

Talking Leaves:

The Student Literary Magazine of IUPUC



2007

Talking Leaves

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Statement of policy and purpose

Talking Leaves accepts original works of fiction, poetry, photography and line drawings from students at Indiana University/Purdue University Columbus. Each anonymous submission is reviewed by at the Copy Editors and is judged solely on artistic merit.

Cover Art
Strauther-Pleak Round Barn
Greensburg, Indiana
by Carrie M. Shumaker

From the Faculty Co-Sponsors

This year's issue of *Talking Leaves* embodies an eclectic mix of the reflections, experiences, perspectives, and humor of the contributors. The faculty sponsors and editors have taken great care to allow students their own voices and this year, for the first time, we have included many more submissions to be published in the magazine. We remind our readers that Talking Leaves is a student literary magazine which encourages students to find empowerment through self-expression. We have kept copy-editing to a minimum in order to preserve the many unique voices, personae, and ideas contained in its pages.

The magazine's title "Talking Leaves" has its origins rooted in Native American lore and metaphor. The story goes like this: Native Americans noticed new settlers carrying papers that had writing on them (literally contracts, maps, and letters). These papers rustled like leaves and "talked" to people. The Native Americans realized the power of being able to send thoughts to another by way of talking leaves. We at *Talking Leaves* ask that you celebrate the importance of the written word by reading this issue. We thank former adjunct faculty member, Howard Wills, for suggesting this romantic title.

The faculty co-sponsors extend special thanks to the campus Student Council and the English Club for their support of *Talking Leaves*.

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POETS

Cher Cramer

Poets. Always

On the look out

For subjects to

Poetise about.

If you see a

Man (or woman)

Who eyes the

Neighborhood

Surreptitiously

Disingenuously—

It may only be

A poet

Watching for

That moment

Of clarity.

Scribbling,

Dribbling ideas

Furiously.

It's All Your Fault

Jesse Groppi

You were just a game

I played one night

--It's all your fault

Yeah, maybe I'm the antichrist

But you're the one

That left this hickie

On my neck

To remind me

--Of you

There are bruises on my hips

From the hard floor

We slept on...

We made out on...

Those aren't your fault

But they are

--Because I said so

I called you

I told you how I needed

A place to stay

Damn you!

You should have demanded

That I stay with you

That you wouldn't have me

Stay anywhere else

Not remind me that

You live

--“out there”

Now I’m “out here”

Writing this poem

About you

--It’s all your fault

Yeah, maybe I’m the Devil

And now there’s drool

In my notebook

Next to your phone number

But you started it

You tried to tease me

--I got you back

Now we both wish

You hadn’t started it

And we’re glad you did, too

But it’s still your fault

damn you

It’s all your fault

--Thank you.

Shift

Cher Cramer

Shift

Shift focus outward onward beyond the norm
Get thru the storm weak and worn new vision
Revision repulsion of a former life rife with pain
send it whooshing down the drain

shift

shift the hate it ain't too late to resuscitate
love tolerance the balance
peace and serenity pray upon the enemy not prey
pray the situation of escalation relations with
other nations

shift

the fatally hip attitude replaced with gratitude
now no more rude crude rough and tough
who got booked rooked goose is cooked
to find the chains the jail were made of mind

shift

from thinking drinkin stinkin thinkin
no hope no dope hangin from the end of that rope
had to let go be slow in the know who's runnin the show

a just cause a pregnant pause and

shift

on a journey of discovery recovery it is what
it's gotta be what's it's gonna be not a wannabe
direct select my intellect memory that'll ever be
the past comes too fast and it always lasts so what
do we do with today

shift

today we are gonna live, gonna give gonna find some
peace of mind something so fine a present the present
no resentment no hate
only love from above can help us

shift

Shift

Night night sleep tight cannot do it with all
My might the words they come they make
Me feel dumb and numb and I can't make a rhyme and
By the time I fall asleep its time to wake up again

And

Shift

Here is the day this is the way to do it don't screw it up
Do your best and pass the test and hold still
Patience maintenance pray the day goes only God's way
Not mine there is no time to tell you all the rhyme again
Drive away leave it for some other day don't play with my words
The words you just heard
Its alright to keep writing
Choose the inner path and watch your step whenever

You

Shift

The Ride
Cher Cramer

Fly fast; furiously in the wind.
Pale sunlight shadows man,
Machine, woman, go
Steadily, southerly, slipping
Through the trees.
Racing river; relaxes against the road.
Turn eastward, enjoy evening stars;
Sunset sky settles behind.
Twilight twists, tending direction.
Heading homeward.
Holy.

Songbird at the Breakfast Table

Matt Rothrock

Contemplating pancakes
On a sunny spring morning
I take up inspection
of my compact disc collection.

My index finger
Lands on Blossom Dearie—
Sweetness, bird voice,
Clever lyrical harmonious choice.

Gathering this and that,
The best pancakes are from scratch.
Lilac perfume trills from the arbor,
Ship's whistle fills the harbor.

Cool, the City morning,
Rhode Island is for you,
I give my cakes the ooh-la-la,
Reading the music review-la-la.

Blossom's bloom,
Bird that flies through the open window...
Lands on my syrup pitcher

Parisian lounge songstress feature.

Contemplating pancakes,
Those horn-rimmed spectacles,
That button of a nose
Peek at me atop the bud of a rose.

Breakfast for one,
Room for two,
The heart allows for three,
If only the mind could see.

Blossom's perched
Upon my French coffee press,
Attracted by the rich yellow walls,
Bacon fat aroma drifting down the hall.

Then the double blast
Of a Cretan container ship.
It was a dream from which I awoke,
And Blossom's words still hung like smoke.

Mediterranean,
Seen from the captain's bridge...
The ancient coastline, the cerulean waters,
Blossom goes to see The Muses, her fair daughters.

And I am left,
On a 'Frisco spring morning,
With a disheveled newspaper, quite uneasy
Cakes eaten, coffee cold, iron skillet greasy.

Blossom Dearie is a jazz singer who was discovered in Paris in the 1950s and became a fixture for Verve Records for years to come. Her treatment of standards from the American Popular Songbook inspired a host of legends, including Tony Bennett and Miles Davis. Her unique voice and obvious piano ability are timeless... her unassuming look, with a button nose, high cheekbones, shock of blonde hair, and thick plastic eyeglasses, belies her true musical nature.

Monsters in the Night

Brad Bott

Just before sleep rests its head on my eyelids
is when the monsters start coming out.
They don't hide under the bed,
waiting to grab dangling arms and legs,
or in the closet amongst my clothes.
They aren't standing next to the dresser,
rummaging through the drawers.
That's just a figurine on the shelf,
not a fiend waiting to attack.
That's really the furnace kicking on,
not a ghoul, growling from the basement.
There's not a gargoyle creeping along the roof,
it's only the wind, scraping across shingles.
Sleep finally wins,
pressing my head deeper into the pillow,
but the monsters remain.
Haunting my dreams, not easily forgotten,
until sunlight peeks into the room,
driving them into hiding.
Until tonight.

Deep Grey Skies
Jesse Groppi

Slippery Silver slides
Across deep grey skies
Love dwindles
And old wives
Spin their tales
Velvet roses wilt
Into a slimy mess
Of brown
I think of you

The cobblestones
Beneath my feet
Crumble to dust
Blow away
In the wind
And add to
The silver shimmer
Of the sky
The street lamp
Sheds no light
On my gray skin
I think of you

The tree branches
Are bare
And distorted gremlins
Dance

Crushing a grey rainbow
Of leaves
Under their bare feet
They sing a song
Of serpent skin
Biting spiders
And the gleeful
Killing
Of beautiful things
I think of you

I think of you
And in my mind
Is you
Dancing with me
In a golden ballroom
With rainbow rose petals
Beneath our feet
And on the outside,
In my grey world
--I smile.



Captured Sunlight
Carrie M. Shumaker

Astrology
Cher Cramer

Perplexing stars—
Never one wish
granted.
Though many of
you fell.
Not to burn up,
Just to burn out.
Like those dreams
that were wished
on so well.
Demanding planets
cycling in my sign;
Though the fortunes were
told.
Not to turn out
Just to burn out.
Again—unrealized dreams.
Man, it gets really
old.
And to think—
You were depended upon
My life suspended on
the galaxy
As it hangs.

My Sweet Grove
Jesse Groppi

I see a place
Within my mind
Where I am whole
And peaceful

My soul is true
My now and when
In harmony
In this grove

The moon, she smiles
On me, below
sharing wisdom
When I need

By my own hands
I built a home
Of wood and earth
And passion

A lasting fire
and large warm furs
a man that is
my true love

I have a garden
with flow'rs that bloom
In the moonlight
They glisten

Fruits to keep me
Herbs to heal me
And earth to dig
My toes in

The long brick path
Leads to a candle
That never dies
Or gutters

The chill fall wind
Brings me to life
And in my mind
I am home

Brrrrlll Brrrrlll

Cher Cramer

They sit upon telephone lines
surveying farmers' fields;

Suspicious behavior of automobiles
rolls in their beaded eyes.

People come by searching for something
the ornithologist does not collect;

Those crazy red-winged blackbirds
watch and wait.

Lighter than a featherweight,
They levitate,

floating slightly above
Prairie grass and the tiniest tips of baby firs.

How do

Do

They

D

O

T

H

A

T

?

It seems as though they
Hover and their talons never graze the tops of tallest weeds.

A motorcycle, shift, shift -- zooms
down a gray-black ribbon of road;

It slows and stops and people gaze
at the beautiful setting sun.

At once, those crazy red-winged blackbirds
fly from the grass;

They hoop-de-doo and holler,
wings beat and flutter as the people

Mutter amongst themselves,
the sun goes down, the earth goes round,

And we move off waving so long
to those crazy red-winged blackbirds.

RK

Cher Cramer

Crow clawing carrion,
Dragging the road kill
Off the cement, bringing it
To a calmer place to take
Its time to feast.
A raucous call goes up
To interested parties:
Supper on Route Three.

Canadian Lakes Memory

Cher Cramer

Line the walls with pictures.
Light here, dark out there.
Over the lake, a loon cries;
No moon. Stars light the pines—
We make our way somehow.
Look at all the pictures.
Dark here, lightness inside.
Through the trees, bullfrogs bleat.
A path. Instinct leads the way—
We will get home, sometime.
There are all these pictures.
Summer night aromas fill in the blanks,
And the coolness of the lake.
The foolishness of our youth.
Still we adventure—we always find
Our way home.



