



Wiregrass

2019 LITERARY AND ARTS JOURNAL



Cover art: **Quite the Spectacles** - *Hannah Stanfield*

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Wiregrass 2019 Literary and Arts Journal

Featuring the writing and artwork of
East Georgia State College students, staff, and faculty.



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Thanks to Val Czerny, Desmal Purcell, & Alan Brasher

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Moonshine

The stench of Merle's moonshine has never left my memory, and with it remains the image of Bassett, the only place I have ever truly felt at home.

The vast and mountainous country-side of Virginia is a lawless land; A place where there are no rules in which anyone feels compelled to abide by without a direct decree from the good Lord himself. The air is crisp with a sense of freedom found nowhere else, and where the only sound to be heard is the bubbling of the creek over the old and obsolete dam. Trailers and Baptist churches speckle the hills and the few paved roads leading to the farmers market and beyond it to Great Uncle Merle's home. With a red face, he enthusiastically greets every single person in a room. His hair is whiter than freshly fallen snow and matches the thick mustache that sits just above his lip. He is a man that has not lived a day sober, and will most likely never see a sober day until the day he dies. That is, however, the way he was designed to be. He is the loudest man in the room, but he never angers and is equipped with patience unmatched by any man.

Although he is old and his body is not as capable as it used to be, Merle refuses to be stifled by his age. Standing on the patio, one could watch him walk through the backyard and into the small patch of woods where he keeps an old boat and his still. He follows a methodical routine of heating and stirring and waiting and watching, a process that I will never be able to comprehend, and the legality of which need not be discussed. With an aroma that would best be described as a combination of acetone nail varnish remover, everyday household cleaners, and radioactive waste, Merle's moonshine is something that no other human being would willingly consume. I imagine the taste is no different from the smell, likely scorching your throat with the literal fires of hell. Merle himself is practically immortal, so he happily concocts what some might consider death's calling card in the copper still and drinks it as if it were water. It has been said that should Merle ever meet his maker, they will have to call in a team to decontaminate the entire county.

Regardless of the obvious dangers and legal implications, Merle refuses to give up his craft. It is as if through this process everything that ails him ceases to exist for a moment, as if he has found both solace and peace. The art of making moonshine is far more complex than what meets the eye, requiring an understanding of both science and technique. The same can be said about Merle, a man who was never given a fair chance to be seen as what he truly is: kind, intelligent, and far more than he is given credit for.

— Margaret Anne Brogan

Dragonfly

Row rapid wings.
Saw the sky,
and sail the liquid air.
Row ancient galley,
older than ancient galleys.

Row, small ship
with the dragon prow,
and go a viking.
Row
with strong wings fore and aft,
oars that dip and rise.

Row, ancient dragon,
clear wings set with panes of glass,
strong wings to cleave the air.
Bob and weave,
or make all time stand still.

Fly enameled dragon
with great faceted eyes,
glittering orbs set on a slender pin.
Shine like a jeweler's folly
pinned on a satin dress.
Stitch air and land together.

Sail on columns of air
and currents minuscule.
Float on imperceptible tides.

Beat time
generation unto generation.
Tame the stream of years,
and carry the spark
that set our world on fire.

— *Kenneth Homer*



Phalaenopsis Ambiguus - *Benjamin Ely*

A Sister's Love

In the hospital, came his birth
More than everything, he is worth
My brother is he
Our smiling faces, would he see
In love, surely is he covered
Love unconditional, we discovered
In baby blues, was he wrapped
In the world, his destiny already mapped
Peaceful was he, eyelids closed
To the safe comfort of mother's arms, was he exposed
So small and warm was he
Happy and content more, could I never be
Lose this love, I could never
In my heart, does this love live forever.
then I will pray a fire is birthed from our cities that burns
this country to the ground
Though I greatly believe in the ideals and the man who was
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
there is a time for the spirit of Malcom X to rise up
This is less a season for doves and more of upheld fists and
feet marching

— *Carley Smith*



Wyatt - *Terrie Daniel*

Conservation

Her sweet breeze blankets like comforting words
Mother Nature bridges heaven and earth.
You hear her voice in chirping amongst birds,
And her arms warm you like a crackling hearth.
Her seas sparkle and shine in sapphire light.
Her somber tears glow like glistening stars
As they cascade down her face in the night.
While Mother Earth lays to rest next to Mars.
Her amazon, in her emerald ring,
Refracts the beam on each strand of wheat.
Her mountain peaks bestow the perch for wings.
While her perfume chills the ravens' two feet.
Despite her beauty, she isn't so strong.
People gut her, and then ask "What is wrong?"

— *Caroline Mason*



On the Bank(sy) - Benjamin Ely

Home is Me

Home is a magnet calling to metal
The soft purring of my cats
Longing for my attention
Home is the echoes of barking dogs,
The sound riding on the wind like a kite,
And kids playing in the park
Home is the sweet taste of crisp apples,
The warming scent of cinnamon
Filling the house and pouring
out to the street
Home is the rust colored bricks,
All the lumpy imperfections,
The joyful hugs from my nephew,
His laughter carrying to the top floor
Home was once all these things, but
Now Home is wherever I am.
Home is...
Me

— *Kimberly Archer*

The Conner Crew

Dancing in the living room, music blasting
through the air
Mama singing High School Musical like she just
doesn't care
Days are full of guitars strumming, laughter, and
tickle fights.
Never is it in pristine condition, but it feels
so right.

Then we have my sisters—Laura and Tay
Although they can be mean, they always know
what to say
Here come the brothers—Jeff and Doug
And all they like to do is bug

Home is golf cart rides and blackberries
Those days were oh so merry
I can't forget the aroma of yellow dial soap
My dad telling me it's bedtime—
uh, how about "nope"?

There's Koda and Lucy and Ricky Ricard Blu
And my favorite blankie with Winnie the Pooh
Though sometimes it may feel like a zoo,
Home is wherever I'm with the Conner crew.

— *Makayla Conner*

What's for Dinner?

A hungry mouth drips open wide
To spill an ache from deep inside
His sorrowed eyes to tell the tale
Of cheekbones hard as cross and nail
He sits alone in shadowed wall
Where fire ants and spiders crawl
But Mother dear, he used to say
I'm just too tired to work today
A widowed mom to let it go
Alright she said, but then tomorrow
Generous words though in the end
Mother's stone was his only friend

— *Eric Wruck*



Mandy - *Terrie Daniel*

Love Language

I need your touch—
To feel you near,
Even when you aren't—
To reach out
And find you there
Tell(s) me you love me.

I need your time—
Undivided and whole—
No phones,
No disturbances or distractions,
Just talking and being
With me, tells me you love me.

I need your voice—
To say you love me,
Yes,
But I try
So hard, all the time
To say and show you, too—
Show me you love me?

I need your heart—
Open,
Bared,
Through, not things given,
But through things done—tiny
Acts, unexpected and true,
Show me you love me.

— *Christian Kraus*

CP: Spitfire Poet

*after hearing the back story
for "Spreading the Light"*

The first time we met, he hugged me like an old friend. We'd talked before, though only on the phone and as a matter of business. His definition of friendship was broad: as broad as the smile he gave every child he saw— as broad as his definition of education.

I booked him for an art festival, and he read in a local restaurant and at the city pavilion—he even held court at the after-party, though that was free of charge and likely beyond his control. Warmth is the first word his name brings, and then others begin to accumulate: a sense of mission rang in every word he spoke; a feeling of community shaped his lines.

His legacy will be as broad as his definition of friendship, as cumulative as his vision.

— Alan Brasher

Open Eyes

Can you see what I see,
This darkened sullen sight?
So what a thing it is to see
That soft and brilliant light

Can you hear what I hear,
The echoes in the silence,
The bloody shrilling screams,
Of the never ending violence?

Can you taste what I taste,
The metal in the air,
The winds that taste blood,
The crimson liquid of despair?

Can you smell what I smell,
The faint taint of the dead?
Oh the pictures never can describe,
The streets when filled with red.

Can you feel what I feel,
Even the smallest of remorse?
Yet here you are with a gun
Aimed at my head of course.

But do you know what I know,
That I am not afraid?
My heart is stilled, strong is my fear,
But I will never cave.

— *Victoria Thornton*

Find Yourself

From the time that we're born,
We've got a name to uphold.
To delineate from your class
Is not just brash, it's too bold.
In a time where it's difficult
To step over the line,
It takes an iron-plated heart
To raise the stakes and cut ties.

