

**Westland
Writes**

2022

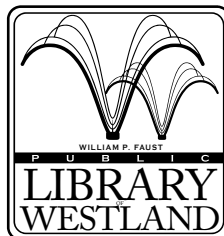


Westland Writes 2022

A Collection of Local Writing

Alexis Tharp

Editor



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

Compilation copyright © 2022 William P. Faust Public Library
of Westland.

All individual poems and stories are copyrighted by their respective
authors, and are reproduced here with permission.

Contents

Poems

Denise Barry

Breathtaking Beauty 9

The Beauty of Music for the Listener 10

Bettie Cunningham

Mothers 11

The Joys of Life 12

Tonya Dixon

Hurt 13

What About Now 14

Philip Howell

A Child's Haiku 15

Sunrise 15

Jim Jeziorowski

Twenty Years Ago 16

Nineteen Years 17

Erin Knape

A Churning Prison 19

Familiar Weather 20

Debra Madonna

Try Harder 23

I wanted to be everything 24

Cheryl Martin, M.A.

Winter in April 26

The Lakes 28

Chris McFadden	
<i>Lightly, We Shall Tread</i>	30
Sally Pinchock	
<i>Snow Haiku</i>	31
C. Reynolds	
<i>Knowing Infinity</i>	33
Nancy Louise Spinelle	
<i>The Newest Cherub</i>	35
Kaylee Tucker	
<i>Fernweh</i>	38
<i>Celestine</i>	39
Teresa Q. Tucker	
<i>Roots</i>	40
Shari Welch	
<i>Sam</i>	42
<i>Ms Queen Ann</i>	43
Karen S. Williams	
<i>Every Man, Like Jonah, Must Meet a Great Fish</i>	44
<i>The Polishing of a Woman's Heart</i>	46
Imelda Zamora	
<i>Pain</i>	48
<i>Maybe Tomorrow</i>	49

Stories

Chloe Adams	
<i>Her</i>	53
Ayana Ball	
<i>Chapter Two: Eve</i>	58
Helaine Binstock	
<i>Detroit Institute of Arts</i>	59
Larry Binstock	
<i>Rite of Passage</i>	62
Ryan R. Ennis	
<i>In Search of Greener Grass</i>	67
Michele Matuszewski	
<i>The Sand Hill</i>	72
Sherry Nichols	
<i>Mr. T and Destry</i>	77
Anette Wolski	
<i>Nametag</i>	79
Image Credits	83

Poems

Denise Barry

Breathtaking Beauty

Breathtaking beauty of Huron's seas
Meeting the sky in the distance!
Cobalt blues seeing eyes does it please,
Pond'ring fathomless experience.

Ships, gigantic & long...lurk,
Moving slowly along the East.
Where are they going in the murk...
Of the wind & the weather's feast?

Walking the warm sands beach, I pry...
And look into the vast above...
Where are You LORD, I do beseech?!
Wondrous, Great-One of Love?

Ah, rocks of color in beauteous bays,
Ah, fossils & shells...my feet.
Reds, blacks, whites...golds, & greys are they...
Melded shapes of the Flood of Defeat.

The Beauty of Music for the Listener

Tones of crystal clear tinkles...
Triangle! Give me a song!
Cello in even, bass noises,
Accompany! ... The rest, now...along...

Oh Beauteous, Low Violin,
Bring... Wondrous, rounded out sounds!
While Piano in virtuous measures,
Backs up as the music abounds!

Silver Flute...come forth...avail us...
Aglow in the notes of the dance!
Listen! As the instruments break forth...
Harmonious...& onward they prance!

Oh Beauty of Orchestral Noises!
Sounds indescribably: Mine!!!
I listen & close my eyes reveling...
As tears on my face... Shine.

Bettie Cunningham

(B'Syncere, Miss Spoken)

Mothers

God could not be in every place...with loving hands to help erase
The teardrops from each baby's face
And so, He created **Mothers**

He could not send us here alone...and leave us to a fate unknown
Without providing for His own
The outstretched arms of **Mothers**

And though God watches us night and day...and sees us when we
kneel to pray
He blessed us in a special way
When he created **Mothers**

And when our childhood days began...and the challenges of growing
up took wind
God knew that some would understand
And so, he called them **Mothers**

As the days of youth slip quickly by...clouds form, rain falls from the sky
Mistakes we make, yet every night
To love us still, are **Mothers**

And when life's span of years does end...I know that God will
gladly send
To welcome home her child again
Ever faithful **Mothers**

The Joys of Life

Oh, the joys of life...

The synchronized drum beats we employ

The sound of laughter, tears of joy

The forming of a rainbow after the storm

Flowers blossoming, babies born

Butterflies and bumblebees

The bubbling brooks and peaceful seas

New friendships formed, the peace before the storm

The silence to hear God speak

Is what we all should seek

Simple pleasures rarely cost us a dime

And can always be reborn

In the recesses of our minds

Glorious be the joys of your life

And may you never have to wander

May you always find a peaceful place

In a world full of thunder.

Tonya Dixon

Hurt

You would think that after all these years
I would get over
The pain and hurt you caused
The person I love
Gets mad and cheats
The person I love
Puts his hands on me
The person I would have done anything for
What hurts the most
Are you even sorry
Did you even love me
I have been through so much hurt and pain
I have moved on
But the memory of the betrayal and the abuse
Still haunts me
I wish nothing bad on you
I hope you have changed
For the better
Maybe this is the way
For me to forgive and never forget
That the man that claim he loved me
Hurt me the way he did

What About Now

The words are replaying in my head
What about now is what he said
With a confused look on her face
What about now
She thinks to herself
Where was this affection before
Just the other day he was ready to walk out the door
What about now is replaying in her head
Should she forgive him
And let him back in
As she contemplates what has happened
She finally decides to answer
Now it's too late she tells him
You have broken my heart
Time and time again
I am no longer
Letting you back in

Philip Howell

A Child's Haiku

An Old Earthen Ditch
Then Two Ancient Planks Across
Camelot Reborn

Sunrise

A Last Scuttle of Coal, by the Cabin Door
A Vase of Willow Buds, on a Formica Table
As the Cycle Goes On, Endlessly Repeating

(This poem was inspired by traditional Japanese kigo poetry,
where a specific word or phrase is used to bring to mind
a specific season: Spring, Summer, Autumn, or Winter.)

Jim Jeziorowski

Twenty Years Ago

What can I say about our time together...

We've had happy times, sad times, shaky times, exquisite times
And this time

We've seen the best in each other. We've seen the worst in each other

Yet we continue because we know that we are not perfect and that
Perfection is not attainable—only the *pursuit* of perfection is

After all these years, I continue to be so happy and humbled that you
Chose me to spend life with

As with the weather, we are prone to thunderstorms, rain, sunshine
and, yes,
Even a few tornadoes from time to time

And, as with the weather, those weather events do not last
Yes, more than likely they will return—SOMEDAY and we deal
With them as they occur

I believe that we have handled the storms of life wonderfully well
Primarily because of you, my love

You are calm in the face of adversity, clear thinking in times of sorrow
And happy as a teenager when times are going good

You, Genie, are my rock, my foundation, my soul-mate

You have changed my life's direction to one of happiness &
correction. I certainly was
On the wrong path when you gently guided me away from a future
of hardship & wrath

You've encouraged me to be my best and, well, you know the rest

I don't know how many more years the Lord has in store—but I'm
hoping for a
Hell of a lot more

With you I've had my heaven on earth and, on that day of June 30th, 2001
My previous life was done and a new one just begun

I love you, sweetheart!

Erin Knape

A Churning Prison

Naked in a world foreign to my body
Tears well up
A refusal
A protest
Amidst the overwhelming reality before me

I tremble
Unable to breathe
Afraid to utter a sound
Suppressing all movement

For fear that the world will hear me
See me
Acknowledge me
And take me with it

In its churning jowls
Pressured production
Cyclical aging
And infinite pain

My heart pleads and bargains
Against what quickly approaches

I am growing older
By the passing hour
Minute
Second

Forced into the assembly line
With a ball and chain at my feet

I am scared
Of what mechanical existence lies ahead.

Familiar Weather

You are perched
A wooden stool in the kitchen
Creaking beneath your weight

Staring out at
The meadow beyond
Past the chipped window frame
The light pours like water
Streaming through
Weathered glass

An alluring glow
Inviting eyes to
Dip
and Dive
Across the hills
And into the trenches

Its beauty is
Undeniable
But you can't shake

The twinge in your chest
A stab at your tissue
Inside your head
It nags

A

Disturbing

Disruption

Amidst the serenity

The possibility

The hills

Vacillating

The trees

Snapping

The sky

Darkening

The rocks

Clamoring

The chirping of birds

Screeching

The rushing of water

Pounding

The movement of clouds

Hastening

The whistling of grass

Shrilling

Sending the mind

Into a frenzy of static

Quickening in pace

You feel it.

The light fades

In its place

Are gloomy clouds

Rapturous storms

An unbearable inundation

A pond fills the sink
Entering through the tap

Spilling onto the checkered tile
The countertops
And dull appliances

The rivers flow
With unending power

Through the opened window
The cracks in the walls
The age-worn door

Oceans form inside your skull
Waterfalls drain your eyes

Taking with it the innocence you held
Leaving hollowness behind

Wracked with exhaustion
All dries up
The sun burns flesh
The light lies strangely now

You were used to the ponds
The rivers
The oceans

Only for them to leave you
A battered husk
On a wooden stool.

Debra Madonna

a stroke. one teeny, broken blood vessel

Try Harder

If a child does not complete a task in a timely manner,
do you tell her, "Try harder"?

