Birmingham Arts Journal

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Produced without profit by dedicated volunteers who believe that exceptional works by the famous, not-yet-famous, and never-to-be famous deserve to be published side by side in a beautiful and creative setting.

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Birmingham Arts Journal

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BUZZING - Digital Collage, 12" x 18" - *Beth Conklin is a photographer and digital artist from Birmingham, AL, primarily self-taught in the area of digital collage. She shows work locally at Magic City Art Connection and Moss Rock Festival. Her work has been featured several times in the magazine* Somerset Digital Studio. *Her blog,* Here on Earth, *showcases her work and has been featured in* Artful Blogging *magazine.* **www.bethconklin.blogspot.com**

VULCAN AT SUNSET – Manipulated Digital Photograph - *Ty Evans lives in Birmingham, AL, and enjoys taking pictures in his spare time. His other interests include collecting antique books, playing the guitar, and traveling.* **ty.evans66@yahoo.com**

THE HATE THAT CHILLS

Maggie Kast – 2014 Hackney Literary Awards – Third Place, National Story

On a June day in 1930 Henriette Greenberg gathered all the money she had in cash and tucked cotton clothes into a small satchel, telling her parents she was going to visit her friend, Nadine, in New York and glad to escape her oppressive home with a lie. She added two years to her age and planned to call herself twenty. At the station she purchased a round trip ticket to Scottsboro, Alabama, for $15. The colors around her brightened, the green of her blouse grew deeper and cooler, and the stripes on her skirt stood at attention.

As the train pulled out of the station, late afternoon light shone on tenements, then suburban houses, and finally broad fields of corn not yet knee high. Farther on, spring became summer, foliage growing fuller and greener, vines reaching out as if to strangle anything in their way. To Henriette's right the empty seat and narrow aisle provided an exit, while to her left the window allowed her to peer into people's backyards, her speed rendering her invisible. A way out and a cocoon to hide her.

In fact Nadine, a reporter, had gone to Scottsboro to investigate the case of nine young Negro men accused of raping two white women. She'd disappeared, and Henriette was going to find her. Then, together, they'd join demonstrations against the unfair convictions. The International Labor Defense, the ILD, was defending the young men and had promised Henriette a place to stay. Rumor had it that the nine men, imprisoned in the county jail, had been faced by a mob intent on lynching, armed with battering pole, rope and guns. Only a brave sheriff had saved them, walking out the jail door and through that crowd, swearing to kill the man who might try to stop him. The sheriff had called the governor, and the governor sent in the National Guard. Henriette shuddered at the thought of entering the legally segregated South and hoped she'd be brave enough to shed the good little girl she'd been all her life, to actually do some good.

"Are you traveling alone?" The conductor intruded, white face and big jowls too close. He took her ticket.

"How far?"

When she said Scottsboro, he drew back. "You don't look like one a them agitators," he said. Was that what she was? No, she was going to find Nadine. Henriette tried to conjure peaceful demonstrations, women in long

dresses and big hats, carrying signs and singing, while men in white, linen suits shook hands and agreed to disagree.

But the National Guard was still there. Not to deal with signs and singing. They were needed to save the young men from lynching, the night riders' ritual of boiling tar, burning, piercing and hanging Negroes, the inhuman custom that had claimed over a hundred lives in the last ten years, four thousand since the Civil War. Fear dried Henriette's mouth.

"I'm going to visit a friend," she said to the conductor. Once she found Nadine, they'd both join demonstrations in support of a new trial for the nine young, black men.

"Well you and your friend better be careful," said the conductor. "Lotsa people going there, lots getting inta trouble."

Henriette nodded. Light faded, and soon she grew drowsy. Memories of a protester she'd met as a child surfaced in a waking dream, and she wrapped herself in their security. W. E. B. Dubois had come to speak at her parents' Unitarian church, and they had invited the visitor to a reception in their Oak Park home. Henriette had been seven and thrilled to meet the soft-spoken hero of black folk. She and her brothers stood on display at the foot of the stairs while Mother presented them to Dr. Dubois. He was smaller than Henriette expected, with a well-trimmed beard and mustache, tan skin and fiery eyes. He shook each of their hands with his fingertips and made a slight bow from the waist.

"Dr. W.E.B. Dubois needs no introduction," announced Father. "My wife and I want to welcome him to our home." Dr. Dubois moved smoothly to the living room window and spoke in a low, controlled voice that meandered up and down as though walking over gentle hills, while occasional applause showered down like rain. He welcomed the mostly white audience to join the struggle.

"Now let's sing," he concluded and taught them a verse of his version of "My Country 'Tis of Thee." The crowd joined in, quietly at first, then raised their voices to fill the room and shake the dining room's chandelier.

My native country thee
Land of the slave set free
Thy fame I love.
I love thy rocks and rills
And o'er thy hate which chills
My heart with purpose thrills
To rise above.

Daylight woke Henriette. The air heated up, and the conductor opened windows from the top, letting in the acrid smell of coal smoke. In Memphis more people boarded, and a woman flopped into the seat next to Henriette. In a cotton dress printed with white and yellow daisies and a straw hat, she pulled out a fan and fluttered it in front of her face.

"Hot in Memphis," she said. "Ah was visiting mah sister. Who you visiting?"

"A college friend," said Henriette.

"Oh, yawl're college girls," said the woman.

"In Scottsboro," added Henriette.

"They say there's ten thousand visitors there, mobbing the place. What they see, ah don't know," said the woman. "They're all a bunch of hoboes, the white girls and the Negro boys. If they'd bought their seats on the train, none a this woulda happened."

"But if they're only guilty of riding the rails, should they pay the price for rape?" asked Henriette.

The woman leaned in so close her sharp chin almost poked Henriette's shoulder. She spoke sotto voce. "Nine black boys and two white girls together in a car?" she asked. "You got another name for it?" Henriette flattened herself against her seat. The woman sniffed and settled back, straightening the skirt beneath her.

"A body dasn't talk like that in Alabama," she said. "It's yawl they'll be stringin' up next."

As they crossed the state line the soil turned redder, until the rolling green hills stood out like bright jewels against the tilled ground, split open like a wound in the fierce sunlight. The train might be safe, but once it expelled her she'd be on her own, and how would she ever find Nadine?

"Waiting Room FOR WHITES ONLY by Order of Police Department" read a metal sign mounted on the wall of the train station. Shoulders, elbows, and hips bumped and shoved her and feet trod on hers, while everyone talked at once and faces shone with sweat. She let the human current carry her toward the town center, a big square surrounded by armed officers who held the crowd back. Facing the square was the Courthouse, a massive red brick building with four pillars and two cannons in front, more officers guarding the doors. The crowd surged and roiled like ocean surf. Many who tired of standing sat on curbs or the square fenders of parked cars. Smells of unwashed flesh. Orange peels and food wrappers accumulating. Shade as sticky as the sun.

The National Guardsmen, attentive and neat in pressed khaki, stood alert but eerily calm, as though their heavy-looking guns and fixed bayonets could erupt into action without causing a wrinkle or a sweat.

Henriette hurried to catch up with a middle-aged man in a light-colored suit, carrying a briefcase. She tapped him on the shoulder and asked for the office of the ILD. He put his head down to listen and pointed her to the town's main street. At least people here took the time to listen.

A Negro man in overalls and a floppy, cloth hat approached. Just as she opened her mouth to speak to him, he stepped off the sidewalk into the street.

"Excuse me," she said and asked for the ILD office.

The man looked startled and removed his hat. "Don't know miss," he said, smiling, with a little bow. "Sorry miss. Don't know. Never heard of it. No way, miss." He bowed again, replaced his hat and continued a few feet before returning to the sidewalk.

Henriette turned and watched him walk away. The man's performance hinted at horrors she couldn't imagine.

Ahead Henriette saw a white woman wearing opaque lisle stockings despite the heat, supportive shoes and a baggy housedress.

"Could you help me?" asked Henriette, feeling the weight of her suitcase and the exhaustion of her night on the train.

"Whatcha want?" asked the woman. Henriette asked for the ILD office, spelling out the name.

"Where yawl from, anyway?" asked the woman, suspicion in her gaze and voice.

"From Chicago," said Henriette. "I just got here."

"We don't want you here," said the woman. "Can't you see we got too many visitors already? Cluttering up the town. Stirring up the darkies, uppity one minute and sulky the next. Yawl oughta stay home and mind your own business."

Henriette tried to move past, but the woman grabbed her arm. "Listen to me," she said, fingers digging in. "Trouble's coming. You stay out of it."

"OK," muttered Henriette. She hurried away. The clerk in a general store directed her to a second floor office a few doors down. "International Labor Defense League" said black letters in a glass panel on the door. A sandy-haired man behind a desk gave Henriette an address where she could stay and a stack of leaflets to distribute. He'd never heard of Nadine.

"Smash the Scottsboro Lynch Verdict" read the leaflet's legend, illustrated by a man swinging a big stick at a noose. Henriette flinched, but that's what the sentence was, a legal lynching.

"Is there anything more I should know?" asked Henriette. "To be safe?"

"You're in the wrong place for safe, lady," said the man.

After a dusty search through a quieter part of town, Henriette found the address, and an older woman with round cheeks and belly answered the door.

"Goodness gracious, come in," said the woman. "I'm Delores. All the way from Chicago! Don't tell me you came alone!" Tension flowed from Henriette like water. Delores guided her out to the bright kitchen and poured her a glass of sweet tea. Henriette drank it down so fast her throat ached. As Delores refilled her glass, Henriette asked if she knew Nadine.

"So many been coming in and out, getting arrested, going to jail, getting out of jail, there's no way to keep track of all of them. But no, I haven't seen your friend."

