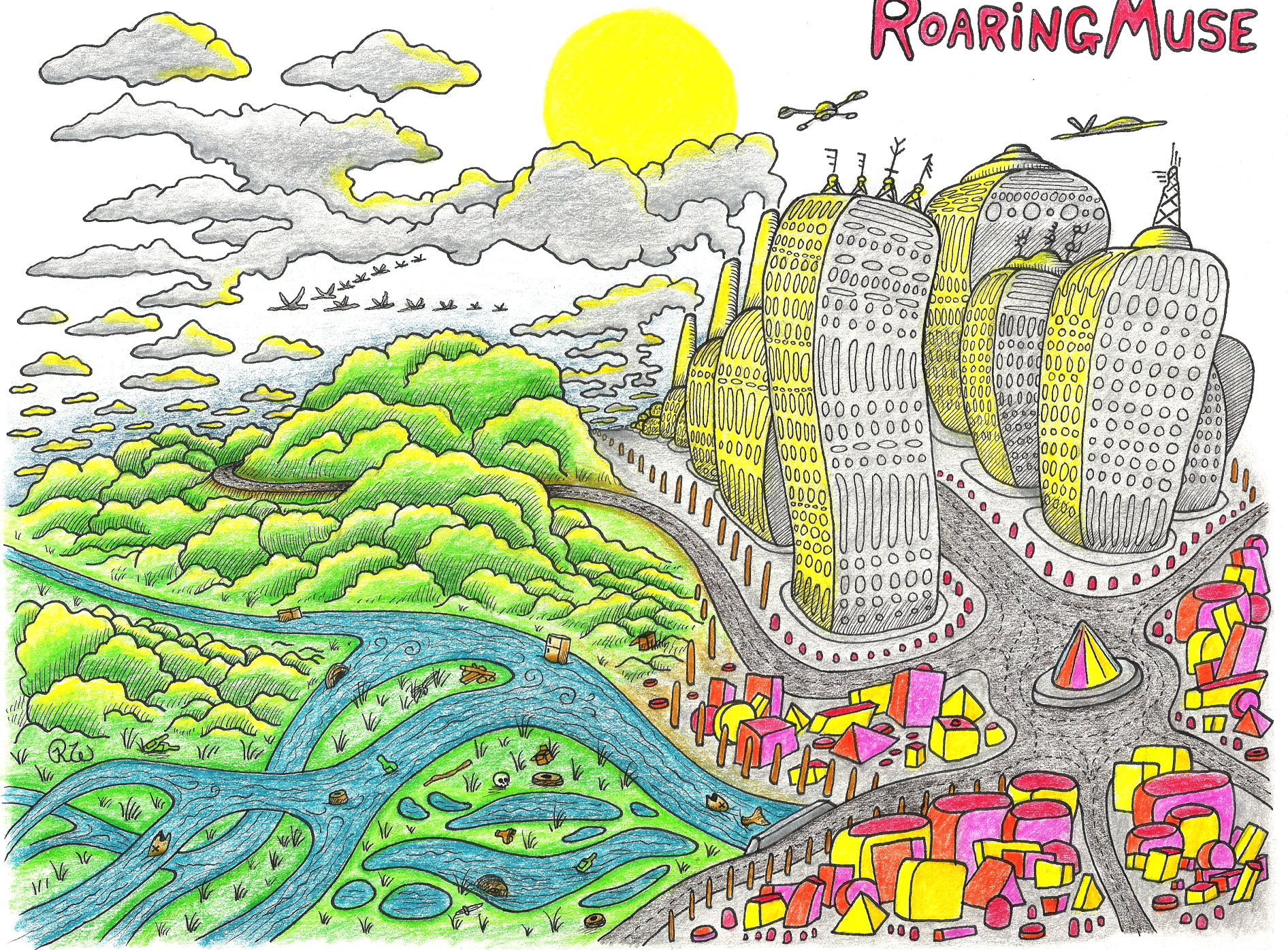


ROARING MUSE



The Roaring Muse
Spring/Summer 2016

Vincent J. Tomeo Refrigerator-I 1

Cat Dixon The Case of Baskets..... 2

Clyde Liffey The Seconds 3

Ethan J. Heshner Untitled 10

Untitled

Joannie Stangeland From the Hebrides, Seen Slipping 12

Judith Skillman Let the bad remain bad, otherwise it will grow worse 14

Christopher Woods Bed With Flowers 15

Zeke Jarvis Heroes 16

Steven Klepetar The Woman and the Silver Chain 25

Fabrice B. Poussin Ahab’s World 26

Fire in the Sky

Derek Pollard Les Loriots De Papier 28

Joseph Pravda Einstinius Germanicus 29

Ronna Lynn Edelstein The Process of Me 30

Ethan J. Heshner dēofol 33

Friends and Family

Kyle Powley Ca\$hOutFuckBoy 35

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois Rabbi 36

Christo

Anti-Hero

Brad Garber Volleyball 39

Posts of Mystery

Sierra Jacob To My Curator 41

Tobi Alfier Down Anstruther Way 42

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Refrigerator-I

A revolution started when garlic spread rumors.
The very thought of being blended into puree was just too much.

Fear overcame all the inhabitants.
Heard noise coming from my refrigerator, opened the door,
saw leftovers revolting against unopened plastic bags of fresh produce.

Spinach slapped spaghetti in the face.
Red beets overturned, the applesauce turned orange.
Eggs scrambled for dear life.
Leftover pizza screamed, eat me cold!
Asparagus fainted.

The bacon sizzled.
The ice cream melted.
And milk, a counter revolutionary, was simply soured by the whole event.

Vincent J. Tomeo

The Case of Baskets

for Greg Kuzma

The excitement is contagious as a man
named Jack, who enters the party late,
speaks of this basket—the tall, coned doorman
in Kuzma’s entryway. Jack spins
the basket, the base as his podium,
to display the age, the composition.
It has sprung! He shouts, then explains
that the base is the most difficult
aspect of basket-weaving. Here
the pressure and distance
of the spokes must be exact
and how could one not think
of the universe—each string
tied together in some complex
atom-packed tucked basket
to display the stars, the mountains,
the animals, us, as flowers
arranged at the door to wherever
the universe opens?

Cat Dixon

The Seconds

I imagine people say I should have listened to my daughter: she's the one who first saw Flo arrive. She was watching from her upstairs bedroom window. I was trying to straighten up the kitchen when the doorbell rang.

"Mr. Hansen, I'm Florence Uzmegi. The agency sent me."

She smiled as we shook hands; despite her slight height and narrow build, her handshake was firmer than most women's, stronger than some men I know. I almost stared at her mouth as she greeted me. Her two upper canines were longer than most, fanglike. They did distract attention from the wrinkles round her lips. Since she had a Slavic or Balkan accent, I simply assumed she didn't have access to dental care as a child.

Unfazed by my impolite gaping, she placed her yellow shopping bag beside her as she sat on one of the living room armchairs. I called my children down. Sandra signaled that I shouldn't hire her; Frank, upset that I disturbed his video game, slumped in an easy chair. Anxious to return to his room, he paid little attention to the interview.

"I'm sorry about your wife, Mr. Hansen," she began.

"Thanks, Ms. Uzmegi, but"

"Please call me Flo."

