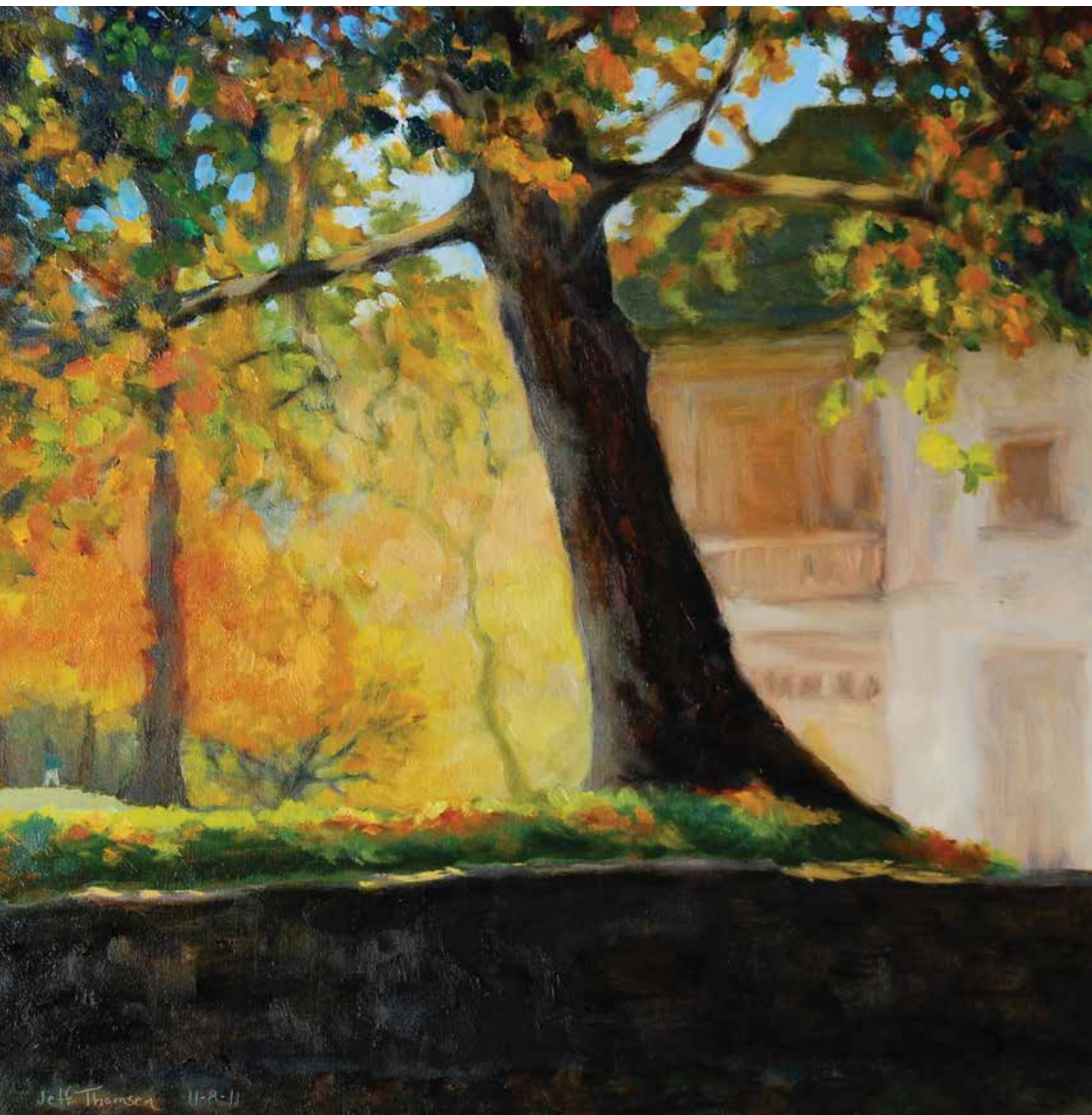


# PhiladelphiaStories

Cultivating a community of writers, artists, and readers across the Delaware Valley

FALL / 2017 / FREE



FEATURING THE MARGUERITE MCGLINN PRIZE FOR FICTION WINNING STORIES

MINATO SKETCHES SHARON WHITE / THE TANNER SCALE IS ALWAYS WRONG CHRISTINA MILLETTI

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THE MARGUERITE MCGLINN PRIZE FOR FICTION IS A NATIONAL SHORT FICTION CONTEST MADE POSSIBLE BY THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE MCGLINN AND HANSMA FAMILIES. CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S WINNERS!

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## ART



### Valley Forge with Fall Sunshine by Jeff Thomsen

Jeff Thomsen grew up in Glenside, PA, and attended Abington High School, the College of William and Mary, and Temple University Law School. In 1991, Thomsen enrolled in the certificate program at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Thomsen lives in Havertown, PA, where he maintains his studio when not painting and drawing out of doors. [www.jeffthomsenart.com](http://www.jeffthomsenart.com)



### Menhirs of Alentejo: Standing Tall by Karen Love Cooler

Karen Love Cooler is an award-winning Philadelphia artist. She creates art in many media including painting, sculpture, mixed media, print making, and photography. She has maintained a studio practice since graduating from The Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. This work presents "portraits" of the Menhirs of Portugal. These human scale standing stones are connected to early human's desire to predict and organize their environment. These stones have stood witness to our actions over 1,000's of years. Visit [www.karenlovecooler.com](http://www.karenlovecooler.com)



### Menhirs of Alentejo: New Beginnings by Karen Love Cooler



### Hay Shoot by William Sweeney

William Sweeney lives in The Chadds Ford area of Pennsylvania and had been painting since 1981. His work has been exhibited in juried shows at West Chester University, Widener University, the Wayne Arts Center and the Community Art Center in Wallingford. He has won awards in the Philadelphia Watercolor International Exhibit of Works on Paper, The Artist's Equity Members' Exhibition, and several art centers' membership exhibits.



### Carpatha Celt: Prayerful Dream by Dae Rebeck Sanchez

Dae Rebeck Sanchez is a fine artist who has shown in galleries, art centers regionally and abroad. Dae works primarily with acrylic paints, photo based transfers and collage on wood. Her narrative, sometimes surreal layered paintings focus on women, the circus, and urban/suburban decay. She studied at the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe, New Mexico and Moore College of Art in Philadelphia. Visit [www.daebeck.com](http://www.daebeck.com)



### Sunflower by Gloria Whitney

Gloria Whitney is an award-winning photographer with a longtime interest in photography. Her passion has been revitalized with the introduction of the digital medium and digital darkroom. Gloria's participation in numerous workshops strengthened her ability to create dynamic images of everyday situations and objects that convey a narrative and use light to impart emotion. Her work has appeared in numerous galleries and art centers in the Philadelphia area.



### Autumn Treescape 1 by Stefanie Silverman

Stefanie Silverman's love of nature is reflected in her colorful, impressionistic pastel and mixed media paintings of land, water, sky, and plants. Her artwork has been in numerous solo and group exhibitions, has won awards, and can be found in many businesses and homes. Stefanie recently returned to the Philadelphia area, where she grew up. Please visit [www.stefaniesilverman.com](http://www.stefaniesilverman.com) for more information.



### Dilworth Reflection by Rob Lybeck

Rob Lybeck is a Center City Philadelphia photographer concentrating on the city's built environment and architectural details for well over twenty years.

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*Philadelphia Stories*, founded in 2004, is a non-profit literary magazine that publishes the finest literary fiction, poetry, and art from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware and distributes free of charge to a wide demographic throughout the region. The mission of *Philadelphia Stories* is to cultivate a community of writers, artists, and readers in the Greater Philadelphia Area. *Philadelphia Stories* is a 501(c)(3). To support *Philadelphia Stories* and the local arts, please visit [www.philadelphiastories.org](http://www.philadelphiastories.org) to become a member today!



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# Minato Sketches

Sharon White – First Place Contest Winner

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1.

She kept reading about how all the paper houses had burned. But as she came down out of the clouds, she saw shiny fields, wet with a sheen of green water and the spikey hills she remembered. The villages tucked into crevices between the islands of trees and rocks and fields. There were certainly paper houses hidden along the shining river. And more were folded in the curves and lumps of the hills. Long white birds announced their presence with their silence and the squat bodies of cormorants raced down the dark rivers once she got to the city. Everything was different. The last few years replaced with concrete that somehow seemed more alive than she remembered. So the woman who told her about the fires was right. The houses had vanished. In the morning she watched as armies of pedestrians marched to work. Their faces placid with sleep. One eyebrow raised here, another foot placed there. Such precision and pizzazz. Every now and then someone would break rank and get a coffee at one of the cafes, mildly folding and unfolding a paper. Picking a white cup off a table and then putting it down.

2.

She ended up on a street with noodle stalls. None of them had any faith. She knew, after all, that they had to kill Jesus for him to be a savior. Military men were at every corner. And the large blue fish in tanks displayed along the walls slept. She could see them breathing in the dusk of their containers. Men in white shirts and black pants jostled against each other, banging their brief cases on their thighs. Everything was lit with a burning core. These men had been at work forever. Toting their bags from home to trains to the office to the narrow streets where the food was displayed on plastic cards or in bowls with plastic wrap. Old women beckoned costumers in at the doors. Huge signs with beautiful letters hung from every open window. So many drunk men rubbing their bellies, dancing in knots close to each other just about to fight. No English here, one sign said. Inside the stall it was quiet. A cook cocked his head and looked away. It was cool, so cool she pulled her sweater closer. She'd left two grown boys and a husband in a country far away, governed by an idiot in a red coat. Everything was alive around her and no one was quiet.

3.

Her new boss said I'm part Cherokee and part Quebecois. I have great friends all over the world, some from my youth hanging out at Johnson Pond. I have many more friends than you do and have held important positions. I'm a denizen of this place, a wow guy, why do you think I got this job? Look at my desk, my legions of pictures of families close to me, for sure I'm close to my brother and sister, too. We get together every year in Maine. I've lived most of my life away, but you know Maine is certainly what I call home. An old house on the green, the view of the ocean from the porch, the sound of gulls in the morning, the children skating on the pond in winter, the smell of woodsmoke. My history goes like this: I, like you, have moved from institution to institution always here, mostly here, but bigwig positions, nothing less. Have you had a stroke, he asked, I know I may have seen that in your documents. Are you sure you haven't had a stroke? She adjusted her smile and said, it was a mild one, a mild one. I have no visible residue. But she knew residue was not the right word. Visible signposts, perhaps, a certain look, the way her family inserted one word or two when they had a chance, the way her little dog looked at her with distrust. It all got to be too much. That country so far away, their loving hands guiding her down stairs, past beggars in the street and gangs of motorcycle thugs prowling the boulevards where they lived. They went to a place in the north one winter soon after her stroke and stayed in an inn where the sheets were very white and they left chocolate on your bed at night. So sweet. They ate in the dining room and she brought her little white dog with her. The dog slept under the table and she could see other holidaymakers snatching looks at her from their beautifully set tables. There were people singing in another room and lights twinkling in the trees outside. Her husband and sons were happy, skiing during the day, and she could sit on the little porch in the sun with her white dog and think about nothing, nothing at all. There was no struggle to find any words. She was in the first months of her therapy and it was difficult to say anything. She could hardly smile. Don't worry darling, her husband said, we'll get you back to normal in no time and she would shake her head. She knew there was no normal around the corner. Her therapist had her draw a clock and she knew from her face, even if she said that's great Gigi, that's great, that she had somehow gotten it wrong, terribly wrong. She studied flashcards and did homework for what felt



like hours. She was instructed to substitute one word for another, but she'd never been much of a poet and isn't that what they did? She used to love to tell stories and she could see the painful look on her younger son's face when they were all silent at the dinner table, her boys back from one college or another. One job or another and it was her husband, who used to be the quiet one, who carried the conversation like a suitcase.

4.

