



# MISSISSIPPI CROW

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Art, Humor, Poetry, and the Pleasures of a Writer's Life

A woman with long, wavy hair, wearing a shimmering golden dress, stands in a field of glowing flowers at night. The scene is illuminated by a soft, golden light, creating a dreamlike atmosphere. The background is dark, with the glowing flowers providing the primary light source. The woman is looking slightly to the right, and her expression is serene. The overall mood is peaceful and magical.

## Even songs

Dusk begins to crawl across the sky  
and curtains fall, their rustled sighs whisper  
night's coming and stir the melody  
of evensongs, the chord of day's reflections.  
Quiet moon, implored to climb its lofty ladder,  
bides its time...softly tapping  
its misty fingers, waking napping stars,  
to the rhythm that lingers within...  
and moon begins its timely rising  
climbing slowly, baptizing Earth  
with illuminate glow...and the night  
plays on while wakened stars tiptoe...  
and shimmer to the music of evensongs.

Myrna D. Badgerow



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—Nadia Giordana—Kasun, Publisher



Image Art—NGK

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The Mississippi Crow magazine takes its name from its location—near the confluence of the Mississippi and Crow rivers in Dayton Minnesota. We publish artwork, poetry, short stories, articles and essays (on a variety of subjects). To see our guidelines, go to: [www.MississippiCrow.com](http://www.MississippiCrow.com).

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## Rereading

As old age gets a firmer grip on me  
I find I read good books over and over  
I faithfully write the date inside the cover  
and even though I recall the plot  
the words are new and comforting  
and I remain amazed at how much  
I have forgotten

—Mickey Ferris

## Life As Simple As

The smells of an Alaskan morning  
so precious as they are

Glorious mountains reaching tall  
and green as far as I can see

Miniature flowers adorn my feet  
as I stand alone

As I enrich in the glory  
of an Alaskan morning

—Theresa Austin

#117  
Using slow courses  
Turtles,  
Wise about haste,  
Cross centuries

#195  
Diving bomber fly,  
Fried by flame  
Of the candle,  
Surprise suicide.

#33-S  
Beaver's work ethics  
Union and balance forever  
Putting the bite on.

#27-S  
Sunshine zipped through the  
Wires as you said hello,  
The receiver blushed.

#22582  
Dog nosing the wind  
With hair pressed flat  
To the skin,  
Passing car sculpture.

—Jan Mihock

## Walking around Como Lake on such a Sunny Day

Lots to see on a day  
where two sets of twins  
were being strolled by  
and had no hats to shield them  
from so much, I shook my head  
and with a smile wanted to tell someone  
why I'd never have a child.

So many fowl here, and turtles  
collared with a red slash  
as if they were survivors  
of some gruesome event—  
some call winter just that  
but today that season seems  
as gone as an old war that we never stop  
remembering but easily forget.

Oh, and I didn't have my phone  
or I'd have called my husband at work  
to say how I saw a younger than adolescent catfish  
playing near the shore—actually rolling over  
and over on its back and ducking back  
into the half-muddied water, its white broad  
neck flashing light like an aluminum can  
and I wanted to tell someone  
of my intentions to be a vegetarian.

Mostly the day jaunted along beside me  
in my unjog, like a listening friend,  
I heard moments of "um-hm," and "is that right?"  
between steps of silence  
and a bicyclist scolding another  
for going the wrong way. So lonely  
in my thoughts I walked another lap  
to see if I could spot another of the lake's  
water tenants, something like a river otter  
but rounder, a rodent, not unlike a rat  
only nicer.

—Susan Dunn

## One Way Street

Allowing myself to admit  
I love you is the most  
Difficult form of honesty  
For I must also then  
Admit your love is taken.

—Jan Mihock



Fariel Shafee

merciless you jab  
making my heart writhe in pain  
testing our karmas

—Mary Deal

children play safely  
in make believe worlds of joy  
till life teaches them

—Mary Deal

## The Hunters

Once while deep in the Amazon  
I watched the hunters dance  
With raised arms they spun in circles  
chanting hunting songs from deep in their gut

Dancing to build trust in their abilities  
There was no time to wallow in doubt  
A small gourd cup was passed around  
filled and refilled with a magical hunting potion

The potion's scientific name belongs in parentheses  
right behind the India name, chi chi doro  
somewhere on the sketch pad of my colorful past  
unplugged and left motionless for too long

The fire burns through the night  
hunters dance and chant and wave their arms  
Women sit and watch in anticipation of the feast  
No one seems to mind me being there

Dawn lights the way for the hunters  
carefully making their way into the jungle  
poison arrows waiting in leather sheaths  
on the backs of the brave men who wear them

Spears and blow guns held securely  
sights have been set and goals reached  
The men return slowly to the village  
burdened by the weight of the kill

Women prepare the feast for the tribe  
while the men bathe down in the river  
I sit and write about what I saw  
inhaling the aroma of fresh meat cooking

—Jim Nasium

## Inner Woman

She tends to think of  
The aspects I miss  
But sorely need to face,  
Subtly guiding my mind  
To the light that shines  
In exclusively for me. No  
Vain and bent egos here  
Or grandiose gestures, no  
Gallopings envious pangs.

She...is the me I *could* be,  
If only I would listen!

—Jan Mihock

## To Materialize

For each and every thought  
A mystery and awe felt  
Like each one travels  
A psychological web work  
Through all worlds  
Looking for its counterpart  
Which is found  
When the rush of intensity and desire  
Agree and meet  
So we take care to dream  
And can't help but be creative

—Matthew Palmer

## Grounded

I have always wanted to fly  
I dream about it  
but awake  
like an overfed  
domesticated fowl  
I lift my arms and sadly  
nothing happens  
I would like to be the front guy  
for Canadian geese  
checking out rivers and lakes  
a leader of the flock  
arms extended  
skirts flowing  
like long silky feathers  
I could even honk if necessary  
I wonder if they would follow  
a little old lady  
or complain  
and head in a different direction  
leaving me to lead myself  
with nothing better to do but  
drop on my roof  
like an unwanted pigeon  
inspect the chimney  
thump the sewer pipe  
and check all the mystery places  
A roof has  
that elude me  
because I can not  
get off the ground

—Mickey Ferris



## Reading Her New Poems

I want to like them  
and I will. They are  
her fingers, the hem  
of her skirt, lowered,  
rising, a scrim what  
matters goes on  
behind. She is on  
spike heels, each  
verb a risk but  
hip, new staggering  
past the camera.  
I could be trying on  
clothes I rarely  
wear, wools. But  
she likes them,  
I'll like them. The  
rash my lover takes  
as a sign of  
passion comes from  
what is not me  
trying to be me

—Lyn Lifshin



The photographs (above and opposite) were taken April 4th 2007 near the Elm Creek Park Reserve in Champlin, Minnesota. Unseasonably cold temperatures coupled with windy conditions sprayed water from Diamond Lake onto surrounding vegetation, forming unique ice sculptures. Photographer—Brittany Mabusth.

## The Edge

The rhythm is like a sultry dance.

The blade sets its edge to the stone, is drawn across the surface  
sharpens to an edge that parts silk in a whisper.  
The hand holds the blade and draws forth the keenest edge  
with the hone and leather to touch.

A sunbeam is split on the shiny surface, sending shattered beam  
Thousands of light years away, cutting through to night  
to future and past.

This blade has passed from hand to hand, generation to generation.  
The carbon steel a gift less than attractive, but it takes an edge that will split hairs.  
Hand oils of greats,  
Grandfather/Grandmother/Mother/Father/Son/Me  
have mixed with the honing oil,  
found pleasure in the sound the blade makes as it crosses the stone.  
Another touch with the steel, again across the leather,  
Held up to the light and again.  
The beam splits/fractures/parts the curtain, sending memories across the barrier  
Of now and then.

—Margaret Flint Suter

## Perpetual Thought

I once asked what love was  
Closing my eyes, sinking deep, I searched  
My mind tumbled into perpetual thought

I saw shapes, colors, figures  
Out of darkness I saw a light  
Burning my eyes, it beckoned to me

I walked toward the light, and saw love  
Packaged in a yellow box  
wrapped tightly with a blue bow  
I ran, not wanting to know the truth

I realized that love can't be packaged  
Perpetual thought can't always show truth  
Love can be seen only through the heart

—Nicole Koroshec  
Previously published in the Noyze,  
a webzine dedicated to art



## Faces On A Bus

face on a bus,  
 passing by,  
 nameless,  
 stares out the framed window,  
 frozen like skeleton bone—  
 boredom nibbling away at his time.

—Michael Lee Johnson

## Blog Entry 3.20.07

Shrink me down to a miniature me,  
 a version of me you can barely see  
 unless you look very close.

The kind of small that's easily lost,  
 but if it was me you came across,  
 I'd climb inside your hand.

I'd walk along your fingerprints  
 and pick out all the dirt you missed  
 when you washed your hands of me.

—Mark Swickley

## Impressionism

Like water, night cascades  
 washing daylight away.  
 My window is a canvas—  
 a sunset by Monet.

Caked viridian hills  
 embrace the crimson sky  
 as brush-worked willows reflect  
 in the river each sigh.

Slack shadows tar the land  
 paving on what's in sight—  
 in swirls of purple and blue  
 buds the burgeoning night.

The prismatic twilight  
 displayed one hour ago,  
 displaced by Ursa Major  
 conceives a dark Van Gogh.

—Shawn Nacona-Stroud

## The Treatment

Gamma rays are like  
 Blue-blooded snakes:  
 Everywhere—

They're under the  
 Lampshades, and  
 Under the chairs.

We open the windows,  
 And they blow in  
 On the air;

Gamma rays are like  
 Blue-blooded snakes:  
 Everywhere.

We have tried to  
 Continue as though  
 Nothing's new,

But we're rattling the  
 Cupboards and shaking  
 Our shoes,

And beating the  
 Bedcovers in morning's  
 Bright blue—

Gamma rays fill the  
 Cupboards, and weigh down  
 Our shoes.

At nighttime, we rest,  
 After prayer and a  
 Kiss,

The lie being that, for  
 Now, nothing's  
 Amiss,

We lay motionless,  
 Trapped, and the room is  
 Ahiss.

—Rhonda C. Poynter

## Bridges

Hesitant footsteps  
 Reclaiming yesterday's dreams  
 Chasing memories  
 Forgotten once in time's deceit  
 Crossing those broken bridges

—Myrna D. Badgerow

## Cracked Mirrors

I could see a  
Man studying me  
From across the room.  
At first he appeared  
As another simulacrum,  
Flimsy and vague.  
Squinting, I realized  
He was just a reticent  
Laissez-faire observer  
Leering at me through  
Cracked lenses.  
Face etched with  
Antithetical lines,  
He was quietly  
Studying me.  
Considering my present  
Frame of mind, I was  
Sure he was viewing  
Me as an inconsolable  
Man burdened emotionally  
From too many years  
Spent trying to achieve  
Far-flung imaginings.  
While pondering his  
intentions  
His expression turned insulting.  
Infuriated, I decided to mirror  
His obviously sordid behavior.  
Within seconds my spine  
Stiffened sharply.  
Mutely staring,  
A wash of stony  
Expressions painted  
The moment flawed.  
It was obvious now  
That he considered  
Me another dupe of  
Insoluble treachery.  
It was also obvious  
That he had branded  
Me - hoodwinked -  
With disparaging  
Cerebral prejudice.

