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“Indisputably, Part 2”

In a couple of weeks from now, my eldest is back to school. That is, she’s heading back to college to begin her sophomore year. I’ve been making deadlines since she was in third grade; in all that time we’ve been talking, she and I, about books, about writing, about art and music. She’s won a contest for writing a book (in fifth grade!) and she’s played keyboard and sung in public (at the county fair) and she’s performed at Carnegie Hall (with her high school a cappella group.) For all of those things I have enormous pride. But this fall she’s truly busting my buttons, for she’s taking a class in Creative Writing.

Yes, I know, you can’t push someone into it, nor can you pull. Writing is the thing that causes itself in a person. And I’m not sure I would wish someone into being a writer, because it is difficult, with long moments of extreme dissatisfaction. But I love it so much (that I’m probably doing it wrong), and I want her to have this kind of love for something she does.

I like talk with her about it. About imagery and developing characters. About sitting in public places and taking out your earbuds and really listening to how people speak to each other. About writers I like because their prose is...elegant, and writers I like because their prose is terse. I talk to her about rules, and breaking rules, and not breaking rules. And sometimes she shows me work, which is the most fun for me, but I cannot let it be so in front of her, because I think the biggest trap for a writer is being satisfied with yourself and having no reason to go on tomorrow.

A lot of these conversations are just politeness on her part. Sitting and listening to me talk. Nodding her head in agreement. *Sure, Dad. Sure, sure.* And only a crazy person would wish that she not follow her own roadmap to be someone doing something that has an actual, steady paycheck when she’s older. But there are days when I’m a crazy person.

Part of having a daughter who might, maybe, someday, want to be a writer, gives me secret joy. And fear, because writing requires thick skin and fearlessness and a bit of dumbass. Right now, she’s none of those. She’s sensitive and brave and stubborn. Still, and oddly enough, it’s when we’re arguing about something and she says, “I didn’t say that, I said this,” and she goes on to parse her actual sentence. She digs in her heels about the definitions and usage of words.

My God, I love that.

Reading a slap-dash news article: I pop-quiz her. So is it compliance, complacency or complicity? That should be a simple question, right? Or is this my Rhyme of the Ancient English Major arrogance, rearing its ugly head? We’ve all seen click-baits where we are treated or subjected to a “look how dumb they are – they got that word wrong,” moment. Social media is chock-full of misspellings, poor conjugation, typographical errors, and the occasional, singularly odd made-

up word that we can only ascribe to having been originally misheard in a Rolling Stones lyric on AM radio. (Yes, I'm that old...)

And although a selfish part of me wants someone to gripe with about bonehead grammatical mistakes, my daughter's not the one. She's much kinder than I in that regard. Like her mom, she has a good heart, full of empathy for folks who say *lesser* when they mean *fewer*. And she doesn't care that it is both flammable and inflammable and rub her hands together slyly imagining there must be a conspiracy theory hidden like an easter egg in there, somewhere.

So when, *when*, is it actually time to fix our actual mistakes? Is there anyone out there who hasn't typed a word then then typed it again accidentally? Do we correct this, or leave it because it's not really important? Did that person mean *sublimely* or *subliminally*? I ask, although I must say that I'm pretty good either way on this one.

What I'm saying is that writing is not solitaire, where you can cheat or screw-up because it doesn't matter, no matter how much it may seem so in the beginning. The goal of writing is to *communicate* with others. Root – commune: to converse or talk together, usually with profound intensity, intimacy, etc.; interchange thoughts or feelings. What I'm most interested in is the concept of profound intensity, and the interchange of thoughts and feelings. Where I come from an interchange is that frightening piece of the highway where other cars are trying to get on or off and must either speed up or slow down to do so. They hesitate, or just wing it – both actions highly risky. Collisions are possible, with no good coming from them.

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CAUTION

When I buy the wrong pen refill, I often want to just buy the right pen...

“The Quilt”

by Maria E. Murray

Deciduous trees gilded with autumn hues heralded the beginning of the holiday season and yet another opportunity to bequeath Great Grandma’s bequest, a quilt, to a family member. As the current guardian of Great Grandma’s heirloom I rationalized that today would be the perfect time to carry out her wishes since the family would be together for Thanksgiving. With this thought in mind, I strutted to my bedroom.

