

# Graffiti

#5



*to Love and to Create*

1998 — 2023

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5/19/98  
25  
HAPPY BIRTHDAY

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## FRONT LINES

Don Root

Wouldja look at this—we're still here! Whoda thunk it? Hangin' on by the skin of our dentures! We got a lot of submissions this time, which is great! It seems word is finally getting out that there's a crazy zine in town publishing pretty much anything anyone sends them.

**Graffiti has no staff writers; this is your paper, so let's hear what you have to say!** Don't think of Graffiti as a literary journal. Yes, we publish creative writing and art, but we also encourage your writings about any general weirdness going on in Lane County. We're starting to get music and restaurant reviews now, which is cool. But there's so much more to report, no? So feel free to send us notices about your upcoming events (especially parties we can crash!). Thanks!

We recently got one bit of feedback about Graffiti #4 that warmed the cockles of my publisher's heart. I've gotta share it with you here:

Dear #4,  
Over too soon  
I've read all of you  
Cover to cover.  
My memory fades  
So I get to read  
Everything  
All over again.  
Except one  
I've already  
Read thrice.  
I remember  
Being 12, too.

Thank you, Graffiti.  
I LOVE you, tons.

Lise

Thank YOU, Lise! Graffiti loves you, too. And for those who may have missed it, Lise's reference to being 12 comes from Stephen Swiftfox's piece "Golden Muscatel" in Graffiti #4. It's a brilliant, heart-wrenching piece that shows what a powerful story you can tell in under 200 words. Thank you, Steve!

Okay, Graffiti-ians! Feast your eyes on Graffiti #5, and while you're at it, **please send us a donation! We need money to keep going**, and as the dude on the corner always says, "anything helps!" PayPal/Venmo it to our email address or send us a check. **Thanks!** Now onward into the frog!

—Don



Photo by James Otter

### "YOUR ZINE IS COOL. HOW DO I SUBMIT?"

*You put on your leather and get on your knees and beg, slave!  
What? Wrong kind of submission? Oh. Sorry.*

This box used to be called "Instruction Manual for Beginners," which I thought was obvious. But you all kept asking "How do I submit?," so I guess that title was too tricky. Or maybe you thought you weren't a beginner, so you skipped right over it. Well, got news for ya, Holmes: we're all beginners. Anyway, here are the exceedingly difficult submission procedures and requirements:

#### How do I submit work?

You email it to [graffitieugene@gmail.com](mailto:graffitieugene@gmail.com), or you snail-mail or hand-deliver hardcopy to 1292 High St. #129, Eugene OR 97401. Just FYI: at that address you'll find PakMail, not Graffiti's swanky corporate offices, the location of which remains a mystery, even to us.

#### 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 at various places around the county. If there isn't enough room for everything we receive, we print what we like. Hint: we like writing without spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors. **If you don't see your submission in this paper, look for it online at [graffitieugene.wixsite.com/graffiti](http://graffitieugene.wixsite.com/graffiti).**

#### 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. As a rule, we don't edit. What you give us goes as-is.

#### Does Graffiti accept previously published work?

Generally not. That said, if we think something is cool, we'll consider it.

#### Does Graffiti accept submissions from outside Lane County?

Yes.

#### 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. We won't print works longer than 1,200 words in this paper zine, but we'll post those submissions and others on our blog: [graffitieugene.wixsite.com/graffiti](http://graffitieugene.wixsite.com/graffiti).

## Graffiti

### NOTE our new mailing address!

1292 High St. #129  
Eugene, OR 97401

[graffitieugene@gmail.com](mailto:graffitieugene@gmail.com)  
(503) 853-5582

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**Dashboard Cheeses:** Kevin O'Brien

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**Donors this issue:** Lise E., Charles Mattoon. **Thanks!**

Find past issues and additional submissions online at: [graffitieugene.wixsite.com/graffiti](http://graffitieugene.wixsite.com/graffiti)

**ON THE COVER:** Sara, as a living sculpture. Photo by Don  
Want to be on the next cover? Email us your pic and your idea for a cool shot.