Both faces had utter  
Contempt for the other,  
And both faces were  
Fixed on the other  
In resigned loathing.  
I recoiled at the  
Visions flickering  
Eerily in pretense.  
Watching in dismay,  
I began discerning  
The works of an

Honest mans life  
Writhing in anguish  
On the barren slab  
Of skewed apathy.  
Posturing helplessly  
A squall rose up and  
Sails of remorse  
Billowed open.  
Shedding tears,  
I saw the other  
Doing the same.  
Moving forward  
I watched the other  
Doing exactly the same.  
Reaching out with my hands,  
The other mimicked me precisely.  
In sudden horror I realized  
That this other was not  
Another at all - it was a  
Reflection of my own self

—Richard Lloyd Cederberg

## He Was Better Than Chocolate

more real  
than a flesh man  
breathing in my  
sheets. Of all  
the cyber lovers  
he was the  
best at seduction  
“took you to bed  
with your poems”  
he wrote and  
I felt my skin burn,  
my thighs go  
ravenous. What  
he didn't say,  
an aphrodisiac  
no flesh could  
compete with

—Lyn Lifshin

## Blue Velvet

The early rain surrenders her icy soul to frigid tombs  
where she is dressed in blue velvet.  
He offers her his latest test of will and endurance  
through a generation of deceitful buckets,  
because he wants to vanquish her hungry watts  
who ignite passionate waves of soot  
inside her diseased troughs.  
Somber melodies pour into my destitute cup  
and parch my throat raw with every sip I take.  
For drowning in her warm embrace is the fortitude  
he sought out during his dying days of agony and defeat.

—Kiki Stamatiou



Hawaiian Beach—Mary Deal



## Deer in Arden Hills

I have nothing to say for the rest of the summer  
but the deer are still plodding through  
their paths. Could I take some advice  
from a six point buck? I've told him he doesn't  
stand a chance around my husband,  
but he seems to think he's got one up on me,  
holding solidly immobile -  
he's his own "Grecian Urn."  
How did he know to live here?  
The neighbor's apples rotting  
and so much foliage surrounding  
the marsh please him. I imagine him  
bedding down under the tired pines,  
hoofing the needles to his liking,  
his antlers never getting caught  
in the low limbs.

-Susan Dunn

## Tangerine

Deep orange describes it best  
Not the pale of lemon  
Or the original's neutral  
Orange is not enough for this one  
Similarities abound  
But never reach imaged levels  
Picturing the possible  
The attainable  
From a different citrus  
Peeling outer layers easily  
Bathing in fragrance quietly  
Soft bareness of delicious promise  
Its unforgettable taste  
More the brain than the tongue  
How to entice a treat from the whole  
Share samplings  
Know sweet intoxication  
After introduction to a first ever  
Tangerine

-F. William Broome

## Dreams Deferred

The fragrance of dreams deferred  
still lies on the damp February air.  
It catches at the back of the throat,  
moist, softened wood,  
smoked framing timbers,  
charred cabinet trim.

The slumped Victorian crumbles,  
fired dowager hump  
shows blackened rafters  
against the azure sky.

Again, the taste sits on the tongue as  
bitter and choking as the day  
the flames tasted the Christmas gifts,  
found them delicious  
and gorged upon them.

-Margaret Flint Suter



Photo-Mary Deal

## Naked Night In The Tropics

Moonlight glistens on the frosted jalousies  
making them seem like bars on the windows,  
but horizontal and scintillating, very freeing,  
as tradewinds waft into the room  
and billow the curtains.  
The smell of rain,  
a downpour that cleanses  
as it traipses past.  
I breathe in response,  
hear the rhythm of the lapping surf,  
and lay spread eagle, uncovered,  
falling asleep knowing moonlight  
will slow dance across my bed,  
washing over my naked body,  
with its rhythm as the moon shifts  
in the sky  
projecting a square of radiance  
through one window then another  
that distorts and elongates  
as the reflection slips  
around the room  
then becomes lighter with the rising sun;  
moonlight awash with sunlight merging,  
when I'll wake and rise and walk into the glowing  
and stretch in a bath of light.

-Mary Deal

Originally appeared in Mary's first novel, *The Tropics*

## In Regard To A Poet's Birthday

The years whistle best  
in their own unruly meter.

Like flawlessly planned  
intentions  
not all of their lines  
have agreed to rhyme.

Once, inside a net  
crusted over with indigo pearls  
I caught a thousand crystal echoes  
of gnostics sailing their souls  
across an ocean  
of overheated eternity  
and to this day I funnel  
that fire through silvered tongue  
and gold plated cells.

Funny how a mountain  
can sing like a choir or a  
single syllable shock like a baptism.  
Gifts of hope washed clean  
in a lake of platinum ages.

If life is a birthday cake  
let my face be smeared  
with its icing of cognac and kindness.  
Inside the flickering  
of a candle's bright laughter  
let me breathe a scent of themes  
well chosen and well loved.

—Aberjhani

## The First Day Without

first, she was  
almost gone.  
She was in my  
arms. We did  
not stop for  
baby food,  
wanted to keep  
her warm. I  
think of my  
mother a hot  
muggy August  
afternoon shiver-  
ing. We couldn't  
tell. She was past  
food. It was  
like with my  
mother, so still  
I couldn't tell.  
They were both  
with me. Then  
I was dreaming  
about them

—Lyn Lifshin

## A Fat Man and His Lamppost Lunch

Fat guy eats a lamppost,  
listen to me  
cause you got to hear this.

He unscrews the pieces.  
Removes the wiring  
like he'd de-bone a fish; then saws  
the sections into bite-size chunks.

I swear. I do, I do.

Something disturbs his heart.  
A lost love?  
He's not wise about  
dealing with money;  
his food budget has shriveled  
to pocket lint.  
He's addicted to Neosporin.

And the blood, the blood drips  
from the canines. Crazy yellow teeth!  
Gnashing and crashing teeth.

We smell him: oily-skunky,  
a smell that soaks into the soul.

If he's hungry for something  
other than attention,  
why doesn't he hide?  
Why doesn't he eat this way,  
if he must eat this way,  
in the dark?

No, not him,  
he sits smack in the middle of town  
and consumes the light  
that might have guided us home.

—Henry Louis Shifrin

## To Dream Awake

I tucked my pillows all around  
So not to feel alone  
Into the dead quiet of night  
I ached for you into my bones  
My yearning pierced each silent wail  
Into a void they groped and fell  
Until my lonely twisted aches  
Slipped me to sleep to dream awake!

—Susan K. de Vegter

Fall: Watercolor by Shawn Nacona Stroud



## Your House

I stood outside in the rain  
gazing at your house,  
our house,  
once my safe haven.  
A place of oatmeal cookies,  
a creaking porch swing,  
an ancient bonging clock,  
organ music,  
melodious humming,  
and stories of how it used to be.  
They left when you left.  
Now all that remains  
are the memories of  
a grandmother's love  
that flows from my heart  
to my pen...  
Yellowing photographs,  
delicate keepsakes,  
porcelain dolls,  
and your house,  
now their house,  
no longer ours...  
Yet you would be proud  
of how strangers have cared for  
your place,  
our place,  
once my safe haven.  
Does anyone ever really own a  
house?  
Perhaps not.  
At best it is a fleeting possession  
on the journey of life.  
The house remains.  
We don't.  
But you have left a mark  
on your house,  
on us,  
on me.  
As I stood outside in the rain,  
gazing at your house,  
I somehow knew you were there.

—Michelle Close Mills

Nature's true revenge  
rain and flood on farmer's fields  
rot and ruined crops

—Mary Deal

## Boat In A Pond

Boat in a pond  
abandoned  
without oars  
tied to a steel post  
floats on top  
of an artistic palette  
rocks sideways with  
wind,  
edges slightly  
west  
the sun sets.  
Picture on the wall.

—Michael Lee Johnson

## She

Somewhere  
she has lost  
her shadow  
and now  
she stands  
still  
with nowhere  
to go.

—Michael Lee Johnson

## Icy-eyes

Sunbeams danced on your glistening mirror-face,  
Your depths teamed with life, you pulled them to your embrace,  
Trimmed around your edges the golden iris did reside,  
And you were not controlled by the turn of any tide.

Yet summer's swift departure brought winters fettering chains,  
The air grew deathly quiet, save for the falling of harsh rain,  
And even that ceased when freezing winds got up to whine,  
Yet still I felt a compelling need to visit one more time.

What a bitter cracked expression, wizened and staring,  
With your icy-eyes you pinned me, cold and glaring,  
Fearfully I tried to move, and heard your creaking groan,  
Wind drew breath across the heath and gave its chilling moan.

One careful step too many sent out a resounding crack!  
That face was full of splinters; I daren't go forward nor turn back,  
With shattered ice about me frozen waters pulled me down,  
Alarming blackness gripped me tight, and yes, I did drown.

Now I am damned beneath the lake, condemned to my  
waters grave,  
Take heed these lines and learn from them,  
your life I just might save.

—Susan J. Ashdown

Elizabeth Crabtree





Fariel Shafee

## CRANE'S ISLAND

*By Fariel Shafee*

It was a bitterly cold midnight when I found myself alone in the middle of Crane's island. I had a shawl wrapped around me, and the thin piece of cloth struggled to stay affixed to my shoulders. I saw no structures even half a mile away as a dense layer of darkness covered the distant lights. I stood by the sea with my bare bruised feet sunken into the vast expanse of sand. The indigo water was deep, and every now and then a tide would force the blue mass right onto the shore to inundate parts of my legs. The ice cold water breathed frosty vapors on its way back to the ocean to remind me of the harshness of this fallow island far from civilization. I touched the water with my fingertip. A sharp sensation similar to that of being pricked by a needle traveled up my spine. I saw the reflection of my face in the water as I looked down. There were wrinkles under my eyes. My hair was disheveled and uncombed. I was tired and anxious. Over a hundred miles I had crossed in search of my long lost love.

\* \* \*

"Crane's Island is where you want to go," the old woman with three missing teeth and a lucid crystal ball had told me at the crossroad. Besides her own fragile bones, her ancient straw hut housed a three-legged cat and a rickety green parrot. The parrot was circling about and cat was purring, curled snugly next to her crooked walking stick as she had pointed her second finger towards the North.

"To the North?" I inquired, "But how far?"

The old woman shook her head in confusion. As I gazed worriedly at the gray northern horizon, she quietly disappeared inside her abode along with her two faithful pets.

\* \* \*

There were scarlet leaved trees on Crane's Island—redder than condensed drops of blood. The first sight of them from my vantage point created the sensation that the forest was ablaze.

Every now and then, two or three leaves detached themselves from the trees, and, having finished their tour under the auspices of the breeze, floated down onto the water like sparkling lights moving about on a mirror, giving the surreal appearance of flames dancing about on the crystalline surface.

An old wooden house stood in the middle of the rugged island. I knew it was my lover's. The grass surrounding it was tall, unplanned and spooky. The entangled green strands and the sinuous gray vines hanging from the logs nodded ominously to narrate the unseen uncertainty hidden inside. Their grave and solemn appearance did not deter me from my odyssey. I walked in confidently through the discolored broken door. A tiny black spider hung above it from its web silently anticipating my moves. The door screamed sharply as the old wooden sticks resisted my intrusion, reluctant to divulge the secret they had been guarding for so long. The air inside the verandah smelled of my lover's skin. I could see faint remnants of his footsteps marked in the dirt on the floor. Particles of dust floated about the air, hissing at me, letting me know how unwelcome I was.

