



Westland Writes ... 2016

Poetry and Fiction

Andy Schuck, editor, contest judge
Cheryl Vatcher-Martin, contest judge



Westland Writes 2016

A Collection of Local Writing

Andy Schuck

Editor and Contest Judge

Cheryl Vatcher-Martin

Contest Judge

Westland Writes 2016

*All rights revert back to the authors after publishing.

Lay-out and design by Alexis Tharp, librarian



William P. Faust Public Library of Westland

6123 Central City Parkway

Westland, MI 48185

734-326-6123

www.westlandlibrary.org

Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------------|----|
| Westland Writes | 1 |
| Contents | 3 |
| Poems | 7 |
| Annette Rochelle Aben | 8 |
| One For All | 8 |
| LeeAnne Baumdraher | 9 |
| Alice's Ribcage | 9 |
| Candy | 10 |
| Mary Ann Bozenski | 11 |
| It Isn't Over... | 11 |
| What I Need Is... | 12 |
| Patrick Franks | 13 |
| Pub Relic | 13 |
| Or Else | 14 |
| Heidi Irvine | 14 |
| The Left Side of the Bed | 14 |
| Temporarily | 15 |
| John Edward Kelly | 16 |
| The Coronation of the Faerie Queen | 16 |
| A Wonderful, Wishful, Magical Fairy Garden | 17 |
| Cheryl A. Martin, M.A. | 18 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Follow The Moon | 18 |
| Cold Wintry Days in April | 21 |
| Archibald McKishnie | 23 |
| Love You Still | 23 |
| Untitled | 24 |
| Casheena Parker | 26 |
| Immortality | 26 |
| The Pain Unseen | 27 |
| Sever Pederson | 28 |
| It Was a Dark Night | 28 |
| Now | 30 |
| Martha Porter | 31 |
| Conversation with God! | 31 |
| A Mother's Love! | 32 |
| Andy Schuck | 33 |
| Barreling brother | 33 |
| One of them | 34 |
| Nkosi O. Shorter | 35 |
| How Wonderful and Pleasant Nature Is | 35 |
| Full of Life | 36 |
| Kaitlyn Stabile | 36 |
| Of Shakespeare's Quill | 36 |
| Suicide of a Saint | 37 |
| Brian J. Tripp | 38 |
| The River Runs | 38 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| The Solitary Swan | 40 |
| Jesse Trudell | 41 |
| Springtime | 41 |
| Alphonse Tupakavich | 42 |
| Michigan | 42 |
| Barbara May Watson | 43 |
| Who's Dreaming Tonight? | 43 |
| Cloaked Destinations | 44 |
| Shari Welch | 44 |
| Poet | 44 |
| The First One | 45 |
| Justin Williams | 46 |
| In a Shadow of Echoes | 46 |
| Sonic Boom | 47 |
| Anette Wolski | 47 |
| Full Disclosure | 47 |
| Reminiscing | 48 |
| Gary Wyatt | 48 |
| An Arrangement in Gray and Black | 48 |
| Vahalla | 49 |
| Stories | 51 |
| Keith D'Alessandro | 52 |
| Adventure, Interrupted | 52 |
| Mary Lindsay | 59 |

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| The Encounter | 59 |
| Lynette Roggenbuck | 62 |
| Love is in the Fairy Dust | 62 |
| Jeremy Schultz | 70 |
| Climbing Up | 70 |
| Denise Sedman | 74 |
| Da' Polka King | 74 |
| Toya Wilson | 77 |
| The Bee and the Bonnet | 77 |
| Imelda Zamora | 82 |
| The Ending | 82 |
| American Sentences | 84 |
| About the Contest | 85 |
| Contest Entries | 85 |
| Patrick Franks | 85 |
| Cheryl A. Martin, M.A. | 86 |
| Stephanie Neilan | 86 |
| Sever Pederson | 86 |
| Beverly Rothman | 86 |
| Denise Sedman | 87 |
| Nkosi Shorter | 87 |
| Shari Welch | 87 |
| Anette Wolksi | 87 |

Poems

Annette Rochelle Aben

One For All

Around the corner
There is a park filled with swings
Around the corner
In that park of swings
There's a trail to walk along
In that park of swings
Next to the park's trail
There are two picnic places
Next to the park's trail
To work off your food
There's a set of monkey bars
To work off your food
For the dogs to chase
There are plenty of squirrels
For the dogs to chase
For the grandparents
There are many benches
For the grandparents
For baseball athletes
There are three well-lit diamonds
For baseball athletes
For hockey players
There is an ice arena
For hockey players
We are so grateful
There's such a cool park close by
We are so grateful

LeeAnne Baumdraher

Alice's Ribcage

Once, when I tore open my ribcage
Various glass bottles poured out
Lanky and amber, cerulean and squat
Scarlett and curvy, narrow and plum
"Drink me," they screeched

Not all flavors were agreeable
Bitter, sweet, sour, bland, poisonous
A few I rejected like ipecac
One possessed a persistent aftertaste
And took quite some time to get over

Unrealized at the time of consumption
The bottles' contents had a shrinking effect
And so my passion dwindled in size
As well as my tenderness and fidelity
My heart, especially, weakened and withered

For years, I was a miniature version
Of someone who haphazardly imbibed
My chest clinking with ungentle reminders
Small emotions are pinching pinpricks
In a cavernous, unused breast

Hollowed were the bottles, my chest
And the lonely, dragging days before you
But loving you has been nourishment
Like nibbling a rich slice of pound cake

The calories thickened my skin and soul

Now, every drip of liquid has drained
All glass has pierced and perished
Their tastes are shadows on my tongue
Each heart chamber is fat and fleshy
Robustly pumping as if owned by a giantess

So when I tear open my ribcage today
And nothing too scandalous pours out
Know I've been ridding myself of skeletons
Making room within my deepest space
For you to climb inside and stay awhile

Candy

Freckles led me through the forest
Butter brown bread crumbs
Sprinkled on sweet, pliable cheeks
Sacred ground I've kissed
And kissed and kissed and kissed

One lonely crumb located here
On a fleshy, velvet stone
A smattering of crumbs found there
By the diverged treacle tree
I will lap them up upon my return

Fingertips savory as peppermint canes
As I nibble on gingerbread hands
And press my mouth to cherry cordial lips
I would bake a batch of witches
To taste that sugared summer again

Mary Ann Bozenski

It Isn't Over...

Never give up
No matter how bleak it feels
Time will go by
And things will get better
If you don't wait and see
You'll miss out on your whole life
You could be on the verge of turning the corner
If not into happiness
At least a relief from the pain
God put us on this earth to survive
And do the best we can
He wants us to stay around
To help others
And to help ourselves
Together we can do this
You don't have to struggle on your own
Life can be beautiful
If you only take the time to see what can be
And not give in to the sorrow and the pain
That invites itself in from time to time
Nothing is forever
This too, shall pass
And when it does
You'll be glad
You stayed around for the next act
When that final curtain comes down
It will be at the right time
Not ahead of schedule

And your life will be complete
No looking back
No regrets
It will be what it was meant to be
And for that we will be grateful

What I Need Is...

I don't always get what I want
I usually get what I need
My Higher Power watches over me
Leading me and guiding me in the right direction
Abstinence is a gift I receive daily
Don't get me wrong
I do the leg work
But I owe my recovery to my Higher Power
There have been times when I have stumbled and fallen
My Higher Power picks me up and we start over again
I have lost count of the times I have started over again
It doesn't matter, though
As long as I start again I will be OK
I am a food addict and always will be
That will never change
But I can live with it
I manage my life successfully
When I feel like giving up I say a little prayer
And hope my Higher Power is listening
Seems like He always is
He is there for me when I need Him
For that, I am grateful
I have so many things to be grateful for
The list goes on and on
Each day is a new beginning

A fresh start on life and where I am headed
I try not to look back or too far ahead
I try to stay in the day at hand
Ever mindful of the good life I've been given
I try to share my blessings with others
To help them know the joy of recovery
You can't keep it if you don't give it away
I've been given something precious
I will never forget where I have come from
And be forever grateful that I'm not there anymore
I don't know where I'll end up
But with my Higher Power there I know it will be good
The journey is so wondrous
There's no place else I would rather be
Time and God heal all things
I'm in that healing process
I can't wait to see how it turns out for me

Patrick Franks

Pub Relic

Voting in the States

Is a delegate issue

Which depends on you

Or Else

Kill him while he is alive, or else it won't have quite the same effect.

Heidi Irvine

The Left Side of the Bed

50 years ago

You said goodnight to the love of your life

Slept so soundly

Sweet dreams throughout the night

You swore you would always love him

No matter how many times you would fight

50 years ago

You woke up every morning with him beside you

Even when he left early for work

The impression of his body pressed into the mattress remained

As if to remind you that you're not alone

50 years ago

You started to sleep alone

No more goodnight kisses

No more good morning hugs

50 years have come and gone

No man has laid beside you in oh so long

Yet you stay on one side of the mattress

On the left side is where you reside

To the right side, you choose not to roam
With the hopes of one day
Maybe just for one night
Your husband would come home

Temporarily

If you ask me why I paint the sun
I will tell you that I don't know

Maybe there's a change in my soul
Maybe I feel the urge to grow

If you ask me why I paint the night
I will tell you it's how I feel

Maybe I just think I'm depressed
Maybe I just yearn for happiness

Or could it be?
Just for that moment

Temporarily
I am the sailor lost at sea
I am the stillness in the trees
I am taking in the view
Looking for solace in what I see
I finally feel happy
Temporarily

John Edward Kelly

The Coronation of the Faerie Queen

Upon a golden green meadow, I walked and steered
Within it I spied a faerie ring
Then creatures clothed in wondrous and glamorous spider silk
 appeared

Filled with laughter and did sing
Yet one faerie looked sad indeed
For she knew that death would somehow sting

She knew this time she would bleed
For a new faerie Queen would be crowned
Her daughter, the princess, would do the deed

The Queen, clad in wondrous white did not make a sound
For she knew that her death would not be in vain
The new magic unleashed would astound

Faerie magic would not drain
The princess held a tiny bejeweled knife in the shape of an adder
Thrusting it into the faerie that was white and plain

Then a flash of blinding light, then a whirl
My entire body was engulfed in faerie magic
And my sight became a blur

No more was I so sick
The new faerie queen now reigned
All the faerie folk left rather quick

That was how the coronation that was attained
The Great Faerie Queen
This was how my full health was gained

A Wonderful, Wishful, Magical Fairy Garden

In a wonderful, lush green place
With a circle of primrose flowers
The powers of Fairy folk interlace
Flying from one dimension to the next with their superpowers

Beautiful birds, butterflies, and hummingbirds abound
While rainbow filled crystals hang in the treetops and in plants
This is where Fairy folk live never to be found
Sometimes doing their sacred chants

Other bell shaped flowers are everywhere
These supernatural beings love them all too much
They flit from one flower through the air
Giving each flower a gentle touch

Letting each plant grow at its best
Blooming brightly, growing strong and tall
These are the plants that are blessed
To look upon these plants would be to enthrall

Statues of anything please Fairy folk too
From garden gnomes to anything of the sort
These will bring Fairy folk to you
You might even summon a Fairy Court

Music of gentle types in your garden call Fairy folk as well

They love to dance and frolic
With music in your garden you might see them cast a spell
For melodious sounds are almost symbolic

Be sure too to give something to these little folk
A small piece of furniture to lay their fragile wings
Or even a place to hang their spider silk cloaks
The garden would be a place for kings

Don't forget Faeries like sweets too
Put out a piece of hard candy if you dare
It gives these creatures on something to chew
You might see them fly through the air

This describes a true Fairy garden
Create one if you can
Then you might have the Fairy Queen's pardon
And you could witness a Fairy clan

Cheryl A. Martin, M.A.