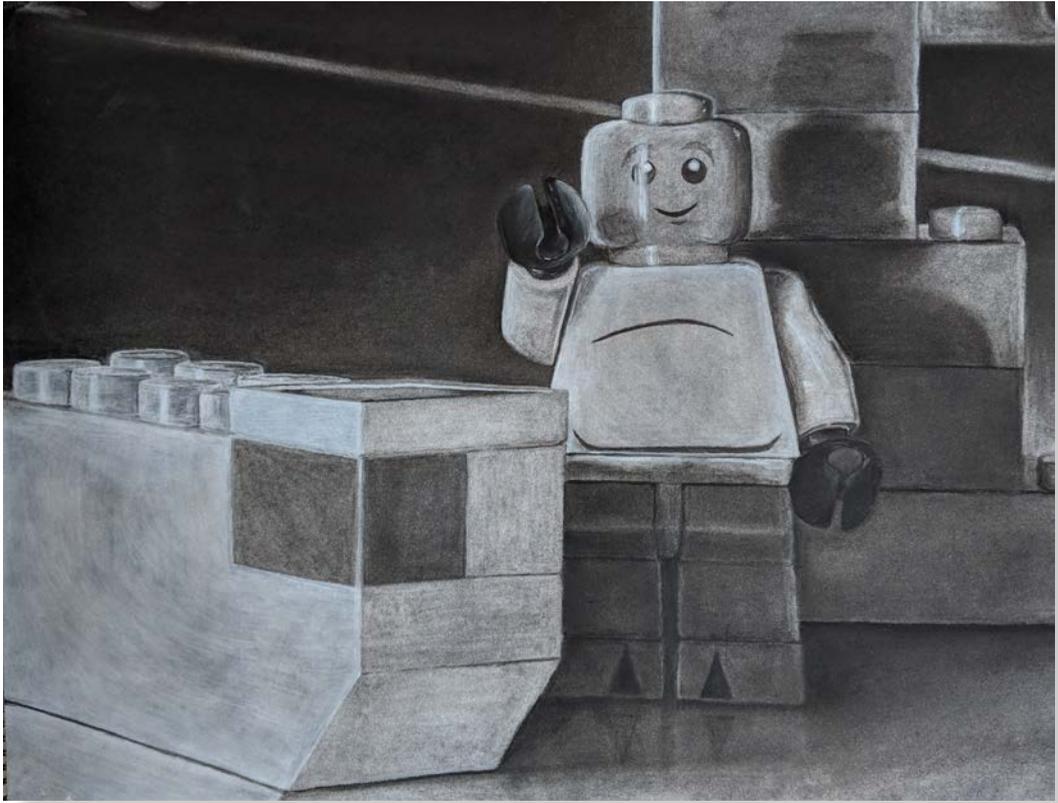
Our upbringing has us set up
On a straight and narrow path,
But for the future generations,
We must take a step back;
For not everyone can know
Where their destiny lies;
Having been expected to know
From a young age, our passion dies.

We make mistakes, but that's okay
Because mistakes are a given;
But what's a dream without passion,
And what is life without livin'?
In a prim and perfect world,
We can't afford to muck about,
But to find yourself, you need some time,
And you just wanna scream and shout:
"I'm just a kid, I need some space
Just to roam and explore;
So please step back and humor me!"
You so endearingly implore.

Enter college, the first choice
For those who seek to get their fill
Of pristine knowledge, expertise,
And the chance to gain some newfound skills.
But what's unclear is whether or not
A college can properly dish out
The unique set of special skills
For the particular field you've inquired about.

Cause not every job has a major
That sets you up for success,
Sometimes it takes a complete failure
To take a bullet for the rest.
The pioneers of their fields,
Who had sunk to their lowest,
Used their minds to come back up
From the ground just to show us
That further schooling does not define you,
You don't have to be like the rest,
So, find yourself and take your time,
Cause all you need to do is your best.

— *Hannah Stanfield*



Lego Man in a Lego Land - *Hannah Stanfield*



People on the Mountain - *Jessica Appleby*

Seen from a Mountaintop near Atlanta

Fires burn with little light--
the earth's slow burning
and too rapid turning
casts all into the night.

Where do all the busy people go?
to move at headlong pace
like beetles as they scurry to and fro
without design, without a purpose to the race

Away from cities of the plain
the smoke drifts in,
a deadly fog not washed by rain,
that claws the earth's green rim.

An ill wind carries soft carrion cries,
The blare and bleat of the valley below
This the way the world dies.
This is the world that we know.

The mountains provide no solace.
The rivers are not clear.
No peace, no quiet place.
No haven from our deepest fear.

— *Kenneth Homer*

West Texas Family

A family has accidentally buried the wrong body
A senior civil servant is under investigation

How the families were told, How the families were bold, How the families were sold
A need for closure

Mallards ain't no malady, but the former lover of a woman was left paralyzed after
she was catapulted

I laughed, don't worry, the spider isn't the monster
Many Americans may think 1920s piano music can learn about supernatural encounters.
A naked man jumped into an aquarium, a mother in New York City is looking for answers.
Some tiny plastic containers that she claimed were teeth
Not sure what was in the vials
The family took the little girl's cocaine
There are 15 kids in the room
No dog can resist
The French bulldog did something very bad
Too-young drinkers have their tells

— *R.D. Holmes*



Pluck Me - Kimberly Page

Aster

starlight born
a thousand years ago
touched our eyes tonight

and yet

what filled my heart
to bursting
was not the fusion
of hydrogen
or helium

it was the sound
of song

of music

of your fingers
on strings

and a minor chord
resonating
in maple wood

— *Armond Boudreaux*



In the House of Persephone - Ren Denton

Freedom Thoughts

They say, "Be controversial and fight for your beliefs."
I think that is atrocious and I just want some peace.
We all can stand together – agree to disagree
On all our ideas – they are what make us free.
And if your friends are different and have their own thoughts,
You should respect their freedom, not push yours down their throats.
If someone says they're different, I am alright with that
We can be friends no matter what – there's nothing to snap at.
But I will keep my distance when you decide to say
Your freedom's more important than Joe's down the lane.
Joe does not have to change for you, pretend he's not who he is
If you insist he drops his faith then I will tell you this:
Joe's freedom is essential, just like yours or mine.
We are all equal, and that's just by design.
So stop this outrage, it has to relent
Before society forces you to repent.
Learn to love your neighbor,
And sheath the saber,
Wish peace unto others,
And peace will find you.

— *John White*

I Miss Her

Seems like most days I think of her,
And most nights I dream about her.
For a long time, my chest would burn.
I never should've left her!
I hate how she's with another man,
But I'm happy to see her standing once again!
While I just can't! I just can't stand up on my own!
I never wanted to leave her in the end,
But I felt like she deserved a better man!
At least that's what I told myself.
To cover up the fact that I messed up!
Oh Lord, I just miss her!
I miss having her around!
I miss our talks, her laugh, and her big smile
I miss how she cheered me up whenever I felt down!
I didn't know how much I would miss her in the end!
Until all the restless nights wishing I could hold her again!
Is it too late to let her know that I still care?
Is it too late to let her know that I still wanna be there?
I only hope it's not too late to let her know that I Love and Miss Her!

— *Jamel Sutton*

Storm

I hear them calling me
The voices in my head
They tell me things of sorrow
Full of horror and filled with dread

They laugh at my misery
And cower at my smile
And when they scream at me to stop
I know it's been a while

These are my inner demons
Pain, fear, anger, regret
Yet darkness is a fading
The sun no longer set

For now I have a new light
And he is always there
He holds my love and kindness
And I know he'll always care

Now I hear them screaming
Those voices in my head
Because they too are losing
And soon they'll all be dead

As I'm in his arms now
I feel so safe and warm
And the voices they are silent

— *Victoria Thornton*

Longfellow's Village Smithy's Daughter

Under a weeping willow tree
A seamstress pulls a thread;
The modiste — strong and brave is she,
With dreams that look ahead;
And the books upon her many shelves
Declare that she's well-read.

Her flaxen hair is touched with frost
Her face glows with each thought;
Her past is filled with diligence
O'er the battles she has fought.
And she looks the whole world in the face,
For to any she owes naught.

Week in, week out, from morn till night
She fights the good ole boys;
You can't hear her strike resistance
With measured counterploys
While she quietly runs her business
Flanked by play-acting killjoys.

