

# Graffiti

EUGENE'S CREATIVE WRITING & ART ZINE

# #17

SEPTEMBER 2024



*To Love and to Create*

1998

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# Graffiti

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Doing it with my fez on: Don Root  
Short skirt / long jacket: Jordan Howell Rose  
Cheap sunglasses: Morgan Smith  
Blue suede shoes: Rod Williams  
Raspberry beret: Kevin O'Brien  
Itsy bitsy teenie weenie yellow polka-dot bikini: Lise Eskridge

Contributors: John Ashbaugh, Ana Marie Boyd, Linda Caradine, Claudia Caramelli, Fergul Cirpan, Tate Cocotos, Joan Dobbie, Paul Dresman, Tim Edwards, Ed English, Peter Fenton, Tim Gardner, Greg Gianelli, Bill Gunn, Mike Heide, Alex Keyes, David Koteen, Dan Liberthson, Christopher Logan, Cassandra Mettling-Davis, Eamon Morris, Moss, Jean Murphy, James Otter, LaDonna Qualtieri, Audrey Quinn, Kenneth Roe, Jim Smith, Morgan Smith, Erica Snowlake, Jeff Southwick, Maya Sutherland, Stephen Swiftfox, Marcel Tulloh

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ON THE COVER: Zyla Rose takes an end-of-summer dip in the Willamette. Photo by Don.

graffitizineeugene\_

more work online!

by Christopher Logan  
Mike Heide Eamon Morris  
at graffiti-magazine.com



## Our Mission...

...should we choose to accept it, is to encourage the production of creative writing and art by members of the community and to foster the development of skills in those endeavors. Also, it's to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, and to boldly go where no woman has gone before!

## Read Me! and FAQ

- Graffiti publishes artwork, poetry, and short prose, submitted by anyone. Work must be original to you and preferably based on personal experience. We eschew (cool word!) essays on politics and current affairs. We DON'T publish rants, hate speech, excerpts from other people's work, or anything that makes us worry about libel or copyright infringement.
- Submissions aren't juried. Subject to the "DON'T"s listed above, we try to publish — either in the paper or on the website, at our discretion — everything we receive, first-come, first-served. Rarely, a submission may fall through the cracks, get eaten by the dog, or be rejected for some random reason. If it didn't get published, send us something else. Don't query us about its fate.
- Please scan your art (jpeg preferred) and email us your art and text. No scanner or computer? Public libraries have them. And librarians love helping Luddites.
- We give highest priority to new work, because Graffiti's mission is to encourage writers to write and artists to art.
- We also encourage writers to write *better!* We're not a vanity press. We prefer to publish writers who treat their writing as a craft and care about what they submit. Please don't send us a "first draft" or something "from the heart" without spell-checking it. Be serious about your work and do your best, okay?

### HOW DO I SUBMIT WORK?

Email it to: graffiti@eugene@gmail.com

### DO I GET PAID?

No. And neither do we.

### DOES I GOTTA RIGHT GOOD?

No, but please try. Remember, generally speaking, we don't edit. **What you give us goes as-is.** So try to make your submission error-free. Use spell check. Use grammar check if you've got it. If all else fails, resort to a dictionary (that big, thick book with all the words in it, spelled properly and even defined for you!).

### WHAT LENGTH WORKS ARE ACCEPTABLE?

For printing in the zine, anything under 800 words makes us happy. Submissions longer than 1,000 words will probably be posted on the website instead: graffiti-magazine.com.

### WHY IS GRAFFITI OBSESSED WITH VEUVE CLICQUOT?

Have you ever tasted it?!

# FRONT LINES

Don Root

Autumn's coming, as it always has, since long before humans arrived to despoil the planet. It's my favorite season, or at least it used to be until the advent of the leaf blower. But that's my broken-record rant you're no doubt tired of hearing, and I lost that battle long ago anyway.

I'm in the autumn of my life now, and I've gotta say, so far life's been pretty easy. Since I dropped out of law school at age 27 due to ethical conflicts with that career path, I've managed to navigate a life largely free of cognitive dissonance — meaning that over the course of nearly 40 years, I've found ways to make a living that didn't require putting on a monkey suit or spouting marketing bs or cheating people or wreaking environmental havoc. Ways that offered me at least a partial expression of my own voice and creativity. Ways that didn't have me breaking into a cold sweat every morning before heading into the office, or drowning my conscience in alcohol every evening upon my return home.

I did a lot of freelance work over the years, and yes, I did my share of office jobs, but at companies that let me wear jeans and tees while I wrote and edited respectable texts. Those jobs were pretty good at the time, but even then, I could see my employers being inexorably drawn toward peak capitalism, losing their soul in the process. Money always seems to triumph over art, right? Nevertheless, I'm lucky to have been where I was, when I was. I never got rich working any job. Not financially, at least. But I had a whole lot of fun and slept well at night.

My dad never gave me much advice when I was young. In fact, this may be the only piece of advice he ever gave me: "Do what you love, but if you can find something you love that makes lots of money, do that." Thanks, Dad. Alas, so far I haven't found that Holy Grail, unless you consider my better half to be that something. And she doesn't make a *lot* of money, just a lot more than I do — and only for a little while longer. Her employer just gave layoff notices to her whole department; it seems serious belt-tightening is needed to make sure the company president can keep getting his \$1.64 million annual salary and the extra \$350,000 a year in future retirement pay the board recently granted him (on top of his existing \$161,000 annual retirement pay). The free market at work. Ain't it grand.

Well, now I'm retired, too, raking in a trickle of Social Security income (thanks FDR and Frances Perkins!) and publishing this rag, which makes no money at all but serves the community's creative soul. I *love* that. If I died tomorrow, I'd have few regrets. It's been a damn good ride, and I still see great things ahead, which is pretty cool. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend my life choices to anyone.

But!

Right now, I need paid work before I expire of ramenitis! As Cher once said, "I've been rich, and I've been poor, and I can tell you it's better being rich." I'd love to find out for myself if she's right about that, but I'd settle for being "reasonably comfortable" in my impending dotage. So if you or anyone you know might have a job for a retired writer and editor, please let me know! Memoir anyone? That novel you've been working on for 17 years? Perhaps a book of your own Vagon poetry to torment the grandkids with? I can help you pull it together. And despite what you may think after reading these pages, my brain still functions reasonably well. So if you need help with something I've never done, I could probably learn to do it and do it well. Thanks! Anyway, back to autumn...

One of my favorite eulogies — Jeebus, can one even have a favorite eulogy? How morbid is that? — has an autumn theme. Here's an excerpt from the whole, inscribed on the Ernest Hemingway memorial in Sun Valley, Idaho:

*"Best of all he loved the fall  
The leaves yellow on the cottonwoods  
Leaves floating on the trout streams  
And above the hills, the high blue windless skies...  
Now he will be a part of them forever."*

Despite how that sounds, it's actually not a eulogy *for* Hemingway. Instead, it's one he wrote in 1939 for Gene Van Guilder, a friend and hunting buddy of his who worked at the Sun Valley Lodge, where Hemingway holed up to finish *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. Eventually, Hem settled just down the road in Ketchum, in the house where he would blow his brains out in 1961. Those tolling bells? Don't ask.

The Wood River Valley, where Ketchum and Sun Valley lie, is one helluva gorgeous piece of Earth. I know, because in my younger days, I literally wrote the book on Idaho (and I can use "literally" here literally, since I actually *did* write said book: Moon Publications' travel guide to Idaho). At the time I was writing it, Bruce Willis lived in the valley, so I wrote him a letter asking him if he'd be open to doing an interview for the book about why he loved living there. I knew it was a longshot, and I never really expected a response. But some time later, he called me at work — totally freaking out the poor phone receptionist — and asked me exceedingly politely and with good humor to please not put him in the book because he valued his privacy and that of his family. Though disappointed, I gained enormous respect for the man for his call, and of course I assented, offering to buy him a beer next time I was in town. He laughed at that. True to my word, I made no mention of him by name in the book, but in my intro to the ski-area town where he lived, I couldn't resist having a little fun. Here's what I wrote to pay tribute:

*"Take a good look at your bartender here; hey, he's nobody's fool. Chances are he's a die-hard shredder, moonlighting to pay for a season pass up north."*

Five Bruce Willis references in there. Did you catch them? Sometimes it's great fun being a writer. Dog bless you, Bruce! And my offer still stands.

Anyway, I hope you all enjoy your fall and the abundance of colorful leaves! Just remember, *rakes and brooms*, people! *Rakes and brooms!* ☂ ☂ ☂

## ATTENTION RETAILERS!

Want to reach Eugene's artsy-fartsiest customers? You've come to the right place! Graffiti is read each month by the most creative creatives in town, who have told me in no uncertain terms that they are ready, willing, and eager to support YOUR business! It's true! And our ad rates are so low, it's impossible to limbo under them! Just \$30 for standard business-card size, or \$15/column inch for anything bigger. **CHEAP!**

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# 9 Dates to Conception

David Koteen

## I

Computer had aligned them. No going back. Click “Yes” if he pleases you. Everyone knows Taurus and Scorpio are naturally attracted? Where was easy: The Lager House. One can tell mucho from beer preference. How her lips greet the glass and sip. She chose the “Lite Flight”... all Oregon IPA’s. He liked her: she stared into the sample glass; then smelled it. (Note: Tauruses are sensitive to scents. They like body emollients and essential oils and subtle fragrances.) “How about some sweet potato fries?” Nose shrug. “I prefer American fries with ketchup.” What was I thinkin’? We agreed on Ninkasi Tricerahops. Bit heavier, but with some depth. (Scorpios like depth.) Lordes was singing: “We don’t care, we’re driving Cadillacs in our dreams.” Their eyes lit upon the other, gave up genuine smiles. As soon as possibility of actually connecting rose its alluring head... doubt set in. Many times bitten, many, many times shy. But he said Yes... and he was true to his Yeses. “I’m done here. What about wee walk-about?”

