

# Bluegrass Accolade

BCTC Literary Journal - Issue No. 9



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*Bluegrass Accolade*  
BCTC Literary Journal - Issue. No. 9  
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DON BOES

## *The Air Age*

### I. Faith

At recess, after games of clumsy tag,  
I pretended to sight a deadly craft  
as it wavered in the clouds above the school.

I walked like a stray across the concrete yard  
until my classmates, loyal to the simple joke,  
joined me in my allegiance to an empty sky.

Once, a nun, the same one who disliked slouching  
and bubblegum, warned us not to look up

if nothing was there.

### II. Living Near The Airport

I no longer notice the planes overhead  
although the noise, always an unwelcome racket,  
makes me shout in a voice I otherwise never use.

It's a big country and a bigger life  
and I appreciate the trips I can take  
between the past and the advertised future.

A woman I know takes off and lands in fear.  
Acceleration, like a lover, presses her into the cushions  
while the steep descent and long runways make her dizzy.

But high above the jittering grid  
she believes more than ever in what is below.

To appear at a casual reunion of friends  
she will blink the earth from her eyes like sleep  
and accept the risk of not arriving. When I fly with her

I understand how every passenger, in order to travel,  
see-saws between trust and doubt. Sometimes,

for whatever reason, only one of us boards.  
The other, behind a wall of soundproof glass,  
watches the departure from the ground, and stays there.

MATHEW DAMRELL

## *Simplicity*

Fire burns  
Only to die.  
Not a slow, quiet life  
but a raging flash,  
imprinted upon us  
as unforgettable.

I hold this pen  
and I don't quite remember.  
Things worked before  
at least I thought they did,  
somehow,  
yet how could they?

Fire burns  
only to die.  
Not only in our eyes,  
but in our minds,  
and our hearts.  
Where things should be immortal  
and yet they fade, too.

The paper seems to stare back  
or perhaps that's just me.  
Judging the words that  
I haven't even said,  
invisible forms of white  
burned into the darkness  
of my mind.

Fire burns  
only to die.  
Not to be remembered,  
but to exist  
in as beautiful a way  
as it knows how.

Words come out of nothing.  
But their meaning is nothing, too.  
The fire is gone now,  
perished to its own effulgence  
and here I am  
left with only a memory.

And with it,  
it took the sheet of paper  
full of the words I never said  
to the people I couldn't see  
because they stood in the shadows  
and fire only burned as bright  
as it knew how.



MATHEW DAMRELL

## *Vicarious*

Tides and waves, discordant thoughts  
drifting on the salty breeze.  
So very far away.

The empty sky, vast and pure, begging for an intrepid soul  
to indulge in Her company, to break their covenant with Gaea.  
Slip free the shackles of the world and fly away.  
Above the oceans and into Her domain, through gates of white.

Take wing, youngest nestling, I can never follow.  
We will never meet again, but yet, as you soar  
my heart will soar with you  
and as I remain behind, bound in chains, I can only smile  
because you are free.

STEFAN DELIPOGLOU

## *Dead Icarus*

Without Love,  
the child dropped  
out of the sky.

An Icarus who had felt  
the overwhelming heat of Love,  
but not the invasively cold persistence of the watery emptiness.

He drowned and became  
nothing more  
than another piece to the puzzle —  
a backdrop near the cusp of total irrelevance.

He rested at the bottom  
for some time before  
passing waves deposited  
his corpse upon the shore.

Pushed passed the sand,  
the body began to decompose  
and rot closer and closer  
to the deep green of the Earth.

He craved to be this.  
He craved to be no more than nothingness,  
but accepted his continual expression  
of existential degradation.  
This was his suffering.

Humans do not get to enjoy wings.  
Humans feel the burn of Truth's stare.  
Humans feel the cold embrace of waves  
entering unwilling lungs  
which fill with a dreadful fear—

—Completing and silencing  
words of Love anymore.

MARY GAMMON

## *Kentucky Snowbowl 2016*

Snowfall, ice, and cold have come in a flurry and a hurry,  
and don't seem like they will be leaving any time soon.  
For most of us, that just suits us fine,  
schedules a day or two behind,  
a reprieve that allows us to throw up our hands in surrender,  
to take a break from our routines,  
to marvel in the magic of icicles,  
to gleefully fling our arms and legs like snow angels fallen to earth,  
and to blow in the wind and dance with the pines

JACOB HOWE

## *The Wolf and His Moon*

Her brightness lightens his trail

The light leads him to her

Forever he will follow

The wolf and his moon

Perched every night

Upon the stars

High above all

The wolf and his moon

And with every night

He climbs up high

To prove to her

His love will never die

The wolf and his moon

ZACHARY JOHNSON

## *Bipolar Geese Give Birth*

To bipolar goslings.  
During the great Canadian

Migration, I saw a painter  
On a ladder, wearing

A V-neck Sweater,  
And I watched a hunter,

With an orange cap,  
Selecting his dinner.

He shot my brother.  
Because I was flying safely

To the left, my guilt swelled  
In honking extremes.

I kept heading south  
Like a long-haul trucker.

Then, to top it off, I saw a trucker  
Grilling chicken outside his trailer.

Every year,  
By Floridian Marshes,

My family gathers.  
Nobody can figure out why.

We just keep moving  
Back and forth

SARITA MUNSEY

## *She – Unspoken Hero!*

She—

Walks with light steps among a sea of emotional state.  
Her own scars buried deep within her secretive reflections.  
Students come in hopeful and complete successful,  
while others, quiet, still, cave under their own pursuits.

Am I good enough?  
Have I done enough?  
When will it be enough?

She—

Unexpectedly is face to face with the self-abused,  
learned from years of crippling torture.  
The one who has already given up on living motivation.  
A single professor placed under an agonizing decision.

Am I good enough?  
Have I done enough?  
When will it be enough?

She—

Seeks a blanket of protection for her students' wounds.

She—

Unaware that she's forever become a binding hero.

She—

Unaware she's pulled her student back from a suicidal ledge.

She—

Breathes calmly under pressure,

She—

Whispering hope back into their soul.

You are good enough!

You have done enough!

It is enough!



PAMELA JEAN PADGETT

## *Eternally Yours*

I look forward to our special day with excitement.  
Looking into your eyes saying our vows.  
Going to bed with you every night,  
and waking up to you every morning.  
Supporting each other,  
Loving each other.  
The fighting and the making up.  
Raising children together.  
Going through life's hardships,  
and seeing life's blessings.  
Sitting on the front porch  
growing older together.  
Loving you and cherishing you more  
and more with each passing year.  
And when it's our time to part,  
I know I will grieve with every memory  
of our special day, or of an enchanting kiss,  
or a passionate glance.  
Please know that whether in this life,  
or in the next, I am and will always be  
eternally yours.

RYAN RIVARD

## *Where I Come From*

Where I come from, are endless days and,  
baseball games, long summers shadows cast,  
and friends we play, in memories faded past.  
Countless journeys under skies of blue,  
wonderous adventures of all things new.  
Falling for my best friends sister,  
behind the willow, where I first kissed her.  
Skipping stones and holding hands,  
trying to understand life's complex plans.  
The cold embrace of my first hard sigh,  
when she found another and said, "goodbye."  
Fatherly advice that men don't cry,  
his gentle hug when I couldn't hide,  
those stupid tears that wouldn't stay inside.  
together we both would weep,  
of faded memories, we longed to keep  
he, like me, was a boy inside.  
and I realized, that men do cry.  
Where I come from, childhood memories past,  
wistful melancholy days, summers shadows cast.

RYAN RIVARD

## *Untitled*

The yard sales last day's dregs,  
the junk of junk, a box for a dollar,  
priceless memories, turned pittance.  
the proprietor's voice startled me, "free to a good home"  
she was holding a tattered teddy bear,  
its sad one eyed stare, frayed, seen better days.  
"no thank you, I have enough melancholy, I surely don't need more"  
she frowned, "it was my daughter's best friend"  
she had a contemplative stare, wasn't listening and said, "she grew up"  
I laughed, "most children do"  
"she has a family and no time for us" her sadness held me  
I felt her pain and said "I'm sorry"  
she hugged me tightly and said "thank you sweet bear"  
placing me in the dollar box,  
among the past's dregs, with the junk of junk.

