LebaNon-Sequitur
2012

Editors

Annette Beamesderfer
Brett Stumphcy
Deb Lovett

Cover Photo

Creepy Baby

Errol Wizda
For all the call numbers retrieved and the reference questions answered—

For her guidance of this journal—

And for her friendship—

We dedicate this year’s *LebaNon-Sequitur* to Deb Lovett and wish her all the best.
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Woman With a Parasol

Rebekah Wolfe

Who makes it to a blissful field
Where golden flowers beneath feet
Carrying no pain,
Are never crushed as you walk by?

Where light illuminates every detail, and
Crisp umbrella overhead
Spares you from uncomfortable warmth, where
These clouds so close,
No rain, no snow
Just brings a breeze
Soft as an infant's toes, or
To where your
Shadow spares the
Delicate grass from eventual
Overheating,
Or dryness,
So they do not fear your shadow
And it does not haunt you,
Yes, you, who made it this far, this beautifully, you,

What did you do different than I?
Did Innocence keep you, did youth cling to your skin,
your words, your shadows?
For I, I must escape artificially,
Through chemically
Altered things, I cannot recall, I hide,
Reside behind imagined dreams, which
My mind,
Has not been as kind, to
Even give to me in sleep.
The penitent, gothic silence of arches

Echo against speckled granite—

The cold whispers shivers

And goose bumps

Until fractured stain

Patterns dance arabesques

Of dust motes

The color of mother’s

Perfume
American God

Aj Brar

Self-preservation is the golden rule
Be damned those who ask for charity and who hinder the ultimate agenda
The cost is blood
Beg, borrow, or steal
Pay the tribute to enter the temple in which all men are gods, and the fate of millions are secure
Rape, pillage, slay my pinstripe warrior
Bring me your virgin dollar and watch me forsake you
Self-preservation is the golden rule
Pay me tribute, and I’ll redeem your cost
Hang up your pinstripe soul and dine with the gods
Smoke Asher cigars and let the smoke become the cloud that cuts through the immortal skyline
My prince, your queen is copper and she beckons to your subjects safe harbor
Toil in soil they redeem your cost and secure your interest
Self-preservation is the golden rule
Endure the tempest
Take with you what you can
Blind yourself to others,
And keep to the problem at hand
Renew and rebuild the shrine in which you will pay me homage
With it your subjects, to whom she beckons
Once again you will look down on your kingdom where, Profit will reckon.

Self-preservation is the golden rule.
The Figure

Ashley Sheaffer

Her feet pound out an unrecognizable beat. She whips her head around to see behind. It’s still there, the shadowy figure following. She turns back around, her icy strands of hair whipping her face like a cat-of-nine. She slides around the corner, her patent shoes finding no grasp. She falls, face first onto the cold wet ground, tears running paths down red, scratched cheeks. The shards of ice an un-ending bombardment from the sky, she sits with labored breath. She looks up from beneath the cobweb of hair. The figure is still following, leisurely. It seems to be in no hurry. As though it knows she’s already in its trap and the gate has closed. She pushes from the ground with bruised, stinging palms. She feels nausea welling up, the burn trailing up into her mouth. She swallows down the fire in her mouth and pushes on. Questions flail about in her mind as she resumes the song of desperation on the concrete below her feet. She wonders if God would have mercy and someone, anyone would brave the storm this night and be outside. She wonders who or what is following her, but is too afraid to stop and find out.

She cries out, beseeching the dark clouds above if this is the night she will die, that God will show some mercy. Her legs grow weak but she dare not stop her retreat. She stumbles over the uneven crack in the sidewalk and steadies herself on a brick doorway. Peeking her darkly shadowed eyes around the cracked side, she see the figure still advancing at the same steady pace. She ducks back into the doorway. She tries to figure about how long she has to catch her breath. Not enough. Her mind is tired, too little sleep, too much exertion. She knows she has a choice, just let the figure overwhelm her, or take it on. She can’t go on anymore. She slides down the rough brick, pulling snags in her thick, drenched sweater. But what does it matter, when tomorrow she’ll be a mound in the ground. Or will she? A sense of empowerment and strength comes over her.
She stands up, bracing herself on the wall. She won’t go down easily, she decides. Her legs are shaking, her eyes still shadowed. But now, her soul has a mission, a demand. She will not back down. The slow calculated steps are near now, as she waits around the corner. The steps stop, she looks up into the dripping dreary sky and remembers that she really is not all alone. He’s there, watching, helping, directing. With renewed spirit she springs around the corner. There is nothing. No figure, no threat.

Just anticipation.

Belgian Food: Before and After

Amanda Juretic
Somewhere Between Coitus and Combat

Justin Peiffer

Lioness heart, with a speed-bag’s tempo
Jabbing palpitations slip past my guard
My defense falls light and gentle as snow
I counter with a head-butt, diamond hard
A straight-necked strike, she opens and she swells
Like a bear-trap, her clinch ensnares, eats me
Discipline breaks, a formless Philly-Shell
Dirty boxing, hands left go recklessly
A stoppage, it doesn’t go the distance
Ends before her anaconda-vice bites
The towel having been thrown in by conscience
The corner-man who threw away the night
Amidst passion lay our bodies marred
Love, painful and eternal, battle-scars
Love, at the Movies for J  (act 2, scene 2)

Brett Stumphy

Soft, your hand in mine
framed by silver
to peek upon images,
images-strung together-
pink-
ecstatic-
flashing dozens of kisses
per second before parting-
like a moon to light
your cheek-the taste
of your smile, my love-
flickering-
and the frame rate
increasing to listless
in my seat to follow
the lines of your lips
like happy daggers-
silently-rapt-your eyes-
twinned like stars
in rival orbit-flashing
images, images, to eek
out love
in the crowded dark-
to rival the pale screen
amid the hush
through which I’d reach
to touch-
and kiss,
each time you were kissable-
dozens per second
with no release-lost
in this airy region
of your eyes, more potent
than any tomb
to hold me
upon
that cheek
I hope I'll always remember what you're like,
And I hope you never change it.
I know time will pull away most days
And the memories of past days, and
The memories of better days, but
I still see my happiness reflecting in
The black of your eyes,
Raising slight the corners of your lips, which
I had secretly, longed to love,
Shortly,
And quietly.
But it was not so.
It was better somehow to know my dreams could
Take me lovingly to better days,
As the imagined leprosy of a patterned
Floral skirt, the dyedblueflowerstains echo a plea to be
Lifted and felt.
But it will not be so.
“Oh the places we will go”

Amanda Juretic
“times ∞”

Ashley Sheaffer

Sunlight filters in
Eyelashes flutter up
Feet slide from covers
Tapping ice cold wood

Moving through motions
Smiles and jokes
Lick lips
Face expressionless

Stars rise
Feet slip under covers
Leaving cold wood
Eyelashes flutter down
Fate

Rachel L. Umstead

Fate, a cruel, heartless child,
Plays with people’s lives as he joyfully sings.
When those lives hang on by a thin thread,
Fate carelessly plucks at their strings.

Here a wife grieving, recently widowed;
There a father saddened by the loss of a son.
To Fate, they are merely helpless toys
There to manipulate for sheer fun.

People’s struggles, to Fate, are jokes—
A baby’s pitiful cries are his laughter.
Torments and trials make him dance with joy,
A death to him is happily ever after.

Still, Fate can be tamed and controlled.
His meddlesome tricks aren’t always seen.
Every once in a while good things happen
When his Mother, Destiny, intervenes.
Bonsai

Katie McCrary

Bonsai tree, bonsai tree,
    Creeping quaint and quietly,
Outside of the rain-stained window pane,
Brewing, stewing slews of potent potpourri,
    With just one hit his soul is slain.

Bonsai tree slyly slips inside his feeble mind,
    Without a whisper, without a whine,
To steal the hunger from his smoldering eyes.
His dignity slithers down its crooked spine,
    Entangling him in its twisted twine,
Mutating my love into a monster I despise.

He is a wilted leaf, warped and withered.  
    Stiff and still, he shook and shivered,
Left to conquer the unforgiving breeze.
His lips spew a slovenly, sludgy sleaze.  
As the devils’ ridicule brings him to his knees.

A boost of winter serenades the air.  
    His voice trembles with despair.
I plead, bonsai tree, please give him back to me.  
Choke, choke, choking on his prayer, 
    His heart is loveless and bare.
Bonsai tree, please don't take him away from me.
The Train
Katie Trainer

The smoke filled senses of these pool ball lenses
Leave my eyes strong and bright
So I say my goodbyes while my pathways collide
And I venture off into the night.

This sidewalk is one with my own inner sun—
While this soul promotes me to glide.
And to an ear’s glance, I heard the last chance—
So I run wildly, toward the lights.

The bar falls parallel to my ever quick excel —
I breathe and my life has no strain.
But the hazy nights shown, that I feel most at home
On these nights when I am racing the train.
There is a woman. She has many different facets to her personality. She is the manifestation of a hundred archetypes, both feminine and masculine. She is a collection of cells somehow biologically linked together to form a unified whole, collectively known as “She”, a woman. Not two, four, or eight women, but a, singular, woman. Take away her singularity, and the woman is nothing, is composed of nothing, cannot be represented by any definition or word, is no longer a woman or a man or a person, place, or thing. Nothing does not mean “nothing”. Nothing means [ ] the space between the brackets (Do not fill in the blanks).

This woman is made of all the parts that constitute a living human being- flesh, blood, bones, a beating heart. Time is slowly asphyxiating her, recycling the matter she is composed of, replacing old cells with new, remodeling her biotic body into something different, yet still always older and never younger. There is no difference between her and “everybody else.” She is one cell in the conglomeration of everybody and will be replaced as such. Nothing can keep up-to-date with time. Even “modern” is antiquated. Even so, the woman confronts her fifteen minutes of fame, but who is ever contented with fate? [The word “death” may be used in place of the word “fate.” Or any word. It doesn't matter.]

