

# Crosscut

*literary magazine*

With an introduction by Baron Wormser





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HUSSON

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Cover Photo: "Rocks" by Kathy Wall  
wrapped from the front to the back cover.

# Crosscut

*literary magazine*

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### **Cover Photo**

"Rocks"

Kathy Wall

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## ***Preface***

The mere thought of spring brings to mind togetherness and renewal. Rivers of melting snow and ice form tributaries, finding each other and crossing paths, flowing together to free themselves from their stagnant form. The once-frozen paths weaving throughout our Maine woods shed their white armor, heartedly inviting pairs of treaded footprints to meet along their crossing journeys. Gloves and mittens are tossed in the closet for another year, allowing loved ones to entwine their hands into one another's as they venture out into the fresh new season.

Over the years, *Crosscut* has become a powerful symbol of spring in just this light. The poetry, prose, and imagery in each of its contributor's art flows together, melting movement and life into the freshly printed pages. Its readers, in turn, breathe in each stir of emotion and new image formed, feeling renewed and refreshed.

We invite you to enjoy the art of this year's contributor's poetry, prose, and photographs. As the world melts and awakens into its spring form, may your heart and mind find themselves flowing gently along with it.

– *Amanda Kitchen*

## ***Introduction***

*Baron Wormser*

People sometimes ask me when I decided to become a poet. My answer is that I didn't decide. In fact, I don't believe that I could decide that. I didn't choose writing. Rather, writing chose me.

That may seem a bit odd. I realize the conventional notion of the writer, and particularly of the poet, is someone who experiences an annunciation that points to a vocation. For me, however, it was nothing so dramatic. I had a weekend to myself because my wife was taking our children to her parents' house in Massachusetts for a visit. That weekend I started writing poems in earnest and haven't stopped. Something inside me broke and out came poems. I was thirty years old.

I think of poets as mediums. Although by this point in time, I have written many hundreds of poems I can say quite honestly that I don't know where the poems come from. My wife sometimes has intriguing thoughts about it — a book I read, a movie I saw, a conversation we had — and I'm sure there's some truth in those origins. But the

poems didn't have to happen because I read such-and-such a book or ran into such-and-such a person. That they do amazes and delights me.

A concomitant aspect of my take on writing is that I don't worry about writing. There's nothing to worry about. If I do it, I do it. If I don't, I don't. My worrying and fretting is not going to make any difference. If months go by and I don't write, then months have gone by and I haven't written. I have, however, kept on reading and thinking about writing during that time, which is a form of preparing the soil into which the seeds of poems drop. Indeed, that internal conversation that I have had with myself over decades about writing is as crucial to the endeavor as the poems. For without the internal conversation, I can't imagine fashioning the various poems. In that sense I was thinking about poems and imagining what they could be long before I seriously started writing them.

Whenever I see a literary magazine such as *Crosscut*, I am excited because I don't know what I will find in it. In that way, the making of poems and stories varies hugely from the making of television shows and movies. Most of those shows and movies are products. They have very definite aims (getting people to laugh along with the laugh track, for instance). They are not the result of wayward impulses that have submitted to the discipline of art. They are more like maps of terrain that has already been mapped many times before. Hence *Bad Movie, IV*.

Literature, on the other hand, is a spirit gift. First, it is a gift from infinity to the writer. Then, it is a gift from the writer to the reader or auditor. I am proud to be associated with the many gifts in this edition of *Crosscut*. These words didn't have to happen but they did and that makes all the difference.   ❧

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*Amber R. Crowtree*

## **Abalone Shell**

There is a spirit  
in abalone shell that  
dances with rainbows  
in sunlight.  
Abalone is fish scales—  
salmon-skin-jewels.

The abalone spirit  
watches you through  
the eyes of Tlingit masks;  
abalone spirit catches  
your attention when it is teeth.

Abalone shell spirit is a  
woman that dances in  
the sun- and moon-light wearing  
water and salmon-skin-jewels.  
She is rich with  
rainbows.

*Susmita Chatterjee*

## **A hundred years hence**

*(Translated from the Bengali of Rabindranath Tagore)*

A hundred years from now who are you  
Reading my poetry?  
In utter curiosity you read my poems  
A hundred years from now.

No flower of today, none of  
The sensuousness of the springtime  
No blushing of pink of the present  
Shall I be able to send to you.  
Yet, would you open the Southern entrance  
And sitting at the window,  
Extend your vision  
Into the horizon far away,  
And bathing in imagination  
Think of your mind, of a day  
A hundred years before, when  
A poet was awake, when a vibrant joy  
In abundance, from a heaven came  
Floating and touched the heart of  
The universe.  
Then in a roving enchantment  
With a heart entranced with songs  
A poet was awake.  
He tried to make many a word bloom  
Like flowers, enamored in a mood  
Of romance was this effort.

In your day of spring, let resonate,  
For a moment, songs of the spring  
Of my days, may it resonate  
In the throbbing of your heart  
Amidst the humming  
Of bees and amidst the rustling sounds  
Of new leaves, let it resonate  
A hundred years from today.

*Aaron Flye*

## **Aurora Borealis**

I watched the band of red along  
the horizon shift slowly to green,  
thinking:

Somewhere in all that color  
is something that hasn't been said  
before, something that can capture  
this light in its spectacle,  
an essence of feeling on paper –  
a synchronism in words, a triumph  
of the pen steered toward victory.

So I opened up my heart to it all,  
but clichés reared up from this attempt  
at vulnerability: thoughts of liquid  
crystalline lights born of emerald hues  
that lapped like waves across the black  
expanse of night – if only I could sift  
sentimentality through the lens  
of science.

But knowing how electrons slam  
against gas atoms could not embrace  
that shaft of salmon-colored light  
which slipped from the horizon  
to the center of the sky before swirling  
into oblivion down some ethereal drain.

It still leaves me  
defeated to say  
those flaring colors  
were like firefly light,  
were like sunlight refracted  
through water in a glass jar,  
were like one strand  
of a rainbow out-of-focus,  
that were somehow fired  
from the long-guns of an ironclad –

though I am comforted by the feeling  
that being there was the closest  
a non-believer like me  
could ever get to the mystery  
behind that great black iris  
that seemed to be staring back.

*Jessica Norton*

## **Chameleon**

I am a chameleon,  
Blending in with the woodwork,  
Crouching in the corners,  
Slithering in the shadows  
Of your life.

The day is nothing more than pain,  
But when dusk comes,  
You invade me.  
You become my world  
And change all the colors  
To the pinks and reds of a sailor's sunset.

And sometimes after daybreak,  
When the warmth of the sun is again upon us,  
Your gaze turns my way and sees nothing.  
And although it leaves me with an empty feeling,  
I am grateful because for one more night,  
You have allowed me to forget  
I am a chameleon.



– Kathy Wall

Rob Juckett

## Charlie Wants to Go to Paris

*This apartment, on the Left Bank, in the heart of the 7<sup>th</sup> arrondissement, is in one of the nicest neighborhoods in Paris. It is surrounded by cafes, shops, restaurants, and open markets. And perhaps the most outstanding feature of this late 19<sup>th</sup> century building is its proximity to the Eiffel Tower. In the accompanying photos you can see the view from the balcony of this 5<sup>th</sup> floor apartment. Impressionnante, non?*

"Livie, come here and look at this!" Charlie pointed and clicked, then scrolled down to the pictures. "Oh, this is great! It's really impressive. Wait'll you see it!"

"I'll be there in a minute."

