with their lives. People did not care about truth; people cared about controversy and issues. What would be the point of confession? She would only be judged; and there had been more than enough of that for all of her life.

St. John in the Bible told the words of Jesus: He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone at her. Later, Jesus had forgiven the woman and said: go, and sin no more. And hadn't Lizzie done just that? Small sins, maybe. No more than any other human being who was not a saint. And she had done so much that was good in her life, she had always done for others; surely far more than her father ever had. Who was to say what was a sin and what was not? Who was to say what the proper atonement for ones sins could be? No person she had ever met had been a saint, nor a Christ, and certainly not a God. Only God could judge.

Lizbeth crumpled the papers and tossed them directly into the fire. Tears fell down her aged cheeks as she watched the fire consume her words.

"If it is hell, then so be it," she said quietly to the darkness. "At least it is *my* hell."



[poetry]

What Happened

The harper, fragile down the manner of her, a wife digressed to him and thought filthy to the stop, abruptly or promptly ate her.

He was a leader. He led what he ate. He began with her hooded face, moving ever in, past monkey nose and two flaws of round, and in each wily nip, and by every lap to teeth, he led himself to feel that he knew her.

"Congratulations." he said, having his bite from her face, "You once got me to shudder."

He explained that the sweetness had embittered, and the anticipations had been augmented by a wrinkling lye from her cracked hillsides. Softly, as in aggression down a count of ten, and where her intima most renounced its courier, the well-quieted, slowly flown woman with no moment she would not claim was his doing, weakly told him everything.

"Supplant, pile, fear, flies." she said.

What he felt to own, he celebrated, what he sensed he had, he busted, a boy-as-man, but a lark, bleary-eyed and picayune, the little plague of his mood in unseen balloons of self-satire.

This is what had happened: Shatter. Huge. Stunning.

-Ray Succre

Charlie Plays a Tune (version 2)

Crippled, in Chicago, with arthritis and Alzheimer's. in a dark rented room, Charley plays melancholic melodies on a dust filled harmonica he found abandoned on a playground of sand years ago by a handful of children playing on monkey bars. He now goes to the bathroom on occasion, relieving himself takes forever; he feeds the cat when he doesn't forget where the food is stashed at. He hears bedlam when he buys fish at the local market and the skeleton bones of the fish show through. He lies on his back riddled with pain, pine cones fill his pillows and mattress; praying to Jesus and rubbing his rosary beads Charley blows tunes out his celestial instrument notes float through the open window touch the nose of summer clouds. Charley overtakes himself with grief and is ecstatically alone. Charley plays a solo tune.

-Michael Lee Johnson

The Law-Breakers of Chicken Double D-Lite

by

Denise Noe

They were an older woman and a very old man. Doris Austen was one of those people from whom the aging process had erased all trace of youth: fat, wrinkled, white-haired, with two front teeth missing, she gave no hint of the flower child she had once fancied herself or the rebellious daughter who had caused her parents so much grief.

By contrast, her widowed father's frail arms still displayed the tattoos of the strapping young soldier who had fought in Okinawa. The primly honest, hardworking family man into which he had mellowed was visible in the close shave on his bespectacled Spam-pink face, the rigorously trimmed ring of white hairs, the buttoned shirt and gray slacks.

Almost everything in their little trailer home had been pressed into doubleduty. One end of the narrow rectangle was the kitchen, its counter mobbed by jars of condiments, a box of aluminum foil, a toaster, a microwave, and a coffee maker. A new, thick roll of paper towels hung neatly over the sink. Nancy Kerrigan skated across the squat fridge (four pics, two in color).

The end of the rectangle they presently occupied served as both living room and Pop's bedroom. Father and daughter sat on a silver-trimmed sofa which was also Pop's bed. (It was not a fold-out; rather, he folded himself into it to sleep.)

