

# RUNDELANIA



Petite gare (1880), by Isaac Levitan. Levitan House Museum, Plyos, Russia.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### POETRY

<b>Poem by Alfred Jarry</b> by Anna Gatto .....	4
<b>A Phone Call to Manhattan</b> by David Kramer .....	5
<b>World Without End</b> by Celie Katovitch .....	6
<b>Eucharisto</b> by Kitty Jospé .....	7
<b>Echolocation</b> by Kitty Jospé .....	8
<b>Tears</b> by Ken Bremer .....	9
<b>It is Cramped Here Along this Wall</b> by Alex C. Tiemen .....	9
<b>Remission: My Hope for Your Future</b> by V.B. Amin .....	10
<b>A Response to Your Love Ransom Note</b> by Juan E. Gama .....	11
<b>Candid Dawns</b> by Cheyenne Zaremba .....	12
<b>What!</b> by Felix Barbone .....	13
<b>Life</b> by Eldridge McClaney.....	15

### PROSE

<b>Dr. Bump</b> by Bruce Thines.....	16
<b>Co-Creating</b> by Inga Songbird.....	18
<b>Two Goners and Charlie Russell (and the gun)</b> by Th. Metzger .....	20
<b>These Things Happen</b> by Dennis Fridd .....	22
<b>Fragment of ‘Monster’</b> by S.Y. Eng .....	23
<b>A Beautiful Lie: For the Screen</b> by Paul Young.....	24
<b>The Toad Exodus</b> by Mary K. Grant.....	26
<b>Fifty Large</b> by Michael Yaworsky .....	28
<b>Dust Motes in Grandma Pistner’s Upstairs Room</b> by Sara Rubin.....	30
<b>Days to Remember: The Monstrosity</b> by Lisa Kleman .....	31
<b>The Disciple</b> - a play by Ronald J. Buttarazzi Sr. ....	32
<b>Messed Up Bernie</b> (cartoon) by Jacob Yaple.....	34
<b>Window on the World</b> by Wendy Burwell .....	35
<b>Stand Up, Be Counted</b> by Alicia Beckwith .....	36
<b>Hunger and Money</b> by Jarrad Ackert .....	38
<b>A Family of Swimmers</b> by Rich Moll.....	39
<b>The Storm</b> by Michael Tuburdyke.....	40
<b>The Great Thurston Road Cook-Off</b> by Gerald Button .....	42
<b>Challenges Facing Genetics and Materialism</b> by Ted Christopher.....	43

**poem by Alfred Jarry**

*translated by Anna Gatto*

I do not know if my brother has forgotten me  
But I feel all alone, immensely,  
With his dear, beloved head pale  
Gone pale in the distance, far away, in the struggles  
of a memory that lies.  
I have his portrait in front of me on the table,  
I do not know if he was ugly or beautiful.  
The Double is empty, void and in vain as a tomb.  
I have lost his voice, his own adorable voice.  
Precise and as though pushed to falsetto on purpose.  
Perhaps he doesn't know this, posthumous treasure.  
From these words, the voice is suddenly evoked  
A broken and caressing feather.

Je ne sais pas si mon frère m'oublie  
Mais je me sens tout seul, immensément,  
Avec loin la chère tête apalée  
Dans les essais d'un souvenir qui ment.  
J'ai son portrait devant moi sur la table,  
Je ne sais pas s'il était laid ou beau.  
Le Double est vide et vain comme un tombeau.  
J'ai perdu sa voix, sa voix adorable,  
Juste et qui semble faite fausse exprès.  
Peut-être il l'ignore, trésor posthume.  
Hors de la lettre elle s'évoque, très  
Soudain cassée

## A Phone Call to Manhattan

by David Kramer

We had made love in a Narragansett beach house as the  
Beavertail Lighthouse

Sent continual beacons of light through the window whose  
rhythm matched our own.

And the call was never made.

At three in the morning, pushing me down into wood  
chips

Scattered about the Children's Garden

In Peace Dale.

And the call was never made.

A red sweater on a cool Fall evening in Providence  
In whose cuteness I saw  
Grandchildren at my feet at eighty.  
And the single phone call to Manhattan  
That it would have taken  
Was never made.

*David Kramer is a published author, poet and journalist.  
He is a professor of English at Keuka College and runs the  
online magazine, Talker of the Town.*

## World Without End

or, *'On my way to the Public Library  
to Pick Up Li Po's Selected Poems, I  
See an Optical Illusion Created by  
Garbage'*

by Celie Katovitch

Plastic bag, milk carton, and fold  
of aluminum.

They gather themselves,  
shining,  
blown upright by the wind,

into three white birds

there in a line  
against  
the fence.

My God,

Even these dull eyes that miss so  
much  
cannot help but transform  
the sin-bittered world  
into

something beautiful.

*Celie Katovitch serves as pastor  
of the First Universalist Church of  
Rochester, around the corner from  
the Central Library.*



En Route: December 31, 2018

### Eucharisto

by Kitty Jospé

I learn it means thank you in modern Greek,  
but carries the reciprocal meaning of gift  
granted and received— how an overtone sneaks  
in to imply exchange of grace

like these trees, more like wraiths in space  
behind the foreground of highway, dividing  
yellow line, guardrail...they stretch  
empty branches— each naked twig pliant—  
receiving the rising fog like a shroud.

It is New Year's eve, and as we speed on,  
it feels as if the old year has prepared its shroud,  
and the trees receive the rising fog, dancing the new

their dance beckoning us to journey beyond  
our clocked time, to timeless grace.

## Echolocation

by Kitty Jospé

Do you remember the game we used to play,  
you say Marco and I say Polo  
until we find each other?  
So, what a surprise to say day  
and you say break  
and I realize you too are thinking  
of the wonder at how the earth  
keeps turning, offering everywhere,  
for someone a new day starting.  
Imagine if we could echolocate,  
every time we lose the words  
we need. As if each thank  
were waiting for a  
you to receive it—  
each thought finding just  
the word to deliver it on cue.  
I say rough and you know  
it's a question of draft,  
and you continue with wrapped  
and I say delicious  
as we unwrap the possibilities.

*Kitty Jospé is a published author and poet who loves  
facilitating poetry appreciation and collaborations with  
word, art and music.*

## Tears

by Ken Bremer

Tears, idle tears,  
Flowing as a salty river,  
Down the face of the one who is betrayed,  
Lied to,  
Or pitied for recompense,  
For the truth,  
Understood gradually,  
In all its bitter surprise,  
From the land of blissful ignorance,  
With Eden's tempting fruit and sweet lies,  
Ending,  
In the cloudy land,  
Of the present day.

*(from: Imagine: New and Selected Poems 1998-2014,  
America Star Books.)*

## It is Cramped Here Along this Wall

by Alex C. Tiemen

It is cramped here along this wall  
that pushes the elbow inward –  
jawbone, toys with a mind;  
thoughts leaning toward the end  
perspective having planed.

## Remission: My Hope for Your Future

by V.B. Amin

*Deceased donor.*

*Perfect match.*

*Blood-type the same.*

*No recurrence.*

Now you have a kidney,  
and it works just fine.  
No more dialysis,  
like when you were nine.

19

29

The next 'nines' will be better.  
But you'll remember your struggle,  
when reading this letter.

And remember you should,  
all the days of your life,  
that ages two through ten  
were utterly rife  
with hospital stays  
and needles beyond number,  
and that through it all,  
you were

a brave,

beautiful,

wonder.

## A Response to Your Love Ransom Note

by Juan E. Gama

Well, thank you for your love ransom,  
but I will pass.

I don't need your romantic puffy platitudes,  
Those fluffy softball-type lobs of love.

I don't need to dream of doe-y lock-eyed stares,  
or heed the dream of soul-mates connected for  
life. (more like inmates of a love prison)

Your ransom demands are moot to me.

Instead, I will live life in the present.

I will enjoy my time with people and  
not try to lock up their future with desperate  
pleas of love.

I will enjoy my time by myself and  
not bend to the societal pressure to pair.  
I will be free of the lonely lure of love.

A stranger's smile is a selfless end in itself.

*Juan E. Gama is a Rochester resident, motorbike  
enthusiast and poet.*

## Candid Dawns

by Cheyenne Zaremba

When you wake up in the morning,  
you will find the bitter taste of the sun  
on your tongue and let it linger there—despite  
its bite—because you enjoy its  
refreshing affect.

When you look out your window,  
across the field of weedy flowers  
in the abandoned grocery store  
parking lot, and see the unbroken yolk of a warm  
egg on the horizon  
you will draw your finger through  
the crystallized sugar and salt  
on your window  
and taste it.

You'll make a list of things that are cold.  
Then, you'll make a separate list  
of things that are transparent and draw  
a Venn diagram of where the two  
lists overlap.

When you go back to sleep  
because the house is too quiet and your breath  
fogs the air, you will forget  
about everything you thought of  
in the candid dawn  
until

*Cheyenne Zaremba is a student in the class of 2020 at Roberts Wesleyan College, majoring in Communications with Honors.*

What!



by Felix Barbone

Alabaster hamburger  
upside down fish fry  
multilensed predator fly,  
wax fruit in a hobnailed  
milk glass bowl  
give it a try.

Gravy strainers, police whistles,  
baseballs, inkwells, sad irons,  
candlestick holders, your loose  
change is good here.  
We'll make a buck  
and have some bloody good luck.

Radioactive boars ripping swan's  
flesh that is being recycled by  
sushi merchants selling the  
courage as safe to eat blowfish fillets.

Psychedelic Tibetan werewolves  
roam the wormwood swamps  
searching for more fly agaric  
mushroom clouds growing out  
of discarded viking helmets  
whose rusting iron rims are  
pierced by ancient monster oaks.  
They long for one more taste  
of exploded graphite rods.

Hoping to slaughter dozens of soldiers  
the militants are killed by a herd  
of stampeding boars while at the  
same time a distraught father

kills his 11 month old daughter on  
live tv before committing suicide.

Meanwhile a hundred and fifty  
years earlier a French acrobat  
crosses the Upper Falls of a great  
river on a massive rope strung  
between its banks and stands on  
his head then kneeling dances a jig  
while back in France during  
the roaring twenties a French  
sailor gets smashed at a burlesque  
shows the empty glasses of absinthe  
lined up in front of him his head  
resting on his table with his eyes  
staring blankly as a pretty can-can  
dancer leans against the table and  
lifts up her dress and gives him  
the show he really came for  
and in a daze his jaw drops  
and all that he can say is

What!

*Felix Barbone is a poet, musician and trained ethnologist.  
He is a graduate of SUNY Geneseo and lives on the edge,  
of Center City.*

## Life

by Eldridge McClaney

Spring the rebirth of

Everything that blooms

Like a flower

Lives for a reason,

Dies out a season

To regenerate

Birth of a nation.

*Eldridge McClaney is a Toastmaster, storyteller,  
retired Rochester City School District Teacher and a  
native of Pigeon Creek, Alabama.*

## Dr. Bump

by Bruce Thines

[This is an excerpt from the author's forthcoming story collection, 'Stories From the Elk Hotel'. The entries deal with the strange incidences and shifty characters in and around a fictionalized Rochester boarding house.]

The Elk Hotel is very old, it was built during the 1920s. Back then the Elk had a bowling alley and a swimming pool in the basement and what they called then a Tap Room on the first floor where beer and liquor were served. When first built the hotel was designed to accommodate people that were just passing through. But those days are long gone, new owners have done away with the swimming pool which had so many cracks that it was beyond repair. Gone also are the bowling alley and the first floor Tap Room. The only thing that remains from the old days are the ghosts that roam the halls... The hotel was managed by Mr. Ed Carr and his secretary Sally Salt. The hotel had its own in-house security staff which was recruited by Mr. Carr himself. There were three of us. My name is Lance Boille, and I'm the head of Security...

It was Tuesday morning and Sally said that Ed Carr wanted to see me in his office. His door was open so I walked in. He looked up from his desk and told me in his Darth Vader voice to come in and close the door. He said, "Lance, I think we have a problem." I replied, "What's that boss?" Ed said, "Three of our residents are missing, they haven't been seen in days." I told Ed I would investigate it and get back to him.