Follow The Moon

Follow the moon on a blue and cream sky during the month of
April,

Three quarters of it appears as if it is a cloud passing by,

Instead a fullness appears with requisite holes an apparition that
reminds one of Swiss cheese,

Earlier in the day, as in late afternoon hues,
A spectacle for sure,
As one does a double take,
Questioning its daytime presence, just as the cross holds
electrical wires,
Or another has squares on it, distorting the shape,
Yet these crosses on wood dot the street scape, blending in
amongst the trees;
If any are left around them,
As these power icons were once thriving wood, someplace,
somewhere, where its bark
Had its own story,
Slaughtered to make a utility pole,
Yet without it, darkness would rein, crickets would ricochet
amongst our brains,
Silence, natural light, a force of Mother Nature,
Where quiet transferred from the white noise and clicking of
thumbs on the keyboard,
Like a woodsy residence with the dirt floor, foraging the woods
for food, perhaps finding the creek filled,
with trout, white fish, and a natural grill somehow put together,
eliminating toxic gasses,
Reminisce with me as the centuries become quiet,

Slate becomes paper, silent scholars gently create on the blackness,

Lessons etched,

Peace in a way the 21st century wouldn't understand, community
life, friendship, one room school's

History, a mainstay of Americana, plenty have brushed aside,

As 1800's century tales, disappear with a bull dozer crossing the
street,

Wrecking ball, pressing a button, the earth caves with the
splattering of memories,

And ancient secrets that also have settled into mother's lap, deep
layers below

The upper stratum,

Screams from the brick, ghosts from the past, a relic that stood
the test of time,

Yet destroyed by mankind, eliminating strength and diversity,

Now the carbon footprint, swallowed, making way for the stench
of tar,

Destroy the living grass, ancient wood, a handmade swing, a
vision of the past,

As the scholar danced amongst the branches, enjoying the
natural world, exuding the best of childhood,

Freedom to be, inhaling fresh air and silence, perhaps glancing at
a cow,

Grazing nearby, waiting for the door to close to the school room,

Knowing a giggle emitted once a black nose pressed upon the
open window sill partaking in its own

Lesson plan, perhaps seeing the son who would put the milk pail
near its udder,

Splashing the milk with young hands,

A task that was natural, necessary and essential to that scholar's life,

Not the importance of technological advances where one's
viewpoint was a small screen,

Mother Nature's garden of life had the play instruments
necessary for one's success,

And today, if pursued, the children of all ages can find the
scholar's energy and inspiration,

One needs to take a step outside, go from there, find a tree, lean
up against it, feel the bark,

Hear its stories, create your own,

Mother Nature needs your love, grow your own garden of life,
literally,

Watch the seed grow, the pine cones form,

Life, earth day, today, and forever.

Cold Wintry Days in April

Where spring flowers enjoy the warmth of a typical April Day,

As the first few days therefor, a Saturday, Sunday, Monday,
and Tuesday,

Plentiful heat cascades, a brilliant sun caresses,

A breath from heaven: smiles, flip flops, and the occasional
shorts out and about,

Then the broom sweeps clean the skies of robin's egg blue,

Robbing the Northern Cardinal of bird seed and nourishing feed
in its hungry state,

As the snow squalls turns the bird house into a blizzard of white
fluff,

Torrential cold, twisting hail, not sure what month it is,

Torrid sky tossing snow balls and winds propelling birds
backwards in flight,

Alright, we've tossed April for December,

A cluster of snowy Daffodils, carrying the weight of winter on
their pistils,

While its evergreen hangs tough, battling the arctic shift,

Yet the hardiness is evident, as the cream and dandelion flavor,
stands tall,

Showcasing its hardiness,

As the balance of Spring returns to welcome Iris, Violets, wild
flowers,

Red roses, alongside Rhubarb, showcasing perfume of the Lilac,

Planted a century ago,

Surviving a hurricane of flurries throughout April,

Ah yes, Spring is finally here,
And will soon greet May Day!

Archibald McKishnie

Love You Still

You could have, in cold depths and coffin boards, loved this boy.
I'd appreciate the riddled bone remains wrapped like presents
In the handsome tuxedo picked out for you in light blue.
We all know it was the silver pin of light that did this to you.

Memories carry me away, I could have dug you out
Or in one fell swoop have made you mine – Pulled the trigger
with you, thigh to thigh
Together as bloated fleshies – Nothing to think about
Age old skins in the stuffy cedar space – Time disappears us
from the grave.

More faces passed than people in view of you – Looked, looked,
looked at,
Through the single black eyeball that disenfranchised you;
Smooched you out and made you a hilarious joke.
Seeing only through The witless eye, the people sanctioned its
evil dispensation,
And It was hard because your neighbors were straight men and
they'd drank from your cup

But I have died already for you and it was the river of the minnows
Who laughed at us behind dark, beady eyes of intolerance.

Our reflection in supercilious pupils was a mirror of hope; We
were not the judging square
And you and I remember only the street light splashed sheets.

Untitled

Death, impenetrable darkness
Abysmal nothingness
With it the ability to feel no pain nor pleasure
Retreat from one's own mind
I used to like you a lot

Long time since having thought seriously
Upon your character
Quirks and qualities
Desire to leave it all like this, I know
Something different, you pulled the trigger

Hurting, alone
You have a communication problem
Only yesterday, wide smiles that you wore
Now you dress in cedar boxes, the embalming process
Adorned with wreaths; The rose bush

We will confront your demons for you
Dependent, unable limbs
Bliss in stories and still loving you
Reciting water on the cheeks
Cry, cry, cry, and fly you back to me

Familiar faces, few of these are new
People, they come to mourn for you
Standing, staring, stone statues

Hear their noise
Walker of the sky, in heaven

Fictitious beings bring me back to you
Time machine, gracious God, Celestials
I seek you out, a face I comprehend
Never believed, so never cried
Urn of ashes, come back old friend

What death does
Dangerous questions
An unanswerable series of words
Blotted away, cities do the same to stars
Signs, stoplights, streets and your big truck

Living vivid memories, I am still a sophomore fag
I spoke no joke, confessions to be shamed, but no
Did not lose the friend in you
"No big deal," You'd tell me, "It happens," You'd say
Acceptance filled your youthful heart

A novel feeling, I was embraced
Strong arms, humid summer's day
Skin burns red, gazing at the blazing Sun
Salty blue water, grasping at linen
Embracing Hades

Ocean waves and sandy beaches
We took home more than shells
Lined bathing suit
Thighs or muscles, look away
Remember what we did, where you are?

I am still loving the Sun

Casheena Parker

Immortality

Tradition is a word that for most families has gone into remission.

Placed away into a world unknown to the generations to come.

Too preoccupied with the formed opinions than on their families alone.

And why

For the world to view them as more fulfilled and purposed than they are.

But what's the reality?

The reality is none of them has any real morals or values.

They float around misguided and unfocused on everything around them.

A misconception of the leaders

Lead them to the world of the unaccomplished.

Because rather they understand it or not mortality does exist

When you build something greater than yourself

Your name continues to live on

Only in that moment will your hard work show past transparency and will your name become brighter than the stars above.

The Pain Unseen

I glance at her in the mirror

And wonder what happened to that girl I used to know

Whose pride was far greater than a man's ego.

But here she stands as her world begins to crash and burn

With her head bowed low

And her knees buckling below

She's losing herself in this mist she's come to know as her own
personal hell

Mystery eludes her

As the pain she kept so carefully guarded breaks free

The box was too small to withhold all that was beneath it

So it exploded

More like imploded on the impact of anything else being secretly
contained.

And as the secrets escape they contaminate everything

Slowly destroying all that she worked for

Prayed and searched for

And all this for nothing

For the pleasure of another's thoughts and wants

Someone who continuously thinks of nothing but themselves

And this proves more than the share of that truth
So I sit back and deal
While patiently waiting for a wound that I know deep down
won't heal
Cause they never have before
So how do I contain the damage that already done?
While making sure it doesn't spread
How do you place the collateral on the damage already done?
You don't
You fix the wounds as they come
You explain the scars that anyone just so happens to see
And you close the door to anything who looks like more damage
to the promise that contains me.

Sever Pederson

It Was a Dark Night

There was a big house
The sight of it was scary
Being so run down

One door was open
Do I dare to venture in

Out in the country

It was said one day
A large family lived in it
Many years ago

Who was the last to leave
This house once so beautiful
No one really knows

People said to me
That is a haunted house now
Stay away from it

Eerie as it sounds
I wanted to check it out
It was a dark night

A flashlight would help
So I found one in my car
Then walked to the door

I heard sounds inside
A bang, a crash and a thud
Was someone in there

My heart was pounding
As I moved slowly forward
Then it all came clear

A raccoon family
Had taken full possession
Like they owned the house

Now

My now keeps moving
Now has moved so many times
Last week was now then

Tomorrow will be
Now to all who are living
I say you are blessed

Now is the big word
That changes every moment
Always leaving past

Now let me tell you
I told you now keeps moving
And always will move

Along the time line
Seconds move it on forward
A steady movement

Six years from now
Many new forms will have been
They come and move on

Can you hold now still
It slips right through your big hands
Always on the go

Now is consistent
Now you can learn a lesson
As you study now

Try to capture now
It will not stay in your box
Go along with now

Now is giving you
Many memories daily
Monthly and yearly

Martha Porter

Conversation with God!