"I'm supposed to pass out leaflets around the Courthouse tonight. What should I do?"

Delores' voice sharpened and dropped a register. "Don't talk to Negroes. Don't raise questions about the defense. Dress proper: knees and shoulders covered. This is a lynching town—that's why the National Guard is here, but sometimes even they can't save you. Jail might be the safest place to be." Henriette pictured the midnight mob assembling on horseback and hunting down a man to be hung from a tree, while the riders retired to camaraderie and coffee. She took a deep breath and listened to it come out in little shuddering gasps.

After a bath and an early supper of greens with ham, red beans, and rice, shared with Delores, Henriette put the leaflets in her bag and set out. The air stilled in the early evening, as though the square were holding its breath. Crows flapped and cawed from the tops of the trees, swooping down for a bug or a dropped bit of garbage fermenting in the heat, while a group of white boys played marbles on a curb, laughing. Men in vests, jackets and fedora hats began to gather on the streets around the square, loosening their ties in the still-warm evening. A few women strolled in pairs, wearing sleeveless, calf-length dresses with dropped waists and soft draping at the collar. As more shops closed for the day, workers joined the all-white

(Continued on Page 7)

POWERLESSNESS
Jill Billions
Acrylic on Canvas
40" x 30"

Jill Billions lives in Vestavia Hills, AL. She studied medicine and art at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. When she is not practicing medicine, raising a family, volunteering, gardening, and visiting Italy, she finds time to paint. Her work may be seen at Artists Incorporated Gallery in Hoover. **jillbillions@mac.com**

crowd, some with hands dark from grease, some with garters that might hold sleeves out of ink. Men who looked like farmers wore plaid work shirts and overalls, necks burned red from sun. Henriette removed her leaflets from her bag and wandered among people, meeting no eyes, listening.

"Why's the Guard still here?" A group of men in overalls smoked and speculated.

"Prisoners might get moved."

"No one wants to wait—kill them now."

"You think the Guard can save them from the mob?"

"They saved them once."

"Waste of time and money. Why keep them safe so they can fry?"

Guffaws. The sound of band music drifted through the air, and Henriette recognized "Land of cotton . . . old times not forgotten . . . Dixieland." The sound made the evening amble feel like a nightmare amusement park, where a hall of mirrors turned murderous wishes into pleasantries.

Henriette walked more quickly through the thickening crowd, offering leaflets right and left. People began to coalesce around speakers competing for attention, and voices swirled and swelled, becoming a single low-pitched growl. Across the square, Henriette thought she saw the man from the ILD office, now wearing a work shirt and overalls. She headed over to his side and tapped the shoulder of a red-haired woman waiting for the man to speak.

"Who's that?" she asked. "I met him, but he's changed clothes."

"That's George Maurer," said the woman, "from International Labor. We're demanding a new trial. "

Henriette offered the woman a leaflet, and she accepted. Now Henriette had a colleague, and she observed her fellow listeners: a man with a walrus mustache and a pot belly bursting through suspenders, jacket over his arm, and the woman who'd said "we," middle-aged and slim in a straight black skirt and tailored white shirt.

"People here would rather kill a northern organizer then listen to him," whispered the woman, her curly hair just touching Henriette's cheek. "Those clothes are camouflage."

"We are witnesses," Maurer began, "to a frame-up. Not a hundred feet from where we stand nine young Negroes are languishing in the bullpen, without adequate food or clean beds."

The hair on Henriette's neck stood up to think she was really here, playing her small part in this demand for justice.

"The press convicted them before the jury even began deliberations." Maurer pulled a folded newspaper out of his jacket pocket and waved it. "The Jackson County *Daily Sentinel* calls them 'Burly brutes. Fiends,' it says. 'Savor of the jungle. Meanest African corruption,'" Maurer's voice grew louder and slower. "The jury took only three days to convict and forty-eight hours to sentence, railroading these men to the chair."

A sound of disgust swept through the crowd like an ill wind with cries of "Go back home" and "Leave us alone."

"We demand a new trial," continued Maurer, speaking faster. "Join all who protest injustice in New York and abroad. Organize! Demonstrate! Stop legal lynching! Stop legal lynching!"

Henriette joined a few others around her in the chant, just mouthing the words at first, then giving voice, and finally filling her lungs and shouting. Smack. Wet on her cheek. Smoky smell. A crawling sensation, something dripping onto her shoulder. She looked left and saw the pot-bellied man viewing her with contempt, wiping his mouth, and her stomach revolted. The red-haired woman pulled out a tissue and wiped Henriette's cheek, acknowledging with a slight nod and raise of eyebrows that this could be expected.

Henriette gagged at the sight of the brown, viscous stain on the tissue. Perhaps she was risking more than she'd intended, and her gut took another turn with more than nausea. Would she get out alive?

Henriette introduced herself to the woman who had helped her. "Mary Landau," the woman said in a voice like a hammer on nails. "I'm from New York. Was that your first taste of Scottsboro?"

"I just got here," said Henriette.

"Scared?" asked Mary.

"Yes," said Henriette.

"That's good," said Mary. "It's best to know the enemy. Maurer's gotten death threats." A new rock of fear in Henriette's gut.

"We all get them," continued Mary, pulling out a letter from her purse and showing it to Henriette with grim relish.

"This one is from the Klan. 'Ask some white man,' she read, 'to account to you why a rapist is under conviction to be electrocuted, and see the accounting you'll get. A necktie of hemp and your rotten carcass decorating a telephone pole or a tree.'"

Henriette shuddered.

"Samuel Leibowitz, a brilliant New York lawyer we've brought in—he's got two city homicide cops with him as body guards."

Mary laughed with a rough and rueful sound, and the band struck up "Hail, hail the gang's all here."

"Have you run into a young woman named Nadine Abravanel?" asked Henriette.

"No, sorry," said Mary. "Come on, let's move those leaflets." The two set off, offering leaflets to kids in shorts, ladies in pink, light blue, and violet dresses, and men in blue overalls. They reached out to hands calloused or nails painted red, glimpsed faces tight with anger or frowning, glanced at mouths shouting or lips pursed, shoulders hunched or arms raised, the hand clutching a stone or tomato. The light turned the courthouse a vibrant orange and then waned, leaving the sky a watery blue up high, fading to indigo, and then black at the horizon. Gaslights came on, and faces flitted by.

Henriette had circled the whole square, losing track of Mary, and was back on the opposite side when she heard chanting coming from a group around Maurer.

"Unite and fight. See the light. Now's the time to do what's right."

A low rumble, like distant thunder, as the people around Henriette started muttering, accosting each other.

"How long they expect us to wait?" A wizened farmer with a cane pressed his lips into a grim line, his eyes popping out like a frog's. "We've been patient. We waited for the law, the jury, the judge, the trial."

"No more waiting!" People around them took up the cry.

"Enough waiting! No more!" They began to stamp their feet. Then, chanting: "We've been patient. We won't wait. Death to the brutes whose crime we hate."

Bystanders joined the crowd, and all began to march around the square towards Maurer's group. Stuck among hostile people, Henriette tried to worm and wiggle her way through the crowd.

Voices yelled, "Go home! Go back! Get out!" growing louder, and the dense crowd pressed forward, until she could barely stay on her feet. Pinned, she heard shouts and screams just ahead. She ducked down and squirmed between flailing limbs until she was among sympathizers, where a heavy woman put an arm around here.

"Here, honey," said the woman. "You stay with me," and they joined in the ILD chant.

The crowd surged back and forth like a monster with a will of its own, and Henriette was caught within it, forced to stagger and clutch at strangers. Grasping at shoulders, belts and skirt hems, she and the woman went down and hit the ground, hard, the woman on top. Cement and grit. Wedged between street and heavy, pounding flesh, Henriette's head banged on the ground, and dust filled her mouth. She gasped, coughed, sputtered, and spit. Unable to rise, she tried to curl and cover her head as people trod on her and fell over her.

Curses.

A mewling infant cried—it was she. Someone pulled the woman's weight away and yanked Henriette's hands behind her back, locking them together, then hoisted her to her feet. Blood ran down her forehead, but she couldn't reach up to wipe it away. Rough fingers dug into the tendons of her neck.

"You're under arrest," said a big, unshaven man in T-shirt and work pants. Badge on his belt, next to a holstered gun. He marched her over to a van and shoved her into the back with several others, and they drove off. Rumble and bump. Tears running down her face. Fear that her bowels would let go. Pounding in her head, ache in her shoulders. Where was succor? Parents, brothers, lover? Blood dripped into her left eye. Dropping her head to her knee, she managed to smear a bloody stain on her skirt, but her shoulders screamed at the motion.

White men in plain clothes unloaded the van and marched the prisoners into a small office, where a man in a green-visored hat sat behind a wooden desk. A sign read "Jackson County Sheriff." The Sheriff cleared his throat and spat in a cuspidor by his desk, and Henriette wished for the neatly dressed National Guard with their clean, tan uniforms.

"What's this rag-tag crew?" asked the Sheriff.

"Loitering," said the cop who'd brought them in. "Disorderly conduct. Actually brawling."

The Sheriff proceeded to book each of them. "You're too young to be in this kind of trouble," he said to Henriette. "In future stay home."

"All I did was pass out leaflets," said Henriette, trying to keep the chatter out of her voice. "Asking for a new trial."

The Sheriff leaned in, smells of his lunch in her face. "You interfere with the way we do things and you'll be in trouble like you cannot believe. I saved the prisoners from the mob one time, but I'm not gonna save you and your pals from the people of this town. You'll get what's coming to you."

Henriette wanted to say something noble and brave, but all her words had been trampled out of her.