He could hear her in the laundry room, opening and closing the dryer.

"Okay."

*Original oak parquet flooring and fireplace make the living room warm and inviting. French doors lead to the balcony, with a gorgeous, full-on view of the Eiffel Tower and the tree-lined street below.*

Charlie brought up the next group of pictures. "Oh, my god...Livie!"

"I'm coming!"

*The master bedroom of our Paris vacation apartment is next with a beautiful antique bed that has been converted to queen-size. Lean back on the pillows and enjoy the full view of the Eiffel Tower. At night it is...indescriptible.*

She came up behind him and put her hands on the back of his chair. "Oo, what's that?"

"That's the kitchen."

"Isn't it nice? Look how the light shines in."

"Yeah. And it's big for an apartment like this. There's access to the balcony from there and from the living room and from the bedroom. Look at this." He clicked on the photo of the Eiffel Tower.

"Wow! It's so close." His wife leaned in for a better look at the screen.

"Two blocks. And look at this . . . You can lie in bed, look out the balcony doors, and voila! The tower is right there."

"It must be expensive."

"I'll check the fees in a minute." Charlie scrolled down through the other images of the apartment.

"Small bathroom," Livie said.

"They're always small. That's 'cause they separate the toilet."

"The water closet?"

"Yeah. We used to call it the WC."

"The what?"

"The way say. This place has got everything . . . washer and dryer, microwave, TV and stereo, DVD player, telephone. I'll print it up so you can see the whole thing."

"Okay. Bobby's goin' to bed; I wanna say good-night to him."

"I'll be right there."

Livie was in bed when Charlie handed her the printout. She sat up and pulled her dark brown hair from her eyes. He immediately noticed the bare shoulder.

"What's the name of this place?..." She frowned and sounded out the French words. "Voyez la Tour?"

"Yeah. Behold the Tower."

"That's a name?"

"The owners identify each apartment with a catch phrase." He began to undress as his wife read.

"Nice description of the neighborhood," she said.

He addressed her from the foot of the bed. "Oh, baby, it'll be perfect. I can see it now...You stay in bed in the morning and I go out to the boulangerie and come back with a baguette and a nice big pâtisserie and then I make some coffee and bring it in to you and we sit in the bed and eat and look out at the Eiffel Tower. It just doesn't get any better than that. Or else, you could get up and we could have breakfast on the balcony and talk about what we'll do that day."

She looked up at him. "You've got it all planned out, don't you?"

"Sort of."

Livie finished reading the apartment description as Charlie got comfortable next to her. He closed his eyes and quickly felt the day crash around him.

Don't go to sleep...

He was in Paris once. Twenty-five years ago. He had gotten used to telling people that the only mistake he made was in going to Paris alone. There I was, looking at Notre Dame and wanting to say to someone "Isn't it great?" But no one was there. He dreamed, unaware, of the streets in Montmartre and the bridges across the Seine. Sitting in a café, *Le Celtique*, with a Coke and the *International Herald Tribune*. Cous-cous in a Middle-Eastern restaurant on the left Bank. Wandering the Louvre . . . wandering...

"Charlie?" Her hand was on him. "Charlie?"

"I'm awake."

"No you're not."

"I am now."

It was dark in the room; she had turned out the light. He blinked at the digital clock on the night table. 1:58.

"Charlie, I've been thinking," she said. "How much did you say that place cost?"

"Two grand."

"And how much for the tickets?"

"Probably five-hundred a piece."

"That's three thousand. Plus we'd need spending

money.”

“Unless Bobby wants to come with us.” He was awake now. “Then it’s thirty-five hundred.”

“He won’t want to go.”

“How can a seventeen-year-old not want to go to Paris?”

“You know...He’s got his own ideas.”

“But this is Paris.” Charlie shifted his hip and turned toward his wife. “City of Lights.”

“I understand where he’s comin’ from.” She put her leg over his. “You speak French; I don’t.”

“That doesn’t make any difference.”

“And you like that French food. You know me; I’m an all-American girl.”

“Oh, stop.”

“You’re the one who reads the history and who knows the things about Paris.”

“Yeah but...”

“We wanted to go to Cape Cod this summer.” She moved closer to him and then kissed him on the lips. “Maybe we should save it.”

He was aware of his breathing and the comfort he felt with her next to him. “But this year is our anniversary. We should do something special.”

“We will,” and she kissed him again.

His thoughts stretched out, probing, searching, trying to grip. His eyes were so heavy. He lay still, wanting to respond to her. His mind was so far. Away...

He didn’t know he was dreaming. He didn’t know he was there. The grass in the Tuileries was so soft, so green. The shade beneath the trees was so cool...   •

*Leon Raikes*

**Coda: Wet Thaw**

Who writes into this snow  
so many notes of dark music?

Why this minor key,  
this slow melt into black spruces  
of remembered melodies?

How can this much perfume rise  
from drifts of mere snow?

See how the pale sun  
mantles the broken branches  
of antique orchards  
with another blossoming:

from the fog about their knees  
and fingers, what music is this  
that whines upon the wind?

Sometimes it is poetry  
in unknown languages  
that best involves us  
in its rhythms and rumors –

you know, the patterns of rain  
that even the rain does not know.

*Jesse W. Baker*

## **Crop Duster**

Lee Alton reached the town around noon.

The town, a collection of shabby buildings, clustered around a faded green train station, resembled a bunch of drunks bellying up to a bar. Dented tin roofs reflected the glitter of the mid-day sun. Here and there a sleepy dog lay in the shade, idly snapping at flies. The flatness of the landscape was broken by a clump of cottonwood trees, surrounding a silver water tower that rested on leggy stilts. Nearby, a grain elevator thrust its white finger at the cloudless sky.

He turned the pickup off the main highway and bounced along a dirt road. Reaching the end of the road he drove across a strip of dried grass and parked in some skimpy shade near a gray metal building. Switching off the motor, he rested his head on the steering wheel.

Jesus, was he ever tired. Picking his head up, he reached into his shirt pocket and pinched out a cigarette and a lighter. Thumbing the lighter on, he touched the end of the cigarette, sucked hard and drew in a stream of smoke. A jumble of thoughts raced confusingly through his mind. He felt like the 'Flying Dutchman', condemned to wander from one job to the next. Good jobs were hard to find and every time he lost one, he sank deeper and deeper in a morass of despair. After losing one job today he had to have this one. Any job that put him in the air became a jewel to cherish. The need to fly burned like firebrand, making him unfit to do anything else.

Clark's parting words echoed hollowly, "I've got to let you go...lost my biggest account...my boy's coming home...can't use two pilots...here's a week's pay...sorry... sorry." Yeah, they were all sorry when they tied a can to a man's tail.

The last six years had been all alike, pointless. When

jobs could be found they were usually short, a few weeks or months here and there...if he was lucky. Every time it looked like a deal was good, something always went to hell.

"Goddamn it! All I need is a decent break," he cried out loud. "If my goddamn bitch of a wife had not run off and left me trying to find myself in the bottom of a scotch bottle, I'd still be running my own operation. Christ, but I'm getting tired of all this goddamn rattling around." He paused, then continued, "Boy, could I use a good stiff drink right now."