If a child does not even start an assignment,
do you tell her, "Try harder"?

This doesn't sound right. What are you trying to say?

If a child turns in a project with mistakes,
do you huff and puff and tell her,
"This is terrible. Try harder"?

After you told a little girl "Try harder,"
did you look her in the eyes?

Did your words help the little girl one little bit?

If the person packing your groceries is going too slow,
Do you tell her, "I am in a hurry"?

If you see a person struggle,
do you think out loud,
"What is the matter with her"?

If someone is recovering from this or that,
do you think it would help if you stood on a table
and yelled so the whole world hear your irritation,
"Heal faster"?

This doesn't sound right. What are you trying to say?

A therapist does not look at her watch and say,
"Your appointment is 55 minutes, you only have 27 minutes left.
SPEED IT UP!"

This doesn't sound right. What are you trying to say?

Do you tell the grass it is growing too fast?

Do you?

Do you tell your plants to grow larger flowers?

Have you thought to be patient and watch flowers bloom?

Have you?

No one at a library ever said, "Read faster."

The people at my favorite stores always greet me,

"I am happy to see you."

Let us trade in all our "Try harders."

Look into someone's eyes and smile.

How long do you think it will take to get a smile back?

Demonstrate what "HURRY UP" looks like.

Demonstrate what "Take your time" looks like.

Demonstrate what "I am here" looks like.

Give your time to others.

You have time because someone else gave you their time.

Remember that Any One who is living is brave.

Remember that Every One may have difficulty
putting one foot in front of the other.

I know you are doing the best that you can.

Aren't we all?

Me, too.

That is what I am saying.

I wanted to be everything

I have been "*everything*,"

but it was not a good idea at all.

I always wanted to be a doctor,

a pediatrician, a neurologist. A neurobiologist,
a kinesiologist, and an occupational therapist.

I mean I wanted to be a doctor so much

that I sometimes think that I am a doctor,

with no license, with no degree,
but a doctor nonetheless.

doctors, nurses, and all the rest must be smart,
confident, competent, caring,
extremely, supremely competent,
kind,
and, for heaven's sakes, please,
be curious.
be so curious that you never say, "I don't know"
without a "yet" at the end of a sentence
or "I don't know, but I am going to think about this."

the experience of being a patient has reminded me
of the necessity of changing my specialty to a Doctor of
Demystification.

a Demystifier elucidates, illuminates, simplifies, interprets, illustrates.
a Demystifier explains the scary stuff.
an empathetic Demystifier clarifies everything
in a language you can understand.

a Demystifier does not always use words.
a Demystifier may hold your hand.
a Demystifier gives you time with facts.
a Demystifier gives you time and quiet.
a Demystifier sits by your side for as long as needed.
a Demystifier may not be a doctor, but it helps if a doctor is a
Demystifier.

a doctor of Curiosity and Demystification. Yes, that's me.
or maybe I could be a crossing guard and a fairy godmother
and make the world a safe and healthy place for children,
a place where children can blossom, grow strong,
be healthy, loved,
and play, play, play,
until it's time to go to bed and have sweet dreams

Cheryl Martin, M.A.

Winter in April

As one thinks of spring
No one feels like chasing snowflakes tucked inside another deep freeze,
A chill to the core felt through the layers,
Weeks after the annual spring it forward jolly Saint Nick makes an
 appearance,
Fogging of the windshield on a cold winter's day in April is a bit
 much as the wipers swing,
Swish, swish, swish,
Banish that flake!
Bring out the sun on this cold wintry day of April Fool's,
A white haze cascades lightly with whipping winds reaching the
 vehicle with its cold firm grip,
Let me have sunshine—take this weather where the penguins enjoy
 ice and extreme chill, we do not,
How the birds go along still singing, with wings shivering, dipping
 for bird seed and suet,
Is unknown to mankind, as, they too aren't thrilled with no spring
 in April,
Their melodies warm the air if only artificially, as they are right to act
 like robins and
Hairy woodpeckers,
Gathering near the black capped chickadees mourning doves, in the
 deep freeze,
Whereas Mother Nature is off key completely.
Her memories of spring flowers are intact, thankfully,
As rhubarb gently pushes through layers of dirt,
Perhaps a month late, as a comparison of 2017's growth
Shows a fully developed rhubarb leaf with a stalk to be plucked already,
Yet, seeing the bright cranberry as a tiny fist is good enough in 2022,
With the crocus surprise across the way surrounded by evergreen
As its ground cover highlights the violet and grape hues

Its egg yolk pistil matches the sun when it's out to warm the hearth
And the ground that has baby daffodils readying to blossom
As their deep blue green stems carry their weight in the cold
Waiting to spring forward,
By then the crocus will be a memory as the color variants
Transform one layer of color for another as each day creates a new visual,
Where the tulips will ready their blossoms before too long,
With the mystery of the color to be revealed,
Sometimes purple, or orange, a delightful surprise,
Either way,
And the grounded strawberries never go away,
Even in the darkest of winter, as their stems and leaves
Go dormant, yet remain, which is a memory that the cold
With its long stretch
Still leaves some plants as a note,
To remember that they will return to vibrancy
Bearing sweet and homegrown fruit,
Those leaves give me hope,
That a strawberry harvest will be
Awaiting me,
No strawberry flowers yet,
Time will bring them forward,
As will the pears once they start as a flower
Growing within the direction of Mother Earth
To be nurtured as spring finally arrives.

The Lakes

Hidden treasures of the life left behind
Now a ghost town that never existed
As plenty are unaware,
That a flood took place to build a new city,
Or town,
One that would be high up and the rest buried
At sea, or, an inland lake,
Fed by a stream,
Whether a plat or hand drawn map
Had an exact location for anything,
Plats were more reliable than some other drawings,
As a depiction of a business, school house, church,
Perhaps a farm or two,
Yet, a sketchy drawing with land laid out with street
Paths would be questionable,
With a topographical map which showed impossible
Land to shape, build on or take a horse and buggy,
Harsh was a word used for Michigan's earth,
As many wanted to settle roots here leaving the East
Behind, yet plenty passed it by as the maps and fellow
Voyagers were concerned the land was no good,
Yet some decided to stop and see and work with
Mother Earth and find the good in the quicksand,
Where in the early 1800's there were grist mills, farms,
Sawmills, cooper shops, dry goods and general stores,
Along with a wagonmaker,
Prolific and profitable in the early 1800's through the
Civil War days and beyond,
As the railway grew and grew and transportation
Of so many goods and carrying travelers to and from
Near and far destinations,
Some little towns began to disappear as its residents
And business owners moved elsewhere,
Starting anew,

Hoping for a better life
With progress chugging away and individuals in that time
Post-Civil War and into the turn of the century,
With changes and creations happening through the 20's
Meant new resources needed to be created
Like lakes fed by rivers and streams
To generate new ways to utilize Mother Earth and create
More waterways for essential living as well as boat travel,
Ensured future generations more to look forward to as previous
Generations laid a solid foundation for many to follow,
As one youngster out east swam in a lake above a town that was no
longer,
Arriving at another where the dock is blissfully peaceful where
swans with
Ducks reside here where another town long gone has some remnant of
Its historic beginning,
Never forgotten as the historical marker reminds those who stop to
read it
On a busy thoroughfare that a long-ago history still exists
And for those who want search,
Seeing the topographical reminder of what was, what could have been,
And what is still standing.

Chris McFadden

Lightly, We Shall Tread

We find ourselves divided,
A house that cannot stand.

From Left and Right,
To Black & White.
It's hard to comprehend.

We all envision progress,
That much, we can agree.
The ways in which we fix things, though,
Can vary in degree.

How did we end up here,
Where we're fighting in the streets?
Where we refuse to listen, use our words,
Where we fail to live in peace?

We were told we left that in the past,
That that part of us was dead.
Instead we harm each other's pride,
We became slaves to our own heads.

When all is said and finished,
This we can't deny.
Unless we try, a nation dies.
Lightly, we shall tread.

Sally Pinchock

Snow Haiku

The snow falls gently.
So soft and pretty gently.
The snow is quiet.

The silent snow falls.
Covering the bleak landscape.
The snow falls gently.

Each flake is special.
Each one beautiful and soft.
Unique is each one.

Millions fall at once.
Landing in a special place.
Delicate crystals.

Each one joins another.
Fluff and fluff and fluff they build.
Blanket pretty and soft.

Clean white cover up.
Frosting on the bleak landscape.
Hiding frozen ground.

Children love the snow.
Looking up to feel the flakes.
Gently touching face.

Lying on the ground
Making pretty snow angels
They are the angels.

Snow piles high slowly.
Beckoning to come to play.
A sled ride is fun.

We are fortunate
To know the snow silently.
Quiet, gentle, pure.

The snow says to wait.
Be patient, spring will come soon.
For now enjoy snow.

I feel the silence
Seeping deep into my soul.
Pristine joy and peace.

Thank you universe
I love the falling snowflakes.
Silently they come.

C. Reynolds

Knowing Infinity

I bathe my body
In the sun
I bathe my soul
In the water

I know now we live
To die
You must become
Whole

A bromeliad with pup
Letting go
to find
Eternity

With seasons we try
To make it
A place
Where someone wants
To be

I look at the wind
Knowing
We must follow
Our way

Are we all Adam
And Eve
Reincarnated for eternity
Choosing to be
In heaven
Or hell

A great karmic loop
Where we are
And were
And will be

I am my father
and the son
The holy
Spirit passed from one
To the other

A piece of a father
And the mother
Body and riches
Given to
Oneself

Producing the environment
Where we live
Each generation
A choice

Nancy Louise Spinelle

The Newest Cherub

Dedicated to the Cherubs of Ukraine

It was just before a glorious celebration when
the Newest
Cherub appeared at the golden
gates of heaven.