ROZALYN WINGATE

## *To the Man Who Raped Me*

when your name showed up under the "people you may know" tab on facebook:  
there was a slight gasp of breath in my throat, trying to get back to the place where my no had lived—  
a place that had been silenced since august—  
a place with a pain so deep it cuts and stains every time i try to get the phrase "i'm over it" to rearrange in a slightly different tone  
but i highly doubt facebook would notice it.  
so instead, i click on your name.  
we have two hundred and ten mutual friends.  
and most of them are females so in my head i sit back and i reflect on whether you prey on them the same way you preyed me,  
i pray, hopefully. none of them are as broken--nor as naive as i was.  
when you told me "we're just friends"  
enlightening me with conversation of your current situation; how you aspire, how you believe, how you dream—and you even dared to mention to me  
your faith of Christianity.  
how you wanted to help the community.  
you told me to write you a poem one day.  
i will title this one rape.  
and i will signature it with my tears and the nights I've spent in my room burying myself into pillows and sheets  
to attempt to rub your spit off of me—to this time get the word no out of my mouth before you decided to rip off my blouse  
before you decided i wasn't too young and before the decision to take my innocence was to be elaborated as fun—  
as you left your unborn children to collect in graveyards on my body.

i remember you told me "i'm only getting started"  
as if this was some kind of party—i am sorry but i was never fond of unwanted invitations.  
you were never invited inside of these scared places—i never asked you to let yourself live here.  
to collect in my memory and to damage me but you did.  
and now there is a scent, a smell—that i can never seem to get off of me.  
when a boy smiles and attempts to talk to me—i run away.  
i run in agony and in vain—and even if i attempt to stick around and stay, i always tell them  
first about you and your ways.  
and hearing about the a girl who couldn't defend herself tends to make a young man stray  
and if i don't bury myself they do—it is impossible for me to fall in love without seeing an  
image of you  
and then tearing myself apart; and stabbing at pieces of my heart for not running, for not  
crying, or screaming or scratching or suddenly dying . . .  
that is what you have left here.  
you told me that one day you wanted me to write you a poem.

ROSINE YANYI

## *Society*

We live in the same society  
Believe it or not we have the same philosophy  
I wear my guilt  
You wear your pride  
I'm a failure  
You're a failure too  
Little Rosie turned 16  
Like in the movies she's been seeing  
She's got a lover  
And she can't tell nobody  
Her mind bound to what seems to be a norm  
Consensual intercourse at her age  
With nobody to have her refrain  
Who is responsible for our kids' education?  
Is it the internet or the stars on television?  
Parents of our generations lack an open-mindedness  
Both parties chained to their opinions  
No one is safe  
Sociology playing games with my psychology  
A good heart never gets by nowadays  
People worshiping that paper  
No time to help the needy  
Why? Oh why have we become mere species in mere existence  
Soldiers go to war and it makes me wonder is it for the love of their country  
or the love of the machine they use in killing  
We live in the same society  
And believe it or not, we have the same philosophy  
Oppressing all my strategies  
Suppressing every part of me  
I'm breaking free from what seems to be ok  
Yes I'm unchaining myself from your psychotic ideologies  
So don't you call me a failure  
We are one of a kind

## *Thankful*

He wasn't very tall at all, but, that didn't matter here. He took shifts at the Laundromat in a side shopping center off a very busy road.

And, he walked to work, and back, and to the restaurant next door to get something some days. He wasn't born in that town, but had come from a place south of the border of Mexico.

He munched on Mexican bread, drank coffee, ate cookies when he wanted/needed a break. Kind, unassuming, intelligent, but not educated to a level of dissatisfaction there. He was glad to have this job, and said so often to the regulars.

And he kept those floors clean. It was his to take care of, after all. There was a pride about him in that, in only that, as far as anyone else knew.

Trim black pants and a tidy shirt, clean-cut features and hair. The rolling accent covered over his English sometimes, so that one had to listen hard, or ask for a repeat.

And when he locked up 14 hours after he began, fatigue from the day tried to get through to all of him. But, he'd shove it away. He had plenty to be thankful for, and didn't ever want to mess that up.

It took 15-20 minutes each way, each day, not too long, not too far, not too easy, but not too hard.

ROGER L. GUFFEY

## *Prophecy to These Bones*

The crowd at Redd's Tavern had dwindled to a handful by the time Keith Crocker shuffled in to take his usual seat at the usual time. His tired and disheveled look made Greg, the bartender, sigh in resignation to his fate of having to listen once again to Crocker's moaning about his job. He walked over with a Pabst he had already drawn as a part of a near-nightly ritual he danced with Crocker.

"How ya doing tonight, Crocker, or should I ask? Rough day at work?"

Keith inhaled deeply and he lifted the beer to his mouth for a quick drink before he set the mug down and responded in an exhausted voice, "Oh, same old, same old. Ya know, that boss of mine is just like a diaper."

Greg raised his eyebrows as he busied himself with the chores of closing the bar at midnight. "How's that?"

"Always on my ass and full of shit."

Greg twittered a soft laugh before inquiring, "Okay. So what has he done this time? Fired you?"

"I wish. Then I could sue his ass. No, it's just the same old stuff. No matter what I do, I can't please him. Crotchety old bastard."

"So what has McGill done now?"



"You know, he's been the curator of the University's antiquities collection so long he probably was around when some of these antiques were made. They let him get by with a lot of shit that would get another man fired."

"Seems like I have heard this before."

"Sorry, but I have to vent to someone or I'd go nuts. I bust my ass in that place for almost a year and he won't even recommend me for a raise. Says the university is on a tight budget and there's no point in wasting the time and paperwork asking. If I was unhappy with my pay there, I could always go somewhere else."

"So why don't you? You're still young and got a good education."

Crocker took another sip, shaking his head slightly. "It's not that easy, and he knows it. Most universities are under the gun and have closed a lot of their collections and museums to save money. McGill has such a great reputation and the collection is so extensive that he had the clout to keep it on the budget. Don't get me wrong. The man knows New World archaeology probably better than anyone in the field, and God knows I have learned a lot from being his assistant curator. I just don't understand why he has to treat everyone else like dirt."

"Guess it is a perk of the job."

"I guess. He demeans everybody and hits on the young undergraduates helping there. Dirty old man. Looks like freaking Ebenezer Scrooge: tiny round spectacles, sourpuss drawn-up mouth and squinty little eyes. Reeks of Aqua Velva aftershave. Thinks he's a player. Girl would have to be crazy to sleep with that."

Greg's eyes twinkled as he offered, "Maybe he ain't after girls. Maybe he's got the hots for you. Ever think of that?"

"Hey, watch it! I'm trying to drink here. Damn, that's too gross to even think about."

"Oh, can't you take a joke? I guess some people are just naturally mean. I know he's been there a long time. What, thirty years or more? As I recall, he and his wife were on the team that discovered that Aztec burial tomb."

"Actually, it was an Inca city. Ingapirca. Oh, I've heard that story a lot. He reminds me of it whenever he thinks he can use it to belittle me. It's not like he led the team. Sure, that was a great find. Some wonderful gold jewelry and interesting pottery pieces."

"Ain't that where they got that big urn or whatever that contained the mummified body?"

"Oh, yes, that thing. Well, it came from that site, but it was found on a much earlier expedition. It's the reason later trips to the site were funded. That damned thing sits on a huge pedestal right beside his office door. The mummy is in a separate air-tight case to preserve it."

"I've seen it. Took my family from out of town to see the stuff there. You know, according to the writing on the urn there's a curse on whoever disturbs the burial site."

"For Pete's sake, how many times do I have to hear that bullshit? Every visitor of the museum wants to hear that story. Someone will die as retribution for disturbing the grave."

Greg's face froze and darkened with resentment. "Don't be so sure about that being bullshit. I've heard that the leader of that team, Dr. Willis, was killed in a car accident just days

after making that find. Several members of the original team have met strange ends. Some have just disappeared without a trace. Some people say that the ghost of that Indian guy comes and steals them away. McGill's wife was one of them. She disappeared without a trace. No body, no weapon, no clues of any kind. It was the talk of the town. A lot of people came to town to see the relics because they were cursed. I'm sure he's told you about that."

"Yeah, yeah. She disappeared without a trace. No clues of any kind. No body, no weapon, no nothing. The old man reminds me of his personal tragedy to manipulate me to do things I don't want to do. How many people on the team have not died under strange circumstances? It's just human nature to single out the few cases that match our perception of reality and forget those that don't. Greg, you're a smart man, so why do you believe that crock?"

"All I'm saying is that there's a lot of weird things we don't understand. You have to admit that it's strange that there has been such a high turnover rate in that job. Six new directors in the last twenty years. I think McGill's held it longer than anyone."

"Coincidences." A wry smile crossed Crocker's face. "You think we are overdue for a new director? Maybe that old curse will get him."

"You can always hope. Want another beer?"

Crocker did not answer because he had idly fixated on watching the man at the end of the bar put out a cigarette in the ashtray before he got up to leave.

"Hey, Keith. You awake? Another beer? Last call."

