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#Narrative

"You look exhausted," Kristie observed.

"Yeah, I don't feel that great. My ear won't stop itching. I think I'll go to bed. We have seminar tomorrow," I replied. Heaving myself off the couch, I climbed the stairs, absent-mindedly itching my ear with each step I took.

The next morning, my ear wasn't bothering me anymore, but my eye felt rather dry. I figured that I had worn my contacts for too long the day before. Regardless, I needed to get going. It had already been made crystal clear that no one missed student teaching seminar classes under penalty of death. Or worse, an F.

Kristie kept up a stream of nervous chatter on the way to class. We were both a little apprehensive about student teaching. She looked over at me, for I was uncharacteristically quiet, and let out a small gasp.

"What's wrong with your face?" she asked.

"What are you talking about," I demanded, not bothering to conceal my irritation.

"Your face is kind of...droopy. And your eye isn't blinking. You look so weird!"

"Gee, thanks." I gave Kristie what I assumed was a (droopy) withering look and detoured our walk into the student union so I could assess the situation.

One glance in the bathroom mirror confirmed that my face was in fact drooping. I smiled at my ridiculous reflection and then realized that only half of my face was smiling back at me. I tried raising my eyebrows. Same deal. I could only manage that one arched brow, soap opera villain look.

I'd like to say that this is the point in the story where I raced to the student health center for immediate medical attention. It's not. My type A, rule-following personality assured me that I could deal with this...after class.

As soon as we reached the classroom, Kristie informed one of our professors that my face was all messed up and I didn't seem to be blinking. His response?

"Ew. That's weird. Here, pass these back." I obediently turned and handed the stack of papers to the person behind me, and then proceeded to take copious notes for two hours.

After class, Kristie looked at me again. "Something is DEFINITELY wrong with you. We have to go to the Health Center. Now."

I agreed and we walked towards the trailer that was currently housing student health services while the main building was under construction. You had to sign in listing a reason for your visit. Thinking for a moment, I scribbled *broken face* and took a seat in a folding chair. It wasn't too long

before a nurse called me back to the exam room. She looked me over and said, "Well, I know what's wrong with you." Then she disappeared into the hall.

She returned shortly with a huge medical dictionary. Opening it to a page, she pointed to the term *Bell's palsy*. "This is what you have. It's facial paralysis. Some people take steroids to treat it but there's no guarantee. It could go away soon. Or not. You should come back once a week and let the doctor look at you so she can monitor your progress."

This? This was my great medical advice? I had to walk around looking like this for God knows how long? Mumbling an insincere thanks I stumbled out of the room and back to Kristie. She took one look at my half-anguished face and announced that we were going to the ER.

An hour later a doctor who looked to be all of 16 years old, confirmed the Bell's palsy. He also checked for signs of a stroke and drew blood to test for Lyme disease. Outward appearance aside, Doogie Howser, MD seemed to know what he was doing.

"I'm going to write you a script for Valtrex. Be back in a second," Doogie proclaimed.

Kristie, who had been by my side the whole time, began laughing. It started as a snicker and soon grew to a loud guffaw.

"What about this is funny?" I demanded. As far as I was concerned, NOTHING about this was remotely humorous.

"You know...that commercial...where the lady is canoeing? And she..." Kristie was gasping for breath. "She has...(snort)...well Valtrex is what you take for genital herpes!"

I stared at her in horror. My face was broken. That was it. Nothing that needed attention anywhere else. I take it back. Doogie was a quack. When he came back in with my script, I pounced.

As it turns out, Valtrex is an anti-viral medication. I had shingles in my ear (hence the itching) which then severed a nerve in my forehead causing the palsy. Shingles is a virus, so that's how Doogie arrived at that method of treatment. He wrapped my face with gauze and lots of surgical tape and sent me on my way.

Kristie drove me to CVS. As if the day hadn't been traumatic enough, I walked back to the pharmacy to find another Muhlenberg student working. Mortified I handed her the script and loudly informed her that my face was broken and that was the ONLY reason I needed this medication. I'm sure the slack mouth and giant eye patch helped my cause.

In case there was any doubt- walking around campus with an eye patch, dribbling food out of the side of your mouth isn't exactly a great way to start the year. Small school means running into people you know everywhere and social media that hasn't been invented yet means that you have to tell your story over and over again. Public smoking means that even though I'm finally legal, smoky bars could cause corneal damage. So long, social life.

No college senior wants to start the year off wearing an eye patch. Especially an eye patch comprised of white gauze pads and surgical tape that covers half your face. Not even a cool pirate patch. Yet, that is how my senior year of college began.

Reflection

This piece is a completely true story and one of the ones that is most often trotted out at parties and reunions with college friends. "Remember when..." is inevitably followed by a laughing recount of my broken face and the comedy of errors that ensued. I wanted to memorialize the piece forever, so that when I'm old and addled I have a written account of the strangest thing that ever happened to me (to date). It could have spanned several weeks, or roughly the amount of time that the Bell's palsy lasted, but due to word limit I chose to end it with the diagnosis and treatment. I tried to think about Romano's chapter about time and writing small, the story taking place just over two days instead of the month or so that the palsy lasted. Originally, my last paragraph was the beginning paragraph, but during one of our group sessions Courtney and Laura suggested that I make it the ending. I think that changed the tone of the piece.

What feels right about this piece is the progression from confusion and worry to humor. It starts out kind of slow and serious, and then builds to one ridiculous event after the other. While it was somewhat terrifying to see my face in this state, the humorous aspects took over and replaced the worry. It became less about the fear of permanent damage to my face and more about being a perfectionist college student worrying about my grades above all else.

If I could change something about the story, I would add more about the aftermath- starting student teaching with an eye patch and the reactions of others. One of the funniest moments that happened after the fact is that one of my roommates had to check on my eye as I slept. Once I started healing and didn't have to wear the patch anymore, she had to look at me in the middle of the night and see whether or not my eyelid was closed. She would leave me a little note on the dry erase board on my door reporting on my nightly eye status. Since I was student teaching and she was not, we had opposite sleeping/waking schedules and that was the best way to communicate.

With some careful editing, I could use this piece (or the idea of it) in my classroom. I definitely do not want to start a conversation with my fourth graders about genital herpes, so I might instead focus on the eye patch and how difficult it was to eat or brush my teeth with a droopy face. Those images could lend themselves to mini-lessons on strong verbs or painting pictures with words. Additionally, I could use this piece to show taking a moment from beginning to end and adding in those details that keep the reader interested- especially by not revealing what was wrong with my face until midway through the piece. Often students start with, "This is my story about the time...." and my piece is more of a 'show, not tell' writing.

Coming Home

By Justine Ivcic

Swinging my legs, tapping my crayon, I sit on the stool at the white island table in the kitchen. The fluorescent light beams down on the yellow folder that houses my project on Alberta. The obnoxious color of it taunts me. Mom is late. I glance at the clock again. She is precisely thirty seven minutes late. I am already aggravated that she wasn't home when I got in from school. No cup of tea waiting for me when I got home, no long winding chat with her about my day. Instead, Dad greeted me at the door telling me that Mom had to run some errands and buy some Christmas gifts, but she would be home for dinner at five.

Dinner was supposed to be thirty nine minutes ago. I jam down harder on the cerulean crayon I am using to color the flag. In an attempt to calm myself, I run my hand over the smooth wax of bright blue like a lake on a windless day. My foot taps the stool harder. My eyes wander back to the clock.

"What do you want for dinner?" Dad asks.

"Where's Mom? Why isn't she home yet?" I reply.

"I'm sure she will be home soon," Dad says. "Don't you want dinner?"

"Mom will make me grilled cheese when she gets home," I answer.

My sisters come bounding into the kitchen at the first word of dinner. At ten and eight years old, my younger sisters are always getting on my twelve-year-old "too cool for little sisters" nerves. Today, they are being particularly obnoxious as they play a game the two of them have made up together. In typical Dad dinner fashion, they are allowed to have Lucky Charms and they immediately start bickering over who got more marshmallows.

"Can you two be quiet please?" I snap. "I'm trying to work on my project."

The two of them contort their faces mocking me as if I care. I roll my eyes and return to writing my report. Forty four minutes late. I copy from my rough draft, slowly forming each letter in a meticulous and exacting fashion. Alberta is home to one of the largest shopping malls in the world—the reason I picked this province. One of my favorite things to do is spend a lazy Saturday sauntering through the mall with my mom, trying on clothes and hunting down sales. Maybe she is in line at the mall right now. For some reason, I doubt it. Scenes of horrific car accidents pervade my thoughts like weeds in my brain.

The phone rings and my stomach drops. After the first ring, I don't hear it anymore—all I hear is my heart pounding in my ears. Forty seven minutes late. My dad snatches the white receiver off the wall, pulling the cord half way across the kitchen as he tries to wipe up spilled milk off the table. "Hello.... No... No thank you." Click. "Telemarketers," he mumbles under his breath.

"Where's mom?" I ask Dad for at least the seventh time since five o'clock. "She's forty eight minutes late."

"Justine, relax," he replies. "I'm sure her errands took longer than expected. She'll be home soon."

I wonder if that's what Amanda's dad told her the day her mom was killed in a car accident. Everyone at school was talking about it in hushed whispers. Amanda is my sixth grade classmate. Her mother passed away en route to a Flyers game on I-95. I watched her a little more closely on the playground when she returned to school. She wore the same Flyers Starter jacket as before the accident, played wall ball at recess, laughed at her friends' jokes. Nothing about her seemed different on the outside, which I couldn't fathom, since inside she must have felt broken into a million pieces. How could you go on living without your mom?

My eyes fill with tears, and the colors—yellow folder, blue, white, red, green on the flag—blur together. A few fat droplets fall beading on the waxy surface of my coloring. Fifty one minutes.

Finally, I hear the loud cranking noise as the garage door is heaved from its resting place. My mom comes in the door, arms filled with shopping bags. I run to her, embracing her before she even puts the bags down. Giant heaving sobs rack my body as I take stuttering breaths and bury my head in her shoulder.

"What's wrong sweetheart?" she soothes.

"I thought something happened to you," I sob, "I thought you weren't coming home."

"Justine, I'll always be here," she consoles, "I'll always come home."

I wonder if that's what Amanda's mom said to her. I wish she wouldn't lie to me. Someday she won't be here, maybe when I'm 92. Someday she won't come home to me, or I won't come home to her. But today she did, and for that I am grateful. I hold her tighter, memorizing her smell and the way her arms feel around me, soaking in the moment.

Three Proposals
By Sharon Williams

"Wanna get married?" The question blindsided me.

"What!? Wait! What!? Are you crazy?" I screeched at him. It wasn't exactly the proposal every girl dreams about.

Sam picked me up for our date about an hour before and headed straight for Penn's Landing. We were walking along the waterfront when he threw this doozy at me out of nowhere. It was the most casual marriage proposal EVER!

This man is a loon! I thought to myself. My complete shock brought out my mean side. "Three kids!? Instant mom? Do you really think this is a good idea? Me, the mom of a teenager, a soon to be teenager, and preschooler?" I ranted at him.

Sam looked at me with a slightly confused expression and simply stated, "You'll change your mind." He walked away, changed the subject and left me scrambling to recover from my shock and catch up.

When I first met Sam, I was only 23 years old and had just graduated from college. Marriage was the farthest thing from my mind, but I felt an instant attraction to the young, soon to be single dad. Whenever I would see him, my heart would beat furiously in my chest and butterflies would flutter nonstop in my stomach. This was something I hadn't counted on when I received the initial call asking me to help out by babysitting for his kids.

