

Graffiti

#2



Hey you! Yes, you! Graffiti depends on you to send us your creative work! Fiction, nonfiction, poetry, line art, photography—whatever you conjure up. Don't be shy! You know you want to. So do it today! More than once if you feel the urge! Be in the next issue, okay? Digital files to graffiti@eugene@gmail.com Hardcopy text or art: snail-mail or hand-deliver to 1440 Willamette St. #242, Eugene OR 97401



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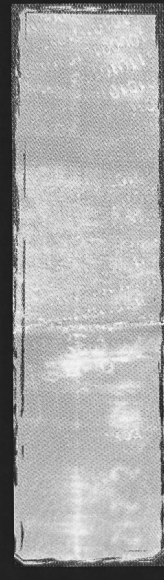
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FRONT LINES

Don Root

The First Postmortem



Photograph by James Otter

Well, all right! We got Graffiti #1 out there. Whew! How did it look to you guys? I was pretty happy with it. The bonehead editor (yours truly) made a few minor layout mistakes and one far more boneheaded error. I somehow managed to lop off the bottom of the photograph submitted by James Otter, DPO. Sorry, James! May the fleas of a thousand camels infest my... well, whatever. The whole photo is reproduced at left. It's much better uncropped, eh? The original had a nice sepia tone to it, but that won't reproduce in B&W.

As for Graffiti's other submissions, I enjoyed their diversity. Fun, serious, happy, sad—they covered the bases. And that's what Graffiti is all about: the collected voices of unique, creative individuals. If you really liked something in #1 (or in this #2), send us your thoughts. Personally, I'd love to see writers edit their works before submitting them. But just doing the writing is a good exercise, right? It's calisthenics for the imagination. If you're reading this and haven't submitted anything to Graffiti yet, what are you waiting for? Consider this your engraved invitation.

Turning now to this issue, first things first: **Let's all give a thunderous**

“HOO-YAH!” to OAK PRAIRIE WOODWORKS

for their incredibly generous donation to this issue! They made it happen, folks. Thanks to their help and continuing support from donor Rod Williams and our faithful advertisers, we upped the print run from 300 to 1,000 copies and actually covered the bill this time, making the publisher's bean counter happy (and saving said publisher painful lectures about fiscal responsibility from Guido the Enforcer). Enormous gratitude! And readers, **please support our exclusively local, small-business advertisers as enthusiastically as they support Graffiti! Thanks!**

In the long run, we need more advertisers, grant money, and/or patrons with wheelbarrows full of gold bullion for us. So please talk us up around town, and tell everyone you saw it in Graffiti!

Finally, thanks to some late-arriving submissions, we actually received more material than we had room for this time (yay!). Alas, that means some people's work didn't make it in (sad trombone). Try again next time, but please take note of our policy change—no more long, serialized works. Keep it to a stand-alone piece of fewer than 1,000 words. This ain't the NBA; shorter is better.

That's it for now. Onward into the frog!

—Don

Graffiti

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Donors: Oak Prairie Woodworks, Rod Williams

And let's have another round of applause for our donors to Graffiti #1, who helped get us off the ground: Steve Boergadine, Bill Gunn, George Havens, Penny Neu, Rose Ramsey, and, once again, Rod Williams! Thanks!

ON THE COVER: Danielle and Michele. Photo by Maury Cohen/CO Design. Computer graphics by Dave Hurst. Concept by Don. Incredible profiles by D&M. Thanks again, you two—you're beautiful inside and out.

INSTRUCTION MANUAL FOR BEGINNERS

How do I submit work?

You email it to graffitieugene@gmail.com, or you snail-mail or hand-deliver hardcopy to 1430 Willamette St. #242, Eugene OR 97401. Failing all that, just come to one of our monthly Graffiti salons and deliver your work to the editors in person. We're too broke to have a real office.

Does I gotta right good?

No, but if you have something to say, you want people to understand it, right? Dictionaries are cheap—even free online! And if you use one, you'll always have perfect spelling. It's that easy. Grammar's a little harder, but the more you write, the better you'll get. Trust me. Remember, as a rule, we don't edit. What you give us goes as-is.

Do I win anything if I'm selected?

Yes, you get published. No, you don't get paid. This isn't a contest. You write it. You send it in. We print it and drop it off all over Eugene. If there isn't enough room for everything we receive, we omit stuff at our whim. If you don't get in one issue, try again for the next.

GRAFFITI POLICY UPDATE

A few questions have come up recently that need to be addressed:

1. Does Graffiti accept previously published work?

Initially, our answer was “yes,” provided the author held the copyright and didn't have prohibitive contract obligations with the initial publisher. Upon further consideration, we are changing this answer to “no.” Graffiti exists to encourage creation, and since previously published work (self-published or otherwise) was not newly created, it runs contrary to this zine's mission. Of course, you published authors are welcome and encouraged to buy an ad in Graffiti touting your previously published work.

2. Does Graffiti accept submissions from outside Lane County?

We will prioritize material from Lane County creators, but we will publish work from out of the county if we like it and have room for it.

3. What length works are acceptable?

Shorter is better. Anything under 800 words makes us happy. Anything over 1,000 words makes us sad. Think of Graffiti as a tapas bar—tasty small bites, not stuff-yourself meals. **We will no longer be accepting long works needing to be serialized over multiple issues.**

DEADLINES FOR GRAFFITI #3

Content submissions: Saturday, March 11. (Procrastinators can bring their work to the salon that day and hand-deliver it, if they wish.)

Ad copy: Friday, March 10

COMING SOON!

The 1st Annual Graffiti Short-Film Showcase

A benefit fundraiser for Graffiti featuring short works by local filmmakers. Got a short film (or a long film and a pair of scissors)? Jet us an email and we'll give you the details.

**unless it's too long, or smells like fish, or we hate it on general principles*

Limited Scope

Jacob Wegelin

Although Mrs. Pitman had, I think, a limited scope, at least in the sense of what literature she enjoyed, which I believe I can partly deduce from what she had us read for her class---compare her with Ray Scofield the next year, whose class opened my horizon and, perhaps more to the point, whose whole manner and what he spoke of struck me as reflecting a world view less restrained than (be honest: more like my own than) Vivian Harper Pitman's---nevertheless in my sixties now I think of Mrs. Pitman more often than of Mr. Scofield, perhaps in part because Scofield occupied a comfortable place in my life, between Mrs. Pitman on the one hand whom I despised because I was smarter, far more intelligent, and Victor Viers on the other, whose class---alternating days with Scofield's, the groaning and hassle in contrast to the halcyon 2 hours of English where we implicitly agreed on what is beautiful and true and good and fun, contrasting like burning fibrous raw swamp watercress vs. bread pudding, Vicious Vic "in large quotes" destroying all certainty by means of cultural anthropology; and not perhaps but certainly because of the love, the solid thing, not Christian charity not impartial decency or professionalism but from the heart, I believe, a "clicking" or a "click," I mean she clicked for me, or I for her, although I did not recognize it until it was over: the mid-century Lake County, Oregon "Why don't you behave like white kids?" single mother when single motherhood was not in fashion, whose husband abandoned her soon after the wedding night (said a girl whom she had crossed), who held her own through a teaching career, through a broken hip and lived another 25 years, past her 100th, and the last time I visited her she said---her voice somewhat slurred now--"Jake, do you know what I want to be when I'm reincarnated?" and I said "Mrs. Pitman, I thought you were an Episcopalian" and she said, "I don't see any reason that Episcopalians can't be reincarnated, dear" and as I held her hand and, of all things, found myself smiling---tedious, tedious, yet I stayed an hour in that room---and saltwater ran down my face, she said she wanted to be reincarnated as a teacher. ☺☺☺

Maria, 10:49 a.m.

Anonymous

Maria sat alone, as usual, watching the giant barges come and go. The giant metal boxes full of pretty expensive things she didn't understand. Something in her ached thinking about it all, but she held back her urge to cry and slowly stood up, now focusing on a container that said "MAERSK."

She pulled her scarf up over her head again. It was quite dear to her, a beautiful pastel floral print that she found on the beach in Los Angeles. It smelled like the air during a spring rainstorm, old books and the highway. It seemed to always fall off her head when she focused on something she didn't understand. She considered it magic. It told her when something was about to change. She never told anyone, for fear that they would think she was crazy.

She surveyed the landscape, now exposed to the wind that was whipping her scarf around her eyes. Several barges were out about a half a mile, blinking their brilliant white and yellow lights at her and her magic scarf. There was a thick, dark grey fog coming in that was beginning to obscure her view.

A group of several seagulls hovered over the dock down the hill from where she was sitting. From time to time, one would swoop down and try to catch a fish from among the broken posts sticking out of the water. She suddenly didn't feel like being there, alone in the cold wind among the rocks. She looked at a decaying bicycle sticking up from among the rocks, half covered in algae.

She closed her eyes gently, and felt the strange warm feeling of fading, as she visualized herself

sitting in her rocking chair back at her apartment in Chicago, looking out the window at the ancient brick courtyard she had known for so many years.