Thinking of his ex-wife reopened an old wound, and added to his feeling of frustration. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't keep her out of his mind for very long. Even after seven years, the divorce still festered like an open sore. It didn't seem right that six years of living with someone could be wiped out by the words of a judge and a little piece of paper. God knows he had worked hard at giving her what she wanted. But a man can't earn a living sitting at the feet of his wife working from nine to five. You had to get out and beat the brush, even if it meant working from dawn to dark. Why in hell couldn't she understand what he was trying to do? Nothing ever satisfied her. God damn her! Thoughts of jobs found and lost mingled with those of his former wife in a kaleidoscope of aches, making him pound the steering wheel in bitterness.

Shaking his shoulders as though to shove the bitter dregs of his life from his back, Lee stepped out of the battered pickup. His slumped shoulders made him appear shorter than he really was. Worry and fatigue creased his brow, prematurely aging him and adding to his thirty-nine years. Glancing at his hands he noticed they were shaking again. Lately they shook more often. Maybe that comes from trying to stay off the bottle, he thought. He shoved them into the pockets of his faded blue denims to hide them, and looked around.

The airfield had no runways, but the land was reasonably flat and smooth. Sparse blades of brownish grass grew

in clusters on the field. Empty chemical drums were carelessly heaped near the lone metal hangar. A strong mixture of fuel, oil, and insecticide odors hung in the heated air. The muted hum of myriad insect wings accentuated the forlorn appearance of the place.

As if it were trying to hide the defects, the garish sun glanced off the red-brown soil giving everything a rosy tint. It did nothing to shake the feeling of dejection that enveloped him.

Hearing the beat of an engine, he looked up and watched as a yellow and silver Stearman sprayer suddenly appeared over the trees and lightly touch down on the ground. After a short roll, the plane turned and taxied to the hangar. As it neared the building, a sharp burst of power swung the tail around. The big plane stopped, its engine slowly ticking over.

Pulling himself out of the cockpit, the pilot stepped out on the wing and jumped to the ground. Years of flying had marked his face with a patchwork of fine lines. His long, unkempt gray hair was partially hidden by a cloth helmet. A dirty blue flight suit covered his stocky frame and a worn pair of scarred black boots adorned his feet. He fished a cigar out of his pocket and stood there, holding a lighted match to the tip as Lee walked over.

"Mr. Frank Russell? My name's Lee Alton. Robert Clark in Jackson told me you were looking for a pilot." Stopping, Lee thrust out his hand.

"Maybe. You a pilot?" Clenching the cigar in his teeth, Russell ignored Lee's hand.

"Yeah." Lee quickly let his hand drop.

"Got any experience?" Russell asked, almost accusingly.

"I've got about six thousand hours," Lee replied.

Russell spit out a piece of tobacco. "Got any ag'time?"

"Yeah, I've done three, four thousand hours of spraying."

Lee stared at Russell, a sick feeling spreading from his gut to his arms and legs. Here we go again, he thought. Good Christ, will I ever find anyone that will believe what I tell them. He brushed his close-cropped brown hair with a trembling hand.

"Where d'ya work before?" Russell kept pressing.

"Well, I just got laid off by Clark. He lost some customers and didn't need me anymore. Before that, I kicked around Texas, Arkansas, quite a few places. I've been around."

"You sure Clark didn't fire you?" Russell pointed his cigar at Lee.

Lee took a deep breath. "Look, Mister, all I want to know is if you have a goddamn job. Either you have one or you don't. I didn't come here to be given the third degree and I'm too goddamn tired to put up with any crap. And another thing, I wasn't fired."

"Okay...okay, don't git excited, now. I was just askin'. D'ya ever work cotton?"

"Yeah, most of my time is on cotton."

"What kinda planes you fly?"

"Cubs, Stearmans, Pawnees, Ag Cats, Snows – You name them, I've flown them."

"Think you can fly that?" Russell gestured with his cigar towards the exhausted old Stearman biplane tied down near the hangar.

"Yeah, I guess so." Turning abruptly, Russell bellowed, "Charley! John! Git the hell out here. I'm not payin' you to sleep all dam' day. Git your asses movin'."

At the sound of his voice, two young black boys came sauntering out of the hangar.

"God dam' it! Git a move on! Untie that Stearman an' when you git done with that, fuel the sprayer an' put in the rest of the chemicals. I'm goin' up with this follow, an' it had better be ready when I git back."

Turning to Lee he barked, "Come on, Ace! Let's see if you can fly."

Controlling his rising resentment at Russell's manner, Lee started to walk around the ship. It showed signs of having been subjected to hard usage and very little care. Originally a bright silver, it had weathered to a dull gray, streaked with heavy oil deposits. It didn't look too airworthy. He completed the walk-around inspection and reached the spot where Russell was waiting.

"Does it meet your approval?" Russell asked sarcastically.

Lee shrugged. "Yeah, we might be able to get it off the ground, if we're lucky."

Russell threw his cigar away and climbed into the front cockpit. Lee started to follow when a shout from Russell stopped him. What's the matter with you? Think these things start themselves? Git the hell out there an' prop the dam' thing."

Lee looked at him, a glint of anger rising in his brown eyes. The thought rose, like bile, into his mind, "Who the hell does this bastard think he's talking to! Just because he's the owner of a one-horse ag'operation doesn't make him God."

He stood there while a battle raged between the desire to tell Russell off and the need to work. Finally, controlling his temper he stepped to the front of the plane, grasped the propeller and snapped, "Brakes on?"

"On!"

"Throttle cracked?"

"Cracked! Come on! Come on! I don't have all day."

Lee pulled the propeller through a couple of revolutions, then said, "Mags on!"

"On!" Russell barked out the word.

A smooth downward thrust pulled the blades through a firing cycle. The engine fired, paused, fired again, then started to run. Russell advanced the throttle slightly and the engine settled down to a steady throb. The engine, Lee decided, sounded lousy.

Hurrying around the wing tip, Lee climbed into the rear cockpit. After strapping on the seat harness, he took over the controls, taxied to the end of the field and headed the plane into the wind. Moving competently he checked the controls and ran the engine up. It didn't sound too great, but it would have to do. He pulled the throttle to idle, and raising his voice above the irregular beat of the engine shouted, "You ready?" He caught his breath as the stick was suddenly wrenched from his grasp and the engine roared to life.

Before he could recover from his surprise, the plane rolled along the ground a short distance, leaped into the air, and climbed over the trees at the end of the field.

Once clear of the cottonwoods, Russell yanked the ship into a laboring, climbing turn to the left, and held it there until it began to shudder and groan in protest. The howl of the straining engine smashed at their eardrums in an avalanche of sound. Suddenly, with a stomach-twisting lurch, the plane snapped over to the right and pointed the nose at the ground. Swiftly, the craft started a tight corkscrew turn, pinning Lee against the side of the cockpit.

Russell shouted, "Okay Ace, you got it!" as he threw his hands up in the air and released the controls.

Desperately fighting the stresses caused by the twisting aircraft, Lee grabbed the stick, chopped the power, and exerted pressure on the controls. Feeling as though the ground was going to rise and kick him in the face any second, he managed to recover the plane as the earth flashed by less than ten feet below. Only his quick action averted a final solution to all his problems.

Throwing his head back and taking a large gulp of air, he yelled, "You dirty miserable son-of-a-bitch! What in hell are you trying to do? Kill us both?"

Russell turned his head and laughed, "What's the matter, Ace? Scared?"

"Screw you!" Lee replied. The abruptness of the maneuver had left his stomach in knots and his temper frayed. The

rapid beat of his pulse pounded in his ears with a deafening throb. The last time anyone had taken him by surprise in a plane was when a Mig had bounced him over the Yalu River in Korea. That had been a near thing, too.