I spent several weeks looking after Danielle, Nicole and Sammy before Sam asked me to dinner the first time. I declined, but he didn't take no for an answer. He kept at it, showing up where I was housesitting, putting flowers under my windshield wipers before he left for work so I would find them when I went out to my car in the morning, and basically stalking me until I finally caved and said yes. As the summer past, I found myself falling head over heels in love with not only Sam, but also the kids. I was beginning wonder if this is where I was meant to be?

It was not even a full year after I received the call asking for my help when he took me up to Penn's Landing on that now infamous night and made his impromptu proposal. I knew I was definitely in love with him, but still had severe reservations about an instant family. After all, don't all stepmothers turn wicked and evil in the end?

Two months after that Penn's Landing date, Sam made arrangements for a 4th of July date to go see the fireworks and fountain show at Longwood Gardens. On the ride there, he explained to me all about how he hauled the marble for the new fountains and the difficulties they had preparing for the opening. When we arrived, Sam surprised me with a picnic basket with my favorite wine, fresh fruit and several different cheeses. We spread the blanket out on the grass, and situated ourselves so we would have an unobstructed view of the festivities. About half way through the light, water and sound extravaganza, Sam pulled me tight, and told me how much he loved me. I had been second-guessing my initial reaction to his first proposal and had been hoping the discussion would come up again, however, I was not completely prepared for what came next.

"You don't understand everything I have been through in my life, if you did, you would understand why I feel so strongly that my life up till now has been a series of events leading me to you. I have never felt this way about anyone before, and I would like for you to be my wife." He declared as he proceeded to kneel in front of me with a rather small box in his right hand.

Tears filled my eyes as I nodded my acceptance of his proposal and everyone around us began to clap. Sam placed the ring on my finger, and I happily stared at it the rest of the night watching the fireworks flicker off the princess cut diamond.

"What did the kids say when you told them you were planning to propose to me?" I interrogated him.

"They don't know yet." He explained. "I will tell them when I get home."

I took the ring off my finger, placed it back in the box and handed it back to him. He again looked at me with a confused expression, and I explained to him that it was important for the kids to feel as if they were part of the planning in this major change they were about to experience. I told him that if I was to become their stepmom, they needed to feel as if they had a voice in the decision making. He nodded, took the ring back and did not say another word about it. Several months went by, and I did not see that ring again, nor was there any mention of it.

The following Thanksgiving, I was sitting at the end of the table when the dishes were cleared. Sam and Sammy had disappeared for quite some time, and I turned in my seat to see where they may have gone. I immediately saw them strutting through the hallway. I noticed with anticipation that Sammy had that ring box in his little 5 year-old hand. When he reached the chair where I was sitting, he knelt down on one knee in front of me with his big brown eyes sparkling as if they held the best-kept secret ever. His sisters stood behind him giggling with anticipation.

"Will you marry us?" Sammy inquired of me, bringing me to tears at this second proposal too.

"Yes, Sammy, I would be honored to marry you." I responded.

I married Sam, Danielle, Nicole, and Sammy 7 months later. At our wedding reception, during our first dance as husband and wife, Sam whispered in my ear, "See, I knew you'd change your mind."

First mother son dance with my first baby, Sammy. June 26, 1993



The Hug

By Sherry Fletcher

"Enjoy that while you can." a voice from behind me whispered. We were dropping our kids off at PREP, an afterschool Catholic Religion Education Program, in my neighborhood. The voice was that of a parent who witnessed my then third grader, give me a hug and kiss on the cheek before entering the room that afternoon. I smiled and said, "I know, I hear it won't last long." He also smiled, "You are lucky he still does it now." We parted ways that day and I honestly paid little attention to the reality of those words. Ty was so good about saying good bye and seemed to need that as much as I did. I have plenty of time. He is only 8, almost 9 and very far away from those dreaded teenage years that I have been hearing so much about.

Fast forward to now. One short year later, the "cool" switch has flipped. It started out slowly with the fact that he did not want to brush his hair. "I like it messy." he whined each morning. "I don't want it cut short." This was the new conversation in our home. I found myself turning into someone that I swore I wouldn't, my mother. Standing before me, my newly ten-year-old, hair full of brown spikey clumps and sleepy eyes, I snapped, "You have to brush your hair, it is all a part of taking care of yourself. We are getting it cut and it will be short so you don't have to brush it!" I dropped him off at school, no good bye, no hug or kiss, and I observe him take his jacket sleeve and mess up his barely brushed hair.

"Whatever." is the new response.

"Do you want string beans or corn with dinner?" I ask.

"Whatever." he says with a sideways glance in my direction, just waiting for me to react to his tone. This boy of mine is testing his limits, knowing that I dislike that word, he says it anyway.

Part of me smiles because I know, as an educator, through all of my training that he is just beginning to want his independence. I easily embarrass him now, he wants neon colored socks that are pulled up to his knobby knees, and he wants to ride his scooter to the playground on his own. And yes, we debate about wearing a helmet. The switch flipped and I am not ready, yet I am so proud of the perks to this stage. He completes his homework on his own and gets good grades at school. Chores around the house are done with minimal opposition. And most of the time he is nice to his little brother.

Then last Saturday came. We were all inside getting ready for dinner. The radio is playing, my husband is outside in the yard doing some work, Matthew was coloring at the table and it happened. That independent ten- year-old came up behind me and gave me a hug. No reason, no prompting, and no chasing involved. It lasted for two long seconds. His lanky arms wrapped around me in warmth like he still needed it as much as I did. The world stopped and I just soaked in that moment. He was still my 'baby boy'. He is my first child who is teaching me how to be a parent as much as I am teaching him how to be a productive and respectful adult. He walked away into the living room that day as if nothing occurred. I stared at him for a moment. His face still looks like it did as a baby. My baby. That was the best of hugs. "Enjoy that while you can." I said to myself.

Temperature Rising

Debra Kenney

The first day of summer vacation our spirits were high and our unleashed energy was even higher. After lunch my brother Tim, his friend Randy, and I raced our bikes around the neighborhood. The air rushed into our faces. It was the next best thing to sitting in front of our small metal fan to hog the cool air from my brother. We stopped at the nearby Atlantic gas station to spend our dimes on twincicles. The cold flavored ice melted in our mouths and trickled down our throats. As I enjoyed my icy treat, Randy impulsively knocked it out of my hand onto the ground. I looked down at my melting root beer twincicle lying in the dirt, forming a puddle of sweetness. I could feel the anger rising up in me, a pot ready to boil over. My fists formed tight balls. "Buy me another twincicle!" I demanded.

Randy doubled over laughing. My brother saw the warning signs of an impending eruption and scooted me away. We dropped our bikes in the yard and stretched out on our backs under the cool shade of our towering maple. As my body cooled off, so did my temper.

I never did like Randy. He was squirrely, always on the move looking for something to do. Often that something was picking on me. At six, I was small for my age and stick thin. Everyone else in the neighborhood was three to five years older than me. So I felt lucky the older boys allowed me to hang out with them.

My brother, three years older, knew not to push me too far. He had been on the receiving end of my temper too many times. But Randy learned that lesson the hard way. My brother never told him I could hurl a heavy metal Tonka truck several feet through the air with amazing aim. Or that I had smashed a toy bugle on his head with such force that it broke in two.

I didn't realize Randy had followed us until he came to a stop in our yard, hopped off his bike, and let it fall down in the grass. I was not a happy camper to see his black, buzzed cut, freckled face. He darted over to my brother tagged him on the arm and shouted you're it. A game of tag took off. Running, chasing, tagging, I forgot my anger. Forgot, until I tagged Randy and shouted "You're it!

He whirled around and shouted, " Nuh uh!" That's when the argument started. Back and forth we went.

"I tagged you!"

"You missed me by a mile!"

"No, I didn't! I tagged you fair and square! "

"You're not fast enough to tag me! "

"I tagged you, you liar!"

Randy glared at me and moved a few steps closer. "Shut up you little runt, or I'll throw you in old lady Howard's rose bush! "

"You better not! I'll tell my mom!"

Before I could turn and run he scooped me up and started towards the rose bush. I don't know which was worse, my fear of being dumped in the bush

or my fear of what old lady Howard would do when she found out I squashed her prize rose bush. I wriggled and screamed. My scream was loud and shrill. I was certain it would bring my mom rushing to my rescue. No such luck. Randy held me suspended over the rosebush. With all my might I reached up and punched him in the nose. He yelped in pain, took a step backwards, and dropped me onto the ground. Blood gushed from his nose as he wailed. Turning tail, he raced home, howling all the way.

My brother stood speechless as I pronounced, "It serves him right!" I marched into the house determined to rat him out. Breathlessly I relayed the events to my mom. I expected a sympathetic response, or maybe a comforting hug. What I got was a spanking for hurting that bully Randy! She made me sit on the back porch steps for an hour in the hot sun. I complained and mumbled. It just wasn't fair! After all, Randy was trying to hurt me and I was only defending myself. Mom said hitting was never ok and little girls should never punch big boys in the nose. Boy, being a girl stinks!



Debra Kenney

Calling Home

On Father's Day of 2006 we brought Dad home after several weeks in the hospital and several more in a rehab facility. He had suffered two subdural hematomas more than a week apart and had undergone two brain surgeries. Now, finally back home, we entered the house. I could feel the joy and relief radiating from Dad. I eased him into his favorite chair. His eyes took in every nook and cranny of the room. Tears gently rolled down his face as he turned and said, "You take such good care of me. I love you."

Dad is an easy going guy, not much ruffles his feathers, but he dislikes hospitals with a passion. He dislikes the uncomfortable bed, and the bad food, the boredom, but most of all he dislikes the confinement. He's like a toddler trying to escape a crib. During his hospital stay the nurses were forced to place an alarm in his bed to monitor him. Frequently the alarm sounded his escape.

The long road to recovery lay ahead of him. Physical and occupational therapies filled his daily schedule along with follow up doctor appointments. He worked hard and made good progress but was never the person he used to be. Robbed of his ability to maintain balance, he now needed to maneuver through his world cautiously with a cane. Dad was quite a walker, walking several miles each morning and again in the early evening. At 78 he still maintained the house and yard himself. Now he sat by and watched others perform the chores he longed to do. He felt weak and useless.

All these thoughts swirled through my mind as I stared at the phone. I dreaded making this call. How in the world could I tell him I had just been diagnosed with a brain aneurysm and had been admitted to the same intensive care unit he occupied weeks earlier?

Jason Fritz

Listening to What Simon Says

In the afternoon hours of one of the first days of the school year, Simon made his way into my set 5 English class. He crossed the threshold as the bell sounded, a sophomore seemingly already aware of boundaries and the effects of crossing them. We made eye contact as he looked at me begrudgingly through the convex lenses of his glasses and headed towards his seat nearest to me, a spot I had already assigned to him to hopefully help him with his learning and meet one of a long list of IEP accommodations.

Right away, I handed out a writing prompt, one of the first assignments of the year: a diagnostic essay designed to provide data points for me as to where students currently were on the state writing rubric. I read to the class, "Whether in a book, movie, TV show, or song, we've all heard stories that we like and those that we disliked. Good stories have certain common qualities. Explain the qualities of a good story regardless of medium." I proceed to go over the purpose of the assignment, clarifying my proctor role, that I could not help with prompt interpretation or with the writing process. I could only reiterate and/or clarify the directions.

Simon spent most of the period off-task on his laptop, playing games, quickly switching screens as I made my way around his side of the room. "Do you have any questions about the directions?" I asked in an attempt to redirect Simon. "No." He replied with an indifferent tone. Over halfway through the 55 minute class period, Simon had fragments of a sentence. "I'm looking forward to reading your essay." I whispered to Simon in an attempt at encouragement. It was met with another

indifferent "OK". As the bell rang, I came over to Simon who had extended time, about the completion of his assignment. The goal was for Simon to finish the essay with another teacher and submit it the next day.