She stands in front of her looking glass, notes that the term “looking glass” is archaic, feels a vague sense of comfort knowing this. Her reflection is unrecognizable, always reversed, flat and two-dimensional. Once she read an article claiming that people tend to see themselves as less attractive than others view them as being. Something about the way people can't see their personality or mannerisms when looking into a mirror. This intellectually resonates within the woman. She understands she will never view herself as an object the way others can. Many others before her have reached this same understanding, have written books about it, have philosophically expounded on the subject, have influ-
enced the woman herself in coming to this supposition.

This understanding does not surprise her in the least. The understanding is more of a thought, one she often has, one many people have, had, and will have. She doesn’t make a habit of dwelling on the thought—she has many pointless thoughts. Her thoughts become pretentiously unpretentious. In her head, she takes on the affectation of some new poetry she had read, poetry of which she hadn’t decided whether she liked or disliked. She thinks—

“I like Times New Roman.
Times New Roman is so passé.
Everyone compliments me on my style.
I think I have good style, but it doesn’t matter.
apparently capitalization is also passé now and sometimes even punctuation
line breaks too but it really isn’t anything
new and avant-garde
unexpectation is an anachronism
pretty much. my computer won’t allow me to get away with a
lower case I. as if lower case letters weren’t already tedious
Enough.
I pity bakers
Who think
they are made of butter.
why must I always be capitalized I is so self-satisfied
I does not exist there is no-
Self
Thing(s)
are (is) exactly as they seem but aren’t real”
And then the woman realizes that it doesn’t matter all that much whether she likes it (the poetry) or not. Time will replace it, remodel it into something new and different, yet always older and never younger. She walks back to the mirror, notes that one day the word “mirror” will be obsolete, feels a vague sense of comfort knowing this. Her reflection still looks unrecognizable, reversed, flat and two-dimensional, but she is not sure this time if the mirror or her physical body, as she perceives it be, exists. She turns away from her reflection, finding solipsism her new raison d’être. This is not the first time she has come to this conclusion, nor is she the first person to. Tomorrow she will come to a new conclusion, a new raison d’être. Tomorrow she will breathe and eat and “go to the bathroom” and think and sleep. Tomorrow almost everyone will breathe and eat and “go to the bathroom” and think and sleep (unless they die or are dying). Tomorrow people will live and die.

Tyrant Lizard and Man: Leaping Lizards!

Amanda Juretic
The Night Path

George R. Appelt Jr.

At 43, I should not have been afraid of the dark, but I still held my breath as I stepped out into the chilly night air. The door to my parents' house clicked closed behind me with a finality that emphasized I was on my own. Standing on their back steps, with only the yellow glow of the porch light, I realized I had stayed too long and would now have to walk home alone in the dark.

A wave of cold dread started in my stomach and settled in my chest like an icy knot, and I cursed myself for walking. My house waited less than a quarter of a mile away at a far corner of my parents' farm. To reach it, I had to follow a path through the old apple orchard and a massive cornfield.

Darkness was the problem. Perhaps because I'm a suspense writer or maybe just a coward, I imagined silhouettes shaped like demons hiding in every patch of darkness.

Earlier in the afternoon when I came to visit my parents, I had followed the trail we had worn into the earth between our two homes, not paying any attention to the dried out corn stalks ready for harvest, or the overgrown high weeds in the apple orchard, but after sundown the world changed.

Studying the shadows that clung to the trees and bushes like torn cobwebs, I inched toward the pathway.

Somewhere a fire spewed acrid smoke into the night sky. The sulfuric scent of burning coal hung heavy in the air. I imagined the dark smoke slithering through the night sky like a giant snake. The stench conjured images of hell and brimstone. The sinister flames may have blazed miles away or just over the next hill, I had no way to tell.

I searched the darkness for signs of invisible assailants, but found nothing. My hands felt unnaturally cold, and I balled my hands into fists to stop them from trembling.

The porch light's illumination failed to reach beyond the border of the yard, and I drew in a ragged breath as I reached the edge of darkness. Pausing to let my eyes adjust, I
felt a heightened sense of awareness. I could almost see the dark figures crouched among the gnarled apple trees waiting to spring out at me.

Behind me, my parents’ house loomed. Safe passage home waited just inside, all I had to do was go back and ask my father to drive me home. Only my pride halted me. I could hear his amused taunts if I returned to ask for a ride, “You’re not really afraid of the dark at your age?” Although good natured it would still feel like an indictment against my manhood.

That same pride and fear of appearing foolish compelled me to say “no” when my mother had asked if I wanted to borrow a flashlight. “That’s OK,” I had said making an excuse, “I’ll just forget to return it to you later.”

Pride is a hard taskmaster.

Night sounds in late fall were sparse. Only the season’s last dried apple leaves rattled overhead to disturb the silence.

I reached into my pocket and felt the small pen light on my keychain. I decided to carry it in my hand. The undersized light beam proved an ineffective weapon against the overwhelming night. Outside the tiny circle of light, ink black darkness crowded closer. I thought about the old farmer who had died on the adjoining farm several years ago and the young boy who had drowned in a pond just down the road the previous summer. I could feel their ghosts hovering behind me, the hairs on my neck stood up in anticipation of an icy caress across the skin just above my shirt collar.

Twigs snapped off to my left, and I spun around aiming the pen light in the direction the sound had originated. Remembering my grandfather’s favorite ghost stories, I expected to see an army of undead shuffling toward me. I backed away from the sound, squinting to catch a glimpse of unworldly attackers.

A rotted apple squished under my foot. At least, I prayed it was spoiled fruit. Memories of the large dead possum my daughter and I had found at the edge of the cornfield a few days ago flashed in my mind. It had stared back at us with cold black eyes. Its mouth fixed open in a snarl that revealed sharp teeth. A long rat-like tail had forced me to grimace. I hate rats.
“It died in a fight,” my daughter had said.
I had scooped it up with an old ground shovel and tossed it into the hole I had dug. The animal’s one side had been ripped open, and its entrails had spilled out. “Yep.” I agreed, “And from the looks of it, it died fighting something nasty.”

Even in the warm afternoon sunlight, the possum had unnerved me, and I couldn’t wait to bury it. Now, stumbling through the dark orchard, the image prodded me along, that and the sudden thought that whatever had killed the possum may still have lurked close by.

I broke into a sprint. Out of shape from too many hours behind a desk, I sucked in deep mouthfuls of air and ignored the painful stitch in my right side. The light beam bounced around madly as I ran and provided no aid. Rotten apples coated the orchard floor, and my feet slipped on the uneven, wet slickness. The earth rose up in a flash, slamming the air from my lungs as I hit the wet slimy ground. My hands flew open to break my fall, and I lost my grip on the pen light. The sticky warm mire reminded me of the possum’s innards. I choked back bile as I wiped the sticky goo from my fingers on my pants legs.

Snatching up the small light, I aimed it at the ground to be certain I hadn’t just reached into some decaying corpse, not that there logically would have been dead creatures lying around the farm. At this point my imagination fired in overdrive.

Before I could identify the large pools of sticky, red sludge that befouled the orchard floor, the small light faded. I clicked the off switch praying the battery hadn’t completely drained.

The primordial darkness cloaked what sounded like thousands of small creatures scurrying about in among the apple trees.

Immediately I thought of rats.

With more than halfway to go, I wanted turn back. I decided I could face my father’s teasing, but rustling noises among the fallen leaves behind me froze me in place. The night was no longer silent.

A faint hint of the moon emerged from behind heavy clouds and painted meager silver light onto the narrow path
that sliced through the corn field toward my house. Even a hint of light held hope. The scurrying noises were closing in on three sides; the path through the field offered my only retreat.

The corn field covered a hill, and I had to reach the crest before I could see my yard at the end of the path. I stumbled to my feet and pushed on. Even in the frigid autumn air a film of sweat crept down my back.

A breeze rustled through the dried corn stalks. I tried to look everywhere at once. Fleeing down the path, glimpses of movement tugged at my peripheral vision.

Then I realized that the rustling wasn’t the result of a breeze, the snapping of corn stalks grew louder on both sides of me. No longer able to contain my fear, and certain that any moment thousands of large rodents where going to rush out of the darkness and swarm me, I broke into a full run.

The once solid ground beneath my feet gave way like crumbling dirt. No matter how fast I ran, my feet sank into the soft earth like it was mud, like the darkness swallowed them.

A barn owl’s screech pierced the night.

Gasping for breath, I pushed harder. My heart slammed against my chest wall. The sharp edges of the corn stalk leaves slashed at my face and hands as I crashed past them. My chest squeezed tighter, and fire blazed in my lungs. I was going to have a heart attack. My family would discover my body torn, and ripped like the dead possum, a snarl of defiance frozen on my cold blue lips.

At the top of the hill, I spotted the silhouette of the shed in my back yard. Faint hope erupted like a small candle flame, and I thought maybe I could reach the safety of my home. Something big crashed into my back and snuffed out that flame. It hit me like a sledge hammer between the shoulder blades.

I cried out as the force of the blow knocked me to the ground. Pain stabbed my left palm where a stone bit into my flesh.

This time I clutched the pen light in my right hand even as I tried to break my fall.

The beast’s hot breath huffed in my left ear and on the back of my neck.
I twisted onto my side to pitch off the creature. For all its force, the beast had no weight. As I spun, I jammed on the pen light button and prayed the batteries still held a charge. A thin beam of light bit into the monster, and it screeched again, only this time it was an excruciating cry that shattered the night’s silence. The monster’s form, roughly the size of a man, detonated into thousands of individual shadow fragments, and they fled like wretched creatures in all directions into the surrounding corn stalks.