"Nah, I gotta go. I have an early day tomorrow. We're cleaning out some old pieces that we don't need any more. Thanks for listening to me bellyache. Good night. See ya tomorrow."

"And try to have a better attitude, okay? See ya then."

## II

Crocker rose early the next day and grabbed a to-go breakfast from McDonald's on the way to work. McGill's car was already in the parking lot. Crocker steeled himself as he entered the museum, expecting to catch hell for whatever malfeasance of duty his boss perceived as today's shortcoming. McGill's office door was open, but he was not there. Crocker heard some noises in the basement and took the elevator to the basement to see if he was needed.

McGill was by the furnace, throwing stacks of old paper inside. "Crocker, you're just in time. I've cleaned out a lot of old papers and damaged pieces we don't need to make room for that traveling exhibition of Pre-Columbian art. You can take over for me here. Just throw these old papers in the furnace."

"Where did all this stuff come from?"

"Here, yonder, and about. A lot of newspapers that were already on microfiche or transferred to computer files. That stuff takes up a lot of space we'll need if we want to put up a good display. Hop to it. I'm going back to see if there's any more."

Crocker nodded and started to stack the papers on a small-wheeled cart, rolled the cart to the furnace, and threw the papers in. He went back upstairs and headed to the main office. He paused and patted the large urn as he walked into the office.

“Say, Dr. McGill, have you ever thought about moving this urn? It’s really a magnificent piece and could probably be shown more effectively in the center of the room.”

“No, it’s just fine where it is. There are a couple of cracks in it and I’m afraid if we move it, the whole thing may crack. It’s been sitting there since it was given to the museum. And besides, if we put it in the center of the room, it would not be long before some little bastard running around it would push it over. That urn is far too valuable to risk damaging it. Here, get busy and take this trash down to the incinerator. And see if there are any pedestals or display cases down there we can use in the new exhibit.”

Crocker shrugged and pushed the cart down the hall into the elevator. When he got to the basement, he carefully steered the cart through a maze of boxes and crates to the old furnace. Ansel Graham, the founder of the museum, had a vindictive streak and had written into the policies of the museum that any materials scheduled for disposal had to be incinerated to keep people from rummaging through the garbage and finding pieces to sell to other museums or collectors. His dream was to make his museum the premier showplace for the archaeological discoveries from Central Mexico. He would have done anything to hold on to that distinction, even if over half of the museum’s holdings were warehoused in the cluttered basement.

Crocker eased the cart to rest in front of the furnace, opened the door and tossed the papers into the fire flaring up through a large rectangular grate. The flames shot up more brightly, and forced a blast of hot air into his face. He shut the door, and lit a cigarette while he waited for the fire to die down enough to toss in the rest of the trash. He meandered through the maze of crates. Some were opened, exposing the shredded packing; others were still nailed tightly shut, and a few had the lids removed lying crossway on the top. He dropped the cigarette, and stepped on it to extinguish it, and began to explore some of the open boxes.

Some boxes had manifests glued to their sides that listed the original contents of the crate: dozens of pots and shards, a few weapons, and assorted odds and ends typically discovered in digs. A few made reference to gold and jewels that he knew were on display in the museum, but many of the unopened crates were not labeled.

"Damn! You got to wonder what is in these crates! And better yet, why has the old bastard not put these items on display? Just being contrary, I guess."

The alarm bell wired to the upstairs rang, and he knew he had better hurry back up or face the scolding he had grown used to. He loaded the cart onto the elevator and went up to the main office for the next load. McGill was waiting for him.

"What the hell were you doing down there for all this time? We need to get this stuff out of here ASAP, and you are down there diddling yourself or something. Now here, load this stuff up, and this time don't take all day about it!"

Crocker bit his lip before answering, "Actually, Mr. McGill, I didn't think that throwing all that trash in there at once was a good idea with that old furnace. I was waiting for the first half of it to burn before I tossed in the rest. You know, just to be safe."

"Safe? My boy, that old furnace will outlive both of us. Been there since the place was built and never had a bit of trouble with it. Burns like the flames of hell itself. You don't need to worry about safe. That heat keeps the steam-powered generator going. Damned cast iron walls must be a foot thick. Now, help me move this filing cabinet over there to the corner. That table needs to go under the window."

The two men wrestled the furniture around to the new locations. "Now sweep the floor, so we can put that display case there. You do know how to use a broom, don't you?" McGill sneered sarcastically.

Crocker paused before replying, "Gee, I don't know. I was hoping you would give me lessons."

"Okay, smartass. Hurry up. I want to close early today so I can go to Memphis to make sure everything is ready to ship the exhibit here next month. I want everything in order before I leave. By the way, you'll need to move some of those crates in the basement to make room near the loading dock for the exhibit. I'll be gone until the first of next week. I was going to close the museum for a few days, but I think you can keep it open. If there are any problems, you can call my cell or just have people come back when I'm here. Since you're getting the afternoon

off, you can make up the time Saturday to move those boxes. I want you up here when the museum is open."

"Well, Dr. McGill, I'd planned to be out of town this weekend to visit some friends in Cincinnati."

"Well, I guess you have to decide which is more important, your friends or your job. I want this done before Monday."

Crocker swallowed hard. "What would you do if I just quit now and let you do it yourself?"

"Go ahead. You won't get unemployment, and if you apply for another job anywhere, I'll be sure to make them aware of your lazy work ethic. It's your choice."

"Okay, okay. You don't have to be nasty. I'll call my friends and tell them next weekend is better. The place will be ready Monday. I'll get paid overtime, won't I?"

"Oh, I guess I can manage that. Now take that next load of trash down to the basement. I'm closing up in a few minutes so you can start moving some of those boxes. I'll see you sometime Monday."

As Crocker turned to leave, McGill added, "One more thing. We will need some things from some of those crates. I'll leave you a list taped to my door."

"Okay. See you next week."

Crocker went back to loading old papers onto the cart. He took the cart down stairs, and busied himself trying to move some of the crates around. He looked at his watch.



"The old bastard won't know if I take a break. I need a drink," he said.

He took the elevator to the main floor, locked the door, and walked over to the bar.

Greg greeted him, "Little early today, Keith. You quit or get fired?"

"Neither. The old son of a bitch had to go to Memphis and left early. I have to work tomorrow, so I figured I can take off today."

"Working on Saturday? Well, I guess the cat's away, the mice will play. You want your usual?"

"Yeah, that would be fine," Crocker said as he took a seat on the stool in the center of the bar."

He slapped a pack of cigarettes against the bar a few times before he tore the plastic off and lit a cigarette. He nodded to Greg as he set his drink down before him. "Thanks. Run me a tab."

"No problem. So, why did your boss go to Memphis?"

"I thought I'd told you. We're getting a big exhibit next month after it leaves Memphis. He wanted to go check on the shipping arrangements and find out if there were any special things we needed to do to get ready."

"Oh. What do you have to do tomorrow?"

"Make room in the basement for the crates when they get here, and fish some things out of some of those crates down there."

He took one last draw on his cigarette and blew out a long swirl of smoke. "You know, Greg, there is one thing that bothers me sometimes. I think that old coot is living beyond his means. I don't care if he is the director. He lives in a mansion he lives, and owns a bunch of cars, even a Rolls."

"Maybe he made good investments, or maybe he had a life insurance policy on his wife. Who knows? I wouldn't worry too much about it. I figure the less you think about him, the better off you'll be. Need another?"

"Yeah, I was going to go back in tonight, but what the hell. I'll go in tomorrow."

"By the way, that blond was in last night asking about you. I think she's got the hots for you. I told her you'd be in today sometime. She said she'll come back tonight about seven. You might get lucky."

"About damned time I had luck on something. Got the crossword I can work on till she shows up?"

"Sure," Greg replied, as he slid the newspaper down the bar.

The young blonde woman came in a few minutes later and they left the bar together.

### III

Crocker left the young woman's apartment about nine the following morning, and grabbed a breakfast at McDonald's on his way to work. He opened the door to the museum, set

it to lock after him, and walked over to the main office door. McGill had taped a note listing some items he wanted from the basement. He had added "I think this is in the crate labeled 8."

Crocker made a pot of coffee, checked the door to see if it was secure, poured a cup of coffee, and rode the elevator downstairs. He thought to himself, 'I might as well try to get those things out now.'

He examined the stenciled numbers on the boxes until he found one with an 8 on it labeled nearly hidden in an unlighted corner. The smudges in the dust on top of the box were smeared, so he figured had been recently opened. It was labeled "MISCELLANEOUS POTTERY. "I guess this is the one he wants," he said quietly.

He began to rummage through the packing materials. He felt a metallic object that he pulled out to examine. He stared in astonishment at a heavy solid gold figurine depicting an ancient Inca god in his hand.