She opened her eyes again, now looking out the window at a group of starlings sitting on the clotheslines. There were still a couple items of clothing on the lines, forgotten for a month or so. A grey pajama shirt, a forgotten sock and a pair of faded jeans hung limp in the light rain. The ground below was wet, clean and empty save for an old woman smoking a cigarette by herself. She looked lonely and sad. She is like me, Maria thought. She does not know her own beauty. Maria looked over at her vanity mirror, thinking of the harbor, the seagulls, the pelicans.

She again closed her eyes, and remembered looking out at the beach from the high sand dunes in Oregon. The little island of windswept trees standing above the sand where she gathered firewood at dusk. She could not hold back her tears; thinking of the ocean always overwhelmed her. All the townspeople, so sad and pensive looking. If they only knew how easy it is to be happy.

She continued thinking about those days in the end of winter, and felt herself fading. Now she was looking out at the beach, sitting with her knees in her arms, up at the western edge of the stand of trees. Thinking about those endless walks on the beach, when she would walk for miles in the icy wind, frozen despite her exertion but quite warm inside; finally satisfied and ready to walk home again. Happy to live in her little driftwood fort. ☺☺☺

The World-Famous Graffiti Salon

Last month's salon brought hula dancers, sword swallowers, and one supremely flustered cupcake salesman. As you can imagine, things got out of hand quickly, so this time, please, no elephants! (Hippos allowed but must be on a leash.) Come on down! Meet Graffiti's publisher, hand him your work, and bribe him with Châteauneuf-du-Pape! This free, not-to-be-missed event will take place on

Saturday, March 11, 2-4 p.m.

at

**Doc's Pad Taphouse
710 Willamette St., Eugene**

You come, you see, you conquer!

Where Do I Find Graffiti?

Look for this esteemed rag at the coolest establishments in Eugene, among them:

**Art House Cinema
Bhumi Refillery
Community Cup Coffee
The Copy Shop
Dark Pine Coffee
Doc's Pad Taphouse
Espresso Roma
Eugene Mailbox Center
House of Records
J Michaels Books
MECCA
New Zone Gallery
Red Barn Natural Grocery
Smith Family Bookstore
Tea Chai Té
Voodoo Donuts**

and in Cottage Grove:

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Miss an issue? Find it in our online archive:
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Donut!

Did I say "donut"? Sorry, I meant "DONATE!" It cost \$570 just to print this issue of Graffiti. If you like what you see, why not express your profound, undying appreciation with a wee cash contribution supporting free community expression?

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THANKS!



Glossary of Archaic Terms

Telephone Call: That thing when you actually hear a voice coming from your device and have to respond with your own voice. Positively terrifying.

Letter: Formerly used worldwide for communication between interested parties. An epistle handwritten on paper, folded and placed in a paper envelope affixed with a postage stamp, then dropped into a secure "mailbox" (a publicly available receptacle—at one time ubiquitous in urban areas), from which said letters would be collected by employees of the "Postal Service" and delivered to their addressees, who would open and read the enclosed epistles with glee and warm fuzzies. Interestingly, the demise of the letter seems to correlate with an increase in the size of human thumbs. Scientists are looking into this.

Rake: Once upon a time, people were able to gather autumn leaves fallen upon their lawns with this futuristic implement that burned no fossil fuels, contributed not one iota to climate change, and best of all, made no noise other than a soothing "whish whish." Unfortunately, at some point in the Anthropocene Epoch, knowledge of this tool was lost.

Broom: From the dawn of mankind, humans used this tool to keep their domestic areas clean of dirt and debris. Like the rake (see above), use of this tool seems to have completely disappeared with the advent of the "leaf blower" in the 21st century. Psychologists are currently investigating the correlation between the leaf blower and testosterone poisoning of male humans in the video-game era.

Bicycle: A mode of transportation largely replacing the horse in many parts of the world in the late 19th century. Widely known as "the most efficient means of transportation known to man," this device burned no fossil fuels, created no noise or air pollution, and was able to move its rider from Point A to Point B quickly and with little-to-moderate effort, while also providing the rider the health benefits stemming from physical exercise. But since the universal adoption of the fossil-fuel-burning, air-polluting automobile for transportation in the 20th century, the bicycle's use has largely been relegated to recreation rather than day-to-day utility. Interestingly, in the 21st century, the advent of "electric bicycles" allowed the rider to continue exploiting fossil fuels to a large degree, with the added benefit of reducing or eliminating the physical exercise component of the original bicycle altogether. This made them extremely popular.

Journalism: Formerly a respected profession, it was phased out starting in the late 20th century in favor of internet "clicks." Today, facts aren't facts, the "truth" is subjective, and readability has been rejected in favor of luring the reader to the bottom of the page past as many ads as a frequently errant or occasionally deliberate finger can click on. The last surviving journalist died last year. There was no memorial service.

Society: An archaic notion that humans could live and work together to the benefit of all. Although it was given lip service for ages, by the 1980s it had given way to today's universal understanding that all individuals live solely for their own benefit, regardless of the harm they may cause to others or Earth.



Photographs by Magoo

So, this is 20

by Jordan Rose

At this juncture, I have accepted the severity and frequency of coincidence as a phenomenon to be the *fashionably late* comedic relief in my life.

Divinity incognito, bittersweet good-byes, false starts, awkward introductions, and lack thereof.

Sometimes it's asking a guy you went out with two months ago to help take a bolt off of your hearty 2006 Hyundai Sonata, *which you've taken to fixing the spark plugs yourself and figuring out how to disassemble parts of your engine manifold.*

Mind you—The awkwardness of this ask lies in the fact that it's been a solid two months since you've last talked, and that communication consisted of: **"hey! i started dating someone else, just wanted to let you know. we can still be friends tho. _(ツ)_/"**

To your surprise (and his) he's elbow deep in your car, *which feels like a fast level-up in intimacy compared to the two hugs you've shared (and you're strangely wishing you were the car and not the dunce standing nearby with engine grease on your otherwise pristine Carhartt pants).*

The part frees itself (with suspicious ease, I have since been told), An even more awkward- **"Thanks! Bye! See you in another two months,"** is exchanged, and you're off to a job training where you come to the realization that the position includes the honor of keeping the streets of Eugene clean from porta-potty arsonists (a growing epidemic).

A note: I did not take that job.

Although the events leading to this moment felt like a fugue, by the end of the night you'll be sitting on a raft in the middle of the forest on a creek (of a Lutheran-school-turned-disc-golf-course that is the setting of a hippy-festival on this otherwise mundane Friday night).

You're with the guy- and soon you're noticing that melty-warm feeling that's followed you around all day is still with you although the sun has long since retired for the night.

No- the culprit can only be the beaming, and *estranged* familiar sitting in front of you.

And his (*previously noted*) kind face backdrops the discovery of freckles that seem to further accentuate his benevolent expressions. The red in his beard emphasizes the tenderness (*of his whole being really*) in his brown eyes, and you soon realize the only thing *strange* is the two month delay in this moment coming to fruition.

But if this past year has taught me anything, it would be that the path forward is never a straight line. It's jagged, curved, and sometimes looks like a drunkard had a night out with a spray paint can.

The path to finding my hand grazing his, and eventually sitting inside of his mom's white Toyota Camry and- *in a frenzied, awkward instance of stage fright* asking if it's "kissy-time," had to include a few missed connections.

A follow up text that was never delivered. A festival spent visiting all the wrong stands and with entirely ill-fitting company (and the wrong shoes). A few sterile side-hugs. And assumptions made *that in retrospect* gives me the insight that perhaps my young brain is still a few years shy of being the *headquarters* I should allow full judicial power to- and more akin to my actual *hind-quarters*.

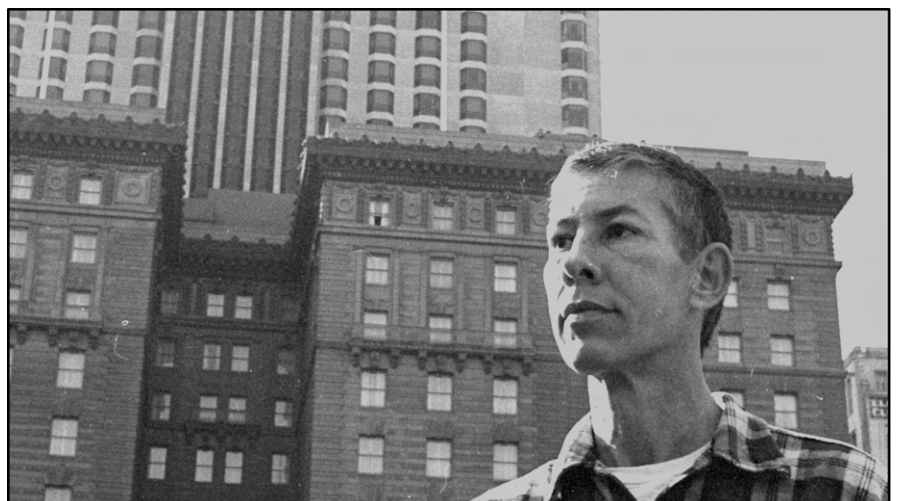
But what is young love other than chaotic? Two humans still understanding how the bodies they inhabit work, where everything goes, what everything is, and drunk on a speedball of heavy neurotransmitters.