I gulped in a painful breath and scrambled to my feet. Every muscle hurt. I staggered forward toward the end of the path. Rustling closed in on all sides again, cornstalks cracked, as the shadow shards swarmed through the field.

The pen light hadn’t destroyed the shadow fiend; it had only pissed it off. I lurched forward and picked up speed. I stumbled into my yard, still forty feet from my back porch and ran with all the strength I could summon.

As I closed the distance, I felt the creature pursuing. Too afraid to look back, I sprinted for my house. When I closed within twenty feet the sensors powered on the back porch light. Unlike my parents’ dim bulb, I had installed a halogen spotlight. The back yard blazed into daylight. Another screech ripped through the night.

I didn’t stop, I didn’t look back. I stumbled up the porch steps and into my house, slamming the kitchen door behind me. I stood there panting, safe in the kitchen lights’ glow. The ancient demons had once again been driven back by modern technology. I laughed out loud. Hysteria held me completely in its grip.

My wife greeted me in the kitchen.

I stumbled into her arms trembling from fear and the adrenalin rush. Still out of breath, I couldn’t speak.

The blood drained from her face and she stepped away from me. “What happened to you and your jacket?”

I slipped out of the coat and discovered six long slashes down the back. The fiend had shredded the outside layer of the coat. I started to speak, but the kitchen suddenly plunged into darkness. Something had killed the electrical power to our house. Loud shattering glass on the back door window cut off my answer.
The moments we hold dear, tucked securely in a box at the back of the top shelf, covered by a layer of dust, are never farther than our fingertips. No sooner have we opened the box than we’ve traveled back in time, through baseball cards, sepia stained photos of friends, pets, and lost loves, their letters bound with yarn beneath pressed flowers and concert tickets still humming Hanson’s “MMM Bop” (whether you like it or not).

For this year’s theme, we asked contributors to consider their own Timeless Pieces, the bits of nostalgia stashed away in a box on a shelf, waiting for a glimpse, a touch, to dust away the years and haul the past into the present.
Her hands and face are grayed slightly by years of dirt from too many hours spent in the garden. Her flaming orange hair has grown fuzzy, the ends worse for wear, and her bangs stick up, smashed back against her forehead. Her bonnet and dress are a little crumpled, but the colors haven’t lost their vibrancy. Yellows, greens, reds, and whites form a variety of patterns, each patch stitched into her dress in a haphazard fashion. Diamonds here, circles there, a few plaid ones and the underskirt covered in tiny red and green flowers.

She stares out at the world, her hazel eyes thoughtful, freckles dancing across her nose, a smile tugging up the ends of her small mouth. She is silent, as always, a witness to the passage of time who passes no judgment. No judgment, just a reminder of what was and could have been, and what could still be.

I don’t remember exactly when she arrived in my life. Looking back it seems that she was always there. I know it was sometime before my sixth birthday. She was a doll little different than many of the others that I owned, save for the fact that she bore my name—Holly. Holly Hobbie. As other dolls and stuffed animals disappeared from the house, passed on to other children after years of being shoved into the back of my closet, she remained. Even now she sits on a shelf, her arms opened in welcome, watching patiently as time passes.

I often wonder what she might say if she were real and could voice all that has passed right in front of her. She has witnessed, in some way, every major event in my life. What advice might she offer for the road ahead. What would she think of who I have become? Would she be pleased with who I am or disappointed?

I often look back and see in her the child I was when she first arrived. I was happy and full of life then, afraid of nothing. The world was still full of wonder, joy to be found in the simplest things, like my rock collection, the smell of pine and wood smoke, or playing in the field behind our house. I
was convinced that I could achieve anything with a little vi-
sion and some hard work. If I wanted to be a doctor, join the
circus or become an explorer, there was nothing to stop me.
There was no doubt in my mind that I would do all of that
and more.

In those days my imagination ran rampant. I was al-
ways running off to defend the innocent from evil forces. No
adventure was too fearsome or too big, no feat impossible. I
befriended dragons and ogres as often as I defeated them. I
was the one to rush into battle to save the Prince, not the
other way around. There seems to be nothing capable of
stopping me.

Yet, at some point along the road, something changed.
Things began to stop me. Life intervened and I had no say in
it, like the heart-breaking day I was packed up and moved
across the country, torn from my friends and the open field
where I had disappeared into different worlds. Shortly after,
my Father left. I learned that some battles couldn’t be won.
Fear crept in. I talked less. The stories of my imagination,
now committed to paper, no longer featured strong and fear-
less heroines. Now she was trapped by terrifying beasts, a
victim of circumstances she never seemed to have control of.
She not only needed the Prince to come and save her, she
wanted him to.

I began to see that the changes in myself had bled into
my heroines. In real life I avoided doing things I wanted out
of fear of failure or embarrassment. I stopped singing kar-
aoke and going to theater auditions. My health disintegrated
and I was shuffled from one doctor to the next with no an-
swers to be found. I became the victim, convinced that I
somehow deserved all my ill luck. Good things did not come
to me because I wasn’t good enough; I was damaged. The
people around me turned into enemies, whether they really
were or not. I had lost control of my life along with the will it
would take to get it back.

All the while, Holly Hobbie bore witness to this in si-
lence. Over the years, I often wondered why she had not
fallen to the wayside like so many other toys from my child-
hood. I wondered why I could never bring myself to give her
away. It is only recently that I began to suspect that she is a
reminder of who I was and who I could still return to.
Obviously we can’t go back to the innocence of childhoods, tempting though it may be. But perhaps we can regain that childlike belief that we can do anything, that fearlessness of spirit that drives us to greatness. Perhaps by keeping old Holly around I have given myself a constant, nagging reminder to not give in to my own baseless fears. She is a reminder to think of that happy child, to mix and match patterns that don’t go together and to realize that no matter how worn around the edges we might be, we can still have value. She is a reminder to seize life with a child’s reckless abandon.

So she remains on her shelf, watching whatever comes, her small, private smile a quiet reassurance that some things can be reclaimed. It is never too late to try out for that new play or belt out your favorite song at karaoke. You can still be the doctor, the circus performed or the great explorer. It is our job to not forget that and to not become a silent witness of our own lives, but an active participant in the adventure.
Locket
Deborah Jarecki-Bybee

A silver cross centered in a mother-of-pearl heart on a heart of gold
Opened... nothing

What She knew -
He was in the army. Tall. Handsome.
A friendly, melodious voice. He asked her to dance.

What She didn't know -
He was a sergeant- 1st platoon. Some of his time was spent at Indian Town Gap. One of her daughters would live near there 50 years later. He played baseball and was good. Good enough to be contacted to play for a professional league farm team before the war.

What He knew -
She was very pretty. Most noticed the striking chestnut hair but he noticed the strands of amber in the sunlight. Her blue-grey eyes were gentle and innocent. It was easy being with the guys, joking, having common interests. With her, he was a little less sure of himself. He knew that he came from an immigrant poor family. What would she think about him if she knew? He had the courage to ask her to dance in the park among the other couples.

What He didn’t know -
She would share with her daughters the story of how they met and they would grow up with the romance of it.
What She knew -
She accepted the dance, and a dinner date. She gave him a photograph of herself, lightly tinted as they were then. She agreed to write to him once he was overseas. She knew that he would write back but wondered what other girls would get his letters.

What She didn’t know -
Hers was the only picture of a young woman in his possession. He wrote to a favorite aunt and some family members but his letters to her were special. There was no one else.

What He knew -
He liked her, thought they had spent so little time together. At 27, he might be ready to settle into a life with her when he came back. If he played pro ball, he’d be able to provide for them. He wondered if she would consider ever leaving her home town, her home state. In one of his letters, he asked her to be “his special girl.” He went to England thinking of her and bought a gold heart locket to send her as soon as he could to let her know how he felt.

What He didn’t know -
She treasured the locket and often showed it to her daughters as she told the story. It would be given to her second daughter, who wore it often.

What She knew -
He sent her a 10 franc note when he landed in France. Unlike the bland U.S. bills, this had vivid pictures, beautiful colors. She kept it and wrote back that she would be his girlfriend.

What She didn’t know -
The picture on the French money, which showed a woman holding a child, made him think of home, family and Her. She didn’t know if he got her letter saying yes to being his.
What She knew -
She continued writing letters and wondered what had happened when the came back. Worried about the returned mail, she wrote his mother.

What She didn’t know -
His mother received notice that He was missing in France, along the German border.

What He knew -
He and his men were running from house to house through the town, avoiding the sniper fire. He got his men safely into a doorway. The river wasn’t too far away. He felt something hit him. Nothing.

What He didn’t know -
One of his men pushed him back towards a medic. He was dead before he fell into the medic’s arms.
His mother would tell Her that he was gone.

What She knew -
She knew He was dead but thought about him over the years. Whenever she saw the locket.

What She didn’t know -
60 years later, His nephew would start seeking information about the uncle he never knew. His family had kept Her picture and the last letter She wrote to his mother.

What She knew -
His nephew found her and she shared her memories with him. She told the story of how they met.

What He didn’t know -
60 years later, His nephew would meet Her and two of her daughters. They would hear about his life. They would see his picture and read some of his letters. She would show the nephew the locket and
She would add the 10 franc note to his nephew’s scrapbook. His memory would touch them and one of her daughters would write.

What She knew -

His nephew used money She gave him to put flowers on His grave when the nephew went to the cemetery in Luxembourg. A dozen roses placed at the white cross bearing his name. Like a blaze of the setting sun bursting from the snow-covered earth.