Rural Decatur County Windfall
Carrie M. Shumaker

“Lazy River” Inspirations

Matt Rothrock

Steamy July mid-evening,
Dwarfed by ancient ash and white oaks
My gaze takes me ever westward
River flowing toward my thoughts.

I curse one Hoagy Carmichael
For writing his “Lazy River.”
No fledgling poet, inspired,
Can swim in its churning glory.

O, that music of Nature!
Electric air mingles with haze.
Hoagy’s sound, divine yet profane,
Carries us higher and further.

The “true nectar” of Emerson,
Epitome of perfection.
No earthly substance nor ideal
Can touch the face of God quite like

Constant and murky Driftwood,
Flat Rock rushing ever southward,
The persistent, turbulent White—
Thinking towards the current of life.

A Letter From Mr. Arthur Woodsworth #2

Brad Bott

Greetings,

It is I, Mr. Arthur Woodsworth. Yes, I am writing again. It has been just over a month since my last letter in which I told you how I got into the predicament I am in. As my family has not come to my aid as of yet, I have to assume they did not receive news of my unjust commitment. Nevertheless, I remain confident that my rescue shall come at any moment. Still, if any of you happen to speak with my family, kindly let them know of my dilemma.

Anyway, I shall proceed to other matters. As I said before, it has been just over a month since my last letter. In that time several interesting things have happened to me. One incident was most peculiar and I shall relate it to you now.

I started out my day like most any other day. They generally let me go about my business as I please. So I took my shower, got dressed in my scratchy, uncomfortable robe and a pair of heavy, ugly slippers, and then went down to breakfast. It was at breakfast that the aforementioned event occurred.

The cafeteria is painted light grey and has a few dirty windows that look onto the weed infested courtyard at the back of the facilities. The food window is on the left-hand side and is just large enough for trays of food to be slid through. There are not many options when it comes to food. Not that it really matters. It all tastes like cardboard, except the oatmeal. It has a hint of cinnamon, which makes it tolerable. All of the tables and chairs are arranged on the right-hand side of the room and are bolted to the floor. The chairs are on a metal track which allows them to be moved closer or farther away from the tables.

I grabbed a tray of food and had just sat down to eat after waiting in line for fifteen minutes with a bunch of imbeciles. Can you believe they actually had to take time to choose between plain oatmeal or oatmeal with brown sugar and cinnamon? I was finishing my first bite of oatmeal with brown sugar and cinnamon, of course, when Mr. Twenkles sat down beside me. I had not spoken to him since the last incident, which I described in my previous letter. I knew it

would take every last ounce of my patience not to get up and leave before he had said his first word. Nevertheless, I allowed him to initiate the conversation.

“Sir, I remember talking with you about a month ago,” Mr. Twenkles said, “but I never learned your name.”

“My name, good sir, is Arthur Woodsworth. Pleased to make your acquaintance,” I said, giving him a hardy handshake. “Might I say, you seem much better since the last time we spoke.”

“Yes, I got all the rabbits back in their pen. It is quite the ordeal when they get out. I apologize for my behavior,” he said as he wiped his forehead with a napkin. “To be honest, I think someone let them out.”

“Not to worry, it was nothing really. As the saying goes: ‘No harm, no foul.’”

Just then, a gentleman walked past. He was a good six-foot tall and had one of those long mustaches that droop down past the chin. He was dressed in a robe and slippers like the rest of us. However, he had a black top hat on with a little card in the band that had 10/8 written on it.

All of a sudden, Mr. Twenkles jumped out of his seat, threw a handful of oatmeal in the man’s face, and hurried off yelling, “You shall never steal the rabbits, they’re all mine.”

I handed the gentleman with the top hat a napkin and apologized for Mr. Twenkles actions.

“No need for apology my above average compatriot. Mr. Tewnkles has quite left behind his small glass spheres used for playing boys games of pastime. By the way, my name is Henry Allen Joseph Johnson Jr.,” he said, as he removed his top hat while giving a bow, “and your name would be?”

After his rather windy introduction, I knew this was going to be a rather painful encounter. Apparently, he was one of those people who wanted to sound intelligent even though they may not be. I put on my best face and introduced myself. “Arthur Woodsworth at your service.”

“Yes, I seem to have a vague series of mental pictures regarding your person. I recall having used my organs for sight in discerning your location on one or two instances.”

At this point I tried to excuse myself, but Mr. Johnson would not let me get in a single word and I did not want to seem rude. I could feel my blood pressure slowly rising. It was a constant struggle to keep my face as cordial as possible.

“I cannot begin to relate what a sense of overall well-being it is to verbalize the workings of my cerebellum to an individual who may offer opinions that may not have been known to myself up to this point. I find most of the occupants of this establishment somewhat lacking in the mental capacity necessary to comprehend the workings of my lobes, let alone to be able to vocalize some form of response. You, on the opposite digitated appendage, seem to be a male of quite above normal reasoning capabilities. Being as it is, I would like to produce some information for you to contemplate for a short length of time. Then, I would like you to respond with your personal process of thought, if that is of an agreeable nature to you.”

Despite Mr. Johnson’s long-winded form of speech, he had begun to pique my interest. I should have walked away at that very moment though. Something in the back of my mind told me this was not going to end well. Nevertheless, I asked Mr. Johnson to proceed, which he did with great enthusiasm.

“Please allow me to get through the entirety of my proposal of the business variety before offering your response. I am what you would call a procurer and purveyor of goods and services. As you viewed with your organs of sight the reaction produced by Mr. Twenkles to my entering the vicinity which he occupied, your processes of thought may have led you to the conclusion that it is quite an improbability that I should be able to venture much closer than the length of several appendages used for walking of him. I would appreciate it a great deal if you would work your way up to Mr. Twenkles as if you wished to converse with him. Then, when you are close enough to use your sense of touch, I want you to plunder at least one of those furry big eared, fluffy tailed creatures he keeps penned up and return it or preferably them to my possession. If you cannot pilfer them, at least release them from captivity. I do so enjoy when those creatures get loose and hop about trying to evade Mr. Twenkles. It is a spectacle of the humorous variety well worth the physical exertions taken to procure the end results. Either way, I am willing to transfer a large sum of monetary compensation into your custody should you achieve positive results on either instance. What do your synaptic firings compel you to do?” He finished as he placed his hands behind his back.

I stood there dumbfounded, running his proposal over in my head for about thirty seconds. How was he going to get money in here, and what would it matter to me? It is not like one has to pay for anything here. Then, everything he said finally registered. I looked him right in the eyes and slapped him on the side of his face, knocking his top hat off his head. The look that crossed his face was one I will never forget. His eyes widened and his mouth dropped open. Then his hand shot to the cheek I had struck, trying to rub away the handprint. I have to admit, I was probably just as shocked as he was by my actions. For the first time since initiating the conversation, Mr. Johnson seemed to be at a loss for words.

When he finally recovered his senses, Mr. Johnson responded to my slap in his cool long winded manner. “Mr. Arthur Wordsworth, if you continue with your prior action of physical assault, someone may have a seeing organ ejected from their orbital socket. It is not advisable to proceed in said manner of which is highly uncivil.” Then he bent down and picked up his hat.

He was brushing the dust off his hat while he was straightening up. Just as he was finishing, I reached up and slapped him a second time, this time on the other cheek. Then I yelled loud enough to stop everyone in the breakfast hall right where they were. “You, Mr. Henry Allen Joseph Johnson Jr., shall never have Mr. Twenkle’s rabbits by my hand. For that matter, you shall never have my rabbits or any other rabbits if I can help it.”

When I had finished, Mr. Johnson looked me right in the eyes and screamed just like a little kid, “Orderlies!”

To this I said, “You tattled on me!” The furrow in my brow could not have gotten any deeper.

“I did not,” he said while shaking his head.

“You did too!” I said moving my face closer to his.

“Did not!” He moved his face closer to mine.

“Did too!” Closer still

“Not!” Our noses were almost touching.

“Too!” I shouted in his face.

“I did not tattle!” He finally screamed out, sending little drops of spittle spraying in my face.

I wiped my face with the sleeve of my robe and had just enough time to slap him for the third time before the orderlies grabbed me and started dragging me to my room yet again. I caught a final glimpse of Mr. Johnson stalking off in a huff. I could not help smiling in triumph. The orderlies put me in my room and locked the door behind them. I was not permitted to leave my quarters for well over two weeks for the disturbance I caused amongst the other patients. However, I could not help feeling it was well worth the time.

Well, that brings this little story to an end. I thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I must also ask one more time that if you should happen to speak with my family, please let them know of my situation. Until they come to my rescue I will continue to hold out hope. May rescue come with all speed.

Sincerely,

Mr. Arthur Woodsworth

P.S.- I am still angry with you Dr. Harding. If you want to save any dignity, you will promptly clear this whole matter up.

P.P.S.- Nobody is going to steal the rabbits!.



Frozen Fence, Carrie M. Shumaker

Ode To Sanity
(There It Goes)
Jesse Groppi

Sanity. It slips through your fingers, just when you thought you had a hold of it. The elusiveness is enough to make a person suicidal. And that in itself is a total loss of that which we strive to gain. Sanity.

Sanity has no definition despite what Webster or Oxford have to say, or your psychiatrist for that matter. What sanity is to one person might be a loss of sanity to another. However the second person's sanity may also qualify for the first person. And yet a third person can be sure he has no sanity, while the other two might think that's crazy. Are you still with me? I lost it there for a second.

For some, superficiality is sanity. They wear the latest fashions, get life advice from magazines, and hang out with only the "coolest" people (you know, the other superficiais). Some find sanity in patchouli, dread locks, occasional showers and a steady supply of weed. Others see sanity in whatever they can get into a bong, and some things they can't. I've even known people who got sanity from a book they could never read all the way through, two pieces of wood, and a few nails. (Really now, that sounds like a true *lack* of sanity, doesn't it? If you chose to read a book, why wouldn't you finish it? I mean, come on, people, if you're not going to finish a book, why read it in the first place? Isn't it agonizing, not knowing how it ends? That is, unless the end is one of the parts you *did* read. But we all know that just doesn't happen, right? It's one of those unwritten rules *everyone* knows. Whoops, there it goes again.)