The three residents missing were Claude Balls, a schizoid with nine different personalities; Harry Ends who was a chronic masturbator, especially in the TV room when those Progressive Insurance ads were on with that lady Flo; also missing was Brad Foreskin who suffered from dementia, who wore one red shoe and one blue shoe and a tinfoil hat.

My investigation led me to the basement, the entrance secured by a locked gate. The only people who had a key were management and security. I unlocked the gate and started down the stairs. The basement was basically a dumping ground for spare stuff and some power tools, such as a table saw and

a drill press. There were many secured rooms that nobody knew what lied behind them. When I reached the back of the basement I noticed that someone had built a shack out of plywood with a padlocked door. There was a very peculiar smell that came from the shack, it smelled like vinegar. I called Peter our maintenance man and asked him if he knew anything about the room, he said he didn't. I called Ed Carr the manager and asked him if he knew anything about this room. He said no, but he was on his way down.

Ed had some bolt cutters and we snapped the lock off the door. When I opened the door the smell of vinegar and disinfectant overcame us. Inside the room we found the three missing residents. They were strapped to chairs, duct tape secured their heads to make-shift headrests. There was a lot of blood running down their heads because of the holes drilled through their skulls. Tubing ran from a pump into their heads from a bucket containing vinegar, another tube came out the other side and carried brown fluid into a tub.

We called 911, the police and the EMTs arrived. The EMTs very carefully removed the three men from the chairs and got them to the hospital. Ed and I gave the police a full report of what we knew and found.

I had told the police of a resident on the second floor that I was suspicious of. His name was Charles Bump, a.k.a. Dr. Charles Bump. I had learned that Dr. Bump could no longer practice medicine in New York due to unethical procedures he was engaged in. He was a strange man. His skin hung in folds from his face as if he was melting and his nose was a reddish purple with sores all over it. He dressed in forest green with a large green and brown hat adorned with a feather. To top off his attire he wore a huge green and brown great coat, that which a Prussian General would wear. He resembled an aged tree. He would hang around the office a lot talking to Ed and Sally about his medical experience and his general opinions on cures, especially for the mentally ill.

A few days passed and I kept a close eye on Dr. Bump. I finally caught him one morning about 4 a.m. unlocking the gate to the basement. I asked him where he got the key to the gate. He told me Ed gave it to him. I told Dr. Bump to give me the key and that I would check his story out with Mr. Carr in the morning but he refused my request. I told him if he did not give me the key that I would call the police

and charge him with trespassing. He handed me the key reluctantly and fled out the door to the alleyway.

When Ed woke I told him what had happened early in the morning. He was upset about Dr. Bump having a key to the basement and said he didn't give Bump a key. We questioned everyone else who had access to the office and they all said that no way did they give Bump a key. I had wondered if he may have taken someone's key and had a duplicate made, there was that possibility. We checked Bump's room, we wanted to question him. He was not in his room when we arrived but we did find a gallon of apple cider vinegar, some used aquarium hoses, hypodermic needles and couple bottles of Thorazine. I told Sally Salt to keep a look out for him and call me as soon as she saw him come in.

The next day we got a call from Sergeant Fuller of the RPD to meet him at the hospital. He said that one of our tenants had fully recovered and was talking. We met Sergeant Fuller at Strong Hospital and we followed him up to Harry Ends' room. We found Harry sitting up in his bed, his head was bandaged and his eyes were surprisingly clear, he looked good. He said he remembered being in a kind of dimly lit room and he said he remembered Dr. Bump would give him an injection and he would drift off into a deep sleep. Harry thought the whole thing was a dream until he woke up in the hospital with his head bandaged and one hell of a headache. Everything came together after the police talked to him and told him where they found him. We learned from Sergeant Fuller that Claude Balls and Brad Foreskin didn't survive.

Harry fully recovered. He was like a new man, all his old habits just vanished. Flo no longer fascinated him. He totally, miraculously cleaned-up his act. When I last talked to him he was taking classes through a County program to make him eligible for a job. Dr. Bump was later picked-up on the streets of Rochester and charged with two counts of murder.

*Bruce Thines is a 73-year-old retired person. His collection, Stories from the Elk Hotel, is awaiting publication.*

## Co-Creating

by Inga Songbird

My friend Ollie had a tree stump in her garden that she needed cut in half. It was a wish she had held for a very long time. Her husband had left her and she was afraid to ask him.

After seeing how things manifested effortlessly for me, Ollie thought she would give it a try. She wrote on pieces of paper: Wanted – tree stump cut in half, in exchange for a home baked pie and included her phone number. She hung the notes up on a few neighborhood bulletin boards.

A week later Ollie complained, “Nothing happened. I can’t do it like you do.”

“We are two different people, we would create differently,” I explained. I asked to see an example of the paper she used for her ad. Ollie pulled out a little piece of paper the size of a Bazooka bubble gum wrapper.

Ollie asked, “How would you do it?”

I told her that I first would have made the pie, putting the wagon before the horse. Knowing that this would work for me. I then would have walked around with the pie in hand to a hardware store or a construction site, anywhere where there were plenty of men. Men can’t resist a home baked pie. I’ve heard that the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach. I went home leaving Ollie to ponder.

The next day I rode my bicycle to the grocery store. My friends Sophie and Isabella were coming for a visit from Brockport, New York, and I wanted to provide them with a light lunch. Along the way I came across two men cutting down tree branches with power saws. I stopped and asked, “Would you be interested in a home baked raspberry pie in exchange for cutting my friends tree stump in half?”

Are there any other choices of pie?” One of the men asked.

“Any kind you want! My friend Ollie is an incredible baker! She will make any pie that your heart desires!”

Michael Z., the owner of the company asked, “What’s her address?” I was suddenly unsure of her house number. I told him that I would be right back with the information. I rode my bike a block further and found a man tending his lovely garden. I asked if he had a phone book and he graciously obliged. I got back on my bike and gave the house number to Michael. He said he would go to Ollie’s house right after he had completed the job he was working on.

As I rode away I realized that I wasn’t sure where the cutting-line was for the tree stump. I rode another block and came to a man sitting on a park bench in front of a beauty salon. He was holding a cell phone. I asked if I could use it.

“NO!” He snapped.

As I straddled my bike to leave he then said, “I was just kidding.” Happily he dialed Ollie’s number and handed me the phone.

“Hello, Ollie? It’s me Inga.

“I was just walking out the door to go to work,” she said in haste.

“I need to know where the cutting-line is for the tree stump. The tree cutters are on their way to your house.”

“I’ll tie a blue ribbon around the stump where I want them to cut. Bye!”

I proceeded on to my original mission to buy food for my guests. On my way back home from shopping, I stopped at my favorite little antique shop to say a quick hello to the owner, he was the new guy on the block and it was a tradition I created meant to wish him prosperity. It had to be brief as my two friends were coming soon and I was late for their arrival. After my greeting and silent blessing I opened the door to leave and there, coming into the store were Sophie and Isabella! “What are you doing here?” I asked in total astonishment.

“What are you doing here?” They chimed in unison. “You’re supposed to be home making our lunch!”

My friends are big time shoppers and know the city like the back of their hands but they missed the exit to my house and were perplexed as to why that happened. There are no accidents. They had decided to check out

the little antique shop before coming to my house. They had wanted to go there many times over, but always seemed to run out of time.

I told them I was going directly home and would await their arrival. On my way I passed the tree trimmers who announced they were on their way to Ollie's house.

Once at home, my phone rang. It was Michael, "Jobs done!"

A few minutes later there was a knock at my door. It was Sophie and Isabella. My friend Sophie ended up buying a \$200 coffee table from the new guy on the block. She lives on a fixed income. The fact that she bought anything at all was a miracle onto itself!

The most powerful thing a person can do for themselves is to say, This is what I want! Claim it!

People want to give, want to lend a hand, they want to help if they can. Ask and you shall receive. It's getting the dream out of your head and onto a workable surface. The power is in asking. The worst that can happen is that you will get a no. If you can imagine the worst-case scenario of what that no might look like and if you can handle that, it's worth asking. You are then one step further to your intention.

Ollie is an early riser and picked a fresh mix of red and deep-purple raspberries to bake Michael Z. a well deserved pie. Michael had chosen the raspberry pie when he found out how much she enjoyed growing them in her secret garden.

My friend had a focal point in mind to place next to the tree stump. Something significant to her. Now that the time had arrived and the tree stump was low to the ground, just as she had envisioned. She placed the relic there. It was a very large plastic pig. It looked like something she might have won at a carnival. The pig's body resembled that of a wiener dog. Who would have thunk it?

Ollie beamed as she clasped her hands to her heart, "I love it there!"

*Inga Songbird's gift of manifestation began at the age of four. An early childhood experience set her on a path of discovery and joy of what life had to offer and how to help make it a reality. Not listening to adult figures or society's narrative that drowns out individuality, belief and trust in one's self and inner voice.*

## Two Goners

by Th. Metzger

### 1- Wes Kobyłak (and Lulu, nude)

I made myself a White Russian (Kahlua, vodka, Splenda and cream) and there appeared before me the ghost of Vaclav Kobyłak. I don't care much for girlie mixed drinks. But I was alone, far from home, and the ingredients were there for the taking and using.

Wes (as I knew him) wasn't Russian. He was Czech. Nonetheless, this drink, his favorite, conjured him from the land of the dead.

We'd met a quarter century before, in a claustrophobic office: six badly-paid community college teachers, three desks, no windows, no future. Wes read a couple of my early novels and said, with no irony, that they were "worse than obscene." After a few semesters he moved on to a job that provided health benefits (and some modicum of dignity) and we lost all contact.

One year before his heart and lungs shut down, Wes got drunk and e-mailed a dozen people from his old teaching days. "Sure. Let's get together," I replied, "but why does your message read like it was written by a brain-damaged thirteen year old?"

On the phone, Wes's words were a raspy whispery remnant of his classroom voice. "You're the only one who responded," he said. "What's wrong with you?"

In the interim years, he'd read all my books that he could get a hold of. There is no one on the planet about whom the same thing can be said. He claimed to dislike my work, but kept returning to see what else I'd published.

There was always – at least in my presence – an astringent bite to Wes's words. He mocked me for not playing any sports in high school and I mocked him for playing too much football without a helmet. He insisted, when playing cards, that there always be a winner and a loser. Our last game – hearts – ended with us exactly even, so he demanded that we cut cards to see who came out on top. My queen of clubs beat his nine. Knowing there was a winner, all the way to the end, seemed to give him some comfort.

He lived in a studio apartment crammed with houseplants and pictures of the supernally beautiful Louise Brooks (AKA Lulu). After Hollywood and Berlin, she moved to Rochester, just a few blocks from Wes's apartment. There she took up the pen, trying to make sense of her life as a dancer at the Ziegfeld Follies, a movie star, a prostitute, and then this city's most illustrious secret resident. A gorgeous nude shot of Lulu hung in Wes's bathroom.

Wes once asked me about my relationship with my mother. I said, "cool." (I didn't mean Miles Davis or Thelonious Monk cool.) "Why?"

"You're so totally messed up," Wes said, "but you get along so well with women." There was a flicker of envy in the statement.

I called in July of '15 to see if Wes wanted to play cards. Diane, his girlfriend, answered. Still in shock, she said, "Wes died three days ago." I knew he'd been sick – toting around an oxygen tank – but Diane's words came from nowhere, pitching me into a state of numbed vertigo.

There was no funeral. Some of his friends got together at a greasy chopstick restaurant (Wes's favorite) and told tales (mostly true) about him. My wife got violently sick from the food. Eventually the place was closed down by county health officials.

A few weeks after our celebration dinner, the nude photo of Louise Brooks arrived in my mailbox. With her hands raised and fingers extended, she's a girlish hierophant casting a spell. She gazes down at me as I write these words: gorgeous, pale as the moon, serene in her nakedness, supremely cool.