He knew.

A silver cross centered in a mother-of-pearl heart on a heart of gold

Opened... memories.

Author’s note:

This is a true story with very few changes from the actual events. It occurred during WW II and could have been the story of so many men and women. It happens to be the story of my mother and He was killed December 31, 1944 in a town neat the Saar River. His last letter to his family was written the day before the sniper’s bullet found him. His platoon received notice within a few days of his death that they were being sent home. His nephew visited the cemtery in Luxembourg in 2006. With the money my mother gave him, he put red roses for the grave.

This story is dedicated to my mother, Margaret Druga Jarecki and to the memory of Andrew Garchar, a sergeant in the U.S. Army.
The Constancy of the Corner Hutch

Steffan Bomberger

A word—instability. While most have a grasp of this word’s meaning, I have my own understanding of its potency. For me, instability means family. When I say family, I’m talking about my mother’s tine on the ever-present fork of my family tree. Running rampant through my family is an imbalance, an uncertainty. It isn’t limited to relationships; it runs its way down to the atomic level. There is a sickness, a sorrow no one can explain. The said instability is ever present. I don’t have the ability to count its rapidity of occurrence. I can still feel the tension from a dull haze of anger, a distant gnashing of teeth.

The women who raised me were (and still are) ill, whether they’d admit it or not. None were spared from a generational curse; not my Meem, nor my aunts, and certainly not my mother. In the background of our family portrait there was always a looming, yet decidedly unmentioned sickness of the mind. In a reality created by adulthood, I now know that each of these ladies struggles with, at various levels, bipolar disorder.

So, it wasn’t uncommon for me to experience absolutely glorious, youthful days spent on far-off journeys at concerts, parks, zoos, and museums. However, there were also not too uncommon days during which I was left on my own, days when my Meem or my mother couldn’t bear to get out of bed. Whenever these dismal episodes set in, I went to my pillar of safety, my mainstay of comfort. You see, my Meem has always, since before I can recall, had a corner china closet, no matter where she kept her home. It was a tall, triangular cabinet that was simply stained in Meem’s favorite color, a deep faux redwood. It had a scrolled top piece that flowed into two high-placed, glass-front doors for display. Beneath was an alcove for various goodies and treasures. At the bottom was a set of double doors for hiding toys and trinkets.

In a normal house, it would have held the good china, but, as it belonged to our family, it held nothing quite so practical. Instead, fitting with Meem’s eccentric nature, it has held a trove of many delights that would be the greatest
of discoveries for any young explorer. Although in adulthood it seems to be nothing really unique, my young eyes saw endless opportunities both in its structure and its contents.

This chest of wonders had it all. There was the old fashioned walky toy, which was eternally clowning through its flecked and crackled paint smile. I was told it had been in our family four generations before my time. There were old fashioned jacks and glass marbles, not to mention those glorious shooters which were perfect for tormenting my menagerie. There were the beautiful glass dishes with the most brilliant shades of purple and blue; I was convinced we’d stolen them from royalty. There were the various sculpted snowmen that had become totem items for Meem. Those were really the only things that were off limits, which was fine with me. I thought they were silly.

Then, of course, there were remnants left by my late PawPaw, who offered exotic coins and paper money to me, the world traveler, barely as high as PawPaw’s hip. These tokens captivated me; their various states of antiquity led me to dream of far-off lands that, no doubt, I would one day see.

While so many pieces in this trove go unmentioned, there was one item that always caught my attention. It was an honest to goodness school bell. With its assistance, I would imagine being a teacher in a compact, one-room schoolhouse. This bell would be one of my staple props as I taught imaginary pioneer children in my pretend classroom. If I’d behave during my visits with Meem, once in a while she’d let me ring this extension of my ‘teaching’ arm. I looked forward to it every trip.

When my parents moved back to Pennsylvania for good, we moved in with Meem, and this sent me reeling with excitement. Yes, I would be able to play with her furry friends. Yes, I’d be able to eat her scrumptious confections. And yes, I’d have someone to watch after me other than a random hired hand. But in my six-year-old eyes, I was excited about living under the same roof as that magical hutch. In the following years, my want for this cabinet developed into a need as my family slowly began to decay.

As the days progressed into weeks, and the months churned into years, the mania caused by the most basic chemical imbalance would seep into my life as I watched
these women begin to pull apart in layers. I whittled away many days throughout my childhood playing with contents of the corner hutch. When my mother threatened her aunt with a knife about a phone bill, I sat in the corner hutch. I felt safe there, secure. When my parents fought about money, I sat at its foot and played banker so that I could pay the bills.

When PawPaw walked out on Meem, I was lost in South Africa, mining for jewels that I’d no doubt found in the back of the cabinet. When our Christmas tree slowly turned into a death bush, still in its place at the end of April, there I was, sitting at the foot of the hutch. When one of the ladies went catatonic, I taught my students how to treat their families to truly love one another.

Eventually, Meem lost the house in a settlement to the legacy of my grandfather. She moved in with various family members, then into apartments, and finally, last week, into an assisted living facility. But no matter where she’s gone, the hutch has always gone with her. As the family was moving her belongings, I found myself once again sitting at the foot of the hutch. Many of the things that I’ve since mentally turned into legendary treasure could be seen once more. Reminiscing, new light shone upon these old objects. The walky toy turned out to be a counterfeit. The stolen dishes were won at a carnival. The snowmen were still silly. And the coins were mostly JFK half-dollars.

Amidst all of these misconceptions set into stone by my young mind, I began to reconcile reality and truth to form a more accurate account of my childhood. It then struck me that I hadn’t seen the hand bell. I searched on the top and around the back, because it wasn’t in its usual home in the alcove. I couldn’t see it in the display shelves, so I got down on all fours and started digging in the bottom storage. And there in the back it sat, heavy-laden with dust. I feared that it too would be a disappointment. But the bell, oh the bell, it was still amazing. It was more aged than I had recollected. But beyond that, it was as I remembered it to be, a true schoolteacher’s class bell.

Meem saw me pouring over all my prepubescent memorabilia, and she asked if there was anything I’d like to take with me. I asked for the bell. She graciously handed it to me, and I took it home. Now it sits on display in the center
of my hutch, which I hope someday will become someone else’s treasure trove, someone else’s constant—someone else’s safe haven in the midst of an inconsistent world.

**Mourning Glory**
The Impossibility of Roses

Brett Stumphy

It’s late, and I can smell everything but roses.

Lilies, violets, daisies. Bitter rosemary, its flowers pressed against wrought iron fence posts, thickens the rain. I can smell the gutters gurgling up what the sewers cannot swallow. A woman smokes a stale cigarette beneath a café awning—a door opens and out rushes fresh bread floating in café noisette. Another thirteen steps to the corner where there is wet newspaper and camphor and car exhaust—another woman, this one fragrant of pulse warmed jasmine. I can smell the cemetery mud that clings to my pants, my shoes—to the parcel I’ve stowed beneath my coat, also stained where I had wiped clean my hands. But I cannot smell roses.

Four years and no roses—though there must be roses.

At the corner, smooth pavement veers to cobbled stone and a steep incline. The rain pervades—seeps from the jagged foundation along which the boulevard ascends. I feel along the brick façade of a dark storefront until I find the corner, and I pause—wait—listen. The wind picks up, brings the smell of camphor back. For weeks, now, camphor and a hobbled gait—a shuffling, dragging foot hauled forward by its counterpart. An elderly woman pities my blindness, lays her fingers at my elbow and asks if I need assistance. She calls me “young man,” and her voice cracks, garbled by phlegm dug deep into her chest. “Merci, madame. Je suis essoufflé.” Not until I speak does the shuffled step pause. Its owner stifles a raking, tubercular cough as familiar to me now as the smell of camphor.

The woman grips my elbow, pinches a nerve, and anchors herself to my weight that she might pull herself closer to my ear. Under my coat, I clench my parcel, wrapped in a wet, grave muddied bag stolen, years ago now, from the hotel in which I’d spent the last of the money that afforded my exile. “Bonsoir,” she whispers against another rush of wind,
and she’s gone, leaving an empty pocket of sound, of scent. There is the camphor and a cigarette. A car splashes by. The woman, though, might never have been there at all, save the dull ache radiating from where her knobby-knuckled fingers pinched my elbow. “Adieu,” I think to say. I turn—the necessity of returning her farewell quavering my hand, rustling the plastic bag. She ought not be out in this weather, not with that cough and not with the wind promising a storm. But the scentless silence had obliterated her. There is no one, I’m certain, to whom I might wish “adieu.”

The cold has taken my free hand and numbed it. When I reach for it, the storefront corner is there, but vague, abstracted from texture. It’s late and getting later, and the shuffled step behind me may well be alone—difficult to tell—but it won’t be alone much longer. Exile isn’t what it used to be, or what I’d hoped it would be, or pretended to believe it could be or whatever it was I thought when I left—a refuge from the possible—a sanctuary to hold onto the last vestiges of the impossible. But impossibility loses its prefix with too much handling, and too many here are only here because every choice narrows the passage to finite, implacable, certainty. We are exposed, every one of us. We are reduced to a room, to a cup of coffee, the same cup of coffee to sever us from our bedsheets, the same bedsheets, repeated. Exile is the final condition of the impossible, a vantage from which we look back at the detritus of all that has merely been and all that will ever only merely be. He’s come for it, my hobbled friend. And there isn’t much time.