At the foot of my bed was one of my prized possessions, a cedar chest that my beloved mother-in-law had given to me. The trunk had housed my children’s stuffed toys and outgrown clothes, but now its residents were the quilt and two blankets. I opened the chest and removed the quilt, the size of a throw, and spread it on my bed. As my gaze floated over the heirloom, I marveled at how Great Grandma had handsewn scraps of various colors, sizes and shapes to create a beautiful spring scene depicting a yellow Labrador retriever sprinting through a shallow stream flanked by trees and observant wildlife.

Four generations had handled the heirloom, yet it had stood the test of

time, primarily because my predecessors had recognized that the quilt was a masterpiece worthy of the best of care. But, would my children give the precious handmade coverlet the same attention if one of them was chosen? That question often visited my mind because my offspring—three boys and a girl—had not shown any interest in the heirloom. To this day my daughter, with marked detachment, referred to the quilt as “the old blanket”. Nevertheless, I wondered if I was being too hard on my apathetic children since I had been guilty of the same disinterest when I was a youngster. Even so, I couldn’t compare their adult reactions to those of a seven-year-old, for that was my age when I first saw the quilt one frosty winter afternoon.

That cold day, my mother’s energetic pulling of boxes from her bedroom closet ignited my curious streak. Was Mom cleaning her closet because she was looking for my Christmas present? Needing answers, I eagerly hopped over boxes and posed a very important question, “Mommy, what are you looking for?”

“You’ll see.”

The reply did not suffice. I needed to know. I needed to see. I got in her way. In spite of my inquisitive behavior and annoying intrusiveness, she arranged boxes of various sizes and colors into neat piles on the floor. Then a very big box came out. Patience not being one of my virtues, I shouted, “Open it, Mommy! Open it!”

Mom put the box on the bed. As she removed the top, my expectations soared, but they crashed when my eyes failed to recognize the box’s contents. “What’s that, Mommy?”

“A quilt.”

A quilt? My face scrunched up; it probably resembled one of Grandma’s prunes. Having witnessed my “What in the world is that?” facial expression countless times, Mom immediately proceeded to enlighten me.

“Sandy, a quilt is a bedspread that is made out of pieces of fabric that are sewn together. It has a backing that is the size of the quilt. The fabric is usually made out of cotton, and the middle consists of filler which is normally cotton. Nowadays, the middle could be a layer made out of an artificial substance. Anyway, the filler gives the quilt body and also provides insulation.”

Mom’s explanation zoomed by like a foreign language on jet skis, specifically Chinese, the language an uncle always mentioned when he didn’t understand something. Wondering



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what “filler, cotton, backing, and artificial substance” were, I leaned over the box for a closer look. Curiosity prompted me to glide my hand on the fabric; it was smooth and soft, definitely not what I had expected.

Mom gently brushed the hair off my forehead. “Would you like to see it, Sandy?”

What I said was not important, but what happened next was. When Mom took the quilt out of the box, an envelope fell out. “Sandy, will you please get that for me?” she asked, putting the quilt on the bed.

I picked up the envelope and handed it to her. She sat on the edge of the bed, and I sat beside her. My cerulean eyes beamed with unbridled curiosity as Mom opened the envelope and pulled out a letter. With a calm decorum that I could never emulate, she said, “It’s a note from your Great Grandmother.”

“Wow! It must be very old! What does it say, Mommy?!”

Mom opened the page; inside was a yellowed black and white photograph of a woman sitting on a rocking chair. On her lap was something that resembled a small comforter. “Who’s

that?” I asked, pointing to the woman.

“That’s your great grandmother.”

I stared at the woman. Her peppered hair was woven into a braid that rested on her shoulder. Her attire reminded me of the clothes women wore in Western movies. Her eyes were dark, but her craggy face and hands were *very* dark. All of a sudden, the impetuous words, “Was Great Grandma black?” vaulted from my mouth.

A bewildered expression swam across Mom’s face. “Why are you asking, Sandy?”

“It’s just that her skin is *so* dark.”

Adopting a serious tone, Mom stated, “Great Grandma was white. Her skin was dark because she probably spent a lot of hours working in the sun.”

At that age, my attention span was appallingly unpredictable. Any thoughts that I could have had about the quilt, the note, and the picture dissipated. “We’re not supposed to spend too much time in the sun. We could get skin cancer,” I commented.

“That’s true.”