## II

“You took your Ave Maria sweet time about it. What! You got a three day rule?” “Hey! Hey! Hey! Your outdated phone works same as my iPhone 10. Know what I’m sayin’?” I give my most righteous rapper’s mudra. Like don’t be dissin’ me, bitch. We both paid same fee to see each other’s profile. “Maybe? But I’ve dated Scorpions before. You people like control. Especially around ‘dark issues.’” What’s dark about sex? Don’t you want to go deeper? They strolled and sauntered and sashayed along Willamette River bank. He tried to impress her by skipping large chunk of fir bark. Which went about three feet and kerplunked, splashing her with chilliness. Lost few points for that. “Check this out.” She kicked off large outcropped root and swung up into overhanging alder. Then hung by her knees, revealing taut little belly and naval sides of her breasts. Nicely done. Plus amply exposing flesh. I feel like I’m falling behind. She swung down — amid disarray — feigned to hug him, then shoved his shoulders away. She raced him to concrete bicycle bridge. But he didn’t run. So she won. By time he arrived she was chattin’ it up with some geeked out cyclist: I often come here after my daily rides; just to stare at the water... and see who I meet. You are today’s good fortune. Blah, blah, blah.

## III

4 days passed. He bit proverbial bullet and texted. After all, he really did come in second. buy u dinner? whr i chz? y not? marché on 2sday. time is yrs. ok. 7:30. mk it 7. i meant 7. 5th Street Public Market is central gathering destination for two score years and some. Also fairly recent home of Marché and newer adjoining bar, called Le Bar. Eugene class. “I ordered you extra-chilled dry Boodles martini.” “Thoughtful, and then some. Kiss on your cheek, or maybe your left ear?” “Not my ear, please.” That’s how it was. “Let’s go with poached parsnips. Maybe swap this Old Fashion for some *vin rouge*. Did you ever drink Spanish Muga? Hmmm, with *moules frites*. Add beet-and-fennel salad. What say you?” “That’ll work for me. And bread.” During second glass of Muga she pointed to flame rising in kitchen area, surreptitiously sliding her hand over his. This was progress. No dessert. No coffee. They left last glass of wine for waiter as tip. \$8?

## IV

Logical next date is cycling. It’s Eugene. Some energetic, aerobic activity is mandatory. More bikes per capita than any other small American city. “Yes. As we know bikes go between places, offering even more options.” “Then we are in accord. But let’s not race.” No need to rub salt in it. First stop, Sundance Natural Foods — pioneer in the industry. There didn’t used to be organic/non-organic distinctions. Then what happened? He got four mixed beers and two kinds of olives. She put hot minestrone soup from salad bar into thermos she had brought with. Good idea. A Granny Smith apple, one Bosc pear, and piece of Italian Fontina. They were set. He had previously bought a dark heart from Euphoria Chocolate Company. Taurus females (and others) resonate to dark chocolate. It cleans their aura. Past Roosevelt Middle School and south onto bike path. She rode no-handed and put on poppy-colored lipstick. Handed it to him who rode rather ineptly without his paws; hence smeared some here and there around his bristly visage. Yet he smiled. I’m winning now. “You’re winning now, aren’t you?” Maybe bump her slightly... but thought better of it. They turned west on Fox Hollow and stopped at Crossfire Church outside children’s play area. They sat crotch-sideways on two metal swings and ate olives: Montequillas and French oil-cured. Concurrent with pit-squeezing antics. “Hey! You two move on. These premises are only for members of Crossfire Church.” She shot oil-cured pit at the voice, harrumphed, got up, giving swing one big push. With merely one stop thereafter they made it up past the Raptor Center on to Christensen Rd parking lot. First water. Always water. As they lead their bikes toward wooded trail that winds down to town, he abruptly passes, easing into her Snoopy backpack the chocolate heart.

## V

The fifth date was awkward. In lower arcanum Tarot cards — not ones with complicated drawings on them, but those like normal playing cards — 5’s are low point in each of the suits: pentacles, cups, swords, and wands. The 5’s mean energy in that element (earth, water, air, fire) has ebbed. No more can be added to it without detriment. She said: Never ask why. En route to University of Oregon dance concert, they met Howard. Her ex... ex-husband. Like, who knew? Howie was buzzing (maybe meth?), approached with some vehemence... very direct. Kind of hit her, not hard, with backside of his left hand on her shoulder. Though not in his repertoire, her date managed to step up: “You got a problem, brother?” “My problem is not with you. It’s with your friend here, Ms—” “I’ve filed for divorce. Deal!” She said: C’mon Howie. Give it a rest. We did our best. Don’t be a pest. Howie scowled: “Good luck, guy, melting that heart of ice.” Then to her: “Have a great fucking life.” And buzzed off. They skipped dance concert. Instead walked over to McMenamins.

## VI

His eruditeness around relationships was this: you can go to center line... reach over; but you can’t cross over. Partner has to move closer. Or nothing happens. Trust is imperative. Even during Eugene winters one can find some form of bouquet if one isn’t too particular. But he instead purchased one white fragrant lily from Aldo’s Flowers to convey his feelings. They reconvened at Rhododendron Garden atop Hendrick’s Park. I have smelly lily for you and hot tea for us. Is it herbal? No, it’s Assam with honey and crème. One cup and you’re high. Guaranteed.

OK, hook me up. This isn’t some sort of nasty trick, is it? Started to drizzle so they leaned against trunk of massive oak. Stop that! Do I come off as someone who would put warm urine and apple juice in a thermos? “Here’s my excuse. ‘I’m about to bleed any second now.’ Ace in the hole. “Have some tea. Maybe it’ll start your flow.” “Mmm! This is good. And I adore lilies.” They held hands around oak trunk. She whispered: I get grumpy and demanding when Fortune doesn’t favor me. (Security is bottomline value for Taurus). I won’t necessarily accept your offer, but you should offer anyway. Step 12 in “12 Steps To Pleasing Your Partner”: Give More, Expect Less.

## VII

You want to hike into Pinard Falls? I certainly do. Where are they? Outside of Cottage Grove on Laying Creek Road. Pretty easy trek. They said no rain on Sunday. If you like, I can drive? I like. Began to drizzle as they drove off. Though to be fair it did seem like clouds were commencing to ease apart. Don’t tell me what you brought along. I’m curious to see if we match up. Superb! I brought nothing... are you disappointed? Ha! Almost two months had passed since Zoosk had chosen them. Why people sign up... to meet likely suspects for future capers. Someone to rob convenience store with. Or bear your child. Meander through wet, forested landscape, share moments of majesty and wonder. So it was working. Often Scorpions are associated with sexuality. And appropriately so. Of course it was present, but he didn’t feel any overwhelming urge. That they had made it this far was miraculous. She said: When it’s going right... my way, my whole body is charged; I can fire from anywhere. Orgasms are a dime a dozen. He typed that in his Reminders.

## VIII

We should do something with other people. Not Howard. No, not Howard. Doubt not that I have other friends. Also nearly 50 on Facebook. You rock. Like have drinks with them, or what’s your idea? You’re not going to help, are you? I am helping. But I prefer being with you one on one. Well, friends are part of my package. And family. Now you’re starting to frighten me. Oh, looks who’s here! The inimitable Sarah Engels. (I’m being taken advantage of. My good nature.) “Hello, Sarah Engles. I’ve heard nothing about you.” “You don’t look like no Scorpio. I’d have guessed Capricorn. Although you do look pretty clean.” Get some coffee? Sarah: I can’t stay. I just came to see if he was worth keeping. And? I’ll call you later. Does this fill our requirements of being with ‘other people’? It wasn’t so, so difficult. Sarah Engels is alright. But I wouldn’t hire her as my astrologer. Fair enough. Let’s go eat some fish. In the sense that Tauruses always like to indulge their senses — like taste — they’re easy to please.

## IX

Daffodils and daisies, burgeoning lilacs. Her birthday arrived. She had dropped few hints about ‘things.’ Nothing more. They hadn’t spoken about ‘any thing’ special. He would have to figure it out. It was time. Finals. And of course, the question.

(continued on p. 12)

# Three Streams

Paul Dresman

The eyewitness said:

“First, there was light and then came shock. The blast wave shot across the open water.

As the ship drifted at the edge, as we watched the cloud rising thousands of feet, we removed our goggles and remarked on the complete success— thumbs up from deck to deck.

Then the first sea birds came flying toward us, out of the cloud. Their eyes had been burned by the flash, the remains drooled down their beaks.

In the screaming and the circling, the circling, and the screaming,

we met our surviving witnesses, and we tried not to listen or see.”

My mother said:

“My cousin Harriet told me Klaus Fuchs was in Clifton’s Cafeteria, counting the capital letters on the menu

because their number is exactly the same as the amount of uranium he gave to Stalin.”

[long pause]  
“There is no menu in Clifton’s,” my father said. while my mother passed him a dish.

“Yes,” my mother said, “that’s why she goes there. She can’t read, you know. She’s retarded.”

“She is?” I asked. They looked at me, askance, having forgotten my presence, as we ate dinner, the little face at plate level.

“Yes,” my mother said. “It happened when she was born. Uncle Harold was in the Army in Texas, and Aunt Mildred had her on the stairs. They just didn’t deliver her right in that Army hospital.”

It was a Naval hospital,” my father said, correcting her.

Nobody said anything:

Lowering the boom, drilled at school, we crouched down under our desks

and tried not to listen or see.

At home, at dawn, when Dad and I watch the Nevada test shot live on TV, I want to crawl behind the set, get way back inside the cabinet, out of sight of the towering cloud in the desert on the screen.

It seems the thing is about to come through the window and into the room, just like the night when the all-out attack sirens went off because of the rain, and I was in bed, thinking, “This is the end, my friend, this is the end...”

Later, I ask my father to go over the signs once more, the swipe for a bunt, the swerve for hitting away, curves, where the cosmos warps, time tears into uneven strips.

His cheek tics, the tea kettle sings. Daylight is here, but the night remains.