"And if you thought you were going to cozy up to the colored and spread your ideas here in jail, you got another thought coming. My jail is as segregated as our courtrooms, our schools and our lives."

Her wrists finally freed, she was dumped in a cement cell with a single bulb. Some twenty women in torn and streaked clothes sat or lay wherever they could find a spot and looked up at the newcomer without interest. Henriette squeezed onto a dirty mattress, sitting next to a sullen-looking girl about her own age.

"You got beat up," said the girl, her face streaked with dirt. "I look bad, but I ain't hurt none. You from here?"

"No," said Henriette, guarded.

"Protesters was out there I heard."

The girl touched the dried blood on Henriette's forehead.

"Don't want them boys to hang. They get you?" Henriette shook her head no.

"Colored will get theirselves killed." The girl shrugged. "Can't be helped. What you come here for? Ain't nothing here. No jobs, no work."

"What do you do?" asked Henriette.

"Starve. Steal. Had a job in the cotton mill, worked fourteen hours a day for four-five dollars a week, then lost it when the Nigras come along and work for less."

If these people knew how Henriette came to be here, they'd be at her throat. Panic started like a spark inside her, and she cast her eyes about, searching for a glimpse of daylight. She might be stuck here for hours or days, even weeks. She clenched her fists, cold sweat breaking out all over her. Unable to stay still, she began to measure the bullpen with her feet, walking along one edge, then between mattresses to the other side, until she was all the way at the back. Against the back wall a woman sat on a mattress with her head on her knees, long black hair hanging forward in greasy hanks. Slowly, she raised her head, revealing a bright flush and red spots all over her face. It was Nadine.

"Nadine!" Henriette's voice a shouted whisper. "Nadine!" she crouched and took Nadine's hot hands, but her friend's eyes remained blank. "It's me, it's Henriette."

"But you can't be here," said Nadine. "Are we somewhere else?"

"I came here," said Henriette. "I came to Scottsboro to find you."

Henriette sat next to her and put an arm around her, bursting into tears of relief and dismay. "You're burning up," she said, touching Nadine's forehead.

Nadine hung her head again. "I'm sick," she said.

"How long have you been like this?" asked Henriette. Nadine shrugged, fell over sideways on the mattress and closed her eyes. Henriette had to do something, but what? She looked up.

"She's really sick," she said. "Anyone know how long she's been here?"

"'Bout a week, I reckon," said a woman next to Nadine. "She'd been over to the Nigra side of town, talking to the families, getting their stories. Said she'd put them in the papers up North. Folks here don't like that—me neither."

Do something, thought Henriette. Right now. She rose, crossed the room to the door and pounded on the bars. "Hey!" she called out. "Someone in here is sick."

"They don't care none." The woman next to Nadine lay down and covered herself again. Henriette walked back to them.

"My friend is sick," she raised her voice enough to be heard by those nearby. "Very sick. You can't stand by and let her die." She repeated these words, then stood in the middle of the cell and called as loud as she could.

"Wake up! My friend is sick! Get her help! Don't stand by and let her die!"

"What she got?" A woman rubbed sleep out of her eyes.

"I seen her when she came in," said another. "I seen her get them spots. It's jail fever."

Now Henriette had a name, and she shouted, "Jail fever, jail fever," calling the other prisoners to join. "Get a doctor! Get this baby outa here!"

She marched to the cell door and rattled the gate, her panic released into action, spirits lifting at the women's response. They might be poor, hungry, and prejudiced, but they could still rally to help a fellow human being. "All together now," and most of the women joined Henriette rattling the door and stamping on the floor.

"Jail fever! Call a doctor! Get this baby outta here!"

A sleepy guard ambled over. "If y'all don't shut up, y'all be here another week. Now what's this about fever?" He unlocked the cell door, and the inmates opened a path to Nadine. He nudged her shoulder, and she rolled on her back, mouth open, eyes partly closed, eyeballs rolled up.

"She looks pretty bad," said the guard. "Yeah, jail fever, I'd say. You her friend?" Henriette nodded. The guard wandered out, leaving Henriette to wonder if he was going to call an ambulance or just go have a smoke.

One more day, and Nadine might have died. That's what they told Henriette at the hospital, after they'd started IV fluids and given her aspirin. Typhus was common from the lice in the jail, they said, and more than half who got it didn't make it out. They cleaned and bandaged Henriette's scrapes, and she sat by Nadine for two days and nights, her own eye turning black, as Nadine's delirium and rash slowly faded. On the third hospital day they received a visit from Samuel Leibowitz, chief defense counsel for the young men. He steamed into the room without looking back, wearing a three-piece suit, and took a seat by Nadine's bed. His cops stood by the door.

"The ILD has hired me to conduct a rational, legal defense," he said, "in spite of, or because of, my reputation as a criminal lawyer and mainstream Democrat. I'm no leftist. Then they bring in people like you, who violate the local customs and make trouble, and that makes my job nearly impossible. The citizens of Scottsboro hate me because I'm from New York, and your presence can only make them hate me more. So please, as soon as you are well, go home, and don't come back."

Silenced, both Henriette and Nadine nodded and waited for him to leave,

"We *are* going home, aren't we?" asked Henriette.

"Hell, I wouldn't stay here if they paid me," said Nadine. "But I'll report everything I saw."

Henriette returned to Delores' to pack and say good-bye. The two sat in the quiet kitchen while Henriette repeated what Samuel Leibowitz had said.

"The ILD was smart to bring him in," said Delores, "whether you and your friend like him or not. I'm not sure the crowds and demonstrations do any good."

"Dr. Dubois would favor demonstrations." Henriette pouted.

"Actually he doesn't," said Delores. "He wants to save the boys' skins before he saves the world."

Henriette was taken aback. Could her wish for justice and her concern for the young men be at odds? She'd found and saved Nadine but accomplished nothing for the convicted men. The women in the jail cell despised the men, yet they'd rallied to help her. No way could she stand up against mouths that spit, hands that wrote death threats, or marauding mobs.

So what could she do? On the ground, mouth filled with grit, she'd cared only about saving her own skin. Doing good was more complicated than she'd thought. The sinking sun suddenly showed orange on Delores' face, making her round face smooth out and shine like a fat, wise Buddha. Henriette got up and gave her a hug.

The next day Henriette and Nadine walked to Scottsboro's green frame train station with its little peaked roof, glad that neither citizens of Scottsboro nor visitors from other states could distinguish them from the gawking crowd. The band played on, a breeze sprang up, and the freedom to come and go felt like a glorious gift. The train chugged out of the station and carried them back to Chicago. By the time they arrived, the lump on Henriette's head was small, and her black eye was nearly gone.

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Maggie Kast is the author of The Crack between the Worlds: a dancer's memoir of loss, faith and family. *Her stories have appeared in* The Sun, Nimrod, Rosebud*, and others, and essays in* America, Image*, and* Writer's Chronicle. *A novel,* A Free, Unsullied Land*, is forthcoming.*
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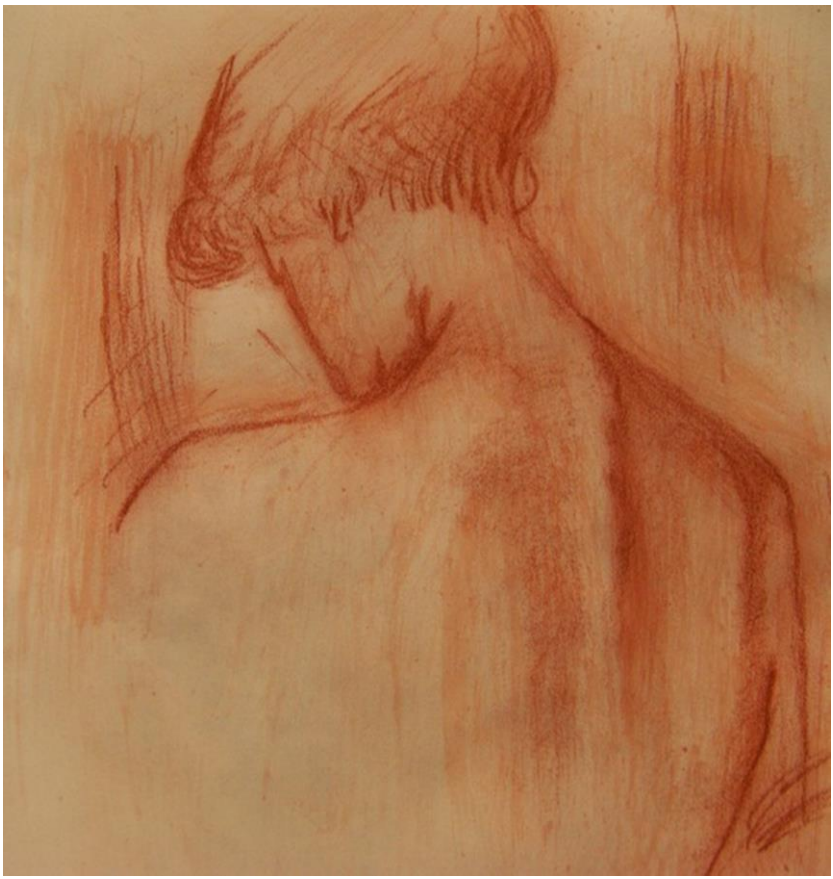
"The beautiful thing about learning is nobody can take it away from you."