That's where this story stands present day; the two of us entirely *"three sheets to the wind,"* (a nod to his seafaring experience) walking barefoot in a number of treacherous terrain, and giving each other *full frontal* hugs.

The icing on well- *both of our cakes really,* we have the same birthday.


Life is so fucking weird. Fucking *beautifully, magically, weird.*

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FELLINI FESTIVAL AT ART HOUSE CINEMA!

Film buffs rejoice! From now until May, Art House is presenting 16 works by the master Italian director Federico Fellini. The series began with his 1960 classic *La Dolce Vita* and will include *Amarcord*, *8½*, *Juliet of the Spirits*, and more. You don't want to miss this chance to binge-watch cinematic history! Go to www.eugeneartthouse.com for ticket and schedule info. Here's an excerpt from Roger Ebert's brilliant, poignant review of *La Dolce Vita*:

"Movies do not change, but their viewers do. When I saw 'La Dolce Vita' in 1960, I was an adolescent for whom "the sweet life" represented everything I dreamed of: sin, exotic European glamour, the weary romance of the cynical newspaperman. When I saw it again, around 1970, I was living in a version of Marcello's world; Chicago's North Avenue was not the Via Veneto, but at 3 a.m. the denizens were just as colorful, and I was about Marcello's age. When I saw the movie around 1980, Marcello was the same age, but I was 10 years older, had stopped drinking, and saw him not as a role model but as a victim, condemned to an endless search for happiness that could never be found, not that way. By 1991, when I analyzed the film a frame at a time at the University of Colorado, Marcello seemed younger still, and while I had once admired and then criticized him, now I pitied and loved him. And when I saw the movie right after Mastroianni died, I thought that Fellini and Marcello had taken a moment of discovery and made it immortal. There may be no such thing as the sweet life. But it is necessary to find that out for yourself." [from www.rogerebert.com]

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Thank you!

Pelicans Rising

White pelicans float
 edged with black
 silent
 mirrors
 depth
 of serenity... then

take leave of the lake
 rise
 in slow, elegant cyclone
 majestic gods as they go
 circle of my heart opens into sky

this is all
 of heaven and earth
 standing just there
 I could want.

Charles Mattoon

The Ur-Witch

She is a witch. An Ur-Witch.
 She can read my face
 and voice together as one
 sinew in the flexing muscles

of swiftly moving water
 and give me an interpretation
 of a dream forgot on waking,
 a dream she has not seen, yet

I believe that she, (by looking
 slightly to the side), can see
 the people in my dreams
 move, each like a Chess piece,
 from square to square inside me.

Leo Rivers

Returning

When the bird courses out into a continent
 does it know it carries home-song in its heart?
 Do salmon dream the promise of
 their warm stream womb
 while consumed by a northern sea?

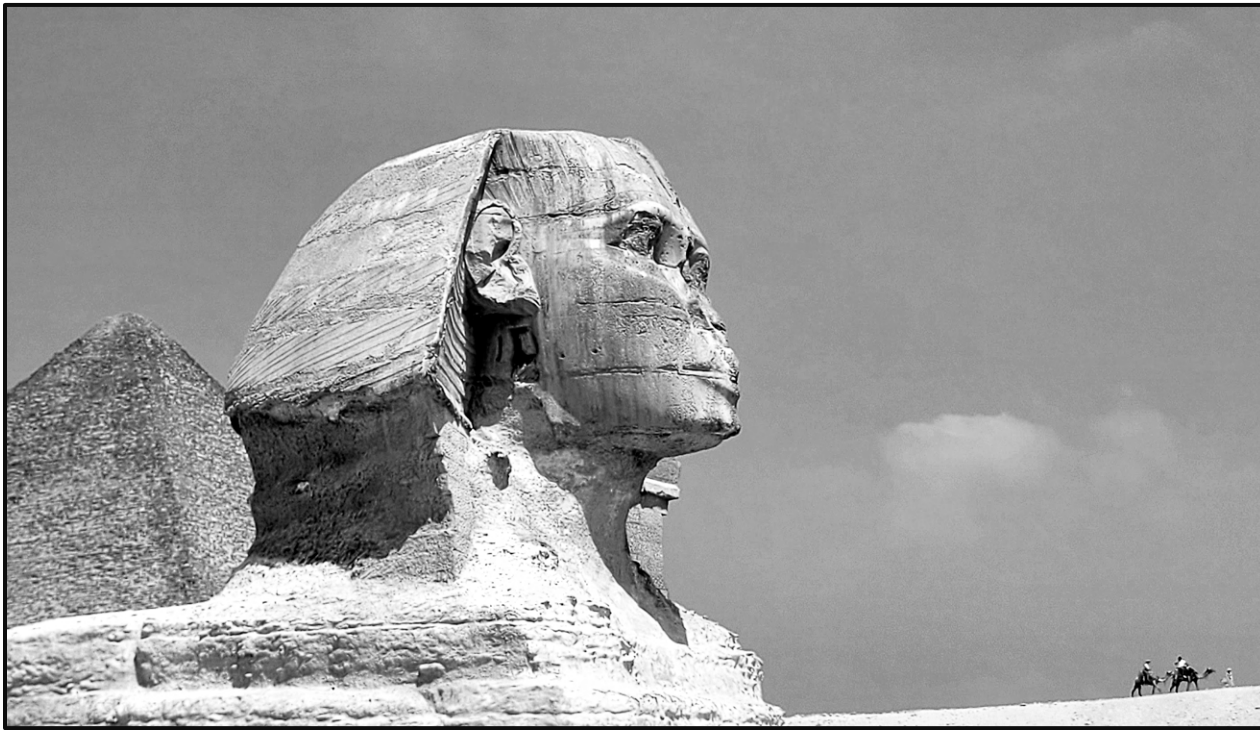
When we know (or think we know) we will return
 does the journey lose luster, or are we
 blinded to lucky chance
 from that harboring of home-fire glow?

Can I trust that return is remember,
 let the plunge into the roam
 prune me all the way back
 to deepest roots?

To go and come back is a necessary rhythm;
 if my poem ran on in one straight line
 how could I find my way before the end?

Maybe we travel better with faith
 that even when home won't stay
 how we left it
 and there's only strange around each bend
 the quest-ioning in the journey
 is with us wherever we go,
 every turn of the road an opening, a gift,
 so origin-al gratitude can accompany us
 in continual arrival
 so we feel our home waters abide
 through all the ebb and flow
 and know that the return of each breath
 every flight and forward step alighting on earth
 can be coming home.

Charles Mattoon



The Sphinx, Giza, Egypt. Photograph by Brian Hyta

Greyhounds and Wolves

Kevin Graves

Oakland, California, January 1993

Around 10 p.m., my Uncle Nick drove me to the Greyhound station in downtown Oakland, fully an hour before my bus was to take me back to Oregon. This was years before Oakland became gentrified; in 1993, it was The Hood.

I went into the station and looked around. The waiting area was full of passengers and other people just there to stay warm. Greyhound workers were milling about behind the counter, and a sign at one of the glass windows said, "Ticket counter closed, will reopen soon."

I sat and waited, because I needed to buy a ticket for the 11:15 bus, and the only way to get one in those days was to buy it at the station.

At precisely 11 p.m., one of the workers came out, grabbed the sign off the window, and started walking away. I jumped up and complained.

"I've been waiting here for an hour to buy a ticket and you guys never reopened!"

"Sorry, sir, we're closed," she replied, with a smile saying, "Fuck you, white boy."

"B-b-but..." I gasped.

I had just traveled the length and breadth of Europe for a year, and here I was, getting fucked in my own backyard. And in my native language!

A few giant security guards appeared and start herding all the transients out into the foggy Bay Area night. I followed the ticket-carrying crowd out the back door where the buses pull in, hoping I might be able to buy a ticket from the driver. I was wrong. When my bus showed up, I pleaded with the driver to sell me a ticket. He basically said I was SOL.

I was pissed. What could I do but call my uncle and have him come pick me up? It was now 11:45 p.m. and getting sketchy in the neighborhood. I thought, "Nick's going to kill me."

I found a pay phone out front and called him. He swore at me a little, but agreed to come get me if I'd stand out front so he could just pull up and get us the hell out of Dodge. Nick had lived in Berkeley since '68. He was no amateur.

After I got off the phone, I turned around to face the street and realized that five or six big young men were slowly, nonchalantly, forming a

semicircle around me. Moving as a well-coordinated team, they were pinning me to the side of the building, where I'd be totally shielded from the eyes of passersby. I was reminded of the nature shows that follow wolf packs closing in on a kill, their collective mind focused on a helpless moose calf, waiting to tear it apart limb from limb.

People talk about time slowing down when you are about to die. It didn't for me, but it did take an exorbitantly long time for this white boy from Eugene to realize my predicament.

Just as the alpha wolf got so close I could smell his liquor breath, an old guy with grey hair shoved his way into the circle, grabbed me by the collar and said, "This one's with me." He pulled me away from the wolves before they knew what was happening.