Not being easily deterred, Mom steered me back to the note. She held the letter close to me, so I could see it. But I had not been introduced to cursive handwriting at school, so I was not able to read Great Grandma’s

squiggles. Even so, I gave Mom my undivided attention as she read, “I spent a lot of time working on this quilt. Please, give it to a family member when I die. I don’t want the quilt to go to a stranger. Please, I beg you. Do as I request. Lila Bradford.”

“Great Grandma was really worried about what would happen to her quilt,” I pointed out after Mom finished reading. Frowning I added, “Mom, what is a family member?”

“Sandy, *you* are a family member.”

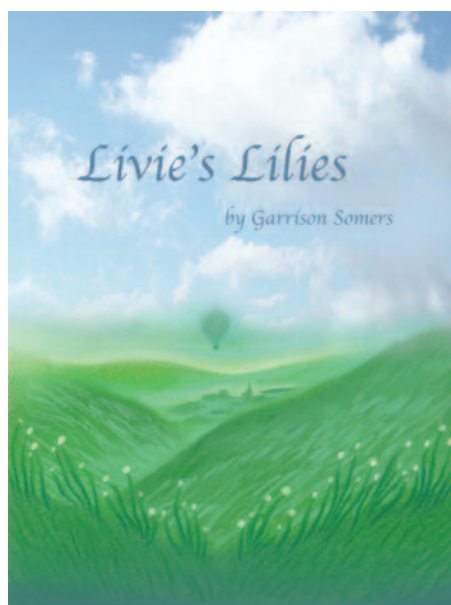
I pressed my lips together and stared at her. A few seconds went by, then I asked, “Mom, are you going to die?”

The soft gaze that had soothed me during troubled times reflected confusion. “What made you ask that question?”

After swallowing a copious amount of saliva, I declared, “It’s just that any time people talk about Great Grandma, they say that she died at a young age.”

Mom got so sad. I thought I had said something wrong. I probably had. After all, I was a kid. But I still wanted to know why she had suddenly gotten so unhappy. “Mom, did I do something wrong?”

“Sandy, you could never do anything wrong.” Mom’s slender arms



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wrapped around my small frame. “Don’t worry, Sweetie. I’m planning to be around for a long time.” Then, in a cheerful mood, she suggested, “How about having some chocolate chip cookies and a glass of milk?”

Milk was not my favorite food, but cookies, brownies, and ice cream were. Thinking about feasting on chocolate chip cookies, I quickly requested, “May I have four cookies?”

“You may have two.” Mom smiled. “I’ll race you to the kitchen.”

I got there, first. Keeping my hands off the cookie jar was difficult. To appease my anxiousness, Mom gave me a cookie then put two more on a plate. I grabbed the plate then merrily skipped to the living room, munching my cookie; Mom followed with a glass of milk and a cup of coffee. We sat in her favorite chair, a recliner large enough to accommodate us. The mental picture of me sitting beside my mother, eating cookies and washing them down with milk, brought a smile to my face. But the smile faded when I thought about the quilt, and that I had to bequeath it to one of my uninterested children. I was still considering to give it away today when I heard my daughter yell, “Mom, we’re here!”

Oh dear! Chrissy and Cecelia are already here. My goodness! Is it that late? I thought, hustling to the living room. But my granddaughter and daughter were not there, so I hastened to the kitchen.

“Grandma, I brought you something!” Chrissy ran to me, holding a ceramic turkey candleholder. After exchanging tender hugs, she gave me the candleholder.

“Thank you, Sweetheart, I’ll put it on the dining room table when we’re ready to have dinner. For the time being, I’m going to put it on the kitchen counter.” Concerned with the idea of choosing a recipient for

Grandma Bradford’s quilt, I inadvertently clutched Chrissy’s gift for a long while.

Cecelia must have presumed that I was having a senior moment. All of a sudden she blurted, “Mom, you look perturbed. Is something wrong?”

Not wanting to start an argument over my well-being, I put the candleholder on the countertop and focused on the items by the stove. “I see you brought a pecan pie and a green bean casserole! Thank you, so much!”

Cecelia cocked an eyebrow. “I’ll let this go for now, Mom, but where’s Dad?”

“He’s watching a football game with a friend.”

“I hope he’ll be home in time for dinner.”

With unquestionable self-assurance, I responded, “He will,” because Jeremy had never been late to an important event.

