

T H E

oddtville press



W I N T E R 2 0 1 6

C O V E R A R T

Nourishing the Feminine

Janet O'Neal

Janet O'Neal has been seriously working in art since 1986. She began as a water color painter and has branched into an artist with a mastery that spans more than half a dozen genre. For the 2015 studio tour she classified herself as working in photography and mixed media. In reality the "mix" of her media includes printmaking, clay and resin sculpture, collage, photography, painting, recycled art, and combinations of all of the above. She felt a love and connection to color as a child, and this love continues to shine through in all of her art. A collection of her work is viewable at her website, www.janetoneal.com

the oddville press

Promoting today's geniuses and tomorrow's giants.

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D I S C L A I M E R

For some reason, since the nineteenth century, it has been perfectly normal in Western culture to write about murder, violence, cannibalism, drug-taking and other terrifying experiences without putting in a disclaimer. But ordinary, everyday experiences, such as being naked, using swear words or having sexual intercourse, are considered unsuitable for impressionable children. Odd though the Oddville Press has always been, we think it wise to adhere to convention in this case, so parental discretion is advised. The Oddville Press considers a wide variety of literary work. Nothing is included purely for its shock value, but sometimes, good art is a little shocking. This book is aimed at adults. This is not the same as “adult content”: it means content for actual grown-ups who are actually mature. If you aren't an actual grown-up then please don't read the Oddville Press, or at least, don't complain to us if you do.

Thanks for reading,
The Management

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Ascent

Jeremy Geddes

Jeremy Geddes studied painting at the Victorian College of the Arts and began working full time as a painter in 2003. He's most well known for his paintings of cosmonauts and people floating, falling, colliding and drifting in empty landscapes. Jeremy was born in Wellington, New Zealand, and now lives in Melbourne, Australia with his wife and whippet. jeremygeddesart.com

Sheila the Endling

Robert Ripperger

THE LAST LIVING gas-powered car died today. Sheila, a 2018 Nissan Sentra, died at the Tokyo Auto Zoo this morning. Her mechanics found her parked in the back corner of her beloved garage, her home for the past thirty years. She died peacefully when her idling engine seized up. She was the last of her kind. The once proud internal combustion engine race of vehicles has gone extinct.

Thousands of fans arrived at the Auto Zoo shortly after the news broke to pay their respects. They laid flowers and empty cans of oil with written personal messages of remembrance for Sheila. Much of the world had grown attached to her and her brother when the other last family of cars died in Detroit two years ago. Her brother, Isaac, passed away just over a year ago, making her the endling, the last of her species like Martha, the last passenger pigeon, or Benjamin, the last Tasmanian tiger.

Leaders, celebrities, and mourners sent their regards from all over the world through social media and press releases. Many noted the end of an era and how rapidly automobiles rose to the ubiquitous form of transportation and how they fell just as quickly to a sad end despite a vigorous conservation movement among car enthusiasts and mechanics to save the gas-powered machines.

The car originated from the late 1800s when steam engines from trains combined with horse-driven buggies in a classic example of converging evolution. These early cars immediately switched to the much more energetic food sources of oil and gasoline and developed primitive combustion chambers to process that volatile food to stay mobile. They quickly replaced the horse and carriage while providing faster transportation over longer distances.

Their habitat of paved roads, parking lots and gas stations sprang up all over the world and they became almost as numerous as humans, who harnessed the car's power to transform the world. But, over decades and generations a combination of factors led to their decline. Oil and gasoline became more difficult to obtain, other types of cars running on renewable resources grew to compete with them and their overpopulation was putting too many hydrocarbons in the atmosphere. Even so, cars adapted. Later models increased their fuel mileage with more aerodynamic designs, lighter bodies, and sophisticated fine-tuned engines. Though this kept them on the roads for a longer time it only delayed the inevitable, a fate that at last culminated with Sheila.

Sheila was born in the breeding grounds

of Japan, which became the most popular breeding grounds for cars in the seventies during the mass migration from Detroit. Many cars came after Sheila but because of her low mileage and healthy diet she outlived even the last cars ever born, which happened when she was already over twenty years old. Known as a shy and reclusive car she spent her whole life in Japan. When the European subspecies died out she was bought by a car collector and kept in a garage, protected from the elements and taken care of by a dedicated crew. The car collector noted that Sheila did not like to get her oil changed and crew members would have a hard time getting her to park for maintenance checks. They would let her out to play once a week on a secluded parking lot. She enjoyed driving around the perimeter like she was doing laps, imitating her distant cousins—the racing breed of cars.

Once cars became officially designated as an endangered species the Tokyo Auto Zoo bought her and reunited her with Isaac, her long-lost brother. They took a few years to warm up to each other but eventually developed an inseparable bond, always sleeping in the same garage. With rust taking its toll on

the few surviving groups of wild cars Sheila and Isaac had some scary moments. When Sheila's tie rod broke Isaac parked by her side during the entire operation to have it replaced. Shortly after that Isaac's radiator failed and he almost died from overheating. Mechanics had to put him on a lift to save him and Sheila drove erratically around her paved enclave, worried to a point of frenzy. When the American cars went extinct mechanical biologists extensively recorded Sheila and Isaac's behavior and construction to preserve the memory of the gas-powered car and to maybe one day resurrect it like recent efforts to restore woolly mammoths.

Sheila's last few days were spent in a lonely kind of roaming under the intense watch of her dedicated crew. She had been fighting a long battle with rust, a condition all cars suffered from in old age or from neglect. By then most of her gears did not work and the old, frail engine could barely process even the most delicate fuel mixture. Yesterday, at dusk, she parked for the last time. It was a sad last night for the last car, in the corner of a dark garage, the ending of such a successful species gone too soon.

Robert Ripperger lives near Cincinnati, Ohio and works at a public library. He has been previously published in The Legendary.

Save The Last One (re:Betty)

Peter Bracking

there is this woman, you see,
she is made of heart and hugs
and fills the entire world (or maybe
it's just your entire world) with hope and hints
of happiness for all who reach

not to say life is roses
not even hers for none
not one survives without the indifferent vicious clutch of mr. bones

(we met once, sweetly:
there we were against the sea
wall walking elbow in arm
both simply trying to breathe
each worried about the other's heart
the pacific singing its usual song
a few silent panting smiles and all
our secrets washed away washed away
in the receding tide)

over time
over the interweb she reveals a regret:
over the decades she has underdanced

immediately hearing this you wish
despite creaking arthritic feet to leap
thousands of miles to toe the line
and jig alongside in heart thumping unison
until she wildly smiles

Peter Bracking's words have been published from ocean to ocean to ocean by some really great literary mags in a growing number of countries on half the inhabited continents.

Vera, Vera

Ann Graham

VERA PRETENDED to fling Charles's "World's Greatest Husband" coffee mug at him a few seconds before he rounded the corner and took his seat at the breakfast table. Hot coffee sloshed onto the sleeve of Vera's terry cloth bathrobe. She summoned a modicum of calm and set the mug beside his plate of fried eggs and thin, crisp bacon. Since Elizabeth's birth, Vera remained in her robe most of the day. When Charles made no comment about her not dressing for breakfast, she let it become her new norm. She'd become bitter and had only recently decided it was bitterness. Its onset had been quick. She was happy, or thought she was happy, and then she was bitter and angry. She'd given him the coffee mug with a cerulean silk tie coiled inside for their third wedding anniversary. She'd spent hours selecting just the right color. That was four years ago.

Last Saturday evening, she'd hired a babysitter and they'd driven to Old London Broil for dinner. The business loop made a circle, like a belt, around town. Charles claimed this road was the quickest route to the restaurant. He talked incessantly about his clients.

Frightened because the idea formed quickly, Vera fought the urge to yank the steering wheel and send their car into oncoming traffic. The

compelling desire and its imagined outcome reminded her of the previous Thursday evening when she followed Charles to the basement to show him the washing machine's leak. She'd fought a sudden urge to shove him down the stairs. That first violent thought was curious and unexpected, but the second caused her distress even as she liked the idea of the power.

They'd built their modest-sized home when William was a toddler. Three bedrooms. Two baths. Their bedroom, of course, one for William, the son Charles wanted, and another for the daughter he assumed she wanted. The predominant feature across the front of the house was the large plate glass window that looked past the cul-de-sac and down the lane to the bottom of the hill. They'd spent hours selecting wallpapers, light fixtures, doorknobs, and artworks; Charles knew what he liked and Vera had been amenable.

Every day as Vera passed through the living room her gaze automatically fell on Charles's favorite reproduction of a painting by Childe Hassam. The snowy cityscape was printed on textured cardboard, which did not line up with the impasto brushstrokes. These incongruities taunted Vera every time she walked past.

On the front porch, two enormous concrete sculptures in the form of vases

holding large hibiscus blooms flanked the welcome mat emblazoned with their surname, Bolton. The faux flowers were painted on the concrete in garish reds and oranges. The lawn was meticulous and always green. After Charles finished any yard work, Sam, their nearest neighbor, appeared and praised him on his expertise and thoroughness.

Last Tuesday, Vera stood at the washing machine until her breasts had begun to leak. She tried to race up the stairs to nurse Elizabeth but the staircase felt submerged in molasses and it took an extraordinary amount of energy to reach the landing. The house was unfamiliar with vast distances between each room. The chairs and sofa and tables retreated as she neared them. The vine patterns on the wallpaper waved and undulated.

"Aren't you eating?" Charles asked as he held his tie to his chest and scooted his chair closer to the table.