In conclusion, we really ought to live and love together. We must face up to the fact that everyone was born different. Some people came out head-first, or feet-first. Some nearly came out sideways and had to be rotated. Heck, some people came out of the mother's belly-button. Speaking of belly-buttons, did you know that Marsupials come out of their mothers' you-know-where unfinished and blind, and then have to crawl up to the pouch *by themselves*?! Does Momma Marsupial even feel it? How sad would it be if she were to roll over mid-embryo-5K?!

Wow, I can't even hold onto it for a few paragraphs. You know what? Forget all the bullshit I just spewed out. Sanity doesn't exist. Get over it.

Post Script: If I somehow insulted anyone, I apologize.

Post Post Script: If you're still offended, screw you.

Post Post Post Script: I plead not guilty, due to insanity.



The Indiana State Capitol, from the Soldier's and Sailor's Monument
Indianapolis, Indiana
Carrie M. Shumaker

**The Sparkk Twins
and
The Disappearance of Sammy**
Carrie M. Shumaker

It was a steamy summer day. We were sitting in the office with the blinds pulled low to try to block out some of the heat, but it didn't seem to be helping. The sunlight streaming through the dusty blinds gave the room a strange yellow glow. The fan on the file cabinet was humming away as it worked hard to cool the room. The sounds of Benny Goodman drifted through the air from the radio in the corner near the water cooler. It was one of those days when it didn't matter whether you were inside or out, the heat was going to make you sweat. It felt as if even the buildings and sidewalks were perspiring. Ah, summer in the city, there is nothing like it.

The only people to be seen outside on a day like that were those that had no choice but to be out there. Cops walked their beats even in the heat, swinging their

nightsticks and keeping an eye on the hoodlums trying to cause trouble. The milkman and the iceman had finished their deliveries before the temperature became unbearable. Paperboys were standing on the corners trying to make a few cents off the midday edition so that they could buy a cool drink at a local diner. Someone had opened a fire hydrant down the street for the neighborhood kids to play in, the only way for them to get cool. Even the alley cats took the day off from chasing the sewer rats to stay in their cool spots.

The trash piled on the curbs waiting for pick-up was sending off an offensive odor that seemed to permeate the air. The longer it sat, the stronger it smelled, as rotten food fermented in the sun. The stench began to drift through the open window causing us to feel even more claustrophobic. There was no way to escape it. If we closed the window we would lose what little breeze there was and we would have to seek refuge outdoors, where the stench was that much stronger.

Our office was on the third floor of a downtown building, but even at that height we were able to *enjoy* the aroma of the city. **The Sparkk Detective Agency** had been serving the city for many years. My brother, Arthur, and I had taken the business over when our father retired. He was proud of us and lived long enough to see us solve some of the biggest cases the agency had ever seen. Our mother was not as pleased, she was afraid that her precious children were going to get hurt. So far, we've gotten by with only a few scrapes and bruises. Our mother has learned to live with our career choice, and I think she's even a little proud of us. I happen to know, from reliable sources which shall remain unnamed, that she keeps all the newspaper articles about us in a scrapbook that can be found on the second shelf of the large book case in the living room. It is a show piece that is taken out whenever the girls are over to play bridge.

It was a slow day at the office. We had just finished a case and we were sitting around waiting for the next one to walk through the door. I was sitting at my desk cutting out an article in the daily paper about us (I keep a scrapbook of my own). The headline was ***Sparkk Twins Solve Another One!*** The article was all about the bank robbery we had just solved. My brother was sitting at his desk with his feet propped up eating the sandwich he had packed for lunch, corned beef on rye, when we heard light footsteps in the hallway. Then *she* walked in, sobbing.

"He's gone!" she cried. "I just don't know what to do. Will you please help me?"

“Why don’t you have a seat and tell us what your trouble is,” Arthur got up from his seat to offer her a chair. “Just start at the beginning and tell us the whole story. We’ll see if we can help you.”

She took the chair and the monogrammed handkerchief that Arthur had offered her. She stared at me for a moment, looked back at Arthur, then at Arthur’s sandwich. The girl seemed unsure of whether or not this was such a good idea. And when I say girl, I mean girl. She probably wasn’t more than ten years old although her dirty face and baggy clothes made it difficult to tell for sure. I wondered how her mother could let her run around like that.

“We was in the park playin’ when he disappeared. I ran away to hide an’ he never come to find me. When I went to look for ‘im he was gone. I couldn’t find ‘im nowhere!” she blew her nose. “I know you ken help me. I saw your picture in the paper, an’ a paperboy tol’ me ‘bout you. I can pay.” She produced a few coins that had been tucked away in her pocket.

“What do you think Al?” Arthur looked at me.

I shrugged, “We don’t have anything else to do right now, might as well.”

“Okay Kid, we’ll take your case, free of charge,” Arthur winked at her. “Just don’t tell people, or they’ll want us to take their cases for free too.”

“Oh, thank you!” the excited girl jumped up from her seat and promptly passed out.

Arthur and I ran to her. I pushed her chair out of the way as Arthur got some water from the cooler.

“She’s still breathing,” I said as I took the glass of water from him. “I think she just fainted.

“From the heat?” Arthur questioned.

“That and hunger. Did you see the way she was eyeing your sandwich?”

“I did notice that, but I didn’t think anything of it. She sure is a mess,” Arthur was holding the girl’s hand which was very grimy to the touch and then he noticed the thick dirt under her finger nails.

Slowly the girl began to come around. She looked confused as she took in our faces and her surroundings.

“What happened?” We helped her sit up.

“You fainted,” I answered as I held the glass so she could drink some water. She gulped it quickly. “When was the last time you ate?”

“What day is it?” she asked, using the back of her free hand to wipe away the water that had dribbled down her chin.

“Friday,” Arthur answered. “Why?”

“I think I ate something yesterday, or maybe it was the day before. I don’t really remember.”

“That’s it! We’re going to get you some food,” I helped her stand up. “There’s a sink in there. Why don’t you go wash your face before we go?”

“But I *did* wash my face before I come! I washed my hands too,” she held her hands up so we could see.

“Go in there and see if you can get another layer of dirt off,” I opened the door for her.

She grumbled a bit, but she went in and closed the door behind her.

“What do you think, Al?”

“Orphan?”

“Certainly a street urchin of some kind. What about the missing friend?”

I shrugged. Just then the washroom door opened, and in walked a freckle-faced girl.

“You look much better,” Arthur said to her.

“It helps when you have soap,” she grinned.

“Should we get some food?” I asked.

The little girl’s face went from a smile to a frown at this question.

“What’s wrong?” Arthur asked.

“I wanna go to lunch with you, but I ain’t got ‘nough money. See?” she pulled the change from her pocket again.

“That’s okay, Kid,” I smiled. “Arthur owes me two lunches, so he can buy for all of us.”

“Okay,” she opened the door. “Let’s go.”

Arthur and I grabbed our hats and followed her out into the hall.

* * * * *

We went to a diner near the office. A place that serves soggy sandwiches, burgers, hot dogs, stale doughnuts, and strong black coffee. It had mediocre service, but a low price. You should have seen the kid's face when a plate with a huge hamburger was placed in front of her.

"Hey Kid don't eat so fast!" Arthur watched as the child seemed to inhale her burger.

"Yeah, you're going to get sick. Remember, you haven't eaten for a few days," I pointed out. The kid seemed to slow down a bit after that.

"So Kid what's your name?" Arthur began the interrogation.

"Anne, or Annie."

"Where are your parents?"

"Dunno," she took a large gulp of milk.

"Then where do you live?" I asked.

"Where ever," she mumbled through a mouth full of bread, meat and lettuce.

"What do you mean by that? Haven't you been put in an orphanage?" I watched her face as I asked this.

She grinned again, a large mustard spot on her chin. "The authorities ain't caught me yet."

I looked at Arthur when she said this. We had always thought that the authorities didn't do enough when it came to the kids in the city. There were too many of them running wild, lying and stealing to make it in this world, because their parents didn't have enough for them at home.

"Why did you come to us? Didn't you think that we might turn you in once we found out that you're an orphan?" Arthur turned back Annie.

"Nah, I knew you was different. I could tell from your picture in the paper."

"Thanks, I think," I said. "Now, tell us about your missing friend."

"Well, he's my best friend. I met 'im 'bout three months ago and we ain't never been apart since. His name's Sammy. I really hope you can find 'im for me."

"We're going to try," I assured her. "What does he look like?"

"He gots light brown hair an' brown eyes."

“Does he have any noticeable marks on him?” Arthur was taking notes.

“Oh, yeah! He gots a dark brown mark on his ear.” Arthur wrote *birthmark on ear* in his notebook.

“Okay, which park were you in when you last saw him?”

“The one two blocks over. It’s got lotsa trees for us to hide behind.”

“Let’s go there first and find out if anyone around there saw anything,” Arthur threw some money on the table and we got up and left.

The heat was still unbearable when we left the diner, but we decided to walk to the park. We figured we could keep an eye open for Sammy along the way, besides what’s a few city blocks anyway?

“Do you see him anywhere, Annie?” I asked as we walked past a line of people standing outside an employment office. With the depression, more people spend their days standing in that line, or one similar to it. Most of them would have gladly been working but there just aren’t enough jobs to go around. No one can afford to pay their employees anymore.

“I don’t see him nowhere,” Annie answered as she skipped between us.

“Anywhere,” Arthur corrected her.

Sammy was not spotted along the street to the park. Annie showed us the exact spot where she had last seen Sammy and we looked around for clues. We looked behind trees and bushes, under the park benches, Arthur even suggested we look in the trees which for some reason made Annie laugh.

“Sammy don’t climb trees!” she exclaimed.

“Sammy *doesn’t* climb trees,” I corrected her automatically.

After half an hour of searching we met a police officer on the path.

“Can I be helpin’ you with something?” the officer kindly asked.

“Actually you might be able to,” Arthur answered. “Anne here has lost her friend, and we were trying to help her find him.”

“Are, ya now?” he gave Annie a friendly smile. “And what would your friend be lookin’ like?” he asked in a thick Irish accent.

Annie told the officer what Sammy looked like, and as she did he began to frown.

“Weren’t you playin’ here earlier today?” he asked

“Yes, sir,” she looked up at the officer.

“Now Annie girl, you weren’t playin’ with another child were you?”

“No, sir,” she looked down at her scuffed shoes. “I wasn’t.”

Arthur and I looked at each other, then at Annie, then at the officer. He noticed our confused faces and began to laugh.