And daughters coming home from school
Love to listen to her talk —
(While she frames the speeches she will give
As she plans the freedom walk) —
And catch every flaming phrase that flies
Like a bonfire burns each stalk.

With a sash of purple, white, and gold
She holds her banners high.
“Submit or conquer,” one proclaims,
“On but one choice we rely!”
It asks: “For just how long must women
Wait for liberty?”

The words sing out like carillon bells
Ringing in Paradise!
Spaeing about each old, staid way —
How in the grave it lies;
And with her wearied hand she wipes
A tear out of her eyes.

Toiling, — rejoicing, — sorrowing,
Onward through life she goes;
Each morning surmounts new stumbling blocks —
Mends feats stalled in long furloughs;
Strides made to legislate equal rights —
When secured? — God only knows.

Thanks, thanks to thee, our worthy friend,
For the amendment you have fought!
Growing the fibers of equal rights,
Which, unspun, must yet be wrought.
Thus in words that weave democracy,
We’re still threadbare in what is not.

— *Val Czerny*

How I Became Me

I am from gumtrees, fragrant in the summer heat.

I am from the kookaburra's maniacal laugh,
shattering the morning calm of "the bush".

I am from kangaroos bounding across the outback plains.

I am from crocodiles and boomerangs,
from sun, sand and surf.

I am from red earth and blue skies,
painted on my soul.

I'm from "the land down under".

I am from sampans and fishing boats,
from islands so small they're not shown on the map.

I'm from heat and humidity found only near the equator.

I am from fish drying in the sun,
the stench so strong you can smell it in your sleep.

I am from "Selamat pagi," and "Apa kabar?"

I'm from the Riau Islands of Indonesia.

I am from fried chicken, fried okra, fried "almost anything".

I'm from pine trees, mosquitos, no-see-ums and gnats.

I am from driving on the "wrong" side of the road,
from "Bless your heart!" and "y'all".

I'm from azaleas in spring, fireflies in summer,
From colorful leaves in fall, and frosty mornings in winter.

I'm from "the South", the "Bible Belt", with a church on every corner.

I am from Swainsboro, at the crossroads of 80 and 1.

My home is not a place,
 it's wherever my family is.
Never in one place long enough
 for it to truly become "home".
My hometown is the earth
 and wherever I find myself.
My tree has no deep roots,
 not like a majestic oak or a towering pine.
More like a willow, my roots spread far and wide
 to make me strong,
And my branches bend and sway
 with every gentle breeze or stormy wind.
I am who I am because of where I'm from.

— *Kerri Close*

Based on a model poem by George Ella Lyon



Peacock - Janet Sanchez

Shipwrecked

Why did you leave me alone in this boat?
I'm using the sail to write you this note.

I won't pretend I know why you left.
But you should know I'm completely bereft.

I went to sleep just for a sec,
When I awoke the ship was a wreck.

The life boat is gone and I'm sinking fast,
Gotta pull myself up if I want to last.

— *Cady E. Tippins*



Dusk on the Water - *Kimberly Page*



Mantis Guard - Kimberly Page

Self-Deprecation

Hello,
My name is Self-deprecation
I'll be moving in
Actually it's more like an invasion
I'll be here for every single one of your occasions
Waiting for you at the end of every day's end
My specialty is confidence assassination
I can't wait to be your whole lives annihilation
Now let's see where we'll begin
You know your hair's a little bit of a mess
Actually much worse than that, it's a Bird's nest
Oh, sweetheart, you're gonna wear that dress?
I thought you said you're dressing your best
You know there's such thing as too thin
Good thing you'll never have to worry about that then
And looking like you do you'll never get men
Oh yeah how long has that been?
Quite some time
Oh well that was expected
Oh I love all these thoughts I get jumbled in your head
Oh sorry, were you trying to go to bed?
Too bad you're so lonely then
No family
No loved ones
No friends
Do you know I've never met anyone even their mother couldn't love
I guess you're a first, dove
But don't worry sweetheart you'll never be alone
I'll always be here cause I've set up home
Don't worry I'm not a bad houseguest
I mean I don't even eat much, just your only chance at happiness
So slide on over and make some room
I won't be going anywhere anytime soon
Because I'm here to be your self-worth's doom
So be ready for a rain shower of perpetual gloom

— *Susannah Walters*

The Seventeenth Annual Emily Pestana-Mason Memorial Poetry Contest



Our poetry judge, Chris Mattingly, holds an M.F.A. in Poetry from Spalding University. He teaches writing, literature, and interdisciplinary courses at Bellarmine University in Louisville, Kentucky. His book of poems, Scuffletown, is available for checkout from the East Georgia State College Library. From 2012-2014, Chris served as a Humanities faculty member at EGSC.

The First Place Poem... The material poets use to craft their art is the most common and over-used material in the world: language. Because of that, it is often difficult to create potent, memorable meaning through a poem. But when it happens, look out: language becomes rejuvenated and living again, and we are reminded of the power of words. The poem "Queen" does that. This poem says so much in so little space. It is at once an honest expression of self-love and a beautifully rendered reflection. This is the kind of piece you tape on the bathroom mirror to read and remind yourself every day. This is in fact the intimate, private moment of someone looking in the mirror. But I also admire the range of diction in the poem: it has the crunch of common single-syllable words with that mix of a higher diction that you have to look up in the dictionary. And the way this poem moves from abstract to specific fills the lines with breath and breadth. One specific place I found myself floored: "Cotton candy like hair." Yes, this line is simple. But it's also complicated by the context of the poem and the rich melanin of the first two lines. That in mind, beneath the sugary image of the hair is a the image of cotton, which in this poem, is linked to the history and exploitation the speaker hints at later in the poem. I'd put this poem in the anthology right next to Lucille Clifton, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Etheridge Knight.

FIRST PLACE POEM

Queen

Melanin
Rich
Cotton candy like hair
Wide nostrils
And voluptuous derriere
Often lost in the midst of the world
Never the “beauty society’s” first place girl
I am Afro-American
History built on my ancestors back
I am beautifully black
Embodying Afro-American magic that doesn’t crack.

—*Cole ‘Christian’ Osborne*

The Second Place Poem... This is one of those poems that you "get into." And by that, I mean one that makes you nod your head and say, "That's right!" One that makes you slap the table and go, "Come on!" This is one of those poems you read and think, "Right. I've got something to say too." Yes, this is a poem that inspires. I love the litany of the repeated question: "Why is it!?" That move is prayer like and invokes rhythm through repetition. And I also love the long rant-like lines that build and build and build the poem. There is a relentless energy in those lines underscoring the anxiety and anger because this is serious: we are seeing once held visions shattered. Probably most potent in the poem is the dramatic shift from the litany-driven to the complete tone shift with the stanza beginning: "There can be no innocence in America." It's as if the poem stops, takes a breath, and resolves in the most composed, sober way it can. This poem makes the political personal and the private public. I put this one in the anthology between Saul Williams and Walt Whitman.

SECOND PLACE POEM

Should Elmo Take A Knee

Why is it

Shel Silverstein didn't tell me that the sidewalk ending
was also where government funding dropped off?
Thus the reason for street lights lessening and crime rates rising.

Why is it

Ms. Frizzle didn't take the Magic School Bus
beyond the birds and bees?
Explaining sex and gender do not always match.

Why is it

Mr. Wizard taught me that apples could be swallowed while standing on my head,
but not how to swallow the lies fed to me by the media?

Why is it

the most diverse street in my neighborhood was named Sesame?
Speaking Spanish before Dora was ever born, not forcing a homeless "Grouch" off the street.
But I had no idea I was watching a societal metaphor.
Puppets under unseen control, talking heads with someone's hand up their ____.

People may ask why I merge debates of the day with the innocence of childhood.
Simple.

There can be no innocence in America

when the latest Batman and his brother,
our favorite 1980's doctor,
and the President
get grabby.
when the public's defenders,
American politicians,
and forest animal news channels deny basic rights.
when churches lay down the Cross
and instead passionately wave a school flag
in order to segregate their sheep.

when the Justice System has

become a real-life game of Monopoly
where instead of hotels, prisons are privately owned
where the Utilities run from inside the school yard to inside the fence
where Court rooms are more corrupt than shaved dice
and the Community Chest is stacked with Get Out of Jail Free cards
(as long as your uniform includes a police shield instead of a NFL logo)

when men thrust themselves upon

co-workers, fellow sitters at the local bar, and any passerby on the side walk
in an attempt to overcompensate for a frailing phallus.