Later that afternoon the family gathered at the dining room table to feast on delectable food. Smiles, laughter, and engaging glances bounced off animated faces as lighthearted conversations skipped across the table top. Eventually, the effervescent banter faded as folks pushed themselves away from the table to give their replete-with-cuisine stomachs a break.

Men retired to the living room to watch football. Children bustled throughout the house. And women advanced to the kitchen; there, as chats wove through air redolent with spices, the notion of choosing a recipient for the quilt continued to tax my brain. After wiping a bowl dry and placing it in a cabinet, I told my daughter, “We need to choose a recipient for Great Grandmother’s quilt.”

Cecelia nonchalantly wiped her hands dry on a well-used dishtowel. Seconds laboriously crept by while I

waited for her answer. Finally, with the coolness of an experienced safecracker attempting to break into a wall safe, she said, “Mom, we’ll have to leave the blanket for another day. It’s pretty late, and Chrissy needs to go to bed.”

Her response, although expected, disappointed me but I didn’t object. Though I loved my grandkids, my senior citizen nerves could only take so much of their energetic roughhousing.

Conversations among the women continued, but the clinking and clanking of pots slowed down, then ended when my daughter and daughters-in-law finished loading casserole dishes with leftovers to take home. Their actions indicated that Thanksgiving was over. Yes. The holiday had ended and once more I had failed to fulfill Grandma Bradford’s wishes.

Discouraged, I wandered to the living room where Jeremy and my guests had gathered. As I listened to my children issue promises to visit “the old folks” more often, I knew from previous occasions that their good intentions would not be kept. Nevertheless, I was determined not to let that thought tarnish today’s bright side—Jeremy and I had spent some happy moments with our children and grandchildren.

After our guests left, Jeremy retired to the living room to read the paper, and I slipped to the bedroom to return the quilt to the chest. Staring at the heirloom spread on my bed, I wondered what the quilt had meant to Great Grandma, and for that matter, to Mom and Grandma. They had taken excellent care of Great Grandma’s heirloom; therefore, the quilt must have meant something to them. But what did it mean to me?

To answer the question, I mentally jogged to the circumstance under which I had inherited Great Grandma’s quilt. Ten years ago, I

became the quilt's angry, unwilling recipient when Mom passed away. At the time I firmly believed the quilt was not worthy of my love or respect because it was a blatant reminder that the life Mom had shared with me and my father was over. Eyes brimming with tears, I wanted to throw the quilt on the ground and stomp it to shreds but I couldn't move. I couldn't destroy what Mom and my predecessors had protected for so many years.

And now, at 65 years of age, I still wanted to protect the quilt. Why was I doing this? I covered my mouth to stifle a chuckle. The motive was obvious. The quilt reminded me of the happy and not so happy times that I had spent with Mom; those priceless memories were sufficient reasons not to give it away.

Before I convinced myself to do otherwise, I found a greeting card and wrote a note to my children: "Dear Cecelia, John, Steve, and Henry, when I'm gone, please choose a recipient for Grandma Bradford's quilt from family members. Don't worry if you are chosen. You will learn to appreciate the quilt as I have. Love you, Mom."

Satisfied with my decision, I placed the quilt and the note in the chest. ❖

"Who gave these idiots
microphones?"

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"Euology for Moby"

by Bianca LaPaz

He came into our lives 11.5 years ago, when we were least expecting it. "Let's get a cat," my mother, my younger brother, and I decided. It was around the time of Thanksgiving, and in my fourth-grade class we had just read a story about a young girl with a black and white cat. In the SPCA shelter, I was drawn to the only black and white cat available, distracted by its uncanny resemblance to the cat described in the story. Surely this was meant to be, I thought. But right next door to this celebrity of a cat, there sat the cat we would eventually call Moby. They had given him a temporary, generic name, one that we changed as soon as we got home. My mother was fixated on him, her intuition telling us things about him that hadn't even come true yet. He was the one. Together we watched him rub his face across the metal bars of the cage in figure-eights, attempting to rub his own cheeks in the way I grew to know he loved. The undulations he created against the bars of his cage, over and over, reminded my mother of a mobius strip, which is a one-dimensional surface that ripples endlessly without provocation. And that is how he became known as Moby. And that is how he became our cat.