“You thought you were looking for a child, when all along you’ve been looking for a mangy mongrel that was picked up by the dogcatcher earlier today. Wait till the boys down at the station hear about this. The great Sparkk twins hired by a waif to search for a flea bitten mutt, they’ll never believe it,” he walked away chuckling.

“Thanks so much for your help,” I muttered sarcastically.

Anne looked up at us, the tears beginning to pool in her eyes. “I’m sorry,” she cried. “I thought you know’d Sammy was a dog.”

“It’s okay,” I smiled at her, not bothering to correct her grammar this time.

“We’ll go back to the office to get the car, then we’ll go to the pound and see if we can find Sammy there,” Arthur put his hand on her shoulder.

* * * * *

The sound of barking dogs and yowling cats assaulted our ears when we opened the door to the pound. The man standing behind the counter looked up as we entered.

“Can I help you?”

“Yes, we’re looking for a dog,” Arthur said to the man.

“Well, you’ve come to the right place. What sort of dog are you looking for?”

“This dog was caught this morning at the park downtown. He belongs to this little girl and we would like to get him back if possible,” I explained.

“All right,” the man leaned down to Annie’s level. “What does your dog look like?”

For the third time that day Annie described Sammy. Once she was done the man smiled.

“Wait here,” he said softly. As he opened a door the racket from the back increased.

“Do you think he’s here?” Annie asked as she stared anxiously at the closing door.

“I hope so,” I gave her an encouraging smile and squeezed her shoulder.

“Is this the rascal you’re looking for?” the man had returned with a dog on a leash.

“Sammy!” Annie hugged the dog. “Thank you so much!”

“When you take the dog out you need to keep him on a leash so he doesn’t get away.”

“Oh, I will!” Annie took the end of the leash which the man handed her.

Back in the car Annie and Sammy had curled up in the spacious backseat of our Plymouth sedan and fell asleep. Arthur was driving, and I was gazing out the passenger window thinking. The sun was getting lower in the sky as afternoon turned to evening. The temperature that had been so unbearable during the day was slowly dropping. It was going to be another perfect summer evening in the city.

“What are we going to do with her,” I finally asked.

“You could take her home,” Arthur suggested.

“Not tonight. I have a date.”

We were quite for a few more minutes each lost in our own thoughts. Lights in the nearby buildings were beginning to come on.

“Mom!” Arthur and I said at the same time.

“I can’t believe we didn’t think of her before,” Arthur laughed.

“I think she still has some of my old dresses. I’m sure some of them will fit Annie, until we can get her some clothes of her own,” I said.

“But how long are we going to leave her there?” Arthur headed the car in the direction of our mother’s house.

“Well, I didn’t mention this before, but Howard and I are engaged. After we get married, if we can’t find Anne’s parents, we could adopt her.”

“Congratulations, Alberta. I was wondering how long it would be before I lost my sister to marriage.” Arthur was grinning.

* * * * *

A few months later our mother, Arthur, Howard, Annie and I were sitting in the judges chambers discussing Annie’s adoption.

“So you see Your Honor,” I looked at the judge. “Anne has been living with my mother since that day. Arthur and I have been unable to locate her parents. It’s as if they just left Anne to fend for herself. Howard and I got married two weeks ago and we would now like to legally adopt Anne. She has already become an important part of our family and we would like to make it permanent.”

“Anne what do you want to do?” the judge asked the little girl.

Anne gave the judge an adorable smile and said, “I want them to adopt me, and Sammy too.”

“Sammy?” the judge began to flip through the file in front of him. “I don’t see anyone named Sammy in this document.”

“It’s her dog, Your Honor,” I quietly reminded him.

“That’s right, I forgot.” He paused as he shuffled papers around on his desk, paused again, and eyed Annie suspiciously. “All right, in the case of the orphan Anne and her dog Sammy on this day of September 29, 1933,” the judge smiled. “I grant custody to Mr. and Mrs. Howard Banks. Case dismissed!”

Mongolia

Jo Beth Robinson

Jeffery and Amber waited to board the airplane. She couldn't believe this was actually happening! MONGOLIA! Since she and Jeffery had started flirting at work, they had had an inside joke about running off to Mongolia together. They were both unhappy with their lives, and had nothing they cared to cling to. Mongolia was their idea of the other end of the Earth. The farthest possible place to run away to and forget all of their troubles. They talked of joining a band of horse-bound nomads and going from camp to camp, depending on the season. They pictured the hot springs where they could soak their bodies in the frigid winter months. And now they were going. Jeffery (he didn't like to be called Jeff) had a talk with his wife, Amber told her mother she was moving out, and now they were on their way. They would take a flight to Beijing and from there another flight to Ulaan Baatar, the airport where they would be landing in Mongolia. At that point, they planned to join a guided tour being led by a group of nomads and camp with them for a week. Amber knew a group camp was called a *ger*, and that the custom was to bring trinkets such as toys, pocketknives and lighters to trade for food and shelter. Jeffery hadn't told her what he had up his sleeve after the tour. He would only tell her it was a surprise. She was so excited, she didn't care what it was. As long as they got to make love in the springs together.

Jeffery had been quiet since his talk with his wife. Amber didn't think it was her place to ask what had happened, so she tried to keep quiet, too. It was difficult, though, and she asked him several questions about their destination. As usual, he knew all the answers.

“What's the weather going to be like when we get there, Jeffery?”

“Hopefully we missed the rainy season. It's supposed to end around June. It should be hot, but cool in the evenings.”

“When will it get cold again?”

“Not until October or so, babe.”

“Do we get to go to the Four Peaks?”

“The Four *Holy* Peaks. And not during the tour, but maybe a different time.”

“How long will we be in Beijing?”

“Babe, can you go get me a cup of coffee?”

“Ok, sweetie. But when I come back, you have to tell me about the dust storms again.”

Jeffery was excited, too. They would be in Beijing overnight, and he had reserved a hotel room. He sighed and thought about all of the things he had read about Mongolia. The tour they were supposed to take would take them through the territory of Genghis Khan, or actually, Chingis Khan, which was his real name before its Americanization. The weather was cold seven months out of the year, and frequently got down to -22°F. That would just mean that much more need for a warm body next to him. He thought of Amber wrapped in furs and lying next to him in the *ger*. He pictured her young, firm body floating naked in a hot spring on a cold evening. Their tour would be scheduled for the time of the ‘Three Manly Sports’, the nomad version of the Olympics and Fourth of July combined. He saw himself participating in the games, impressing the girl.

Too bad he had to kill her in Beijing. The girl had served her purpose. She had entertained him even before he had decided to get rid of his wife, and she was a good lay, but she needed to go. He still wasn’t sure it had been necessary to take Amber all the way to Beijing to get rid of her, but he figured it couldn’t hurt to have one less body with his name tied to it. Amber had seen him skimming money from the work accounts, although she hadn’t realized that was what he was doing. There was no telling what information the cops could get out of her, though. Besides, he had plenty of money now.

The plan was to take Amber to the hotel for one last screw, then strangle her. After that, he planned to cut the body into the smallest possible pieces, put the pieces in several bags, and then distribute the bags throughout the area. He would then return to the hotel room, clean out the bathtub, and get some rest before the flight. He *did* plan to go to Mongolia for several months, until the heat died down. It might be a while, though, considering the condition of his wife’s body. Boy *that* was certainly a mess. When he decided it was safe, he planned to find some nice, little, obscure country where he could spend the rest of his life, and his money, in peace. For that, he would be happy to eat horse testicles with the nomads for a year.

“Here’s your coffee, honey.” Amber came up to him, holding the cup.

“Thanks, babe”, he said, standing up to give her a kiss. “You’re the best.”

Amber blushed, just a little. Funny, after all the freaky things this girl had let him do to her, she still blushed at an insincere compliment like that. It would almost be cute, if it wasn’t so annoying.

He’s so sweet, Amber thought. She felt a momentary poke of guilt in her stomach when she thought about his wife, Maris. Then she remembered all of the things Jeffery had told her about Maris. Maris was cold to her husband, and never kissed him goodbye. They hadn’t had sex for over a year when Amber met Jeffery. Maris told Jeffery she hated him and that the only reason she didn’t divorce him was because of her devout Catholic mother. Her mother would die if she heard her daughter was getting a divorce. Jeffery said he could have divorced her, but he had grown accustomed to a life of neglect and abuse from his wife. It was Amber who woke him up to the pain in his life. It was Amber who made the pain go away, too. He had actually *said* that, like a line from a romance novel. It made Amber feel all melty just thinking about it.

At the same time, Jeffery was also thinking about Maris. She was a plain girl, with long brown hair and eyes to match. She was quiet, as her mother had taught her women were supposed to be. Jeffery actually had some respect for Maris’s mother, Ellen. Ellen sure knew how to break a girl. By the time Jeffery got to Maris, about ten years ago, she was nothing but a lump of humanity, shaped like a mousy young woman. Ellen had done all of the work. Jeffery was just there to add the finishing touches. It was almost too easy.

He beat her for fun. He smacked her when she did something right, but kicked the shit out of her when she did it wrong. With every strike, he told her how much he loved her. He caressed her while he told her how worthless she was and how much he hated her. He did such a thorough job teaching Maris the ways of the world, or, *his* world, at least, that when time came to kill her, she never made a sound. It was pretty impressive, although a little disappointing. He liked to hear people scream.

Jeffery and Amber had arrived at the airport three hours before their plane was scheduled to depart at 1:23 a.m. They wanted to make sure there was plenty of time for them to get through security. It turned out there wasn’t a lot of people in the airport that late, so they still had about two hours to spare at the time Amber brought Jeffery his

coffee. Amber sat down to leaf through a magazine she had bought at one of the gift shops. Jeffery was feeling restless, so he got up and started pacing.

“I’m going to the bathroom. I’ll be right back,” Jeffery told Amber.

“Oh, well...hurry up. I don’t like being out here alone. I get kinda scared.”

“What are you scared of, babe?”

“Nothing. I just don’t want to be alone, that’s all,” she answered in a small voice.

Jeffery looked at her. She looked a little pale. He rolled his eyes. “You better not be planning to back out now, toots. I’ve gone through a lot of shit to get here with you tonight.” His voice was bitter.

Amber looked surprised at the tone of Jeffery’s voice and the look of anger on his face. He never talked to her this way. “No, Jeffery. I’m not backing out. I was just feeling a little scared about being here by myself. I saw some guy looking at me earlier.”

Jeffery’s face returned to its usual calm expression and his voice softened. “I’m sorry, sweetie. I’m just a little bit stressed. I’ll be back really soon. There’s a security guard right over there if you need anything, ok?”