### 2- Charlie Russell (and the gun)

The rumor went around quickly: "Charlie's dead." It spread by word of mouth: guys he'd played with in various bands, an ex-girlfriend, a housemate. By this time Charles S. Russell had been gone from Rochester for about a decade. But in those years we kept hearing about his exploits: making a precarious living as a backgammon shark, running the soundboard for the Grandmothers of Invention (after Frank Zappa died), witnessing Goethe's Faust performed by residents of a

German mental institution.

What was true about Charlie? This much I'll stand by. Of all the musicians I worked with, he was the one who I thought would make it into the Big Time beyond Rochester. He was a great bass player. He had big bountiful hair and plenty of optimistic ambition. He released a 33 rpm single in 1987: "Daddy's Gun (Handful of Nails)" on which he played all the instruments. He built, and lived in for a while, an art-car named "Cinnabar Charm." I'd coined the phrase and used it first as the title of a poem.

He joined Health and Beauty (the best band I was ever part of) and contributed two pieces. The first was a totally un-ghetto rap ("My name is Charles S. Russell, I'm the King of Rock. I'll be beating my thing around the clock.") The second was his maniacal cover of "Daytripper." He played Lennon's riff perfectly, but as exactly-even eighth notes with no rests, like an autistic machine, while I bellowed at the baffled audience, "Me hungry! Me hungry!"

The last time I spoke with Charlie he was in New York City. He'd told me to call when next I was in town. I got through, but he said he was three days into a game of poker with Israeli arms merchants and it would be very unhealthy to quit just then. "Maybe next time," I said.

So when the rumor went around that Charlie was dead, I didn't doubt. By that time, Charlie was living in the desert on an abandoned military base. No water, no power, no sewers for his trailer.

I called Sean, a drummer he'd worked with, to confirm the bad news. Though he wouldn't tell me the cause of Charlie's death, Sean said that Charlie really was dead. Soon, someone had the brilliant idea to call Charlie and make sure. He answered, having gotten no word of his untimely demise. It turned out it was his father's obit (same name) that triggered our confused grief.

A few days later, Charlie posted a picture of himself holding a gun to his head. The caption: "No, this isn't a cry for help. And no, I'm not dead."

So a year or two later, when news of Charlie's death began recirculating, I said to my informant: "Yeah, right. He's dead again."

This time, the story was true (or at least truer.) A friend had left him sitting at a table in his trailer. When the friend returned the next day, Charlie was still sitting there, at room temperature. No gun, no obvious signs of drug abuse, no funny suicide note.

The first band Charlie had been in was called Woody Dodge. I ran into Sean, the drummer, not long after Charlie's second death, and he gave me a fakey hippie Woody Dodge T-shirt. I doubt very much Charlie would've liked the tie-dyed design.

I hardly ever wear it. I suppose I'm saving it for the day when I hear Charlie has died again. Third time is the charm.

*Th. Metzger has lived his entire life in the Burnt Over District of Western New York. Soaking up the weird vibes of Mormonism, spiritualism, Love Canal, the Publick Universal Friend and the original electric chair, he explores his area's strangeness in a number of works (fictional and otherwise).*

## These Things Happen

by Dennis Fridd

I can't tell you what the last thing my father said to me was because he took off in the middle of a random moonless night. I can only tell you that it left just me and mother to tend the fields ourselves. Moms held it together for a while, but eventually she just lost it.

One day she threw everything in his workshop out onto the lawn and burned it. As tears ran down her face, orange from the reflected glow of the fire, she told me that when two people love each other they exchange little pieces of themselves, until part of you is in them and part of them is in you. And then when it all falls apart not only do you have a hole in yourself from the part of them you lost, but that part of you that you gave them, you can never get it back.

She was drunk. For weeks I had spotted the jars lying around the house. When she thought I was sleeping she would scrape the inner walls of our house and bottle them with yeast and sugar to ferment. Eventually her liver turned and she died.

Everyone in our town lived in buildings made of giant fruit. Our home was a pumpkin; city hall was a strawberry wider and redder than a barn. It all worked fine until the fruit flies showed up. First a crackling whisper, like a bad phone reception. Then the sky went dark and some of us thought it was an eclipse, but the science teachers told us those kinds of things are usually scheduled.

They ate every last building in town. You could hear their collective chewing for miles. After the destruction we gathered outside, standing around as withered and sluggish as cornstalks in a drought. Many wept openly. My yard contained all the possessions of our house dropped into a single enormous pile. The fruit flies didn't care—when they ate through the second-story floor, beds and end tables and electric toothbrushes tumbled down onto the contents of the first until it all looked like a junkyard. Beside the pile a giant pumpkin stem lay as a shed snakeskin, unused and decaying. All around now pointless farm equipment dotted the landscape of our

once prominent town.

So people packed up and left. Some drove. Some walked. Some hitched a ride on the back of one of the fruit flies, many of which were now as large as Cadillacs.

Not me. I decided to stay and fight. Nobody else did. That's okay—never had much need for people.

My preparations are many. All week I've been making batches of homemade bug spray in the remnants of my kitchen. Enough bug spray to fill the tanks at the gas station to their rusty brims. By sun and by candlelight I've worked the fields, planting seeds, laying down glue and explosives and booby traps. Soon those seeds will blossom and the snare will be set. I am farming for a higher purpose now: I am farming for vengeance.

Why stay? Because this is my town. I was born here, in our pineapple hospital, swaddled in cotton blankets and bawling my eyes out. I got my first kiss here, my first fist fight, my first and only broken bone. Every scent is a memory, every street a history. I could walk for days in the catacombs of my mind devoted to these 25 square miles. When I was younger we rode our bikes down to McDermott's and bought as much candy as we could carry. The good stuff, the kind that turns your spit red and long and stringy; Eric let his dangle halfway down his body before sucking it up and arcing it back into his mouth as gracefully as those dolphins doing flips on TV. Before I hit my phase and people stopped returning my phone calls, I sat up with Sara and watched the motionless infernos of the stars and wondered about our place in the world and what was going to happen to us when we got older. She twirled her cigarette and it looked like a firefly in the darkness. That summer – it was the summer before she cheated on me with David, who could grow bigger fruit than me. I wish I could capture that whole summer in a mason jar with two holes poked in the top, maybe a leaf for color. The point is I love this town. And when you love something you don't walk out on it in the middle of the night.

I sit at the top of the tallest hill in town. I can see all of my preparations. I hear a faint buzzing in the distance. One memory of the devastation sticks

out in my mind particularly. I remember little Katie Brightman. She was eating a peach when the fruit flies came. The juices were running down her face because seven-year-olds don't know how to eat. The flies came and swarmed her. They covered her face like a carpet and you could hear the screams for miles. She barely survived. I am fighting for that little girl. So it doesn't matter that everyone left. It doesn't matter that there's no high school anymore and I won't graduate like I was supposed to. It only matters that this is where I belong. The buzzing is growing louder. I am ready.

*Dennis Fridd is a microbiologist and Rochester native. He likes cats.*

## Fragment of 'Monster'

By S.Y. Eng

Glorious Lapis Bourbon. It promises to transform stubborn grey hair into highlighted perfection. I needed it. My ex, eight years younger, took everything we bought together with him. Left his stinking pile of filthy socks and toxic leftovers in the fridge. Oh, but he also gave a parting gift: a mug that says, 'Being a Woman is a Real Bitch.'

I was fired from the local Love Me Sushi Shack. I got angry at a customer who wanted something that wasn't on the menu: pizza!

I set the oven timer. After thirty minutes, highlighted perfection. My elbow brushed-off some unpaid bills from the kitchen counter where they fluttered onto a small mountain of other unpaid bills on the floor.

I was squeezing out the last goop of Glorious Lapis Bourbon when someone pounded on the front door. Shit. Must be the landlord. Ignore him, I said to myself, which I did. The pounding stopped. Quiet. BAM. BAM. BAM. Now it's at the side window. Maybe it's not the landlord...

*to be continued*

## A Beautiful Lie: For the Screen

by Paul Young

On a July morning a young woman placed a basket on the stone steps of an orphanage run by the nuns of San Martino Convent and rang the bell and quickly left.

The door was opened by one of the nuns who looked down and saw the basket that held a baby wrapped in a blanket. Attached to the blanket was note that read "Please Love my child".

The nuns would give the baby the name Summer. Summer would be the child's first and last name. Summer would be loved and educated there until around the age of sixteen.

One of the things Summer liked to do was to walk through the church cemetery, and read the names on the grave stones. The stone she liked the best was a small stone of a little boy who had died at the age of four years and six months, and whose name was Giacomo Puccini.

Summer would keep this name in her memory. Summer took some flowers that she had picked, and put them on little Puccini's grave. Then she talked to him about the orphanage, the nuns, and things she liked. Nearby was a little girl hiding behind a tree. She was about the same age as Summer. That evening at dinner the little girl saw Summer and when dinner was over she went to speak to Summer.

"I saw you at the cemetery today, do you go there a lot ask the little girl?"

"I go there to visit my little friend, and why do you go there?", asked Summer.

The little girl said she goes to the cemetery to play and pretend. "I pretend to be a great actress, and I pretend I have a lot of nice things."

"What is your name?", inquired Summer.

"My name is Violet but the nuns call me Moonett because I look at the moon a lot. I like the name Moonett better than Violet."

One day a Mr. and Mrs. Storchio came to the orphanage hoping to find a companion for their daughter Rosina. The nuns immediately thought of Summer. Rosina and Summer became very close friends. Rosina was given music lessons by the music

teacher Antonia Barezzi. Summer would sit in the music room while Rosina took her lessons.

One warm day Antonia opened a window to let in some air. There in the garden was Summer cutting flowers and singing to herself. Antonia was very surprised by the tone and beauty of Summer's voice.

Summer came in to the music room to listen to Rosina's music lesson. When the lesson was over, and Antonio had a chance to do so, he said to Summer that she had a beautiful voice.

Antonio then offered Summer voice and music lessons on his own time for free. These lessons would go on for a few years.

Summer told Rosina about the music lessons, and Rosina said she was very happy for Summer.

One day, Rosina and Summer were out walking when a horseman came riding up. He introduced himself as their neighbor, his name was Carlo Angeloni. Rosina had seen Carlo at church but had never met him. The three had a pleasant conversation, and Carlo asked Rosina if he could come for tea someday.

Sometime later Rosina came running in all excited and told Summer that Carlo had proposed.

Summer said she was very happy for her.

The night before the wedding Rosina came to Summer's room with a little box that had money and a necklace in it that Summer liked. As Rosina put the necklace around Summer's neck, Rosina said that Summer would always be her best friend. With tears running down her cheek, Rosina left Summer's room.

The wedding for Carlo and Rosina was beautiful. After Carlo and Rosina gave their good byes to Summer and left for their honeymoon, Summer went back to her room for the last time to pack a suit case to go to the city of Milan the next day.

In Milan, Summer would audition for her first opera. The opera did well and Summer received good reviews. This would open the stage door for many more operas. Summer would go on to be one of Europe's great voices.

Giuseppe Verdi and his mistress Giuseppina Strepponi attended an opera by Richard Wagner.

After the opera, Giuseppe and Giuseppina went back stage to meet the singers. When Giuseppe was

introduced to Summer he became very infatuated with Summer, so much so that he came back the next day to the opera house stage door to wait for Summer after the afternoon performance. Giuseppe had rented a carriage and brought a picnic basket for a picnic in the country. When Summer came out, Giuseppe reintroduced himself and offered her the invitation for the picnic.

Summer was very aware of whom Verdi was and his fame, and accepted his invitation. They would have a lovely picnic under a beautiful tree in the country. These picnics would continue for about two weeks, but Summer and Verdi knew they both had separate lives to live.

So it was on their last picnic that they said their good byes. Verdi would marry his mistress and go on with his life, and Summer would go on with her life and career by herself.