When Nick had dropped me off an hour before, this guy had bummed a smoke from me. He drove a cab and was parked in front of the station trying to pick up a fare. Or score drugs, or find a hooker, doesn't matter. He opened the passenger door, shoved me in, and then ran around and got in the driver's seat and locked the doors.

"What the hell you doin' out here, white boy?" he asked, laughing. "You just about got rolled. Them niggas was gonna put whitey in the hospital and take his money."

He clapped his hands together and laughed and laughed. Meanwhile I was having a panic attack. Wrong time, wrong place.

I may have said "thank you" to him five or five hundred times. Or maybe I didn't even utter a word, busy as I was shitting my pants. We smoked cigarettes, and he rambled on like the crackhead he clearly was.

When my uncle showed up, I got out of the cab and practically ran to his car. The wolfpack was still eyeballing me, big grins on their faces.

My uncle and I were mostly quiet on the ride back to Berkeley that night. I never told him about the wolves, and he never asked. I'll never forget the actions of that cab driver, who, for no obvious benefit to himself, saved me from becoming prey for the pack. Maybe he recognized me as a fellow vulnerable member of the herd.

☺ ☺ ☺

Looking for Work out West

Everyone's tracked by sorrow
Sorrow dogs you everywhere
Tough walking the straight and the narrow
When you've got your darkness to bear
When you leave your secrets unshared

I left my sweet girl in Philly
Looking for work out west
Crawled out of town on my belly
Said I needed to give us a rest
She said you're putting our love to the test

Worked the pipelines in North Dakota
That hard-bitten snowbound land
Found a job as a company gopher
With men whose lives hadn't gone as planned
Now can I see a show of hands?

All of us there for the money
None of us there for the grief
It's amazing what you can stand, honey
When you're numb from your toes to your teeth
And you're searching for some cold relief

Evenings we drank at this dive bar
Steely Dan on the jukebox
Shooting dice and dealing out high cards
Tomorrow we're drilling through rocks
Tonight there's no curfew, no clocks

Met a lady with a shadowy half-grin
A lonesome ghost with a spark in her eyes
A phantom nursing a tonic-and-gin
She reminded me, I realized
Of Philadelphia, and my sweet girl's sighs

One morning near the hydraulic lines
A man shouted, "Fire in the hole!"
The rescue crew tried, but they couldn't find
The guy who was trapped, the poor soul
Boss said we hurt our production goal

Everybody knows trouble
Trouble hunts you everywhere
Out of the ruins and the rubble
Comes a voice that says, hey, if you dare
Go on, remember the smell of her hair
And get yourself home on the double
Better grow up, and hope she's still there.

Rod Williams

Closing Down High Desert Hospital

They're closing down High Desert, the county says it must
Revenue's down, they say you can't get blood from a stone
In come the yellow engines, rise up the cloud of dust

The walls and roof will crumble, every beam and truss
As a foreman takes his orders from his little cell phone
They're closing down High Desert, the county says it must.

The supervisors yawn, "What of the public trust?
It's just the poor who'll cry and piss and moan."
In come the yellow engines, rise up the cloud of dust.

Dry lightning in the summer air, dry wind in violent gusts
Pick the building good and clean down to the very bone
They're closing down High Desert, the county says it must

Newspapers, TV, radio say the union's going bust
Men and women jobless, into that black unknown
In come the yellow engines, rise up the cloud of dust

Walk on down the highway, sick with wanderlust
Walk sixty miles for a hospital bed, alone, alone
They're closing down High desert, the county says it must
In come the yellow engines, rise up the cloud of dust

Rod Williams

GJ's Real Meal Deal, Eugene, Oregon

For Gary and Judy

Pony-on-a-pole,
stamped resin, painted chocolate-brown,
festooned with yellow, the color of lemon
icing on a cake –
someone's memory confected
just to make it through
a life of round-and-rounds,
eyes ever bright.

Two stars on her halter, four sequined reins,
with a bit jammed
to the back of her throat,
she's parked in place, inside
GJ's Real Meal Deal at Sixth and Filbert,
still throws a silent whinny
into the eggs and sausage air,
content with this
and every instant, announcing
(by way of the sign on her pole)
"Please Wait To Be Seated"
and, once we've been so greeted,
while we fall into line, she regards
our own circling around
all that shines and whirls,
our spasms of human joy, occasional and brief,
with perpetual smile, through horsey teeth.
(O my comfort, O belly up
upon my breakfast plate,
my stomach flower,
and mend this world!)

Broken from the carnival herd
freed from the Wheel,
she dwells not
upon cinch, or bit
or hope,
but prances through this world, doomed
to weak coffee ("What'll it be today, Sweetie?")
shaking her mane, trailing her golden rope.

Ezra Tishman



**The Cottage Grove Harpies announce
the publication of their new anthology,**

Passages

Short stories, essays, and poetry by regional writers,
many of them Cottage Grove residents.

Support local authors! *Passages* is available for \$9.99
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tacting the Harpies directly at cgharpies@gmail.com.

The Russian Agents

Jeff Southwick

The Russians have been watching you since 1962, why I have no clue, for you an average mid-western woman, who only left the state to visit your aunt in Topeka and your sister in St Louis.

Maybe it was something your husband did in Korea, though as far as I know, his thirty years since 1953 were spent working on mufflers until, his last day under a tree, out at the lake fishing.

Jim was no elegant black tie James, you were the only girl for his eye, other than a pinup calendar in the garage and that blonde Biscuit, who'd conduct surveillance out the window of his Dodge.

Maybe there was someone whose dress you hemmed, in the years that you took alterations, and surely you said nothing to the editor, a letter about abused footwear in the United Nations.

Now Jim was a good man, always washed the grease off his hands, then was life so boring your days were spent in some tunnel, escaping under Berlin with secrets from the Kremlin?

So those years we thought you sat in a lawn chair, chatting neighbors in

the yard, were you really chasing a spy satellite, some double agent in Cuba, trying to whack off Fidel's cigar?

And those times you said, were with friends quilting for the fair, really spent hanging under a train car rolling through Slovakia, trying to photograph the documents in Brezhnev's attaché?

A secret life for all those years perhaps, an old nemesis who refused to acknowledge the cold war ended, that babushka behind the hedge, in scarf and apron, then crawling in your attic? Suspecting it wasn't years of bacon that did in your Jim, a stealthy revenge Boris planned, as your hands painted boxes and trays in decoupage, while Natasha remained conducting espionage.

It seems they have finally come for you, sending knockout gas through the vents, mystery clicks on the phone, zapping your skin with laser beams sent out from that box atop your television set.

Their secret plots now uncovered, is this information you should have shared, for now they know I know of the tangled intrigue, should I expect that the Russians will be coming next for me? 🚲 🚲 🚲

Handling the Ant

Roll it into a ball.
Can you feel
the black abdominal sac
pulse minutely
against your thumb?
Nothing will stop the antennae
waving and crinkling,
barely tickling your skin,
save pulling them off.

You can think, now,
it's just an ant
and squeeze
your thumb and index finger
until you feel the tiny pop.

Or you can think
my fingers hold a life,
see through insect eyes
the vast alien vise,
struggle in your own grip,
think
there might be me,
let the creature down
and watch it find
its old path.

Do just this
and save us all.

Dan Liberthson

Canary

Orange flame in a cage
but absolutely free
in moments of motion,
he rocks on his swing
to and fro, side to side,
swaying in the unforced
wind of impulse, a
smiling as a bird smiles,
in his entire posture,
with all the joy
of any child or dancer,
any live being
burning through its gift
of flesh, swinging up,

down, in life's cage.

Dan Liberthson

The Forest Through the Store

Every morning I walk in the woods
Then when I have to drive to the store
I park a little further
And buy a little less
So I can exercise my body more than the autos
And find nourishment more than
shrink wrapped indulgence.
By the time I return home
Exhausted by refusing unlimited limited offers
I share a wall on one side
And a garden on the other
Because us neighbors have been humbled enough
To know that sharing is caring
But you can only care so much for one day
When we are raised by mean streets
to think one way
Yet I'm loving where I'm at
Because I know who I'm striving for
Though I'm never that close to getting there.
I don't need anyone to praise my work
In fact even the whole world wouldn't do.
With no one left to please
We can all put ourselves at ease
But when your only intimacy is customer service
You'd employ a whole village
To clear cut one lord's purpose.
Boring through the center of the Earth
Barely scratches this community's surface.

Jeffrey Morel

Caribou

The immense racks of caribou
are living, feeling tissue early on,
covered with fine skin and fuzz,
sensitive to touch as an ear to screaming.
Later, they set into bone,
tear through the air
like a robust thornbush,
then shed in a single season.

The big bucks carry their racks
proud as any king wears a crown
and feel they must use them
as any king swings mace and sword
to cut pretenders down.
The does, circumspect, await the outcome
and appear not remotely concerned
when the males lock racks and starve.

Dan Liberthson

Eating Sesame Seeds Is Like Listening To A Buddha

Pink sky sunset
in Surprise Valley
between Tapeats
and Deer Creek.

Dropped my pants
hunkered down
shat out
what my body
couldn't use.