## Graffiti goes international!



Pisa, Italy

Photo by Don



Sydney, Australia

Photo courtesy George Havens



Porvoo, Finland

Photo courtesy Piivi Hakulinen



Carcassonne, France

Photo courtesy Andy Guck

# Screaming in the Streets!

Jean Murphy

Last week I was downtown, walking along the east side of Charnelton Street between 8th and 10th, heading for the library. Across the street from me, I noticed three boys, one about 10, the other two a bit older, maybe 13 or 14. There were several parking garages on their side of Charnelton, and every time the boys passed one, the youngest screamed loudly into the opening, listening for the echo.

The older boys began joining in, not screaming but yelling. This amused me, so the third time the young one screamed, I screamed too. They looked over to me, but I kept walking and kept a straight face. I'm an old lady, and I'm sure they didn't suspect me; grannies don't scream on the street. They came to another garage, and screamed and yelled; this time I made a loud animal noise — I mooed. They had to know it was me but didn't say anything.

The youngest screamed again, and I was thinking about barking (I have a great sea lion bark), but then I heard — we all heard — from behind us, perhaps a block away, a very angry man's voice yelling "Shut the fuck up right now you fuckers! Shut up damn you!" and so on. We shut right up, but the guy kept yelling.

The boys turned and looked behind them, then began to run toward 10th Street. I turned, too, and didn't see anyone, but I agreed with them — we had raised a Demon and it was time to leave. ☺ ☺ ☺

# Go Piss, Girl

Jordan Rose

On this dreamy but dreary Friday morning, I find myself sitting in a tall chair and fighting to keep my eyes from closing indefinitely-

Which does sound like a rather restorative activity if I wasn't certain that I'd be tucking myself in for a sequence of unproductive and teeth-clenchingly terrifying nightmares.

The two men who are meeting for a punctual morning breakfast are talking about an array of horrifyingly boring topics,

Mixing in a few ambiguous and painfully common names of people who I will never meet nor get the privilege of listening in on their entirely bland banter either.

These men are of the: Golf-shirt-tucked-into-khaki-golf-shorts-with-knee-high-socks-and-outdated-nikes variety.

A breed I find is always present and accounted for throughout every environment I find myself in, no matter how foreign.

While these men were reminiscing on old times back when they were 20 pounds lighter and two kids and a wife fewer,

I was spending my 6 am roaming a box-shaped and rather cruelly lit Rite Aid where I was having an altogether cringey conversation about product packaging with the woman ringing up the pregnancy test and package of Great Value brand Plan B.

I do have to say we both were right on the money when we both mutually agreed the person who came up with the packaging on that one must've had a shaft and two rather saggy and unimpressive balls.

To make this process a little more incognito I found myself quickly resorting to animalistic means to free this \$50 pill from its plastic sarcophagus;

All of which included using a lighter as an attempt to melt the plastic and ultimately using as much brute force I could muster and eventually losing my thumbnail to the fight.

My labor was fruitful.

I made my way to a coffee shop which has an abundance of high chairs and standing areas,

Which is perfect for the fidgety likes of me.

A considerable factor that went into the deliberation of picking this particular shop also included the state of the bathroom as I would be peeing onto a stick and would prefer to have a smattering of comfort,

*or at the very least a pleasantly painted wall and a toilet seat without the prospect of smeared poo.*

The Universe must've overheard my conversation with the cashier and pitied my fight with the packaging because as soon as I walked into the bathroom to do-

*the deed,*

I heard the familiar voice of my dear friend Bob Dylan,

And as he's told me many times before;

*"Don't think twice it's alright".*

*-And god dammit Bob,*

Here we are,

The two of us,

You somewhere far and without any acknowledgment of my existence,

And me holding a ten-dollar pregnancy test as I pee onto it,

Fearing that any second-

My hand just might dip into the toilet water.