The TV sat in a cupboard beside the closet. There were several other shut cupboards and an open, doorless space with pencils and paperback books of crossword puzzles, a phone directory, and a pile of bills. A folded ironing board was stuck up against the closet; so were Pop's shoes, both the OK pair and the ones they planned to fix someday.

"Doris," Pop asked, between slurps of oatmeal and coffee, "have you paid that car insurance yet?"

"No," Doris replied with her uniquely skewed smile. She was in the habit of

pulling her upper lip down when she spoke to try minimize the gap between her teeth. "We just don't have the money."

"But it's been over two months now," Walter Austen said in exasperation. He sighed deeply and the small blue eyes, which looked frog-big through the thick glasses, fixed on his daughter.

"I know, Pop." She lifted her non-existent eyebrows and shrugged. "It'll be OK." She hated for Pop to worry. "Do you want some more sugar?" she asked, hoping to distract him. She knew Pop had a terrible sweet tooth -- which Doris had inherited, much to her distress -- since, as she sometimes joked, she'd lost her teeth to a sweet tooth.

"Yes, yes," he replied, still staring at her with a worried expression. "And more coffee."

Doris moved swiftly despite her heft. But there wasn't far to go: moving around their home was really a matter of stepping carefully around chairs and boxes -- something more difficult for her father and which tended to keep him seated.

Doris poured Pop some coffee and stirred in cream and sugar.

"It's illegal to drive without insurance," Pop remonstrated gravely. He took off his glasses and rubbed the lenses with his shirt. Then he tucked his shirt back into his pants. "You could get in trouble for it, Doris."

"That's only if I get caught. And I've never had an accident, not even a traffic ticket, in my whole life," replied his gap-toothed daughter. She went back to watching the tube.

"I don't like being a law-breaker, Doris." Pop finished his coffee, then carefully set his tray on top of the TV set. "That's why I used to get mad at you all the time."

"That was a long time ago, Pop," she reminded him, trying to keep a trace of resentment out of her voice. She didn't like to be reminded of old family troubles. Doris gobbled her third piece of French toast and washed it down with milk. It was time to get ready for work so she moved her chair closer to the little peeling red chest which contained her make-up and brushes. After she placed the latter items either on the floor or in her lap, she took out the mirror and balanced it on top of the closed chest.

Doris fussed with her white hair, first gathering it into a ponytail, then fixing it "up" with bobby pins. Carefully, she sketched light brown eyebrows into the appropriate places.

"Also, Doris, you need a dental plate. You've gone without one for *so* long." "Never mind about my teeth, Pop. I'm used to it."

"Yeah, but you must be self-conscious, Doris. After all, don't some of the kids at work call you a \ldots "

"A witch," Doris said, turning her head and letting her lips pull back into a full, gap-toothed grin. "That's OK, Pop. Sticks and stones, y'know."

Pop was sad as the TV went to the news. He knew she was humoring him. Words *do* hurt; everyone knows that. "Every time you leave I'm afraid something will happen and you'll get arrested for driving without insurance," Pop told her, "I'm just so afraid because then what will we do?"

"We'll get the money soon," Doris said. "And I'll pay it first thing."

"But when?" he asked in a husky voice full of anxiety.

"Pop, remember the time two years ago, when the phone got cut off and then

our utilities too?" Doris asked, putting her jewelry on.

He nodded his head, remembering. "Ohhhh," he groaned, eyes closed, recalling the nightmare. "No electricity and it was one of the worst summer's Duoland's ever had. I like to have died."

"But remember, we found the money," his daughter reminded.

"Yeah. Oh yeah, that was a miracle," he said.

"When you really need them, Pop, miracles happen." Doris put her heavy arms around him and kissed his cheek just before leaving. "We witches have our ways."

"May I take your order, please?" Doris asked for the umpteenth time that day. Then she saw the gun.

This time it was a white guy. Young, ruggedly built and blocky, with short black hair and a tattooed forearm. He said the same thing the black robber had said two years before: "Just gimme the money."