—B. B. King



TURNING AWAY
Jeff Glenn
Conte on Paper
12" x 12"

Jeff Glenn sketches, paints and photographs what he loves. He lives in Ashville, AL, with his wife and five children. **fineartamerica.com/profiles/jeff-glenn.html**

SOUTHBOUND

John Saad – 2014 Hackney Literary Awards – 1st Place, State Poetry

On Route 5 down to Marion, a backroad
coughs up a logger dogclutching through a plume
of clay and shale: his smokestacks belching black,
slick pine poles staying the slewing iron bunk,
and red flags flailing like flushed crossbills.
His left mudflap hussy has lost her right
likeness, as if in a haggard fairy tale,
and gravel doveshots my Camaro's hood.
Scrapwood then caroms off the dimpled blacktop
into splintering midair pinwheels. I draft
behind the logger for miles, my left arm tanning
outside the window. The speakers spit with each rut—
young Iggy caterwauls about *the forgotten boy,*
the one who searches and destroys. We pass
soy fields and redbrick churches, satellite-
eared mobile homes neighboring scaffolded
white Revivals, and shacks swathed in vine like
shacks swathed in vine. We downshift a hill. Skid-
marks swerve the double yellow, then vanish.
In tall grass, off the shoulder, a woman stakes
checkered *3* flags around a tinseled cross
already overburdened with Crimson Tide
logos. This place is at a loss of words,
and our old sayings, if not dead, fall short—
unlike a pine pole through a windshield.

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John Saad lives and works in Birmingham, AL, with his wife and their dogs. He recently completed an M.A. degree in English from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He writes poetry. **johngregorysaad@gmail.com**

GLORIA

Reggie Holder

I always knew there was something extraordinarily special about my friend Gloria Spruill and that was confirmed the night we decided to duck into Wendy's for supper. We walked in and there was suddenly a palpable change in the air, an excitement from the people working behind the counter. They pointed, one jumping up and down, and I could hear them exclaiming, "It's her—she's coming inside!"

I asked Glo if she knew these folks and she said, "Oh, I come here all the time, usually around one in the morning right before they close. I never come inside, I use the drive through. They think my bib is so funny."

"Your bib?" I asked

"Oh, yes, I have a gold lamé bib that the girls at the beauty (her shorthand for beauty parlor) gave me to wear in the car. These gals think it is a scream." She said that she always ordered the chicken salad at Wendy's. She went on to explain that she fed the chicken and cheese to her little dog, Scruffy, that she ate the lettuce and tomatoes, and she put the two cucumber slices on her eyes to keep them from getting puffy.

No wonder the women behind the counter were excited. This wonderful character, part Auntie Mame and part Holly Golightly, was actually coming inside. Who wouldn't be excited? When Glo went somewhere, she was noticed.

Well most of the time. My wife called Glo about five o'clock one December evening and asked if she would come over and give us some holiday decorating advice. Glo had impeccable taste and was for several years Chair of the Decorator's Show House. Glo often stayed up all night and slept all day and said she had just woken up and would be right over. Within the hour, she was at our house. We opened the door and there she stood in multi-colored silk polka-dotted pajamas, bunny slippers, a pink feathered hat as big as a lampshade, and a full-length mink coat.

Our boys were enchanted. They smothered her with hugs and received kisses leaving tell-tell lipstick marks on their cheeks. "Well thank goodness, someone noticed," she offered, "that damn man at the gas station paid no attention to me." How could anyone not pay attention to Glo?

Well there was that one time. Late one Saturday night, Glo went to Walgreens to pick out Halloween cards for our boys. Learning that

Walgreens closes at nine, she decided to go "the village" and look for cards at Western Supermarket. About eleven o'clock, she noticed there was no one in the store. The coffee pot was still on, every light in the store was still on but the doors were locked and everyone was gone. Because the coffee was still on, she supposed that someone would soon return, but no one did.

Glo spent the whole night locked in the Western. She told me that she spent some of her time that evening putting items that were out of place back where they belonged. She also noticed that there were little red and yellow stickers on the shelves that indicated new items in the store. She was so intrigued that she went throughout the store and counted the new items– 143. She started to get hungry so she ate a candy bar and had a cup of coffee. Her lips were dry so she used a chap stick. She wrote everything down that she used so she could pay for it.

Early on Sunday morning, two women came to open the store. One of whom, no doubt fearful that she was about to experience the wrath of some sort of Real Housewife of Mountain Brook, just kept walking to the back of the store and did not stop to hear an explanation. Glo presented the other woman with the list of items she used throughout the night, explained that she didn't have her billfold and would return later to pay for everything. Everything but the coffee which she said was not fit to drink. True to her word, several days later she returned to pay her debt.

Glo always looked like a million dollars. Once we traveled to New York together and Glo confessed that she had not packed for the trip but merely brought the suitcase from her last trip that she never bothered to unpack. Not that it really mattered for she wore the same outfit the whole trip, accessorizing a little differently for day and evening. Even so, she always managed to look exquisite. In recent years, she stopped carrying a purse, preferring instead small-handled paper shopping bags. And again, she always pulled it off. She once gave a public presentation with mismatched shoes and looked stunning.

Glo had her own sense of timing. In 1998 she called and asked if I would go to Service Merchandise and buy her a new television set. Her old set hadn't worked in years. I purchased her a new set, got it into her house and started to open the box to remove the TV and set it up for her and she said, "We can't possibly do this today. I'll call you on another day." Seven years later in 2005, she called me to come set up the TV. By this time, Service Merchandise had gone out of business and we were both a little worried that the once new set might not even work at all. I asked her why she waited so

many years to let me finally come set up the TV and she said, "Oh, I knew you were busy."

She was notoriously late for most everything but theatre performances. She served as the President of the Fine Arts Society at Birmingham-Southern College and would drive on campus the morning of a concert or theatre event, swipe an orange traffic cone, and reserve herself a parking space. She knew she would surely be late, arriving at the last minute. She thought no one knew that she did this but at the end of her tenure as President, the College presented her with her very own traffic cone, which she cherished and used in the same manner all over the city. She may have always been the last to arrive, but she was always worth the wait. She missed both our son's baptisms because she was late. At our youngest son's Baptism luncheon, she came up to me in all seriousness and asked if we would have a third child so she could witness the ceremony. Years later that same son broke his arm. He received a get well card with a five dollar bill for ice cream two years after his cast was removed. They say the secret to good comedy is timing; Glo always contended it was never too late to let someone know you have been thinking about them.

She always kept bubbles, sparklers, and a red foam clown nose nearby, often in her car. She knew there was always something to be celebrated or someone who needed encouraging. I bet the gals at Wendy's have seen that clown nose a time or two.

A few days before she died, she and I were talking in her room at the hospital. We were sharing fond memories and in the course of that conversation I shared with her the stories that all my friends love to hear about her. It is not at all unusual to be at a dinner party, sitting around the table after dessert and have someone say, "Tell us a Glo story."

Glo often slept all day and roamed around the city at night. She would sometimes shop at Leaf and Petal, the neighborhood garden shop long after they had closed. In the wee hours of the morning, she would leave them a note, tucked in the door, listing what she had taken so they could bill her. Once she wrote on the note, "I can't reach any of the hanging plants, would you please leave a ladder out?" They did. Eventually they decided that this was a good business model and today there is a mailbox on site with preprinted little slips of paper for customers who can't sleep or have an urgent late night need for an asparagus fern. They call it the Honor Box but I call it the Gloria box.

In the hospital that afternoon, I thought I was telling Glo something that she did not know—about how much I and others enjoyed the stories of her joyful antics and quirky yet endearing habits. But a few days after she died, I was looking through a file folder of things she had for me and I found one of the little slips of paper from Leaf and Petal.

She knew all along how much I loved that story and all the others that I will continue to share about this fascinating woman of impeccable style and grace.

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Reggie Holder grew up in Tuscaloosa, AL, and moved to Birmingham in 1998. He serves as Director of Growing Ministries at Five Points South's Highlands United Methodist Church and is married to Kristin Harper. The Harper-Holders have two sons, Carter (17) and Graham (14) and a cat named Cecil.
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"The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach."

—Benjamin E. Mays

ONCE THERE WAS A SEASON

Dannye Powell – 2014 Hackney Literary Awards – Second Place, National Poetry

when the bare branches
of winter trees
greeted me
like lit candles
and once
there was another season
when
the telephone
grew sweaty
in my palm
and my elbows
were always propped
on something hard
and the man
who answered
at the morgue
kept calling me lady
though I could tell
he didn't think I was
but he promised
over and over
to be in touch
if anyone
fitting your description
happened to turn up

.....

Dannye Powell is the author of three collections from the University of Arkansas Press, and her fourth collection, Nobody Calls Me Darling Anymore*, is due from Press 53 in the fall. She lives in Charlotte, NC, where she writes a book column for the* Charlotte Observer. **dannye700@aol.com**

THE ROTC-UNIFORMED CUSHMAN TIME-TRAVELLER LANDS IN PETERSON

Jim Reed

If I close my eyes, I am suddenly transported back in time more years ago than you have been alive. I have a busy if not full life in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. As a student at the University, I keep myself occupied by not studying, by being an on-air announcer at several local stations, by attending class in order to catch naps.

One class I am required to attend twice a week in full green wool uniform is the U.S.-run military program for male students called ROTC. Part of the reward for mandatory service in ROTC is the fact that the Army, needing soldiers for the never-ending war in Vietnam, has the theory that each of us will fall in love with the idea of giving up parties and romance and the good life to go to jungles far away, teaching enemies to do right.

That is why I am wearing a full Army outfit after my classes are over. That is why, this day, I hop aboard my tattered Cushman Motor Scooter and drive as far away from the campus as possible, as fast as possible, to create a breeze on this 80-degree afternoon. The duct-taped vehicle is my only means of physical escape from T-Town.

I head for the nearby tiny town of Peterson because I know how to get there. And because that's where my grandfather's general store is located.