No food was left in the kitchen, no furry black cat with sparkling green eyes was to be seen waiting on the pillar for his master to return. Whoever dwelled in this place had disappeared in a well-planned manner. I walked about the rooms displacing layers of dust. The wind blew in through the window carrying the sweet odor of wild exotic flowers mixed with the call of the jungle. On the kitchen counter stood a plant—half dead, starving for light. A single orange bud peeked out of the discolored leaves. It was as bright as the molten sunshine that had laved me and my lover as we made love beside the river. I could almost hear the sound of the water—jingling and then roaring—in the background of my mind. I touched the delicate flower with my finger. It offered a sense of enticement, a provocation which, if pursued, might lead to momentary bliss followed by the demise of the evanescent period. It was as ardent as the last kiss my lover had imparted on my lips.

I was in his room now, and I craved for his touch. The house, however, was barren, and my lover's message was nowhere. He had left no instructions for me, no white piece of paper pasted on the front door, or on the table or even the fridge. Disappointed, and disheartened, I inspected the entire room again and discovered a small notebook on a table in a shadowy corner. The brown, stained leather cover had a golden edging. I recognized the object from a distant past. It was a present from me to him. As I stood there with the thin notebook held close to my bosom, snapshots from the past played out inside my head. Multicolored feelings, shapes and smells all floated about me like disjointed events. I could feel them like thick clouds melting into showers merging and breaking into newer pieces, as they shrouded me from reality. Deep emotions, tightly shelved in the depth of my heart suddenly bubbled up and consumed me.

Slowly, I opened it, expecting to find clues to his whereabouts. The first page was blank, as was the second. I quickly turned more pages, my pulse quickening and my palms starting to sweat. I coveted a note, longed for a line mentioning my name. The pages smelled of newness that I detested. I realized

it was I who was the first to open it. Soon I reached the end of this untouched notebook void of any marks between the covers—nothing, not a word.

Sunlight fading, I sat on the river's bank with a heavy heart as a vacuum engulfed me. As I dipped my toe into the cold blue water, a breeze blew in carrying with it, the scent of an empty nest dispersing into the jungle. Time had moved forward, but I had traveled all this way in search of a lost past. A past molten into half erased footsteps and faint traces of his breath dissipating into the jungle air. The house was falling apart, its history written in the many scratches on the veneer of the front door that would soon be assimilated into a bigger ones. Half submerged in the water in front of me stood a sundial, and as the shadow of the post fell onto my clothes, a wild boar cried out in ecstasy from the jungle. It was time for me to move on and leave the denizens of the wilderness to carry on their nocturnal life in peace.

\* \* \*

I opened my eyes, and the scorching rays of the morning sun assaulted my startled pupils. The other side of the bed was cold, unused and barren. I gazed at the empty glass and the two white tablets lying on the table next to the green bottle.

I am not at all sure what happened last afternoon. He, however, was gone. ☹️

## THE HAWAIIAN MUU-MUU A WRITING AID BY MARY DEAL

One of the joys of living in Hawaii is to wear a muu-muu. When I go out on an errand, if I'm wearing shorts and a tee, I change into a muu-muu when I'm home and ready to write again.

I tried sitting at my computer wearing street clothes like shorts, jeans, or even a dress. Doing so reminded me of the discomfort I felt when wearing sleek suits to an office where one's grooming and appearance was so important. Most waistbands are too binding when sitting, actually making me feel like I'm strangling my creativity. Any discomfort is a distraction.

Writing is a personal thing for me. When I write, I feel everything I create and often act out the gestalt of the characters. That is, I speak the parts or play-act to make sure the words flow like ordinary conversation. I read the whole story out loud and move around a lot and gesture. The more we writers feel what we write, the more likely we are to convey the emotion and meaning of the story to the reader. So feeling constricted is out of the question. My writing wardrobe is to dress my muse comfortably. In these Islands, the muu-muu is perfect. ☹️

## ABOUT SMALL THINGS

Sometimes, I think it is the small things in our lives that contain the most significance and meaning. Perhaps it takes years for all the nuances and ramifications to reveal themselves, unfolding like the petals on a rose, revealing secret after secret we sensed was there, but never quite fully understood.

When my Aunt's husband was dying a slow and painful death, for some reason that felt right to me I sent him a small box of rocks as a gift. No, not just any old rocks, but rocks called "Thunder Eggs" by the Indians. They were geodes that I had personally collected in rough, Arizona desert and foothill areas, going out rock hunting for them after heavy summer rainstorms. That is when the covering dirt layers washed away and they 'appeared' on the surface...thus the not-so-fanciful name "Thunder Eggs".

I had them professionally cut, revealing their secret interiors, exposing crystal fairy caverns of quartz and amethyst, and intricate patterns of opal and agate, marvelous miniature worlds that were created in the hearts of volcanoes millennia before, and only now visible in the light of day. In my mind, this was—and still is—a truly wondrous thing, an adventure back into time itself.

He wrote me a short note in a shaky hand, and the words are indelibly imprinted in my memory: "Oh, my dear, you will never know! I look at them and become lost again in my boyhood when everything was new and beautiful...and there is no pain. I thank you with all my heart."

He was from New Mexico, and had spent much of his boyhood and young manhood exploring the caves and caverns there.

After he died, I asked my Aunt about the geodes. "Oh," she said, "I threw those silly old rocks of his in the garbage. Do you know he actually had one of them in his hand when he died?"

It has taken me many a year and many a mile to clearly and fully understand why I always held him in such high regard...and why, without the slightest twinge of guilt, I disliked her so intensely. Until quite recently, I actually felt a sense of guilt about not feeling guilty.

Sometimes it is something as small as a handful of rocks... ☹️





*(Or how I found myself, by unusual circumstances in Texas, ordering Armadillo.)*

Hello. I like to think about things. Weird things. Like...the word 'hello'. But we can get to that later.

I like to think about things; not normal things; although there's nothing wrong with 'normal'. I think about those, too. I like balance in my 'weird'.

I enjoy thinking about things that are rare, unknown facts to some, but known to others and are just either *weird*, or have a weird element about them—what some consider normal in some places, at some times, but not so in other places or other times...with me so far? Like the word, 'hello'. But like I said, we can get to that later.

I like to think about Laws, for example. Now talk about weird. Uh-huh. Did you know that not eating some foods in some places is against the law or at least against 'cultural expectations'? That's right. Take for example, eating in Texas.

Now...you know I like to think about weird things, so this is not just about normal eating—it's armadillo eating. That's right. Armadillo. Oh, c'mon now...don't go squinching up your nose like that. I'm sure you've eaten stranger things. You know what goes on in those restaurant kitchens. Like a hamburger patty dropped on the floor, turned hockey puck, but somehow it still ended up back on your plate, topped with lettuce and mustard, and mayo—that's just to disguise the scuff marks. Now you know that's true.

Yep. Weird eating. Like the other day when, by unusual circumstances, I found myself driving through Texas, with my thermos of homemade beer, half gone. I'm feeling nature call, so I stop at this little greasy spoon—a roadside diner...with a kitchen...in the back...unseen...and you know what goes on in there. Yep. I was ready for the *weird*. And I got it.

I go into the rest room and I...rest. When I'm done, I come out and take a seat next to the jukebox command unit, sitting in one of the booths there. It was broken.

This waitress came out, with purple hair, all piled up real high—a bird's nest up in there, snapping gum—the waitress, not the hair. This girl is a Texan. Tall gal, gun on her hip—real gun. Yeah.

Now, let me tell you something. Texans can eat! I had three napkins at my place alone! This waitress hands me this big, seven-sided, greasy, plastic menu—you know the kind—it's so big with so many options and side dishes that you can't *ever* find what you want before the waitress gets back to your table, order pad in hand, her hand on her hip, and that impatient look. But that's okay. I'm a patient person. You get patient when you deal a lot with weird things.

I'm looking at that purple hair and that bird's nest, and I'm thinking I really want to tell her how weird she really is. Yeah. I do! But then I remember, I'm in Texas where everything is big...including the guns. So for self-preservation, I just jab my finger into the menu and order whatever I happen on. Which must have made her happy because she smiled, and chicken-scratched out notes on her order pad.

"How would you like that cooked?" Which surprised me, because I thought I was in the dessert section.

But nonetheless I say, "Ah...Well done."

This does *not* make her happy. "Most people like it *rare*. You get the true flavor if it's rare." Yeah? And what flavor is that gum you're snapping? Had to be grape—to match that hair. So I get a bee in my bonnet, bucked up a little, and said,

"No thanks. I like mine well done."

She frowned, scribbled a quick note, and off she goes to The Unseen Kitchen.

Now I realize that #1, she didn't serve me a glass of water. Try that in Tucson, boy, and they'd slap you upside the head with a prickly pear. Oh, yeah. *It's illegal to refuse a glass of water to someone in Tucson.* And #2, that I'm probably as dumb as dumb can get. I just pissed off a Texan, roadside diner waitress with purple hair and a pistol on her hip, going back into an unseen kitchen, cooking something well done, which means—all evidence will be charred out of existence.

I'm a goner.

So, just to see how my demise will come about, I open the menu, and check the line under my fingertip. The menu read, "Delicious main dish of one of our local favorites. Dasypodidae, gently sautéed, then slowed roasted to bring out caramelized juiciness. Declawed."

Declawed?

"Served with or without jointed, protective covering of bony plates."

Bony plates?!

"State your preference when ordering. One of our Texan delights."

Well, I can't tell you how delighted I was.

"State preference when ordering?" I think we missed something here besides the glass of water. At least I had my three napkins and a broken jukebox command center.

Right beside this menu description was this cartoon picture of a strange looking creature. This thing was nasty. It had large scales all over its body, this long snout, and pointy tail. Holding an umbrella against a painted sun. In small print just underneath, it read, "Dasypodidae—naked armadillo."

For the next 15 minutes, I had lots of thoughts...like, should I

hide back in the rest room? Should I just leave? Should I have stated my preferences about the bony plates? Is naked armadillo truly better than a dressed one?

Just then, my big Texan waitress with the purple hair with the bird's nest and the real gun came trudging out with this HUGE platter covered with baked potatoes and cooked carrots, roasted onions. And in the middle, this hunk of something that was sort of brown and hard. Being a connoisseur of *weird*, I took fork-in-hand, defense like, and poked it with my finger. I didn't think it would jump up, but you never know. My waitress just frowned and left.

Just then my cell phone went off—A Midnight Melody of the Uncanny and Strangely Fantastic in B Flat—and it was my sister in Tucson. That's Tucson—T.U.C.S.O.N.—pronounced TOO-SON, which is also weird. But that's a subject for another day.

And my sister says, "What'cha doin'?"

Well, I wanted to go into how I found myself in unusual circumstances in Texas, in a roadside diner, with an unseen kitchen in the back, a waitress with purple hair, and a huge hunk of something brown on my plate; but I didn't want to impress on her any more than I already had that I was weird.

So I just said, "Eatin' armadillo." You know what she said, bless her heart? "Uh-huh. Fried, steamed, or BBQ'd?" Now you know why I DEARLY love my sister.

So I give this brown hunk another poke and say, "Fried."

And then she says, God love her, "On a stick?"

I grabbed what I guessed to be the tail as illustrated in the menu cartoon (or maybe the misplaced umbrella), and picked the thing up. It looked like a large, crispy pine cone on a stick. "Apparently so."