"This isn't nice, is it?" Doris asked, automatically pursing her lips together.

"Give me the money bitch or I'll shoot," he told the fat ugly old woman.

"Really, it's awful to break the law, don't you think so?"

He realized that she wasn't scared and a chill ran down his own spine. What was wrong with her? "Can't you see I've got a gun?" he yelled.

The woman looked at him with an oddly indifferent expression on her face. Her striped polyester uniform seemed to contrast weirdly with the bits of rhinestone glittering on her earlobes. Taking her time, she removed the bills from the drawers and handed them to him.

She grinned, displaying the black vacancy of her mouth.

Pop!

"Oh--ohhh!" Doris gasped, a hand on her bloodied chest as she slid toward the floor of Chicken Double D-Lite.

Jamie slammed the passenger door shut with a bloodied hand and Trish stepped on the gas. "You shot somebody!" Trish screamed as she passed a car.

"Slow down, Trish," Jamie ordered, rubbing the front of his upper lip. Trish slowed.

"Goddamn it," Jamie muttered, "I can't believe how much she splattered me." He looked down at the front of his shirt: it was soppy red.

Trish demanded: "Why did you shoot, Jamie, why?"

Jamie shrugged his shoulders and took his shirt off. He rubbed his hands against it, trying to get the blood off them. He sure hoped Trish wouldn't start crying; but, then, his old lady was pretty tough.

They were on the freeway now and going 25 mph above the speed limit like everyone else. "Didn't he give you the money?" Trish asked. "She," Jamie corrected. He started scratching his arms. His skin felt funny. Inside his mouth, his tongue worked against his sore front teeth.

Trish was pretty and thin, with big boobs, a mop of dark blonde curls which spilled past her narrow shoulders, and a case of zits to the max that had followed her out of her teen years. Heavily made-up, she tried to bury the blackheads around her nostrils and between her eyebrows beneath Clearesil. She also tried to hide a black eye (she had annoyed Jamie the other day) behind extra layers of foundation and purple shadow. Today she had colored her lips a fierce electric blue; her long fingernails were painted various greens and blues. Big peace-signs dangled cutely from her ears.

"She was, baby, but . . . it was the way she looked at me. Have you got a Kleenex or something?"

"Look in my purse," Trish said.

Jamie rifled through her capacious, shoulder-hanging bag. "Oh, good," he said, heaving relief. She had a little clear-colored pack of tissues. He started rubbing his hands furiously. Why did he *itch* so, he wondered?

"The way she looked at you?" Trish repeated incredulously. "What do you mean?"

"Well, she was this old lady, and she should have looked scared when she saw the gun. But instead she smiled at me just like she was super pleased to see me and her smile looked weird because her front teeth were missing and . . . it just kinda threw me." Jamie rubbed a finger on his sore upper lip again. "Don't miss the exit, Trish," he told her sharply.

She didn't. "How much did you get?" she asked as she turned.

"Fifty," Jamie replied. He thought he must be coming down with something.

Trish kept looking at the road. She bit her lower lip to keep quiet but she was fuming inside that he had taken such a risk over such a dip amount of money.

Trish pulled into the Shadowlawn Inn, a maze like and sprawling pinkish, onestory building.

"You go in, baby," Jamie said. "I don't want the clerk to see me because there's probably an APB out about me."

"OK, baby," Trish said. She wasn't mad at Jamie anymore. Jamie *was* cute. Plus he seemed to her a real man, old-fashioned and macho, not a wimp like so many of the guys nowadays. Life with him was exciting and that was what counted.

An old bald guy sat behind the desk at the motel. Slowly, he looked up from the crossword puzzle he was doing. "How may I help you?" Walter Austen asked.

"Me and my husband want to spend the night here," Trish replied. The old guy got up: he seemed to take forever. Trish couldn't believe how some of these old guys were in slow-mo.

