



New York State Summer Young Writers Institute 2007



NEW YORK STATE  WRITERS INSTITUTE
State University of New York



Young Voices:
An Anthology of Student Work



The New York State Summer Young Writers Institute

The New York State Summer Young Writers Institute (NYSSYWI), sponsored by the New York State Writers Institute at the University at Albany, is a week-long, intensive creative writing workshop for students who attend high schools in New York State. Now in its 10th year, NYSSYWI has been held the first week in July at the Silver Bay Association YMCA Conference and Training Center in Silver Bay, on Lake George.

Thirty students are chosen each year from approximately 100 applications, and these young writers work with three professional writers to produce new poems, stories, and imaginative essays during the workshop. Admission is determined by evaluation of original creative writing samples submitted by the student applicants.

Apart from participating in three classes each day, students usually hear visiting writers who appear in the Writer's Voice Readings by the Bay series, and they have also attended the Writers Institute's summer program at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs a

number of times to meet with nationally-prominent writers. For two years, Darin Strauss, author of *Chang and Eng* and *The Real McCoy*, has traveled to Silver Bay to read and to work with NYSSYWI writers. This year Angela Pneuman, author of the story collection *Home Remedies* held a reading and seminar for the students.

Our goal is to bring talented high school writers into a relaxing, inspirational environment with professional writers, offer them recognition and respect for what they have already accomplished, and encourage them to develop new work and to grow as writers. The combination of instant bonding with peers and getting to do what they enjoy doing on the shores of a beautiful lake in the heart of the Adirondack Mountains – where, when they're not writing, they can swim, use canoes and kayaks, hike, sail, and play tennis – has produced lasting friendships and wonderful new writing for the last eight years.

What you hold in your hands, this anthology, presents the best of what our NYSSYWI students produced in

early July of 2007. Interspersed are images from the summer session and comments from the students on their experience. In a short period of time, with pieces to produce in three different genres for three demanding teachers, these students created pieces that are funny, moving, troubling, dramatic and, finally, remarkable in a number of ways. It was our pleasure to watch as these poems and stories emerged, and it's your pleasure to discover them here.

William Patrick
Director

For additional information about the New York State Summer Young Writers Institute, please contact:

New York State Writers Institute
University at Albany, SL 320
1400 Washington Avenue
Albany, NY 12222
518-442-5620

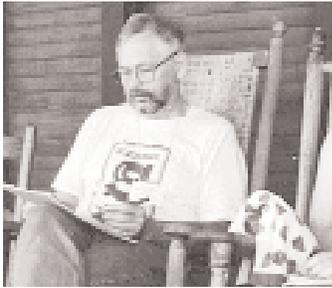
writers@uamail.albany.edu
Applications may be requested from the Institute, or downloaded from the Institute's website at www.albany.edu/writers-inst.



Summer 2007 Faculty



KATHLEEN AGUERO is the author of three volumes of poetry, *Daughter Of* (Cedar Hill Books, 2004), *The Real Weather* (Hanging Loose Press, 1987) and *Thirsty Day* (Alice James Books, 1977), and co-editor with Marie Harris of *An Ear to the Ground: An Anthology of Contemporary Poetry* (University of Georgia Press, 1989) and *A Gift of Tongues: Critical Challenges in Contemporary American Poetry* (University of Georgia Press, 1987). She is the editor of *Daily Fare: Essays from the Multicultural Experience* (1993), also from the University of Georgia Press. She has taught writing to students in grades K–12 in the Poets in the Schools Programs in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Presently she is an assistant professor at Pine Manor College in Chestnut Hill, MA.



ROBERT MINER has written for the *Village Voice*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Esquire*, *Redbook*, *Glamour*, *Parents*, *Outside*, *Self*, and *People*. His first novel, *Mothers Day*, was about a single father—an outsider’s view of motherhood from the emotional inside—and critics called it “fearless and original.”



WILLIAM B. PATRICK, who founded and teaches at the New York State Summer Young Writers Institute, is a writer whose works have been published or produced in several genres: poetry, fiction, creative nonfiction, screenwriting, and drama. *Saving Troy*, his creative nonfiction chronicle of a year spent living and riding with professional firefighters and paramedics, was published in December, 2005. His memoir in poetry, *We Didn’t Come Here for This*, was published by BOA Editions in 1999. *Kirkus Reviews* called the book a “marvelous memoir-in-poetry and a wonderful hybrid, written in a voice that’s compassionate, fresh and American, without ever proclaiming itself such.” An earlier collection of Mr. Patrick’s poetry, *These Upraised Hands*, also published by BOA Editions in 1995, is a book of narrative poems and dramatic monologues. Patrick’s novel, *Roxa: Voices of the Culver Family*, won the 1990 Great Lakes Colleges Association New Writers Award for the best first work of fiction. He works each year with middle and high school students in the Adirondacks for The Writer’s Voice at Silver Bay.

Engagement

by Kate Berner

In our love,
(or lack thereof)
the games we played to
figure each other out could have set
Olympus on fire.

We started fencing,
shrouding our entire bodies
in white quilted fabric.
Most importantly,
our faces were covered,
impassive, and blank
under screen masks and lies.

Foils in hand, charged and cracking with electricity,
we began. A few jabs and
false starts later,
we abandoned our obligatory footwork,
success foiled for the time being.

Exhausted but determined,
we tried croquet.
Mallets in arms,
we walked close through
the dewy grass, preparing to send
each jewel-toned ball rolling
through the wire gates.

Just as my sapphire sphere
was about to sail
through the gate at your feet,
it stopped abruptly.
No entry, you said.

In a fit of rage,
I left,
still wearing my fencing mask
and cradling the slighted ball
in my pocket, wondering whether or not
the games were over.

Something Simple

by Hannah Bewsher

I WAS SITTING CROSS-LEGGED ON THE bed, breaking Cheerios into halves, then quarters. There was blood smeared across the back of my hand and a cat scratch starting to itch and hives spread along my wrist like a puffy zipper.

The window beside me was wide open and just below the sill, inside the old walls, horsehair plaster and a few old pine studs. I can hear the raspy crying of a nest of sparrows.

I slipped and crushed a piece of cereal to dust between my thumb and index finger. My cat had just stalked, caught and bitten the mother bird. She was sitting half perched, half lying on my dresser. The offending cat, waiting outside my bedroom door for me to return his quarry, reached up and rattled the doorknob violently. The sparrow jumped with some weak flapping, but didn't leave the dresser top. When she lay still, she was panting

and blinked her tiny, black-bead eyes. She was in shock: the window was open and she wouldn't fly out. She didn't even struggle when I gently scooped her up and deposited her in the shoebox on my pillow. There was a red bandana inside, and the lid had been liberally stabbed with my pen and it had ink all over the top.

The nest of babies under the window started screeching with a renewed hunger every thirty seconds or so, as if they were crying over a missed meal. The mother stood up and peered over the top of the box. It was hard to look at the injured bird, because every time I did, she would look up at me. She had blood smeared across her beak, blocking one nostril, and all over her tawny breast. She looked more like an English robin than a homely sparrow.

I turned away, took up some of the cereal bits and leaned out the

window. I had one leg hooked around my bedpost to add to the awkward position. Below, our buckled sidewalk and flat river-stone porch seemed entirely deadly for the first time. I had been forced to jump off the roof before. While painting I ran over one side of a hidden hornet's nest with my roller. I had landed in the grass and gotten by unscathed, though the yellow jackets were more barn-red now than yellow, so I did contemplate the fall, or more importantly, the landing.

Biting my lip, I bent at the waist until I came face to face with the asbestos shingles. One hung by a single nail, swinging in the breeze. The place it had once covered was where the house sparrows had built their nest. Sure that the cancer-causing asbestos dust was getting all over my shirtfront, I quickly stuck my offering into the hole beneath the sill.



It happened so quickly and violently, that I almost drew back. Four infantile beaks, rubbery and not yet hardened, leapt up and groped my hand, eating every speck of food. They half swallowed my fingers and did not stop shrieking even then. My hand came out very fast and their ugly little heads followed. They were completely featherless, with bulging, blue tinged eyes, still closed. Their naked heads bobbed and swung on skinny necks as they lay on their potbellies, silent for the first time in nearly an hour. They were maggot-like, their skin thinner than paper. Even after realizing how truly grotesque they were, I still felt responsible and saw some kind of cuteness in their hellishly ugly faces.

I came back in the window, and frowned down at my hands. I could still feel their pinching beaks. Wringing my hands, I tried to relieve them of the bizarre sensation. I looked over at the mother. She had been watching from her perch on the corner of the box, and had started to preen herself. The orange cat's fang had only torn the thin skin and exposed the muscle on her chest. I didn't let myself think she would be all right yet, but it was an improvement of some kind. I had raised many birds before her, and I knew that they always perked up a few hours before they died. Birds are experts at disappointing an aspiring rehabilitator.

I washed the wound and ended up using a single drop of super glue to pull the skin back together. I dropped the lid on the shoebox and said aloud to myself, "God damn cat . . ." The orange stray turned housecat had a single fang, a curled tail and a ballsy swagger that belied the fact that he had been neutered at six months old.

“ With such dedicated and creative teachers, it’s virtually impossible to spend the week uninspired. The atmosphere is lax yet productive, enabling you to take your own pace and work in whatever environment works for you. This was my second summer at Silver Bay and I learned just as much as I did last year — the program never gets old. It is a truly wonderful institution and every effort should be made to keep it running. ”

I aimed a half-hearted kick at him as he came stalking into my room looking to finish the bird off. I didn't intend to make contact and he knew it. He just turned and left calmly. I closed the door and went to bed.

Three days later, the mother sparrow was alive again. I let her out of the window and she flew right to the nest. I had been feeding the chicks constantly the whole time. The strange sensation of their beaks had not in anyway become normal. The male had been looming for the three days, but had not come to the nest once while I was there.

After that, the chicks grew and came out to sit on the sill. After the whole ordeal they had become half-tame. They would all be lined up outside my window in the morning, four chicks, the male and the mother. She had also relaxed, and I could sit in the window and as long as I moved slowly, stroke her breast where the inch-long cut had been. Three of the chicks died that summer and soon only the mother

and a single chick would come back for Cheerios. For three years I had Mother and Beebee visiting at my window. They would come sit just inside and screech at my new parakeet, who soon learned to speak the same jeering language and I was doomed to having a demented parakeet with a sparrow complex for the next seven years.

I found Mother dead in the backyard one morning. She looked like she was frozen in place, sitting on a perch and roused in the April sun, but her wiry feet stood in the air and she was prostrate in the topsoil. She looked like she had simply fallen asleep, as long as I overlooked the fact that sparrows don't sleep on their backs.

I buried her in a shallow grave without much more than boring a hole in the earth with the toe of my sneaker. I would miss her, but there were always other birds. I had raised jays, starlings and even a young, crippled crow. Some made it and some didn't. It was simple. ■

Untitled

by Kate Bosek-Sills

WHEN I WAS JUST TURNING EIGHTEEN, the stars were even out to celebrate me. My eyes were coated with visions from dreams dancing and stretching so fast it made us vomit. My house never looked so green, the color popping and shocking my eyes. The walk to the park was a river of black tar and uncontrolled laughs and stomachs, a bend overgrown with shrubbery and vines twining up trees and poking the sky. The park was shifting spatially, going from a field of light so halogen-esque it seemed unnatural, to that of an eclipsed moon with only the diffused light around it shining onto us. I tried to piece everything together, my mind was as overgrown and altering as the space around me. But when we melted our hands together, my mind cleared and everything made sense.