Stood to admire
beautiful
dark brown shit.

Found it flecked
with bits of gold.

Listening to a Buddha:

if you don't
crack the seed,
it will pass
straight through.

Trout Black

The Dominguez-Escalante Expedition

When the Dominguez-Escalante Expedition,
seeking to discover
a route from Santa Fe to California,
couldn't find a way
to cross an unnamed river,
they left a vast expanse

empty

at the center
of their map.

Our lives
are like that,
we know so much,
have so much information
words describe so much,

and yet,
at the center of our lives,
there is a great mystery,
emptiness
silence
immeasurable space.

Trout Black

NOT

The New York Review of Books

The Star Rover

by Jack London

Review by Andrew Guck

Have you ever finished reading a book that was so thought-provoking you had a hard time moving on to a new book? I've just finished *The Star Rover* by Jack London for the second time, and that's how I feel.

Though it's a bit more obscure than London's better known books such as *White Fang* and *The Call of the Wild*, it's one of my favorites and a phenomenal read.

In this mysterious and nebulous story, the protagonist is serving a life sentence for murder in San Quentin prison. Five years of his term are spent in solitary confinement, where he's constantly tortured by prison officials with the use of a sort of straight jacket in order to break his spirit. They leave him tied up as tight as possible in agony for days at a time without food or water, but he discovers how to withstand the torture by means of astral projection, allowing his spirit to travel to past lives.

Each chapter toggles from his prison torture to one of his past lives, each more impressive than the last, leaving the reader to wonder, "Who would I have been in a previous incarnation?"

If I ever write a fictional book, this would be my inspiration.

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle

by Haruki Murakami

Review by Rod Williams

Haruki Murakami is one of Japan's most respected and beloved authors. He writes novels and short stories and even essays on topics ranging from his love of running to the significance of his favorite t-shirts. At first, his books can seem intimidating, but in most cases the writing is very accessible.

The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle is considered by many to be his masterpiece. Within its pages, Murakami weaves overlapping stories of a troubled marriage, wartime atrocities, and an intricately plotted good vs. evil saga populated by cryptic personalities and informed by vaguely supernatural events.

At over six hundred pages, the book is a brick. But don't be fooled or put off by its size: from the start, it's an authentic page-turner. Murakami successfully draws in the reader with his peculiar, vivid characters and with storytelling elements that echo, but don't quite duplicate, the "magical realism" style popularized by Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Bird is original, funny, colloquial, philosophical, ominous, quirky, and puzzling, all at once. Do yourself a favor and give it a test drive. You won't regret the ride.

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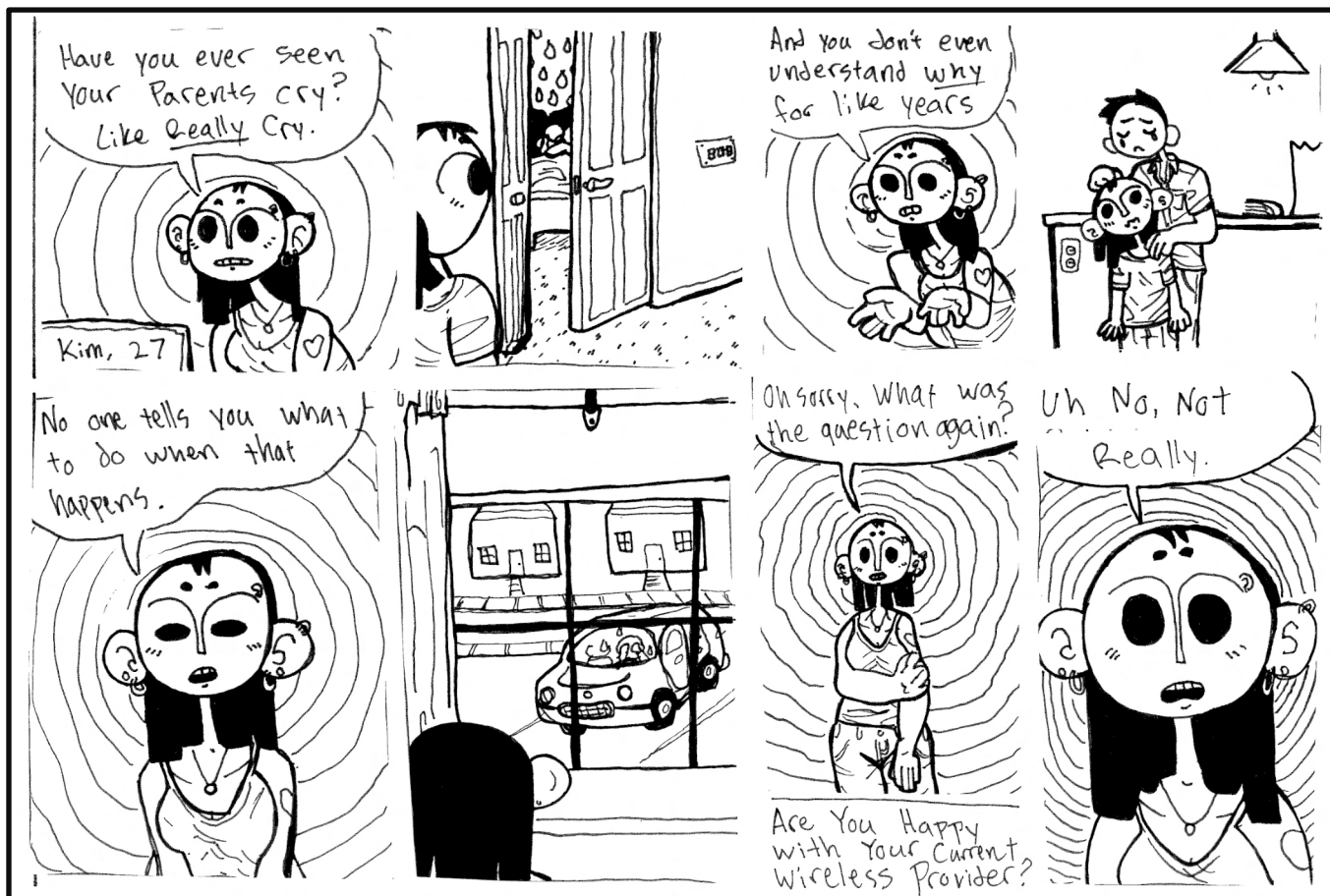
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"First, you write for yourself... always, to make sense of your experience and the world around you. It's one of the ways I stay sane. Our stories, our books, our films are how we cope with the random trauma-inducing chaos of life as it plays."

—Bruce Springsteen, *Born to Run*



misha kagutaba

This column spotlights examples of great writing from notable authors. Got a favorite short passage from an author you like? Send it to us for consideration. (No song lyrics or poetry, please.) This first one seems fitting for yet another gray winter's day in Eugene.

The Golden Pen:

Herman Melville

“At last the anchor was up, the sails were set, and off we glided. It was a short, cold Christmas; and as the short northern day merged into night, we found ourselves almost broad upon the wintry ocean, whose freezing spray cased us in ice, as in polished armor. The long rows of teeth on the bulwarks glistened in the moonlight; and like the white ivory tusks of some huge elephant, vast curving icicles depended from the bows.

Lank Bildad, as pilot, headed the first watch, and ever and anon, as the old craft deep dived into the green seas, and sent the shivering frost all over her, and the winds howled, and the cordage rang, his steady notes were heard,—

“Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood, Stand dressed in living green. So to the Jews old Canaan stood, While Jordan rolled between.”

Never did those sweet words sound more sweetly to me than then. They were full of hope and fruition. Spite of this frigid winter night in the boisterous Atlantic, spite of my wet feet and wetter jacket, there was yet, it then seemed to me, many a pleasant haven in store; and meads and glades so eternally vernal, that the grass shot up by the spring, untrodden, unwilted, remains at midsummer.”

— from *Moby Dick*

The Unveiling

An excerpt from *Morphology*

Liv Reimers

Pearl sank deeper and deeper below the surface of the dark, fetid water. She couldn't remember why or how, but her hands and legs were tightly bound and a heavy stone was lashed to her feet. All conspired to make her descent rapid and struggle futile. She held her breath as long as she was able—until it exploded from her lungs and sent a burst of bubbles upward to a sky she could no longer see.

Just as she knew she must breathe in the foul water to re-fill her emptied lungs, Pearl jerked awake, sat bolt upright, and gasped for air. Sweat and fear soaked the silk sheets of her bed. Laying her forehead on bent knees, she calmed her rapid breathing and pounding heart. She was safe, she told herself, safe in her own bed and in her own Niche.

The night of vivid dreams, however, had left behind a hunkered dread curled up tightly in her mind and body, and it was not so easily dislodged.

Then she remembered.

It's my Pairing Day.

A fresh wave of panic washed over her as another thought struck.

And nothing will ever be the same again.

She'd be the first of the Morpchs to go. They'd even had a party to celebrate. All twelve Alphas and their Caretakers dressed in their most colorful clothes and gathered in the Pod's Common room to eat cake—a rare treat—and to dance in whirling circles. It was the culmination of all they had all been working towards for so long. Pearl and her sister, Ruby, had sat out the dancing, held hands, and looked on with worried eyes.