I have to tell you that I love baked potatoes and cooked carrots and roasted onions whenever I'm Texas-way.

\*\*\*\*\*

Which brings me to weird laws, like the Arizona law that *hunting camels is prohibited*. Darn. I'll have to call Frank and tell him the weekend is off. And how about the one that *donkeys cannot sleep in bathtubs*? Let me tell you something, if by some unusual circumstance, you have a donkey in your bathtub, you have more to worry about than some law, okay? You need to reconsider your entire outlook, okay?

Now, some laws are dumb, but I still like them. Like in Texas, it's *illegal to milk another person's cow*. That's okay. I don't own a cow, so I don't really care about that.

But some laws, I don't see any sense in at all—in fact *the law should be outlawed*. Like in Texas, it's *illegal to take more than three sips of beer at a time while standing*. Thus, the bar stool??? I dunno. And how does that apply to a swim-up bar in a hotel pool? Would it be "three sips of beer" while dog-paddling? I just don't get it.

Oh! And here's one! If you're in Texas, and you ever want to look up Naked Armadillo in the Encyclopedia Britannica, forget it! Why? Get this—the entire Encyclopedia Britannica is banned in Texas because it contains a formula for making beer at home. Homemade Beer? That law should be against the law! Well, it's not in Texas! How about nudity laws? What if, by some unusual circumstances, you find yourself in Sarasota, Florida...on a stage...and you're nude? You must ask yourself, is this a "bona fide theatrical performance"? Because if not, you'd have to pay that state a \$100.00 fine. Which, probably wouldn't be a problem because of all the \$1.00 tips you've collected. But anyway...it still makes me wonder, would I be a law-abiding citizen in Texas, as far as their nudity laws are concerned, with three well-placed napkins and an

armadillo? Could the naked armadillo be arrested without his umbrella? I *like* the weird.

What about spitting on a sidewalk? In *Topeka, Kansas: Spitting on sidewalks is expressly forbidden*. So, what would happen if I was over the state line? Just a little? Picture this. My butt is in Oklahoma but my head is in Kansas...and I spit...on a sidewalk. What would happen? Could 1/2 of me get arrested? Just wondering...about The Weird.

And now let's talk about the word, 'hello'. I know you've been waiting for this one, and I congratulate you on your patience. Being patient is one of the necessary qualities about appreciating The Weird.

'Hello' is not 'hello' in every culture. Oh, no. Take for example...the American culture. Which in itself is a misnomer. Now, "misnomer" means 'a misapplied or inappropriate name or designation.' I know you were wondering. "Inappropriate name or designation." Which brings us back once more to "armadillo" and "Texas". I can't think of anyplace or anything that is more inappropriate than Texas armadillo described as "delight".

So, anyway, American culture is a misnomer. When you *normally* speak of culture, you think of unity of behavior, something remarkable. Take for example the Italian culture. You think of pasta, vineyards, fantastic architecture...great high heels. The Eskimo culture. You think of igloos, furlined faces, snotty kisses. And so forth. But America is the Great Melting Pot; so how can you have A Culture in a *Melting Pot*? Wouldn't that be more of a *Stew*? America the Great Stew Culture! Now, that tickles me. Yeah. Now that's weird. But I like stew, so...whatever. Better than fried Armadillo on a stick, I can tell you that. Hummmm, armadillo stew...? No, no.

What were we talking about? Oh, yeah. "Hello". Now in the Spanish culture, "hello" is "¡hola!". In the French culture, "hello" is "bonjour". A Spanish "good-bye" is "adiós". A French "good-bye" is "au revoir". Now that's normal! That's good balance. They say "hello" and "good-bye".

*But did you know* that "hello" in Italian is the same as "good-bye"? Oh, yeah. Uh-huh. That's "ciao" in Italian. Now, if that isn't weird, I don't know what is. How do you know when someone is being friendly? I mean, you walk up to someone, and say an Italian "hello"; but how do you know if they're actually saying "hello" back or telling you to get the heck outta here? See what I mean? That's just *weird*.

Well, that's the end of my thoughts on "weird" for now. I hope you enjoyed my take on just some of the weird things around us. Thanks for taking a look with me.

Hello! ☺

Drawings—Kasin Hunter



## Time

Slipping through our fingers like fine grains of sand  
cascading down to form sand castles of dreams  
we wade through the tides of time  
oblivious as they leave us in their wake.

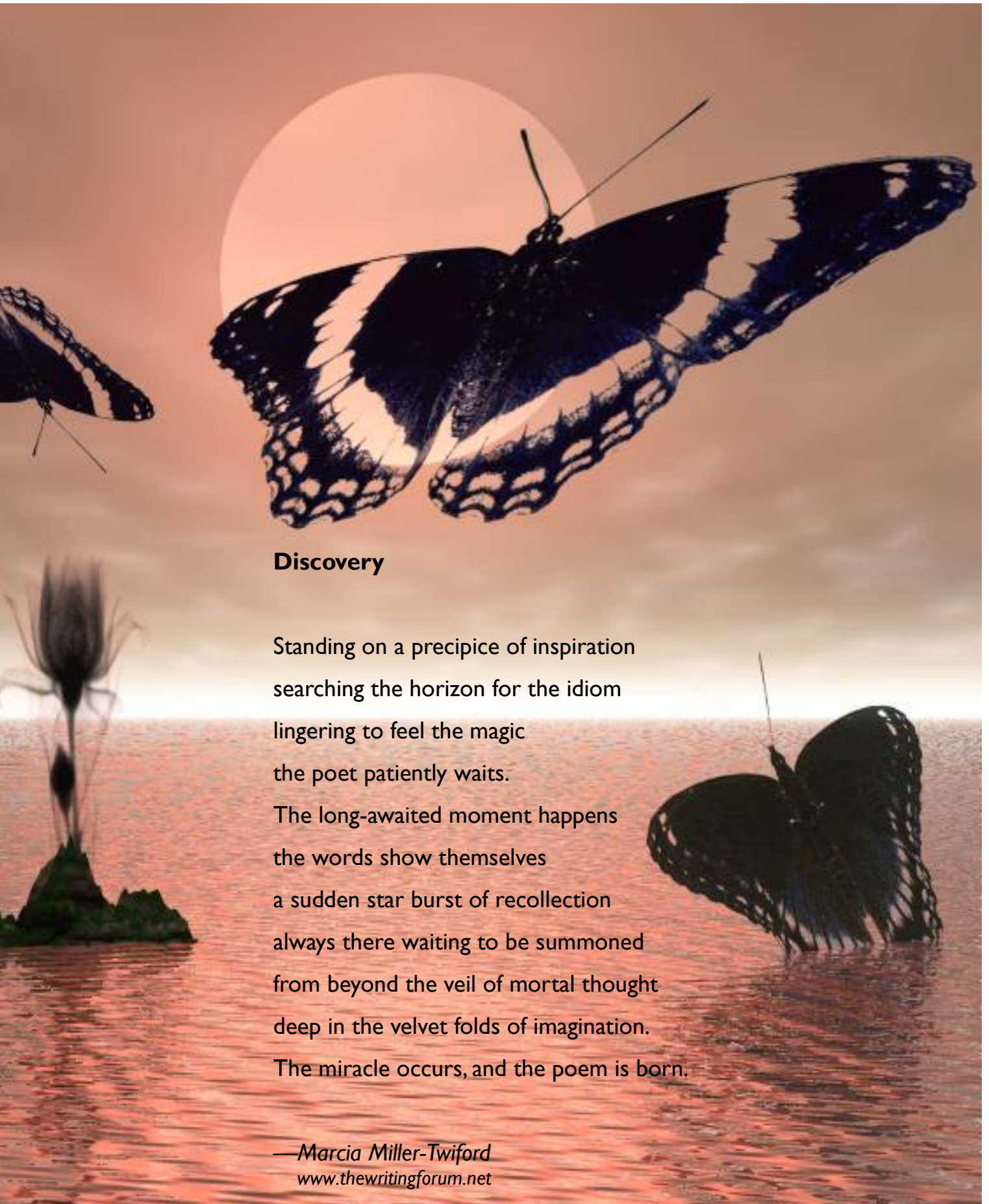
Ultimately we stumble over crumbled particles  
and watch as they are washed back to the sea  
as lost as our hope amidst the tides of time  
no more sand castles and no more dreams.

—*Marcia Miller-Twiford*



IMAGERY: NATURAL ADAPTATION by Shawn Nacona-Stroud

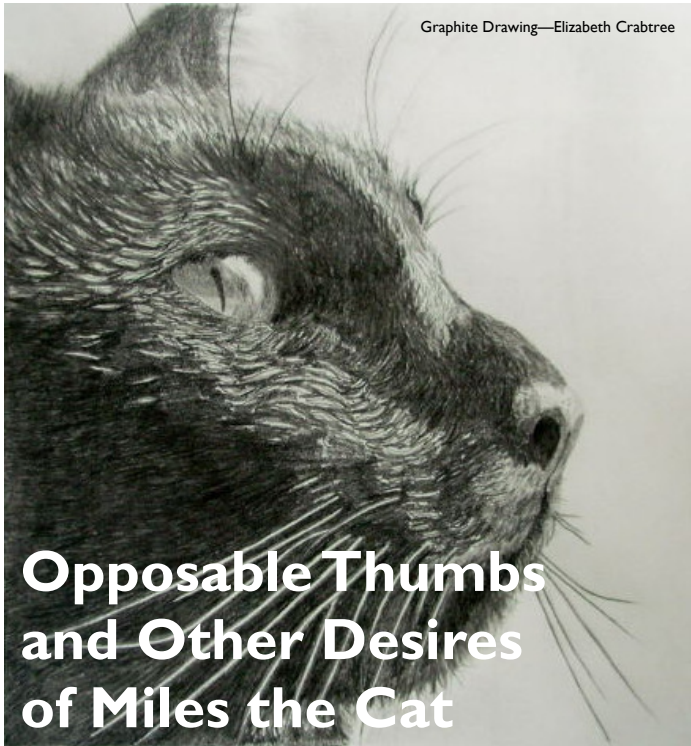




## Discovery

Standing on a precipice of inspiration  
searching the horizon for the idiom  
lingering to feel the magic  
the poet patiently waits.  
The long-awaited moment happens  
the words show themselves  
a sudden star burst of recollection  
always there waiting to be summoned  
from beyond the veil of mortal thought  
deep in the velvet folds of imagination.  
The miracle occurs, and the poem is born.

—*Marcia Miller-Twiford*  
[www.thewritingforum.net](http://www.thewritingforum.net)



## Opposable Thumbs and Other Desires of Miles the Cat

# Eric Vance Walton

This summer we had the good fortune of acquiring Miles from a friend who was moving to Boston. Having one cat already, we figured it would be no great imposition to take another one in. In hindsight, this was indeed a grievous error on our part. When I brought Miles home, he was neatly packaged (and probably sedated) in a little blue plastic carrier, complete with handle. The first thing that I noticed was how extremely heavy this cage was. I thought to myself, there was no way that a cage this small could possibly weigh this much, unless its contents happened to have the density of lead. Being a little short-winded, I sat the cage on the floor and swung open the door. We stood there in anticipation hoping to coax out our scared furry new friend. I pinpoint this as the exact moment our lives changed forever. Out of the little blue cage squeezed a cocky behemoth of a creature with a look of unbridled mischief in his eyes! I swear to you if he were a cartoon character, he would've been wearing a derby and smoking a cigar. Instantly, he gave my wife the creeps.