The fucking test is inconclusive.

☺ ☺ ☺

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# On the Menu

## Reader restaurant reviews

“Seize This Review,” by Charles Mattoon

Arriving at **Seize The Cafe** felt like easing into a comfortable old, clean jacket that's not the latest flash fashion, just affordable Old World quality, charmingly rough around the visual edges. Like an early draft of a damn good poem. Like unpretentious Mom & Pop with class, the kind of place easily overlooked except by locals in the know, until Rick Steves discovers it.

You can sit indoors or out, on a variety of tables, chairs and benches. There's a bit of deli vibe, as the cooking and baking operation is nonchalantly doing duty in full customer view, including a dried ham leg. They're making the most of the somewhat petite working space. My eyes went to the impressive pastry display case (the chef/owner trained in Paris), perused the local wood-carving art on one wall, and returned the smile of one of the friendly, competent staff.

I was impressed by the small but intriguing lunch menu (they also add dinner Thu-Sat nights). For lunch I had the duck confit sandwich with caramelized onions and arugula, which included a side of potato wedges (not fried) in a light, creamy sauce, for \$11. It arrived quickly, and was absolutely delicious. Not huge, but quality stretches the nourishment into a full-spectrum experience.

I was well-satisfied. If you want to stuff yourself, there are plenty of other options. This is the United States after all. Then I sampled a lemon ginger scone, also excellent. I saved the rest for later because I belatedly noticed the strawberry rhubarb pie, my favorite, and then I bathed my taste buds in bliss with the most awesome slice I've ever eaten. Not too sweet (a pet peeve of mine in this sugar-addled society) and the crust extra thick along the outer rim, multi-folded, substantial yet light, perfect.

It all awaits you at 2465 Hilyard St., nestled between the also cozy and packed dense with quality Black Sun books, and Sundance grocery's wine boutique. Closed Sun, Mon. If you're really in a hurry, or crave pizza, check out sibling Seize The Pizza next door for wood-fired feasting (slices available). I did that a couple weeks ago and was not disappointed.

Seize the opportunity to dine well without breaking your budget, and to support someone who's doing it right. Then tell your friends, but don't put it in a guidebook; I don't want to stand in line to get in. I only send this review to Graffiti because they're young and hungry and Rick Steves hasn't discovered them yet, either. 🚲🚲🚲

# On the Weekend

## Weird and wonderful weekend events in Lane County

**July 7–9** — Once again, it's time for the **Oregon Country Fair** in Veneta. Set your wild self free at the biggest festival in Oregon. Dress or undress to impress. Dance your keester off to magical music. Check out arts and crafts by the unsung heroes of Oregon creativity! Tickets at oregoncountryfair.org.

**July 15** — It's the **12th Annual Adkins Farm Blueberry Festival Blues and Brews**, at 85995 Gossler Rd. in Eugene. Who doesn't love blueberries? Who doesn't love beer? Who doesn't love the blues? It's a win-win-win for everyone, and also a benefit for CASA, an organization supporting advocacy for kids in foster care. Admission by donation.

**July 19–23** — **The Lane County Fair** returns with cotton candy to get stuck all over your face, as well as vertigo-inducing carnival rides to make you barf up your hot dog. Plus smelly barn animals, racing pigs, and corny country music. What's not to love? Hot tip: Sheila E. (Pete E.'s daughter) plays Sunday at 5:30. That'll be a good one.

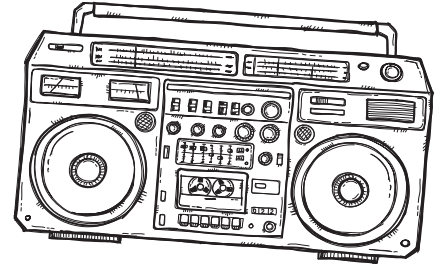
**July 29** — It's the year of the rabbit, so hop on down to Alton Baker Park for the **Asian Celebration / Obon & Taiko Festival**. Come hungry for Pad Thai and Korean corndogs, watch a variety of martial arts demonstrations, check out Indonesian batiks and Chinese brush painting, and of course, get your soul rattled by the Taiko drums. 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.