I pull up next to the Sinclair pumps, park the scooter out of harm's way, take a look at Grandmother Effie's flowers in the front yard, open the Miss Sunbeam Bread-bedecked screen door, and enter the store. Store and home are physically connected, and my grandparents' lives are played out in a situation where they are never away from home, never away from work.

Uncle Brandon is down on the concrete floor, constructing shelving out of cut strips of Coca-Cola signs. Uncle Brandon looks like a cross between Stan Laurel and Will Rogers and is as funny as both of them. We palaver a bit and I go looking for Grandfather Robert. "Hey, Granddaddy, how are you?" We shake hands instead of hugging, since I am almost grown up now. "Doing OK," he replies, monosyllabically answering my questions about life, liberty, and the pursuit of Grapico drinks.

I wander around, inhaling the rich aroma of mildew, kerosene, bubble gum, ripe vegetables, and leather combined with the powerful fragrance of my grandfather's ever-present cigar. I observe off-shift coal miners

stopping by for a drink and a chaw on their way home. “Gimme a Dope,” one of them smiles, slipping a dime onto the counter and grabbing a bag of Tom’s Toasted Peanuts that he carefully pours down the neck of a Coca-Cola bottle. Dope is Coke in these rural parts. I salivate at the thought of that heavy salt combining with the cane sugar fizz and making an unforgettable snack.

I’ve made my visit. Shown off my ROTC uniform. Bragged about my radio jobs. Gossiped a bit. Now it’s time to head west toward Northport for my evening duties at WNPT. I am refreshed. I’ve seen my grandparents and uncle as well as postmistress Aunt Gladys; I’ve sniffed the memories of my early childhood. I am refreshed and energized.

On the highway, I wend my way back to responsibilities and the feeling of purpose that to this day I get out of going to work each day.

I want to remain in Peterson and live the quiet life. I want to be an on-air star and impress people with my talent. I want to toss this cotton-pickin’ wool uniform and hide from the draft, I yearn to date coeds, laugh with my younger siblings Tim, Rosi, and Ronny, hug my mother, talk to older sister Barbara, try to get through to my stoic dad, lie abed late at night and listen to reel-to-reel tapes of Bob and Ray shows, fall asleep to the jazz emanating from WWL in New Orleans.

All these generations later, I haven’t changed. I still want to be everywhere at once, every time at once. I still am happy at end of day in my solitude, floating in memories most textured and pleasing

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Jim Reed writes of his seven-decade life in Alabama. He is curator and owner of Reed Books/The Museum of Fond Memories in Birmingham. **www.redclaydiary.com**

“All growth is a leap in the dark.”

—Henry Miller

CENTERFOLD

CENTERFOLD

A GOOD VET

David Roberts IV – 2014 Hackney Literary Awards – Third Place, State Story

I could hear the slightest whisper of a moan coming from her hospital room in the palliative care ward where I stood at her door, scanning her chart, waiting for my breath to come back to me. I had made her the last patient on today's busy schedule.

This was a hard one. Eighty-six years old. A good family friend. Debilitating stroke from an inoperative brain tumor. She had been a writer and artist, one of the best in Birmingham, and had given this driven community her golden sunshine of ideas and images that cast light to darkened corners in a gritty southern city that could never break free of its past. Now, here she was, dying slowly, losing memories she held to dearly, no longer guiding her fingers with pencils or paint over paper and canvas, struggling with cancer's relentless robbery of herself.

And, me. Trying to do the best I could to make her loss bearable.

I walked into her room of many colors. Tall vases of red carnations, white daises, yellow daffodils, hand colored cards of friends' self-portraits wishing her well, paintings of soft waves on calm seas: all rested or hung from every nook and corner of the ten-by-twelve room, save the whirring, blinking, stainless steel vitals machine that monitored her.

Her silver gray hair was combed smooth, her face white but not blanched. A cotton sheet rippled pointed edges and rolling folds over her thin frame. She motioned me over with a slight movement of her hand, a hint of a smile on her face.

"How are you, Jeanette?" I asked in my best physician's voice.

"You should know, John," she said in a soft voice.

"Well, I do. Are you comfortable?"

"No. Not at all." Her emerald-green eyes looked at me, scouring my face for hidden replies that I did not want to give. Her thin lips pressed together.

"What is wrong?" I asked, walking up to stand at the end of her bed. She was propped up in a half sitting position.

"I want to die. And, you're not helping me."

I straightened. I am a white oak in a strong wind. Not bending because I was trained not to bend – to hold fast in any turbulence.

"I'm doing everything in my power to make you comfortable."

"You're not listening to me, John."

"We removed the feeding tubes yesterday as you requested. When you get uncomfortable, we have drugs that will enable you to make it through." I wrapped my white lab coat around me, crossing my arms.

"Make it through to what?" She steepled her fingers.

"A good end."

"That's what euthanasia means, but substitute death for end." Her fingers folded into a laced fist.

"Yes."

"This is not a good death. I am losing my memories. I battle to remember my husband, my children, my paintings, the way to mix a deep black from alizarin red and . . . You see? I can't remember the other color. I had been mixing them for over sixty years. It's gone." Her hands made twirling moves as if stirring paints on a palette.

"Everyone loses memories, Jeanette."

"Don't patronize me, John. You're too close to do that to me. Our families have been together for years. Years. I watched you grow up and followed you through med school."

I could feel it behind me. The dark curse laid on physicians—how to be and not be friend and technician.

"I'm not double-talking, Jeanette. Death robs us all of memories. Sometimes quickly, sometimes slowly." The sweet scent from a gardenia bouquet drifted to my nose. And clashed with the clamor of a crash cart being hurried down the hall.

"Well, I want to go out with a bang, not a whimper. I want to have my mind's pocketbook full of the memories I cherish rather than an empty no-deposit no-return bottle at the bottom of a waste can."

I took her hand, feeling its warmth against the glacier tips of my fingers.

"I'm doing all that I can."

"No. I've already told you that you're not."

I shifted my weight from foot to foot.

"What more can I do?" I asked, feeling the arrow of truth speeding towards my flimsy shield of hospital protocol.

"Kill me quickly," she said. Her green eyes blazed into mine.

"Jeanette. You know I can't do that. I am obligated to do that which is in the best interest of my patients." I could feel sweat underneath my white lab coat start to soak my armpits.

"You have a dog?" she asked.

"What?"

"Does your family have a dog?"

"Yes. Puddles. A golden retriever," I said. Has the lack of food and water started to impair her concentration so soon? She knows Puddles. Has for years.

"You and your family love Puddles?"

"Yes. Puddles is very dear to us. She's been with us for twelve years. The kids were raised with her. She's like a second mother to them."

Rain started to pelt the window. I went over and eased the blinds closed a bit more to reduce the patter. Gray storm light easing through the slats cast colorless, twisted streaks on the off-white window frame.

"What if Puddles had what I have? What if I were the vet treating her? What would you ask me to do?" she said, emerald green eyes fixing on me, until I looked at the floor.

"Look at me, John. What should I do as a good vet?" Her hand clenched mine.

"I would ask you to, to . . ." Words stuck in my throat.

"Say it."

"To put Puddles to sleep."

"Suppose I told you I would not kill Puddles quickly, but let her die by starving and dehydrating her. Of course, I would give her drugs so that she didn't suffer so much along the way. Moreover, she would be comfortably locked away with other animals in a back room dying ward. That scenario would be in her best interest." She paused. "What would you think of me as a vet?"

I backed up and leaned against the shadowed wall.

"That you were violating the trust we had in you."

"Say that in words that I can understand, John."

"I would think that you were doing something so terrible that I would have you up for license removal for ethical violations." I felt my hands clench into trembling fists.

The room tightened its pressing claustrophobic grip, closing in around me.

"Tell me. What's the moral difference between me and Puddles?"

"You're a person. I can't let persons suffer or kill them," I said.

"You're killing me slowly in a way that is causing me incredible suffering. Real care doesn't distinguish between Puddles and me. Can't you

see that death is in my best interest? John, just kill me. Soon. I know that you're smart enough to figure out a way to do that. Please. Soon."

We stared at each other for eternal seconds.

"Can I think about that, Jeanette? That's a lot to ask."

"Don't take your time," she said. "Minutes are agonizing for me."

"I understand," I said, as I checked her pillows, held her hand, smiled, then left through the ever open door. "I will be back by before I leave."

She nodded and smiled.

I went down the hall to the doctor's lounge. Got a cup of coffee in a white foam cup. Put it to my lips, then back on the gray Formica table. Looked at it steaming fresh for five minutes, white vapor wisps rising in feathered curves giving off a surprisingly robust smell. Two minutes went by as I stared at the cup. Steam stopped. Coffee started to go lukewarm. Bit of oily film formed over the surface. Another five minutes, it was cold black and bitter to a quick taste. Brown stains on the white foam dotted the place where I had put my dry lips. I quickly poured the black liquid with a few trailing bits of grounds into a nearby sink, crumpled the cup, and threw it into a dome-shaped, aluminum trashcan.

Two hours later, I went to her room. She was asleep. So peaceful.

I went home, hugged my kids, ate a lasagna dinner that my wife Fran had prepared, watched a Thunderhead Hero video with all of us crowded on our stuffy brown sofa, laughed as Puddles licked the toes of my foot when I put it out to scratch her raggedy ears, and cried my guts out in the shower before I went to bed. Shower is the best place: my wife, kids, and even Puddles can't hear the grief. No matter how much soap I used, I didn't feel clean.

Next morning, I found out Jeanette had another stroke sometime around midnight. Completely paralyzing her.