A few days past the deadline, Simon finally submitted his essay that consisted of three paragraphs and a one-sentence conclusion. After assessing his writing with the state rubric, I scored it very low score with mostly 2s (Basic) and 1s (Below Basic) on for all five domains: focus, content, organization, style, and conventions. But, more importantly, what I was more concerned with was that I had a student who was already familiar with these negative labels and did not seem to identify with this type of writing. I felt that I was perpetuating a cycle of testing and labeling.

To complicate this, over the course of the year, some of the same behaviors around writing continued, and new ones emerged. Simon would try some of my behavior management strategies on me, attempting to redirect our conversations about writing into conversations about computers, a passion of his. While I am all for students sharing their passion, I wanted to somehow help create a passion for writing in Simon. He was consistently late with writing assignments and would always find ways to engage in off-task behaviors such as playing computer games, texting on his cell phone, or listening to music through headphones hidden under his hoodie. Sometimes, he would go to the bathroom and remain gone for a long time, and sometimes he would completely disengage in class, pull over his hoodie, put down his head and not participate in class. I became really interested in these actions because, to me, they were the manifestations of a non-writerly identity in

Simon. I wondered, "How can this young man ever really develop as a writer we he doesn't see himself as a writer?"

Though Simon completed all of his major writing assignments for me throughout the school year, all of them were very late and all of them involved heavy support from me and another teacher. I tried a variety of writing strategies with him such as conferencing, analyzing mentor texts, drafting, peer conferencing, and brainstorming, but none of them were really successful in helping Simon to discontinue his resistance to this type of writing.

A little over a week removed from the school year, I find myself regretting that I did not try to understand Simon's perceptions of writing. I wonder how he perceived the writing that we were doing. I believe that if I had adopted more a listening stance in this regard and encouraged Simon to manifest his perceptions of writing, I may have been able to modify my writing pedagogy in ways that would encourage Simon to adopt a writerly identity and come into his own.

I Hate Dogs!

Maggie Herr

My heart was pounding in my chest. Sweat poured from my face as I raced down the street on my roller skates. I could feel Charlie's moist, hot breath against my calves. My skate-covered feet could not carry me up the steps of my parent's house. As I ran towards the door I shrieked, "Mom! Help me!" I crossed the threshold just in time to slam the door in Charlie's face. In my mind I had just survived an "attack" by my next-door-neighbors vicious Great Dane. Now can you understand why I hate dogs?

Over the next sixteen years my feeling about dogs remained consistent. I generally mistrusted them, crossing the street when one was walking towards me. Then I met my future husband, Dan, and his only character flaw happened to be that he LOVED dogs. He had grown up with a dog and definitely pictured one in our future. So began the challenging task of convincing him that a dog was not what we needed. EVER!

As we began our married life, worked full time, moved into our first home, and started having children, the subject of a dog never really came up. Life was so busy that we didn't feel and void, let alone one that an animal might fill. Shortly after the birth of our third child, my husband started "the press," desperately trying convince me that a dog was exactly what our family needed. I knew that this day was coming, and I was prepared. Pretending I thought adding a dog to my already hectic life would be wonderful, I explained to my husband that the timing just wasn't right. I was working as a preschool teacher and trying to get an elementary position. With an oversaturated job market, and money being tight, I simply told Dan that we could definitely get a dog when I got a job.

A Tourist Sees the Sites

By Laura Ouladdaoud

The city grew up out of its monochromatic surroundings like an anthill. Its walls and buildings were all the colors of brown you might find in your favorite latte. A real life walled-in oasis complete with palm trees, communal well, and millennium-old traditions. The routine of life in the city was welcoming, the maze of skinny streets, thrilling. It looked practically biblical. Had I gone back in time?

"So this is Algeria," I thought as I scanned the scene.

I had come to attend a wedding. The people, the food, the colors, the etiquette – everything was brand new. You should know that literally half the city was invited to stop by for a meal at some point during this three-day occurrence.

On the second night, I was corralled into a van with a bunch of semi-hysterical women, young and old, to drive across town to bring my nephew's bride to her new home. I played the role of thrilled observer. The whole way there the young girls banged on the inside of the van and sang loudly. Their joy filled the van to bursting. Suffocating, I kind of wished someone would open a window.

After arriving at the bride's home, we all poured through the door, up the stairs and into a large room, seating ourselves around the edge. The myriad sounds around me – baby crying, children laughing, women all speaking at once, loudly talking over each other – nearly distracted me from the fact that the bride was not yet in the room. When she finally entered, many minutes later, a respectful hush fell. As soon as I looked at her, I sensed something was amiss.

The day is here

*The freight train
Of time
Thunders toward
My marriage*

*I am not ready!
I feel so sick,*

But they're waiting...

*Aunts
Sisters
Cousins
Neighbors
Friends
Strangers!
Immersed in their euphoria
On my behalf
While my panic builds*

*There
are
too
many
What ifs!*

What have I done?

*Hush!
It is the way*

No.

Comfort.

*I dress slowly
My mother walks me out
Into the crowd of ladies
My face is flushed
My heart beats
Like that of a rabbit
Being chased by a fox*

*As they braid my hair
My kohl-traced eyes,
Full of apprehension,
Are cast downward.*

I had received an invitation to witness the intimate that night. The poor girl looked positively miserable. Brushing, braiding, attaching ornaments, her mother and aunts “made her up” for her wedding night as guests chanted prayers and songs. Tears trickled down her cheeks; she could not hold them back. Her eyebrows were in a small furrow; her shoulders inched ever closer to her ears. Was she even breathing? Rather than preparing to begin a blissful chapter of her life, it seemed as though she had received a death sentence. Since that moment I have thought and thought about what that girl might have been thinking and feeling in anticipation of consummating a marriage with a man she barely knew.

*I agreed to this.
The idea of it seemed exciting
But now it's
actually
happening.
I just don't know
What to expect.*