"Yes," he said, opening a vanilla-colored book for her to write in. His squint behind those thick glasses gave Trish the creeps. He had tattoos on both arms but he sure didn't remind her of Jamie.

Walter cleared his throat. He noticed the pimples on the young girl's face and immediately felt a twinge of pity for her: looks are so important to females. No matter what Doris said, he knew her missing teeth had to be a source of terrible pain.

As Trish scribbled "Mr. and Mrs. Johnson," Walter told her: "You've got beautiful hair, ma'am." He believed it was important to pay compliments to girls who were probably self-conscious.

"Thanks," she replied. She played with her earrings while the man with quivering

hands shuffled to a side drawer where keys were kept, then back to the front where he opened up a drawer full of bills. Trish's eyes about popped out of her head: so much cash! The spaces for tens, twenties and fifties were all piled inches high and so was the one with Ben Franklins!

Walter held out the keys.

"Thank you," Trish said as she picked them up. She couldn't wait to tell Jamie about all that scratch.

"You have to pay in advance, ma'am," he said with a kindly smile.

"Yeah, sure." She plonked down the fee and waltzed back to the car with a shitfaced grin. "Jamie, I've got something to tell you," she whispered.

He gave her a lackluster look and rubbed on the front of his mouth. "What is it, Trish?" he asked as they walked to Room 241.

"Wait 'til we get inside," she replied as she opened the door.

"I don't feel too good," Jamie commented, sitting, then lying down, on the made-up bed.

"Take your shoes off," Trish remonstrated.

"Shut up," he said irritably, lying on the bed in his shoes and still playing with the front of his mouth.

"There's loads of cash here!" Trish exploded joyfully. "The hotel register must have about a thousand bucks and I'm not kidding!"

She waited for him to jump up with excitement but Jamie just stayed put, his expression unchanging.

"I don't feel like another job yet," he said woodenly. "Something's wrong with me."

"Oh, Jamie, who cares? You need money to see a doctor, don't you? Then get the money."

Jamie shook his head. "No," he said. "It's too soon after the Chicken D-Lite thing. The pigs are already looking for us. And I'm sick. Don't you care?"

"Of course I care." Trish sat beside him on the bed. Yes, she realized, he did look bad. His skin had a sallow tone and there were big, inexplicably dry spots.

"Feel here," Jamie said, guiding her fingers to his teeth: they were loose! she realized with a start.

"I guess you are sick, Jamie," she said sympathetically, holding his hand and kissing him along the jaw. "But you don't seem too sick to rob that old guy. We ought to get money in case you get sicker, y'know."

"No," Jamie said firmly, reinforcing it with a quick slap to Trish's face.

"Oh!" Trish got up from the bed, embarrassed. She was churning with anger. Well, if he wouldn't do it, she decided, she'd have to do it herself. Although she hadn't had to use it, Jamie had provided her with a gun "just in case," which she kept in her purse. Hell, she thought, remembering Walter's compliment, maybe she wouldn't have to steal it. The horny old guy might fork it over if she flirted with him.

"Hello, Mrs. Johnson," Walter Johnson said, looking up from his crossword puzzle when Trish walked into the office.

"Hi," Trish said, smiling and tossing her curly hair back. She stood extra-straight so he could get a good look at her tits. "Guess it's kinda slow now."

"Yeah," he replied, smiling back.

It was easy to detect the glint of lust in his eyes, even behind those awful

glasses. "Could I get change?" she asked.

"Sure." He stood up from his chair, then waddled over to the drawer and opened it. "Change for what?" he asked.

Without a word, she leaned over the counter and grabbed the stack of hundreds.

"Young lady!" he exclaimed.

Trish didn't run. She just stood before him, playing with the cash and smiling slyly. "Walter," she purred, "You wouldn't mind letting me have this, wouldja? I could be nice to you."

His pink face deepened to a brick red. "No! That's not right!" His jowls shuddered as he shook his balding head.