Thornton, the resident neurologist, said that she might be able to hear or see, but her eye reflexes were not good. It wouldn't be long. Maybe, a day or two, given that all sources of sustenance had been removed as she had requested.

She lasted four more days. Her body would not give up easily, reluctantly letting its trapped life trickle out of its cocoon cage. The white sheets covering her frail body would tremble as her breaths would come in hurried gasps, to settle back into a whispered sigh. The flowers were gone but left behind the smell of funeral wreaths. She bore out her sentence with her eyes closed, never speaking a word.

I visited her room those four days as she slowly descended into the depths of blackness. There was one moment, next to her last day, when her green eyes flickered open and looked at or through me.

I hoped to God that she didn't see me.

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Birmingham resident David Roberts IV says of his writing, "My fiction stories reflect philosophical themes that evoke emotions and feelings that challenge beliefs." His works include Becoming Twigo. **droberts1944@gmail.com**

"Just purchased the Large Hadron Collider. Support says I should talk to the administrator; the administrator says I should call support."

—Steve Martin

REMAINS

Susan Thomas – 2014 Hackney Literary Awards – Third Place, National Poetry

I wish I'd known Schopenhauer
back when I coasted on rickety skis
each day to visit the friendly wild
things that lived in our field and backwoods.
I was new to the uplands, learning
to track things in the snow, big things,
little things, paw prints,
feathers and scratchy claw marks,
curious who was there, who ran
and flew and skittered and leapt,
but all it was really about was who
was eating whom at what particular time.
One day, with animal tracks in front
of me that were large and deep, two
feet apart from front to back, then three,
then four. I suddenly knew the thrill
of something chasing something else
and the terror of what it was chasing.
I wish I'd known Schopenhauer.
I wouldn't have been so shocked.
I would have known there was evil
in the forest. Schopenhauer was right—
it's everywhere, everything, all inherently evil.
I tracked the long excited leaps of
whatever was chasing into the brambles.
There at the edge of the woods—fur,
blood, scent of horror, and then deeper
into the forest, the remains of a deer—
teeth, hooves, bones, viscera.

What I needed was Schopenhauer sitting
there on the page, muttering inherent evil,
malevolent volition, bellum omnium of eternal
predation, eternal becoming, endless flux.

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Susan Thomas has two poetry collections, State of Blessed Gluttony *(Red Hen Press, 2004, Benjamin Saltman Prize) and* The Empty Notebook Interrogates Itself*, (Fomite Press, 2011). She also has two chapbooks and is co-translator of* Last Voyage*, a collection of Giovanni Pascoli's selected poems, (Red Hen Press, 2010).* Among Angelic Orders, *a collection of short fiction, (Fomite Press) came out in 2015. She lives in New York City and Marshfield, VT. with her husband, writer Peter Sills.* **susanthomas1000@yahoo.com**

"The world will be here, with or without us, until the sun dies, 5 billion years hence. At that point, the sun's atmosphere will have expanded to engulf the entire orbits of Mercury, Venus, and Earth, which will have become charred embers spiraling, one by one; to the crucible that is the sun's core. Have a nice day."

—Neil deGrasse Tyson

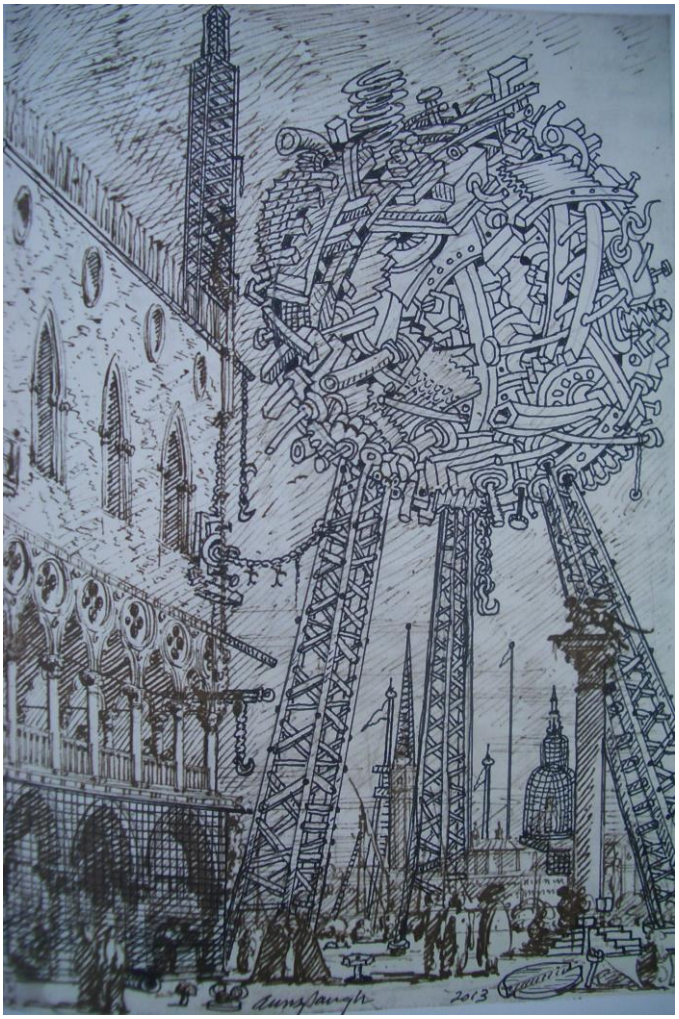
EVERY NOTE, A PRAISE

Matt Layne

And I took your advice to heart,
rose early,
and wandered out in that strange stillness
of early morning where I witnessed,
Hallelujah! a peaceful world,
void of human interference,
every bird song, a hymn of praise!
But here now came a man humming along
in his fishbowl of a car,
scattering the quiet like autumn leaves,
but peace be upon him!
in the sun's glinting light,
he seemed more a forgotten god
steering morning's chariot across the pinking sky
so we all might rise to find a world restored.

.....

Matt Layne is a librarian and poet from Birmingham, AL. He has won a few awards, published a few poems, and made a lot of friends. Each November, you can see him emcee the Day of the Dead Festival in downtown Birmingham. He is the poetry editor of Steel Toe Review*, and he has an amazing son named Isaac Charlemagne.*



CANNALETTO AND ME

7" x 10"

Pen and Ink

Dick Aunspaugh

Dick Aunspaugh, a native of Dunedin, FL, retired from teaching art at Young Harris College in Young Harris, GA. Cannaletto and Me *is drawn in pen and ink, on a book plate of a Cannaletto drawing of St Mark's Square. When not making art, his other passion is kayaking.* **aunspaugh1196@windstream.net**

THE RED CORNER

Russell C. Working - 2014 Hackney Literary Awards – First Place, Novel

NOTE: In the novel, The Red Corner*, Alexei, an eighteen-year-old Russian amateur boxer, is working in a Chicago deli called The Cherry Orchard when he recognizes a new customer as the mobster who murdered his businessman father eleven years ago in Russia. But Garik, the assassin, does not recognize Alexei, who was present at the killing. Alexei vows to avenge his father by killing Garik and even confides in Darya, his lover, but he finds himself unable to act after he learns the mobster has a fourteen-year-old son. At a party catered by the deli, Garik offers to buy the business, apparently planning to launder money through it, but the owner, Yakov Isayevich, refuses.*

The next day when Alexei arrived at the Cherry Orchard, the doors were locked and a "CLOSED" sign hung in the window. Darya was behind the counter removing the butcher paper that had been laid out in the deli case overnight. He rapped on the glass, and she came over to twist the keys three times this way and four times back, then said from some distant realm, "It won't o--" whereupon the door flung open and smacked him in the brow. The room, warmed by the early light through the plate glass, breathed the fermenting aroma of rising black bread. Across the room, Lyuba stood inclining her head toward the office. Back through the doorway Alexei could see Garik's lieutenants, whom the deli workers called Scarface and Buzz. Scarface, ponytailed and wearing jeans and a windbreaker and a Polo shirt buttoned up to the timberline on his throat, leaned on the door frame, looking this way, at Darya, as a toothpick shimmied in his clenched teeth. Buzz, in blue-and-white winter camouflage pants and a T-shirt from a Bulgarian wrestling tournament, was back in the office, his arms folded, looking toward the unseen table and desk.

"He's here, with his troglodytes," Darya said. "Garik."

"What do they want?" Alexei asked.

"I don't know, they're talking to Yakov Isayevich in back."

Seeing Alexei, Lyuba, the owner's wife, joined them and said in a low voice, "They're trying to buy the place again. Yakov said I should stay out here and get ready to open up. I don't like that Voskresensky, he gives me the creeps. His buddy from the party's also in there. Odious people. Oh, this couldn't have come on a worse day. Our granddaughter, Rufina, went out to play in St. Petersburg and she hasn't come back. She's been missing

for hours. She's only eleven. Our daughter, Katya, phoned us about it. Alexei, go see what they're up to back there. I don't like this."

Darya said, "Maybe he shouldn't, Yakov Isayevich said to stay out—"

But Alexei was already heading back to the office.

As Alexei crossed the room, Scarface was momentarily distracted by Buzz, who was handing him a drink, and they raised their glasses in response to a toast offered back in the office. Alexei pushed right in. "Hey, kid!" Scarface said. "Nobody enters."

Alexei ignored him. Yakov Isayevich, dressed in a white shirt and bow tie, sat cornered against the desk behind the circular table, arms folded, his chin raised, stretching his jowls. Vadimych and Garik flanked him. In the center of the table stood a vodka bottle, along with three shot glasses painted with pictures of St. Basil's, of a sort sold to tourists in Moscow and Russians at the Cherry Orchard. Vadimych refilled them and returned the bottle to the damp circle where it had stood. A bag of Cheetos, bought elsewhere, spilled out on the tabletop like dried larva stranded on the contaminated bed of a vanishing inland sea. Only Garik was eating. He brushed the dust from his fingertips, wet his lips with vodka, and then deigned to notice Alexei.