## Who Looks at a Pocket Watch?

Stephen Swiftfox

It was 1973. I was 22 out of college and needed a job. I ended up driving a city bus in So. Central L.A. from 2:30PM to 2:50AM. No need to explain why that was a life threatening job. Anyway, all bus drivers were required to buy their own pocket watches. They had to be "railroad watches." The specs are: All numbers, 1 thru 12 had to be on the dial, no hash marks, had to have 3 hands... hour, minute, and second. The watches had to be at least "4 position," that means that they had to be accurate no matter the position that they were held. They had to be at least 14 jewel. I loved mine. It was an Illinois brand. Ah, the good old days. No matter how many times I was hassled, robbed, threatened, or beat up they never thought to take my pocket watch which hung upside down from my belt. 🚲🚲🚲

## Edge of Delight

Low tide  
Vibe shifts

In this great American muse

Becoming a sensation  
A persona of drama, mystery and love  
An element familiar and yet distant

Unafraid  
Unashamedly myself!

Fergul Cirpan

## Alchemy

At what point does friendship  
Become something more?

Pine cones fall and roll the  
Music of gravity, but at some  
Point they stop.

Waves crash and emit a  
Vibrionic “hump” then recede  
Into their larger body.

Again, at what point does friendship  
Become something more?

Stars die in the vague morning light  
As the luminous waves  
Crash and spread across  
The day.

When does friendship become  
Something more?

Just asking.....

Ed English

## Quiet Morning

Cloudy, misty, drizzly day in the city.  
Now we wait in silence.  
Waiting for the fallout from the aftermath.  
The wounded egos throwing shovelfuls of sand into each other's faces,  
and burning down each other's homes,  
are taking all of us with them  
on their journey through hell.  
It's a quiet day at home.  
Windows open to light from the overcast sky.  
The war continues on multiple fronts.  
Relentless slaughter of the innocents.  
Ranting megalomaniacs channeling hatred,  
promising to visit my neighborhood,  
where gently falling raindrops  
keep the world alive.

John Ashbaugh

## My Dark Cocoon

At four A. M. I am wrapped like a mummy in an oversized blanket, red and white-new Christmas colors. I lie back, stretch out. and with closed eyes, see Goya-like creatures, dark clouds, and magma waiting to burst, dancing from my eyelids.

From this dark cocoon, the collected clocks call out, their harsh voices, like lost friends, reaching out in the darkness for some singular solace.

I can only wait for the hour, the half hour, for their reassurance. They all have a message and I know them intimately. I have lifted their hems and have torn into their innards.

Not much has escaped me as I clean and polish their polite and exact parts.

It is now five A. M. and they start their exchange to prop me up.

Sleep is still far off. The echoes of dead friends begin their rants.

Bill Gunn

## On a Ship

The sail has been unfurled in strong winds, and by now, I am jettisoned across the sea. The sea that gives me strength, fish and a far off vision is set for sudden change that doesn't last.

Looking down in the blue, water going aft makes an argument for special regressions and daring.

As I run to the bow to see the dolphins, jumping, racing, not to be out done by some human contraption.

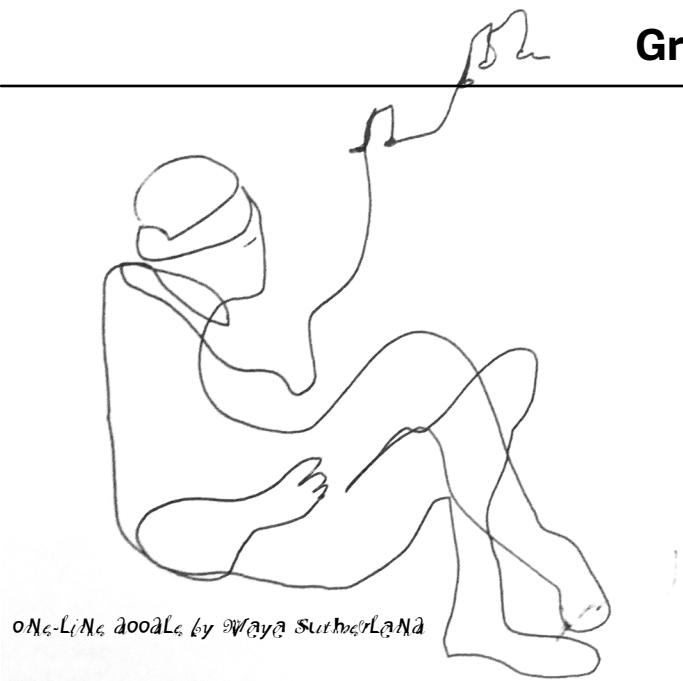
If I could ride a dolphin instead of being cloistered on this ship, I would gladly trade my lungs for a clue to the unknown.

Here, now, I sit trying to be calm.

It's a simple procedure.

Bill Gunn





oNc-LiNc dooALc by WyaS SurhweLcNa

BREAKING

15 Injured When Parade Goes Awry

Jeff Southwick, Reporter

Garibaldi, OR - Fifteen people were injured this morning during the annual Garibaldi Days parade when Samba Ja, a percussion ensemble based in Eugene, Oregon, suddenly lost control and plowed into a crowd of parade watchers who were standing on the sidewalk.

According to local resident Patti Watson, who witnessed the accident but was not injured, "it was like watching a slow motion nightmare as the band started careening off the street and toward the crowd. You could see the panicked looks on both the faces of the band and people on the sidewalk, but there was just no time for anyone to react."

A member of Samba Ja, who was treated at the hospital in Tillamook for a broken leg and received stitches for cuts to the nose and forehead, said, "I noticed that the right shoe of the person in front of me was coming untied, and then before you could react, the shoe was off and she was skidding off to the left. Of course we were unable to break rank, and since she was carrying a 20-inch Surdo, she had way too much momentum to slow down. Since I was keeping the rhythm on my Caixa, I didn't have a free hand to wave a warning, so we all just followed and tried to brace for the impact. It was a horribly frightening experience; thank goodness no one got killed."

Jana McCandless, Undersheriff of the Tillamook County Sheriffs Office said that she is still awaiting a toxicology report from the lab to rule out bad shellfish or other intoxicants, but based on the preliminary evidence it appears to be a case of basic equipment failure. "The weather was clear, and our examination of the roadway found no slick spots, so at this time we are focusing on a single tennis shoe found at the scene. If it is determined that the tread on the shoe was worn below the minimum limits for safe operation, or that the laces were tied with the slip knot, then it is possible that the band could be cited for marching with defective equipment."

Undersheriff McCandless also provided a safety warning: "Some people think that they are invincible, especially if they are only moving at three miles per hour like this band, but you cannot neglect safety! Check your shoes, check your belt — you never know what could go wrong. I for one would like to see a few layers of bubble wrap mandated for every drum with more than a four-inch head."

At press time most of the injured were treated and released, but two members of Samba Ja, one local resident, and two visitors from Canada remained hospitalized for further observation.

Wallflower

Claudia Caramelli

"Wallflower," he said, as I stood there at the graduation party with his blunt in my hands, as in "It's funny, I always thought you were such a wallflower." His smile stopped halfway across his face because he was making a joke not funny enough for a full laugh, a joke that uses a tired cliché as if he had invented it, like his comedy somehow made up for years of him associating me with nothing but florals. It spoke of him more than it spoke of me. What it really meant was that us two, we weren't close. This was a fact that must have escaped him, because his dilated eyes gave my legs the slow crawl. I could feel him pinning posies to my skin. That must be what he saw, the socks printed with neatly patterned roses, the gentle sway of indigo shorts, soft sleeves on a lavender sweater. For him my clothes concealed the promises of lily skin and morning glories.

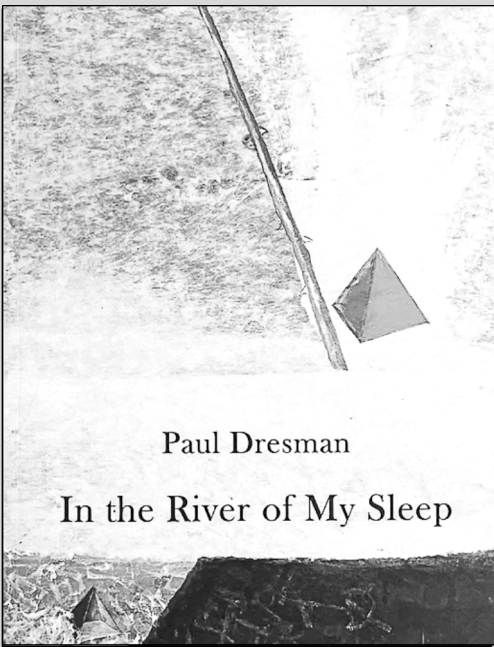
The real joke, I thought, is that we had never seen a real wallflower. The modern walls of our homes had long been wiped clean of wallpaper of all prints and patterns, yet somehow he'd missed the memo. It must be easier to demolish a building than a well-constructed bias. My own room had papers, not "wallpaper" but stories, drawings. Tucked behind my headboard, the story that had won me my scholarship. Arranged around it are letters from my family, well-wishers, all of them imbued with the hopes for me of success because I could be the first family member to go to college.

He didn't know this about me, though. Looking out at the party I saw them through his eyes. Quiet daisy at the punch bowl, tiger lily dancing beside the stereo, slender lilac framed in the doorway. One "wallflower" with a beer, wearing a romper with vertical lines of tropical vines running up to her neck. She drank as if they were choking her. I knew her. She majored in sociology, and wrote beat poetry.

"Wallflower." The word hung between us like the cloud of sour smoke that trailed from my fingers. I put the blunt to my lips and inhaled twice, and the room fell back into perspective. I chose my words carefully. Snuffing the weed out I told him, "Wallflowers don't bloom." 🍃🍃🍃

"The weather deepens roots, and I write from an American imagination, a spirit in cahoots with wellsprings and camaraderie... History is a nightmare I am trying to elucidate; poetry the singing, invisible flag I raise."

—from the Prologue



Award-winning poet Paul Dresman taught literature and writing at the University of California at San Diego, at Beijing Teachers' University, and at the University of Oregon, in his hometown of Eugene.

amazon



"Big, spectacular. and daring in topics confronted."

— Donald Wesling, Professor Emeritus of English Literature, UC San Diego

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Inferno in the American Forest

A telephone rings in the middle of the night.  
"Get out now!" a friend yells.  
They leave in slippers and robes, a down jacket,  
a hooded rain poncho covered in ashes, a silly hat.  
They drive the canyon road through fire—  
sparks billowing across the windshield.