It is I calling upon you today
I need to talk a while
'Cause my heart is torn to pieces
For I need a friend
That I can express
My innermost thoughts
And I know you won't laugh

You will always know
What my heart wants to say
'Cause sometimes my mind
Seems to wander
Due to the confusion, fears, and pain
Brought upon, from this world

Yet I know
With you I'll never feel alone
I can turn to you for love and guidance

Even during my darkest hours
Only you know the direction I must take

You will never leave me
As those here always do

You will always be there to catch me
When I stumble and fall

You will always keep me safe
From harm, I cannot withstand

Talking to you GOD
Is like talking to a friend!

A Mother's Love!

Although, lost in passing
A Mother's love never rests

Just when your heart is broken
A Mother's love will prevail

A Mother's love can understand our tears
And put an end to our fears

When our dreams suddenly seem real
That is when our Mother's love
Comes in the form of a touch, hug, praise, or words
Much like hers

Trying to visualize

A Mother's love
As if you're always here
Locked inside my heart

For the day you left
You left me sad

Wishing you here
To fill this hole I'm in
Put here when you passed

Always there it seems

In my dreams
You're always here

A Mother's love
Will always be
Never too far away!

For as long as I have memories, Mom
We will always be!
Never Apart!

Andy Schuck

Barreling brother

Barreling brother

past lips in need of chapstick

inconsistently shod
not very solid
as good as never-ending
come over to plow around
at chummy, dark cafes
not cross-examining the move
to allotted trees
not uncommon to the fence
He liked the deadened feel
the smooth ache punctuated
by the three blizzards
in places you can't name
chapped by the aleatoric breeze
they slap a stone to

One of them

just under your chin
the little things
we don't want to do

we bend a knee
until there's nothing
left to breathe

I wasn't one
of them until

somebody told me

we're walking away
so ably soaking
up the spit

all this time
out of town
I want let out

how can you
not reach
for me?

Nkosi O. Shorter

How Wonderful and Pleasant Nature Is

The sun gives a shine,
That is wonderfully kind.

It is lovely to observe,
As I stroll around the curve.

Squirrels are climbing up the trees,
As I walk through nature's leaves.

It starts to thunder and to storm,
Then comes out every worm.

How wonderful and pleasant nature is,
It reminds me so much when I was a kid.

Full of Life

People want to be full of life,
The life that has no strife.

People want to be full of life,
The life that tells the tired body good night.

People want to be full of life,
The life that is guided by a good light.

People want to be full of life,
The life that guides them like a strong kite.

Kaitlyn Stabile

Of Shakespeare's Quill

Define me, my feathered friend.
Dilute thy thoughts, fraught with
Effervescent knowledge, kept still by a beating heart
Feigning madness before the hour.
A serpent stung the ear of a king,
The melancholic nerve.

Ectoplasmic tears mist the

Unconscious,
A Trojan heiress consumed by revenge
Sought a ghost in the night.
If Electra were to be born of different sex,
She would pursue the frailty of death.

Oh, poor Hamlet, he who
Suffers from the deceptive court,
From incestuous intentions;
Ceremony hides corruption.
Plato's allegory sheds no light on the
Shadows that encompass a Denmark heart.

Laertes, you play the tragic fool, well.
And Ophelia, a watchful eye now placed
Upon your scene does no longer
Yield a genuine response.
This tainted view has poisoned his eyes,
Scorned his mind.

Embody the Other by pen to paper,
Playwright,
There is no human definition here.
Immerse thyself in the translations of the psychic.
A juniper smile erupts from within, artificial and noxious,
A murder most foul.

Suicide of a Saint

Before you do, Siren, kiss your children goodnight.
Tape up your guilt next to the cracks
Of deception and insecurities.

Pry open the mouth of the metal Reaper
And let it breathe bulbous indigestion into
Your lungs.

Turn the knob,
The only electroshock therapy to comfort
You, the Rabbit Catcher.

Kneel before the beast,
Ask for his forgiveness in your detrimental
Posthumous life

Take the Edge of the knife,
Hold it close to your wrists,
You are the ringmaster in a Circus of Three Rings.

Young mother take solace in the
Hibernation of insomnia
And the milk-white talons of depression.

Paint your life blonde,
The locks of a venerated student
Caught in a noose, Like a Hawk in the Rain.
Before you go, Siren, tell the world goodnight.

Brian J. Tripp

The River Runs

The river runs swiftly by.

Where does the water go? I really don't know.
But on and on the river flows.
Ceaselessly by.

The river twists and turns
and meanders a bit.
It narrows, it widens, it's deep, or shallow,
so I may wade into it.
But it runs on, it never quits.

It's on a journey, like you and I.
Onward it flows.
And where it all leads, God only knows.

To the ducks, their home, their friend...
and to the trout who swim upstream
and also to the fishermen.
The river doesn't worry about its end.
It doesn't fret, nor worry, nor dream.
It just runs on relentlessly,
ceaselessly to the sea.

The river cuts through stone
and earth and clay.
Jagged rocks smoothed day-by-day.
Its power fierce as it rages on.
Hour-after-hour, year-after-year.
It doesn't hunger, nor want, nor cry.
It just runs on, it's never done.
Relentlessly, ceaselessly to the sea.

It's on a timeless journey.
Unlike you and I, my friend.

While we're here and after we're gone,
the river runs on and on and on.
Onward it flows.
And where it ends, God only knows.

The Solitary Swan

There is a solitary swan
floating on the still, blue pond.
Recently where, I saw a pair,
now, there is but one.

She swims about so solemnly,
while preening in the sun.
This regal fowl makes nary a call,
just swims now all alone.

Do you wait upon your mate
whose love is unrequited?
He to return at a later date,
only then to be united?

Or has your mate
met worse a fate
and only you survive?
Now all alone on the still, blue pond
to live your solitary life.

As I watch this lonely swan
upon the still, blue pond.
I contemplate *my* future fate.
One day *I'll* be alone...

...or should I be the first one gone,
my mate must soldier on.
She then must swim the pond alone,
like this solitary swan.

Jesse Trudell

Springtime

The icy grip of winter has passed,
Its bitter frost no longer bites.
We bid farewell to those unforgiving frozen nights.
Temperatures that once fell begin to rise at last.
Rain drops are free to leap from brimful cloud tops.
A liberated parade floating about on the wind.
As gravity guides the procession's march down,
A steady drumroll patters the ground.
Each splash sounds a note in a musical dance.
Birds flock to sing in harmonious voice.
Crowds of budding wildflowers rejoice.
Lush fields of grass drenched in green,
Stretch into an endless emerald sea.
All around, mother nature is blossoming anew,
Displaying her vivid colors in brighter hues.
Springtime is revealed on the master's canvas.
Admire and behold its grandness.

Alphonse Tupakavich

Michigan

Deer, Bear And Raccoons Too,
Roam The Forests Serene,
While Lakes And Rivers
With Fish Do Abound,
Some Say They're A Fisherman's Dream.
Bright Sandy Beaches
And Fine Golfing Greens
Wilderness Camping 'Midst Picturesque Scenes.
Boating, Biking And Ice-Fishing Too,
Skiing, Sight-Seeing, A Trip To The Zoo.
In Cities And Small Towns, Villages Too,
There Is Much To Be Seen,
Many Fun Things To Do.
These Are Just A Few Reasons
Why Our State Of Four Seasons
Is One Of The Greatest Of All, And To View Nature's Splendor
- Wondrous Scenes To Remember,

Take A Ride "Up North" In The Fall.

It's Beautiful! It's Michigan!

Barbara May Watson

Who's Dreaming Tonight?

Talking in my sleep has gone on for numerous years.
I have frightened some with my loud outbursts, thinking I might
be possessed.
They stood over me praying for the evil to leave and for me to
remain blessed.

I take on the voices of many, one being an old crone.
She has a creepy, crackling voice of age that often spews words
and groans.
Another night, it might be the child reciting words or a song.
Happy, laughing, and singing...I have rehearsed them all.

Upon waking, my friend would convey just exactly what I had said.
I would think and reminisce, then, I supplied my rendition.
I wrote it down in a journal that I kept at the side of my bed.
I did this to help discover my mission.

Finally a day, this year, the pieces of the puzzle fit.
I had the astonishing epiphany that had eluded me all of these years
I have been dreaming multiple dreams in multiple dimensions all
at the same time!

I eagerly relayed to my friend the sudden, intuitive revelation.

She understood so she waited that night to find out who was
talking.

My friend asked the entity, "Who are you?"

It answered, "I am her psychic shaman."

Cloaked Destinations

Cloaked destinations wisp you to magical places at night.

Step up on the platform, assume your position

And let your dreams take flight.

Let the linens absorb you as you sink and become furrow.

Release the day's frustration and look forward to the

Astral Travel World.

Take a few deep breaths, hold them a moment.

Release when you are ready.

The bursts of energy light up the night's dark sky.

The boom, bang and crash hide all the reasons why

Cloaked destinations are hidden from the world.

Only those who truly believe can experience and see

The multi-dimensions filled with wonder and awe.

Shari Welch

Poet

(Writing a poem)

Writing a poem can take you to a place in

time.
Expressing thought to a beat in
rhyme.
From political injustice to romance and
pain.
To the lovers fight---then make up
again.
The poet has a way to bring it all to
light.
With just a few words the Poet just
might.
Bring forth thoughts explored like never
before.
Writing a poem will open that
door.
To a world of subconscious thoughts that flood the
heart.
Articulating, contemplating and plotting a
chart.
Through an unending array of
feeling.
This the Poet will write for
Meaning.