"How did you know?"

"About your wife? The agency told me." She sat forward on the chair, smiling, expectant, her lips closed over her teeth. She seemed nervous, she wants – needs – the job, I thought.

"But I didn't tell the agency why I needed a housekeeper."

She wasn't flustered. "The Employee Assistance Plan at your company must have told the agency."

I glanced at my watch. It was nearly seven o'clock that Sunday evening. My kids, sullen teenagers, didn't have any questions.

"Let me show you the yard."

The sun was setting. I remember how Flo admired the clump of large tulips in the back corner of my little plot. The bright yellow blooms hid a small concrete statue of the Virgin. While she examined the yard I regarded her. There have been times when browsing in a bookstore or gallery that I've

turned and suddenly seen a woman, almost always a young woman, that is, in her early to mid-thirties, and I've felt as though I've instantly grasped her in her essence and her totality. This was not so with Flo. Though she was small, I knew straight off I would never know her.

She was still holding her shopping bag. She looks good for someone who must be in her mid-fifties, I thought.

She didn't like the statue.

"The previous owners put it there. My wife thinks it's charming. I don't care for it either but since she's Catholic, it stays."

I offered her a ride to the train station after the tour. "That's OK. It's late. You have to prepare dinner."

"I can pick up a pizza in town. You won't be able to get back to the city and be able to start tomorrow. The trains don't run that often on Sunday nights."

"I'll manage."

As I expected, Sunday dinner was fractious. I drank beer while I prepared it, caught some of the game on the kitchen TV. Already a little dehydrated from the day's driving, I over-poached the fish, probably over-boiled and under-seasoned the vegetables. I tried not to rehash the traffic jam on the way home from the sanitarium while I neglected my cooking. In the car I had tried to convince my ear-budded children to study for their exams but they of course couldn't hear me. Knowing we had to get back to interview the housekeeper, I fumed at the divine or demonic agency that caused the slowdown when suddenly without giving an inkling of its cause the tie-up dispersed.

Anxious to get back to his gaming, Frank paid little attention to the food or the conversation. Sandra began her attack after complaining about dinner. "You didn't hire her, did you, Dad?"

"Of course I did."

"Why?"

I put down my fork, drank some beer, shook the can. There was still some left. "Why not? The agency vouched for her. I'm sure she's a better cook than me. Besides," I sighed, "I'm tired. Flo will be able to take care of things when I'm at work. We'll have more time for each other and to see your mother."

"Did you see her teeth? She has fangs, yellow fangs."

Frank looked up from his food, snorted.

"Her canines are just a little elongated. They probably didn't have good

dental care in her country.”

“What country is that, Transylvania?”

“I don’t know. The agency didn’t say. We’re not supposed to ask.” I thought about the idiocies promulgated in the name of political rectitude, considered conducting an impromptu Civics lesson, looked at my children, they were apparently resigned to my decision, they had spring fever, I was tired, I had a long week of work ahead of me, starting with a conference call with my surly European counterparts at 8:30 the next morning.

“What did the doctors say about Mom?”

“They’re still baffled. They need to keep her under observation for at least another six weeks. She perks up when she sees us but then relapses during the week. There’s no pattern to her peaks and valleys. They’re still not sure what treatment to use. They can’t figure out the cause of her condition. That’s why we need to stick together. Can I count on you to give Flo the benefit of the doubt?”

Sandra merely rolled her eyes. Frank was already back in his room.

Flo was a much better housekeeper than I expected. She quickly learned the layout of the town, was able without coaching to drive the kids and their friends to their after school activities. Withal she was an excellent cook. Though I hadn’t stocked the larder very well since my wife’s illness, Flo produced delicious well-balanced meals every evening. More a family member than a servant, she took her meals with us.

That first Thursday night, I asked Flo about her plans for the weekend.

“I have none. I can do whatever you want.”

“I can drop you off at the train station early Saturday morning before I leave to see my wife.”

“Why would you do that?”

“Don’t you want to see your friends or family?” Flo never discussed her personal life. We of course never asked.

She smiled. We didn’t notice her teeth anymore. “You’re my family now. Besides, Frank needs a ride to his baseball game on Saturday and Sandra needs a ride to the mall that afternoon.”

“We have car pools for that.”

“It’s our family’s turn to contribute to the car pool,” Sandra said.

“I feel neglected. Will you go grocery shopping with me tomorrow evening?” I asked Flo.

I expected her to be dazzled by the selection available at our upscale supermarket. She wasn't. Flo quietly pushed the cart, consulted the flier, her shopping list, her small batch of coupons. Since this was her first time there, I suggested we go up and down every aisle. I studied her intently as we passed through the so-called international sections. Her expression never changed. Somebody pushed their shopping cart into Flo's, knocking her off balance. I grabbed her upper arm, steadied her, glared at the clumsy woman. "I didn't mean to bump into your wife," she apologized, "I was distracted."

As we waited on line at the checkout counter, I saw my next-door neighbor Jim rush towards the express lane carrying two cases of beer. "It's too bad you can't make it to my barbecue tomorrow, Hank. How's the wife doing?"

We discussed her condition while Flo packed the groceries. When I said goodbye to Jim, all that was left for me to do was to pay the cashier. Though the cart was fuller than it had been since I began shopping last month, the bill was at least twenty dollars less than usual. I waved to Jim in the parking lot, only then realizing that I hadn't introduced him to Flo.

From then on Flo shopped alone.

Naturally she was the major topic of conversation between my wife and me the next day. Maria was still too weak to walk the grounds. Since it was a beautiful May morning, I suggested pushing her in a wheel chair. She declined.

"Don't you think it's unusual she's staying with us on the weekends?"

"Maybe she doesn't have anyone close to her in the city," Maria replied. "Besides it means less driving for you."

"What will she do tomorrow when I bring the kids here?"

"As long as she doesn't go through my jewelry, I don't care," she joked. She held my hand. "Don't worry so much. We're very lucky to have her."

Sandra was a moody high schooler. Maria advised me to give her space. Home early and having time on my hands late one Friday afternoon, I ambled upstairs to chat with Frank. He was of course playing one of his video games.

"It's an online game," he explained. "Flo told me about it. It's called The Seconds. The Apocalypse has already happened. I'm on the side of the Seconds. We're scavengers. Our job is to take what's left over from civilization and repurpose things, use them for our own ends. The other side represents civilization. They're trying to eradicate us but we'll win."

We're like cockroaches."

I thought of my days in the city. "It seems like you're addicted to this game."

"Sure, it's fun." As he operated the controls, he continued to explain how the game worked. "We infiltrate for a while, blend in with the others, the ruling class, then we get to re-emerge, with slightly altered identities, new tags, new partners, new converts, we're bugs, we're always changing, that's what I'm doing now. We sabotage them."

"So you swarm instead of developing your own personality, your own identity."

"It's just a game, Dad. It's fun." I tried to follow but soon lost interest, I guess I was too old, too much of a Yankee individualist. I noticed my company's logo flickering in the lower right hand corner of the screen.

"Why does my company sponsor this game?" I wondered.

"I don't know, maybe to get younger customers or project a more youthful image."