*They finish.
I stand automatically
And the unseen exhilaration of my family
Propels me toward the door
Toward my husband
My new life*

~~~~~

*The baby giggles*

*And reaches a  
Chubby hand  
Upward  
As if offering something  
To his mother*

*She smiles  
And buries her face  
In his neck,  
Breathes him in,  
Kisses him,  
So she can  
feel his soft skin  
on her lips*

*She watches as her husband  
Lifts the baby  
High into the air*

*More  
giggles*

*More  
smiles*

*She is content.*



## The Uninvited Visitor

As I finished getting ready for the evening I moved over to the mirror to give myself the final outfit approval, throw on some make up, toss my hair, and pose as if I'm going on a red carpet movie premier, instead of my mom's for a family dinner. The image reflected was much as expected until the unanticipated happened.

Flaps, Flap, Flap...in the reflection of the mirror, a dark small shadow swept down the hallway behind me. The hall was dim and I figured I must have been seeing things. Swoosh.... it happened again, and I spun around, terrified as he flew toward me like a black bullet. My heart dropped, as did I to the hard floor and screamed with fright. Zach leaped out of the living room to find me, the dog trailing behind, "What's wrong?!" his voice panicked. "A bat!" Pointing to his small body in the corner shelves of the hallway, starring at us, motionless. Zach heroically grabbed our dog and ran into the living room closing the door behind him. *Some tough guy, it was the goose incident all over again, running away from the hissing goose as I stand on the park bench trying to shoo it away with my foot.*



Slowly I reached for Zach's coat, hanging on a nearby hook. I then carefully stretched out my arm to finger the brass knob on the door. Turning it carefully not to startle the frozen dark figure. Once the front door leading into the common apartment stairwell was open, my next moves had to be precise and quick. All in one swift motion I covered the bat with the coat and grabbed his small body flinging it all out the door and with a slam it was shut.

With one victory down, we still faced the challenge of leaving the apartment through the stairwell. Gathering our things, purse, keys, and the dog securely under Zach's arms. It was time to venture into the stairwell, where the only thing between us and the door to freedom was a black-winged-fang-toothed rodent. Our first few steps were a relief, not a thing in sight but it didn't take long before the bat was sighted again. Dropping to the floor screaming, laughing, laying on the steps with each tantalizing swoop. Crawling down the three flights, we reached the final door, propping it open in hopes the bat would escape by the time we got back.

Fast-forward to our arrival back home, we were anxious to see if our uninvited visitor was still with us. Eyeing up the ceiling, steps and crevices we were hesitant to believe the bat was really gone. Moving slowly, methodically up the steps we reached our door without a bat in sight. A sigh of relief, this circus was finally over, until my eye caught a dark shadow on the screen of the window in the hall. Quickly slipping into the apartment, Zach went to search for a step stool, setting it up to reach the high window, it was then his turn to be quick in action. He jumped grabbing the top of the window slamming it down. Sandwiched between glass and screen sentencing this intruder to a life of exile. So marked another experience, the kind you can look back and shed some tears of laughter on, the kind you when you realize the perfect team you make.

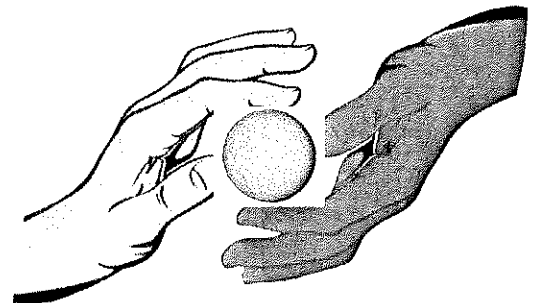
Another Day in the Neighborhood  
by Brenda Krupp

We were the Gale Street Nine, but only in name. In reality, there were only six on the handball team. Six neighborhood kids. Six kids who all lived within shouting distance of their homes. Six kids whose moms fried fish on Friday nights. Six kids who went to Olney Elementary School, listened to the Beatles, rode bikes, and played together in one another's basements or backyards. Six kids from the neighborhood.

We each had our own assigned spot on the field, and this never wavered. Steph lounged on first base (the fire hydrant) because she could catch. DavidBeal (two words but always said as one) roamed the outfield, especially right field because that was his front yard. Joey Wiesenger, well he played wherever he wanted to play because he usually didn't show up or had to leave early. His skill was not with a ball, it was that menacing stare. Scary. Felix (fondly known as *Felix the cat*- when he was not in hearing range) was older, limber, and could run and catch. A powerful combination on this "team". My brother Tom was the coach. He's the one that told me I was third base - literally - third base. "Stand there and don't move." So of course I stood where I was told, every spring afternoon when "the team" got together to play hand/baseball.

So there we were, six kids from the neighborhood playing our version of hand/baseball. Laughing, joking, cajoling, when Steph stopped the game-time banter to whistle at me. I looked up from the pile of stones I was accumulating at third base to see three boys walking up our street. Three boys; one dressed like my brother in a striped Sears polo shirt and cutoffs, the others in no-name jeans, black high-top Converse Chuck Taylors, and white t-shirts. Three boys, only one smiling, directly at me as if to say "I told you they'd come". Three boys walking up our street, in our neighborhood. Three boys; all attending Olney Elementary School, but only one lived within shouting distance and walked to school with us. Only one who shared our reflection in a mirror.

Practice halts as the boys approach home plate. My brother tosses the white pimple ball to the kid in the middle. He catches it and hands it off to the boy on his right who takes it and hits it, far. DavidBeal sprints after the ball and catches it. He tosses it to Tom who catches it, looks at the new recruits and says, "Wanna play?" And so the game begins.



Balls are hit, caught, and thrown to other players to make outs. "You're out!" "Good catch!" "Brenda, pay attention to the game!" Laughter and fun and smiles, an afternoon that shouldn't have to end.

Then it happens. The ball is hit hard to Felix. He fields the ball, winds up and whips it to Steph on first base. The throw is high, and fast, and hard, and Steph has no chance of catching the errant throw. It sails out of play, over her shoulder, into the fenced in yard. The Gale Street Six look at each other. We know the game is surely over, unless we can get the ball back. Felix looks at us and heads to the chain-link fence. He looks around, and quickly scales the fence, as he has done many times before. We watch as he searches for the ball under the car parked in the driveway, under the bushes, under the flowers growing in the front bed. Our eyes follow his movements, but we are not the only eyes watching. The heavy draperies part and two eyes take in the situation. Two eyes follow the ball retriever and then scan the "team" waiting for their team-mate, silently. The draperies close and we know she is heading for the front door. "Quick Felix, grab the ball and get out of there!" someone shouts. "Here she comes!"

The team disperses as the door opens, waiting to hear Mrs. Yankowski's usual rant, "I call your mother you come in yard again." But we don't hear those words. She shouts, "You! Go home! Go home YOU!" She stares and points. The team turns its back on her as she continues to shout. Felix tosses the ball to the waiting players who all return to the field of play ready to resume the game. All but two. Two boys are hustling down Gale Street. They are almost running. Running, running toward Masher Street and the S bus. Running, running away from our neighborhood, a place where everyone is within shouting distance of home, where moms fry fish on Friday nights, where kids listen to the Beatles, ride bikes, and go to the same elementary school. Our neighborhood, where kids like Stephanie Orehowski, Joey Wiesenger, David Beal, Felix Joos, Tommy and Brenda Telford, and Robbie McNally can play handball but apparently Leroy Moses and Charles Samuel Malone can not.

## Blood, Sweat, and Tears

by Pauline Schmidt

The truth is, some days with a special needs child are easier than others. Some days, I can simply accept who Emma is, what she can/can't do, and go from there. But if I am being 100% honest, there are days when I get so frustrated, I even cry.

Three of the four of us are excited about our first family bike ride; Emma is indifferent. Because she lacks a seven year old's verbal ability, it's hard to tell what she's thinking or feeling most of the time. As we drove from our house to the bike trail, I kept thinking, *please let this go well!!! Please. Just one normal day... Is that too much to ask?*

We got out of the car and Robby jumped into action! His helmet went on in a flash, he busied himself with getting the other helmets distributed, and waited patiently for Brian to take the bikes off the rack. My bike was first so I could attach the baby seat. *Now, how did that guy at the bike store do this again!?*

With the baby seat securely in place, it was now time to coax Emma into the summer air, into her helmet, and (hopefully) onto the bike seat. *Where's that bag of popcorn?*

"Okay, Emma. If you put on your helmet and let mommy buckle you into this seat, you can have this bag of popcorn!"

"Okay mommy. I promise."

It's so cute when she says that, but it's not always true. We repeated these sentences several times before we actually got the helmet on and the buckles adjusted.

We were now on our way. The boys flew on ahead while I was going much slower, realizing it's been years since I've been on a bike! I remembered what I had to do, but I had the added challenge of a 35 pound child sitting on a seat behind me. My arms compensating to keep us properly balanced.

"Hey mommy!!!"

"Yes, Emma?"

"GO FASTER! Get the BOYS!!!" Her high-pitched voice yelling now.

*Hmm, this is not as easy as I thought it would be! But, at least it seems like she is having fun. I still can't seem to catch up with the boys. Sometimes, I wish I shared their enthusiasm for physical activity.*

"Hey Mommy!"

"Yes, Emma?"

"Popcorn's all gone."

"Okay, I see a trash can up ahead, can you hang on to it?"

(silence)

"Emma, can you hang on to it?"

(silence)

*Grrr....I hate when she doesn't answer me!*

I slow my bike down and pull off to the side. I see the boys slow down too, but they are way up ahead of us. The huge garbage barrel has a heavy wooden lid with a handle and I pick it up without even thinking.

"OH SHIIIIIT!" I shout as I lose my balance. The bike, Emma, and I all tumble over to the ground. *Oh my god. Oh God. Emma!*

"Emma, are you okay?"

(silence)



My right leg is pinned under the bike and I can feel the stones embedded in my leg, but all I care about is her. She looks like she is in shock, but she's not crying. I quickly glance down at my leg and see some blood, but ignore it to get the bike back to an upright position. I'm trying to balance the bike, while checking Emma for any injuries. *Thank goodness, she just has a brush burn on her arm. Okay, I'm okay. She's okay.*

As I'm regrouping, Robby and Brian return to us, both looking nervous.

"I think we need to turn back now."

They quietly nod in agreement and push off, returning to our car. Emma is already starting to fuss but we have to keep going. Her screaming gets worse and worse with every push of the pedal. *Oh man. What am I doing?*

Kicking, screaming, and thrashing her body from side to side, Emma challenges my upper body strength.

The blood from my knee is slowly dripping down my leg, the sweat is making its way down my back, and the tears are right behind my eyes. *Okay Pauline. Snap out of it. You cannot feel sorry for yourself. Your daughter is watching. I don't care if she has special needs or not, she is watching. What's that picture you saw on Pinterest - something about when you feel like giving up, there is a little girl watching you? Stupid Pinterest.*

*You.*

*Can't.*

*Give.*

*Up.*

Brian slows down so that he is beside me. "Are you okay?"

"Yes, fine!" I shout back. Somehow, yelling at him makes me feel better.

"Why don't we switch? I'll take her and you take my bike."

"NO!"

In that moment, something strange happens in my body...something takes over. A jolt of energy or maybe even insanity. My legs feel like they are on fire, but I push them hard into the pedals. As luck would have it, the final stretch is up a hill. Now, my whole body is on fire as I struggle up the hill with a screaming child attached to my bike.

I turn the last corner, cross over the parking lot, and ride right over to our car. I yell to Brian, "Grab my bike!" I click the car door open, grab my water bottle and chug the ice cold water, while unbuckling my helmet. I can't control it anymore. The tears come gushing out of my eyes but I am hiding from Emma. *She can't see this. I can't show her defeat.*

I look up and there's Emma. She leans in and hugs me. I collapse into this show of affection.

"Mommy? Are you okay?" Her high-pitched voice now tender and gentle.

"I'm okay."

I will never give up - because of her.





## A Quiet Place

Jess Watkins

Sometimes you just need a quiet place, a break from all the chaos. Time away from alarm clocks and traffic, work and stresses. Sometimes you just need a break from your surroundings. So you get in your car, point your compass north, and drive.

The route to your quiet place is not necessarily relaxing. Big semis cruise past you and road warriors race by. But, with each mile you get closer, further away from the noise. You pull off the highway, head to back country roads, and inevitably get lost. Frustration does not take over. You know the trailhead is just a few moments away.