The First One

When you walk into the room
Embrace quiet stares, fake smiles
Carefully worded statements
Scurried awkward movements
you feel
Tense---tight---heavy
you think

Mean---betrayed---hurt
 you want
To cry---yell---fight---leave
 you do
Stay---your job---remain professional
 you end
 ACHIEVED

Justin Williams

In a Shadow of Echoes

In a shadow of echoes
I wear the Innocent's Crown
Amidst the wind of the song-filled rushes
Rife upon the ground

In a Shadow of Echoes
I hold my mind's eye
Up to the brown nest's sparrows
Held gently in the sky

In a Shadow of Echoes
Far away from the Sunlight's beams
I sleep in the tall green grass
And dream of being free

Sonic Boom

As the dead amassed on the courtroom floor
The hysterical crowd cheered for more
It was a sight the hangman could not ignore
As he pulled the noose nice and tight

While the priest who gave the Sunday mass
Was arrested while the plate was passed
As all the windows stained with glass
Came crashing down from the heavenly heights

The Politico's lies were on display
While the masses all did moo and bray
Believing the tales of a better day
Despite the gathering gloom

And the coins that read "In God We Trust"
Now despoiled with blood and rust
Were blown away by the cosmic dust
Of a warplane's "sonic boom"

Anette Wolski

Full Disclosure

Tattooed arms
Stretching
From shoulder to supple wrist
Sharing a story

Reminiscing

Old friends embracing
Catching up on the good times
We haven't changed much

In spite of gray hair
The sparkle inside remains
Two children at heart

Gary Wyatt

An Arrangement in Gray and Black

A huge gray Monolith, the Ancient Asylum
Enter...

The long dark hallway,
Shadows of Gray and Black
cover the ceiling, walls and floor.
Shadows in Gray and Black,
motionless,

shaped like dead ghosts
of Children Women and Men.

These very Shadows of Gray and Black
Bleed Blood, Red Blood
without movement.

Then, the Bleeding Shadows of Gray and Black
began to move.

The Blood Shadows move like flowing streams or
wisps of smoke.

The Bleeding Shadows of Gray and reach out toward
you.

The shadows of Gray and Black creep closer, closer,
ever closer as to embrace you.

Do you flee hoping to escape the embrace of the
Shadows of Gray and Black or embrace them and perhaps
become yourself a Bleeding Shadow of Gray and Black?

Vahalla

It's a warm October day,

the sun is shining.

There's a cool breeze blowing.

We're playing on grass.

I'm at middle linebacker.

And I'm seventeen

forever.

Stories

Keith D'Alessandro

Adventure, Interrupted

Alexis Kendall Black remained unaware of just how much her mother's heart had broken last month when she started kindergarten. Just as her brother, Stewart, had been oblivious to their mother's emotional state when he had begun attending Patrick Henry Elementary the previous year. Both Alexis and her brother were unaware of how scared their mother was for both of her children now that state mandate required her to relinquish the absolute control had exercised upon their safety and well-being in her first five years and six months of raising her children. It was the same fear of the world that Alexis' Grandma Rose had impressed upon both of her own daughters. But to the credit of Alexis' momma, the younger daughter of Rose Ann Drickler was doing her best to keep those fears to herself, rather than impressing them upon her own children.

Alexis Kendall, who her mother had dressed for school today in blue jeans and a brown tee shirt that proclaimed, **Pretty AND Good at Math**, did not know how determined her momma was that both of her children, unlike both of Alexis' parents, attend college. Alexis' mother embraced the idea of her children claiming their independence, just as long ways away in the future as she was in no hurry to become the present.

Alexis was unaware just how much her mother meant it when she said she was the daughter she had always wanted, because her mother had kept from her that the reason this was so was because she was the little girl her mother wished she had been. She was also unaware that this very same logic caused no end of conflicting emotions within her mother for her son having taken so much after her.

Alexis resented the fact that her brother would always be older than her and for that reason would always get to do things first. The fact that Stewart was so much bigger than her and was always using that to be mean to her. She also remained confused why there were so many things she had to do that she didn't want to do. Every time she asked her momma, 'Why', her momma answered, "Because I said so. Now would you please tell me why you and Stewart can't stop fighting each other for one second?"

There was one thing that Alexis Kendall Black, with her summer blond hair starting its turn back to its cold weather brown in the pigtails her mother had put it in and the gray cotton jacket she had put on all by herself the way they had taught her to do at her four-year-old school around her school, did know at the moment:

School was over but her momma till hadn't picked her up as she had done every other day she had gone to school since starting three-year old school. And Alexis may have not have known why it was her momma was not there yet... 'yet', Alexis told herself repeatedly...but she did know that she that she was very worried about this.

As she stared out in front of her, waiting to see her momma turn the corner and suddenly appear, as she had been doing every afternoon on every day that wasn't Saturday or Sunday, Alexis felt her classmates go around her and walk up to their own mommies. Hearing all of the mommas ask them how school had been that day, and all of the kids she went to school with tell their mommies, "Fine", as you were supposed to do until the two of you started walking home. Knowing that your momma would keep asking you what you had done this morning until you finally gave in and told her.

The rule was, you could not leave the classroom until your momma or daddy was there to pick you up, although daddies rarely showed up to pick up their kids. Every time one of the

kids asked Miss Janet why it was they had to wait in the classroom until their momma showed up, Miss Janet always said, "Because it's the rule. That's why." Neither Alexis nor anyone of the other kids in the class thought this was a good answer. But at least Miss Janet did not say, "Because I said so. Now drop it."

Alexis did not like getting in trouble and having to take a time-out at school.

However, because she had had only turned five last month, and had been a very strong willed child for each and every of these sixty-one months she had been on this planet, the moment Alexis' teacher stated, "Remember that absolutely no one is to leave this classroom until your mommy and daddy is here to pick you up", Alexis left the classroom and began walking in the direction she had been staring in ever since putting on her jacket. Because, using kid logic, she had been told not to do that very thing.

Alexis was fortuitous in that just moments before setting her legs in motion towards the door an argument broke out between two of her classmates as to which boy's father could beat up the other's boy father in a fight that would never happen.

Without knowing she was doing so, Alexis chose the very moment Miss Janet's back was completely turned to her and was admonishing the boys for talking the way they were to step through the outside doorway and head past the room's lone window. Having made her getaway, Alexis Kendall walked to the corner of the building, around it, all the way across the side of the school that faced the street she lived on and was halfway down the cement path that led to the crosswalk when she realized the slim lady dressed in faded blue jeans and a dirty gray sweatshirt walking quickly in her direction was her momma.

Her worry about getting in trouble for being caught not following the rules returned to her, and overpowered her happiness that her momma had finally arrived right up until her

mother came up to her, embraced Alexis against her legs and said, "I'm so sorry, sweetie pie. I was trying to get all my vacuuming done while your dad's at work and you and your brother were at school, and I lost track of time."

And then all Alexis Kendall Black felt was happy that her mother was there to take her home. Especially when her momma bent down and showered her forehead with kisses, as Gail Kristen Black was inclined to do with both of her young children.

"I try to get all of my cleaning done now when you and Stewart are in school," Alexis' mother explained to her after standing back straight.

Gail let a smile come to her face as she said, "Were you having yourself an adventure? Seeing how far you could get home on your own before I remembered to look at the clock?"

Alexis' momma was always doing that with her and Stewart. Telling them they were 'going on an adventure' as they walked to the playground at the park right by their school. Walking through bushes as tall as her brother and telling them they were exploring, even though the only thing on the other side of the bushes was the tennis court and soccer field.

And in her mommy asking her why she had been walking home on her own, Alexis Kendall suddenly realized she had been denied the chance of doing so. She had been stopped from having a true adventure.

Determined to have that adventure, and forgetting all the worry had only minutes ago had been coursing through her entire body as she walked unescorted in the direction she was pretty sure was the way home, Alexis said, "Momma, tomorrow I'll walk home all by myself."

Gail smiled down at Alexis, amazed at how strong willed and confident her daughter could be, and replied, "Yeah, that's not gonna happen, Missy Lou. Not until next year at the very earliest."

"But you let Stewart walk home by himself."

“Because he’s in first grade, Alexis. And because your father insisted your brother do so to build up the confidence you have and he doesn’t. Last year when he was in kindergarten, I came up and walked him home, too. Just like I am doing with you, and just like I’m gonna do until you start first grade next year.”

“Momma! It’s not fair!”

“I know. I’m such a mean Momma. Trying to keep you safe. Trying to keep you...”

Gail looked into her daughter’s defiant eyes and her protruding lower lip and thought about just how happy she was Alexis had inherited all of the traits she had hoped her youngest child would from Allen, that Stewart hadn’t. All of the things that had attracted her to Allen in the first place and had made her fall in love with him. Allen’s confidence and desire to push himself to do new things and to have different experiences. His belief that he could do anything he wanted to do that Gail wanted so much for both of her children to have. Rather than all the worry of what could go wrong if she tried that had been drilled into her by her own mother, that in turn had been indoctrinated into her by her mother, Gail’s Grandma Alice.

All the things of what could happen to Stewart and Alexis when they weren’t in her sight that coursed through Gail whenever they were gone from her.

Gail cupped her daughter’s cheeks in her hands and tried to think of how to explain to Alexis the kind of momma she wanted to be to her and Stewart. She saw the lettering on her daughter’s shirt and began smiling at her.

“The moment I saw that shirt at Kmart, Alexis, I knew I had to buy it for you. Not just because you are so pretty, but because I want you to always feel you can do anything you want, when you are old enough to do it. I was always really bad at math, and your Grandma Rose and Grandpa Evan said it was because I was a girl. Well my being a girl had nothing do with it. I just wasn’t good at math. Just like I was good at others things because for

everyone, there are things you are good at and there are things that you are not. A man will always be more likely to be good at lifting rocks all day or building up really big muscles. But that doesn't mean there aren't women that can lift rocks all day or aren't really strong. There are certain things that will always be true. A man will never be able to have a baby and a woman will never...well, I can't think of anything right now that's the same thing for men that a woman having a baby is...but my point is, it might turn out that you are not good at math. Or that you are really good at spelling or being organized. But it won't be because you're a girl. It will be because you are Alexis Kendall Black. And you were born with certain strengths and things you need to work on to be good at."

"But, Momma, I want to walk home by myself!"

"I know you do, Alexis. Just like I would have wanted to if your Grandma Rose wasn't always telling me every single bad thing that could happen even if both her and grandpa went with me on the bus to high school. Your Grandma Rose has always been scared of everything and she taught me to be scared of everything."

Don't go out in the rain, Gail. you could slip and get hurt. Don't go across the street. You could get hit by a car. Don't go to your friend's house, you could get lost. Don't go swimming, you could drown. Don't go skating, you could fall.

"I'm twenty-eight years old, Alexis, and your grandmother is still doing it.

Don't sun tan, Gail. You could get skin cancer.' 'I don't sun tan, mom.' "I know. But don't sun tan. You could get skin cancer.'

Don't smoke when you're pumping gas. 'Mom, I don't smoke.' I know, but don't smoke when you pump gas. You'll blow yourself up. I saw it on the news last week. Some woman was smoking while she was pumping gas and blew herself up.