"I'm not hungry." Her appetite had waned and she'd lost weight. The terry cloth robe, tucked between her thighs, fell open at her knees. White spots marked the hem edge where she had splashed bleach and it was this that she pretended to examine before she pulled it from between her thighs and let it drop to cover her knees.

Charles crunched his bacon and wiped his lips with his napkin while he chewed. Then he asked, "Did you sleep well?"

Vera gazed across the table, focused on the premature gray hairs that stood stock-still on his head like tiny soldiers. His features blurred and his face disappeared.

"Fine," she lied. She rarely slept and felt like a brood mare. Each morning, already awake, she watched the clock's numbers flip to six, zero, zero, and leaned over to touch Charles's left shoulder to wake him from his solid and refreshing sleep.

"You haven't been yourself lately."

"Are you happy?" Vera asked.

"What ever do you mean?"

"Just that. Are you happy with how you are?"

"Really, Vera. Are you upset about something?"

"No, can't I ask you a question?"

"You've been different. Maybe you should go to the doctor."

"I was asking about you. Don't you ever ask yourself if you are what you want to be? I'm trying to have a conversation."

"Well, this isn't really a conversation so much as an inquisition and I really don't know what you're getting at."

Instead of responding, she wagered silently whether her husband would stand to drink his juice or his coffee. He always stood to drink one or the other. She felt an affirmation when she was correct. His Adam's apple bobbed in syncopation with each gulp of tomato juice and a small clump of whiskers he'd missed shaving ran in place. She made a silent wager for tomorrow.

He set his glass on the table, leaned in to kiss the top of her head and grabbed his briefcase of actuarial calculations that slumped in a chair like a silent, exhausted partner.

"Bye, bye, love." Charles locked the door behind himself.

Vera watched her husband, her captor, through the plate-glass window laced with wrought-iron bars as he walked down the sidewalk towards the corner where he would catch the Hennepin bus. He claimed that he preferred the walking and riding to driving and parking.

A motion startled her out of her reverie; Sam waved. Nearing seventy and retired from the Navy, he was Charles's favorite neighbor. Sam's wife, Gladys, had died the previous year.

Vera wondered whether Gladys had seen it coming. Not the cancer itself, but death, peace, freedom. She'd raised five boys. She'd rarely smiled. Vera realized she was still waiving and dropped her hand and backed away from the window. Sam's quizzical expression told her that he'd mention this to Charles the next time they chatted.

She remembered staring through the thick glass at the massive ape at the Como Zoo when she was a child. She'd felt apprehensive and uneasy even as those around her thought the new exhibit wonderful and great. Her father had been a friend of Dr. Fletcher, who was responsible for establishing the large primate program and for an instant, Vera felt as though she was in just such a glass cage.

She went to wake William.

"Time to get up, sleepy head." Vera flipped the light switch.

"Aw, mom, it's too bright." William jumped out of bed but held his hands over his eyes. "Okay, okay. I'm up."

She'd laid out his clothes the evening before. His favorite breakfast, cinnamon toast and milk, waited for him on the table. When the weather was nice, he walked the four blocks to Plymouth Elementary.

Vera peeked at Elizabeth who was, thankfully, still asleep. Vera had been up with her for hours, rocking. The motion of the chair made the tiniest creaking sound that seemed to say, oh my, oh my, oh my. If the rocking slowed, Elizabeth fidgeted and fussed. Oh my, oh my, oh my, still rang in Vera's ears.

William ate while Vera washed dishes. She checked the freezer, the pantry, the refrigerator, and planned dinner. Often she wished she could stop the clock while she caught up with the growing mounds of laundry or that dinner would appear by way of a secret helper who had snuck in the back door and set a prepared

meal on the dining table as a personal favor.

William grabbed his schoolbook, his sack lunch, and bounded out the door, not returning her wave. She watched him down the sidewalk and realized that his gait mimicked his father's bouncy lope.

She turned and padded down the hall to the bathroom. Charles's towel, washcloth, dirty socks, and underwear were sprinkled like breadcrumbs between the bedroom and bathroom as though to help him find his way. Although she washed plaid boxers everyday, now they looked foreign and obscene. She dropped them into the hamper.

She returned to the kitchen where a small, built-in desk was organized with a telephone, pen and paper, envelopes and stamps. She multiplied seven years of marriage by 365 days and that by four: socks, underwear, towel, and washcloth. The result: 10,220. She taped her calculation to the cabinet door and went to the nursery.

Elizabeth slept on her back covered with a white receiving blanket. Her tiny mouth moved as though she was nursing. Charles had painted the navy blue nursery pink and the furniture white. Vera thought the colors belonged on a cupcake but was nevertheless happy with the change and she had replaced the dark curtains with lacy, white sheers and the stiff pad on the rocking chair with a soft pillow.

For days, some distant memory Vera couldn't quite grasp haunted her. Every time she changed Elizabeth's diaper the mysterious sensation tugged at her memory. Finally, when she grasped Elizabeth's tiny ankles and raised her legs high enough to slide a clean diaper underneath her bottom, it hit her. The gesture was the same as when she clasped a raw chicken carcass just before she chopped off its legs.

For dinner, Vera prepared fried chicken, mashed potatoes, and Brussels sprouts. Just

as she set the iced teas on coasters, Charles opened the front door and said, "I'm home."

As every other day, he walked straight to the dining room, set his briefcase in a chair and went to the sink to wash his hands.

"Hi Dad," William said and sat in his place.

Charles ran his hand over the top of William's head.

"Sport, you're getting taller every day."

"Pretty soon I'll be as big as you, Dad."

"Smells good. I'm starved," Charles said and held his tie to his chest and scooted his chair closer to the table.

Vera seated herself and placed her napkin on her lap and wagered that Charles would dish seven Brussels sprouts for himself. She started to cry when she counted seven in the center of his plate.

"Vera, honey, what's the matter?"

"Nothing. I guess I'm tired and haven't been sleeping well."

"You've been a little out of sorts lately," Charles replied.

"I think I'll make an appointment with Dr. Wellesley."

"I think that's a good idea," Charles said.

"Dad, guess what happened at school today?"

"What's that?"

"Jimmy Stevens broke his arm."

"Oh my. How'd that happen?"

"He fell off the monkey bars. He was up high and he tried to stand up. Then bam." William slammed his palm on the table and continued with his story. "He fell right down and he screamed and he cried and the principal came running out."

Vera scooted the food around on her plate. She heard Elizabeth cry.

"Excuse me," she said and left the table.

Elizabeth, pudgy and healthy, smelled of warm milk and diaper rash ointment. She continued fussing as Vera blew on the mobile that hung over the crib. The pink bear and yellow lion cubs spun in circles. She watched Elizabeth's fontanel throb in tandem with her cries. Vera had not been excited about a second child at first, but soon after delivery she realized she loved the tiny being.

Vera slid her forefinger and thumb down between the plush folds of Elizabeth's neck and considered how easily she could permanently squeeze all of the cry right out of her. Although Vera feared that the baby sensed her treacherous thoughts, for the rest of the evening, Vera felt strangely powerful, yet strangely weak.

From processing blood specimens, being robbed, overnight motel clerking, modeling for drawing classes, to working as a Visual Resources Curator for twenty-five years, Ann Graham has hoppedscotched around a few blocks. She has a M.F.A. in Painting and Drawing and has attended the Squaw Valley Community of Writers workshop. She has been writing short stories for over eleven years and recently was published in DIGGING THROUGH THE FAT. She blogs and tweets about short stories at www.ann-graham.com and Twitter [@AnnGraham7](https://twitter.com/AnnGraham7).

Scribbling

Melissa Parietti

There are few legitimate reasons to write
poetry, like, my teachers in grade school
told me (on my report cards) I had
inconsistent grades (that was their complaint)
so when I forged my parents' signatures,
age eight, I was told (at school) to
bring the paper back home for the right scribbling.

Melissa Parietti is a native of Long Island. Parietti attended writing workshops at SUNY Geneseo. Her poetry has been published in several print and online journals. Parietti can be contacted through LinkedIn <https://www.linkedin.com/pub/melissa-parietti/34/970/2b2> and can be followed on Twitter at @MelissaParie.



Letting The Soul Fly Free

Janet O'Neal

A Forest of Innuendo

Stanley Kaplan

Bray and bark,
hark the lark,
withdraw and
speculate.

Fibber and Molly,
will fight a forest
on innuendo,
an inlet, a flood.

Benny Belsky,
in his hour of need,
sat upon his Jewish
steed.
Finally a gentleman.

Sowerby, sitting at
his atheist organ,
debauching

the instrument,
was without remorse.

What was the source
of his deadpan,
his willingness to tear,
to sear the sound.

Finster and Finnigan
are in again.
Their art, apart from
the money,
grew old and
gravitated west.

A specious surprise,
Maxwell the Benny car,
took ill, and belched
his ancient gas.

Stanley Kaplan lives in New York City. His work has been published in Onthebus, Midstream, Chiron, Ragazine, Tribeca Poetry Review, Taproot, Slab, Soundings East, Mobius, Quiet Courage, etc. He has published two anthologies—Tokens and Bridges. In 2,000 Kaplan was awarded a Pollack-Krasner Foundation grant.

Santa Barbara — 1981

Matt McLaren

“MY MOM HAS THE RHEUMATOID; her fingers look like Cheetos, the crunchy kind.” I pulled the hole in my sleeping bag in front of my face open and looked up to see a man sitting next to me. He had the greasy, wind-burned face like most everybody down here under the palm trees that stretched out in both directions. He picked at a deep healing gash across his nose, examining the fruits of his exploration under his fingernail before gazing out at the ocean and smiling. “I seen cantaloupes out in Merced the size of bowling balls. Just laying there next to the road, perfectly fine.”