**July 29–30** — If Taiko sets off your migraines, you have an alternative: go get messed up at the **Blackberry Jam Festival** in Lowell. After you smear blackberry juice all over your hands, your mouth, and your nice, white cashmere sweater, you can watch the parade, listen to music, and play cornhole. Cornhole! How cool is cornhole?! You'll find it all at Jasper-Lowell Rd. and Moss St.

**July 30** — **Sam Bond's Book Club** at Sam Bond's Garage features Columbia University anthropology graduate student Fern Thompsett discussing life off the grid, away from all those racing pigs, Taiko drums, cornhole tossers, and the horrific nightmares of modern civilization. 8 p.m.

# Turn it up

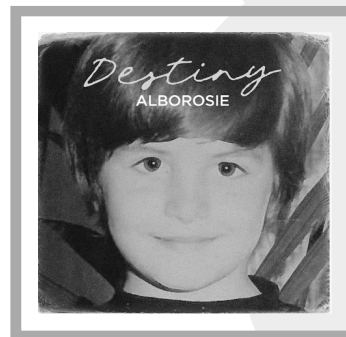
by Morgan Smith



Welcome to the first edition of this column where I review three albums... because: For the Love of Music. A personal opinion: a musician gives the greatest gift to the world.



## Destiny



### Alborosie

Released: May 26, 2023

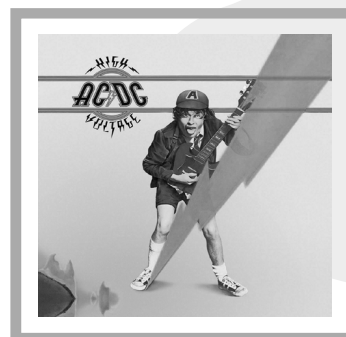
Tracks: 14

“From Sicily to Kingston, Jamaica, this is Alborosie. Real, authentic reggae music.”

- alborosie.com

I am a longtime fan of Alborosie, so I was excited to learn of his latest, *Destiny*— hot off the vinyl press. In preparation to review it, I've listened to all 14 tracks at least four times. “Viral” is probably my favorite track. Or maybe it's track #4: “Rastazeneka.” Although there isn't a song on *Destiny* that surpasses my two all-time favorite Alborosie songs: “Still Blazing” and “Rastafari Anthem.” Overall, I recommend anyone who enjoys reggae to throw an Alborosie cassette into their boombox.

## High Voltage



### AC/DC

Released: May 14, 1976

Tracks: 9

An Australian rock band formed in Sydney in 1973. Their name symbolizes raw energy.

So much love to express about this band and not much room. AC/DC is #3 on my Top 25 Favorite Musicians/Bands. *High Voltage* is their first album, so if you need an introduction, start there. “It's a Long Way to the Top” and “T.N.T.” are the album's most popular (according to Spotify plays). Personally, I like “Rock 'N' Roll Singer” the best. There are only a handful of bands that get regular play at sports stadiums, and AC/DC is properly among them. This group shakes the foundations. ; )

## By the Way (Deluxe Edition)



### Red Hot Chili Peppers

Released: July 9, 2002

Tracks: 18

“...thank you for listening and being exactly where and who you are.”

- part of the release statement from the band

*By the Way* is the eighth studio album from this American rock band, formed in Los Angeles in 1982. It's good all the way through. Upon getting the CD, it remained in my car's single disc player for more than three months. It's a challenge to choose a favorite track, which makes for a great album. Maybe it's “On Mercury.” Maybe it is “This Is the Place.” “Can't Stop” happens to be the most popular song, closing in on a billion listens (Spotify).