I saw you lying on the ground with four jackets swelled on top of you, but none of them on: a green one like the color of my house, a coat that was my brother's, and a couple more underneath that collection. You were crunched up, shivering even though it wasn't really that cold outside. We later found out that it snowed that night. Echoes of "You're not seein' what I'm seein'!" and "Dude, you gotta see this," erupted around our friends watching the grass creating codes at their wills, and the trees which danced erratically and unwished for. I knew you could see all this and more, but you weren't speaking as part of the gathering. Along with the several heavy coats pile, you were laid out like death on top of some of our friends, staring at the stars and discussing how time works and how

we're in a layer of consciousness separate from any other ever experienced without the means of drugs.

There was no way at the time to fully understand what was going on in each others' minds without discussing it, and especially without being able to see your face under the mass of clothing and people. As the grass continued to grow, I trekked through it, off to the tennis court area of the park, alone, feeling the imminent presence of death and indescribable loneliness (wondering why I felt so lonely, and why death felt so imminent). I'm not the only one who felt this way. I don't even remember what brought me back to the group, and what tore me away from the inevitable prospect of death, but I wound up vomiting extensively upon returning to the



“ **Silver Bay opened new doors for me and I’m eternally grateful. The people I met here were great. We helped each other out, and made lifelong friends.** ”
— *Kaitlin Milos*

world which moved and grooved like nothing I’ve ever imagined in full consciousness. My vomit was connecting with my mouth and the ground simultaneously; everybody saw it, so it must have happened. Everyone saw the deer, too. And you and I saw the space ship in the sky. We thought we could catch it by flying, but realized after the first attempt that it was futile to continue. At least we figured it out through laughter. At least you were up.

We all realized how cold it was getting, and decided to return to my house at one thirty in the morning. You and I paired up. We locked fingers like the twisting and aberrant looking trees, the streets were wide as fields and the sky pressed down on our bodies and minds like a passionate lover. The two minute walk took probably nearly half an hour, neither of us knew exactly because time simply did not exist during that night. It was lost in the motion of our world. Scenery that we’ve both seen for nearly our entire lives became a torrent of eccentric volatility. The world was a painting in motion, each object a separate entity of everything else, changing in its own spatial and surreal ways. Colors popped and things lived. We popped. We lived. We were as the trees, doing things we never knew we could do. We melted together, because we are one person. Our minds are connected and I feel comfortable with you and you with

me, our subconscious even knew it. Our tree fingers fused together and we both felt it. We didn’t let go. Our conversations sank deeper than most, and as our minds were laid out in front of us individually to see, we laid out our minds for each other, dictating to each other every thought, and becoming more and more comfortable doing so. All queasiness subsided and even though my mouth tasted of vomit, it was okay.

All you have to do is hold onto the light pole that is reality and stay in the sputtering circle of light, and you’ll be okay, I explained to you. You understood, and the spider tree across the street wouldn’t hurt you. Cop cars went by at four in the morning but we weren’t stopped. We sat on a bench under the muted light pole for a while, our minds finally draping down in a heap of distressed heavy velvet. With stomachs empty and connections buzzing, we returned to my house for our rest. We were safe together and nothing else besides us, and the visual world around us, mattered. Our minds stopped flipping and we laughed ‘til dawn. We saw sides of each other previously unseen. I helped you more than I knew I could, and we connected even more than we knew we did. ■



Strangers

by Nick Brigadier

THERE HE SAT, JUST TWENTY FEET AWAY, eyes fixed on me and shining brightly. With one tightly gloved hand he extended the candy toward me, and with the other he patted his lap, indicating I should sit. I looked behind me, but saw no way to escape and, absolutely horrified, I shuffled toward this sketchy figure I had never met before.

The similarities of being led into a pedophile's unmarked white van and meeting "Santy Klaus" at the local mall are uncannily similar, and although the event I'm describing is the latter, I'm sure it is no less horrifying.

It's not just Santa. The whole idea of handing your children over to strangers wearing masks or flamboyant costumes and makeup has always subtly disturbed me. Whether it's clowns, theme park cartoon characters, or sports

mascots, not knowing who's behind the mask is the only thing not as scary as actually seeing who is. I discovered this in preschool . . . to this day I still sometimes wake up screaming in a pool of my own sweat.

The date was April the whatever of '94: Easter. My preschool teacher, whom I don't have particularly fond memories of, thought it would be a wonderful idea to invite over to our school—and you'll never guess it—the Easter Bunny! I always wonder, as I've forgotten, if little kids actually believe that some random guy in a costume is really the Easter Bunny, but even then I knew something was terribly wrong with this character. The "Easter Bunny," about 5'6" standing on his hind legs, was wearing an almost skintight, fluffy and garishly pink jumpsuit, with a pink hood on which two weathered bunny ears flopped

limply on his head like two dead snakes. Though he was wearing a little pink nose, and had charcoal black whiskers stenciled to his face, nothing could mask the unspeakable Evil behind the colorful exterior of this . . . thing.

Though he was technically a man, to say it that simply would be like saying the Pacific was a body of water. His relatively young face was scraggy and unshaven, and his white eyes, almost completely lacking pupils, leered at me from beneath thundercloud eyebrows. His thin nose pointed at me like an arrow, and he smiled a wolfish grin. His teeth were about an inch apart from each other making his grin look like a broken zipper. How I longed to zip that grin up and escape, but the teacher and her hench-teachers were keeping a sharp eye on the unsuspecting children. My three-year-old mind working furiously, I decided to hide.

My mother, who was there that day, was so amused by the sight of me cowering in fear under a small paint easel that she decided to videotape it. She laughed then, and she still laughs now, but if she had focused the camera in a little more and seen the look of pure dread in my innocent toddler eyes as the Easter Bunny began passing out coloring books, she wouldn't have laughed. No one would. While I did eventually take a coloring book the Easter Bunny left behind, I still didn't trust him.

To this day I don't celebrate Easter, and it's easy to see why. I never fully recovered from that fateful day, and I'm constantly reminded of it whenever my mom takes the home videos out for a spin. Pouring it all down on paper doesn't necessarily help me forget it, but it does help with some of the healing. ■



American Politics

by Tony Cheng

I CAME TO THE UNITED STATES WHEN I was five, in the summer before kindergarten. I had grown up with my grandparents in Dalian, the bustling port city of southern Manchuria, which took quite a bit of political tug-o-warring in the past century and a half. The Chinese had it, the Japanese took it, the Russians dreamed of having it and got it for a while, the Japanese took it back, the Russians liberated it, and by the end of WW II, finally handed it back to the Chinese, who I'm sure were very grateful after all that fuss. My father majored in political science and my mother in philosophy, and I was conceived in their cramped residence at the People's University of Beijing where they taught.

So naturally, one of the first things my five-year-old self (who spoke no English at that point) cared about in this new country, was how it ran itself. I discovered that the leaders were elected by popular opinion, which came as a great surprise to me since my father had told me several times that he will always be my father regardless of what anyone thinks.

My first taste of this strange new system of choosing our superiors came around Election Day during kindergarten. My teacher had just explained that a big presidential election was coming up, and then proceeded to hand out a leaflet which contained the pictures of Clinton and Dole with little check boxes underneath them. I compared the two smiling faces, and after some rumination, decided to check the box beneath Clinton.

That night, my father saw the leaflet lying about in my room and the political opinions of a kindergartner apparently appealed to his interest. At dinner, he asked me curiously: "Why did you vote for



I always have a great time here at Silver Bay. I love the setting, as well as the people. The teachers are very helpful, and the kids are a lot of fun to be with. It's great to be able to spend a week with people who are as creative and as dedicated to writing as I am. I always find a lot of inspiration when I come here, and I believe my writing has genuinely improved because of this program. I hope to come back next year.

— Emma Loy-Santelli



Clinton?" I was forced to defend my choice.

"Well," I said honestly, "He has white hair, and the other guy does not. Quite clearly he is the wiser of the two. And so I think a president with white hair is better than a president with black hair." I was very proud of my eloquent little speech explaining that my criteria had been intellectual prowess more than anything else.

Years later when I told this story to a friend, she exclaimed to me, "That is such a Chinese way of thinking!" Perhaps it was, but of course now I know better than to choose presidents based on hair color. Since then, I have garnered much more experience with the American system, with the system of democracy and the will of the people. I now firmly place my faith in American democracy.

I am proud that there is no such thing as corruption in America, only

the benign lobbyists from big companies who give lavish gifts to Washington. I understand that the common people are too plebian to vote wisely, and so we must hire special electors to do the job for us in the Electoral College, which makes it possible for a president to be elected even after losing the popular vote. I admire the commendable habit of our politicians practicing the art of compromise, which in a two-party system of not-so-very-different parties is sure to represent the full spectrum of public will. I agree that the only way to protect our liberties is to sacrifice the liberties of a few funny-looking people, and torture them at detention facilities in the Caribbean. Thus, I can safely state without exaggeration, that I have come a long way from that day when I voted for Clinton in kindergarten, and I finally can believe in what America stands for. ■

Turkish Delight

by Laura Colaneri

TWO DARK HAired young women sitting at a table in the corner of the empty dining hall gaze about the room. They are alone, just finishing their dinner as they speak together in a language full of soft clucking and the drip-drop of water.

Instead of eating at the picnic tables outside the building, the two have taken refuge inside to avoid the rain. Handan Eski, age 23, and Aysenur Cakmakciogau, 21, hail from Turkey, a nation with a distinct blending of cultures, dating back from Greek and Roman times to the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires.

“We don’t speak English very well, so speak slowly,” Cakmakciogau warns me when they agree to be interviewed. She has clean, sharp features, neat, sharp eyebrows, and honey colored skin, her dark hair swept in a ponytail across one shoulder. She seems to have the better English of the two, for every once in a while Eski will glance to her for help translating. They speak with light, tangy accents, pronouncing short I’s as “EE” and softening their R’s.

Handan Eski has softer features than Cakmakciogau, with the same

honey skin and dark hair. She wears fashionable turquoise corduroy pants and a black and gray striped sweater. “I am here mainly to improve my English,” she explains. She works in the dining hall at the YMCA of Silver Bay, New York so that she can encounter different cultures and see different countries. When she’s not working, she often goes to the gym, reads, or studies English. “I like music,” she tells me, like the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Coldplay.

She’s also studying communications and advertising, and though she’d like to be a doctor, she still enjoys what she’s studying.

Her family in Turkey consists of her mother, father, and two sisters. Her mother is a housewife. “My father . . . sells . . . building items?” Eski tries to explain as we smack hard into the language barrier.

Turkey has too many tourists, the pair explains distastefully. It is less crowded than America, but it’s many historical places, beaches, and sunny weather attract large amounts of European travelers.

“We have brochures,” Handan Eski says. “Would you like to see them?”

As she hurries off to where they are staying to find them, Cakmakciogau calls to her. “Handan, bring the Turkish delight, too.” I am about to get my first taste of Turkish culture.

Aysenur Cakmakciogau is an only child whose father is a tax controller. Through a student exchange program, she is staying in America and then will be traveling to Portugal. She won’t be returning to Turkey for another year. She is studying tourism and enjoys meeting new people.

Besides America, Cakmakciogau would love to go to Egypt to see the pyramids. She has been enjoying America, though. “Everything is . . .”



she describes the word she's looking for. "Everyone has a specific job and place to be."

"Organized?" I guess.

"Yes! Organized."

So far, she says, the Americans she has met are friendly, happy people.

Returning, Eski agrees. "They are not as strict as in Turkey, they are more... relaxed." She holds an armful of pamphlets, postcards, and a plate of candy.

Food in the United States is very different from that of Turkey. It has much more sugar. One of the most important dishes in Turkey is kebab, with meat, spices, and a sauce called ezme. Another well-known dish is baklava. Turkish delight is a sweet, gummy candy coated in powdered sugar. Another dessert is kunefe, a food resembling custard.