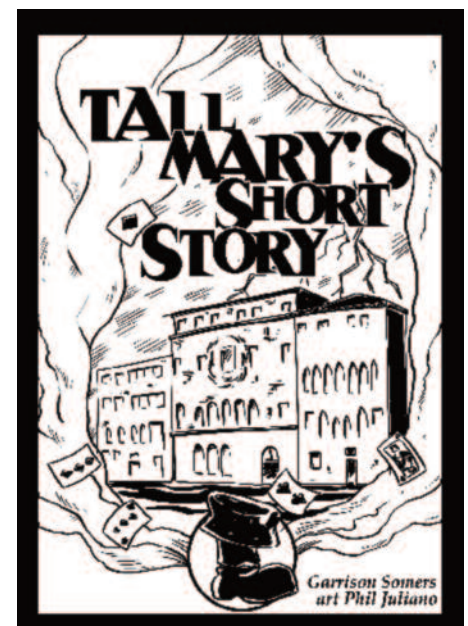
Within a couple of weeks, he was given another name, this time by my then 8-year-old brother: Moby Dickerson Joe Johnson Myerson Lawrence III. We would chant his full name in song all the time, falling into a fit of giggles by the end.

After he came home with us, I spent hours and hours watching him, dream-

ing up what his life must have been like before he became a kittypet. The Warriors book series, about clans of feral cats, painted our early days together, as I attempted to comb into his unknown past while I brushed him, looking for answers. What was his warrior name? What clan did he belong to? Was he happy now as a kittypet, or would he forever ache to return to the wild?

He had an affinity for the outdoors, always darting for the back door. He did get many mornings in the backyard, prowling through the garden, eating grass and rolling on the patio in the sun. There were maybe one or two times where he successfully escaped under our noses, often through the garage when we were bringing in groceries. One evening he had been gone for some time, and my anxiety was mounting as dusk

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approached. My brother had walked around the neighborhood asking whoever he saw, "Have you seen a grey cat with a white lightning strike down his chest?" To this day, I never knew why he floated on such a subtle detail of Moby's appearance. What about his little white socks? What about his white muzzle and chest, and perfect, little grey chin? What about the way the white and grey met around his nose, fitting together like the rarest of inverse puzzle pieces? What about the way his tail curled into a backwards C, always indicating he was happy?

I walked up and down my street, calling his name in a high-pitched voice, drawing out the long O and the long E, a common call to which he had learned to respond. It was part of our daily back-and-forth, an acknowledgment between the two of us: I would call out for him, looking for him through the house, and he would respond with a few friendly, falsetto meows, excited that someone was paying attention to him, trotting out to

meet me. Almost dark, I called out again, and he answered in his same way, like everything was normal. He scurried out from under the bushes of our neighbor's house and up to me. I picked him up and carried him inside, lightly scolding him for being gone for so long and not leaving a note. Once inside, I realized he had received a scratch on his nose, probably from a territorial cat that lived down the street. (It may have been this same cat from whom he received a bad case of the fleas not that much later.) I watched that wound heal day by day, a small pinkish-red gash, reflecting on his imaginary days as a warrior cat.

By fifth grade, he had inspired me to decorate my bedroom walls with gritty print-outs of cats from the Internet, complete with early "I Can Haz Cheeseburger" memes to cartoon cats, blown up inspirational cat posters from the Scholastic Book Fair, torn out pages of kittens in baskets from dedicated cat calendars, and of course, pictures of him taken on a prehistoric digital camera. He was becoming part of my identity, this cat.

He was a very vocal cat. Whenever we came home, he always greeted us with such excitement, asking us about our days, only to begin telling us about his, and then interrupting himself to beg for food. This was so common, I wrote a poem about it in fifth grade, titled "Sister to Cat," stylized to mimic Langston Hughes' "Mother to Son."

"Well, Moby, I'll tell you:

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Life for me ain't been no can of wet fish.

It's had sourness.

And neglection,

And has been replaced with almost nothing,

And times when it's not there—

Hunger.

But all the time

I've been survivin' on,

And callin' out,

And findin' love,

And sometimes findin' no one there

Where there ain't been no 'home.'