You arrive, strap on your hiking boots, and set off for your destination. With each step up the trail you start to get lost in yourself – sometimes thinking, sometimes not. For most of your journey you're alone – but not really. You notice the stick bug, a sight never seen. You hear the scurry of a squirrel, the rustling of a bird. You hear the clomping of your shoes against hard, dry earth. Occasionally, you even run into a group of hikers and realize you're together in your joy of this moment. And still, you move on.

Finally, you reach the top – perhaps a little drained - and find the perfect spot. The curve of a rock looks simply inviting and you nestle yourself just so on the sun warmed surface. You take a moment to gaze out over the valley. Lush greens, hawks flying, houses way out in the distance.

Your moment of solitude is temporarily interrupted by another group, a family making the same journey but it's no bother. The smiles and satisfaction of being outside, together, is enough to sustain the moment.

You return to your book and entertain whatever world you've brought on this walk with you. You're lost to reality, lost to time passing. It's just you, your book, this mountain.

But time does continue to pass. You realize it's time to return. With fresh eyes, a mind cleared by the mountain air, and a well-earned good night's rest ahead of you, you begin your decent back to reality. You are refreshed, relaxed, revived. This is your quiet place.



# Restlessness

Jess Watkins

Restless. 28 years old and restless. I've followed the path I'm supposed to take. Penn State University, move to Virginia to pursue my teaching career, settle in with a guy, build great friendships. And then, restlessness sets in. Great guy turns out to be okay, friends start moving forward, moving on. Suddenly I found myself stranded? Bugged down? Bored? And....it's time to move on.

A plan started with a visit to Alaska and soon snowballed into a career change and move. I was leaving Virginia, trading in my books for hotel keys, my sneakers for hiking boots. My dad thought I was crazy – and I probably was. Having just completed my Master's Degree in education no one could understand why in the world would I give it up now? But sometimes it's time to move on – sometimes you need a change.

I packed up my classroom, my apartment, my life in Virginia (which to my surprise all fit snugly in the basements of my parents' houses) ready to board a plane for the unknown. Seeing polar bears, hiking Mt. McKinley, or perhaps fulfilling my dad's greatest fear – meeting a toothless local with which I'd share my life – all awaited me in the great beyond. How funny the perceptions we harbor about places we've never been.

It was an exhausting few days. My friends in Virginia threw me a going away party the night before I left. People I hadn't seen in a while came and let me know how truly loved I was. My nearest and dearest friends created a memory book for me which concluded with the idea – “Of all of us, you will be the one to set the world on fire! We were just lucky to be a part of it!”

Two days spent at home, second guessing my decision and saying goodbye and it was time to go.

As the plane's wheels touched down in Anchorage the weight of my decision bore down. I'd left the stability of my life behind to venture into the unknown. I

knew not a soul and no one for 3000 miles knew me. I realized I didn't even know if Anchorage had taxis to leave the airport. Dragging my travel weary body through the doors of the airport I was suddenly revived by the permanent sunshine of the summer solstice. Despite it being 10pm, people were moving about, making noise, celebrating. This would be the start of something great. A new beginning.

The next day was spent trying to confirm that the hotel was expecting me and was really ready to take me to Denali Park the next day. Wandering lost around the city, I came upon a spot in Anchorage where you can see the mountains towering over you. The Gulf of Alaska stretches for miles reflecting the beauty all around. Stopping, really stopping for possibly the first time ever, I stood in complete awe of my surroundings. Snowcapped mountains loomed in the distance creating a surreal blanket around this mini metropolis. Even better, the majestic mountains reflected off the water, took my breath away, and made my heart skip.

Wandering around Anchorage, by myself, completely independent was just the first of many adventures during a magic summer. I went to Alaska thinking I'd find something I was missing: maybe a new career path or bigger purpose in life. In fact, what I found was a new appreciation of the world around me. I learned to take a moment to take in my surroundings to appreciate the wonder in every day things.

I learned a little more independence. I learned that people bring all kinds of interesting outlooks. I learned to appreciate the risk of doing something a little crazy. I learned to be brave. I learned to enjoy the simple act of going for a hike and wandering across something you've never seen before. I learned to take risks. I learned how to "ski" down a slope of rubble and avoid bear scat. Most importantly, I learned that sometimes life calls you in another direction so you can learn to appreciate the direction you've been heading.

As the Commandant of the military academy neared the car, his driver, a young cadet in his teens, stood with his hand held sharply at his brow.

"For the greatness of the German Empire," the boy said. The Commandant couldn't help but smile at the boy's earnestness. He raised his hand, returning the salute.

"At ease, soldier." The Commandant replied. He and the boy removed the dusty cover from the automobile. The chrome and glass sparkled in the morning sun and the Commandant saw the boy's eyes widen.

"First time seeing this vehicle?" The Commandant questioned. The cadet nodded his head, a grin plastered on his face. The Commandant ran his hands over the cool metal of the car's hood, remembering the first time he had rode in this car, during Kaiser Wilhelm's visit to the Holy Land in 1912. *The people of Jerusalem had hated us that day*, he remembered. The Kaiser refused to walk into the holy city. Therefore, the ancient streets of Jerusalem had to be widened for this car to pass down its narrow corridors. The Commandant remembered the horror stricken faces as the citizenry witnessed chunks of plaster ripped from thousand year old buildings to allow the passage of the car. *Defilers*, the Commandant remembered an old man muttering.

The Commandant shuddered at the memory as he opened the car's back door and sank down into the supple brown leather seats. The boy, goggles pulled down over his face, cranked the engine and with a loud belch of exhaust, the engine roared to life.

"Where are we off to sir?" the cadet asked over the noise of the engine.

"To Munich today," The Commandant replied. He took the letter from his pocket and reread it. *Berlin, 1917. From his imperial majesty Kaiser Wilhelm, due to the desperate need for ammunition for the war, all precious metals are demanded immediately from the local population to sustain the war effort.*

The Commandant sighed. *First rubber for shoes, then butter, now precious metal*, he thought, *soon my school will be feeding acorns to half-dressed students if the war continues much longer.*

They moved down a winding road, leaving the school behind. As they neared the black iron gates, the Commandant noticed it blocked by a crowd. The boy slowed the car, their exit blocked.

"Wait here, son," The Commandant opened the door and walked towards the crowd. As he neared, he saw a platoon of soldiers, infantry from the looks of their faded grey trousers and jackets. The Commandant neared one, who wore the stripes of sergeant on the shoulders of his dingy grey outfit. He



couldn't help but cringe as he noticed the mud on the soldiers pants and at the haphazard way he had done up his buttons. As the man met the Commandant's eyes, he greeted him with a rough unshaven face and a lazy salute.

"For the greatness of the German Empire," the soldier muttered. A small white skull had been etched into the front of the soldier's spiked iron helmet.

"What is the hold up, sergeant?" The Commandant asked.

"Funeral procession," the sergeant replied.

"Why would there be a funeral procession coming this way, there's no graveyard near here sergeant," the Commandant shot back.

"You'll see," the sergeant replied, shrugging his shoulders.

The Commandant opened his mouth, a sharp retort forming on his lips, when he heard a loud banging sound come down the road.

At the sound, the sergeant barked a command. The platoon drew their weapons and rested them against their shoulders, preparing for action. *Why are they preparing for battle?* the Commandant wondered, *are these French and British mourners?*

His questions remained unanswered as the first mourner came into view, beating a drum in a steady rhythmic march. Men and women followed, black lace shrouds over the women's faces, their eyes downcast as they followed the pulsing drum beat forward. Wooden soled shoes crunched down on the dirt road and the Commandant saw some bare bloody feet trudging through the dirt.

"Where are these people from?" The Commandant questioned.

"Munchun," the sergeant replied.

"But that is over 100 miles from here," The sergeant shrugged once more. The Commandant saw the other soldiers point and laugh as the mourners filed by. One soldier spat at a villager's feet. The Commandant was about to reprimand the soldier when he noticed a wagon moving towards him. Curious as to whose death would draw these villagers on a 100 mile march to Berlin, the Commandant walked towards the wagon. He looked into the wagon's bed and then froze.

Inside the wagon was a bell.

The Commandant moved to question a villager when he heard the sergeant speak to the mourners, his voice heard above the staccato drum beat and laughter of the soldiers.





"I hope all of you understand how much the Kaiser's army appreciates your sacrifice to the war effort. May the German Empire triumph over its enemies!"

A villager, and old man from his stooped posture and weather beaten face, turned towards the sergeant. The Commandant saw tears pooled in the deep wrinkles hooding the man's eyes.

"That bell is older than your German empire. It rang on the day I was married and on the day my father and mother were married and on the day their parents were married. It has rang out the life of our village for over 400 years."

"And it shall makes some fine bullets to kill some British and French soldiers on the front in Verdun old man," the sergeant responded. The Commandant saw the old man's fists ball up and the sergeant smiled.

The mourners moved down the road, their journey continuing past the gates of the academy. As the Commandant looked down the dusty road at the death march of the Munchun bell, the sergeant saluted him saying,

"For the greatness of the German Empire."

The Commandant could not bring himself to return the salute.



## How Hard Could it Be?

By Sarah Mullen

So it was March twenty-seventh, and we finally settled on a three-bedroom townhouse in rural Perkasio, Pennsylvania after a long, disappointing, and agonizing year of searching. The house on Peachtree Drive, although only ten years old, needed a significant amount of work, but we were up for the challenge – I mean, we did watch HGTV for an entire year in our spare time... *Rehab Addict*, *House Hunters*, and *Fixer Upper*, just to name a few. We were essentially experts in renovation and home design – undoubtedly ready for our own D.I.Y reality show.

Our first assignment was fishing an ethernet wire and cable wire from the attic into the master bedroom on the second floor of the house. *Simple. I mean, how hard could be it be?* I thought to myself. Next, “we,” meaning Travis, would need to cut a hole in the wall to affix the receptacle that would direct the ethernet and internet wires. I, trusted sidekick and supportive fiancé, would “supervise.” So, to ensure we were prepared, Travis sought advice and recommendations from only the most knowledgeable experts and sources: Google, YouTube, and HGTV. As Travis composed his “game plan,” I collected the necessary tools for installing a cable and ethernet receptacle, including the 10-amp Dewalt reciprocating saw (or the “sawzall” for short) that we had borrowed from my dad. We reconvened in the laundry room. Travis climbed into the attic through the stairs that opened from the ceiling. And I, the foreman of the project, supervised from below and held the flashlight so that it barely illuminated the dark abyss above. Travis fished the wire through the insulated wall, climbed down the stairs from the attic, returned the drop-down stairs to their appropriate storage position, and together we headed back into the bedroom for the second half of the project. *Piece of cake*, I thought to myself, shocked by our success and lack of obstacles encountered.

I could see the twinkling in Travis’ eye as he picked up the sawzall. In his mind, he was competent, oozing manpower, and absolutely, one hundred percent qualified for this job.

“Do you know what you’re doing with that?” I asked Travis doubtfully.



“Kind of. How hard could it be?” he responded, apprehension settling in the tone of his voice.

Travis picked up the saw, moved it closer to the wall, and revved the motor.

“Don’t you think we should measure? Or make a mark on the wall as our boundary?” I questioned, hopefully leading Travis toward the realization that we needed a plan.

“They don’t do that on YouTube,” Travis retorted sarcastically.

“That’s because they know what they’re doing.”

“Me too,” Travis smiled his *I’m so funny* smile.

So he began sawing into the wall. Dust, drywall particles, paint, and the burning smell of the saw at work filled the air. I looked at Travis, his body weight leaning generously into the saw, which was furiously eating away at the drywall. He appeared to be pushing rather hard, his biceps and forearms contracting and releasing with each move of the blade. Although I know nothing about renovations or reciprocating saws, it was apparent that the saw should have been doing a majority of the work, which was not the case at all.