Though my son's answer didn't make sense to me — our prosthetic devices and medicaments are marketed to the well-off elderly — I was impressed by the acuity of his reasoning. My thirteen year old is growing up despite my lapses of attention, I thought, as I turned to the window.

Outside a doe and two fawns were eating the tulips. Suddenly startled, by what I don't know, they bolted toward the rusting metal fence that separates my yard from Jim's. The fawns cleared the barrier easily. Their mother impaled herself on a projecting piece of steel. Flo came running out, brandishing a sharp kitchen knife. The deer was already dead when Frank and I reached it. Flo asked us to bring her a basin, some garbage bags, two rolls of cellophane wrap, additional knives. Dumbly, dutifully, the children and I complied. The fawns disappeared. Sandra, disgusted, went back to her room. Frank and I followed Flo's instructions as she methodically eviscerated the deer. Less than an hour later we had much more venison than I could store in my refrigerator and extra freezer. As Flo was finishing up and I was scratching my head, wondering what to do with the head, hide, entrails, and other inedible parts, Jim pulled into his driveway in his pickup truck. We told him what happened while Flo brought the blood-filled basin and bloody knives to the kitchen to start cleaning up.

Jim whistled. "She really carved up that animal. I don't know anyone,

myself included, who could dress deer meat that well.”

“I don’t know what to do with all these extra parts.”

“If you let me have any meat you can’t store, I’ll dispose of the rest. That way there’ll be no need to get Animal Control involved.”

I smelled grilled venison when I returned from the sanitarium the next evening. Jim was drinking a beer at his gas grill, hosting a late night impromptu party for our bowling team. My children were there with some of their friends. Jim waved me over, pulled me aside. “Naturally I didn’t tell anyone where all this deer meat came from,” he whispered. “That’s our little secret.”

“Of course. I didn’t even tell my wife. I still can’t figure out how Flo knew how to dissect that animal.”

“Gypsies are the rednecks of Europe. They know everything.”

“What makes you think she’s a gypsy? She never said where she’s from, I never asked.”

“She is, Hank.” So Jim, my sententious woodsman friend.

Just as we were running out of deer meat - it was late summer -- my wife’s condition improved. After dinner one Monday evening, I told Flo that her services were not needed after the coming week. I thanked her for her house-keeping. As I told her this I thought of my wife’s wide inviting hips, so different from the tangle I imagined Flo had down there. Maria and I had not had conjugal relations in months – doctors discouraged them during her extended convalescence, she didn’t want them anyway. Flo didn’t seem surprised by the news, her eyes didn’t well up, I worried mine would.

“Can you drop me off at the train station at six on Saturday?”

“Why so early? We can’t take Maria home till noon.” I was hoping that she would want to stay with us to the last minute. I would have kept her for a week, paying the whole cost myself if I had to, while my wife readjusted to town life.

“You’ll need time to get ready and do last minute things. I have to work with the agency to get my next position.”

“Of course.”

The train station was deserted that Saturday morning. I backed into a parking spot right next to the empty platform for the city-bound trains. We heard a garbled announcement that the trains were delayed. “I’ll get your bags.”

“The train’s late. Let’s sit for a minute.”

I turned to kiss her goodbye. I suppose it began when our tongues touched. Only a middling Lothario in my bachelor days I never thought two mouths could so commingle. I'm still trying to piece together what happened next. The train schedule must have slipped out of my back pocket. Flo later showed me the article on the newspaper's web site. The police lieutenant claimed it was an important clue to my disappearance.

I don't remember ever seeing such a long avenue of trees. The underbrush on either side of the wide gravel path is different than what I'm used to – more like Virginia or Georgia than the Northeast. As we approached the mansion, I noticed what needs trimming, what needs more nurturing. Flo squeezed my hand, smiled. She was carrying a different yellow shopping bag in her right hand; I held an old overstuffed suitcase in my left.

We're sitting in the anteroom now, waiting for the master or bailiff of the estate to interview us. My thoughts flit between my recent past up North and my present circumstances. Telepathic Flo assures me that my memories will fade soon enough, this will soon be the only life I know. Once I forget who I was, I'll be able to speak again. Right now I'm enjoying the split.

Flo squeezes my upper arm, whispers that we'll be excellent temporary caretakers of this manse. Her teeth are straight now, she has never been lovelier. I look older, more haggard than I appeared in the photo in the web article, that electronic milk carton. No one will recognize us and yet we look like what we are, a middle-aged couple.

A butler enters the room. "Mr. and Mrs. Meghuzih, Mr. Anson will see you now."

Clyde Liffey

Untitled
Ethan J. Heshner



Untitled
Ethan J. Heshner



From the Hebrides, Seen Slipping

Colors tumble, splay a splotch here,
imprint after the eye slides away.

When Mrs. Ramsay walks into this poem
ghost-white, fog shrouds the sea's edge,
clouds the farther islands.

Yes, the weather may turn.

Sun makes the Lighthouse plain.
Not until dark or squall
will its many-eyed lens
ignite a magic, warning.

Resonance, like the taste of yesterday,
tremor of specters on my arms.
I'm too thick
to hear their whispers, but Mrs. Ramsay
clicks her knitting, shush shushes
like waves down at the harbor.

Might squint this dazzling afternoon,
or shiver, some scenes
too familiar.

Now she's seen the storm.

I want to sit with her as this house shudders
its age and gardens ramble to the verge

while she crosses needles, glances
toward Lily's canvas,
our edges blurring, washed by light
and birds call from the orchard—

but in some other dream
we stay this course: yarn, paint, a poem.

Joannie Stangeland

*Let the bad remain bad, otherwise it will grow
worse*

from Kafka's Conversation Slips

Here he is, an apparition. Too weak
for what's demanded—trips to Friedland Castle,
Grottau, and later to Matliary. The sleeplessness
grows worse: the old burning in the eyes,
tension in the temples. Ideas regarding
Abraham's sacrifice surge through his pen
in letters written to Max Brod. The son is dirty,
the father ridiculous and unsummoned, yet he comes
forward, rides the ass up the hill to perform, to win
a prize for having done the will of God. Returning home,
Abraham turns into Quixote and becomes
the laughingstock of the village. "Really,
this dirty son? You killed him?" The things
that slip from the townspeople: "That boy
with consumption? Why, he deserved to die!"

Judith Skillman

Bed with Flowers

Christopher Woods



Heroes

As the third hood pulled his knife out and moved in on the woman, there was a wave of heat and an engine's roar. Plunging down into the slim space between the hoods and their prey came Avenging Angel, fiery sword in hand. He quickly twirled then came to a hover with grace and force. "All right," he said, "Let's all relax before someone gets hurt." Avenging Angel's metal suit and iridescent, polymer wings were partially glistening in the dim light of the street lamps.

One of the hoods dropped his knife and ran off, whimpering. The other two stood their ground, but stopped their advance on the woman. After a tense pause, Avenging Angel said, "Let's not make me hurt anyone."

The two hoods looked at each other, silent. Then, a gentle yet powerful voice came from the end of the alleyway. "What is the talk of violence, my child? Cannot this transgression be solved with simple forgiveness?"

The hoods dropped their knives, Avenging Angel gave a mechanized sigh and shook his head; the woman whispered her savior's name: "Jesus."

"Yes, I am here to save you all."

"We're fine," muttered Avenging Angel. "Everything's fine."