She leaned forward and planted a wet kiss on the whiskery side of his face. He banged the drawer shut, then backed away from her.

"OK, you want it the hard way, fine," Trish told him as she took the gun out of her purse. "Give me the money."

"You don't want to do this," he said. A trembling, tattooed arm reached out to take the gun.

Trish shot. She screamed as blood splashed onto her but the old man still smiled as she shot again and kept shooting at his bleeding body until the gun only clicked.

The highway was relatively uncrowded and no cop car was in sight so Trish was going 80 m.p.h. Jamie groaned beside her, slouching in the passenger seat. There sure was something wrong with him. A front tooth had popped out while she was getting the money from the Inn. His eyebrows had fallen out. He had swollen up in weird places over his body, the skin flaky and dry. Once they got out of this Duotown dump, he'd have to see a doctor whatever the risk of alerting the heat.

Trish steered with one hand while she scratched at a violently itching forearm.

"Another tooth came out," Jamie whined. Trish looked: sure enough, there it was in the hollow of his palm.

"Gosh, I'm sorry," Trish said. She turned off a ramp. For some reason, she didn't feel really feel sorry. He was getting so whiny: he sounded like an old woman. Really, she'd done better on her one job by herself than he had in any of his. In all of his put together! And now, swollen up like he was . . . he sure didn't turn her on.

Trish noticed that there were marks on her arm, faint black marks. They must be from scratching herself -- but wouldn't that make red lines? She brushed her hair back. Hairs came off in her hand.

"Welcome to Duotown," the sign read.

"Wha-a-t?!" Trish exclaimed. "Jamie look. We're back at the same town."

"You must have driven around in circles," he moaned in an unnaturally high voice.

"But I didn't!" Trish said. "I'm sure of it."

"It's getting late now. We might as well just find a place to sack out."

"Yeah," Trish replied sarcastically. "Maybe we should go back to the motel I robbed."

Jamie shrugged. A hand went to his chest: why did it feel so squishy around his chest? But then his brain seemed to fog up and he shut his eyes and drifted off to

sleep.

Trish drove around, thinking they would probably have to just sleep in the car tonight. Really, she thought, she'd be better off without the lug snoring beside her. Maybe in the morning she'd just keep all the dead Presidents for herself. Hell, she was the one who'd gotten them.

There was a wooded area up ahead. A campground? Trish wondered. She drove to it. Yes, that's what it was. There were some campers off in the distance and some benches and tables. She parked on the soft ground, then got into the back seat, where she tossed around uncomfortably.

She awoke in a good mood, having just been dreaming about a Porsche. They had enough to buy one. *She* had enough to buy one. What did she need Jamie for? Damn it, she was itching all over.

It was still dark. She looked at her watch: half an hour after midnight. Oh, hell. She wasn't like Jamie, who was still snoring away. She couldn't get a full night's sleep in a car.

Trish checked her purse: yes, the gun was still there. She should . . . without waking him. Then she'd be free in the morning. Free and rich! Very carefully, Trish opened the car door and slid her feet onto the grass. She tried to be quiet but it seemed to make an awful lot of noise, the door's sounds, the grass and twigs crunching under her sandal-clad feet. But still . . . no movement up front. She took the gun out of her purse and opened up the driver's side and saw a head of pure white hair. Trish let out a gasp and a fat old woman wearing Jamie's clothes said, "You don't want to kill me, do you?"

The gun slipped out of Trish's hand as she fainted.

"You've got to go in to get my glasses and clothes, OK, Doris?" Pop said as Doris parked the little sports car in front of the Shadowlawn Inn. Pop looked down at himself and smiled grimly, "That girl had to pick this day to put a dress on."

"Well, I look pretty silly, too," Doris noted. Jamie's pants were fit to burst on her: the seams were loose and the fly wouldn't zip up.

"Still," Pop said with a shrug. Without his glasses, he squinted so hard his eyes looked like slits. "Also take this key and look in the drawer. Make sure everything's the same as last time."