The horizon spun madly around as the airplane convulsed violently and rolled upside-down. An abrupt stop nearly wrenched Lee's head from his shoulders and left him hanging from his seat harness. Starved for fuel the engine died, the propeller slowly windmilling.

"Ya got it!" Again Russell turned the plane loose.

Blood rushed to Lee's head, and he felt like he was moving through glue as he grabbed the controls again. He began to return the reluctant Stearman into position for normal flight. Letting the nose drop to pick up speed, he applied right stick and rudder to start a roll. Because the biplane had lost a lot of speed, it was slow in reacting, and for a suspenseful moment he didn't think it would respond. Concentrating all his strength he exerted more pressure on the controls. Finally, ever so slowly, the plane rolled right side up and fuel flowed to the carburetor again. Backfiring loudly, the engine came to life. As soon as it settled down to a rough beat, Lee started to climb for altitude.

His heart was pounding wildly as he slumped in the seat, wondering how he managed to get involved in situations like this. What a day this had been so far! First he's lost a good job, and now this character was trying to kill him. Like a woman, ag'flying wasn't always kind to a man.

Once more he found himself upside down and revolving rapidly. A spin! An inverted spin. Jesus Christ, was this guy crazy? Again he grabbed the controls and righted the plane. Every time he dropped his guard Russell put him in an awkward position.

His anger got the best of him and he shouted, "No more! God-Damn it! I've had all of this shit I'm going to take."

He didn't wait for Russell to pull any more stunts. Although it might cost him any chance for this job, Russell was

going to get a dose of his own medicine. For ten minutes he slammed the plane around the sky. He looped, rolled and spun the airplane, most of the time inverted.

Occasionally he felt Russell on the controls but he refused to let go. Finally he pointed the nose at the ground and dove until the wheels were rolling along the earth. Abruptly pulling up, he made a sharp climbing turn, jerked the airplane into a stall, chopped the power to shut off the engine, and glided for a dead-stick landing.

Touching down, the plane rolled to a stop near the hangar. Lee turned off the switch and slumped in the seat, drenched with sweat. His expression was that of a man thoroughly beaten.

Russell climbed out of the plane and stood looking up at Lee. Unwrapping a cigar he said, "Before you say anything, hear me out. I've got some damn' tough acreage here an' I can't afford to have some clown fly for me. I haven't lived this long by bein' a fool an' by hirin' fools." He pulled out a match, scratched it on the side of the plane and held the flame to the tip of his cigar. "I haven't any more time to waste right now. If you're still interested in the job, hang around. I've got another load to put out an' when I git back we can talk about it...if you're still here."


Without waiting for an answer he turned and walked over to the loaded sprayer and climbed into the cockpit. Gunning the engine, he aimed the plane down the field and started this takeoff roll.

Lee climbed out of the Stearman and leaned weakly against the wing, watching the takeoff. The heavily loaded aircraft looked like a giant yellow bumblebee as it struggled slowly over the trees.

Suddenly the engine sound stopped. The airplane seemed to shudder, momentarily suspended in space, then lazily arc into the ground, scattering tree limbs and leaves in its wake. The crunch as it hit the earth was followed by a deafening silence. It was as if the world was holding its

breath.

Then the silence was ripped apart by a mushrooming ball of fire and a black, oily plume of smoke. The clap of the explosion drove Lee to his knees and sapped the last of his strength.

Staggering to his feet he ran towards the burning plane shouting, "You did that on purpose, you dirty bastard... you dirty bastard...you dirty bastard..." 

*Amber R. Crowtree*

## **Crow Kite-ing**

I step out  
into the warmth  
of February third.  
Half the day has flown by.

Crows, that fill a tree, break  
apart suddenly  
dispersing into the gray  
air like burnt leaves.

Peace does not come  
this late in the day.  
I want to fly far—drift—  
like a kite without  
strings to tug me back.



***From Orono, Maine***  
– *Scott Caron*

*Leon Raikes*

## **Island Fishes**

Nohu—simple name  
for a twisted fish. *Scorpionfish*:  
in old times wise ones said  
some eggs would hatch into sharks.  
Beware the adolescent then!  
Their colors come to match the surroundings.  
No swimming thing forgets the sting.

Moi too, whiskered of fin,  
foretell disaster for the elders  
if gathered in angry numbers.  
No wonder early peoples advised,  
“Don’t strive for the ‘ama’ama,  
the fully-grown mullet-moi.  
If you are only pua’ama,  
a fingerling, be satisfied.

Some, like the uhu, prophesy.  
For those who know the *parrotfish*,  
its full palette of colors,  
can see far off about the wives  
left behind on tranquil beaches.  
Capering crowds of uhu show too much levity  
at home; if there is rubbing of noses,  
a flirting of uhu, go home at once!

Loveliest of all,  
Lau-wiliwili-nukunuku-oi-oi,  
best of beak, most perfect cloak of yellow color,  
where is the equal of your flush of beauty?  
Pure gold *butterflyfish*,  
you truly seem to fly from shadow green  
to shadow blue, only a glint for a body,  
one small ripple your footprint in the sea.

The other beauty has a bite,  
a *triggerfish* wedging itself in a coral crevice,  
colors on the verge of violating  
nature's good taste –  
its signature humuhumu, “pieces stitched together”  
a wild impromptu of motion and hue.  
No wonder the ancients reserved the best name  
for you: humuhumunukunuku-a-pua'a.  
By the time we say it, you are gone!

*Nordia Garnett*

## **Goodbye**

*Dedicated to the first graduating class of  
occupational therapy students, '04*

There is no easy way to say goodbye  
It seems like just yesterday that  
You all came into my life  
First, as strangers  
And now at our crossroads  
A group of educated professionals  
Who have shared in the fun,  
Laughter, challenges and dreams  
From this moment on we must travel  
Onto our individual paths into a world  
We have spent years to prepare  
This is it!  
Take a deep breath, ahh  
We have finally made it to the end.  
Goodbye.

*Gary Albert*

**Got a Light?**

Twenty friends compact then dwindle  
A camaraderie of temptation  
I carry you close to my heart  
We visit in thirty-minute intervals  
Such a decadent delight  
A breath of false security  
An expulsion of anxiety  
A special blend of the finest toxins  
Dissipating with enthusiasm  
Flip top box; a condensed version of my death bed  
Come my friends; let us rejoice in a carcinogenic haze.

*Erinne McCarthy*

## **Growing Up**

Life is like a flower  
a seed, ready to grow  
needing care and nourishment  
a bud, about to bloom  
Slightly unstable with much to learn  
a lily, beautifully developed and admired  
having deep roots to hold steady  
an organism, pollinating to others  
getting them prepared for continuance  
a petal-less pistil, wrinkled yet elegant  
fading slowly to join its roots  
Life is like a flower showing all  
its pride and glory



– *Kathy Wall*

*Leanne Scorzoni*

## **My First Lesson in Suicide**

The red van my aunt drove  
always smelled of vomit, but  
that day I don't remember  
anything  
other than a flash of movement  
from the sky.

A brown jacket and white shirt  
lay in the Boston highway,  
a man somewhere inside them.  
He rolled onto his side  
away from me.

The fat woman in front of us  
screamed  
and pointed at the green  
overpass.

My aunt with the naturally  
curly hair whispered

"Jesus...Jesus."

*Leanne Scorzoni*

**An Exceptionally Satisfying Virginity**

He came  
into a girl  
for the first time, and his  
fingers felt like  
ribbons  
that my mother  
never wrapped  
around my pigtails.