Amber nodded. She watched Jeffery walk away in the general direction of the bathrooms. She looked around for the man she had caught following her around earlier. He was tall and thick. He looked like he had been covered in muscle about ten years ago, but had started to turn soft. He was wearing a pair of blue jeans, a blue t-shirt and a red baseball cap. He had been too far away for her to make out his face, but somehow he had seemed familiar. She had wandered around for a little while earlier, and he was always somewhere where she could see him. It was odd, but maybe he was just waiting for a flight, too.

She glanced around then, looking for the man, but couldn’t find him. Good. Maybe she *had* just been being paranoid.

Meanwhile, Jeffery was standing at the urinal in the bathroom. He was thinking about what he might get to snack on from one of the restaurants there in the airport, when he heard the bathroom door open. He heard whoever it was enter one of the stalls. He zipped up his pants and turned around, finding himself face to face with a very large man.

“Holy shit! Fuck, man, you scared the shit out of me!” Jeffery was trying to sound light about it, but it came out a little unsteady. The man just stared at him. “What’s your problem, man?” Jeffery asked him. Jeffery saw the man’s arm cock back, his hand in a fist, and everything went dark in an explosion of pain.

Amber was swinging between being angry and being worried. Jeffery had been gone for almost half an hour. She wanted to get up and look for him, but dreaded carrying the carry-on luggage all around the terminal. Jeffery’s bag was especially heavy. She looked around for the security guard, but didn’t see him anywhere. She sighed, stood up, and heaved the bags up onto her shoulder, and headed toward the bathroom.

As she was walking, she saw the man that had been following her earlier. He was hovering around a gift shop, and it was obvious that he was waiting for someone. She walked slowly, with her head down, trying to look as if she hadn’t seen him, but still heading in the general direction of the bathrooms.

She had almost made it to the bathrooms, but there was still no sign of Jeffery. She looked around again for him, or for that other man, when her foot hit a slick spot on the floor. She landed on the floor right in front of the men’s bathroom. Momentarily dazed, she looked around for the offending wet patch on the floor. When she found it, she tried to convince herself it was paint. It looked as though someone had come out of the men’s bathroom with a nosebleed. Just then, a hand covered her mouth from behind.

“Don’t move, and keep quiet.” Said the voice. Amber knew it was the man that had been following her. She did as he said, and, with his help, they stood up together. Then the man said something completely unexpected.

“You’re under arrest.”

“What? What are you talking about? Where’s Jeffery?” she asked, as the man read her her rights and handcuffed her. Two more men showed up, these two in uniform. The first man was talking about fraud charges, aiding and abetting, murder...

“Wait! Murder?? Who’s dead??” Amber asked. Then the cop lost his temper, and smacked her across the face.

“Listen here, you little whore! We’ve been keeping an eye on Jeffery for a long time. We know what he’s been doing, and we know you’ve been there every step of the way!”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about! Who’s dead?!” she asked again.

“Jeffery’s wife...as if you didn’t know.” One of the uniformed officers answered.

“What? No! I didn’t know! I had nothing to do with it!”

“Maybe, maybe not. But we’ve got a bloody footprint the same size as your boyfriend’s on the front step of his house. Maybe the D.A. will make a deal with you if you give us a little more concrete evidence.”

“But I don’t know anything! Please!”

“Save your breath. It’s a long trip to the station.” And she was led out of the airport.



Spanish Bay, Pebble Beach, CA
Matt Rothrock

Opa
Matt Rothrock

A celebration.

What is there to celebrate?

Life... a life led well, respectably.

Optimism sometimes gives way to denial, emotionless existence, a lack of reality. Opa is dying, and yet I remain optimistic. It is hard to celebrate anything. It's around Christmas and I am sort of present for it, but my emotions are dammed. That dam has cracks in it, though, and in a matter of time, those cracks are going to give. To be full of emotion yet unable to do anything about it, or to hope for the best in the direst of circumstances is a difficult cross to bear. You hope for ascension out of a vessel of limitations. So you hope for yourself and you hope for others. Somewhere in between those two hopes, I am able to finally feel.

Heading towards Nashville, towards Bloomington, towards a familiar spiritual retreat of an hour's duration, I release. The dam simply cannot hold what is welling up behind it. In the cold, harsh landscape of the valleys, creek beds, brown brush and bare trees fingering their way towards the lone state road, I let it all go. Springsteen is on the radio, and the song's driving rhythm and the plaintive rasp of his voice fight the current, try to cut it in half, but they cannot. I really grieve. On that cold January evening, I shed thousands of tears on that drive. As dangerous as OWS (operating while sobbing) is, I do it anyway. I no longer care. I wax nostalgic and blame it on Bruce Springsteen. It's like surfing waves, waves of grief, the waves of the various emotions as they fight their way through the fissure in the dam.

Then, you get the call and you are at the airport. The airport reminds me of space. Being hurled up into the air makes you feel closer to space, to Heaven. I used to abhor

flying. After this trip, though, I will feel differently. Taking off, your rational mind screams into the wind, “This isn’t natural!” Yet at the same time, for the first time in awhile, you let go and experience exhilaration. It’s the aviation version of Kierkegaard’s leap of faith—powerlessness. That first leg of the trip, from Indianapolis to Denver, is not easy. It is a huge leap. Just before I enter the chute at the ticket counter, I freeze. I look behind me, and my ride is gone. I have no other options, but I cannot move. I have to get into the chute to check my luggage and to move on my way. Each step is painful, painstaking. Even waiting for the plane the committee convenes and says, “Don’t get on!” I have learned that the committee is a bunch of phonies who get together for a three-martini lunch and assure one man’s destruction, namely mine! If I ensure my own destruction, it’s because I listened to the phonies, took the bait—hook, line and sinker. The phonies want me to die young.

Before you know it, you are at the house. Death is on your mind. The gray house on the corner with the cedar shake roof... accented by fuchsias and ferns and rhododendrons. No grass, but scores of ferns and flowers. The daffodils have already started to bloom. The whole front is framed by a bright white rail-and-stile fence. Dappled sunlight bathes the space, framed by live oaks whose limbs look like they could fall at any minute. Spanish moss drapes over the limbs and sways at the mere inclination of a breeze. It is full of family and familiarity, but it is also so profoundly different. There is an empty space at the gathering. I walk through that great entry door. Oma and Opa’s house is alive with people, teeming with family. Having already been up for 12 hours, I help myself out to the sumptuous and seemingly constant buffet of food. Where I light after helping myself, I feel incredibly weird and quite uneasy. Realizing where I am, I come quite close to losing it, but that gives way to numbness, fatigue, spacey emotion... and I can tell that I am not alone in that. The whole family is going through their own set of circumstances. I can tell where everyone is in that emotional (or emotionless) state. With little effort of my own, my senses are acute. I am operating at a much higher level than before.

Your thoughts return to waves as you wait for the sun to come up the next day. There are no street lamps here. Spanish Bay on this California winter morning is shrouded in a cloud of mist as the wind comes off the land. The marine layer is hanging

over the bay... a cloud of lead—heavy, gray, forbidding. A damp chill cuts through you as you make the mile plus walk to the bay from the house. You have this overwhelming need to see the Pacific. You have this overwhelming need to see the sandpipers, egrets, pelicans, and sea gulls prowl the beach for breakfast. You feel the same need for the water as the lone surfer does, strapped into his wet suit and searching for the perfect wave. He's addicted and you're addicted... but to different things. You spot a weather-worn picnic table at Point of Interest #5 while dodging a motor coach full of Japanese tourists with their stereotypical burdens around their necks... you cross the 17 Mile Drive gingerly as five or six dozen cyclists move en masse further down the coast, pedaling in unison and using an economy of words on the windy cold morning. You, in your consciously Midwestern raiment—jeans, sneakers, a Cubs t-shirt over a long underwear top and a White Sox cap (a walking contradiction)—nod to the various locals coolly strolling as they have done every day for what seems like a century. All mere disturbances, you tell yourself.

You sit and you breathe. Your purpose: meditation. You arrive at a level of consciousness where the salty mist enters your nostrils and you can feel the individual particles as they strike your mucous membranes. Having so cleared your mind, you open a meditation book and it says “I will take the most crowded day without fear.” You invoke your Great Spirit to take the fear away and face a series of difficult events fearlessly. Having so adjusted your spirit, you go back to the house as the morning's coffee starts to catch up with you.

As the day wears on, you draw nearer to the celebration. When it comes, you take a deep breath and you just go. You see about a hundred people, some old, and some young. You easily can be reminded of the Great Circle. Old, young, wealthy, not so much—they are all there to celebrate. The members of VF 192 are there—the “World Famous Golden Dragons” from “The Bridges at Toko-Ri.” It's a unique group of naval aviators. Some are career Navy men and some go on to other things. Some, after Korea, leave the squadron to raise their families and assume their starched white collars and the attendant responsibilities. Some become admirals, but their cohesiveness as a group (those missions in Korea were galvanizing) is evident as they speak. They talk of tragedy and of frivolity with equal gusto. They are here to celebrate, too. The food is incredible

and never-ending. The bar is open—an awareness of people becomes acute. An hour in, there are toasts and a speech by the Admiral, as we like to call him. War stories after the toasts, after the formalities... keeping flight time during peacetime by flying to Mexico to purchase Oso Negro gin. These are ancient men to any stranger, but I can see the twinkle in their eyes when they speak of the squadron, of the war, of the Navy. So much joy and sorrow was witnessed by these men; a lifetime of personal loss, unfathomable gain, family, friends, children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren. It's hard to feel alone in this group. There is so much love and respect flowing. I knew loneliness once when I was in rooms full of people—usually bars and workplaces and homes. The Celebration could have filled up the emptiest person. You really can show up for life!

Life... It has been said by my father that I am happy to be alive every day I wake up. Truer words have never been spoken. As long as I am on the right side of the grass, I have a chance. I can have that tortured soul, that soul sickness that kills, and I can quantify life with petty classifications and unreachable benchmarks, but I am happy! Grief can be a road map to happiness. This journey to California is proof that a happy and useful existence is available to me if I choose it.