“We're so proud,” Pearl's Caretakers said when a Patron was chosen for her. “So very proud.”

Then why does it feel like I'm going to my execution?

Pearl's official name was Alpha One of Twelve, and she was not only the first of them to go, she was also the very first Morpch. The first one born alive and healthy, anyway. And until about three mths ago, she'd been fine—fine with all of it. Excited, even. But that was before Ruby—Alpha Two to the people at Geneti-Search—said all those awful things, using words like murder, annihilation, and bondage.

“Morpchs are just genetically engineered human sacrifices,” Ruby whispered to Pearl one morning as they lay together in the beds they had pushed together the night before. “Sacrificial virgins offered to today's gods, the ones everyone seems to worship now—”

“Oh stop, Ruby. So much drama. Why do you say things like that? It's not true and you know it. We're not being murdered; we're being Paired, for Goodness's sake. To a person. A carefully selected one, but just a person. Besides, everyone at Geneti-Search loves us,” Pearl had said. “They wouldn't let anything bad happen to us.”

“Billionaires, Pearl. I meant billionaires and trillionaires and—What comes after trillion? Gazillion? Don't be so literal. I know they aren't actual gods,” Ruby said and snorted.

“Okay, okay, Ruby. Geez, calm down. I just—”

“But only the super-wealthy can afford us. And do you really think GenetiSearch is doing all this because they love us so much? Out of the goodness of their hearts? They're grooming us, Pearl. They need us sleek, healthy and cooperative. Just getting us ready for the coming sacrifice. To increase our value.”

“You don't think Mama and Papa love us?” Pearl said, appalled at the thought. “You think they're lying to us?”

Mama and Papa were the Caretakers she and Ruby shared. Papa had a soft spot for Ruby and let her have access to the unmonitored web occasionally. It was strictly forbidden, and Ruby and Papa could get in terrible trouble. Exactly what kind of trouble Pearl didn't know. But what she did know was it didn't seem to be doing Ruby any good.

Ruby's face slackened, and she shrugged.

“Oh, I don't know. Probably not on purpose, I guess. But they really have no more say in all this than we do.”

And then, days later, Ruby said something else about the impending Pairing—something that hit closer to Pearl's fears and that chilled her to the bone.

“Afterwards, the person you are now—this minute—will be gone, you know. And someone else entirely will be in your place. You won't be you any

more. Your Patron, the person you're Paired with—enslaved to—will determine who and what you are. Everything down to what you think and feel. Their desires will become yours. Their wishes will be your wishes. Your very body will shape-shift to the form they crave. You will embody their desires. Forever. End of story. ‘Bye, bye, Pearl,’” Ruby said, snapping her fingers.

“Not now, Ruby. Please don't start—”

“That's murder, Pearl,” Ruby interrupted. “How is that not murder?”

(Continued next issue)



Paris mural. Photograph by Charles Mattoon

The Art of Conjugation

Lisa Anderson

This is my final week in Guatemala so I am cramming in as much information as my poor brain can tolerate. Next Wednesday I am going to Colombia, and I don't know my plans or whether I'll have an official teacher other than la Vida.

While learning yet another verb tense yesterday, subjunctivo pasado to be exact, I had to laugh at the mental gymnastics required to conjugate in this tense. You have to take the third person plural in the preterit (one of the past tenses), remove the "on" ending and put the appropriate new verb ending on it. It already takes me long enough to conjugate in the preterit alone. Plus, you have to know what the appropriate time is to use the subjunctive tense which isn't easy for us English speakers. This tense or mood exists in English but it's not really obvious. Somewhat like the ozone layer or free radicals; you know they're there, but you can't see them.

If I wanted to say, "The big party for your mother was at John's house" I would have some serious intellectual acrobatics to perform before I opened my mouth.

First, in order to say "the" I have to know whether the noun is masculine or feminine. Easy- fiesta ends with an "a" so it's most likely feminine.

To say "big" I have to decide if I want to emphasize it or just let it be a plain old adjective. If it's to be emphasized I'll put it first and say "gran" but if it's just a plain old adjective I have to put it after "fiesta" and say "grande", I think.

Next, I have to decide whether to use "por" or "para" because they can both mean "for" (Plus a dozen or so other meanings) but are used differently. OK, I've decided that "para" is probably correct.

Now on to "your mother". If I wanted to offend someone I could say "tu madre" with the same tone of voice used when saying, "Your mother wears combat boots". But here in Guatemala it's ok to say "tu madre" in a sentence and it won't be offensive (according to one of my teachers).

Now comes the fun part- "was". There are at least 36 different words for "was". This is a true story. Although in Latin America second person plural is not used so there only 30 words here.

First, you have to decide which verb for "to be" to use. One is for more permanent things and the other is for more temporary things and locations.

Great, this is a location so it's easy to decide, right? Wrong. Because this is the location of an event which uses the other verb for more permanent things even though a party isn't permanent unless you're my brother then maybe it's a possibility.

OK, I've decided which verb now I have to decide which past tense to use. I can rule out the subjunctive pretty quickly which leaves me the other two past tenses. One is for more routine type things (but there many other uses, I know because one of my teachers showed me a handout with 12 different uses) and the other is what most of think of as past tense.

Ok, I am going to go with the regular past tense now I need to decide on which person to use for a party. A party is not a person, although some think they are the life of the party but that is a different matter entirely. A party is an it so I think I have my final answer so don't ask me again Regis.

All that is left is "at John's house". Now do I use "a" or "en" for "at". I forget so I'll slur my words a little and maybe the listener won't notice.

Next, I have to skip over "John" and put "casa" first -after I have decided that "casa" is feminine and put "la" in front of it, then I add "de" for "of" then switch "John" to "Juan". Piece of cake.

What I want to know is how can these native Spanish speakers speak so fast when they have to go through all these gyrations just for a simple sentence. I just hope they don't ask me to describe the party or the food.

I hope you enjoyed your Spanish lesson. My brain is so full I can't remember the simple stuff today. But like a fool I decided to squeeze in another 5 hours next week (two on Monday and three on Tuesday). This will seem like a picnic after four hours a day.

I like my new teacher for this week in spite of the cruelty he enjoys inflicting on me. Wait a minute. I asked him to teach me this stuff--what was I thinking???

"There's nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and open a vein."

—Sol Stein, *Stein on Writing: A Master Editor Shares His Craft, Techniques, and Strategies*

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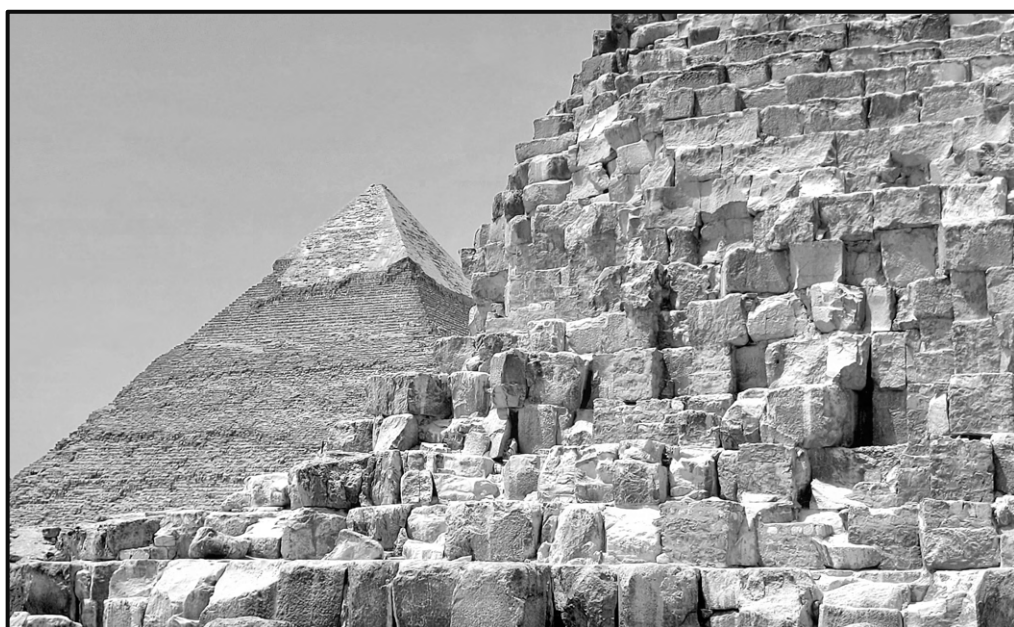
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The Pyramids, Giza, Egypt. Photograph by Brian Hyta

Pink IV
LIMONADE-TH-DR-
We lay down and do common
sense drawings on a
merri-go-round hanging puppets
in the river above,
Silver keys dangle [STATIC TWO]
in a fallen tree - some lit on
fire in a jar - some lit in two
places where static comes from
the TV.
I don't know these denatured
rules of light
turn my head into
the library,
through the head return
slot & my other head
tucks into a house

without having to get lit
ON fire.
The cooperative forest swaying-
inside the theater
blackberry bushes grow
stepping quietly into fragments
of darkness, under the sea,
your hands move
seventy days at a
time.
music ends in a CUP THAT REFILLS
IN THE HALLWAY-
A tiny, till frame of family---
standing in the waves
together
A hand wandering the house,
from a nearby town
out of breath.