“Are you sure you should be doing it that aggressively?” I yelled over the murmur of the blade against the drywall.

And with that comment, and one last “umph,” I witnessed Travis’ body jolt forward, the tension in his arms release, the tool protrude inward, and the sound of the saw echo through the hallway *outside* of the bedroom.

As the saw blade slowed to a stop, I looked at Travis. We both knew exactly what had happened. Mr. Fix-It sawed directly through the wall creating a gaping hole on *both* sides, our bedroom *and* the stairwell. Travis looked at me, smiled, and flexed his left bicep muscle in the air like a bodybuilder, showing off his “guns.”

“Solid muscle,” he said in a deep masculine voice sarcastically.”

And the only reason I didn’t punch him, was because I was laughing too hard to control my fists. It’s funny how such a disastrous moment in time can demonstrate the power of humor. Travis’ sense of humor is something that I am grateful for. He can make the most stressful times seem so insignificant. Without him, I’m certain life would just be too serious.



Ginny Jervis

### What Will People Think?

As I sat in the pew at my niece's wedding, the view outside absolutely awed me. Enhanced by a huge, transparent Palladian window, the altar's background was resplendent with the crimsons, ambers and golds of the last leaves of the season hugging the rolling Shenandoah Mountains. The priest, a friend of the bride and groom's, had just offered a warm message in his sermon that left me feeling calm and reverent. I slipped my hand into my husband's. Suddenly, I sensed a commotion in the back of the church. When I saw what was happening, I knew what some of the members of my family were whispering in their heads, "What will people think?"

What will people think? I heard this question in one form or another quite often in my childhood. Though my mom is loving and kind, appearances mean a lot to her. Whether because of her upbringing in puritanical New England, the status her family held in the same town for seven generations, or for some other reason, my mom tended to give more gentle reminders on manners and proper behavior to my sisters and me while we were growing up than any of our friends received from their mothers. Sprinkled in with the typical lessons of right and wrong/please and thank you were lots of other lessons on correct behaviors. Emily Post was our friend. A relative even jokingly called us "the catalogue family" because, in his opinion, we were always so perfectly and properly dressed. And everyone in the neighborhood knew that my sisters and I were never up on the most recent soap opera plots because watching such inappropriate behavior on television was forbidden in our house. Even today, my eighty-four year old mother is the personification of decorum. She dresses quite tastefully, keeps a trim figure, treats everyone with kindness and never rocks the boat. Emphasis on being proper is important to her still.

When my niece, my mom's oldest grandchild, announced her engagement two years ago, my four sisters and I, our families and my mom excitedly looked forward to the first wedding in the family in years. The ceremony was to be held at a beautiful winery in Virginia just outside of Charlottesville the day after Thanksgiving. More important to my mother than the beauty of the vineyard was the news that the grounds had once been part of a Catholic family's estate and thus, included a consecrated chapel. My mother, a daily Communicant, was thrilled that my niece would exchange her vows as part of a full Catholic Mass with all its decorum.

Because the wedding was in Virginia, my sisters and our families stayed at the same hotel. The day of the wedding, the hotel corridor mimicked our childhood home again as we traveled back and forth between each other's rooms. Because my sister Beth had driven Mom down, she became her roommate and caretaker. About 11:00 AM, just three hours before the ceremony, Beth knocked on my door and said, "Something's wrong with Mom, when I came out of the shower she was sprawled on the bed. She says it might be her vertigo, but I don't think so."

I dashed to her room and sure enough, Mom lay under the covers, barely able to lift her pale head from the pillow. In the last ten years or so, my mom has experienced vertigo from time to time and has seen a doctor for it. When we asked her where the medicine was which she takes to treat it, she murmured, "In Pennsylvania." With minutes ticking towards the hour my niece would walk down the aisle, my sisters, our husbands, my adult children, my nieces and nephews, and I crowded in my mom's room frantically trying to figure out how to get our fragile mother up and dressed for the ceremony. One of my sisters decided to call the family doctor to see if he could send her prescription for vertigo to a pharmacy nearby. Another relative left to check a list of drugstores located near the hotel. Thinking some warm food would help their grandmother's stomach, my sons hopped in the car to search the local town for take-out that might hit the spot. A search party of grandchildren began to explore the hotel for some ice-cold water or juice, and my husband sent out calls to some of the nurses he works with. Even with this chaos in the background, another sister phoned the bride to assure her all was well.

Once most of the family had left the room to set out on their assignments, just Beth and I remained with my mom. Mom whispered, "Maybe it's my vertigo or maybe not... maybe it was that pill I took."

Sheepishly, through a cloud, my mom admitted that she had been nervous about seeing some of the family we hadn't seen in awhile. (My sister Cathy and her ex-husband, the bride's mom and dad, are divorced, and those family dynamics aren't great.) Apparently she had explained this to her doctor, who gave her a pill which he suggested she take ONLY if she really felt it necessary. He had suggested she take half, which my mom remembered only after swallowing it whole. My tiny, needs to gain weight, eighty-four year old mother took the whole capsule on an empty stomach!

About an hour later, everyone had returned from their chores without a lot of luck. Even with some warm vegetable soup inside of her, my mom was still quite disoriented. With minutes seemingly flying by, Beth insisted that the rest of us prepare for the ceremony and she would wait out the time until my mom's knees didn't buckle beneath her. Hopefully they would arrive for the reception.

And that is why my poised, classy, devout, always in control mother, dressed in brilliant red, with earrings sparkling and a fur coat wrapped around her, entered my niece's wedding splat in the middle of Mass strolling down the aisle toward her designated second row seat waving an Atlantic City beauty pageant hello, totally unaware of her actions and pleased as punch to be attending her first grandchild's wedding.



**Thomas Seka**

***A Life Cut Short***

**Summer Institute**

**2015**

*"You Catholic girls start much too late,  
But sooner or later it comes down to fate  
I might as well be the one,  
You know that only the good die young."*

*-Billy Joel*

There were no cell phones back then. News traveled slowly. I still remember that phone call I received in June of 1988. My best friend Brian and I were down in my basement, shooting pool on my old Sears pool table. The basement was my place to hang out as a teenager. I could avoid the summer heat - my parents were miserly with air conditioning - and I could be free to goof around and talk about girls and rock and roll with my friends.

Brian and I had just finished our senior year of high school at Bishop McDevitt, our caps and gowns still smelling like hair spray and Old Spice. The Mylar balloons still bobbing in the living room corner. The congratulations cards still lined up on the cream colored mantle.

My mom hollered down for me to come up and take a call. Eric was on the phone, she yelled. "Rack 'em up," I said to Brian, climbing the steep wooden stairs two steps at a time. "I'll be right back."

When I came back down, Brian knew something was wrong. My face was paper white; my brows knitted in a not-sure-what-I-just-heard countenance. "What's up?" he queried.

"Chrissy died last night...down the shore."

I didn't get many details right away. Nowadays, people would have instantly streamed news and thoughts via social media following a horrible event like this: a teenager we all knew and liked - our valedictorian - had suddenly died.

But more came out about it. I found out she died on the last night of Senior Week, a traditionally wild week for Philadelphia graduates who flock to South Jersey shore towns.

Chrissy was crossing the main road in Strathmere, a notorious speed-up stretch of pavement with no traffic stops or streetlights that connects the more colorful towns of Sea Isle and Ocean City. A drunk driver killed her. She was all set to go to Notre Dame on a full academic scholarship. What a well-liked, smart, adorable girl she was.

Now she was gone.

We waited in a long line to be with her for one last time, Brian and I. We were probably wearing the new suits we just wore for graduation, only this time with dark ties. The line of people spilled out of St. John's center doors, turned at an elbow, and then continued along the newly cemented sidewalk. The weather was beautiful. People were noisy on the sidewalk, chitchatting in groups while in line. I thought this seemed out of place. Why were people behaving as if waiting in line to see a movie? As we went

through the church's stained glass center doors, all became solemn and orderly, as they should. The line narrowed. The church was brightly lit. Large industrial fans on pedestals hummed and kept the warm air moving.

We approached her shiny tan coffin. It had silver handrails and a black, pleated skirt draped beneath. Standing side by side, we each crossed our arms in front of our bodies and looked down. I peered over at Brian, his eyes still looking down, contemplating. I looked at the casket. This felt different than seeing my grandmother in her coffin. There was someone my age in there - a kid. The words kid and coffin should never go together.

But we didn't have much time for goodbye. The line was still long. I slid my hand across the lid as we slowly walked out a side door. I wanted to touch the coffin for some reason. Outside, we loosened our ties and climbed into Brian's old Chevy Vega coupe. We didn't say much as we headed to I don't remember where.

That was 17 years ago. A few weeks ago, I logged on to Facebook. There, a mutual friend posted a picture of Chrissy. It was her graduation portrait. She was gingerly holding a slender red rose. I saw her face - so young and smooth - frozen in time. Like the budding rose she was holding, both were cut short. Memories and emotions came welling up inside of me. Many thoughts then filled my head. I thought of Brian, who I haven't talked to in quite some time. I should call him. I thought of my kids. And then I thought, maybe this is a big reason why I'm always extra cautious, particularly any time my kids cross a street. Maybe this is the reason I'm extra careful when it comes to drinking and getting in a car. All because of this young life cut short.

### Afterword

As I stated in the piece, the idea for this writing came to me after seeing an image on social media in June of this year. The horrible events of that summer replayed in my mind. I thought this was a story I wanted to tell.

In my piece, I wanted to portray the tragedy of teen loss, and how this affected me personally. I also wanted readers to connect to my story by pausing and thinking of stories like mine. This was another intended point. Sadly there are way too many accidents like this every year. In my workshop focus group, two people shared similar stories. And while teens are being warned of the dangers of texting and driving – as they should be – it seems that less emphasis is being placed on drinking and driving these days. Is M.A.D.D. still in operation?

Stylistically, I aimed to place the reader alongside me throughout the piece - experiencing what I was going through. I attempted to use imagery and other sensory details to execute this. I wanted the reader to peek into my living room, and be in that noisy receiving line. Making sure I was injecting enough description was common in the revision process for me.

Recently, my nine year old son asked me, "Dad, when is it that you are no longer a kid?" Looking back on it now, this was the time.



## **The Sea of Cortez**

by Mary Buckelew

Louie, Clare, Carlo, and Wil tumble out of the van. It's mid-afternoon and we made it. The Sea of Cortez beckons as we stretch and unfold from the last leg of our journey. We all seem to inhale at once. I feel the tensions of the school year evaporate as I breathe in the sea air. I marvel at the white sand and the emerald blue of the Sea of Cortez. Living in landlocked New Mexico, this vast sparkling body of water is a rarity for us –

“Can we go down to the tide pool?” Clare cries.

“Not until we unload a few things. It won't take long,” Fred, always the pragmatist says.

The tents go up in what seems a micro minute. Carlo and Wil at 14 are still somewhat awkward, but also adept at many things. Putting up their tent, blowing up air mattresses, organizing their cooler of soda and snacks are included in their repertoire.

Louie and Clare help Fred and I set up the main tent. They arrange their sleeping bags, flashlights, and snack boxes. They section off their corner with important items. I believe I see Buzz Light Year and Godzilla guarding their portion of the tent.

We check-in with the campground manager and we're off. Beach chairs, towels, umbrella, beach bag. I notice we're all sort of running. The sight of such an immense body of water overwhelms our New Mexican souls.