Summer remembered the small gravestone of the little boy with the name Giacomo Puccini and gave her baby the little boy's name. Summer would only tell the young boy that his father died at sea. When Puccini became old enough to understand he was told of the real circumstances about his father and Summer would take him to the tree where she and his father had their picnics.

Summer would ask him not to find his father, but there would come a day when he would meet his father. Time would pass and Puccini would go on to be a famous composer. Summer would read one day of Verdi's wife passing and go to him in Milan. Verdi would tell Summer that he loved his wife, but her world had been society and his world was music. Verdi suggested that he and Summer go to a new opera by a young composer named Giacomo Puccini.

After the opera was over Verdi and Summer went back stage to meet with Puccini, and give him praise on his work. In a small room Verdi and Summer met Puccini and gave him great praise.

It was then that Summer spoke up and said Giuseppe Puccini is your son.

The next night Summer, Verdi and Puccini attended a play. On the program the female lead's name was Moonett. Could this have been the little girl Summer knew at the orphanage many years ago?

After the play was over, the three of them went

back stage to meet the cast.

When Summer met Moonett, Summer said she had a little friend many years ago who was at the same orphanage she was in, named Moonett. As Moonett gave Summer a big hug, she said that was her. After they had met the cast of the play, Moonett introduced a very pretty lady to them. This is my daughter Victoria. Puccini's eyes betrayed him as he gazed on Victoria's beauty. The Five of them left the theater together.

*The End of the Study for Screen*

*Paul Young, 69, has interests in photography, music and art. This is Paul's first work for the screen and is an outline for a larger treatment. The author can be reached at: [twobsmart@hotmail.com](mailto:twobsmart@hotmail.com)*

## The Toad Exodus

by Mary K. Grant

Everyone on the block knew that Gary Harmond had a mean streak. The kids next door witnessed it often, most especially in the summer. He would sit in front of his house on the lawn, inviting Gayle and Pammy and Jim to sit all around, their knees crisscrossed, a plastic sand pail in his hands. Then, without batting a sun-bleached eyelash beneath his brow, he would catch a series of houseflies with his bare hands. To the sharp intake of breath, I might add. Gayle was certain that he was part cat; since his reflexes were so quick he would out smart a mosquito or fly.

Then, after glancing at them all with great dramatic flourish, his blue eyes bright with excitement, he'd stick his sweaty, sandy hand into the pail withdrawing a fly on his hand. Grasping the little creature in two fingers, he'd deliberately pull off its wings. The thing would be lying there near his life line, helplessly spinning around, still alive and kicking. Gary would sharply inhale, greedy to experience it again. And he'd do the next one, then the next, until all of them were gone.

Kids in Lido worshiped Gary, but those who were close to him knew he had some deep seated emotional problems. But, strangely enough, this was below the grown ups' radar; only the kids knew it.

Another great thing which happened, must have been the summer 1959, was the expedition into the lot down about five houses or so. Lido Beach was still in development in those days, with large lots filled with weeds providing playgrounds for those bored kids in the developments. Even the Golf Course, a private club, was unfenced to their backyards. They could explore the greens at times, as long as they avoided the golf carts and caddies playing through the Eleventh Hole there. Some great ponds, filled with tadpoles were nearby, well worthy to explore.

But I digress. This is the story of the Great Toad Exodus. Gary and his neighbors were Jews, and the kids had learned in religious school the great story of Moses and the Exodus from Egypt. None of them believed it had happened, but it colored their view of history, so to speak. Now Gary, all five feet of him in

those days, was a strapping and healthy, vigorous and attractive mob leader determined to do something with the space they called "the weeds". So, one day, he gathered his little motley crew of bored neighborhood kids to go on a foraging expedition there to do two things.

First of all, they were going to collect clay. These were strange balls of what looked like dung but were instead congealed tars and sea debris buried in the ground all around since Lido Beach was a well built up small sandbar. The girls especially liked to play kitchen with them, turned them into pies and sandwich deli slices for pretend play in the Burton backyard where they had a little plastic "easy bake oven". They were, after all, little ones, only about nine years old.

Second, there was going to be a determined hunt for "frogs." These were actually, brown toads that lived in "the weeds", particularly young and slow right after the spring when they had hatched out in puddles and muddy banks on the golf course. For this purpose, the bunch of kids brought a huge assortment of pails, coffee cans, plastic bags, and sacks to put them in. Gary had told them to get these.

Soon after they entered the bulrushes, which were about 7 feet high and quite dense, Gary yelled "Fan out." He led one hunting party of boys. Pammy led the smaller group of girls being allowed to come along. Everyone knew what to do. They did this often for amusement. Before too long, an explosion of squeals, yells and stampedes came through the rustling weeds.

As the sun grew higher in the sky, some boys dropped out to return home to "get a drink". But Gayle had carefully brought along a canteen which she shared with the other girls.

Finally, Gary announced "Enough. Stop!" and "Meet at my house." And they all carried their filled, wriggling bags, sacks, pails and the like, thrown over shoulders or dragged along the sand, to his front lawn. There, they sat in a semi-circle around Gary, their eyes fixed on him like a pack of panting dogs, utterly exhausted and spent.

"Should we let the frogs go free?" he demanded, his hands on his hips.

"Pammy and me say you should let them go." Gayle stated, gazing carefully at her brother who was avoiding her looks.

“You know we’re all Egyptians!” Gary said. Then he quickly recounted the story of the great Exodus of Moses and the Israelites from Egypt, getting to the part about the parting of the Red Sea. Expectantly, he glanced around at each one of them.

“Yup, now we’ll let them free. But we’ll see if God saves them!” and with this, Gary moved swiftly with his collection of sacks to the sidewalk in front of the Harmond home, by the edge of the black asphalt road, by the graveled shoulder of the boulevard. “Come on,” he yelled, “Follow me!” and they all did.

Then, they watched Gary as he opened all his sacks, bags and pails, letting scores of toads free on the shoulder. With one gasp, they realized what to do and copied him directly. All along the boulevard, hundreds of young toads began to hop, heading across the roadway away from these pesky humans.

“No. Please don’t.” Gayle shouted, realizing what was about to happen. Some of the girls, after copying him, stood back and began to scream as they saw the traffic light down by the weeds turn from red to green. And a tidal wave of cars began to roll toward the huge pool of toads, heading now halfway to the other side and freedom.

Some of the girls covered their eyes as the cars began to hit the toads. Gary chortled in pleasure, his cruel heart filled with happiness, dancing around, forgetting not to step on the road. All the boys watched and enjoyed the massacre.

As for the Exodus, perhaps a few toads reached the grassy lawns of their neighbors’ properties on the other side. Gayle watched Pammy cry, took her hand, and slowly led her toward their front stoop. While short ugly and blond Mrs. Harmond came out on her front porch, saw what her son was doing, strode forcefully over to him, and pinching him by the ear, dragged him screaming into the open garage, then shutting it by remote control. She was red faced, and yelling at him wildly.

All the boys and girls remaining looked at the splat all over the highway, stood up, dusted off their hands on their shorts and stretched. Then, silently, they all headed home. The spectacle was over, but it had been good clean fun for another day of summer vacation in Lido Beach, where there was so much fun to be had, if you were free.

*Mary Khazak Grant, 65 (B.A. Psych., M.S. Educ.-Deaf Studies) has been an artist, poet and hobby crafter from an early age. She now works as a teacher for the Rochester Public Schools.*

## Fifty Large

by Michael Yaworsky

“Fifty, large.”

“Very good, sir. And would you be looking for a suit or a jacket?”

“Just a jacket. I don’t have many places to wear a suit anymore. But I do need a jacket.” The man checks out the item the sales clerk has brought him. He wants to look good for his upcoming occasion.

“And you said the size would be fifty large?”

“Yep. I wish it wasn’t, but you know how it is. Good intentions, but I just can’t seem to keep the weight off.”

“You and everyone else, sir. It’s not the easiest thing. But you’re tall, so that helps. Can I show you something in a navy? Or perhaps a gray?”

“I think I’d like to try a nice deep gray if you’ve got one.”

“‘Fifty large.’ That’s how he says it. ‘Fifty large.’ Like they’re big mobsters and he’s wearing a fedora and running numbers for Two Fingers Tony Scarface or something. He acts like he’s Mister Important. Like everybody knows who he is and they come to pay him respect.” She makes a dry spitting sound, turning away so she won’t get any on Maria.

“But he’s just a collector. What he really is is a bully. Just because he’s six–six and lifts he thinks he’s tough. But nobody respects him. He dresses like a slob and he thinks it makes him look hip, like a rapper or something. But it doesn’t. They pay him enough to afford a nice car but he drives around in one of those stupid dorkmobile muscle cars like a 16–year–old dork in a dork town. But he says ‘fifty large.’ They all talk that way. It makes me laugh. But only so I don’t cry. They’re so pathetic.”

“But can’t you tell them? To leave you alone?”

“What I’d like is to get out altogether. But it’s hard. Maybe impossible. They think they have some kind of hold on me. Although Mike and Zane are pretty nice. Or can be.”

“But they can hurt you.”

“They never would.”

“Are you sure?”

“Zane wouldn’t. Mike neither,” she says. “At least, I

think not. Do they say ‘one large’ too?” she continues. “Or ‘half a large’? How little does it have to be before it’s not ‘large’ anymore? These guys just make me sick. Playing their games. Using their stupid slang. Like that makes them important. They’re just bullies.”

They both stare at their coffees.

“Don’t let them hurt you, Krissy. You can’t let ‘em hurt you.”

“Fifty large quadrupeds,” Dr. Steenhoemer says. “That’s the largest number we’ve tagged in the zone since, well, since the barriers were relocated.”

“Fifty! What was the previous tally?”

“Fourteen.”

“Eric, that’s amazing! The Foundation’s going to be really pleased.”

“Let’s hope it translates into euros.”

“It has to. When you announce the results— when do you announce the results? Are you going to tell them before the directors’ meeting?”

“We have to. They expect reports at least monthly.”

“Well dress it up nice and blow ‘em away. Fifty large quadrupeds! Eric, you’re a rock star!”

“Fifty? Large bucket, drinks, two sides. Number fifty?”

Janet checks her receipt. Her number is 50. “Right here,” she calls out, approaching the cashier.

“Enjoy.”

Janet takes the large bucket of chicken crisps, three Diet Cokes, one side of fries, and two onion rings back to the little faux–wood table where Kayleigh and Nicole are busily pecking on their phones. Then goes back for napkins. Lots of napkins. Coated chicken, greasy fries, slick fingers – not a good mix with touch screens. A great need of napkins.

“Fifty–one. Fifty–one? Is number fifty–one here?”

Kayleigh and Nicole look up from their phone trance, roused by the cashier’s sonorous voice. Only now do they notice their order has arrived.

“Hey, food!” Nicole exclaims.

“Thanks Janet,” says Kayleigh.

“Yeah, thanks,” Nicole repeats.

“Fifty. Large framed, well–proportioned, robust, socially active divorcee. Children grown, empty nest.

Outgoing, generous, fun-loving, outdoorsy.' Mom! You can't use that!"

"Why not?"

"It's brutally honest! You have to shade things! Nuance! Sell yourself! Make the best possible presentation."

"Monica, I'm through with that. No more games. I'm taking another approach. Everything up front. Total honesty. I'm laying my cards on the table, and I'm gonna find a man who does the same. No games. The less you have to fudge, the better. No lies to get caught in. No stories to keep straight. Just me, just him. Now doesn't that sound better?"

"Uh, yeah. To have. But not to get. First you have to get. And to get something—"

"—someone."

"—whatever. To get someone interested you have to present yourself in the best possible light."

"Sweetie, I want to present myself in the simplest possible light. Keep it simple. I've done this before, in case you don't remember."

"Yeah, dad told me."

"Very funny. Trust me Monica. This is what I want. Humor your old mother for once, will you?"

Fifty large centerpieces adorn the tables and serving buffet. The restaurant opens onto a food court in an upscale mall. Krissy presides over the hostess stand in a short black skirt, dark stockings, and heels. Thoughts very far from serving patrons burden her mind, but duty calls. She doesn't want to lose this job.

