NOYO RIVER *Review*

25th Annual
Mendocino Coast
Writers Conference

Summer 2014

Noyo River Review

Noyo River *Review*

Selected Work

from participants at the
25th Annual
Mendocino Coast Writers Conference
Fort Bragg, California
July 31–August 2, 2014

THANK YOU
To our judges, Charlotte Gullick, Natalie Serber, and Sharon Doubiago, for their thoughtful consideration of the finalists' work.

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Preface

The Mendocino Coast Writers Conference has seen a lot of changes in twenty-five years. *The Noyo River Review* is a case in point. Until three years ago, our annual writing contest winners appeared in an old-school chapbook available for purchase at the Conference. Our new format significantly extends our reach and allows us to include artwork by members of the Mendocino Art Center. As a result, it's easier to enjoy the stories, essays, and poems by our contest, fellowship, and Five-Under-Twenty-five scholarship winners.

We are often asked why we publish an annual journal. Not many conferences bother. But consider this: After receiving cash prizes and reading before an appreciative audience at MCWC, contest winners go on to gain valuable experience working with an editorial staff as their material is prepared for publication. They are further rewarded by seeing their words published online (and through print-on-demand) in an attractive journal anyone with a computer can access. Some of our contest winners have even returned later in their careers as Conference presenters. That kind of payoff is important to our participants and important to us.

You can read more about the Mendocino Coast Writers Conference in the back pages of this journal, visit our website, and subscribe to our blog. We look forward to offering you a warm welcome at future conferences, along with a chance to be a published author!

Susan Bono
Editor

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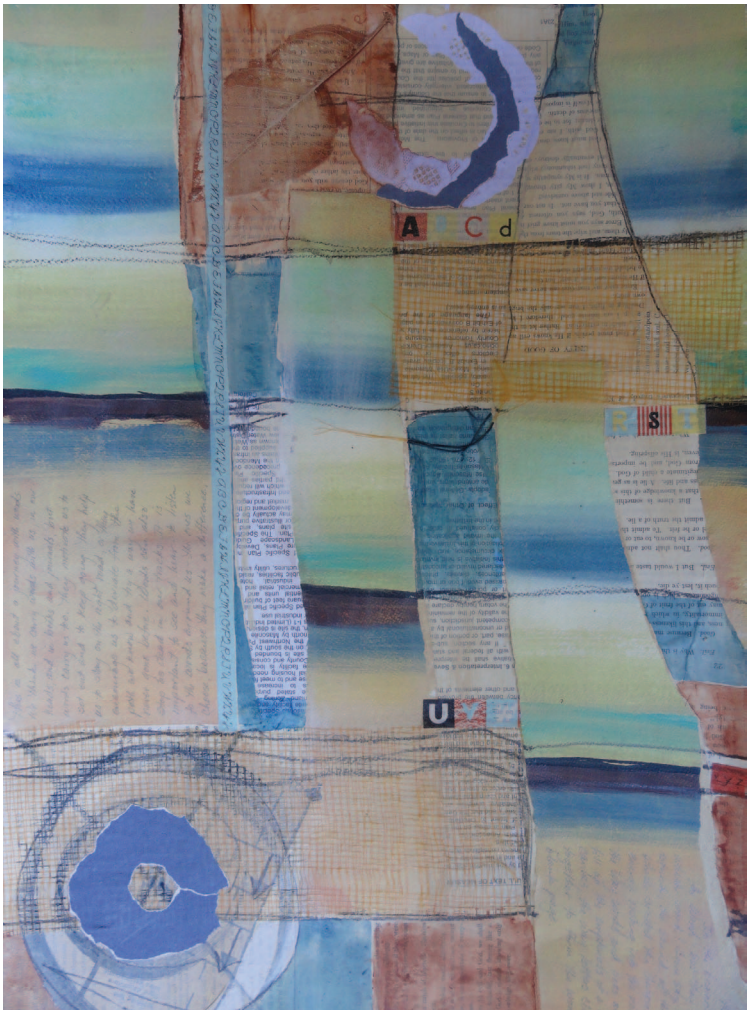

Words
Multi-media, 82 ins x 15 ins
Catherine Evans

Bill Baker

An Excerpt from

Between Two Heavens

First Place, Novel

Carmen Gabriela Etcheberry-Freund Memorial Fellowship

Chapter One

Little Traverse Bay, Michigan: 1806

Strings of ice crystals hung from the tips of pine branches, bent by the weight of a late wet snow. Behind a dense cover of winter cloud, the sun rose dim and obscure, its pale light turning everything some shade of gray. There was no wind to move the cold air. It lay heavy and flat, so when a baby cried nearby, loud, piercing, and long, the ice crystals shook loose and rained down, shattering on the crusted snow.

The crying infant was an Odawa Indian boy called Petawonequot (his name meaning: "He looks at you"). He cried because he was hungry. His mother, Nedawniss, was too hungry herself to make enough milk for him. He nursed instead from a folded cloth nipple soaked in corn and acorn water warmed over a communal cook fire in the center of the family longhouse. The thin pabulum cramped his stomach, so he cried, and ice crystals fell on the hard-packed snow.

It was a terrible time, that winter of 1806, for all the First People of the northern Great Lakes country. Makade Binessi, (Chief Black Bird, of the Arbre Croche Band), stood in the snow outside the longhouse that was home to four families and explained starving to his oldest son, seven-year-old Pungowish, as they prepared to hunt. "Starving is nothing like going hungry. When you are really hungry, as you are now, you think about food all the time, and when you finally get it, you gobble it up as fast as you can and go back for more. But when you are starving, you no longer think about food. You daydream instead, and your dreams often make no sense. You may see things that are not truly present:

ghosts and dead animals. The whites of your eyes may turn yellow and you have bad breath. It is the duty of every warrior to stay awake and alive for as long as he can. Your life is a gift not just to you, but for all the people. That is why we go hunting today and tomorrow."

Early the next morning, Black Bird and Pungowish rolled out of their sleeping niches along the wall of the longhouse, preparing themselves for the morning ritual bath that all male warriors were expected to practice, summer and winter. During mild or warm weather, men and boys learning how to become men, dipped or swam in the fresh water of streams, rivers, or lakes. In winter, if the surface of the water was frozen, a quick scrub with a handful of snow sufficed.

Grandmother Sparrow also woke. She rose from her bed, and shuffled barefoot, quiet as a shadow, across the hard-packed earth floor toward the central fire. She shivered, wearing nothing but a thin blanket draped across her shoulders. She was skeleton-thin, with wrinkled brown skin sagging from the high flat bones of her cheeks. Rubbing sleep from her eyes, she said in a voice like a smothered cough, "I was given a dream last night." If anyone heard her, they did not respond. She repeated more loudly, "Last night, I was given a dream, an important dream. I dreamed of a bear."

"Hush, old woman," someone called out. "We are trying to sleep."

But Black Bird and Pungowish were listening now, along with a few others. "There is a bear, a fat young bear not far from here." She poked at the coals of the warming fire with a stick and stirred them, waving the acrid smoke from her face. From a pouch at her waist, she dipped a pinch of tobacco, and, rubbing her fingers together, let it sift onto the fire. It sparkled and released a cloud of sweet fragrance. "This bear is a gift to the Odawa people of Arbre Croche from the Great Spirit. But this gift can only be found and received by a young hunter who has never before taken the life of a bear. Who?"

Pungowish piped up in his high, clear voice. "That's me.

That's me, isn't it Grandmother?"

"Huh," she said. It was not appropriate for a child to interrupt when an elder was speaking. "I have told you the dream. Black Bird is the one who knows best about hunters and killers."

Black Bird said, "Thank you, Grandmother Sparrow. I apologize for my boy's rudeness. The fault is mine. I have not taught him as well as I should. Yet he may be the one. We will soon find out."

They went outside through a double closure of hanging buffalo hide to put on the hunting outfits stored in the open air to keep them fresh and free of human scent. Over their ordinary clothes they donned deerskin capes, bleached white to match the winter landscape. Black Bird wore a hood shaped like the head of a deer. The long-barreled musket he carried had notches carved in its wooden stock.

His number-one wife, Nedawniss, with Petaw in her arms, came out to help them strap on the willow and sinew snowshoes they needed to make their way over the drifts. She sent them forth with a blessing: "May you find this animal seen in a dream." She added the traditional appeal to warriors going into battle: "Come back to me alive."

As the two hunters shuffled their way up the ridge and through a stand of young pines, they entered a shimmering cloud of fog. Flat clumps of wet snowflakes fell. Visibility was limited to twenty or thirty yards, poor conditions for a successful stalk. But trusting in the dream, father and son moved steadily forward, one advancing, then the other, each trying to spot some movement through the gloom.

Hour after hour, they worked their way through thickets and open ground, descending into tangles of birch and red willow, climbing over benches of skeletal sumac, topping slopes from where they could see ridge after ridge of snow-covered glacial moraine.

It was dusk, almost time to turn back, when they emerged into more open ground that had a different feel. Black Bird held

up a mittened hand and drew a circle in the air, starting toward a thicket of willows. He did not speak, as if prey might hear even a whisper. Pungowish did not follow. Instead, he stared intently at something which had caught his eye. He uttered a soft bleat like a rabbit and pointed left, mouthing the word, "Smoke." Black Bird squinted and peered through the fog and falling snow. There was nothing to be seen.

Pungowish moved very slowly, nocking an arrow on the string of his bow as he glided forward. Black Bird advanced with him, a few yards to the side, trying to make out just what the boy's sharp eyes had glimpsed. A pile of collapsed brush and fallen tree limbs lay in a heap capped with snow. It resembled a buffalo sleeping through a storm. The boy pointed again, and this time, Black Bird saw it: a wisp of smoke, a thin ribbon of vapor that vanished almost immediately. It could be steam from decomposing vegetation, or it might be the moist breath of an animal. With his musket at hand, he circled the mound and probed with its barrel through the interwoven branches. It touched something solid but yielding, a thing like living flesh. He poked again, more firmly.

There was an explosion of snow and shattered twigs directly in front of Pungowish as the square head of a young male black bear emerged, twisting as he bulled his way through the tangle. He bared yellow teeth and uttered a cry, as much scream as roar, lashing out with long black claws. He spun toward Black Bird, ignoring the boy standing motionless, bow drawn, directly in front of him. As he did, he raised his left foreleg as if to catch the arrow Pungowish released.

The razor-sharp point sliced through fur and hide, found a path between ribs, and struck home deep. The bear sat back on his haunches, biting and clawing at the shaft in his chest. With a shake of his head, he snapped it off and rose on his hind legs like a man, roaring fiercely as his blood spattered the snow. He towered over Pungowish, slapping at the air with his great paws, as a second arrow leapt from the bowstring. It struck the bear in his open maw, penetrated the roof of his mouth, and entered his brain. The upper

skull of a bear is so hard and dense that a bullet often bounces off, but the underside is vulnerable.

For a moment, the bear stood as if frozen. His limbs began to shudder and shake. His legs could no longer hold him. One folded and collapsed, then the other. His rear dropped and he hit the ground in a squat. The square head flopped forward, tongue lolling, his eyes wide open, unblinking, and fading. He looked like a man prostrate with grief, praying for deliverance.

Black Bird passed over an obsidian knife. "Kill him, son. You know the proper way. This is your bear, and this is your killing knife."

Gripping an ear to steady his hand, Pungowish plunged the hooked tip of the blade into the neck of the bear. With a ripping motion that required most of his strength, he slashed its throat, severing windpipe, gullet, and arteries. A spurt of bright blood sprayed the air, speckled his arm, and pumped onto the snow, strong at first, then slowing to an ooze. Then it stopped.

The blood was warm, both sticky and slippery on his hand. He felt drops on his cheeks. The spots where they hit were hot. His father said, "There is something else you must do. You must thank this four-legged brother for giving his life so your Odawa family, the Real People, may live. Say the words just as I have taught them to you so many times."

"Yes, Father." Pungowish coughed. "Thank you, my bear brother, for giving your life to me today. I take it so that the Real People may live. I receive your life knowing that one day I will give up my own, so that some other being may live. I will see you in the next life, my brother, and I will remember your gift."

When they returned to the village, dragging the carcass of the bear over the snow behind them, it was pitch dark, hours after sunset. But they could see light flickering from a long way off. An enormous bonfire was blazing in the center of the common, with a kettle of corn and pepper soup boiling away. The entire community was ready for them and the meat they brought.

Grandmother Sparrow, who had dreamt the bear into

existence, greeted them with a song. She was wearing her fancy dancing dress, embroidered with multi-colored porcupine quillwork. She danced around the fire, a two-step welcoming dance, singing in rapid time to the beat of a skin drum. "Next time, next time." The song and dance steps were a traditional celebration of a successful hunt, but she included an "I told you so" refrain, her own improvisation, mocking those who had failed to give credence to her vision.

"Next time, next time," she sang. "Next time, maybe you will listen to me." She laughed and skipped like a young girl at a wedding feast.

Margit Sage

The Apple

First Place: Short Fiction

Standing in the community garden, Gillian reached up to pluck a ripe fruit from a sagging branch. She closed her eyes and took a big bite. Hot blood gushed to fill her mouth. She choked and tried to spit it out, but couldn't, so she swallowed, then looked down at the human heart her hand cradled.

Revulsion flooded her. Pain sliced through the base of her skull. Gaze returning to the red globe weighing her hand down, she watched it flicker and fuzz. A shiny red apple remained, not a scratch on it. She dropped it like it had bitten her, and ran home.

Her surgeon had told her it would take some time to get used to the chip implanted in her brain. He had under-emphasized its potential side effects.

Gillian raced past a self-driving garbage truck and a robotic meter maid. Her heart drummed a too-fast beat and a fiery hot guitar wire thrummed through her head in time. She turned a corner and slowed her pace, breathing deliberately.

The chip activated certain areas of her brain in response to the local chemistry. It was supposed to double her productivity at work by inducing a flow state in which focus tightened, pain faded into the background, insight increased, and endorphins produced a psychological high. When dark emotions threatened, the chip dampened them by triggering electrical stimulation. It wasn't supposed to hurt. Or cause hallucinations. Nothing in life was perfect.

Gillian's steps slowed in rhythm with her breath. She needed to calm herself quickly, or the throbbing in her head would become unbearable. She might black out again.

After their college graduations, everyone Gillian knew scheduled chip implants. She could barely afford one, but she wouldn't have been able to get a job without it—any respectable company expected new hires to have them.

Just one more block. Gillian inhaled and sighed, the pain ebbing.

Besides the elderly, only the impoverished were Chipless; ostracized second-class citizens, they dwelled in cardboard shanties wallowing in self-pity. Gillian couldn't risk ending up like that. She couldn't disappoint her parents or lose every friend she had. Her parents' age excused them from implantation, but they expected the best from her. Her mom worked in the cafeteria of the chip plant. She couldn't show her face to them if she were Chipless. She hadn't even read the thick paperwork she signed before the surgery.

Gillian climbed the front steps of her apartment complex and stepped into a high-speed elevator. Once inside her apartment, she tore through her desk to find the info-packet they'd given her at the hospital. She flipped through pages of side effects, some more common than others. The fine print enumerated them all: headaches, mood swings, nausea, fainting, hallucinations, seizures, sudden death. She threw the packet across the room and wiped sweaty hands on her skirt.

Gillian suffered from headaches and crazy mood swings. Nausea accompanied some of her hallucinations. Then there were the blackouts. She'd recently started checking the time incessantly, trying to record their duration. She hadn't yet discovered if they had a trigger.

Gillian trembled, splashed water on her face, and straightened, grasping the sink. She barely recognized her reflection with its pallid skin, stringy hair, and dark bruises under the eyes. She was a shadow of her Chipless self. Since she'd begun hallucinating, she hadn't been on a date. She wasn't surprised. People gave her funny looks when she walked to the bus stop or to lunch.

Gillian toweled her face dry and called her closest friend.

"Hey you! Haven't heard from you in a while."

You're not the only one. "I know," Gillian said. "I—I was wondering if you've had any side effects. From your chip."

"No, not at all. I feel fantastic. I love my chip. I can't imagine life without it."

"Huh." *Still bubbly as ever.*

"Are you all right?"

"Yeah, no, I'm fine."

"We should grab lunch sometime."

"Sure. That sounds nice." Gillian hung up and tossed her phone on the couch. She collapsed onto the cushion beside it and massaged her temples. Lunch. *Yeah, right.* She couldn't let Sarah see her like this.