My fingers curl against what should have been sharp and gritty, and I begin my ascent. Cobbled pavement kicked to hell by a century or so of shifting earth and a steep grade made the boulevard a trial in the best of conditions. Even without the rain backing up the sewers, bursting its tributaries and flooding the street, the hill required diligence. Beyond it, the city loved by tourists—museums, statues, boutiques, and bookstores renowned in snapshots and postcards. It lacked mystery beyond the crest of the hill. Most days began easily enough, following gravity into tucked away avenues lined with elm, with cafés and jazz clubs, with doddering neighborhoods and brothels once filthy with can-can girls and absinthe, where the architects had placed chapels in-
stead of cathedrals. I made my rounds to my usual spots—maybe a little too usual—but what else was left but the usual coffee in the usual place, ensconced in a nave of the usual people.

Every day, the same table, its surface carved with fragments of poetry and something my fingers couldn’t identify no matter how familiar the pattern seemed. The same waitress took my order—though the procedure had modulated some over the four years. We’d become familiar. She stopped asking me for my order. For a few months, she repeated my order, lilting it to a question, her hand at my shoulder. These days, she met me at my table—sat beside—touched my wrist—read me a little of the American poetry she’d been reading. The older men flirt openly with her as only older men can while the younger men fidget. After she’s spent a stanza with me, the owner makes hash of her name—Madeleine. “You have beautiful eyes,” she tells me, and she laughs—that laugh, so much like turning over in fresh linen to purchase a few minutes against the dawn. It’s a new joke and her fingers trace her departure from my wrist to my elbow where she lingers, close to my ear; “À tout à l’heure.”

I never mean to say anything to her, and when I leave, something like regret sloshes about in the shallow pool of coffee collected in my otherwise empty stomach. When I leave, I wait a block or two before I pause and try to remember her perfume, but I can’t remember. The air changes when she’s sitting there—it coils and uncoils—a living knot over which to puzzle—but I can’t recall the fragrance.

From there, I visit Sainte Jeanne, eat the good old ham and cheese on the wooden bench in the shade of a yew, flanked by lilies and sage. On Wednesdays, the priest joins me. I’m one of his flowers in need of tending. His French is clipped and brusque. Those rushed, all but impolite phrases over our lunches betray a simple message that his grumbling won’t admit—he has found time for me on Wednesdays. It isn’t much, but it is something. I thank him by keeping mostly quiet. Certainly I avoid anything more complicated than the weather. When I wish to express my gratitude, I snarl about the tourists crowding into Notre Dame or Sacré Coeur. At those moments, he snaps back with truncated invective, insulting, mainly, my countrymen. There is a gruff
sort of joy to it, these brief flares of jealousy over the cathedrals—their vaulted arches—their chapels stuffed with foreigners craning their necks near to breaking.

I shouldn’t come here, I know, but I can’t stay away. Against the sin, I made a lousy trade and kept myself from the cemetery—a lot like switching from non-filtered to filtered cigarettes and extolling the health benefits. Stupid. Terribly stupid, coming here like this every day, eating for half an hour in the garden, sitting for an hour in the chapel, running my fingers over the wood grain of the pew—always the same pew. A group of women gather here, twice a week, to pray the rosary, taking turns leading the prayer. It’s a treat, like the days Madeleine brings me pastry. I never eat much, and so she always brings something different, searching for the key to an empty plate. She began with her namesake, of course before moving on to brioche, to croissant amande, to pain au chocolat, to mille-feuille, its endless variations of cream and custard, enfolding, guarding strawberry upon secret strawberry, dusted with ground almond until she returns to her name, hoping I’d make the connection. And in those voices of women, chanting, “Hail, Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit,” each voice, flaking beatitudes of age, exchanging an elderly voice, quavering, for another, now sardonic, for sullied middle age, until youth, maybe five, maybe six years old, effusive, bold, “pray for us sinners, now and in the hour of our death.”

Sweetly unreflective, and proud, she recites the mysteries—each decade counted more like hopscotch than prayer—the stone clacking against the chalked pavement—the singing recitation of each number until she lifts the stone and returns, triumphant.

And before her voice returns, I raise myself from the creaking pew and shamble away, let the layers of voices hide her away again, the recitation incomplete.

And that’s when I heard it first, that infernal cough at the back of the church. That cough, behind me now, following me upon my endless return to this hill, this time covered in cemetery mud, carrying the last impossible something I’d secreted away in my exile, the last impossible something I knew they’d come for eventually. I couldn’t hide it forever.
Couldn’t even keep it from myself, sitting each day in St. Jeanne’s without a prayer for a passport, thinking the virgin would pray for me, regardless. Each time, each day, with and without the rosary, that cough and, later, the camphor to soothe whatever injury he’d done himself that made him shuffle along behind me, tracking every step, recording every boulevard.

Perhaps it isn’t him, I’d told myself—I tell myself, even now, my shoulder leaned against gravity like a stone I must carry to the top of the hill at the end of each day, which had begun easily enough. But the return, dogged now by that shuffled step, that cough—that cough like the woman at the corner who’d whispered “bon soir” before disappearing into an empty pocket of Parisian midnight. He had the same phlegm deep in his chest, the same rasping breath, taken, in that cough to its terminal stage. Perhaps it isn’t him. He’d never followed me this far before, the cobbled stone slipping away with the rain beneath us. Sometimes, he’d followed me—it must have been him—it must have been him, that hobbled gait leaving off at the foot of the hill. I’d lumber on, each night, as I lumbered now, clawing at the wall that girds the boulevard, shrinking to merely a curb as the hill crowned to only another plateau. Deep below, he’d wait, I’m sure, until I disappeared. If I doubted it, a fit possessed him and clamored from brick to brick until it reached me.

Before the camphor and the shuffled step, I heard that tubercular bark hacking its way from the depths, unearthing bits of forgotten breath, moldered and dank. In the café, plied with pastry and steamed milk, I heard that rattled breath convulse from somewhere near the door. Always, he kept himself between my surest hope of egress and me. If it hadn’t been for the cough, I don’t know that I could have been certain that exile hadn’t corroded my will to its paranoid foundations. I couldn’t have hoped to remain here forever, undiscovered. They have a way of dredging every secret from the bed of every river and laying it out on the banks, exposed to flash bulbs and note pads. Crowds would gather and whisper speculation like scalpels—worse than scalpels to drag even deeper secrets from sinew and bone. Rivers upon rivers, they’ll haul the depths to the surface and flay it wide for everyone to read.
I didn’t pay him much mind. What’s another old man dying in the City of Light? But then I heard that cough, the following day, out on the streets, beside a flower cart peddling lilies and tulips to celebrate a wet Spring. And, again, that stertorous wheeze at the back of St. Jeanne’s and then following me, at a discreet distance—what I imagined a discreet distance—but Paris plays romantic tricks with sound, with smell, just as, I’m sure, it plays with light. Furtive conversations bend to sonata, to saxophone riffs like cathedral bells competing over the rooftops come Sunday. By the end of that first week, a third of the city huffed and gulped and spit bloody wads of lung from tiers of windows at the pavement for rats to nibble and scarf.

It could be anybody, anybody. A cough is common enough, I told myself—I tell myself. But the camphor accompanied a dragging limp, sometimes at the café, but not always, and sometimes at St. Jeanne’s—increasingly at St. Jeanne’s—and always behind me, following me to the foot of the boulevard where he waited for me to disappear so that he could safely report my day to the others—and there must be others. I can hear them, murmuring about the weather or complaining about the currency exchange. My shadow stops at la boucherie to haggle over prices, and he’s replaced by a young couple, pretending to be tourists, quibbling over the directions given them by some well-meaning local who has long since abandoned maps and geometry in favor of some inner, whimsical compass that will never point North. They’ve had enough, they’d have me believe, of open air in a queer place. They want to find where they belong, where imperious architects have erected ramparts against ceaseless rain and foreign discourse. They want to go home, but their hotel will do.

And this morning, before the cemetery mud and this parcel, improbably heavy for something so slight, a distinctly American voice in the café, a young man in his idealistic twenties, pretends an interest in Madeleine’s book. She’d tried reading me a passage or two of lyric prose, written in this neighborhood, a few blocks over, in late night reverie over a typewriter following jazz and wine and women for a few precious francs. Great, delirious expostulations on the impossibilities of Paris, of bohemian parties, garrulous and effusive of
poetry and art, where the kitchen yuks and shortles brandy—Madeleine aspirated every sibilant and murmured vowel like lipstick translated from her lips to mine. The kitchen erupts—sloshing eau de vie—while, in the parlor, the author plies a girl ten years his junior, no more than twenty, her cheeks plump, her eyes as soft as hazel nut—the kind of girl every expatriate dreams of defiling, and here she was. And he, just there, effusive of theology, of the feast of Sainte Jeanne, the garlands of flowers laid at her feet.

Hell-bent on possessing every inch of every lover, that writer, seething with passion, had jotted notes in his journal in this café, had fallen in love with some petulant, olive-skinned gypsy, made gloweringly beautiful by an undeserved self-righteousness that veered from generosity to abuse. With a silver coin, she carved runes in the tabletop—gypsy curses, dark magic, and her lips, impossibly pink against that dark complexion, voiceless, pronounced each spell, each brooding verdict until there was only her there, ensconced in an aureole like an almond at the center of which she pouts intoxication. Those lips obliterate the world and start over from scratch.

The coughing had followed me from the boulevard to the café, so I hadn’t much use for Madeleine this morning. She approached me with her usual cheer, no matter my insouciance. Instead of receiving and returning her “bon matin,” I listened for the bell above the door, but it did not ring. Instead, the old man kept on. Perhaps he crossed the street. Perhaps he returned to whatever hole he’d crawled out of. Madeleine had finished her fevered reading of expatriate Paris and my café noisette had gone all but cold before I quit listening for his return, for that tinny bell to chime. I might have convinced myself it was paranoia after all—no one could know about the book, I told myself—she’d given it to me—only to me—and then she was gone—and then it was only this darkness—this sinking darkness—pulled downward by deeper currents, jealous of the dry, bright land to which I’d return. I’m nobody, really. How would they even know to find me? But that’s when the American starts in with Madeleine about the book she’s reading, that she’d read to me while I sat here, not really listening to any of it. He asks if she can point him to any of the author’s old haunts, and is it
true the gypsy girl carved the notches in all these tables—
“cause they look like just nicks and such to me. Is it really
magic? And what about Sainte Jeanne’s? Where can I find
it?”