A middle aged woman approaches the hostess stand. Says a reservation has been made in a certain gentleman's name; has he arrived yet? Krissy checks the book: no, the gentleman isn't here yet, would miss like to have a drink at the bar? No thanks, the woman says, she'll wait in the food court. She wades into the tables and finds one that's been wiped reasonably clean. She takes a seat and starts thumbing through a newspaper someone has left. A few tables away three girls are horsing around. One of them notices her. "Omigod," Nicole whispers to Janet, "isn't that Monica's mother?" It is.

A large-ish man arrives at the restaurant entrance. He feels good in his new jacket. Makes him look prosperous, he thinks, maybe slender too, which would

be nice. He checks his watch: still a few minutes early. He decides not to go in yet. Doesn't want his date to think he's too eager. They haven't met in person yet and he wants their first meeting to be a good one. He buys a newspaper and finds a vacant table in the food court, not too near where three girls sit gossiping and giggling. Nothing personal, he's sure they're nice kids, they're just a bit too boisterous.

The man opens the paper and reads about a wildlife conference being held at a venue across town. Some scientist, somebody Steenhoemer, is giving the keynote address. They've discovered several dozen large quadrupeds in some remote area where scientists had no idea they existed. The man in the jacket knows nothing about zoology but finds himself reading the story all the way through, and is pleased. Any time you discover something like that, he thinks, unspoiled nature where you didn't expect it, it's cause for hope. Tells us there may be something good for us, each of us, waiting out there, just beyond our view.

Fifty feet away the woman opens her newspaper to the same article. She too reads it all the way through. She too is heartened. So, she muses, we haven't totally destroyed our planet after all, at least not yet. So there's still hope. Funny how this stuff still inspires me, she thinks. How great would it be to meet a man who shares the same values I do? We could have something in common. We could just hit it off. At the hostess stand Krissy surveys the house. A decent night so far. Look at all these people, she thinks to herself, all these couples; are they happy? She doesn't know them from Adam and Eve, but she hopes they're happy. She wants them all to be happy.

*Michael Yaworsky is a licensed attorney who works as an editor and writer for a legal information and publishing company. He lives in Rochester in the 19th Ward.*

## Dust Motes in Grandma Pistner's Upstairs Room

by Sara Rubin

I must have been about 5 and remember going with my mother to the house where her mom was still living. It was a simple wooden frame house, on a small town street in Pennsylvania.

Every week my mom would go to her mother's to help with little chores, and this week she was washing curtains and pinning them onto wooden framed stretchers to dry. The drying room had been an upstairs bedroom, empty now of course, but for two big curtain frames. I can picture that room so clearly that I could draw it, looking in the doorway. It was at the top of the stairs, to the right, with two windows on the right-hand wall.

This house was my mom's house too, or had been. She did grow up there. But I never asked her which room had been hers, and where did the five boys sleep? Where was Grandma sleeping the night her newborn son died? —I didn't know then anything about the baby dying though, that might be a story for another time, and I don't think it had anything to do with the impression the bedroom had on me —

I had to wait around the room as Mom worked, and I didn't like it. The room was old and silent and hollow. It had little color; maybe the walls had once been a light yellow, but had now faded to a pale plaster. It had a strange smell, not exactly musty or unpleasant, just strange; sharp, like dry wood in a room that had been quiet for too long.

I don't know why it frightened me. It probably had to do with the overwhelming "past-ness" of the room. It made me feel that I, in my leather soled shoes that made small echoes as I walked, was an outsider, not from 'their' time.

And there was no movement, nothing moved, except for the specks of dust floating in shafts of silver sunlight coming in the slightly clouded windows. There was only stillness; no "present". Even the dust motes drifting aimlessly were keeping their own counsel, not caring about us or anything outside their silent world.

All these years I have been perplexed as to why this experience in that abandoned bedroom lives so strongly in me...

But, now I feel I might be coming closer to understanding it. Perhaps, I think, I had seen in the those unconscious random dust motes the Inscrutable, the Other, perhaps the ancient Magic world of Druids or fairy folk. Perhaps I sensed that those tiny floating specks were manifesting something completely outside human experience; not good or bad, not loving or hateful, just inscrutably Other. Unconcerned, completely separate, completely different.

Maybe as a child I had sensed this separate silent world and knew it was strange, and didn't jibe with my own world— one where where mothers helped mothers, where people did chores and lived everyday lives in simple wooden houses with painted rooms— and it frightened me.

And made an impression that has lasted a lifetime.

*Sara Rubin is a local artist and environmental conservationist who has had a family pottery business for years in Brighton, NY. Though her husband and she continue making and selling their pottery, she has also begun to write about the people and animals and places that make up her world.*

## Days to Remember: The Monstrosity

by Lisa Kleman

My mother was thrifty — an understatement, to be sure. I, in fact, we, all of us six kids, were often annoyed by her ‘cheapness,’ as we termed it then, and we endlessly ribbed her about it.

One particular day, in the early 1960s, my mother saw that O’Dell’s Rexall Drug Store, in downtown Waterloo, New York, was throwing away some shelves. My mother, of course, rescued them.

Picture the scene. A small town with one street light and picturesque early 20th century buildings, brick with decorative facades.

But these shelves were not discarded in the prettier front of the store. No, they were in the rear of the block, where the backsides of all the buildings were uglier, some with rusted-iron loading ramps, empty boxes, and dented metal garbage cans.

You could park out back and enter O’Dell’s through their back door, which is what we were doing that day, when my mother spotted the mangled, metal shelves, dismantled and piled in front of the cement wall, waiting for the garbage pickup.

She could see the use for these shelves, and before we could yell, “No, don’t do it,” they were jammed into the back of our station wagon. Soon, the shelves were reassembled and placed in our house, in the mudroom. They held all kinds of stuff — hats and mittens and scarves (a motley lot, especially considering that there were six of us kids), boots of all sizes, metal roller skates and their keys, pails and buckets, gardening trowels and gloves, and all those kinds of unsightly piles of junk, best left unseen.

We called these shelves, “The Monstrosity.” We made fun of it, or rather, we loved making fun of it. It took on its own personality — The Monstrosity!

It was always there, until the year after the fire, when the mud room was remodeled into a bedroom (my parent’s bedroom), and four of the six kids had gone to college, and there was no longer a mud room in our house.

At some point, The Monstrosity was vanquished to the cellar, a damp, dark, dingy, cement and stone basement, which housed the washer and dryer, canned goods, holiday decorations, mouse holes near the floor,

and lots and lots of spiders. I don’t remember what The Monstrosity held, probably partially-used cans of paint and old paint brushes and varnish, leftover from decades of refurbishing projects in the old house we lived in.

We didn’t notice The Monstrosity anymore — we were all growing up, and our lives were surging forward. We didn’t think about it anymore.

That is, until this one particular day in 1979, when I, 21 years old and living in my own apartment in Massachusetts, visited home and went down cellar to get a can of Campbell’s Chicken Noodle Soup. I saw it there, along the back wall, forlorn and useless — The Monstrosity!

The shelves easily came apart and fit into my car. In Massachusetts, white spray paint gave it a fresh sparkle. The Monstrosity got a third life!

As the years flew by, my kids did not appreciate The Monstrosity, but I found it useful — it is the kind of thing that holds and takes care of all those little items you don’t know what to do with, where to put — ugly things that might just have a use someday.

Nothing lasts forever, though. The Monstrosity got a few more paint layers, but eventually became hard to manage, shelves falling apart at the slightest nudge, and all those unsightly objects spilling onto the floor.

Sadly, I don’t recall when I made the decision to get rid of The Monstrosity, or where I laid it to rest. Don’t even have photos to remember it by. Still, I can picture it, clearly, in my mind’s eye.

My mother was thrifty, and her children, especially her daughters, found it annoying sometimes, or perhaps it’s more accurate to say that we loved to be annoyed by her thriftiness. Growing up, I thought I never wanted to be like my mother (most daughters don’t), but, alas, I too am thrifty, and glad to be so. My children make fun of it and tell me I’m just like grandma.

*Lisa Kleman, a local Rochester historian, is writing and giving public talks about her relatives, The Musical Dossenbachs, who lived in Rochester in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.*

## The Disciple

By Ronald J. Buttarazzi Sr.

[an excerpt]

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### A Play in Three Acts

The play chronicles the epic struggle for the life of western civilization between Hitler, the bloodthirsty tyrant of Nazi Germany and his archenemy, Eugenio Pacelli, also known as Pope Pius XII.

Synopsis:

In 1925 Munich, Hitler, a rogue politician, and Eugenio Pacelli, a Vatican diplomat, studied each other from afar. They instinctively knew that one day only one of them would remain standing. Eugenio Pacelli became Pope Pius XII. Hitler became the Fuhrer of Germany. Hitler intended to destroy western civilization, annihilate the Jews, and supersede Christianity with the cult of race. The play unveils the titanic struggle between the two in its stark dimensions between good and evil, freedom and tyranny, and life and death. The stage is World War II.

—  
ACT II

SCENE 6

A WALK

NARRATOR

It is June 1943; Pope Pius XII is on a meandering walk in the Vatican Gardens requested by his personal secretary Bob Leiber. (The Holy Father smiles at a tiny bird perched on his finger.) The Gestapo is closing in on their quarry—the fragile webs of networks spun by Pope Pius XII, Monsignor Leiber and Joey the Ox Mueller.

LEIBER

Holy Father, I have some disturbing news.

The Gestapo arrested Bonhoeffer, Dohnanyi and Mueller early April on April 5, 1943).[i] Bonhoeffer and Dohnanyi were at the meeting with me discussing the removal of Hitler from office at the Benedictine monastery in Etal in the winter of 1940. [ii] The Ox set up the meeting and has been passing on Nazi classified information to me through dead drops across Rome. By your undertaking the sole

responsibility of passing the information on to the British, you bear all the risks of being accused of being a spy against Nazi Germany. With the arrests, the Gestapo is in a position to unravel everything.

PIUS XII:

Have our codes been broken?

LEIBER

As far as we know, our codes are intact. Our best guess is that one of our operatives under torture has revealed something.

You are also being criticized for not more vehemently condemning the murder of over 2000 priests in Poland[iii] and the mechanized murder of the Jewish people.

PIUS XII

(The Pope rises and speaks directly to the audience.)

Roberto, you forgot to mention the 2500 priests in the compound in the Dachau Concentration camp.

We have not been silent. I have not been strident so as not to trigger Hitler's compulsive homicidal behavior. He uses any pretext to rationalize his atrocities. In making my decisions, I must consider the likely outcomes of the other attempts to change Hitler's behaviors.

Any stinging rebuke would be like ringing the bell for Pavlov's dog, and Hitler will be on another rampage of bloodlust. None of the Church admonitions have been effective in diminishing or stopping the persecution but did raise the number of deaths from reprisals.

About a year ago in June 1942, the assassination of the chief of the Nazi security police, in Czechoslovakia, Reinhardt Heydrich, unleashed a savagery beyond barbarism.[iv] The population of the Village of Lidice was annihilated and the village destroyed. Three thousand German Jews were sent to a concentration camp to be murdered. One thousand three hundred Czechs were executed.[v]

All for one dead Nazi.

LEIBER

The local priests hid about one hundred and twenty members of the Czech resistance and the two assassins in the cathedral church in Prague, — the Church of Karl Borromaeus. The Gestapo found them,

cornered them and in the gun fight in the cathedral killed them.[vi]

PIUS XII

In July 1942 the bishops of Holland led by Archbishop Johannes de Jong condemned the deportations of Jews from Holland. The persecution did not abate. The Nazi Commissioner of Holland retaliated by categorizing baptized Jewish Catholics and Catholics of Jewish ancestry as our greatest enemies and proceeded to abduct forty thousand to be sent to the death camps. If The protest of the bishops cost more than 40,000 lives, a denunciation by me would result in the death of two hundred thousand people. [vii]

It is easy to second-guess decisions from an armchair without bearing the responsibility for the possible death of thousands of innocent people.