Jesus shook his head and walked over a puddle of filth at the end of the alley. "My friend, my brother Avenging Angel. The love which brings you to defend this woman is beautiful, but when you act out in the sort of violence you're threatening, then that love is absent from your heart. If you truly are going to love, then you must love every creature at all times, so that when you-

"I don't try to be violent." Avenging Angel leaned back, letting his jet-pack come on at one-eighth power to prop himself up.

"Hey," said one of the hoods, "we don't try to be violent either, you know?"

"Quiet," Avenging Angel said. "You would've killed her if I hadn't shown up."

Jesus continued his walk, touching the hoods as he passed. "And would not you have beaten these poor lambs had I not appeared, o Angel of Earthly Vengeance?"

“I wouldn’t have beaten them. I would simply have subdued them, which is different.”

“Is it?” said Jesus. “Is it really?”

“Yes,” said Avenging Angel. “It is.” With that, Avenging Angel shot a fireball from his sword. It soared from the tip to a nearby building, cutting part of a fire escape attached to one of the buildings lining the alley. The metal from the fire escape crashed down onto a dumpster, which shot out and knocked down both of the hoods, who had started to shuffle away. Jesus sighed and shook his head. “Such destruction and violence,” he said. “Will the same Benefactor who supplied you with your suit also pay to rebuild this neighborhood?”

“They were getting away,” countered Avenging Angel. “And be careful how far you push your questions in public.”

Jesus smiled. “You never answered my question.”

Avenging Angel let himself rotate in the air, slowly flapping his polymer wings while his jetpack kept him afloat. “The Benefactor gives me equipment so that I can patrol the streets. Isn’t saving your forte? Or maybe your father’s.”

“Can I go?” asked the woman. She was wiping her eyes.

“I will lead you, my child,” said Jesus.

Avenging Angel grunted. “Go with him. I’ll take these criminals to the police. All the real work’s been done, so you can go take the credit, Son of God.”

Jesus simply kept smiling. “This is no competition. Besides, if all the work had already been done, then neither of us would be here confronting this situation, my friend.”

Avenging Angel flew above Jesus and then down to the criminals, grabbing the men and ascending once more. His wings and halo lit up fully, illuminating their way through the night sky.

“God be with you,” called Jesus.

“And with you, Hippie” said Avenging Angel. As he flew away, he added “Get a haircut.”

Jesus was sitting down with the two men. They set down their pistols and leaned in close. “I sense that you are perplexed by what I have to say, my son,” said Jesus, gesturing to Reggie, the man with the Omega symbol brand-

ed into his left bicep.

“Well, yeah, sorta, Jesus.” He said. “See, you said that if we watch too many porn DVDs, then we won’t really know what women are like, right? But, I mean, I just look shit up online if I’m looking for that kind of thing, and I do all right for myself with the ladies, so I just don’t really understand why you’re telling me about the DVDs. I don’t even need them, really.”

Jesus sighed, then gave a faint smile. “My son, you must listen carefully to what I say: the Parable of the Pornographic DVDs. Just as following a false code of as presented by those discs will lead you to ruin with women, so, too, will following a false code of ethics pertaining to power, violence, and money lead you to both physical and spiritual death. No good can come from following evil and immoral ideas.”

The two men sat in silence until Lamarcus, the one with a more fully grown goatee, said, “Damn.”

Jesus frowned. Reggie kicked at his gun and said, “Yeah, maybe I should get rid of this thing.”

“Yes,” said Jesus, smiling. “That would be wise. Sadly, not all your brothers have seen the light. Hello, Gerry.”

Jesus looked up, the two men doing likewise, to a man in a dark trench coat. The coat was slightly open on top, revealing a black shirt bearing an enormous picture of a flaming globe. “Hello, Jesus,” the man said. “What are you doing, wasting your time on these two?”

Jesus rose, placing his hands on the heads of the men. “It is not a waste of time at all. These two men have decided to change their wicked ways.”

“Yeah,” said Lamarcus. “I’m reforming my ass.”

Gerry sneered. “Cute, but try telling the woman you mugged last night that your ass is reforming.”

Jesus lifted his hands off the men’s heads and pressed his palms together in front of his chest. “Stand behind me.”

They obeyed. Gerry reached into his trench coat and drew out his two pistols. “Get out of the way, Jesus. I’ll mow you down to get those two bastards.”

“Please, my son,” Jesus said. “It’s blasphemous to assume that your bullets could destroy me.”

“Yeah?” said Gerry. “Well no offense, but I don’t particularly have much faith in you or your father.”

Jesus shook his head. “So much rage. Why can’t you just accept me as your savior?”

“Because I’m too busy saving the people you just let die.” With that, Gerry cocked his guns.

The men whimpered fought for a safe spot behind Jesus, who stretched his hands back to touch both of them. “You speak of death in this mortal world. That’s inconsequential. The afterlife will provide the justice you seek.”

Gerry began to walk towards Jesus. “In that case, you shouldn’t mind me sending these two there.”

Lamarcus reached for his gun. As he stepped out from behind Jesus, Gerry shot him in the throat. Reggie screamed. Jesus lifted his face to the sky with tears in his eyes. “At least he was able to recant before his death. Thank you, Father, for that much.”

“I don’t wanna die,” Reggie crouched behind Jesus.

“Neither did the old man whose apartment you broke into last week,” said Gerry. “But that didn’t stop you from carving the hell out of him, now did it, Reggie?”

As Reggie began to cry and Gerry took another step towards Jesus, Avenging Angel flew down from the sky. “Sorry, Gerry, but this man is going to be punished by the US justice system, not by you.”

Jesus placed his hand on Avenging Angel’s shoulder. “My Father’s Law has far more authority than any worldly government.”

Avenging Angel crossed his arms. His halo turned from bright white to a dark red. “We don’t follow that in this country.”

Gerry spat. “Who’s ‘we.’”

Jesus shook his head. “Everything was quite fine before you got here.” Avenging Angel shook his head. “You can ask that corpse on the ground how fine things were going.”

“He is in Heaven now, where he belongs.”

“The hell he is,” said Gerry.

“Please,” said Jesus, “don’t curse.”

As the three heroes argued, Reggie began to slink away. “Listen, AA,” Gerry said. “We both want justice. That punk is small time. An asshole and a thug, but smalltime. If the courts put him away, maybe things will be all right, but if they don’t and he ends up back on the streets, then we do things

my way.”

Avenging Angel spread his wings wide. “Justice is blind, Gerry, and the courts are fair. Have a little faith.”

Jesus pressed his fingers lightly against his closed eyelids. “Perhaps the courts are not what you should have faith in.”

“Don’t worry,” said Gerry. “They’re not. Shit. Where’d Reggie go?”

The three heroes looked around. “Crap. Now I have to go track him down,” said Avenging Angel.

Jesus smiled. “Leave things to my Father’s wisdom, and all will be as it should.”

“Yeah right,” said Gerry, putting his guns in their holsters. “Just stay out of my way. Both of you.”

With that, Gerry ran off into the night, leaving Avenging Angel and Jesus shaking their heads. Avenging Angel’s halo turned a dark purple. “Such arrogance from a mortal man,” said Jesus.

“Yeah,” said Avenging Angel. “He’s a real prick, all right.”