And that’s when I know that the old man hasn’t gone
back to wherever, that he hasn’t pushed on, that it isn’t para-
noia. He’s handed me off to this American, if he’s American.
The accent is too nasal, the kind of accent European’s put on
when they want to pretend they’re American and want to let
you know what they think of us. I know, just then, that the
old man will be waiting for me at Sainte Jeanne’s. They know
the book is nearby, but they haven’t quite figured out where.
Sure, the general location, but that’s easy enough. For too
long, I’ve stupidly maintained a narrow orbit around it. For
weeks, I’m sure of it, they’ve been searching whatever random
nook, whatever arbitrary niche—probably tore up, first, the
loose floorboards in my apartment—looked for false bottoms
in the cabinets, in drawers of my Spartan bureau. I’d picked
the spot by random, feeling along from tomb to tomb until
something felt right, and so there was no code to crack, and it
frustrated them. Now they wanted me to know that they were
closing in, force me to make a move—apply pressure.

“Maybe when you get off work, you can show me
around a bit.” The American lays it on thick, but the further
he takes it, the more it seems plausible—maybe he is only a
tourist, coming on with the local help.

I need away from here. Gone. To some place that
doesn’t even exist. Just let the current take me.

And that’s when Madeleine lays her hand on my wrist
and asks me if I want a fresh cup? Perhaps something else?
I don’t seem quite myself today. Would I like some company?
Her shift ends in an hour, she says, and there’s a sudden
flush of rage draining to emptiness, to loneliness. I could kill
her, I think. Why can’t she leave me alone? I didn’t ask for
this attention. For this invitation, whatever it might be. But
I did, I know. I keep coming here, sitting in the same place,
and I listen to her, drifting near the surface, not quite content
to let the current drag me deeper than her voice.

It happens without me. So very much happens with-
out me and leaves me helpless to direct the outcome. Before
the last bit of her fingers could quit my wrist, I seize hers and
hold her here. She goes rigid. The owner—I can feel him at a
distance, no longer speaking to one of his regulars, but sud-
denly quiet. A similar expectation paralyzes each surround-
ing table. The American, I know, smiles, ruefully—cocksure.
He has me. He knows it. But Madeleine leans against me, luxuriant, generous—supple as any saint. The patrons re-
turn to their coffee and their newspapers and their gossip and
the owner forgets all about it. He’s got a business to run.
Her cheek swims up out of the scentless haze of her perfume.
I want to ask her about that fragrance about which I’ve long
had my suspicions. I want to hold her, to listen to her read
pages upon pages of poetry about kisses dancing from ear to
throat like schizophrenic butterflies dividing into swarms. I
want to ask her about the American behind me. Does she
remember the other man, the one who smells of camphor?
But every question refuses to budge. Each one falters and
falls back in a fetid heap in my throat. She waits. I want to
be anywhere but here, anywhere but near her, and then I ask
her the only thing important to ask her. “Étiez-vous jamais
dans l’amour?”

For a moment, her forehead rested against mine, only
long enough for me to know it had happened, to know with
certainty that I had not misremembered or misinterpreted,
but not so long that anyone else might have noticed, save,
perhaps, the American. “J’ai pensé ainsi, une fois. Mais
non—pas encore.” It had been a long time since I’d heard any
voice lilt the way hers lilted. Her effusive camaraderie and
her flirtation left her. Only Madeleine, the impossible depths
of Madeleine, remained, unadorned—sincere. “Et vous?”

And you, held tight, still wet with cemetery mud, the
last impossible something still fluid, still buried deep in
drowning darkness where it could be anything. Its smaller
than I remember, almost as if there were nothing at all be-
neath the plastic in which I’d wrapped it. All that’s left of
you, disappearing in my hand, beneath my coat, the book
subtracts something from me—needles prick my fingers,
thread themselves with the nerves that run the length of my
arm and spread, dividing, forking, taking not one path but
every path to ever destination, inventing destinations. My
heart races. My cheeks flush. Somewhere, an owl, eyes like
saucers, admitting more light than the world has light to give,
pins me to the spot, dizzy and exhausted, my blood pressure dropping, everything soaking into the parcel. A reflex to keep me fainting, my diaphragm contracts, squeezes as much force against my ribs as it can, forcing a coughing jag to push blood to my brain. The owl doesn’t belong here. Its small, gypsy voice, hoots the Aegean. Its feathers ruffle against the rain. A chorus of that owl surrounds me, gathers me into its saucer eyes and swallows me. For a moment, there are shadows—there is movement—the cottage where the owl has nested, tucked into a crevice adjacent to my apartment above the main floor converted to a cramped bar a century ago.

Approaching, a young couple, quickly aging but still holding tight, laughing against the cold, illuminated by street-lamps—a two-headed monstrosity that couldn’t care less about anything but each other. From the labyrinth of streets, of boulevards, of alleys, they have embraced each path, narrowing their progress to this street, at this hour, their shadows evaporating again to darkness. The owl perches, silent, but still vigilant. My blood pressure rises. My cheeks cool. And they pass by the gate, tucked away as it is behind a knee-high fence, composed of drift wood ossified to relics, hedged by thick shrubbery and guarded over by an interrupted maple, knotted and arched to frame the door. Beneath the pungent aroma of pine, wispy tendrils of cigarettes and booze leaks from every crevice. Ivy, freshly blooming, tumbles from the eaves, conspiring with the tuft of leaves drooping from that maple, so brutally curtailed, I cannot slink past without stopping, even tonight, to trace with my fingers its furrowed flesh.

Inside, a scratch broken melody tinkers from piano and voice, revolving on a Victrola that’s been on its last legs since the last World War. I recognize the record. They play it every night. It means it’s getting late, but they’ve an hour more they might store up to keep them against the impending dawn. Dominated by the rain in the trees and against the pavement and by the sound of each other’s voice, the young couple cannot hear the voice vibrating in the vinyl. They cannot smell the cigarettes, the alcohol—cannot imagine the men on the other side of that maple, carousing in that cottage, singing along with the record about nothing, no nothing at all. *Je ne regrette rien—ni le bien qu’on m’a fait—ni le mal.*
No, nothing at all, burning memory with every drink, to keep them warm, when a single, haggard voice, unconvinced of its own outrage, bursts from the cottage. I've heard the man before, his voice stripped to thread bare and lonesome sheets, aggressive and apologetic by turns, as if he could not settle on the man he now wished to be after a lifetime of being some other man, with some other voice, in some other place, with a woman who loved him instead of this record reminding him, and without these others inflaming the wound that they could laugh it away and buy him another round—balayé, oublié. It's their way. I've listened to them, memorized the rhythms. They prod their cohort, flirt with a sore spot they've come to know as well as they know their own—conjure screaming, if uncertain, pain only to anesthetize it with prurient winks and beers and laughter, more laughter to sweep it away, forget the whole thing.

Supervised by nicotine stained harlequins and can-can girls hanging like dingy stained glass from the walls, they've proven a point and on they sing while the young couple passes by and my world steadies, even as fluid soaked lungs hack on the boulevard below me.

He's closing in.

Around the corner, a brief alley, and I'm at the back of the cottage, at the foot of the stairs to the second floor, the attic converted to a single room apartment—enough for a hot plate, for a chest of drawers, for a twin bed, a stiff cot on which to rest myself, to curl against the wall and watch the door until sleep overcomes me. On the stairs, I can hear him in the courtyard, mixed with the chorus of men inside, singing loudly now, their hope for tomorrow. The book writhes in my hand like a fist full of earthworms, wriggling, growing to stinging asps. And I remember, my fingers from your shoulder, ascending the back of your neck, to wrap themselves in your hair, fragrant of a flower I cannot smell. Not any more. There, the shadows again, now splotched with color—pink and darker, to burgundy like the color of your lips, rouged to smoky wine, left to stain the glass on the nightstand beside your bed.

I'm sorry—tottering on the stairs—the long descent gaping beneath me—following you into the dark.

That's all? You're sorry?
The world weeps to omnipresent rain and the last stair before my Spring-numbed hand may fumble with the key and open the door.

I can still smell the snuffed votive, sitting on the bureau—a paltry remembrance beside the conflagration at St. Jeanne’s in celebration of her feast, commemorating her immolation. Madeleine had brought me here after I’d waited an hour for the American to leave, after I’d waited an hour more to be certain I wouldn’t find him loitering outside, after I’d waited another hour yet because I’m sorry. Please. Forgive me, in the dark, her perfume like the garlands of flowers laid by children at Jeanne’s marble feet, the saint tucked into a nave like the hollow of your throat collecting petals upon petals. She helped me select an unlit candle from the growing congregation of flame. She took me by the elbow and led me to my pew. She put her lips to my ear and she bid me “bon soir.” There were friends waiting for her. She would see me in the morning. Her lips grazed my cheek, and she was gone, vanished into some pocket of space absent of sound, absent of aroma, though the air still thick with her perfume. But I wasn’t alone. From somewhere, mingled with the myrrh, scattered by the swinging censer at morning mass, camphor insinuated itself.