"What the hell is this?" he cried aloud. He pulled the box out to check the numbers and found that this was really box 18, but the crates beside it had hidden the 1. He frowned, and started to pull out more gold and silver treasures. The crate was nearly half empty, though the amount of packing material clearly was meant for a full crate. Some of the shredded material still had a figure-shaped cavity molded into its twisted strands. By the time he was finished, he had pulled several hundred thousand dollars worth of artifacts from the crate.

"Why in the hell are these finds not on display? I've never even seen any reference to them in the files. I wonder... Wait a minute! I think I'm beginning to get the picture."

He sat down on a nearby box and pondered his discovery. "So that's where the old bastard's getting his money. He must have lost all references to these artifacts and just sells some of them when he needs the money. Crap! He'll know that I have found his stash when he looks in here. I've got to put this back as good as I can and think about what to do. I wonder if the board of directors knows about this."

He tried to remember the order in which he retrieved the treasures and returned them to their original places. He replaced the top, and searched until he found crate 8. He loaded the items McGill had listed onto the cart, and returned to the main floor. He rolled the cart to rest beside the office door before going back down to the basement to resume his work.

He ran through options of what to do as he worked. "If I say anything to him, God knows what he'll do. If I report him to the board, he'll find a way to wriggle out of it, maybe even blame me for the theft. Still, if he's doing what I think he's doing, he should not get away with it. I need proof he's stealing the stuff. I've got to think.'

By four o'clock, he had rearranged the crates to make space for the new display, careful to leave number 18 as undisturbed as possible. He closed up the museum and walked over to the bar.

Keith could tell that something was wrong when he came in. "Why the long face, Crocker? I figured you'd be happy having the old man gone."

Crocker winced and shrugged. "Just taking a break from re-organizing the basement. I guess I didn't get much sleep last night, if you know what I mean." He winked at Greg who rolled his eyes as he replied, "Too much information, man, TMI! Beer?"

"Yeah, just need to wet my whistle. Dry and dusty in that basement. I bet some of those crates have not been moved in years."

"Probably not. My daddy used to tell me what a big deal that museum was when it was built. Old man Graham played it up big to the press. Cagey old bird. Never put everything on display at once. He would display a few new items every couple of years just to keep the museum in the news. He must have put it all out because after he died there ain't been any more pieces brought out. So, is there a lot of stuff still down there? Anything valuable?"

Crocker felt himself freeze momentarily, "Naw, just a load of old wooden crates and assorted junk. The old man just wanted to make room for the new crates, so when can manage the exhibit safely. Just another of his bullshit jobs."

"That's what he's been training you for, ain't it?"

"Funneeeee. Say, what can you tell me about McGill when he came here?"

"Not much you don't know. He and his wife were hired to assist Anselm Graham's son, Andy, run the place. Andy was a big drunk and in constant trouble with the wrong kind of people. Left town sudden-like. Left a note that he wanted to go back to the site and make a name for himself. Never came back."

"So, then McGill gets the job."

“Well, technically, the board gave the job to his wife with him as an assistant. They worked hard to revitalize the place. Even played up the old cursed tomb rumors. Had a few haunted Halloweens nights there for the kids. Got a few of the old glory days back.”

“So when did she disappear? How?”

“Let me see, that would have been about fifteen years ago. You know, my dad was a police officer here, and he told me he got a call to answer an alarm at the museum. He found the door wide open and the main window to the gallery busted out. He found McGill knocked out on the floor, but couldn’t find any trace of his wife.”

“Maybe she just wanted to rob the place and disappear. Ever think of that?”

“That was what the FBI and my dad said, but they never found any proof of it. The old man never changed his story. They were walking by the place, saw a light on, and went in to look around. Says he tried to stop the burglar, but tripped and knocked himself out on a display case. Nasty cut. Had to have stitches. Police found his blood and hair on the case and what looked like a few scuffmarks on the floor. Never found any trace of his wife.”

“So what happened to her?”

“Nobody knows. The police thought maybe he’d killed her, but they searched the place over, and found no evidence to support that theory. Some people think she may have had a boyfriend, but I kinda doubt it. She wasn’t much to look at.”

“Maybe she was kidnapped.”

“Nope. No ransom note or calls.”

"So what did the robber get?"

"That's the funny part. McGill closed up the museum for two weeks for a complete inventory and found nothing missing. Some people speculated that he'd stolen some stuff for the insurance money, but he never filed any claims. He did take an extended leave of absence to recover from the loss of his wife. You know, he still has a standing offer of fifty thousand dollars for anyone who can help him find his wife. Swears he'll make that offer till he dies, or until she is found."

"So, no one ever collected. No clues or nothing."

"Guess the old Indian curse got her. All the excitement did revive the museum, and the local color ghost story pulls in tourists, I guess. Another beer?"

"No, I have to get back to work. I'll probably be back later."

"What do you want me to do if your lady friend comes back?"

"Here, call me on my cell, and I'll come over to meet her. Thanks. Back to the salt mines."

#### IV

The woman did not come back that night so Crocker spent the time in his office thinking about what to do next.

*Maybe that's the reason the old fart is such an asshole. I can't imagine losing my wife and not knowing what happened to her. That would sure screw with your mind. Still it doesn't make sense that*

*the burglar would take the time to break into a place with lots of gold and stuff and not take anything after he has taken care of the old man and his wife. Even if he ran because of the police coming, he should have taken something. But then again, it might be hard to get rid of anything stolen from the museum. But people steal art all the time and manage to sell it on the black market. Maybe I need to look at that crate again.*

He took the stairs to the basement, scooted the crate out and studied its markings. The crate had arrived at the museum in a shipment after the first big shipment from the Incan expedition. There was no list of its contents other than the words ‘miscellaneous pottery’ and ‘DO NOT INVENTORY’ which had been scrawled in rough handwriting, unlike the neatly stenciled labels on the other crates. The top of the sides had gouges left when the top was pried off, and the accumulated dust on the top was lighter than the tops of the other boxes. There were tracings in the dust indicating something had been laid on the top of the crate.

*This just gets curiouuser and curiouuser. These artifacts would enhance the museum’s collections a lot. Unless...unless McGill has been stealing this stuff all along. That could account for his high living. I wonder if there is any other record of this crate even being here. Wait a minute...maybe that is why he burning a lot of papers. I bet that any record of this stuff was in those stacks of papers I burned. All those papers are coming out of his office so no one else would have had access to them.*

*Come on man, get a grip here! McGill has an outstanding reputation, and no one has ever questioned his integrity. Maybe someone else stole the stuff without his knowledge. Or maybe nothing was stolen at all. Maybe the crate was never filled up. It was shipped later. They could have just put a*



*lot of extra packing in the crate to keep it from rattling around. Maybe that thief did take things. Hey, wait a minute! Maybe there was no thief. He could have faked the whole thing. All the police had to go on was his story.*

“Dammit! What should I do? You know, as little as he gets down here, he may not even know of the crate is here or that someone has taken anything. I really need to ask him about it,” he said.

He lit a cigarette and looked at the crate trying to decide what to do. *I can't think here. I need to get out of here and try to work this out. I'm going back over to the bar.*

He walked over to the furnace, took one last draw before opening the door to toss in the butt. There was no trace of anything he had burned the day before, but the fire inside lay smoldering as a bed of glowing embers. His eyes widened as he eased the door.

*Maybe I'm missing an opportunity here. What if I off the old guy and burn his body in here so there is no trace left. Then I could be given his job and still have access to the treasure no one else seems to know about. A lot of people seem to believe that old curse story . . . HMMMM*

“Are you out of your mind?” he said to himself. *The police always catch murderers... except those that they don't. They never solved his wife's disappearance. So maybe if I'm careful and plan this well. How can I cover up his disappearance so I'm not a suspect?*

Still in thought, he went upstairs, locked the outside doors and strolled over to the bar.

“Back again? Finish up your work?” Keith asked.

“Yeah, now I can enjoy the rest of the weekend. Give me some Wild Turkey on the rocks.”

He sat nursing his drink, stirring it idly with the swizzle stick while he ran through possible scenarios of how to kill McGill. He dared not risk anything that might cause a struggle because it might leave evidence for the police.

Keith came over while he was polishing up the bar. He flipped through the channels on the television, and stopped when he came to a station showing a crowd of people protesting. “You know, they’re going to execute that son of a bitch who killed that little girl three years ago tonight, and these dumb bastards are out there hollering about his rights. I hope he burns in hell.”

Crocker turned his gaze to the television. “Can you imagine what that man must be thinking about now? I mean, all you can do is to sit there and wait for them to come and get you to kill you. Wonder what goes through a man’s mind then.”