Jesus looked directly at Avenging Angel. “How are you doing with your drinking issues?”

“Fuck off, Jesus.” With that, he flew away.

Reggie leaned against the alleyway wall, smoking a cigarette and looking down at his gun. The safety was on. He took a puff and looked from his gun to a woman making her way down the street. She gave no sign that she was aware of being followed, she simply walked along, occasionally looking around at the night. The man following her was also shooting looks around, but his movements were quicker and less regular. Reggie looked back at his gun as they passed by. After a moment, he shook his head, said, “Shit, man,” and followed them both.

As the woman turned a corner, the man following her ran to make the corner just a few seconds after she disappeared. Reggie ran, too, muttering. “Shit, shit, shit,” under his breath. When he made it around the corner, he saw that the man had already forced her down to the ground and had a knife against her throat. Both he and the woman stopped to look up at Reggie. After a few awkward seconds, the man asked, “What you staring at, mother-fucker?”

Reggie pointed his gun at the man. “Get off her.”

The man looked back at Reggie. “What?”

Reggie cocked the hammer back. “Get off her.”

The man shook his head. “Hey, if you wanna get in on this, we can share—“

The woman struggled, and the man slapped her, not even looking down at her face. Reggie took a step forward. “I said get off her, man.”

The man stood up, still holding his knife. His pants were unbuttoned. “You crazy or just stupid?”

Reggie straightened his arm, pointing the gun hard at the man. “Both. Now back off and get the hell out of here.”

The man reached down and buttoned his pants, still holding his knife. “Hey, man, don’t need to get crazy.”

“I don’t want trouble, just get your ass home.”

The man took another step towards Reggie, and Reggie took two steps back. “Don’t move any closer; stay back.”

The man held his hands up, but shuffled a little closer. “Okay, okay.”

Reggie licked his lips. “You run home now, lady.”

The woman began to cry, but she stood up and ran down the street; the man turned back to Reggie. “That was a mistake.”

Reggie shook his head. “One more step and I’ll kill you.”

“Reggie,” a soft voice said, “that’s not what I taught you.”

Jesus walked towards the pair from across the street. The man holding the knife laughed. “Shit. Look at this. Some hippie in dirty sheets coming to join the fight. What you gonna fight with, hippie? You got a hemp gun? Gonna shoot flowers at us?”

“No,” said Jesus. “I have no weapons. My only defense is my love and the authority my Father grants me. If that is not enough, then I am willing to take whatever consequences might befall me.”

“Stay back, Jesus, I got this covered,” said Reggie.

“Jesus?” said the man with the knife. “Man, you’re both crazy.”

Jesus walked up to Reggie and the man, stopping directly between them. “When you open your heart, your mind and your eyes will be opened as well. Such is the glory of God.”

The man with the knife grabbed Jesus, wrapping an arm around his neck and pressing the blade against Jesus’s throat. “All right, put your gun down or the son of God here gets offed.”

Reggie held his hands up. “All right, all right. I’m putting it down.”

Jesus cleared his throat. “Reggie, have you no faith? Do you not know that this man cannot kill me?”

Reggie paused, then shook his head. “Shit.”

“Put it down, Reggie,” said the man with the knife.

“Yeah,” came another voice. “Why don’t you both put your weapons down?” Gerry was behind the man with the knife. He had one pistol pointed at Reggie and a small submachine gun at the man with the knife.

“Oh Lord,” said Jesus.

There was a moment of silence, broken by the roar and heat of Avenging Angel’s arrival. “All right,” he said, hovering above Jesus and the other three, flaming sword in hand. “Let’s relax, here. Nobody needs to get violent.”

Gerry said, “You’re right. Nobody needs to get violent, but I will if these two don’t drop their weapons right now.”

“No,” said Avenging Angel. He shot a ball of flame from his sword, melting Gerry’s pistol and causing him to drop the hot metal. Gerry growled and pulled out another pistol from the back holster on his belt.

“Do it again,” he said, “And I’ll kill everyone here.”

“And what will be gained, Gerry?” asked Jesus. “What good will be done?”

“Less guns lost, less scum on the streets.”

“Hey, I’m trying to reform,” said Reggie.

“Then set your gun down,” said Avenging Angel. He pointed his sword at the man with the knife.

“All right,” said the man. “I don’t wanna die. Don’t shoot me, metal dude. I’ll drop my knife.”

“See,” said Gerry. “This is how you get results.”

The man dropped his knife, pushed Jesus towards Reggie, and drew a gun out of his pants. Gerry shot him in the back of the head, bits of face and blood splattering Jesus.

“See...” said Jesus, “what type of results you get from fear.”

“He made his choice,” said Gerry. He blew the smoke from the end of his gun.

“So did you,” said Avenging Angel. “You know that if you hadn’t been here, I could have melted his knife as easily as I melted your gun.”

“So why didn’t you while I was here?” asked Gerry, still pointing his gun

at Reggie.

Reggie dropped his gun and raised his hands. "I don't want trouble. I'm trying to redeem myself here. That guy was going to rape her."

Jesus said, "Your actions tonight were not the path to redemption. I have tried my best, Reggie, but you're failing me."

Reggie looked at the ground. "I'm sorry Jesus."

Avenging Angel landed. He angled his sword toward the ground and pulled his wings in tight. "All right, Gerry. He's unarmed. I'll take him."

"Don't," said Jesus. "If this man goes to jail now he will never escape the hell he's trapped in. He needs guidance."

"He can find religion in jail, where he belongs," said Avenging Angel. "A lot of people seem to find You there."

"Many people find religion out of jail as well. And no one finds me inside a bottle."

Avenging Angel's halo burned bright red. "I thought you were forgiving."

Gerry took a step towards Reggie. "Let's stop the talking before he sneaks off again. If Avenging Angel doesn't take him in, then I'm going to take him out."

Gerry fired a shot that caught Avenging Angel square in one side of his eye shield, cracking it. Avenging Angel recoiled and groaned. Gerry threw a Molotov cocktail, blasting Avenging Angel off balance. But even off balance, he was able to bat away the second Molotov cocktail, setting a dumpster on fire. Avenging Angel spread his wings wide and flew through the smoke to grab Gerry and throw him through a plate glass window.

"Stop," yelled Jesus, moving between Avenging Angel and Gerry. "Who will be served by this violence?"

Avenging Angel snapped off a stop sign and cracked Jesus over the head. Reggie scuttled over to his gun and whisked behind Avenging Angel, shouting "I got you, Jesus!" Avenging Angel used his wings to wrap up Reggie, who fired off three shots, all of which bounced off the high-tech suit of armor. One ricocheted off of the arm and hit Reggie.

"You're not going anywhere. Another bad shot and you could be dead," said Avenging Angel. "Don't be stupid, Reggie".

Jesus put his hand on Avenging Angel's shoulder. "One might say the same to you."

Avenging Angel shrugged off Jesus's hand, though as he did so, his wings

loosened from around Reggie. “I’ve got some garbage to clean up.”

“Clean? You sound like Gerry.”

Avenging Angel froze for a moment; he then whirled around and head-butted Jesus.