At work, Gillian stayed in her cubicle. She performed the calculations her job required, and wrote up her results. She kept her head down, and tried to go unnoticed.

The next day, she was crafting a memo when she passed out, curled over her keyboard. She woke up to her group lead shaking her shoulder. Her faceplant had resulted in pages and pages of gibberish. She cringed and hunched her shoulders. Her earbuds fell out. He sighed and strode away. She checked the clock. He could report her to their boss. She could lose her job. The chip was supposed to make her a better worker, not cause her to become useless. She wanted to cry. And scream. But if she did either, her head would explode in pain. A dull ache already brewed inside her skull from merely thinking about it. She took deep breaths until she felt calm. The ache receded.

She looked at the ceiling and counted the tiles. She performed the task with brisk efficiency. She counted them again. And again. Timelessness was inherent in a flow state; the chip encouraged absorption in a task, deep focus. The chip's slogan was, "Get into the zone."

"*Psst. What are you doing?*"

"Wha—?" Gillian's head snapped to her computer screen. She quickly deleted the gibberish, and reacquainted herself with her memo.

"I saw you. Staring at the ceiling. What were you doing?"

Gillian glanced at the woman in the next cube, who

propped her arms atop the thin plastic wall that separated them. Gillian swallowed. The woman was new. Gillian couldn't remember her name. "Nothing. I'm writing this week's technical performance report."

"And how did the ceiling tiles perform?" The woman pushed her anti-glare lenses up the bridge of her nose.

Gillian pressed her lips together. "Mind your own business." She stuffed her earbuds in and began typing. The woman's presence still loomed over her. Gillian glared at her, and with a wrinkled forehead, the woman disappeared below the partition. A blade sliced through the right side of Gillian's brain. She focused on forgetting about the woman over the cube wall and completed her memo.

After work, Gillian trudged to the bus stop and saw over-the-cube-wall-woman leaning against a lamppost, lighting up a cigarette. "You didn't see anything earlier, got it?"

The woman pushed off the post and held her hands up. "Not a thing."

"Filthy habit."

"It's hard to kick."

Gillian frowned. "Does it help with the side effects?" She folded her arms tight across her chest.

The woman dropped her cigarette and stepped on it. "What side effects?"

"You're telling me you've never had any?" Gillian's voice rose. She clutched her head.

"An occasional headache. Are you alright? My brother had it worse."

Gillian blinked. "Had? As in, past tense?"

The woman nodded.

"How?"

The woman looked up and down the sidewalk. "Come with me." She started walking, then glanced over her shoulder. "I don't know how safe it is to talk here."

Gillian cursed and hurried to catch up. The woman

unlocked a car and slid into the driver's seat. Gillian opened the passenger door. "Where to?"

"Get in."

"Sure, whatever. Take me hostage." Gillian rolled her eyes.

The woman programmed an address into the navigation system and hit 'Go.' She leaned back for the ride. "Tell me about it," she said.

Gillian shook her head. "There's nothing to tell."

"Don't bullshit me. What are your side effects?"

"What are you going to do about it?"

"You've heard of underground clinics?"

"No?" Hope lilted Gillian's voice.

"My brother. The side effects got so bad for him that he had his chip removed. And not at the hospital."

"Shut up." Gillian turned her body to face the other woman full on. "If I had my chip removed, I'd lose my job. I'd be Chipless." And the few jobs they could hold became scarcer every day, thanks to developing robotic technology. Gillian pinched the bridge of her nose.

"Maybe not." The woman lifted a hand to hover near Gillian's arm. "Hospitals inform your workplace of any procedure. Underground clinics don't."

Gillian squinted. "What?"

The woman dropped her hand and shrugged. "They exist. Some are much better staffed than others. The police shut them down if they can find them. I know they try to keep people ignorant." She gestured toward Gillian, then filled her lungs. "Tell me about your side effects. I promise I won't repeat anything you say."

Gillian nodded slowly. She needed someone to trust. She didn't have anyone else. She certainly couldn't trust Sarah. Or her parents. "The worst are the hallucinations and the blackouts. I'm getting used to the headaches. I can usually even tolerate the nausea," she closed her eyes, recalling the warm blood flooding her mouth, "that comes with some of the hallucinations." She met the

woman's eyes and saw pain in the wrinkles at their corners and in her slight frown.

"How long have you had the hallucinations?"

"Why?" Panic filled Gillian's voice.

"How long?"

"A couple of months." Gillian smoothed her skirt. "They didn't start right away. Headaches came first."

"When did you get Chipped?"

"About six months ago. How long have you had yours?"

"Two and a half years."

"And your brother?"

"It started with headaches and nausea. I think the hallucinations began about a month in. They got longer and more graphic as time passed. The blackouts started a few weeks later. The time he was unconscious grew. Somewhere around four months, he started having seizures."

"Seizures?" Gillian's voice was small. Her hands trembled.

The woman nodded. "I walked in on him one afternoon, convulsing on the floor. I tried to hold him still. When he woke up, he told me everything. That's when I began searching for the underground clinics."

Gillian waited for the woman to continue, hands clasped tight.

The woman swallowed. "I found one with a real doctor. When I told him my brother's symptoms, the doctor asked me to bring him in that night. He said he'd seen lots of cases of people with worse and worse side effects when he worked at the hospital. He started the underground clinic when he'd seen too many people die, just because of their damned chips."

Gillian's heart raced. Sweat coated her palms.

"My brother came willingly. The doctor removed his chip. He said if he'd kept it in, he might have lived another week or two."

Gillian cursed with a shiver. She hadn't had a seizure yet, but her most recent blackout lasted over twenty minutes.

"Only my brother and I know the truth. Our mom just

thinks the side effects ebbed. My brother performs his job much better now than when he was Chipped."

"His boss doesn't know?"

"Doesn't have a clue."

"I'm in."

The woman typed in the new destination.

Gillian looked down. "I'm so embarrassed. I don't even know your name."

"Deb."

They sat in silence. Gillian squeezed Deb's hand. "Thank you, Deb."

Out the window, residential properties dwindled. They entered a neighborhood filled with barbed-wire fences. Security bars covered windows. Cemented broken glass jutted into the air atop high stucco walls. The car turned into the driveway of one such building and came to a stop. Deb rolled down the window and typed a code into a keypad, and a metal gate screeched open. She manually drove into an underground parking garage.

"We're here."

Gillian nodded and released her grip on Deb.

They approached a metal door. Deb pressed a buzzer.

"We aren't accepting any deliveries today." Static crackled, obscuring a man's voice.

"It's Deb for Doctor Parks."

Gillian held her breath. A moment later, the door opened into a long hallway with yellowing linoleum floors and flickering fluorescent lights. A tall man escorted them to a waiting area.

However dingy, the place looked sanitary. Gillian sat and pulled her sleeves over her hands. Deb sat next to her.

"Don't worry," Deb said. "It will all be over soon."

Gillian smiled tightly. Her gaze dropped to Deb's upturned hand, and she pushed back a sleeve and set hers atop it. Deb's warm fingers closed around Gillian's, boosting her courage.

After a while, an older man in a blue lab coat approached them. Deb stood.

"Doctor Parks."

"Deb."

They shook hands.

"And who is this?" the doctor asked.

"A friend. She needs your help."

"Follow me." The doctor led them to a sterile room with a hospital bed and a tray of instruments.

Gillian started shaking.

"Have a seat."

She sat on the bed. Both hands clamped down on the thin mattress.

"Don't be afraid," the doctor said. He asked a few basic questions about Gillian's chip and her side effects. She answered in a meek voice.

"Fortunately, we can take care of this today," the doctor said. "Let me just call in my anesthesiologist." He left the room.

Deb placed a hand over Gillian's white knuckles. "Relax. You're safe."

Gillian closed her eyes and took a deep breath, relaxing her grip.

The sharp sting of a needle jabbed into Gillian's neck. She opened her eyes to a blurry vision of Deb settling her onto the bed.

"You're safe," Deb repeated.

"Deb?" Gillian croaked. All went black.

✶✶✶✶

Gillian woke with a start. A dull ache emanated from the base of her skull. She tried to sit up, but Deb held her down.

"You need to rest."

"Don't touch me!" Gillian shouted, struggling against Deb's grip. "What have you done?"

"Please relax. Doctor Parks doesn't have an anesthesiologist. I volunteer here a couple of times a week. It's supposed to hurt less if you're not expecting it."

"That's messed up."

"I'm sorry. But your chip's gone."

Gillian relaxed. “Let me see it.”

Deb walked to the instrument tray and picked up a clear plastic container. She brought it to the bedside and handed it to Gillian.

A tiny chip sat in the middle of the round dish. Gillian’s emotions swirled. “How do I know it’s mine?”

“Trust. And patience.”

Rage filled Gillian. She narrowed her eyes. Her breathing became ragged. Deb stepped back. Gillian waited.

Nothing happened. The chip’s sharp pain didn’t come. She laughed and reached for Deb.

Deb clasped Gillian’s hand between both of hers.

Gillian grinned. “I can’t believe it.” She met Deb’s eyes. “Thank you.”

Deb nodded.

“I want to help,” Gillian said. “How can I join the cause? How can I find others like me?”

Ancient Oak 2014
Pen and ink on polyester film, 24 ins x 10 ins
David Weitzman
www.weitzmanbooks.com

Casey FitzSimons
First Place, Poetry

Shed in a Coastal Landscape

That shed behind me. Rabbit-riddled
earth around it shudders
under my tread. Inside it,
a playing card weighted lightly
with beachglass. A cairn, or not—
coincidence of things pressing
the edge of intention. The ocean's

attenuated rushing: sound
shaped by rising bluffs, partly dissipated
crossing the hot scarp of highway. It thickens
the whisper of nearby grasses, becomes
a primordial breath-sound eddying
in my sinuses. It throbs faintly
against the slats of the shed, slips
between them. A sliver

of sunlight through a crack sweeps
(must sweep, over hours) the littered
dirt floor like a careful eye, emblazoning
each still obstruction. A different mind
would devise a code from it, set
a timepiece by it. Soon, it will highlight
the spider who'll pause its geodesic mapping
in that rationed moment, permit
the shadow of its web an ephemeral
knowledge of the cool dirt.

I Stand in the Open House

I stand in the open house, its tiny rooms
looking onto prairie through the open door,
its rectangle of brown and gold and blue,
through windows that the outdoors pushes through.
Thin eyelet curtains, pressed in hanging, ruffle
in the breeze, the same breeze the grain out there resists.

Worn unvarnished wooden floor, the chair legs
straight down onto it, though still, not scraping.
The long grooves down the stiles that hold the back,
down the chair legs' grain, across the spindles,
threatening to split it all to kindling;
those are years dried out of the once-tree, soft
old years susceptible to arid breeze, hollowed now
of any nectar of memory, empty of all
but parchment strands of cellulose, empty
of increments of passing time.

Only the hard years color the wood, hold
its substance and structure, remain to signify
chair or table. Only their density conveys
the knocking when the hand tilts and drags it,
moves the tacit archive of events, bridging
empty ridges of loss across the floor.

Reliquary

As I enter the house, the floor
creaks over dry joists, announcing
my presence on the carpet. Memory
lurks, but hidden and harmless, last soot
settling in disintegrating weave. But my hand

on the smooth pull, the rattle as I
open the kitchen drawer, disturbs
unfinished conversations, the repose of
lapsed glances. Like the rib cage of a small saint,
the eggbeater rests in arid air, insensible

to veneration. I'm reluctant to rouse
the past it touches. Lifting this utensil now,
extricating the carrot peeler that impales it like
a lance, would stir to alertness
the indignation of neglect, might demand

engagement. Nothing here I want, I say
to the agent. My own echoes decaying
in other rooms meet the foot-scrape of grit
on porous linoleum. Okay, then, he says.

Nicole Idar

I Can't Stop Correcting My Politically Incorrect Mom

First Place Non-fiction

My 70-year-old Malaysian mother and I have just finished lunch, and when Salim, our Malay waiter, approaches, she offers him her leftover beef noodles. It's only my second day visiting her in Kuala Lumpur, and already I'm stressed.

"Salim, you gave me too much, cannot finish!"

She gazes up at him through eyeglasses that are slightly askew. "See, I took the noodles from the big bowl and put in the small bowl, and I only eat from the small bowl, so the big bowl is clean! You eat the rest for me, ha?"

Salim, a patient man in his mid-forties, just looks bemused.

My mother and I are having lunch at a private club my family has belonged to since I was small. I'm seldom home these days and no longer recognize any of the staff. Maybe Salim knows my mother well enough to be unfazed by her demands, but I'm embarrassed on her behalf, and I have to let her know it.

"Mom! It's Ramadan, remember? Salim's fasting. Don't give him your food!"

Salim, like most of the population here, is ethnically Malay and Muslim. My Chinese mother isn't Muslim, but she's lived in Kuala Lumpur for more than forty years, and she has Malay neighbors. I can't believe she hasn't noticed that the fasting month has begun.

"Aiyo . . . I forgot, Nic," she says, tittering the way she always does when I point out she's doing something wrong.

"Even if it wasn't Ramadan, you shouldn't ask Salim to eat your leftovers." I'm annoyed that I have to spell it out. "He's not poor, Mom. He doesn't need your charity!"

This time she doesn't titter in response. Salim, startled by my vehemence, tries to smooth things over.

"I'll leave your noodles in the kitchen, Madam," he tells my mother. "Maybe somebody's not fasting today; they might want to eat."

She smiles at Salim, grateful for the gesture. After he leaves the table, she gazes out the sliding glass doors at the terrace beyond, perhaps imagining an afternoon more pleasant than this one is turning out to be. I sit silently and stew, frustrated with myself for snapping at my mother. I know I should be more patient, especially now that I live nine thousand miles away in Washington, D.C., and I only see her once a year. But the second I hear her say something I think is ignorant, I tense up and start reprimanding her. She just listens. Maybe she's decided it's best to let me have my say.

Sometimes it's hard to remember how different our relationship used to be. Growing up, my mother expected me to be a traditional Confucian daughter, obedient, dutiful. If I so much as talked back to her, she'd scold me right then and there. "I'm the mother. I tell you what to do, you don't tell me what to do," she'd say. But then, twenty years ago, she sent me to college in America, and everything changed.

She was proud of me for getting into to an American college, I knew. She didn't seem to mind the sacrifices she had to make so I could attend. "It's okay, Nic, I got savings," she said. I was fretting over the costs of tuition and room and board as I filled out my financial aid forms, and I let her reassure me even though I knew money was tight at home. She never had the opportunity to go to college herself—at nineteen she started training as an elementary schoolteacher, not by choice, but because she'd been offered a government scholarship; her dream when she was young was to be a painter. She wanted more for her daughter. She wanted me to be able to determine my own future.

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I arrived in Cambridge, Massachusetts, thinking I already knew my host country and understood its culture simply because I'd watched so much American TV and so many movies. But until I

moved to the States, I'd never met anybody of Afro-Caribbean, Hispanic, or Jewish descent. College opened up a whole new world for me. I didn't realize how little I understood of this world until a few weeks into my first semester, when Deana, an African-American student in my dorm, asked me a question.

"Hey," she said, genuinely curious. "How come you're always sitting with us at the Black Table?"

"What's the Black Table?" I had to ask.

Deana told me it was the table in the dining hall where African-American students chose to sit together for meals, as an informal way to connect outside of class.

"I didn't know I was sitting at the Black Table," I told Deana.

She laughed, but I was so ashamed by my cluelessness I never sat at her table again.

The following semester, I started working as a reporter for *The Crimson*, the campus daily. While interviewing a spokeswoman for *La O*, a Hispanic student organization, I asked her why her group had been created. After all, I pointed out, there was already another Hispanic group on campus: *RAZA*. I'd made the dumb assumption that because both groups had Spanish-sounding names, they served the same purpose. The spokeswoman was so shocked by my ignorance that she called my editor, Amy, and complained.

"*RAZA* is the Mexican-American group. *La O* is the Puerto Rican group. Mexico and Puerto Rico are two different places. You know that, right?" Amy asked me later in her office. My shame made my hands tremble; I hid them deep in the pockets of my jeans.