She had days before the program started so she went to a garden. She had admired this garden in books for years. When she was in this country years ago she was more interested in the mechanics of love than gardens. A brief affair, a few weeks of doing nothing but fucking on the floor in a narrow apartment where everything was miniature. It took her weeks to realize she wasn't in love at all, just enamored of the idea. It was so far away, so far away from the kind of life she normally lived. And she loved the burning bite of sake and how it made her feel. How loved he made her feel, split off from the self she thought she knew, even if she didn't know what she was capable of doing. She didn't know that later when she had her stroke, years later, she wouldn't know who she was at all and the sorting chambers of her brain would disintegrate so she couldn't even talk to her little dog. Her little dog who she sometimes thought she loved above all else, her little dog with the pure white paws.

It was a garden of Waka poetry. The paths circled the pond in the middle of the garden like a magic incantation. Each viewing spot was a bell. A way to inspire memory. A key to the locked room where the words lived. Precious Seaweed Shore. Her days at the Cape with her mother and father and her brothers and sisters. The days burning to a crisp on the sand, cold as hell in the water. Those hours playing in the brook that went down to the sea, the horseshoe crabs moving so slowly along the bottom, waving their blunt spears back and forth. Her brothers stoning the rabbit to death one day when they went to visit cousins two towns away.

Ebb Tide Harbor, her life now.

It took her months before she could draw the clock on the blank piece of paper correctly. Now she watched a man measure bamboo stakes precisely and then saw them off and then hammer them with a wooden mallet into the ground along the edge of the mossy verge of the lake. He measured three times and then cut. She watched him happily. She was definitely happy, sitting on the wooden bench in the old garden. Very old, she knew, early 1700s. Two of the ponds were gone now, but the impression of the water on the surface of the earth remained.

5.

She wanted a resurrection. She knew that was blasphemous to want to so much. She wanted to be struck new with life. Instead God sent her lightening in her brain. And even if the doctors kept saying she'd be fine, she didn't think this state was fine. She was such a talker. She could talk the ear off anyone, couldn't she? Her sons knew that. And as she traveled more and more with her husband and they could do anything they wanted, she had so many stories to tell.

When her mother got sick it was up to them to take care of her, first in her older boy's room and then in the facility down the road. It was a place with trees around it. The only place in miles with a grove of trees. Her mother didn't care at that point that the two rooms looked out at trees, but she did.

It just seemed too much some times. The world was crumbling at the edges. A tyrant had taken over the country and the government was in shambles and then her mother started to say less and less. A kind of imitation of Gigi's stroke, but much worse. She wouldn't come back from this descent into silence.

She brought her meat sauce in a silver thermos. Morsels of chicken in foil. Beautiful sweet ripe clementines. Armfuls of farmer's market flowers. Her mother stopped eating, her mother stopped moving, her mother stopped doing anything at all. And what was there to do? Her mother didn't remember the soap operas she'd spent her life watching or the news at 6:30 or anything really. She was afraid she would forget who her daughter was. But she didn't. Her sister came and stayed with her those last months. Her mother took forever to die. She's just doing it on her own time, the kind nurse with the polished copper skin and tiny eyes told her. The books can only tell you the average time. The average time was two weeks, her mother wanted ten months and she took it.

6.

She'd had a bitter fight with him before she left. Her husband said, "I sacrificed all my waking hours to your rehabilitation and this is what you want to do now that I've got you back?"

"I was still myself, when you thought I wasn't here," she said. "I was still myself all those hours when you were away. I was with the boys in my heart, wasn't I? I fought hard to get back to what you thought you wanted me to be."

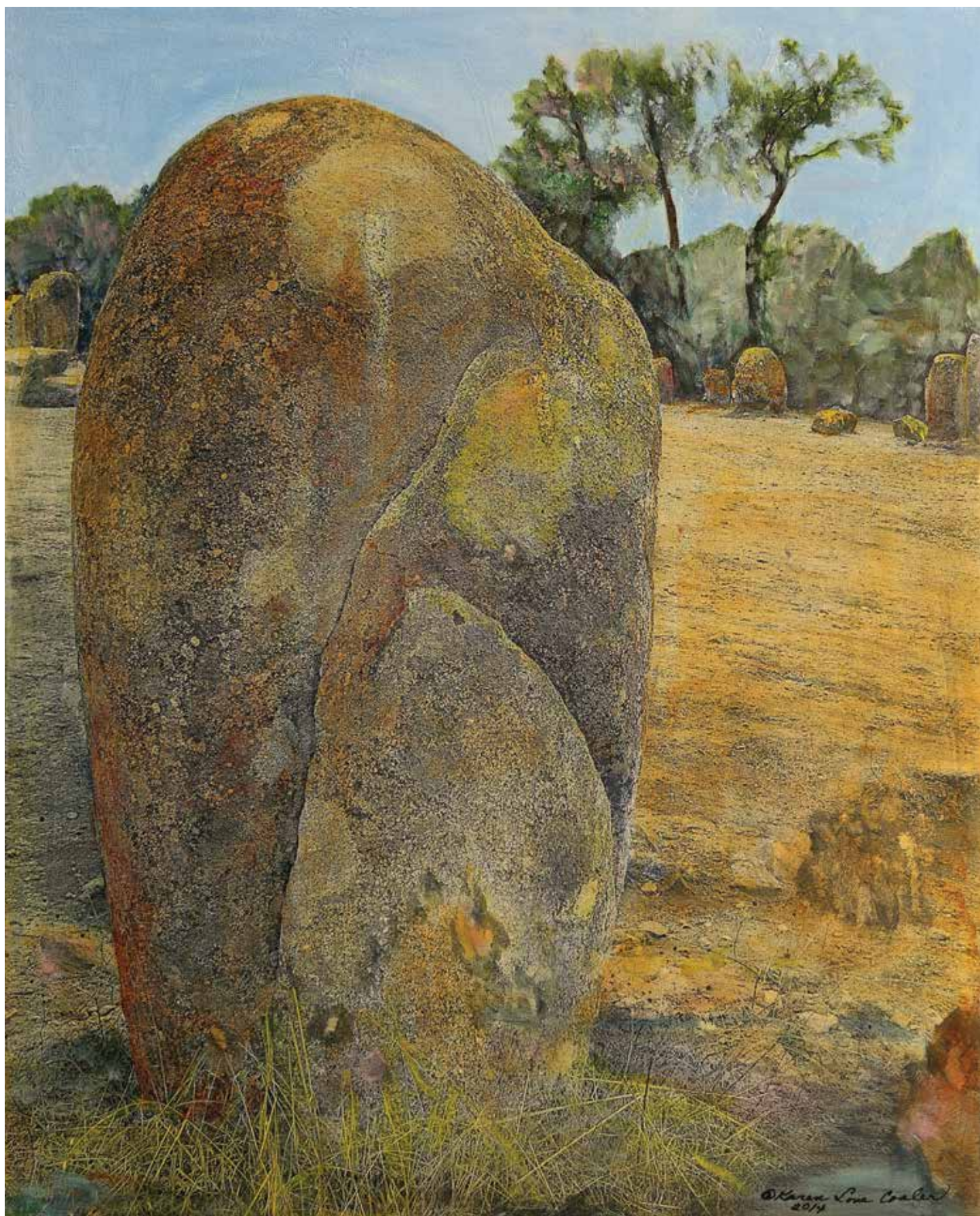
But it was all so dramatic, she thought. The simple thing was there were two of her now. The woman he'd loved for so many years and the one who went away. Went away in her head, all the words mismatched, unavailable for the moment. Not useful.

"You're not the same," he said, "not the same at all if you keep this cockamamie idea in your head and leave us again."

"I can't believe you said cockamamie," she said and then they started to laugh. Everything was so ridiculous after all. There was the tyrant as president, the marches in the street, people with different kinds of hats parading in every town, marching and chanting. Flags waving on every corner. The terrifying blasts in even places you'd think would be safe. Knife attacks on subways. It was a relief to be somewhere like where she was then. Military men, and sometimes women, stationed at subways and street corners and outside of train stations to guide your way. The soft patter of rain, now that the monsoon season was warming up. She was not in the same world, but it didn't matter. No one knew who she was before and she'd gotten the job on her own without the help of her husband or sons or even her little white dog, who she missed terribly.

She'd taken the train to a part of the city with twenty temples. Arched wooden temples with deities who might be sympathetic to her. It was kind of Zen to walk slowly around the village on her own through the vast cemeteries and narrow streets that were spared war and fire and bombing. The hydrangea were in bloom. Delicate lace bright blue like the sky. She met a girl with





Karen Love Cooler  
2014



an owl. A pet owl, three months old. A baby, the girl told her. For a few yen, she could pet it. But it was enough to look at the owl as the bird swiveled her head back and forth. The soft whirl of spotted caramel feathers around her face. The owl's deep black eyes shining as she looked into them and the owl didn't flinch. The bird was perfectly calm. There was a world there that was very different from the one she'd fled. Serene, astonishing, filled with peace.

7.

She talked to a man at the faculty meeting who told her she should get a car, borrow someone's to go to the big international store at the edge of the city. She could get chairs there, you could get anything really. It was stupid to take a train or a bus there, it didn't make sense. After all what were cars for, if not to transport people to places where they could buy things, he laughed. He was thin and wore a white tunic. He had beads around his neck and his hair was as white as his clothes. Everything about him was impermanent, a little foggy. She could hardly hear him when he spoke. I used to teach physics, but now I teach music and yoga. Like the music of the spheres, she said, so that makes sense. He leaned in close to her, yes. The room was filled with men. There were hardly any women. She followed a man with an umbrella out of the building to an annex across the narrow street up the elevator. Are you one of the faculty she asked, or a parent and he said quickly, I'm the CFO. You're a bigwig, then, she said. When the door opened he vanished down a corridor and shut the door.

A woman in the business office opened a brown packet filled with the first edition of her pay and fanned the money out on the desk in front of her. The solemn faces of someone famous in this country glared at her from the surface of the gray desk. There were so many shades of gray in the city.

She was making a garden on her balcony. It was just big enough for several small pots and it looked out at the canals. Someone had planted a spring garden along the paved walkway that ran along the bank. She was on an island of concrete in the concrete city. One man at the meeting told her during the last earthquake everything swayed and then was still. He likes to wear women's clothes, another man told her.

8.

At one of the temples she visited she put coins at the foot of several minor gods who wore pink caps. They were standing guard along the fence to the temple near their leader, a much larger statue with a pink apron around his neck. There were crows the size of eagles carrying pieces of toast and little birds who flew through the towering trees faster than she could imagine. She missed her husband. He would have laughed at the pink hats. He was pretty irreverent about everything. A woman was pushing a cart filled with willow brooms and wooden buckets marked with black calligraphy. For holy water, she thought. Bouquets of fading flowers defaced the graves. Why didn't someone take them away once they started dying? Bundles of wires crisscrossed the sky above her head as she walked into a tiny alley where they were selling juice and puffy buns with cream. She hadn't been hungry in such a long time, but the buns were soft and warm in her mouth. It was a relief to be alone.

She didn't have to search for the words she wanted, she could let whatever came to the surface be what she wanted to say. Penguin. Pigeon. Parrot.

9.

Men with white gloves drove the cabs in the city. The seats covered with white lace. The white ghosts followed her when she went to the 100 yen store where the checkout person, a lively woman, told her there were so many foreigners in the neighborhood, or took the little bus to the hills north of where she was living. When she was watching her mother die all those months, her little white dog came with her. She waited for morsels of food her mother dropped on the rug or the crumbs from the tiny pieces of bread her mother ate. One day her dog noticed something on the ceiling. Her son thought it was angels. The angels come to lead her mother to heaven. She laughed, "Really" she said. "I didn't think you believed in any of that stuff."

"Really mom," he said, laughing, "look at the way Tinker's acting."

She was acting strange circling her mother's hospital bed, sniffing under the covers, whining at the ceiling. It was comforting in a way that angels were there to help her mother, when no one had been around when Gigi'd had her stroke. She was making lunch, something heated up in a pan. A strange thing to do, but there it was. Lunch was in her hand, she was walking across the kitchen, her beautiful white kitchen with jars arranged on the shelves, and the shining silver refrigerator, and then she fell. Lightning and then nothing. When she could see again she dragged herself across the kitchen floor to the hallway and then to the living room. Her phone was on a table in the immaculate room. It took her hours to reach her phone and when she got through to her husband all she could do was make a noise, a simple noise that she thought sounded like help me, but her husband said much later, months later, was more like a croak.