The kids drop their chairs – I call after them as they run toward the sea: “Stay directly in sight of the chairs. Don't walk the beach unless you let us know.” I turn to Fred – “I don't think they heard me. I'll just walk down and make sure they're 100% clear on the beach rules.”

“They heard you – just relax. Sit down.” He glances at me, “Never mind -- go ahead and make sure they know your safety guidelines. I'll set up the chairs and umbrella.

Finally, I sink down into the chair next to Fred and reach for his hand –

“Feel better,” he says.

“Yes.” I smile and close my eyes.

Silence, saltwater, sea air, sun, maybe a nap.

“Do you have water or a Dr. Pepper in your beach bag?” I hear Fred’s sleepy voice.

“Darn.”

“I’ll go up and get the small cooler.” Fred replies.

“No, no – you just set up the umbrella, chairs, towels – I’ll run up. I need to stretch some more anyway. Just don’t take your eyes off the kids. You relax – you deserve it,” I give him a quick kiss. Feeling magnanimous, generous, relaxed, I walk to the campsite, relishing the warm sand and these few days away. I smile and exhale.

I embrace the calmness. At the end of the school year we run helter skelter wrapping up projects, organizing for next year--no time to breathe. This brief pause – these four days in Puerto Penasco seem luxurious. Clare and Wil are so delighted to each have a friend along. Wil and Carlo have been friends since elementary school and Clare and Louie since before they were born. We had a great road trip, breaking it up into two days. No rushing. We swam in the hotel pool in Arizona before crossing the border to the one lane road in Mexico that leads to Puerto Penasco --the closest saltwater beach to New Mexico, our home.

I pack the small cooler with water and Dr. Peppers, Diet Coke, Mountain Dew. Grab some sandwiches and head back to the beach. I sigh—I think I have everyone’s favorites. We can all relax.

I see our chairs and umbrella, and I can tell Fred is dozing by the tilt of his head. His hat pulled low. He deserves this respite from his busy life. I revel in the moment!



I search the water's edge for Carlo, Wil, Clare, and Louie. I see Carlo and Wil swimming. Paddle boards on the beach. I see Clare in the tide pool. She's sitting examining something intently. I expect to see Louie next to her.

Hmm, no Louie. I broaden my search. No Louie?

"Fred -- Where is Louie?" Fred starts awake.

"He's right there with Clare."

"Noo -- I draw out the NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO -- he is not right there."

"He is not anywhere that I can see," I inhale all the air in the vicinity.

I march toward the water.

"Don't talk to me until you find Louie." I fume.

Louie's towhead is nowhere to be found.

If I have lost another woman's child, if Louie has drowned, been stolen, I will walk into the sea and drown myself, but first I will shake, pummel, and maim Fred who was supposed to be on watch -- then I will write a letter to Donna, Louie's mother, and then I will walk into the sea.

Fred finds Louie excitedly examining a dead crab in the tide pool adjacent to Clare's.

The school year approaches. I write to Donna

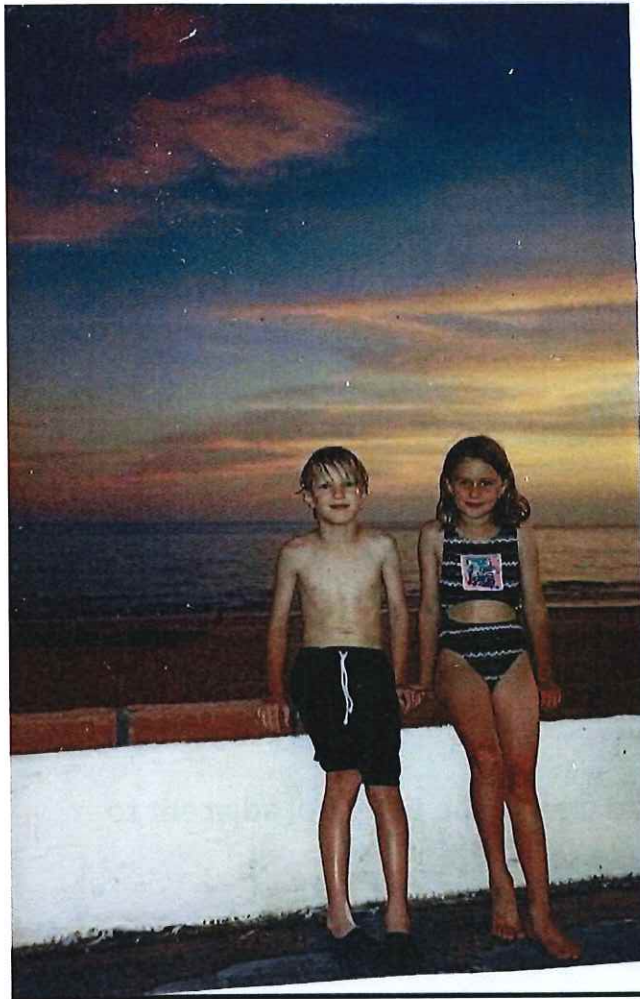
***Dear Donna,***

***Just want to say a quick hello before school starts -- and I wanted to send some photographs your way from our little summer getaway to The Sea of Cortez. I've also enclosed the map for Louie's school project. Thanks again for letting Louie come with us. The highlight of the entire trip was when Fred found Louie examining a dead crab in a tide pool! Again, thanks so much for entrusting Louie to our care. It was the trip of a lifetime. There will never be another like it.***

***Love,***

***Mary***

*P.S Please take Fred off the after school carpool list. He is not able to participate in the carpool ☹ for the next few months, but don't worry, my schedule is clear. I'll take over for a while.*



## Let It Go

Beth Stump

Slowly she walked inside her home, head down, irritated, restless, and even angry. Edith (Edie to me) Geraldine Isley, my grandmother, had returned from the hairdresser. She disliked going because she would just as well cut and color her own hair, but not today. It was a gift - a gift certificate given to her by her daughter, Karen, who wanted Edie to enjoy being pampered - just this once. Edie walked in and if looks could kill, we would all be dead. She was disgusted. "Can you believe she cut my hair above my ears? The last thing I said to that hussy was don't you dare let my ears show - and look at this mess." (Edie wore hearing aids - and she thought no one knew) Storming into the bathroom, she slammed the door.

We all looked at each other wondering how the hairdresser was handling this travesty. Papa was sitting at the head of the kitchen table, my Aunt Karen and I sat on either side of him anxiously waiting for the bathroom door to open. Karen the youngest and only living child of Edie and Papa had seen this temper before. You just wait. Don't say a word. Even from the kitchen, we heard cabinets slamming, water running, the toilet flushing, and Edie mumbling. What could she be doing in there? Each of us

had our own thoughts. Should I pretend like nothing happened, should I ask if she needs help, should I call the hairdresser to see if she survived? We waited. Silence. Aunt Karen whispered, "I'll never get her another gift certificate for having her hair done again." Papa played with the toothpick in his mouth. First moving it up and down with his tongue, then moving the toothpick in circles, and finally back and forth. My hands were underneath my thighs and the tension was growing by the second. Dinner was ready to be served, and we waited with nothing but our thoughts between us.

Finally, the door opened and Edie walked out with a tight-lipped smile, covering her false teeth. Quickly walking past us she asked, "What are you looking at? Help me get dinner on the table!" Aunt Karen and I jumped up, set the table and helped Edie serve the food. Papa continued playing with that darn toothpick. Once the food was served, we took our places at the table, and Edie recited the blessing. As she thanked the Lord for the abundance of food, my head was bowed, and I peered from under my eyebrows, sneaking a glance at everyone. In silence, we began eating. Suddenly, Aunt Karen looked at Edie, dropped her fork, and stammered, "Mom, your hair looks wonderful, and it's covering your ears - why were you so upset?"

Edie replied with a smirk, "It's a wonder what scissors and a little glue can do!" I couldn't believe it! She snipped her hair from the top of her head and glued it in the spot where the hairdresser had cut it much too short. Stifling my laughter, I kept eating her delicious fried chicken and avoided looking at her ears. I realized in that moment, that Edie solved her problems with determination and creativity. Don't tell her she couldn't do something because she would prove to anyone who questioned her that she could not only solve a problem, but also solve it better. Letting go of resentment and anger was a decision she chose to make.







**#Drama**





A Personal Field Trip  
By: Courtney Knowlton

Characters: (7 w)

Shop-owner

Patron

Alicea

Maribel

Ms. Corra

Ms. Fiore

Ms. Park

*(Three fifth grade teachers and two recent fifth grade graduates walk into a Korean dress shop. Silky fabrics hang on rolls behind the counter. The shop-owner stands at the cash register talking with a customer. A delicate gown graces the bodice of a dress form. Ms. Park points at the dress, and the group begins to snap pictures of it with their smartphones.)*

Shop-owner: (brusquely) No pictures!

*(The group approaches the cash register.)*

Ms. Corra: We can't take pictures?

Shop-owner: No.

Patron: (condescendingly) Of course not. Then you could copy it.

Ms. Corra: (in defiance) But, it's her dress.

*(The shop-owner looks closer at Ms. Park.)*

Shop-owner: 아 못알아봤네! 난 또 고등학생갈길래...

(Ah, moht ah ra bwat nae. Nan ddo goh deung hak seng gat gil leh....)

Ms. Park: 그림 사진 찍어도 괜찮아요?

(Geu ruhm sah jin jijik uh do gwen chan ah yo?)

Shop-owner: 그림 . 찍으세요. (Geu ruhm. Jjik eu sae yo.)

Patron: If it's her dress. That's a different story.

*(The shop-owner continues ringing up the hand-made slippers for the woman. The group returns to the dress)*

Alicea: What did she say?

Ms. Park: She said we can take pictures. She did not recognize me. Thought I was a highschooler. I must wear summer well.

Ms. Fiore: Yea you do! But look at us, summer vacation, and we still can't escape our students. (teasingly)

Maribel: (getting in on the joke) C'mon miss, why would a teacher want to leave her students?

*(There is an awkward silence, and Ms. Park looks guiltily at the girls. Ms. Park walks around the dress form trying to get different angles of her dress.)*

Alicea: (to Miss Fiore) Miss, why can't people take pictures of the clothes in here? Is it a Korean thing?



Ms. Fiore: No it is a plagiarism thing. Do you remember what that means?

Alicea: C'mon the last day of school was only two days ago. Give me a break from the word wall review.

Maribel: That's an easy one. Copying someone else's work.

Alicea: Oh yeaaa.

Ms. Fiore: Exactly, you are looking at a Ms. Park original design. She picked out everything from the satin blue top to the gauzy foam green skirt. The outfits are originals, so they do not want anyone stealing the looks.

*(Ms. Park finishes taking her final shot.)*

Ms. Park: Like I could copy that anyway. So, what do you guys think? Is it okay that it's not white?

Ms. Corra: Stunning.

Maribel: Like Cinderella!

Ms. Fiore: Who cares if it's not white? I think it was Queen Victoria who started that white dress trend anyway, and she has nothing on you.

Ms. Corra: And you can think of it as your something blue.

Ms. Park: I like it! What does that symbolize again?

*(Maribel quickly types "something blue" symbolism into her phone.)*

Ms. Corra: I have no idea. Tranquility maybe, like water?

Maribel: It says here, the "something blue" stands for purity, love, and fidelity.

Ms. Park: Seems appropriate, *(she tilts her head to the side in thought)* for the most part.

Shop-owner: 입 어 보 실 래 요 ? *(Ip uh bo shil leh yo?) (She beckons to Ms. Park)*

Ms. Park: Here take this *(she quickly hands Ms. Corra her phone)*, while I go back there. You can take pictures when I come out.

*(Ms. Park disappears behind a dressing room curtain)*

Alicea: I wish she wasn't leaving.

Ms. Fiore: Don't worry. She'll be right back.

Alicea: I mean...

Ms. Fiore: I know what you mean, and I'll miss her too.

Maribel: I'm going to switch schools too.

Ms. Corra: It's too far. You just have to cradle what she taught you this year, and let it grow with you next year.

Alicea: But why does she want to leave us?

Ms. Fiore: Don't think of it like that. She doesn't want to leave you. She's just ready to try a new place.

Maribel: What school is she going to again?



Ms. Fiore: It is called Guinet Academy. It is closer to where she lives, and she loves that it has a nature area across the street with towering trees and trails to explore.

Alicea: So a little bigger than our community garden?

Ms. Fiore: You could say that.

*(Ms. Park appears from behind the curtain in her dress)*

Ms. Corra: Oh wow!

Maribel: Lookin' good Ms. Park.

*(Alicea runs to Ms. Park and holds her hand with both of her hands.)*

Alicea: Thank you, thank you for including me in this Ms. Park. You are one of the most beautiful people in my life. You are my "something blue." Please, still be my teacher.

*(Ms. Corra has the phone poised to take a picture. Ms. Park raises a hand to her eye wiping away a tear.)*

Ms. Park: No pictures, please.

*(The group is frozen on stage as the curtains close.)*







**#Poetry**





"If You Want to Find Love" by Pauline Schmidt

~ inspired by "If You Want to Find Golden" by Eileen Spinelli

If you want to find love, go to a hospital.

Watch the new parents overwhelmed with the responsibility of a new life;  
their bleary eyes filled with joy.

If you want to find love, go to a playground.

Watch the young children who naturally take turns;  
they include everyone, regardless of race or ethnicity.

If you want to find love, go to a greenhouse.

Watch the gardener tend the soil and plants;  
covered in dirt, she gently nurtures growth.

If you want to find love, go to a school.

Notice the teachers who arrive early and stay late;  
they are committed to students from broken homes.

If you want to find love, go to a nursing home.

Look for the oldest, wrinkliest couple;  
notice, they are still holding hands.



The secrets are kept while the envelope's sealed.  
Do you want them set free when the letter is mailed?  
When the flap is glued shut they are as yet unrevealed.  
The secrets are kept while the envelope's sealed.  
The sender's enigmas remain tightly concealed,  
Until the reader has read it and his complexion has paled.  
The secrets are kept while the envelope's sealed.  
Do you want them set free when the letter is mailed?



# Blissful Chapter

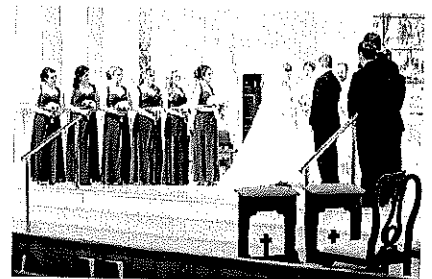
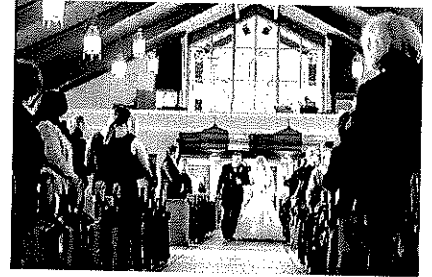
By Justine Ixcic

To begin a blissful chapter of my life  
The day is here, November 15<sup>th</sup>, it has finally arrived  
I walk down the aisle toward my husband, a new life  
Is this true love? Am I ready? Is this right?

The day is here, November 15<sup>th</sup>, it has finally arrived  
Forever and always, my courage, my strength, my hope  
This is true love. I am ready. This is right.  
My eyes lock with yours and I hold your hand tight

Forever and always, my courage, my strength, my hope  
I will love you and honor you all the days of my life  
My eyes lock with yours and I hold your hand tight  
The comfort and joy of my best friend by my side

I will love you and honor you all the days of my life  
I walk down the aisle toward my husband, a new life  
The comfort and joy of my best friend by my side  
To begin a blissful chapter of my life