This wasn't just a *faux pas* I could forget about. This time I'd embarrassed not just myself—I'd embarrassed my editor, someone I respected and admired. I told myself I had to learn to be more culturally aware if I wanted to feel like I belonged in America. Luckily, I had my job at the paper to teach me how. But then each time I went home to visit my mother, I felt on edge; it was as if everything she said bothered me in some way.

"You can say Ella is Jewish, but you can't call her a 'Jewess,'" I had to explain once, when she tried to ask after a friend she'd heard me mention before.

My mother's ignorance felt like a painful reminder of my own, and to distance myself from it, I started correcting her. Our roles reversed—my American education gave me an authority that seemed to trump hers. In my mind, and hers as well, I knew better than she did.

Maybe in the beginning I actually thought I could change her. Except she didn't change. As the years passed, my diatribes became a kind of automatic response, mechanical and unyielding, the jaws of a sprung bear trap slamming shut.

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"Sorry that my mother asked you to finish her noodles," I say, when Salim returns with the check.

"Don't worry, Miss. Whatever a mother says, I always do." He rests the palms of his hands on the rail of an empty chair, in no hurry to leave. We chat a little, and then I ask him about his family.

"My wife is the boss." He grins. "I learned early: when Mother is not happy, nobody in the family is happy!"

He looks right at me when he says this. His tone is jovial, but I can see that he's trying to tell me something. My mother may have broken a religious taboo by offering him food while he was fasting, but I've broken a social one by disrespecting her, and in public, no less. To Salim, I'm the one who's ignorant. Don't I know I have a duty as a daughter to honor my mother? His gentle rebuke shames me. I feel my cheeks grow warm. The truth is, I've policed my mother for so long, I've forgotten how to just be her daughter.

"Salim," I say, thinking quickly, "Can you pack up my mother's meal for me, please? I'd like to take it home."

He straightens up and clasps his hands together. "That's a good idea, Miss. Wait a minute, I'll get it for you."

My mother watches as Salim heads back to the kitchen. "Nic," she says, puzzled by my change of heart, "I thought you said you don't want my noodles."

I want to tell my mother I'm sorry I yelled at her. Instead, I reach across the table and take her hand. It feels so small in mine, so stiff, like a leather glove accidentally tossed in the wash. I know that tomorrow, or the next day, I'll hear her say something I don't like, and it'll start again, this need I have to correct her. But I don't have to do that now, not this second. I squeeze her fingers, each one slender as a chopstick, and, as if her eyes are bothering her, she blinks and blinks and blinks.

Muin Daly

Mother's Day on the Inside

Carmen Etcheberry Freund Fellowship
An Excerpt from a memoir

Child Found

I lost custody of the firstborn child of my womb. She was a huge baby, weighing ten pounds at birth, and she ripped me a huge tear on her journey out. We've been wounding each other ever since. Her Father was from a wealthy, entitled family. We met at an end-of-the-summer party. I was attracted to him for less than the time it took me to sober up the next morning. I became aware of my pregnancy eight weeks later.

The union between us is a story unto itself. To call it a shotgun wedding would be fair. However, the groom was holding the gun, not the bride. When I am asked, "What was your daughter's father like?" I say, "He voted for Wallace." The sordid details of sadistic behavior, physical abuse, denial of me to his family, are easy to imagine. By the time Molly was two years old, we were separated.

My courage was finally stronger than the shame and fear. There came a day when I knew I wasn't coming back to our apartment. I was breaking us free. I used to hold Molly up to the back kitchen window of that apartment. The Elevated train roared by outside. I would whisper in her ear, "Someday we'll leave here as fast as that train and we'll be free." Over and over I said it, and it became our secret mantra.

I left Molly at my mother's house and went to work looking for a place for us. I returned on the sixth evening. I had found us a new home and a new life lay ahead. It wasn't much, but it was going to be ours. I already had a job, and because her father had been unemployed since her birth, I already knew how to pay for our keep. While I was away, it never occurred to me that her father would take her from there. He didn't seem capable of handling all it would entail, but I underestimated his rage

at being left. I underestimated my mother's protective instincts for her granddaughter. She gave Molly over to him on the third night I was gone. My father stood by and watched. In a drunken confession, filled with remorse, he admitted: "Your mother always made the decisions about the kids, and besides, everyone believed he wouldn't keep her for long."

But Molly was in the substantial hands of her paternal grandparents. She was living in a home she had been taken to once in her two years. On her first birthday she had been granted an afternoon meet and greet. The stipulation was that her whore/white trash mother did not accompany her. Now Molly had become an official "abandoned-by-her-mother" child. The wheels were set in motion and they were directed far away from me.

There are many reasons why and how a child becomes abandoned. They reach far and wide, dip into and out of every color, race, economic, and spiritual setting on this Earth. Some of them have roads that only their bloodline travels. But they all go down the same paths, intertwining in the tapestry of "choices made." Most of my choices had been tested and tried, formed in my psyche long before Molly's birth. Others were new with her birth. Justifying my actions was not in my being, and I believed every lie about my inability to mother.

Every outcome seemed predetermined, and it surprised no one that by the time Molly turned four, I had left the area and the scene of the many crimes committed, and had taken to the road. I wanted to believe it was in her best interests, but I realized later that my mental health depended on finding a different vantage point.

By the time Molly was eight, life began to teach me about my worth. There was a lot of work to do, a lot of disbelief to untangle, and many false truths to be disavowed. But a seed had been planted. It took some years to sprout, but when it finally did, all the Blessings of Heaven helped it to grow.

In 1973, Molly entered the third grade, and I moved to the West Coast. I had come to work with Suzanne Armstrong, who

had written a book called *The Immaculate Deception*. I wanted to study with her. I wanted to be a part of the burgeoning "Women's Health Movement."

Within a few weeks, a friend invited me to Oregon to experience another movement, soon to be called, "The Women's Land Movement." Being a row house Philly girl, I thought I had come to another planet. We were on twenty acres of beautiful land that had been purchased by three Canadians, and it was held in a trust for all women. There were sleeping cabins everywhere and a huge main house, all built by female carpenters. I thought of them as wise women royalty, simply because they taught me how to build a fire in a woodstove to keep warm. They also turned out to be my main means of support during what was to become the most important journey of my twenty-four years.

One of them had plans to visit the East Coast, but she had lost her airplane ticket. It was the same week I announced to everyone I had come to a realization: Molly deserved to know me. I deserved to know her, but she had rights as well. Maybe she wanted to yell at me or kick me. Maybe she wanted to run into my arms and beg me to take her with me. She would never have the opportunity if she did not know how to reach me.

Hiding in shame was over and action was now my focus.

However, shame was alive and well within me. I tasted it every time someone asked me if I had any kids. I put my new sense of action in front of my intention, right alongside the shame, and made a decision. I might be going forward shamefacedly, but I would no longer be turning away. It was time to go directly toward Molly. I threw the Tarot cards every day. I asked my Guardian Angels to light and to guide. I prayed to the Blessed Mary and to Quan Yin to help take me to her. I felt completely ready.

When my friend reported her ticket lost, the airlines issued her a new one. The next day, she found the original. She decided to give it to me, and suddenly, unemployed and broke, I was headed back to my friends on the East Coast.

My friends knew I was coming back to find Molly and that

I was flying under somebody else's name. They knew I had a plan. They also knew I needed their help.

The posse was forming, and the first list of the necessary items was written during a redeye from San Francisco to Newark. The man sitting next to me kept smiling as I pulled the Tarot cards, over and over. He wisely suggested that I stay with the first cards thrown. They showed the Hierophant, the World, and the High Priestess. The Hierophant told me to look at this through the lens of loyalty, and stay as loyal to my motherhood as I knew how. The World told me the odds were indeed in my favor. The High Priestess told me to follow my instincts and to truly listen to the guidance given. These insights were coming through the cards and encouraging me to trust myself and my decisions.

I knew my design was headed in the right direction. I was going to approach this from the simplest and most direct route. I felt heaven on my side. My angel was beside me. Things after that kept falling into place.

When I arrived at the airport, two of my four cohorts were there to greet me. These were the youngest of a newly-formed, five-woman crew and the most enthralled. Susan and Dee were their names. Their fall term had yet to begin at the University of New Hampshire, and they were full of the fresh-start energy that comes to students in the beginning of a new semester. I had it as well. I had generated mine from a very different source, but the electricity we shared was traveling the same circuit. We were going to turn on a relationship that had burnt out due to my faulty wiring. There was brand new light showing me the way back to my daughter, and I was determined it would not be extinguished until she and I saw each other face to face again.

The first necessity was the vehicle. We rode back to Boston in Susan's fifteen-year-old VW bus, so this piece was happily taken care of. It was cozy inside with soft pillows all around and lovely curtains on the windows. A perfect, private meeting place when one doesn't have access to a more solid structure. It offered us a place to sleep as well, which helped with cost considerations. After

removing the, *U.S Out of Vietnam* bumper sticker, its innocuous beige paint made it appear non-threatening.

Where exactly and with whom Molly was living was unknown to me. The last correspondence I had received from her father was a legal document. The divorce had been finalized a few years earlier, but he was asking that I sign a paper giving up any right to custody, so Molly could be adopted by his current # 3 wife. I refused to sign the paper. Praying that my daughter had a positive mother figure by her side became a daily practice. I tried not to describe her in detail, leaving that up to Our Mother in charge of it all. I did consistently request that she be tender, with an open heart. Her demeanor, however, was irrelevant to my decision. That had been three years prior, and the only address I had was the attorney's office.

Knowing her father as I did, I was certain he and his new family were living close to his parents' house. He needed them for support. The little suburb in New Jersey was where they would be. I was sure of it. On the way back to Boston, I laid out the plan to Dee and Susan. We were headed to pick up two more women, along with the remaining items on the list, and then we would be Jersey bound.

Vincent Peloso
Third Place, Poetry

Born to Shop

Weekday nights after dinner my dad
says, "Come on. Let's go for a ride."
Sometimes Mom joins us.
Most times we go by ourselves.

But we always drive to a store.
Some nights it's downtown.
Or out on the highway.
Some nights he knows what he wants.

But mostly he just wants to look
for that one thing that might catch his eye.
And catching it, hold it while he decides
if he truly needs what he sees.

He's teaching me how to need
and how to weigh both need and desire,
feelings and thoughts, attractions and possessions,
decisions and their consequences.

But I am learning how to steal
pencils, balls, small rubber toys.
It's exciting until I get scared
and decide this cost too much.

So I turn to skimming through bargains,
markdowns, sales, closeouts, irregulars,
and learn to like what I find.
I find myself looking at girls.

Girls with their mothers.
Girls by themselves.
Girls looking at me
weighing, deciding, pretending to be

an adult with a family, a job, and a car,
some free time after dinner during the week,
a little gas, some cash—Oh, the excitement we had!
All this I bought, and more.

Why Salmon Don't Read Newspapers

The single family home on the five acre lot
has a very long driveway
which the daily newspaper deliveryman ignores,
flinging each edition, instead, toward the house
through the window of a slow-moving car.
Some days, the paper lands on grass.
Some days, it lands in the driveway.
Sometimes the residents' cars run over it
on their way to and from home.
The paper is folded into a plastic bag
which readily flakes under a tire's weight.
When it rains, bits of plastic flow into the street
and down the storm drain next to the curb.
The drain leads to a creek
which feeds a river which, legend has it,
could once be crossed by stepping on migrating fish.
But that was years ago, decades before 90% of the water
was pumped over a mountain and into a manmade lake
to irrigate vineyards and lawns hundreds of miles away
from this house, its storm drain, these plastic bits
and the newspaper publisher now demanding
our county change its General Plan
because, he claims, the housing element
unfairly restricts both development and occupation
on privately held acreage.
That's why salmon don't read newspapers.

Where Are You Now, Elizabeth Doss?

Newly married, counting our pennies,
living on student loans and minimum wage,

we stood in the supermarket aisle debating,
ice cream or hamburger? Ice cream or hamburger?"

With no television, few records or books,
we read every piece of mail received

just for the stimulation,
inventing stories about each anonymous plea

for money we did not have.
In the picture that fell from the envelope,

you were young, thin and barely clothed,
wide-eyed, brown-skinned and haunting.

The letter claimed you would write back
if we only pledged a few dollars.

We didn't. We couldn't. But we never forgot.
When I give to charity today,

it's your pleading eyes I see.
Where are you now, Elizabeth Doss?

Are you still alive? Still poor? Still thin?
I hope you are happy, have found more clothes
and all the ice cream you ever wanted.

Gloria Schoofs Jorgensen

Cousin Kit-Kat

Second Place, Short Fiction

"Uncle Henry's coming," Mother says when she picks Gigi up from fifth grade at Dodson Drive Elementary School in Atlanta. "And he's bringing Cousin Kit-Kat."

"I can't hear you." Gigi says and swings her long shiny brown curls over her shoulder as she tries to clamber into the upholstered back seat of the black 1950 Cadillac Coupe de Ville. Mother has already picked up Gigi's big sister, Em, from high school. She's sitting in front. "Em, would you scoot up a little so I can get in the back, please?" Gigi says. Her sister won't budge, so she has to squeeze in behind and nearly drops all her books.

"I see you showing off that long hair of yours," Em says. "Don't you think I don't. Just because my hair got fried with that Tonette home permanent."

"At least you don't have to sleep with aluminum curlers in your hair every night that pinch and pull and keep you awake. You don't know how lucky you are," Gigi says. "Besides, I was hoping Mother would notice how nice my curls held up. She says it's so much work, but she wants me to look this way. Mother?"

"I'm talking to your sister." Mother says.

Gigi notices Mother's dressed different for picking up kids, more like she's got on church clothes; she's even wearing earbobs. What does it mean? Best to keep watch, take care, be on best behavior and know where to hide in a heartbeat if things take a turn.

"You look nice today, Mother," she says. "May I have my window open just a crack? It's so hot back here."

"No," Mother says, "you'll ruin my hair and the wind always gives me a crick in my neck. If you girls are through squabbling I can finish: your Uncle Henry and Cousin Kit-Kat are coming to visit this afternoon. They'll spend the night. I want you to look nice. Change into your good clothes for supper."

"Is Cousin Millie coming?" Gigi says.

"Of course not," Mother says, "it's a school night."

Em laughs. "Of course not. Are you some kind of Bozo?"

Mother and Em exchange smiles. Em is a teenager and a cheerleader at her high school. Mother says, "Don't worry about that perm and those bangs, Em. It will relax soon and be perfect." Gigi can't imagine Em ever looking like a normal human being again in her entire life, but she has too much sense to mention it.

"Uncle Henry's bringing Cousin Kit-Kat to participate in a beauty pageant, Miss Southern Stock-Car Raceway. She's one of the top ten finalists. Uncle Henry paid an exorbitant sum of money to have her gown specially made to fit her figure perfectly. It has a blue velvet bodice to bring out her eyes and miles and miles of tulle netting. She'll sing for the talent portion of the contest, just as she does at Dogwood Primitive Baptist Church every Sunday. Oh, you know how spectacular her voice is."

Here Mother reaches out and touches Em on the knee. "They insist she do a solo every week. Then they present her with one pure white rose. Only one. Always white. She's been taking lessons on how to walk, turn, stop, smile, and stand with one foot turned out and just a tad in front of the other. Isn't that just too, too precious? She's had to learn about make-up, too. She's never worn it. It's so exciting."

Mother clasps her hands at her bosoms and stares into space as they sit at the traffic light. Someone behind her honks the horn. She glares in the rearview and stomps the gas so hard the tires squeal.

At home it's so hot Gigi feels like butter melting on a griddle. Perspiration gathers around her hairline, drips down her face and runs down her back. She knows from experience her mother will never let her open a window. It's too early for the attic fan. At this hour it will only pull hot air into the house. "Mother?" Gigi says. "May I have some sweet tea?"

"Oh, I guess. Not too much. It will keep you awake."

"Yes, ma'am. Thank you." She knew there would be some

made up for Uncle Henry and Cousin Kit-Kat. At home, Mother and Daddy usually don't have it, being from the Middle West where they've never learned to appreciate the finer things in life. She opens the freezer door. The blast of cool air feels so good she wants to crawl in.

"Hurry up," Mother says.

"Yes, ma'am."

The top shelf of the freezer is crusted with ice crystals. There must not have been time to defrost before company arrives. It's a huge production. Mother is probably ticked off about that. Gigi has to grab an old butter knife from the cutlery drawer to chip the ice cube tray out. Her warm fingers get stuck to the sides of the cold metal tray and she knows if she tries to yank them away her skin will come off and leave painful raw patches. Em got her with that one when she was little.