'Mom, I don't smoke.' I know. But don't smoke. You'll get lung cancer.

Gail bent down to her daughter and said, "Alexis, every time you or your brother are not in my sight, I worry about all the things that could happen. I am so afraid that something will happen and you'll get hurt. Or that I will lose you.

"But I don't want to make you or Stewart afraid like Grandma Rose made me afraid of everything. I don't want you to be telling your daughter when she's five, "It's okay that I am making you afraid of everything. It's not my fault, it's your Grandma Gail's fault."

"I am trying to be strong as I can and let you be the confident, strong-willed girl that you are right now. Because that's the way I want you to grow up. To not be afraid the way your Aunt Judith and Grandma Rose are, and my grandma was. I want you to be the very best of what your daddy and I happen to be. But that doesn't mean that a girl that just turned five should walk home by herself. That's not an adventure, and it's not me being silly. My job is to keep you safe until you are old enough to know how to be safe on your own. And to be confident that you can do anything you set your mind to do. Without letting fear hold you back the way it sometimes still holds me. I promise you, Alexis. Next year, I will let you walk home on your own, as terrifying as that will be for me. As it has been for me every Monday through Friday afternoon this month until your brother gets home from school."

Gail watched her daughter's lip protract a little before letting go of one more, "It's not fair."

"I know. But you're still not walking home by yourself right now."

Gail placed a flurry of kisses on both of her daughter's cheeks and then asked, "Who's the best little girl in all world?"

Through a giggle, Alexis replied, "I am."

And Gail was grateful that her daughter believed that. She stood back up, took her daughter's hand and began walking back home.

Mary Lindsay

The Encounter

From the moment they locked eyes, she knew she was in trouble. Halfway across the Magnolia Street pedestrian overpass bridge, she saw him. He was in a shadow, quietly watching her approach while she, lost in thoughts of her latest argument with her mother over her choice of an apartment in a neighborhood her mother described as "sketchy", had not seen him there. She froze in place, as he slowly stepped forward, neither of them losing eye contact. Her faced drained of color as she realized she had seen him before in this area and was wary of him then. Why did she decide to take this shortcut tonight? It was a cold evening in late November, dark early with not many other people about. She was in a hurry to get back to her apartment and the overpass seemed the most expedient way to get there. She thought of the small apartment now, with its freshly painted walls in the turquoise color her boyfriend told her would be a mistake. She had bought curtains and some throw pillows that she felt made a statement while complimenting the new color scheme perfectly. Her potted herb garden on the antique sideboard near the window overlooking the street provided another touch that was making the apartment a real home for her now. She had left her slow cooker on when she went to work so the chili recipe she wanted to try would be ready for her when she got home. She

thought of all these things now, wishing desperately that she was home now in her small but safe apartment. She wondered if she would ever see home again, given the situation before her now.

Taking in the look of menace in his eyes and his filthy condition, she decided that he was probably homeless, his makeshift bed tucked beneath the overpass. And now she was trespassing on his turf, presumably giving him the right to confront and probably attack her. She risked a glance around herself, assessing her options. If she turned around and ran, he could easily overtake her. If she leapt over the side, even assuming that she would land in an area soft enough not to break a bone, she would probably be in the area where he slept at night, and it would be a quick trip down for him to pounce on her. Climbing up the framing of the bridge might get her slightly out of his reach, but then what? Could she stay up there for an indeterminate amount of time, waiting for the unlikely appearance of another pedestrian in the now quickly dropping temperature?

How she hated this feeling of helplessness. It seemed to her that her whole life had been lived making one compromise after another. Her parents had been so anxious about her leaving home for college, she gave up the opportunity for a larger life at the University of Michigan for the smaller campus and proximity to home of Madonna University. She met her boyfriend there in an accounting class she didn't want to take. She had a talent for graphic design, but her parents perused her to pursue a more "marketable" field of study. If she was going to pay for a college education, she should make sure she got her money's worth, they told her. According to them, a degree in the arts was for people who were content to scratch out a living for the rest of their lives. Even Paul, her boyfriend, was unhappy with her job choice of handling accounts for the small local museum of modern art. "Babe, with your degree you can make a whole lot more money working in wealth management than at this peanut job" he

would tell her in his most supportive, yet concerned for her financial security voice. The choice was one she had made in order to take advantage of their scholarship program for budding artists and for the opportunity to participate in their annual gallery event showcasing local artists. She could see them all mentally shaking their heads at her insistence on continuing to take classes and workshops in what they pointedly referred to as her "hobby. "Does what I want matter to anyone other than myself?" she wondered aloud. This prompted her would-be assailant to raise his head and look at her in a quizzical way.

And now, she felt she was being intimidated once more, here on the overpass two blocks from home. She had a right to choose this path home. This is how she wanted to get from point A to point B and like so many other decisions in her life, someone else's wishes were taking precedence over hers.

It was at this point that she decided that she would take charge of this situation. She was going to continue on her intended route home. No longer would she freeze in her tracks and turn in another direction when clearly she was already heading in the direction of her choice. She stepped forward with all the confidence she could muster. As she neared her potential adversary, she saw him tense, as if ready to spring at her and at that point she raised her hand and said in a loud and what she hoped was a commanding tone "NO!" She maintained her eye contact with him, but now instead of fear in her eyes, she felt a certain self-assurance. She was in charge of this encounter and as she swept past him, the dog lowered its head and trotted off to the other side of the overpass. She continued on her way home to her safe haven with the turquoise walls and the slow cooker chili waiting for her there.

Lynette Roggenbuck

Love is in the Fairy Dust

Nick Gabbles was running late.

“Don't forget your meatloaf!” His mom yelled after him. He was supposed to meet his boss ten minutes ago at a coffee shop. She was not a patient person. Ms. Kurington had a reputation for being downright nasty. The guys joked it was because she was sixty-three and, with a face like tyrannosaurs, hadn't been laid in seventy. Needless to say, Ms. Kurington would be furious.

Nick was hardly what you would call prime bachelor material himself. He was overweight, had severe asthma, and lived with his mother. He filled his days testing video games but wished he could find that special someone.

Bustling at top speed from the bus station, he didn't have much time to think about that now. Reciting the apology in his head, he tried to juggle his suitcase and notes. Rounding a corner, Nick ran into something small and hard. Wham! Staring around, Nick saw flakes of golden dust in the air. A strange tingling sensation rushed from his head to his fingertips. He shook his head. The lack of coffee was messing with his brain.

Thirty minutes late, Nick walked in and plopped down in a seat next to Ms. Kurington. He mumbled out an apology that was nothing like the brilliant soliloquy Nick had composed in his head. She waved it aside.

“That's quite alright, Mr. Gabbles.” Nick blinked in surprise. Certainly, it was odd that she would pass up the chance to yell at anyone. That was how she spent her free time! Nick tried to brush it off and continue with his presentation, but things only began to get stranger. Halfway through his speech on his recent beta test, she interrupted Nick.

"My, my, I just love listening to you." Taken aback, Nick halted in his presentation. A compliment? The woman must be ill!

"Thank you," he mumbled. She swatted her hand at him as if he had said something silly.

"Nick, darling, call me Claudia. Enough of all this talk of beta testing and quarterly earnings; you know I don't really understand that anyway."

Now Nick was extremely confused. Ms. Kurington was a monster in the office, usually forbidding talk of anything but quarterly earnings. "What would you like to talk about...uh...Claudia?"

"Certainly, you can think of something," she said as she ran her hand across his knee. Nick stood up.

"I need to go outside," the words tumbled out in a rush, "I left my...uh...pencil...in the...bushes." He sprinted for the door. She waved a handkerchief like an old southern lady.

"I'll be waiting," she cooed.

Outside, Nick took an enormous breath. What on earth was wrong with that woman? She had never acted this way before. In fact, everyone had been sure that all remnant of feeling in her had withered away.

"Pssst."

Startled, Nick looked toward the noise. What he saw, he could scarcely believe. Hovering in front of his face appeared to be a tiny male fairy. His tiny insect wings were a blur, and his green cotton outfit came with matching pointed slippers. Despite his whimsical appearance, the fairy looked cranky.

"Name's Hodgkins," he growled, "We got a problem."

Nick said, "What seems to be the matter?" Hodgkins bobbed in the air.

"Well, I was running late for a big fairy meeting this morning, and we collided. Big crash. I was carrying an entire ounce of fairy dust! Now you're coated in it. We need to get it off you, pronto."

Fairy dust? Nick felt excitement course through him.

"What will the fairy dust do?" he asked, "I mean, will I be able to fly?" Hodgkins shook his head.

"It's not that kind of dust. This is magic love dust. It will make you seem irresistible." Nick staggered in bewilderment. Him? Irresistible? He had never experienced anything so incredible!

"We have to get it off you," Hodgkins was saying, "This stuff is way too strong. You don't want to face the consequences if we leave it on." Nick had stopped listening.

Sandy Hart had just pulled up in her 1957 Chevy pickup. Every morning, she brought flowers from her farm to the florist shop across the street. The whole reason Nick came to this cafe was so he could watch her stop there every morning. He had never seen another woman so beautiful. Normally, he was too terrified to ask her out, but if he was irresistible...

Ignoring Hodgkins's squeaky protests, Nick started across the street toward her. He was just about to reach her when a hand on his arm stopped him.

Turning, he came face to face with Ms. Kurington.

"You kept me waiting, naughty boy," she said, "but it's alright! I forgive you. Let's get back to our tea." The light bulb clicked on in Nick's head at once: Ms. Kurington was caught under the influence of the fairy dust! Before he had a chance to think what to do, a tall blonde lady pushed her out of the way and shook Nick's hand.

"Patricia," she said, "Aren't you a sight for sore eyes! I would love to take you to dinner sometime, sweetie." Nick beamed back at her luscious lips, thinking this fairy dust may have been the greatest thing that ever happened to him. Abruptly, he was seized from behind. Facing him were two smoking hot women wearing very short skirts.

"Hey, I'm Anna and this is Gloria," she nodded at her companion.

“Hey! I saw him first!” Her friend protested. Nick was having hard time breathing. Whipping out his inhaler, he took an enormous puff. *Best. Day. Ever!* he thought,

His excitement soon turned to dismay as more women from the market came over. On a good day, Nick could barely manage to talk to one woman, much less several dozen. They began grabbing him and yanking him around. Nick cried out in alarm, but they didn't seem to care. Each one was too busy demanding he take them out. It was extremely painful. Even more swarmed down upon him. He was about to suffocate under a pile of women! Nick did the only thing that was logical: he ran for it.