# TRAVELS WITH STEVE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHEN SWIFFOX

## MADAGASCAR



# Postcards

Sarah Johnnes

*Postcard from my cat*

Dear Sarah:

I regret to inform you that you are failing as my human. Your defiance of my authority is of some concern. When I sit under the table where the treats are, you neglect to perform your duties over and over again. How do you not know that I am in need of service? When I purr in your ear at three AM, you refuse to get up to adjust the flow of water at the shower spigot. I even gently rub my whiskers on your cheeks to alert you about this failure. Unacceptable. I have been quite tolerant of your insubordination, but now we need to take further action. We need to meet to discuss your work plan. You are permitted to have union representation present.

Best wishes,

Your cat.

P.S. Please stop clipping my claws. I can handle them just fine.

*Postcard to my cat*

Dear cat:

You purportedly have nine lives. Perhaps we will need to test that theory out. I wonder, how many ways could I kill you? I could scare you silly. Which wouldn't take too much. Remember when I went to New York for my brother's funeral? My friend from out of town stayed at our home for a week? A week! And yet, you still jumped off the second-floor deck out of fear of her? I could do that. I could scare you silly. But this time, I would seed the ground with building pigeon spikes under the rhododendrons. There's more than one way to skin a cat.

All my love and respect.

Sarah

P.S. I will not wait long to replace you

*Postcard from my dead plant*

Compliments to you, Sarah,

You did a really nice job of putting the nail in my coffin. You should have taken better care of me. I needed to be pruned, fed nutrients and repotted. Did you really think I could survive, let alone thrive, when you forgot to water me? I deserved better. You weren't even sure what kind of plant I was. Rude.

Respectfully,

Dead plant

P.S. Thanks for putting clippings of me in water so my legacy continues. Please don't fuck it up this time.

*Postcard from my mother's fridge*

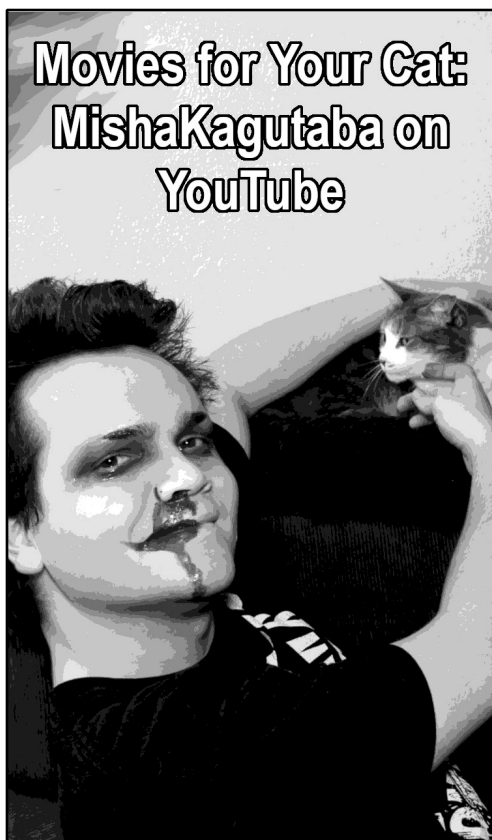
Dearest Sarah,

We miss you. Yes, others are taking care of this situation, but we miss you. We miss seeing your expressions of revulsion as you discover the package of rotting, liquified, chicken livers, that were pushed to the way back, behind yogurt that has been expired for 2 years. We miss seeing you find 3 bags of radishes in various stages of decay. We miss seeing you open and close the door several times as you decide what to do.

Hurry back soon, my love,

Your mother's fridge

P.S. She no longer calls me an icebox.



### A Secret Message

Yearning for secrets hidden away,  
Onward I venture, to sail or to stay.  
Under the stars, the winds they do whisper,

Adventures await, as horizons I weather.  
Roaming through landscapes, both far and both near,  
Eclipsed by the shadows, with courage I steer.