“Well, I bet it is not the same thing as what you used to think about. The old electric chair struck fear in people’s heart, I bet worrying if you’re going to feel anything or catch fire. If you ask me this lethal injection business is for the birds. Make him suffer like that little girl suffered. All he does now is just go to sleep and not wake up.”

“Actually, they do it in stages. There’re several plungers involved. The first one has a sedative in it, the second one has a muscle relaxer and the last one has potassium chloride to

stop the heart. You're right though: he doesn't feel much more than the needle stick. Always struck me as ironic how we keep coming up with humane ways to kill somebody."

"Hey, after tonight he won't kill anyone else."

"No, he won't. But I wonder if it really . . ."

His voice trailed off as his mind replayed his last words *"Potassium chloride stops the heart."* *That's it! I bet there is some of that in the chemicals in the museum somewhere. Hell, we had it in high school chemistry class. I can inject him with a massive dose to kill him and then dispose of the body. It won't even matter if he knows I have stuck him because he is going to be dead meat soon enough. And I know just how to get rid of the body!*

He sat up straight and smiled, bringing a quizzical look on Greg's face. "Hey! What's so funny? I mean, I'm glad that the bastard is checking out, but it ain't that kind of funny!"

Crocker swung his glass to his lips to finish his drink before smirking, "I wonder if they read him a bedtime story."

Greg winced a light chuckle, "Ya know, I never thought about that. Now *that* is kind of funny."

"Well, I need to go back over and double check the locks. The old man is due back on Monday, so I'd better be sure everything is just perfect for him. I'll see ya later. Good night."

"Night, Crocker. Don't forget to celebrate that the world will be short one deserving bastard at five after midnight."

Crocker made a gun with his right hand and clicked it at Greg,

“Yep! One bastard short.” He closed the door and returned to the museum.

He scurried across the street and let himself in the front door. He strode excitedly down the hall toward the lab they used for cleaning and restoring display items. McGill had insisted on putting locks on the storage cabinets in case some kid got into them so he had to wrestle his key out of his pocket to open the cabinet. The lock and chain slipped easily out of the handles so he could swing the doors open wide. His eyes raced along the top shelves, hoping that the jars were in alphabetical order. They had been at one time, but now there was a hodgepodge of various-colored glass jars. He moved a few around until he found a deep brown wide mouthed jar bearing a skull and crossbones with the words Potassium Chloride (KCl) printed on the peeling label.

*I wonder how much I need. It shouldn't be too hard to find out a lethal dose on the internet.*

He closed the cabinet, locked the door to the room, and took a seat before his computer screen. He started to Google potassium chloride but froze in mid-motion. *Crap, I can't search here in case the cops search the hard drive. I can look it up in the library tomorrow afternoon and mix it up tomorrow night so I will be ready when he comes back. I might as well go home and think about how I can do this.*

## V

The library opened at noon on Sunday, but Crocker waited till two to go do his search. He sauntered around the computer room until he saw a teenager leave the computer without

logging off. He quickly typed in “potassium chloride lethal dose,” and shielded the screen with his hunched-over body. He accessed the first reference and quickly memorized the lethal dose 100 milliequivalents, before quietly slipping away from the computer. He drove back to the lab, mixed the proper solution in a small bottle which he hid with a syringe in a drawer in a cabinet.

On the way home he stopped by three hardware stores to buy some timers for the lights. He found a new message on his answering machine from McGill announcing his plans for the return trip.

“Crocker, my plane is supposed to arrive around five so maybe it’ll be there by seven. I’ll come to the lab directly because we need to go over some paperwork and check a few things. We should be finished by nine or so. Meet me at the lab around seven.”

*This is perfect. I can sit at the bar for a while before I go to the museum. I have this tape to verify his plans for the evening and with these light timers, it will look like someone is there working late.*

## VI

He could not sleep much that night as he spent the night going over his plans, trying to think of anything he may have forgotten. He arose after a fitful sleep, drove to McDonald’s for an egg McMuffin and coffee before going to the museum. There he set the light timers on the room lamps for different times before installing them in various rooms that had a window facing the street. A few things needed his attention, but after he had completed those tasks, he

went for lunch and then dropped by empty the bar where Keith sat working a crossword puzzle.

“Afternoon, Greg. How about a beer?”

“Sure thing. You seem awfully happy today.”

“Just enjoying my last few hours of freedom before the old man returns. He is due back sometime around seven and wants us to work some tonight. Might as well spend some time goofing off.”

“So the museum is closed today?”

“No, but I just put a sign on the door explaining that due to circumstances beyond our control the museum would be closed until one today. I have to get back in a few minutes. I figure what the old man don’t know won’t hurt him. Damn, I need to go. “

He gulped down the last of his beer, before hurrying out the door. “I’ll probably be back after I get off if you’re still open. See ya.”

His watch read five till one when he opened the doors. Mondays were usually slow and today was no exception. He set the timers to turn the lights on and off at various times in different rooms before settling down to read while he waited for McGill to return. Still tired from not sleeping well, he dozed off for a few minutes until a small group of visitors woke him around four. He guided the group around, and explained the exhibits with his usual spiel. After the tour, he reminded them of the big Pre-Columbian exhibit that was opening next month.

The group left, and he was alone once again. Anxiously, he went to the chemical room to check the solution and syringe. From there, he went to the basement to check that the furnace was still burning. Returning upstairs, he went on line and researched some articles about Pre-Columbian archaeology.

About six thirty, he heard the back door open and close. McGill's footfalls echoed in the hallway as he climbed the stairs to the main floor. He paused in Greg's doorway to flex his umbrella, covered in a fine film of the misty rain that had started to fall outside.

"Welcome back, Dr. McGill. How was your trip?"

"Fine, fine. I found out a few details we need to check. Our constant temperature and humidity chambers need to have their filters cleaned, and we need to empty some of the larger display cases temporarily. Follow me to the office so I can show you pictures of some of the pieces."

"Sure thing, but I need to go to the bathroom before we begin. I put the artifacts you asked for on a cart by the door to your office. Be back in a bit."

"Hurry up. I don't want to be here all night."

Crocker walked toward the restroom until he saw that McGill had entered his office. Then he walked swiftly to the chemical room, and palmed the syringe so it would be unnoticeable before going back to the offices. His heart was racing and his breathing became more rapid as he entered the main office. He settled into a position beside McGill who paused

to look over his glasses at him. He managed a weak smile as he asked, "Did I get everything you needed?"

"It looks like it. Was I right? Were they in crate eight?"

"Oh, they were there, but I opened crate eighteen by mistake. Guess what I found?"

McGill blanched momentarily before his face turned bright red with rage. "Can't you read? I said crate eight!"

"It was an honest mistake. So, guess what I found? A whole bunch of gold and silver artifacts that are not catalogued anywhere. It looks like some of them may be missing, based on the packing. Did you know they were down there?"

McGill pushed him away, snapped open his briefcase to grab a pistol that he pointed in Crocker's face. "You damned right! I know all about that. But you are about to forget everything—even to breathe. Step away from."

Crocker lunged at him, knocked the gun loose, and jabbed the syringe deep into his thigh. McGill tried to get past him to retrieve the gun from under the desk, but he staggered and gasped for air. He clutched his chest, and fell to the floor, wheezing badly. His breathing became more labored and then stopped. Still shaking, Crocker sat down in the chair, trying to catch his breath and calm down. He tried to light a cigarette, but he was trembling so badly he had to wait a few minutes. Finally, after he managed to light up and smoke a few puffs, he rolled a cart into the office, loaded McGill's body onto it and pushed it into the elevator. In the basement, he pushed the cart out of the elevator over to the furnace where he struggled to place



the body over the main burners. He tossed in the syringe, closed the door, and flicked the switch to turn on the forced-air blower and the exhaust fan. When he heard the *whoosh* of the fire, he took a deep breath and turned to take the cart back upstairs. He collapsed into his office chair to calm down.

*I wonder how long this will take. I'll wait here for a spell, and then go over to the bar for a few drinks. Ya know, I can leave this all night, come in early tomorrow and get rid of any remains. I just need to be sure that Greg sees the lights upstairs.*

He went to the main floor, checked the timers, locked the door and went over to the bar.

Greg hailed him, "So, is the old man back?"

"Yeah, he's back. Mean as ever. I told him I needed a break and would come back if he's still there. Gimme a beer and slide those pretzels down here."

"You got it, buddy. So, what's the big news from the museum set?"

"He brought back some more detailed information on special needs for some of the display items. When I left him, he was checking out the constant temperature display cases. He wanted to get them all done tonight. I told him I'd come back over if I saw the lights on. Hey, make me a club sandwich on whole wheat. I might as well eat now in case I have to stay late."