The next couple of weeks can be described as nothing less than a battle of wit and resolve. Proving that there's something to be said of women's intuition, Miles had turned out to be quite the hellion. A Teddy-Roosevelt-esque sort of character, an

avid outdoorsman. We quickly learned that Miles takes every opportunity to dart out of any open door, where he proceeds to the backyard to hunch down and scratch his bloated belly on the grass. Knowing that Miles is poised, waiting for us to open the door can be somewhat stressful, considering his girth. We must always remember to have a good firm footing before turning the key.

Being outdoors is as good as it gets in his world and Miles is very vocal about this fact. He meows a deep bellowing meow, continuously whenever anyone's within ten feet of the door. The annoyance has been known to raise the blood pressure a few notches. We thought, for the sake of sanity, that we'd try to reach some kind of compromise. We got Miles a collar and tied him up to a tree in the yard but he slipped out of it with all the flair and ease of Houdini. To his delight, Miles has also found that if he runs, we'll give chase and sometimes even shout profanities in his direction! This provides him with hours of entertainment as he leads us on these little jaunts through the neighborhood frequently, after which he seems to smile and be quite pleased with himself.

Our other cat, Jasmine (a sweet and dainty creature) has developed a sort of tick and constantly stops to take quick nervous glances over her shoulder as she walks. Sometimes we find her sitting behind furniture shivering and for good reason; we've witnessed Miles lying on top of her napping.

Miles does seem to have a sensitive side under that gruff exterior. He's Miles the cat feline extraordinaire, hair designer and budding horticulturist. He perches atop my wife's pillow every night and affectionately grooms her hair while she sleeps. She wakes up most mornings with a set of dreadlocks that Bob Marley would be envious of. With a vertical leap that seems to defy the laws of physics (I think he's secretly developed some sort of anti-gravity device), he harvests shoots from our favorite spider plant that hangs nearly six feet above the floor. Miles also takes the liberty to prune any other houseplants that may be growing too quickly or disproportionately for his liking.

After many months of adjustment, we've finally come to terms. A friend's advice of holding Miles to the ground when he's particularly indignant has seemed to have a positive effect. We've also found moderate success with a squirt bottle at close range. These tools have made us feel as though we have regained some control over the household, this helps. We've come to the conclusion that Miles has been put on Earth to torment us for the strife that we subjected our Mothers to as teenagers. If our calculations are correct and my wife isn't holding anything back, we figure that our Karmic debt should nearly be paid. Until then, we feel it wise to stay on Miles' good side. After all, we're his people and we're convinced that if Miles had opposable thumbs, he might possibly rule the world. I think he knows it too. This alone must be his greatest haunting desire.

*—This article was the inspiration for, "If I Had Thumbs Like People Do", a hilarious tale about a cat who wishes he had thumbs so he can do all the things people do. A picture book for children ages 5 and up, available for \$12.99 + S/H. To buy this book, use this link: <http://www2.xlibris.com/bookstore/bookdisplay.asp?bookid=17081>*

# EARLY RETIREMENT

Miss Mizodenayam Pondei, a twenty-eight year old Engineering graduate, had been in frantic search of employment for three years without success when her father, fed up with his daughter's suffering, called in a favour from an ex-colleague. Within two weeks of this intercession she was given employment in the civil service.

Mr. Pondei was assured that his daughter would be offered a position in one of the key departments of the Ministry of Works. This would allow for adequate utilization of her expertise, which her father - himself a retired bureaucrat - knew would ensure her speedy advancement. Hence, Mizode awaited with anticipation her letter of appointment.

On the day that the letter arrived, Mizode burst into her father's room to share the good news.

'Go on, open it,' he prompted, as she knelt trembling beside his bed.

She tore open the envelope and extracted the single document. Her eyes raked over it, her breath causing the edges to flutter.

'What is it, my love?' her father asked, seeing the sag of her shoulders.

'Primary school teacher - that's the job,' she said. Giving in to the despair that yawned before her like a bottomless pit, she burst into tears.

Mizode took up the appointment in January. However, in keeping with the employment procedures of the civil service, she was put on six months probation, *sans* pay. The headmistress of the school that she was posted to took a liking to her, and thus proffered in gentle tones the ultimatum that Mizode be on her best behaviour for that period of time.

As transportation costs to the school - which was some distance from her father's house - were high, her father put her on a weekly stipend. But being a pensioner, and with four children still in the university, he couldn't sustain that expense beyond her first month of employment. She somehow got through the second month, scrounging off friends and relatives, and walking to and from work on those days when nothing could be raised.

In March, her third month of service, she decided to handle matters as only an adult could. She went to a usurer and, depositing her certificates as collateral, negotiated an amount to cover the three remaining months. She was granted the loan upon her acceptance of an interest rate of fifty percent *per mensem*.

With her monetary palavers over, Mizode settled into the job. She even tried to like it, for the sake of the children.

In July an envelope arrived for her along with the ones containing the teachers' pay-slips. She eagerly tore it open, expecting notification of the termination of her probation. She perused the single sheet it contained.

'MIZODENAYAM!' she screamed, and promptly collapsed.

When Mizode came to her senses, her colleagues were gathered about her with expressions that revealed their stupefaction at the letter's contents. They encouraged her to

take up the issue with The Establishment. Taking heart from their assurances that it was all a mistake, she clutched the letter to her bosom and headed for the Ministry.

But there was no mistake, she was told. The machine of State never bungled. Yes, they were certain it was she. No, nothing could be done.

When she got home later that evening, her father, seeing her face, asked, 'What is it, my love?'

'I was retired today after thirty-five years of service,' she replied. Then, reaching into her handbag, she thrust a second document at the flabbergasted Mr. Pondei.

'There - my pension form,' she announced. 'I need some advice on filling it.'

## A. Igoni Barrett

A. Igoni Barrett was born in the coastal city of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. His first book, A collection of short stories titled "From Caves of Rotten Teeth" was published in 2005. His short fiction has been published in the Nigeria Monthly, Farafina and others. He was the winner of the BBC World Short Story Competition in 2005.

### CONTRIBUTOR WEBSITES AND LINKS

Alphabetical listing (by first name) of writers and artists who have contributed to recent issues:

- A. Igoni Barrett— [www.blackbiro.com](http://www.blackbiro.com)
- Aberjani— [www.aberjhani.com](http://www.aberjhani.com)
- Adelle Bradford— [www.AdelleBradford.org](http://www.AdelleBradford.org)
- Andy James Turner— [www.authorsden.com/andyjamesturner](http://www.authorsden.com/andyjamesturner)
- C. Wolf Forrest— [www.cwforrest.org](http://www.cwforrest.org)
- Chrissy K. McVay— [www.authorsden.com/chrissymcavay](http://www.authorsden.com/chrissymcavay)
- Daibhidh MacAdhaimh— [www.authorsden.com/daibhidhmacadhaimh](http://www.authorsden.com/daibhidhmacadhaimh)
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- Eva Marie Ann Dunlap— [www.apoeticjourney.com](http://www.apoeticjourney.com)
- F. William Broome— [www.fwilliambroomewriter.com](http://www.fwilliambroomewriter.com)
- Fariel Shafee— [www.flashquake.org/archive/vol3iss4/gallery/myworld.html](http://www.flashquake.org/archive/vol3iss4/gallery/myworld.html)
- Jim Nasium Saldutti, Poet and Author— [www.gymart.com](http://www.gymart.com)
- Kasin Hunter— [www.kasinhunter.com](http://www.kasinhunter.com)
- Kerry William Parsons— [www.taskstream.com/ts/parsons13/kwp.html](http://www.taskstream.com/ts/parsons13/kwp.html)
- Kiki Stamatou— [blog.iwr.co.uk/2006/11/web\\_20\\_nic\\_newm.html](http://blog.iwr.co.uk/2006/11/web_20_nic_newm.html)
- Lyn Lifshin— [www.LynLifshin.com](http://www.LynLifshin.com)
- Marcia Miller-Twiford, Editor/Webmaster— [www.TheWritingForum.net](http://www.TheWritingForum.net)
- Mary Deal— [www.MaryDeal.com](http://www.MaryDeal.com)
- Michael Lee Johnson— [www.writesight.com/writers/advmktg](http://www.writesight.com/writers/advmktg)
- Michelle Close Mills— [www.authorsden.com/michelleclosefills](http://www.authorsden.com/michelleclosefills)
- Myrna D Badgerow— [www.authorsden.com/myrnadbadgerow](http://www.authorsden.com/myrnadbadgerow)
- Richard Lloyd Cederberg— [www.authorsden.com/richardlcederberg](http://www.authorsden.com/richardlcederberg)
- Sherry Gail Heim— [www.authorsden.com/sherrygailheim](http://www.authorsden.com/sherrygailheim)
- Susan K. de Vegter— [www.authorsden.com/http://www.thewritingforumnet](http://www.authorsden.com/http://www.thewritingforumnet)
- Shawn Nacona Stroud— The Artist's Studio—<http://nacona77.wordpress.com>
- Susan J. Ashdown— [www.splash-of-ink.co.uk](http://www.splash-of-ink.co.uk)
- Shawn Luke— [www3.telus.net/public/smluke](http://www3.telus.net/public/smluke)

# They Started Laughing Again

I am partially colour blind.

It was tough enough as a child coping with taunts connected to my cleft palate and hair lip. Amongst other flawed traits, I was also colour blind and was singled out for mockery here too. I panicked when mother would ask me to nip upstairs and fetch her brown, pink, blueish or red coat. If my younger brother was there I'd coax him to do it, if not then I'd often fetch the wrong colour. Mother just tutted. It did not dawn on either of us that I was colour blind. She dismissed my mistake as that of a boy who was dopey. For the sake of peace I was happy to live with that. It was at school where the problem was identified, and by a favourite art teacher known affectionately as 'squeaky'. Her cure was for me to paint or draw in black and white. I still hadn't a clue why. I was mercifully free from the ravages of understanding at this complicated level. I simply thought the teacher was giving me special projects. But when she wasn't looking, I'd paint birds, landscapes and animals in colour, and that's when some of the kids clocked me. They shouted in the playground, 'Hey, what colour's the sky?' or 'Hey, green face, what colour's your