Our children are left
with scars and tombstones.
They have learned Vegas offers a greater gamble
than your life savings.
They have learned schools are a place to hear
the echo of gunshots.
They have learned that the white people with the white power.
Oh sorry,
 the right people with the right power,
 can get away with anything.

So yes, I am done with Saturday morning television.
I am done with bubble gum shows
that promise pseudo love
or keep shiplap in business with another home renovation.

America is the new Rome, burning to the ground.
But instead of a lyre being played during its destruction,
it appears people have the ability to spew gasoline from their mouth.
Now I, and every artist willing, must pick up our instrument of choice
to begin the proper education of every child, youth, and adult.
It may require taking a knee
or standing up to a politician who values volume over truth
or speaking truth when foolishness and lies are dispersed like aspirin.

Just know that we have come with the intent to battle,
the plans for war,
and the passion for a better day.
Also,
 we do not back down.

— *James Snow*

So, here we have one of several poems in this style submitted by this poet. This poem is funny: begin with the title, which is a date of seemingly no significance that I know of either in the world of the poem or the world we live in. What marks the day, however, is the total lack of interest or commitment the speaker has! They are so disengaged that they are just going to lay their head down, and not only that, they are going to commemorate it in poem form! I love it! I've seen that person and I've been that person. Haven't we all? I think what is also funny is that every end word in the poem rhymes. On one hand, it gives the poem that Suessical music. On the other, it's a gesture of playful mockery from the poet. It's like they're saying: "oh, you want a poem? I can write you a poem. And poems rhyme, so let me make every end rhyme ring out like a chime. The effect: tired words become meaningless obliterations while the recurrent sound reinstates meaning-- that's poetry. I'll put this one between William Carlos Williams and Shel Silverstein.

THIRD PLACE POEM

April 12th

My mind ached that day,
as my soul fell away,
while my mind began to fray,
with my thoughts astray.

I did not have much to say
and so, my head did lay
upon the desk that day.

— Cady Elizabeth Tippins

The Healer

A few days after Christmas Tom Smoot and his wife Ginny sat by the pool of their motel on the gulf coast of Florida. He wore only shorts and sandals and she had on a faded pink bathrobe. They were both middle-aged, but she looked older than him because her curly red hair had gone mostly gray. Tom was trying to take a nap, but with the gulls crying out like lost children as they flew back and forth from the river to the parking lot, and Ginny rustling the pages of the Orlando Sentinel, it was proving difficult. He was about to say something to her, when she suddenly let out a yip and almost fell out of her wheelchair.

“Look at this! The Healer is going to be up in Atlanta!”

The other day she had called Tom in to watch a TV preacher, a cadaverous-looking woman in a white gown, who shouted and slapped people on the forehead and made them faint and then come to—miraculously cured. “That’s all fake,” Tom had said then, and he said it once again.

“It’s only a six-hour drive,” said Ginny, “and we haven’t been anywhere in a long time.” Her chin began to quiver. He hated it when her chin quivered.

“You know you don’t like riding in a car that long,” he said.

“I’ll be all right as long as you don’t smoke too much.”

Tom lit a cigarette and looked around. There wasn’t a guest in sight, which he considered a good thing since the pool needed cleaning. Ten years managing the place and it was turning out to be the slowest winter ever.

“I don’t ask for much,” said Ginny.

He knew it was no use reminding her what the all the doctors had said—that after being thrown from the car that way she was lucky to be alive. He groaned and ran his fingers through what was left of his hair. “I’ll think about it.”

The next morning, after Krispy Kremes and coffee, Tom bathed his wife then dressed her in a white summer dress and slippers. After rolling her out to his black ’98 Buick Regal, he picked her up and sat her in the passenger seat, and then collapsed the wheelchair and stuffed it in the trunk. He gave some last-minute instructions to the maid who would run the place while they were gone, and then drove off singing, “We’re off to see the Wizard.”

“What a glorious day,” sighed Ginny. The sky was turquoise and cloudless and the lawns glistened with dew. A light breeze rustled the leaves of the palms along the road. “Let’s have some music.” She turned on the radio and a guy sang through his nose about lost love.

"I wouldn't like that even if it was good," said Tom, and they both laughed.

He watched her fiddling with the dial and thought about how much had changed since she had come bopping into that roadhouse on open mike night with a couple of sorority sisters, saw him singing and playing guitar and decided he was the one, and she was going to spend all her time and money making him the next Jimmy Rodgers. It turned out love is not only blind, but deaf too.

There was a stack of supermarket tabloids at Ginny's feet, and she soon had one in hand and started flipping through it. "They got a diet in here says if you eat a grapefruit with every meal, you'll lose five pounds a week."

"You don't need to lose any weight," said Tom, remembering how she used to look in a bathing suit.

"Aww, don't give me that," said Ginny. "I've got to drop at least twenty pounds before I get out on the dance floor. What are you looking so surprised for? If I'm gonna to be walking, I'm certainly gonna be dancing. What's the matter? Afraid you won't remember how?"

"I just don't want you to get your hopes up too high."

"Don't you worry," she said. "There's no way on earth I could tolerate that much grapefruit."

He was going to say, "I mean about this trip," but stopped himself. He liked how she was in such a good mood. Why spoil it?

Ginny started singing an old Doris Day song. "Que sera, sera. Whatever will be will be. The future's not ours to see. Que sera, sera." She stopped, and Tom figured it was because she couldn't remember the rest of it, but then she sighed and said, "If I was to die right this minute, I'd die happy."

On the other side of Valdosta, after they had stopped for gas, they passed a girl standing on the curb with her thumb out. She had on a gray jacket that was too big for her and white pants with black stripes. She carried a beat-up green overnight case. Ginny's head swiveled to keep her in sight.

"Oh, Tom, we have to go back and get her."

"Not on your life. She could be insane for all you know."

"She's just a girl. What could she do to us?"

Tom shook his head. "Absolutely not."

Ginny reached over and touched his arm. "It's not safe nowadays for a young girl like that to be hitchhiking."

"That's her people's business, not ours."

"It's everybody's business," said Ginny, watching the girl get smaller. "We all got to watch out for each other. What if she gets taken off like that poor girl last year, and her mother's on the news crying and begging for whoever has her to let her go, and all the time she's laying dead in the woods? How would you feel then? What if she was our daughter?"

"Well, she's not." Tom dug frantically in his shirt pocket for a cigarette, found one and stuck it in his mouth, but before he could light it, Ginny snatched it and threw it in the back seat.

"That won't fill your God-shaped hole, Tom."

"My what?"

"You heard me. Nicotine and alcohol and—and—other things. You've got to find good ways to fill your God-shaped hole, and one way is by helping those in need."

Tom struggled to hide his mortification. He often wondered how much Ginny knew but never said a word about. He had always tried to be careful, but obviously she knew something.

"It's true," Ginny continued. "How can we expect the Lord to help us if we won't help others?"

"We can help others when we get home," said Tom. He kept his eyes on the road, not wanting to see the expression he knew so well—the judgmentally arched eyebrows, the sanctimoniously pursed lips.

"It's the Christian thing to do, Tom. Are you, or are you not, a real Christian?"

Tom snorted. "No, I'm a Hairy Krishna. What do you think?"

"I don't know. Nothing would surprise me about you any more. You either believe in Jesus Christ or you don't."

The truth was, Tom didn't know if he could call himself a Christian or not. Of course, Christmas was his favorite holiday; no other holiday even came close, but it seemed to him a lot of people who called themselves Christians did some pretty awful things.

Finally, he said, "Yes. I believe there was a Jesus. As a matter of fact, there was a show

on just the other night about how they found actual evidence of him when they were digging up some ancient Roman---stuff."

Ginny shook her head, her eyelids fluttering. "I don't know about you, but I'd sure feel better standing before The Healer if I've done something to deserve being healed."

"You've done lots of good things. You married me didn't you?"

Ginny nodded sadly. "I'm ashamed to say it, but I lost my faith there for a while. That's why we need to go back and get that girl. Start doing things for others instead of always thinking only of ourselves."

"All right," Tom said through his teeth, pulling off the road and one-handing the steering wheel, the sound of gravel crunching under the tires as he turned the Buick around. "But if I'm not mistaken, hitch-hiking is illegal. We're not doing her any favors by indulging her."