With his small plump face pressed
up against the gate he could already hear the
most enchanting music imaginable.

Suddenly a very tall angel appeared,
extending his hand, indicating that he wanted
his hat.

Now the Newest Cherub knew that he could only enter heaven by
giving up all his earthly goods. But to give up his favorite hat was
something he simply refused to do!

With authority the Tallest Angel,
who seemed to be in charge, blocked his entry with the open span of
his mighty wings.

All the little cherubs, as if to warn him, began to speak at once.

"Best to leave all earthly things behind," advised one young cherub.

"No one needs hats here!"
cautioned one of the smallest cherubs, smoothing her wings.



Pretending not to listen, the Newest Cherub, in protest, turned his back and plopped himself down onto the nearest cloud.

The more reasons they gave, the more he tugged at his hat stretching it securely around his head.

Knowing this Newest Cherub was not to be convinced, the Wise Angel was summoned.

Aware of another, the Newest Cherub, with a peek from beneath his hat, beheld the most brilliant angel he could have ever imagined.

Suddenly the spell was broken as the Tallest Angel stepped forward to explain. "He wants to keep his hat," he advised apologetically.

The Wise Angel did not speak, but looked down upon the Newest Cherub with the slightest trace of a knowing smile.

Responding with scarcely a sound, the Newest Cherub approached to stand before her.

Soothed by the gentle touch of her wing, he was led to a small cloud. With her great wing the Wise Angel parted the cloud, exposing the Earth below.

With wondrous curiosity the Newest Cherub began to stare down at the sight. He stared and stared and stared until he could clearly see a small shivering child without even a hat to keep warm.

Without another thought the Newest Cherub with his bent head low
knelt before the Wise Angel.

Stretching her wings over his head, that much loved hat miraculously
appeared on the Earthly child.

Amazingly, at that very moment,
the Newest Cherub suddenly felt
a soft, pure, caressing warmth surrounding his head.

And as a mysterious light glowed within, the Wise Angel withdrew
her wings, exposing a halo...the first halo ever to be given to a
Cherub.

Then with a band of angels accompanying him the Newest Cherub,
with his head held high, was led through the heavenly gates.

Kaylee Tucker

Fernweh

The edges of the flowers strewn across the wall,
Though they're slashed mid green vine life breathes on.
Through muted hues I hear their call;
Blues and magentas pulling me towards dawn.

I feel them growing in my soul,
Awakening a love once dormant before,
A longing to be surrounded by what makes me feel whole,
Alas I've only the hum of fireflies just beyond the door.

In anguish I claw the thin paper off,
The scraps cascading onto the floor
Mimicking leaves as they flutter and scoff
At my failed attempts to win this monetized war.

I will continue to fight until every wall breaks down
And I find myself flying out of this godforsaken town.

Celestine

She is grace embodied.
A gentle, bold being
Whom those could only hope to have copied
Even a fragment of her light, which would be so freeing.

For when they encounter her,
They realize they've spent their whole lives
In the shadows of falseness, existence but a blur,
But now they see truth as she strides,

And they stumble to keep pace,
Longing for the warmth of her smile,
And for her laugh that wraps like lace
Around their hearts, allowing cheer to settle in for a while.

She leads like the sun, her voice rising above the chaos, unfaltering
and captivating,
An invigorating beacon, the world is compelled to see what she does
next; they're waiting.

Teresa Q. Tucker

Roots

For 15 years I've watched the trees
On this block struggle to attempt
To thrive and then move into a fit of survival.
Moving through the changes of people,
Environment, and atmospheric climate conditioning
Has been a struggle.
The trees no longer stretch upright,
They bend,
No longer defiant.
They bend in a way that toll and strife has deemed appropriate.
If they had verbal command, a litany of curses would spring
From their roots.
They are angry, bitter, and hurting.
Leaves are no longer a camouflage.
They are sparse fronds.
There is no hope left in the branches; only twigs are left,
Brittle and frail.
The will to live is sloping.
There is no urgency in living and no pride in dying.
All that is left is time immobile and waiting.
There is no anticipation, but there is a fluidity in
Buying rented time with foreign currency.
Decline is melded into decimation that has merged with destruction,
that is what is left.
There is no bloom or budding.
These trees with no sap left in them don't argue anymore.
They don't fight the blight that has crippled them.
They are dispersing into oblivion.
Their decades-old commitment and dedication have yielded no fruit.
Barren branches, clipped roots, are all that remain.

What once was now isn't and there is no swan song as a tribute or a
send-off.

Weeds are now choking what is left of their frame.

The carnage is slowly building to a crescendo and fading into silence.

Life is leaving rapidly.

And the people appear to be undisturbed, unbothered, and
uninterrupted.

If only branches transformed into legs, they could stand up and
walk away.

Shari Welch

Sam

Once upon a time
there was a frog named Sam.
Sadly he roamed the land
secretly wishing to be a man.

He had to be kissed
by the princess no less.
Searching high and low,
he was always at his best.

Oh the lovely vision
was indeed upon his horizon.
Think fast — think fast
this could be my last chance,
 (he thought)
for love and romance.

The princess looked down
and all around.
Guess what she found?

Such a pretty little frog of green,
big brown eyes and kissy cute.
Well something happened in-between
because the frog named Sam
was now the happiest man in the land.

Ms Queen Ann

While contemplating what to wear
 for this particular function she does not dare
 portray the hip-hop, long hair and loose cloth spirit
 in bright — fringed and beaded frock

A long length black flowing conservative
 attire with pearls representing the mature
 educated, overrated and knowledge collecting
 well-read , well-bred, and well-fed

Speaking to the crowd with a pleasant tone
 articulating as only the honorary can
 Socially less than alert is not the plan
 but to weave a web — enticing all her own

To please , appease and most definitely tease
 working the crown — everyone is at ease
 Gracious acceptance into the ominous elite
 occurrence of this occasion memories will repeat

Embrace this affair with a knowing flair
 having proper titles long enough to connect the dots
 creating a picture of an accomplished air
 that separate the haves from the have nots

Karen S. Williams

Every Man, Like Jonah, Must Meet a Great Fish

1. The Great Fish:

In my world, life is simple:
Dive and swim a silken wave;
Ascend, a pirouette through glossiness;
tossing its bubbles like tiny balls,
eyeing upward a placid surface,
trying to reach, cumulus, white beyond.
Or perhaps in watery imaginations.

Fish, like people, do not think.
Or do they?

2. Jonah:

Ninevites! Bah! Too stubborn, God!
Why send them my sacred scroll?
Would they care?
Painful, this animal of love,
potential, wounding,
fear of no control.

3. The Great Fish:

Ah! Resistant man, peaked
as Poseidon's trident. As if
fear can split a blue-green sea
or earth stony with brittle words;
as if people, Ninevites, like great fish,
don't feel or need,
as if chop and water are only things.

Wake up, sleeping man!
Make scatter your ghosts!
They drift you tattered like flotsam,
make you grip crumbling,
ancient buoys.
Let go, new man of the sea.
Careful. Pride may swallow you.

4. Jonah:

Yahweh, sometimes it's hard to pray.
Hard to hook and cast my cares.
Hard to reach them, brewing in
storm, tangled in shrimp shell,
adrift in seaweed.

5. The Great Fish:

Amazing what man will do to avoid.
How he'll cling deck-side,
steeped in trembling
and will force rogue sailors
to toss him, easy, unpoised
into waiting gullet.
Rough, surprising,
stiff baleen and tongue,
tonsils, throat that glistens.

6. Jonah:

Fear makes us do crazy things.
Don't tell me who needs me.
Don't make me love.
Don't make me walk this plank.

7. The Great Fish:

Good-bye man.
L'Chaim to trembling,
razing fear, your fort.
If I could shout one message to you,
limp on dry land,
with tail swish and dive I would shout,
"Love. Enter its deep, a wet beauty,
then climb, take its ladder
through cumulus,
higher, higher to rebirth and Everlasting,
weakness sheer as sea."

Oh, to emerge from a great belly.
Oh, to count the cost of being free.

The Polishing of a Woman's Heart

A Prose Poem of Healing

At four in the morning, a book in my hand, Eldredge's *The Sacred Romance: Drawing Closer To The Heart of God*. A word in Chapter One – "The Lost Life of The Heart" – leaps off the page at my eye, a shimmering insect lighting off the vellum. The word? Tarnished. What does it mean? To tarnish? According to Webster's Dictionary, tarnished means "To soil, or change the appearance of, especially by an alternation induced by the air, or by dust, or the like; to diminish, dull, or destroy the luster of; to sully; as, to tarnish a metal." What it means to be broken, human, tarnished as metal. Outdoors, a rustle, a tiny patter of rain, perhaps the local calico that scampers on soft paws across my porch and pounces onto night-cooled street. When I see her at day, trotting up a driveway, or two, not her own, she usually ends up across the street, furry, crouched low at nearby bush, sniffing and prowling its fingered leaves, the crushed leaf scent of its twigs etching an indiscernible path across her back, the white oak leaf patch near her middle. So quietly, she inspects branch and