After the Celebration and back at the same gray house, I am flanked by two accomplished naval aviators with very different stories to tell. One shares his experience of careening off the deck of an aircraft carrier into the Pacific. The carrier steams right over both the plane and the pilot. The crew aboard ship surely believes that both plane and pilot are lost. Then the crew looks back, the plane has surfaced and the pilot survives! The other laments the lack of offers to fly really fast planes. He has friends who own and operate single-engine Cessnas. He accepts invitations to fly with these people, but "It's just not the same..." and later, with a flourish and a hand motion "If it doesn't do Mach, it isn't worth flying." I ask him about the pin on the lapel of his blazer. He says, matter-of-factly, "It's a Distinguished Flying Cross."

"How many do you have?" I ask.

"Oh, five or six."

He speaks as if the Navy gives these out like so many enumerated rivets on a destroyer ship, yet I know that he is more than proud of each and every one. I also know that it's a mere representation of the execution of a mission, another job to do... another

plane to fly. It's humility. Another starts to rant about Robert McNamara and LBJ and projects with Grumman... such a thrill to talk to these men. It's an even greater thrill that my grandfather is equal to these men.

Those enumerated rivets, those trinkets are representations. It's like the airport gift shop... refrigerator magnets and colorful shot glasses that say "I know the way to San Jose." They say, "I was here. Where were you?" In seeking solace after Opa's death, the question becomes reversed. "You are here. Where am I?" The answer is simple: right where you are supposed to be. This must be grace. Or is grace when you are supposed to be there and you know it and you're okay with it? You can share grace. By sharing, you are accepting the fact that you are not alone. By sharing, you open yourself up to someone else's experiences, someone else's possibilities. Experience comes through in the mundane tasks and insignificant parts of our lives. You can be doing something—some menial or seemingly random chore—and be reminded of other things if you let yourself be in the moment. I see the birds frolicking at the feeders in our backyard and can be reminded of the scrub and stellar jays and pileated woodpeckers on the deck of my grandparents' house on a cool, cloudy January morning. In the stillness you can feel renewal. In the quiet you can feel the presence of God, of those gone before you. You can start to feel that you are the sum of your total experiences... at this moment, right now, you are you and you are exactly where you are supposed to be!



Ya Think?
Carrie M. Shumaker

The Blemish

Based on Nathaniel Hawthorne's "The Birthmark"*

Carrie M. Shumaker

List of characters

Omar Fudd – A scientist who is more involved in his work than what is going on in the rest of the world. Marries Georgia because he feels it is time to get married. Only really interacts with his wife when they are discussing the footprint on her face and the best way to remove it.

Georgia Mudd Fudd – Marries Omar, then finds out that he cannot stand to look at her face because of the large footprint birthmark that goes from her chin to her forehead. Believes Omar is a genius and is willing to sacrifice herself to make him happy and achieve his ultimate goal, removing her blemish.

Interlocutor – Omar's lab assistant as well as the narrator of the play. He has a laugh that makes him sound insane. Does not believe that Omar should mess with nature because the results could be deadly.

* Most of the dialogue comes from "The Birthmark".

McIntosh, James, ed. Nathaniel Hawthorne's Tales. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 1987

(Omar and Georgia are in Georgia's room sitting at a small table set for breakfast. They are not moving and there are no lights on them. Interlocutor is standing center stage with a spot light on him.)

Interlocutor— One day my employer, Omar Fudd, *(light turns on above Omar)* an important man of science, decided it was time to be married. He left me to watch the lab and went out into society to seek a bride. He found the most beautiful woman in the world (or at least this county) and married her. Georgia Mudd, *(light turns on above Georgia)* a woman known throughout the county for her charm, beauty, and kindness, but with a flaw, married Omar Fudd and took up residence in his home where he also has his labs. 'What,' you may ask 'is her only flaw?' It is a blemish upon her face, the shape of a footprint, the heal at her chin and the toes on her forehead. This is her only flaw, but one that could be fatal.

(Entire stage is lit. Georgia and Omar begin eating their breakfast.)

Georgia – *(rings small bell on table)* Interlocutor, would you get the coffee please?

Interlocutor – Yes, Madam. *(Bows and walks off stage)*

Omar – Georgia, has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your face might be removed?

Georgia – No, indeed. It has so often been called a charm that I have come to believe it so.

Omar – Ah, on another face it might, but not on yours. Not on my wife's face. You came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature that this slightest possible defect shocks me as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection.

Georgia – Shocks you? If it shocks you so much then why did you marry me? You cannot love what shocks you!

Omar – I...*(interrupted by Interlocutor entering room)*

(Interlocutor brings in the coffee, sets it on the table near Georgia, and leaves. Georgia serves herself and prepares a cup for Omar)

Georgia – *(handing Omar his coffee)* Do you remember, my dear Omar, having a dream last night about this footprint upon my face?

Omar – None! None whatever! I might well dream of it; for, before I fell asleep, it had taken hold of my fancy.

Georgia – And did you dream of it? A terrible dream! I wonder that you can forget it. Is it possible to forget this one expression? ‘It is in her heart now; we must have it out!’ Reflect my husband; for by all means I would have you recall that dream.
(*Georgia freezes*)

Omar – (*To himself*) I remember that dream well. Interlocutor and I were attempting an operation for the removal of the mark; but the deeper the knife went, the deeper sank the foot, until at length it appeared to have stepped upon her heart and I had to excise the mark. (*To Georgia as she moves again*) No dear, I do not recall such a dream.

Georgia – Omar, I know not what may be the cost to both of us to rid me of this fatal blemish. Perhaps its removal may cause deformity; or it may be the stain goes as deep as life itself. Do we know that there is a possibility, on any terms, of removing this footprint, which affixed itself to me before I came into the world?

Omar – Dearest Georgia, I have spent much thought upon the subject. I am convinced of the perfect practicality of its removal.

Georgia – (*Overact this dialogue*) If there be the remotest possibility of it, let the attempt be made, at whatever risk. Danger is nothing to me; for life, while this hateful mark makes me the object of your horror and disgust, - life is a burden, which I would fling down with joy. Either remove this dreadful foot, or take my wretched life! You have deep science, all the world bears witness to it. You have achieved great wonders. Cannot you remove this mark, which I cover with my hand? (*Covers her face, moves her hand again before speaking*) Is this beyond your power, for the sake of your own peace, and to save your poor wife from madness?

Omar – (*Overact this dialogue*) Noblest, dearest, tenderest wife, doubt not my power. I have already given this matter the deepest thought – thought which might almost have enlightened me to create a being less perfect than yourself. Georgia, you have led me deeper than ever into the heart of science. I feel myself fully competent to render this dear face faultless; and then, most beloved, what will be my triumph when I shall have corrected what Nature left imperfect in her fairest work!

(*Interlocutor reenters the room and stands in a corner, unnoticed by Omar and Georgia*)

Georgia – It is resolved then. And Omar, spare me not, though you should find the mark has taken refuge in my heart at last.

Omar – (*serious look and tone*) Georgia, there is danger.

Georgia – Danger? There is but one danger – that this horrible stigma shall be left upon my face. Remove it, remove it, whatever be the cost, or we shall both go mad!

Omar – Heaven knows your words are true. I will go to my lab. In a little while I shall return, and all will be tested.

(Omar steps out of the room.)

Interlocutor – *(Interlocutor makes his presence known to Georgia.)* If you were my wife, I would not hate that blemish but cherish it because it is part of you. I would leave it upon your face and admire it.

(Omar returns before Georgia has a chance to respond.)

Interlocutor – *(to Omar)* Best leave well enough alone, Master. You are playing with Nature and that can be dangerous.

Omar – *(directed at Interlocutor)* The concoction of the draught has been perfected. Unless all my science has deceived me, it cannot fail. *(Gives Interlocutor a stern look.)* You may go to the lab now and don't come back until I call you.

(Interlocutor leaves the room)

Georgia – Save on your account, my dearest Omar. I might wish to put off this mark of mortality by relinquishing mortality itself in preference to any other mode. Life is but a sad possession to those who have attained precisely the degree of moral advancement at which I stand. Were I weaker and blinder, it might be happiness. Were I stronger, it might be endured hopefully. But, being what I find myself, methinks I am of all mortals most fit to die.

Omar – You are fit for heaven without tasting death! But why do we speak of dying? The draught cannot fail. Behold its effect upon this plant.

(Omar pours some of the liquid on a plant on the windowsill. Plant grows to ridiculous height and has blood red blooms)

Georgia – There needed no proof. Give me the goblet. *(Grabs goblet from Omar)* I joyfully stake all upon your word. *(Begins to drink)*

Omar – *(Laughingly)* Drink, then, thou lofty creature! There is no taint of imperfection on thy spirit. Thy sensible frame too, shall soon be all perfect.

Georgia – *(In a dying voice that fades at the end)* Methinks it is like water from a heavenly fountain; for it contains I know not what of unobtrusive fragrance and deliciousness. It allays a feverish thirst that had parched me for many days. Now, dearest, let me sleep. My earthly senses are closing over my spirit like the leaves around the heart of a rose at sunset. *(Georgia lies down on the bed)*

(Plant in the background has faded and is drooping, but Omar does not notice this.)

(Plant in background has faded and is drooping, but Omar does not notice this as he sits next to the bed where Georgia sleeps. Every so often he bathes her face with a wet cloth)

Omar – By Heaven! it is well nigh gone! I can scarcely trace it now. Success! Success!
And now it is like the faintest rose color. But she is so pale! *(Opens the curtain to let the sunlight fall across her face)*

Interlocutor – *(Enters room, looks at Georgia and Omar, then lets loose a crazy laugh)*

Omar – *(Omar looks at Interlocutor when he hears the laughter)* Ah, clod! ah, earthly mass! you have served me well! Matter and spirit – earth and heaven – have both done their part in this! Laugh, thing of the senses! You have earned the right to laugh.

(Georgia wakes, reaches for Omar, who sits down next to the bed.)

Georgia – My poor Omar! *(Georgia places her right hand on his left cheek.)*

Omar – Poor? Nay, richest, happiest, most favored! My peerless bride, it is successful!
You are perfect!

Georgia – My poor Omar, you have aimed loftily; you have done nobly. Do not repent that, with so high and pure a feeling you have rejected the best that earth could offer. Omar, dearest Omar, I am dying! *(Her hand drops from his cheek as she dies.)*

Interlocutor – *(crazy laugh again)* I told you to leave well enough alone and not mess with Nature. Now, by your own hand your wife has died, but she left you a mark to remember her by.

(Omar with stunned expression turns his head so that the audience can see his left cheek. Upon that cheek is a bright red mark in the shape of Georgia's hand.)