10.

It was hard to go a day even so far away from where most of her life had been without her mother appearing in some way before her eyes. She'd been persistently haunting her for her whole life. A woman who wanted perfection in everyone but herself. Gigi took the little bus to hills north of where her apartment was in the largest city in the world. The librarian at the university had told her about a museum with a small, perfect garden. She walked aimlessly in the direction of where she thought the museum was past women with their perfect faces, their gloved hands clutching bags from expensive stores. Each one accompanied by her mother. A woman who was an older version of themselves, but just as perfectly dressed in shades of cream, or gray or delicate floral.

On the bus, she'd met a woman who told her how to get to the museum. I'm going that way, I'll show you, she said. Her English was impeccable. They walked quickly along the wide boulevard. "And you live in the dormitory of the university?" the woman asked.

"No," Gigi laughed. "I live near the bay, in an apartment."

"How nice," she said. "But you're very brave to spend the summer in Tokyo."

"The heat?"

"Yes," she said. "The heat, the humidity. It's really quite terrible."

"What do you do?" She asked the woman, who was wearing navy. Her short stylish hair framing her face.

"I'm a guide," she said. And she laughed. "I'll leave you here, I'm going to the market. Have a wonderful summer. You should really stop at the market after the museum. It's my favorite museum."

She wondered if everything in her life was an echo of her mother and if, since her mother's death, everything was a shadow of that same echo. In the museum she spent an hour studying many hanging paper scrolls with squares of poetry framed by paper, adorned with gold flecks. Saturated with the color of the sky or the moon or the sun. In another room there were tea bowls with names, famous tea bowls celebrated for their misshapen beauty.

There was a Buddha in the garden sitting quietly when everyone else was circling the garden, taking pictures. The Buddha sat on the edge of the flowing stream, before it cascaded to the pond where two turtles overlapped on a rock. Stretching their green streaked necks out, sunning. It was much cooler in the garden, she wished she'd worn a sweater.

11.

She met her new boss again in the street when she was looking for lunch. He was pushing a bike. A young woman, very beautiful, was trailing behind.

"How are you?" She asked.

"Great. I'm going to work out and she's going home. You know they're here to review me. I thought I'd look for a putter. When those meetings are taking place on Friday, I'll be playing golf with Fred Olson. But I need a golden putter. When I played with Tony Mashimito he had the putter to end all putters and he beat me like that. He gave a ton of money to the school. I want to be ready this time. I've got to step up my game."

There were children all around them as the young woman smiled shyly. She was dressed in a silky flowered frock. He was in a polo shirt and shorts. His bike was black. His teeth seemed to be broken, or cut off at the ends. Such an unfortunate mouth. She couldn't imagine him kissing the young woman who walked behind as he pushed the bike. But you never knew about these things.

12.

She knew her mother's body too well after those months taking care of her. She would guide her into the shower, turn the water on and then hose her off with the handheld shower. Her mother's skin was still firm. The pounds she'd accumulated over all those years of life gleaming on her bones. After those months in the facility when she refused to eat, things changed.

She wakes to bright light, almost burning white here, very early in the morning. At the Cape when she was young, not so young, just after she graduated from college, the first time she had a hard time calling up words, she would visit her aunt and uncle and stay in a bedroom in the basement. Right on a marsh. It was the light then that called her to the ocean. A brilliant burning on the waves, the salt spray on her tongue in the morning. A kind

of crystalline definition of the birth of the day.

The city presses down around her after her days in the foreign country. The ambulances politely calling out to pedestrians to please move away from the vehicle, the women in the department store showing her all the attributes of the pillow she wants to buy anyway. They instruct her to try it out, her head on a piece of gauze covering the pillow, her feet placed on a sheet of plastic at the foot of the bed. When the transaction is finished the two women dressed smartly in tailored clothes, like a uniform, bow and thank her over and over again.

It's the time of the year when trains are delayed in the city. The electric screens in the subway announce passenger injury several times a day. Or antelope on the tracks. Gigi thinks it's a problem with translation. Could there really be antelope in this country? The term passenger injury means someone has jumped. It's just a euphemism for death, several people at the faculty meeting told her. It's a bad time of year for that. The raining season coming up, the brutality of the spring. Everything blossoming. New life. She'd read in the news that pigeons had been arrested for carrying little backpacks with pills sewn into the fabric. The backpacks were miniature and fashioned to look like their feathers. The pigeons didn't know they were drug mules. They just loved to fly.

13.

In a prefecture north of the city there were radioactive wild boars. Thousands of animals with blunt noses and fierce eyes. Hundreds of hunters had tracked them down and killed them but not enough to clear the cities. She was curious. Her days in the sparkling city were lining up into something she couldn't define. It was the first day of classes. Someone was pounding on the floor above her apartment, shaking the ceiling.

A friend had lost her husband once in in the aftermath of an earthquake. She was visiting a place where they were building a beautiful resort on the sea. Her two girls were with her. She and her husband had gone to take a look at the resort. The girl's godfather was part owner. The girls were up in the hills with a friend exploring. When the tsunami hit, their parents had to run for dry land and their father spotted the skeleton of a building. He led a group of people wearing only their bathing suits to the top floor. It was too much for him and he died there, already prone to a weak heart. Her friend had to cover him with someone's flowered wrap and leave him there while she searched for her daughters. She thought she'd lost her family to the water.

"I didn't know if they were alive," she told her. "Until I heard from a friend who I met days later that the girls were with another friend, safe and well in another part of the island. It changed everything for me. And then we all went back to the place where Andrew died and brought his body into town."

14.

One of her students, a solemn boy from India, told her he almost died climbing the sacred mountain. You were supposed to be able to see it from the city, a perfectly shaped cone with snow on the top. But she'd been lost in the concrete caverns for days now and couldn't understand how you could see the mountain from the city. It rose up, she knew, from the plains

below. A stark reminder of the majesty of geography.

Her student, Goreesh, was climbing the mountain with six friends. They were ill equipped and cold by the time they got to the shoulder of the mountain. There was a hut where they paid a huge amount to sleep on hard pillows and wrapped themselves in one thin blanket. He was not feeling well. Maybe it was the altitude, he thought, and his friends wanted to give up. But he went ahead in time to see the sunrise. He was so tired, he told her, that he slipped at the edge of a ravine and was almost never heard from again. And he was so young. His mother would have been bereft and his friends very unhappy, but he caught himself and they all went on to reach the top. It took them 18 hours to climb the mountain.

She was thinking perhaps she should tell the man she'd met at the faculty meeting that she would take him up on his offer to find a car. She wanted to go somewhere, anywhere out of the city. Was there something wrong with that? She was thinking she wanted to go to the prefecture with the wild boars. There were deer there and hawks and other animals gathered in a place with lots of grain and fruit trees and tender shoots to eat. A ripening away from human habitation. She thought it would be interesting to catch a glimpse of that. The authorities were trying to convince the people who'd fled to return to the place they'd left.

Her husband had been calling her, trying to convince her to come home. "You can use your health," he said, "as an excuse. Tell them you didn't realize how stressful the trip would be."

"But I'm fine," she said. "And I don't want to come home yet. This is important to me even if you think it's stupid."

"I'm not important to you?" he asked. It was his night and her morning. There was no way they could talk about this. It was yesterday there and today here. They were not even on the same globe, somehow. She heated up the water on the stove. Watered her collection of plants on the tiny balcony while it heated and looked down at the canal flowing in and out of the bay. The bay was once barricaded from foreign ships.

Her long rehabilitation had seemed like it would never end, but she was passionate about being able to talk again. And she did, but not in the way she thought she would.

15.

If there was a story to tell she couldn't remember it some days. And what of the man with the white hair and the white stones around his throat and the white clothes. What was his story, she wondered, as she walked past the temple and then up the hill that wound past the Friends School and the expensive looking houses and tiny gardens to the boulevard that led to her apartment. Everything was miniature in her place. The chairs, the lamps, the glasses, the forks. That's what her mother's life was like those last weeks, something that had spread out to several houses and states and countries and shrunk to one room. A bed, a chair, a TV she didn't watch anymore, a sink, a toilet, a brush.

Sometimes there was music that came out of thin air. Like the words she lost all those years ago. Or was it so long ago? There were children with pink hats holding their mother's hands as she came up to her building. A monk kneeling in the garden, touching the roses one by one. A man feeding two cats by the canal. Was everything a gesture of something else? Her mother's hand fading in her hand as she watched. Her eyes disappearing.

Everything sinking into the white sheet of the bed, until finally even her teeth seemed to have disappeared.

17.

What are you doing up? She texted back to her son.

Woke up. No reason, he texted back.

How are you?

Fine.

Just fine mom?

Great. Really great, she texted and added a heart.

Love you mom, he said, miss you.

Miss you sweetheart. Nite nite

Nite, mom.

It was her sons she thought of when she thought she was dying. She wanted to go back to the time just after the lightning. Just fall back into blackness, but the thought of her sons pulled her across the floor and into the bedroom where she'd left her phone. Just that thought. Her love for her sons. She didn't want to leave them just yet. And though she loved her husband dearly, it wasn't the thought of him alone that pulled her back to the living. Not that at all.

18.

He'd always wanted to go off to the wilderness. When he was in high school it was the west. He'd talked a friend into driving with him to Oregon. They took three days driving nonstop. And it was wild out there. Trees packed into the land along the ocean as thick as thieves. They camped near the beach even though it was illegal. What did they care. They'd grown up in a town not far away from a place with perpetual underground fires. The catacombs of coalmining. He studied physics because it was a language he could understand. It translated the wilderness into numbers. There was something comforting in that. Evidence that there was still mystery in the world. Why did he fall out of love with that language? He supposed the woman he met at the faculty meeting was right. It was just a continuation of his obsession with the music of the spheres that pushed him into yoga and dance. He fingered the beads around his neck. You're just an old hippie, that bastard Bryan, had said to him yesterday. He could hear the big headed jerk telling a student even though he had a letter that said he could miss as many classes as he wanted, it wouldn't stand up in his class. Anxiety was no excuse.

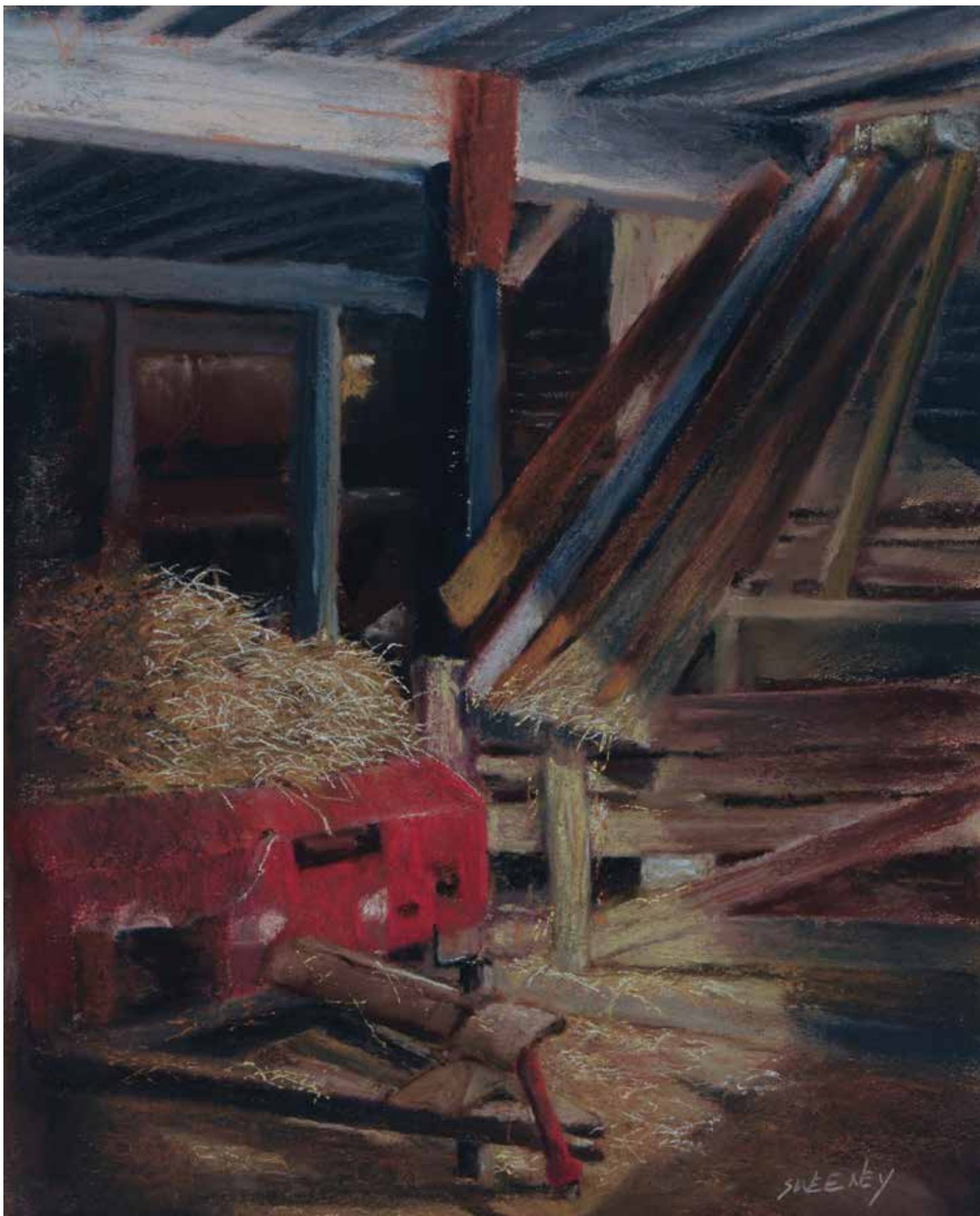
He'd been in this country now for how long, Bryan had asked him, and he still hadn't achieved enlightenment.