soil it's as if I'm watching a secret unfold; twilight skitters of the tarnished plant bug. Flat and oval, gentle markings of white, brown and yellow across its tawny back, the skin of the tarnished plant bug is the color of sterling candelabra that has lain quiet, open to elements of Mother's closet: mothball; sole lint; miniature powdered soaps; a brush of woolen hem; pungent wintergreen wrapper; fading Eau de Joy. Like no one sees silver dimming in a closet, no one sees the tarnished plant bug do its damage: how it flutters then clings, a nocturnal whisper to vegetables, strawberries, and tree fruits; dahlias; chrysanthemums; marigolds and attacks. Its piercing, sucking mouth punctures flora's tender shoots, chews, debuds, unfurls spittle toxin, stunts what was not created to be stunted, but plucked, peeled, eaten and enjoyed; or snipped and cut at a perfect slant; placed into a bud vase and honored for what it is. Swirls of velvet color, opulent fire blooms, peppered creamy scent. The ancient proverb is true. "When you have only two cents left in the world, buy a loaf of bread with one, and a lily with the other." Yes. Bread and beauty are silent teachers. The word "tarnished" too is a silent teacher. The more I stare at it, dawn of the first day rises overhead, reveals undying swaddling light. A seamless aria, orange blazing sky, it sears my retina. It and my sense of knowing boiling the only tear I could squeeze out. The tear, fierce saline of bittersweet, inches a slow burn down my cheek, a soft green caterpillar in mid-spring, soon to nestle a borrowed branch, warm, covered beneath imagination's crust until the crust rustles at fiery pneuma and finally cracks, a damp, crumpled monarch wriggling out, a monarch with strong, iridescent wings; pumping wings; lifting wings. I imagine it soaring over porch, cat and bush, a dove circling a drying earth. And when the dove returns to its keeper, in its yellow beak an olive branch; fruit of course; budding; a bubbling spring of knowing. That within us which is tarnished and eaten, stunted at the pierce of the tarnished plant bug, only withers beneath flesh's brittle crust. Polished and pure beneath crispy mottle, at unseen moments, at telling strokes, mottle and tarnish will shift and crack, and we, vegetables and tree fruits, chrysanthemums among others, will emerge from our buds and cocoons at polishing hands, will bloom again.

Imelda Zamora

Pain

It's a wound.

Yes, it is.

It's an open wound.

Yes, it is.

It's not bleeding.

Yes, it's not.

So, does it still hurt?

Yes, it does.

But it's been years.

Yes, it has.

Will it heal, ever?

No, it will not.

Why not?

Because it refuses to be

Just a plain dry scar.

Maybe Tomorrow

I will climb the highest mountain
And swim across the ocean.

Maybe tomorrow

I will jump off an airplane
And float among the clouds.

Maybe tomorrow

I will even write a book
Or discover a new planet

Maybe tomorrow

I will feed all the hungry children
And give them clean water to drink.

Maybe tomorrow

I will help find cures for all diseases
So we can have a healthy world.

Maybe tomorrow

I will do all these things.

But today's my birthday
I am turning eight
I can't wait to eat
My Spiderman cake!

Stories

Chloe Adams

Her

I let go of her hand as she walks ahead of me. She looks at me with such confusion, I wave her on ahead. I can't help but think to myself, this is what happiness is. It's been so long since I have felt this sense of happiness, and it happened in the most random, organic way. No clue this was what to come.

It was like any old Sunday, raining and cold, typical spring weather. Being the rain lover I am, it didn't stop me from continuing my plans for the day. I went on down to the local coffee/book shop, Books and Beans. I had been finding it hard to get through even a page in my book without an interruption. I opened the door and was greeted with the normal sound of the doorbell and a cheerful hello from the lady behind the counter.

"What can I do for you?" asked Glenda.

"I would like my usual, please."

"One chai tea, coming up." Glenda had been working here for at least the 3 years I had lived here.

I walked down to the end of the counter where we picked up drinks after paying. I looked back up at the line I had just walked, to start some casual chat with Glenda, when I saw her. The most beautiful girl I had ever seen. She was looking at Glenda with these huge brown eyes. They had this fleck of color on the edge of the iris that I was unable to make out at the time. I still remember what she was wearing that day, a nice black leather jacket, light blue jeans, and a fuzzy bubble hat. Her hair was longer back then, just longer than her shoulders.

"Here's your coffee, love."

Glenda handed over my drink, and I make my way over to a table in the corner as the girl took my place to wait for her coffee. She seemed to have gotten a basic coffee, as it took less time to make than mine did. Turned out reading here had just as many distractions as at home. She lingered after getting her coffee to talk to Glenda. I tried

to read, but instead just eavesdropped on her conversation. It seemed that she had just moved into town from the city. She left after asking about job openings around the area. Good, she left, now time to read, but sadly she was all that occupied my mind. After about 20 minutes of trying to read, I went back up to the counter.

"Getting another drink?" Glenda asked, seeing that I hadn't finished my current cup.

"No, just wondering the name of that girl who had just come in?" Hopefully, she knew who I was talking about since no one else had come into the shop.

"The new girl, her name is Dawn." She gave me sort of a smirk. "Why, she catch your eye?"

"Maybe," I said with a small smile.

I walked back to my table, and on the way I couldn't help but notice that Glenda had had a "vibe" about her as I inquired about Dawn's name. Sitting back down, I was finally able to read my book. I stayed in the shop for another hour or 2, reading to my heart's content. The next day, I popped back into the coffee shop to see if maybe I could run into Dawn again. I had just got my most recent manuscript back from the first round of editing, for my read-through. I was there for about 3 or 4 hours, working in the corner. There was no sign of Dawn. I did this for the next few days or so and still didn't had the chance to see Dawn again. Glenda seemed to have noticed what I was doing and called me over.

"Ashton." I walked up to the counter. "Are you waiting for someone?"

"No," I said, "Just really need some time away from the house." She could tell that, while not completely a lie, it wasn't the full reason.

"Well, If you were waiting for someone, you might have a better chance of finding her at the diner." She gave me a wink as she walked away to get the next customer's order.

Turned out I didn't have to go over to the diner. As I turned to leave, she walked in. She gave me the sweetest smile I had ever seen. I decided I was not going to leave and instead hopped in line behind her to order another chai and maybe a bagel. I watched as she ordered a black coffee and a plain bagel with veggie shmear. I was so focused on her, I didn't realize it was my turn to order. I grabbed a chai and

my everything bagel with veggie schmear. I watched as she went over and sat in my normal corner. I smiled. It was time to introduce myself to the new girl in town. I walked over to the table, nerves building as I neared the corner.

"H..Hi." Of course, I stumbled over a word as simple as "hi." She looked up, not seeming to notice.

"Hi," she said back. "Can I help you?"

"No, I just came over to introduce myself." I could feel my hands starting to sweat. "I am Ashton, the local crazy writer, who you can find sitting in this corner most days."

"Ahh, I am in your seat." She seemed annoyed that I'd mentioned that I normally sat here.

"Well, nice meeting you. I will move now." Oh shit, I hadn't mean to upset her.

"No, no, you can stay. I wasn't trying to get you to move, just introducing myself." I tried to give her a reassuring look, but that didn't seem to work.

"Well, it was nice meeting you, I think I have to go now, my name is Dawn by the way." She smiled as she walks away.

Seemed like I had not made the best first impression on her, but at least I'd said hi. After she left, I took my seat, drank my tea, and ate my bagel. I was satisfied knowing that at least she knew my name and I got to say something to her. That evening, I sat at my kitchen table wondering why I was so enamored with this woman. I had seen plenty of good-looking girls; why was this one different? That night, all I could think about was Dawn and how I couldn't wait to talk to her again.

The next morning I decided that I wasn't going to let this girl cloud my mind any longer. I had deadlines I needed to hit, as well as other work that needed to be done. It was 10 am now, time for something to eat. By 2 pm I had done absolutely nothing. No work on my book, no work on the house. I just couldn't find the energy to do what needed to be done. I hadn't felt this sense of darkness in a while and had no idea as to why it had come up so suddenly. I called up my therapist to talk to her about this sudden dark. Our chat lasted about an hour and a half. Neither of us could figure out what caused the sudden darkness, but I did feel better. I had been seeing my therapist for about 2 years

now. After my last breakup, I had gone into a very dark place; she had been there for me ever since. I had thought that our relationship was going very well. She had helped me come to an understanding of who I was before my ex had stepped on my life. The footprint she'd left had haunted me ever since she'd left with the woman she had been cheating on me with. I had done a lot of soul searching to be able to be me again; I thought I was doing a good job, but it seemed I couldn't get rid of the dark. No more slump, let's get out of this old house. I walked down to a local park, feeling the crisp spring air on my skin. This spring had been colder than the previous ones; I was quite enjoying the transition this year. In the middle of this park was a duck pond. It was teeming with life as the ducks and geese swam about. I took a seat down by the edge of the water, just watching as the animals lived their lives. I wondered if the ducks and other animals ever felt like this, did they ever get the darkness.

"Hi," a voice from behind me said. When I turned around, I saw that it was Dawn.

"Hi," I said back to her, surprised she was talking to me. I think she could tell that.

"May I sit with you?" She gestured to the empty spot on the bench next to me.

"Of course," I scooted over, even though there was plenty of room for her. She was smaller than I would have thought by just looking at her. She seemed about 5'6" and very lean; I bet she ran for fun. I, on the other hand, was about 5'3" thicker in the hips and backend, and hated running. We sat there in silence for a bit, just taking in the view of the pond. After a while, we started talking like we had known each other for years. It was nice to finally talk with someone like this after what had happened. I hadn't been able to make friends as easily as I'd used to.

"Oh my, look at the time." I hadn't noticed how late it had gotten until Dawn said something. I looked down at my phone; we had been sitting on this bench for 5 hours.

"It's past my bedtime," I joked. "Let's head back." We both started walking back the same way. Turned out we lived on the same street. I lived in a house on one side of the road, and she lived in the apartments across. After that day at the pond, Dawn and I became good

friends. We started hanging out all the time. Going to Books and Beans. Getting food at the diner she'd found work at, and my favorite picnics in the park. After about 6 months I felt that our friendship had progressed enough to finally ask her out. I decided to take her out on a picnic to the same bench we'd sat on that day for 5 hours.