Gigi goes to the kitchen sink that's dripping just enough to free each finger with a drop of water. She lifts the lever on the aluminum tray. The cubes crunch and crackle as she loosens them from the metal bar and drops them into her tall glass. She pours sweet tea over the ice and it crackles some more. By the time she has refilled the ice cube tray at the sink and replaced it in the freezer, her tea glass has beads of sweat on the sides. She holds the cool surface to her face, then gets a paper napkin to wrap around her glass so it won't drip all over the place.

"I need you to set the table." Mother says.

"Yes, ma'am," Gigi says.

She gets Grandma's Bavarian bone china from the small oak cabinet with the curved front glass panels. The mahogany table in the dining room is already laid with a hand crocheted lace tablecloth Grandma Lucy made before she went blind. Once Gigi has set out six places, complete with curved bone plates, tiny butter dishes at each place, salad plates, dinner plates, and dessert compotes, she fetches the silver chest with Mother's good silver. She sets out six pieces of silver for each person, plus serving pieces, more than an embarrassment of riches, but they never use this

stuff, so she figures why not? The blinds are pulled shut against the sun and the room has a funereal glow.

With her job completed, Gigi finds her tea glass, takes a long sip, and goes back out to the kitchen where she notices a small, dented aluminum saucepan containing water just about to come to a boil. "Grandma," she says, "your tea water's fixing to boil."

"Oh, yah, yah, yah," Grandma Lucy says, "I come now, I come."

A wisp of a gray-haired woman wearing a house dress, moccasins, and support hose rolled down to her calves shuffles out from the den and into the bustle of the main part of the house.

In the kitchen there's the smell of a roast in the oven. Mother has put a big pot of water for fresh corn on the back burner of the stove to boil. Daddy is out in the garden selecting the fattest ears with the darkest silks. He won't shuck them until he sees Uncle Henry's blue Ford Fairlane pull in the driveway. Until then they will soak in a bucket of cool salt water. He's picked beautiful salad greens and sliced the juiciest tomatoes. He comes in with fresh-cut red roses to adorn the table. Mother puts them in the refrigerator. Gigi hears Daddy say, "Do you think them little men in that ice-box will enjoy them flowers I work so hard to grow?" before returning to the garden. Mother gives him a dark look in their ongoing battle over the care of roses.

Grandma Lucy moves to the stove. "Dey should be here any minute," she says, referring to her son Henry and Cousin Kit-Kat. She retrieves her saucepan of boiling water and carries it to the counter. With her left hand she reaches for a fine china teacup placed in a saucer and containing a Lipton teabag. The cup clatters as she misjudges the distance slightly. She places her left index finger in the cup just at the rim and begins to pour water slowly. When she can sense the warmth she stops pouring, says, "Vould anyone else like tea? No?" pours the rest of the hot water into the sink and returns the sauce pan to the cabinet. She's blind from glaucoma and shuffles around getting in everyone's way. Mother gives Gigi a look.

"Grandma?" Gigi says. She gently takes hold of her

grandmother's soft, bony hand with the wormy blue veins popping up. "Would you come sit with me at the piano? I think I'm doing better with my music, but I could use some help." Gigi is as tall as her grandmother.

Grandma says, "Yah, sure. I'd be happy to. If Emily vants to get rid of me."

"No, Ma," Gigi's mother says. "You go. I don't need help right now."

"Yah," Grandma says, "just don't dry out the roast the vay you usually do. Dat husband of yours isn't tied down, you know. Airline pilots like him don't grow on trees. You never catch another one, old as you are," she waves her arthritic hand. "I take my tea." She drops Gigi's hand, removes the teabag from her cup, places it in the kitchen sink, takes Gigi's hand again, and walks slowly through the house she has memorized, balancing the clattering cup on the thin saucer she carries with the other hand.

"Do not let that glass make a ring on my piano." Mother says. "Yes ma'am, I mean, no ma'am. It's those opening notes of, *Oh, Christmas Tree*. I can't remember what key it's written in. Does it have any sharps or flats?"

"Und so, it has dat one B flat."

They sit side by side on the cool black bench of the Steinway grand. Gigi has put her glass in an ashtray and found a place for the teacup on a nearby coffee table. Grandma places her hands on the keys and begins to play and sing, "*Oh, Tannenbaum, Oh, Tannenbaum . . .*" Her voice is high and soft.

Gigi hears the side door slam. She and Grandma both get up, nearly tipping the piano bench over in their excitement. Gigi reaches to steady her grandmother, who shakes her off. "No, I tell you people, don't hold onto me, I hold onto you, is better." The two move away from the piano bench. Grandma grabs Gigi's elbow and says, "Now, go."

"Is that them?" Gigi says. She and Grandma walk slowly toward the kitchen.

"No, just your father. He still hasn't picked the corn yet."

Mother says.

"You know Henry's always late," he says.

"Not always."

"Why do you think the airlines wouldn't keep him after the war? He never got to work on time."

"Don't you dare say a word against my brother . . ."

"I'm saying what them people at the airline said. He talked when he should have been working and he come in late every day."

"At least he spoke English and went to college."

"There was a Depression on and your family didn't have no place to live. You always talk like your folks was better than mine but dey wasn't so grand. Dey lost dere farm."

"Emily," Grandma says. She shuffles into the kitchen from the doorway where she's been standing, unnoticed, with Gigi. "I can smell this roast drying out from da living room." She goes to the oven and shuts it off. "You need to get this out of here right avay. It von't be fit to eat."

"Ma . . ."

"Theodore, go shuck dat corn. Dey von't be here for hours yet. You know how dat son of mine is. Ve got ta feed these chil'ren."

"Mrs. . . . "

"Go . . . dat vay. I might not kin see much, but I kin see dat light. Go." She points outside.

Just then Em comes stumbling out from the back of the house where the bedrooms are. "I fell asleep studying. It's so hot. What's all the commotion? When do we eat?"

"What are you wearing?" Mother says, "And what in the world do you have on your head?"

"I put on my shorty p.js it's so hot, and wrapped my hair around orange juice cans to try to straighten out the curl."

"You look terrible! Doesn't anybody listen to me?"

"Can we just eat?" Em says. "Out on the screen-porch, where it's a little cooler, off normal plates so we don't have to be so careful?"

"I suppose we might as well." Mother says.

Gigi notices nobody has much to say at supper. "I think this is the best corn ever, Daddy. Could you please pass me another piece?"

Em says, "My favorite part is the salad. Are there any more of those tomatoes?"

"I believe," Daddy says, "I'll have another piece of that delicious roast. And some catsup, please." The table doesn't even shake that much when he tries to cut his meat. Gigi notices how kind her father is to her mother, even though her mother isn't very nice to him. He's the only one who eats the meat. Mother treats Daddy like he's a thing.

Everyone decides to sit out on the porch to watch lightning bugs gather in the gloaming and it finally turns dark and cool.

Gigi says, "Daddy, can we have the attic fan on now, please?"

"I reckon so, Hugger." Daddy says. He gives her a big hug, goes to turn it on, and opens windows all through the house for the cross breeze. Everyone moves into the living room to watch "My Three Sons". He, Mother and Grandma watch "Perry Mason" and Edie Adams and Sid Caesar after sending Gigi and Em to bed at 9:00.

It's eleven o'clock when Uncle Henry and Cousin Kit-Kat arrive.

"We're having a great time," Uncle Henry says. He talks a blue streak, explaining their tardiness. "You wouldn't believe all the last minute things that came up . . ."

Daddy, an amateur photographer, wants to shoot pictures. It takes a while for Uncle Henry to talk her into it, but at last Cousin Kit-Kat agrees to get gussied up for them. Grandma goes to help her.

Kit-Kat requires more time than anyone expected to put on the dress. There's some problem with the zipper. "We selected *peau de soir* shoes, dyed to match the tulle," Uncle Henry says, "not the bodice. We didn't want anything to distract from her face."

When Grandma and Cousin Kit-Kat emerge, the grownups agree it's been worth the wait. Daddy goes through a big production selecting just the right spot for the photograph. He

wants to get everything perfect.

"Do I have to stand under all these bright lights?" Cousin Kit-Kat says. "I feel like I'm being interrogated and they make it so hot."

"Lighting is everything," Daddy quotes from one of his photography magazines as he holds a measuring device up to her face. She smiles her stunning hundred-watt smile. The photos will be spectacular.

When the picture shoot is over, Henry says he'll help his daughter out of the dress. Grandma Lucy does not think this will be proper, but he insists. He says he'll be the one helping her at the raceway, so Grandma agrees reluctantly, but says she'll help now, for propriety's sake. Uncle Henry grumbles.

In Grandma Lucy's room, Uncle Henry discovers the trouble with the zipper. The dress is pinned. It won't close. There was no way it could be zipped. Uncle Henry becomes furious. "What's the problem here?" he says. "This dress fit perfectly a few weeks ago. I want to know what's going on." An argument ensues that involves Uncle Henry, Cousin Kit-Kat, and Grandma Lucy. A short time later, Uncle Henry's car roars out of the driveway.

In the morning, Gigi wakes Em up early. "Come on," she says, "let's go see if they came."

"I don't see a car," Em says. "I'm going back to sleep."

"Maybe the car's around back," Gigi says. "Come on. I'm going to see, anyway." They both run like a herd of wild elephants.

The big, blonde cabinet for the small black and white TV set takes up a lot of space in the kitchen. From the level of noise it seems most of it must be for speakers. They hear, "This is Today, September 5th, 1962." Barbara Walters holds forth in her lisping voice on what it's like to be a Playboy Bunny. Sun beams in through the kitchen windows. Mother, Daddy, and Cousin Kit-Kat sit around the table and drink coffee from a percolator. Daddy and Cousin Kit-Kat laugh. Mother's mouth is pulled straight across in a thin line.

"Where's Uncle Henry?" Gigi says.

"He went home," Cousin Kit-Kat says.

"What's going on?" Em says.

"Cousin Kit-Kat's going to stay with us for a while," Mother says.

"What . . ."

"Don't ask so many questions," Grandma says. She holds out a beautiful kimono Uncle George sent her from Japan during the War. The sharp creases in the fabric indicate it has never been worn. "Here, Kit-Kat. This should fit you mit room to spare. Now go, chil'ren. Get dressed. You have school. She vill be here vhen you get home."

Gigi's cousin stays for three weeks. She sits on the floor with Gigi and plays with her Barbie dolls. She spends a lot of time with her, although Kit-Kat's mind is far away. No one tells Gigi why Cousin Kit-Kat is still in Atlanta or why Uncle Henry went home. When Gigi asks why she wasn't in the pageant, Cousin Kit-Kat says, "I decided I don't want to be a beauty queen after all. Now, don't ask any more questions. They're rude." She pats her on the head like a dog so she'll hush.

One day, when Gigi makes the long trek out to the mailbox, there's a big envelope for Kit-Kat with her real address crossed out and Gigi's home address scrawled across the top. Gigi watches as Kit-Kat pulls papers out of the brown envelope. They look important. Kit-Kat says it's her visa so she can go get married in Austria to a soldier. Gigi's father takes Kit-Kat to the airport the very next day.

Cousin Kit-Kat's first child, a boy, is premature. Cousin Kit-Kat's mother reports he arrived when he was only five months along. It is touch-and-go-as to whether or not he will survive. No one else stateside sees him until he is five years old and has outgrown most of the effects of being born so early, though he will go through life with only one testicle.

The week Cousin Kit-Kat leaves for Austria, Mother makes special arrangements to pick up Gigi from school before Em. Mother has never done this before. She says she has a surprise. "I entered you in the Little Miss Atlanta Pageant. Your sister's too old for Little Miss, and too young for the big girl pageants. Isn't it

exciting? We're going to have a great time."

"I need to open a window." Gigi says. She feels like a thing, but knows her Daddy will give her a hug and she'll feel better.

Fragments
Mixed media, 44ins x 36 ins
Catherine Evans

Catherine Marshall

128

Second Place, Nonfiction

When the spinning stops, I'm crumpled in a heap like the lopsided contents in a washing machine. I try to twist around, but my legs are pinned under the steering wheel. The tops of redwoods are all I see through the windshield. The narrator of my audiobook drones on with another story from Alexander McCall Smith's *The No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency*. I reach to turn it off and hit the wiper wand by mistake, causing pellets of safety glass to rain into my lap.

If I could get to my purse I could call for help, but it has fallen out of reach to the floor of the passenger side, next to my water bottle. I consider undoing my seat belt and realize I don't know where the car landed. I had been driving through the redwoods on Highway 128. The Navarro River had been on my right. Am I teetering on the riverbank in danger of sliding in?

I close my eyes and breathe in the musty fragrance of the forest floor, inches from my face. I focus on calming myself by visualizing a peaceful place and reciting my favorite prayer. The view from the Mendocino Headlands floats into my mind as I begin; *Lord, make me an instrument of your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love . . .*

Highway 128 is a familiar road for me, connecting my homes in the Bay Area and Mendocino. Though today was clear, it had been raining for days. My mind had been lost in the story and my plan for the coming week. When I maneuvered through one of the road's many sharp curves, my rear wheels swerved. I thought I had it under control, but then, I was gone; spinning in darkness like Dorothy in her tornado-borne house. I know my head slapped hard against something metal, but I don't think I lost consciousness.

"Hello?" I open my eyes and see a man stumbling over the brush in front of the car. He holds a cell phone away from his face,

pausing, mid-conversation, to speak to me. "What's your name?" he asks. He repeats what I tell him to the person on the other end. "Is anybody else with you?"

I tell him no and he walks out of sight. I breathe and continue to pray, relieved that help is coming. *Where there is injury, pardon; doubt, faith; despair, hope; darkness, light; sadness, joy.*

The car lurches forward and I grip the steering wheel wide-eyed. What's happening?

A bearded man in a yellow jacket and fireman's hat peers down at me through the passenger window. "What's your name?"

I tell him.

"What day is today?"

"February 18, 2014," I say.

"Are you hurt?"

"My shoulder, and I think I cracked a rib. I see some blood on my hand but I don't think I'm bleeding now." As I recite these minor injuries, I realize how lucky I am.

"Can you move your fingers and toes?" I hold up my hands and show him what I can do. He nods and walks out of sight.

A different voice barks at me from behind. "We're going to get you out of here, Catherine. What's your worst fear right now?"

My gut tightens as I consider the possibilities. "That in the process of rescuing me, I'll be crushed in this car."

They're the experts and I don't want to insult them, but all I can imagine is sliding into the river or having the car collapse on me further. One wrong move and I'm toast.

"That's not going to happen. The tow truck has a firm hold on your car. We're bringing in the Jaws-of-Life."

I have no idea what a "Jaws-of-Life" looks like, but nod when he comes into view. He confers with others I can't see. I twist again to relieve the pressure on my shoulder, push on the steering wheel confining my leg. My mouth feels like it's filled with dust.

"I'm really thirsty," I say. "Can you reach my water there?"

He glances down to where I'm pointing. "Not now," he says and walks away. I guess he has more important things to deal with.

Another rescuer in yellow comes into view, smiles and asks how I feel. He's smaller than the other man and about the age of my son. "We're putting a blanket over you while we work on the car. You might feel some debris, but don't worry." He shoves a folded cloth through the window and tries to tuck it around me, but can't reach. I take the edges and pull the blanket over my head and legs. For the first time I feel less helpless, a partner in my own rescue. From under my flimsy tent I hear the gnawing on metal and small bits pinging the blanket.

I breathe and focus on staying calm. *Oh Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. . .*

"Hi, Catherine, I'm Kyle."

From the open end of the blanket I see the outline of a woman, her yellow jacket showing through a space between the door jamb and the airbag curtain. Her kind voice sounds like my mother's and for the first time I want to cry. I'm touched by all the people helping me and feeling I'm sorry for myself in this predicament.

"It's my job to keep talking to you, okay?" she says. "What day is it?"

I say the date again. I understand they need to check on my mental health and I hope I sound convincing. A wave of nausea rolls from my belly to my esophagus. I look around for a container, but nothing is within reach. I make a plan to aim down through the opening in the car cracked apart by the impact. "I'm feeling a little sick, Kyle. Any chance you can get me some water?"

"Maybe later. I don't think we can give you water right now."