It was the path that mattered, Richard thought, the path was the only reason for anything, wasn't it? Right now he was hell bent on getting to see those radioactive boars and the wilderness grown up in the prefecture. He'd heard that Chernobyl was the same way. The animals taking over the landscape, even though the radiation was off the charts in their bodies. His tea was cool now and he placed the cup on the low table in his apartment. It was the beginning of summer. The morning light blazing at 5 on his face as he sat on the narrow balcony and looked down into the water of the canal.

19.

She woke every morning with all her molecules lit. That's





what it felt like. Her body more alive than it had felt in years. The whole city was on fire. Fire bombed, fire forged from disaster at one point or another. And then shaped again with concrete. When she walked along the canal she saw men sitting on benches before they went to their offices. Their eyes closed, leaning against the back of the bench or bent forward, the slim egret and brave heron slicing past them in the air. One man bent over his dark trousers fanning his legs with a paper fan spread wide, picking lint off the dark fabric, another fed two cats crouched by the edge of a building. On her way to the university she passed a shrine. She could hear the monk beating a drum with a stick, a ringing sound that filled her with peace.

It was such a long time before she could put a sentence together after lightning struck her that time. After her stroke. Her therapist had sheet after sheet of exercises for her to do. Filling in sentences like a fourth grader. Dredging up grammar from the depths of her brain. Sometimes it felt like there was nothing there anymore. No word for key, or apple, or car. The trick was to search for nearby words that might give someone else some idea of what she wanted to say. It was a game. A trick. A way to pretend she was normal.

She stopped teaching. It was difficult enough to remember the word for son or husband, let alone plinth or column. But here she was teaching the history of art to five students from all over the place really. In the city for one reason or another.

"It's such a short course," she said to her husband and sons. "I'll just be away for a couple of months."

"That's a joke, mom," her older son said. "You'll be most of the way around the world."

"You're so bored with us you want to get that far away?" Her husband asked and laughed. He was stirring sauce on the stove. Her older boy was setting the table. Jobs she once did without thinking.

When the occupational therapist had her make tomato sauce, she couldn't remember how to use a spoon and picked up the smallest knife to stir the pot. This interchange of one thing for another was maybe not so bad. What did it matter anyway? In this country you used chopsticks.

20.

She passed a green phone booth almost every day. You could make a call there to someone in this country or internationally. She couldn't remember the last time she's seen a call box in her country. Country of ignorant men, country of tyrants and cars. Country of hate, country of bores. She wanted to make a celestial call. Every day she thought about her mother. What a strange thing to do. Her mother had been a pain in the neck, really, but still she was her mother and she missed her like she'd miss a hand or a foot or an ear. In all the stories she'd read there was a way to get what you wanted. And even if you failed, the story was the challenge. She wasn't sure what she wanted anymore. For so long it was to talk again, to be part of the conversation.

Even if she opened the door to the phone box she wouldn't know her mother's number wherever she was. It was unlisted surely.

She passed a little girl with a pink hat as she walked away from the phone. She passed a man playing a song on a harmonica, something from a Broadway musical. She passed a little dog with

soft pointed ears and bent to pet her. She's six, her owner said. She was the first person Gigi had encountered on her walks who spoke English. She's so cute.

She could feel the dog's bones through her shining fur.

She passed a woman with orange shoes walking two dogs on two leashes who had bright orange booties. She passed the gray birds quarrelling in the trees along the canal and a woman picking berries from a bush.

If she picked up the phone and heard her mother's voice what would she say? There were so many things to tally up as mistakes or losses. But here she was in a country that had lost so much. Whole cities obliterated, wiped clean in the war.

21.

"I just like reading," her student said. "I don't watch TV. I'll be reading and the tea will boil or the dog will want to go out and I just can't put the book down. The phone will ring, I still have a landline, or the doorbell will chime and I just can't put the book down. The house will shake, or I'll have to go to the bathroom, and I just won't put the book down. Even when my father died, I couldn't put the book I was reading down. It was about a princess. She'd fled to the mountains with her brave samurai general and a loyal handmaid. Her father had raised her like a boy instead of a girl. She was real swashbuckler. Prancing around in the mountains, her gold hidden, her dynasty in ruins. The samurai had offered up his sister, disguised as the princess on a platter, to save the royal line. The revolutionaries thought they had killed the princess and let down their guard. This was in oh, I think, about 1600, so it was cold in the mountains and the princess was hidden in a cave. She wasn't content to stay there, though, and spent much of her time thwarting her own attackers, two peasants who had stumbled on two bars of gold in a stream. It all ended happily. That's what I'm most worried about. Will everyone make it alive out of the story and get back into their lives."

The student was from somewhere in England, somewhere in the north, Gigi thought. She was round like a ball and her head stood on top of her shoulders framed by blond hair. One of the other students, a boy, was her friend. He had tattoos down both of his arms, an insignia like an anchor on his neck. They needed the course to fulfill their art requirement, but they weren't really interested in the subject. Gigi tried to make it interesting by showing movies and slides in elaborately constructed powerpoints. Her husband had helped her put things together before she left. Just follow the word on the powerpoint and you'll be fine, he said. They don't know the difference between a portico and a plinth, so it won't matter if you mess up now and then.

She knew she didn't tell her husband enough how much she loved him. That was the problem, wasn't it? She was afraid he'd wake up some morning and realize he had poured so much wine into her chalice and all she did was drink and drink and never distribute the goods to the congregation. She didn't say thank you enough for the hours he spent drilling her on vocabulary or the walks up and down the corridor of the rehab place until she could walk straight and not list to the side. Until she could get up off the floor on her own and the director said she was certainly ready to home.







Her student pulled a flowered kerchief out of her bag and wiped her face. Her friend laughed. Just like the woman on the train, he said. Not quite, she said, and tucked the piece of cloth back into her cotton tote.

Gigi had watched a mother and daughter share a handkerchief on the train, too. It was something people seemed to do in this country. They had shared hand lotion and then used the cloth to wipe the excess off of their hands. It was such an intimate thing to do. She had never had that kind of relationship with her mother. Her mother was always the princess. Her sister the handmaiden. The night before she'd dreamed of her mother, young and beautiful on the arm of her father. They were going to a party. She smelled of the spicy perfume her mother always wore. Her lips were painted bright red. She wore slim shoes. Her father smelled of aftershave. They were all glitter. Her brother had a tantrum after they left, and she told the babysitter to just ignore him. He'd turn blue and then settle down. He wouldn't choke to death.

22.

She found, by chance, a small shrine tucked into the corner of a lane. It was a surprise that there were still these crooked lanes in a city that was so big you could drive for hours and still not escape it. She'd had a conversation about escape with Richard, her colleague who taught the music of the spheres. He really looked angelic, she thought. Spare, white, robed in the lightest of clothes. A kind of Zen impression of a catholic angel. He was one of the few people who seemed at all interested in her. Which was just as well. When she was anxious it was harder to call up the words she wanted. Her students were an incurious bunch of kids, so she hardly ever had to answer questions. She just walked herself through the information on the slides and pointed out the important details of whatever piece of art she was talking about and everything went smoothly.

The shrine was reinforced with concrete, covered with wood. Incense was burning. It was in the cool corner of a shady place. She'd read that the deities with the pink caps and pink bibs were in memory of lost children. This deity had a stained bib, the same kind she used on her two boys when they were babies. There were fresh flowers and sticks of incense in a little box. She slipped a coin into the slatted box at the foot of the shrine and picked up the slender stick of incense. She had lost a baby before her two boys were born, one and then the other not long after the first. It was a surprise to get pregnant so easily when she was not that young and then it was a loss so great she thought she wouldn't recover for an instant when she sat with her husband in the waiting room and the doctor told them that the baby was gone, the slip of child just disappeared on the ultrasound.

Richard had told her he wanted to drive north to see the wild boars in the prefecture that had the earthquake and tsunami a few years ago. It was sort of a wacky thing to want to do, he told her, but then he never had much of a liking for normality. Even growing up. That's probably why he ended up leaving the country even before things got so bad. He thought if he had stayed he would've ended up in jail, certainly, since that's where most of his relatives worked. The huge buildings that took up so much space near the town where he was born.

23.

He only wanted to write about himself, her student told her, how his brain was on fire. How he couldn't escape the thoughts in his brain, like someone hitting on the wall in his room and shaking it minute after minute. He wanted to clear out who he was and become someone else. He'd thought he would be a filmmaker, but that didn't look like a good idea. He just didn't get along in groups. He couldn't talk.

"But you're talking to me right now," she said.

"Yes, but it's just you and me."

He wanted to be screenwriter, he thought, then he could work alone. She didn't want to tell him at that point, the fluorescent bulbs in the classroom humming, shades tilted to let in the blazing light of noon, that everyone had to talk to someone unless you were a hermit and what chance was there of doing that in this place or this time?

She had gone to a poetry reading with her older son not long before she'd left the country and the poet told a story about his boyfriend who was living for a few weeks in a community of people who raised their own food, meditated on their lives, and went off into caves now and then to think. It was in the southern part of the country. A place where she was afraid once hiking in the woods and she had to avoid a man with gun who followed her for miles. Tracked her like a deer. The police called the poet, who wasn't as famous as he would become, and told him his boyfriend had committed suicide. It wasn't anything the poet expected his lover to do, so he called the coroner's office and had the report sent. Suspected suicide, but several irregularities, the report said. Someone at the sheriff's office said, No, it was definitely a suicide. The poet was even more suspicious and composed poem after poem about the tragedy. Years later filmmakers got interested in the case and read the coroner's report and then interviewed the coroner. The poet's boyfriend had been tied up, beaten, and then burned. It was certainly not a case of suicide.

Outside her window she could hear the blackbirds chattering on the trees below the balcony that lined the canal. They were squeaking and whistling, arguing over the berries that looked like mulberries. She had read the last empress of the country had raised silkworms and had her subjects spin silk. The empress also wrote 30,000 poems.

When she told her son, he said, "But mom, they were very small poems, weren't they? It's not like she was writing epics."