"Dawn, can I ask you something?" I turned to look at her while starting to sweat.

"Of course, what's up?" She turned to give me her full attention.

"I know we haven't been friends for very long, but I feel that maybe we could be more than friends." I look at her waiting for her response.

"What do you mean?" She looked at me, super confused. "I thought we were already going out."

I felt the biggest wave of relief. "Really? I mean yes."

I can't believe that I got this beautiful woman to say yes to me. Me of all people, this quiet, weird writer from a small town. That is how I found my happiness, the best I have ever felt. She helps keep away the darkness, and she shows me that I am worth being loved.

Ayana Ball

Chapter Two: Eve

From Curing the Head Sick Warrior

Six grueling hours later and I am home in my one-bedroom apartment scrolling through Netflix and eating dinner. It's a rather humble apartment with its scratchy wood floors and tiny nook kitchen, but it's mine. At least my bedroom is separated by a wall, no matter how thin that wall is. I'm not cooking three steps away from my own bed, so for now it will have to do.

Tonight, it's just a simple grilled chicken salad from a nearby restaurant. Yesterday was just water because I was too tired to make anything else.

I sit up in bed and open Pinterest, deciding to forgo a movie. Instead, I am going to scroll aesthetically pleasing photos until I drift off to sleep. The apartment is dark with only the light from my phone illuminating the room.

Just as I begin to nod off for the night, the floor begins to vibrate. Even the walls are vibrating. I sit up and look down at the floor, but I don't see anything.

It's 3 a.m. Who would be doing work on their apartment this early?

Mid-thought, I'm distracted by the sound of my window vibrating hard, with the intensity increasing by the second. It seems like forever, but I finally push my shock-still body into motion to investigate. It begins to shake more violently on the short distance to the window, so much so that the lock pops and gives way. A chill runs through me. Now I truly understand the meaning of a deer caught in headlights, because I'm utterly frozen as the vibration ceases and the window begins to pull away from the frame, seemingly of its own accord.

Before I can react, I hear a zipping sound followed by a tiny sting a half a second later. I try to reach for the nip of pain in my neck, but my arms are too heavy to move. I'm too tired. Another full-body chill rolls through me. Before I feel my eyelids flutter, I know I'm in trouble as darkness seems to start at the back of my head and creep forward.

Helaine Binstock

Detroit Institute of Arts

I have no artistic talent whatsoever. I can't even draw a straight line with a ruler. I won't play Pictionary because even my stick figures are indistinguishable. Yet, I'm an art lover...an appreciative observer of those talented people able to make water look like water, satin like satin, pewter like pewter and all fabrics—velvet, leather, metal and wood textures—clearly identifiable. These paintings can be seen in the magnificent Seventeenth-Century Dutch Masterpiece galleries right here in our very own Detroit Institute of Arts, around these parts referred to as the DIA.

I've traveled through many states, visiting myriad art museums, and find our permanent collection one of the finest. I've frequented the most prominent museums in Chicago, Toledo, Dayton, Cleveland and Cincinnati. I've toured some in Boston, Philadelphia, San Antonio, both Getty museums and several others in California. I've visited the National Gallery in D.C. and every art museum in that venue. Each is wonderful in its own way, but none surpasses the Detroit Institute of Arts when it comes to its collection of seventeenth-century Dutch masterpieces.

It amazes me how artists capture sunlight and shadows streaming through beautiful leaded windows, leading into rooms clearly depicting depth, illuminating stark Dutch households. Each masterpiece illustrates families going about daily chores. The subjects within have perfect skin tones and hair luster, every object clearly definable. These paintings resemble textured photographs. How is this possible? I study the canvases in awe. I recognize fuzz on peaches, rough surfaces on oranges, and smooth wax-like coverings on bananas. I can almost feel the tapestry textures of tablecloths, draperies, brocades as well as the silks and satins of their clothing. I am held in wonderment.

When I attempted painting at an early age, more paint landed on me than on the drawing I was creating. Still today, should I attempt to draw anything, the product is laughable and unrecognizable. Consequently,

I am completely dazzled how textures, fabrics, shadows, clouds, sunrises and sunsets are perfectly represented with meticulous application of tinted oil on a canvas or wood surface.

How I would love to have the genius expertise of those talented artists. To me, one could never feel alone, always having the company of changing seasons, weather conditions, stormy seas, happy, sad and indifferent faces to paint. I do confess I'm shamefully green with envy but, hey, I'm rather good at rhyming words. Some might say, to each his own.

And their sculptures floor me too! Take a huge piece of marble or bronze. Then with hammers, files and knives, chisel and carve definitive expressions in faces, folds in clothing, fingers with tiny nails, myriad minute details. It amazes me. I'm repeatedly astounded. While visiting our DIA, I'm like a kid in a candy shop. I will never tire of traveling different locations through paintings, displaying life in different locations through landscapes, portraiture and still-life paintings. I stare in amazement at scenes, portraits, fabrics, fruit, all captured and produced from a pointed or flat-tipped brush, envisioned and applied from mere mortals' imaginations. The works of art do not seem possible. There I stand stunned, aghast!

I admit I do not identify with contemporary art. I've tried. There must be something I'm missing...I simply cannot understand canvases filled totally with one color, perhaps a single dot of color in its center. I can't help but wonder—is this so-called artist pulling the wool over our eyes? I enjoy a few modern mobiles, but so many rusty-looking creations I've seen just confuse me. Why do others find beautiful those rusty objects of art which to me are so distasteful? Apparently, it's all in the eyes of the beholder.

So, for those of you reluctant to drive, considering today's costly petrol, be aware you'll enter a fantasy world inside our DIA. The building itself is a work of art. You're met with marble walls and floors, you're engulfed within spacious halls and columns. Just being inside, without even viewing its collection, is thrilling. Don't just visit the renowned Diego Rivera room of frescoes for which our museum is so famous—be sure my favorite seventeenth-century Dutch galleries are included.

It's not possible to see everything in one visit, especially if you read the wonderful, descriptive narratives relating to each object...learning history through paintings. Before long you'll be wandering, again and again, through its many corridors, passageways, halls and galleries. To me, it's a day spent in paradise!

Larry Binstock

Rite of Passage

It was ironic that the wedding turned out to be the catalyst for the most intense emotional experience in Stuart's young life. He had fought valiantly to not go. "I've been to two weddings and was bored both times," he told his mother.

"That was a long time ago," she responded. "You're 15 years old now. Not a child anymore. You shouldn't be bored so easily now. Besides, the Logans have lived downstairs for 13 years. They're neighbors and friends. When they invite us to their daughter's wedding, we have to go."

"Come on," Stuart argued, "I hardly know Sandy. You always said yourself, she's an unfriendly girl."

"Friendly or not, all of us have to go to her wedding, out of respect," said his mother, with her voice rising a few decibels.

The debate would have continued indefinitely except that Stuart's father entered the fray. In his quiet but firm voice, he made it clear that all the family would be at Sandy Logan's nuptials. And so, on Sunday evening, June 16, 1951, Stuart found himself, along with his mother, father, and younger sister, Eileen, in the ballroom of a downtown hotel awaiting the start of the wedding ceremony. It was then that he saw THE GIRL. She appeared to be approximately Stuart's age, but seemed more sophisticated than any girl Stuart knew. She was quite attractive with olive skin, black hair, and eyes whose sparkle could be discerned from across the room. She wore braces on her teeth, but these usually awkward appliances only enhanced her good looks, as if they were oral jewelry worn for this occasion.

It was, however, not so much her beauty that fascinated Stuart, but her bearing. She seemed quite comfortable in her surroundings. She also seemed, Stuart noted with more than a little envy, quite comfortable with her parents. Stuart saw the girl lean toward her mother to say something, and the older woman leaned to meet her half way, smiling at whatever the daughter said. A genuine sign of amusement rather

than a patronizing charade.

Stuart wanted very much to meet the girl, but she seemed far removed from him, an alien from a distant world. He was certain there could be no contact between them. He was wrong.

With plate in hand, Stuart stood ready to attack the sweet table. It was merely a question of which morsel to snatch up first.

"Better be careful with that stuff," came the feminine voice behind him. "You don't want to get fat."

Stuart turned to see the girl, her sparkling eyes more radiant from that proximity.

"You don't put on weight from things you eat at weddings," Stuart responded "They sweeten everything with love, not sugar." Stuart was surprised that her presence inspired rather than hindered him.

"That's good, I'll have to remember that," the girl said. "Would you like to dance?"

"I can't dance," was Stuart's reply. He waited for the usual distasteful response. There could be disbelief, the offer to teach, or the declaration that anyone can dance. The girl just accepted it and asked, "Would you like to just talk?"

They retired to a now deserted table and they did talk—for nearly two hours. The girl's name was Barbara Newton. Her mother and the groom's mother were cousins. The family had come to the wedding from Columbus, Ohio, and were staying with friends who were also in attendance. And Stuart had guessed correctly. She was an anomaly compared to his life.

As Stuart had surmised, she was 15, his own age. She had, however, experienced so much more than he had in that relatively short time. She had visited places Stuart longed to see. She had climbed to the top of the Statue of Liberty and down to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. She had toured the White House in Washington, D.C., and a movie studio in California. In a few weeks, the Newton family was going to Yellowstone National Park, a place Stuart wanted especially to see.

Her activities seemed endless. She was a cheerleader and a member of a volleyball team. She took both ballet and piano lessons, and dreamed of becoming a concert pianist. She also skied, a sport well outside of Stuart's milieu.