As he rolled up to the girl, she shaded her eyes and approached the passenger side, leaning over to talk with Ginny, who had rolled down her window. Long stringy molasses-colored hair obscured much of the girl's face until she brushed it away and Tom saw that she wasn't bad looking, but kind of hollow-eyed, and wearing too much make-up, like the girls he'd seen hanging around truck stops.

"Where you headed, Honey?" asked Ginny.

"Atlanta," said Brenda.

"Well, we're headed to Atlanta too, so you can come along with us all the way. You have people up there?"

"Yes, Ma'am. My nana's up there."

She studied the two of them as if trying to recall where she had seen them before, until Tom got annoyed and said, "Are you getting in or what?"

Ginny gave him a dirty look, but the girl let out a nervous laugh and said, "Thanks y'all."

She barely got in the back door before Tom took off. He watched in the rearview mirror as she put the green overnight case on the seat beside her, opened it, retrieved a brush and flipped her hair over in front of her face and began brushing it down like it was an animal. He tried to guess her age, figured she was probably young enough to be his daughter.

Ginny introduced herself, and then Tom. The girl said her name was Brenda.

"Hitchhiking is so dangerous," said Ginny. "I hope you haven't been doing it too long."

"No Ma'am. Not too long."

When Ginny told her they were headed up to Atlanta to see The Healer, Brenda put her brush away and stared at Tom.

"Not *him*," said Ginny. "It's *me*. I'm a paraplegic. You see, my husband I and were in a terrible car wreck. We had been to a New Year's Eve party and it was raining and the roads were slick and we were arguing about something silly and—"

"All right," said Tom. "She doesn't want to hear about it."

"—And it wasn't his fault. Not really, but alcohol, even a little bit, dulls the senses and slows the reflexes. But you're right, Tom. That's all in the past and the past is a cancelled check. What matters now is getting to Atlanta and getting healed."

"Well, good luck to you, Ma'am. I sure wished I believed in miracles."

Ginny gave her a warm smile. "Why, Honey, your very existence is a miracle—the miracle of birth!"

"I was a caesarean," said Brenda. She bent over and came up with a cigarette. "I found this back here on the floor. Is it all right if I smoke it?"

"I suppose so," said Ginny. "But those things are so bad for you."

"Yes Ma'am. I know." Brenda lit the cigarette then rolled down her window. "I'll quit one of these days."

Tom wished both of them would shut up. He could feel the girl's eyes on him and looked at her in the mirror. She was smiling like she knew a secret.

"Slow down," Ginny hissed.

Tom looked at the speedometer. He was doing eighty-five. He let off the gas and tapped on the brake.

"How many wrecks do you plan to have in this life?" asked Ginny, her face as hard as a cemetery statue, and when Tom didn't answer, she added, "You were going way over the speed limit."

"All right. Drop it."

"And don't clench your jaws like that. You know what your dentist said."

After a while, a billboard advertising a truck stop appeared on the horizon. Ginny

turned to Brenda. "Honey, when was the last time you had something to eat?"

Brenda shrugged. "I had me a candy bar for breakfast."

"Tom," said Ginny, "get off at the next exit and let's feed this child."

As they left the highway and caught sight of a dingy white building, some gas pumps and eighteen-wheelers, Brenda muttered, as if in a trance, "Relax—Refresh—Re-fuel." Tom and Ginny both turned and looked at her. "That's what the sign said," she explained.

"And that's just what we're going to do," said Ginny.

Inside, Ginny and Tom sat at a table drinking cokes, sharing an order of nachos while Brenda, waiting for her burger to fry, explored the gift shop. Tom watched her pick up and examine a rubber snake then a little pair of praying hands you were supposed to stick on your dashboard.

"So much for my diet," said Ginny, wiping her mouth. Then she looked over her shoulder at Brenda and sighed, "We should have tried harder to have a child."

"It wasn't meant to be."

"I know I would have been a good mother."

"The world's getting too crowded anyway."

"That night I was lying in the ditch, watching all the headlights go by, wondering if anybody was ever going to stop and help us; I was thinking we should have tried harder because now it's too late. I called out for you."

"I didn't hear you," said Tom, for what he figured must be the ten-thousandth time. "I was knocked out. If I would have heard you, I would've come."

Ginny patted his hand. "I know you would have."

Tom got up and headed for the men's room. While he washed his hands he read the labels on the condom machine. *Increase her pleasure*, one said. When he returned to the table, Brenda had her cheeseburger and was sitting across from Ginny. "Well, we thought you might have fallen in," said Ginny. "Now it's my turn."

"You need any help, Ma'am?"

"No, thank you, dear. You know what, though. Why don't you come with me and call your nana and let her know you're coming?"

"That's a good idea, Ma'am. You know something? I think you're about the nicest folks

I've ever met. I'm sure gonna try and pay you back some day."

Ginny put her hand over Brenda's and said, "Just do for others when you can. That's the only thing that really matters in this world." With that, Brenda wheeled Ginny away. Tom was glad to finally be alone, but after only a minute or two the girl reappeared and sat down.

"Your missus sure is a nice lady." She picked up her burger and took a wolfish bite, the juice dripping down her chin onto her hands. Tom thought about pulling a napkin out of the dispenser and handing it to her, but didn't. Instead, he drank the last of his Coke. Then he started chomping on the ice. After a while it got to be too cold on his teeth, so he stopped. Brenda was grinning at him, so to show her he couldn't care less, he let their eyes meet for a second or two. Then he looked at his watch. Why was time going so damn slow?

The fading sunlight slanting in gave her face a kind of glow. Tom wondered what her story was, but he didn't want to talk to her, so he put his elbows on the table and hid his mouth behind his folded hands. Then he looked over at a pimply-faced boy and a short, chubby girl cutting up at the magazine rack. They had their arms around each other's waist. Stupid kids, thought Tom. A moth bumped over and over again against the plate glass window.

When Brenda finally finished eating, she said, "Boy, that sure hit the spot. Say Tom, you think I could get a cigarette off you?" Tom gave her one, and as he lit it for her, she softly steadied his hand. "You don't talk much do you?" she said. "Or maybe you just don't like me. I'll bet you didn't even want to stop for me, did you?" When he didn't answer she blew smoke at him. "I guess you don't agree with what your wife said—about helping people. Well, I think she's right."

"That's nice."

"I seen how you been looking at me."

Tom forced a chuckle and shook his head.

She leaned in and whispered, "Can I ask you a personal question?"

"I'd rather you didn't."

"Can you two--you know—make love?"

Before Tom could think of something to say, he heard Ginny's wheelchair banging against a door. "Oops," said Brenda. "Guess I need to mind my own business."

Ginny appeared, slightly out of breath, and rolled over to them. She took a drink and looked at Tom, "Why's your face so red?" When Tom didn't answer, she turned to Brenda. "Was your cheeseburger good, honey?"

"Yes, Ma'am. I sure was hungry."

"Would you like some dessert?"

"Let's get back on the road," said Tom.

"I might have something sweet later on," said Brenda. *Was that a wink?*

"Did you get ahold of your nana?"

"No, Ma'am. She must be out. It's probably bingo night or something."

Ginny stretched her arms and yawned, "Oh Lordy, I'm all done in." On their way out to the car, they passed a pick-up truck where the pimply-faced boy and his girlfriend, in silhouette, appeared to be eating each other's faces.

They checked into a motel just outside of Atlanta. Since Brenda had been unable to contact her nana, Ginny got her a room down the hall from theirs.

"The healing don't start until seven tomorrow night," said Ginny, "so we got all day to see the sights. I want to take a look at that Cyclorama. I hear it's a doozy."

An hour or so after they had got settled, and just as Tom was tucking Ginny into bed, a knock came on the door. Tom looked through the peephole. It was a wet-headed, bathrobed Brenda. He opened the door.

"You need to turn on the TV," she whispered. Without make-up she looked almost wholesome, not like a lot lizard at all.

"Why? What's going on?" asked Tom.

"Just turn on Channel 9."

Ginny called out, "Is that you, Brenda? Come on in, Hon. I'm decent."

Brenda stepped in and grabbed the remote and clicked on the TV. "I'm afraid it's bad news, Ma'am."

There on the screen was a picture of The Healer. Apparently she had been caught in a hotel room with hookers and cocaine. She was under arrest. The event for the following night had been cancelled.

"No," gasped Ginny. "Oh, no."

Tom went over to her and touched her shoulder. Brenda let out a laugh, but then quickly stifled herself.