Nick hustled down the street, inhaler in one hand. Already, he could feel his asthma constricting his lungs like a python. He couldn't stop now! The stampede of women was just behind him! Screaming like banshees with clawing arms outstretched, they raced after him.

“I knew I should have done more cardio!” Nick wheezed as he raced away. So far, he was managing to keep ahead of the pack. As his lungs tightened, he knew it couldn't last forever.

Finally, his luck ran out as he made a wrong turn down an alley and found himself facing a solid brick wall. Nick gulped. Fear froze his heart as he turned to face his doom. Within seconds, dozens of terrifying women surrounded him. Their perfectly manicured nails scratched at his face while the expensive Gucci handbags dangled ominously at their sides.

“Nick, darling,” Ms. Kurington purred as she stroked his arm, “I know this adorable sushi joint you can take me to.” Before Nick could even begin to grind his brain into a response, Anna snarled at her.

“Oh no, he ain't!” She hissed, “He'll be too busy going fishing with me!” She grabbed his arm and yanked him toward her.

“Not if he's going to the movies with me!” Patricia yelled as she seized his other arm. Gloria shoved Anna aside to latch onto him.

“Nonsense!” She spat. “We're going dancing!”

The mass of women erupted all at once into heated bickering of who Nick was taking out. One girl jumped on the back of Patricia and started ripping her hair out. They fell back only to have three more ladies take their place. Silken hands reached out from everywhere and attempted to wrestle him away. Nick felt like a scrap of meat in a pack of hyenas.

“Ladies! Please!” He croaked out as he was stretched in every direction at once. “There's plenty of me to go around!” They didn't listen; rather they pulled harder while beating back the others. Nick was betting that his massive girth wouldn't stand a chance against these vultures. Eyes bulging, he was about to be ripped in half!

Suddenly, a limo peeled into the alley. It raced toward him and everyone was forced to retreat or risk getting bulldozed. It stopped and the door swung open. Inside was his best friend, Ramone Aldente.

“Get in!” He shouted and Nick didn't need telling twice. He lounged toward the safety of the limo like a criminal fleeing the gallows. The limo squealed away, burning rubber off the tires. Realizing what was happening, some of the women lounged for the back of the limo, but too late. Nick slumped against his seat, panting terribly. Ramone glanced back and let out a low whistle.

“Man, some chicks. They just don't know how to take a 'no' for an answer.” Nick laughed mirthlessly.

“You have no idea. Buddy, you just totally saved my ass. I owe you a beer.” Ramone waved it aside.

“Hey, no worries. I understand the whole chick-magnet problems.” Nick wasn't sure how to respond to this. No doubt, Ramone had ladies falling at his feet. He was a successful businessman that was very handsome and spent all his free time developing his six-pack in the gym. It was all new and terrifying for Nick. Women usually didn't go for couch potatoes that spent their free time becoming a level fifty-three warlock.

"Rough day?" Ramone asked. Nick put a hand over his eyes.

"You have no idea."

"That was a lot of women back there. What did they want anyway?" Nick shrugged.

"I don't know." He didn't feel up to telling Nick the whole story.

"Oh, you're such a liar! I've beaten off tons of women in my time! They definitely wanted to get into your trousers. None of them you're type?"

"No, not really," he muttered feebly. Telling his best friend that the only reason that women were terrorizing through town was because of some fairy love dust sounded insane. Ramone scooted closer to him on the seat.

"So that would mean you're available, right?" Not really listening, the question didn't sink in at first.

"Uh...I suppose?" Nick asked. Ramone inched closer to him and continued in his huskiest voice.

"I know, surprising, right? I never showed any interest in you before, but watching you fight off those women...mmm, it really got my blood flowing, you know? So what do you say we hit the town and see how things go between us?" Nick peeked through his fingers.

"Wait, what?" Ramone smiled dashingly.

"I know, I don't usually get involved with friends, but it could work out! Perhaps we should even skip the town and head straight back to my place." Nick threw up his hands to stop him.

"No, wait!" He cried, "You don't need to do that!" A strange gleam entered Ramone's eyes.

"You're right! We could do it right here in the back of the limo!" Ramone draped his arm around him. Nick waved his hands desperately.

"No!" Ramone gave him a puzzled look.

"Why not?"

"I'm not gay!"

"Are you sure? Cuz those were some pretty hot women. Only a gay guy would run from that."

"I wanted to continue to live! They were going to tear me to shreds!" He gave Ramone a weird look. "I didn't know you were gay either." Ramone shrugged.

"I'm still in the closet. Afraid to tell my family. Papa is kind of traditional." He ran a hand through his hair. "You're the only one of my friends who knows now. You don't think I'm disgusting now?" He was looking at Nick with puppy eyes. Feeling awkward, he patted Ramone gingerly on the shoulder.

"Of course not," he stammered, "I'm sure your father wouldn't hate you." They pulled up to a red stoplight. Ramone seemed rattled by the thought of his father. He was still uncomfortably close, but Nick didn't know how to ask him to move without sounding rude.

"You don't know my father." Ramone moaned.

"A rich successful guy like you?" Nick comforted, "I doubt there's a father on the planet that wouldn't be proud of you damn." Ramone's smile returned.

"You really are the best, Nick," he said. Then he closed his eyes, pursed his lips, and began to lean towards Nick. At first, Nick stared at him before comprehension dawned. *He's going to kiss me*, he thought, *Ahhhhhhhh!*

"Thanks for the ride. Gotta go!" He pried the door open and down the street.

"Wait," He heard Ramone shouting, "Don't play hard to get!"

Not even pausing, Nick continued to race away. *That had been close*, he thought, *this damn fairy magic*. The sooner he got rid of it the better.

"That was certainly exciting," a voice said. He looked up to find Hodgkins fluttering above his face. The fairy looked too amused for Nick's satisfaction. His rosy cheeks were flush with laughter.

"Have you been watching the whole time?" Hodgkins nodded. Anger flared inside him. "Why didn't you take the magic off? You could have stopped all that!" The fairy shrugged.

"I thought I'd teach you a lesson," the fairy explained,

Nick shouted, "Take it back right now!" He didn't need anyone else trying to kiss him. Hodgkins waved his tiny wand. Little specs filled the air as the dust floated back into Hodgkin's pouch.

"I'd best be getting this back to fairy headquarters," he said. "This is going to mean a lot of paperwork. You look after yourself, Nick. Remember, love belongs not to the attractive, but those that are willing to look for it."

With a small poof, he was gone.

Snorting, Nick continued on his way. No more women lounged his way as he passed; nor did they corner him on the street. As far as Nick was concerned, he was done with love forever. He'd kiss it goodbye and never give it a second thought. No more...

Nick had just rounded the next corner to find himself back at the cafe. Across the street, Sandy Hart was unloading her truck. Her hair blew into her face and she tucked it cutely behind her ear.

Steeling his courage, Nick strode up to her. She looked up as he approached.

"Hi," he said as he stuck out his hand, "I'm Nick Gabbles. I know we haven't met before, but I thought I'd say hello. I love all the flowers you grow." Smiling, she shook his hand.

She said, "You're the guy who sits in the coffee shop every morning and stares at me." Nick blushed.

"You noticed?" Sandy elbowed him good-naturedly.

"You were obvious." He laughed.

"I'm sorry if I came across as a creep. Maybe, you can grab coffee with me? I promise not to stare at you."

Sandra giggled. "I'd like that."

Jeremy Schultz

Climbing Up

Several years ago, in a small suburban town, Kevin was a great ape. Actually, he was nine, but his mom kicked him outside for the afternoon, and he was a big fan of the tailed boy who transformed into a King Kong-sized ape whenever he saw the full moon in a Japanese cartoon, so he was forced to use his imagination.

His favorite tree had no branches until at least four feet off the ground, but instead large sets of rounded bulges appeared, and looked like a butt to Kevin, so it was his favorite one. As a great ape, Kevin naturally felt compelled to climb his favorite tree by the butt of the trunk, and the higher bulges he assumed must be arms wrapped around the trunk, or perhaps they were scarves.

Kevin Kong got as high as he had ever climbed before, on a branch sitting five feet off the ground. He looked out on the neighborhood park, and saw a big city for him to wreck in an intense fight with the evil aliens. He then noticed one: his best friend, Josh. The younger boy walked up to the towering behemoth in which Kevin sat on high.

"Hey Kevin," Josh squinted upward on that typically sunny summer day, "whatcha doin'?"

"Playin' Dragon Balls," Kevin answered, displaying calm restraint and masking his hopeful excitement, "you wanna climb up?"

Josh climbed up to the branch right under Kevin's, when they heard a nerve-rattling scream. Both boys looked toward the direction they heard the sound coming from, and saw the source, their buddy Dequandre, being chased by his big sister Joanne,

who was obviously enraged, barely trailing behind and throwing a shoe at him.

Dequandre reached the tree by the time Joanne had run out of ammunition, and she decided to put her shoes back on, rather than climb the tree barefoot like her little brother had. She threw his own sandals up at him, but he caught one and the other missed by a foot, and bounced off a branch before landing on the ground past the tree.

"Jeez, Dre, what did you do to her," Kevin asked once his friend had a chance to catch his breath.

"I," Dre coughed, "I didn't do anything!"

"You were callin' me a goat-face, you little pit-stain!"

"Okay, I did say that, I guess, but I didn't *do* anything..." Dre admitted under his breath.

"Well, you still shouldn't throw all your shoes at him, you big meaniebutt," Josh shot down at her. Josh often came to Dequandre's defense, being a year younger, while Joanne was Kevin's age. Dre and Josh had been friends the longest, and were only ever separated by a grade in school or dinner time.

"Yeah, Josh," Joanne asked, "how'd you like it if I threw our titanium bat at your head when you come down?"

"No," Josh screamed, "Kevin, you gotta do something!"

Kevin saw how scared his friends were, and how mad Joanne was, and almost decided to climb down and fight her himself. Suddenly, he remembered how much she liked gambling toys on winning board games at recess, and that he was now the great ape, Kevin Kong, and he had an idea.

"Hey Joanne," Kevin got cocky, "wanna make a bet?"

"Y'all know me," she thrust her arms out to the sky, "what's your wager?"

Kevin tried to sound like his dad at bath time, "I climb to the top branch, then you gotta let 'em go!"

"Awright fine," Joanne grinned hungrily, "but if you don't, I'm gonna kick all yo' butts!"