Of all the elements in Barbara's life, the most impressive to Stuart was that she and her family lived in their own home. Stuart lived in the same apartment all his life, on the second floor, treading softly so as not to disturb the downstairs neighbors, meanwhile hoping the upstairs occupants would display the same courtesy. With Barbara, however, there was nothing above them but their own bedrooms and nothing below but their basement, part of which had been transformed into what she called a family room, complete with ping pong table.

Stuart thought her life was wondrous. She was wondrous. She had opened a door to a magical land for Stuart and he wanted to enter it. But most of all, he didn't want this time with Barbara to end. But inevitably it did end. When Barbara's mother approached their table to say it was time to leave, a huge void opened in Stuart's life. A few minutes after Barbara and her party left the ballroom, Stuart walked to the balcony overlooking the hotel lobby. He got there just in time to see the group leave the hotel through a revolving door on which his gaze remained fixed for several minutes after the group's departure.

Two weeks after the wedding, Stuart still experienced constant restlessness, going from place to place, pastime to pastime without enjoyment, just as he hadn't enjoyed the movie he had gone downtown to see that day. Seeing her son's agitation, Stuart's mother was concerned. "You're sure you're feeling okay?" she asked just before Stuart left for the downtown movie house. "Maybe you should see a doctor."

Eileen, Stuart's sister, was more perceptive about her brother's condition. "I think Stu is mooning over that girl he met at the wedding," she offered.

"Is that it, Stuart? Are you in love?" their mother asked with a patronizing smile.

Stuart was angry with mother and sister for that demeaning interrogation. Now, walking from the theater to the bus, he wondered if he were indeed in love. Was this the feeling so highly touted in movies and books? Without realizing it, had he become mature enough to experience that celebrated emotion? Or did the encounter with Barbara Newton touch some other part of him? Whatever the feeling, he was painfully aware it was caused by such a transitory incident, and that its key player was now out of his life.

Stuart began walking toward the bus stop, but halted abruptly as a thought came to him. The hotel—the wedding site—was only a few blocks away. Surely, there he could capture the joy of that night. Perhaps the deep emotions he'd experienced were absorbed in the very walls of the place and could be reflected back so that he could bask in them. He began walking in the proper direction, growing more excited with each step.

Once inside the hotel, Stuart noted the place had taken on a completely different appearance. On the Sunday night of the wedding, the lobby was virtually empty, and the edifice seemed as if it had been built solely for the purpose of housing the Logan wedding. Now it truly appeared to be a hotel, with queues formed at both the registration and check-out counters. Bellman and guests moved about, carrying baggage. People sat in the lobby's plush chairs, reading or conversing. Stuart was taken aback by this startling difference,

Stuart climbed the stairs to the mezzanine where the ballroom was located. Once there, he stared down at the revolving door as he had done that night. He saw only a bellman enter, carrying two suitcases for a newly arrived guest. He hesitated a moment before opening the ballroom door, half expecting Barbara herself to be on the other side. When he finally pushed the door open Stuart stood transfixed, startled by the scene before him. On the wedding night, the ballroom had been illuminated by muted artificial light. Now the heavy draperies were open. Bright sunlight drenched the room, making it all but unrecognizable to Stuart.

Workers scurried and jabbered, preparing the room for another affair. Two men passed by Stuart, one rolling a large wooden disk. To his amazement, Stuart saw that the disk was a tabletop and, mounted on a pedestal and covered with a cloth, became the kind of table at which he and Barbara spent their hours together. Near the door at one of the already mounted tables sat three waiters in shirtsleeves, smoking and drinking coffee. Another emerged from the kitchen door, walking toward his colleagues.

"Whatta we got here tonight?" he asked before reaching the table.

"Some kinda corporate banquet," came the answer. "Pretty fancy stuff. So mind your manners."

"Yeah, you gotta wear shoes," joked another man. Hearty laughter ensued.

Stuart's fascination with the scene was interrupted by a harsh voice directed at him. "You looking for somebody?" It was another waiter, a slim man with a pencil-thin mustache on skull-like face. He had come from his seat at the table to question the young intruder standing by the door.

"Yeah," Stuart answered softly.

"Who do ya want?"

"Never mind," Stuart responded, talking mainly to himself, and already backing through the door. "They're not here."

The swinging door swung back and forth a few times. During one of the open swings Stuart saw the skull-faced man walking back toward the table, jerking his thumb over his shoulder. Stuart figured the waiter was telling his colleagues about the strange kid at the door. And then the portal was finally shut, blocking his view of the unfamiliar cavernous sun-drenched room and completely closing the door on Barbara Newton's magic land.

Stuart stood outside the door briefly, then descended the stairway to the lobby. He made his way through the revolving door and briskly headed for the bus that would take him back to his own world.

Ryan R. Ennis

In Search of Greener Grass

On a cool summer morning, Donovan spots a young woman sitting alone at a picnic table. Behind her is a tall maple tree whose leafy canopy provides her with a good deal of shade from the bright sun. Though she is many yards away, he can tell she is pretty. He is particularly beguiled by her long dark hair, its lovely curls reaching almost down to her elbows. As he makes his way around the park's perimeter, following the rectangular track, his speed changes from a brisk walk to a leisurely stroll. New to the area, he feels lonely. Why not say hello?

Crossing the lawn, he approaches her. "Good morning," he says with a smile.

She pleasantly smiles back, her hands resting in her lap. "Good morning."

Now that he is up close, he can fully take in her attractive features—porcelain skin, rosy cheeks, and blue eyes—enhanced by light makeup. She appears youthful yet mature. He guesses that she's in her early to mid-twenties, probably about five years or so younger than he is.

"Nice day— isn't it?" he asks.

She nods. "Enjoying your walk?"

"Yes, I am. My name's Donovan—and you are?"

"Dorie." She stands up. "May I join you?"

"Of course."

As they walk, they become quiet. Shielding her eyes with her hand, she glances up several times at the sky, clearly admiring the vivid blueness. He tries not to ogle her. He tries to direct his gaze at the other sights around him—the playground, the volleyball court, the pond with ducks swimming about—but his eyes keep wandering back to admire her slender figure in tight jeans and a snug sweatshirt.

"What brings you here today?" she asks, breaking the silence. She seems not to be concerned by his long stares.

"I've been meaning to check out the park since I moved into the sub a couple of weeks ago. I need to get back into an exercise routine." He

points down to his slightly bulging stomach through his zippered jacket.

"Where are you from?" She pushes her long locks of hair away from her shoulders. Her enchanting ringlets, cascading down her back, call to mind pictures he has seen of mermaids and sirens. Such loveliness!

Awaiting his answer, she slows her step.

He does the same. "A terrible place."

"Oh?" She peers at him quizzically. "Why so *terrible*? Bad neighbors? A lot of crime?"

Even though he fears sounding like a fuddy-duddy, he decides to say, "The community was just too rowdy and wild for my liking. Several of my neighbors were unemployed. They were drinking and smoking pot and partying day and night on their porches. Their kids were almost constantly screaming and fighting on the street. Most days, I could hear music blaring from the homes on either side of me, even when their windows were shut during the winter."

To express her sympathy, she pats him gently on the arm. They resume a normal pace.

"I'll miss my old friends and my low house payment," he adds, "but I had to leave that hellish place because I couldn't take it there anymore." He looks toward the row of well-maintained brick bungalows across from the park. His new house is located three blocks away. "I believe I've made the right choice by relocating. This subdivision seems quiet—I hardly hear a peep out of my new neighbors."

"I hope, for your sake, it stays that way."

Close to the end of the track is a parking lot. A white sedan covered with dents and some rust pulls into the lot. The driver's side window rolls down, revealing a middle-aged woman with curlers in her hair behind the wheel. She calls out to Dorie in a gruff voice.

Dorie rolls her eyes. "That's my mom. She probably needs me to watch that stupid brother of my mine. She doesn't trust him in the house without supervision. He and his friends are always getting into trouble. I'm so sick of them." Backing away toward the parking lot, she gives him a quick goodbye wave.

He says, "Thanks for hanging out this morning."

"No problem," she replies. With that, she hurries off and jumps into the car.

He watches the car drive off. Uninterested in continuing the track by himself, he decides to leave the park. As he ambles down the street, retracing his path back to his house, he thinks about Dorie. She certainly has him intrigued. He wishes they had been able to spend more time together, so he could've asked her questions about herself. Since she is expected to babysit her brother—and not too thrilled about it—he wonders about her living arrangements. Is she a college student home for the summer? Or simply a young adult who can't afford to go off on her own? He frowns, perturbed with himself. He should've at least asked her if she cared to meet up again for a walk. That way, he might've gotten to know her better and wouldn't have to speculate about—

From behind, he suddenly hears a loud commotion. Pivoting, he discovers that four boys with booming voices are racing their bikes and coming straight toward him. He jumps onto the plush grass to avoid a collision with them.

Unfortunately, he is still within their reach. As the first boy whirls by, he splashes Donovan with a bottle of red pop. The liquid drenches the front of his expensive gray jacket and splashes onto side pocket areas of his designer gray sweatpants. The first boy yells back, "Haven't you heard, guy, of keeping off the grass," and then roars with laughter. The second boy screeches, "Nice jacket," as he flies past. The other two boys, whizzing by, give him obscene gestures.