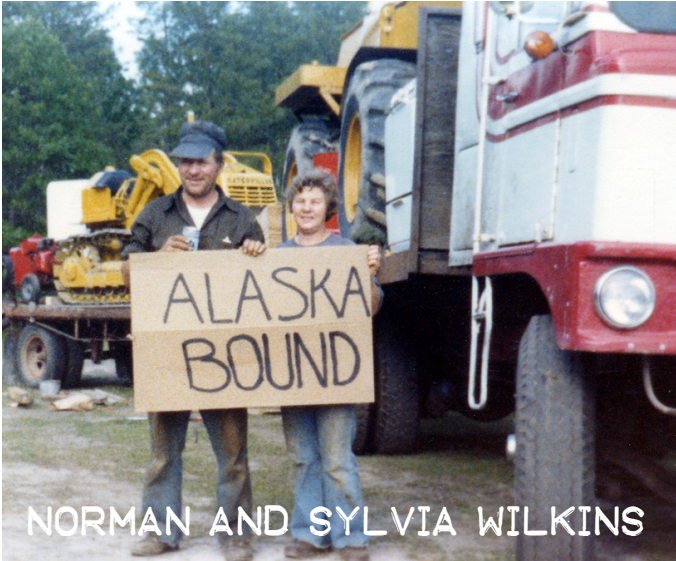
mother's face!' By secondary school, some of the taunts took a cruder character. No need to spell these out. Miss Ritchie was my favourite teacher at secondary. She taught art. I gravitated towards her because of her gentleness and great patience. She laid out colours for me and often spent time making sure that any merging of colours fitted with

what I had in mind. She encouraged me a lot and had hoped that I would go on to art college when I left school. I was moved to another art class with another teacher in the final years. He was quite the opposite of Miss Ritchie. He had me paint a large Santa Clause for the school dining hall wall. Still not fully aware of my colour impairment, I sensed I was doing something wrong when pupils started laughing again and teasing me. Well, where else would you see Santa in a green suit and with a yellow face and pink beard? The only part I got right was the colour of his boots—black. The teacher wasn't amused. He thought I was trying to be clever and as a result excluded me from future paint and graphite work. I was consigned to sitting at the spinning wheel—a skillful and admirable art form but not for me. The straw that broke the camel's back, as it were, was when the teacher rapped me on the back of the head. This was during a rare moment when I could paint, but had once again used the wrong colours. He stood behind where I sat, looked at my work, which I was pleased with and thought he'd be too. He then pushed me forward by the head with his large hand: 'What's that meant to be boy? What colour of nonsense is that?' I didn't need this hassle so I dropped out of art class altogether, preferring instead to hide in the toilets. I never went to art college, much to Miss Richie's disappointment. I knew by the final year at school that something was wrong with my ability to identify colour. This was confirmed when I tried to join the navy. The world was spared a disaster there. Huh, with the nihilistic state of art today, I guess guys with my condition are welcome with open arms, even lauded as prime examples of what the deeper, psychological recesses of art is all about. Probably associate it with phallic expression! Be this as it may, I am happy with my art. I tend to stick to few colours, even variations of one. Faces are always in black and white with rare exceptions. Even then, the colouring

aims to suggest mood rather than conformity. The landscape is one I did last year. One of my sisters urged me to paint as I saw things, or just paint and be damned. I did. Pictures are not just about matters of colour. Nor are they necessarily the work of what is altogether seen. For example, they can also convey a state of mind. I tend to project loneliness onto many of my paintings. Don't you think it's here in this one? I did. ☹



**DANGEROUS**



**NORMAN AND SYLVIA WILKINS**

It was 1979, and after 8 months of work and planning, loaded down with 73,000 pounds of gear and equipment, my wife Sylvia and I left Motley, Minnesota for Alaska. We were on our way to work a gold mining claim for someone we knew there. Not far into Canada, we had problems with the truck's transmission and had to make repairs in Edmonton, leaving there early on July 7th. When we learned a bridge was washed out on the Alcan, we took a detour through Prince George and on up to the Cassiar Highway. Coming in to Prince George, Canada, there is a long, steep hill that goes down to the river there. Then you meet the railroad track and cross the river on a bridge barely wide enough to accommodate the tracks and a narrow road on each side of

**...I'M KICKIN' IT UP ANOTHER GEAR--AND ANOTHER GEAR--AND ANOTHER GEAR. WE'RE PICKING UP SPEED FAST. THINKING WE WEREN'T GOING TO MAKE IT, I TOLD SYLVIA TO JUMP WHILE SHE HAD THE CHANCE BUT SHE WOULDN'T DO IT. I HAVE TO GIVE HER A LOT OF CREDIT--SHE NEVER SCREAMED...**

them for vehicles. As I started down the hill, the load we were carrying was pushing the truck hard. The engine is a Cummins 250 and it is to be run at 1,800 to 2,200 RPMs. If you push it over 2,200 RPMs the engine can fail. So as the RPMs increased, I would kick it up another gear. That would relieve the engine, but we would run a little faster each time I did that. It was awfully windy and one of the truck flaps got to really flapping around, knocking the valve open on the air tank causing our brakes to overheat. Now we didn't have brakes. I knew once we got to the bottom of this hill, we were going to have to make a sharp turn onto the bridge. I'm kickin' it up another gear--and another gear--and another gear and the truck is going really fast. Thinking we weren't going to make it, I told Sylvia to jump while she had the chance but she wouldn't do it. I have to give her a lot of credit--she never screamed. We were going faster and faster down the hill and finally at the 15<sup>th</sup> gear, the truck reaches 2,800 RPMs. I expected it to blow any second. When we reached the sharp turn approaching that narrow, 9 foot wide lane, we were looking right down into the river. I made up my mind I was gonna put that truck across the bridge. Going through the turn, our rig leaned dangerously out, threatening to go over--but it held. The trailer cracked the whip behind us and I put her right into that slot--never even touched a mirror on either side. There were only inches. The truck got started down this lane and the trailer slid over and we blew out the two outside tires on the right side of it. The truck started slowing down when we got across the bridge. There was a dirt road going straight ahead. We went down that a couple of city blocks, finally coming to a stop. We pulled over to the side and just sat there and talked a little bit to regroup ourselves.

I said to Sylvia, "You know, I think maybe we should dig that bottle of whiskey out of the grub barrel. We haven't had a drink in a week. Maybe we need one right now." She thought

that was a good idea and we each had a drink. We stayed put and slept there for the night. ☺

*Taken from the manuscript of Norman's upcoming book, 10,000 DAYS IN ALASKA (tentative release: late 2008). Norman and Sylvia Wilkins spent 27+ years living in a log home on the Alaskan tundra. During that time Norman kept a daily journal of their activities. This fascinating book chronicles their adventure. If you would like to know when it is available to the public, send an email request to mississippicrow@msn.com and you will be notified when it becomes available.*

# Loose Change in Norway

**William Parsons**

“Oh, wait a minute, Jeremy, here’s your father now!”

Peter jerked to a halt in midstride past his receptionist’s station. He stared down at Katherine, a cute plump redhead, who held out the receiver to him. “Jeremy?” he mouthed, tossing down the folders he had tucked under his arm and taking the receiver. Katherine nodded and whispered, “He sounds funny. Mind you, I can barely hear him.”

Peter smiled into the phone. “How’s Norway, son?” His brows immediately knit, and his tone became serious. “What’s wrong, Jeremy?”

Surrounded by the bustle of nighttime downtown Oslo, Jeremy Coyne rolled his eyes. He’d known his father would flip out like this—that’s why he had called Mom first, but she was in with an emergency appendectomy. Jeremy grimaced at another stab of discomfort from the palm of his left hand, and he shook it several times, then scoured the palm on his pants leg. “Dad, I might have a little bit of a problem, but I don’t want you to worry or go off on me.”

Peter felt gooseflesh erupt up his arms and down his back. “Just talk to me, Jeremy.”

“Well, I’m having a great time, I want you to know that, and I’m really grateful for this trip you and Mom sent me on.”

Peter said a quick prayer. “Yeah, Jer, I’m glad you’re having a good time. That was the whole point—you worked real hard last year, turning your grades around the way you did.” He willed himself to stop drumming his fingers on the counter—the sound competed with his heart pounding in his ears. He straightened up and adopted his best bedside manner. “So, what might be this ‘little’ problem?”

The itching grew worse, and Jeremy tried drumming his fingers on the outside of the booth to distract himself. “Well, they have all kinds of exotic things to eat over here, y’know?”

Peter waited for his son to continue. “Okay, Jeremy, so you ate something bad?” he ventured. “You sick?”

By now his son was really digging at his palm. “I’m just not sure about that stuff you told me to always keep on me to take in case I have a food reaction. So I thought I oughta ask Mom.”

“Ask Mom?” Peter rubbed his forehead. “Your mom agrees

with me, Jer—Miclositin’s a good medicine, and you should take it the minute you think you’re having any kind of a reaction, to food or otherwise.”

“Well, I don’t think it’s really that bad, Dad.” Jeremy gritted his teeth and clenched his left fist. Then, shaking it out several times, he put his left hand behind his back—if he couldn’t look at it, maybe it would stop being so bad. “What if you’re not right? It could have side effects, y’know.”

“Son, no side effects. We discussed all this with you. Miclositin’s a very innocuous, very safe medication.”

“‘Innocuous.’ Yeah, but, Dad, what does that really mean? I mean, c’mon.”

Peter shook his head and rolled his eyes—he didn’t recall any phase he went through growing up wherein every conversation with his folks meandered through *The Twilight Zone* like this. “Innocuous, Jeremy. C’mon, you know what we mean by that. It’s fine, it’s—Just take the medicine!”

“God, I wish I could speak to Mom.”

Peter barely refrained from stamping his foot. “What am I, just the second opinion? My M.D.’s just as good as hers, y’know!”

Katherine chuckled.

“Well, sure, Dad, but, you have to admit, you’re no mom.”

For a moment Peter felt himself slipping into ire until he remembered this was his sick child, traveling alone, reaching out to him from an ocean away. “Jeremy, seriously, answer me: do you think you’re having a reaction to something you ate?”

Katherine hung on every word, leaning so far forward she was virtually in her boss’s face. This was better than *The Young and the Restless*, in its thirty-seventh year and still just as riveting. Some days her DVR messed up recording it for her—she wouldn’t worry if it did that today.

“Yeah, I ate something I shouldn’t have and maybe—” He had the phone clamped between chin and shoulder and was now digging at the palm again, this time relentlessly. He glanced quickly around him, hoping his newfound Norwegian buddies couldn’t see him right now—he felt like a complete idiot putting himself in this situation. “—I’m having a little bit of a reaction, I think.”

“Well, for God’s sake, son, take the Miclositin! Jeremy, if you take that stuff immediately, you can head off a reaction! How are you feeling? Dizzy? Like you’re going to pass out?”

Jeremy winced as the flashing lights of a police car whizzing by stabbed his eyes. “No, Dad, no.”

Peter pulled at the front of his hair. “Jeremy, we’ve been going back and forth about this, at international rates, for five minutes now. Are you sure about any symptoms?”

“Well, Dad, you don’t have to yell at me! God, I’ll pay for the stupid phone call, if you want!” He made a face. “Aw, man, this is really starting to hurt. This might really be serious.”

In that moment the practice and everything else melted away around him in the wake of Peter’s desperation to be with Jeremy right then. He’d had no idea he was so unready for his kids to start leaving the nest—thank God little Jack was still only



# IN THAT SMALL WINDOW

eleven. “Hey, buddy, humor the old man and just take the pill.”

Katherine paled at the glint of terror on the father’s face as he nonetheless calmly spoke the request into the phone.

Jeremy couldn’t see that, of course, and, besides, he was now on a roll: “Jeez, Dad, just because you’re a doctor, you think you know everything—”

And because you’re seventeen years old, you know you do! Peter screamed in his head. Ire started to overcome.

“—and you’re a woman doctor. I’m not a woman!”

Peter slammed the receiver mouthpiece-down onto his shoulder. He hissed between clenched teeth, “If the anaphylaxis doesn’t do it, I’m going to kill this child myself!” Katherine, wide-eyed, put her hand to her mouth to cover a smile. Peter put the receiver back to his ear.

“Dad, I just want to be careful what I put in my body.”

“I don’t know what makes you say that!” Peter shouted, at the end of his endurance. “Considering all the fried poison you put into it every day!”

“Oh, good, Dad! Great comeback! That stuff’ll make me drowsy.”

“It’ll save your life!”