"Yeah," Doris said. She knew she didn't look as silly as he did and went to the office to fetch the glasses and clothes that were on the floor there. Before leaving, she opened the drawer and, yes, it was filled with duplicates of the cash the Austens had gotten from Trish and Jamie.

"Pop, we've got to set the alarm for early in the morning," Doris said as she got back behind the wheel of the car, giving his stuff to Pop. "You know, so I can get to the bank before I go to work."

Walter Austen put his glasses back on. "Even at night, the world looks a lot better through these," he said.

"I'm glad," Doris said.

As she drove, he slowly, clumsily, slipped his slacks on. He wouldn't bother to put the shirt on. If anyone saw him in the darkness, they'd just think the dress was a shirt that was too big for him and not tucked in. "Doris, do we have enough money to pay the auto insurance?"

"Sure. We should have that just from selling this car."

"Doris, are we going to keep our old car this time?"

"I'd like to," Doris replied, stopping the car in front of their trailer. "The Cougar's a stick shift and I'm not used to that."

Doris got to the door first and opened it for her father. He switched on a light. After he was inside, Doris went back to the car for the bad people's things. When she came inside, Pop was not on the sofa but in the bathroom. He had left the door open because he was only shaving.

"How are we fixed for cash?" Pop asked.

Doris opened the unfamiliar purse and counted. "Pop, we're fine. The cash is lots more than we got the last time."

"Probably not with inflation. The last time was two years ago."

Freshly shaven and gently smiling, Pop made his way to the living room/ bedroom where Doris had deposited the young people's clothes and other items. There was a *Sports Illustrated* ; Pop cleaned his glasses and thumbed through the magazine as he sat on the sofa.

He carefully tore out a page. "This Gwen Torrance," he told Doris, "fastest woman in the world. Maybe you should put her on the fridge with Nancy."

"Sure," a happy Doris replied, then giggled as she held two big peace-sign earrings up to her ears. "You wouldn't be *too* mad at me if I wore these, would you, Pop?"

"Wear 'em," Pop said.

"You used to hate this sign *so much.*" Doris smiled that purse-mouthed smile.

"Well, you're old enough nowadays to do as you please," he said. Then he added very firmly: "You've got to get yourself dentures. I know you want those kids to stop calling you 'the witch."

"Sure will, Pop. But first thing is to pay our auto insurance."

"Of course. We're not criminals around here."

Just before she went to bed, Doris hugged her father fondly and said, "I don't mind being called a witch as long as I'm no law-breaker."

SHADOW

What is the shadow that comes out night and slithers 'cross the floor? An entity it seems to me not remem'brèd anymore

> Its wretched face turned to the wall ashamèd to be seen Silently it calls to me whatever can it mean?

At last it disappears from sight all shivery and cold A memory witnessed by me lost to the days of old.

—T. K. Rouse

[poetry]

AS THE WAVES ALL BOW AWAY (for William Schley-Ulrich)

I wore this lonely vessel by the breakwater and the bay though winds were sometime heavy still I had a pleasant stay

> But now I start my journey in the late hour of my day with the harbor slowly fading as the waves all bow away

And the swells, the swells they carry my soul with God to stay and this sea strips me of worry to steam on through the spray

> Now my soul is sailing softly far'from where my body lay with my Maker at the tiller these breakers all obey I no longer need a pilot as the waves all bow away.

> > -Michael Brimbau

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Contributors

Ada Jill Schneider, winner of the National Galway Kinnell Poetry Prize, is the author of several volumes of poetry, most recently *Behind the Pictures I Hang*, published by *Spinner* in November 2007. She directs "The Pleasure of Poetry," a program she founded, at the Somerset Public Library in Massachusetts and reviews poetry books for Midstream magazine. Ada has an MFA from Vermont College. Michael Brimbau is a life long resident of Fall River and grandson of Madeiran immigrants. Retired from Verizon, he spends his summers cruising the New England coast in his sailboat Saudade. Michael is an avid book collector and the owner of the Davenport house next door to Maplecroft.