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Sharon White's book *Vanished Gardens: Finding Nature in Philadelphia* won the Association of Writers and Writing Programs award in creative nonfiction. *Boiling Lake*, a collection of short fiction, is her most recent work. She is also the author of two collections of poetry, *Eve & Her Apple* and *Bone House*. Her memoir, *Field Notes, A Geography of Mourning*, received the Julia Ward Howe Prize, Honorable Mention, from the Boston Authors Club. Some of her other awards include the Neil Shepard Prize from Green Mountains Review, Italo Calvino Prize in Fabulist Fiction, a Pennsylvania Council on the Arts Fellowship for Creative Nonfiction, the Leeway Foundation Award for Achievement, a Colorado Council on the Arts Fellowship, and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship. She teaches writing at Temple University in Philadelphia.

# Longing

Poem by Claire Scott

---

Years and years ago when I was six, and there were four of us kids always fighting, when my mother stayed in bed the entire year, bottles under blankets, orange vials on the floor, when us kids made bologna and mayonnaise sandwiches for supper, combed each other's gritty hair in the morning, pulling and tugging, untangling knots of nightmares, although we skipped hair ribbons and barrettes, forgot to brush our teeth and wore wrinkled dresses to school with our only-one-pair-each scuffed brown shoes, before my mother was taken away, sirens splitting the night, before my father stayed home and made sodden pancakes, when my best friend Emily brought her new red patent leather shoes to school, I stole them from her locker.



Claire Scott is an award winning poet who has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize. Her work has been accepted by the *Atlanta Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Enizagam* and *Healing Muse* among others. Claire is the author of *Waiting to be Called* and the co-author of *Unfolding in Light*.

# The Flemish Captain

Poem by Gwen Wille

---

So some of his friends made  
it out for his last, weathered

the late March rain, thin and soaking  
as wave crests on a prow. *Better*

*to have scattered him off*  
*of Newfoundland, says one. Another,*

*He hated Scottish pipes. But again,*  
it was the best his widow could do:

Cape May, near the lighthouse, near  
where the cold water smacks the sand

and froths mightily, exaggeratedly. And we  
two onlookers sit perched beneath

a frayed umbrella on the beach, still  
warm from breakfast and soon to set

out shelling, imagine him thus: bookish  
more than bawdy, but grown full of tales.

Even the conchs we find later, blue-bleached  
ocean bones strewn in halves and quarters,

know no better.



Gwen Wille lives and works in West Chester, PA. She studied writing at the University of New Mexico. Her work has appeared in *San Pedro River Review*, *Philadelphia Stories*, and *Crow Toes Quarterly*, among others. In her spare time, she enjoys spending time in the woods with her son, husband, and high-spirited spaniel.





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# The Tanner Scale is Always Wrong

Christina Milletti – Second Place Contest Winner

Not long before Olive called a meeting of the Insult Club for the first time on the shaded, snail-calloused back steps of PS 64, she discovered a small lump, a scaling horn-like barnacle, growing on the severe wing of her shoulder. Soon, a second crustaceous bud sprouted on her opposing limb, pushing its way through the sharpened ledge of what she quickly learned (scanning WebMD for her sudden, inexplicable symptoms) was the part of her shoulder called her “acromion.”

Some unexpected “acrimony” as her new wingman?

*Right on*, she thought. Olive wasn’t afraid.

Since the first day of 5<sup>th</sup> grade, she’d felt oppressed by a juddery, slow-churned irritation that vibrated out from her knees and surged up her coxis, where the tremor violated out through her spine and into her back as a reckless, crippling knot. Of late, she found it awfully hard to sit still in the warped homeroom chairs listening to Miss Blatter’s lessons about gout-faced men and their centuried accomplishments. She appreciated the men’s importance: their jelly lips and snorkeled groins were once the anatomy for change in science and culture. But where were the girls, their mothers, in the stories of men? What did they do when their dads sailed off? Or wandered away into their cavernous dens?

Stories happened in spite of daughters. In spite of moms, she realized.

Spite, it seemed, was her foremost school lesson.

Suddenly, Olive’s back felt better.

She relaxed as the chips on her shoulders formed.

## A BEGINNER’S GUIDE TO GIRLS

### **Mary Shelley:**

Mary chose a poet for partner at 17 and, still a teen, wrote *Frankenstein* two years later. Publishers assumed her husband wrote the ground-breaking novel, because, like so many, they failed to understand girls know monsters best, especially monsters who at first don’t look like monsters at all. *Frankenstein*—a novel about a man out of control, and the monster who put him in his place—was finally published under her own name. 13 years later.

### **Claudette Colvin:**

16 year old Claudette defied the nation and the state by keeping her seat on the bus, and initiating the landmark civil rights case: Browder vs Gale. Described as “emotional,” “mouthy,” and “feisty”—who wouldn’t be? she was pissed off!—she was passed over so that Rosa Parks could play her part 9 months later. But it was Claudette’s case in court that finally ended bus segregation.

### **Atalanta:**

Abandoned by her father as a babe in the mountains because she was not a son, Atalanta was left for dead and raised by bears. Later, hunters found her, took her in, trained her. Soon, she sailed with the Argonauts and helped kill the Caledonian Boar. Girls always have to prove their mettle is twice (3 times? 4 times?) as strong as their brothers. Even our myths tell us so.

When Olive was six, the racist neighbor next door tripped on the sidewalk while shouting at an earbudded teen riding by on a bike. The neighbor fell hard, hit his head on the splintering concrete and was left, long after his pooled blood dried into the broken path, with a raw scar shaped like an N over his left eyebrow. Her mother called it his “scarlet letter.” Taught her about “Hawthorne,” “racism,” and “irony” in one informative rant. Then advised Olive “to just avoid the jerkwad’s yard.”

Long before comprehension lessons at school, Olive learned that people are stupid and sometimes the world shows them how much.

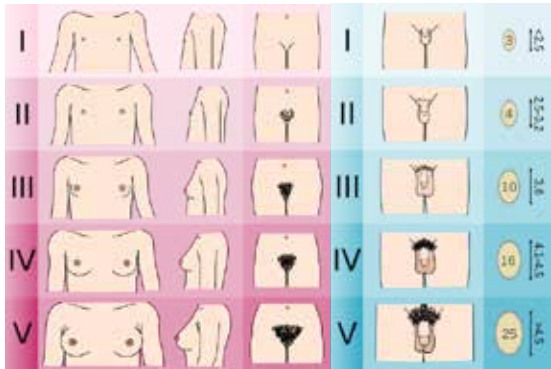
Olive wasn’t afraid of the growths on her shoulders the way adults feared crepuscular skin tags or unruly moles. Still awash in the early years of post-amniotic wonder, she tended the lumps like snails in her garden, wondering how they might inflict themselves on her flora next. Would the nubs rupture or leak like a soft-boiled egg? Peel back from her secret scabrous fruit? Would they sprout, become thistle or thorned? What kind of creature was she becoming? Would she soon be taloned? Take flight?

Naturally, Olive preferred nubs on the shoulders to bumps on her chest. The school nurse, her friend Georgia’s teen sister, not to mention the terrifyingly, cheerful Girl Scout leader who called even the troop’s cookie thieves “Dears,” had presented





a forest of pamphlets with aggressive Tanner Scale sketches illustrating the maturing female form—the section on “breast buds” highlighted with care—before saying with reassuring dread: *Soon, you’ll be a woman. Isn’t that exciting?*



At the next recess meeting on the shaded school stoop, Olive pulled her shirt to the side, showed the huddled girls the prongs on her shoulders, let them palm the scabby nubs with their humid, pre-pubescent fingers.

They were a sign, she told them. Maybe an omen.

An insignia, she thought, of leadership.

She kept the last one to herself.

“My acromions are acrimonious,” she said, whittling the sharpening point of each nub, then going on to teach her friends the names on each part of the shoulder: the rounded bursa, the humeral head, the socketed glenoid and labrum, the scapula behind, the clavicle above. The girls nodded, then rubbed each part of their own shoulders in turn, wondering, as they looked out with terror at the jungling antics on the woodchipped playground plot if they were due their own armor soon.

Olive studied the schoolyard, the raging monkey bar play.

“Jackal,” she said, frowning at a flank-steak of a boy kicking woodchips at a scrum of K-kids barnacle-stalked on a bench.

“Boars,” Molly corrected. She was looking at the teachers ignoring the brawl behind them.

“Parasites.”

Imogen growled the word, a stone skipping air, as she carved the pitted step with a stick.

Olive nodded approval. Her shoulders were on fire.

“Yes.”

From that day forward, the Insult Club sat together on the stoop at recess, a chorus of wide-eyed girls of varied backgrounds hunched on the shaded, ant-smearred steps. The snails crawled up their arms as they named what they saw. No one asked them to join the play in the sunlight.

No one noticed the girls at all.

## A BEGINNER’S GUIDE TO GIRLS

### **Margaret Knight:**

At age 12, after watching another child get impaled at a mill, Margaret designed a safer loom, which the mill owners put into use at once. She was never given credit. But she went on to design many other inventions: most notably, the flat-bottomed paper bag. You know the one. *Plastic or paper?* Stacks of them. Still. At your grocer.

### **Malala Yousafzai:**

In 2012 a Pakistani teen had to remind the world that girls are worth more than your ass. She fought for the education of girls. Then she was shot in the head for her trouble. She survived. And after recovering, continued her efforts. Malala is the youngest ever Nobel Prize laureate for her courage and her ongoing advocacy for the rights of children.

### **Nancy Drew:**

16 year old fictional sleuth who used her brains and charisma to solve local cases. Why can we believe stories about smart girls. But not real ones?

Olive couldn’t recall later, during her deposition, who named the group the Insult Club. Whether the girls came up with the name themselves. Or if a passing kid carelessly lobbed the double slur their way—an insult about insulting that neither undermined nor amplified offense—that the girls adopted at once, the way pilot fish adopt a shark. They didn’t think of their work as insulting though. They’d been taught by their mothers to be “tactful.” By their fathers, to be “polite.” By their teachers to be “correct.”

They’d also been taught not to lie.

The Insult Club had only one expansive rule: Be precise. Give what you see the tag it has earned. The name he/she/it deserves.

When one of the girls hit a name on the head, Olive first awarded the winner an M&M from her pocket, then bent to twist the sweet-eater’s arm—just once, hard—giving her a quick reddening burn that heated the skin to remind them all, she said, that telling the truth was a pleasure that almost always also gives pain.

It was something her father told her, she said, before he left when she was four. She hadn’t seen him since.

“What do you call him now?” Molly asked.

Olive shrugged.

“You have to know a thing,” Olive reminded her, “before you can name it.”

## **Favorite insults from Olive’s pocket journal (later called “Exhibit A”).**

### *Skinflint*

7<sup>th</sup> grader, Max Meyerson.

Weapon: pencil. Specialty: poking girls’ bums in the cafeteria crush. After being poked in the hallway, Imogen slammed a locker shut on Max’s left hand. The resulting scar on M.’s index finger looked like an arrow pointing back at his own black heart.

### *Mashup*

The playground gazebo where the 8th graders liked to sit out of sight tucking hands into pockets not their own. The Insult Club vowed never to go there. And they never did.

### *Cervitude:*

The adult practice of claiming as true what is untrue.

Then demanding others agree.

The Insult Club wasn’t a club in any real sense of the world.

Outcasts, the girls were driven to the back step at recess, the way pebbles are pushed to the shallows by the currenting force of a stream. They were too slow, too fast, too dreamy, too generous. The Insult Club girls were simply too much, couldn't keep their ideas in check, or keep up with the untethered come-ons and come-backs that volleyed the field. They found their way to the shade to hide or cool off. Cautious, they stayed in the shadows to survey the terrain more clearly.

When Ava found her way, sweaty and dew-eyed, to the step one afternoon, Olive placed a snail on her arm. They watched together as it started sucking its way towards her elbow.

"Did you ever tell Ree to just bug off?" she said.

Ava looked at her blankly.

"Ree won't wear glasses—she can't see—it's why she stares like that. Acts mean."

Ava wiped her cheek with the back of her hand. It was oddly soothing to watch the snail move with steady fearlessness up her arm.

Olive shrugged. "Next time she calls you fat, tell her not to worry: she'll look great in glasses."

"She'll punch me." Ava peeled back the flesh on one finger.

Imogen snorted. "That would suck. But then *she'd* get in trouble."