My lips cracked open. I tried to say something but just a gurgling rasp came out. He laughed and reached into his pocket and fished out a can of Kern’s peach nectar. “I found these behind the Alpha Beta, only a couple days out of date.” He popped the top and handed it to me. I sipped the warm, thick juice, felt it sliding down my throat slowly. “I heard that you can cook fish in a dishwasher. You put it on the top rack where the glasses go.” He picked at the grass. “I’m gonna have to try that the next time I pick up a pearl diver gig, but them Hobarts... Whoeee! They pack a wallop, so I don’t know. You can run a thousand dishes an hour through ‘em...” his voice trailing off in a sigh. We both sat and looked at the ocean, sparkling in fresh

light. “Million dollar mother fuckin’ view you got there. After six days on that farm camp outside Firebaugh, this is heaven. I was practically shitting tortillas by the time I left, it’s all those wetbacks eat. Gimme a hit off that.” I handed him the can and he swirled it before drinking the rest.

I told him how I was heading east, trying to figure out the best route to Vegas. A couple other guys overheard and soon a lively debate began. Arguments about whether to go through Piru or down to The Pear Blossom road, which diners would let you pull a shift in the dish pit, which towns to stay away from, what rail lines to hop. These men were professionals. Never once did they ask to hear my story or wonder why a young man was out on the road. It was a matter of respect, a man’s past was his own.

The morning wore on and as I packed up my sleeping bag and backpack, they each came up and gave me something for the road. A water bottle because, “thirst will kill a man quicker than shit,” a can of Sterno, a map, half a bottle of Old Grand-Dad.

They stood together and smiled as I left, benevolent grandfathers. I wasn’t one of them and they knew it but it didn’t matter. Maybe they saw themselves, young and strong. Or maybe they just knew I needed them.

Matt McLaren lives in Hollywood California and has previously written for film and television. His stories have appeared in Sensitive Skin magazine, The Cortland Review and other publications.

Remington 5

Amanda Bateman

THE YEAR IS 1938 when I'm created. I come to life when the final pin attaches the type bar. I'm transported by truck with my brothers; we have a job to do. We leave one factory in search of work at another. I hear the whispers of war when I arrive. People talk of money being scarce from the stock market crash. People talk of bankruptcy and suffering. What kind of awful place is this?

I'm thrown into chaos and surrounded by wiser and more experienced machines. They are larger and older, their black skin dulled by dust. I have a window seat, but it offers little sanity. The hum of sewing machines on the floor beneath me vibrates through the room and resonates in my gears. My carriage and keys rattle, the ribbon stains my insides. I wonder if it is this loud working outside.

A young woman sits before me as a man gives her instructions on what she has to do, but does not tell her what to do with me. Her name is Annie. Once the man leaves, the ladies in our aisle teach her how I work. Annie slides a fresh piece of paper into my pursed lips. It is smooth and soft, like the leaves of a plant. This must be what a tree tastes like. Annie says it smells like a Christmas tree. It has the remnants of a pine murdered in the forest, but it is my only source of nutrition. I am grateful for the gift.

My new home is sweltering, though it does little to slow the momentum of the women; they work like busy bees in the hive. They buzz from machine to machine, and hover behind one another to inspect each other's work, or to give their tired hands a break. The women walk by and observe, to read the next headline of column, but only for a moment.

Annie's fingers hammer on my keys as she types up the headline: The Ringling Brothers. Mystifying Circus. One Week Only! The brothers promise a spectacle unlike any other, complete with elephants, a sword swallower, and even a tattooed lady. Unheard of creatures trapped in a bizarre habitat. The circus guarantees smiles and laughs, memories sure to last a lifetime.

Annie's fingers are hard at work as I produce the information. It's a shame no one can afford the circus. I want to advertise the free circus people can witness in the factory. Annie doesn't get the message, and her fingers continue to do what they are programmed for. My keys respond to her orders, the ribbon spool spins like that of the sewing machines below, but I leave words instead of stitches. Annie whispers how glad she is that she doesn't have to cover the war stories. I

savor the happiness we share together, her thoughts and my ink.

Horse flies swarm the room at the peak of summer, hungry for garbage and the sweat off a brow. Women fan their faces, frantic for relief from the heat. Ink bleeds off my ribbon onto the pages. Annie crumples another sheet and tosses it in the wire basket. Flies rest on me, a perch for their tired wings. Their legs rub together as they vomit on my shiny black coat. Annie doesn't mind the visitors, her fingers double in speed in efforts to impress the insects. I tell her to swat them away, I beg for the vomit to be wiped off my surface. She ignores me and continues to work.

The women's chatter turns somber as the months pass. Annie's neighbor, Doris, moves her lips in silence to dictate the page. The women struggle to motivate themselves as they are swallowed the constant tapping of keys and chimes to announce the end of a page. The ladies remind one another the men are fighting for their freedom, and that they are doing their own part. Annie's touch comforts me in such dark times. I fear I'll lose her like the soldiers they mourn.

After four years, the building sinks into disarray, much like the city we live in. More women have been forced into the room like a herd of cattle. They rub elbows with their neighbors, while mechanical arms dictate commands and produce stories worthy of being called news. I'm grateful for my space by the window. Papers are filled with nothing but misery. The public drowns in words like Nazi, bomb, and Jew. Annie's strength and happiness are contagious. I wonder if she loves me as much as I her.

Annie's birthday comes and goes as it does every year. For her first one at the factory, Annie receives a single flower from

Doris, a daisy plucked from the wall of a neighboring building. Annie says it's a sign that the war will end soon and change is coming. She treasures the simple birthday token. She and Doris talk about the heartbreaking conditions occurring in the streets outside the factory. Annie cries over the children clothed in rags and their meager diets of biscuits and grease. Europe isn't the only place being engulfed in hell.

President Roosevelt creates more jobs in an effort to bring the city out of the shambled mess it has become. He is hungry for workers, while Uncle Sam is starving for bodies. Men enlist and get sent away. Women are left behind to mourn the impending loss of their loves. Annie and I document the body count as I print their names on paper. I have become the Grim Reaper.

Annie uses paper to dab her eyes and blow her nose. She can't afford tissues anymore than she can afford her sanity. Our work drains the brightness from her eyes. I long to write about the circus, or a film that's been released. Weeks pass and she grows numb to the names she has to repeat. Her eyes are empty and she has no tears left. Annie becomes a shell, her optimism fading with each keystroke.

After the factory is quiet, my brothers and I share updates about the war and what goes on in the streets. I sit on the desk where a dust bed has grown. It cradles the machines and I just as the dust bowl engulfs the Great Plains. My brothers and I share updates. About the war, about the chaos in the streets. We talk about how the sewing machines seem to have doubled over night above and below us. We share our fears of becoming outdated, just another casualty of this thing called war, yet we continue to work.

During the day, the homeless litter the

streets outside of the factory. Hungry children cry, and fathers, the ones who were not able to enough to fight, dive in the dumpster like rats. In the evening, it is worse. The cries of children echo off the bricks buildings and ooze into the factory. Annie doesn't order me to document these conditions. I only report on the important lives lost, the soldier's lives. The locals hold no value in the news. Even the drought, which swallows the west, is nothing more than idle conversation around the factory.

The conditions inside the factory, like the morale of the workers, deteriorate. And as the working conditions slip, so does Annie. No longer can her soul bear to type another name or eulogy for an anonymous soldier. She has a dreadful cough from the dust. When she decides to quit, I fear for my future, but Annie gives her boss cash for me, and promises her last paycheck. She tells him she wants to follow her dreams of writing, and no longer wishes to be surrounded by the smells and sounds and tastes of death. The boss laughs, but accepts her offer. I still hear him laughing as Annie carries me down the staircase. I bid farewell to my brothers as I get my first taste of sunshine.

Annie and I move across the Hudson into New Jersey. She finds an apartment and a job making coupons for the local grocery store. In her spare time she creates beautiful poetry with me. She says she'll be the next great poet, and vows to make an anthology. She wants to be remembered like Emily Dickinson, and is determined to have her work published before she dies. Annie's conviction and happiness make my gears buzz with life. My keys long for her touch and the cadence of her fingers.

Annie gets a new job as a secretary at the high school a few blocks away. She gets a

new typewriter, and just like that I am relegated to the darkness under her bed. I long for the sun and her touch, for her poetry. I hear her speak about her boss of love. It's obvious she has caught the attention of someone important. She is young and attractive and full of ideas.

She scurries about the room trying on new shoes and outfits to impress her suitor. It doesn't take long before she stumbles into the room in his arms. The bed creaks above me in the same cadence as her fingers used to. She sounds out of breath as the man grunts. The man asks a question after they settle down, Annie cries and I discover it's from happiness. They are engaged and marry the following summer. She becomes a housewife.

They get a new home and I am relocated to the basement. I listen in the darkness to the sound of footsteps overhead. I recognize the sound of who walks above. Annie's husband's shoes make a dull tap on the floor as he dances across the hardwood. The sharp tap of Annie's heels remind me of a time she needed me as much as her shoes, though it seems she only wears them when he isn't around. Soon after, boxes of shoes join me in the darkness. Annie spends most of her time in the kitchen; I hear her chopping and prepping meals, and the popping of a wine cork almost always follows the sounds of preparation. I listen to the familiar waterfall as she washes dishes every evening. When her husband gets home, he helps himself to the liquor, ice cubes clink into the glass. Like a broken record he lectures that her job as a school secretary is a joke, only women unfit to wed should be in the workplace.