\*

Last millennium's vehicle frame rusts,  
bare ribs in a desert of remaining hulks,  
a desert of refrains: cars, wars, massive burnings.  
These are depictions, re-creations, simulacra  
or the lasting evidence stored in every head.  
Sometimes, memory, turning and turning  
in its widening labyrinth, will recall  
the momentary thrall, or the dismay,  
the broken remnant of what was to be different.

Here is a hole where an eye could be seen,  
there a siren— warning, blaring.  
A gush of conjured smoke, a distorting mirror,  
peroxidized pulley and winch  
manipulated to accentuate  
the beast within, as a circus might celebrate  
the roar of the big cats, the howl of clowns,  
the enormous gasp when Christ the Acrobat leaps  
into the ring, and the lions feast.

\*

In time, flesh turns to marble.  
In time, we are ground into particles.  
In time, you never get around to considering the tight spaces

where we must contain ourselves, compounded  
limitations, boundaries, borders, bigotry and tall walls  
to pretend security, to restrict.

There is no salvation,  
no rescue, no exit.  
The heat's rising, the trees dying,  
the earth cracks under the sun's blaze.  
Your throat turns dry and sore  
from all the smoke  
as your mind splits, aches  
in the face of tomorrow

on a voyage to hell, cast adrift  
in a sea of fire, a sea of ennui,  
helplessly lost in a time  
of fear and death,  
division and hate,  
going under waves of disease,  
the voices crying,  
"I can't breathe."

Paul Dresman

# DEMOCRACY

Text and Photos by Tim Gardner

Here in Oregon nearly everyone votes by mail. But all libraries and many state facilities have giant ballot drop boxes, sorta like mailboxes, securely and permanently bolted into the sidewalk.

On the last Election Day, back in May, I parked my car at the little neighborhood shopping center here in Sheldon, Eugene, close to the grocery for ease of departure, and I walked on down to the library at the other end of the center to drop my ballot in one of those boxes. As I walked on down, proudly carrying my ballot, along with my recycled grocery sacks folded under my arm, I noticed another person walking through the parking lot, also carrying her ballot. And then I spied another. And someone just left the drop box. And here is someone else driving up to put theirs into the drive-up slot. And sure enough, two or three other people appeared from cars and shops to drop their ballots.

I slipped mine into the slot and turned to smile at the woman who was coming up right behind me, her ballot in hand. And as I walked back toward the grocery something caught in my throat, I got all misty and started to tear up. A memory had suddenly come to my mind.

Sixteen years ago now, I was in Bhutan when they were holding one of their first democratic elections. The king had decided that the country should no longer be a Buddhist monarchy and that Bhutan's future was going to be a democratic one. Their very first "election," in April of 2007, was actually a mock election consisting of four faux parties, each a different color, with high school students having been selected as mock candidates. It was all a practice for what would come over the following months and years as they established a brand-new system of federal and local governance. When I was there in late March of 2008, they held their first general election that would establish the National Assembly, the lower house of Parliament. It was a historic time!

We were out in the countryside, having just come off a short camping trip in the lower Himalayas. It was early morning, the sky was huge, and we were being driven to our next destination when we started to notice lines of people in their traditional garb, the Gho for men and the Kira for women, walking along the road, and on the trails over the hills, and through beast-made paths in the fields.

There were no crowds, but as we traveled over an hour we saw hundreds of people, grouped in small lines, walking together in one direction. It finally dawned on someone in our group that it was Election Day, the first general election in Bhutan, and all these people were heading to the polls!

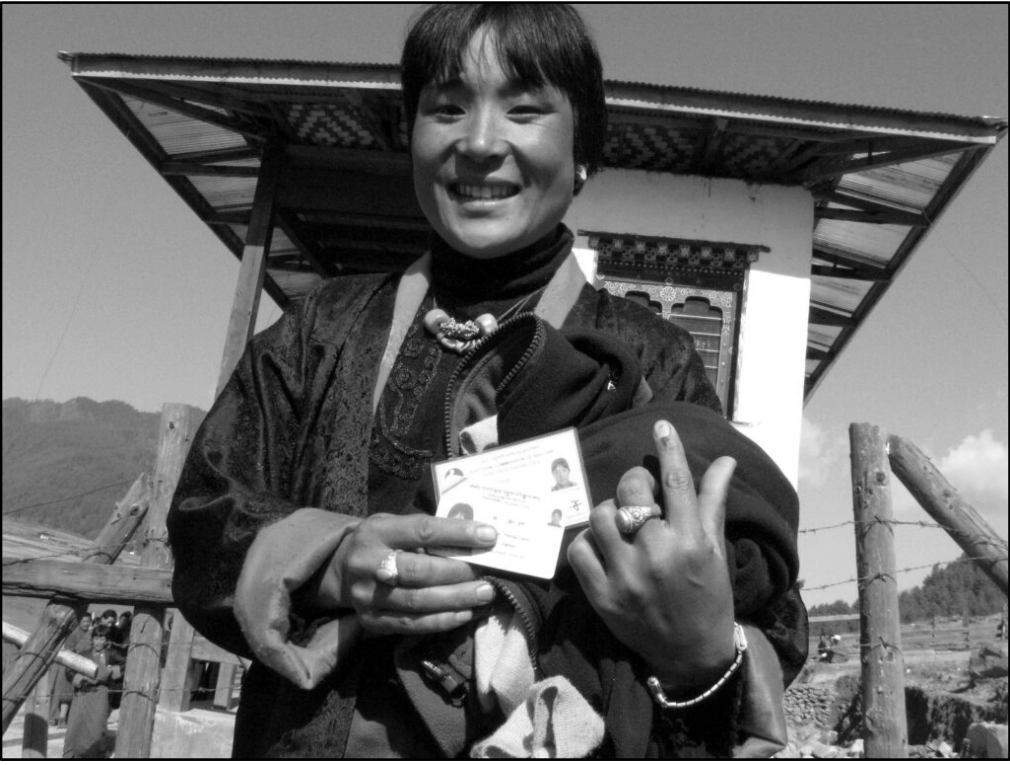
Crossing hill and dale, meadow and mountain, to do so.

Before long we came to where a large group of Bhutanese had gathered at a small way station and we stopped to talk. Our leader went with the guide to chat with folks while the rest of us just sat in the van, or stood back ... in awe. People, climbing the hills, walking through yak pastures, sometimes both and some for many, many miles, had come to this lone building in what seemed the middle of nowhere to cast their ballot.

**It finally dawned on someone in our group that it was Election Day, the first general election in Bhutan, and all these people were heading to the polls!**

It was without doubt one of the most wonderful moments in my life. I felt most proud and held the deepest respect for democracy. But it's hard to explain exactly how I felt. This remarkable scene was humbling and thrilling all at the same time, to see democracy playing out, here, in the remote mountains of the Tibetan plateau (or thereabouts). And the people, who loved their king, putting out so much effort to accomplish this amazing thing called democracy that had been offered to them. I got all choked up then, just like I did yesterday morning at the drop box. I have never forgotten that experience or what it meant, or how it felt.

And now. Now, the day after, I find it heartbreaking to see where my own country has gone. This country that inspired so many others like Bhutan. This country where we now have fake electors, insurrectionists and strongmen. A former president on trial and indicted.... I can't even recall the number of charges. A Supreme Court justice flying the flag that represents those who stormed the capital. What has happened here that citizens want to give up this gift of democracy that our forebears all fought so hard for? We don't even need to climb mountains or step around yak dung. Much of the time we don't even need to get off the sofa but to slip our ballots into our mailboxes. Bhutan's first election had a turnout of just over 80% of eligible voters, at a time when less than 5% of the population owned a vehicle. They walked to their first opportunity to select the people that would run their newly found government. བོ བོ བོ





“CONTRIBUTE TO OUR GOFUNDME . . . I BEG YOU!”

I cannot tell a lie . . . We need to find an extra \$600 for our IRS 501(c)(3) application so at some point we can get grants from the King and stop asking you impoverished revolutionaries for your lunch money. We also need our own wire display racks so we look presentable and oh-so profesheal when the Redcoats show up. A dozen racks will set us back another \$600. So far we haven't found a source for used racks — if you know Ben Franklin, please ask him to buy us a rack or two. In any case, add that all up and it comes to 1,200 smackeroots. That's a lot of smackeroots, so...



We've started a smackeroot GoFundMe:

[gofund.me/02e7682e](https://gofund.me/02e7682e)

Please help! And remember, “One if by land; two if by sea!”

# THE FAILURE OF OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

Linda Caradine

Men are fallible. Let's start with that premise. Our Founding Fathers created the guidelines for a nation built in their image. Their work was epic in scope, but who were they really, these early thinkers and dreamers, who set out in print an overarching treatise for this brave new world?

It seems their aims were short-sighted by virtue of their own place in a society that had not yet arrived at a place of inclusion and acceptance. They excluded women, African slaves, indigenous peoples and even some European settlers, conceiving a nation by and for the white men who had come here largely to escape their own debts and legal problems back in Great Britain.

My European friends question why the U.S. is so frantically patriotic. We fly the U.S. flag from every rooftop, truck and pole, and we insist our children recite the Pledge of Allegiance at school. If we were a developing nation, we would be accused of practicing mass indoctrination. Yet most of us are so accustomed to this, we don't even think about it, or we consider it a matter of national pride.

Let's look at that pride. My white male friends and relatives fervently worship Thomas Jefferson and the other founders. And why shouldn't they? White males are the demographic that has experienced the bounty of the country's early promise. They are free to live, work and worship as they please. They can consider us one nation under God. They can pledge their allegiance and assume to receive liberty and justice as set forth in that storied verse. And so they will. But it's not so for all.

Our Constitution, the supreme law of the land, is considered the masterwork of great minds. It's been amended 27 times since 1789 but has yet to bring unity or provide fair oversight to an increasingly diverse nation. The areas of interest to non-white and non-male citizens it addresses are largely ignored in spirit, if not in fact.