The likelihood of reprisals forced me to burn my manuscripts in case they fell into wrong hands.

LEIBER

No doubt, the Vatican is infested with agents of Germany and the Soviet Union.

PIUS XI

Yes, Roberto, Ambassador Osborne informed me that British intelligence is aware that both Nazi and Soviet agents have infiltrated the Vatican.

I have cautioned the cardinals that, “all our public utterances...” (must) “be carefully weighed and measured by us in the interest of the victims themselves, lest contrary to our intentions we make their situation harder to bear.”[viii]

LEIBER

“Holy Father, actions speak louder than words. A few days ago at one of your audiences, you granted Max Ciampoli’s request for 3000 baptismal certificates for more than 2000 children he and a friend, posing as fascist police, rescued from a filthy concentration camp outside of Paris.” [ix] The baptismal certificates will be signed by parish priests for the families hiding them throughout France. The certificates are the passports for their protection, safety and new identities for those fugitive orphaned Jewish children. We respect their loyalty to their ancient covenant as Jews. Indeed thousands of the persecuted are living at your

summer residence at Castel Gandolfo. Some might even be scandalized to learn that your own bedroom is being used as a birthing area. Over forty children have been born in your own apartment[x] .

PIUS XII

We are committed to removing Hitler from office for the good of all. [xi] The life of the thousand year Reich is now measured in months not years and not centuries.

SCENE CLOSES

(END OF ACT II)

[i] (Shirer, William L. 1960, 1024)

[ii] (Metaxas 2010, 375) (Michael 2002)

[iii] (Catholic Martyrs and The Holocaust n.d.).

[iv] (Shirer, William L. 1960, 991-992)

[v] (Shirer, William L. 1960, 991-994)

[vi] (Riebling 2015, 124 et seq.)

[vii] (Krupp, The Documented Truth 2012, 20)

Krupp references memoirs of Sr. Pascalina Lehnert, (Wikipedia 2016) (Phayer 2000, 54,55) (Catholic Martyrs and The Holocaust n.d.)

Hamans, Paul (Edith Stein and Companions, Paul Hamans, 23).

[viii] (Toland 1976, 864)

[ix] (Ciampoli 2010, 195)

[x] (Krupp, The Documented Truth 2012, 106) -/ Courtesy of Prof. Ronald Rychlak

[xi] (Riebling, Church of Spies 2015, 63)

*Ronald J. Buttarazzi Sr., JD is a retired Rochester attorney and a former Assistant Attorney General of New York.*

MESSED-UP BERNIE

by Jacob Yaple



Messed-Up Bernie

by Jacob Yaple



MESSED-UP BERNIE

by Jacob Yaple



## Window on the World

by Wendy Burwell

When I sit in my living room I easily see and hear so much of what goes on in my richly textured urban neighborhood thru my window and sometimes I see more than I'd like. In direct sightline from my chair are 2 young women and their dogs. They have lived in the bottom half of the white trimmed sea-green duplex across the street for several years now.

They may or may not be a couple, I don't know that it matters. I do know that one of them has dyed her hair several very interesting shades of purplish red indicating that at some level she may be comfortable with standing out in a crowd. And she is the one that has at times pulled my attention out of my living room.

When I first noticed them, they had one dog who they never took for a walk but instead these young women would open their front door, clip the Labrador pup to the 10 foot lead attached to the front porch and go back inside. This offers only the driveway for relief and the rambunctious pup was often left out there no matter the time or weather. It's hard to know how they could miss its late-night continuous loud whining and yipping demands to get back in when the neighbors were all too painfully aware.

At some point, torturing one was not enough – so now they have two. The second one, a smaller breed, was also very young when it was first brought into their strange menagerie. Apparently they also have a very large, very loud parrot in their apartment- which can't be seen, but I have heard about from the neighbors who live above them.

Now the two canines take turns with this dance that includes the front porch and the driveway complete with the whining and yipping of course. And although there are now two distinct pitches, neither voice sings a soothing tune.

And if all this weren't entertaining enough, the woman with the unique hair colors likes to come to their all-glass storm door leading to the very visible front porch in nothing more than her birthday suit. There is no mistaking the human form in all its glory

so when friends ask me if I am sure this is what I'm seeing, I can confirm without hesitation that yes indeed she does not seem to be bothered by stepping onto the porch without a stitch of clothing on.

Having seen this multiple times, usually late in the morning when I imagine the dogs can wait no longer to get to the driveway, has not lessened its impact. And as comfortable as I am with nudity, it is always a bit shocking every time I see her nakedness in the context of our city environment. Understand that I'm not watching for her to do this – its just what I see out my window. And its hard to miss.

The most challenging time for me was when the little one was first brought out to the porch by the naked lady and did not cooperate with – or understand – the dance. The young woman had to concede that even she could not step off the porch in her all-together. So back into the house they went. She quickly reemerged carrying the pup and wearing nothing but a tee shirt. Her problem had yet to be solved however. She tried once or twice, but could not bend over to put the dog down in the driveway without exposing her still uncovered bottom to any and all. What she did next was hard to watch: she dropped the puppy from waist level.

And at that point I had to go into another part of my house, something I wished I had done earlier, just to unplug from this drama that was not mine.

*Wendy Burwell has lived in the South Wedge neighborhood since moving to Rochester in 1987. She has witnessed its many changes and, knowing that living in diversity is where she wants to be, is sometimes challenged by what she sees.*

## Stand Up, and Be Counted

by Alicia Beckwith

One late Friday afternoon in October I stopped at Mt. Hope Cemetery. I often went over after work, usually during the daylight. Thankfully, the gates were still open. I looked about to see if there were other cars, but saw none. A ripple of anxiety crept up my back. I began to wish someone were with me. There wasn't even a jogger to be seen. Oh well. Nothing's going to happen.

I drove the short distance, taking the right turn along the cracked pavement in front of the dark, foreboding office buildings, and then 2 left turns onto Greentree Road. I drove slowly crawling to a stop in front of the Vick tower monument, the family plot that held the graves of my parents, grand and great grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins.

At first, I just sat in the car feeling the autumn's night chill. What was left of the setting sun reflected lovely orange and yellow shades over the roof tops of the University of Rochester. Soon there would be no light at all. I looked about, and made my decision to open the car door and get out.

Delicately making my path, I stepped in between the head stones. Keeping to the narrow bumpy path, I felt an odd sensation making its way up my spine. I stood still, looking about, feeling the air grow chillier. I pulled my sweater tightly around me, hugging my arms to my body, trying to add any warmth I could muster. The fresh fallen leaves swished about my feet as I continued to walk. Their smell reminded me of my dad raking leaves in the fall.

I came near the Vick tower with the large lily above the name, James Vick, 1882 at the top. There was no inscription on it other than the name and flower. Seedsman from Portsmouth, England should have been engraved on this marker.

Shadows continued to elongate. I could see gray images growing in number. I opened and shut my eyes as fast as I possibly could to be sure what I was seeing was real. I jerked my head back and forth. They aren't headstones! What are they? They're coming right at me!

Panic enveloped me and my heart drummed in

my chest. I felt frozen to that cold spot. The images continued to materialize more and more taking on shapes of people. I quickly backed up.

"What the heck's going on?"

"No! This just isn't happening!" The forms kept coming closer.

My stomach flipped, and I felt my skin change as goose bumps crept up my arms.

"I'm getting out of here!"

I turned to run, but tripped over a headstone, falling to the ground. "Oh, damn!" I got up as fast as I could, hoping the creatures were gone. Nope, they were still there. I looked around them and the markers to make my way out, but before I could move, one of the forms right came up to me.

"It isn't possible! Oh! Geez! Don't come any closer. I just came here to see my parents. Please let me go!" I peered at the form of a lady in front of me. She seemed to be doing the same thing. She had on a black ruffled long dress and black bonnet that kept her hair tucked and under. The late sun bounced playfully off the mourning stone she had around her neck. I looked closely at her while rubbing my leg where I'd bounced off the headstone.

Her features were becoming sharper as she approached. The woman gestured toward me, motioning for me to come closer. As I took a couple steps, she began to smile. With her right hand, she pointed toward the headstone labeled Mary Elizabeth Vick, 1901. She seemed to float over the cold ground, and a twig snapped making me jump. She really is here! I stepped back feeling a coldness as she came closer.

"What do you want? Why can't I just leave? .....Wait! ....I know you! I've seen your pictures at my mom's house. You're James Vick's wife. My parents told me so much about you. But, how... .....I still don't understand. How did you come back? How can I see you? Wait! Has anybody else seen you?" My breath threw fog out ahead, punctuating my words and the wind picked up a little, swirling the leaves about my feet.

I don't know how she did it, but she began to talk

to me. Her mouth wasn't moving, yet I was able to hear her words, or maybe they were her thoughts that came to me.

"No one will hurt you. I know who you are, too. You're our great-granddaughter. They waited a long time for a child before they chose you."

"I don't understand. What do you want?"

Mrs. Vick gently touched my arm. The coolness of her body made gooseflesh on my arm, but I stood my ground. Her voice was soft and gentle with a lilt as she continued. "Dear, we don't have any intention of harming you. Your presence here is what we have needed to come forth."

"I still don't understand," I said.

"For some time, James and I have known you have a heavy burden on your heart, and have unanswered questions about your life with your parents when they took you. Do you have questions you would like to ask me?"

"Well, you know I was adopted, and the story behind all that, right?"

Mrs. Vick smiled. "Yes, but you have been living a long time with great hurt and disappointment. Maybe we can clear some of that up."

"Yes, but I never knew you'd know about that. I always felt dad wanted a boy, not a girl. I thought he wanted my brother, and not me, and that he didn't want a child. Then when they sent my brother back to foster care, and could adopt me, I felt him distance even further from me. I never understood it, and to this day I wonder what I did or didn't do." I looked down the headstone as a tear coursed its way down my cheek.

Mrs. Vick tenderly put an arm around my shoulder.

"You know, I understand why you feel that way. However, there's much more to this than what one sees from the outside. Your father did love you. He just never knew how to show that love. And, while there may be some truth to his wanting a boy, it goes back a long, long way. And, dear, it has nothing to do with you."

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw my father nod.

"Can you help me understand this?" I asked.

Mrs. Vick turned her head ever so slightly and glanced at my father, then back at me.

I turned and followed her gaze. I jumped and a cry rushed forth as I saw my parents standing by their headstones. My mother was right next to him. No surprise. They were dressed in their burial clothing. I stepped toward them, but Mrs. Vick reached out to stop me.

Mrs. Vick continued. "Your father had agreed that you should know, and admits he should have explained it to you before he died."

Mrs. Vick turned to face me as she continued.

"Your father was born and raised in New England. He's always had difficulty showing emotion, and has kept something deeply buried all these years."

"You see, when he was a boy in Providence, he and several other boys, along with his younger brother Danny, were riding bicycles, racing down one of the major roads. One of the boys suggested grabbing onto the back end of a horse drawn wagon. Well, your father dared Danny to be the first.

"So, Danny started up the road, found a wagon, bent over to catch part of the back board he could hold on to. The problem was that the wagon kept increasing its speed until Danny could no longer hang on. He let go of the back board, lost his balance and fell off the bike into the path of an oncoming wagon. He was run over and killed instantly."

Mrs. Vick hesitated as she watched while I absorbed it all.

"Oh! No!" I cried. "Now I understand why dad always cried when he heard the song 'Oh, Danny Boy!' I just thought he liked it so much it made him cry. It must have been awful for him to watch it. I'm so sorry it happened."

"I hope that you can forgive your father for his coldness and understand that many factors went into making his life before you entered it."

I tilted my head toward my great grandmother. "I really thank you for sharing this with me. I really never understood. Now, I think I see things more clearly."

"Dear, now that you have heard your father's story, there are others here who would like to share their stories with you. Do you think that is something you can do? Can you come again to visit with us?"

I nodded emphatically and smiled. "I will come

again, for sure. But, I just don't know when."