Her other typewriter becomes my roommate. Her dreams and ambitions litter the basement and build up in the corners. I crave the sunshine and the taste of paper.

My ribbon feels stiff and lifeless. My keys feel jammed and unusable. I wonder why Annie hasn't put me out of my misery and taken me to the local landfill.

Annie becomes pregnant with twins only a few months into their marriage. The children are born in the summer of 1953. The house is filled with their laughter and cries. I hear them skid their knees across the floor as they learn to crawl. It isn't long before I hear the soft pad of their feet as they toddle in attempts to walk. I hear the sink most of the day, and the hum of the vacuum. Annie fills her time with chores and cigarettes. While her husband is away at work, the house reeks of cigarette smoke, clouds of tobacco joining me in the basement.

Her children grow with each passing day, as I continue to age below their feet. The children master the art of walking and prefer to be barefoot. They run through the halls and stampede down the stairs. The husband starts coming home late. I hear him stumble into a wall while Annie interrogates him. They yell into the early hours of morning. Spoons sing into glasses as they mix themselves another beverage.

Holidays pile up around me in the damp basement. Crickets chirp in the corners by the cobwebs. The children grow quiet, there running replaced by them sneaking around. Spying on their parents at night when Annie and her husband fight above me. Full of liquor and courage. Glasses are thrown and shatter against a wall. The children's feet pad up the stairs to hide in their bedrooms until the battle is over.

On occasion, Annie comes to the basement, and with each trip, I become hopeful

that I will be rediscovered. Instead, she places something new—a box, a bag, a suitcase—on and around me. It doesn't take long for the mountain to grow. She picks up a gardening hobby, but it isn't long before garden tools join the collection of her former selves. Years bleed together, and I'm buried alive beneath the weight of a past longed to be forgotten. Each Christmas, she, and eventually her children, come to my home to retrieve boxes, and each time, I am once again hopeful of being found, but every year I am left disappointed. It is time that I face the fact that I am buried in a history of memories and the scent of the past. It has been thirty years since I've seen Annie. Hope of seeing her again, of once again making a home on the dining room table while being more than a receptacle for dust, is gone.

New sounds awake me from my hibernation. Pieces of floorboard, weak from years of neglect, crumble as heavy footsteps walk through the home above. Spiders scatter all around me, and the crickets grow silent. Even the musty scent of mildew seems to evaporate.

A man's voice echoes down the stairs. "Everything's got to go." The thump of boots on wood follows his voice down the stairs. "Jesus, this here's the cleanest part of the house."

Someone whistles. "I'm surprised she didn't fill the basement with garbage like she did upstairs." It's a man's voice, though different than the first.

"All right, Matt," the first man says. "You start in that corner and I'll start over here. We can pile the bags by the steps then carry them up when we're through." Feet shuffle on the

dusty floor. Garbage bags unfurl, and then crinkle as items are placed in the bags.

I feel the weight above me lessen. Boxes are being removed from all around me. For the first time in years, I can breathe. The sound of rifling through cardboard follows each lessening of the weight, and dormant dust begins to once again travel through the air. A man sneezes. Another man coughs and spits.

"Hey, Pat," the younger man says, "It's cool if I take stuff, right?"

Pat makes a clicking sound. "I don't see why not. It's not like it's going to be used anytime soon."

The younger man reaches for me. I prepare to be tossed into the contents of his garbage bag.

"Hey, look at this." He holds me up for inspection. "What is it?" He lifts me in the air and turns me around.

"Now that there's something you have to keep, Matt." Pat walks over and takes me from younger man. He slides his thumbs over my locks and my case gives a satisfying snap. Pat opens the box, a flood of light and dust engulf me.

"That's amazing," Matt says.

Pat chuckles. "You could probably fetch a pretty penny for this thing."

Penny? Is that all I'm worth now? Meaningless pocket change forgotten in the cushions of a couch?

"No way would I sell this thing." Matt takes me from Pat. "If it still works, I can give it to Kate as a graduation present. She would love this."

Matt sets me down on a box. His fingers brush against my keys. It's been so long since I've felt some ones touch. He tests each key to make sure they work. A few are stubborn and stuck. I feel awake and alive. The keys tap the pulse back into my ribbon, my veins.

"It still works." Matt says.

They take several trips upstairs before Matt comes back for me. He sits me in the passenger seat of his truck. He takes me home and polishes my casing and soaks my gears and organs in some sort of oil. The scent is repulsive, but I'm grateful for the tune up, even if I smell like oil. He slides a piece of paper in me, the first sheet in years, and types out a thoughtful letter.

He locks me inside my case like a genie trapped in his lamp. I can see through the barrier. He places me back in his passenger seat and even straps me in. We take a long bumpy trip across at night. We have to stop at odd gates to dispose of change. Trucks the size of elephants roar along beside us. Orange lamps illuminate the pavement. Matt's truck groans and chokes as we pass the 'Welcome to Pennsylvania' sign.

He turns onto a rougher road, and stones pelt up through the open window and knock on my case. Matt parks the truck then removes me from the passenger seat. He wipes my case down with a towel. He carries me through a squeaky screen door.

"Just keep your eyes closed, Kate." Matt sets me down on a small kitchen table. "I should really wait until May to give this to you, but I can't wait."

"This is a graduation present?" Kate asks in a soft, warm voice.

"Yeah, but it will motivate you to finish." Matt unlocks me and wipes me down with a soft cloth. Kate sits before me with her eyes shut tight.

"I only have two months left of school, I wouldn't quit now anyway."

Matt plucks a hair off one of my keys and steps back. "Okay, open your eyes."

Kate's shriek is deafening. "Where did you find this?" She runs her hand over my polished shell. She traces little circles over

each key, feeling the slight depression with each letter and symbol. She types her name slowly. The K, and then the A, and then the T, and then the E. She types random keys until I get to the end, where I dutifully chime. I had forgotten how it felt to speak, what it was like to have a voice.

"I had to help Pat clean out some dead lady's house." Matt adjusts the paper and resets it so Kate can start a new line.

"So, you stole the typewriter?" Kate asks.

"No, I didn't steal it. The guy who owns the place didn't want anything left behind."

Matt sits beside Kate and watches her type. "They just paid Pat and I to clear out the house so they can try to sell it."

"The last place I would put this is a basement." Kate rubs her fingers over my polished body yet again, as if she is unsure of my reality. "I am going to have this on display and show it off to everyone."

The next morning, she sets me on the table, and for the first time in thirty years, I see the sun rise on the horizon, and as her fingers dance across my keys, I once again have a purpose.

Amanda Bateman is a non-fiction MFA candidate at Southern New Hampshire University and a stay at home super mom for two young children. This is her first foray into the world of short fiction, and her first published story. Amanda is working on a collection of personal non fiction essays for her thesis. She lives in New Jersey and is a self-taught artist and spends her few moments of free time drawing, or writing.

How a Grain of Sand Tips the Scales

Carol Hamilton

That ancient rock, exposed there
as you hope never to be exposed,
waited all this time for your return,
but all this time
is only a flutter of your lashes
to the ancient rock
that wears its pitted face
without apology or shame
or pride or any other word.

Your return only marks time
on a human scale,
and your shame is bared
to you alone.
Lichen curls and peels
on the ancient rock
even as you drive away.
A cold autumn blue cleanly
washes everything in sight.

Carol Hamilton has recent and upcoming publications in Poet Lore, Gingerbread House, Outrider Review, Haight Ashbury Literary Journal, Boston Literary Review, Hubbub, Blue Unicorn, Broad River Review, Caveat Lector, Iodine, Rathalla, Flint Hills Review, Main Street Rag, I-70 Review, U.S. I Worksheet, Reed, Cold Mountain Review, Two Cities Review, Albatross, Hash, Nebo, and others. I have published 17 books: children's novels, legends and poetry, most recently, Such Deaths. I am a former Poet Laureate of Oklahoma and have been nominated five times for a Pushcart Prize.

Dead Wood

Giles Rees

THE TREE OFFERED no natural steps, no considerate clefts. Its dark branches reached at awkward angles, set at hostile levels, as if they'd grown with resistance in mind--with this night in mind. The bark chafed my skin beneath my overalls. My hair grew wet with sweat. Needles and bits of twig tumbled into my eyes as I tried to find purchase with my hands on the bole and branches above. When first I saw her in daylight she enthralled me with her beauty, a Hollywood actress from a Golden Age.

But now she was a bitch, an unyielding geriatric, all elbows and knees, wild-eyed, thin coverlet clenched to bristly chin.

The climb exhausted me. I stopped and sat in the collar of two branches. I caught my breath in the damp air. I took hold of the rope looped around my shoulder and drew it tight, around the trunk. I threw both ends to the lawn below. Then I began my descent. Half-way down, I came to the stump of the broken bough. The collapsed branch--the trigger for my involvement--lay in next door's garden. I looked at the detached limb. I locked my hands on the tree, breathed deeply, then resumed my descent and jumped onto the lawn.

A fox, running on the wet grass, paused to look at me. I picked up the ends of the rope. I walked to the far side of the garden, lashed

one end around a steel peg I hammered into the lawn with a mallet. I muffled the sound with rags as I pounded it. I tied the other end to a second peg, some distance from the first. The sight of the watching fox calmed me. When I lowered my goggles and ripped my saw to life the animal fled, into the night.