They chatted idly as Crocker ate his sandwich. He glanced at his watch after he finished eating. "How about getting a breath of fresh air while I grab a smoke?"

"It's slow, so I can step out for a minute."

They stepped out onto the sidewalk to see that two rooms of the museum were lit up.

"Dammit! I guess I need to go back over there. Maybe it won't be an all-nighter."

"Oh, suck it up, you big baby. It won't kill . . . hey, look he turned off one of the lights."

*Right on time. Now we wait a couple of minutes.*

"Looks like you might luck out."

"I hope so. I'm really tired. Well, son of a bitch! He must be calling it a night. He just turned out the other lights. I'm out of here."

"Lucky bastard, I'm stuck here for another hour to close up. See ya tomorrow, I guess."

Crocker's mind was racing as he turned to walk away. *This is going perfectly. The deed is done, I have a great alibi witness and nobody is the wiser. I'll get up early and come in to take care of business in the basement.*

He felt a rush of excitement at committing the perfect crime, and being the sole owner of all that loot made him too antsy to sleep well. He managed to drop off about two, giving him four hours of sleep before he got up at six. He showered quickly and drove to the museum quickly. A faint sickening odor met him as he raced down the stairs to the basement. He opened the furnace door, and found that most of the body had been reduced to ashes, but a few ends of the larger bones and the burnt shell of McGill's watch lay on the grate. He fetched a metal bucket and small long-handled shovel from a janitor's closet and carefully removed the pieces of bone and watch. Then, he ran the shovel over the grate to sift all the remaining ashes onto the pile of ashes accumulated during the trash burning. He used the shovel to mix the ashes up some and closed the door.

He returned the shovel to the closet, grabbed a small stepladder and the bucket of bone fragments, and made his way awkwardly over to the elevator. The bucket was not heavy, and he easily loaded it into the elevator, rode to the main floor, and worked his way over to the pedestal holding the large urn. He paused to look at the door's title, and imagined what it would say if he were named the curator. "Keith Crocker, Ph.D Head Curator." Barely able to contain his glee, he opened the stepladder up, set it up beside the pedestal, grabbed the bucket of bones, and climbed the steps.

He steadied himself on the lip of the urn, and hoisted the bucket up to dump its contents into the urn.

He thought to himself, *'This is too perfect. Just another mysterious disappearance with no clues or body. I'll be the new curator and I'll make sure this urn will never be moved as long as I'm the boss.'*

He stepped up to the next rung and swung the bucket to throw the ashes into the urn, but froze in mid-motion as the color leached out of his face.

The urn was already filled to the brim with ashes, bone fragments and fire-charred jewelry.

BILL MCCANN

## *The Green Light*

The light was green, piercing the dark, not like the light at the end of Daisy's dock but rather with the intensity of a law enforcement vehicle pulled to the side of a road, slowing traffic in both directions. "What is that?" Jamison thought, trying to make his brain function through the fog of sleep interrupted. A green light. Bolder than a green traffic light. A green that begged to be taken seriously; unlike, say, the namby-pamby yellow-green so typical of a smoke alarm.

"Where'd it come from?" he thought to himself. "Was it there when I went to bed?" he asked aloud, startled at the sound of his own voice. No voice answered. Surely, he'd have noticed the greenish cast of his room had it been there all along. "Wouldn't I?"

Jamison closed his eyes, trying to shut out the green glow preventing sleep. No luck. He turned over. He turned over again. And again. There was to be no easy dislodging of the green light. Finally, Jamison lay on his back and turned on his bedside lamp to read *The Last Tycoon*; he had earlier finished *The Great Gatsby*. Perhaps an hour later, leaving the lamp on to diffuse Daisy's green glow, Jamison again tried to fall asleep; all to no avail.

Finally, Jamison did the inevitable and faced his nemesis. Pulling a ladder-back chair to a spot under the green light, Jamison mounted the chair so he could better see—eyeball to eyeball, as it were. "Yup, it's a green light," he proclaimed aloud, no longer surprised at the

sound of his voice. Putting an eye nearly on the green light he saw through the green glow to an interior behind it. "Amazing," he muttered to himself, "a desk."

Indeed, the green light hid what appeared to be a small office, complete with a desk perhaps two inches tall, a taller file cabinet and a desk phone. Was it ringing? Could it be Sam Spade's office? Maybe it's the office in "Rick's Café Américain" in Casablanca. Nah, it couldn't be. Neither was a possibility.

A tiny office in his wall, behind a boldly green light? People'd think him crazy. So Jamison got down off the chair and pushed it back to its place. He turned off the lights, got into bed, and stared at the ceiling almost till dawn.

Just before eight am Jamison got up, showered, dressed, had breakfast and went to his group therapy session, just like any other day at what he called "The Wilbur State Institute for the Inane."

VICTORIA WALKER

## *Knotted at the Heart*

Though legally blind, she cuts her own hair when she takes the fancy or occasionally I help her out in a pinch when a butterscotch candy gets gloriously forgotten in her silky hair. She loves green beans, all nature of sweets, and good old-fashioned chicken pot pie. She has known the pain of death, the pain of justice, and the pain of growing old. She plays classical music at a deafening range, takes delight in doing her own laundry, and would give you all the time—and I mean all the time—in her day.

Her favorite question is: "What, honey?" And her favorite response is: "I know it's the Lord's money, but even Jesus paid taxes." She is shrewd, deliberate, and shoots straight from the hip. Make that both hips. Don't stand in her way. She laughs louder than you and moves mountains from the angle of her wheelchair.

Her name is Miss Mabel. She refuses to give up, give out, or give over. I heard remorse in her voice only last week when she "let go" of her two-foot, completely decorated, artificial Christmas tree—the one that had towered on her kitchen table for untold years collecting dust like snow. She files memories like coupons (she knows what they're worth) and doesn't miss a chance to paint you into the loosely woven tapestry of her tightening life. I sang "Happy Birthday" to her last year when she turned ninety, while she served me birthday cake on her

best china. She even made coffee and had searched all drawers until she found her pink cloth napkins for her party for two.

These days, she's stripping her house, preparing to move. She has tried to give me her sewing machine, a wooden rack, a wicker laundry basket, and untold keepsakes. One day she placed in my hand the tiny nativity scene that stood as the ongoing gift beneath that two-foot Christmas tree. Then out of the blue, with intonation rising, she said, "I'm going to miss you." There was a slice of silence . . . and then a diversion to something of flood insurance and would I mind picking her up some shoe inserts the next time I went to town.

For once I was grateful that she was legally blind and that there was only one tiny tulip light bulb dimming in the chandelier of her darkened living room. She couldn't see the tears gliding down my cheeks. She doesn't hear so well either, so my cracked, hollowed voice, and sniffles quite silently zigzagged right on by her.

Have you ever sat in moments of sacred silence? Silence that is perfect like a warm, heavy, hand-me-down quilt around your thoughts? A silence that threads an amazing story about a beautifully tender friendship and the divine nature of two hearts knotted together?

"Let's go through every closet and drawer, Miss Mabel, just to make sure they didn't miss anything . . . Why, look at these heavy wooden hangers, Miss Mabel. You'll want to use these for drying your 'soakers'.

"And who is this card from? Ah, Miss Mabel, it's from Cora. Shall I read it? Yes, she has lovely handwriting. Did you see this apple cork board, Miss Mabel? Apple. Cork. Board. Yes,

I think you will want to keep it, too. You sure have saved quite a few Ivory 'chips'. Hmm. Of course, we need to get the ironing board on the truck.

"Are you wanting this lamp shade? Or how about these wooden spools of thread? Did you say you put your purse in the dishwasher? Sure, let me fetch it for you."

I cut her hair one last time that night. I've never touched such thick, shiny, white hair in my life, much less have taken scissors to it as if I were some fancy-fingered beautician. Three-inch locks fell to the carpeted floor as she told me about her school days, wool skirts and sweaters.

Then we heard the train. She and I both love the familiar sound of the train hemming its way through Havens.

"Are you going to miss the sound of the train and its whistle, Miss Mabel? Of course, I know you will. Tell me again about catching the train and hauling your trunk south every summer when you were young. When will you get to see your boy, Miss Mabel? You know that your seeing JT is the only thing—and I mean the Only thing—that makes your move to Georgia positively bearable for me, Miss Mabel. I would give my right arm to witness your reunion . . . but then it would be more difficult to cut your hair with only one hand!"

There is nothing quite like hearty, belly-rolling, Miss Mabel laughter.

"Yes, Miss Mabel. The movers are finally here."