It climbs the stairs and crawls under my door, across the bare wood to where I kneel beside my cot. On the other side of the wall, the owl hoots. Even through stone and wood and plaster, it sees me, on my knees, peeling plastic like cutting eyelids to unblinking devotion. I miss you, and he’ll be here soon. I can smell him, and my knee hurts. There’s blood, I think, or maybe its only mud, from rushing among the graves, banging against a headstone and falling in the muck and the mire. Rivers upon rivers of mud kick up bodies—I’ve betrayed too many people, hiding you from sudden, uncertain outrage and hobbled enemies who drown, day by day, in the fluid that collects in their lungs until there’s an animated corpse soused in camphor at my door.

Sainte Jeanne, protect me.

I fell at her feet and I begged her, please, I’m sorry, please. Made enough of a scene that the priest called un policier to remove me from the property, to stuff me in the back of a car, to get me out of there and away from him. If only I’d
stayed away, but I couldn’t stay away. Je suis désolé, mon cher. I couldn’t live like this anymore, forgetting and forgetting, trying hard to swallow the rain sodden tumor in my throat where once your lips kindled ash to fire. I took the garland of scentless flowers from the feet of the virgin and tore them to petals, and I spit invective until they carted me away, and that should have been the end of it. The priest spoke on my behalf, begged them take pity on a blind orphan—a prodigal son who sat with him on Wednesdays for half an hour, who kept him company.

They returned me here, and that should have been the end of it. Every egress has cut me off from every other possible egress, and now there’s only this—a simple choice. I couldn’t remain here, not like this, not with them knowing, not with them closing in on me. Either I could leave you—consign you, forever, to that shallow grave, or I could hold you again, if only for the last time, and I need to hold you and to remember. So I returned, knowing they’d be waiting for me, knowing they knew me as well as I knew myself. Below me, that chorus of drunken men rummage through one last melody that might have been any number of songs they all happened to know, howling a variety of slurred, haphazard lyrics cobbled together into a club footed monstrosity too ugly to survive anywhere other than the tucked away hearts of men pickled by memory. The plastic peels away from leather stamped with hieroglyphs like gypsy poetry to cast a spell and obliterate the world with fire. Happy, happy, they sing, happy to die, tossing heartbreak into bottomless love. Speak softly, they sing. Je vois la vie en rose, and I rushed through the cemetery and banged my knee against a headstone and fell, wrist deep in mud—the earthworms like fingers to assure me, the earthworms like your hair twisting to asps.

I felt my way among the tombs, touching the faces of angels, of granite faces in anguish until I found you, seated on an altar, your slender back, long and languid, a garland, a ring of posies hanging from your hand, your bare foot raised at the heel, your toes grazing the wet grass. My head in your lap, weeping, I kissed your hip, but you turned away and left me, kneeling in the mud to dig at the base of the stone and pull the book from its listless grave. Already, I could smell the sewers vomiting the rain, and I could smell the yew in the
garden, fragrant of pine, the night blooming jasmine and the cigarettes on the rue—already the camphor smell, mingled with myrrh.

He's there, I know it. Just on the other side of the door, he's standing there, refusing entry. Every yesterday he's ever known, putrescent in his lungs, garbles his breathing, but he can't stop remembering, even if to save himself, hacking up rainwater and regret. With or without the book, it'll kill him. He'll die, strangled by remembering, and I hope it hurts. I hope it hurts like hell, cracking the spine to find a page, any page, my fingers on paper like your torso, etching permutations of you, of me, of us, each hidden synapse a well of ink to sink every line deep enough no one will ever haul it up, bloated and bruised and call it a shame. Too many corpses, and I'll be another one soon enough, and we'll rest together at the bottom of the river, and I'll write a Paris from hip to knee and cover your thigh with an immolated saint, bathing in the river—some Jeanne, some Madeleine, some you, only you, a million times over, my knee aching from chasing you down the stairs, the night you left me for the last time.

He's there, I know it. Kick it down already, dragging the dead weight of my right foot behind me to follow you through 3 AM, climbing the hill that separates my apartment from yours, chasing you, the pain of it searing a sprained knee or worse. Missed the last step and buckled and now this dragging, hobbled step to chase you through the rain. Cold, wet air rakes my lungs. The world tips to dizzy, every particle of me that I dare call me, vacating—my fingers on a blank page, down on my knees, the journal opened on this cot like an altar where you sit, and I hold your knees and kiss your hip. And when I look up, there you are—a saint in a nave—lithe, vivid, your olive skin like smoldering shadow upon shadow, uncoiling, hypnotic—asps, like roses, blooming everywhere your fingers find me. He's there, and he means to kill me, I'm sure of it—kill me and leave me here, slumped over this cot absent of these blank pages just as you left me in your bed, absent of you, coughing a cold, wet Spring from my lungs, calling your name.

I press my face to the pages like bedsheets, and I've been robbing graves to find just the words to say like the
words I scrawled with fingertips against your ribs, to cover your back, descending to a shudder. Your wrist seized, eyes, as big as any owl, feasting on snakes, raving—I could write us on these pages a million times over and never reach the limit of all the things we could be, but when I hold your wrist, the sewers choke on the rain. Why doesn’t he just kick in the door and end it, please, end it. I’m sorry. All those words—all those images, images, vaulting, ecstatic, to clamor your vaulted ribs, to seek the limits of revelation where secrecy asserts roses—you smell like roses—your perfume when I met you over coffee, when I kiss you in the doorway, drenched in omnipresent rain—roses, I’m sorry. But every word cancels a million other words made impossible, the permutations dying in the rivers upon rivers, like shadow upon shadow, the cross currents just under your skin to drag me under until only, “I’m sorry,” and it isn’t enough.

What are you waiting for? What? Please, end it, the dawn encroaching upon an empty bed. Somewhere in a worm-riddled dream, a fist full of your hair coiling to a hiss, you kissed me, maybe, and didn’t say goodbye. Please, no more. A bullet. The Seine. Let the currents pull me into deeper shadow upon shadow. Let me keep a final secret and bury me in silt, somehow blessedly too deep down in the gloom and the garbage, the pages upon crumpled pages of poetry about gypsy lovers who steal your sight with a kiss, who bring you burbling up from your loneliness—about olive skinned waitresses who would love you if you loved her, now and then, who you’d chase through the rain at 3AM, who’d leave you on the street, coughing her name, twisting in bedsheets empty of everything but the journal she’d bought you because she wanted poetry—poetry scrawled over paper like her skin, etched to burning—embers of words to obliterate every sin that leads us to parting in a doorway, loitering, a moment longer. I’m on my knees, swallowed in bedsheets—please, now, please, mon cher, the book open to any page is as good as another when every page is you. And when my fingers reach you, waiting on ink, I see you, there, always there, leaving, but never leaving, your complexion carved from the shadow, lingering and lithe in a nave or a door, the morning sun, an aureole to burn you to rose petals, floating in flame.
Leaves

Errol Wizda
Featured Writer

Joan Weaver

Introduction

There she was 20 years ago in a white blouse, black slacks, and a permed “do” with curls that wobbled when she moved her head. She had a way of leaning one hand on a desk while she looked into your eyes as the conversation went on. She’d smile and pay close attention; maybe she’d laugh her chuckle and add a comment; her eyes were friendly, warm, intense. She was listening for stories.

No one knows how or when Joan Weaver became an accomplished storyteller, but it probably has something to do with her ability to remember the tiniest details about things that she heard or things that happened long ago, or maybe it has to do with her keen interest in just about everything.

Then, again, maybe all those books, magazines, and newspapers she’s read have influenced her writing, or perhaps it’s that she would rather write a story, poem, or essay than watch a television program just for something to do.

It might also be that over the years she’s read so many student essays, known so many students, visited with so many friends, too, that she was carrying around too so many ideas and she had to put pen to paper. For us, it really doesn’t matter how she came to be an inspiring and entertaining writer; we’re just glad she did.

Congratulations, Joan; the recognition is well deserved.

Yolanda Lauria
Bake Sale

Joan Weaver

He was her only child, gone now, no one will ever know why.
He might have been running late,
anxious about class that night.
It’s hard for her to pass the spot,
marked by his father’s Guard unit,
along the highway, near the park.
This is her first winter without him in twenty years,
the first she will miss him at Christmas and his January birthday.
She wants him remembered, she hugs me for coming,
for talking about him,
for letting her talk about him.
On the lobby table are the cookies, cakes, and cupcakes
she and her sister, wearing Santa hats, baked yesterday.
They have packaged them in holiday cellophane,
red and white ribbons carefully tied, curled.
She can’t do anything for her son now, but she
will do everything, always, with him in mind,
thinks now how the pretty bows
show him how much she loves him.
First Daughter

Joan Weaver

I carried a bunch of lilacs in a Mason jar to the passenger side of the Trooper and handed them to my sister. My brother-in-law groaned.

"Where are you going to put those?"

Susie and I giggled, took a breath, and chorused, "I'll just hold them between my feet." Our husbands looked at each other and rolled their eyes. We were turning into Elsie Kurr again. Next thing we knew, we'd be saving empty cracker boxes to carry pies to picnics.

Watching me scan farm-and-garden catalogues and sprout alfalfa seeds in our 1971 inner city apartment, John used to joke that I was practicing to be my grandmother. I always laughed, but not too hard. Elsie was strong in all her seven grandchildren. But I was the oldest, the first daughter of her first daughter, as she herself had been. There was a pine milk cupboard waiting for me in her house, passed for generations in her family from first daughter to first daughter. It would be my mother's next, then mine.

A year later, in California, I tore open the letter from my mother.

"Susie and Terry are going to buy the farm from Grandma," I read. "She just doesn't feel as if she can keep it up anymore the way she used to. She wanted to rent it to them, but they talked her into selling it to them instead."

"I'll be damned," I told John. "Well, I'm glad Susie's buying the farm. I was always afraid I'd have to."