Oh, they think I might have internal injuries. I focus on breathing, hoping to postpone the vomiting.

Popping and grinding continue out of sight, punctuating their conversations.

"This car's built like a tank."

"They should really lower the speed limit on this section."

"It stays wet here all year round. We've had too many accidents along this stretch."

I breathe and remember the last time I watched the waves, hoping to see the whales going north. For it is in giving, we receive, in pardoning, we are pardoned, and dying we are born to eternal life. This was taking a long time.

"Are you still with me, Cathy?"

"I'm okay, Kyle."

The car shudders and creaks and the passenger side peels away. As the blanket is pulled off me, I see the young fireman smiling at me again.

"Give me your hand and let's try pulling you out." I undo my seat belt and try to stand, but can't get around the steering wheel twisted on my leg. We struggle together, and in the effort, I knock my glasses off.

"Will you hold these for me?"

He folds them into his pocket and steps away to get advice from others gathered nearby. With the car opened up, I see a fire truck, an ambulance, the tow truck chained to the back of my car and at least a dozen people in yellow jackets and hats, hovering like extras in a play waiting for their cue.

My young friend returns with a contraption of dangling straps and clips. "How much do you weigh?" he asks.

I tell him and stifle an urge to apologize.

"We're going to put these straps on you and pull you out with a winch." He leans into the car and wraps the top strap under my arms. The bad angle of his reach causes him to fumble and stab my breast with the clip.

"I got it," I say.

He hands me the rest of the straps and I fasten the clips around me.

The winch yanks me up and around the steering wheel and I'm able to stand on the driver's seat. Another tug lifts me onto a waiting gurney. A plastic collar is snapped around my neck. Now all I see is the sky and the tops of the redwoods. My hair is caught in the collar and the skin of my neck is pinched in its clasp. I tug at it, trying to get comfortable. A woman with a halo of white hair

peers into my limited view.

"Hi, Catherine. I'm Kyle." Her eyes are warm with concern as she smiles to reassure me. She squeezes my hand and I squeeze back.

Before I can say thank you I'm in the back of the ambulance. A paramedic tries to close the door, but a sheriff's deputy blocks the way.

"I need to ask her a few questions first," he says. Without waiting for an answer, he turns to me and demands to know my name and what happened. He wants to see my driver's license.

"It's in my purse and I don't have it, but I know the number." I recite it for him, proud that I have my wits about me enough to remember it.

"We've got to get her to the hospital. You can talk to her later." The EMT frowns as he pulls the door closed, forcing the deputy back.

"We're taking you to a helicopter. Do you get air sick?"

"No, never did. I used to fly small airplanes." Who am I trying to impress, strapped to a gurney and wrapped in a neck collar?

He cuts off my jacket sleeve and examines the inside of my arm.

"I apologize in advance," I say. "I have no veins." I hate IVs, and giving blood samples has always been an ordeal.

He pats my arm a few times and nods. "You're right."

Within a few minutes the ambulance stops and I'm extracted and carried toward a din of whirling blades. For a few seconds I see early evening stars, then I am shoved into the helicopter, with a ceiling view of straps, tubes and metal boxes. The door slams and the commotion of the blades increases, preparing for takeoff.

The EMT shouts at me as he dons a headset. "We won't be able to hear you with these on," he says. "Give me a thumbs up or a thumbs down if you need anything, okay?"

I nod and then give him a thumbs up to let him know

I got it.

He checks my right arm again, hoping to raise a vein, and then he examines the back of my hand. "I bet you twenty bucks I get an IV in you before we get to the hospital," he says.

I can't help but laugh at his determination. He slaps the back of my hand over and over as if I've been a bad girl. I give my chin a pinch to distract myself from the pain in my right fist where he inserts the needle.

"You owe me twenty bucks," he says.

I give him a thumbs up as we lift into the night sky.

Marion Deeds

An Excerpt from

The Langtree Charm

Second Place, Novel

Full Moon, Month of Nueve, Year 313

The first time she found copper she was only a tiny girl, three years old, playing in the marsh. Her mouth filled with a taste like salt. Under her hands, the mud grew warm, and moments later her fingers brushed something smooth and rounded. At first she thought the transparent globe was a lamp, but the shape was wrong. It was a jar, the narrow mouth run round with lines and grooves. She dragged it home, clinking, spilling mud along the way. Her mother, Ellewen, dumped the contents into a washtub and gasped, clutching Pedro's arm. The tub filled with copper coins the size of her mother's thumbnail. Even with the ones she had dropped, there were enough to buy the inn.

✶✶✶✶

Maris lifted the clear cylinder off the last lamp, freeing the two exhausted sprites within. One darted off with a violet flash, but the other lit on her knuckles, its four iridescent wings quivering. Warmth pulsed up her arm, and the slim bracelet of twisted copper hummed. A breath later, the sprite flew, disappearing into the twilight.

Maris dipped her rag into the bowl of vinegar and warm water. She wiped the smears of honey and sprite droppings from the lamp's wooden base. When she was little, she thought the sprites had faces like people, in spite of the furled proboscis and the large triangular eyes a color of blue she saw nowhere else in the world. Now she knew that people saw faces in everything, in a flower, in a cloud, in a random collection of stones and leaves. Some people even thought they saw the face of Cheviot the Ram in the lines and shadows of the east bluff that curved over Merry Lake, especially when the moon was full.

She leaned the lamp's long pole in the corner with the others, and lowered the cylinder into her bowl of water. Corwyn Alatriste had come by earlier with the fresh sprites he'd trapped, but this night it would be Felipe, not Maris, who refilled lanterns and lamps. Maris had coin in her purse. Her fine red skirt draped over her trousers and scuffed boots. She was going to the fair.

The Dosmanos Inn was filled with travelers here for the fair, so full that when her mother's Langtree cousin had appeared, close to moonset the night before, there had been nothing to offer him but the barn. He had traveled, he said, with a pair of musicians, but coming up the south pass they got separated. The musicians had arrived hours before, and were snoring merrily in one of the four-bed rooms.

Tonight, Maris knew, her brother would sleep in the barn so that Oshane Langtree had a soft bed in a clean room to himself. He would not have to share, because he was family. Felipe wouldn't mind. At his age, sleeping in the barn was still an adventure.

The notes of a flautine drifted across the inn's yard. Maris flinched and nearly dropped the lamp. The notes conjured up the sounds she had heard last night in her dreams, a low-pitched hooting that filled the space behind her eyelids with a blue glow. She had slept poorly these last eight nights since the earth quivered and the long tube of water rolled the length of Merry Lake, crushing half the wharf. She shivered, then recognized the notes. It was a folk song from down-mountain, one of the endless stories of Cheviot the Ram, of his tricks gone wrong. Her mother's cousin stood in the yard, watching her. She straightened up and made herself smile. "Cousin Oshane," she said. "Good evening."

"Cousin Maris, are you still working? I thought you'd go to the fair tonight," he said. He wore brown trousers, a brown jacket and a green cloth cap with a medallion fastened to one side. "The best night, the full-moon night, the wildest night of the fair."

He smiled. He was always smiling, she thought, as she wiped dry her hands. "And I thought you would be playing." She gestured

to the flautine, which he had returned to the leather carrying case strapped across his chest.

He turned down his mouth in a sad frown, although the corners of his light brown eyes crinkled. "I seem to have lost my mates again. I hoped you would help me find them."

"Ah," she said, trying to hide her disappointment. She meant to go to the fair with Corwyn, and hear about the progress of his latest project, the secret boat, but she could not insult the cousin her mother had seen last when he was a child barely able to toddle.

That morning at breakfast, Oshane had charmed all of them. He brought gifts: a bone-handled knife with a wicked blade of Ancient for her father, a puzzle stone for Felipe, a packet of letters and a pin with a green stone for Ellewen and for Maris, a translucent scarf the color of copper. He told stories, many featuring himself in the role of the fool.

There was no reason not to trust him, but Maris felt as if the ground shifted a bit when she was around him, and she didn't like that.

He gave his hand a swirl. "Of course you should not have to escort a stranger to the fair when you have friends you wish to join," he said. "I only meant that you could direct me. They are near the forecasters and the prospectors' booths, they said."

Behind him, Corwyn came up the path. He stopped just inside the gate. Maris stepped off the porch and beckoned him in.

"Of course we will accompany you," she said. "Corwyn Alatriste, my mother's cousin, Oshane Langtree."

Oshane turned. "Ah, a bringer of light!" he said.

Corwyn glanced over his shoulder.

"You," Oshane said. "You are a sprite trapper?"

"Yes," Corwyn said.

"So you bring us light." Oshane held out his hand. Corwyn clasped it, released it quickly.

"I just trap them," he said. Maris took another step down and moved closer to the two men.

"My cousin needs help finding the musicians he traveled

with," Maris said. "I told him we could bring him to them at the fair."

"There is no need, cousin," Oshane said. "I'm sure I can find them."

"It's no bother," Corwyn said. "We're going anyway."

"I'll buy you a plate of pork for your trouble," Oshane said, nodding.

Corwyn flushed. "I don't need to be paid for courtesy. I have coin."

Oshane raised a hand. "I only meant it as a guest-gift," he said, "and an excuse to visit with my cousin, whom I had never seen before this morning."

Maris slipped her arm through Corwyn's. She and Corwyn were the same age, fifteen. In fact, Corwyn was one month older than she, but Maris had already had her registry day. Corwyn had to wait two more years to register because he was a boy. She hadn't thought it would make a difference, but sometimes it felt as if a chasm had opened between them. Sometimes, though she felt shamed to think it, it seemed Corwyn had more in common with Felipe than her. She cherished the times they spent planning and working on his structures, because during those times the chasm closed.

"If I wait on the two of you, we will be here 'til moonset," she said. Corwyn smiled and turned, walking with her. Oshane followed, whistling.

After a few paces Oshane stopped. "You must come and hear us play," he said. "We are the best minstrels in the land. Or, at least, the best at this fair. Or, at least, the best you'll hear tonight. I hope."

Corwyn, startled, laughed. Maris gently tugged him forward and they went through the gate to the road.

Oshane glanced at Maris. "I thought you lived in a house on the hill, cousin. Do I remember it wrong?"

"We moved when I was little, when they bought the inn," she said.

"When you discovered copper."

"What do you know of that?" she said.

"Only what your mother wrote in a letter to my father," he said. "That you were a copper-hunter from the time you were a babe."

"No copper-hunter," she said. The back of her neck prickled. "A child, with a bit of child's luck, nothing more."

"Fine luck indeed," he said. "Many of the Langtrees are copper-hunters. At least, so says my father. He's not one. I can attest to that."

"What does your father do? Is he a shepherd?" Corwyn said.

"Nothing so stable. He scuttles from one spot to another and rummages for scraps of Ancient."

"You said he wasn't a copper-hunter," Corwyn said.

Oshane laughed, a sound like the yip of a sheepdog. "Oh, he's not, I assure you. Copper-hunters find copper. That skill is not my father's."

Maris looked up at him. From this angle, even in the near darkness, she could make out the face of the medallion on his cap. Two straight horns ran up from the center of the forehead, while two others curled like arms around its face. The ram had a long muzzle and eyes set with small red stones. It was made of gold, the medallion, the soft yellow metal they often found in the veins of Ancient. In DuLac, they prized it more highly than copper for how well it held a charm. Ellewen and Maris had spent many a night by sprite-lamp, picking threads of it from the slim lacquered plaques Maris brought home along with strands of copper wire, when she did go hunting.

"You wear the medallion of Cheviot," she said. He studied her, one corner of his mouth quirked up. "So I do."

II

"Your father is a prospector," Corwyn said.

Oshane nodded. "Yes, a bad one. His brother proved the wiser. Your grandfather, Maris."

"That's one of the family stories," she said. Fergal and Aengus Langtree had parted ways in Merrylake Landing; Aengus staying and raising his family; Fergal moving on in search of riches.

The streets of Merrylake Landing were deserted, since most of the townsfolk had gone to the fair. Even the meadshop was closed, although Maris knew they had a booth for the fairgoers.

"Corwyn, can you scent copper?" Oshane asked.

Corwyn shook his head. "No. I just trap sprites. I have no special skills."

"Corwyn has skills," Maris said. He glanced over at her, white showing all round the edges of his eyes, and she could have bitten her tongue in two. Quickly, she said, "Trapping sprites is a skill, an important one."

"It just takes patience," he said.

"Something I lack." Oshane spoke off-handedly, but Maris was sure he had seen Corwyn's look. Plainly, Corwyn did not want to talk about the things he built, especially the boat.

Oshane drew out his flautine and tootled a series of notes, which melted into a bouncy tune from the flatland sheep farms. Maris had heard it before in the inn's common room. Corwyn began to hum along. Oshane jigged around them, still playing. Corwyn laughed. Maris tried to keep from smiling, but it was impossible. The music teased her feet. Corwyn spun her in a circle and she followed his steps down the cobbled street to the open meadow where the fair beckoned them. It glittered with gold and blue lights. Maris could already hear music, smell the sulfur-whiff of powdered black-rock, and the sweet, spicy smell of stewed pork.

Oshane stopped his playing and bowed.

"I feel as if I should give you a coin," Maris said.

"Nonsense. It was my pleasure," he said.

They walked past the children's games that rimmed the fair. Joyful shrieks carried to them from the whirly-go, the best ride from Maris's childhood. She remembered clinging to the stuffed sack, swinging out sideways over the blurring ground as if she were flying. It looked so simple now; a wheel of wood on top of

an upright shaft, fern-stuffed bags hanging down from ropes. She watched it, smiling. Corwyn shook his head slightly.

"You don't like the whirly-go?"

"They work too hard," he said, nodding at the two panting runners who pushed the shaft. "I know a way to do it more easily, with paddles." He lifted his feet as if marching.

"Foot-paddles? Is that what you are using for the boat?"

Corwyn flicked a glance at Oshane, who had wandered ahead, out of earshot. "Yes. Paddles with a belt to turn the wheels. Why don't you like him, Maris? He seems friendly."

"I like him. He just makes me uneasy."

Pelican
Oil, pastels
Jacqueline Hewitt

Chloe Sariego
Second Place Poetry

How To Speak To An Older Brother

"Hold his hand"
your mother says of your brother
two years older
as snowflakes fall on your cheeks.
Don't squirm.
(even if it's not fair)
Pick up his mittens.
Hold his hand.

"It was her first time doing a tattoo"
he says, holding his bicep
like a tarot card.
You know he regrets it.
Bite your tongue.
Bite your knee
Til you hit blood if you have to
(you rattlesnake girl)
Tell him you love it.

"It's so nice to meet you"
she'll say, kissing your cheek,
(like a fish)
her nails the color of blood.
Do not judge her eyebrows.
Do not judge the impracticality of her high heels.
Smile.
Shake her hand.
Let her braid your hair.

When you wake up at four a.m. to him screaming
throw out her toothbrush;
she has broken his heart.
Do not tell him you knew since she baby voiced.
Do not judge his sadness.
Throw out the razors, the gasoline, and the telephone.
Do not let him lock himself in the bathroom.
Do not sit in your room with a pillow over your ears.
Do not try and go back to sleep.
(no matter how tired)
Do not leave him alone.

The first time he tries to hurt himself
Make him a bracelet
Bring him a blanket
Buy him an Xbox
The second time he tries to hurt himself
Put on black lipstick
Bring him to the front yard
Tell him if he does it again
You'll bury him yourself.

When he offers you weed at Thanksgiving
Stick to beer.
When he offers you weed at Christmas
Stick to wine.
When he leaves to smoke
Call him out.
When he leaves to cry
Pretend you don't notice.
When his best friend tries to touch you
Don't pretend you don't notice.
Count backwards from 100.
Step on his foot.

Tell your mom.

Tell him
"I miss you"
and mean it.

"I had a nightmare"
he'll say, as a little boy.
He'll have his blanket
and his stuffed lamb
Named Manna.
Forgive his fear.
Forgive his inability to protect you.
Let him in your bed.
Make up stories about the ocean, the mountains,
about digging to the center of the earth.
Let him be the engineer.
He'll let you drive the train.

In the morning it's the first snow of November,
"Hold his hand"
your mother says,
as you huddle in front of the ski lodge,
only your cheeks and eyes peeking through;
as snowflakes fall on your cheeks,
don't pull at your long underwear.
He's dropped a mitten,
Pick it up.
Put it in your pocket.
Hold his hand.
Every time,
Hold his hand.