The Chuck Wagon

Carrie M. Shumaker

List of characters:

Harvey Dowd - the owner of The Chuck Wagon, a diner located in the middle of nowhere Arizona, well educated

Sal – full name Salvador, one of the cooks in the diner, speaks with a bit of a Spanish accent

Bud - the other cook, everyone calls him Bud, because only Harvey knows his real name

Dottie - a fifty-something waitress, has known Harvey for many years and has worked with him since he opened the diner

Maureen - a twenty-something waitress, dreams of someday becoming a movie star, had to stop and work on her way to Hollywood, fairly new at the diner

Big Earl – short, thin man, a regular customer, stops every four or five days because the diner is located on along his truck route

The Reilley family – Mrs. Reilley, Mr. Reilley, Evie five year old daughter, Andrew eight year old son, from Louisiana, stop on their way to visit relatives in California

Rick – fast talking production assistant for the movie *Showdown at Gila Bend*, a movie being filmed nearby

Archie Leach - a famous movie star

Francine Gumm - another famous movie star

Movie crew - large group that enters with the two movie stars

Near Julian, California
Carrie M. Shumaker



(At rise of curtain, late afternoon, the staff of The Chuck Wagon is taking a break before more customers arrive. Dottie is sitting on one of the stools at the counter enjoying a cup of coffee and working on a crossword puzzle. Sal and Bud are playing cards at booth UR. Maureen leaning against counter, reading a movie magazine with a picture of Archie Leach on the cover, occasionally she pops the bubble gum in her mouth. Harvey Dowd ULC choosing a song from the jukebox.)

Dottie: I need another word for nonsense. It has ten letters, the forth letter is an 'f' and it ends with a 'y.'

(Classical music is now playing in the background)

Sal *(to Bud)*: Gin, I win again! *(Bud throws his cards on the table.)*

Sal *(to Dottie)*: Try tomfoolery.

Bud *(to Sal)*: This time I'm going to deal.

Sal: You still won't win. *(Sal gives Bud a mischievous grin.)*

Maureen *(looks up from her magazine)*: What is this music?

Harvey: It's classical. You know, you should listen to something other than rock and roll once in a while. It's good for you. *(Cross to LC, stands near register)*

Maureen *(sounding annoyed)*: I know it's classical, but in a diner? Come-on! This isn't some fancy-shmancy restaurant in the city. When people walk in here, they expect to hear Elvis playing, not Mozart.

Dottie: It's not Mozart, it's Tchaikovsky. I need a word for a movie photographer.

Maureen: Cinematographer.

Harvey: Maureen, you have to remember that this may not be an expensive restaurant in the city, but it also isn't a diner in the city, which means I can play any music I want to.

Sal: Gin!

Bud *(slams his cards on the table)*: Damn! How do you do that? Roll up your sleeves. Are you sure you aren't hiding any cards up there?

Harvey *(turning to Sal and Bud)*: What's the matter Bud, he beat you again?

Bud *(glaring at Sal)*: Yeah, I think he's cheating, but I can't figure out how.

Dottie: I quit playing cards with him a long time ago because I never could win.

Maureen: Hey Bud, can I make a suggestion? (*Stands up straight*)

Bud: What?

Maureen: If you are going to keep playing cards with Sal, don't use that booth. In fact don't sit anywhere near a wall.

Bud (*looking around in confusion*): What does that mean?

Maureen (*smiling*): Oh, I don't know. Maybe if you REFLECT on it for a while, you might figure it out.

Sal: Shut up Maureen, you're giving away all my secrets.

(*Dottie and Harvey look at the mirror hanging on the wall behind the still confused Bud and begin to laugh. Bud looks in the direction that they are and finally figures out Sal's secret.*)

Bud (*glaring at Sal*): Why you dirty rotten cheat! I can't believe you would cheat like that. Next time we sit at one of the tables in the middle of the dinner where there is no way you can hang a mirror near me.

Sal (*laughing at Bud*): You'll still lose.

(*Harvey exits L through kitchen doors. Bell over door rings and in walks Big Earl, a short, thin man.*)

Sal and Bud: Earl!

Big Earl (*Cross to DLC, sits on a stool near Dottie*): Hey fellas, how's life treating you?

Sal: Just great and you? See anything interesting on the route this time?

Big Earl: Oh, nothin' much. Dead animals, dead cars, you know. Pretty much the same ol'thing. I passed a real nice car-b-que 'bout five miles back....People just don't know how to take care of their vehicles in this desert heat.

(*Sal and Bud exit L through kitchen doors to get ready for the order.*)

Dottie (*places a cup of coffee in front of Earl*): That's what all those sirens were for. Here's your coffee. Now what can I get you?

Big Earl (*takes sip of coffee*): Well, what are the specials? I've been drivin' all day and I need something to fill me up, you know. (*pats his stomach*)

Dottie: I think we have just the thing for you. The boys can fix you a plate of meatloaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, and green beans. And I think we still have some of that apple pie I baked this morning.

Big Earl: That's exactly what I need.

Dottie (*yells at Sal and Bud in the back*): Earl needs the 'loaf special with apple pie just the way he likes it for dessert.

(*Sound of pans crashing to the floor comes from kitchen.*)

Sal (*yells from off stage*): Bud, why do you always grab the bottom pot without taking the others off of it?

Harvey (*enters from kitchen, stands DL behind counter*): Big Earl! How the heck are you? (*shakes Earl's hand*)

Big Earl (*grinning at Harvey*): Just great Dowd, just great! I'm on my way home. I'll have a few days off, then on the road again. It's amazing how many times I've made the trip between Albuquerque and Barstow, you know?

Harvey: You've been in here so many times, I ought to give you your own booth.

(*Big Earl roars with laughter at this comment.*)

Bud (*through opening between kitchen and dining room*): Order up! (*places a steaming plate on the ledge and hits the bell.*)

(*Dottie picks up plate, moves to counter and places it in front of Big Earl, then refills his coffee cup.*)

Harvey: Enjoy your meal Earl. (*exit L through kitchen doors*)

Maureen (*puts down her magazine, cross DL over to Big Earl*): Big Earl, what's California like? (*puts one hand on counter and leans into it, tipping head to one side twirling the back of her hair around a finger*) Is it really like in the movies?

Big Earl: Well (*takes bite of food, chews thoughtfully, then swallows*) I don't really know. I've never gone further than Barstow. Maybe along the coast it's like the movies show it, but I doubt it.

Maureen (*disappointed*): Oh.

(Bell above door rings, enter Reilley family R.)

Dottie: Just sit anywhere folks and someone will be right with you.

(Family sits in booth UR.)

Evie *(bouncing in her seat)*: Momma, I gotta go the bathroom, real bad.

Mrs. Reilley: Okay sweetie, can you wait until the waitress comes to get our drink orders?

(Evie gives Mrs. Reilley a desperate look and shakes her head no.)

Mrs. Reilley *(sighs)*: Okay, it's over there. *(to Mr. Reilley and Andrew)* We'll be right back.

(Mrs Reilley and Evie exit UL through restroom doors)

Andrew *(to Mr. Reilley)*: She always has to go to the bathroom.

Mr. Reilley: Evie is only five, give her a break. Besides, I seem to remember having to stop the car a while back so a certain young man could relieve himself.

(Andrew slouches down in his seat at his father's reminder)

Maureen *(cross to UR booth, sets four glasses of water down, then begins to set out the silverware and napkins)*: What can I get you folks to drink today?

Mr. Reilley: My wife and I will have coffee. The kids will have milk, if you have it.

Maureen: Sure do, I'll be right back with the drinks.

Andrew *(to Mr. Reilley)*: Can we get chocolate milk?

Mr. Reilley *(to Maureen)*: Do you have chocolate milk?

Maureen: Yes, we do.

Mr. Reilley: Then, two chocolate milks instead please.

Andrew *(cheers to himself)*: Yes!

(Maureen exit L through kitchen doors. Mrs. Reilley and Evie cross UR sit at booth. Dottie pours Big Earl some more coffee.)

Dottie (*placing piece of pie in front of Big Earl*): Here you go Earl, a nice piece of apple pie with a slice of cheese, enjoy.

Big Earl (*stabbing pie with fork*): Thanks Dottie. You sure know how to feed a fella.

(*Dottie smiles and walks away. Maureen cross UR to Reilley's table with the drinks.*)

Maureen (*pulls out her notepad and a pencil*): Have you folks decided what you'd like to order?

Mrs. Reilley (*closes her menu*): I think I will have the chicken salad sandwich. What do you want Evie?

Evie: Can I get a cheeseburger?

Maureen: Would you like fries with that?

Evie: Yes please!

Maureen: And you sir?

Mr. Reilley: I think I will have the meatloaf special.

Maureen (*to Andrew*): And what would you like sir?

Andrew (*feeling very grown up*): I think that I'd also like to have a cheeseburger, but I want mine dressed.

Maureen (*pauses in writing down the order*): Dressed??

Andrew: You know lettuce and tomatoes, and I want fries.

Maureen (*finished scribbling down order*) I'll bring your meals out to you as soon as they're ready. (*cross L to place orders*)

(*Big Earl takes a last drink of his coffee, stands up, throws some tip money on the counter, cross LC to register. Harvey walks to register to take care of Big Earl. Dottie has gone back to her crossword puzzle.*)

Harvey (*ringing up the sales ticket*): Was everything all right Earl?

Big Earl (*opening his wallet*): Of course, delicious as usual. (*hands Harvey his money*) Well, I better git on the road. I'll see you all in about a week. (*exit R*)

Entire staff of The Chuck Wagon: Bye Earl!

Sal (*places the orders for the Reilley family on the sill, hits bell*): Order up!

(*Maureen puts the plates on a tray and takes them over to the Reilley family.*)

Maureen (*placing a plate in front of each family member as she recites their orders in monotone*): ‘Loaf special, chicken salad sandwich, cheeseburger and fries, cheeseburger dressed and fries on the side. Is there anything else I can get you?’

Mr. Reilley: Not at the moment, thank you.

(*Bell above door rings, enter Rick R talking on cell-phone*)

Rick: Yeah, I found the place. It’s called The Chuck Wagon, how ironic, huh? Okay, hold on a sec. (*to Harvey who is still standing at the register*) Hey Mac, you think you could feed between thirty and forty people?

Harvey (*staring in amazement at the man*): Thirty or forty people? I.... Sure...no problem. When exactly are these people arriving?