So Mobster, don't you turn back,

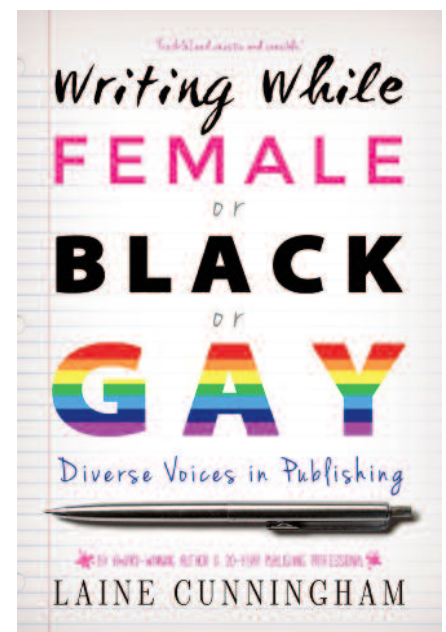
Don't you wail into space for someone,

'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.

Don't you sit there with pleading eyes now—

For I've still searchin'.

Mr. Moby,



Available on Amazon

The Pregnant Mare or The Guys in The Crate at The Joint



Garrison Somers

art by Susan Connors

On Amazon - of course....

I'se still a-findin'.

And life for me ain't been no can of wet fish."

When I started using a laptop in sixth grade, so began the daily battle of keeping him from sitting on the warm keyboard whenever I got up to leave the room. He loved to sit on strange surfaces, like pieces of paper, plastic bags, newspaper comics, and cardboard. Occasionally he'd get into his bizarre mood, which we called "frisky," where his eyes would get so wide and he would gallop back and forth across the house, sometimes stopping to attack an imaginary insect on the wall. I don't know if he saw ghosts, but whenever he got into these moods, he sure saw things we couldn't. "Moby," we'd say, a little exasperated but mildly entertained. In the cave—a distant, extra room built on one end of the house which eventually became a guest room—if he happened to get frisky one evening, it would be no surprise to us to see him leap from the footboard of the bed to the top of the nearby armoire, where he would claw at figments of his imagination on the wall.

On weekend mornings, while I slept in, my mother would let him out of the living room, where he slept at night, into my room. Every time, he had one destination in mind: he would climb under the covers with me to curl up in the dark, warm recesses of my bed. And there we would sleep together, two cats in a cradle. Except for the mornings when he wasn't sleepy, and he would climb around on my pillow, batting my face, trying to wake me up. I would often groggily try to encourage him to settle down on top of my covers and make bread, something he loved to do often. Soon after, he would finally fall asleep,

soothed. In the evenings, he had taken to sitting on my textbooks and notebooks while I attempted to work, my best friend who never wanted to leave my side.

He lived through many home renovations, as 1970s carpet became hardwood floors, windows were replaced, walls were repainted and even knocked out, and the kitchen was retiled. He also lived through the addition of two big, burly golden retriever puppies, named Kashmir and Seamus, who eventually grew into full-grown adults. Moby probably wouldn't like me mentioning this, but he and Kashmir got along pretty well when she was a puppy.

I was quite fortunate to get to spend the healthiest years of his life with him while I still lived at home throughout late elementary school, middle school and high school. When I was no longer there, he received the best care in the world from my mother, who gladly fed him at least a half-dozen times a day in perfectly sized portions, so he wouldn't get sick from eating too much, too fast. In addition to incessant meowing, we knew he wanted food whenever he would reach out and lightly tap us with his paw, claws slightly extended, to get our attention. "Psst," he would say. "I'm hungry." I would often take this opportunity to

get close to him and bump noses, pressing our foreheads together, our own secret language. Much like Rolly from 101 Dalmatians, he wasn't at all unlike a dog, this cat. He did chase his tail, after all. Moby, this ultra-fine feline, was so special, he even received his own Facebook page—the creation of my mother after I had gone off to college and complained of missing him a great deal. He had taken to curling up on her chest in the evenings as she reclined on the sofa, becoming so very attached to her. Even when I could no longer be there, I knew he was still happy.

At approximately age 14, Moby's health began to quickly decline, in the last six months or so of his life, due to cancer, and on March 21st 2018, we as a family decided to help our beloved, elderly cat return to the wild. He went peacefully, and he was laid to rest in our backyard, in his favorite cat bed, where he will become one with the Earth again, in the same place he loved to explore and bask in the sunshine. He may go off to join StarClan, or he may one day be reborn as a new kitten—we can't really know—but it is my hope that one day my buddy boy and I will meet again, perhaps in this life or the next.

Moby, the Ultra-fine Feline. ❖



"Cold Poets"

by John Grey

Thinking about you,
Amos Anderson, Colorado Springs wasn't it,
poetry reading in the snow,
all rugged up and resting on gravestones,
the air as frigid as the poles –
shivering, shuddering, huddled like sheep,
not actually poetry reading,
more like poetry breath,
poetry crumpled paper,
poetry laughter in the land of the dead.