Turkish coffee is very different from American coffee. It is at this point, though, that we reach another language barrier, and it is difficult to communicate its differences. By pointing at a picture in one of the brochures, Cakmakciogau explains that it has bubbles.

Pictures on postcards show Turkey's beaches and the large hotels in the south of Turkey, including one called The Titanic that resembles the doomed ship. The country's skiing mountains and sunny weather draw large amounts of tourists to the area.

Two boys working in the dining hall come over to speak with the girls, teasing them for eating in the corner by themselves. "We're just kidding," one boy says. "We just came to say hello." The girls smile at the friends they've made.

A few minutes later, Handan Eski excuses herself to go study while Cakmakciogau continues to teach me about her country.

The pamphlets show the vast diversity of cultures that makes up

Turkey's history. The Greek ruins of Ephesus, an ancient theater, a Mosque dating back to the Ottoman Empire, and the mausoleum of Ataturk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, are all featured. In one picture is the Turkish flag, a white crescent moon and star on a bright red background.

This culture, of which a sadly small number of Americans learn about, is part of what makes up Aysenur Cakmakciogau and Handan Eski. Plants transplanted into a vastly different pot, they are students of culture, acquiring aspects and

knowledge of every place they travel to.

"Would you like to learn some Turkish?" Cakmakciogau asks. "What would you like to say?" "How about 'Thank you very much,'" I suggest.

She writes the Turkish letters down and pronounces the words for me. After stumbling through the syllables for a minute, I manage to force the odd sounds to twist around my tongue properly. "Choke techakure edarin," it sounds like. The syllables taste beautiful and strange in my mouth, though my tongue rebels against the difference. ■



Wild Boar Woman

by Michele Colley

A lumbering elephant
You plod up to my register
Wild Boar Woman.
A mighty earthquake shakes my teeth,
Dentist drills scream in my ears
Jarring my brain,
My stomach lurches.
As sausage fingers gesture at your three items
A stubborn beast, you refuse to change carts.
Customers like you, ma'am,
Are the root of all evil
And thank you for shopping at BJ's.
Please hesitate to come again.



A Folded Piece of Paper

by Rachel Daly

THE FIRST THING JUDY TAMLAND DID when Tracy's father left the classroom was search for air freshener. Perfume. Anything to cover the stench of stale booze and

arms. She had also noticed that Tracy had been losing weight. Her skin had receded until it barely clung to her knuckles and wrist bones. Her face had also taken on a

bruises at some point." Judy remained unconvinced.

Finally locating the Lysol, Judy let out a stream of aerosol, trying in vain to release the stress of the evening in a cloud of mist.

Judy feared it would be awkward when Tracy came into school the next morning. What if her father had punished her? However, things continued as usual when Tracy arrived and hung up her fleece coat on a coat hook.

It always made Judy sad to see the way Tracy walked into the room. Though she was beautiful, Tracy always seemed as though she didn't want to be seen. She would shrink herself down, avert eye contact, and slip along the wall to wherever she wanted to go.

Judy busied herself with the grading she had been working on. A

“ I loved the atmosphere here and the faculty’s approachability. I feel like I’ve been here for much longer than six days, but it also flew by. ”

tobacco that hung like smog on the air he left in his wake. Her eyes began to water as she opened and closed cupboards searching for Lysol. Hopefully the odor wouldn't seep into all corners of the room before she found it.

Judy replayed the conference in her mind as she searched. Tracy's father, who had introduced himself as Chuck Graffman, had scarcely listened to a word she'd said. And frankly, Judy felt as though she had voiced some valid concerns.

First, there was the situation of Tracy's grades. They had been steadily slipping as the year progressed. Judy had been hoping to confront Tracy's father about them and maybe get to the bottom of her lack of focus. Instead of showing concern, Mr. Graffman had just said, "Well, I wasn't too smart in school either. She probably gets it from me." Judy hadn't quite found this to be an adequate response.

Second came the more pressing but ever more delicate matter of Tracy's health. It had been this subject that she had been most nervous to talk about.

That very day, Tracy had come to hand in a test, and Judy had seen the bruises, partially concealed by makeup, that shadowed Tracy's

skeletal resemblance, with sickly colorless skin and dark caves beneath her cheekbones.

Mr. Graffman had also virtually feigned deafness when confronted by this concern. "She eats and bathes just fine," he'd said. "And all sixth graders wind up with cuts and



“ This week was amazing. Writing and reading work in a supportive and never-boring group was insanely magical. Now I have more pieces written and more material to write about. Thanks. ”

— Adah Hetko

second later, however, she looked up and was startled to see Tracy standing beside her desk.

“Hi, Tracy,” she said pleasantly. With every bit of her she tried to sound warm and caring. This child needed it more than most.

“Hi, Mrs. T.,” she said. Even her voice was small and skittish.

“What can I do for you, sweetie?”

“Nothing,” Tracy said softly. She performed an antsy twisting motion.

“Okay.” Judy let her amber eyes

remain on Tracy a few more seconds. Talk to me, she projected her thoughts. What’s going on?

“My dad and I are moving soon,” she stated.

Inside, panic pounded through Judy’s veins. Surely this was all her fault! Okay, she thought. Be careful what you say.

“Where are you going?”

she managed.

“Ohio.”

“Why?”

“Dad wants to get a job out there,” she said. “I was supposed to tell you yesterday, but I forgot.”

The boa constrictor in Judy’s chest loosened its grip. They had been planning to move before the conference.

“We’re going over Thanksgiving break,” she said.

It was only a few days away.

“Oh, honey, we’re going to miss you,” Judy said.

By now, other students were filing into the classroom. Tracy looked like she was fighting tears. She sat down in her desk, and Judy decided it was time to get the class organized.

But all day as she taught, she was fighting tears herself.

On the last day of school before Thanksgiving break, Judy took Tracy aside after class. She pulled out the slip of paper which had been repeatedly folded and unfolded in her hands earlier that day. It was now damp with sweat.

“This is the address of the local church,” Judy said. “I know you’re moving, but if you write to it, they’ll send you some free information. I thought you might find it interesting.”

Tracy didn’t react but just took the paper.

And then she walked away, just faded out. She disappeared from Judy’s life with the final bell.

As Tracy’s bus pulled away, all Judy could think of was that she should have done more.

It’s funny how we never know the full effects of our actions. A bully’s victim cries himself to sleep while the bully sleeps soundly. A daughter feels worthless even though she is the light of her mother’s life. When Tracy Graffman walked out of Judy Tamland’s life, Judy believed her chances of making a difference departed as well. It’s funny, sometimes, how wrong we can be. ■



On the Colour Blue

by Francis Dieterle

Loss echoing off the walls of an empty theatre.
Love falling to the floor of the stage.
The silent slip of an arm down a pillow,
forming the curves of a perfect stream,
like a circle beginning and ending
at Point Wherever and stopping nowhere,
like the void and the leap into eternal
Nothingness and “filling” it,
like the electricity pouring over my head
in brighter-than-neon thoughts, singeing my eyebrows,
like the sailor’s streaky words flying through the air,
leaving traces of you hovering behind.



Rainy Day Music

by Jason Fishel

Rainy Day Music
I believe
in the Father Almighty, maker
Of heaven and Earth,
etc,
etc,
ad infinitum,
sure.
But more importantly,
I believe in the needle
That burrows its way to the center
of the Earth, and I believe in the music
Of its voyage.
I believe
In wise men saying
only fools rush in,
And I believe that you just may be my candy girl,
and yeah, you got me wanting you.
I believe in the rain outside, and I believe
It will not stop this time,
Finally.
I believe in you and you alone,
And tears,
and clowns,
and countless stills of countless nights.
In blue velvet and black vinyl
And vice-versa.
And maybe,
Just maybe, this time I will dare
To believe that when arms fall off,
And music turns to scratch,
scratch,
scratch,
You will still be there, singing to me
Softly.

Chameleon

by Liz Hennessy

NICK JEFFERY SAT IN HIS ROCKING chair, looking out at the docks of Silver Bay as he listened to his friends converse. It was a dreary day, raining lightly and casting all of the surroundings with a dull grey hue. The air was chilled slightly, but not enough to present a need for a sweatshirt.

Looking up during the middle of a conversation, he spotted a stranger that had joined the ranks. She was a sixteen-year-old girl looking for an

seconds, but she still refused shyly. Then, Nick turned his focus to a middle-aged woman who had a blank expression on her face as she paid no attention to the current happenings.

“Let’s have you be interviewed!” The others laughed at the idea, but the woman was still absorbed in the scene of the boats and lake. As the laughter died down slightly, she turned and looked at Nick.

“What?” she asked with a mix of

were very close. Nick admitted that he never used the kayaks or canoes at the boat house where he worked, but last summer he did go out on one of the larger boats: a nice white boat, proudly displaying an American flag.

“What’s your favorite thing to do in your free time?” the girl asked.

“Play Frisbee,” he replied with a very deliberate nod.

“Would you consider yourself really good at Frisbee, or . . .”

“Yes,” he interrupted confidently. “Yeah.” The girl nodded, scribbling on her notepad. She stared at her notes, pondering, as Nick thought that perhaps the interview was already over.

“Do you have a particular memory?” the girl asked at last. “Something that sticks out from when you were a kid or a young adult. A fond memory, or maybe a not-so-fond one?”

The question took Nick by surprise at first. He thought for a moment before replying.

“Yes, I do have a not-so-fond memory, actually,” he said. “When I was ten years old, I was in a car accident.” Nick paused, remembering the traumatic experience. He had been hospitalized for 163 days. For 15 of those days, he was in a coma.

“It gave me these scars,” he continued, pointing to scars on the left side of his face, the base of his neck, and the back of his head. The girl scribbled on her notepad. Nick stood, awkwardly, glancing around the boathouse and the lake.

Smiling, the girl thanked Nick for his time and left the boathouse. Nick nodded and went back to the conversation with his coworkers as “chame-chame-chame-chame chame-chameleon” played in the background. ■

“**This is my third time around. I love it. I always love it. This should be something every single young writer experiences. I would not be the same writer, or see writing in the same way, if I had missed out on this. Also, I love Paine Hall. I'm going to miss it.**”

interview, an assignment she was given for the writing camp she was attending. There had been a few others before her with the same assignment, and Nick cheerfully looked around asking, “Who wants to be interviewed this time?” No one responded, and shy glances were cast around as the young reporter laughed in an attempt to ease the awkward moment.

“Hey, how about you? You should be interviewed!” Nick laughed to a young girl who sat beside him. She was about 10 years old, and she shook her head as she pulled her legs into herself protectively. Nick tried to persuade her for a few more

confusion and surprise.

“Ah, I’ll be interviewed,” Nick said at last. He stood and walked a few feet away from his coworkers to talk to the young reporter. She asked for his name. Nick Jeffery.

“Where are you from?”

“Uh, Massachusetts,” he replied, nodding. As the conversation went on, he revealed simple things about himself. He worked at Silver Bay, New York for the entirety of the summer, going home, south of Boston, for the rest of the year. He had worked at Silver Bay for three years after his Aunt Kim, his mom’s brother’s wife, gave an excellent recommendation. He and his aunt

Victory

by Adah Hetko

SKY'S PALMS AND FACE THROB AGAINST the earth.

"I can't believe it. I finally won!" she murmurs and smiles to herself. She rolls over, squinting at the sun, and dipping sweaty feet in the water. Kara is looming over her sister, hands on her knees, mouth bunched into a ten-year-old smirk. Last time this happened, Sky ended up with a black eye. But Kara is tired out, and only a smack was given to the victor. Triumph tingles down Sky's hot neck. Sky has won.