Tom shot her a sharp look and snapped, "What's so damn funny?"

"I don't know. It's just so—so--"

"Go back to your room!" Tom shouted.

"Don't yell at the girl," cried Ginny. "It's not her fault. It's this horrible, horrible world."

"I guess the messenger's always the one that gets shot," said Brenda, shaking her head. "I'm really sorry, Ma'am." Then she left.

Tom sat next to Ginny and put his arms around her. *What could he offer?*

"I knew it was too good to be true," she said, and began to quietly weep, eventually crying herself to sleep. The last thing she said was, "Go see to Brenda. The poor girl is all alone."

Tom went outside to have a smoke. A station wagon pulled in the parking lot and a family emerged, the father carrying one child in his arms, the mother holding the hand of another. Loud music and laughter came from a distant room. A police siren whooped and died. He imagined himself going to the girl's room, her looking at him the way she had at the restaurant. That mocking grin. Like she never doubted for a minute he was going to do it. Ha! He could show her a thing or two, that's for sure. After all, he'd been in the Navy! Little tramp. She was probably lying the whole time. She probably didn't even have a nana in Atlanta. Sure he *could* go to her. Everybody *expected* it of him. He could have, but he didn't.

Back in the room, Tom slumped in a chair. Ginny was still asleep. He watched the blanket rise and fall below the graying halo. He thought about how that night would soon be gone forever and then it would be morning and they would go back to their lives.

He fumbled in the darkness for the remote, found it, and then turned on the TV and pressed the mute button, cutting off the romantic repartee of two long-dead movie stars.

They embraced, and then *The End*, in big white letters, extinguished them. After a while, Tom turned off the TV, undressed, and slipped under the covers beside his wife. He settled back and laced his fingers behind his head and stared up at the gray ceiling, somehow knowing that this time, when he was deep in sleep, he would not hear the screech of tires, the crunch of metal and glass, and someone calling his name from the wrong side of the grave.



Redeemed - *Terrie Daniel*

Cell Structure

I hope I ring a few bells,
as I try to help you remember the main parts of **Eukaryotic cells**.
It is selectively permeable and not lame,
because all cells are surrounded by this **plasma membrane**.
The **nucleus**, a membrane-enclosed organelle,
that contains genetic material of the cell.
Made up of a double lipid bilayer,
the **nuclear membrane**, is the nucleus helpful player.
The **cytoplasm** is lucid,
because it's just a jelly-like fluid.
They are free in the cytoplasm and sometimes not seen,
they are **ribosomes** that make protein.
It produces the energy currency of the cell,
this is not fiction or just a tale,
Without the **mitochondria's** creation
cells would not be able to obtain energy from anaerobic respiration.
These are just a few of the cells parts,
one cell in the human body is how life starts.

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Creative Assignment: Let's Talk Biology Assignment
BIOL 1107 Spring 2018 Professor Sega MF



Storm Trooper - *Janet Sanchez*

Fata Morgana: A Tribute to Nico

Christa Päffgen (1938-1988)

She trounces in the room with a broken grace. A grace from her modeling days marred by needlework and songs. Once was a blonde bob now a pitch-black rat's nest that magnifies her already enlarged pupils. Eyes that once exhibited sultriness and exotica, now revealing fear and paranoia. Her pouty visage once an iconic quirk in her career now an emaciated shell of its former self. See how the needlework has given her face a paper-like quality prone to early wrinkles. I wasn't happy when I was pretty. She'll sputter in her androgynous drawl sharp with a German accent. Her words oozing slowly from her crumbling teeth like black tar on new pavement. Her tattered black coat reeking of cigarettes accentuates her bust, giving her a proud bourgeoisie look like an Old World vulture. Something glamorous, something hideous. The bulky boots hobble to center stage where her harmonium stands guard. If her needles weren't there, her music was. Her backup band anxious at her arrival. Would she have another outburst? They wondered to themselves. She gives them an icy stare. Pupils dilated, she's fine. We're fine. Trembling fingers quick on the keys like Circe casting her spell on those pigmen who scorned her. The hollow moan of the organ fills the echoing hall. A monolithic racket that seeks to destroy all in its path through sheer noise alone. And then... the voice starts: JANITOR OF LUNACY, PETRIFY MY INFANCY. A tone-deaf howl of pleading mixes with the organ's groans into a concoction of heathenous commotion. Wrath and sorrow tangible in her voice. The audience is nonexistent to her, this show is all for her. She places a cigarette in her cracked lips before the next verse. Believe it or not, this figure on the quaking stage was once a Warhol Superstar and a muse of Lou Reed's. Once a symbol of bohemian glamour and Rock N Roll, now a figure of addiction and self-destruction. The original Goth Girl. She abandons the organ and does an irreverent dance to a Romani rhythm, a lively Middle-Eastern piece to clash with the Medieval solemnity of the previous song. Jerky movements and a twitching of the cathartic sort. A whiplash inducing scene. She takes a malevolent joy in the chaos of her movements, an ethereal witch performing an incantation. Her long black hair now obscuring her sagging face. Almost a funerary veil.

This would be her last performance. In a few months, she would be dead. A sickly summer day in Ibiza and a heart attack on a bicycle. I'll be back soon. She told Ari, her only child, son petit chevalier. A son with those same wide eyes that were unmistakably hers. Methadone and marijuana the only things in her body and redemption the only thing in heart, carried off to those Lawns of Dawn that Morrison told her about. They buried her next to her mother in Germany. A small plot veiled in greenery and flowers, something to temper her frosty persona. This was Christa Päffgen: a model, an actress, a superstar, a musician, a junkie, a mother, an icon, a mirage. Nico.



Prayers - Terrie Daniel

The Cycle of Life

My eyes jerk open, I sharply inhale.
I scream; hot water rushes down my face.
Large blue hands grab me, writing words — “female”
New hands grab me; I recognize this place.
I rest, hearing the familiar heart beat.
I look at her and know I am secure.
I gain a new home; she says, “we’re complete”
From a wide eyed child to wise and mature,
I grow, finding comfort in my mother.
She’s been my familiar place from the start.
Life hits, age pries one life from another,
First the grands, then parents, crushing my heart.
My end draws near, I shut my eyes and sleep,
My eyes jerk open, I breathe in and weep.

— *Ansley McQuaig*

Everything's Okay

Remember the day you said you felt like dying,
Sitting there saying that while you're smiling,
Then out of nowhere, you broke down crying,
Saying that,
You're done hiding!
You're done with all the fighting!
You're done with all the pain that you kept inside,
So you thought it would best if you let it outside.
So you let all of your pain free,
For the whole world to come and see.
People came but you pushed them away,
You even lied saying that you were okay.
That's not okay!
You even tried leaving me to,
Which made me wonder what did I do,
And you only said that it was me not you.
I can see that you're not okay,
The expression is written all over face.
So I pulled you in for an embrace.
Only to say everything's okay.

— *Jamel Sutton*

A Soft Record of Passing

It is a soft record of passing, that he sits there, his last day, paying for every sin... every transgression, every evil thought. Left undone is tenfold the sin every man has committed. He has cursed god, devil and man, but takes no responsibility for the things he has done, because every dying man is a saint and every dead man is a martyr and every child need not fight for any cause. It is knowledge that has caused us to sin, and the only thing god left to us, lest he burden us with his bad ideas.

He sees a clear picture of his father, the one from whom he was meant to earn love, the one he has never met. It is this way, and no other, no matter how desperate. It is a truth and one he cannot escape. And now... a father himself, he fails, of no fault but his own... and as a husband, there is no way to repay his debt. She looks down at him and takes his hand. She says it is time. He understands the agreement they have made. She lays the pills beside him and walks out of the room. He takes them dry... instantly, without regret. He looks up at the ceiling, and speaking to no one says, "I'm sorry" and closes his eyes and sleeps.