*Leanne Scorzoni*

## **Spread**

Out of those  
hundreds of glossy  
magazine spreads  
hidden beneath  
the stiff  
covers  
like paper concubines,  
how many of  
those girls  
with parts  
like mine  
have had mothers  
and other blood relations  
stare into their  
forced sexuality  
and shudder?

*Kristie Licata*

## **Missing Pieces**

I see your intentions  
Are like a puzzle –  
But there is always at least  
One piece missing.

Your border is intact  
But your center is damaged.  
I think you lost your entirety  
When you forgot to follow your heart.

To fill the empty spaces  
You would need to look inside yourself.  
Searching right to the core  
Finding what makes you complete.

Because the pieces aren't on the outside,  
Or hiding under the bed.  
They're in places only you can see  
And fit into places only you can feel.

*Aaron Flye*

## **Mountain Fog**

It sits in layers of languor  
upon the horizon, this false  
afterbirth of fire – the outermost  
gradation of a blaze in  
still-frame – Loki at rest  
upon the tips of branches,  
pausing long enough for me  
to notice – knowing that  
I cannot reach him there.

The mist, burdened under  
its own weight, mingles  
among the sagging green -  
looking like La Fée Verte  
as she is steeped over a cube  
of sugar.

I wonder if it moves, if  
I were to move through it, if  
I could feel it against my skin,  
would it be grainy, rough as  
the ash of wood smoke – those  
heated specks of dust – or  
smooth like the light touch of  
creeping, humid air - the moist  
petal of a papery anemone?

Driving with the fog at my back,

my rearview mirror reveals white cotton  
fingers waving weakly above the tree line -  
still so much a chameleon of  
smoke that the idea of fire just  
out of sight stays with me long after  
I'm gone.

*Leon Raikes*

## **Palm Sunday In Maine**

### I.

I am carrying in the palms –  
not the rich rasp of whole fronds,  
just papery strips for church aisles.

Across my shoulders  
falls a mantle of shadows  
from suspended bells.

I notice at the threshold  
that even this sunlight fails  
to turn our hemlocks into green.

My shoes too are polished black  
like shoreline stones picking their way  
through snowbanks.

### II.

The tide is rising, and I smell  
for the first time this year  
the emerging mudsmells.

I see how the rising waters eddy  
in blueblack currents  
right up to the churchsteps.

### III.

I am bringing in the palms –  
but at the threshold I hear the oaks  
in frayed cloaks

lay down a new music of robins.  
I see the robins nibbling now  
at the green skirts of things.

And above all in perfect circles  
rise and fall new waves of gulls proclaiming  
in their own language some newness of life.

### IV.

Somehow at the root of things  
speeds a tremor of flowers,  
a flush of dawn,

urgent colors from inside empty coats,  
a sheen of rain on rocks. No wonder  
you see me carry in the palms:

already now huge stones are itching to move.  
A cloudy sky like an arch of rent veils  
beats into the wind some renewing transiency.

Already now old hymns are rising  
at open doors like another sun  
and I hear approaching the urgent footfalls...

*Kristie Licata*

## **Pushing**

Your life seems simple.  
Colorless – but easy.  
Only two shades  
Black and White.  
But Darkness is engulfing Purity.  
You let the Black slide in with ease,  
Forcing White to retreat.  
What's your mission?  
You've got Blackness marching  
With his head held high.  
But Purity waved her  
White flag  
Long before the war began.  
So what will it be?  
The death of Purity...  
Or will Blackness surrender?

*Amanda Kitchen*

**Soaked You In**

You have got my blankets  
resting gently  
on your chest,  
matte skin  
stretched just as gently  
across the  
peaks and valleys of  
muscle and bone—  
And I just want you to know  
I'm soaking you all in, love,  
soaking you all in.  
You have my pillow  
laying gently  
under your head,  
soft lids  
shut just as gently  
across the  
highs and lows of  
tidal eyes—  
And I just want you to know  
I'm soaking you all in, love,  
soaking you all in.  
You'll be gone tomorrow  
and I'll sleep  
sideways  
but I'll be with you  
because I soaked you all in, love,  
I soaked you all in.

*Aaron Flye*

## **The Morning Star**

*How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! –Isaiah 14:12*

The first few sips are jagged,  
like tiny shards of an omen  
that rip the throat into defiance.  
The next few sips are elation,  
a last-minute reprieve from  
the warden without the promise of  
a future death.

I welcome you in, open the door  
into myself and ask you to sit,  
to languish. You wander around,  
poking into rooms, asking about  
the pictures you find inside  
and the letters stored away in  
boxes. You find the basement  
locked, and ask for the key – but  
even staggered I withdraw – remain  
myself.

Your friends, though different  
colors, are too much like you.  
They take the key when I am almost  
reduced to a cadaver, when I am left  
with motor skills that stem from unfelt  
neurons firing. Below the foundation  
you find exactly what I always claimed  
wasn't there:

A portrait of the Morning  
Star, dusty and untouched,  
askew against the wall –  
in it the capacity for sin  
and the potential for vainglory,  
a canvas of iniquity within  
myself never gazed upon.

Upstairs, I am cut down to the ground,  
cast out of my mind like an abominable  
scion – detached from the stock –  
that will not remember having  
seen the portrait, having exalted it,  
until thrust through by another's memory  
of the fall.

*Gary Albert*

**'Till Dawn**  
*(for Dawn Rackliffe)*

Her voice is the promise that guides him  
A strength and assurance she conveys from within  
Her every word; his will to sustain  
When twilight beckon; 'till dawn remain

And from her eyes, the moonlight shine  
Upon her lips of velvet divine  
About her hair, the starlight shimmers  
As nightfall looms; 'till dawn they glimmer

Faithfully he waits, for a chance caress  
To feel her warmth upon his chest  
As twilight eclipsed his eyes sedate  
Now dusk has fallen; 'till dawn he'll wait

Solemn he abides, long through the night  
So near, her ray of eternal light  
When midnight whispers of faint desire  
In darkness gloom; 'till dawn inspires



– *Kathy Wall*

*Bruce Pratt*

## **Weekends**

The boy intuited the rhythms of life in his father's departures and returns. Early in the week they were as predictable as the bodies of beauty queens, but on Friday mornings, aroused by the sounds of his father hurrying to make an early train, the boy would sprint along the dark hall and plunge down the back stairs to catch him at the breezeway door. There, as he lifted his arms into his coat, his father, George, would muss his son's sleep-snarled hair, and urge the boy back to bed saying, "Go catch some more shut-eye, son. The sun will be over the yardarm soon enough."

As his father backed out of the driveway, the boy would picture his black briefcase and gray top coat on the passenger seat of the car while sniffing the hallway for the lingering scent of his aftershave, and wishing he were old enough to ride the long dark train into the city; something he'd done but once when his father had taken him into his office to show him, "where the old man mines the salt."

When he was very young, the boy would watch the car until it passed from his sight, then go to the kitchen and sit where his father had sat drinking coffee and eating rye toast. There would be crumbs on the placemat, bits of warm butter and crusts on the bright blue plate, and a wrinkled cloth napkin next to the morning paper. Arriving for work, Mrs. Marshall would find the boy in his father's chair waiting for his own breakfast to be made.

When he was no longer very young, the boy did not listen for the garage door, or the high whine of reverse, or the staccato barking of the Feller's dog, as his father backed the car into the street. After bidding him goodbye, he would pour himself a cup of coffee from the pot, stir in some cream, rifle

the sports section from the paper, and return to his room to await Mrs. Marshall's call to breakfast.