Consider our abysmal treatment of indigenous peoples. From the beginning, thanks to our doctrine of Manifest Destiny, the United States oppressed and subjugated First Nations people because we wanted their land. The USA would never have come into being had we considered those whose lands we were occupying. And although Manifest Destiny's mandate of westward expansion played itself out more than two hundred years ago, its ugly stepchildren of racism and exclusion still permeate what we call "our" country.

Ask yourself why Blacks are much more likely than whites to be arrested

and even killed by the police, and why non-white would-be immigrants are turned away at the border en masse.

As for women's rights, ask yourself why there is a gender gap in Nobel laureates and other recognitions of achievement, and why there is still a glass ceiling and 1950s' mentality for the place of women, who have struggled and sacrificed every bit as much as their male counterparts? I'll tell you why — because their "old" role is necessary and advantageous to the smooth rule of white men.

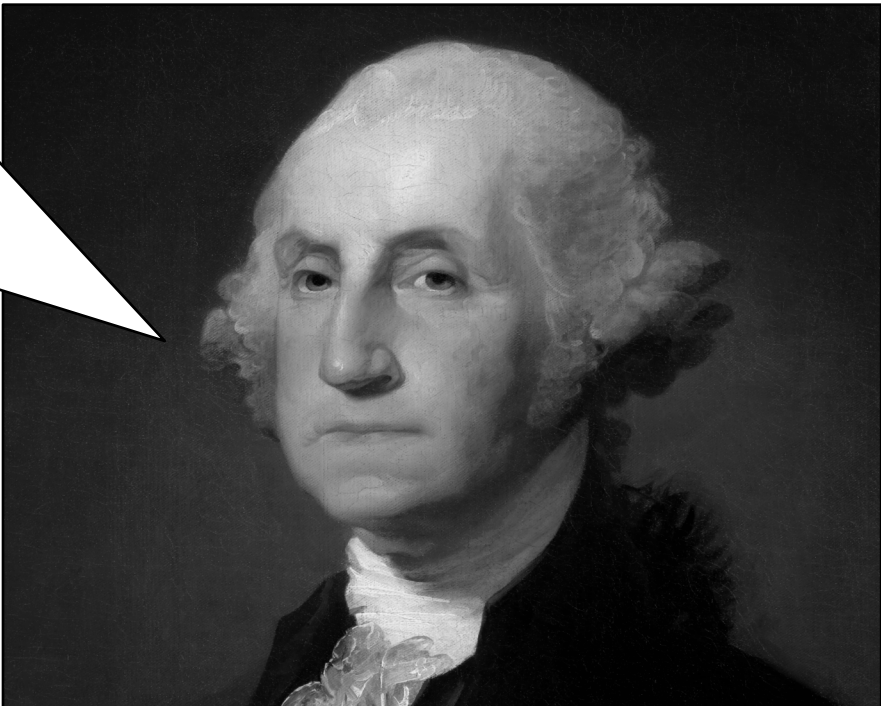
If you don't acknowledge these realities, you are either a white man entrenched in the status quo or a person who hasn't been paying attention. There are plainly two Americas: the official one for white men; the other for the rest of us. Is it any wonder many Americans take the Constitution with a grain of salt, seeing it as full of grand allusions to the workings of a free nation but offering little in the way of applicable substance?

We live in an elitist society where the white male is right and others are largely ignored and shorted in the bounty of good fortune. White males, in particular, believe immigration is a dangerous affront to our nation's ideals. They blithely skip over our nation's "melting pot" beginnings and struggle to instill a "whites only" mentality into our stew. In a country that claims to be all-welcoming, the fear of those who are different generates widespread prejudice and discrimination. But in our land of plenty, surely we have enough to go around.

I am not at war against white men. I think most are doing the best they can in a system designed to support their base instincts. But I think most of us, male or not, white or not, are part of the problem. We ignore and sanction racism and all the other "isms" that reinforce a class-conscious society. Many of us think that to hold onto our elusive rung on the ladder of success, we must struggle to remain above certain other people. Instead, we need to develop empathy for all our partners in this worthy experiment.

We can't continue to sacrifice the rights of others on the altar of self-promotion. We have to see that it won't hurt but rather help us to be more inclusive and accepting of human differences. You won't be penalized for having a broader worldview. In fact, you'll be rewarded with an expanded appreciation for humanity in all its colors, languages, shapes, sizes and points of origin.

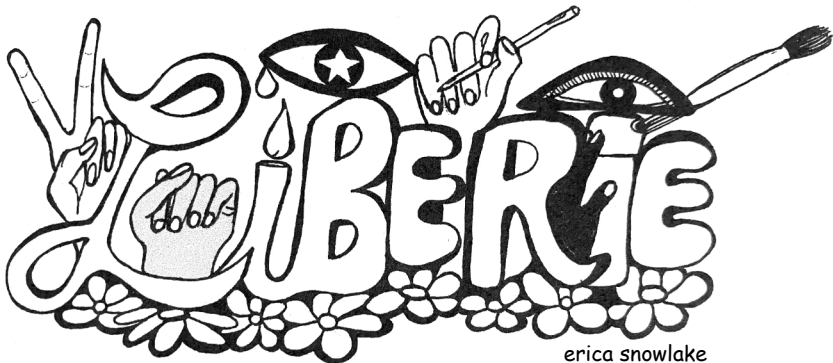
And isn't that what we strive toward on this uncharted life journey we've undertaken together — to grow wiser and to better deserve the riches we all share? 🚲🚲🚲



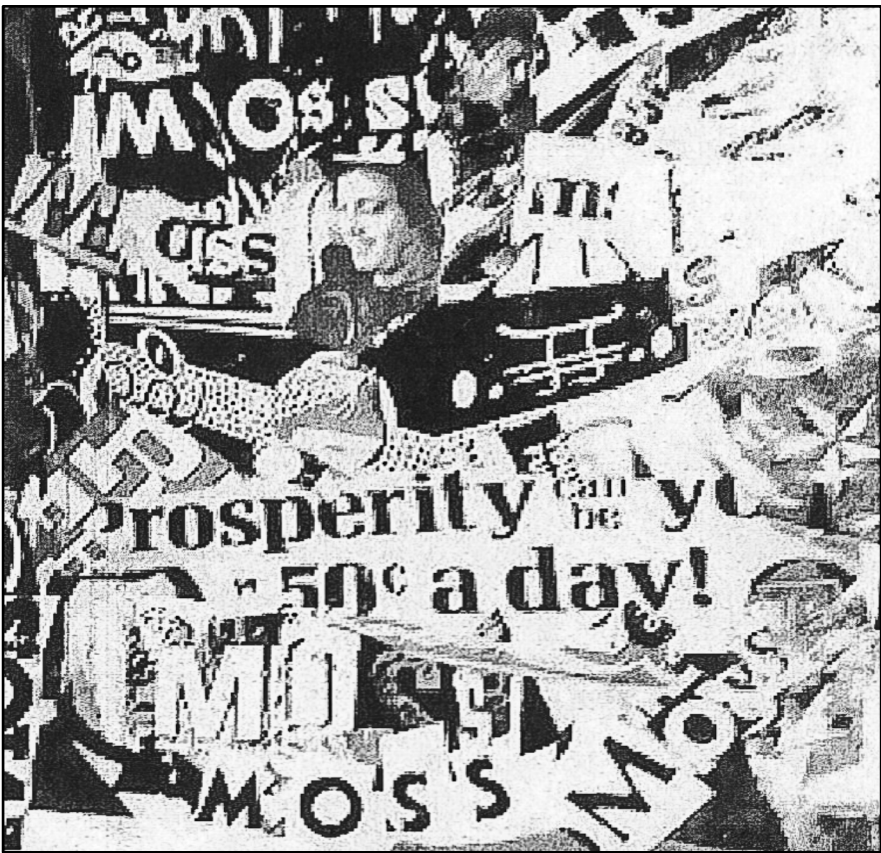
# THE DINNER PARTY BEFORE THE REVOLUTION

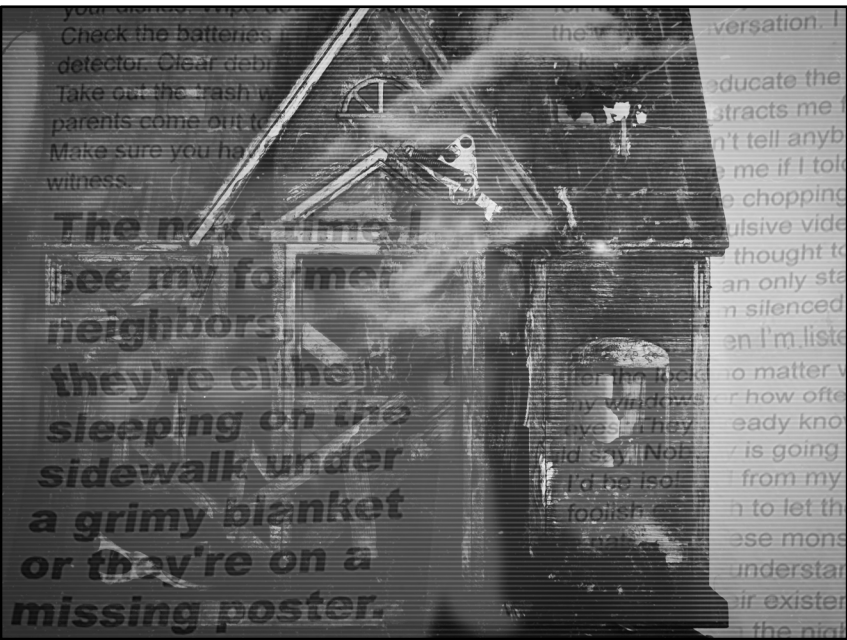
Jim Smith

The general and the spy arrived at the door together, where they met the securities trader. The host, who everyone knows for her great wealth and generosity, opened the door and took their coats and weapons. "You won't be needing these in here," she smiled. Everyone welcomed the Adman when he arrived bearing well-written denials for everyone. The unbiased reporter walked in, looking for his chum — and some said, lover — the CIA spy lady. Then the deep-thinking professor came, apologizing that his think-tank duties made him late. Last of all, with pomp and circumstance preceding him, came the Politician with his Secret Service entourage. He made a short speech thanking all for his re-election. Much of their talk was about the great feast to be served, for they knew the host always shared the spoils of wars. Alas, an hour went by, then another, without a call for their gluttony to begin. The host apologized, "It seems the servants have all run away." The spy began to grow alarmed when she couldn't reach HQ. Then softly at first but growing more insistent came the sound of drums, then the sound of voices, maybe thousands, and sounds of general merriment. The procession stopped outside, and a loudspeaker proclaimed: "This is the party before the REVOLUTION. Celebrate the world turning upside down!" The general was furious. "I thought this was the party before the counter-revolution. I must return to my troops." The reporter, sweating profusely, said: "I see many of them outside, wearing red bandanas." At this, everyone ran to the door to escape, but found it locked from the outside.