He watches TV through syrup,
so his eyes sag down the wall,
opening an umbrella.
The television turns flower helicopter
blooming grapes.
She walks in the waves,
Speaks through a house, using
the ghost system
inside our roaming elephant
Overlay: nests of calculation
stirred with an ink stained
fork.
Our house stirred in on stilts
The house rises through the trees
not knowing it's alive.

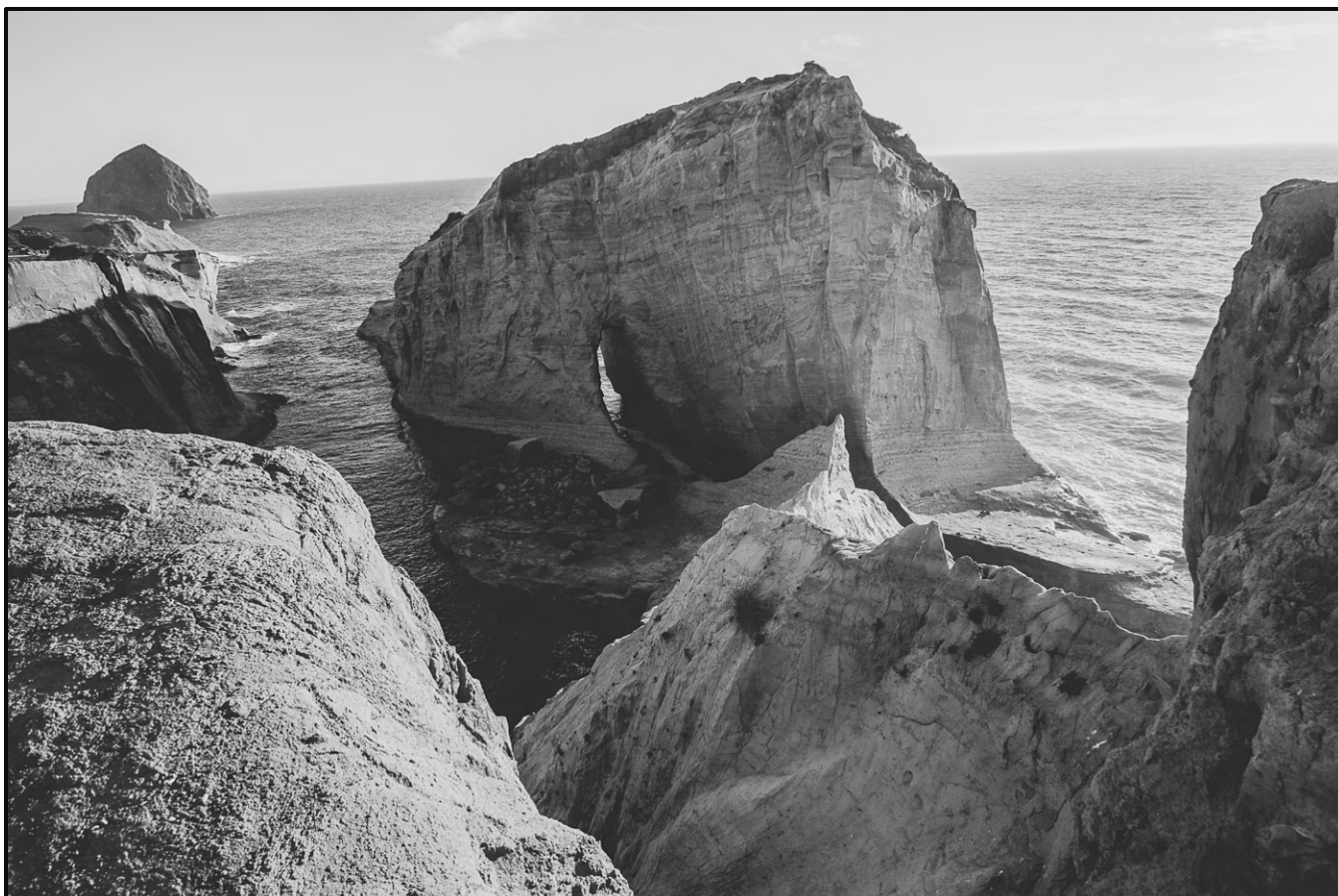
on stilts, I lift it out with the
Ampules
My ~~look~~ behind the theater
through an underground garden -
in the hospital, past the thrown away
gurneys lining the steps-
The flying circus has been erased
Landing in bones: Attic, Maze
London,
Basement

A Cottonwood full of leeches, full
of sharp
I lift it out with the Ampules,
underwater with my fork, and set
wriggling & squirming.
You'll notice through
the glass
window
they started tearing apart Russia
A scream falling from the sky
drops a light on the street
shatters. People screaming;
falling from the sky
into multiple worlds
I drop the light from extended rope

genomics into the alley,
and swing from the stars.
A Sparrow on your shoulder
through the crowded Subway
wrapped up in a rubber
Zenith,
As a bluebird we act,
as a transmitter,
we cruise in,
doing Manton soup, slouching.
Proceed to lab number 7, short waves
down the cobblestone.
we excavate for bones together, eating
realms

In the bottom deck,
wiping my chin with TV shows
Try to see through A massive machine
like a phone rolling around with
a bloody nose,
fishing breath from strings, I may have
an earpiece, from a lowered hope
in a window
in the hospital
on the hill,
looking at each other with
clock-eyes,
taller than the forest.
Speaker
acrossed
toothache.
An elephant passes by the ol'
station.
cartoon embryo - The cartoon
blue birds

are forming underground --
The wall is made to resemble
sloop -
Tumbling in the dryer,
eaten by time.
Men in white hazmats are searching
through the die, ruined debris,
broken windows - in the rubble,
lockets.
A sleeping embryo -
They circle-her with
felt tip marker,
naked people are resin, poured from
the ceiling into chairs.



Pacific City, Oregon. Photograph by Morgan Smith

Rocky Mountain Oysters

In the early days,
she had a penchant
for rocky mountain oysters.
Little did I know
that when fried medium rare,
they twitched in the pan.

Just like I jump
when she enters the room
unannounced.

Bill Gunn

Out There

With every moon,
distance and yearning
dusts the evening.
Dear to the heart
lies a trail to a lake,
a mountain, a stream,
a destination recovered.

Out there stars shine
like salt sifted
on a charred steak.

Out there makes you crazy
if you think
of the infinite
while cloistered
in the finite.

Out there lies a truth
a silence.

Bill Gunn

Answering Questions

In a green field
with poppies and camas
were an old man and a boy.
The man was bent over
as if picking a flower
or explaining some reality
to the child.
They were at their leisure,
as they should be.

The boy asked pointed questions.
The old man responded.
The assumed answers
lie somewhere between
youth and old age.

The boy is young
and doesn't think
of the future.

The old bastard,
trying to straighten up
after stooping
glares at the horizon.

The sun is going down in flames
to make room for the boy
that holds his flowers.

Bill Gunn

The Filbert Orchard

To walk through
the deep shade
of a filbert orchard
is to touch paradise.

The shade,
dense as a moonless night
brings thoughts of reclusion,
or an awakening
on this cool afternoon.

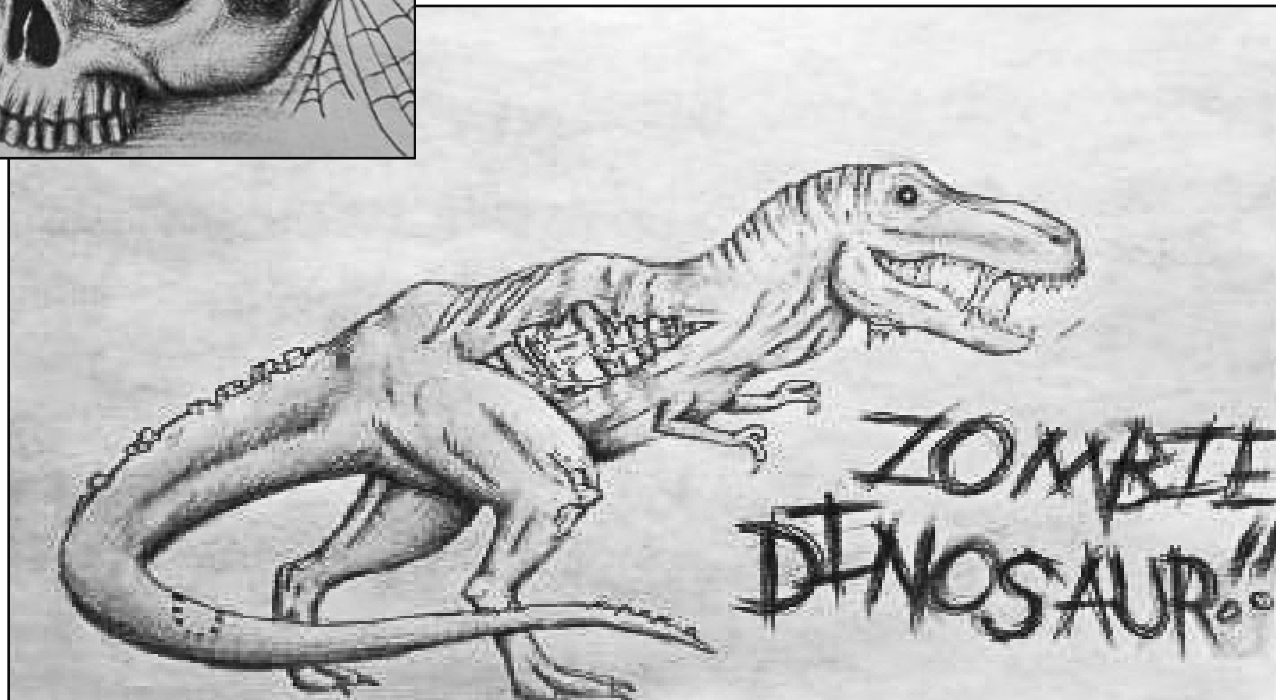
I want to carve
my full name
on the trunk
of just one of these trees.