For a moment, he feels dazed by what has just happened. His new jacket is probably ruined—red soda stains on a light-colored fabric will be difficult to remove. How can a kid be so cruel? His sense of shock quickly changes into anger—anger that boils over in a matter of seconds, causing him to spring into action. Despite being out of shape, he pursues them. He runs as fast as he can. At the corner, he turns in time to watch them go around the block. With his leather sneakers smacking the pavement, he continues to follow them. At the next corner, huffing and puffing, he pauses and discovers three of the gang have gone out of sight. But all is not lost. He's able to catch a glimpse of the fourth, the heavysset snot who doused him with soda, on the adjoining street. The boy is scurrying from the driveway into the open garage attached to a brick colonial. The garage door immediately closes after him.

While Donovan catches his breath, he wipes his sweaty forehead

and neck with the back of his hand. With a grimace, he trots over to the snot's house. At the doorstep, he rings the bell repeatedly. Each ring sounds like three sharp knocks. He hopes the boy's parents are home, so he can tell them what their out-of-control son did. It takes a while before someone finally answers. To his surprise, it's Dorie's mother! She's got a lit cigarette between her yellowed fingers. How crazy—and amazing—that Donovan is standing here! What are the odds of him wishing to have another chance to talk to Dorie and then a short while later ending up at her doorstep? Maybe there's a reason why he had to be the gang's (latest) victim—

"Hey, aren't you the guy—?" With a scowl, Dorie's mother studies him intently. "Yeah, you're the guy who was bothering my daughter at the park—"

"Excuse me?"

"You heard me—bothering—harassing her. I can't believe you'd stalk her all the way to her own house. I thought when we moved to this neighborhood, we'd be free of the perverts and weirdos we used to be surrounded by—but apparently not. If you don't get out of here, I'll call the police." Playing up her disgust, she flings her nasty cigarette at him. To his relief, it misses and lands on the cement stoep.

He scowls at her. "Now wait a minute!" He points to his stained jacket. "You don't know what just happened with your kid—the—"

"Oh, I know what happened all right," she fumes, her dark, bulging eyes refusing to acknowledge the red pop splatters on his clothing. "I could tell what you were up to when I arrived at the park. You were trying to pick up my daughter. Why else would you be talking to a seventeen-year-old girl?" She shoves her right hand into the pocket of her fleece jacket. "Leave now—or I'm pulling out my gun."

"You can't be serious—"

"Trust me, you don't want to find out." The woman slams the door on him.

Backing away, he mulls over what has just transpired. *Dorie is only seventeen* . . . He shakes his head. He's unsure if his action is directed at himself or Dorie's mother. He feels bad about mistaking Dorie for an adult, but her mother overreacted about it. He shakes his head again. The woman overreacting is an understatement—she almost went bal-

listic, threatening to call the police and use a gun on him. With a mother like that, no wonder the boy has problems—and thinks he can get away with all kinds of nonsense. If a teacher or other adult tries to give the woman a bad report about her son, she probably blows up at them. What a shame . . . the woman could learn a lot about her kid if she would only close her big mouth and listen.

When Donovan reaches the edge of the driveway, he hears the garage door lift. Turning around, he watches the boy reappear from the garage. Donovan takes a good look at him. His sweatshirt is torn and dirty. His dark hair is greasy and messy. He has a can of Coke in his hand. He takes a sip from it and grins. His cocky grin exposes his set of jagged teeth. What is the kid trying to do—taunt or intimidate Donovan? Well, his tactic isn't going to work—Donovan has done enough running for now. Proving it, he forces a smile and waves at the boy. And the boy waves back, his confident expression quickly fading. He then stares at his raised hand, as if surprised by what he's just done.

From across the street, two of the other boys suddenly emerge with their bikes from where they were hiding between the houses. Donovan salutes them. They only glare at him.

Donovan proceeds to walk away slowly. As he saunters toward the corner, he makes it a point of keeping his shoulder back and holding his head high. And his point is well taken—because no one follows him.

Michele Matuszewski

The Sand Hill

As she gazed out over her backyard watching the flowers blowing in the breezes, her mind drifted back to her carefree childhood days in the late 1940's on Vineyard Lake in the now-famous, but then obscure, Irish Hills in Michigan, to a memory she coveted still all these years later. Everything comes back to her so vividly.

She was walking in the clear, shallow waters along the familiar shoreline in her bare feet, watching the minnows as they quickly scurried away from her in all directions. This short trip along the edge of the lake led to one of her then most favorite places in the whole world: The Sand Hill.

This was the route she took only when she was with her mother and/or her older sister. She was never allowed to go alone, nor would she even risk it. She couldn't swim yet and she was so careful not to go near the water without either of them. But as she walked along the edges those hot, summery days, her excitement would build as they slowly made their way to their goal.

They would never walk on the land edging the front of cottages owned by folks lucky enough to have water access, for fear of trespassing. Thus, they walked in the clear shallow waters enjoying splashing and kicking up the bottom. The shallow water was very warm. She knew this path would soon turn murky and she didn't look forward to it. But she would brave it for those few hundred feet. It was a small price to pay for this short trip.

There were still some uninhabited, unimproved properties along the shoreline, with strange wild growth—some prickly weeds and lots of mucky, slimy mud which slid down right into the lake bottom making it challenging for her little feet not to slip or slide into even deeper muck. She knew the waters would open up to be firm again, so she would tough it out. She followed her sister very closely and often whined and complained, and she wished someone would carry her like they did when she was smaller, but now she was told just to follow

carefully.

Funny how it got so mucky before it became the most pristine, beautiful, warm and sandy part of the lake.

As they cleared the mucky parts, the minnows reappeared and quickly diverted her attention as she watched how they gathered and quickly dispersed when she walked closer toward them. And then there were the baby frogs, some sitting royally on lily pads. She wasn't into catching frogs, but it would have been easy. It was too cute just watching them.

The minnows scurried about, sometimes bumping into her skinny legs, which would make her giggle. They weren't afraid of her. As they rubbed against her little legs, it was only a little tickle, and it wasn't like something huge and unidentifiable was attacking her.

She knew she was now closer to her destination and started getting excited as the Sand Hill came into view. Could it have been classified as a sand dune, who will ever know, because it is all overgrown now, but at the time it was such a large expanse with the height being that much more exaggerated from her little five-year-old point of view.

En route, her mother would be first in line, hauling that new Admiral portable radio, which only Mother could carry for fear of having the heavy new wireless fall into the water. It was a large, black radio which contained a very hefty battery, the latest innovation at the time. She was never allowed to touch it.

Her sister Laurie would walk behind Mother holding a blanket and a couple of beach towels high over her head for fear that they too might get wet. The walk wasn't very long and the water barely came up to their ankles, but her sister was still careful not to let her load get wet ahead of its need.

They were on their way to enjoy a day in the sand and in the most sandy-bottomed part of the lake. Although Vineyard Lake had a big drop off further out, the part they were heading for was shallow for yards and yards out. She would play close to the shore at the bottom of the Sand Hill, in the shallowest parts which were what she loved the most: the warm, shallow, sandy-bottomed part of the lake. The sand would be all rippled and you could squeeze it between your toes, and the water, even though it was warmed by the sun, was still somewhat

refreshing. Such a safe place to play.

On this, the eastern edge of Vineyard Lake, there were two sand hills. The one further away, which they seldom visited, was small and scrawny with trees encroaching from both sides. It wasn't nearly as large or exciting as this sand hill. They only went there once to check it out.

The larger sand hill, the closer one, the one she was soon getting to, was very wide and steep and the trees and shrubs and grasses stayed far off to the sides, giving them a large swath of pure, clean sand to play or lay on.

Once they arrived, her mom would put down the blanket and towels, being careful to put the radio down where sand wouldn't blow into its case. Then she would play with the kids, getting her whole self wet before settling down to sun bathe. Her mother loved water, having played on a water polo team in her younger days and spying the man she would marry at the Kronk's pool. He stood there majestically on the diving board, and the rest was history. A history that ended in an early death for him, as a police officer in the line of duty.

These cottage trips to Irish Hills were a godsend, not only for this young widow, but for her daughters who were drawn to the water as she was.

Once the towels were laid down, Laurie would take her up the steep hill almost to the ridge at the top ... a struggling trip in the deep warm and even sometimes very hot sand. Her sister would often grab her little hand and give her a boost on the way up. She loved being pulled up. This got her to the top faster, and then the fun would begin.

The view of the whole lake was splendid with the hot sun bearing down on them. The reward for this uphill struggle wasn't in view watching, but rather in running down at full speed, sometimes tumbling head over heels and almost always ending up rolling over and over again as they neared the water's edge and then ultimately rolling right into the shallows. It was pure, silly, joyous, clean fun. No toys required.

The sand continued thick and safe far into the lake at the foot of the hill. Rolling into the water, she knew that trip down was over and just laid on her back letting the water wash over her small body. It made for



a joyous trip and she begged her sister to do it again and again. After several rolls down the hill, they would both be exhausted.

Her sister would grab a towel and lay by their mom, and she would just lay in the water as it tipped her sideways back and forth. She felt so safe in the small rippling waves and enjoyed laying on the clean sand beneath her. The water was so pure and clear and refreshing, never cold. She loved bath time the same way, only this sandy bottom was much more comfortable. She loved the water.

Where Mom was sun bathing, soon all three of them would be on their towels listening to the music, and it wouldn't take long for all of them to succumb to an exhausted nap. Sun, the hill, and water, none of them needed any encouragement to doze.

Waking up, she knew it would be back through the shallow edge to return to the cottage. Gathering up their things, carefully closing the lid of the radio, they trudged back the way they came.

Later in life, she would visit the sand dunes on Lake Michigan, but nothing could compare with those innocent days at the Vineyard Lake Sand Hill, climbing and rolling and running down and just being with her mother and her sister—with their little family of three and no one else around. Such a simple pleasure. Such a simple memory. Those were beautiful, glorious days—holding a memory that fades over the years but never completely goes away.