From the time I could walk, I followed my grandmother around her sunny bungalow half a block up the
street, or played on the dining room floor with the paper dolls my aunt had left behind. I could hear my grandmother whistling while she dusted furniture or rolled pie dough. She could hit all the notes, even the high ones that cracked her alto voice. She'd call me when there was enough dough left so I could roll my own cookie-sized pie and let me wash dishes, even the glasses, standing on a bench. But as soon as the house was in order, we'd go out to her garden.

"That's a tiger swallowtail," she'd point. She'd pull a couple of weeds while I edged the bouquet I was making with violet leaves. "And here's a cocoon. If we take it in the house, we can watch the butterfly hatch out."

She had lived on the edge of the country all her life. She'd grown flowers and vegetables in whatever beds or garden space she had. But one Saturday afternoon when I was six, my mother came home from a farm auction with my grandparents.

"How would you like to live at a farm where you can pick strawberries and wade in a stream?"

I thought I'd like that. "Are we going to have cows?"

"Our family's only going to live there in the summer, like at camp. It's going to be Grandma and Grandpa's farm. But they're going to let us stay there, and we'll all help fix it up."

For Christmas that year Grandma's children gave her a subscription to *Organic Gardening*. She began putting in peach and cherry trees, composted eggshells and coffee grounds, and handed out beans and tomatoes from the first garden of her life that was big enough to satisfy her. Some years later, when I spent a summer week or two at the farm with her and Grandpa, we'd turn out pans full of baked apples—always in pieces, after she cut out the spots, but still smelling of cinnamon and good with milk before bed. I didn't like the weeding or tying paper bags over bunches of grapes to save them from bugs and birds. But when I turned twelve,
she let me use the power mower.

"Be careful where you mow over here," she would caution. "This plant came up of itself, and I want to see what it turns out to be." Twenty years later my brother-in-law was still coming across her plant-protecting jars and lidless tin cans with his mower.

"Joan, come on; I'm ready to go for Grandma."

After my grandfather died in 1956, my mother made the trip to fetch Grandma every Saturday. From early spring until late November, the farm was her home. All week my grandmother pruned grapevines, pulled poison ivy, and chopped off burdock till her hands were weed-stained. On Sunday morning she fretted that her hands looked awful, then pulled on a pair of white gloves and went to church. But church was ten miles from the farm, near our house in Lebanon, and Grandma was one of many women of her generation who never learned to drive.

Often there were bunches of flowers to be squeezed into the back seat of the Buick, especially if Grandma was arranging church altar flowers that weekend or taking flowers to the cemetery.

"Here, Joan, you hold the peonies between your feet, and I'll hold the lilacs," she'd direct. "Now, Christine, do you have room in the trunk for these vases?"

There were her parents' and grandparents' graves to decorate at Kimmerling's Church Cemetery, and my grandfather's at Mt. Lebanon. I pumped water and poured it into the vases and watched my grandmother and mother divide out the flowers.

"Esther Siegrist's mother asked me if I'd do the flowers for Esther's wedding! My, I wonder what I'll have blooming. I haven't done wedding flowers since Ruth got married." Older now, she relished more than ever her reputation as Bringer of Flowers for All Celebrations.
She spent her 92nd winter with my aunt in Tucson. My mother phoned me the afternoon before Mother's Day.

"Grandma's home. Tom just got here with her. I'd like to bring her out to the farm tomorrow."

"That would be nice," I said.

What would she think, I wondered. Since John and I had moved there the previous October, I'd thought often of my sister's lament: "No matter how hard we try, she always finds something I haven't done." And I remembered the sting when my grandmother had asked my mother how she'd managed to bring up two such terrible housekeepers. It had been ten years since Elsie Kurr had gardened at the farm, and it looked it.

I kissed her hello at the car door.

"Oh, my, look at how that lilac bush is doing!" she said over my shoulder. "The new ones just don't have such deep color. You should prune out that dead stuff in the middle. Now this is a tree peony. I see it's coming back—a branch fell on it two years ago and broke it off. I'd get rid of this privet. And black walnuts kill tomatoes, did you know that? When I think of all the black walnuts I stuck in the ground to sprout! I thought they'd be valuable some day!"

From plant to plant we went, Elsie's royal progress. She reminded me of each one's genealogy—"I got this from Mrs. Stupp"; nodded encouragement—"This fragrant viburnum looks better than it did a few years ago"; dispensed advice—"That wisteria is going to choke the spirea. I'd cut it off."

A year later she was gone, the first first-daughter. The milk cupboard took its place in my mother's dining room.

But in April her tulips and daffodils bloom at the farm, then the flowering almond and lilacs. I've lost her rhubarb and tree peony, but her fragrant viburnum is flourishing. And at Memorial Day - Decoration Day, she called it -
I shove a bucket of sweet rocket and lemon lilies into my old blue Datsun. If I drive carefully, I can keep it from spilling till I get to my mother's house.

Then she can hold it between her feet till we get to the cemetery.

**Winter Haiku 2011**

Joan Weaver

Even garlic mustard—
beautiful now,
emerald scalloped with frost.

No dark eclipse
bites this full moon
but brightening dawn absorbs
its pearl-white disc.

Old yellow cat,
without me you'd be dead.
Your purr tells me you know.
Strings

Joan Weaver

She holds her basket in front of her, grasping with two hands. She rarely uses a cart, not in this market, with crowded aisles and skimpy space to line up for checkout. It’s a discount place, stocked with soon-to-expire or just-expired goods. You need to examine carefully, but if you do, you can get some good buys.

The basket is heavier than she expected, with dollar loaves of whole wheat bread, a couple of grapefruit, and a bag of carrots. She likes to buy locally grown produce, but this time of year there’s nothing but stuff from Florida and California in any of the stores. She chooses the shortest line behind a man with a lightly loaded cart. He sees her smaller order, insists she take his place behind the two women whose groceries the cashier is scanning.

“Go ahead, you just have a few things,” the man says. He’s about her age, wearing a navy blue baseball cap with a sports logo she should recognize but doesn’t. He looks a little like her cousin Joe, with a friendly, open face. “You don’t have much. Hey, you don’t have to hold that basket,” he says. “Here, put it down on my cart. There on the edge, yeah. You don’t have to stand there and hold it.”

She has encountered generous gestures like this before. Sometimes they’re open-hearted, sometimes attached to expectations, buying her time and attention. But she can’t gracefully decline his offer. Those two women are taking an awfully long time.

“I like this place,” he says. “I was over to Horning’s the other day. I like that place, too. And the box store. I know that guy, known him for years. I used to take him Shuey’s pretzels. I’m the Shuey man.” He grins a little.

“Do you work there?” she asks politely.
“No, I’m retired from Reese’s. I go over and pick up pretzels at Shuey’s. That guy and I used to work on a golf fundraiser. No, I worked at Reese’s all my life. Listen, I grew up on a farm over at Grantville. We were poor.” He says he was one of twelve children, that his father worked the farm with mule and horses, a hard life, and died at 47.

She steals a glance over her shoulder. There is some difficulty with the account of one of the women, she sees. The cashier is patient, checking the register, trying to find the reason the woman’s payment is not going through.

She begins to say she remembers farmers using mules, especially in the northern part of the county, that her father borrowed a neighbor’s mule to break ground in the spring. But the man isn’t listening. He is talking about death.

“I buried my wife nine years ago. Yeah, cancer. And yesterday, my brother.” She makes the expected sounds of sympathy.

They are trapped, she thinks, he in his need to talk, maybe especially to a woman, she in a lifetime of habitual politeness. Does he feel this, she wonders, the desperate longing to break the connection, go their separate ways? Maybe he’s as powerless as she.

In a parallel universe, her alternative self offers a sad smile and asks, "How old was your wife?" And when they have both finished checking out and he has asked her out for coffee, she accepts and lets him tell his life story. In this one, she shifts to her other foot and hopes the woman’s payment is accepted quickly.

He has gone on to his service in the Korean War, to his conviction that it will happen again. His eyes are narrow now, his jaw set. “There’s a young crazy guy in charge there. He wants war. He’s going to push the button one of these days. Everything’ll go up, just like that. Yeah. It could happen one of these days. And nobody’s doing anything. Just talk, that’s all. Talk, talk, talk.”
She is not going to say bullshit, what does he think the Occupy Wall Street movement is about, they’re actually doing something, what the hell is he doing but talking, talking to a woman, the way he has done his whole life, from back when women, no, girls, were glad a boy like him was paying attention to them, no need for him to listen to anything they have to say, stuck in his own world view. She is not going to call him an asshole, taking advantage of somebody else’s good manners to spew his reactionary political theories. She will do that in yet another parallel universe, maybe the one in which she used to call the pickup artists on Ste. Catherine Street sexist pigs.

She is not going to say it with anything but her body, which cannot help twisting away from him and his cart, her hands grasping her basket. She has seen an opening in the next line over, and she leaps into the escape it offers.
Endnotes

We hope you have enjoyed reading this year’s literary journal, the LebaNon-Sequitur. Thanks to all the students, staff, and faculty who submitted their works.

The journal is published at the end of the Spring semester each year. We welcome submissions. The deadline for submissions for the 2013 literary journal is March 15, 2013.

If you are interested in submitting an essay, memoir, story, photograph, drawing or sketch, please contact Dr. Brett Stumphy, English Department or Annette Damato Beamesderfer in the Learning Center. All entries must be accompanied by your name, address, phone number, email address and the title of the work(s) submitted.

You will be contacted when your work has been selected for the journal. Once accepted, you must submit you work to the editor in an electronic format.

You can submit your entries as well as any questions you may have to the following email: LebanonLiteraryJournal@hacc.edu