They race most days in summer, sprinting through daddy's fields, and scrambling to the stream down the hill where Kara brings her pack from town. But today, it's just the two of them.

Both are runners, but neither see much resemblance beyond that. "Sky is a cry baby. She can't be strong like me," Kara proclaimed when mother chided Sky for dropping a heavy basket, coating the new, white eggs in mud. In the sun, Sky's blonde locks blend with the grass. She watches the other's hair while pretending to look at a cloud. The hair looks like another life form, a leafy, reddish, venomous plant.

Sky is long and slim, and Kara shorter, but that doesn't stop Kara's

legs from making powerful strides that have almost always outmatched Sky's. Not now, this time Sky has won.

Kara picks up her head and sends her best I'm-better-than-you-and-always-have-been-and-I-was-even-the-first-born glare in Sky's direction. Today there is no witness, and both know Kara will boast later about how close the race was, and how she won again anyway. To top it off, she'll smile real sweet.

Sky knows what that red line over Kara's eyebrow means.

"Rematch." The rules of engagement determine that a rematch is held starting from the stream, through two fields and a stretch of trees ending at their house. Close to the path grow two apple trees planted on the twins' birth. Guess whose grows faster.

"What? Oh come on." The words sounded good in her head, but they fell flat on her dry tongue.

"So you're chicken?" Kara does a half-hearted chicken flap, as if picking on her sister is just so easy it isn't even worth the effort.

"But I w . . ." Sky fidgets with her braids.

"Oh you are, you're scared that I'm still faster."

"Am not!"

"Rematch." She spits in some weeds.

"Ok. I think."

"Reeeeeeeeady?"

"Set." They are standing now, horses pawing at the gate.

"Goooooooooat." Sky jumps and Kara cackles, showing her teeth.

"Go!"

They charge, sneakers skidding on dirt-encrusted rocks, dead grass flowers, and muddy twigs. Sky can smell her own skin, and her sister's sour scalp, ever so slightly ahead. Sky's body plunges forward into the trees, but in her heart lingers the confidence of the sunny field behind.

Sky soars. She absolutely soars. She has always shared her birthday, but this is her day and her day alone. Kara's heavy breath now hangs like a curse on the back of Sky's neck, rasping with hers.

"To . . . the . . . door . . ." The words are barely words in her throat. The sun burning in Sky's cheeks and eyes is barely the sun, it is a trophy.

And then, the world slows down. Kara sees the white, square house before her as it always is, but the windows start laughing, just as the roots of her hair scream. A pale hand had yanked Sky's braids.

Thwap. Thud. Sky's feet hook on a root. She senses her shadow tripping, falling. No, not just her shadow. Shadows don't scream like that.

Both twin sisters now know the pain of a sprained ankle. Twin sprained ankles. Sky can see the twin pairs of crutches already.

Mom charges down the porch steps, a comb stuck in her fair hair, mid-stroke. She sees two daughters, one screaming, and the other silent. She cradles the quiet Sky in her arms, carrying her in first.

Sky can't help it. She has to. She cocks her head to one side, looks back and mouths the words to her twin. "I won." ■

“ This program truly inspires me to grow, not only as an author but as a person, expanding my horizons until I get every point of view possible. I may not agree with everyone, but it's interesting to hear them anyway. Everyone is either eccentric or learns very quickly. ”

— Francis Dieterle

The Gun Range

by Malcolm Lasky

“LOOK, ERIC, I’VE LIVED A GOOD LIFE; a life that’s full. I just want to go my way,” I said to Dr. Reed, while we walked into the gun range, and up to the gun rental area. We were discussing my chances of survival. Now, Eric and I have been friends since grade school, so I can understand his hesitation to let me go, but is it really right to try and keep people alive so we don’t feel guilty? Goddamnit, I just wanted to go in peace. Is that so much to ask?

“But with chemotherapy you have a 50 percent chance of recovering,” Eric said.

“I have a 50 percent chance of dying miserably. I’ll take a quick death,” I said. We asked the guy at the counter for two .45s and continued.

“I don’t see why you’re so opposed to trying,” he said.

“I’m not opposed to trying when there is a good chance. I am opposed to pain, though,” I said, getting a bit angry. What the hell is his problem? I just wanted to come here and shoot some last rounds before I die. Is that so bad? We chose a gun range because we used to always shoot BB guns as kids, and as adults visited gun ranges all the time. I was planning on this being the last time we saw each other, so I wanted to make it somewhere we were emotionally connected to. But he’s turning it into this huge battle over my life.

“Hey, settle down,” the guy said when he put our guns on the table.

“Piss off. This is between us,” I said, and paid for the guns.

“Yeah...see, thing is, I’m about to give you both loaded handguns. I don’t want no goddamn war reenactment in my gun range,” he said.

“We’ve been friends since grade school, don’t worry about it,” I said.

We walked to the cube-like area where you shoot and put up our targets, pushing the halfway button on the side.

“Look, I’m content with dying, okay? I don’t want to live anymore. It’s not like I have a wife or children to support or even look after. I just wanna go in peace,” I said. My wife had died in a car crash, nearly

fucking years after your family died.”

“Fuck you. Don’t talk about my family like that. You have no idea what that’s like,” I said, very angrily.

“Goddamnit, I took care of you for five years, and you can’t give me five years back? You’re a goddamn prick, y’know that?” He matched my angry tone.

“Up yours, I lost my wife and

“ This program has definitely turned out to be a highlight of my summer. There is nothing like this. The beautiful scenery was such a plus. I met some truly amazing people here, and made some great memories. ”

twenty years ago . . . so had our two daughters.

“I heard you say that the first time. What I’m saying is, why don’t you at least try the chemotherapy?” Reed asked.

“Okay. I’ll say it slower. I. DON’T. LIKE. PAIN,” I said, elongating the syllables of the last four words.

“Don’t be a wise ass. I’m trying to save your life here,” he said.

“You’re my hero. Except for the fact that I want to die. Let me go, please?” I asked.

“I . . . can’t. You know I can’t. You are my family, for Christ sake,” Eric responded.

“Don’t be so melodramatic. Nobody enjoys it. You’ll get over it. Like a brother gets over another brother’s death.” I said.

“Yeah, it is so easy. Like when you didn’t leave your house for five

children in one night. I had the right to be depressed,” I spat back.

“And now I have the right to try and stop you from dying, and from me going through that, too.”

“Goddamnit, this isn’t about you. And this isn’t an accident, it’s about sparing me pain.”

“But, chemo . . .”

I cut Eric off. “Do I have to kill you to get you to stop?”

“Hah, very funny,” he said.

Unfortunately, with a gun in hand, I was one hundred percent serious. I aimed at his head.

“What the fuck are you doing?”

“Don’t worry. I’ll be dead soon, too. And we’ll be together in Heaven,” I said, compassionately, before I shot him, and as I pointed the gun to my own head, I thought, at least we’d be together in Heaven, and he won’t be missing me. ■

Half and Half

by Elisa Leiva

I WALKED THROUGH MY BACKYARD, THE long green grass tickling my bare legs. The hot sun shone onto my back while I carefully peeled off the fuzzy brown layers of a fig. As I hungrily put my lips to the sweet mushy delight, I looked around me. Next to me were my two best friends since birth, Cony and Rocio, who were swinging like maniacs on our stringy hammock. A couple of feet away, smiling faces were huddled around a wooden table—my aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and an array of different friends. My mom served a fluffy pink cake filled with gooey surprises, in celebration of my older sister’s ninth birthday. This memory is etched in my mind because it is the last time I

remember feeling like I completely belonged. In the next few weeks everything in my life was going to be turned upside down.

“Elisa and Camila, we need to talk to you,” my mom proclaimed one Sunday afternoon, only a few days after my sister’s birthday. I finished putting a gorgeous blue satin dress on my Barbie and excitedly marched to the kitchen table. My sister and I exchanged eager glances; we both already knew the groundbreaking news that my parents were going to reveal to us. My mom had been on the phone an awful lot lately, and since it was only a few days away from Christmas, we came to the conclusion that this could only mean one thing—we were getting

the puppy we had been asking for!

“Remember to act surprised when she tells us,” my sister whispered into my ear. We had both practiced our flabbergasted faces in front of the mirror the other night so we would be fully prepared.

“Well kids, we have some big news to tell you,” my mother paused, unable to fight tears. “Your father has gotten a job in the U.S. and we’re going to move there,” she said finally. I was stunned. My body felt numb.

“I think it’s the best thing for us right now... It will only be for a few years. I’ll be working on my Ph.D. and your mom will be doing her Masters in Public Health,” my father explained. “You’ll finally get to know your mom’s side of the family in Minnesota,” he said, trying his hardest to be cheerful. Once we left Chile, my journey in the world as a bicultural kid had begun.

At first while living in Minnesota, I refused to learn English. I remember thinking that the words my mom and classmates at school spoke sounded so silly and hard, like sandpaper being dragged across the tongue. She would say something to me in English and I would respond back in Spanish. I tried to resist the language and culture as much as I could; all I wanted to do was be back in Chile. But after months of being in Kindergarten, I began to speak fluently and grow close with my cousins. After the school year ended, we moved to Boston so my mom could finish her MPH at Harvard. I instantly felt comfortable there and bonded with some other bicultural kids—Shakira from South Africa, Frederica from Sweden, and Bea from Brazil. Having these three close friends who completely understood the hardships of being bilingual and having family and friends in two different countries



made it hard for me the next year when we were moving once again, this time back to Chile.

On the eighteen-hour flight back to Chile I sat next to a severely rotund stranger who was snoring and spewing out icky goop from his nose every few seconds. That may seem bad enough, but it was nothing compared to what was going on inside of me. My heart was beating hastily. I suddenly felt excessively clammy and restless. I constantly replayed made-up situations in my head about what going back to my homeland would be like.

“What will my family be like? Will I make friends in school? Will people laugh at my accent? Will everything go back to how it used to

and sounds I used to be so acquainted with. As soon as I got to school my classmates gathered around me, asking questions about life in the States. How many famous people did you meet? Did you go to Disneyland every day? Is everyone blonde, blue-eyed and beautiful? They bombarded me with questions.

“I didn’t do any of those things. Life in the United States is not like what you see in the movies or on TV,” I responded truthfully. The eager faces that had seemed so excited to see me were now glazed with confusion and un-interest.

“I mean of course I met Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake,” I lied, trying to bring back the enthusiastic attention of my classmates. The

explain the truth to puzzled faces. But they were also very kind and warm with me. They invited me to class parties and to their homes; they talked to me when I was sad; we did our homework together. Yet it still felt as if something was missing. It was as if all they wanted to talk to me about was the illustrious “United States of America.” I felt like the person who was always being dragged along as a form of entertainment, but never considered one of them. The teachers would call me “La gringa,” The Little American.

“No soy una Gringa!” I retorted loudly one day, fed up with that word. I wasn’t, I thought to myself, at least I didn’t feel like one. But what was I then? Could I still call myself Chilean? I didn’t feel adequate when I was in Chile, but I also didn’t feel at home in the United States. Did I belong anywhere?

In the wee hours of one Saturday night, over a year of living in Chile, the yelling coming from my parent’s bedroom awakened me. I rolled out of bed and lethargically put on my bunny-slippers. I crouched down and put my ear against the cold wooden door trying to decipher what they were saying.

“We can’t do this again to the kids,” I heard my mom say.

“But they’re offering me a really good job at the University, and there is nowhere I can work here in Chile.”

“This is not what we planned, we were supposed to raise our kids here,” my mom cried.

“Welcome to the Capital Region.” A blue sign ushered us into new territory.