I angled the saw into the trunk of the tree. It spat bark. Orange sawdust blew as I cut the first wide notch, like a mouth, in the cedar's side. Then I went round to the opposite side and worked the saw deep into the tree's heart. My immersion detached me from the saw's whine and drawl. Satisfied, I withdrew the saw and silenced it. I became aware in my peripheral vision that lights had been turned on in nearby houses. I kept my focus on the tree. I drove two wedges, at left and right, into the second cut, striking them with the same mallet I'd used on the pegs. Splintering, cracking sounds came from inside the cedar. For a second it seemed to hesitate, to waver. But then... a moan, a swish and, finally, a crash as it hit the lawn. Lights were coming on everywhere. A dog was barking, which set off another. A woman was calling from a terrace. "Can you see anything? Tom... be careful." I headed down an alley to my van. I threw in my things and drove.

In the morning I went to the café. An old guy I'd seen there before was at the next table, staring into space. Trish, who runs the place, said his name was Gerald and that in the night someone had done something awful and cut down his tree. Trish said Gerald's dad had planted it on the day Gerald was born.

When I got back to my place the phone was ringing. "Leave only firewood," the voice said and hung up. When I located my next target I had no qualms: a conifer hedge of the soil-leaching, light-blocking kind. Bogus trees. Green, but that was all. A mercy killing. Not even the Somme would have wanted them. I cut straight through them, at night. Twenty. It wasn't enough.

I'd been a cab driver. Nights. I lost my licence when my temper cost a customer three of his teeth. That was when they found me (in the way that people like them do). Before that, Afghanistan.

Ken taught me about trees. I found him in a forest in Canada, on the internet, in my local library. He'd made a series of films of himself, felling timber. I'd imagined lumberjacks to be tall, athletic. But Ken was on the dumpy, stumpy side. He had a ginger beard and a shirt with red and black checks. He wore an orange helmet and blue ear muffs. His skills impressed me, both his cutting and his teaching. After he'd made an incision he'd turn off and lay down his saw and say something like, "Now I want you to take a good look at this so you remember what I've done here." He'd point at a birch or a pine to make clear why he'd gone about things in the way that he had. Sometimes he'd place a tape measure against the bark. He didn't force on me a particular saw or jacket or ask if I wanted to meet other

lumberjacks. It was just Ken, cutting trees. He showed concern for my health and safety. He talked about the importance of always planning an escape route which he said the American way: rout like clout. One time he seemed to run pretty quickly towards the camera (which wobbled). But he still declared the job "a great fall". He'd shot eight films. At the end of each of them Ken warned of the importance of cutting with care. Then he said, "Happy felling, fellers" and raised his safety helmet. Ken's films had been on the internet for six years. They'd been watched by eleven people, none of whom had left any feedback. So I wrote, "Thanks." For the next year, I killed trees.

I worked coast-to-coast, mountain to valley. A motorcycle courier left packets of cash for me in Trish's café. She knew nothing.

In Scotland I scythed through a stand of pines that had a preservation order on them but were blocking the expansion of a noted golf course. On the South Coast I dismembered a fine chestnut that had spread itself into the sea view of someone often seen on TV. In the Welsh borders I destroyed an entire orchard of ancient apple trees that had threatened a planned estate of what the agent called executive homes. I had my subtle side, too. A Monkey Puzzle tree (*Araucaria araucana*), in the quad of a famous college, began its slow and painful death thanks to the rods I skewered in its side by torchlight.

The police attributed my work to vandals, firewood thieves, bungling contractors. I was unstoppable. No one thought (or even wanted) to connect the stumps of five oaks in a Norfolk park to a copper beech sliced and diced on a Gloucestershire green.

Developers were my biggest customers,

of course. Environmental deserts were their aim: no trees hanging around, making trouble, causing a fuss. But some of my sponsors might surprise you. The client who had me cut down an old but healthy beech in a Midlands town square was a white-haired spinster who resented the way youths congregated beneath it at night.

My killing became industrial. Chainsaws weren't enough. I erased a mile of greenbelt outside one Northern city through a process of steady poisoning. The authorities, who had themselves engaged me, re-classed the land as industrial spoil thereby paving the way for an out-of-town shopping mall and a car park only marginally smaller than an airport runway.

I was interrupted only once: a young girl who stopped me (for a while). I was about to lay waste to some willows in the garden of a house beside a river you're sure to know in a valley near London. The trees were of some literary significance. A man who'd been a guest at the house felt he'd been slighted by his hosts. He placed a contract on the willows by way of revenge. The girl, no more than ten, approached me in the soft darkness of a mid-summer night as I considered the best way to take the willows apart.

"What are you doing?" came her voice from behind me.

"I'm... checking the trees," I said, swinging around.

The girl was in her nightdress. She had a grey rabbit in her arms and was petting it.

"Why?"

"They need to be checked, sometimes," I said.

"I'm checking Roger," she said and she stroked back the ears of the rabbit.

"That's good," I said.

Lights came on in the bay windows of the house at the top of the garden. A woman's

voice called the girl by name. Martha. The girl walked away, talking to the rabbit as she carried it. For a moment she turned back to me, then she continued on. I gathered my things and went to the jetty at the bottom of the garden. I slipped the moorings of the boat I'd tethered there, and drifted downstream.

The man who felt himself slighted contacted my handlers. He wanted to know why the willows were still standing and when, exactly, he would see the riverbank littered with their carcasses. He was paying good money, he said.

When I did it, it made the newspapers. They called it the work of a maniac. I thought about calling a Press conference to explain myself, my work. To reveal the role of the thin-skinned man. To point out the part of his sarcastic host. To highlight the needling contributions of their wives who would not, could not, let the slight (real or imagined) rest. To make plain how the gossip of their circle, their set, had finally marched those willows to their deaths. I didn't, of course.

Then came the yew, a thousand years old, so ancient it no longer looked like a tree: its girth enormous, deformed, grown-in on itself. It had not bark in any normal sense but a grotesque hide of sharp ridges, sinister valleys, foul tumours and clenched knots. Its crown was absurdly low as if it had been stamped down by the sky. Surveying its mounds and sprouts and swellings, I could not help but think of Merrick, The Elephant Man. But I had no pity for the yew and it had no mercy for me. Its needles, more black than green, brimmed with poison.

It crouched beside a West Country church in a yard of flaking headstones that comported themselves at strange angles in the manner of

ships run aground. Yet, for all its ugliness, there were those who saw it as beautiful, venerable and even sacred. Had not the archers of Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt cut their bows from trees just like it? In the old, grey church a faded pamphlet by a vicar long-dead spoke of the yew and the Angel of Mons, how the ghostly bowmen of Agincourt rose as one in a Flanders field, 500 years on, to hurl back the Hun and save the lives of beleaguered British soldiers (as I had been, once).

The new vicar saw things differently, and wanted the yew dead. He was young, a high-flier, lean, keen and smelling of cologne. The yew stood in the way of his plans for a meeting hall, kitchen and cloakrooms. The congregation had split into factions. A special court had been arranged to decide the yew's fate. But the vicar was impatient. He wanted to make his mark and move on. The yew required an accident. I left word that I would return when conditions were favourable.

I've always taken an interest in the weather, as soldiers do. When I saw the isobars tight as a knot on the television news, I knew it was time.

The wind pummeled my van as I drove. I fought the wheel like the skipper of a trawler. Soon there was no traffic. The sky darkened. Rain of a kind I had never seen swept down in waves like arrows. Abandoned cars littered my route. Torn cables slithered and hissed on the drenched roads, bucking and sparking as I drove between them. Soon trees became my obstacles, falling and blocking my way as if they knew my business, as if they were sacrificing them-

selves for the yew. I sawed through them and pushed them aside. I drove on through woods that moaned and wailed. When I reached the church gate, the yew glared. It knew.

Wind howled between the headstones of the churchyard and blasted the lychgate shut. I heaved it open, dragging after me the heavy chains with which I intended to shackle that old hag. Flowers left by loves on graves took flight. Notices peeled from a board and swept into the deepening dark, like rooks startled from a copse. Slates crashed from the roof of the church and shattered like shrapnel on crosses and tombs. Its stained glass windows of saints burst outwards as if being machine-gunned from inside. I dropped my chains by the porch and went back to my van for my saw and my axe.

When I re-entered the churchyard, my reception party was waiting. Ken was first to scurry alongside.

"As with every specimen," he gasped, "what you have to ask yourself is: do you really need to take down this tree?"

I brushed him away. He gave me a resentful look. His helmet flew into the sky, and he disappeared after it. Next came Trish. The blue tabard she wore at work was tight against her in the wind. She waved envelopes bursting with banknotes.

"All this is yours," she said. "How many more must die?"

She threw the notes into the air. The wind drove them against headstones, spiked them on hedgerows and swept them into brooks that boiled and laughed. Next I saw Gerald. He was clinging to a beam in the porch, as if to the lip of a cliff. I leaned into the wind and looked at him. The storm unlocked his fingers, one by one, and the church sucked him--shoes, raincoat, head--into its crevices and crannies, as if it were some kind of ravenous bog.

I reached the yew. Beneath its swaying, cracking branches stood Martha whose willows I had spared, then slaughtered. The yew had hold of her hair, twisting it backwards into the dark folds of its trunk.

"You're not checking the tree," she said. "You're not. You're not."

The bells of the church began to peal as if the yew was summoning defenders. A murmur of voices made me turn. The dead of the parish were rising from their graves: smocked farmers and their wives, soldiers in scarlet, a parson (holding down his hat). They stamped their feet and shook soil from their clothes. A nurse in a uniform of blue and white helped the older, less able dead to their feet. A teacher called her young charges who ran to her skirts. Whiskered men mustered in groups. An aproned butcher spoke with a doctor whose Gladstone bag swung in the storm. A thin man in a top hat and chain of office thrust a furred umbrella into the wind. The indignant dead assembled behind him, leaned into the storm and made for me.