When Avenging Angel made contact with Jesus’s head, he pulled his own back immediately. There, upon Jesus’s head was a crown of thorns. He landed and staggered over to a fire hydrant. Jesus sat down by him. “Are you ready to listen now?” Blood began to run down Avenging Angel’s head, clouding his eyes inside his helmet.

Avenging Angel gurgled a little. Jesus reached over, and Avenging Angel could’ve sworn he felt his hand slide through the mask, touching his head. As the hand withdrew, Avenging Angel’s eyes cleared and his head stopped stinging. His and Jesus’s eyes locked. They were quiet for a moment. So quiet that they could hear a light rattling then a BOOM. Both of the heroes went flying, and the hydrant exploded, spraying water everywhere. There was a loud whine and a bullet caught Reggie in the chest. Avenging Angel and Jesus both yelled, “No!”

The pair looked back at Gerry, who simply stared at them for a moment, then said “Raise him from the dead.” He slowly walked away.

Jesus looked at Avenging Angel. “You should go, too.”

Avenging Angel nodded, sheathing his flaming sword. He stood up, initiated his jets, and flew away. Jesus crawled over to Reggie, who was crying and spitting up blood. As the sirens rose in the background, Jesus put his hand on Reggie’s forehead. “Calm yourself, my son. You will be at peace soon. Simply know that I love and forgive you.”

Reggie smiled at Jesus through the blood. Jesus began to hum a tune. As the sirens in the background grew louder, Reggie grew stiller, although he continued to smile. Jesus stroked his forehead until the police cars pulled up. “Freeze,” the police yelled.

Jesus rose, holding up his hands. His palms were streaked with blood. One of the policemen approached Jesus, pointing his gun at him. Jesus put up no struggle as the officer put handcuffed him. “You’re going away for a long time for what happened here tonight,” said the policeman.

“Yes,” said Jesus. “I suppose I will have to be punished for what happened. It seems that’s always the way.”

Zeke Jarvis

The Woman and the Silver Chain

She has forged it link by link, from metal
mined beneath a gray-green sea

and its sparkling rings dangle from her neck
with the weight of rock, fire-born.

Steve Klepetar

Ahab's World
Fabrice B. Poussin



Fire in the Sky
Fabrice B. Poussin



Les Loriots De Papier

After “This Unmade Bed” with Kevin McLellan

When no one claims the umbrella after
However many years, it is scissored
Sisterly, into a murmuration

∞

Out among the rains, that same, strange hesitation

∞

If the birds stop, or if they resume, it
Cannot matter; they are now merely that
Which is left o’er

Palimpsest of a place
Magnificently lost, seemly in its
Breaking

Derek Pollard

Einstinius Germanicus
Joseph Pravda



The Process of Me

A is for arthritis, B is for backache, C is for constipation, D is for diarrhea, E is for...

The alphabet list of my ailments, which I started three years ago when I went on Medicare, goes all the way to Z, although I had to create some imaginary physical problems for such challenging letters as Q and X. I find myself replacing the soothing hot Ovaltine of my youth with medications for pain and stress; taking a nap every afternoon has increased to several naps throughout the day, leaving me tossing and turning at bedtime.

Even though I do not always feel old, especially when I wear my jeans and hoodie to work with my college students on writing, the mirror tells me that I am old. It highlights my graying hair, wrinkling skin, and sagging jowls. Not even the magic mirror of the Wicked Queen would have the temerity to tell me I am the fairest—and youngest—in the land.

People—ranging from teenagers to forty-somethings—remind me I am old. Whenever I take a public bus, a younger person—once including a man on crutches—offers me a seat. I alternate between admiring the courtesy of the person willing to stand on my behalf and resenting the person for seeing me as an individual in need of a place to sit. While recently unloading my grocery cart in the parking lot of the market, a thirty-something very pregnant woman with a toddler in tow approached me and said, “Ma’am, please let me help you do that.” My mouth thanked her, but my eyes glared at her.

When I work out in the gym, those youngsters around me raise the incline on the treadmill, race up the Stairmaster more quickly than Jack scampered up his beanstalk, and pedal the bike as if they were actually travelling across real roads and had a deadline to meet. Age leaves me no choice but to set my elliptical for low and then walk at a leisurely rate that allows me to read my book and pretend that I am strengthening my cardiovascular system.

Even the government emphasizes my oldness. I get Social Security, Medicare, a free bus pass, and discounts at theatres and other venues. The only category that applies to me on an official survey is the 65-and-older one; why can’t there be a 50-69 box, and then a section for the really old?

The world shouts at me that I am old; it provides me with evidence to

support this hypothesis. But my inner voice rebels. After all, I spent the past twelve years living with and caring for my dad; he was 98 when he died. By my family's standard, my mother died "young" at 87, and my paternal grandmother died "middle age" at 90. At age 68, I am practically younger than springtime.

Yet, the hands on the clock keep turning, the days keep melting into weeks, the weeks into months, the months into years. If I refuse to admit that I am getting older, I must accept that I am not getting younger.

Getting old, I realize, means slowing down. Instead of doing it all, I now have to make choices: If I take a walk in the morning through the nearby park, I might not have the oomph to stay awake in my afternoon adult learning class. If I spend the day engrossed in a great book, I may not have the energy to get dressed and join a friend for dinner. Youth was a time of endless possibilities; old age is a time of opting for one thing by sacrificing a host of other things.

Getting old means squandering half my day looking for my keys, my cell-phone, and my glasses, leaving me with too little time to open doors to new opportunities, communicate with friends, or watch a documentary on public television. It means taking my dad's cane and walker out of my basement storage unit and putting them in the hall closet so they will be nearby for when I inevitably stumble or fall. Getting old means sitting on the bench at the reservoir and watching children race round and round, reminding me of the olden days when I, too, would run around the reservoir while Grandma, Ma, and Dad sat on a bench and cheered me on.

I find that I am no longer able to "look" in the way that Robert Fulghum in *All I Really Need to Know I learned in Kindergarten*, describes. For Fulghum, the "look" of the Dick and Jane books has a more significant connotation than its one syllable, four letters suggest. It means to look--to see--beyond the obvious. To look means to become part of the sun as it casts its golden glow on the city's buildings; to giggle with the babies crawling in the park as they feel their first sensation of the softness of grass; to share the hope of the bride and groom who pose for pictures on the steps of the neighborhood cathedral, smiling the innocent smile of a new beginning. Sometimes, though, my trifocals blur the images I see; at night my developing cataracts cause a film that distorts people and places. Looking—really looking and embracing—has moved from being a natural part of who I am to a challenge I must con-

sciously focus on in order to see, both with my eyes and my soul.

It is hard to keep alive the wonder of my youth when I am too busy scheduling medical appointments, standing in line at the pharmacy for a prescription refill, or debating the pros and cons of a tint job or a Botox treatment. I remember once-upon-a-time waking up each morning with wide-eyed enthusiasm, knowing that my teachers would introduce me to new literature and ideas, that I would be able to hop onto my bike—the red one with the red-and-white basket and silver bell—and explore the neighborhood, that I would celebrate each day by ending it with a big dish of ice cream without worrying about fat content or cholesterol. Now, I feel myself losing that sense of awe-filled excitement; the days are a routine in which my goal is to awaken without a new pain, make it to bedtime without anything out of the ordinary happening, and keep alive my sense of humor in a world that has become smaller and more frightening to me.