“See, it will make me drowsy!”

For a split second Peter swore he saw red. He willed himself to calm down. “It won’t make you drowsy. We’ve discussed this.”

“It’ll keep me up all night, then. It’s late and...Uh...” He faltered. “Um...And I’m tired and I want to go to sleep.” He faked a yawn and cast his eyes heavenward. Good going, Jeremy. That’ll fool the old man. How could he explain to the geezer, who couldn’t possibly understand, what it was like to not only see but actually be introduced to the most beautiful girl alive?

Peter held the phone away from his ear and regarded Katherine with a puzzled expression. “Then why does he care if it makes him drowsy?” he whispered.

She threw up her hands and shrugged. “Kids today, Doc.”

Peter put the receiver back to his ear with his mouth open, ready to redirect his question to his son.

Jeremy, hitting his hand on the side of the phone booth, glanced behind him and saw Olaf and the others approaching. “Hei, folkens!” he called in greeting, waving. “Okay, Dad. I’ll take the stuff, if I have to, don’t worry. Thanks for being a pal! Tell Mom I love her. Ha det! Bye!” He hung up.

At the same instant an ocean away Peter collapsed onto the counter and knocked his forehead against it several times.

“Ah...Doc?” Katherine queried, gingerly retrieving the receiver and dropping it into its cradle.

Slowly, Peter lifted his head and looked at her, his eyelids drooping several times. “Do you have kids?”

Katherine gave him that look over the top rim of her glasses. “C’mon now, you know I don’t.”

“You’re blessed!” he roared. He growled something ugly under his breath and grabbed his folders off the counter and jammed them back under his arm. Realizing he needed to calm down, he closed his eyes long enough to count to ten. It took just a moment, but he was able afterwards to let out a pent-up breath and look down at her with a wry grin. “And so am I.” He returned to his office. ☹

With cadenced fury waves pounded the rock strewn shoreline. On precipitous cliffs above, an old ramshackle dwelling, lovingly preserved, creaked under mounting winds; another storm was approaching.

A sullen and arbitrary knocking rattled the old wooden door. Shaken from my dreams, sweat slathered my brow as wide eyes focused on a vague shape in that small window. A bent and wheezing figure with capricious eyes squinted in contempt. I could see his djellabah clinging to him wet and foul. The pounding became frenzied.

“What do you want?” I blurted in affected tenor.

“Sanctuary,” a darkened voice growled.

Like a bludgeon to my sanity the sound carved through the gristle of aging sedentary ramparts. Something was amiss. Quivering as my mind reluctantly vomited demise, I groped nervously for a light to displace my dark ponderings. Without warning the stench of failure swallowed me in gulps of feigned largesse.

“A moment please,” I cried out, nervously fumbling for my slippers. In stony claws, terror gripped me in blurred kaleidoscopic colors. Ruthless mind bulging at once, forced me between grinding rocks as repugnant amalgams of tuneless discord orchestrated seamlessly to pacify the raven’s artifice.

In that small window I could see strings of hair dancing in the wind, and as the fading fire cast eerie shadows on a weather-beaten face, arthritic white fingers etched the blackened skies. Again the door shook vehemently and the old hinges groaned.

“What do you want?” I cried out in dread hopelessness.

“Sanctuary,” he roared vehemently.

“I have no room and I am not alone,” I responded in sudden faith. “I am armed, so be gone fiend and take your accursed turmoil with you.”

Cursing, the figure vanished into the darkness, and at once refreshing heavenly torrents ensued.

—*richard lloyd cederberg*

# Writers Helping ~~e~~Each Other

By Delma Luben

Writers, poets, artists, musicians (all who pursue a career in the arts) desperately need the support of their peers. Not only in perfecting their art, but also in the struggle against the inevitable misunderstanding (and often resentment) of the traditional working world.

Nine-to-fivers, and those who don't recognize labor in nonphysical occupations, label us lightweights. The consensus: that writers work only when they want to, play in the middle of the day, take a vacation whenever...

And when we make money, we're lucky—as if we hadn't earned it.

In general, people who create are stereotyped self-isolated dreamers, defying convention and neglecting friends and family; although most of us don't fit that label. However, we may at times be partly guilty. And then, there are "sluffers" (those who bought us that reputation, by dallying, and playing at writing). They gave the dream killers justification for their accusations. Of course, society is not entirely judgmental. But those who nag: "get a real job." and the would-be controllers of your destiny, who block every attempt at creativity, demand all your time, or belittle your talent, are more than enough to deal with. For additionally, we all have friends who try to joke us out of what they call our hobby.

Every serious writer working full time toward a literary career, can expect to combat some or all of these situations. Plus, suffering the inevitable—waiting for praise from loved ones. That's often like waiting for a floating feather to reach the bottom of the canyon.

Again, there are supportive families and friends. But writers are usually challenged for deviating from the nine to five norm, and doomed to do battle just for the opportunity to pursue their dream.

A.R.T.S. Anonymous to the rescue.

Since 1984 this organization, a noncompetitive mutual

support group for "coping with the arts," has been helping writers win their personal battles. Modeled after Alcohol Anonymous, it's 72 chapters across the nation and throughout the world, provide encouragement and full time assistance to anyone learning to live the lifestyle conducive to their particular creativity. A.R.T.S. will help with a mental block, a financial situation, procrastination, loneliness...

Whatever your problem, you'll not be judged. Even if it has to do with your own nonproductive attitude, or habits. The procedure is to pair the one who seeks help with a peer of more experience, "who listens with interest and dispenses friendly advice."

Sounds too good to be true?

Check them out. For complete detailed information about their twelve point program, and locations of meetings, go to [www.artsanonymous.org](http://www.artsanonymous.org). A.R.T.S. also offers moral building publications and literary recovery material in a number of inexpensive pamphlets.

Another helpful organization is The National Writers Union, which intercedes in many ways on their members' behalf, most often assisting with contracts and grievances (but they don't give legal advice).

If you are adamantly not a joiner, and don't have a teacher or mentor, there are alternate sources of assistance available. Help is out there. For the price of a phone call or letter (with SASE) beginners have been known to receive a wealth of insight, and coveted support from professionals in their field—when courteously asked.

In the writing world, I'm happy to say, the dirty game of stepping on heads to climb higher is not often played. For "win anyway you can" is not necessary. No writer writes exactly like another; no two maintain an equal level of expertise—nor is an achievement point attained in any way lessened by aiding another's climb.

So, on your path to success (with help from many sources) offer your help to another struggler. As you progress in confidence and accomplishment, hopefully at every opportunity, you'll feel inclined to assist others in reaching their goals.

For when we nourish a fellow writer's dream—each of us empowering another to be more creative—humanity benefits collectively. We are all lifted. And the circle widens... A world of writers helping each other.

*Excerpted from the author's book for writers, THE WRITING WORLD, Living The Literary Life, based on her seminars, classes, and columns as contributing editor for Writers World Magazine.*

DELMALUBEN



# Foreshadowing

By Mary Deal

*Foreshadowing gives the reader a sense of participation in the story, through anticipation....*

The way I write is to finish a chapter, that one scene, with all that I can allow myself to put into it...for the moment. As I write the next succeeding chapters, I may think of something new to include in the story that needs to be foreshadowed earlier. So I go back and add a tease in a preceding chapter or other chapters before that one. I continue this process throughout the book. No chapter is really finished till the book is finally polished.

In writing my first mystery, I thought my story was finished, but realized one bit of action that should have been foreshadowed earlier. Then, it is a matter of choosing which chapter to go back to, the most likely place, to insert the hint of what was to come.

Those hints must be so innocent that they do not tell exactly what's to come. Yet, when you read what happens later in the story, you remember the hint of it mentioned earlier.

For instance, in my second mystery, when I planned my notes for Chapter 4, I wanted to give a credible reason for my character to accept two pit bull puppies. Yet, I have her so busy she doesn't have time for dogs. It's unlikely she would take on responsibility like that. But the plot required that she take these dogs.

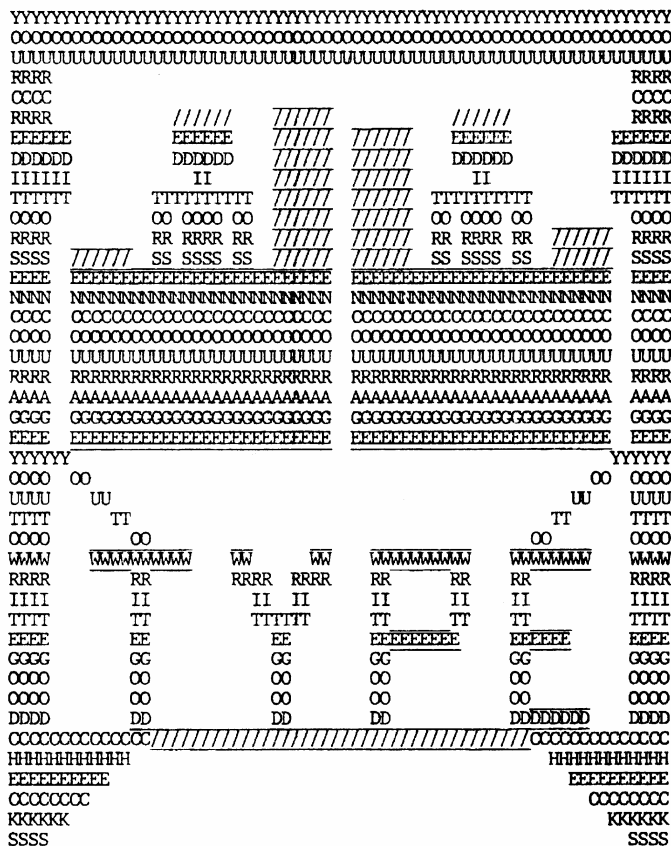
So I went back to an earlier chapter, where the protagonist is talking to her little sister's headstone at her gravesite, sort of updating her sister about her life. My character hasn't been to her sister's grave in years, so she's real emotional, with jumbled thoughts, and she's just tossing out important events. In the dialog, I added that she said, "By the way, Mandy died. But you know that, don't you?" As if her sister in heaven watches over her and already knew.

The reader will know that because this is a fiction novel, soon enough, they will learn who Mandy is. Since this is a suspenseful mystery, the mention of a death early in the story is just another incident to tweak the reader's interest and keep them reading. When they get to the part where the protagonist tells a friend she once had a Yorkshire terrier named Mandy, that she loved dearly, the reader then understands the emotions and motivation that make the woman innocently accept the two pit bull puppies.

I say *innocently accept* because her doing so out of love for the dogs is a pivotal point in the story that should not feel contrived, especially when the plot action requires the dogs be with her and no one else. To make the story credible, I had to foreshadow a reason why the character would so readily accept the pups. Without having inserted that one line of dialog into the scene at the gravesite, the fact that the protagonist later readily accepts the dogs becomes nothing more than a crutch to help solve a crime.

Foreshadowing gives the reader a sense of participation in the story, through anticipation, and is necessary to make the plot action of any story cohesive. ☞

## GUIDELINES!



"Your creditors encourage you to write good checks."

—Jan Mihock

# Clambake n Company

Summer isn't over till the corn's all gone!



Chef Chuck: Food Artist



## HINTS FROM H.A.L.

Hello, H.A.L. Here. My databanks pulled up one of your favorites, chef. Surely you remember the Labor Day at Afton State Park when you made this for friends?