Now, well beyond her golden years, as she gazes out her kitchen window, she again relives that murky walk (but she'd wear water shoes

now) and brush past the frogs and minnows and enjoy her thoughts.

The sand hill has overgrown these 70 years later. Worse yet, the property at the top was purchased and a large house takes in the view with signs of "Private Property, Keep Out."

Weeds and trees and shrubs have taken over what was once the wide expanse of pure sand, making it look like any other undeveloped space. There is still the hill, but it's so uninviting.

A path has been paved down the side of where the Sand Hill was, so the occupants of that private property ("Keep Out") can get to the water—their water, it seems. There are two walls jutting out into the lake as if they were keeping others out. I'd like to think it is to keep what's left of the sandy bottom from eroding, but I'll never know. It's all so uninviting now.

Happy fading memories ... scurrying minnows, frogs and lily pads, warm waters, murky spots leading to the playful days of childhood at the Sand Hill.

Sherry Nichols

Mr. T and Destry

They were buddies. But their journeys were two separate endeavors.

Mr. T's was the saddest.

Mr. T was a handsome boy. A Siamese.

I adored him. He would bring dead birds to my door and leave them for me. UGH! I never could get used to that. He left during a snowstorm...a blizzard, and never came back. I wept and wept. I would go to the door and call his name. Mr. T, Mr. T, please come home. But he never did.

The snow kept coming and falling, making hills and valleys in the yard and all around the house and barn. It snowed and blew until it was 3 feet deep in the yard. It blew across the road and built higher hills. Like an architect chiseling out its design. It was cold, so cold. We couldn't get out of the driveway. We were marooned inside the house and had to wait until the snow and wind slowed or stopped. Up north in Michigan is no stranger to cold winds and snow. I wept and wept. Where are you, Mr. T, I cried. But nothing.

Spring came and the blankets of snow drifted and blew, and melted away. Little did I know I was about to find Mr. T. He was finally returning home to me. We emerged from a snowy, white, desperately cold winter and began doing outdoor chores. Clean the barn, check the chickens, clean the stalls for the pigs and prepare for the spring litters to arrive. Clean out the food barrels...there was Mr. T...at the bottom of the barrel. Cold, lifeless and waiting for someone to find him. With a deep sadness and a heart that was breaking, we had finally rescued him, but too late. We laid him to rest. Life moves on, chores continue, and all of these things help you get through the grief and the journey. Oh if only we could have got out and checked the barn. Forgive me, Mr. T.

Destry was our Irish setter. He was beautiful! Dark auburn hair and faster than greased lightning! He was a runner! Free to run as he wished throughout 100 acres. He would even take off for town often, 2 miles away, when he wished to do so. Oh, and he chose to do so often.

DNR would call and inform me they had Destry again. I would then ride 2 miles into town and retrieve him.

He hated smoking! If you brought a cigarette near him he would snarl and emit a low growl and turn his face away. Smart dog! But the owner was not as smart and kept smoking.

He loved pumpkin pies. Did he ever! One Thanksgiving half a dozen pumpkin pies were baked and set on the pie shelf to cool. While we immersed ourselves in some Detroit Thanksgiving Parade, Destry disappeared into the kitchen, unbeknownst to us. Getting up to begin supper I sauntered into the kitchen, and lo and behold all the pumpkin pies had been licked clean, leaving only the barren pie shells. I screamed: Destry has eaten all of the pies. Needless to say we never let him close to a pie again.

Your pets are an extension of your family to be loved and treasured.

Anette Wolski

Nametag

I heard his footsteps swiftly approaching from behind. I was on a dark, desolate street and knew that if only I could make it to my car, I'd be safe. But I wasn't quick enough, and he was upon me before I could take my next step.

I heard him mumble something as I slowly turned around to face him. He was slightly taller than I—5'8" at best. He wore baggy pants, a loose shirt and a scarf around his neck. His head was adorned with a knit cap, and on top of his hat was one loose feather. I was surprised that the feather had remained on his head since he had sprinted to catch up with me. I couldn't tell if he was attempting to impersonate a pirate or Robin Hood.

He lifted his left hand out to me and shook a plastic cup. I looked at his eyes and noticed that he had nystagmus, a condition in which the eyes move involuntarily.

Ah, Robin Hood, I thought. He was disabled and asking for money... but something seemed off... I shook my head and started to turn away. It was then that I noticed the gun in his right hand.

"Give me a fifty!" he yelled.

I could feel the anger rising in me. *How dare he pose as a disabled person and then rob me!*

"I don't have a fifty!" I yelled back at him. I looked in my wallet and handed him a twenty.

"Give me a fifty!" he continued to yell.

"Are you kidding me?!" I yelled back. Where I was getting the nerve to yell at this man was beyond me. "I'm a social worker for god's sake! I don't have that kind of money!"

I saw that I also had some ones and gave them to him...but I didn't give him all of them.

He turned around and ran away. So much for being Robin Hood. No, he was definitely a pirate.

Shaken, I sprinted the few steps to my car. Once inside I took a big

sigh. *What just happened here? Now what do I do?* I was parked on a one-way street and the man ran in the outbound direction. *Is it safe to pull out my cellphone and call 911? Is he watching me? Will he come back if he sees that I'm using my phone? If only I had a GM car with OnStar...then I could pretend to adjust my mirror and call for help.* It was the early 2000's and OnStar was a big deal. I vowed to buy GM the next time.

"Hello, this is OnStar, Julia speaking. How can I help you?"

"Hi Julia. This is Anette. I'm trying to activate my Bluetooth but something weird just happened."

It was 2022. After the robbery, I had bought an HHR, which I was still driving. GM was no longer offering hands-free calling through OnStar, and instead, they offered Bluetooth technology. Although my car was old, it did have Bluetooth capability. All I had to do was figure out how to activate it.

I perused my HHR manual and found instructions on how to pair a phone on page 4-83. I discovered that my Bluetooth-enabled cell phone had to be paired to my car's Bluetooth before I could use the Bluetooth function. The instructions advised me to refer to my cell phone user guide regarding Bluetooth functioning before pairing the phone with my car. My head was already beginning to spin—too many words for my brain. Up to five cell phones could be paired with my car. The in-car Bluetooth system will automatically link with the first available paired cell phone in the order that they were paired. In most cases, pairing should only be completed once.

The actual instructions on how to pair my phone followed, and I scanned them before I Googled the instructions, as they had advised me in the introductory section.

I played a short video that lasted 18 seconds. When it concluded, the nice man in the video instructed me to "continue watching the video." I clicked "play" again but only accessed the same 18 second video. I tried one more time to no avail. When I scrolled down, I saw another video. *Aha!* I thought. *Here it is.* I clicked "play."

PLEASE ENTER YOUR CREDIT CARD INFORMATION. *What?!* A pop-up had materialized demanding my credit card information. I could not proceed further. *What the...?! Now they want to*

charge me for using my own phone?! I backed out of the screen a couple of times, but the same pop-up continued to demand my money. I thought about this for a while. I was scheduled to attend a conference the next day near the Thumb, and high winds were predicted. I wanted to have hands-free calling in case an emergency occurred...so I inputted my credit card information.

CREDIT DENIED. PLEASE USE A DIFFERENT CREDIT CARD.

Now I really started to worry. Did someone just hack my credit card? Is this a scam? Are they trying to get all my credit card numbers?

I closed the pop-up and called my credit card company. After a mere 20 minutes on hold, I spoke to Ashley, and I explained the situation. Ashley told me that the payment was denied because my purchasing history did not indicate that I would purchase an item from a site such as this. She added, however, that she could put the payment through since I was the one who initiated it. Since I wasn't convinced that this was a legitimate site, I advised her not to—I planned on calling OnStar to determine if the site was indeed affiliated with them.

And now I had Julia on the OnStar line. "No, ma'am," she told me. "That was not us. But I can help you sync your Bluetooth to your car." *Finally*, I thought.

As Julia walked me through the steps, an automated voice came through my car stereo. I was having difficulty following the instructions since both Julia and the automated voice were speaking at the same time. When the automated voice asked me to supply my nametag, I turned the volume down on my stereo in order to only hear Julia's instructions. "My nametag is my name, right?" I asked. Julia confirmed that it was. As I turned the volume up on my stereo again, I heard my own voice saying, "My nametag is my name, right?" followed by the automated voice saying, "Thank you for confirming your nametag. Your pairing is now complete".

"Noooo..." I shouted at the stereo. I could hear Julia laughing in the background. "You can change it if you'd like to. Just follow the steps again..." *No, I'm confused enough as it is. I wouldn't be able to maintain my sanity if I started over again.* "Thank you, Julia. But I think I'm going to keep it as it is. I mean, how many other people have that nametag?!"

I hung up with Julia and shook my head. I got my nametag, but I

had to call my credit card company back to either unfreeze my card or get a new one.

“Thank you for calling U.S. Bank. We are experiencing heavy call volumes now. Your approximate wait time is 20 minutes...”

And to think that this all started because I was robbed by a pirate. I should change my nametag to Blackbeard.

Image Credits

Cover: Matthias Süßen (matthias-suessen.de)

license CC BY-SA (creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0)

via Wikimedia Commons

(commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Noctilucent-clouds-msu-6817.jpg)

Page 35: Jessica Shultz

Page 75: Imagery © 2022 Maxar Technologies, map data © 2022 Google

Westland Writes began in April 2009 as a small poetry book by local authors in celebration of National Poetry Month. Since then, it has grown into an eclectic annual collection of poems and stories from in and around the community of Westland, Michigan. The William P. Faust Public Library of Westland is proud to present this thirteenth installment of Westland Writes. Happy reading and writing!