When he was very young, Mrs. Marshall, or his mother, would take him to the playroom after breakfast and he would guide the bright train around the gray track, wearing his engineer's hat and pretending to carry men like his father into the city so they could mine the salt, have lunches in restaurants, drinks in the bar car where everything smelled like cigarettes, and get scolded by their wives for being late when they had promised to dine at the Verlanes, or for forgetting to get cash for the milkman on the way home.

When he was not so young, but still spending his day in the company of women, the boy would wait, eyes copper-fastened on the kitchen clock, for his father to return home, hoping to hear the garage door, which meant his parents would not be dining out. When the car skidded to a stop in the driveway, the boy would run to the front door, and as his George came into the house he would ask him the questions he had thought up during the day. "As soon as I'm out of my work togs, son," George would say in answer to the boy's string of queries about trains and planets.

If, having missed the 5:27 but made the 6:10, George was running late, he would often fumble out of his suit and into his evening clothes in such a hurry as to find himself at the front door quite sober, but without his cufflinks or bowtie—omissions his wife, Phyllis, never failed to notice. She would send him back upstairs, the boy close on his heels, while she gave Mrs. Marshall instructions for the evening, then, having set her empty glass on the hallway table, would regard her hair in the mirror, check her teeth for lipstick, and rock back and forth on her heels until George returned. Priding himself on his punctuality, George greatly disliked being rushed, but as he searched for the shoehorn or unrolled the proper socks, he tried to listen to the boy's questions, always agreeing that he could stay up an extra half an hour if he behaved for Mrs. Marshall.

Except for when he was very young, no matter how late at night his parents returned home the boy was alerted to their arrival by the barking of the Feller's dog, the groan of the garage door, and the brief glimpse of the hall light being switched on. Straining to hear his parents' final words, he would drift back into his dreams.

In summer, the rhythm changed. When they weren't on vacation, George left the office early on Friday, catching the 2:55 and arriving in Chatboro at 3:40. A few minutes later, he would stride up the walk, open the front door, place his briefcase and suit coat on the chair in the hallway, loosen his tie, and amble into the kitchen. When the boy and girl were very young they would spin around him shouting his arrival, grabbing at his sleeves, and babbling in a language he did not understand. On those days drinks were poured at four, a leisurely pace invading the house.

Washing his hands at the sink, George would smile over his shoulder at the boy and girl. Offering him a hand towel, the boy would stand aside as his father removed the lid from the ice bucket Mrs. Marshall had placed on the counter, a cool fog rising above the rim. George would grasp a glistening cube in one hand, the cracker in the other, and deftly smash the ice into brilliant shards that he dropped into a bright metal shaker. The boy would hand his father the Beefeaters and Noily Prat from the cabinet, and watch as he added, by eye, the precise amount of each to the ice, then with the flat end of the cracker faithfully swirl the mixture to chill it. When the shriveling shards ceased eddying, George would strain the drink into the monogrammed Tiffany pitcher he'd given Phyllis for their fifth anniversary. With a three-tined fork, the boy would fish olives from a slender bottle, impaling them in pairs on sharp toothpicks, then lick the strange juice from his fingers. Before rinsing the shaker, he'd run his tongue over the rim, the juniper tickling his nose. By the time George had garnished two chilled glasses, Phyllis,

having arisen, would be at his side. They would toast, "To us," take a full sip, and exchange a quick kiss.

The rest of the year, George arrived after the children's dinner. Phyllis would have made the drinks as best she could, and George, savoring the first sip, would search his wife's eyes, the barest augury of concern on her brow unnerving him. If they were home, the boy and girl would wait on the leather couch, and were Phyllis about to announce an academic achievement, George could anticipate it in the boy's countenance. But, if the boy was smirking, and the girl diverted her eyes, he knew he would be called upon to be stern with her, a role he quite disliked—especially when urged by Phyllis to reprimand her for a transgression he did not understand.

The boy, Timothy Thomas Buckley, Tim-Tom, Timothy for George's father, and Thomas for Phyllis' brother, rarely erred—his missteps the caprices of boys. He captained the middle school football and hockey teams, played second base on the baseball team, and collected fifty dollars for making the honor roll each term. George had wanted to send the boy to pre-prep at Eaglebrook, but Phyllis had argued against it—something George reminded her of whenever she complained of the complexities in arranging rides for all of the boy's activities.

Socially adept, yet academically indifferent, the girl performed poorly in school. She was, George thought, bright enough, but like her mother who had been summoned to several teacher conferences to discuss the girl's lack of effort, flighty and easily distracted. George and Phyllis had spoken to the girl about sending her away, perhaps to her mother's old school, Ethel Walker, to repeat her freshman year, but after a dreadful scene agreed to see if she performed better in the next semester at Chatboro Country Day—George shrinking from the girl's outraged tears, and recoiling, as if struck in the face by a whip, each time she swore she hated him.

Observing these moments with detached pity, and marveling at the ease with which his sister might avoid such unpleasantness, the boy relished his father's praise; beaming when he raised his glass and said, "Here, here," the same words he used when his man won an election, or he toasted Phyllis on her birthday.

Of the weekend days, the boy preferred Sunday; less given to hectic errands or demands, with no practices or games. George and Phyllis slept in, often until ten. The girl slept late as well, but the boy would rise as early as on a school day. Though he longed to shoot baskets in the driveway, or play catch-back with a tennis ball against the pool house wall, he knew he must not disturb his parents, so he would sit in his father's chair in the den watching the big television, or go for long walks in the silent leaf-gilded lanes, counting and memorizing the number of steps between houses, and arousing the nervous curiosity of the neighborhood dogs.

A few Sundays a year, certainly Christmas and Easter, the family bundled off to St. Andrews Episcopal Church for the eleven o'clock service. Obligated to park in the rear of the municipal lot because the girl would not hurry, George scowled and urged them toward the door hoping to find an open pew and not be forced to sit with the dawdlers on the folding chairs in the rear. When each child was in the fifth grade, Phyllis pulled a raincoat over her pajamas on Sunday morning and drove them to confirmation class, giving them each five dollars for the plate. The girl, who always pocketed the money, nearly wasn't confirmed because she would not apply herself to memorizing the creeds or the order of the Eucharist. Told she might have to repeat confirmation class, the boy, when his parents could not hear, called her Mary Kate, the name of the retarded girl who collected the shopping carts at the Chatboro Village Market.

As Mrs. Marshall had Sunday off, the Buckleys dined

at The Chatboro Country Club, except for the afternoons they drove to Connecticut to see Phyllis's mother. On those trips the boy enjoyed riding in the front seat with his father while his mother and sister dozed in the back, or read magazines until the twists and turns of the Merritt Parkway made them carsick. Watching the skilled hand of his father on the stick, the boy anticipated each gear shift, working imaginary pedals and yearning for the time he would drive himself to school and park his own car in the upper school lot, where the older boys sat with their girlfriends until the second bell.

When they were young, the boy and girl enjoyed sitting with the adults at their grandmother's massive table, where they were served roasts and potatoes and hand trimmed green beans by their grandmother's cook, Helen, and delighted in sipping ginger-ale from thick-cut glasses, garnished with orange slices and a maraschino cherry.