The strong voice of reality drowns out the weaker voice that tries to delude me into believing I am not old. I know that the “sixty is the new forty” jargon is hogwash, having even less substance than cotton candy. I know I am inching towards seventy, a decade that, if I survive it, will lead me to an even more ominous and older eighty. At forty, I had the stamina to teach all day, deal with two children who grappled with a post-divorce family and the ever-changing friendships and moods of their teenage years, do laundry, grocery shop, and occasionally vacuum and dust. Now, I am proud if I can clean one of two bathrooms before collapsing on the couch for a nap.

The adamant and wise voice of reality tells me that getting old is a part of the life cycle; it is a reminder that we humans are processes, not products that neither ripen nor decay. I begrudgingly accept the changes in my appearance, but I do grapple with the way the years have made me less likely to believe that optimism will sustain me and that laughter will stop the tears that come from losing others and losing vital parts of myself. I yearn to maintain faith in the power of my imagination and dreams; I yearn to believe that my spirit will soar long after my body dies. Yet, I am too busy dealing with and too exhausted from the burdens associated with aging to seek the sublime in the mundane.

E is for eyestrain, F is for flatulence, G is for gout, H is for headaches, I is for...

Ronna Lynn Edelstein

dēofol

Friend of the world, come walk with me
Across sandstone & sea we'll sneak
Bring your woes, I'll hide the key

The watcher is here, all must flee
Smokeless fire, what havoc Belial wreak
Friend of the world, come talk with me

About ge old & forgotten glee,
Under ashen tree, where clay trunks creak.
Bring your woes. I'll slide the key

In a place that none can see.
Price of devotion too high for meek.
Friend of the world, come stalk with me

Over earth, man, mortality.
We'll sip mint tea, eat dates, bespeak.
Bring your woes, I'll guide the key.

Trust ancient foes, in time will be
Rejoined atop empyrean peak.
Friend of the world, come walk with me.
Bring your woes, I'll hide the key.

Ethan J. Heshner

Friends and Family

Buddhist/Alcoholic
Christian/Hypocrite
Passionate/Nihilist
Evil baby

Ethan J. Heshner

Ca\$hOutFuckBoy
Kyle Powley



Rabbi

The rabbi's horny daughter pulls up his long, fairly steep driveway in the Mercedes sports sedan he gave her. She jumps out, forgets to set the parking brake.

Inside, she argues with her father and mother. Her father stands at the picture window with his hands clasped behind his back, acting his most rabbinical.

He sees the car begin to roll backward. His daughter is making horrible accusations against them, detailing what terrible parents they were, and still are. He watches the car pick up speed as it nears the end of the driveway. It maintains a straight course across the narrow road and over the cliff.

The whole process is soundless. Even as the car plummets down the thousand feet and crashes at the bottom of the canyon, there is no sound to interrupt his daughter's ungrateful ranting. He knows there are no homes below, no roads, not even a trail. He tightens the grip of his hands on each other.

His daughter finally burns through her anger, turns dramatically on her heel and yanks open the front door.

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois

Christo

I enter Christo's lodging. We live in the same shabby rooming house. Several of our friends do, but Christo and I are the only ones who enter each other's rooms without knocking. He is Greek and speaks with an accent. His family owns an island which bears their name. He knows he will be rich when he returns, but in the meantime he is slumming in the U.S.A.

He is standing in front of his dresser mirror with his shirt off. His belly billows over his belt. He's says: Mitch, tell me. Am I fat, am I fat fat, or am I fat fat fat?

I, a male who suffers from Anorexia Nervosa, who has no realistic sense of his own body image, say: I think you have a lovely, luxuriant body, Christo. It is smooth as olive oil and has the fragrance of anchovies and goat cheese.

This was over a decade before the advent of the Age of AIDS.

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois

Anti-Hero

My dentist kicked me out, not only from her office, but out of the luxury condo we shared. From up high, we drank cocktails and watched cars drive down the avenue like baby teeth fleeing childhood.

I could go back to her office if I want to open my mouth to unendurable pain, but I don't think I can do that.

You're a baby, a wimp, a coward, she accuses.

That's true, I say. What's your point?

There are heroes in Iraq and Afghanistan, she continues, and continues and continues, and every day shrapnel pierces them, roadside bombs blow off limbs and give them closed head injuries, and you won't have a root canal.

I have no defense. I have to admit she's right. All I have to fear is fear itself, but that fear towers above me like a monolith about to fall and crush me. Even if I had an attorney, I'd have no defense. I only hope she relents, blunts her judgments, finds some mercy for this poor dental sinner, re-opens her heart, and the door to her sweet luxury condo.

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois

Volleyball
Brad Garber



Posts of Mystery
Brad Garber



To My Curator

Like starlings migrated in revolving droves
I don't know the engines of my hands anymore.

I can't take anything out for you. I want the tight
skin aged. This is forecasted nerve retreat—

stand me with thin sand cranes and white pelicans
and we will go endangered. In the tropics

I wave my red crest and spin for bread thrown like
lilting foam traveling road ditches after floods. Tell the

waterproofed tours rambling over tongues of swamp
this is forecasted nerve beauty resting mortal and blue

in genuflection. Painful sites within the same dermatome.
My fists have gone loose; the soles of my feet failed. Forget

to cut the grass. Forget hiking myself into these swales or
burying in the deep waterways filmed with algae overgrown.

Let fingers be gentle not unconscious machines for display.
This tongue collapsed in my throat will be a fossil we can

study. I can't take anything out for you. I want a body placed
quiet after stretched rain. I know what is coming. Let me loiter
here like storms set to boil slack afternoons in the summer.

Sierra Jacob

Down Anstruther Way

It is summer.

A small crowd rides a crest of laughter
propelled by somebody's radio,
the speakers turned up and out,
a rousing ballad.

He has drunk whisky
to this song, broad smile, arms clasped
upon the shoulders of fellow neighbors
with a love for the farm and knack
for turning rocky quadrants into lettuces
and leeks.

He has hunched deeply over this song,
head foggy with a wall of sadness.
Remembering the fleeting dusk,
her woolen cloak disappearing round
the corner, the note not yet
discovered, the silvering moon.

He knows the land
but not the woman. He knows
the skies and the vanishing tides,
the brief grace between storms,
familiar gait of his boy
as he ambles toward home.

The sun finds its place deep in the west,
an outdoor cathedral as light bursts
onto the wet stone of uneven village roads.
The radio changes to a dream,
a young girl starts to dance.

Tobi Alfier

Bourbon Street Angels

I hear angels hang out on Bourbon St.
They survey their territory,
stomp old stomping grounds,
elbow each other when some drunk
drifts out of Lafitte's to his car.

They do not guide or save anyone,
they just survey
the doings of folks with a dollar or two
craving booze-lit zydeco,
prize any soul who drops change
in the cup of some poor boy tap-dancing
on the street to help his mama make rent.

Come first light, they pretend to have breakfast,
knock powdered sugar off each other
while they watch the couples
stopping for coffee and beignets
after a few hours between the sheets.
They know there is nothing like the taste
of sugar after the taste of sex.

They call each other *cher* but don't speak
French, don't speak to anyone but themselves.
No one can see them, that's how they want it.
They look perfect, undiminished,
but only to each other. They never have to face
mirrors, their stories told, silenced long ago.