As the girls around her began to laugh, Ava couldn't stop herself from letting a swampy hiccup of air escape. It was fetid, held in for too long. Not quite a laugh. But close.

Olive smiled. Rubbed her tingling shoulders.

Without looking, she could feel each prong growing.

Naturally, Olive's transformation didn't take place over night. In spring, flowers often seem to bloom with sudden fierceness. But if you're patient, look closely, the buds first burp out gently, furry pimples testing the air, before swelling resolutely until their skins peel back to reveal caped redolent mouths breathing open, exposing tongues, tonsils, suckling throats. The fiery, perfumed breath.

As Olive walked down the halls of PS 64, she could feel herself blooming. Her whole body trembled, not in fear. Or anticipation. She was electrified, the hairs on her arms standing on end. When she passed gaggles of students huddled at lockers, they'd tentatively sniff the air, the way a rabbit twitches at the smell of a fox. But Olive smelled of mulch and moss, the mild putrid scent of insects that live beneath rocks. The kids stepped back, uncertain, looking around for a wet cat, or a snake in the rafters. They ignored Olive in the camouflage of her neatly pressed cotton skirt, her pink knee socks. The delicate fingers always pushing one loose tress behind her ear.

They didn't know that under her shirt, her skin had grown goosed and cobbled. And that under her skin, her spine was plating. Her feet were heavy, the toenails sharp. The heat radiating through her pores wasn't a fever, but their entire world about to implode.

What set Olive off?

What sets off a flower? Was it the girls in the hall laughing into their scalloped paws? The boys who lurked, eavesdropped? The teachers who smiled in class and smoked in the break room? Her mother who loved her, but could not change the world?

It was purely coincidental that her final change came during a test, a math test she was prepared to take of course—Olive was a good student—and which, she was certain, was going well. Until

the final question.

*How many steps?*

She paused, looked around. The other kids didn't seem to be miffed by the question. She reread the sheet, looked for the information she must have missed. Flipped the test over. Scanned, reread, reconsidered. Nothing.

Rising, she walked quietly up to Miss Blatter at the front of the room.

"This question," she whispered, "is impossible," she said.

Miss Blatter smiled, patted her hand.

"You'll figure it out," she assured Olive. She gestured toward Olive's desk. "Now go finish."

Olive half-turned to go, then paused. Tried again.

"Really," she said. "I've looked it over."

This time Miss Blatter frowned. "Olive," she said quietly. "Go sit down and finish. Everything you need is there."

So Olive sat down and stared at the test.

*How many steps?*

Beyond the window, she could see the stoop where the Insult Club gathered. Five steps, she decided. Unless she counted the foot of the staircase, the floor as it were. Which made six. But what of the top step, that final plateau before you reentered the school? Was that a step? Or a launch pad? Was a step only the horizontal plank on which a foot was placed? Or was it the entire architecture of the stairway's construction? The vertical riser that supported the tread, which in turn supported another riser and the next tread above? If one considered that all "steps" supported "each step" could a "single" step ever exist?

Olive sat back and closed her eyes. Around her, she could hear the scratching of pencils working out problems, chairs squeaking as children squirmed in place. Labored breaths. Teeth grinding lead pencils. She could hear hearts beating. Sweat rising, condensing, between every moist thigh. The coppered smelt of fear. Lactic boredom. The enzymatic satisfaction of an answer solved before the next problem's sinews were broached.

*How many steps?*

*How many answers?*

When had she begun to (fail to) answer the question, she wondered? The evening she studied? The day she'd listened to the lesson in class? Her first day of fifth grade? Her first day—ever—of school? Were answers always historic, a runway off which, one day, a girl might take flight? Or did they arrive in the future, always after they were needed?

Olive wrote down an answer. Knowing it was wrong. Yet because wrong, right.

Her shoulders tingled.

And the world around her was fire.

## A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO GIRLS

### **Sybil Ludington:**

At the age of 16, she rode faster and twice as far as Paul Revere to warn her neighbors that the British were coming. Did you learn about her in school?

### **Mo'ne Davis:**

At 13, she was the first girl to pitch a shut out in Little League Baseball World Series history. Watch out: she throws like a girl.

**Elizabeth Gurley Flynn:**

A labor leader, feminist, and activist, the “East Side Joan of Arc” gave her first speech at the age of 16 and began a career as an agitator for women’s and worker’s rights. She never stopped.

**Ruby Bridges:**

Just 6 years old, she didn’t run, didn’t cry, when she was led through a roiling mass of bigots into William Frantz Elementary.

In the initial immolation, the heat of Olive’s new body radiated out and melted every test, all the desks beneath them, the linoleum tile (even the asbestos tile the new flooring concealed), the laminated artwork collaged on the walls, all the cubbies and lockers and abandoned, half-eaten snacks. Every transcript. Every log. Every rule book.

The blast was swift, yet like Olive, selective. Why wouldn’t it be? She melted plastic, metal, and cloth. But skin and bone? The children and teachers? Naked, missing some hair, they survived. Every one of them. Though, Olive wasn’t above spite: Miss Blatter and Max Meyerson turned up more charred than the rest. The teacher’s tight bun was transformed into ash. And Max Meyerson? His bum, scorched a blistering red, was suspiciously (auspiciously?) marked by arrow shaped streaks that pointed right at his own puckered ass. He couldn’t sit down for a week.

The children and teachers sprawled on the floors where they’d once been sitting, in classrooms that no longer existed. When the temperature died back, they opened their eyes, blinked at each other in the raining light, while Olive, above them, tested her new wings in the air, pulsing hot gusts with each stroke on their sooty, exposed backs.

Like every monster who realizes she’s not a monster at all, but an evolved artifact of the human condition, as Olive flew above them, she was laughing.

Soon, Olive saw the concrete stoop had survived and flew over to find her friends gathered and waiting for her. They no longer sat in the shade. Because the school had been razed, the sunlight bled over their shoulders, and the snails had taken refuge where the steps caved in a new protective lair.

How many steps when steps lead nowhere?

Imogen reached over and touched Olive’s shoulder where her new wing had sprouted a webbed antler surging from its pinnacle.

“Finally,” she said, feeling its warmth radiate from the wing into her hand.

Ava’s legs were crossed. One arm was wrapped over her chest, the other shielding her eyes as she gazed out at the flattened grid of the school, at the drive leading up to a sidewalk that now only framed rubble. But there was a smile hidden behind her ash-covered face.

“Now what?” she asked.

Olive shrugged.

The once subtle preteen movement was cataclysmic: her entire wingspan convulsed.

Imogen rubbed ash from her side, just under her waist. “Look,” she said.

Olive smiled and touched the nub now growing from her friend’s hip.

Of course the town was in uproar. “Readiness and Response Plan #1” was invoked. The School Board Crisis Management Team huddled around hastily assembled cafeteria tables watching Power Point presentations about “insurance mandates,” “city infrastructure grids,” and the influence of the “changing environment on adolescent female biology.” Distraught parents herded truculent children indoors. On the TV, the public panicked and growled. Fundamentalists preached. Environmentalists lectured. Zoologists gave interviews. The news bloomed and germinated its rhizomatic cycle.

The situation could have been worse. But no kids, or teachers, had perished. Not even one homeroom pet. As the school’s legal team explained to the school board, the PTA, and the police, Olive couldn’t be held responsible: there was no case law, or by-laws, for girls becoming dragons. And while her role in the school’s destruction was “leading” even “coincidental,” her transformation at the end of the day, was simply circumstantial: all the security cameras and smart phones that might have proven otherwise had melted in the blast.

Fortunately, like most cities, there were too many shuttered schools on the tax roll. Soon, one was selected. A Blight Team was sent in to prepare the way and, three weeks later, the mayor was photographed cutting tape at the (Re)Opening Ceremony of PS 42 while students walked through its newly painted doors behind him. In no time at all, the public grew bored of cataloging “Olive sightings” when she flew overhead. The mayor, meanwhile, discovered that his city was lined up for what the local news called, “an insurance settlement of exceptional size,” and, in result, the tax roll debt was reduced, rearranged, forgiven. Not only was the city’s credit rating expected to surge in the next quarter, the comptroller noted, but according to both local and national newspapers, the mayor had also handled the PS64 Blast with such “steadfast reassurance” that they’d moved onto to the next question: *Would he soon run for Congress?*

While Olive tested thermal gusts above, it was the question being asked below.

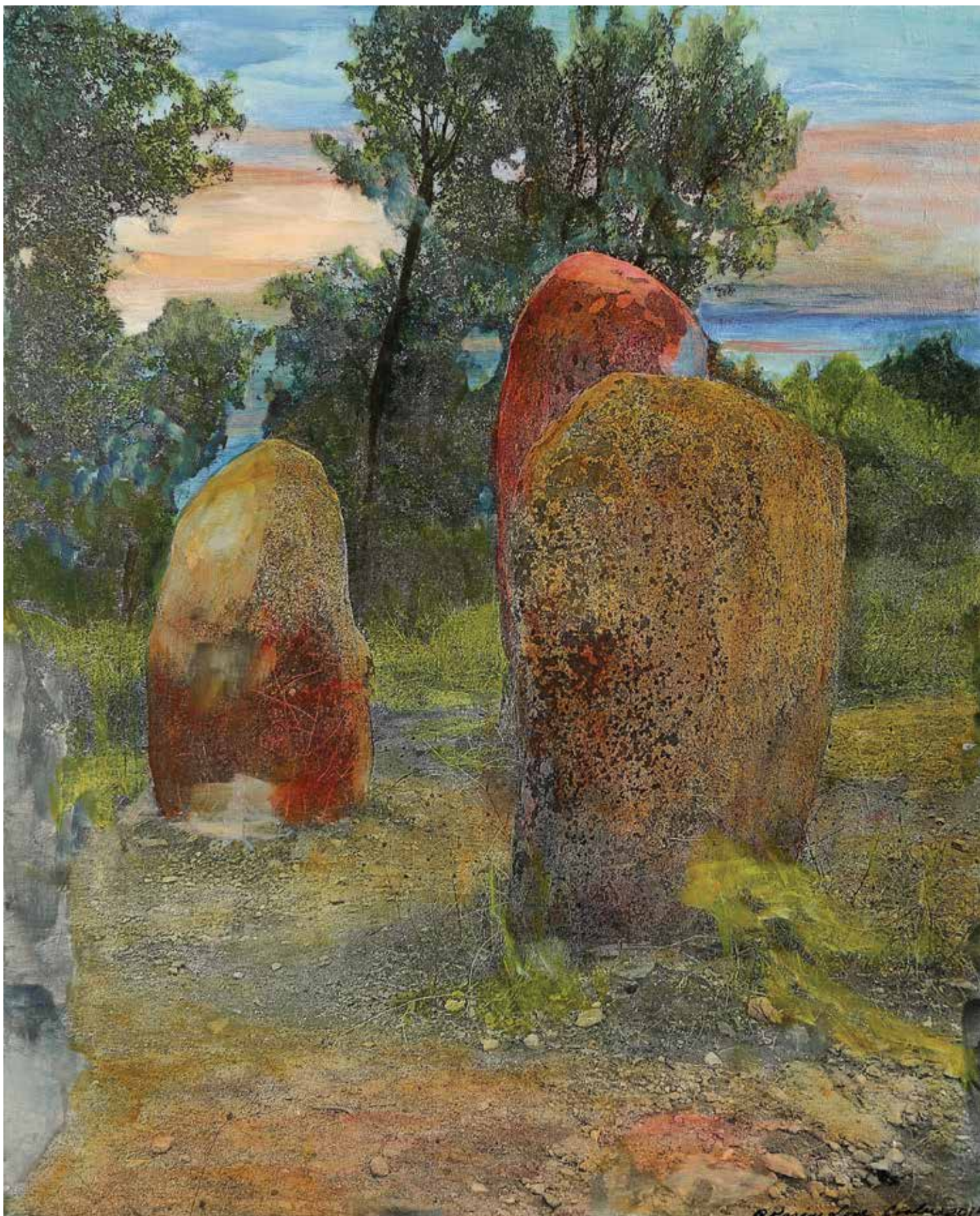
Olive, of course, was still in the thick of it. In the absence of video evidence, there were depositions about her anatomy, her state of mind, her friends, the Insult Club in particular. Family genetics.