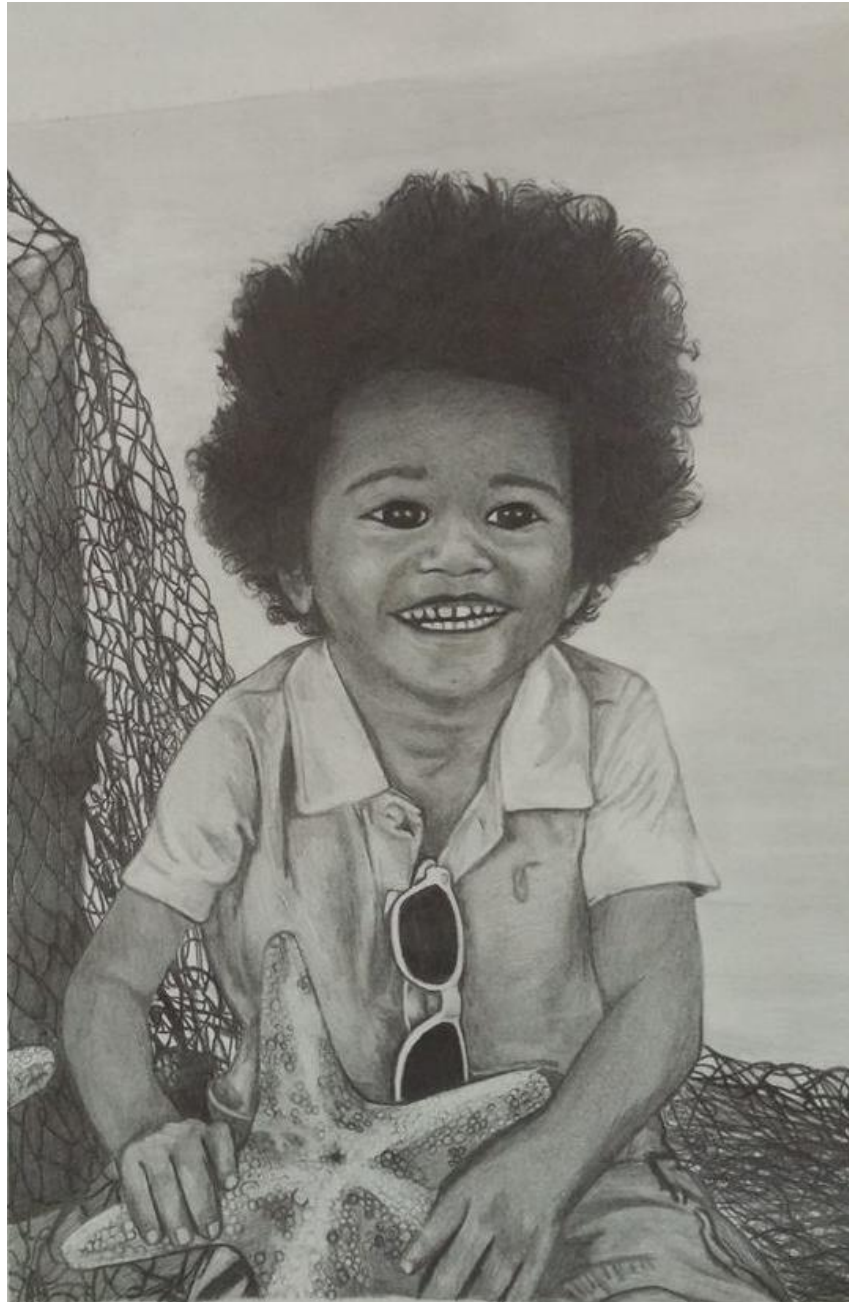


The last thing I heard her say as she waved at me from the window of the Yukon was "Are you going to be okay walking up the street. It's one a.m., you know. Joe, wait until Tori gets home . . . Are you sure? Will you be okay?"

And I stood there in sacred silence, watching the tail lights of the U-Haul and the Yukon fade away down Sculptor Street and thanking the Lord that Miss Mabel and I were forever knotted at the heart.