Mr. Grim K. DeEvil was born in western New York and then moved to Florida in his youth. He still resides there attending university. He writes every day, and has written for many years. He is currently in the midst of writing a short story and in a second draft of a play.

Aurora M. Lewis is a member of the University of California at Los Angeles' Creative Writer's Program, General Studies. She write poetry, short fiction, and personal memoir, and has recently started writing speculative poetry and short stories. She is currently working on a speculative theatrical play.

Mark Sashine is the pen name for Mark Labinov. Born in Kiev, Ukraine in 1956, Mark is an engineer and works in the Aerospace industry. In 2002, he received training in the 'Breaking Into Print' program from the Long Ridge Writing School in CT and has been writing ever since.

> **Denise Noe** lives in Atlanta and writes regularly for The Caribbean Star of which she is Community Editor. Her work has been published in The Humanist, Georgia Journal, Lizzie Borden Quarterly, Exquisite Corpse, The Gulf War Anthology, Light, and Gauntlet.

Marie DeSpirito

Russian began writing at an early age. She writes with compassion and humor and is published in "The Rhode Island Short Story Club Presents."

David James Marshall is a native South Carolinian. He graduated from Rhodes College, in Memphis, TN, and earned an MA in journalism from the University of South Carolina. He has since worked for three newspapers. **Kat Koorey** lives in Central Florida and is a writer and frequent contributor to this Journal. She enjoys researching the Borden murder case, and on-going discussion on the Lizzie Borden Society Forum. She has developed a passion and aptitude for genealogy, fostered by her Forum friends. Other daily entertainments include swimming, long phone calls, HGTV, reading true crime and British mysteries, her 2 cats, and photography. Larry Allen is the current president of The Columbia Chapter of The Missouri Writer's Guild. He has had poetry published in *The Mid America Poetry Review, The Griffin, Fine Arts Discovery* magazine, NOW, and *Well Versed*, the chapter publication. Larry is a probation and parole officer for the state of Missouri. He describes himself as a garden variety history nut.

Michael Lee Johnson is a freelance writer and poet from Itasca, Illinois, who created over 365 poems published in over 135 journals and online publications to date. His new poetry chapbook with pictures, titled From Which Place the Morning Rises, and his new photo version of The Lost Amierican: From Exile to Freedom, are available at http://stores.lulu.com/promomanusa. He is a member of Poets & Writers, Inc and Directory of American Poets & Fictions Writers and The Illinois Authors Directory, Illinois Center for the Book. He has been published in the United States, Scotland, Turkey, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Nigeria, Fiji, India, and the United Kingdom. Michael Lee Johnson's personal website can be found at: http://poetryman.mysite.com/.

Kathleen A. Carbone is a resident of Salem, Massachusetts. She has lectured on the Borden murders for the Boston/Brighton and Lynn Public Libraries and is the author of LAB.com's irreverant "I Love Lizzie" series.

TK Rouse is a Canadian freelance writer working on her second novel. Her first novel. The Paradox of Paradise, was published in 2002 by Xlibris, and received rave reviews. She recently moved back to her hometown where she is still a starving artist, but is now doing so in a circa 1878 Victorian mansion. She also has two short fiction pieces on lizzieandrewborden.com and is an active member on the Lizzie Borden Society Forum.

Stefani Koorey is the Editor and Publisher of *The Hatchet*. She holds a Ph.D. in theatre history and dramatic criticism from Penn State.

Ray Succre currently lives on the southern Oregon coast with his wife and baby son. He has been published in Aesthetica, BlazeVOX, and Pank, as well as in numerous others across as many countries. He has been nominated for a Pushcart and his novel Tatterdemalion (Cauliay) was recently released in print and is available most places. He tries hard.











































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