“More like the stupid region,” growled my sister under her breath. I was ten years old when Guilderland became my new “home.” And so it began again. I was

“ This camp is the highlight of my year. Now that it’s over, I’ll spend the rest of the summer missing the friends I’ve made, and writing based on the inspiration this place has given me. ”

— *Laura Colaneri*

be?” I asked in a whisper to the snoring man sitting next to me, only to be responded with a swab of cold, lime-colored goop on my left cheek.

I put on my uniform: a plaid blue skirt and a sweater of the same color with the logo, “The Kent School,” printed in felt. It was my first day back at school. I sat next to my sister on the small golden school bus, looking out the window, trying to re-familiarize myself with the sites

crowd responded with a unanimous “ooh-ahhh.”

As the days in school progressed I realized that it was much easier to fib about my life in the U.S. than to tell the truth. My classmates could not grasp the concept that not everyone in the United States was white, skinny, and blonde and that there were places other than Los Angeles or New York City, and so I became tired of constantly trying to

thrust into a world of strangers who didn't understand me. I had the hardest time adjusting here than any other move before. I sat by myself on the large unfamiliar yellow bus to Elementary school, looking out at the McDonalds', strip malls, and Dunkin' Donuts that I hoped I was never acquainted with.

"Are you an illegal Mexican?" a blonde mean-faced girl sneered at me during lunch on my first day at school. "Because my daddy says they should be kicked out of our country, so if you are I don't like you." I explained to her that no, I wasn't from Mexico; I was from Chile.

"Same difference," she snapped back.

"Do they have potato chips down there?" some other girls asked me, pronouncing each word slowly and extra-loud as if I couldn't understand. "What about TVs? Did you live in a hut? Is it chilly in Chile?"

These questions annoyed and

enraged me more than all of the questions my classmates in Chile had asked.

I sat on my blow-up mattress and stared at my bare bedroom walls that needed to be decorated. An inexplicable feeling hit me, something I can't quite put into words. A pang of realization had struck: I did not belong anywhere in the world. I could go to Chile, and I would be treated as an outsider. I can be in the U.S. and I'm treated like a foreigner. I had no place to call my home. I began sobbing uncontrollably. I felt like I was drowning and choking at the same time. My identity was scattered in two different countries, and I would never be able to put the pieces that made up who I am back together again. I missed my family back in Chile; I missed the food, the music, my house, the smells.

"I just want to belong somewhere,"

I cried quietly to myself. "I just want to belong."

Now, after six years of living in Guilderland my outlook on being bicultural has changed quite a bit. It's definitely hard, confusing, and even scary at times. But when I try to imagine what my life would be like if I were completely one thing, that scares me even more. Going through the world with only knowing one language and way of life would be so boring and bland; being bicultural allows me to relate to so many more people. Moving so much has also helped me adjust and get used to new situations quickly. Of course there are days when I cry because I miss my family and the life I left behind in Chile, but I know that they are only a phone call and a plane ride away. I have realized that I don't belong in only one of the two countries. I belong in both. ■



The Mother

by Emma Loy-Santelli

WHEN THE THREE CHILDREN SAW THE face above them in the sky, they told themselves it was their mother. It looked like they imagined she would, bright blue eyes and a gentle smile. It was certainly how they would have wanted her to look. But the three had never met their mother. Or, if they had, they couldn't remember ever having seen her. Sometimes they wondered if they had even had a mother, though Judy, who knew everything, had made it quite clear that everyone had mothers, even people who couldn't remember them.

"And that's ours," she said of the face. Zachary and Anna just nodded and stared with wonder. Of course it was their mother. Who else could she be?

They slept soundly that night, on smooth beds of grass, with flickering fairies spinning in the cool air, and the mother watching in silence.

The world was a rainforest the next day. It usually was. Anna liked rainforests, and even Judy couldn't persuade her not to imagine them. They set off through the trees, with vines hanging low around them.

"I don't think mother would approve of this," said Judy. The face had vanished when they had awoken, and so the humid sky was empty of everything except for puffy clouds and sunlight.

"Why not?" asked Zachary. And Judy stared at him, open-mouthed, because she wasn't used to being asked to explain her statements.

"Just because," she replied, after some serious thought.

"She's not even real," Zachary muttered.

But they turned a corner and there she was, watching them from the shadows of the trees. Her hair shone, heavy with sunlight that somehow managed to drop down

through the branches. Her smile was comforting. The children stared at her, uncertain of what to do.

"Hello," said Judy. But the mother just smiled wider, then vanished into the trees. They searched wildly for her, crashing through the undergrowth, but she was no longer there.

Monkeys chattered loudly that night as they lay down to sleep. The air was moist and thick, but warm and enveloping like a blanket.

"Who keeps thinking her up?" Judy demanded, staring upward at the specks of glittering stars between

the leaves.

"Not me," said Anna.

"Me neither," said Zachary.

"Well, I'm not either," Judy snapped, as if annoyed by this unsolved mystery.

"Maybe you scared her away," said Anna.

"Did not!" said Judy.

"I hope she comes back," whispered Zachary. The other two silently agreed.

They lay in silence. The sounds of the rainforest seemed to fade slightly.

Zachary sat up quickly.

"I'm scared."



Anna nodded.

"Yes, I think we're trapped."

"Don't be silly," said Judy, but her eyes were wide. A new presence seemed to have seeped into the forest. They felt its presence like a chill wind. They sat in the thick darkness and wished for sleep to come.

When they woke up the sky was yellow, the ground was orange, and the clouds that scudded overhead were deep purple. Zachary liked bright colors.

"What color would cows be?" asked Anna.

"Blue," Zachary replied promptly, with the confident air of an expert. "With green spots."

"Green's an ugly color," said Judy.

"Is not," said Zachary.

"Is too. It's the color of pond slime."

"Mother wouldn't approve of you

arguing," piped in Anna. Judy and Zachary stared at the ground. They didn't want to displease mother.

The birds were pink, and some landed on their shoulders as they walked. They chased them away and watched them dart up into the yellow sky. They found themselves hurrying ahead, looking around bends, peering into the shadows around the red trees. The day was hot, uncomfortable, and they all began to grow irritable.

"This is dumb," said Judy.

Anna just glared ahead. Zachary suddenly began to sob.

"Where's mother?" he wailed. The other two sat on the ground beside him, trying to hold in their own tears.

"Do you think I chased her away?" whispered Judy. "I didn't think mothers scared so easily."

"If she really was our mother she wouldn't have left," said Anna. "She doesn't really love us if she would go away and not come back."

Zachary looked around.

"I'm scared again."

They stared at the bright world. The colors were fading; melting into a sort of black that filled empty space and seemed to reach for them.

"Who's doing that?" wailed Anna.

And they ran, and the shadows snatched them.

Day immediately slid to a quick, velvet night and the children huddled together. They felt something watching them. Something mean; quite unlike the mother. It was the same presence they had felt in the rainforest.

"Will it eat us?" whispered Zachary. It seemed quite necessary



“ This week was a chance for me to make friends and discover if I still have the creative writing prowess that I thought I had. ”

to whisper in the blackness.

“Leave us alone,” said Judy, but tears strained her voice, and the shadow beast didn’t obey.

“Mother, help us,” said Anna softly.

The only way the children knew when night was over was when the world turned gray. It rained, and fog swirled, and the children shivered, tears clinging to their faces and moisture beading their hair. They could feel the darkness creeping through the mist.

“It’s coming,” said Anna. The three of them moved closer together. None of them liked to hear their fears spoken aloud.

“Maybe mother can help us,” said Zachary.

“What will we do if mother never comes back?” asked Judy, in an unfamiliar, uncertain tone.

“She will come back,” insisted Anna. “She must.”

They stared around them. They could see the darkness now. It had retreated from the day, but was now rapidly advancing again.

“I want mother,” whispered Zachary.

“Mother!” Judy shouted. “Don’t be afraid! Come back! We miss you!”

“Help us!” called Anna.

The mist swirled. The darkness seemed to flow, like a smooth, black, river. And then there was mother. She was there, in a patch of fog, watching them.

“Mother!”

But she turned and ran, and the children raced after her, shouting desperately. They could feel the gathering darkness that seemed to have taken the warmth and joy from the world, and was now after them. Mother

ran, and the mist filled in the space behind her, but the children knew they couldn’t stop. They wouldn’t let her vanish again.

And then there was nothing. The fog vanished, and they felt the darkness stop, as if trapped, as if it could go no further, while they continued forward. They couldn’t see

mother, but they knew she was there.

The world slowly changed. A shape began to solidify. A house, appearing from nothing. A warm, blue sky swirled into existence, and soft grass was suddenly there, beneath their shoes. The house was yellow and blue, with a porch and cheerful windows, and standing in front was mother, smiling and holding out her arms. The children didn’t hesitate. They knew for a fact, as they had known all along, that she was mother. They didn’t know if she was their real one, but somehow she seemed right. They ran to her. She hugged them all as the sounds of hooting monkeys filled the air and pink birds swooped through the sky.

“I’m glad you’re back,” said mother, her blue eyes shining. “I’m glad you’re home.” ■



Prologue: Legacy

by Kaitlin Milos

LAND, FAMILY, HONOR, AND PRIDE: these four legacies matter most to my breed. Land because it is what we were born to protect. Family because they are the only ones you can truly depend on to teach you the ways of our world. Though they may abandon you, they raised you to be strong enough to survive on your own. Honor and pride because it is what separates us from the other beasts.

My kind. We have survived for generations through war and peace, through famine and disease. Our forms are of two species. Man, the “intelligent” species and the wolf, the strongest canine.

Sometimes through the years we

have been referred to as werewolves. The Hollywood renditions of my kind are truly amusing, extracted from the misinterpreted discoveries of us.

However, the difference between human horror films and reality is that we are very much alive and living among humans everyday. We will continue to do so until we eventually die out or flourish; our future is undecided, as is that of the human race.

I just wonder if it is their fate that ours ebbs and flows with like the ocean tide. I hope not because the fifth legacy is survival and like the other four, we will do what is necessary to maintain it.

CHAPTER ONE

Empty Moon

In my white wolf form, the countryside was only a blur of fading greens that were in the midst of turning into the golds and rusts of autumn. The night air was cool, as it would continue to become steadily over the next few weeks until winter dawned with the first snow fall.

I came to the top of a hill, overlooking my pack’s land for miles, on the eastern border of our land. Nighttime border patrols were necessary, not particularly for the reason that we thought anyone would invade our land, but for the basic principal and protection of that land. If my family did not leave our scent over it frequently, other packs might think that they had the opportunity to run about. This was, of course, not acceptable.

New land was tempting, I admit, for a few reasons: it was new and could be explored; there were new scents, new places, new creatures. To be honest, though, I was more than content with our land. It was home.

Our land was at least two hundred acres. Mostly fields, there was, however, a wooded area just to my left, on the southern border. Thick pine trees covered the forest floor with a padding of needles. Leaves from the tall maples fluttered down like orange rain and the birch trees were ever the same white fingers standing tall against the background of green, orange, yellow and red.

I sat down on the crest of the hill, which smelled so rich of moist grasses, fertile soil, pine trees, and small vermin. Those things were wonderful to the senses, but it was instead the moon that always captivated me. It was almost full tonight, but wouldn’t be truly full





for a few days' time.

I circled a few times, padding down the grass and curled up. I crossed my paws and lay my head to rest on them. I had a perfect view of the silver moon.

It was so beautiful, and yet . . . why did it look so empty? So lonely?

When I was a cub, I used to imagine the sun and moon were friends, but I soon grew to realize that they were never truly together, though they shared the same sky. Eternally together. Forever apart.

I felt my eyes grow steadily

heavier. I had not slept for four days straight. The moon had kept me awake, but there was something else. I had the feeling that something was coming. Something that would change my life. I was anxious. Not hopeful, nor fearful, but restless.