I want to carve my story
to let some future being
know that I was there,
and loved what
I saw and felt.

Bill Gunn



Art by Elizabeth Jacobs-Pitsenberger



The Picnic, 1847

Inspired by a Magnolia Tree

Eden Omari

PART TWO

Georgie and Paulie been best friends since they was knee high to a tadpole. They can build everything from a baby rocker to Lizzie's rooftop and anything in between. They was takin' their time as usual haulin' up all the timber to be used for buildin' the stage for the band, the pulpit for the Pastor and the altar for the dammed and of course their customary argument ensues.

They bicker back and forth like old, widowed sisters. Paulie says, "Well Georgie, you know that post is just a little too high – a person might slide offa there and slide down and kill they selves." Georgie responds in his dry raspy tipsy slur "OK then – just let the devils slide and ride right down into the dirt – I don't care." Paulie says, "Well let's hope it ain't your sweet lil darlin' Harriet be one a the ones that go slidin' down into the dirt, cause I's shore to tell her that it was her "true hearted one" that done dirtied your dress Miss Harriet by not listening at my advice."

Georgie gives Paulie a raised eyebrow and then turns his back and goes back down the hill to drag up the last piece of lumber for the stage. He knows that Paulie been pining after his Harriet since he and Harriet tied the knot. He had tried askin' her out juss before he hadda leave mid school and tend to his Granddaddy's ranch outside of Perchsmith. He never did regain any confidence in hisself since then cause the kids teased him 'bout his ragged dusty farm clothes and shoes and he never had no money to go do fun stuff with the other kids. When the Johnstones found out 'bout that, they begin to give Paulie money to join the other kids. And when the kids found out about that, they teased him even about that, so he just kinda worked on the farm and grew into a big strappin' farm boy that all the girls was smitten to but he ain't never married nary of 'em and been single alla his life.

Even in his sixties he still got that strong manly body. All the young men in town admire his physique and call him Strong Farmer John. And everyone in town know who they be talkin' about. He left on a long train ride up to the north – Philadelphia – for quite some time and returned even more broken than when he left. But came back he did and turned that farm into a oasis of every kinda thing that can grow from the ground when his Granddaddy died. He even let Henrietta Harding grow a big, huge pepper field, peppers that they sold far and wide. So, he kind of a legend round here and the women all say "What a shame. All that strappin' man gone to waste." His daddy was a Catholic. That's all we's know.

Somewhere in between they bickering and brotherly affection Georgie and Paulie always come to a compromise and chose the best timber for the job. Georgie done already told his wife Harriet and his older children that Uncle Paulie might be they daddy one day iffen anything should happen to him. And he made Harriet promise to marry Paulie if that happened and after many times of him askin', she agreed. Georgie always knew how hard it was for her to decide between the two and her love for Paulie ain't never really gone completely away though she chose the one in the end that she really wanted...at the time. He couldn't think of no better man he'd want in his bed after he was gone. Plus, he knew Paulie would love her and take care of his four children even more than he does now. And the kids adore they Uncle Paulie to deff. Georgie did all that more than a year ago after the doctor told him about the thing they found on those x-rays. He ain't never told a soul. And he been feelin' the most worse lately. Harriet ain't never found the secret pills he hides behind the window curtains in the attic.

Oh, nobody don't pay no attention to Georgie and Paulie during this part of the celebration, they too busy reveling in the fact that there's gonna be picnic today and ain't nobody payin' no mind to Georgie and Paulie. The dogs are all scattering about and barking at their owners to give them a little scrap of this or that, and you can hear the band tuning up they's fiddles. Margie gonna be playing the lead today. We likes it when Margie plays lead. She just gives it that extra little special something – especially when we havin' a picnic. Some say she a witch 'cause that fiddle has been known to be heard all the way over to Oak Brook in the middle of the night when Margie's lights is on. And that sometimes when she be playin' so fast, it's like the fiddle bow just be standing still, but you know its movin' but you can't see it movin' cause its goin' so fast.

Her and her mama didn't get along a tall. For years you would hear them cursing and fighting drunk as two witches in a cauldron. They'd scream unnatural sounds that didn't sound like screams but more like screeches that reminded me of what a Hyena might sound like if I ever heard one. Eight years ago, her mama drove herself offa Pikes Cliff during a rainstorm into the river. The car was found but never the body and of course the whole town made speculations about what might a happened. The sheriff's office searched every piece of they land looking for the body and even pulled the foundation of the house apart lookin' underneath. But Lenora ain't never showed up nowhere. Margie probably turned her into one a those Hyenas I was talking about.

Margie, she sweet now and everything. She started wearing face powder and rouge and colors around her eyes to hide it, but you can't get pass the fact that her face is like a bulldog with those low hanging jowls and large watery eyes she got. She short and round and her hair used to look like electricity ran through it. Now she visits Matties beauty shop and wears hair rollers and the like and her hair look nice and curly and fluffy. She look like a different person altogether. Lenora woulda hate that.



Photographs by Anonymous

Then Margie married Ben Carter. Lenora woulda hated that too. Some old folks think she casted a spell on him cause before that Ben ain't never seem to look up much, never mind lookin' up at Margie. It's like she was the frog, and he kissed her cause everybody like Margie now. Seem Lenora ain't want Margie to have no kinda life. When asked, Lenora told Margie that her daddy ran off and that she ain't know where he at. Margie finding out that her momma used to work at Lizzies place back in the day made her hate her momma and made her feel like she was the towns secret love child of any one of these men in town. But no luck because none of them ain't look like her. Nobody looked like Margie. When Ben lost his best friend Beau in that fire Margie was there to console him. But before that Margie and Ben had a big fight in private. She accused Beau of acting like a lost lover and that she had Ben now and he should get used to it. She threatened to take Ben away if he dared interfere with her plans and she did. She told Ben that Beau had made a pass at her and Ben just cut Beau off. Just like that. Without never a look back, although in private he yearned for Beau deep in his bones. In his mind, at the time, Margie was a trade he was willin' to make. But that was the old mean Margie. She's as lovely as a flower now and often wishes Beau were still alive so that her husband wouldn't be so ever blue. She would have made up for the fight had he lived. She swears by it to herself.

Lenora seem went plum crazy right after she had give birth to Margie. She walked around town unkept and talkin' to herself. Some of the women in town took to goin' by her place to make sure the chickens and hogs was being fed and that she was being fed and that her house dint burn down with the baby in it. Some of the women took turns taking care of the baby. They did that for about three years. That's how long it took for Lenora to come back to her senses. It seem like Lenora ain't never ever really took to her own child. Never comin' to any of the school pageants, never dressin' her up for Easter or anything like that. Margie was the talk of the town but not for the reasons she was thinkin'. Margie playin' lead today and the whole town excited 'bout that.

And now here come the Boylston's with those six children of theirs totin' that fat pet hog they named Jethro that the whole town will feast on one day. It was bigger and wider than any hog you ever gone see. It were more like a baby bear with all that size and hair on it. Jethro knew word signals and would stomp on the ground and squeal whenever he heard a fiddle. It could chew its way through a cane stalk like a tooth straw. Alla these things made Jethro very entertain' and well loved by the town. Mrs. Boylston was so tall and elegant and dignified you'd never tell she a farmer's wife by lookin' at her. She heavy bosomed with the most perfect shinin' teeth framed with that orange lip rouge she wear – sometimes pink or red. She buy the finest of dresses from Lyla Bates stores and the finest, I think they call it millinary. She could hitch a carriage, bareback a horse, ride side saddle, chop a full cord a wood and even help her husband when it come to the gold mining and oil drilling on they land. Everyone calls her Lady Boylston. It just seems fittin'. They's always a penny short and a minute late, but they a fun family and we love 'em.

(Continued next issue)

And that's the way it is, Tuesday, Graffiti 2nd, 2023. Good night, Chet. Good night, David. Good night and good luck. Please take care of yourself and each other. Courage!