erica snowlake





## Under the Bridge I Saw an Angel

Genderless  
Androgynous  
From heaven above

Wings striped black  
and grey

Naked  
Skinny with ribs dented and broken  
Pale as perfect morning clouds

I witnessed a heavenly body  
With long fingers  
White powder

The underpass  
Like the inside of a pyramid  
Standing in the dust  
Amber and emerald glass  
A message inside a bottle  
Dented cans and plastic bags

I saw an angel Towering over a pile of vomit  
An angel with wings like a flying rat and  
the face of a sinner

The angel told me  
It was time to be afraid  
Of the choices I have made

It's not here to remind me  
To teach me a thing  
The lesson was a downward spiral  
It was a walk of life

The underpass with its caged sections,  
Its boulders placed by man,  
Cobwebs and bats,  
Lights that never turn off

The angel told me it doesn't need to be OK  
Our lives are but stories and not all stories  
have happy endings

It told me to take it by the hand  
My hair was frosty  
My lungs were hot  
Stuffed up and my eyes  
Boiled on the inside

The angel stood over me  
Heavenly and ugly  
It looked down on me with  
deep understanding

It's not my fault completely  
I slipped up  
The angel asked me  
if I wanted to leave this place

The stench of my being was unmistakable  
My jeans were torn and wet  
My shirt was open and my arms bled  
I felt euphoric as if I had fallen into a river  
of love and warmth

Under the bridge  
Semis passed above me  
The roar of the highway  
The angel picked me up

It told me  
You never had a choice  
So you don't have to make one

Under the bridge  
I felt my body give out  
It didn't hurt  
The angel looked into my eyes  
I saw an infinite highway leading to freedom  
To shelter  
To the warmth of childhood  
To memory

The angel asked me  
If I was ready for moebious

Without answering it told me  
Eternity is your next destination  
Are you ready

I found comfort in weightlessness  
The angel I saw under the bridge  
It vanished when I closed my eyes

I felt the earth as it spins and spins  
After that I lost all sense of description

**James Otter**  
poetry & art

## Fine China

We are fragile  
like glass

and reliable  
like fine china  
that they take out  
for the important  
occasions

**Ana Marie Boyd**

## Last Saturday, I spent an interesting hour

in front of the Eugene Public Library as  
part of Peace Vigil. We “vigilaunties,” as  
our one remaining male participant calls  
us, have done this for decades. Some of  
us are old hippies, and some are just old.

This time there were only two of us, me  
and Karen. I had two big flags: a rainbow  
flag with “PEACE” on it, and another one,  
my favorite, with rainbow stripes at the  
edges, a globe in the middle, a dove and  
“WORLD PEACE.” I stuck the rainbow flag  
in the big flowerpot near the street and sat  
in the shade on the metal bench with the  
other. Karen had a lovely banner, white  
with green letters, “PRAY FOR PEACE,  
ACT FOR PEACE.”

All was peaceful (!) except for a man sit-  
ting in the shaded entryway of the Atrium,  
kitty corner from us, yelling at the world.  
He sounded angry and kept it up for the  
whole hour we were there. Luckily, we  
couldn't understand him – didn't try, either  
– but at some point I heard the word Sub-  
aru. So maybe he had car trouble.

Meanwhile, small groups of people were  
meeting at our corner of the library, look-  
ing at their cellphones, conferring, and  
moving on. Some groups included women  
with green faces and witches' hats; turns  
out it was a scavenger hunt with a Wizard  
of Oz theme. There were a few scare-  
crows too, and one little boy who told me  
he was a lion – “Oh, that means you're the  
COWARDLY lion” I said, and put my  
hands up like claws and gave him a soft  
roar. His first reaction was CLAWS UP  
and ROAR BACK, but then he remem-  
bered: claws down, back away, look  
scared...

Along came two young women and (I  
think) their younger brother, with two  
beautiful cockatoos in a cage. I asked to  
see them and they brought them over. The  
white one is Snowy and the multicolored  
one has a name I recognized as a Japa-  
nese anime character but now I can't re-  
member it. (Not “Subaru!”) They've just ar-  
rived from Texas and are looking for a  
place to live. “Welcome, and good luck!”  
we said. They didn't have an accent, but  
looked exotic to us, with lovely brown skin  
and straight dark hair, and Karen asked  
them what part of the world their families  
were from: Bahrain. They headed for the  
Saturday Market.

And then a weird thing happened. A  
young Black man came striding up to us  
and demanded “WHY are you supporting  
the USA? WHY are you supporting the Ku  
Klux Klan?” We were speechless at first,  
then Karen said, “We're not!” and gestured  
toward her banner, “PRAY FOR PEACE.”  
He looked at the flags more closely, said  
“Oh. Sorry,” and walked away. I suspect  
he'd thought he'd seen two old white  
ladies waving the stars and stripes, and  
didn't notice the stripes were rainbows,  
and there were no stars at all...

We end our vigils with a short ritual,  
holding hands in circle and reciting a vari-  
ation of a Buddhist prayer. Since there  
were only two of us, we included Eugene  
Skinner, who'd been sitting there, staring  
into space. He couldn't hold hands so I put  
one hand on his head and Karen held his  
shoulder. “May all beings be happy,” we  
said. “Peace, Peace, Peace.” He looked a  
bit downcast to me. Maybe that perked  
him up.

**Jean Murphy**





art by marcel tulloh

# The Van Gogh Scam

Peter Fenton

**Attention Penniless Male Artists!** Want the financial support of an educated, ambitious gal pal or spouse? Your best bet is the Van Gogh Scam. It's a time-tested truth that brainy, high-achieving females are suckers for soulful, creative-type guys. Perhaps it has something to do with the pressure these exceptional women face arguing a case before the Supreme Court or performing brain surgery. Their freewheeling, artistic mates offer a welcome contrast to their own intellectually rigorous careers.

Such women have long been a fruitful vein of revenue for aspiring musicians. An acoustic guitar combined with a modestly tuneful voice has won many a girl's heart, particularly during the impressionable undergraduate years. Who doesn't know at least one bearded guy housed and fed for a semester or two by a girlfriend impressed with his ability to write songs with her name in the title?

The problem with the singer-songwriter gambit, though, is that eventually you have to deliver. The second or third time you get booed off stage on open mike night, you're back mixing mocha lattes for heathen commuters. These are intelligent women we're talking about, not cheerleaders.

Which brings us to the Van Gogh Scam. In case you've forgotten, Vincent Van Gogh was the tortured 19th-century Dutch artist who didn't sell a single painting before he ended his life. Today, a Van Gogh can sell for \$10s of millions.

And that's Vincent's greatest gift to you as a pretend-painter: It doesn't matter how truly dreadful you are. Who cares if friends and critics consider your work an abuse of oil paint, an aesthetic transgression, or a common vulgarity bound by a frame? Because, citing Van Gogh, you can claim that the haters are blind philistines; 22nd-century art lovers will hail you as the criminally ignored master painter of his era.

The excuses for failure are limited only by the intensity of your desire to paint while your Significant Other works her tail off.

## Case History

The story of Syd the Painter illustrates how you, too, can pull off the Van Gogh Scam. I learned about Syd from Elizabeth, a San Francisco filmmaker. Our meeting took place in a quintessential North Beach hangout; noisy, airy, redolent with the scent of fair trade coffee and wet cashmere. Thirtyish, with prematurely silver hair and the nervous habit of toying with an unlit cigarette, Elizabeth was eager to talk about Syd.

"I'd heard tales about Syd and thought he'd make a fascinating subject for a short documentary. So I introduced myself to him. He usually spends mornings over there with his sketch pad," Elizabeth said, nodding at a wobbly table near the window. "He was thrilled at first, but quickly got cold feet. I think he was afraid his wife would learn too much about his daily movements."

"Which are?"

"Nan, his wife, is a banker and keeps banker's hours, so Syd essentially knows where she is at any given moment. By the way, Syd started finger painting at age three and his work has remained at that level of technical skill and emotional maturity. But Nan adores it. Go figure."

"Fifteen minutes after Nan leaves in the morning, Syd strolls down here for coffee and Danish. An intense expression on his face, he doodles on napkins. He's been known to snap at the owner if interrupted. A few hours later, he sighs, stuffs the napkins into his pockets and leaves a fifty-cent tip."

"At noon he walks over to this Mexican bistro where he has two chicken tacos, beans, rice and ice tea, no chips or cheese. He then lowers his head into his folded arms and takes a long nap. Refreshed, he returns here for espresso and chess, stopping at precisely 6 p.m., win or lose."

"Hurrying back home, Syd opens his studio and begins working in earnest. Nan arrives about ten minutes later, showers, makes dinner and calls Syd to the table. With a great show of reluctance, Syd quits for the day, locking the door to his studio—which Nan is not allowed to enter—and joins his loving wife for supper."

I ordered the check. "What's in it for her?"

"I've asked myself that. After all, Syd has never sold a painting. Gallery owners throw fits when they see him. All I can figure is that while Nan seems traditional on the surface, she's a rebel inside. She takes vicarious pleasure in what Syd alleges is his battle against an obtuse establishment."

"And what about Syd? What's he get from it?"

Elizabeth paused before answering, "The only job he's had in thirty-four years of marriage is keeping Nan happy. Unbelievably, she is."