The wind blew and I felt the scent return. There had been a scent on the wind for the past four days, only adding to my sleeplessness. A scent I could only just barely resist. I wanted to chase after it; find it. It smelled like hope and something nice . . . something almost

companionable.

I sighed. It was probably only passing through. I would never know what it was and it would be gone by the end of the week.

Rolling over, I exposed my belly to the sky. Though this position would have been construed as a white flag of surrender in a scrap, it meant nothing now: there was no one else around to see it.

I nodded off. This didn't surprise me, after all, five days of no sleep was pushing the limit.

Did I forget my name? It is Molly. Molly Candith. While human, I have long silver-blond hair, blue eyes, and pale skin. While in my wolf form, I am snow white with golden eyes. I don't really think one figure is better than the other, just different in their own ways. I think my biggest problem, if I thought about it, would be if someone asked for my picture, I would not know which one to give them: the young girl or the young wolf. They're both me and then, they're both not.

I'm one hundred and nineteen

“ This institute has been a life-changing experience. It fosters an environment that allows a writer to be creative and expressive. I am so grateful for an opportunity that has allowed my writing to grow and progress. ”

— *Kate Berner*

years old... in “dog years”. In human years, do the math: I’m seventeen. Though I’ve heard each dog year actually counts as a little less as they grow older, counting by sevens is fine for me. I mean how cool is it to be one nineteen? Very.

Anyway, back on that hill.

So I had drifted off. When I woke, I had turned over on my side, with my back to the border, facing the moon. The scent had hit me and it was strong. Too strong, or more practically, too close.

I got up and looked about.

At first, I saw nothing, but soon spotted what I had sensed. About fifty yards from my spot on the hill, there

was a midnight black wolf slinking towards a rabbit: one of my rabbits.

Rabbits weren’t my pets, nor did I have any claim on any particular rabbit. The rabbit was on my family’s land, which made it my rabbit.

Moving a few steps towards him, I was about to bark, warning him to back off, but it got caught in my throat. He smelled like the scent I had picked up and I didn’t want to scare him away if it was really him. However, as he moved in, my instincts kicked in, leaving all thought of companionship behind.

I let off a howl that echoed across the hills and came back even after I had lowered my snout. The black

wolf stared up at me, glanced towards where the rabbit had probably disappeared, and then back up at me. He lowered his head, disappointed. Then he started coming in my direction.

I backed up a bit, unintentionally, because I didn’t know what to do. Usually when a wolf was warned, he took the clue and left. Why would he come closer? I thought I had made it clear he wasn’t welcome here, especially after stalking food on my land.

As these thoughts ran through my head, the midnight wolf had made it up the hill and then stood before me, too close for comfort, but I barely noticed. Instead, I was trapped in his eyes. They were as bright as the clear sky on a sunny day, but as deep as two diamond-cut sapphires. They sparkled in the silver moonlight.

He took a step closer, his mouth slightly open, his head hunched so he wouldn’t seem threatening. He did come too close, though. I growled and he backed away. Counter productive, but I backed up and growled again. He turned and started to walk away. When he hadn’t gone more than five paces, he turned to look back at me. I sat perfectly still, afraid to move. I was afraid to do something, but afraid to do nothing, so I stared. I was almost positive that the scent I had picked up was coming from this wolf.

What was I supposed to do?

He snuffed at me, then blew out forcefully through his nose. I cocked my head, because I didn’t really understand even though he was my own species, I couldn’t understand. This was confusing.

Without another sign, he turned around again and padded down the hill and away, leaving me sitting there, with only my lonely moon for company. ■



The Chapel

By Emily Nichols

A designed provocation distends itself through the cracks of light in the door frame when all I really want for this one breathless moment is early darkness and husks of what's left of the day to bare through uneven window panes and catch pieces of the corners and teach me everything there is about dust I want the taste of chalk on my tongue, to be read and to be written, to impress myself into the roof and be weathered and seasoned and bleached with age, plunge both hands into years of looking at tree tops and sky, gawking up from below with the deliberation of all those stones, unwavering in their rows of worn fury so that I can be wise in the way that only antique chairs and backs of closets can and

shed some sort of anything on all the places I walk today when rounding a corner, I will be immersed in the softened edge of understanding while all things new are busy getting old and I am left reaching out and finding the laziness of rocking chairs and mornings I am waiting for someone to tell me their secrets and to assure me that they feel as much self-worth and less as I

do and that they too are waiting for the night to brim over with deserving ideas and promises that there is one measly cool handshake in me, one wrenching look, one song, an answer because for now I just want to bury myself in piles of newspapers and good books and broken glasses until I rot into someone that can say goodbye and mean it. ■

“The NYSSYWI is great because it provides a lenient environment to write and meet people just like you.”



One Armed Boxer

by Mollie O'Brien

At first we dance around the ring,
delicate, focused,
trying not to step on each other's toes.
A bell sounds and we move in.

We battle with adjectives and verbs.
You try to advance. Hypocrite.
Liar.
The blood boils in my veins.

Your accusations are a succinct
jab to my heart,
My truthful retorts are a left hook
straight to your ego.
We both fall down.
I retreat to my corner, grasping for the ropes.
But you are persistent. Bruised
and bloody you keep coming back,
round after round.
Each time we are weaker than the last.



Zeda

by Bobby O'Connor

“HI ZEDA, HOW ARE YOU?” SAID THE milkman.

“Yeah, it’s probably gonna rain tomorrow.”

That is how most conversations with my great grandfather started. He had lost most of his hearing by the time his hair finished turning gray, but he refused to acknowledge it by getting a hearing aid.

“By the way, you still owe me some money from last week.”

“Stupid, greedy capitalist pigs! Always want more money to fund their damn wars instead of helping their own people! If Trotsky was still alive . . .”

Zeda had been secretary of the Communist Party in Boston before senility kicked in, and the FBI had watched his house during the Red Scare.

Unfortunately, none of this helped him read lips in the slightest.

“So, how are the kids?”

“Oh, I can’t stand it. If they lose one more time, I’m just gonna burn down Fenway myself. It’s just the Yankees, for crying out loud, they can’t be that good. I mean, they’re from New York.”

Most conversations with Zeda continued in the same way they started. Even a deaf Bostonian knew where any conversation would invariably end up, and Zeda usually decided it was safest to go there immediately.

“Yeah, I know what you mean. And it’s so expensive now.”

“The entire game would be so much better if they let Jews run it, and if they stopped trying to make a profit. Capitalist schmucks.”

Along with being a radical Marxist, Zeda was also a proud unorthodox Jew.

“But I still love going to see them. Been to any games lately?”

“I remember during the

Depression when I could have gone to a game and then a movie afterward for what my grandson makes in an hour. Now it costs more than what he gets in a week for a hot dog. What kind of chutzpah do you need to pull a stunt like that?”

Zeda knew all about chutzpah. One time, he was working as the maintenance man at a summer camp in the middle of nowhere. He decided to take a walk in the woods, and ended up getting lost for three days. He eventually followed a stream that serendipitously lead right to the camp, and immediately went back to work as if nothing had happened.

“I know, it’s obnoxious. Have you actually been to any games lately?”

“Well yeah, my family does know a lot about chutzpah. Last week, the principal of that grammar school down the street called my daughter-

in-law because Kennet was terrorizing the kids when they walked home. He’s four, and now they have to lock him in the house every day at three so kids twice his age don’t get scared.”

Yiddish doesn’t have a “th” sound, so most of the older family members pronounced my Uncle Kenny’s full name incorrectly. Zeda was an exception however, in that he took pride in Kenny’s behavior. His nickname means “grandfather” in Yiddish (even though people were calling him that long before his eldest son was even married), and he tried to live up to it as best he could.

Zeda’s was also the name of the best bagel bakery on the East Coast, and he tried to help their business as best he could, too. It was the one capitalist installation that he wasn’t philosophically against, and he ate as much of their product as possible. ■

“**The only place where I feel myself growing as an author even as I fall for 13-year old girls and write about it.**

It’s an old thing, it’s a soul thing, but it’s a real thing. I do not know what the hell that means.

The only thing better than the teachers is the food. ”

— Jason Fishel

Untitled

By Lily Ringler

FOR ALL OF HIS SIXTEEN YEARS, TOBY Jacques had been wearing a cloak of guilt. Every morning after his alarm clock sounded he'd stretch sleepily and stand, taking the cloak from its hook on the back of his bedroom door. It was yellow-gray, quilted with the prickly threads of fear and denial and self-loathing. Toby would slip his arms into it gingerly, careful to cover his face completely with the immense hood and curl his toes into its bottommost folds. The thick fabric took time to dissolve into Toby's skin and he'd lie on the bed while he waited, a cold tingling starting in his stomach. After he

became numb and the guilt had spread around him and through him, he got up and went to school.

As always, the guilt was with Toby on a windy June day as he stomped through the woods at the back of his house, a fresh black eye and new belt-buckle lacerations his prizes from a run-in with his father. With both angry arms he hurled rocks and sticks and his wide brown boots made sure to crush any insects that were in his path. When his hair flopped into his eyes, he pushed it away roughly. He muttered to himself.

Today the guilt wasn't docile. It was alive and churning and singeing

the back of Toby's throat where the bile kept rising. The cloak, usually cool and bearable, had become icy and crippling. It wasn't long before Toby's body seized with the burden and he tripped on a root and fell, his protesting body crashing to the ground. "Fuck," he whispered violently. "Mother fucking son of a bitch bastard." It was a line he'd learned from his grandfather.

He pulled himself up with considerable effort, kicking the root brutally as he went. It wasn't until he finished brushing the dirt off his pants that he noticed the girl staring at him.

She was slight, with thick dark wavy hair and lips slightly parted in surprise. Her eyes, he noticed, were indigo and glinted with an emotion that was not quite fear. Her underdeveloped body showed her to be no more than fifteen. For a moment, Toby was frozen by her uniqueness, examining her scabby knees and dirty cutoff overalls and cracked green toenail polish. When his gaze traveled back up to her face, he saw that she still hadn't dropped her gaze.

Toby wiped a hand on his jeans and stuck it out into the void between them.

"Toby," he grunted after a moment, nervous heart racing.

The girl hesitated; thin pencil legs flexed and ready to run. But, slowly, her calf muscles unclenched themselves and she visibly relaxed. She took two halting steps forward and put her miniature hand into his.

"Eva Marie Hirsch," she said, her voice too loud. "My family owns these woods."

They dropped their hands quickly. "Sorry about the trespassing," he started, but she cut him off.

"No, it's no problem. I don't even know why I brought it up." She





paused. “You go to Falls High? I’ve never seen you around there.”

“No,” he replied. “Johnston School. My grandpa pays for it.”

They chatted for a while, neither of them mentioning the awkward circumstances of their initial meeting. Toby found his words flowing more easily as the conversation progressed.

“Why haven’t I seen you before?” he asked her after they’d been talking for about a half-hour. “You’ve probably been living five minutes away from me my whole life.”

She giggled, her white teeth showing. “Maybe you just didn’t look hard enough before.”

When it began to turn dark, they said goodnight. “We’ll meet here again?” asked Eva.

“Sure,” Toby replied. His insides jumped and adrenaline coursed through his body as she stepped toward him.

“Goodbye,” she said, pressing her fingers gently to the bruise over his eye, letting Toby know that she

knew: that she understood.

“Goodnight, Eva.” Her fingers moved down to squeeze his hand, and then she was gone.

As he walked home, Toby felt the cloak becoming less crippling, more bearable. When he hung it on the back of his door later that night, he realized that it was lighter than it had been before.