"That's fine, child." She winked, and continued.  
"We will surely be here!"

I turned reluctantly, looking back over my shoulder to be sure my family was really still there standing by their markers. I went to go back to the path and nearly bumped into a small girlish figure with marks on her face, arms, and legs. Her dress was torn in several places. The child held a hand out to me, her sad eyes imploring me to stay.

*Alicia Beckwith has been writing since her early teens and has previously published poems and short stories. She is currently writing a biography about a small child surmounting many obstacles to survive and thrive.*

## Hunger and Money

by Jarrad Ackert

Everything in our days helps to prolong this great nightmare of the cosmos: consciousness, its ideas and the multi-layered murders of ideas-in-action; in all, our appearance on this planet's surface; a futile, endlessly repeating attempt at organization and a self-maintaining system (what we call History, or Progress) in the face of primal chaos. We are a mockery of ourselves. I take the bus to work; I work; I earn hunger and money; I worry about hunger and money; civilizations – of which I know nothing about – perish to maintain this hunger and money. This daily curse, sufferings my own and those unbeknownst to me; it's no wonder why I seek refuge in the nights and my room. In the fusion of these two realms I know that I have escaped from nothing, that nothing has changed; but it is there where I put to death this civilization, this self, all sufferings and consciousness; it is there where I face the silent, unknowable chaos of the cosmos, and of an earth that has the same desert charm of a Mars. This is the only silence I can afford myself; I care not if it is fleeting. I am merely an example of a living-dead man: the only result of a conscious species (not its projects).

*-taken from the book, Tetrachord, published in 2017.*

## A Family of Swimmers

by Rich Moll

As long as I can remember, swimming was a family affair. My dad was tall and lean and had a great swimming stroke. He would just glide through the water. My mom seemed to have a more delicate stroke, something like a half crawl stroke. I can still see her and my two sisters at a beach or a pool with swim caps. These were rubber caps, some white others pastel pink or blue, that women and girls wore on their heads to keep their hair dry. The need to learn to swim as well as the love of swimming was just a part of our growing up. Countless hours of Saturday lessons during the winter were meant to prepare us for summer swimming. Vacations and weekend destinations always seemed to include a State Park with either a pool or a beach.

We grew up in Irondequoit, as did my parents. In fact, we grew up on the same street my dad grew up on. My mom was born on the next street over. Our backyard folded down into a wooded gully which rose into the woods of Durand Eastman Park. The park was full of wonder. There were paths and ponds and streams full of frogs and crayfish. Playing in the “crick” as we called it was fine but we were warned not to venture into the ponds. The ponds were not for swimming and there were dark and vague references of kids drowning in those ponds when they were kids.

North of the park was the magnificent big lake, Lake Ontario. One of the Great Lakes, one of the wonders of God’s creation. My cousin told me later that the lake was made by the glaciers, not by God. I was a bit disappointed to find out the truth about the Lake, but then who made the glaciers? But I digress. The wonder of the lake so close to our home was not diminished by the glaciers. In the 1950’s Durand Beach was a destination. There was a wide sandy beach with a large bath house and row after row of life guard stands. We used to go there regularly in the summer. Again, I was encouraged to try out my new swimming skills but warned not to go out too far, and certainly not to go out over my head. The land under the water sloped ever so gently so one could wade out quite far. If I tip-toed out far enough I could just reach the first sandbar without going over my head. Once having

reached that first sand bar I could stand up with the water barely touching my waist. I was home free. The temptation to try for the second or third sandbar got me grounded. I got in over my head in more ways than one.

As I reflect on the family love affair with swimming and the equal emphasis on becoming a good swimmer and a safe swimmer, I can’t help but recall a story that my dad and mom told us many times.

To the east of our home is an equally impressive though much smaller body of water, Irondequoit Bay. The bay is about four miles long and a half mile wide. It stretches from south to north from the end of Irondequoit Creek, near what is now Empire Boulevard, to the Irondequoit Bay Outlet to the Lake Ontario shoreline.

As a young man before WW II, my dad seemed to be having the time of his life. I have photos or have heard stories of him golfing, fishing and hunting with his English Setter, all in Irondequoit, the town he grew up in. This was before the post war home building boom which transformed large tracts of woods and farmland into new homes and housing developments. There were not a lot of jobs to be had during the depression, but he found work. He worked his way through high school setting pins at the local bowling alley and had a job as a clerk at the neighborhood soda shop. I think the place was called Loves Ice Cream, and yes, they made their own ice cream there. Finally, after saving enough money he bought a canoe. I think after his beloved dog; the canoe was his most prized possession. I am guessing that canoeing became his favorite leisure pastime. There are more than a few pictures of him and his friends with the canoe. The bay was always his favorite canoeing destination, as its waters were more reliably calmer than the big lake’s.

One day, as the story goes, Dad, Ray and Eugene decided to beach the canoe on the east side of the bay and take a swim. It was a hot summer afternoon. My Dad was an excellent swimmer. He had been on the swim team at Franklin HS and had earned his life saving certificate. The idyllic summer afternoon suddenly turned dark. Eugene had waded out into the water as my dad passed him returning to shore. He did not see Eugene. He did not see him slip from view. Ray did. Ray watched him appear once and then

disappear again. Not being a strong swimmer he had to wait until my dad got to shore. Frantic with fear Ray exclaimed, “Rich, you better get out there, Gene just went under the water again.” Unbeknownst to Gene, the shallow waters of the bay quickly drop off from a three-foot shelf to a depth of fifty feet or more. At its deepest, the bay is eighty feet deep. Time was of the essence. Eugene could not swim. Losing one of his best friends was not an option. Dad swam out to Gene in one of his fastest times ever. Reaching where Gene was he pulled him up and told him to relax and lie on his back, that he was going to pull him back to shore, all standard instructions from a lifeguard to a person being rescued. Gene complied. Dad cupped him under his chin and side stroked his way back to shore, Gene in tow.

Dad was a humble man, he never bragged about his accomplishments, he just stated them in a matter of fact way. But we all knew, we heard the pride and joy in his voice, he had saved his best friends life.

I never really thought about it until just now, but I think his love of the water and his love of swimming and the day he almost lost a friend to the water left a deep impression on him. An impression that lasted a lifetime; a lifetime and beyond. A wisdom really, a wisdom handed down directly and indirectly to his children, his grandchildren and his great grandchildren.

*Rich Moll is a local author and lifelong resident of Irondequoit. A husband, father and grandfather he worked as a chemist for 40 years. His hobbies include traveling, photography, reading, and mycology.*

## The Storm

by Michael Tuberdike

“I hope to God that this will happen. I need it now more than ever. It is all I want in this life and this world—please. If not anything else just let it all fall.”

Richard Davidson sat half naked on the edge of his bedside and looked out at the world. The clouds began to form a heavy gray mass over the quiet town that sat just beneath the cliff. The temperature that week broke records and May looked unreasonably like late August. Everything was dry and burnt, which made it difficult to not sweat if one needed to move.

He was a painter and the white wash from that afternoon stained his hands along with his only pair of jeans. His skin looked like a blood-orange from being out in the sun for too long. The skin behind his ears was peeling.

Scattered across the floor were remnants of the previous evening. He had fallen off the wagon for the first time in a couple of years. Life brought him down. A close friend was found dead earlier in the week. The following day another friend of a different kind decided to turn their back and leave him for another.

That conversation began like all the others. She didn't want to hurt him, so she hurt him early on to avoid any collateral damage. He did not know that she did in fact love him, but it was tough and it all came at the wrong time. It was like a car accident. One missed a signal, which caused both machines to collide. Both held a visible dent at the end.

Photographs were scattered across the floor. In them the two looked very happy and if he could, he would sell his soul for not just this lifetime, but for the next five ahead of him to receive just five minutes of that time again. Beside the photographs was a letter he received from his deceased friend about a month before he decided to take his own life. There was also a parking violation ticket that he laughed at for not paying.

His head hurt, and it felt like an anchor that wanted to force him to the ground. He refused and did his best to sit straight in order to watch the clouds roll in. A crooked smile adorned his face, which was in high contrast to the parasitic pit of despair that held a grip in his heart.

He needed the heat to go away.

“Look at me. Here. Sitting. I have unraveled everything. I have grown sour. Used to be sweet. The honey in the hive of my heart was syphoned. In the heat— I can’t think straight. I have nothing to say other than why? Why this? Why must I— must be something in me. I hope to God that it rains. Need it now more than ever. It’s the heat that makes me crazy. I love it but then again I don’t. The back and forth. Falling to stand back up again. People say it builds character. If anyone wants some character—. I am not afraid. Life. Death. What difference does it make? I have lived to pursue life and last night, in my own personal celebration I became death. That is the other me. The one who does not smile when my face is glowing. The one who knows not—not, for certain that they are lost, but certainly knows nothing else. The loneliness that breeds when all hope is gone. My own personal demon. Something to fight my whole life. Honesty bleeds from the heart of truth and so badly do I sometimes want to topple the cards even if the house took awhile to build back up again. Back up again. After a few years on the wagon, I deserve a day off.”

He spit on the floor and watched the sky grow darker and the thunder rolled in.

“That the best you got? I was louder than you last night. Love you brother hope you are well. In a better place. No longer a pickle. Pickle in the middle. All the time we said we would be free. Guess you are free now. Nothing holding you back. Nothing pushing you though. I can’t say what is true anymore. Maybe it is all an illusion. We say the best at the time. Meant it at the time. Love. What a lovely idea. Meant it at the time and I meant it now. Didn’t say it though. If only we said the things we meant to say, to everyone we meant to say the thing too. Then maybe, life would be different. I’m quite positive it would be. Lose all inhibitions. Let go of the guard rail. I am in the world now. Just as I came in and how I will go. Alone.”

His thoughts ceased as he realized that the temperature dropped. The thunder was now closer and as he stared down to the floor his eyes landed upon a very specific photograph. It was the last day the two had spent together and on that day, it was raining. A stranger that walked by them took the picture as the two stood under an umbrella.

The water slowly built up behind his lids as he realized everyone in that frame was now a stranger. The thunder in the distance was louder and then the storm came.

*Michael Tuberdyke is the author of the novels, The Pharaohs and The River May Run. What!*

## The Great Thurston Road Cook-off

by Gerald Bunton

Back in 1975 when we were just newlyweds my uncle Charlie and aunt Frances Bunton came up from Bowling Green, Kentucky to visit my father. As some wives do my wife started to brag about how good her husband could cook in fact she thought I made the best desserts. My uncle mentioned that he did a little cooking. Me I'm trying to signal my wife to not brag about my cooking. But she didn't get the signal.

My uncle being an old time poker player and fisherman threw out a little bait by saying he was a fair dessert man himself. My wife took the bait and said her husband could really out cook any one. Now he sets the hook by saying just maybe we should have a little cook off just to settle the issue. Me I saying to myself what has she got me into? So it's set the next day we will make our specialty dessert.\

I go across the street to pick up my supplies all the time knowing that it's a hopeless task but my baby believes I can so I'm gonna give it my best. We all meet in my kitchen and uncle starts with the psychological warfare right at the start. He asks "did I see store bought vanilla wafers in your bag?" I just mumbled a low "yes sir" and sneaked the pudding mix out of the bag. Round one to Charlie Bunton but I'm still steady on my feet. He's sitting in a neutral corner just watching for an opening. I mix my pudding and then he pounces again. "That smells like Jello pudding, is it?" again I just mumble a quiet "yes sir" and try not to let my pudding scorch I know he's trying to throw me off my game. Round two I'm still standing but the round goes again to Charlie B.

Now to try and throw me off my game he quietly starts to mix his cookies, again from scratch of course. Slowly the seductive odor of vanilla and sugar starts to get past the pudding I'm stirring. I know his game distract me and my mix scorches and knock out, game over. But the cookies do bring back sweet memories of the trips to Kentucky when we were kids and he would cook up a few dozen for the trip back home. My mind is drifting back to very distracting days but I never stop stirring my pudding though. Round three goes to me for just making it past the the distraction of cookies baking.