They drove me backwards against the thick trunk of the yew, stripping me of my axe and saw. Their pale, pinched faces pressed inches from mine.

"He wants our tree," the schoolteacher said.

"Well, he's not having it," said the thin man with the chain of office. He stuck the wooden handle of his umbrella under my chin.

"You're not having it, you hear," joined in the butcher, taking my hair in his fist like entrails from a block.

Soon they all chorused: "You're not having it! You're not having it! YOU'RE NOT HAVING IT!"

The children ran back to the graves from which they had risen and returned with wet soil to pelt my face and my chest.

The women tore off my clothes, stripping me naked. Two soldiers took my arms and held me hard against the tree. Parting the mob, a group headed by the man with the chain advanced, placing on my head a crown of thorns.

Above me the yew shook and creaked and groaned. And then... blackness.*

No Earthly signs of me remained. Not a tooth, not a nail, not a hair, not a button, not a lace, not a thread. Had I been hanged or gored or beaten or burnt, something of me—a finger perhaps, maybe my wristwatch, charred and cracked—would have been left. But there was nothing. It was as if I'd been swallowed, whole.

And yet... I live.

The problem with the yew has been solved. What I mean to say is that the tree has stayed and the young vicar has moved on. Clippings ground into his fancy leaf tea saw to that. He suffered a little, it's true. He trembled and staggered as the toxins took hold, then collapsed and lay cold on the vicarage floor. I've seen worse: soldiers taken apart by a mine who in their initial shock were able to see their own severed limbs distant in the dust or splattered against the wall of a stone building made to look like some Hellish butcher's shop.

After the vicar I went in search of the courier, the one who brought my pay when I was the hired hand. I knocked him from his motorbike in the street near Trish's café, put a saw to his throat. I told him my killing had to stop.

He told me to go to a grey block in a part of town long-conquered by concrete and that there I would find Him, the one that I wanted.

My entrance was spectacular, as anyone would have granted. Call to mind those sol-

diers who camouflage themselves so skillfully with nets and twigs and creams that they may hide undetected in ditches and fields for days and you will, perhaps, have half the picture. In my case, the foliage was real: green shoots that sprang from my skull, tendrils that twisted and turned in place of my tongue, stalks and stems that swept from my excavated eyes and ears, leaves that swarmed my torso and limbs, needles like scalpels that flailed from my fingers, a beard of lush moss that clung at my jaw--each and every inch of me coppiced, spinneyed or sown.

I found Him, my Controller, my Master, call Him what you will, at a desk with a telephone and papers piled high. On a wall were maps punctured with pins. He was skewering-in yet more when he saw me.

I went about my work: an incision to the right of the trunk, a deeper cut to the left, then wedges hammered left and right (just as Ken

had taught me). I detached myself from His shouts and screams so that, amid the crimson fountains, I would and did avoid any entanglement of limbs. The fall was a good one.

Now I am here, waiting.

Sometimes, when shadows lengthen on autumn evenings and a coolness stalks the stillness of this lichened churchyard, at that particular hour when moths and bats and owls commence their vespertine callings and when heavy fish rise from dark pools to take the last flies of the day, then, those that pass with prayer books who care to look at the old yew closely may, perhaps, see and know me. For I am here and always shall be. And those that trespass against us shall be right to fear me. Protector. Defender. Saviour. I am the Green Man now.

Giles Rees was a reporter on the staff of British newspapers including the Western Daily Press and the South Wales Argus. Major inquiries he covered included the case of serial killer Fred West and the arrest and trials of Baroness Susan de Stempel. He lived in Russia for a while and taught English at a school in central Moscow, passing the Kremlin on his daily commute. These days he lives in Swansea, Wales, where he likes to comb the beach and walk in Cwmdonkin Park (where Dylan Thomas hung out as a boy). He has had short fiction published in The Waterfront and at The Lonely Crowd. He has been offered a place to undertake a PhD in Creative Writing at Swansea University.

(Flaming) Death from Above

Adam Phillips

We dawdle and the night grows
veins, argent
and inflamed.

Mist tears against the spire.
Hawks drag fog across
the queasy face
of the moon.

Crickets lob themselves
at the sputtering stars,
vitreous eyes
sprawling in the dust.

Most portentously, my pinkies
have gone numb, an unmistakable
harbinger of
practically anything.

Adam Phillips currently splits time between Boise, Idaho, where he makes his living teaching at-risk 8th graders, and Rockaway Beach, Oregon, where he doesn't. He is lucky enough to share both locales with his beautiful brilliant wife and two small strange sons. You can see considerably more of his work this summer when his first novel, Something Like My Name will be published by Caliburn Press. He thanks you profusely for looking at his poem.



Upskirt

Dan Bina

Dan Bina studied Fine Art at the Chicago Academy for the Arts in 2002 and earned his B.F.A. in Painting from the Kansas City Art Institute in 2006. Dan maintains a studio in Brooklyn with his wife, Katya Mezhibovskaya. In 2014 he published a collection of prose poetry titled, iNew York. Dan works in a variety of fine art media and a design partnership called Kahokia. His collected client list includes; Calvin Klein, Reebok, Oscilloscope Labs, Gen Art, Bloomsbury Publishing, Riverhead Books, Simon & Schuster, Pembley, Jacques-Elliot. danbina.com

Lupe

Erren Kelly

Lupe
plays with her cats
when there is no man around
to watch a sunset
with her
she walked the beach
at mariel, as a teenager
her copy of hemingway, in tow
sometimes, she'd find a guy to sit
with her
but she discovered she moved
as well alone
maybe they were afraid
she thought too much?
maybe they couldn't handle

her hips
that couldn't be confined
to any border

now, her tongue finds
peace in another
home
and she dances with her cats
not caring
there's no man to
dance
with her
the swing of her hips
making their own
music

Erren Kelly is a Pushcart nominated poet from Seattle. He has been writing for 25 years and has over 150 publications in print and online in such publications as Hiram Poetry Review, Mudfish, Poetry Magazine (online), Ceremony, Cactus Heart, Similar Peaks, Gloom Cupboard, Poetry Salzburg and other publications. His most recent publication was in The Rain Party and Disaster Society; he has also been published in anthologies such as Fertile Ground, and Beyond The Frontier. His work can also be seen on Youtube under the "Gallery Cabaret" links. Kelly is also the author of the chapbook, Disturbing The Peace, on Night Ballet Press. He received his B.A. in English-Creative Writing from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge.

The Last Day at Captain Billy's

Jill Hand

A FUNNY THING about the impending end of the world is that people still want to eat. You'd think knowing that planet Earth was about to be smashed to smithereens by an enormous asteroid would make everybody lose their appetites, but such is not the case.

Here at Captain Billy's Lobster Pound in Putnam Cove, Maine, nearly every seat is taken on the deck overlooking the water. Inside it's standing room only, as a line of hungry people extends from the front door, past the revolving metal rack that displays postcards depicting lighthouses and moose, up to the linoleum-topped counter.

The tip jar next to the cash register is empty, as is the cash register itself, a hulking brass monster that resembles the love child of a one-armed bandit and one of those old-time penny arcade machines that plays a flickering, black-and-white film of madly grinning flappers dancing the Charleston. The cash register is a relic of a defunct grocery store that was owned by three generations of Bob Maynard's family, all of them gloomy and sour-tempered and completely unsuitable for being in a trade that required them to interact with the public.

Bob Maynard is the owner of Captain Billy's and he's every bit as grim as his forebears. He's in his late sixties, gaunt, grey-haired,

grey-featured, wearing a black baseball cap on which is written: VIETNAM. BEEN THERE, DONE THAT. Bob is occupied in making lobster rolls while taking swigs of Chivas Regal straight from the bottle.

Bob usually wears disposable gloves while preparing lobster rolls and clam rolls and hotdogs and all the other food that's sold at Captain Billy's, but not today. Today his hands are bare and probably none too clean. (He used the restroom with a sign taped to the door saying EMPLOYEES ONLY a few minutes ago and there was no sound of water running in the sink after the toilet flushed.)

That's another funny thing about the end of the world: all those things that you're supposed to do for your own good or for the good of others or because the law requires it, like buckling your seat belt and wearing gloves when preparing meals in a restaurant go right out the window, the reasoning being why bother?

On the whole, the approaching end of the world has made people treat each other better. Bob is a case in point. He used to yell at the waitresses and insult the summer people when they made what he considered to be unreasonable demands, such as asking for sauerkraut on their hotdogs. When that happened, he'd

inform them, venomously, "This is Maine. We don't put that shit on hotdogs here. If you want sauerkraut, go back to New York City." Being an old-school native Mainer, he sneeringly pronounced it New Yak City.

The summer people, the bane of Bob's existence as well as the source of most of his income, have all fled back home to Park Slope or Basking Ridge or Darien, jumping into their BMWs and their Mercedes-Benz SUVs and tearing out of town as soon as they heard the news that the asteroid was going to hit, taking with them their labradoodles and their silly little hipster hats and their children with absurd names like Lennon and Orwell, names that no old-school native Mainer in his or her right mind would ever think of giving a child.