The house, with dark back-stairways and three full floors, loomed over Long Island Sound, and the boy loved to sit in a third floor window seat regarding sailboats tacking across the silver bay, or watching the winter sunset turn the water a deep graygreen, while the girl hosted dinner parties for imaginary friends, or pretended that she lived in a suite at The Plaza. When they were very young, they played hide and seek, or rummaged in the attic for old toys and dress up clothes, while the adults sat by the winter fire, or lazed in the sun-drenched Florida room.

Driving home, the sun setting in their eyes, the boy would take out the spare, scratched sunglasses his father kept in the glove box, and, once the women had gone to sleep, would ask his father how he learned to sail a boat, and if he would show him how to do that the next time they went to the cape, and if he could go to a summer camp where they had motorboats and you slept in tents. George always answered. "I imagine I can show you how to sail the Blue Jay, but we'll have to ask your mother about camp.

She's not keen on it you know." Pulling into the driveway, the boy would unbuckle his belt and push the button for the garage door.

Saturday did not have Sunday's easy rhythm.

No matter how late they had been out Friday night, Phyllis would insist her husband attend the boy's games. George enjoyed football, outdoors on a blazing fall morning a few hours before the upper school games, or baseball games in the clean light of spring, but he found hockey unpleasant. The school's rink was dark and oppressive, especially when the fumes from the ice resurfacing machine lingered in the damp air. With a hangover it was unbearable. Those games often began before George was fully awake, and even when they were played at reasonable hours, he had to peer at the players through the milky glass at the end of the rink, because there were few seats, and had great difficulty following what happened at the far end of the ice. It was especially taxing when Phyllis came with him, because she assumed that George understood the game, and made him seem foolish in front of the other fathers by asking questions he could not answer. Driving to the station on Monday morning, George could still smell the boy's sweaty pads and polished skates in his car.

At noon, Phyllis had her hair done. Mrs. Marshall having the afternoon off, George was left in charge of lunch. He made tomato soup and tuna salad on toast with chunks of celery and bits of sharp white onion mixed with mayonnaise, and Dijon mustard. Sitting at the head of the worn, soft-pine, kitchen table, George chewed vigorously, washing his sandwich down with a stein of beer. The stein, a birthday gift from Phyllis, had come from Bavaria, its pointed top operated by a flick of the thumb, the sides adorned with sculpted stags and alpenhorns that glistened in the light. To his own delight, George would emit a thunderous belch, then feigning embarrassment say, "A thousand pardons. By God, I believe my shoes are too tight." Gulping a deep breath, the

boy would release his own extraordinary blast nearly regurgitating his food. When he and his father laughed, the girl, suppressing a smile, could only say "You're both so gross." George would open and close the stein lid as if it were the mouth of a puppet, and bark in cartoon German, "Ach! I zink de gurl is ubzet vid us." It was the boy's favorite meal. When he was very young, Mrs. Marshall would take him to his room to nap when he'd finished his food, but when he was not as young, he and his father might linger in the kitchen belching and talking. The boy would play with the stein, imitating George's poor attempt at a German accent, and tell "knock-knock" jokes, sipping at the foamy dregs and inhaling the scent of sour lager. When the boy was older and he'd swiped an unattended beer at a pool party, the yeasty redolence reminded him of the stein, and the tang of tuna salad.

By three-thirty Phyllis would return home, her coiffed head framed by a scarf, her energy spiking. Flying about, drawing curtains against the fading light in winter, or opening windows to the spring's freshness, she'd rattle off the details of her adventures in town, as George lent half an ear. At four he would say, "The sun is well over the yardarm. May I make you a drink dear?"

"That would be ever so lovely," she would reply.

While George mixed the Saturday martinis, Phyllis would announce, "Grownup Time," and the boy and girl were obliged to become silent and invisible for an hour while their parents retired to the den, or sat by the pool, to sip their drinks. The girl reveled in the freedom to use her phone line, or take long showers, or steal her mother's makeup. The boy, who was not allowed to watch television in the den, use the pool, or bounce the basketball in the driveway, resented it, believing that his mother could have nothing to discuss with his father that he could not hear. If he did not have a game, he would sequester himself among the lilacs below an open window, or stand in the dark hallway outside the den door,

listening for, and sometimes hearing snatches of, the secrets of adults, as they whispered about his sister's grades, his grandmother's health, or the vexatious task of making a guest list for their annual pool party. It annoyed the boy that he could not say to his father, "Don't invite the Hallotons, Richie's a jerk," or "ask the Verlanes, I like Angela."

When the hour passed, it was not uncommon for the boy to find George dozing in his chair, or his mother asleep in a lounge chair, a delicate martini glass shattered on the bricks by the pool, or fallen to the rich Berber by the fireplace.

Returning from her afternoon off with a pie from the Chatboro Bakery, and vanilla ice cream from the dairy, Mrs. Marshall grilled steak or chops, made hand-cut French fries, or double-baked potatoes, and a fresh salad or butter-slathered peas for Saturday's dinner. While Phyllis finished dressing, George would pick at the serving dishes, eating a sliver of meat or crisp dark fry with his fingers, leaning over the sink so as not to drip on his fresh white shirt.

The boy would hurry his meal, eating so fast as to have a pain in his stomach, so he could sit with his father in the living room and wait for the women of the house to be ready for the evening's events. When there was a fire, he would watch the flame's shadows flicker on the portraits of his forebears staring down from above the long leather couch, and study his father's face, searching for the traces of his lineage. When winter had quieted the neighborhood, and the ticking of the mantle clock disturbed his own thoughts, the boy would watch his father's eyes wander the room, and wonder what it was he saw, and wonder when he would impart to him the secrets of living with women. Holding a small glass of ginger-ale in his hands, and swirling the ice with the tip of his finger to keep it cold, Tim-Tom would try to imitate his father's relaxed posture: shoulders rounded, legs splayed, hands on his thighs, chin to his chest.

In the summer, a horn might honk sundering their reveries, and the boy would grab his glove and hat and race out

the front door in his untucked uniform, his father's startled good wishes in his ear. Later, he would draw outlines of his father's head with the toe of his spikes in the rolled river silt near second base, while the pitcher took his last warm-up, just before the catcher threw the ball down to him, and he swiped at the bag to erase an imaginary base runner.

George would wait alone for his tardy women. As he did not bring the woes of work home, his mind ran undisturbed, agreeably imagining the evening ahead, vexed only by the lollygagging of his wife and daughter. In those moments, when the smell of glove oil and mown grass lingered in the boy's wake, George would find himself wishing to understand the boy's devotion to sports. Never much of an athlete or sports fan himself, he felt certain it was good that his son was both. The young associates at the office were rabid fans, always badgering the partners to secure more tickets to the professional games on the pretense that they would help attract new clients. Perhaps, George thought, the boy might play some sport in college. He knew he'd need not worry about him turning out all right.

George did not understand why the girl seemed to detest him as much as the boy appeared to like him, and was not sure his wife knew either. He could not think that they'd been ungenerous to her. Were she to cotton to something physical like golf or cheerleading, he thought it might assuage her tantrums which he was sure were hormonal. Unable to comprehend what the girl found so vexing about school, George had told her she didn't need to excel, just do as well as her mother had done at Walker's and Simmons, and that if she was civil and made an effort to be punctual, she'd keep all her privileges. At least, he thought, she inherited her mother's beauty, and would likely marry well, too.