Now I give him the stove as I build my Banana pudding layer by layer. Cookies, yeah I know, store bought. Then hot unscorched pudding, then a layer of bananas. Two more layers of each as I build my perfect dessert. Uncle is now at the stove mixing his pudding, I know all scratch ingredients. The man is a master at the stove. I simply have to stop what I'm doing, which is mainly sulking over near the refrigerator, to watch the magic hands throwing a little of this and a little of that into the pot and the most delectable aromas fill the air. Then he pulls out the cookies and I can't resist. I break down and ask for a couple. He only smiles that winner's smile. I snatch a couple any way. Round four to Charlie B. If this was a boxing match the ring doctor would have stopped the fight as I took my first bite of hot vanilla cookie.

Now both desserts are chilled and ready to serve. I can't wait to sample his dessert but I will wait til later. I don't want to influence the judge my dear wife. We march out of the kitchen like two proud gladiators waiting the final judgment. Our creations are placed on the table and everyone gathers around. Karen takes the first taste, it's mine, and smiles. The she tastes uncles creation and eats the entire sample, but she looks at me and again smiles. The verdict: his is the best banana she has ever tasted but I get the silver medal for coming in second so it wasn't a complete knock out.

Then I told Karen she had entered a cook into a competition with a master chef. The Bunton men all knew how to cook but some were more advanced.

*Gerald Bunton is a native of Woodburn, KY and a long-time Rochester resident. He has been married 42 years, is a grandfather, great grandfather, retired millwright, urban fish farmer and currently an organic gardener.*

## Challenges Facing Genetics and Materialism

by Ted Christopher

### Introduction

There are enormous confident expectations about the workings of DNA. For example, Craig Venter succinctly answered the question “What is life?” with the expression, “DNA-driven biological machines” [1]. Additionally, Richard Dawkins stated “DNA neither cares nor knows.

DNA just is. And we dance to its music” [2]. Also in his 2007 *A Life Decoded: My Genome: My Life*, Craig Venter also stated that the Human Genome Project:

has charted a landscape in which we will discover the most intricate workings of our species, the particularities of our own individual genetic makeup, and the promise of novel approaches to health and medicine that will mark a new stage in human development, one in which inherited biology is no longer destiny [3].

The follow-up to the human genome project, though, has been minimally successful, beginning with the ambitions of personal genomics [4-6]. Readers can also see also James D. Watson’s predictions in the April 2003 issue of *Scientific American* [7] and then compare those to some of the sober general acknowledgements given in the May 2017 *Scientific American* article on the failure to find the expected DNA origins for the susceptibility to experience the mental illness schizophrenia [8].

One might argue that the expectations with regards to the life-steering capabilities of DNA were overly optimistic. One could conclude this by noting some elaborate innate behaviors such with the migratory instincts of birds or in a contrary way with the puzzling disconnects found between human monozygotic twin pairs. On the other hand, a seemingly striking success for genetic (and evolutionary) reasoning appears to have been obtained in the selective breeding-beget transformation of foxes in the ongoing Siberian domestication experiment (a

succinct presentation of those findings can be found in [9]). But is it realistic to suppose that DNA alone can explain the tameness-bred changes including the tail-wagging, whimpering, and licking in response to human contact; responding to their names; having “acoustic dynamics of their vocalizations[being] remarkably similar to human laughter”; and also the human friendly appearance makeover (as more generally seen with the domestication syndrome)? That these changes were divorced from environmental causes appears to be beyond doubt as demonstrated via the experiment’s embryo switching protocol.

Yet the “secret of life” status of DNA has surely been put on trial with the frustrating follow-up to the deciphering of the human genome. That so many heritable distinctions have found little if any traction amidst our limited collection of variable DNA should be producing puzzlement.

### Some Under-Appreciated Behavioral Challenges

The aim of this paper is to nudge further that DNA puzzlement. As I previously suggested, there are a number of accepted behavioral conundrums that are very difficult to explain with the modern vision of life [10-11]. Whether in the form of prodigies who appear to hit the pavement running in adult-focused and sometimes learned ways, or in the form of transgender kids who appear to come equipped with the opposite sex’s agenda and as noted via extensive testing, “trans girls see themselves as girls and trans boys see themselves as boys, suggesting transgender identities are held at lower levels of conscious awareness” [12]. Readers can compare such observations to Ernst Mayr’s claim that “[t]here is not a single Why? question in biology that can be answered adequately without consideration of evolution” [13].

I open with a simple example of the kind of conundrum facing the scientific/genetic vision of life. In the February 2014 *Scientific American* article, “Remembrance of All Things Past” [14], some remarkable autobiographical memories observed

in a number of individuals (in a syndrome called hyperthymesia) were reported on. That article opened with an excerpt from an e-mail that the lead author James McGaugh had received from a woman named Jill Price:

As I sit here trying to figure out where to begin explaining why I am writing you ... I just hope somehow you can help me. I am 34 years old, and since I was 11 I have had this unbelievable ability to recall my past ... I can take a date, between 197[6] and today, and tell you what day it falls on, what I was doing that day, and if anything of great importance ... occurred on that day I can describe that to you as well.

The authors then followed up and extensively tested Price's recall of events and her memory was eventually proved faulty in one case - the day of the week of one of the previous 23 Easters (and Price is Jewish). Along the way she "corrected the book of milestones for the date of the start of the Iran hostage crisis at the U.S. embassy in 1979". During tests of less significant dates she:

correctly recalled that Bing Crosby died at a golf course in Spain on October 14, 1977. When asked how she knew, she replied that when she was 11 years old, she heard the announcement of Crosby's death over the car radio when her mother was driving her to a soccer game.

Jill Price demonstrated an "immediate recall of the day of the week for any date in her life after she was about 11 years old". Yet she "has trouble remembering which of her keys go into which lock" and "does not excel in memorizing facts by rote". The remainder of James McGaugh and Aurora LePort's article chronicled their subsequent confirmation of similar memories in about 50 people. Such memories were found to be "highly organized in that they are associated with a particular day and date" and that it occurred "naturally and without exertion". I suggest here that simply the general ability to identify the day of the week for a given previous date is incredible.

Given the effortlessness of hyperthymesia that is strongly suggestive of a DNA basis. Thus such people would seem to have a specific DNA pattern that somehow fell out of our evolutionary history that allows them to effortlessly recall their lives and significant events in a date and day-of-the-week fashion. This point is followed up by the authors, who also manage to sidestep acknowledging the scientific jaw-dropping implications of these memory whizzes. Is science expecting too much from genetics and evolution (not to mention neural tissue) when it assumes that DNA can produce such prodigious memories?

Here for an introductory prodigy example is a description of a musical prodigy taken from Darold Treffert's fine *Islands of Genius*:

By age five Jay had composed five symphonies. His fifth symphony, which was 190 pages and 1328 bars in length, was professionally recorded by the London Symphony Orchestra for Sony Records. On a 60 Minutes program in 2006 Jay's parents stated that Jay spontaneously began to draw little cellos on paper at age two. Neither parent was particularly musically inclined, and there were never any musical instruments, including a cello, in the home. At age three Jay asked if he could have a cello of his own. The parents took him to a music store and to their astonishment Jay picked up a miniature cello and began to play it. He had never seen a real cello before that day. After that he began to draw miniature cellos and placed them on music lines. That was the beginning of his composing.

Jay says that the music just streams into his head at lightning speed, sometimes several symphonies running simultaneously. "My unconscious directs my conscious mind at a mile a minute," he told the correspondent on that program [15, pp.55-56].

Treffert's book contains a number of other examples supporting the conclusion that prodigal (including prodigious savant) behavior typically involves "know[ing] things [that were] never learned". Such outcomes also represent remarkable transformations from the usual norms of

childhood behaviors. From a genetics perspective these transformations, like the observed canine domestication dynamics, appear to require a DNA basis. Is this really plausible?

One final prodigy example considered here is Kit Armstrong and his case was presented in Andrew Solomon's *Far From the Tree* [16]. Kit's prodigious abilities showed up early. He was able to count at 15 months. His mother May then taught him addition and subtraction at age two. He then went on to teach himself multiplication and division. Solomon then suggests that at age three Kit was asking about things for which the theory of relativity was required for an explanation (this claim, though, would probably be tricky to establish). His mother May raised him and she was not pushy. In fact she was concerned about his seeming hyper-development and thus hoping he might "grow down" in kindergarten [16, p.456].

While completing second grade Kit also managed to finish off high school math. By age nine Kit was ready to try college and enrolled at Utah State University. At ten he toured Los Alamos National Laboratory with his music manager, Charles Hamlen. At that LANL a physicist took Hamlen aside and told him:

unlike the postdoctoral physicists who usually visited, Kit was so bright that no one could 'find the bottom of this boy's knowledge' [16, p.456].

Within a few years Kit had a residency at MIT and there he helped edit some papers in chemistry, physics, and math. About Kit's apparent ability to pick up so much information and expertise his mother said:

[h]e just understands all things. Someday, I want to work with parents of disabled children, because I know their bewilderment is like mine. I had no idea how to be a mother to Kit, and there was no place to find out [16, p.456].

If scientists are looking for cognitive and developmental - as well as genetic - mysteries to

ponder, examples like this are not hard to find.

Kit Armstrong's lasting extraordinary contributions, though, have been with his piano performances and composing career. When Kit was five years old, May Armstrong wanted to find him a hobby. May then went outside of her own interests and decided to try piano lessons. Consistent with his intellectual prowess, Kit raced ahead on the piano. After his first lesson Kit returned home to make his own staff paper and proceeded to attempt a composition. Solomon reports that Kit's facility with the language of music had "come to him whole" and that he could simply hear music on the radio and then "play it back" [16, p.456]. This is an extraordinary, albeit somewhat loose claim, though.

To connect with Kit's love of music his mom moved them to London so he could study at the Royal Academy of Music. There he became the first student of the expert pianist Alfred Brendel (who coincidentally also did not come from a musical background). When Kit was thirteen a journalist who had been a strong critic of placing children in serious performance scenarios attended one of his concerts. Of that performance the journalist later wrote:

[h]is playing was so cultured, his joy in performing so obvious, his commitment as he stretched his small frame to reach the low notes so total, that my objections seemed mean-spirited [16, p.457].

Like a number of prodigies you can read about Kit Armstrong's career on the internet.

## Conclusions

For the scientific backdrop to such mysteries, you can read a work such as *In Ernst Mayr's What Evolution Is*. Therein you can find a finely written synopsis of science's understanding of evolution. Mayr's synopsis highlights two scientific assumptions. The first is the gross one that evolutionary processes simply reflect physics-dictated phenomena, with no underlying direction.

Mayr offers some defense of this assumption, whilst others have questioned it. The second, and I suggest more significant assumption, is that DNA is capable of fulfilling its evolutionary blueprint roles. Mayr doesn't even acknowledge this assumption and apparently few even now dare question it.

Mayr's confidence is reflected in the response to the 2016 book by Siddhartha Mukherjee, *The Gene* [17]. Mukherjee's book captured the unquestioned materialist-just of modern genetics with its presumed DNA support. The book was highly praised and as far as I could tell the underlying genetic/materialist logic never questioned. This was true even amongst the hundreds of Amazon comments that I scanned (although a few noted how poorly written parts of the book were). Other than arguably in a paragraph on page 487, the book never hints at the unfolding failure of genetic searches. That so many heritable characteristics could all be so subtly encoded within our variable DNA is difficult to imagine.

If the missing heritability problem continues to hold, then what does that suggest about the modern certainty that underneath it all is simply physics (and ultimately, of course, equations [18])? It is perhaps noteworthy that such a failure would appear to be consistent with the suggestion offered by the Nobel laureate physicist Eugene Wigner about a possible contradiction between the "laws of heredity and of physics" [19].

I suggest the biggest intellectual (and most vital) mystery facing humankind does not involve the remote speculative topics of physics. It is much closer to home and deserves much more attention. It is the basis of heredity.

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