Tobi Alfier

Biographies

Tobi Alfier

Tobi Alfier is a multiple Pushcart nominee and a Best of the Net nominee. Her most current chapbooks are *The Coincidence of Castles* from Glass Lyre Press, and *Romance and Rust* from Blue Horse Press. “Down Anstruther Way” is forthcoming from FutureCycle Press. She is the co-editor of *San Pedro River Review* www.bluehorsepress.com.

Cat Dixon

Cat Dixon is the author of *Eva* and *Too Heavy to Carry*, both from Stephen F. Austin University Press, plus the chapbook *Our End Has Brought the Spring* from *Finishing Line Press*. She is the managing editor of *The Backwaters Press*, a non-profit press in Omaha. Her website is www.catdix.com.

Ronna Edelstein

Ronna L. Edelstein is a part-time teacher at the University of Pittsburgh English Department’s Writing Center. Her works of fiction and nonfiction have appeared in *Dreamquest One* (first place), *Scribes Valley Publishing* (first, second, third place and honorable mention), *First Line Anthology*, *Pulse: Voices from the Heart of Medicine*, *Seasons of Caring*, *Jet Fuel Review*, *Verse Envisioned*, *The Washington Post*, and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

Brad Garber

Brad lives, writes and runs around naked in the Great Northwest. He fills his home with art, music, photography, plants, rocks, bones, books, good cookin’ and love. He has published poetry, art, photos, essays and articles in many quality publications. 2013 Pushcart Prize nominee.

Mitchell Grabois

Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois has had over a thousand of his poems and fictions appear in literary magazines in the U.S. and abroad. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and other awards for work published in 2011 through 2015. His novel, *Two-Headed Dog*, based on his work as a clinical

psychologist in a state hospital, is available for Kindle and Nook, or as a print edition. To see more of his work, google Mitchell Krockmalnik Grabois.

Ethan J. Heshner

Ethan J. Heshner has been awarded multiple scholarships for works of fiction, and non-fiction. He lives in Duluth, Minnesota and is a writer, farmer, traveler and student of the world.

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Sierra Jacob is an MFA candidate at the University of Montana, where she received the Richard Hugo Memorial Scholarship for poetry. She is currently a poetry editor for *CutBank Literary Magazine*. Her poetry has appeared and is forthcoming in *Sonora Review*, *LUMINA*, *Yemassee*, *The Louisville Review*, *Compose*, *Cream City Review*, *Hawai'i Pacific Review*, *Pacifica Literary Review*, among others. She was born and raised in Ha'iku, Hawai'i.

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Zeke Jarvis is an Associate Professor at Eureka College, where he edits *ELM*. His work has appeared in *Bitter Oleander*, *Thrice Fiction* and *Moon City Review*, among other places. His books include *So Anyway...* a collection of introductions to poems that don't exist, and *In A Family Way*.

Steven Klepetar

Steve Klepetar lives in Saint Cloud, Minnesota. His work has received several nominations for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. His latest collections include *Speaking to the Field Mice* (*Sweatshoppe Publications*), *Blue Season* (with Joseph Lisowski, *mgv2>publishing*), *My Son Writes a Report on the Warsaw Ghetto* (*Flutter Press*), and *Return of the Bride of Frankenstein* (*Kind of a Hurricane Press*).

Clyde Liffey

Clyde Liffey lives near the water. He tweets, rarely, @ClydeLiffey

Fabrice B. Poussin

Fabrice Poussin teaches French and English. Author of novels and poetry, his work has appeared in *Kestrel*, *Symposium*, *Eskimo Pie*, *The Chimes* and will appear in other magazines throughout 2016. His photography has been published

Roaring Muse

in *The Front Porch Review*, *Foliate Oak Magazine*, the *San Pedro River* magazine and more than three dozens of other publications.

Derek Pollard

Derek Pollard is co-author with Derek Henderson of the book *Inconsequentia* (*BlazeVOX*). His poems, creative non-fiction, translations, and reviews have appeared in *American Book Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Diagram III*, *Drunken Boat*, *E ratio*, *H_ngm_n*, *Pleiades*, and *Six-Word Memoirs on Love & Heartbreak*, among numerous other anthologies and journals. He is Assistant Editor at Interim. More information can be found at dpollard.squarespace.com.

Kyle Powley

Kyle Powley A.K.A. WIZARD is a 21-year-old Graphic Designer who lives on and off the edge of society's toes. He is a counterculturist that shades over his counterpart. He enjoys the finest of details, but also honors the simplification of complex material. Deep in thought, he exits the paragraph. Hallelujah.

Joseph Pravda

Born Brooklyn, NY, began a career in law in 1971, with the Federal Government during Watergate, where he immediately 'Felt' something was amiss; he has been a prolific writer in all genres, he often illustrates his own work via storyboarding, etc.; a 10 page excerpt from his play 'Patsy', involving a fated 'reunion' of JFK Jr. & the oldest daughter of Lee and Marina Oswald, won him a highly competitive place at the Kennedy Center summer 2006, with subsequent lifetime privileges at the annual Intensives featuring such literati as Marsha Norman, Steven Dietz, et. al.

Judith Skillman

Judith Skillman's recent book is *House of Burnt Offerings, Pleasure Boat Studio*. Her work has appeared in *Cimarron Review*, *J Journal*, *Seneca Review*, *Tampa Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *FIELD*, *The Iowa Review*, *Poetry*, and elsewhere. Awards include an Eric Mathieu King Fund grant from the Academy of American Poets. Visit www.judithskillman.com

Joannie Stangeland

Joannie Stangeland is the author of *In Both Hands* and *Into the Rumored Spring*, both from *Ravenna Press*, plus two chapbooks, and a pamphlet. Joannie's poems have also appeared in *Front Porch Journal*, *Off the Coast*, *Hubbub*, *Santa Fe Literary Review*, and other journals and anthologies.

Vincent J. Tomeo

Vincent J. Tomeo is a poet, archivist, historian and community activist. For 32 years a New York city public high school teacher, teacher of American history. Presently volunteering at the 9/11 tribute center museum at ground zero. He has been published in the *New York Times*, *Comstock Review*, *Mid-America Poetry Review*, *Edgz*, *Spires*, *Tiger's Eye*, *Byline*, *Mudfish*, *The Blind Man's Rainbow*, *The Neovictorian/Cochlea*, *The Latin Staff Review*, and *Grandmother Earth* (vii thru xi).

Today, he has 720 published poems; winner of 99 awards; 81 public readings.

Christopher Woods

Christopher Woods is a writer, teacher and photographer who lives in Houston and Chappell Hill, Texas. His published works include a novel, *The Dream Patch*, a prose collection, *Under A Riverbed Sky*, and a book of stage monologues for actors, *Heart Speak*. His short fiction has appeared in many journals including *The Southern Review*, *New Orleans Review* and *Glimmer Train*. He conducts private creative writing workshops in Houston. His photography can be seen in his gallery christopherwoods.zenfolio.com

Robert Wildwood

Robert Wildwood has titles available in print at Microcosm Publishing and is releasing a novel called *Generation Snow* in 2016 available on Amazon. Robert lives in Duluth, MN.

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