Lawyers were called. Biologists consulted. Documents notarized, distributed, filed. Meanwhile, a daily witnessing took place at her doorstep. Mormons baptized her in absentia. Catholics performed an exorcism from the curb. The Universalists sent an invitation to tea.

Olive took it all in stride; after all, she could fly away—above, out—whenever she wanted. She wasn’t trapped. For the first time, she was stratospheric. Free. They could all go to hell. She was already in the wind.

Sure, news outlets speculated that the city would soon be overrun with winged girls melting local Elks lodges and football fields, Weight Watchers franchises and Botox dens. Or that—singular in her transformation—Olive would sign a 7-figure book deal, and launch a life of celebrity in either New York or L.A. Had Olive been a different sort of girl, she might have considered such options. (Her mother, reading the “news,” reflected with







curtained enthusiasm that the, “7-figure book deal sounded nice.”)

As for Olive? It wasn’t that she lacked ambition. Or that she wasn’t generally pissed off at stupid tests, bullies, lunchbox size packets of 100-calorie foods, thongs, “lady” anything, or the term “tomboy.”

But for Olive, her wings weren’t new or different. They were just part of the girl she always knew she was. Her mother made her dinner and folded her (altered) clothes each night. There were still friends and cotton candy. And even if sleepovers were cancelled for the foreseeable future—and she now spent her time rejecting research proposals en masse—she was still a girl. Would always be.

Olive could have done anything.

But she chose to return to the halls of PS 42 with her friends for the first day of 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

PS 42 had to take her. It was a public school after all. And maybe, she admitted quietly to herself, she wanted to make them abide her presence now, much as she’d often endured theirs. It’s important to look past your own windowed reflection once in a while, and see who, beyond the glass, is staring back.

At the new school, the Insult Club continued to meet. At recess, they now sat out in the open—Olive’s new size required more space—and spreading her wings around her friends, she shielded them from the glare of the sun and the other kids’ curious eyes.

“Clankermass,” Imogen warned.

Frankie J. was sidling up to spy on them, but the rattling key chain hooked into his belt loop always gave him away.

“Skern him,” Ava whispered.

Olive turned her head and withered him with a look of exhausted distaste.

Reprimanded, he veered off at once toward the trees.

Olive smiled as the girls leaned against her.

The pilot light of her belly now kept them all warm.

### List of Favorite Insults (continued).

#### **Kiddens:**

The Kindergartners who, in the Library or Cafeteria, accidentally glued their bums to chairs or snacked on paper and paste while their teacher’s backs were turned.

#### **Dilettauntes:**

Other kids who tried to insult the Insult Club. But sucked at it.

Then, one day, unexpectedly, Olive’s dad came back.

She didn’t see him until she landed in the back yard, shaking small clouds of smog from her wings, before folding them delicately behind her. She walked to the house, lost in thought about her new perspective—how, from above, her neighborhood at first looked like an elegant puzzle, its form and content shifting from artistic abstraction, to unkempt, distraught rooftops, to (as she descended fast, testing her speed) a charismatically landscaped nostalgia when her feet took on earth again and she remembered the landlocked girl she’d once been—and there he

was, rising from a chair in the shadows on the porch.

“Daddy?” she said. She’d seen his image in photographs for so long that his animated face, conflicted by time, was alarming.

In his hand, he held a cupcake. It had wilted in the heat while he waited, the once mountainous cap of icing now sliding a slow tsunami toward the edge.

“I had to see you,” he said. In his hand, he held a newspaper, a picture of Olive in flight on the front page.

In the driveway, her mother pulled up in her car and stepped out. She stood by the driver’s side door, stunned, looking at the two of them on the porch.

“You’ve gotten so big,” he said. He was sizing her up, not just her height, she realized, but her wingspan as well. She wasn’t the girl he remembered.

“How does it feel?” he said.

There were so many things he could mean.

“Your wings,” he clarified. “How do they feel?”

She looked at him looking at her body.

“May I touch them?” he asked.

She didn’t answer and he circled around, until he stood behind her. She could feel the inept heat of him, his heart rattling against its plasticized cage. She didn’t stop him from studying the sturdy webbing of skin, so much like the leather that still tipped her elbows, which had now grown between the enhanced architecture of her shoulder blades. When he reached out his hand, however, the wings shuddered involuntarily, collapsed in sudden recoil against her spine. He blinked. Stuffed the hand in his pocket.

Behind her, the gate creaked open, then shut. There was the rustle of gravel and leaves. Her mother’s feet on their clovered plot of lawn.

“Mom says I have her eyes,” Olive said as he shuffled his feet.

She rustled her wings at him. “Did I get these from you?”

He refocused on her. Took his time answering.

“In my family,” he said, “there are stories of girls who left suddenly. For no reason.” He blinked. “My grandmother would say ‘they just flew off.’ She’d say it the way you might say ‘took off.’ *Those girls just flew off.*” His voice trailed. “I didn’t understand.”

Her mother was at her side now.

“Dad says I get my wings from him,” Olive said.

Her mother snorted. “He would.”

Olive could feel her mother folding anger like a fan inside her heart, trying to quell the fury it contained: wings of a different order just under the surface. One day, they might sprout too, Olive thought.

She hadn’t seen it until now. How much she took after her mother.

“I imagine many women in his family would like to take off,” she said.

Her mother looked at her. “Those wings are yours. You earned them.”

She stroked Olive’s shoulder.

“Remember.”

The next day, PS 42’s new Development Officer invited Olive into his office on her way to recess: he’d love it, he said as she stepped through the door, if Olive would give a speech at

Commencement about the significance of the school's new logo. He stood carefully back from her, a good three steps maintained with care, as he explained he'd designed the logo himself.

"Take credit where credit is due," he said, showing it to her. The image was of a child with wings, looking off the edge of the paper into the horizon of her burgeoning future.

Olive paused. She was supposed to be pleased, she thought. Supposed to be proud. She stepped closer to look at the sheet, noting his proportional shift away toward the wall.

It was one thing, she thought, to be baptized against her will by the Mormons camped nearby. To rebuff researchers. Even the stares of neighbors who knew her. It was another thing to be diminished. Transformed into a mascot.

There is a gesture adults forget how to synchronize in their rubbery, superseded bodies. A subtle twitch of the shoulder, a dismissive flick and recoil from the chin up to the brow. The movement's horizon is infinite. It asks for no response.

What the Development Officer saw was a shrug.

"You're missing an opportunity," he said. His voice frowned. He'd started to sweat. He smelled like a spent penny dug up from the dirt. She guessed he'd already sent the logo to the printer.

"It's time for me to go," she said, looking out the window at her friends waiting for her on the playground.

He turned toward the clock, the minute hand nearing the end of the period.

He thought he understood.

"I didn't mean to keep you," he said. Then: "We'll talk more later."

She smiled, and headed off down the hall. Soon, she joined her friends in the grass.

They sat quietly for some time. Like all creatures that travel in packs, the girls often simply sat together to share each other's warmth.

Ava sighed and touched Olive's arm.

"You're going aren't you?"

Nodding, Olive stroked Ava's shoulder. Touched Imogen's hip. And they, in turn, creviced into her body like the flowering leaves around a tender choke. Dragons are not only made of fire.

"There are others," she assured them, stepping back. "You know it."

Then, without fanfare, Olive flew off.

The Insult Club watched her go. For now, it was enough to know she was out there, a growing collective of girls whisking the moonlight. Beating every horizon back.

In no time at all, Olive was clear sky where a winged girl had once been, and the Insult Club turned to go inside. Frankie J. stood at the edge of the playground watching Olive launch her stratospheric flight path, his mouth slack in the soft meal of his face. If pudding could feel awe, Frankie J. was a gelled dessert held together by a set of frayed laces, his cinched nylon belt, and a cap.

Imogen walked over, touched her toes to his, let him feel the heat of her. He couldn't stand it for long, and when he fled back to the school, he was red from the base of his collar to the backs of his ears, as much from her ovening swelter, as from the blush that had crept up the mostly unseen length of him.

Imogen knew that, sometime soon, she would consume him. She wasn't sure precisely why. Or in what fashion. Just that she smelled a sweetness in him, like a yolk inside a translucent egg.

Or the custard inside a mild, inoffensive pastry.

One day, she knew she'd eat him up.

Dragons have the gift of foresight.

All girls do.

Christina's fiction and articles have appeared in many journals and anthologies, such as Harcourt's Best New American Voices, The Master's Review Anthology: Best Emerging Writers, Denver Quarterly, The Cincinnati Review and Alaska Quarterly (among other places). Her collection of short stories, *The Religious & Other Fictions*, was published by Carnegie Mellon University Press. She recently finished a novel called *Choke Box: a Fem-Noir* (now out for review with publishers), a short selection of which was published in story form in Akashic Books' *Buffalo Noir* and recollected in *Year's Best Mystery Stories 2016* (alongside the work of Joyce Carol Oates and Mary Higgins Clark). "The Tanner Scale" appears in a new collection, *Girling Seasons*, which she is now finishing with the help of a fellowship from UB's Humanities Institute and a residency at the Marble House Project. At the University at Buffalo, Christina curates the Exhibit X Fiction Series and helped to found UB's new MA in English/Innovative Writing program. She still thinks of Philly as home.

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# Harmonica Rescue

Poem by Joe Samuel Starnes

---

If you find yourself at the bar alone  
Sitting late for a quick beer  
Before catching the train home  
Surrounded by transparent young people,  
Good-looking, but simple,  
Half staring at their phones,  
Half talking to each other,  
Ignoring the aged drinkers, most stoned,  
All unaware the digital impostor of a jukebox  
Is silent, the TV turned down,  
The incessant babble of the infantile  
Like a rainstorm, the room's only sound,  
Play the Stones' "Midnight Rambler,"  
Live version. One dollar never goes farther.



Joe Samuel Starnes is a native southerner who has lived in the Philadelphia area for eleven years—five in Fishtown and the last six in Haddon Township, New Jersey. His novels are *Red Dirt* (2015); *Fall Line* (2011); and *Calling* (2005). He also has published poetry, short stories, essays, and journalism in publications as varied as the *New York Times* and the blogazine *Fried Chicken and Coffee*. His website is [www.joesamuelstarnes.com](http://www.joesamuelstarnes.com)



# Sanctuary

Patrick McNeil

Frank Ewing only ever lets me into his place because he has to. It's right there in the lease.

"I ain't ever signed off on that," he tells me through the crack of his door the first time I knock. "You show me where it say that."

I pass a copy across the threshold and point to where the Housing Authority mandates monthly visits from me, his new case manager.

He looks at the paper for a long time. In a few months, he'll start to let me help him with his mail, and I'll come to understand he can't read.

"Boy they kill you with the small print," is all he says about the lease.

He never learned how.

He is seventy five and has a long enough history of homelessness that the city pays me to provide whatever support he needs to stay housed, now that he's finally housed.

"It's not like an inspection or anything," I add. "I'm not here to get you in trouble."

He opens the door and lets me in. The place is always the same: clean enough, with some cowboy show on the TV, mattress on the floor, unopened condoms on the windowsill, and nothing in the fridge.

"Want some help with food?" I ask. "There are some places I know about that could help you out a little."

"Don't need no help. See you next month. Seventeenth, right?"

On the seventeenth, I bring back a loaf of bread. One of the pieces of mail I help Frank review is from the Housing Authority, threatening eviction. He hasn't paid his rent once in the six months he's lived there. I ask why not.

"How much I owe?" he says. "I'll pay them next month."

He doesn't. I explain the situation to my supervisor, and at first, she assumes Frank's using, but then when I mention the condoms, the pieces fall into place for her.

"So, he's tricking, too."

Next time I see Frank the lights don't work. He lets me call PECO to work out a payment plan, but the thing about it is he has to actually pay. Both the rent and electric payments are so small it's like they're symbolic. It's like:

*You want this place? Give up something for it. We know your pension is modest, we understand things are hard. We're not asking for much, just give us something.*

He doesn't give them anything. Maybe it's symbolic for him, too.