The Earth Does Not Care

The softest thing.
The fingertip talker.
The slight giver, the golden taker
Dripping like morning dew.
Equal, clement,
and waning.
A young man.
Curls and seeks,
Folds himself inside my palm.
The warmest snow,
the slowest swing,
the strongest bough,
the first balance,
my first love.

Undertaken, understood,
forsaken, for good.
Starting the rockslide,
She looks at everything;
lifting under the eyelids,
the branches, the sloughs
for tadpoles or the owlman or
a new faun.

Only when the earth is quiet,
(the wind and the rain grows quiet)
and still is again,
does the Stone
miss her Sun.

A year goes past
photograph backs,
rip at the places they were taped to the wall.

Glassy like stones in shallow water,
The young man's eyes,
shape-shifting the moon's reflection.
A year away from
the softest thing I ever knew
the strongest bough,
the warmest snow,
my only first love.

Mourning Becomes You, Mother

I used your perfume.
I fed the peas to the dog.
I cleaned his vomit with your linen.
I ate the piecrust.
I cut your dress short.
I put my feet on the wall.
I took your laughs.
I slept through the funeral.
I rinsed out the stains.
I called you back, Momma,
But you were asleep.
I'll see you soon,
My mother, my shade
I'll see you soon,
Beneath the redwoods
In the garden
By the gardenias
Their scent speaking
your name to my nose.

Jessica Kotnour
Five Under Twenty-five Scholarship

Sam

I let him take my heart the way that bystanders let the purse
be stolen
It was not my problem
There was nothing I could have done
Someone else will step in

I waited for my hand to slap away his arm but my hand
thought that
My legs would run but my legs thought that
My tongue would speak up but my mouth thought that
My brain was going to give the words but my brain
thought that
My heart was in control but the heart was in control

No one helped and I was left with a five-inch incision
through my chest
And a cavity where my bloody love machine had
previously resided

I think he kept my heart in his notebook, the one that never
left his pocket
But
He could have placed it at the finish line of Rainbow Road
One of my friends told me that
She spotted it in a bowl of miso soup
At the local Japanese restaurant
But
She might have been mistaken.
There was also a rumor floating around
There was a heart in the chamber of secrets

But
I never reached platform 9 ¾ in time to see
It might have been part of the Chalk Art Festival
But
It had rained the night before I went to look

An amber alert went out
MISSING: TEENAGE HEART
LAST SEEN OUTSIDE OF THE GYM
HOMECOMING 2013
REWARD FOR TIPS

There were no leads
No one called
There were no sightings

Eraser Shavings

As soon as I learned how to write with a pencil (the crayons and markers were hibernating until art class) the shavings appeared.

Just a few at first, when I would misspell a word (a common thing when you go to a Montessori elementary school) and actually catch the error (a not so common thing when you go to a Montessori elementary school).

~~beliv~~ became believe with a cloud of eraser shavings acting as a halo around the corrected mistake.

The cloud was dispersed with a brush of a hand leaving a clean surface for the next crime to be committed.

For the sake of aging teachers' eyeballs, the pen usurped the pencil, but not the shavings. They simply transformed from halo clouds into tornadoes that touched down and interrupted the flow of the now damaged world.

It was around this time, the introduction of the pen, that we began to realize that there were worse things than misspelled words.

It was around this time that our writing began to look like soldiers' letters home, sentences blacked out. CLASSIFIED information made its way into our writing, and we were left to decide if it was ready for the public eyes or if it needed to be placed into the folder marked TOP SECRET: AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY.

(No one knew that we were the only authorized personnel.)

The teachers continued to age, and soon we were forced to put down the pen for the keyboard.

Our chicken scratch handwriting was now replaced with standardized pixels on a screen, our misspelled words now brought their squiggly red snakes out as playmates.

It was around this time that we were introduced to the delete key.

No longer were there halos surrounding the corrected

mistake, or even tornadoes attempting to hide leaked information.

Now there was white.

Blizzards covered our mistakes so that we were the only ones who knew they once existed, and we kept building right on top of the fresh snow, adding layers and layers until even we forgot where the mistakes once existed.

Transplant

"It looks like it took."
The skeletal muscle was used
To walk the shores of the Atlantic Ocean,
Where ladies lay until they resembled the red snapper
They would dine on that evening,
Where the cacophony of screaming children and paranoid parents
Was silenced
Only by man's journey to beyond blue skies.
(But the skeletal muscle was meant to hike the northern trails.)

"The body accepted it."
The fovea was used
To see the wait times that hung over
A never-ending line
That led
To a quickly ending ride;
To take a picture of a man
Dressed like a mouse
Standing next to a melting mob
Dressed like a happy family;
To pick an oversaturated balloon
That was also overpriced and overvalued.
(But the fovea was made to read Homer under the shade of a
sugar maple.)

"It has not been rejected."
The heart was used
To keep the transplant alive
As it crossed over the Mason Dixon Line
And into the land of strip malls and orange groves,
The land of lost tourists and found natives,
The land of steamy sidewalks and stores the temperature of Pluto.

Beth A. Harvey

Relentless

Third Place, Nonfiction

My mother was a charming woman. She used to sing in the kitchen, bake birthday cakes in the shapes of animals, and bring heated towels for me after my baths. She was attentive, loving, and fun to be with. Of course, I didn't fully appreciate her until she was gone. But when I say gone, I don't mean dead. She is still very much alive.

"Oh, hi, honey," croons my mother's voice on my answering machine. "I haven't heard from you lately and hope you're doing well."

The fifth message I haven't responded to this week. Something must be up.

"I just want you to know that I love you," she says. "Call me when you get a chance, and have a blessed day today."

My mother is an aging widow with time on her hands. She uses her time to pray for me, hoping to save my soul in the time she has left.

The phone rings again.

"Hi, Mom," I say.

"Oh! Hello, honey," she says, as if making a new acquaintance. "I'm so glad your phone is working, I was beginning to worry."

"My phone's working just fine. As always."

"Well," she says. "I wasn't sure if you got my message."

"Which one?" I ask. The one about Corinthians 13 or Matthew 28?"

"Oh, good," she says. "You did get them."

My mother is a Born-Again Christian and Jesus is her best friend. Trouble is, Jesus can be a jealous, narcissistic kind of a friend who inserts himself into every conversation.

"I just think of you so often," she says, "when I'm reading the words of our Lord."

"Thanks, Mom."

"Well, I know you're a busy lady," she says. "I never want to be a bother."

My mother often reminds me of how little a bother she is. This is code for my having neglected her too long.

"So, what's up, Mom?" I ask, ignoring the bait. I glance at the calendar and predict the request that's coming, and the lie I must come up with—fast.

"I was just thinking about Easter," she says, "and how we could worship the Lord this year."

"We already have plans," I say. "But you're welcome to come over here for dinner. If you're free."

"Oh, honey," she says, as if touched beyond words. "Thank you for including me. But I'm already committed to dinner at the church."

Time moves slowly as I comprehend my mistake. Damn it! I could have thought of an excuse months ago. Now it's too late. Here comes the tsunami. My mind scrambles for shore.

"I know!" she says. "Why don't you and your precious family join me at the church for Easter dinner?"

"The kids have school the next day, Mom. Besides, they'll be strung out from overdosing on chocolate all day."

I know as soon as the words come out, I sound lame and unconvincing. Once again, this ridiculous dialogue we engage in every Easter and Christmas. Do I have to tell her the truth again?

"The kids will have such a wonderful time," she says. "And you don't have to stay long."

"Mom," I say, bracing myself. "You know we're not a religious family."

"It's not that kind of a dinner, honey," she says. "We're just going to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord."

"Mom. We don't believe in the Resurrection. You know that."

"Well. I don't know what you believe," she says. "You never want to talk about it."

"Exactly." She's gotten to me again. "Mom, please. We can't keep having this conversation over and over again."

"Whatever you say, honey," she says in a saccharin sweet voice. "Though I can't imagine why you wouldn't want to enjoy a lovely meal and spare yourself the trouble of making one. But I'm sure you have things well in hand. You probably don't need any help at all."

In her scripted version of my life, I'd be happily accepting this offer, not rejecting it. I've gone completely off script by being an Atheist.

"Mom, I have to go now."

"Well, let me know about Easter dinner," she says. "I need to let the church know how many people to expect."

I hang up the phone like it's a hot potato. I feel ambushed, yet defiant. She is the only person I know who can push me off balance. I pick up the phone again.

"Hi, Mom. We won't be seeing you on Easter unless you come here for dinner. I wanted to make that clear."

"Well, hi again!" she laughs. "It's so nice to hear from you so soon."

Is this all a joke to her now?

"I'm sure you'll be able to make it another time, honey," she says. "Give the kids my love."

"Great. I'm glad we cleared that up."

"Okay, sweetheart," she says. "Have the best day of your life today. And may God bless you richly."

I hang up not knowing what to think. Is she a master manipulator or just going crazy? I decide not to care which, and carry on with my day.

Two days later, she calls, crying.

"Hi, honey," she says, sniffling. "I just wanted to say that I am very upset by the way you spoke to me the other day."

"Mom," I say, as if to a small child. "You are welcome to join us here for Easter dinner. You know you're welcome here anytime at all."

"But (sniff). You know, dear," she says haltingly. "I can't do that. On the Lord's Day."

"And we can't join you for church," I say flatly. "Not now. Not ever."

I've done well. I've said what I needed to say. Maybe all things are possible in the world of rational thought. I almost feel triumphant. Surely, now she'll let it go.

"I am 79 years old," she begins. "And I don't ask for much. Ever since your father died, I've tried not to be a burden. All I'm asking is for my grandchildren to join me on Easter."

"Then you're asking too much."

The phone is silenced and my heart feels heavy. I feel like a jerk. A bad daughter. Too selfish to grant my aging mother her fondest wish. I steel myself and go back to my chores, thinking long and hard about the person I've become. Yes, I'm a non-believer. That doesn't make me a bad person, just an honest one.

I can see the fog lifting through my kitchen window, and my eyes are drawn upward towards the sky. I bathe myself in a tiny sliver of sunlight that's breaking through the cloud cover. Almost like Jesus himself is shining down upon me, helping me to find my way. I feel renewed. The weight on my heart is beginning to lift. Now, like my mother, I can smile the smile of the righteous and the just.

Doug Fortier

Today

Third Place, Short Fiction

As I have each of these sixteen mornings since I brought Bareth home from the hospital, I open the nightstand drawer cradling the pistol to touch the cold steel and tell myself today is not the day.

"Today?" she whispers to my back.

My gut recoils with her acknowledgment of our lifelong agreement to die together, our love so great we didn't want to live without each other. I'm surprised she's awake after night-long bouts of breathlessness aided by oxygen pumped into her lungs. In these sixteen days I've been trying to deny my promise regarding the last day.

Bareth believed when her body finally broke from slow asphyxiation and I called the ambulance to come, they'd find two dead.

The abrupt downturn of her health, then the hospital stay, forced me to denounce the romantic ending I'd defended and to realize the toast honoring our love, "Together to the end," had become a tribute to my death. Hand in hand at her hospital bedside just before her release, I slipped into a memory of late summer, seventy years ago, the moment I fell in love with Bareth.

I'm fifteen and ignoring the crowd toting umbrellas and towels while I clear sand from the boardwalk in front of my parents' soda shop. A pretty girl my age wearing a yellow dress doesn't move as I sweep closer. She smiles and asks my name, then stands uncomfortably close, speaking softly, never moving her eyes from mine.

Clicks of plastic valves pushed the fleeting giddiness from my chest and returned me to the bright hospital room and the flowers I'd brought.

"I saw," she breathed, "you smiling."

"It was the day we met, but it could have been our wedding

day, or your—"

She let her head fall back. "It makes. Me think. Too much."

✶✶✶✶

Our home meets her needs, yet it has taken longer each morning to move her from our bed to a bath that cannot renew her ebbing flesh, an intimacy that erodes memories of her vigor and beauty.

Bareth smiles and points to my flannel pajamas on the hook. "Please?" I want to capture that smile as I have in hundreds of photographs filling our house. Instead, I wrap her warmly and slide her feet into wooly slippers.

She watches from the family room while I make breakfast in the kitchen, the oxygen pump cycling with the rhythm of her breathing. Unbidden anger roils inside me, feeding on fear of my impending end and regret that I'm still healthy with a few good years ahead of me. While I collect her pills, prune juice, and tea, I'm soothed by reminders of our long life together, in pictures and pieces of art from our travels.

Bareth lies quietly for several hours in her reclining chair between the kitchen and the silent TV, with strength only for breathing. In a rare moment away from her, I close the bathroom door behind me and focus on myself in the mirror, trying to connect with my creator on the other side. Ignoring my blotched and wrinkled skin, I stare beyond my eyes in the reflection and take a deep breath before I speak. "Please, Lord, return Bareth to me whole, and I'll tell the world of your miracle. Take a year of my life and give it to my love."

When I return to the chair by Bareth's side, her breathing has become raspier, and a few minutes later, the gauge measuring her blood oxygen moves lower. Tears form in her eyes. An upwelling of grief clenches my chest, urging me to scream, yet I will not make this harder for her. Sharing her tears, I sit motionless in my anguish, resisting the unfolding reality.

Lunchtime comes and goes, neither of us stirring from our vigil as Bareth's skin becomes grayer.

I lower the blinds when twilight overtakes the day, and she looks up when the oxygen monitor pings faintly. With her hand in mine, the closeness we've shared these years is a source of comfort.

An alarm startles me awake. Bareth is cold, and I'm plunged into sadness. Moving to hold her, cheek to cheek, I tremble as each part of me fills with grief.

After unplugging everything, I kiss my love one last time and dial the number I've memorized. Once the questions are answered, I draw myself to the nightstand and look at the gun one last time.

Today.

Rebecca Ortega
Five Under Twenty-five Scholarship

Sun Eaters And Sand Walkers

For my parents.

I was raised by helio-skinned parents,
drunk with that optimistic flair that only comes every
ten years,
Heavy with golden, liquored-up dreams and ambitions
and aspirations.

They came here through mucked-up, dim-lit rivers,
over seas made out of moldering, singing sands and
aided with the traitorous wit of silver-tongued coyotes.

Fishing for ten-cent paying jobs growing bloated fruits
from wine-touched soil that is stamped with signs of
"Get out"
"Go back to where you came from"
and
"No one wants you here."

From dark God-bloomed earth they hold every day
in blistered, calloused hands,
But doesn't even belong to them
because this world says no when they want yes.
Because they didn't have a damn piece of sliver-thin paper
that told the world they belonged here.
Because for some reason not being born here
immediately brands them as a type of sunset-eyed people
with not enough patriotism
but enough skin on their hands to work their hearts
down.

I wished a thousand times that I could take away the
ashen-cast fear
that has been sewn into the very bones of my people
and burrowed deep into their brains.

The fear of being caught with supposedly righteous cuffs,
and taken away from wide-eyed children,
and desperately needed jobs,
and better lives.

The fear when you see flashing red and blue firework lights
that should mean safety but sometimes shoots
chattering fear
like a poisoned arrow straight through the heart.

I want to be able to take their hands and tell them
"See? You are free."

But because eyes see different and mouths whip out words
that bleed.

I have to watch as my helio-skinned parents,
My helio-skinned, silver-palmed people,
break their earth-kissed backs for this fickle land.
Bleed their own incandescent blood into hostile soil.
Cry their own brackish tears into private rivers.

They suffer for American dreams
wrapped in hope so large it bursts
through the very seams of this universe,
threatening to explode them into another dimension

Skinning themselves to the nerves for no other reason

than to watch their children with hope-filled eyes still
not crushed,
walk that path that they never could.

For their own sun-skinned parents,
whose starched veins ache with age,
to be able to live like they deserve.
For the faith that everything they lost
was for a heart-filled, life-giving chance
to do better in this uncharted, unknowing life.

It makes them breathe fire and flame and flare
into their starved lungs
and let it out with a crashing roar
that brings down guardian angels like they are
faithful comets.
Makes them fight with fists and words and contagious hearts
so that we may tie them in instead of pushing away.

My starved, luminous people were never a naïve dream
too far away to reach.
They are not numbers on paper.
Nor alien strangers.
Nor tools to till this land.

My people are people.