— *R.D. Holmes*



Chester - *Terrie Daniel*



Food for the Hive - *Jason Lee*

Clearwater

Every one the same, glassed over grey skulls with just a hint of green, missing teeth, and retarded with amphetamine. It is Halloween every day here, goblins run wild. I hate it here, but I am too young to have any say... I was born here, but I'm not one of them... by god... I am not one of them. "I have to get outta' here," I think to myself. "I have to." I crack a book and I read, and I read, and I read. The more I read, the more I forget where I am... and I keep reading until reality is completely gone. The goblins are gone, the rows and rows of old mill houses sick with cracked lead, devils of treachery and toil... gone. It's not their fault... it's not mine either. Everyone here is a product of industry abandoned... it was no better when it wasn't... just different. Can you blame a soul cast to hell without sin... without petition? I was nine the first time I saw a house raided. All the neighborhood kids were out playing Army, or Doctor, or both at the same time. I saw men dressed in black fatigues, bullet-proof vests, and full faced helmets come from all directions, all at once. It was only three houses down. At this house, they didn't have any kids and you never saw them outside. One of the men told us to get back and go home... but of course we only hid in the bushes to watch. Twenty-two kilos of shit-valley shake n' bake and all the Drano to make it... five brown tooth goblins laid out in the yard, face down, as the soldiers pillaged to gather as much evidence as they could... as they needed... as they wanted.

— *R. D. Holmes*

The Playbooks Writer

I am my biggest competition
Fighting myself is the way I make decisions
Based on how I feel, or what I do with them
It can be hard, very to get me to sit down and listen

Never know what to do with advice that is given
Thanking the Lord for another day, a new beginning
Always been in the race but never this close to winning
For the very first time in a while I don't see the rules bending

Could barely pick up a feather and now I'm throwing boulders
Stronger than ever because he took the weight off my shoulders
Been through the trials, but they decreased as I got older
20 years old and I'm finally getting sober

You see it wasn't always this easy
Most of y'all thought you knew who I was but really couldn't see me
I told a lot of lies, so no one ever believed me
I was hiding behind the people who patched me up when I was bleeding
Others put me in the soundproof room when I was screaming
When reaching out for help no longer can I see them

If there are people in your life who lift you up
Keep them
The ones who put your through the pain
Release and delete them
Before every fight you get into, just remember it can become a battle
These are the steps being taken when you take back your power
Positivity, Persistence, Peace, and Patience
This is my Playbook—uncensored

— *Alexa Slaboda*



Dab - Benjamin Ely



Crab - Janet Sanchez



Tortoise - *Jessica Appleby*



Dancing with the Holy Ghost - Terrie Daniel

For You

Remember

When I have no other reason to go on, I live for you

When I have no reason to be happy, I smile for you

When there is no way to stop the chaos, I stay calm for you

When nothing is funny anymore, I laugh for you

When my heart is gone from my chest, I let it beat for you

I do it all for you

Because no matter the battles I face

You are more important to me

More so than the impossible

So I will defy it just to see you happy

Or let you know that's how you make me feel

Genuinely Happy

— *Susannah Walters*

Memories of Home

We munch merrily on marvelous macadamia nuts
nestled in soft sweet disks of deliciousness.
Bumpy bitter grapefruits is what Grandma gave us,
usually.

Croissants with their cavities created delicious delicacies
and oatmeal was made better by mixing maple.

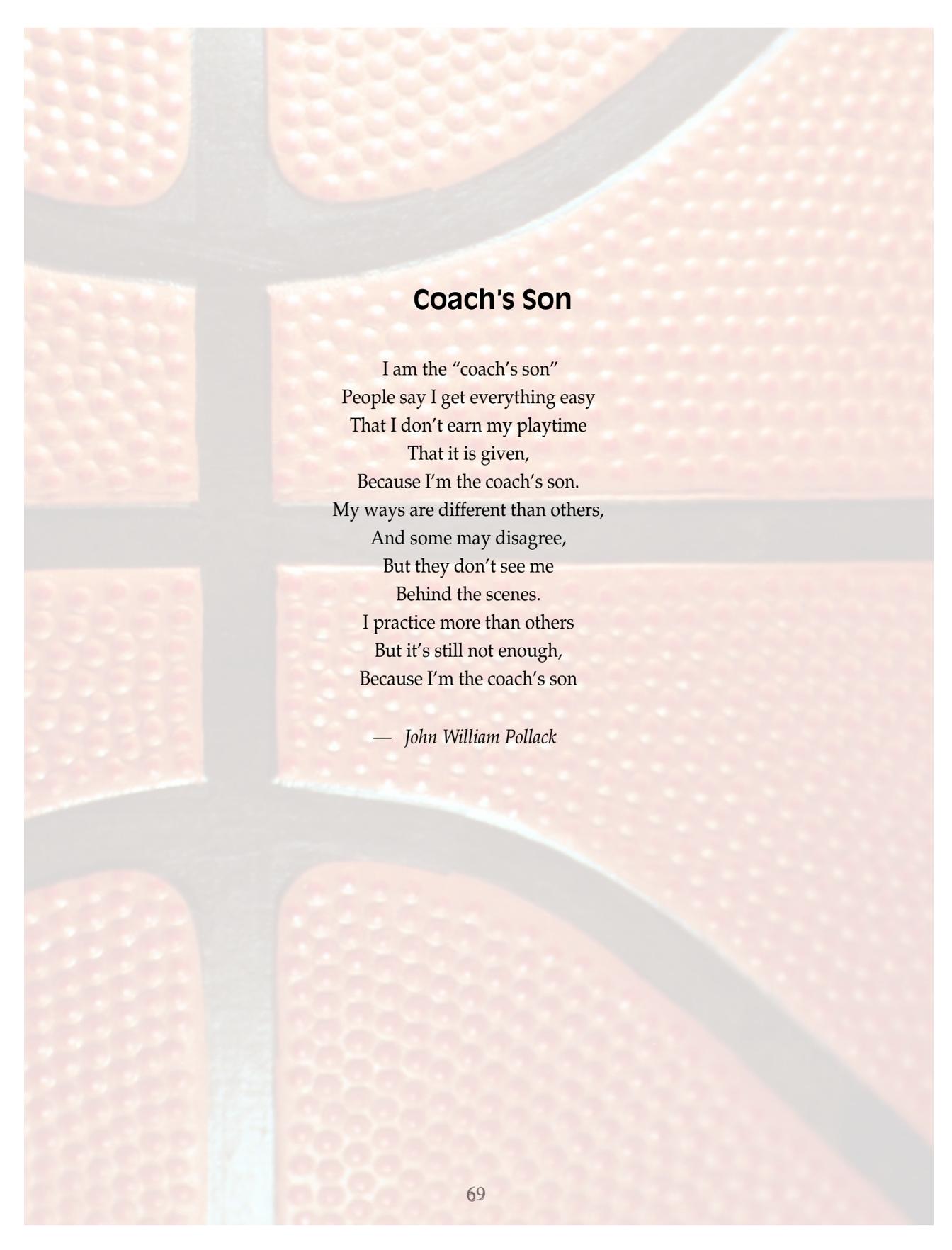
We wailed on karaoke nights, singing Shanice.
We sang, simultaneously shining our lights at each other,
always full of innocent youth.
The sun danced sometimes through decorated drapes in the den.
Clueless children —
We witnessed none of your sickly struggle.

Photo ops printed and organized on oval frames
standing side by side on the mantle,
secured sweet family moments.
Youths were yelling at fuzzy Hershey
as he frantically fetched Frisbees
all the while, in the house, the woman was dying.

Delicate, pretty perfume enveloped me.
It makes me mourn your warm wishes and praise.
You didn't deserve the disease that devastated
us unexpectedly,
unfortunately,
with only nine years following forty.

I hope the memories I've made
are everlasting evidence of
the place I called home.

— *Shadeenah McCleary*



Coach's Son

I am the "coach's son"
People say I get everything easy
That I don't earn my playtime
That it is given,
Because I'm the coach's son.
My ways are different than others,
And some may disagree,
But they don't see me
Behind the scenes.
I practice more than others
But it's still not enough,
Because I'm the coach's son

— *John William Pollack*

Dark Falcon

This city is a dark falcon, tucked head and conical wings. Dumb on a stool, deaf in a booth, dim green glow, dumb disappearing through a dark doorway, dozens of hydrants breathing fire, putting out fires and immediately starting new ones. Deaf to the music and conversation, dumb to the soul in front of you, finger flicking fools of industry, look in front of you, just look, just once. Bellies filled with the fruit and the word of god. All dressed up and can't find a single place to be, not here not there, never over or under yonder, deaf to the singing, dumb to the laughing, deaf to the readers, dumb to the writers, they are exactly, perfectly right... it is everyone else who is wrong.