On the day I visit Frank to tell him he's being evicted, I meet the woman he's been spending all his money on. She's leaving just as I get there, and in lots of ways, she's not what I expected: she's older, in her sixties maybe, and beautiful in the way that mothers and grandmothers are, wholesome. Her hair's done up, she's wearing scrubs, she's off to work, she tells me. We talk for a minute, and she calls me baby in that way that older women sometimes do that I love. Her name is Prudie.

"So that's her," I say to Frank once she's gone. I've been coming to see him for almost a year at this point, so I should know better. It's the wrong thing to say. He darkens, says it's none of my damn business, and points to the door. I show him the notice to vacate.



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At eviction court, the lawyers compel Frank to either submit to a representative payee—someone to handle his finances, pay his rent, budget his spending—or vacate the unit in thirty days.

"Please," the lawyers appeal to me in private. "Try and talk some sense into him. You know how many people would kill to have what he's about to throw away?"

I do. I get it, but for the whole meeting, all I can think about is Prudie in her powder pink scrubs, and I don't try and convince him one way or the other.

After he's evicted, I go and see him in the shelter, see what he's paid back this month. When the balance is zero, he will be awarded a new Section 8 voucher, judge's ruling. He hasn't paid a cent, and the staff at the shelter are frustrated with him.

"Every month it's the same thing. He leaves out the first—pay-day—and comes back on the fifth, broke as a joke. It's been four months, and he hasn't paid back a dime towards his balance. It's like he doesn't even care about getting back home. And it's not like he's even getting high—we've tested him. Addiction we can at least try to treat. There's funding for that. But this? And don't think we don't know exactly where his money's going."

"To love," I say, and it helps, they laugh. I'll never tell them about Prudie, and Frank will never give her up. I try and press him a little, though. The shelter is a hell of a place to be seventy-five years old.

"Just give them a little bit. I mean don't you want to get the

hell out of here?"

He laughs. "I sure do get the hell on out, every first of the month, don't I?"

I don't know where it is he meets Prudie every month for those few days, and I know better than to ask. I get it. Wherever it is, it's the one place none of us can touch.

Before I leave we play a game of chess in the day room. I've never played anyone as good as Frank. He seems to wake up when we play, like he's thirty years younger, moving quickly and slamming the pieces down, "There." He talks smack, he laughs at most of my moves, and he uses his queen in ways that would make me nervous.

"You putting her on that pedestal ain't doing you any good, neither," he tells me.

I laugh, he's right. "I'd just be scared of losing her."

"Shit," says Frank, and he darkens like he does. "That ain't love."

---

Patrick McNeil has worked in Philadelphia's homeless sector since 2011. His work has appeared in *Eclectica Magazine*, *Apiary Magazine*, and elsewhere. He is the organizer of Philly's own Backyard Writer's Workshop, and founder of the Writers Residency in Tufo, Italy.

# Hospice

Poem by Joseph A. Cilluffo

---

My son says the garden is dying.  
Every August, it's the same.  
The cucumbers, which had clambered  
so fiercely up the lattice  
and across half our garden square,  
begin to yellow and wilt.  
The peppers brown. They soften.  
Tomatoes explode across their vines, manic –  
they bear more fruit than the days can hold.  
Look there, I tell him, see that space?  
Next year's garden is already growing.  
Seeds are in the ground,  
gift of the fallen.  
We could do nothing  
and, by June, there would be more tomatoes.

He sees, I am certain, in only two dimensions  
– what is before him, and what he remembers.  
We could do nothing. Nearby, my mother  
dies in slow motion, surrounded  
by four walls, a window  
she doesn't look through,  
cut flowers. All her words  
from these last, long months  
wouldn't bend a blade of grass.  
We could do  
nothing. My son and I  
uproot the cucumber plants,  
the peppers. I wish I were strong.  
Eyes will open to the green and new.  
I try to picture  
the garden to come.



Joseph Cilluffo has had over 100 poems published. In addition to *Philadelphia Stories*, his poems have appeared in journals such as *The Schuylkill Valley Journal*, *Apiary*, and *Philadelphia Poets*. He was the Featured Poet for the Fall 2014 Edition of the SVJ, which nominated his poem, "Light," for the Pushcart Prize. Joe's first book of poetry, *Always in the Wrong Season*, was recently published by Kelsay Books and is available on Amazon.com.



# The Challenge of Choosing a Winner

Carla Spataro – Publisher/Editorial Director

Since we launched the Marguerite McGlinn Fiction Contest in 2008, I am tasked each year with two duties. First, I must find a judge who is also willing to come to Philadelphia and deliver the keynote address at our Push to Publish conference, as well as offer a master class the day before. I start this task by reaching out to writers whom I admire. Sometimes I know them and sometimes I don't. In 2015, some might say that stalked Bonnie Jo Campbell to convince her to participate. (Well, to be fair, I did chase her down an aisle of the bookfair at an AWP conference.) Still, she agreed to be our contest judge and delivered a wonderful keynote speech and inspiring master class. In other years, I've approached writers I've had the pleasure of working with and could do a little personal arm twisting, such as Kevin McIlvoy, Michael Martone, Robin Black, and Elise Juska, just to name a few.

It has been our honor and pleasure each year to welcome these writers of national renown to be our contest judges. This year is no exception. Karen Joy Fowler is writer of tremendous versatility, writing successfully in many different genres. She is also very funny, and I'm excited to have her be a part of the Push to Publish experience. Thanks to writer Gregory Frost for the introduction.

My second task is to choose the finalists. Some years I read upwards of 200 hundred stories. This year I only had to read 60. (Thank you to all of our contest readers!) From those final stories, it's my job to choose the final ten to send along to the judge who will pick the winners. It might strike you as funny that I get nervous about choosing these stories--after all, the judge is not commenting on my work. But I do get nervous. The stories

that I choose are a reflection on the magazine, and once I get to this stage, it feels very personal. Ultimately, I pick what I like: stories that are well written, of course, but also stories that take chances with content or form, stories we may have heard before but are presented in new ways—writers who are taking risks and succeeding.

We're only as good as the writers who submit their work to us, so thank you to all of the writers who trust us with their work each year. This is what Karen wrote in her email announcing the winners:

"I've judged several contests of this sort in the past and it's always hard because one story is a wonderful example of one kind of story and another is just as wonderful, but just a different kind, etc. Still, there are almost always a few stories I don't like as well that are easily eliminated. Sadly, that wasn't the case here. Each story was quite incredible, nothing was easily eliminated. Each story was a pleasure and a joy to read. So, I'm impressed with everyone."

It was no surprise that two of the finalists are highly accomplished. They've published stories, essays, poems, and books, but I am just as excited to announce that this will be the first time the third-place winner has ever been accepted for publication (his story will appear in our online edition of the magazine). Having both ends of the publishing spectrum represented in our contest is a real thrill for us, and, more importantly, I think it would have made Marguerite very happy. As always, many heartfelt thanks to the McGlinn and Hansma families for their continued support of the prize and the magazine.



PS Teen is an annual magazine published each Fall featuring local writers and artists aged 13-18.

PS Junior is by local writers and artists aged 12 and younger, which will be published each Spring.

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# RESOURCES



## Upcoming Calls for Submissions



- Greasy Spoon - a print anthology devoted to diners (Jan. 16.)
- Regular magazine submissions - open February through December
- Book queries (memoirs, essay collection, craft books) - reopens Nov. 1

## Forthcoming from our Books Division



- Air: A Radio Anthology - Winter 2018
- Stuff from my Hippocampus: A Journal - Winter 2018
- By the Forces of Gravity by Rebecca Fish Ewan - Spring 2018
- Dig: A Personal Prehistoric Journey by Sam Chiarelli - Fall 2018

[hippocampusmagazine.com/submissions](http://hippocampusmagazine.com/submissions)  
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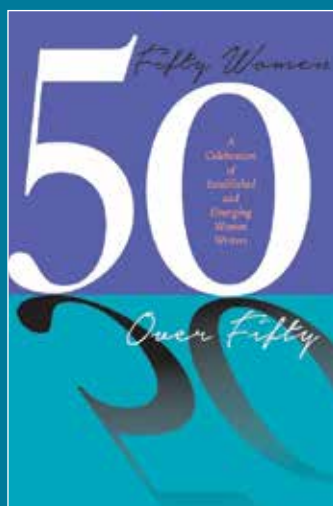


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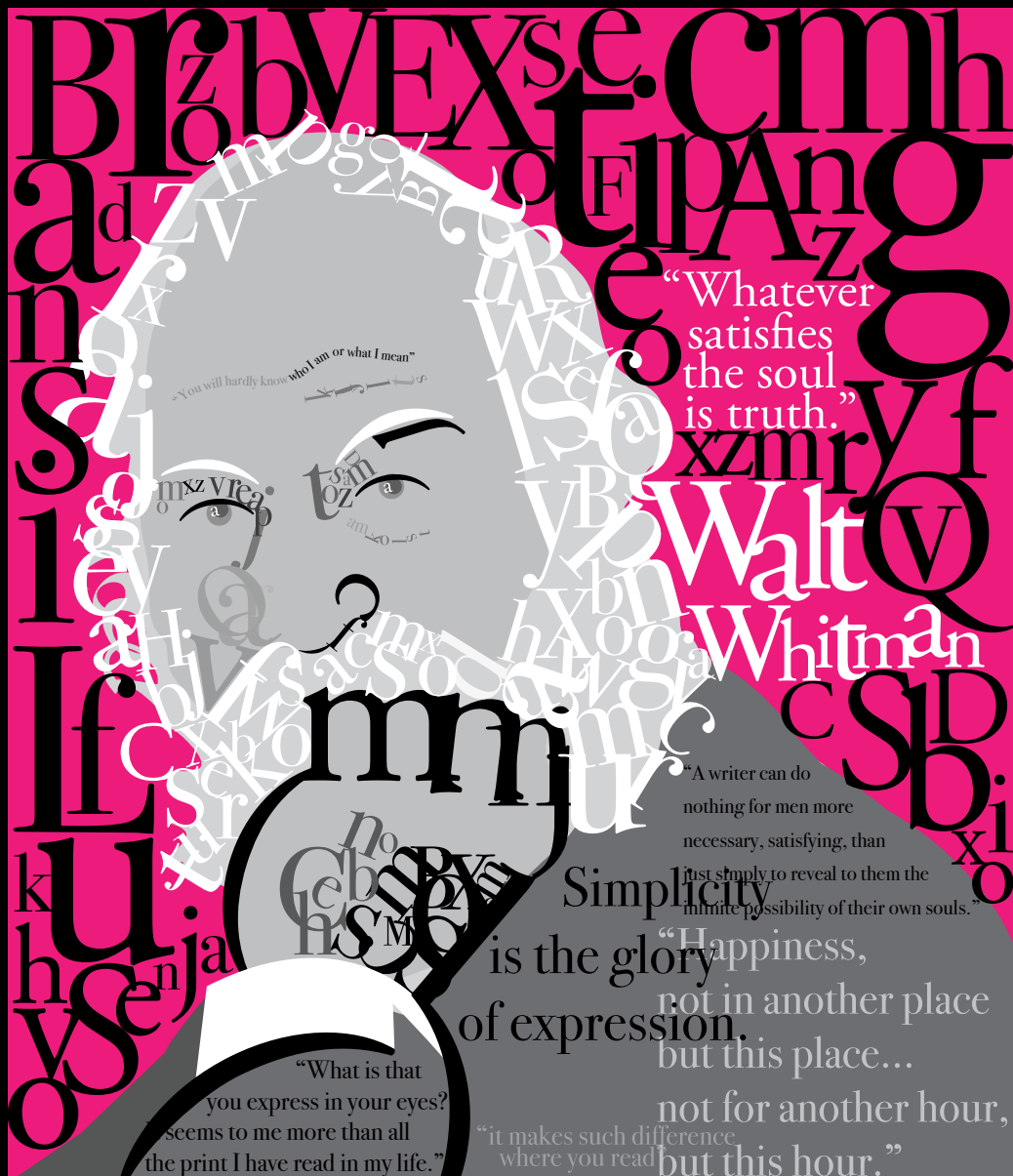
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