*Untitled*    *TAHREEM ALI*



*Jaxon*    **BRAEDEN BROOKS**



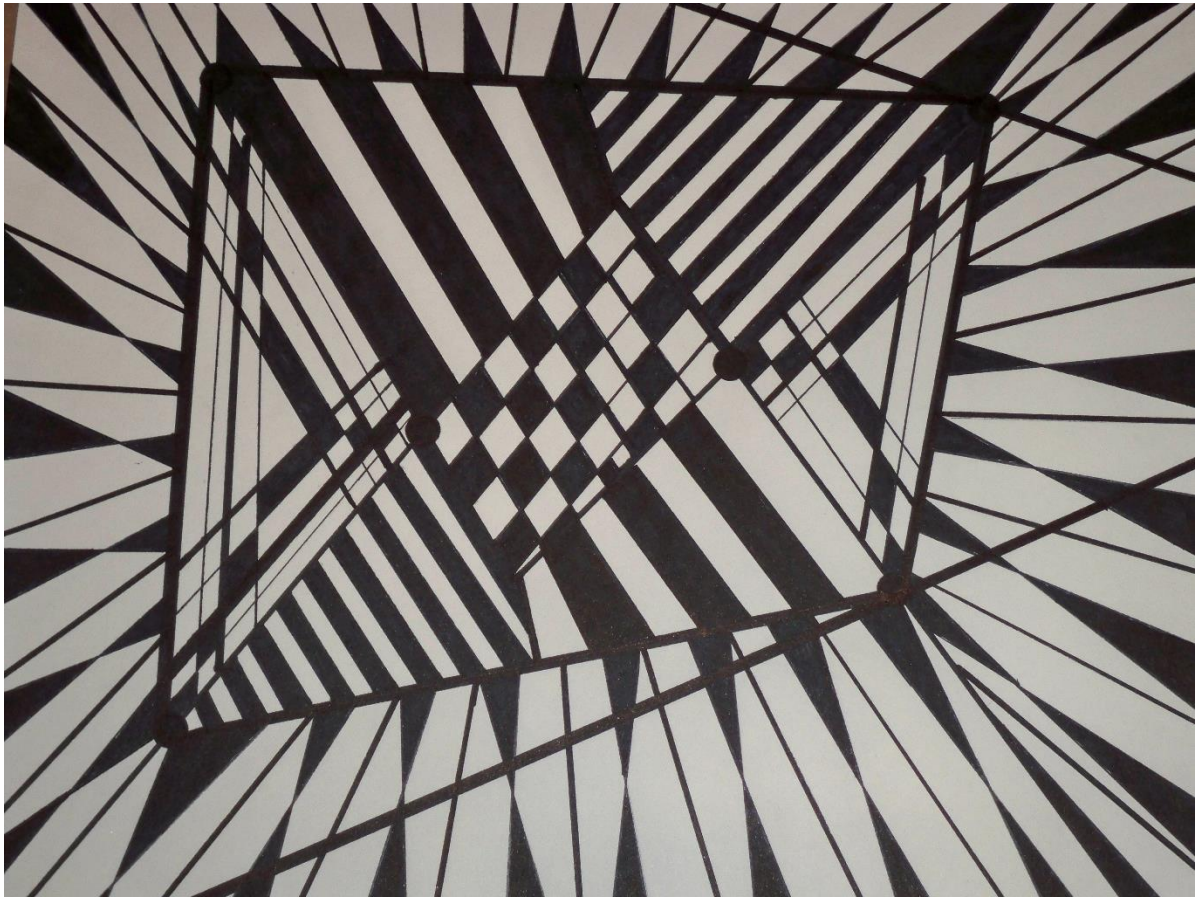


*Double Blossom* STEFAN DELIPOGLOU



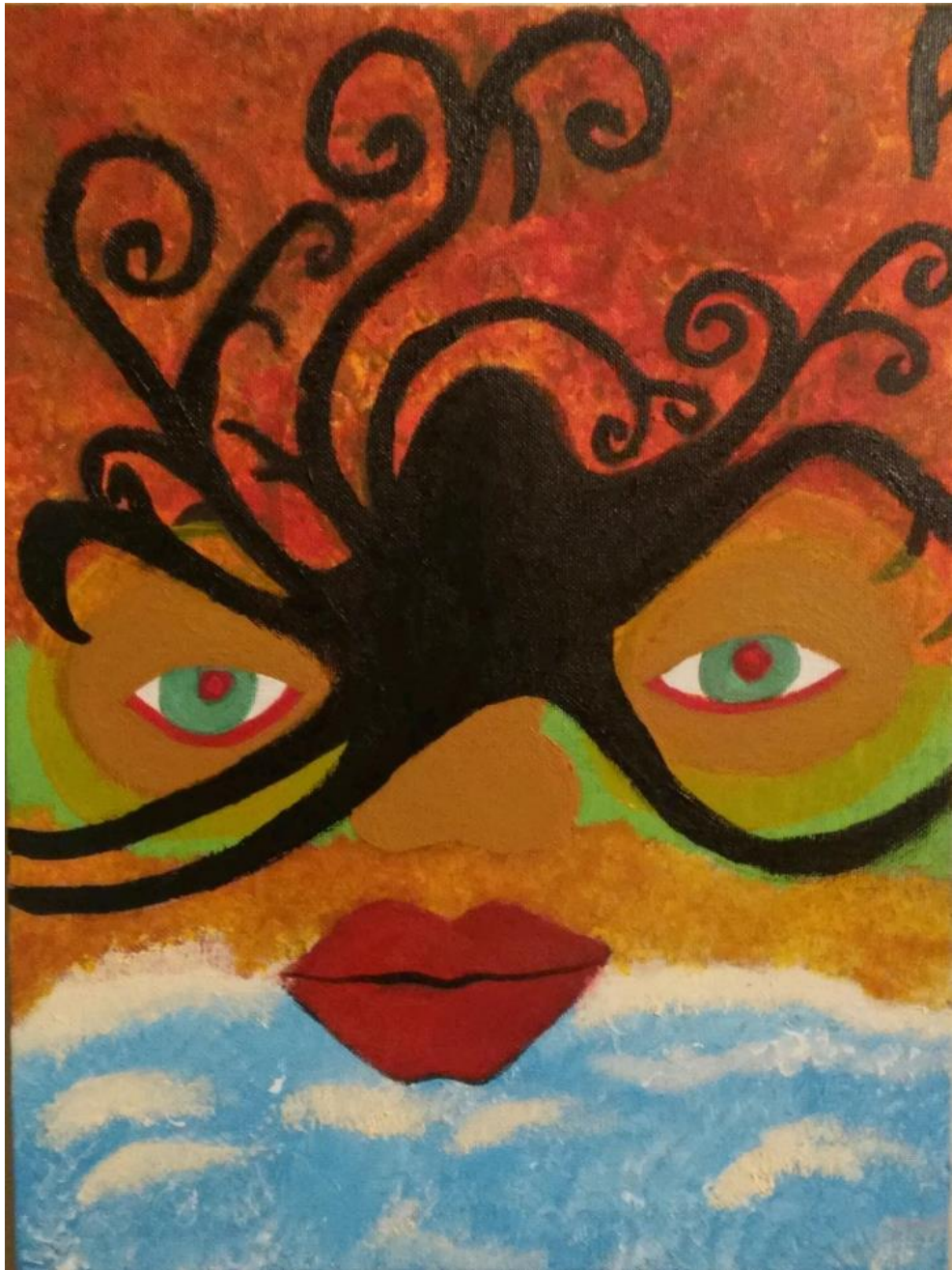


*Diaspora* ROGER L. GUFFEY



*Untitled*    TIM MARTIN





*El Silencio* PAULA MARTINEZ-BENZ



*Seepferdchen* SARITA MUNSEY





*Untitled* KIMBERLY SHORT

## ***Biographical Information/Notes from Contributors:***

**Tahreem Ali** is a student at Bluegrass Community and Technical College.

**Don Boes** teaches at Bluegrass Community and Technical College. His poetry appears in two recent anthologies: *What Comes Down To Us: 25 Contemporary Kentucky Poets* published by University of Kentucky Press and *Bigger Than They Appear: Very Short Poems* published by Accents Publishing. His other books include *The Eighth Continent* and *Railroad Crossing: Poems*. He has been awarded three Al Smith Fellowships from the Kentucky Arts Council.

**Braeden Brooks** is a student at the Newtown campus pursuing an Associate in Arts degree.

**Lizabeth Teed Damrell** is the author of a picture book—*With The Wind*—published by Orchard Books; a number of articles and stories in the former Bluegrass publication, *Nougat*; flash fiction in *The Avalon Literary Review*, and has self-published a book—*Impressionism*—a collection of 100 Short Short Stories. She lives and works in Lexington, Kentucky.

**Mathew Damrell** is a fledgling writer, born and raised in Lexington, Kentucky. He pursues any form of writing that captures his imagination at a given moment, from poetry to prose, and has been doing so for as long as he can remember. Ultimately, he hopes to find his own special niche in fiction, preferably writing fantasy or sci-fi, and maybe pick up a master's degree in Creative Writing at some point along the way

**Stefan Delipoglou** has been writing consistently for 6 years in poetic forms including Romanticism, haiku, and more recently, free verse. Focusing on natural environments to illustrate abstract concepts of life and death, Stefan uses writing as a method of stress management. In addition to stress management, poetry has also served as a means to chronicle his reactions to events. Stefan also enjoys creating abstract art through graphic arts.

**Mary Gammon** has been a BCTC Developmental English adjunct since the spring of 2013. Prior to that, she taught Spanish at BCTC's (then known as LCC) Winchester Campus beginning in 1990-2005, and elementary Spanish at St Agatha Academy and Seton Catholic School, 2006-2013. She resides in Lexington with her husband Kevin; she has 3 kids, Ben, Jacob, and Katie; and two cats, Cocoa and Ladybird. She loves languages, reading fiction, the arts, music and historic homes.

**Roger L. Guffey** is an adjunct faculty member at Bluegrass Community and Technical College. He has taught math at the college for over 24 years. He also has taught full time at Lafayette

High School. He enjoys writing fiction and is currently working on a collection of short stories. He also does a lot of photography.

**Jacob Howe** enjoys writing poetry to relieve his mind of thoughts and expresses them best with poems of love and nature. He was born and raised Kentucky proud and is attending Bluegrass Community and Technical College at the Lawrenceburg campus to fulfil his dream in Law and Criminal Justice. He became enticed with poetry because it is graceful and precise but can be sometimes mysterious or have underlying meanings.

**Zachary Johnson** enjoys writing poetry. He is originally from Portland, Maine and has been writing poetry and song lyrics since he was 16 years old. He currently lives in Lexington, Kentucky where he works as a psychiatric nurse.

**Tim Martin** has been a student at Bluegrass Community and Technical College since 2013 and enjoys all venues of art. He has been a musician for over 30 years and is originally from Owensboro, Kentucky. He has dabbled in drawing throughout the years and is in his first class at the college level in drawing. "It forces you to see things outside the box," so to speak.

**Paula Martinez-Benge** is a Puerto Rican artist that loves to express her emotions and convey her inner self through her artwork. She was raised in Greensboro, North Carolina and has enjoyed the arts ever since she could hold a crayon. Currently, she lives in Lexington with her husband, Travis Benge, and her two dogs, Onion and Theo.

**William (Bill) H. McCann, Jr.** is a playwright and poet who teaches at Bluegrass Community and Technical College. He lived in Lexington most of his life before moving to Corinth in May 2012.

**Sarita Munsey** enjoys poetry and art of all mediums. She has had a creative spark since she was 5. At the age of 16, she developed a love for creative writing. Currently Sarita is 25 and goes to Bluegrass Community and Technical College to work on her dream career of being a zoologist.

**Pamela Jean Padgett** is originally from the northern part of Kentucky and had moved to the Cynthiana area to attend college. She has been writing poetry since 1996. Pamela enjoys time with family and loved ones, writing, music, engraving on glassware, and attending craft shows as a vendor.

**Ryan Rivard** is a student at Bluegrass Community and Technical College.

**Kimberly Short** is currently working to obtain her Associate degree in Nursing at Bluegrass Community and Technical College. Originally from Eastern Kentucky, she resides in Frankfort, Kentucky. She has 2 sons, Andrew and Tyler, who inspire her. She spends her free time reading, movies, quilting, traveling, and enjoys taking pictures of nature and architectural structures.

**Victoria Walker** is a home educator, Spanish instructor, and Faculty Advisor for Pearson World Languages. She lives in Midway with two of her four children. She loves teaching, spending time with her family, writing, Bible study, baking, playing board games, hiking, and traveling. She is a proud grandmother, and her family currently serves as a host family for a college student from Panama. She has been writing since she can remember and has a blog called [singlesojourner.weebly.com](http://singlesojourner.weebly.com).

**Rozalyn Wingate** is a slam poet. She has been writing since the age of 8. She is an activist in the African American community and takes classes at Bluegrass Community Technical College. Ms. Wingate has an undeniable passion for reading and writing, as well as tutoring and doing whatever it is that she possibly can to have a positive influence her community.

**Rosine Yanyi** has been writing poetry since she was 10 years old as a form of escape from the abuse at home as well as society. All of her pieces are personal and describe what she has experienced and how she perceives the world sees her. She is a single mother of 1 daughter and also is a student at Bluegrass Community and Technical College.