The Boy Who Held God

I want to write,
To the young man of arms.
The one cocooned in big, Vietnamese leaves,
And heavy rice fields littered with pit vipers.

The fifty-year-old man that is really an eighteen-year-old boy,
with no name and no letters and only a heavy gun
sleeping in his hands.

His war thickened wrists rest on the table,
the one inside the 24-hour diner,
the one that holds fluorescent light bulbs that make you
look addicted to sweet ice and lemon,
and strawberry milkshakes.

I want to ask him:
What are you doing here, Ghost boy?
Why do you cry when the taste of salt hits your lips,
or the slice of apple pie you just ate settles hollowly
in your gut?

He goes out to the back, and I, I follow him,

Oh, Lost boy of Neverland.

What do you see when the night lights up with
punctured stars?
Where does your mind go
when the pictures come back with a force like
a hit from Mjölnir?
Do they haunt your dreams at night,
Guerilla Man?
Volunteer Brother?
Soldier Friend?

Recruit Terror?
I watch him go out like a light in the dark,
before he appears again from the light of his Zippo.
A shimmered flick that tames into a red dot in the night,
when his hands steady from their butterfly shaking.

I want to ask him:
Were you ever scared, Golden boy?
Did the heat ever dig deep
like the rain of bullets drowning you down?

I realize though
that this old,
young, aged man,
boy,
ghost,
brother,
fighter
and possible father
was always scared.

Always jealous awake at 2:35 in the morning,
to hide from his eighteen-year-old friends.
Whose scratched bones are somewhere in jungle
choked lands,
and whose names are etched only into his own
scratched bones,
and a black glass gleamed wall,
and their own scratched family bones.

So I leave.
I leave Him.
In the back of a diner,
a cigarette held in between broken teeth,
and a hole the size of a quarter
leaking out his insides.

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Rose McMackin

The Moving Mountain

Five Under Twenty-five Scholarship

On a Friday night in January, I go hiking alone. I pull up to the trailhead in twilight and walk with a headlamp for a few short miles up the ridge. Alone and brightly lit, I imagine what I must look like to the little animals' eyes that hover outside the beam of my light. I don't have a good explanation for myself about what I'm doing here really, except that I'm twenty-three still, and that's reason enough.

When alone, I camp light and almost feral. A paper thin Thermarest and no tent. No stove even. Just some cold food picked up from Trader Joe's after work and the gear I had in the back of my car. A casual transition between this real life and that real life.

I wake to the soft clink of other campers making coffee. The campground isn't close to full, but I'm not totally isolated, either. This doesn't bother me, but it strikes me because there have been years when I have hiked out on the coast in early spring and been utterly alone in my miserable enjoyment of the cold dampness. In other years, the appeal of the coast is heightened in the fall and diminished by December, but this bright weather is unusual.

From the ridge line, I can see the fog as it rolls in and folds into the creeks and ridges of the Point Reyes Peninsula. This is such a funny little piece of California. On the state's far western edge, Point Reyes National Seashore is perched on the edge of a different tectonic plate— the Pacific Plate—crunched up against the westernmost edge of the North American Plate. The shaky, slipping boundary between the two is marked on maps as the San Andreas Fault, the famous fault line that slices through the Olema Valley, the Bolinas Lagoon, and the submerged valleys of Tomales Bay. Driving from San Francisco, the windy roads dip down to cross this boundary, but if you don't know to watch for it, it would be easy to believe that the land is seamless.

When I try to picture it, Point Reyes is all watercolors, a kind of ephemeral color palette. Like all the rocky, gray Northern California beaches, its exoticism is shimmery and subtle, silvery sand dollars and fragments of abalone shells and sage green succulents, but make no mistake—it is a geological world apart.

After snacking and stuffing my sleeping bag, I crunch happily down the trail towards the beach along a path that has long since become old and familiar to me. What's funny in this is that the permanence of mountains is only relative. This one in particular, because this entire peninsula, located as it is on a different piece of lithosphere, is drifting quietly northward.

When I was twenty-one, I thought I would never get enough of certain things, like riding in the beds of pickup trucks and driving across the Utah state line to buy beer. Those summer nights were exciting in that particular way that is so hard to make interesting in the recount, even though they felt tremendously interesting to me at the time. But lately, things I swore I would never, ever succumb to don't seem so bad. I'm awake, so bright-eyed on a Saturday morning, and it hardly feels mundane.

Still, it's only human nature to believe that what we know and want will stay the same.

This year, it's January and we're still waiting on rain. I try, but can't imagine how this will shape my adulthood. Out of habit, I still assume that if I someday have daughters, I will argue with them in a long, hot tenor to please, just take shorter showers for god's sake! like my own mother did with me when I was in high school. That this will be the way I will worry about them and about water. And then I remember that if something as inviolable as the climate can change, then so can economies and cultures, and so, certainly, can things like families and people.

I see a few other people on the beach, but no one tries to speak to me, which I prefer. It is this silence that would have seemed so unbearable to an earlier, wilder incarnation of myself. But I came hiking alone intentionally, on my own schedule, to

wander the intertidal zone looking at gooey starfish.

When I lose track of the trail back up the bluffs, I make a scramble of it. It's a little exposed, and I suppose that I could fall, but I won't, and I don't. At the top, there are deer tracks through the waist-high grass and I follow these east until they connect with a trail. Color flashes in the grey-green grass. Budding wildflowers, beautiful, but months too early.

The trail along the scarp is right where I sensed it would be, running parallel to the water. I pause for a moment to shake sand out of my shoes and brush foxtails from my pants. My face is warm, probably sunburned.

This can't last, of course. Of everything that is creeping toward a changed state, this is the thing that will end first; this sense of my own infallibility and this single-mindedness. For the moment, though, it is enough to be alone and capable in this misty world. I know that it's moving away underneath me, but it is happening so slowly I don't feel it.

Terri Nicholson

Enter Emma

Third Place, Novel

Chapter 1: Shoved from the Nest

March 3, 1924

Emma wrapped her scarf more tightly around her neck and gripped the door handle as Papa brought the truck to a stop at the Chardon train depot. She didn't want to go.

"You mind Dr. Epstein," Papa said. "And his wife. We're counting on you to behave and keep your opinions to yourself. The Epsteins don't care what you think."

"Yes, Papa," Emma said. She looked down at her boots. She'd never even ridden on a train before and now Papa was sending her away to Cleveland to live with strangers. Though the train would get her there in a couple of hours, it would be half a day's drive to get there by truck. "When can I come home and visit?"

"In a few weeks, probably. You'll have to work it out with the Epsteins," Papa said, as if it was nothing. It was beginning to snow.

A few weeks? I've never been away from home for more than a few days. "Tell Mama I'll write when I know when I'm coming," Emma said. Doesn't he have any idea how hard this is for me?

Papa nodded. The warning bell began to ring. "Now go or you'll miss your train."

Emma took a deep breath and swallowed. "Goodbye, Papa."

When he handed her the small beat-up suitcase that used to be Mama's, he didn't meet her eyes. She was afraid he might be glad to see her go. Despite everything Mama had said, she felt like she was being banished, punished for what had happened to her

older sister, Anna.

The Epsteins had mailed her a ticket so there was no need to go inside the small depot building, which was not much bigger than their farmhouse. Emma thought of her own house with five kids and her parents all crowded into two small bedrooms. She pictured Mama outside letting Wilma feed the chickens while she checked for eggs, and then wrenched her mind back to the present.

She took the steps to the platform, handed her ticket to the conductor and boarded the train. There was an empty seat by a window in the back. She slid in, put her suitcase down by her feet and wiped a clear space on the steamy window with her sleeve. Papa was still standing there, snow coming down around him.

The train began to move slowly, gradually picking up speed. The whistle blew its low-pitched signal rising to a higher note, three times in succession, as they left the station. Emma looked around her. Most of the seats were full. They were made of wood and not terribly comfortable, but each did have a thin, dark green cushion made of a coarse fabric. At least it was warmer in the train than in the truck.

Besides the simple brown dress and blue wool coat she was wearing, she hadn't brought much with her, just her nightclothes and slippers, new ones, a gift Mama had pressed on her last night after Papa and the rest were all asleep. Mama said the Epsteins would give her a maid's uniform. Emma put her hand up to her shoulder-length brown hair. She was the one who insisted that Mama cut it. Long hair would be too much trouble at the Epstein's. Besides, it was 1924 and she wanted to look more modern, not like a backward farm girl with a braid hanging down her back.

After the others went to bed, she and Mama had sat before the last burning embers of the kitchen fire and talked late into the night. Mama had tried to reassure her, "Oh Emma, of course we're not trying to get rid of you." Mama spoke in her native Bohemian, struggling with English only when absolutely necessary.

"But Papa is always so angry at me, if not for reading books,

then for being too outspoken."

"Papa's not angry at you. He's angry that no matter how hard he works there's never enough money. Something always goes wrong. After we made the last payment to the doctor, the cow died. Now it's the roof leaking and it takes good shingles to fix it properly."

"But I've never been anywhere overnight without you and Papa, and I've never even seen a Jew. People say they're very strange. What if they don't like me?"

"Jews are just people. They worship the same God, just a little differently. You'll be fine. They'll be glad to have someone as smart as you. You've always caught onto things quickly. It's your mouth I worry about." Mama reached out and touched her arm. "Emma, promise me you'll guard your tongue. You're going to be a servant and they will expect you to obey them without argument."

Emma nodded.

"Be careful with the boys, too. They are not your brothers."

"What do you mean?"

"I believe the oldest one is already fourteen, only a year younger than you. You must be extremely proper around him and never be alone with him or give the Epsteins any reason to doubt your virtue."

Emma guessed she knew what Mama meant. At church, Father Michael was always telling the girls to protect their virtue. The subject made her feel even more nervous. If only she could just stay home. "How will you manage without me?" she asked.

Mama only laughed. "The boys will just have to help more with Wilma. She is almost five." Mama laid a hand against Emma's cheek. "I'm sorry I can't come to the train station and see you off, but Papa has other errands and it would be too much for Wilma. You know how much I'll miss you. I'd never have agreed to let you go if we didn't need the money so badly. What you earn will really help." They had held each other then, saying their silent goodbyes.

"It's alright, Mama. I do understand."

But she didn't really. As the train approached a crossing,

it blew a warning whistle. Emma peered out the window, but couldn't see much except for a few milk cows still grazing in a field despite the snow. It was bad enough they'd made her drop out of school when they knew how much she loved it. She had hoped to become a teacher. Miss Page had said she was smart enough, but Papa didn't think girls needed to go to school. Sending her away to work for strangers was even worse than making her leave school. She leaned her head against the window, thinking of that last horrible day with Anna. Before Emma left for school that morning Anna had made her promise not to tell Mama her cough was back. Emma hadn't realized Anna was having trouble breathing, too. Would it haunt her forever?

The train slowed and the conductor yelled, "Cleveland Station!" startling Emma back to the present. Though it was quite warm in the train, her hands were icy cold. Emma pushed thoughts of Anna from her mind. Her new life was beginning, whether she wanted it or not.

Outside on the platform, it was snowing. A tall, thin man with wire-rimmed spectacles and a red muffler around his neck stood apart from the crowd. That must be Dr. Epstein. His letter had said, "I will wear a red scarf so that you will be able to spot me easily." She couldn't tell whether he was frowning, but he looked very serious.

Emma's heart was thudding so hard it was painful. How am I going to walk up to a total stranger? She closed her eyes, willing herself to calm down. Finally, she took a deep breath and got to her feet. She was one of the last to disembark, but before she could walk over to the man, he began walking towards her.

"You must be Emma," he said, taking her suitcase. "I'm Dr. Epstein." Emma could hear only the slightest trace of an accent in his voice. He was clean-shaven, with a dimple in his chin and a neatly trimmed mustache. From what she had overheard her classmates say, she had thought Jewish men had long beards and wore only black.

"Nice to meet you," she replied automatically, shaking his

hand and wondering if that was the proper thing to do with an employer. He didn't seem to take offense or notice that her hand was trembling. His hand was warm and the handshake firm, and he had startlingly blue eyes, the same color as Father Michael's. Somehow she had thought all Jews had dark hair and dark eyes.

"My, you're tall for a girl, almost as tall as I am," the doctor said, meeting her eyes and then smiling. "The car is over here." He pointed to a Model A Ford parked by the curb. It wasn't new, but where it wasn't covered with snow, it was shiny black and looked well cared for. The doctor put her suitcase in the back seat and opened the door for her. Her family didn't own a car, so this would be her first ride in one.

Carefully she put one foot on the running board, grabbed hold of the edge of the door and pulled herself up. She sat down on the comfortable grey upholstered seat and looked around in awe. She'd never been in anything but the neighbor's old truck, splashed with dirt and smelling of hay and farm animals. This car was clean and shiny. There was a crocheted blue and white blanket folded neatly on seat between them and a black leather bag, which looked much like the one their family doctor carried, on the floor in front of her. There were real glass windows, so the snow and wind would stay outside.

Once she was settled, Dr. Epstein pulled on leather gloves, walked to the front of the car, and began to crank the engine. By the time it came to life with a roar that shook the entire automobile, he was sweating. He pulled a handkerchief from his pocket, wiped his brow, brushed the snow from his hair, and got into the car. He smoothly maneuvered the car back onto the road. It felt very different from the jerky way her father and brothers shifted gears in the truck.

They drove along the rutted streets without speaking. She couldn't think of anything to say, and even if she had, she wasn't sure her voice still worked. She looked out the window at the passing buildings and shops in Cleveland's business district. There weren't many cars on the road or people out and about, probably

because of the weather. The snow was coming down fast now, and they couldn't see more than a few feet ahead of them. The silence seemed to stretch on forever. Emma felt the panic return, and the motion of the car was doing strange things to her stomach. A wave of nausea and dizziness made her grasp her middle. *What if I throw up in Dr. Epstein's car?*

Dr. Epstein looked over at her. "Feeling sick to your stomach?" he asked. "Look out the window. It will help your inner ear adjust to the motion of the car." This made no sense to Emma, but she did as he said. She swallowed several times, and tried to slow her breathing. A cold sweat trickled down her back. At that moment all she wanted to do was hide her head in Mama's apron like she did when she was a little girl and too shy to talk to strangers.

"Better now?" the doctor asked a few minutes later.

She nodded. She was feeling better. The nausea had eased and her stomach wasn't quite so jumpy. "Thank you," she whispered.

Dr. Epstein nodded. "Good. I will have to make a stop at the hospital before we go home. There is a child with rheumatic fever I need to check on." He turned into the hospital parking lot, came to a stop, and turned off the engine. "You can come in and wait in the lobby or stay in the car."

"I'll stay here," she mumbled. She was terrified enough without having to talk to more strangers in a hospital. She'd never been in one. There was no hospital in Chardon, and Papa said people only went there to die.

"See you in a while then." He closed the car door and walked purposefully toward the hospital.

Once Emma was alone, she was struck again by the injustice of it all. *How can Mama and Papa do this to me?* She had been the top student. It had almost broken her heart when Papa said she couldn't continue. Why was it so terrible that she liked to study?

She remembered Papa's words when he caught her reading in bed by kerosene lamp. She'd already been forced to leave school by then. He told her he'd found her a job and that they were sending her away. "These Jews are book-lovers like you. You can

do your reading there instead of burning my house down hiding lamps under the bedclothes."

Why did Papa send me away? Was it because of Anna? Emma's mouth felt dry. Her heart raced, and she felt like she couldn't get enough air. She hadn't been able to cry about Anna. The tears just wouldn't come. Emma hadn't cried since then, even when they told her they were sending her away. But now the grief welled up from somewhere deep inside of her and the tears wouldn't stop. It had been horrible sitting by the bed watching Anna struggle for breath, and even worse, knowing it was all her fault.

Cady Owens

An Excerpt from

Poets Named Will

Five Under Twenty-five Scholarship

Exactly one week before I started seventh grade, my brother Will disappeared.

According to Mom, Will wasn't missing, because we knew where he was, which was allegedly in Princeton, New Jersey. But I didn't buy it.

For one thing, I knew Will wasn't going to college. It had been a big deal when he'd been accepted to Princeton the spring before, but the same day the letter had arrived in our mailbox—"Congratulations, William Tucker!"—Will had announced he was going to skip college and move to Tibet to become a monk.

Plus, he left without saying goodbye. Will would never leave without saying goodbye.

But Mom insisted that Will had changed his mind and was safely in New Jersey at that very moment.