The new Bob, the about-to-be-killed-by-an-asteroid Bob, is almost saintly in his patience and his love for his fellow human beings. When Kristen, the waitress with the nose ring, whom Bob formerly couldn't stand, bumped into him as he stood at the deep-fryer, causing grease from the basket of fried clams he was making to splatter upwards with an alarming hisss, all he said was, "Careful, darlin'." Then he gave her such a melting look of sweet, fatherly affection that it was a beautiful thing to behold.

Bob greeted Natalie Dorr, the town's librarian, by waving the Scotch bottle at her as she stepped up to the counter. "Hiya, Nat! Want a lobster roll? They're free. Everything's free. Why not give it all away, right?"

He took another pull from the bottle and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. Then he added, defensively and completely unnecessarily, since the evidence was plain to see, "I'm having a little drink."

Natalie knew Bob from AA meetings at the Congregational church and the grange hall

and the first aid station over in Edgecomb. She'd been going to AA for almost a year now, and had heard Bob hold forth countless times about how he'd been sober since 1992. She made no comment about the Scotch, although she thought, Ha! Who has more sober time now, Mister Sit Down, Shut Up and Listen? Then she felt bad for having such a mean thought. She told Bob she'd have a lobster roll with mayonnaise on the side, and an unsweetened ice tea.

"You got it," he said snappily. "Have a seat on the deck.

Kristen will bring it out to you."

Out on the deck, there was a stunning view of the cove, hemmed in on two sides by pine trees so dark green they were almost black. Natalie never got tired of that view. I'm going to miss this place, she thought, although since she didn't believe in an afterlife she supposed it was unlikely that she'd have the ability to miss anything, once the asteroid hit.

The lobster boats were bobbing at anchor. None of them had gone out that morning. (Again, why bother?) Gulls, unaware that the world was about to end, flapped and squabbled on the rocky shoreline. The cloudless sky was a tender shade of blue. There was no sign yet of the asteroid. Natalie wondered if it would be visible before it hit, or whether it would be moving too fast to see before everything exploded.

She sat down at one of the knotty pine picnic tables where the varnish was peeling off in brittle, yellow flakes. At the end of the table, one of the guys who worked at the town dump (Natalie thought it was Brad LaVerdie, although the LaVerdie brothers all looked alike, and they all worked at the dump) was giving beer in a blue plastic sippy cup to a baby seated in a high chair. The baby was barefoot,

wearing only a disposable diaper and a Boston Red Sox t-shirt.

"Lookit him! He's a brewsky man," the man proudly announced as the baby grasped the cup with his little hands and chugged down the beer. No one intervened and threatened to call the police or child protective services. One of the summer people probably would have butted in, since they always seemed to have something to say about what children should or shouldn't be allowed to do, but they were gone, and good riddance.

Then Brad (or whichever LaVerdie he was) grew mournful as he gazed at the baby. "Poor little guy," he said. "He ain't gonna live long enough to get laid."

One of his companions, a burly man with a shaved head who wore a sleeveless white t-shirt, the kind sometimes referred to with gleeful political incorrectness as a "wife-beater," loudly stated that he'd gotten laid last night. He went on to explain that it has been a threesome, with his ex-wife and her sister, and they hadn't made him wear no goddamn condom, neither.

That got the attention of Leigh Ann, Bob's girlfriend. She was sitting nearby, pensively smoking a hollowed-out cigar filled with marijuana. Seated next to her were her two young daughters, busily coloring with crayons on the back of paper placemats. Leigh Ann's candy-apple red lipstick was smeared, and her blonde hair, done up in a complicated chignon, was starting to break free of its buttress of bobby pins. Eyes blazing with wrath, and smoke pouring from her mouth so that she resembled an enraged dragon, she told him to shut up.

"Watch your filthy fucking mouth. My kids can hear you," she snarled.

The little girls didn't look up from their coloring. The older one, who looked to be about eight, had drawn a rainbow, under which a terrifying creature that resembled a furious

Gollum wearing a white wig was standing next to what might be a cow.

Leaning over to look, Natalie told her, "That's nice. What is it?"

"Heaven," the child absently replied, busily coloring. She pointed a chewed fingernail at the frightful, white-haired creature. "That's Grandma." Indicating the cow, she said, "That's Goldie, our dog that got run over."

Her sister stopped coloring and squinted indignantly at her. "Goldie didn't get run over. She went to live on a farm, where there's lots of room for her to run around."

"Uh-uh. She got run over. You were at Daddy's. Mom didn't tell you because she knew you'd cry like a big baby," her sister told her smugly.

"Liar! I hate you!" the little girl screamed. She went to punch her sister, who evaded her easily, and laughed.

From the road outside came the sound of an amplified male voice. It would have been nice if it were God, announcing that he'd had second thoughts and had called off the end of the world, but it wasn't. It was Charles Bickford, pastor of the One True Holiness Bible Church, making his opinions known about the cause for the planet's impending doom through the public-address system mounted on top of his truck. The truck was a silver Ford F-150, on which Bible verses were painted in crazily staggering black letters, as if by someone whose zeal had overcome any impulse toward neatness.

"Abortion!" Bickford shouted ecstatically, the feedback from his microphone screeching and warbling. "Homosexuals getting married, sashaying through the streets and forcing their perverted agenda on our children! Taking prayer out of the schools! Women wearing pants! Vegetarians telling us we shouldn't eat the animals that God created especially so we

could eat 'em! Sodom and Gomorrah! This is what you get! This is why the Lord God Almighty sent the asteroid to smite the sinful Earth! Come to the One True Holiness Bible Church and repent! Get saved and you'll be raptured up to Heaven along with us!"

"What an asshole," muttered the guy in the wife-beater. A couple of his companions stuck out their middle fingers in the direction of the truck, which could be seen slowly making its way back toward Townsend Street, where the One True Holiness Bible Church (formerly Sondra's Better Curl hair salon) was located.

Natalie took a bite of lobster roll. It was delicious, filled with large chunks of sweet lobster meat. One thing you could say about Bob was that he made a good lobster roll.

"Hey, Mom," said the elder of the two little girls, looking up from her coloring. "What if Grandma's not in Heaven? What if she got sent to Hell? She called me a little shit one time, and she paid Uncle Douglas five hundred dollars to set her car on fire, so she could say it got stolen and get the insurance money."

Her little sister's eyes grew wide with excitement. Tugging at the hem of her too-small t-shirt that depicted the simpering members of an especially obnoxious boy band, she said, "Grandma's in Hell?"

Her mother took another hit from her blunt and closed her eyes wearily. Releasing a cloud of pungent smoke, she replied.

"No, honey. Grandma's not in Hell. Only really bad people get sent to Hell, like Hitler, and murderers."

"And Mister Harris? He's going to Hell, right? For trying to get us evicted?" the child persisted.

That was their downstairs neighbor. He and Leigh Ann had a long-running feud over the late Goldie's barking and Leigh Ann's parties, which generally began around mid-afternoon

on Fridays with the ominous thud thud thud of rap music and continued, gradually rising in volume, with drunken shouts and screams punctuated by hysterical laughter, until early Monday mornings.

Leigh Ann said probably not, although you never knew; it was God who got to make the final call. Changing the subject, she asked Natalie if she'd heard what had happened to Doc Mosher, the town's ancient general practitioner.

Doc had delivered many of the citizens of Putnam Cove, including Natalie, who had been born forty-eight years previously in the backseat of her parents' Plymouth Belvedere. It had broken down on the way to the hospital. Mosher had happened to come along on his motorcycle and Natalie's father had flagged him down.

"The eighth of August, it was, and hot as blazes. I never heard a newborn scream as loud as you did when I pulled you out in the backseat of that Plymouth," Mosher used to reminisce when Natalie was a little girl and went to his office to get her shots. Her father, if he happened to be there, would always cut in at that point and remark how he never should have traded in the Plymouth for a Dodge Dart that burned oil.

Natalie's parents were dead by now, both having succumbed to cancer. Natalie had suspected that she'd probably get cancer too someday, but thanks to the asteroid, that was no longer a concern.

Doc Mosher, Leigh Ann told her, was dead as of that morning, having taken an overdose of sleeping pills. He'd left the drug cabinet unlocked in his office, and posted a note on the front door inviting people to help themselves.

"He was a wonderful man," Leigh Ann said. Natalie agreed. Leigh Ann proffered the

blunt to her, raising her plucked eyebrows in invitation. Natalie declined, shaking her head no. It wouldn't make her feel any better and might make her feel worse.

The sun reflecting off the rippling gray-green water of the cove hurt her eyes. She'd left the house without her sunglasses and had forgotten to put on sunscreen. Her arms were starting to burn. It didn't matter. It would all be over soon.

The men seated at the end of the table were whispering among themselves, furtively glancing at Natalie and guffawing like trolls. One of them spoke up, "Hey, Nat, I got three books overdue at the library. Are you gonna make me pay a fine?"

It was the man who'd given beer to the baby. Natalie was certain by now that it was Brad LaVerdie. The baby, meanwhile, had slid bonelessly down in the high chair until his head was just visible above the tray. He sat there slumped, blinking owlishly, drool dripping from his chin.

Natalie thought (not for the first time) that she was glad she'd never had children. She replied that all fines were waived on account of the asteroid, adding, "Besides, I've never seen you in the library yet, Brad LaVerdie."

There was laughter at that, followed by sudden, shocked silence as the sound of three gunshots rang out in rapid succession from somewhere nearby, followed about thirty seconds later by a fourth.

Bob came out from the kitchen, wiping his hands on a dish towel. Looking in the direction from which the shots had come, he said, "That'll be Frank Osgood, putting his dogs down."

Margaret Spaulding, who ran the Putnam House Bed and Breakfast Inn, asked how many dogs Frank had.