Something about fruit
or was it a woman named Michelle,
or more philosophic, given our surrounds –
is there an after-life
and does it involve worms? frozen worms?
and why's there no one here but us?
is mourning really just one more factor
of temperature?

Thinking of you in a warm place,
hot desert actually,
but comfortable lodgings –
my poetry is air-conditioned these days –
and, in winter,
it's never far from the fireplace –
I even speak aloud,
though I know you can't hear me –
it's in the tradition –
I spoke to Bukowski for days after he passed away,
and Ginsberg too –

Two by John Grey

I've even been to Paris and chatted with Baudelaire-
I often do conversations solo.

No audience in Colorado Springs,
just ourselves,
cracked voices, weeping eyes,
reading to each other,
ears too blocked with ice to hear –
you're very much the colder,
according to an email, an online obit –
all at body temperature,
not as I remember you.

"Gym Class"

by John Grey

Mr. Waldron calls boys, "ladies."
He loves to thump an arm,
a back, even a stomach, every now and then.
And he has a look severe enough
to snap a jockstrap
when someone fails to measure up.
Your brains are not part of the equation.
Nor is your nature, good or otherwise.
Mr. Waldron cares only for your
approach to the pommel horse,
your single and double leg work.
He wants finely tuned bodies
performing immaculate routines.
He has no interest whatsoever
in how many presidents you can name
or how respectful you are to your parents.
Give him spindles and flares
with immaculate handstands,
spirited dismounts
like you're expecting a ten from the judges.
Brains and heart are of no consequence.
Be just like Mr. Waldron and you'll get by.

“Knightswood”

He drove me to Greenock
whenever his car hiccupped
or had a clot in its blood
so a car's failing health
was my propitious chance to rejoice.

I was no Helen of Troy
but was made to feel like one
every blessed Monday evening
when to Helensburgh we went
my glass of Perrier water fizzling
as I sat in my fitful dress
a Troy in a Scottish pub.

And Knightswood that still exhales
its breath of fugitive Knights
was our haven at noon
and sometimes in the middle of the night
where a half-dressed moon
anointed
my temples with a half-kindled love.

Friendship, loyalty, nostalgia; and the joy and healing power of music...

A Southern college town and its thriving local music scene,
where the music's neither "sacred" nor "profane" so long as it's
good...

A lost tape of a beloved band's legendary show...

A record label, poised to break big, which certain people want
to be part of - by any means necessary...

Two visitors, whose own music has been muted by regrets over
long-ago bad decisions: Chuck McDonough, former grad student,
who skipped town after learning things about himself he couldn't
face; and Penny Froward, whose attempt to help a friend in
danger almost destroyed another woman's life...

A mysterious will by an unknown hand; and murder...

Blotter Books presents:



All Tomorrow's Parties

by Marty Smith



(publisher & book reviewer, "The Blotter Magazine;" contributor to the "Urban
Hiker;" former host of "New Frontiers" and "Laugh Tracks" on WXDU - FM,
Duke University Radio)

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"Celena Luxance"

His only interlude
is a furtive look
at a junior clerk
who keeps his books

she is poor
obscure
and rather demure
with specs defying
meteors.

He's seen her gown
a hundred times
the same old broche
of the medieval cast
her hair all locked
in the same tight knot
the pair of shoes
with not a speck of dust.

Her slender hands
without manicure
repose on paper
like a pair of oars
all eagerness to row.

She rarely chats
she rarely yawns
pours out her verve
into her work
and spends her break
by the nearest oak.

He'd relish a bite
from her triangle of cheese
from which protrudes
some lettuce
few peas
and sip her nectar
of home-made teas.

He tarries until
the clock strikes five
when she gives her specs
the celestial shine
to catch a glimpse
of the naked light
lambent
in unshielded eyes.

The glamorous schemers
Lynn and Shaun
uneasily fidget
in a nearby tavern
waiting to snatch
a single glance
at the beau whose eyes
remain entranced
by Celena Luxance.

"Rain"

by Susie GhariB

The nuisance that disturbed neat locks of hair
that shamed our funky shoes with blotches and stains
wreaked havoc on notebooks and lace
is the rain of our frivolous teenage.