Scarface grabbed Alexei's arm and said, "Kid, scram, we're busy."

"No," said Yakov Isayevich. "The boy stays."

Scarface looked to his boss for orders. Garik rose halfway from his chair and shook Alexei's hand. "Hey, champ, how you doing? Why don't you wait out there a minute? This is a private conversation."

"Yakov Isayevich said--"

"Which is a polite way of saying, get the f___ out of here."

Alexei glanced back at Scarface, who had his hand in his windbreaker pocket, as if holding a gun.

"Go," the old man said.

Alexei returned to the store proper, followed by Scarface, who helped himself to some chocolates.

"Word to the wise, kid," he said. "The thing is not to aggravate Garik, see? You personally get away with a lot around him, but I wouldn't push it. Me, I sure as hell wouldn't put up with s___ from a punk like you."

The conversation in the office did not take long. Yakov Isayevich cried out, "Savages! Animals!" Lyuba rushed to the office door, but Scarface stopped her. She called, "Yakov, what's going on back there?"

He did not answer, and she began shouting for her husband. Yakov Isayevich cried, "Lyuba, hush! Go away. I'm all right."

He emerged ten minutes later, looking pale, and a long strand of hair, usually combed back over his bald pate, hung in his face. Garik came out, shouldered Scarface good-naturedly, and made a point of offering his hand to the old man. Yakov Isayevich did not shake; he wiped his hand on his trousers. Garik laughed as if this reaction pleased him and headed toward the front door. Vadimych followed, tucking papers into his briefcase, with the two thugs behind him.

"So, we'll see you down at the title company," Garik said. "I think you'll agree you're lucky to get that much in what they call a stressed market." Had he been wearing a top hat he might have tipped it with his cane on his way out. "Lyuba, Darya, nice to see you girls."

Yakov Isayevich called the staff over, including his nieces who had just arrived, and explained that Cherry Orchard would be Garik's just as soon as he could sign all the papers. To everyone's dismay, the old man's face puckered up and he wept.

"What are you talking about?" Lyuba said. "Spit on him; if he's threatening you, we should call the police."

"No! It's Rufina! They kidnapped her! I just spoke to her on Garik's phone. Some of his associates in St. Petersburg are holding her. They said they'd release her when I signed."

"Oh, my God!" Lyuba cried.

"Where's my phone?" Yakov Isayevich found it in his pocket. "Somebody bring me a glass of water." He punched a key and waited for a moment, hushing his wife with a gesture. "I'm calling Katya." He swore. "Busy."

"For God's sake, Yakov, tell me!"

"They snatched Rufina while she was outside playing. So Garik dials a number and hands me the phone, and on the other end of the line is this man who says, 'Yakov Isayevich, I've got a little sweetie here who has a message for you.' And he puts Rufina on. She's sobbing. She says, 'Grandpa, they kidnapped me.' She tells me she's on the floor of a car, doesn't know where, some men's boots on her. 'They told me to tell you Dubai's not a nice place for little Russian girls.'"

"What the devil?" Lyuba said.

"Listen!" Yakov Isayevich said. "So she hangs up, or the men do. Garik tells me, 'Do you know how much Russian pussy sells for in Dubai or Shanghai?' (Pardon me, but those were his words.) He said, 'an eleven-year-old, a virgin, you know what we can get for her?'"

"Monsters!" cried Lyuba.

Darya glanced at Alexei, as if to say, *do you see who we're dealing with?* His eyes answered, *Yes, I've known since I was seven years old.*

But Lyuba was still in denial. "My God, this can't be."

"Do you think this is my idea of a joke?" Yakov Isayevich said. His cell phone rang. "Wait, it's them. Hello, Katya? Oh, thank God. Oh, thank God. Yes, they put me on the phone with her while they were holding her. Because they want the deli, that's why. I'm signing it over to them today. No, there's no avoiding it. No. No. No. No. We have no evidence, what are we going to tell the cops? Yes, of course, put her on."

He paced the room, his hands trembling so he nearly dropped the phone.

"Rufina? Grandpa. Oh, my God, are you all right?"

There was a long pause.

"Shhh. It's all right, sweetie. They didn't touch you or hurt you? Oh, thank God. Don't worry, you'll never see them again, they were just trying to pressure Grandpa. Yes, there are some very bad people in the world, and that's all there is to it, but that doesn't—"

He knotted his fingers in his thin hair.

"From now on, don't talk to strangers, all right? Yes, I know, it's not your fault, but if anybody tries to grab you, you fight, kick, scream, yell, 'People, help me!' Don't get in the car with them. I know. Of course you tried. You didn't do anything wrong. All right, my little sparrow, it's over. We're going to give them what they want, and you'll never hear from them again. Yes, that's right. Put Mama back on the line."

After a pause he said, "Katya? Listen to me. You've got to leave Petersburg tonight. Get on the train to Moscow. You can stay with Aunt Sonya, I'll call her. Tomorrow you go straight to the American embassy and tell them you want to immigrate. Find out what you need to do. We'll help. I've told you this for years, the time has come. You need to get out of Russia."

A tinny voice from the cell phone tried to assert itself but Yakov Isayevich flapped his hand by his ear impatiently.

"NO! NO! Tonight! We can talk about that tomorrow. Just go, go, right now, to Moscow Station! Here, talk to Mama."

He gave the phone to Lyuba.

After she had hung up, she looked around in a daze. "How much is he giving us?" she said.

"A hundred thousand," Yakov Isayevich said.

"A hundred? Just a few weeks ago he was offering five hundred, and even that was ridiculously small."

"Would you rather take over negotiations with them?"

"Oh, my God. What are we going to do?"

"I don't know," Yakov Isayevich said. "We've still got the savings, and we can sell the condo in Fort Myers. Or sell this one and move there. Get out of Chicago. We need to get Katya and Rufina over here. It's not safe for them in Piter anymore."

His eyes flitted about in dismay, as if searching for someone to blame, and he seemed a decade older, stooped, doddering. He settled on Alexei. "Well, you get your wish. The old man is out of the picture, and your new best friend is boss."

"Garik's not my friend," said Alexei.

"He just told me about the money he's been giving you to so-called 'support your boxing career.'"

"He wouldn't take no for an answer. I threw it away in the Dumpster."

This did nothing to assuage Yakov Isayevich's wrath. "You threw away money? What kind of moron are you?"

.....

Russell C. Working is the Pushcart Prize-winning author of two collections of fiction: Resurrectionists*, which won the Iowa Short Fiction Award, and* The Irish Martyr*, winner of the University of Notre Dame's Sullivan Award. His fiction has appeared in* The Paris Review, TriQuarterly, Narrative, Zoetrope, *and elsewhere. He lives in suburban Chicago.* **russellworking@gmail.com**

FOXFIRE

Vivian Shipley - 2014 Hackney Literary Awards – First Place, National Poetry

Ten years now, I've come to Howe Valley, the church
graveyard, but my father's stubbled face will not recede
beneath plane wings like white fences of Calumet Farms
framing Kentucky's Blue Grass Airport. It is the hour
for witches to take up broomsticks, but I have no coven,
augury or incantation to dam this sudden rogue wave

of grief. I know nomenclature of root salves but three
fingers of bourbon will ease my flight to Connecticut.
To keep him in my life, I've worn my father's Pendleton
cardigan threadbare, but it's not unraveling. Digging
in his heels when he went to stop his horse and plow,
Daddy didn't believe in quiet passage; no crying, clawing,

his heart took its own sweet time to stop. Slaughtering pigs,
chickens, knowing death first hand, my father was angry
about what he was losing: oak, black walnut boards he'd
cut would go to hands that never climbed them as trees
in Hardin County. Is that why I'm thinking of him poking
rotten stumps outside Cecelia to unearth an inverted castle

lit by foxfire? I doubt Daddy was teaching me conservation
of energy absorbed by luminous fungus molecules must
reappear again in some other form. More likely, it was to give
me an answer about love for those no longer on this earth,
how grief must find a voice. Buried it will rot like foxfire,
will not glow until it's broken up and gets air. Jewels by night,

luminous fungi caused decaying wood to glow. Never in pine,
fir or walnut, by day it was watermarked with black circles
called spalling. I'd highlighted Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn's
plan to dig an escape tunnel to the cabin where the slave
Jim was being held. A lantern would give them away; they
looked for *them rotten chunks that's called foxfire and just*

makes a soft kind of glow when you lay them in a dark place.
Not trying to free anyone, just wanting some fun, my father
and I would get buckets of foxfire to throw into Rough Creek.
Like sorrow that tears won't wash away, water will not quench
it. Over waterfalls, down currents, chunks broke up and went
for half a mile until the whole creek lit up like it was decked

out for Christmas. It has taken me most of a lifetime to have
a heart that can subtract from itself and still beat. Writing poems
about my father, sprawled in front of the smoke house, untrimmed
brows like lichen-moss, is like stringing bits and pieces of foxfire
on leaves and branches so they can dip and move to light a way
as they did for Huck, Tom and Jim through the woods, the night.

.....