The next night, Toby awoke as a crash rattled the house. The guilt awoke too and the cloak rocketed across the room and clawed its way into Toby’s body before he even had a chance to reach for it. Another crash echoed and muffled sounds of a woman’s sob reached his ears. The guilt was alive as it had been in the woods and its freezing cold enveloped him again, this time paralyzing him, even as he heard the dull slap of belt buckle on flesh. A chant came from the living room in a low and defeated voice: “Stop it, Roy, please stop it. Please. Please stop.”

The guilt took on a life of its own. It was at once inside and outside

Toby’s body, devouring him while it coursed through his veins. It swam in his organs and gnawed at his heart and punched him with iron fists. Toby choked and gasped, writhing as he fought to free himself. His sister’s whimpers from the next room haunted him and the babyish cries of the two younger boys crawled under his skin. His mother’s vacant and indifferent eyes affixed themselves to the underside of his eyelids so that he saw them every time he squeezed his eyes shut. He was drowning and no matter how hard he swam he wouldn’t be able to make it to shore. His lungs were giving out and he clawed at his throat to make it open again. It was then, out of the utmost desperation of his soul, that Toby conjured from the recesses of his mind a skinny girl with scabby knees and overalls. She thrust her miniature hand into the abyss and pulled him out. He could breathe again. ■

Cornfield Madness

by Dan Savage

“No, Daniel you can’t come on the slide,” my brother Evan shouted.

Poof! I was gone; I had had it with my family. I was five years old and as I ran into the cornfield, contemplating how I could live off corn, I didn’t grasp the significance of this day for my family. I was just a kid who never wanted to see my tortuous brother, who I swear had horns at one point, or hear my parents fight in their bedroom that was no longer a resting-place for my father.

The importance of this day dwarfed the importance of the fall of the Berlin Wall or the invention of plastic. It was the biggest event in my family’s history since the divorce. My parents had divorced about three years before this date because my father was finally able to accept his homosexuality. This really isn’t much of a shocker considering my father’s affinities for Madonna, swim teams, and men. My mother was naturally angry and depressed and their relationship didn’t recover until my mother was diagnosed

with breast cancer two years later. My father was very supportive and directed her to the best oncologists at Albany Medical Center. Slowly, my mother and father’s relationship was mended and they rediscovered the friendship they had before they dated.

The day that I ran into the cornfield was the day that my father’s boyfriend was supposed to meet the rest of the family (my mother, my brother, and I). My parents decided to have the meeting take place at an ice cream shop in Vermont. A nice quiet place where the adults could talk and the kids could fight. What they hadn’t predicted was my running away when my brother bullied me. They could have easily predicted my brother being a pain in the ass, but not my running away because it was the first time that I had.

I was a very mild-mannered child. I hardly got sad or frustrated about anything, but when I did have a problem I overreacted, causing

chaos throughout the land. My running through the cornfield caused three hunger strikes, four city riots, and five people getting snacks out of vending machines for free.

So there I was, pissed off, hands crossed, sitting in a cornfield, and thinking about how I would make clothes out of the corn. I could hear them coming to take me back.

I heard a grumpy old man say, “I can hear something shuffling in the bushes.”

The new grown-up, the one dad brought with him, said “Daniel, come here.”

While it was obvious that my corn schemes were more brilliant than the plan behind the Bay of Pigs, I trusted the new guy. I can’t believe that Stefan—the new guy—stuck around. I know if I had been in his position I would have run faster than an illegal immigrant being chased by border control cops. He brought stability to our family and I am glad to call him my parent. ■



Naked Light

by Betsy Sciarolino

naked light

you are Amaterasu,
the sun goddess.

you have been
exiled to a hollow cave
where you wait in anguish as your ears
grow more angular and begin to curl in on themselves.

Your teeth decay, leaving gaps
in your crooked jaw.

Here, you hide
between the window pane
and a tight protected space of time.

You are now that which you shouldn't be,

and i wait for you outside the window
to radiate once again.

If you tell me what sensation

gallops
inside skinny sinews
and presses against them,
I may dissipate it
into the flap of skin behind my knee.

Unhinged, it will slide in
and you may be absolved.

Now I'm waiting on a melted glacier, fondling the crevice within my knee.

The glacier's melted salts dissolve and look to venus to saturate me with her nectars.

Once a single drop is released into my mouth

it expands between my naked white teeth,
but it is not enough to keep me satisfied.

I'll have to wait for Venus to catch me in her open arms

so Amaterasu may be free

and her nascent passion

may be able to grow.

When Venus catches me, she will scatter

drops along the lining

of my brow

so that i may slurp the sweet nectars she has set forth for me.

Family Values by Ryan Skrabalak

IT WAS HOT ON THE DAY OF MY GREAT grandmother's death. I remember it was hot because it was a strictly formal funeral; I was wearing a tightly fitting wool suit. The air in the church hung heavy with stale sweat and sweet myrrh incense. My cousin Kimmy was crying all day from the excessive makeup that my cousin claimed Grandma Lottie didn't want on her the day of her funeral. The undertaker had evidently put way too much mascara on her lashes, and the heat had taken its toll on them. She looked like she had just been mugged and had two ferocious black eyes to show for it.

The reception was at my grandparents' house since my grandfather's side is the Polish side. In true Polish fashion, there were three tables in the dining room: the photo table, the food table, and the vodka table. Most people would either find it odd or be straight offended by the fact that the majority of my family congregates near the vodka buffet before the photo table. This is just how it is in the Skrabalak family; the Pollocks that I am related to simply enjoy a shot or four before admiring the memories of my great grandmother that survive only in photos.

It's funny because when I stumble home at 4:30 in the morning with a bag of tortilla chips and a half-swilled bottle of Colt 45, they usually are less than happy. On this night, though, my parents are literally pulling me to the now tablecloth-soaked bar. I sidle up to the bar, my Uncle Jack speaking in furious bouts of both Ameri-Polish and drunken mumbling, and my Aunt Donna already (yes, it is possible) double fisting vodka shots.

My father whirls around to me, nearly shouting at the excitement of

nearly 10 liters of potato vodka glistening in the stained light of the dining room chandelier.

"You can have a little bit, but don't get sick," he advises.

As many other teenagers, I began to giggle slightly at my father's comment regarding my tolerance. Sometimes I wonder if he questions my ability to consume alcohol to merely cover his own ass or to actually be serious. At first, I thought I might drink a shot in celebration; it seemed like everyone was celebrating. Instead, I took a glance at the photos of my grandmother and her family. I thought of honor, and I

cliques (i.e. my cousins, sisters, and I) and the older relatives exchanged stories of Lottie, who was a mother, aunt, grandmother, or mentor to all of these people. While we kids smuggled what vodka we could find around the house (I think we even found a nearly empty bottle in the downstairs bathroom) and let the stuff burn our throats, the parents played "Pitch" and smoked cigars. After awhile, my cousins and I integrated in between the barstools of the parents and listened to our great grandmother's vivid life as told by a bunch of drunken Polish retirees and their kids.

The next thing I remembered was

“**NYSSYWI has been an opportunity for me to get away from the city, from my family, and from my daily routine to immerse myself in writing with other young writers. The people I met were all phenomenal.**”

— Tony Cheng

remembered her alpine white hair, like a beautiful intricate cobweb running pearl and iridescent over her head and her eyes, pale mountain pools that burned fierce through phonies and sinners but welcomed good hearts and kindred souls. I shook off the reminiscing and looked up to see my grandfather yelling the traditional "Nastrobie" as he took a vodka and ice to his mouth. I took my seat, fulfilling my father's wish of staying somewhat clean on bison water, and turned on the TV, with "Man vs. Wild" drowning out the Polish toasts and loud whoops.

As the night went on, the younger kids tended to hang out in their

my cousin Mike sloppily returning from a visit to the bathroom and sitting down next to me. He smiled at me, cleared his voice, and addressed the group.

"Does anyone remember when Lottie first started smoking weed?" he asked wearing a sly grin.

"Holy shit!" replies his sister Kimmy from the opposite side of the circle. "How could I forget?"

Kimmy lived in the apartment upstairs from grandma for the last four or five years of her life, and as aforementioned, was one of the most emotional people throughout the course of the day. At this point, I have a particularly wide toothy-smile unfurling. There had always

been secret conversations and snippets about this side of the family enjoying the effects of the smoked cannabis plant. This was the concrete evidence that I was searching for. And to think I had nearly given up on searching for said evidence. The conversation ensued as such:

“I remember it was about a week or so after mom found my stash,” Mike continues. Mike and the entirety of the circle turn slowly to my Aunt Donna (his mother), who is both drunkenly and nervously fidgeting in her seat. She plays it off and laughs, a very Aunt Donna-esque mannerism.

“Miiiiiiike,” she replies with a smirk, “is this really the time for . . .” She is cut short by her son, who ignores the plea to keep the reminiscing G-rated.

“She had been talking to me about it before,” he resumes, “and I brought her a half eighth and my little metal pipe. I asked her if she had ever smoked reefer before, and she kept on saying ‘no,’ and then smiling like immediately after.” He takes a swill of his drink. “So, you know, I pack it and fire it up, just sitting there with the radio on at the dining room table, and I pass it to her. She takes this huge drag, and I must have forgotten that she used to smoke cigarettes, ‘cause she totally beasts on this thing. I look over, and she starts coughing up her lungs big time, I mean like hacking and sputtering like that old Volkswagen I used to have.” He looks up; some people are giggling, some intently waiting for Mike to finish his story. Uncle Jimmy essentially yells from the far right section of the circle.

“Jesus, I miss her.” His eyes are misty as he takes a drink. Some people silently agree, nod and sip their drinks. Even more people

silently agree, nod, and pound their drinks.

Normally, I would be laughing, but this was my 85-year-old great grandmother that we were talking about. I leaned forward on my chair and simultaneously dragged my forearm through a sticky puddle of vodka tonic.

Mike spoke up again. “So she’s coughing up a storm, and I’m just sitting there at the table. To be honest, I looked over at her red puffy eyes and the smoke wafting in front of her face, and I assumed that she hated it. I walked over to the fridge to get her a glass of water, and she just lets out this huge semi-high-pitched ‘whoop.’”

Mike is cut off by the howl of my grandfathers’ laugh from his right side. How he can manage to fall off his chair, laugh like an orangutan, and avoid spilling his drink will be a skill that he will most likely take to the grave. My father, also struggling with laughter, helps him up from

the floor. The circle barely calms down, but enough to let Mike begin his account.

“Now, I had to go somewhere that day, I forgot exactly where . . .” He is interrupted yet again by someone, it may have been my Uncle Mel.

“Wonder why you forgot, Michael,” he asks bluntly. The circle erupts into a variety of drunken laughs, howls, caws, cat calls, oohs, ahhs, hiccups, and random burbles of responses to humor. Mike stops laughing (quickly, mind you) and speaks.

“OKAY, SO AS I WAS SAYING. I go to leave, and I ask grandma what she wants me to do with the half-smoked bowlpack lying on the table next to the maple syrup and napkins. She picks her head up, real slow like, and says nothing. I asked her again. ‘Grandma, what do you want me to do with the marijuana?’ She looked at me with that wrinkled stern face of hers and says, ‘Oh, you can leave it here. I ain’t done with it yet.’” ■

“**To be honest, I’ve never experienced an institute quite like this one. Most institutions keep us locked inside padded rooms, but here they let the crazies walk around in public. We could let our minds and bodies wander in and around the verdant scene. Almost no one tried to medicate us and we never encountered any imposing man-nurses. This definitely beats where I spent my last summer! Thanks to this institute, I’ve never been more proud of my own special brand of insanity.**”

— *Colin Wheeler*

Brave Those Mountain Passes

by Samantha Smith

I sing of confused gazes and eyes
darting around to piece together
the hidden puzzle.

And apprehension at not finding
the perfect fit.