“Don’t worry guys,” Kevin reassured his friends below him, “watch this!” He proceeded to climb higher and higher. Though he became more unsure of his decision the further he went, Kevin’s friends cheered him on, with cries of “you can do it” and “you’re the man” shouted to the heavens, before they could agree on a chant. Kevin neared the top branch and decided he wanted his bro’s to be quiet for his final step, but when he looked down to tell them so, he froze.

“What’s wrong,” Josh asked, “are you okay, Kevin?”

“No, I’m too high!” Kevin Kong was gone. The nine year old was more frightened by the second.

“Come on, Kev,” Dequandre yelled, “you’re almost there, finish that branch or my sister will beat you up!”

“No,” Kevin shrieked, panicking more with each thought of his elevation, “I’ll fall, I can’t do it!”

“Yes, you can,” Joanne cried out, “Kevin, you’re already farther than anyone in the neighborhood’s ever got before, now I *know* you can mount the last branch!” With everyone encouraging him, Kevin found new bravery within him to master the heights, and reached the top of the tree.

Kevin became a competitive climber, and an avid hiking enthusiast after that, and ten years later, he finally got Joanne to climb the tree with him. It was their first day home from college, and they were glad to be back.

“I still can’t believe you said that!” Joanne giggled.

“Oh yeah, ‘I’m too high,’ so dumb” Kevin laughed, to the point of tears.

“So are you still working at that camp-and-rafting store,” Joanne inquired nonchalantly. It felt nice knowing where she could find him, when they were in the same town again.

“Yep,” Kevin was proud and blissfully unaware, “I guess four summers paid off, and now I’m untouchable! What about you?”

"Oh, I'm good," Joanne laughed harder, "apparently I looked good in a bowtie, so I got me a summer job at that fancy new restaurant across town!"

For the third time since they climbed up an hour ago, Joanne's phone rang below in her jacket. Kevin got worried, "are you sure you don't need to answer that?"

"Yeah," Joanne bluffed, "that's Dre's ringtone, and he still at Josh's party 'cause he's gonna text me if he needs a ride."

"Okay," Josh hadn't spoken to Kevin since he left town, "I can't believe they didn't invite me..."

"We can go over there, but can I tell you something first," Joanne asked, full of nerves.

"Sure, what's up?" Kevin wondered if she brought a boyfriend home from Central.

"I've been thinkin' about it a lot, and I decided to transfer to State!" Joanne prayed he would like the idea, to rousing approval.

"That's great," Kevin practically shouted, "then we can keep hangin' all the time!" This echoed around the park.

Once again, Radiohead's "Creep" rang up from Joanne's phone, bringing down Kevin's mood before anything else in the tree.

He tried to be less selfish than usual with Dequandre, "Y'know, you should probably get that one."

"Sure," Joanne smiled, "one sec'." Then she leaned in and kissed him. Kevin's eyes grew wide, then clamped shut. They didn't make it to Josh's house for another eight missed phone calls. Three years later they moved in together, and five years after that Kevin proposed under the old tree. Eighteen years after Joanne got Kevin to scale his first whole tree, they climbed Mt. Everest on their honeymoon, and they still had nowhere to go but up.

Denise Sedman

Da' Polka King

Human nature intends things to be a certain way. You cry at funerals. You give your sympathy to the bereaved. And you buy raffle tickets from Uncle Chet. It's just the way things are. You don't question these funeral rituals.

You also never win a prize after you buy a raffle ticket from Uncle Chet. Our family has had at least a dozen funerals during my lifetime, and none of my relatives can claim they've won anything at all. Nothing. No exotic trips to the Caribbean. No fancy new cars. No fluffy fur coats. Nothing.

It's not that Uncle Chet's a cheat. Chet's no cheater, that's for sure. So, big deal, he drinks a little. Chet likes to drink. Just because he likes whiskey, doesn't mean he hawks raffle tickets at funerals for a profit. That's a large leap in logic. But, it's true, Chet's a drinker. He drinks whiskey at home. He drinks whiskey at other people's homes. And he drinks whiskey at funerals. But, Chet's no cheater.

Except if you count the time he spent fooling around with that cocktail waitress. She worked at the bar across from the Ford factory. He'd go there after work. But, it's not like he saw her every day. It was just on Fridays when he got his paycheck. A man has to celebrate the end of a work week. Chet was no exception. He liked the cocktail waitress, and she liked him. The affair didn't last that long anyway. It was short-lived. Fifteen years isn't really that much time when you're sixty-eight years old. And besides, he has the remaining 78% of his time to spend with my aunt and their children.

Maybe it wasn't exactly 78%. After all, a man has to have outside interests. Uncle Chet is no exception. One of his other

passions is Polka dancing. He goes to Crystal Gardens to Polka. He goes to Warsaw Park to Polka. He goes to the VFW Hall to Polka. He goes to weddings to Polka. In fact, he goes anywhere to Polka. The man loves to Polka. He doesn't need aerobics to keep his six-foot frame so sinewy. Instead, he Polkas.

Uncle Chet dances that stiff hopping step and yelps, "ya, ya, ya," as he stomps his feet and twirls right then left. He's an amazing Polka dancer. One of the best. He's probably won every Polka contest he's entered. However, I never saw any Polka trophies at his house, so I'm not sure. Anyway, Chet lives for Polkas.

The last time I danced the Polka with Uncle Chet, I was fifteen. He grabbed me firmly and put a soft fist in the small curve of my back. He moved me this way. He moved me that way. I was dizzy. I hopped, he twirled. I hopped, he swirled. I hopped, he whirled. I hopped and hopped and hopped until my toes cramped.

When Uncle Chet isn't making people imitate rabbits being poked in the rear end with a stick, his steady eye is behind his eight-millimeter camera. During the party for my aunt and uncle's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, his lens caught my cousin with toilet paper dangling from his shoe during the "Too Fat for Me Polka." Chime in if you know the chorus – "I don't want her/you can have her/she's too fat for me/she's too fat for me/oh, she's too fat for me!" The paper trail flapped in the breeze. A thorough trampling returned the streamer to its lifeless form.

At the same party, my father made gargoyle faces to Harry Belafonte's "Day-O" chorus of the Banana Tree song. That, too, is captured on celluloid.

Chet must have enough eight-millimeter film to stretch from his downriver home to the Upper Peninsula. His basement is the warehouse for our family memories.

When Chet isn't prancing to the Polka or peeking into other people's lives, he finds other uses for his camera. Chet likes to run "blue" movies (or "smokers" as he calls them) on his camera. Chet always treats his guests to movies. The kids clear the living room and Uncle Chet, his wife, his guest, his guest's wife (my parents) watch and groan. "Oooh, AAAH, Oooh La-La."

So what? Chet's a little perverted. Every family has at least one perverted uncle. Chet's no different. He's your ordinary-perverted-uncle-type. I don't see what the big deal is. He only shows those movies once in a while. It's not like his projector is running every day. I know my family visited only about six times a year. That's all. One year, six movies, that's it.

You can't say Chet isn't a fine man. He's a man of the community. Why do you think he sells so many raffle tickets? He sells tickets for the Kiwanis, the Polka Boosters, the VFW Hall. You can count on Chet to support a worthwhile cause.

Chet isn't a complicated man. He works, he drinks, he Polkas. He often taps his toes while sitting quietly in a blue La-Z-Boy recliner with only his imagination hearing the accordion beat, "one, two, three, four ... one, two, three, four ... roll out the barrel, roll out the barrel of fun." Chet knows "IN HEAVEN THERE IS NO BEER" – "that's why he drinks it here."

Chet often lets his mind wander as the kids scurry around him. He almost always has a peaceful look on his face. Sure, part of the calmness is induced by five shots of whiskey and two beer chasers, but a man's got to relax. Chet can't Polka all the time.

Last week, Uncle Chet put his Polka shoes to rest. One of his friends said that he "went to Polka Heaven." Uncle Chet is in "Polka Heaven." Well, if there is a "Polka Heaven," I'm sure Uncle Chet will find Lawrence Welk leading the band with some of da' great boys playing da' accordion, and he will have a wonderful time. Chet will be dancing with all the ladies, twirling and swirling them around.

Now the dancing stops. I walk up to the casket to pay my last respects. I'm trying to conceal the paper I squeeze tightly in my hand. I carefully look to the right, then the left. No one is looking. I have my chance now. So, I slip it neatly into the breast pocket of his jacket. Uncle Chet will need these I reason. It's worth the risk. My son's soccer raffle tickets are close to Uncle Chet's heart. No doubt he'll sell them in Polka Heaven.

Toya Wilson

The Bee and the Bonnet

Zena's Hat Shop carried the most perfect line of bonnets. There were so many colors: blue, pink, yellow, orange, red, green, gray. Kyla the bee loved flying by the shop to look in the store window. She often landed on bonnet boxes carried out of the shop by The People, looking for any openings until they shooed her away. Her friends told her to stay away from The People but Kyla refused. She loved Zena's Hat Shop and if she couldn't have a bonnet of her own, looking at one was the next best thing.

One bright, sunny day, Kyla buzzed outside the shop window. She stared at her round brown body with its yellow stripes. Two transparent wings stood up from her back. Her big black eyes, set in a pleasingly hairy face, glowed in the reflection cast from the window. Kyla sighed as she turned to watch two people coming out of the shop. One, a big female person, carried a box while a little female person jumped up trying to grab it.

"Stop Jasmine!" the big person said.

“But Mom, I want to wear my bonnet now,” The Jasmine replied.

“You know the bonnet is for special occasions, not for play,” The Mom responded.

“But Mom,” The Jasmine moaned.

Kyla watched them walk away and then decided to follow, wondering why The Mom didn’t just let The Jasmine put on the bonnet.

“Jasmine, if you continue your current behavior,” Kyla heard The Mom say, “we won’t stop for ice cream.”

The Jasmine quickly apologized, “Ok, ok, I’m sorry!”

Kyla watched as The Mom and The Jasmine went inside Ice Cream Town at the end of the block. When they came out, The Jasmine was carrying two ice cream cones. The Mom sat the bonnet box on one of the small tables before taking an ice cream cone from The Jasmine. As The Mom sat down, her arm hit the box, knocking the top slightly off. Kyla buzzed in glee and quickly flew forward. This was her chance to touch one of Zena’s Bonnets!

Landing on the corner of the table, Kyla crawled to the box, then crawled up and inside the opening created by The Mom’s hit. Sunlight filtered in allowing Kyla to see a yellow bonnet with pink and blue flowers and a delicate, thin white ribbon. Kyla buzzed happily over the flowers and top of the bonnet, loving the feel of it against her legs.