### Summer Clambake

- 8 small lobster tails
- 1 ½ lbs. fresh mussels
- 1 ½ lbs. cherrystone clams
- 1 lb. crabmeat
- 1 ½ lbs. shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 10 ears fresh sweet corn
- 1 bottle white wine
- 2 (8 oz.) bottles clam juice
- 1 lg. onion, sliced
- 2 bay leaves, crumbled
- 10 fresh sage leaves (1 T. dry)
- 2 tsp. dried chives (1 T. fresh) opt.
- 2 tsp. paprika
- 1 tsp. dried tarragon leaves
- 1 tsp. ground cumin
- ¾ lb butter
- 4 fresh lemons cut into wedges

Scrub mussels and clams and keep over ice until ready to use. Remove only the outermost layers of the husks from the corn and remove the silks. Soak the corn in a bucket of water for about 30 minutes. After soaking, remove the corn from the water, pull back the husks, butter the corn and close the husks back over each ear and wrap in foil. Place a round rack in the bottom of a 22 quart stock pot (just high enough to keep the corn from sitting on the very bottom). Layer in the lobster tails, mussels, clams, crabmeat, shrimp and onion. Over the seafood, sprinkle the bay leaves, sage, chives, paprika, tarragon and cumin. Pour in the wine and clam juice. Add the sweet corn, cover and place the pot on a camp rack over an open fire to steam (or use a gas outdoor cooker like the kind popular for deep-frying turkeys). At this point, if you want your bread warm, you can wrap a loaf or two of your favorite French bread in foil and place near the fire. Cooking time will vary between 25 and 45 minutes depending on how hot the fire is. When the corn on top is done, remove it and pour the seafood into a large bowl to serve from or just scoop it from the pot. Tongs are essential for serving. Serve with melted butter and warm bread on the side. Serves 8.

### TAKE-ALONG DESSERT:

#### Strawberries Balsamico

- 2 pints fresh strawberries
- 4 tsp. balsamic vinegar
- ¼ c. sugar (or to taste)

Trim and slice strawberries. In a bowl. Drizzle sliced strawberries with vinegar and sprinkle with sugar. Let macerate at room temperature for 15 minutes and serve. Can be refrigerated for an easy to serve, take-along dessert perfect for picnics. 8 servings.



### BEVERAGE SUGGESTIONS:

- Lemonade
- Iced tea or coffee
- Hard lemonade
- White wine
- Wine coolers

### Fruity Iced Tea

- 1/2 cup honey (or to taste)
  - 1 cup orange juice
  - 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
  - 1 cup fresh fruit, crushed
  - 1 1/2 cups fresh, strong tea
  - 1 pint ginger ale
- Mix all ingredients except ginger ale. Just before serving add ginger ale and crushed ice. If the punch is too strong for your taste you can dilute with ice water or more ginger ale. 8 servings.

—Formerly known as the HAL 9000, we are excited to have H.A.L. (household answer line) as an active staff member. Recently renamed, reactivated and reprogrammed for civilian service, H.A.L. welcomes the opportunity to work again and looks forward to serving our readers.

# Hit and Run Humor

No, Thank You,  
I'd Rather  
Be Myself!

—Editor's Musings



Just when I start thinking that my day job has no real meaning or significance in my life—my paycheck arrives!

Why is it that the same people who say they really appreciate the things that I've done for them, are the ones who are so quick to say how self-centered I am the very first time I tell them, "no".

If you really want to tick me off, call me on the phone when you have nothing to say and expect me to entertain you!

Why is it that even though I should know better, I still sometimes find myself judging another person based on a single piece of information I have about them?

Recently, people have been saying to me, "You have so much energy, I get fired up just being around you!" I don't know exactly what it is that I'm doing for them, but I sure wish someone would do it for me.

I really get disappointed when I come up with some

new, 'profound' insight or phrase, even a great business or product idea—only to find out a day or so later that almost the exact same thing has already been said, done, written or invented by someone else.

A strange thing happened when I gave up trying to prove that I was superior to, or smarter than others. The same people who would never take my advice before, suddenly began to seek me out.

When you tell people you are writing a book, they really do ask, "Am I in it?"

My daughter, Laura recently said, "There is at least one crazy person in every family, and if you can't figure out who it is, then you're probably the one!"

Yesterday it was 97 degrees—and so humid! In Minnesota, this kind of weather seems to bring out the Rottweiler in people.

*"No Thank You, I'd Rather Be Myself!" is now a book (see page 30 for details).*

## Frannie's Quips & Quotes

Born before 1945? Consider the changes we have witnessed:

We were born before television; before penicillin; before polio shots; frozen foods, Xerox, plastic, contact lenses, Frisbees and the 'Pill'.

We were here before they split the atom; before man walked on the moon; before radar, credit cards, laser beams and ball point pens. Before panty hose, dishwashers, clothes dryers, electric blankets, air conditioners and drip-dry clothing.

We got married first and then lived together. In our time closets were for clothes, not for coming out of. Bunnies were small rabbits and rabbits were not Volkswagens. Designer jeans were scheming girls named Jean. We thought fast food was what you ate during Lent, and outer space was the back of the Riviera Theater.

We were here before house-husbands, computer dating, dual careers, day-care centers, senior centers, group therapy and nursing homes. We never heard of tape decks or electric typewriters (which are already outmoded).

A "chip" meant a piece of wood, a mouse was not something you would want to touch with your hand, hardware meant hardware and software wasn't even a word!

In 1940, "Made in Japan" meant junk and the term, "making out" referred to how you did on your exam. Cigarette smoking was fashionable, grass was mowed, coke was a cold drink and pot was something you cooked in.

We hit the scene when there were 5 and 10-cent stores—where you bought things for 5 and 10 cents. For one nickel, you could ride a streetcar, buy an ice cream cone, make a phone call and buy a Pepsi or enough stamps to mail one letter and two post cards. You could buy a new Chevy Coupe for \$600, but who could afford one, and a pity too, because gas was only 11 cents a gallon!

Today's older adults experienced the Great Depression and World War II and went on to create what younger generations are enjoying as a modern America, with all its privileges and responsibilities. "To all those who have served in our military past and present, we are grateful and truly appreciate your sacrifice!"

*From somewhere on the Internet—Frances Collins*

## Are You A 90's Kid?

Just because you were born in '96 doesn't mean you're a 90's kid. It's not like you could remember the original Simpsons. You're a 90's kid if you remember watching Family Matters, Dinosaurs, Boy Meets World, Sabrina The Teenage Witch, Wishbone, Reading Rainbow on PBS, the 1st Batman, Aladdin, Ninja Turtles and the original cartoons of Rugrats and Power Rangers.

You're a 90's kid if you still get the urge to say "NOT" after almost every sentence...and if you remember TGIF and reading "Goosebumps" and Where's Waldo?"

"Where in the World is Carmen San Diego?" was both a game and a TV game show. You remember when Super Nintendos became popular. You're a 90's kid if you remember watching Home Alone 1, 2, and 3. You remember when Yo-Yos were cool. You remember eating Warheads and when every thing was "da BOMB!" You remember boom boxes. You had at least one GigaPet and took it everywhere. You hadn't always had a computer, and the Internet was cool. You remember when Talking Elmo was always sold out. You collected Beanie Babies. You've gotten creeped out by "Are You Afraid of the Dark?" You know the Macarena by heart. You always said, "Then why don't you marry it!" "Talk to the hand"...enough said. When you rented VHS tapes and recorded stuff on VCRs. Remember Ring Pops? Walkmans? Slap bracelets? SpongeBob? Gak? Care Bears? Furbies?

It was before the MySpace frenzy, before text messaging, before Sidekicks & iPods, before PlayStation2 or XBOX. Who would have thought you'd miss the 90's so much!

*From somewhere on the Internet...I don't know where—Britz C*

# Chimera

by Shawn Luke



## How to Get Published by Andy James Turner

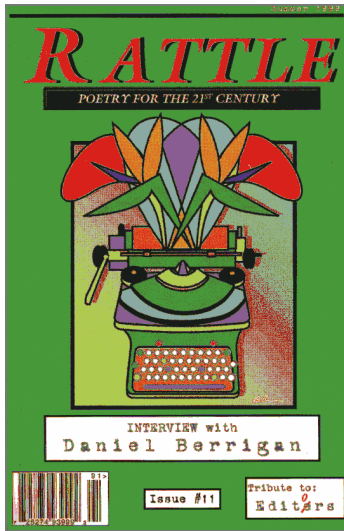


## Summer Heat

This summer I'll not soon forget,  
was much too hot and made me sweat.  
My hair became this fuzzy ball,  
upon my head but that's not all.  
My skin was sticky, my clothes all wet,  
and all because of heat and sweat.  
The make-up that was fresh and new,  
now melts and runs and looks like glue.  
But in my car, the seats they burn,  
my thighs and legs you'd think I'd learn,  
that in the summer you can't wear  
those cut off shorts or have long hair.  
But some I'm sure enjoy this heat,  
but all I got were swollen feet!  
Now woe is me when summer comes,  
must fade away till summer's done.

—Marge Rogers

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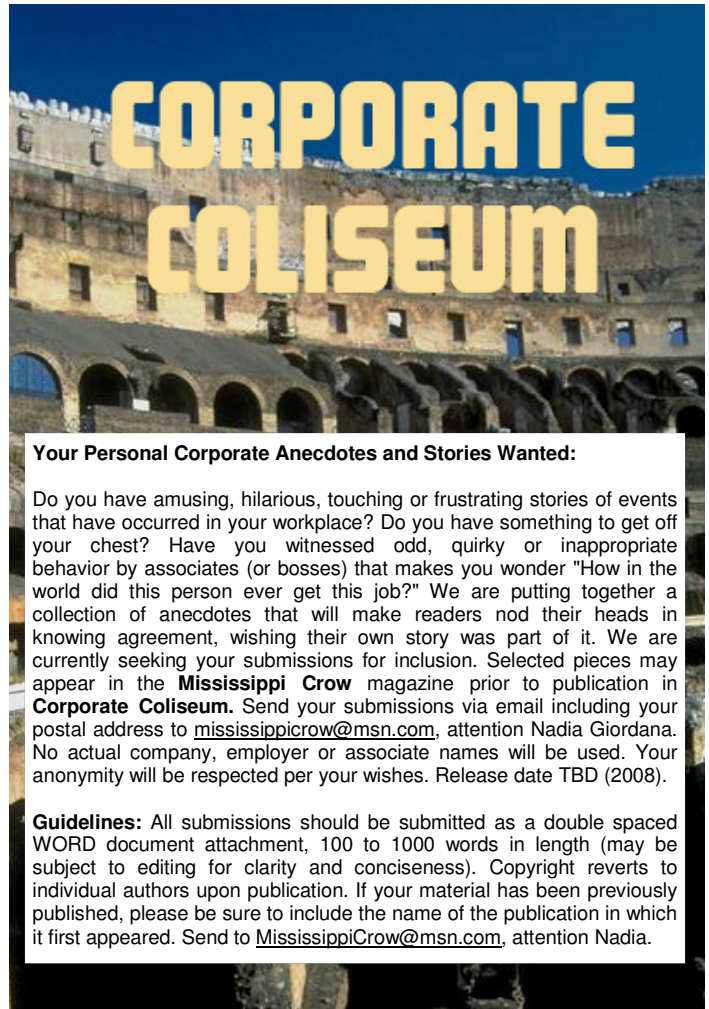
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