"But," I asked, "why didn't he tell me he was leaving? Why didn't he wake me up to say goodbye?"

"Ava, sweetie." Mom's voice wavered. "I think it would have been too hard for him. But," her face brightened, "he said he can't wait to hear from you."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Are you saying I can call him?"

Mom's forehead wrinkled, and she pursed her lips, which meant no. This wasn't a surprise, because Will has always had this thing about phones.

A month after Dad died, when I was six and Will was twelve, Will convinced me that there were monsters living in the phone lines that would crawl out of the receiver and into your ears to listen to your thoughts. We used Mom's big orange scissors, which were strictly off limits, to cut through the cord of the red

telephone that hung on our kitchen wall, and rejoiced in our victory over the monsters. We celebrated until Mom came home and burst into tears when she saw what we'd done. Mom cried a lot back then. It would have been better if she'd just yelled.

For years after that I wouldn't touch the phone, even when Grampy called from California. I kept imagining monsters, like beetles with jack-o-lantern faces, crawling into my ears. Eventually I got over it, but Will has avoided talking on the phone ever since, and always looks uncomfortable when he has to. He says it makes him feel jittery. So it made sense that he wouldn't want a phone installed in his dorm.

"You can write to him," Mom said. "Send him letters. He'd love that." She held out a small piece of paper with something written on it.

When I didn't take it from her, she put it on the kitchen table, next to my placemat. I could feel a lump forming in my throat, but I took a deep breath, trying to swallow it.

"Why didn't you tell me he was leaving?" I said.

Mom opened her mouth to respond, but by then I'd thought of something else.

"And exactly when did Will have this change of heart? This morning? You don't just wake up and decide to go to college that day. How long have you known he was leaving?"

Again, Mom started to respond, but I was on a roll.

"The two of you must have talked about it—made the decision together." I felt the sadness in my throat moving down into my belly, hardening into anger. "Why didn't anyone talk to me? Ask me what I thought? I do have thoughts about things, you know. I'm not a baby!"

The lump in my throat was back, too big to talk around, and even though I was angry, not sad, I could feel tears rolling down my cheeks. I was angry at Mom, and furious at myself for crying. I ran to my room and slammed the door.

I stayed in my room with the music up loud, playing all the CDs I knew Mom hated. When I heard her car pull out

of the driveway, I went out into the kitchen and examined the piece of paper she had left on the table: *William G. Tucker, 905 Herrontown Road, Princeton, NJ 08540*, written in Mom's slanty handwriting. I folded the paper and stuck it in my pocket.

✶✶✶✶

That night I wrote a letter to Will and then lay awake in bed for a long time. After Dad died, I had trouble falling asleep at night. Will brought a sleeping bag into my room and slept on the floor next to my bed. Eventually, Mom said Will had to sleep in his own room, so he rearranged the furniture in both of our rooms so that our beds were snug up against either side of the same wall. If I couldn't fall asleep, I would knock on the wall, and Will would knock back.

That first night Will was gone, I shut my eyes and tried to send Will a message. I miss you, I thought, as hard as it's possible to think a thought. But when I knocked on the wall, I didn't hear anything back.

✶✶✶✶

Dear Will,
It's nine o'clock, and I just finished getting ready for bed. It felt so weird without you here. I realized that I don't know how long I'm supposed to spend brushing my teeth. My entire life I've stopped brushing when you stopped. Spit when you spit. I'll probably get cavities now.
Love,
Ava

✶✶✶✶

One week later, I stood on a street corner a few blocks from my house, waiting for the intercity bus. The year before, when I had to register for junior high, Will had insisted that Mom send me to Euclid, the school two towns over. Apparently it had some sort of special program, and I had to write an essay to get in. At the time I'd thought it sounded exciting, but at the bus stop, I felt nervous. Why had I agreed to go to a school where I didn't know anyone? What if I wasn't smart enough for whatever this special program

turned out to be?

Mom offered to drive me on my first day, but I worried that she'd want to come inside and meet the teachers, or something embarrassing like that, so I told her I wanted to take the bus. I was wearing Will's Pablo Honey t-shirt, for luck. When I pulled my sweatshirt up over my nose, I could smell my brother. The scent of him made me feel better.

"Hey," a girl's voice said. I pulled my head out of my sweatshirt and turned around. The girl was about my age. She had short brown hair cut like a boy's, and her long-sleeved purple velvet dress was too small for her. I didn't recognize her.

"Are you a cat?" she asked, as if this were a completely normal question. I stared at her.

"By the way," she said, "please ignore this awful thing. I'm only wearing it because I bet my brother Ben that he couldn't eat five hot dogs in five minutes and I lost. So Ben said I had to wear a dress on the first day of school. But this one from last Christmas was the only one I had because I hate dresses. But at least Ben threw up all the hot dogs."

The girl spoke so fast I could barely follow what she was saying.

"I'm Natalie Green," the girl continued, "but you can call me Nat. I'm a cat. Are you?"

"Um," I said, "I'm Ava. And I'm not a cat."

"Not a cat, a GAT. With a "G." It stands for "Gifted And Talented." It's what they call kids at my school. I only asked because this is the intercity bus stop. And pretty much the only reason anyone our age goes to Easton at this time of the day is if they go to Euclid."

"Oh. Yes. I mean, I guess I am a GAT. Or I will be. I'm starting at Euclid this year. Well, today."

The girl, whom I'd known for about one minute, reached out and hugged me.

"This is incredible," she said. "I've never had anyone to ride the bus with before. All the other GATs either live in Easton or their parents drive them to school. We have to be friends."

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Euclid, it turned out, wasn't just a junior high. The school had every grade from kindergarten through high school, and was

divided into two schools, called the Lower School and the Upper School. Confusingly enough, the Lower School, which was kindergarten through eighth grade, was at the top of the campus hill, and the Upper School, which was ninth grade through twelfth, was at the bottom.

During my first week at Euclid, I heard people say they were going to, "the lower Upper School," "the upper Lower School," "Mount Olympus," "the ocean floor," and about a zillion other names, most of which I couldn't make any sense of. According to Nat, kindergarteners were mountaintoppers, high school seniors were bottom-feeders, and when you finished eighth grade and moved to the upper school, you were sledding, or, if no teachers were around, going to hell. Teachers, who usually taught at both schools and could be seen jogging up or down the hill between classes, were hikers or hillaries.

I couldn't keep any of it straight. If it hadn't been for Nat, I probably would have crawled into a hole after my first day. I was dying to tell Will about everything, but when I tried to write it down, I didn't even know where to start. I wished I could call him.

✶✶✶✶

By Sunday, Will had been gone for twelve days. His t-shirt didn't smell like him anymore. It didn't smell like anything, which I guess meant it smelled like me. I wondered what I smelled like to other people. If I disappeared, would anyone walk around in my t-shirt, trying to breathe me in?

Mom worked a double shift at the hospital that day, and our house echoed with emptiness. I flipped through my CDs, but didn't put anything on. I went into the kitchen and looked in the fridge, but after standing there with the door open for a few minutes I closed it again without eating anything. I combed through Will's things, looking for some kind of clue about what he'd been thinking in the days before he left. I desperately wanted to understand why all of a sudden he'd decided to leave and hadn't said anything to me. But everything in his room looked like it always had.

And yet—if Will was at college, like Mom said, why did his room look the same? I looked around more closely. His bookshelf

was full. The picture I'd framed for his birthday, of the two of us with Grampy and his golden retriever, still sat on the desk. His stereo, which he'd gotten for Christmas the year before, stood on top of the dresser. I got down on my knees to peer under the bed, and sure enough, there was his entire CD collection. I knew that Will would never have left for Princeton without his CDs. So where was he? And why hadn't he taken anything with him?

✶✶✶✶

Dear Will,
Do you remember when we visited Grampy in California? When Maisy had that litter of puppies? And we slept on the screened-in porch, and in the morning all of the puppies would run in and wriggle down into our sleeping bags? And how sad we were when Mom wouldn't let us take the small one home? After that trip, I missed that puppy so much. And missing the puppy made me miss Grampy. And missing Grampy made me miss Dad. But what I realized today was that all that time I thought I was missing them? I wasn't really. Because we never had the puppy, and Grampy never lived with us, and I don't remember Dad. But I sure do miss you.
Love,
Ava
P.S. Where are you?

✶✶✶✶

A few days later, I got a note from the school office during social studies. It was a message from Mom, saying there was an emergency at the hospital and she would be home late.

When I got off the bus after school, I fished the spare house key out of its hiding place in the mailbox. The key was under a big stack of catalogues, which I brought inside. When I put them down on the kitchen table, something slipped out from the stack and fluttered down to the floor. I bent down and picked it up. It was a postcard with a picture of a frog on it. Above the frog were the words, "Every day is a gift." I turned it over, and my stomach flipped.

I knew that handwriting.

Ava,
Dogs bark bite and pee
Sometimes the best puppies are
Imaginary
Love,
Will

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Judges' Comments

Norma Watkins coordinator of the MCWC writing contest:
"Each year the contest entries arrive like gifts, which we the judges are allowed to unwrap. This year brought another delectable assortment. Enjoy."

Charlotte Gullick on **Nicole Idar's** "I Can't Stop Correcting My Politically Incorrect Mom":
"This piece explores the complexities of family, identity, and cultural perspective with a compelling voice. The narrator's realization underscores the importance of humanity and compassion in all things, rather than blanket and judgmental responses. It is a bit of writing that has much to teach us all. "

Natalie Serber on **Margit Sage's** "The Apple":
"From the first gripping image, this story unravels in a dystopian near future that keeps the reader turning pages. The characters are sympathetic and recognizable, for in this challenging place, where citizens have chips planted in their brains to maximize their performance, the deepest struggle is one we are all familiar with, the struggle to belong, to combat loneliness. Margit Sage has made some bold strokes in creating her vivid landscape of the future."

Sharon Doubiago wrote about Casey FitzSimons' entry:
"Reliquary" is a strong poem, haunting and mysterious, touching eerily on the haunted house archetype. It feels like a poem of a larger collection on the same theme that will tell us more. The title is exquisite, an example of how much "juice" a title can give."

Author Biographies

Bill Baker is a retired teacher, married to programmer Annie Gould, with two boys, Andy and Peter, who never call. He began teaching after a working career in factories, on highways, and in the woods. He volunteered with Greenwood VFD and Elk VFD as a firefighter; with United Methodist Committee on Relief for Katrina relief; and with the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. He is currently with the United Methodist Church as a lay speaker, and can be found at the Fort Bragg Senior Center serving lunch. Contact bbaker@pacific.net.

Muin Daly has recently located to the North Coast, having lived in the Bay Area for over 40 years. She is a Licensed Acupuncturist and holds a degree in Integrated Health Studies, as well as a Masters of Divinity. Ms. Daly is co-founder of Acupuncture Recovery Treatment Services, which delivers traditional healing modalities within the Criminal Justice System. Muin is retired, after serving as a Rehabilitation Counselor and Director of Religious Services for the San Francisco Sheriff's Department. *Child Found*, is an excerpt from a larger "fictionalized true event story."

Casey FitzSimons is a frequent featured reader in the San Francisco Bay Area. Her poems have appeared in *Bohemia, Red Wheelbarrow, Clay Bird, HAARP, Broken City*, and other print and online journals. This year she placed first in Ina Coolbrith Circle's "Poet's Choice" competition. Her chapbooks include *Standing in the Open House* (2014), and *The Breeze Was Mine: Poems in Form* (2013). She has a master's degree in Fine Arts from San Jose State University.

In the '60s, computers provided **Doug Fortier** his first taste of creative expression. He's been writing since 2006, and is

the current president of the Mendocino Coast branch of the California Writers Club. His website is www.dougfortier.com

Beth A. Harvey is a novelist, essayist, and short story writer living in the Bay Area. She draws inspiration from her two children, a deeply religious upbringing, and her own transformative experiences. Her mentor, Charlotte Cook, inspired "Relentless".

Nicole Idar is Editor-at-Large for *Malaysia at Asymptote*, a journal of world literature in translation, and has been published in *World Literature Today*, *Rattapallax*, and *The New Ohio Review*. She teaches in the University Writing Program at George Washington University and at the Writer's Center in Maryland.

Jessica Kotnour is a high school student from Sanford, Florida. She has been writing since she learned how to and also loves photography and crocheting. You can find her writing and photography at adhocfornow.wordpress.com.

Gloria Schoofs Jorgensen was born in Atlanta, Georgia when it numbered fewer than half a million souls, the War Between the States had not released its stranglehold on the agriculturally-dominated South, education suffered, and the duck pond at the zoo was the most stimulating pastime for young children, but she always wanted to write. Life delayed plans while providing material. She attended UGA, West Georgia, Goddard, and is presently enrolled in SFSU's MFA in Fiction. She's published with Yale.

Catherine Marshall is a consultant to nonprofits and the author of *Field Building: Your Blueprint for Creating an Effective and Powerful Social Movement*. She loves the community of writers in Mendocino and supports it by serving on the advisory board

of the Mendocino Coast Writers Conference and hosting a writers group. Her writer's website, www.catmarshall.net, encourages the telling of our Real Life Stories.

Rose McMackin is a 24-year-old California native. A fondness for the Romantics led her to work as a wilderness guide and the sport of whitewater kayaking, both of which she now pursues with a zeal that would make Thoreau proud. She chronicles a life of adventure and commitment-phobia at www.rosemcmackin.com.

Terri Nicholson wrote her first story, a science fiction piece about Martians, in fourth grade. Unfortunately, her teacher was more interested in fine penmanship than an engaging plot. She was discouraged for a while, but by high school, her interest in writing and the teaching profession came together. She has spent most of her teaching career sharing her love of literature and joy in the art of writing with students. *Enter Emma* is her first novel.

Rebecca Ortega was born in Ukiah, CA, and lives with her family and two dogs. She is currently attending college and hopes to transfer in two to three years to bigger and better things. Her ultimate goal is to become a well-known writer one day and in due time. She thanks her parents for everything they've done for her.

Vincent Peloso teaches at the College of the Redwoods, Eureka, CA. A regular participant of the Lost Coast Writers' Retreat, from 1994 to 2008, he produced and hosted The Mad River Anthology on KHSU radio. His work has appeared in many small literary magazines and journals. A manuscript was first runner-up for the 2011 Bordighera Poetry Prize. He lives in Fortuna with his wife and dog.

Cady Owens grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area. She graduated from UCLA in 2010 with a degree in English, which many people warned her she would never put to use. She now spends her days editing science textbooks and her nights writing fiction.

Margit Sage is a writer, freelance editor, knitwear designer, and founding member of a local writers group. Originally from Oregon, she studied engineering at Princeton and Stanford. She worked in the aerospace industry before leaving to write and edit full-time. When away from her computer, she enjoys quilting, spinning, weaving, photography, and taking her dog to the park in sunny Silicon Valley. She maintains a blog with book reviews, flash fiction, and poetry at http://margitsage.com/blog.

Chloe Sariego is an undergrad at Sarah Lawrence College. She hails from Miami, Florida.

About the Mendocino Coast Writers Conference

Every July for twenty-five years, the Mendocino Coast Writers Conference has brought writers together for a three day conference on the spectacular Northern California coast. Under the guidance of established writers, editors, agents, and publishers, participants can develop their craft along with their connections to other writers and the publishing world. Past instructors, chosen as much for their teaching ability as for their writing credentials include Alison Luterman, Ellen Sussman, James Houston, Judith Barrington, John Dufresne, Ellen Bass, Kim Addonizio, Valerie Miner, Ben Percy, Jean Hegland, David Corbett, Joshua McKinney, Robin Hemley, Elizabeth Rosner, and Victoria Zacheim.

Presenters for the July 31–August 2, 2014 conference were: Malin Alegria, Charlotte Robin Cook, Sharon Doubiago, Kevin Fisher-Paulson, Sal Glynn, Charlotte Gullick, Scott Hutchins, Emily Lloyd-Jones, James Maxwell, Pooja Menon, Elizabeth Rosner, and Natalie Serber.

Board Members for the twenty-fifth annual conference were Henri Bensussen, Maureen Eppstein, Tony Eppstein, Kate Erickson, Patty Joslyn, Barbara Lee, Katy Pye, Ginny Rorby, Fran Schwartz, Nona Smith, and Norma Watkins.

Mendocino Coast Writers Conference
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