"Three," Bob replied. He turned and went back inside.

Mrs. Spaulding, who came from a moneyed family in Boston and was considered to be hoity-toity by the year-round residents of Putnam Cove, began to cry softly. She blotted her eyes with a lace-edged handkerchief, being careful not to smear her eye makeup. Then she got up from where she'd been sitting in a corner of the deck, under the blue-and-white-striped canvas awning.

Pulling two large diamond rings from her fingers, she handed one to Leigh Ann and one to Natalie. "Here," she said, "I want you to have these." Without another word, she turned and went down the steps that led to the parking lot, carefully holding onto the wooden railing, as her high heels made descending stairs perilous. The roar of the engine of her Lexus starting could be heard coming from the parking lot out front, followed by the splattering sound of gravel being tossed up as she drove rapidly away.

Carbon, thought Natalie, watching the diamond flash and sparkle as she turned the ring over in her hand. It was still warm from Mrs. Spaulding's finger. She found it hard to believe that she'd soon be dead, reduced to her essential elements, of which carbon figured most prominently.

Marie Thibodeaux, who'd been silent up to that point, asked what time it was. Somebody told her it was 1:15. An hour and thirty minutes until the asteroid was expected to strike.

"Oh, my poor fur babies!" Marie moaned, referring to the horde of feral cats that she fed discount-brand cat food from battered aluminum pie tins placed on the frost-upheaved slates of the front walk of her ramshackle house, where she'd lived alone since the death of her mother.

It would be hard to find a less attractive assortment of felines anywhere. Many of them

were missing an eye or an ear, and had oozing sores on their flanks. They slunk through the weeds in Marie's untended yard, having tremendous, yowling fights and producing litter after litter of sickly looking kittens. Marie loved them dearly.

"This is the president's fault," she said. "If he'd spent less money handing out welfare checks to illegal aliens and more on figuring out how to stop asteroids from hitting us, we wouldn't be in this fix."

That sounded completely ridiculous to Natalie, but there was muttered agreement from Brad LaVerdie and his companions.

The president had been on television that morning. He read a brief statement saying there was no question that the asteroid was going to strike, and that nothing could be done to prevent it. He said he and his wife and his cabinet members were all getting together to pray.

"We'll be praying for each and every one of you, and we hope you'll keep us in your prayers," he earnestly told the television audience. There was a long pause as he stared into the camera, at a loss as to what to say next, finally concluding, "May God have mercy on us all."

The president's address was followed by a panel of scientists who somberly discussed such things as what, exactly, was an asteroid, and what were the chances of anyone surviving the impact. (The consensus was that the chances were practically nil.) Next up were two perky newscasters, who debated the issue of whether or not the president was dying his hair. They agreed that it appeared he was.

There had been looting and rioting in some of the larger cities when word got out that the asteroid was coming, but not as much as might have been expected. Reports of human sacrifices being made by members of

a voodoo cult in Haiti in an attempt to ward off the impending apocalypse turned out to be untrue, as was the rumor that there was no asteroid, that it was a hoax perpetrated by a group of internet pranksters who had hacked into NASA's Near Earth Asteroid-Tracking system.

People mainly reacted with shock to the news that the world was about to end. Then came the stampede to houses of worship. Members of the clergy, looking out over their packed audiences, ruefully thought, So this is what it took to bring people in here.

In Putnam Cove, there had been exactly two acts of violence brought about by the approaching asteroid. Lynette Card, upon hearing it wasn't going to be a near-miss, as had originally been reported, but a direct impact, marched over to her mother-in-law's house and rang the doorbell. When the old lady opened the door, Lynette punched her smartly in the face, blackening her eye.

"I've been wanting to do that for thirty years," Lynette told her, to which her mother-in-law replied that she'd never liked Lynette one bit, even though she'd always professed to love her like a daughter. Truth be told, she thought she was a terrible housekeeper, a bad mother, and it was disgusting the way she'd let herself go. Her son, she concluded, smiling savagely, could have done much better for himself.

That settled things. The two of them went their separate ways, both of them feeling much better.

The second act of violence was committed by Herb Michaud, one of the town's selectmen and a pillar of the Congregational church. Herb took a sledgehammer to the front window of a gift shop on Main Street called Downeast Treasures. He'd always wanted to smash a plate-glass window and

he figured that if he was ever going to do it, now was the time. He chose to smash the window of Downeast Treasures because he hated the wares that they sold.

"Bunch of overpriced junk, like those filthy dream-catchers with feathers and beads hanging off them, and those little plastic lighthouses made in China. If I had to walk past there and look at that garbage one more time, I would have gone insane," Herb said, when he turned himself in at the police station. The chief of police told him to go home and try to relax.

Natalie finished her lobster roll and sipped her ice tea. It was a beautiful July day, warm and sunny, with a fresh breeze blowing in off the ocean. She thought it was strange that she wasn't feeling more upset. Perhaps that would change as the time grew closer.

One of the men sitting with Brad LaVerdie spoke. He'd been quiet up to that point, but now he said, "You know what I think? I think everything's gonna turn out okay. I think the space brothers are on their way right now. They're gonna blow the asteroid up with their lasers, or whatever kind of advanced weaponry they're got."

"No kidding?" said Brad, looking interested.

Maybe he was right. It wasn't impossible that space aliens could have been keeping a watchful eye on Earth for a long time, and now, at the eleventh hour, they'd finally make themselves known.

The man who'd advanced the theory took a pull from his bottle of Narragansett beer, belched loudly, and continued. "They'll blow up the asteroid, and then they'll land their spaceship in front of the White House, or maybe even right here, on the town common. Then they'll come out and talk to us. They'll tell us that things are gonna be different from now on. We're gonna stop having wars, and being so materialistic, and start getting along better. Wouldn't that be great?"

There was an excited murmur of conversation. Maybe there'd be a last-minute reprieve. It wasn't out of the question, the universe being such a big place, that help might be coming from somewhere. Please, thought Natalie, please.

The funny thing was, she couldn't have said whether she was pleading for rescue, or for the world to hurry up and end. She looked up at the sky and waited.

Jill Hand's science science fiction/fantasy novella, The Blue Horse, about fun-loving time travelers who search for a rare beast that actually existed, is available from Kellan Publishing. Her work has recently appeared in Bewildering Stories; Cease, Cows; Jersey Devil Press; T. Gene Davis's Speculative Fiction and Weird NJ, among others.

Labor Day

Frank Diamond

“What’s the worst
job you’ve ever had?”

Banter ignites in
a near-empty newsroom
after the paper’s to bed

The hours-long slump
from leaving barbecues,
and family in mid-sizzle

To schlep off to work
recedes to memory like
last week’s mild hangover

The scanner’s crackle
absentmindedly
punctuates trash talk

Waitress, bartender,
lifeguard, cashier;
don’t even bother

Bouncer, boxer
nude model, and —Yes! —
chocolate factory worker

Now we’re cruising
When Grump mentions
driving a Philly cab

One Labor Day
and getting stabbed
twice in one shift

“I would have called
it a night after
the first stabbing.”

BS antenna droop
to half-mast in honor
of the dues we pay

Frank Diamond has 30 years writing and editing experience for newspapers, magazines, and television, and is currently the managing editor of Managed Care Magazine. Diamond has released a novel, The Pilgrim Soul, and a short story collection, Damage Control. He’s had hundreds of articles and columns published in outlets including the Philadelphia Inquirer, Philadelphia Daily News and the Philadelphia Bulletin. His short stories have appeared in Innisfree, Kola: A Black Literary Magazine, Dialogual, and the Zodiac Review. Diamond has had poetry published in Philadelphia Stories, Fox Chase Review, Deltona Howl, Black Bottom Review, and Feile-Festa. Diamond also wrote the Bloom’s Guide (competitor with CliffsNotes) for The Handmaid’s Tale. He lives in Langhorne, Pennsylvania.



Love and Passion 134

Janet O'Neal

July 5, 1995

Robert P. Hansen

If I asked Bob Ross
why my happy little clouds
have started crying,
would he tell me that it's just
a little passing shower?

Robert P. Hansen teaches philosophy courses at a community college and writes in his spare time. He has had over 80 poems and 20 stories published by various magazines. His collections of poetry, short stories, and my novels are currently available as e-books from several retailers. To find out where, check out his blog at: <http://rphansenauthorpoet.wordpress.com>.

Time Goes

Holly Day

The Time Goes

Waiting for Spring, I tore
at the tiny folded wings of a dormant flower
spent all morning watching the animals forage for food
listened to the clock ticking on the kitchen wall.
Instead of breathing, I perched my chin on the windowsill
thought of the world beneath the snow, wished
for frogs and angry baby squirrels
shuddered at incomprehensible desires.
Today I pried apart one of the hard, wooden nubs of lilac
felt the bush shudder beneath my touch as I dared
to see the green leaves curled up inside, heard
the honk of the first Canada geese coming back
thought of melting snow.

Holly Day was born in Hereford, Texas, "The Town Without a Toothache." She and her family currently live in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where she teaches writing classes at the Loft Literary Center. Her published books include the nonfiction books Music Theory for Dummies, Music Composition for Dummies, Guitar All-in-One for Dummies, Piano All-in-One for Dummies, A Brief History of Northeast Minneapolis; the poetry books Late-Night Reading for Hardworking Construction Men (The Moon Publishing) and The Smell of Snow (ELJ Publications); and a novel, The Book Of (Damnation Books). Her needlepoints and beadwork have recently appeared on the covers of The Grey Sparrow Journal, QWERTY Magazine, and Kiki Magazine.