So there you have it, guys. With palette, brushes—and a carefully selected female patron—you too can reap the benefits of the Van Gogh Scam. 🚲🚲🚲

# Turn it up!

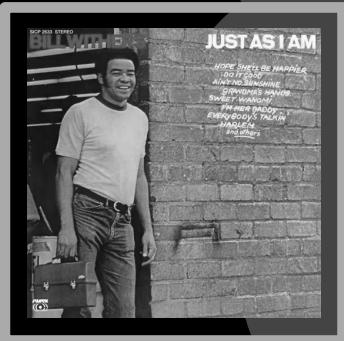
by Morgan Smith



This issue's column is dedicated to a genre with roots in African gospel and rhythm and blues, originating in the United States in the late 1950s and early '60s, known for handclaps and spontaneous body movements: Soul.



## Just As I Am

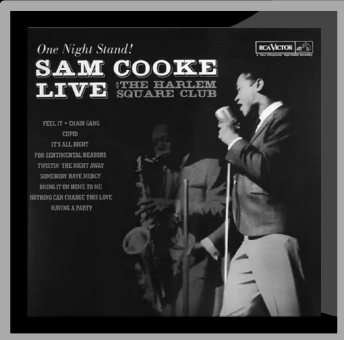


**Bill Withers**  
Released: May 1, 1971  
Tracks: 12

William Harrison Withers Jr. was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2015.

The gem of this album — Withers' debut studio recording — is the second track, "Ain't No Sunshine." That song is a few shakes of a tiger's tail from reaching 1 Billion listens on Spotify (994,938,006). Funny thing about the cover art, it "features a photograph of Withers next to a brick building, supposedly the factory that he was working in at the time the album was recorded, where he installed airplane toilets." - Wikipedia

## One Night Stand – Live at The Harlem Square Club



**Sam Cooke**  
Released: August 16, 1963  
Tracks: 10

Born Samuel Cook in 1931, he added an "e" in 1957 to signify a new start to his life.

At first I thought this place must be in New York City, but no... The Harlem Square Club is in Miami, where the live performance was recorded on Saturday, January 12th, 1963. This album, released seven months later, was chosen for grabbing my attention immediately, for its capturing of a moment in time, for its vibe — allowing me to "be there" in the club that night, imagining the dancing, partying people, the smoke filled room, the dark pierced by the spotlight aimed at the stage, where a young Sam, introduced as "Mr. Soul" (the future "King of Soul"), electrifies the crowd.

## Dreamer



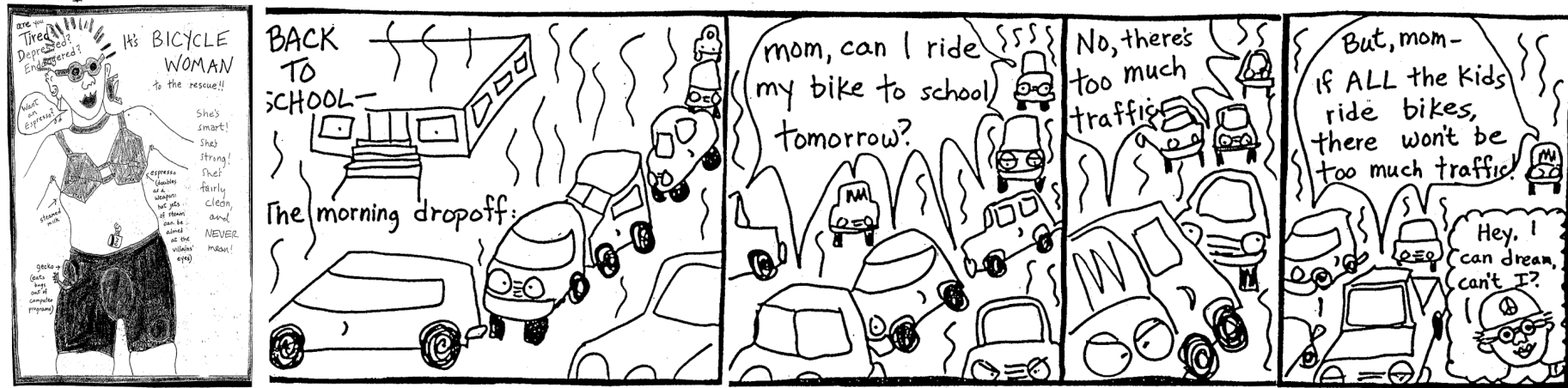
**Bobby "Blue" Bland**  
Released: January 1, 1974  
Tracks: 10

Bobby's style was inspired by the sermons of Detroit preacher C.L. Franklin.

Bobby brings high energy, storytelling, and an orchestra to his music. A special thing about this album is that it contains the memorable track "Ain't No Love In The Heart Of The City." And the special thing about that song is it's prominent in a film I love, one of my Top 25 favorites: *The Lincoln Lawyer*... which happens to have a soundtrack filled with soul. One of the genres attached to Bland's name is "Soul Blues." A product of Memphis' Beale Street music scene, he was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1992.

Bicycle Woman

by Jean Murphy



**If it doesn’t need to be said, then why say it at all?**  
Why use a sentence when a paragraph will do?  
Eyes roll up into foreheads and sighs are heard from across the room.  
Surely I am too old to be cool, and I damn well am not as funny as I think I am, which, sad but true, seems a shame.  
But shame is a nasty beast, right there with the twin menace of regret and remorse.  
Dad always said the easiest thing to do in this life is give up . . . and he wasn’t kidding. So, if I happen to give up on this poem before it runs its course, I could be ashamed to the point of regret . . . but I won’t.  
Poetry is freedom, freedom from words subservient to grammar, the surly shackles of structure – like woodsmoke in the wind. Rhyme and meter, sonnets and odes. Haiku.  
Less is indeed more. Why use a novel to say one thing?  
I still have not figured out who “they” are. Some people, most people, everybody, nobody.  
Everyone but me, me and no one else. Alone together, one for all and all for who?  
I am my own best friend. I send texts and emails to myself. I dial my phone number and leave messages to hear my voice from a distance. I care just enough to make a difference, just enough to pull my weight and stay out of the way.  
I’d like to think somewhere near the bitter end that I mostly kinda sorta did my best.  
I think I think too much. Or maybe not enough. Or maybe not about the right things.  
Extraneous thoughts that pertain to nothing do not merit one calorie of energy as I get out of bed and do nothing but make coffee and feed cats, then write words and hope I can translate because the whole thing is a fucking mess.  
The ragged edges are grim, profound sadness is undefined beyond the endless tunnel  
of my own selfishness. I am worthy. I am worthless. I am aging, but I am not old.

Kenneth Roe

Victimhood

I no longer live in victimhood  
It took awhile but it's  
Understood  
That I've been living in the wrong  
Neighborhood.  
Someones been telling me to leave!  
  
The same imbroglios  
Repeating themselves  
Bringing grief  
Challenging my hopes  
Taunting my beliefs.  
  
A voice came through the darkness  
A call to wellness  
A path back to me  
I reach, again  
For the promise  
It's free  
The cost is to BE!  
  
BE ..... without parameters  
BE .... Like nothing else matters  
No one but yourself to flatter

The gift is ..... You  
Your presence eternal  
The hope you live is  
an achievable hurdle  
And the consequence is  
Inconvertible!  
Your choice .....

Ed English

Homecoming

Resting in my fire  
Universe expresses itself through me  
In my body-home  
Flirting with the sound of my heart  
  
The definition of love  
Changes with me  
Within me  
  
Echoes of past pain fade  
Notes of inner peace and resilience  
take over  
  
Open heart  
Open roads  
  
Seeing with my hands  
Hearing with my skin  
Dancing with myself  
Touching with my heart!  
  
Fergul Cirpan

Dance

I dance for myself  
Sometimes I dance for you  
  
Revealing the ancient stories  
  
Shapes in space  
Infinite possibilities  
  
All is me, meeting me  
In this infinite dance.  
  
Fergul Cirpan

What matters most...

It was nice not knowing, not knowing how happy or sad they were.  
All of their new relationships and ladies. Babies and ladies.  
Not knowing every single person's opinion on each and every single thing.  
Then there was the mute button and the bliss of not knowing.  
Deep long breathing...  
Keep on creating!  
  
That's what matters!  
  
Grounded in my bubble and reality  
I am free  
  
Fergul Cirpan

Nazi Salute

The Tyrant stands proud  
raising his fist  
blood dripping down  
from his poor  
injured ear  
HE HAS GOD ON HIS SIDE  
that's for sure  
& yet  
that which we fear...  
might still never happen  
that death dealing  
future is not yet  
quite here  
There's still time... but  
for what?  
time keeps growing  
smaller  
and no ANGEL in sight  
no superman  
no batman  
PRAY AS WE MAY  
no wonder  
woman  
rises up from the depths  
raising her flag  
in the wind  
  
Joan Dobbie

The Church Organ

An ocean-song  
A church organ's wail  
  
the way I cry  
for you  
  
Ana Marie Boyd  
  
Memorial  
  
The thing about not getting  
what you need  
is that  
you search for it in kitchen cupboards  
next to the sugar  
and the bags of rice  
  
Ana Marie Boyd

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# What's Stopping You From Telling Your Stories?

Audrey Quinn

I believe stories shape our whole world. Not just the stories from the media, or the stories you learn in school, but the stories that come from our hearts. The ones we tell our kids, our friends, our family.

The stories your elders pass down to you especially influence who you are as a person: Would I have reacted the same way in this situation? So that's why my parent/grandparent/sibling did this. I can't believe I never knew that! Oh, I remember when my parent told me what to do if this ever happened...

And maybe the most profound: Thank goodness, I thought I was the only one.

Stories are crucial for the survival of both the storyteller and the listener. Sometimes that's literal, sometimes it's metaphorical. A story about not sticking a metal fork into a toaster to dislodge a popart is as important as a story about not being inauthentic and sacrificing your own personhood to try and fit in with society...although most children probably learned the former story much earlier than I did!

Despite the vital importance of sharing our stories, experiences, fables, and hard truths, many people find themselves keeping quiet. Maybe you don't want to disturb the peace, maybe you think no one will listen to you, or maybe you don't even know where to start when it comes to sharing anything deep about yourself. All of these things are understandable and human.