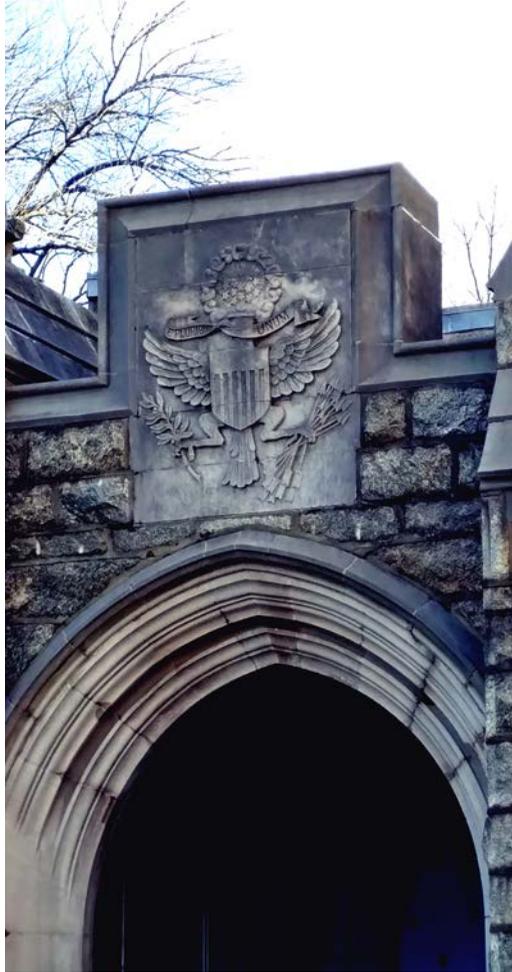
This city is a dark falcon, a lodge to house the bored and uninformed. This giant flightless bird sitting over us, in the offing, waiting to bring you in. A giant black chicken vortex, a black bird black hole. This town loves you to death, I promise. If boredom is hell, then hell it is. Our grey cracked beaches give way to sad little statues and mammoth monuments of the most exquisite and expensive dung, paid for by viewers like you. Big brick fountains, volcanoes erupting useless silage of bottle caps, bottle cap factories everywhere, bottle caps everywhere, and not a bottle to be had, plastic Easter egg factories, plastic eggs everywhere to remind us of Nietzsche. He is with the lord now, right where he said the lord would be. The third day has come and gone for this big black bird and it did not even think to breathe. It is a heavy weight to hold, when it should have been holding us.

This city is a dark falcon, every feather filled with commandments, each quill holds a task that no one wants, you say I am whining, I am whining, and endless whine for my mother to hold me and tell me it's ok, but my mother is this Dark Falcon and I am tired of propping her up. I am whining for all of us who have held her weight off the others, while they play in the snow and run credit cards for copulation, how else are they going to pay for it. You say I am ranting, I am ranting, I am also pleading for this fat turkey to get off of me. Where did all the givers of rants go, where are our Hoffmans, our Bukowskis, our voice, where is our voice. Our jesters can't be our only voice, the only ones willing to say what we are not allowed to say, if it is a joke, that's fine, but if you are angry...

This city is a dark falcon, with stark white legs and golden claws. Scraping off white scales to do a line, massive hills of powder to carve through, to say no to, and then you break down and say yes, and then... you are sadder than you were before, your pride is gone on the tip of a key, sucked into that tiny empty bag. The party has left me with these failing sticky orbs, filling with fog and ghosts and embers. I am the savior, shaman, pulpit, pew and parishioner, I am an oxycontin moron in a junkie nightmare.

This city is a dark falcon, and it lies easily, because we are gullible.

— *R. D. Holmes*



One From Many - Mike Luzzi

Stained Love

Our love was so harsh and rough, like the sea.
My lover had hidden depths to his soul.
He seemed to own a heart pure as can be,
But it left my hands stained black, like charcoal.
My skin was often colored in dark shades,
From the times his fists replaced his taut voice.
He crushed my heart's brittle barricades,
And made me live as if I had no choice.

I lived in fear of someone I held near.
I'm scared of living my life alone,
But is this really called living, my dear?
Now my heart feels nothing, for it is stone.
My lover stained my skin for the last time,
For there is no use crying over spilt wine.

— *Mackenzie Terry*

poeta vitae

"In order to write about life, first you must live it." - Ernest Hemingway

Poetry is more than reflecting on the past,
it's crafting a picture of life that will last.
If you form your words and sentences well,
people might consider your work to be swell
and many books you may get to sell.

But capturing a figure's tragic fall
or documenting a bully's gall
for demanding absolute perfection from all
requires an understanding of life
unacquirable through the rolling of dice.
It requires knowledge, honest and modest,
to produce a poem of inspired means.

A poet should live fully,
learning how to esteem themselves lowly
and consider those around more holy,
if they wish to write about life's devices
and its multitude of vices.

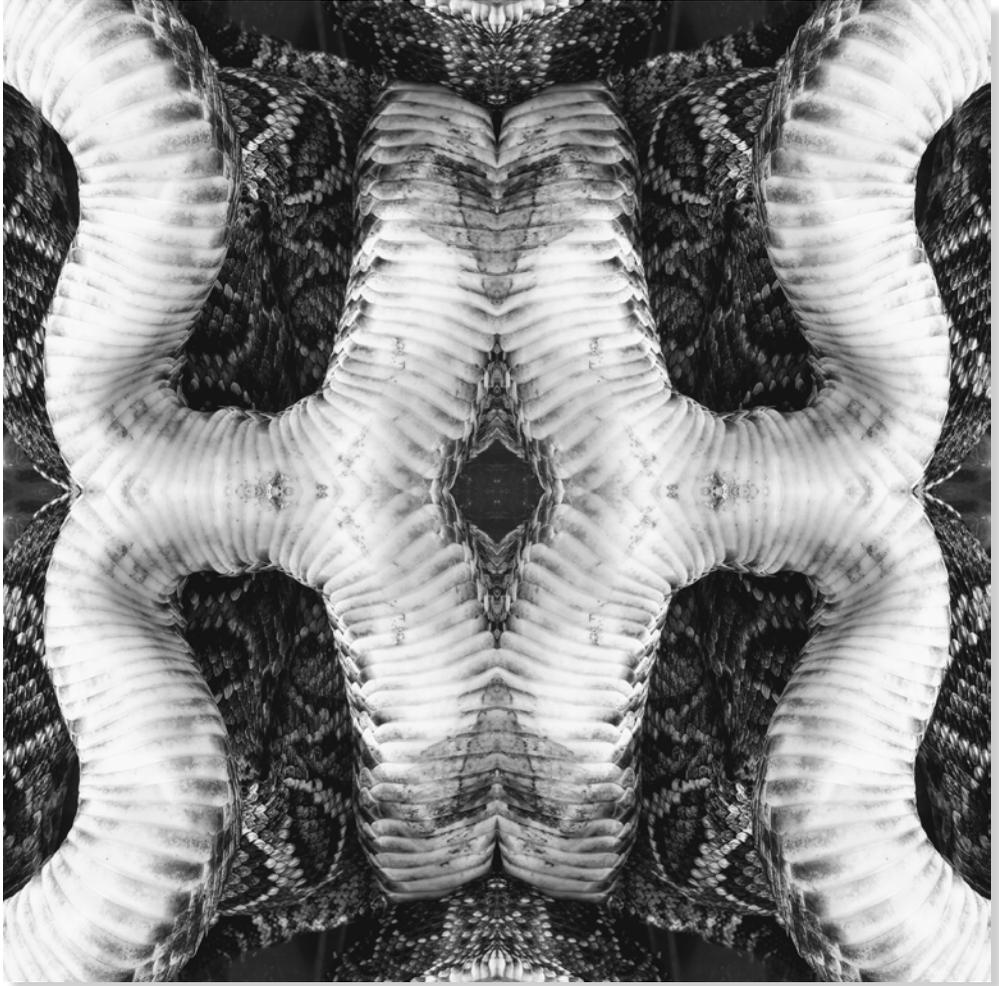
A fine example of love,
keeping the peace of a dove,
knowing when it's time to hush
to hear the spoken words as others fuss
so inspiration can rush from mind to pen,
are the duties of a poet in notice.

All this and more comprises a poet's mind,
which, when combined and refined and intertwined
with a story of their own design,
produces a poem with a bright shine,
one the writer wishes to be inclined
that one day, should the stars align,
it'll be beneficial to mankind
in understanding life, in all of it's
prizes, guises, and surprises.

— *Caleb Ely*



Ozymandias - *Cameron Chalker*



Primordial Mandala - *Desmal Purcell*



Ache - Savannah Register

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