Vivian Shipley teaches at Southern Connecticut State University. Her eighth book of poetry, All of Your Messages Have Been Erased, was n*ominated for the Pulitzer Prize, won the Sheila Motton Prize from the New England Poetry Club, the Paterson Award for Sustained Literary Achievement, and the CT Press Club Prize for Best Creative Writing.*
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"The most influential books, and the truest in their influence, are works of fiction. They do not pin the reader to a dogma, which he must afterwards discover to be inexact; they do not teach him a lesson, which he must afterwards unlearn. They repeat, they rearrange, they clarify the lessons of life; they disengage us from ourselves, they constrain us to the acquaintance of others; and they show us the web of experience, not as we can see it for ourselves, but with a singular change—that monstrous, consuming ego of ours being, for the nonce, struck out."

—Robert Louis Stevenson

LIDDED JAR WITH FINIAL

Alan Burch

Wheel-thrown Brown Stoneware.
Fired to Cone 6 in oxidation.
15" x 6"

Alan Burch is a ceramic artist living in Florence, AL. His work focuses on wheel-thrown traditional forms with a modern approach to surface decoration and construction. Alan earned a B.F.A. degree from University of North Alabama in ceramics, and though he has lived most of his life in Texas he considers himself an Alabamian because of the formative years spent here. **abnxs@bellsouth.net**

TYPESETTING TUNES

Terry Barr

The machine engulfed Travis, but he didn't seem to mind. Travis chain-smoked unfiltered Camels, and one was always burning at his side as he pressed the buttoned keys for all the letters to appear, just as I had originally typed them. Sometimes, yes, he made mistakes but not often. And anyway, when the words appeared in print, I was the editor; I was the responsible party.

And so I never mentioned Travis or his work to anyone.

He was frail and hunch-backed. Stooped just in the form you'd expect from one who spent eight, maybe ten hours each day typesetting others' words, making sure others' ideas or suggested messages came out cleanly, appropriately, and of course, without error.

So Travis, naturally, knew all the secrets, the stories.

Yet I never wondered what he thought about the simple panty raids, the SGA proclamations striking down women's curfew, or the "startling expose's" that exposed administrative corruption and the juggling of academic data to pacify and satisfy accrediting agencies and the *US News and World Report*. I wondered if Travis read what he typed at all, or did he simply concentrate on those little keys, putting each in its appointed place?

I visited Times Printing only on those occasions when I dropped off the copy and then, once Travis was finished, picked up the mock-ups. I was nineteen and didn't much know how to make small talk with a man in his 70's, a man who did not have the privilege or benefit of attending university. Still, I'd try sometimes:

"Hi, Travis. How does it look today?"

Most often he wouldn't look up, and only rarely did he pause at all. But when he would, I think it was more due to his need to inhale the Camel again than to respond to me. So at best, I'd get

"Good. She's good,"

And then back to his work.

I knew back then that men of his age took work seriously; they didn't live for their breaks and try to stretch fifteen minutes into thirty, as I did in my summer job. But one day, when I came to pick up my copy, Travis stopped his work. He rose up from the cramped space and looked directly to me:

"That band you wrote about that's coming next Friday. It says they play bluegrass. Is that real bluegrass or just what they think is bluegrass?

More words in one smoky breath than he had uttered in two years.

"It's real bluegrass, Travis. It's The Dillards, you know the band that's 'The Darlin' Family' on *Andy Griffith*?"

"You say it's real? Maybe I'll go."

"I'll get you tickets, Travis."

I dropped the tickets off for him the next day, though he was at lunch, and so I left it with his boss.

"Travis asked for these," he said.

"Sort of," I said. "Anyway, he wants to go."

"Hhhm."

When I got to the auditorium that Friday night, not only was Travis there, he was on the third row aisle seat, all alone.

"Hey, Travis! Can I sit next to you?"

"That all right," he said.

The Dillards put on a lively show for the crowd of 500 students and one old man. It took about two songs before Travis was dancing in his place, clapping his hands in the air, and singing along to "Rocky Top" and "Dooley." After the fourth song, he smiled at me:

"They're all right!"

I remember so little about that night really, at least what was happening on stage. But what I do remember, and what I can still see so clearly now, forty years later, as I set my own type, is Travis, with his old-timey horned-rimmed glasses, his stooped shoulders, and still in his uniform. And especially his fingers, the ones that were his trade, the ones stamped equally with black ink and yellow cigarette burns.

The ones he held so high as he clapped his way into my life.

.....

Terry Barr's essays have appeared in Belle Reve Literary Journal, Rougarou, *and* Steel Toe Review, among others. **gtbarr@presby.edu**

REMEMBERING A LONG-AGO FLIGHT TO ELEUTHERA

Richard Modlin

I received my doctorate and returned to Miami. What better way to baptize a fledging marine biologist than with tropical water? My friend Paul and I planned a month's cruise aboard his sloop, *Physalia*, from Coral Gables across the Gulf Stream to Bimini, and beyond to the east. Since he had left before I arrived, I was to meet him in Eleuthera.

On 22 May 1976, I entered Fort Lauderdale International Airport. I bought a ticket on Mackey Airlines and found the dim, nondescript, beige-colored gate.

"Hurry!" a ticket clerk grumbled. "Everyone's aboard. It's ready to leave." He pushed open one of the glass doors.

I blundered onto the tarmac. Parked beyond the chain linked fence, its nose angled skyward and tail on the ground, waited a glistening, aluminum-colored DC-3. Painted on its fuselage was, Mackey Airlines. From the top of the boarding ramp the flight attendant gestured for me to hurry along.

Stunned at seeing this flying relic, I froze, caught my breath, then hurried up the ramp. At the door I grabbed a handle, gasped, and furrowed my brow. Allowing a moment to de-stress, I looked at the flight attendant, nodded, and then grinned. "Didn't know these things were still flying commercially," I said.

Smiling, she said, "Find a seat, Honey."

As she pulled the door closed, I grasped my backpack, straightened, and made my way into the plane. With my elbows held high, I squeezed down the aisle and I found an empty window-seat. Never having flown over the ocean before, I wanted to see the sights.

"Strap-in!" A male voice cracked through the speaker.

I glimpsed forward. Silhouetted against the glare of the cockpit windows, the pilot and co-pilot appeared busy checking through a thick binder. Their bodies masked a simple console of instruments. The engine outside my window began to whine. Slowly the propeller started to turn. Its rotation accelerated. Then a loud bam shot a huge cloud of white smoke backward, and the propeller, with increasing roar and vibration, rotated faster and faster. The noisy confusion on my half of the DC-3 didn't mask the complaining scream of the opposite engine. Then came the blast of

smoke, roar and momentary out-of-phase vibration. As the pilot trimmed the engines into harmony, the plane began to move forward.

As the DC-3 taxied to the head of the runway, I scanned the fundamental interior of this antique airplane. A flat, beige and gray-colored material covered the plane's interior walls. There was no air conditioning aboard a DC-3. Once in flight, outside air cooled the inside. Passengers sat in metal-framed seats cushioned in beige-gray mohair. The pilot, copilot, and flight attendant, an exotic-looking blond, wore stylish uniforms.

The pilot revved the engines and released the breaks. The DC-3 tore down the runway, roaring and harmoniously vibrating. Its tail lifted. We sat level. Then its nose rose and we were airborne. In a moment the Florida shoreline fell behind the wing and Grand Bahama Island appeared to the north.

The airplane's course turned to the southeast. North and South Bimini came into view. Before my buttocks imprinted on the seat, the DC-3 began to descend, turned ninety degrees to the left, then two more sharp lefts, and in minutes its landing gear screeched onto South Bimini Island.

When the plane stopped in front of a shack-like terminal and the attendant opened the door, its interior filled with heavy, humid air. It was as if we had landed in a sauna. Several passengers exited. Since a breeze blew outside, those of us who were continuing on to Eleuthera stood in the doorway or on the ramp, until we were told to return to our seats. The slight exertion I expended walking uphill to the doorway caused my perspiration to produce a rough, splotchy map of the Bahama Islands on my shirt's front and back.

"You're not accustomed to tropical air," the stewardess said.

Not wanting to show my inexperience to this eye-catching beauty, I told her that I'd just been away for a while.

"Sure." She said and handed me a magazine. "Honey, step outside and fan yourself. It might also be good if I rub you down with some coconut butter. Your skin is lily white." She winked and smiled, then walked down the aisle checking for anything the exiting passengers might have forgotten.

The layover on South Bimini lasted about twenty minutes, long enough for the DC-3's interior to turn into an oven. Door closed. I wondered how long it would take to roast a human. The engines started. The plane rotated away from the terminal, moved a short distance, and stopped at the end of the runway.

Get this tub into the air! My mind cried.

Engines revved. The plane lurched forward and sped down the runway. Salt grass and mangrove trees swept away below the wings. With the air vents opened wide, the interior cooled. The turquoise ocean expanded as the plane rose. Exposed sandbars on the Bahama Bank glared white. Those submerged curved and twisted like whitish-green and aqua-marine sea monsters. The bank sprawled below, then it ended and the water turned to a viscus royal blue color. Below me now, the very deep, extensive area known as the Tongue of the Ocean. To the southwest was Andros Island, south was Nassau on New Providence Island; Grand Bahama and the Abaco Islands floated to the north, and east about one hundred miles, the bank that contained Eleuthera Island and my destination of nautical challenges. On our sail back to Coral Gables, Paul and I would pass through this stretch of ocean.

.....

Richard Modlin is the author of Revolutionary War novels, Patriot Apprentice *and* Newfound Freedom*, and travel memoirs,* Chasing Wings *and* Malachite Lion. *He is professor emeritus at the University of Alabama in Huntsville and former president of the Alabama Writers' Conclave. Modlin and his wife, Marian Lewis, whose work has also been featured in Birmingham Arts Journal, reside on a forested hill in north Alabama.* **rfm1937@earthlink.net**

"It was a blonde. A blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window."

—Raymond Chandler

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