We used to take shelter under ledges and trees
rebuking the skies for their ill-timed tears
watching the spheres succumb to cosmic craze.

We disparaged the sun for losing his muscular sway,
for failing to tear up mere cloud-spun swathe,
our looks all altered by aquatic blades.

We never wondered what happened to our childhood days
when we reveled in bathing in drops of grace,
splashing our boots in street-born bays.

Now that our fifties are mounted on steeds
we think that rain rejuvenates our skin
moistens our hair,
softens our age,
cooling the heat that menopause sprays.

The Dream Journal

real dreams, real weird

Please send excerpts from your own dream journals. If nothing else, we'd love to read them. We won't publish your whole name.

mermaid@blotterrag.com

Dream Excerpt #1

I was walking with my father who had died so many years ago and we were underneath the grey skies. It was a complex route and he was leading the way; I wanted to return the way we came because I'd forgotten my keys, and I was afraid of getting wet if it should rain. I arrived at a new apartment I was going to live in, on an upper floor, and I was alone, about to start my life over. I heard from my Chinese friend Winnie and she said happily "You're about to become a mother!". On a walkway someone carried a precious kitten over to me; I held it in my arms, and I wanted to eat it with a spoon as if it were made from yogurt ice cream.

B S M - Brookings, OR

CONTRIBUTORS:

Maria E. Murray of Fort Worth, TX, writes, "I am an entomologist and aspiring fiction and nonfiction writer. When I am not writing, I help my husband operate an antique business; hence, the inspiration for writing 'The Quilt' arose when we sold a vintage, six-gumball, vending machine stand that I loved and miss seeing in our house."

Bianca LaPaz has been a resident of areas in and around Charleston, South Carolina for most of her life. She is in her final year at the College of Charleston, majoring in Urban Studies with a concentration in Sustainable Urbanism, while minoring in Environmental & Sustainability Studies. She works as Assistant Internship Coordinator at her school's Office of Sustainability. She has been writing for ten years and more recently enjoys listening to podcasts, dancing to electronic music, and making mixed media artwork. She is infamous for her dried flower arrangements and recently created her first 'zine. This is her first publication.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident. He is recently published in *Examined Life Journal*, *Evening Street Review* and *Columbia Review* with work upcoming in *Harpur Palate*, *Poetry East* and *Visions International*.

Susie Gharib is a graduate of the University of Strathclyde (Glasgow) with a Ph.D. in English. Her doctoral thesis is on the work of D.H. Lawrence. Since 1996, she has been lecturing in Syria. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in *Adelaide Literary Magazine* and other poems are forthcoming in *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Straylight Magazine* and *The Pennsylvania Literary Magazine*. She is a lover of Nature and enjoys swimming.




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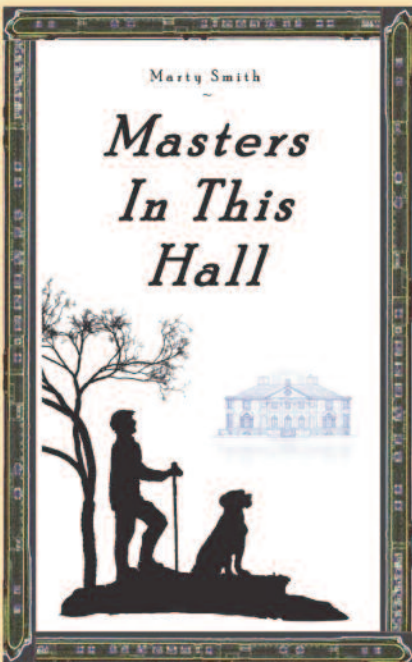
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Rick Kingsley's younger half-brother Aidan ran away three years ago. During those years, "ghost trains" – old long-gone streamliners – began reappearing, sometimes even rescuing people in danger. A being called "the Wizard" started entering peoples' dreams, but offering real-world psychic powers. Rick has inherited, from a mysterious recluse he's never met, a vast fortune and an estate, "Haw Court." And the world seems speeding ever closer to apocalypse, with global-warming fires, floods and tornadoes increasing both in numbers and size; along with human evils: "religious freedom" and Stand Your Ground laws, rampant bigotry online and in person, right-wing sabotages against society, topped by Trump's Presidential bid. Now, on the eve of the election, Aidan's coming home. His return may bring Rick to a possible confrontation with the Wizard himself – with the lives of Rick's family and friends, and his own, at stake.

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