On the first count, it's unfortunately true that some stories are inherently violent, disturbing, or otherwise hard to hear. They might literally feature violence of some kind, or they might just be very painful to talk about, especially with certain audiences. However, there's ALWAYS a place for these stories. Sometimes, they might be the ones most important to your survival.

It's important to weigh the maturity level and safety of sharing difficult content with audiences but, even if you find it's better not to share your story aloud, that doesn't mean you shouldn't write about it. Journaling, for example, can be a particularly healing way to process unresolved trauma, grief, and pain.

If you're worried about people not wanting to listen to your story, that's also a very real possibility. I know this feeling: I'm writing this in my living

room with nobody else around and wondering if anyone's ever going to read it.

But that's a risk you have to decide whether to take or not. Do you have something to say? Is it worth saying? YOU are the one who answers those questions; you and nobody else.

Maybe you're worried about being doubted because of your identity (age, gender, ethnicity, ability, nationality, all of the above, or something else altogether). That's a fear I understand on a personal level as a queer, trans, and disabled person. For me, it helps me to think about my little brother, who's also under the rainbow and disabled umbrella (picture a vibrantly colored umbrella playing with a fidget cube). He's the first person I came out to as transgender and non-binary. But I still hid so much of myself. It wasn't until he came out to me as transgender that I realized about how important it is to not only talk about my identity and journey, but to live authentically. When we live in fear, and keep our words inside, we betray ourselves. And we can't show up for the people closest to us when we're not being authentic.

If you're worried about people not listening to you because of who you are, think about the fact that your story could mean the world to someone feeling the same way you are, and wondering if they're all alone, or if people are going to just ignore them, or if they'll be laughed at if they dare to open up. Isn't that well worth the risk of nobody caring about what you write? Or doubting you or mocking you? To me, it is.

In isolation, in the quiet, a story is a spark. When you set pen to paper, or fingers to keys, or voice to air, your story ignites into a flame. When you share it with your listener, it becomes a real fire. Potentially dangerous, perhaps, but also crucial for survival.

Because that's the thing that makes stories so powerful. It's that they are shared. They connect us, they help us remember, they teach us, they help us empathize.

When you think of it like that, what is holding you back from sharing your truth?

Audrey Quinn is on the staff at Wordcrafters in Eugene, a nonprofit creative writing organization. You can learn more about them and the classes and events Wordcrafters offers at wordcrafters.org.

## Lizard Story

It was a calm and tranquil day.

A lizard by the roadside basked in the sun till my shadow touched his eye.

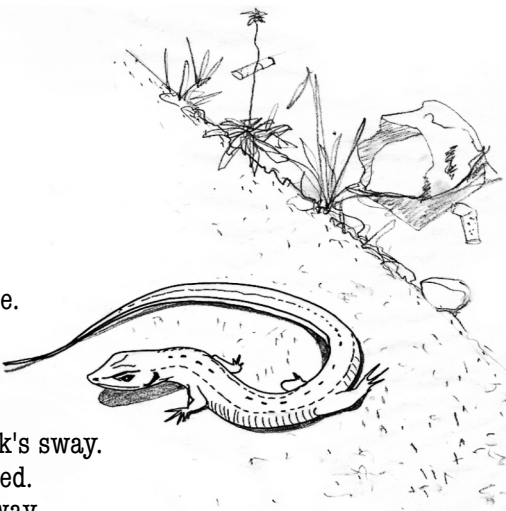
Frightened by the darkness, he did push-ups to scare the shade away: it shifted, settled, stayed.

Off shot the lizard, racing down the asphalt headlong into a butterfly. Too busy running, he lunged late. Lunch flowered and flew away.

Lizard simmered down then under new sunlight, tilted his head to match his back's sway. Into the picture a horsefly buzzed. Lizard never noticed—too far away.

It was a calm and tranquil day.

Dan Liberthson illustration by cassandra mettling-davis



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Have you heard of Edelic, Eugene's local, non-profit center for ethnobotanical services? What does ethnobotanical mean, you ask? Ethnobotany is the study of a region's plants and their practical uses through the traditional knowledge of a local culture and people.

And what does Edelic do? Founded in 2015, Edelic provides wrap-around services in the emerging field of ethnobotanical/entheogenic plants and fungi for health and well-being. Our educational mission is to support medicinalized, decriminalized, and, where appropriate, legalized ethnobotanical plants/fungi to further a global awareness of and protect human relationships with these naturally occurring entheogens, while providing community, education, harm reduction, and integration opportunities. Edelic has a variety of social gatherings, including keynote speakers, support groups, and conferences such as this one on Saturday, September 14. Details and ticket info above.

Come join in community and enjoy an enriching experience!

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HEARTWARMING: MAN EATS 50 DONUTS IN 10 MINUTES

bottom text

...

how would that be heartwarming?

it warms MY heart

that is because you have high cholesterol

do your work

ugh

art by tate cocotos

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She wears indigo blue denim jeans,  
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Blue as the deep pool  
into which she dives  
Down to the bottom  
From which she springs back up  
And back flips  
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9 Dates, continued from p. 3

Three abortions into it, she knows her cycle. Blood + 15 days — beware! Text came at one pm. Gather you at four pm. Four pm? Game on!

For him ‘things’ were no challenge. Not that he had excess wealth, rather, what lies beneath desire?

Her and his point of departure was ‘search for satisfying relationship.’ That would be perfect present... if he could fathom it.

Yes, this is Scorpio’s strength. Penetrating the fathoms. Naturally several taste treats along the way... just to keep her expectations whet. Then what?

He pushed doorbell button... but decided to return to his car to wait (Truth: often one waits for Taurus persons.)

Not this time. She is peeking out between her 2nd-floor apartment violet velour curtains. Just to check. You know what? I’m feelin’ it.

He watched her approach: beauty and grace. I wish I was a sculptor.

“Are you going to tell me our destination?”

“Oh! Would you like to be blindfolded?”

He turned onto 99 North.

You really can’t out-silence Scorpions.

“Is there gift for me inside your satchel?”

He laughed mischievously.

“Indeed, there is! Take a gander.”

Unzipped the zipper.

Passed field of green winter wheat. Dwindling stacks of black plastic covered hay. Romney lambs gamboling on lush hillsides.

She was half irked, half curious. He’s clearly making an effort.

Oregon Ducks gray sweatshirt, Two tees: one with Bob Marley; one, X-tra Large, with broad black and strawberry-pink stripes.

She smiled out loud.

Thread-thin, well-washed jeans, cut off, kind of her leg length, REI Smart Wool green socks. And orange secondhand Adidas tennies.

Wow! She punched him hard in right tricep.

“You shouldn’t have. For me?”

“You swap them for what you’re wearing?”

“Right now?”

“You have about 25 minutes. Take your time.”

He probably finds me irresistible in this outfit.

So he was treated to shotgun striptease. More like strip torment. She kept jabbing him with three middle fingers.

Ow!

When she put on striped shirt she faced toward passenger-side window.

“Hey! That’s not fair. But you do look very state-of-the-art.”

“Tell me, now. I’m all dressed down how you want.”

“Shhh! It’s Risky Business.”

“Shh yourself! What’s risky business?”

Whispering: “We’re driving slightly north of Corvallis, park, and jump on freight train to Portland where I’ve reserved room at the Monaco.”

“Say again. You want me to illegally hop moving freight train without getting trashed and/or arrested. Then spend night with you downtown Portland. Are you daft?”

Quarter hour went by. Sky darkened and slow, heavy rain fell.

That they had made it this far was miraculous.

“You got me. Let’s just say ‘yes.’”

Getting on slow-moving half-empty train was a walk in the park. She went from doubtful to thrilled. She threw satchel in, pulled herself up, hoisted up his backpack, and offered him strong, right hand.

He took out freezer bag which contained sparkling Vouvray, 12 oysters, rye crackers, and herbal goat cheese.

After Salem it was straight shot into PDX.

“Now I get it. Risky Business à la Tom Cruise. I suppose that would make me the call girl who steals his mother’s glass egg. I’m overdressed.”

Tom Cruise gives his award-winning smile,

“Still like that old time rock ‘n’ roll.”

She makes sure Vouvray is empty. Unbuckles and unbuttons his burgundy Dockers.

“I need to tell you something.”

“Sounds like confess.”

“I confess that it’s likely that I’m fertile today, this moment.”

Train horn sounds twice.

“For the most part I think history is bogus. What’s behind us is fiction. Like wearing armor. It happened then. Now is when our future begins.”

They look out open boxcar door as the freight gathers speed... rhythm... shaking... squeaks... clickety-clacks.

Escape is the parasite;  
the desire to escape, a  
madcap endeavor. Why be  
you when you can be him  
or her? Or be somewhere  
else? Anywhere but here.  
We are presented with  
wonderful scenarios of  
people doing bigger, better  
things in exotic locales.  
Make your today exotic!  
Eat a mango! Say hello to a  
stranger — now that’s  
exotic!

Greg Gianelli

Spanish Love  
Trying to Look  
Casual

It was deep Spanish love  
trying to look casual  
arriving at the door wearing  
flip flops, jeans  
and a T-shirt

pretending  
like it just happened to be  
in the neighborhood  
saying how it was such a coincidence  
running into each other this way

divulging nothing of these mountains  
it would climb

to be with you

Ana Marie Boyd

Oh You Who Felt  
Forgotten

Oh you who felt forgotten  
in the pandemic

Oh you  
who ate cereal  
for three meals a day  
because your parent  
had to work

Oh you  
who called for help  
but all the Helpers  
were on lockdown

Oh you  
Oh you  
Oh you

Ana Marie Boyd

GoddessZilla

I am GoddessZilla  
In your arms  
Writhing and feeling,  
Emoting and reeling.

How do I maneuver  
The heft of my tail  
Through this intricate terrain?  
I am certain to fail.  
The perfection you see  
Might just be me  
Living in the light  
Of our fantasy!

I don’t seek perfection  
But something clearer.  
Scaly, creased, and alien  
Held up to a mirror.  
Each encounter’s hiss  
A moment of bliss  
Each flaw is unbound  
Awaiting a kiss

LaDonna Qualtieri

Psst! Hey you!

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