\*This Pantoum poem was inspired from Laura Ouladdaoud's narrative titled "A Tourist Sees the Sights". In my writer's notebook, I wrote a Pantoum using lines from her piece. Having just gotten married on November 15, 2014, I connected to the universal emotions of a bride—nervousness before the ceremony as well as her ultimate happiness after the occasion. However, my experience was also quite different from hers, so I rewrote the poem to reflect the emotions of my own wedding rather than those of the bride in the original narrative.\*



Jason Fritz

## The Red Ink Pen



The tips of pens point

And penpoint what

May <sup>SP</sup> become tipping

Points for the writers

Whose black and blue <sup>△</sup> <sup>△</sup> <sup>△</sup>

Inked writing starts

To bleed red once

Read the body of <sup>△</sup>

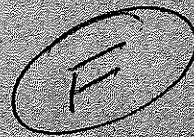
Work ~~Marginalized~~ <sup>△</sup>

Losing its composure

With this out of line <sup>△</sup> <sup>△</sup> <sup>△</sup>

Outside of the lines <sup>△</sup> <sup>△</sup> <sup>△</sup>

Suffarance of strokes <sup>△</sup> <sup>⊙</sup>



*Follow  
directions!*

*Stopp!*





Jason Fritz

### Body Language

A student writes in a language unheard  
And moves through hallways and classroom spaces.  
This is self-expression without a word.

There's no left to right, and the lines are blurred.  
In muscle movements up and down faces.  
A student writes in a language unheard.

Know that silences are never absurd.  
These are impressions past pencil traces.  
This is self-expression without a word.

There are ways in which a body is stirred.  
And so much within a heart that races.  
A student writes in a language unheard.

This is what happens to a scream deferred,  
Teachers out of students' good graces.  
This is self-expression without a word.

In soundless soundness, honor is conferred  
On learning at different places, paces.  
A student writes in a language unheard.  
This is self-expression without a word.



## Stepmom's Fairytale By Sharon Williams

*Is there a fairytale ending for a stepmom?  
One where tranquility and love are imminent?  
Always reaching for an unattainable calm,  
Is there a fairytale ending for a stepmom?  
Romans 15:13 is her solemn psalm.  
Praying for peace at home is always prevalent.  
Is there a fairytale ending for a stepmom?  
One where compassion and love are imminent?*





# If You Want to Find Summer

By Laura Ouladdaoud

Inspired by *If You Want to Find Golden* by Eileen Spinelli

If you want to find summer, sit outside a local school mid-June.  
Feel your cheeks rise in unison with those of the joyful children who  
pour forth from its doors after the final bell rings.

If you want to find summer, take yourself to the beach!  
Splash in the waves and let the sun warm your skin.  
Fall asleep in the sand for a few hours  
and wake up to the calming rhythm of the sea.

If you want to find summer, take a walk in the woods.  
Listen for the chirps of baby birds, maybe catch a glimpse  
Of them learning to fly. Stay alert for other baby animals  
Learning the ways of the woods from their parents.

If you want to find summer, follow your nose to the farmer's field.  
Wake up early and watch the farmer hard at work, breathe deeply  
And take in the scent of fresh earth.  
You can stop by later in the evening too, right around dusk,  
And commune with the deer who wander through, searching for spare seeds.

If you want to find summer, drive into the city,  
and find an empty bench at a playground  
that is finally awake after the long winter.  
Let the sounds wrap their arms around you –  
neighbors catching up, the ice cream truck hollering,  
children screaming and laughing  
and making new friends for a night.

If you want to find summer, wade into a cool creek.  
Turn over some stones, watch the crayfish scuttle away.  
When you are finished, sit on the bank, lay back  
and just be.

If you want to find summer, sift through your memories.  
Dig until you find the one where the day would never end.  
The one where you played until your body was sweating exhaustion  
and you were the happiest you have ever been.  
It's the one where summer stretched out in front of you  
full of hope and possibilities.  
You had better find it quick though,  
before Fall arrives and gives notice  
that winter is not far behind.



Greg Maigne

## HONOR

Honor always has his shirt tucked in and takes out

the garbage even when no one has asked.

He apologizes for lying and always holds

the door open for an older person.

When his brother cries for having dropped his ice cream cone

Honor hands his over.





## A Quiet Place

Beach towns whisper on an early morning walk.

Early colors streak their lavenders, pinks and baby blues across the sky.

Dawn's mist drops coolness on my skin.

Scraps of shell twinkle like jewels in the sun.

Seaside, the sand gently caresses my feet.

Sometimes the wave's curls tiptoe to the water's edge

And sometimes they fall with a hush.

Quiet is all around,

But the real silence is within me.

Ginny Jervis



**#MyLifeAs...**



Hard, soft, toppings galore or unembellished, blended or layered, sugar cone or waffle cone, sundae or scoops. I am an ice cream junkie. Regardless of time of day, day of the week, or season, I'd eat it. And I never share, or leave any leftover. I can remember fueling my ice cream obsession as early as two years old – walking on the Ocean City, New Jersey boardwalk to Kohr Brothers Frozen Custard to enjoy an orange and vanilla creamsicle cone. Now as an adult, my palate has become more sophisticated - some may say a bit “snooty” - craving only handmade and farm made ice cream. Everywhere Travis and I travel, we seek out the most popular rave-reviewed Shoppes to marvel in their ice cream expertise. One of my most favorite ice cream Shoppes is in Vermont - the Champlain Creamery. It was here that I was introduced to my favorite ice cream of all time - Mint Chocolate Chip. Although I am typically a Cookie Dough enthusiast, the Creamery's Mint Chocolate Chip won my heart... and taste buds. The experience was so memorable that I can still reminisce my first bite. It's got everything you could want in a frozen treat: sweet, chocolatey indulgence balanced by the tantalizing flavor of mint.

Farm made, scooped, unembellished, in a sugar cone. Simplicity at its finest. *Simplicity is the ultimate form of sophistication.* As my life as an ice cream connoisseur evolves, I find that my palate is becoming increasingly simplistic - appreciating the craft, instead of the embellishments. But even in my worldliness, I shall never share or leave any leftover.





# My life as... a “taxi driver”

## By Maggie Herr

My life as a taxi driver is sometimes stressful and surprisingly often enjoyable. The days where I have to be in three places at once are far from fun, but somehow the kids and I make it work. I love the rides where I’m driving a carful of kids: my own and others. It is during these trips, while eavesdropping on conversations that I get a glimpse into a life I left behind long ago. It seems that my passengers think that because I’m driving I can’t possibly be listening. The days when it’s just one of my children and me are priceless. They can offer a much needed opportunity for some one-on-one time. They can provide a safe space for a difficult conversation. No eye contact and a captive audience; sometimes the toughest subjects are easier to tackle in the car. Go figure!







**#RightWord  
FortheWrite  
Time**



# **Fearless**

By Sherry Fletcher

**Fearless** walks in the room. Doesn't look around to see whom she knows or doesn't know. She is unaware that confidence sits beside her as she enjoys a piece of cake. **Fearless** approaches *Self-Conscience* and *Friendless* to ask them if they want to swim. The two of them look around nervously as **Fearless** grabs them both by the hand and leads them to the pool. Of course **Fearless** jumps in, clothes and all. She emerges from the water wearing an infectious grin. *Joyful* and *Carefree* dive in right after. This trio of friends is inseparable.

**Fearless** glides to the side of the pool and hoists herself up onto the ledge. She notices *Loneliness*, "Come on in, the water is wonderful!" **Fearless** is encouraging. *Loneliness* shakes his head and sits with *Depression*. **Fearless** cruises along the pool's edge, passing *Jealousy* without a glance in his direction. **Fearless** doesn't have time for his nonsense and manipulative drama.



## *Eagerness to Learn*

*Eagerness likes to sit at the front of the room.  
He hangs onto ever word wanting to know more and  
pours his ideas out for the world to hear.  
He is prepared for anything school throws his way,  
Sharpened Pencil...check  
Notebook...check  
An open mind...check  
Eager likes to spend time with ambitious and thirsty,  
together they make a dynamic trio, ready to take on  
the world.  
One question could lead eager into a mountain of  
books in search for the answers.*



Thomas Seka

Summer Institute 2015

One Word Focused Free Write

July 13, 2015

## *Fearless*

He spotted them at 3:30 am. These three matched the description of the robbery suspects Patrolman John Wilding was directed to look for on this warm, moonless Saturday night. A frantic foot chase ensued. The fearless police officer threaded his way through shadows and unrecognizable obstacles. It was pitch dark. He had no backup. Why didn't he just turn back and get assistance?

The physically fit officer hurdled over an ivy-covered chain link fence that ran along the back of the Vault Tap and Kitchen on North Main Avenue. He did not see the 15-foot drop that was on the other side. He landed on the cold cement below and suffered massive head trauma.

This happened last Saturday.

And just this morning, tragically, the brave, young Scranton patrolman died of his injuries. He was a mere 29 years old. He leaves behind a wife and two small children.

Today, we remember John Wilding, who was fearless. We also need to remember that, even though several recent news stories have shown police officers over stepping their limits – even acting with malice – the vast majority of the force fearlessly and bravely keeps our communities safe every day.







## The Forest of Forgiveness

Beth Stump

Forgiveness travels through the thick wilderness of unforgotten memories. I stumble beside her through the dense and dreary forest. Our journey is slow, meandering through the prison of never ending pines. Hoping to ease the pain, I trip on her exposed root and it brings our process to a halt.

Tired, lonely and lost, the rays of light struggle to penetrate. The canopy of my confusion swirls. As the light peeks through the horizon, she sings the song of compassion. Together, we snap the branches of resentment and pull the needles that sting.

Sharing her strength, we softly touch the limbs of letting go. We smell the scent of release and feel the breezes of freedom. Forgiveness has healed my open wound and assures me she is continuously available if I choose.







**Justine Ivicic**

I teach third grade @RydalElementary @AbingtonSD. In November, I married @MichaelIvicic. My favorite things to do are #beach #Zumba #reading



**Jess Watkins**

Teaches 4th grade @CynwydElementary@LMSD. She's been inspired by the writers in this institute. She loves #hiking #dancing #traveling. #Italynextsummer



**Sherry Fletcher**

I am a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher@Penn Wynne Elementary. I am a mother of two boys and love to take them to #zoo #beach #bike riding.



**Debra Kenney**

First grade teacher@Kutztown Elementary School. Mother of one, teacher of many #life time learner. Loves #hiking #reading #traveling



**Brenda Krupp**

@brenkrupp Third grade teacher. Franconia Elementary. Live & learn everyday. #twitter #reading #writing #beachherelcome



**Greg Maigur**

I am an 8th grade teacher @Holicong Middle School. I am the father of 5 children who never cease to amaze me. #reading #beach #kayaking #nosleep



**Laura Ouladdaoud**

@LSOdaoud 4th/5th grade language arts and social studies teacher @Benchmark School who is now attempting the writerly life #reading #travel #feelinginspiredbyPAWLP2015



**Jen Greene**

@greenemachine82

I teach 4th grade @Penn Wood Elementary School #WCASD. Murray is my spirit animal. Love to: #Read #Write #Dance #PhotographLife #EatDonuts



**Beth Stump**

@BethIStump Teaches 2<sup>nd</sup> grade @KutztownASD #mother3dghtrs  
#wife30yrs Loves #camping #hiking #reading and now #writing



**Pauline Schmidt**

Teaches teachers @WCUPA. Writes a YA Lit column for @ncte's  
#EnglishJournal that focuses on diverse YA Literature. She is a #motherof2  
and #wife2Brian. Loves #musicaltheater #reading #Disney #beachtravel



**Sharon Williams**

Teaches 8th Grade Language Arts. @SWilliams\_LA @SLMSMiddleSchool  
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#LovesReadingandWriting #beach



**Ginny Jervis**

Teaches 5th, 6th, 7th grade LA @Country Day School of Sacred Heart  
#Married to Will #Mother of 3 adults #reading #gardening #beach



**Maggie Herr**

4<sup>th</sup> grade language arts teacher @Jenkintown Elementary@JenkintownSD.  
The institute has inspired me to infuse my classroom with writing. #Reading  
#Beach #Changeisgood!



**Thomas Seka**

2nd grade teacher @Penn Wynne@ LMSD. Dad, artist, writer, Beatles fan,  
golfer. #golf #bassist #beach.



**Jason Fritz**

Teaches 10th, 12th @HarritonHS@LMSD. Thx to incredible peeps of  
#sipawlp15. Shout out 2 Mary & Brenda. #mothermurraycomestome  
#therewillbeananswer #letitbe.



**Jenna Rocco**

2nd grade teacher @Jenkintown Elementary@JSD. When the lightning strikes...write. #neverstoplearning #LBI #crossfit #rescuedoglover #traveler



**Mary Buckelew**

Teaches @WCU; Rio Grande Writing Fellow 97; #reading #writing #dendrite aerobics #walking# traveling #spending time with family & friends; Director, PAWLP



**Courtney Knowlton**

EL Co-teacher @JohnBStetson, Grade 6. Drama director & Fletcher groupie. Anticipating a year of #wissahickonhikes #brunch #mindfulness #inquiry #beingawriter



**Sarah Mullen**

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#lovesteaching #runner #wawafrenchvanilla #seaislecity #gettingmarried  
#youcancountonme

Jen