Rick: Yeah, he says they can handle it. But listen, don’t send everyone at once, I don’t think the place is big enough. Send a few, wait a while, then send some more...Yeah...Uh huh...Okay see you in a while. (*man hangs up phone, cross LC to Harvey*)

Harvey (*to Rick*): Did you say between thirty and forty people?

Rick: Sure did. Listen, are you sure you can handle it. This group tends to get a little rowdy at dinnertime.

Harvey: Oh, we can handle it, no problem. (*announces loudly to staff*) All hands on deck, we’re going to have a full house tonight!

Dottie (*looks up from the crossword she’s working on*): What do you mean a “full house?”

Harvey (*waves his hand toward Rick*): This fellow has informed me that tonight we will have between thirty and forty customers.

Maureen (*hearing conversation*): You’ve got to be kidding. Sometimes we don’t get that many customers in one week. What are you a fortuneteller or something?

Rick: No, I just have a hungry crew. Our chow wagon hasn’t arrived on the set yet. I don’t know if it ever will. It’s so windy out there that it may be pointless. I know they’re called *sandwiches*, but I don’t think my cast would really appreciate it if they really contained sand.

Maureen: Haven't I seen you somewhere before? You look so familiar.

Rick: I don't think so, this is the first time I've been here.

Dottie (*looking at the man*): Maureen, you're right, he does look familiar. I think I've seen him on TV. (*to Rick*) You aren't one of those criminals from the news are you?

Rick (*smiling*): If I was a criminal, why would I be traveling with forty other people?

Dottie: They could be your gang of thugs that help you commit bank heists.

Harvey: Dottie, you've been watching too many movies.

Rick: Well, I'm not a criminal. And if I was, do you think I would really tell you?

Dottie: No, I suppose not.

(Maureen cross UR to the Reilley table to see if they need anything, cross DL. She picks up her magazine and marks the page that she left off at. Bell above door rings as about a dozen people enter R. Some of the people in the group are wearing the attire of the old west.)

Rick (*turns to see who has entered*): Ah, here's the first wave.

Harvey (*to new customers*): Have a seat anywhere folks and someone'll be with you shortly.

(The new customers seat themselves at various tables in the restaurant, talking loudly. Maureen, Harvey and Dottie have begun to pass out menus, glasses of water, silverware and napkins.)

Evie Reilley (*pointing out some people in costume sitting near them*): Mommy, look at the clothes those people are wearing. They're like the one's in the cowboy movies Daddy watches.

Mrs. Reilley (*putting Evie's arm back down on the table*): Yes sweetie, but it's rude to point. Finish your fries so that we can get going.

Mr. Reilley (*looking around at the new patrons*): You know I think I did read somewhere that a movie was going to be filmed out this way. I think it is called "Showdown at Gila Bend." Huh, this must be some of the cast and crew. Now kids, this is something you don't see everyday.

(Maureen upon hearing Mr. Reilley's comment hurries over to Dottie who is serving the man at the counter.)

Maureen: Dottie, I know who these people are!

Dottie (*pouring coffee*): You know who all these people are? How?

Maureen: That family over there was talking about a movie being filmed out this way, and that these people must be some of the crew. (*To Rick*) Now I remember where I've seen you, your picture is right here in my magazine. (*Pulls magazine out and waves it under Rick's nose.*)

Rick: Well, you found us out. I suppose you would've figured it out once Archie and Francine arrived.

Maureen (*look of joy*): Archie Leach and Francine Gumm are coming *here!* I can't believe it, all this time I've been trying to make my way to Hollywood, and it comes to me instead.

(*Man at counter smiles and shakes his head as Maureen cross UR to the Reilley table.*)

Maureen: Will there be anything else?

Mr. Reilley: No, just the bill.

Mrs. Reilley: I have a feeling we'd better git while the gittin's good. It sounds as if you're gonna have a huge crowd in a very short while. (*slides out of bench*) Come on kids, let's hit the restroom one more time before we leave.

Andrew: But I don't hafta go!

Mr. Reilley: Try anyway. I want to go as far as we can tonight and the fewer stops we make the farther we'll git.

(*Mrs. Reilley and the children exit UL, Mr. Reilley cross LC to register to pay Harvey, cross UL. Reilley family makes final exit R, another group from the movie enters R arrives.*)

Dottie (*greeting new customers*): Have a seat anywhere folks. We'll get to you as soon as we can.

Crewmember: Thanks.

(*The new group fills more of the vacant chairs, someone plays some rock and roll on the juke box. Maureen is clearing off the Reilley table when some more people in costume walk towards her.*)

Maureen (*still wiping table*): I'll be out of your way in just a second.

Archie Leach: There's no hurry.

(Maureen looks up at Archie in awe, then quickly walks away with the dirty dishes. Dottie is waiting on the people at the counter. After getting rid of the dirty dishes Maureen walks over to Dottie.)

Maureen (*whispers*): Dottie, I don't know if I can do this. Archie Leach is sitting at one of my tables and I don't know if I can go back over there.

Dottie (*to a customer*): Excuse me for a moment Francine.

Francine: No problem Dottie.

Maureen (*being lead away by Dottie*): You know her on a first name basis already?

Dottie (*matter of factly*): Of course. I met her last year when I was visiting my nephew. (*pulls Maureen over to the table where Archie is sitting UR.*) Archie, fancy meeting you here.

Archie (*looking up from his menu*): I told them this was the best place around here to get a decent meal.

Dottie: Don't be silly, it's the *only* place around here to get a meal. Now give your aunt a hug and let me introduce you to someone.

Archie (*standing gives Dottie a hug*): It's good to see you again.

Dottie (*moving Maureen next to her*): This is Maureen, the young lady I told you about when I spoke to you last month.

Archie (*sticks out his hand for Maureen to shake*): Oh, hey, it's great to meet you. Aunt Dottie told me you were on your way to Hollywood and had to stop and get a job. Maybe we can find you something to do in this movie.

Maureen (*shaking Archie's hand*): I.... yeah....that would be great.

Harvey (*cross to Maureen and Dottie*): Ladies we have a bunch of hungry mouths to feed, and more on the way, so let's get to work. Hi Archie, thanks for the business, but next time a little more notice would be great.

(Curtain)



The Depew Fountain, University Park
Indianapolis, Indiana
Carrie M. Shumaker

Eyesight Fallen to Earth
Robert Stilwell

Futile persuasions, unwanted work,
regrettings that I'd make insoluble
--those watches are ending, now. More than ever,
I wish I had, again, the posters
I used to take down off my walls

and give to loved ones, hoping
they'd care about them, almost certain
they wouldn't, but loving them better
from disappointment. I want my last
great purifying Rothkos back, Matisse's reds,

Sisley's imagining of cloudscape summer
A Bend in the Road, my most
mysterious Hoppers, my yellow water-irises
that streamed, that blossomed,
for an old man at Giverny. Suppose

the Angels do exist, despite
all our gainsaying or because of it. Suppose
they'll ask of us, once we have been
resolved into totality, their plainest,
their nearly bleakest, questions

--how do you think we'd gather
the virtue to reply? Suppose
they demand of us What did you see,
there in the world? What did you see,
by so much good light?...

Honeymaking

Katherine V. Tsiopos Wills

Past the wheat fields, windbreaks of spruce,
past the coon dogs' yodeling, we drive to
where the bees build their aristocracy of wax.
Good doctor Altamundo, you move serenely
between the workers and the drones. They do not
stir from their precise and methodical dance.
Two bees alight on my bodice of red roses.
Through the thin cotton print I can feel
the hum of their persistence. They turn
and counter turn, yet do not stray far
from their domain.

You brush your hand just above my breast.
Caught in a draft, the bees rise and fly away.
We talk of the history of meade.
You snip a marigold while giving me a lesson
in anatomy: stamen, pistil.
You touch my palm with the pollen.
The flower is bold and upright.
You ask me if I would like a taste of honey
put up by felicity.
I say, I am more interested
in the Queen's hegemony
and fear a sting.

Katherine V. Tsiopos Wills, PhD., has published in *Bathtub Gin* (2000, 2005), *ART/LIFE* (10:8; 16:1; 16:4; 16:5), *Poetry Motel Wallpaper* (2001), *River Styx*, the *Otherwise Room Anthology*, and others. Romanian poet Lillian Ursu interviewed and translated Dr. Wills poetry into Romanian for the Romanian National Public Radio Romania Broadcast (2000). Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She has read her work in over 100 national and international venues.

Biographical Notes

Brad Bott

I started writing creatively my senior year of high school. I graduated from Seymour High School in 1999. Then, I got a job working for a large printing company, which I held for six years. I have been happily married for just over three years. I left printing to attend IUPUC. I just finished my sophomore year for a degree in Secondary English Education. I have always had a great love for literature and hope to be able to pass that love on to my future students. I have had one short story published in the 2006 edition of IUPUC's literary magazine, *Talking Leaves*. My other loves include singing, cooking, and coin collecting.

Cher Cramer

I am an English major in my second year at IUPUC. I was born in Detroit, Michigan and lived there until 2001 when I met my husband and moved to Illinois. I have lived in southern Indiana about two years. I began writing poetry at 10 years old. I have had poems published in Scholastic Magazine, the Chicago Tribune, on online poetry sites and have self-published my poetry. I am currently working with my daughter, a wonderful artist, on an illustrated book of poetry.

Jesse Groppi

I will be starting my second year as an English Education major, in the fall. I am also pursuing minors in Creative Writing, and Theatre, as well as a dual teaching certification in Computer Education. Beyond my education, I have been writing, for personal gratification, for about fifteen years. It is one of my primary goals to be a published writer before graduating, and to continue publishing my work while teaching.

Jo Beth Robinson

I am 29 years old and looking forward to starting work toward my Bachelor's in English here at IUPUC. I live in Greensburg where I am a mother, a reader and a computer junkie.

Matt Rothrock

I'm a non-traditional English major. I've been pursuing a Bachelor's degree off and on since 1999. I plan on graduating in December, 2008, with a BA in English (the school switch is stuck on "on" now). I also plan on going for post-graduate work at Bloomington and beyond after maybe packing up Dr. Peter Cruiser and driving around for awhile... destination unknown. Fodder for poems, perhaps, or further reinforcement that life is about the journey, not the destination.

Carrie M. Shumaker

I will be graduating from IUPUC in December 2007. I am a psychology major and a literature minor. When I have time I enjoy taking pictures, writing, reading and traveling.



Hotel Del Coronado
San Diego, California
Carrie M. Shumaker