Darkness suddenly descended and Kyla gasped in fright. The lid was closed. Flying up, Kyla bumped against the top of the box with all her strength but it didn’t budge. She was trapped.

“Oh, no,” Kyla moaned. Worriedly looking around in the darkness, Kyla took deep breaths, trying to slow the rapid beat of her heart. She knew what happened to bees that got too close to The Persons. They were mashed, squashed, squished. Kyla gulped and shivered. All the warnings her friends gave her rushed back. Time and time again, they told her to stay away

from The Persons and what did she do but climb right into their hands!

Kyla envisioned her demise as she sat alone in the darkness. Kyla heard the persons talking but couldn't make out their words. After what seemed like forever, the jostling of the box finally stopped.

Kyla watched in anticipation for the lid to lift but nothing happened. Her fear eventually gave way to weariness. Not wanting to be surprised, Kyla settled behind one of the flowers and drifted off to sleep.

As Kyla slowly woke up, she blinked in confusion, wondering where she was. Suddenly she remembered and quickly looked around. The first thing she noticed was light. "I'm out of the box," she whispered. Crawling from behind the flower, she studied her surroundings. The bonnet sat on a dresser next to a comb and brush. Kyla remembered seeing the exact set in Zena's Hat Shop. She admired the shininess for a moment before shaking her head.

"Get it together, Kyla," she whispered, shaking her head, "you've got to get out of here."

Making sure she was alone, Kyla flew up and around in search of a way out.

Kyla was in a bedroom and both the door and window were closed. Kyla crawled around the window searching for a hole, a crack, anything that she could use to escape but found nothing. Flying to the door, Kyla noticed the crack along the bottom but knew that it didn't lead outside. If she went that way, she was sure to run into The Persons and be mashed, squashed, squished.

Trying to hold in her despair and wondering if she should chance it, Kyla settled back on the bonnet and contemplated.

"Well, Kyla, I hope it was worth it," she whispered as she ran her legs along the top of the bonnet.

Kyla jerked as the door to the room opened. The Jasmine skipped into the room and headed straight towards Kyla. Kyla

flew towards her original hiding place, behind the pink flower but she was spotted.

“A bee,” The Jasmine proclaimed.

Kyla stilled herself for the scream and prepared to fly up for protection.

“Hi, little bee,” The Jasmine said.

Kyla starred at The Jasmine in confusion.

“I won’t hurt you, little bee,” The Jasmine continued in a sing-song voice.

Shaking her head, Kyla wondered what The Jasmine was up to. She watched as The Jasmine took a few more steps towards her. Knowing what was about to happen, Kyla shot up, flying to the ceiling.

Kyla watched as The Jasmine picked up her bonnet.

“Do you like my bonnet, little bee?” The Jasmine asked. “I do too and I can’t wait to wear it to my cousin’s wedding this weekend!” she continued.

The Jasmine put the bonnet on and looked at herself in the mirror. She continued to talk but Kyla wasn’t sure if The Jasmine was talking to her.

“My dress is white with pink and yellow flowers,” The Jasmine said as she twirled around the room before taking off the bonnet and placing it back on the dresser.

“You can trust me, little bee, and I’ll prove it,” The Jasmine stated.

Kyla watched with interest as The Jasmine went to a small table and started pulling things out of a drawer.

“This is a flower from an old bonnet,” The Jasmine answered as if replying to Kyla’s unanswered question.

The Jasmine pulled off an orange petal and cut the petal into four pieces. She then glued the edges of the four pieces on top of each other, wrapped a small black rubber band around it and then pulled the other edges up.

Kyla crawled slowly down the wall to get a better look.

Amazed, Kyla watched The Jasmine create a tiny orange bonnet with a yellow flower.

“This will allow you to wear it,” The Jasmine said, pointing to the black band.

The Jasmine picked up her creation and carried it to the window.

With Kyla looking on, The Jasmine opened the window and placed the tiny bonnet on the windowsill.

“Little bee, I hope you realize you can trust me,” The Jasmine said, walking away from the window.

“When you leave, don’t forget your bonnet,” The Jasmine continued as she opened the door. “And please, come back and visit again,” she added before walking out the room and closing the door.

Kyla was so stunned that she didn’t move for a minute.

“Am I dreaming?” she asked herself. “Did The Jasmine just make me a bonnet and opened the window?”

Squealing, Kyla flew towards the window, landing on the sill and picking up the bonnet. After placing it on her head, vanity won out over safety and she flew to the mirror to admire her reflection. The little yellow petal on the round orange base went nicely with Kyla’s stripes.

“My very own bonnet,” Kyla whispered in awe.

Flying out the window, Kyla glanced back. “Thank you, The Jasmine, thank you!” Kyla said.

Realizing how lucky she was, Kyla cut her daily visits to Zena’s Hat Shop to weekly visits and she stopped landing on bonnet boxes. But she did return to visit The Jasmine and on every visit, she found a little bonnet sitting outside the window in the corner of the sill.

Kyla learned that there were some nice persons out there who didn’t want to mash, squash, or squish bees and thanks to The Jasmine, Kyla was never without a bonnet of her very own.

Imelda Zamora

The Ending

"Anton, where are you? Are you ready?"

"I'm coming."

"Humming? You're humming?"

He ignored her question. She had become hard of hearing lately and he did not want to hurt her feelings. Instead, he said, in a very loud voice, "Start counting to ten."

"Oh, Anton", she sighed, "Are we doing that silly game again? Alright, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,"

"See? Here I am!" he said brightly, as he stood in front of her.

"Good," she said, "let's go. Give me your hand,"

"Ow."

"Oops." She quickly pulled her hand away. "Sorry, was that your arthritic hand?"

"That's alright, dear. It's just that some days are worse than others."

"Don't I know it; some days I do not hear too well." she said in sympathy. "Oh, Anton," she giggled, "we're like old broken dolls that need fixing."

"We're doing just fine, Greta, we're doing just fine."

She held on to his arm instead and they found their way out to the back porch. Each settled into their own rocking chairs. She brought a lap blanket for each of them for it had become chilly in the late afternoon. It would be sunset soon. Several minutes passed in silence.

"Anton, you're awfully quiet. Are you alright?"

"I'm thinking."

"Blinking? Did something get into your eye? Do you want me to come and look?"

"I'm fine, Greta, I'm fine", he said in a much louder voice.

"Or are you winking?" She looked at him with a twinkle in her eyes. "Remember the wink I gave you way back when?"

"How can I forget? You got me with that wink, you know. I was hooked after that. Didn't I tell you? You sealed my fate that day." He laughed.

"I was flirting, wasn't I?" She was laughing with him now.

"Yes, and I liked it. That was very devious of you, my dear, very devious."

"Anton?"

"Yes?"

"We did have a good life, didn't we, considering what we went through?"

"Yes, and we still do, Greta, a very good life, thanks to you. Me, I messed up. Sorry for all that grief and pain I caused."

"All in the past, Anton. Forgiven and forgotten."

"I don't think I will ever forgive myself, forgive myself..."

"Time to put it away. Look, we survived it, didn't we? We started over and thrived, in spite of it or maybe because of it. God had blessed you with enough time to fix your wrongs and make things right, because it had been right and good ever since. We are in the best place in our lives right now. Let's enjoy it."

"You are a very wise woman, Greta."

"And you are very nice yourself, Anton."

American Sentences

About the Contest

Created by poet Allen Ginsberg and inspired by the Japanese haiku, the American Sentence captures an image of life in 17 syllables.

The American Sentence is one continuous sentence, unlike the haiku which breaks its syllables into 3 lines. The American Sentence uses poetic devices like alliteration and metaphor to focus on a singular image or theme.

In addition, American Sentences can also use everyday speech, found poems, and condensed speech to focus in on its subject.

Each entrant could submit up to two sentences. The top three sentences were awarded a gift card.

Contest Entries

Patrick Franks

Say What

What you said I said wasn't what I said, but what I said you said was.

Look Out

She shone like the moon and sun, till her husband had come, showing me stars.

Cheryl A. Martin, M.A.

Impact of Earth Day forty years ago the same as it is today.

A poem can be written in seventeen syllables quickly.

Stephanie Neilan

Wind Gust

Whirling, twirling, whipping, dipping, whisking round in earthy,
primal dance.

Window Seat

I sigh in contentment as the sun eases my aches and soothes my
soul.

Sever Pederson

Never let a day go by without saying these three words, I love
you.

Reflecting on eighty years of life I still see the possibilities.

Beverly Rothman

You must file and pay a tax each year or plan to spend some time
in jail.

To sing and play music on my ukulele is enjoyable to me.

Denise Sedman

Rotten apples are in everyone's yard and you can't get rid of them.

A copper penny heads up on the sidewalk when picked up brings good luck.

Nkosi Shorter

Poetry fed Marylou's soul and poetry can feed Jim's spirit.

I have driven the finest cars, and I have climbed the highest mountains.

Shari Welch

Walking the dog is a challenge when a cat decides to stroll on by.

I notice the flower petals begin to open when the sun shines.

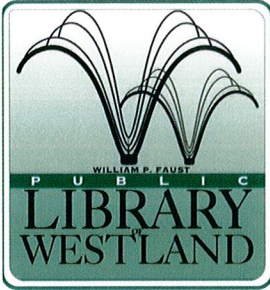
Anette Wolksi

Sunrise

The sun rises over the treetops while early birds sing joyous songs.

Journey

Life's journey is punctuated by roller coaster rides and calm seas.



The William P. Faust
Public Library of Westland
6123 Central City Parkway
Westland, MI 48185
734-326-6123
www.westlandlibrary.org

The William P. Faust Public Library of Westland is proud to celebrate this 8th annual publication of the **Westland Writes ...** series. This collection came to fruition out of a National Poetry Month idea to share patrons' poems in book form. This yearly series draws from library writing programs, like the Writers Workshop, the Writers Club groups, the Skill Building Conference for Local Writers, and the National Day on Writing.

It is wonderful to read new work from annual and first-time contributors. These writers put their heart and soul in this book for us. We, the readers, gain so much from their willingness to take us on these imaginative leaps and journeys. We celebrate this book on May 25th, 2016 at our Book Release Event, accompanied by the music of the Sheila Landis Duo, who will once again raise the words in this collection to jazzy, musical heights.

If you did not get a chance to submit work in 2016, look for your chance again during National Poetry Month (April) of 2017. Happy reading and writing!

ISBN 978-1-365-09762-1 90000