For a time, thinking he might prefer to leave Chatboro, George had made desultory attempts to persuade Phyllis to move upstate. He could be a respected country lawyer, never hurrying for the train, or dressing for dinner. There would be

fewer obligations, more sleep, evening walks with the boy, square dances. The Rotary Club would invite him to speak on the importance of having a sound will. The boy and girl could go to boarding school where teachers and masters who were versed in such things would shepherd them over the rough spots, and he and Phyllis would visit on Parents' Weekend and chair the Annual Fund. She had said they would be bored, without friends, unsuited to life among farmers and tradesmen, and too far from the city.

One warm Saturday, a few minutes after three, George dozed off by the pool while the boy was in the kitchen fetching him ice for his tea. He dreamed about a farm and delivering calves from spotted, dung-caked cows, and saw Phyllis in a wide straw hat, trowel in hand, bent over purple cabbage plants, the dimples in her slim back showing above the waist of her shorts. Standing barefoot in the garden, her belly stretched and gravid, he saw the girl; a small child on her hip. He tried to call to her, the words slurring from his lips like the strained sounds of a brain-injured child. A horse galloped in a field. The boy rode astride a tractor harrowing spring soil into muddy coils of earth and weeds and manure. George tried to call to him to tell him that it was time to go sailing, but he could not be heard over the growl of the tractor, and the complaints of a flock of quarrelsome crows. The dream fled.

When the boy returned and found his father asleep, he took the tea glass from his hand and set it on a glass-topped table. George started, then nestled deeper into his lounge chair, his cheek flecked with bits of cracker, his face reddening in the sun. An ant crawled along his sock. The boy moved to sit on the end of the diving board.

The neighborhood was quiet, but not silent. Fragrances from cook-outs wafted over the fences and yards and the boy sat imagining his mother and sister painting their nails and brushing their hair and spreading deodorant on their freshly shaved underarms. He envisioned his sister at her

bathroom mirror, mouth agape, wiping vermilion lipstick from her teeth with the edge of a white wash cloth. He could hear the sibilant hiss, and imagine the acrid odor, of his mother's hairspray. Quick breaths of breeze carried the sadnesses and laughter of the neighborhood to his ears and goose-fleshed the clear water below him.

The pool filter hummed. From an open window, the boy heard his mother singing what sounded like an Easter hymn, and envisioned her before her opened closet staring at the dresses, deciding which one to wear, and peering at her thin, diamond-shaped watch with the silver band to determine when she needed to make up her mind.

The boy tried to remember what his mother looked like when he was very young and it seemed she had changed little. He recalled that his father had been thinner, and as he watched him dozing in the bright sun, noticed his bald spot glistened with sweat and that the corners of his mouth were wet. Awakened by his own snoring, George started with a sharp puff of breath, then smacked his lips and dozed again, trying to discover where the dream had gone.

The boy trailed his feet in the water and gazed up beyond the leafy tangle above his head into the searing blue of the early September mid-afternoon, holding a hand over his eyes when the light threatened to blind him. He heard his sister call, "Mom, do you have any mascara?"

"Mascara makes young girls look cheap, dear."

"Mother, you are so out of it."

The boy could see his sister's face twisted in disdain, and wondered why she didn't buy her own mascara with her allowance, or with the money he knew she filched from her mother's purse while she napped in the afternoons. The boy knew it was preferable to know how to get the things you wanted, than to pout.

His thoughts drifted to a time when he was very young. It might have been at his grandparents' house on Cape Cod, or at his uncle's cottage in Rhode Island, he couldn't

be sure, but it had been his job to keep his eye on the big hand of his father's watch, and to call out when it reached the top of the arc making it four o'clock. Sitting in the warm sand he'd fastened his small moist eyes to the gold dial. The sun was hot and the waves whispered a nice plush-plush against the shore. He urged the pool water make the same soft sound by stirring it with his feet, but it only went plack-plack against the concrete. He remembered that some of the adults were playing a game with a ball at the edge of the water; others slept on towels beneath a great umbrella. The older kids were hunting for treasures in the sand along the back of the beach by the dunes, and he was sitting next to the nurse, Miss Grey.

A dragonfly zipped low over the pool. A small, black beetle paddled in the shadow of the diving board. The boy noticed the music of the neighborhood. A basketball thrummed against the Feller's driveway then abruptly stopped, a delivery truck slunk past the house, a raspy-throated crow flew up into the brightness and disappeared, dance mix pulsed from his sister's room then faded, melding with the sounds of screen doors, laughing toddlers, droning bees, and sizzling meat.

The quiet reminded him of the locker room before a game when no one dared speak, the lights so low you could barely see the players on the other side of the room, and the air smelled of sweat and turf, athletic tape and moleskin, and player's pads creaked and helmets clacked against the wall as chinstraps were buckled, and mouthpieces chewed. The boy loved pre-game, the final rioting tension like the unbearable agony of an erection in Miss Dobbs's class, or the pain in your gut from draining a can of soda, or gulping a glass of warm beer. Players sat on the floor, legs stretched out before them, eyes closed, envisioning plays, and squirting small sips of water into their dry, nervous mouths. Coach Hartung, at first calm and precise, would remind the players of what to do in special circumstances, then his cadence would change,

his voice rising in volume and pitch. "Are you ready?" he'd cry. "Always ready," they'd scream, and when he'd ask, "Who wants to win?" they'd yell, "Chatboro, Chatboro, Chatboro," slapping their thigh pads and helmets, and when the assistant coach flashed the lights they'd bounce to their feet, cleats clattering on the cement, and line up, and when the door was opened to the outside they'd run screaming out onto the sun-bright field.

The boy kicked at the water. George snored. A steady breeze sang in the trees, and he heard his mother opening windows shut to the day's earlier heat. His sister changed the station on her radio. A small bird darted into a cloud of gnats. Tim-Tom regarded his watch, the crystal gleaming in the sun and he strained to discern the time. "Dad," he called, the big hand having crested the arc, "Sun's over the yardarm." 🐼

*Silvana Costa*

**Whales at south west rocks**

sea crows  
let loose  
from gravity

barnacled  
and knobbed  
swooping

as if able to  
stir gulls, set  
the bush on fire

*Kristie Licata*

## **What's Your Problem?**

What's your problem?  
You have something to say?  
Want to share your thoughts  
On how you feel  
About ME?

Let's hear you vocalize  
Your ignorance.

You think you know me?  
You think you have me figured out?  
Like you can tell by the way  
I walk and talk that  
I'm wicked?

Let's hear you articulate  
Your idiocy.

Want to share your notion of me?  
Have an idea as to who I am?  
Think you can see all  
There is to me  
By looking at my face?

Let's hear you verbalize  
Your stupidity.

## Contributors

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**Silvana Costa's** creative and analytical work has appeared in *Aegis*, *The Macquarie University Post Graduate Magazine*, *The Morning Sentinel*, and is awaiting publication in *The Maine Organic Farmer and Gardener* and *The Maine Commons*.

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**Leon Raikes** has lived in Utah, Montana, Sierra Leone, Lebanon, and Michigan—but Maine has become his permanent home. He lives with his family in Steuben.

**Leanne Scorzoni** is a senior Creative Writing major at UMaine Farmington and is originally from Danvers, Massachusetts. She plans to pursue her Master's degree in the field of Nonfiction, and currently writes for the Franklin Journal.

**Kathy Wall** teaches anatomy and physiology at Husson College. Most scientists have an artsy side, and her current artistic compulsions are photography and classical guitar.

**Baron Wormser** is Poet Laureate for the State of Maine. His recent books include *Subject Matter* and *The Surge of Language*. 🐾



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