Unsure footing and continuing
pretending nothing bad could happen as
I tightrope walk above a rocky death.

I write of things I pretend to know
Of judgment and being judged
Or the love
that makes a bird sing all day long.
In brilliant moments only
have I felt a love as such.

I write a fragmented mind
and with fleeting muse
Can you remember your first time at anything
Or have you done it all?

Music can overtake my brain
Reverse my thinking
And pull my body with the rhythm and sway
A little girl that isn't ashamed of her innocence
A cat who makes a special detour to rub my ankles
Whenever he walks past
A unique veil of prejudices as variant as the wind
It itches and clings or billows loose around me
Let's switch—yours for mine
No, no, mine is coming off soon enough.

Rules of Engagement

by Ben Taylor

LOOKING BACK ON ALL OF THE YEARS I've been privileged to know my family, my entire extended family, all my memories contain several key traditions.

- ◆ All family gatherings must have more members than can be counted in your head.
- ◆ Warm weather gatherings must contain a rousing game of bocce ball. We all love each other and all that crap, but there just isn't anything like a little family competition.
- ◆ Flatulence and flatulence-based humor is a must.
- ◆ Big gatherings such as Christmas, Easter, and the Super Bowl must include obscure relatives from out of state. To these relatives you are required to adorn yourself with a giant, extra-toothy smile and exchange pleasantries for several minutes before quietly excusing yourself to look for a guest list. Since there is never a guest list, you must go to the next best source.
- ◆ Once you have found your mom, you point to the blood stranger from across the room and ask, "who the hell is that?" Sadly, your Gramma will have been standing next to Mom when you said H-E-double-hockey-sticks and you will receive a slap on the arm or upside the head for your vulgarity on a holy day (or simply because she is twitchy). You'll point out that you've heard far worse and receive another slap for your insolence.
- ◆ Mealtime: everyone lines up as if in imaginary pews and with

solemn procession, grabs food from the numerous platters and then segregates. Anyone under 30 is banished to the living room while those over 40 are allowed to sit at the dining table in self-appointed "thrones." Those in between drift from room to room like lost souls wandering through purgatory. Eventually the gates are opened by either group, welcoming these pilgrims in. After mealtime, there is more quiet conversation.

- ◆ The cardinal rule: You must trip over Gramma at least twice each reunion, to and from your rush to the bathroom. Hastily, you show signs of awe and humility,

genuflecting. Gramma absolves you only after you have received penance. Slap!

Just how serious are these rules? Here's an example. It's my fourteenth Christmas. In the dining room I can hear the sounds of the older generation at worship, making reverent "goo, goo, ga, ga" sounds to eight month old Michaela. Where is her mother? Fallen from grace, eating with all us sinners on the congregation B list. Farewells are backward hellos. I've forgotten certain names once more and so I'm forced to say, "so nice to see you again," and, "goodbye, you over there by the wall." "Goodbye Gramma!" Slap! ■



7am
by Jillian Towne

You, you are capital punishment

You are mothers scolding and infants screaming
You are ominous clouds and portent cats and stop lights.

You are peeling paint
on baseboards and screens that let bugs in. You
are too much salt and not enough oil.

You act boldly and without mercy,
Never tip-toe-ing, always stomping around on my brain stem and down my spine.

You are toothy children and pageant moms and telemarketers.
You are the door to door visitors, and the mailman who never came. You are Sunday evening and Tuesday morning.

You are like an off key voice, relentless and belligerent.
You are the vein on my father's forehead, the singsong
in my mother's voice

You are leaky bottles and broken glass and
tepid bathwater.

You are skinned knees and natural disaster.

You, you are death

You are anger and you deceive me

You are beating my head against the wall, bringing me to water, not allowing me to drink.
You are dictators and minions and preachers. You force me to believe. You are pick-up lines and saccharine pleasures
and arsenic and invisible ink.

You are unhappy birthdays and sour apples and whisper kisses. You
are like sirens signaling a car crash in another world. You
are the day the music died.

You, you are the whistle of a train.
Last stop dreamland, next stop reality.

Memoirs of a Fragment

by Colin Wheeler

“One more time and you’re gone!” his father shouted.

Jerry Marceau finished his Popsicle. His dad had given him some money. The moment he heard the music of the ice cream vendor Jerry got two dollars from his father without so much as a grunt. Normally his father pinched pennies so tight, they would scream. Jerry didn’t question why he had received this generous helping of change for very long, however. It was a victory for Jerry . . . though looking back his victory seemed short lived. Now Jerry had a small piece of flat wood. He tried chewing on it, but the stick made his tongue feel funny and assaulted his taste buds with an unpleasant plasticky taste. He threw it to the neighbor’s terrier, who was paying a visit from the Johnson’s yard. The dog began to chew with vigor; he guarded his prize carefully. Jerry climbed the stoop and reentered his own house, the flimsy screen door banging behind him.

The sun had turned the staircase orange as it sank below the line of black trees. The clock indicated the time: half past eight. Jerry knew he had to go to bed in thirty minutes, but he hoped that his father’s current preoccupation would somehow allow Jerry to stay up later than usual. At first, he couldn’t locate his father’s whereabouts. His father clearly wasn’t watching television or working on something in the garage.

“So help me, this is the last time!” his father bellowed. The walls seemed to hum several seconds after the exclamation. The silence protested its broken state. Half way up the stairs, Jerry stood still. His father’s cry had sounded like an angry bear. Jerry knew that his father yelled a lot lately. Even when they were not directed at Jerry, he

disliked violent outbursts. Jerry climbed the stairs and walked to the right, beyond his bedroom and a broom closet, curious to see what had attracted his father’s rage, following the nasty exclamations.

“Jesus!”

Mister Johnson walked out to find Roger chewing on a discarded Popsicle stick in the Marceau’s front yard. He had stepped out onto the lawn, perhaps to listen to the birds or enjoy some music on his tinny old radio. He opened the gate of the fence that separated their yards, frowning at the shallow hole Roger had used to climb through. Roger looked defensive. He started to angle himself away from Mister Johnson, sliding his belly around to conceal the stick. Mister Johnson had already spotted it, however. Taking the woody fragments away, he threw them in the trash bin. Roger looked indignant. “Honestly, Roger, you shouldn’t eat those. You’ll get splinters in your stomach.” Mister Johnson stroked his thinning comb-over nervously. Staring at the

darkening sky, he curled his toes inside his sandals and straightened his horn-rimmed glasses.

“What were you yelling at, Daddy?”

Somewhat surprised, Mister Marceau looked up. Jerry had caught his father, garbed in a sweat stained undershirt and blue striped boxers, sitting alone in front of the family’s aging sewing machine. Jerry surveyed the scene uncertainly. Hair spiked from constant nervous sweeps of the hand, eyes bloodshot, hands shaking, Mister Marceau gave all the appearances of a defeated man.

Before, when Mrs. Marceau had decided to turn the sort of large closet into a sewing room Mister Marceau had seemed skeptical. But she had taken the shelves out herself and had put in some pink vertically striped wallpaper and a nice lamp. She had managed to cram in a table and a small sewing machine. Somehow, she had made the room work; her small body and slender hands had made the room feel strangely cozy. Jerry had liked it there. But Mister Marceau, his

“**At Silver Bay, I grew. Surrounded by talented people and beautiful scenery, it was impossible to not produce good work. The people here are amazing. I didn’t hear a single piece of bad writing—just great writing—which peers and faculty helped make even better.**”

— *Jillian Towne*

“ This program truly inspires me to grow, not only as an author but as a person, expanding my horizons until I get every point of view possible. I may not agree with everyone, but it’s interesting to hear them anyway. Everyone is either eccentric or learns very quickly. ”
— *Francis Dieterle*

shoulders large and sloping, his stubble mixing with sweat, made the space feel small and ridiculous. The horizontal blue stripes on his boxers fought vengefully with the wallpaper.

On the table, Jerry saw his father’s shirt, its cotton tangled tightly in the

mechanical arm and needle. A rip that his mother easily could have mended now lay botched, gaping, and frayed on the tiny plastic table. “It just wouldn’t let go.” Mister Marceau murmured softly. He stood to his full height and had to duck to get out of the small room. “I’m

sorry; I didn’t mean to upset you.”

Jerry looked up numbly at him.

“Where did mom go?”

The sun had at last descended completely, casting the world into a dull blue gray. Mister Johnson sat in his rocking chair on the porch outside of his house. He sipped his steaming coffee. Roger sat quietly on his lap. Mister Johnson watched the street lights flicker on. Beyond the fence, the Marceau’s house had turned dark, except for the flicker of a television set occasionally illuminating the face of Mister Marceau and his son upon his lap. Smiling, dog on lap, Mister Johnson took a long sip from his ceramic mug. Roger’s stomach grumbled unceremoniously.

“Well, old boy, good to see you’ll be okay . . . not now, but soon.” ■



**New York State
Summer Young Writers Institute Participants
Summer 2007**

Katherine Berner
Smithtown

Hannah Bewsher
Watervliet

Katherine Bosek-Sills
Rochester

Nicholas Brigadier
Albany

Anthony Cheng
Rego Park

Laura Colaneri
Troy

Michele Colley
Wappinger Falls

Rachel Daly
Peru

John Francis Dieterle
Delmar

Jason Fishel
Niskayuna

Elizabeth Hennessy
Watervliet

Adah Hetko
Boght Corners

Malcolm Lasky
Chatham

Elisa Leiva
Guilderland

Carly L'Ecuyer
Valatie

Emma Loy-Santelli
Delmar

Jenny Marion
Schenectady

Kaitlin Milos
Troy

Emily Nichols
Rochester

Mollie O'Brien
Troy

Bobby O'Connor
Delmar

Lily Ringler
Ballston Lake

Daniel Savage
Delmar

Betsy Sciarolino
Delmar

Ryan Skrabalak
Delmar

Samantha Smith
Albany

Ben Taylor
Hoosick Falls

Jillian Towne
Greenwich

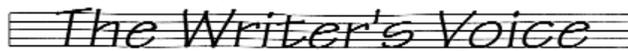
Colin Wheeler
Niskayuna



In 2004 the New York State Writers Institute celebrated its 20th Anniversary. Created in 1984 by the state legislature to draw attention to writing and the artistic imagination across the state, the Institute has emerged as one of the premiere sites in the country for presenting the literary arts. Over the course of two decades the Institute has sponsored readings,

lectures, panel discussions, symposia, and film events which have featured appearances by over 800 artists—including six Nobel Prize winners, and 90 Pulitzer Prize winners—and has screened more than 550 films, from rare early prints to sneak previews of current releases. The Institute is a major contributor to the educational resources and cultural life at the University at Albany, where it is located, as well as the surrounding community. It is also identified by the writing and publishing communities as a place dedicated to promoting serious literature, where writers and their work are held in high esteem, where being an invited guest is considered an honor, and where talking about books is celebrated as the best conversation in the world.

Further information about Writers Institute programs may be obtained from its website at: www.albany.edu/writers-inst.



The Writer's Voice of the Silver Bay YMCA of the

Adirondacks is a member of the National Writer's Voice network of literary arts centers located at YMCA's across the country. Established in 1991 through a major Lila Wallace Reader's Digest grant, the Writer's Voice has created a permanent literary arts center in the Adirondack region of New York State. The Writer's Voice provides public programs that enrich all sectors of its community. The Readings by the Bay reading series, workshops with accomplished writers, and Writers-in-the-Schools arts in education programs are the main components of the Writer's Voice.

Silver Bay YMCA of the Adirondacks is a century-old YMCA conference and training center situated on a 700-acre campus on the western shore of Lake George in the Adirondack Park in northern New York State.

Further information about the Silver Bay YMCA may be obtained from its website at: www.silverbay.org.

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The Writer's Voice