Reveling in wonders, of places unseen,  
As I forge my own path, with spirit serene.  
Dancing with dreams, I'm drawn to the fire,  
Intrigued by the unknown, a curious desire.  
Astonishment swirls, like winds 'round the globe,  
Nurturing my spirit, as stories unfold.  
Tales of discovery, etched in my soul.

### Gideon Stuart

#### Mother, will you tell me?

Mother, will you tell me,  
did you shudder when he touched you?  
Did you find the arms that once wrapped you  
in beauty and ecstasy  
Did you find that they became your very poison?  
Did you find that you were hiding  
hoping he wouldn't see you  
wouldn't reach for you.  
What was it mother  
that led you to this place?  
Did he chase you into darkness  
or did you build walls and dig motes  
of dark imaginings,  
of fears whispered to you of "what-ifs"?  
What if he's just like the others?  
What if he's too good to be true?  
Tell me mother,  
did you dig your own grave?  
Did you build a castle around you  
and place a dragon at the entrance  
to defeat any wandering soul  
who came walking through  
the dark forest you planted around yourself?

I wonder about you mother  
when I take up cultivation of my own dark forest.  
When I begin laying the bricks of my castle,  
grab a shovel and pierce the dirt for the mote.  
I can see what's trying to build itself.  
I can see it with the light that shines  
from the love that you have glimpsed.

I wonder if you blotted out the sun  
for fear of being burned  
as you had  
one too many times before.

I wonder how to stay standing in this open field  
where the sunlight kisses my skin  
and the wind nibbles at me  
and I know that I am made of starlight.

I wonder if you've seen this field before  
and if you'd like to come back here,  
and if you do, how I can invite you  
to dance with me,  
to be in wonder at the love you always wanted  
but never let yourself have.

### Marissa Gamberutti

### Sunday Orange

Peels torn from their sweet flesh  
litter the bed, dampening the sheets.

Juice rains as I close my hand  
around one pithy segment.  
The droplets find home on our skin,  
bonding our chests when we embrace.  
You squeeze until laughter  
streams down from my lips,  
and yours taste only of citrus.

### Liz Kuhns

#### I Wasn't There

Breaths splashed my coffee,  
Stood at clouded panes.  
Beyond those panes,  
Hot, torn metal steams  
Through November cold.  
There's naught to be done,  
A lost world of projects.  
When you crawled out,  
Your hand and knees  
Bled onto festered leaves.  
You don't look at the cafe,  
And don't see me there,  
Just hobbled on,  
Maybe to  
Where you looked.  
Not to the future,  
Just, on the move.

### Kacey Pink

#### Untitled

I am a sponge  
I see & hear magnificent  
Words & songs & voices  
I absorb them into  
My psyche—I bask  
In them as I wander.  
I mull them over  
Directly on my tongue  
Fresh, until they've  
Sunken into my being.  
To experience beauty  
Is to understand the  
formation  
Of perilous thoughts  
& the pursuit towards  
More profound  
Instances that stimulate  
& stroke & submerge.  
I spiral into the  
Rabbit holes of  
Other creative minds.  
YOUR ventures into  
The unknown  
Are the magic ensembles  
That subconsciously unfold  
Into each stream of  
Consciousness,  
Magnifying the  
Collective willpower  
That possesses us  
All to move forward

### Lauren Oliver

### Restoring Sappho

Olivia Fink

Sappho (Σαπφώ, c. 610 BCE–c. 570 BCE) was a lyric poet and musician who lived in Mytilene on the Greek island of Lesbos. As derivative language of our times suggests (e.g. "sapphic," "lesbian"), Sappho "knew and loved women as deeply as she did music," concludes Anne Carson in her translation of Sappho's work, *If Not, Winter* (2002), the reference for my poetry below. Sappho dedicated her life to writing songs. Scholars in Alexandria compiled her work into nine volumes, the first of which had over a thousand verses of poetry. These works were subsequently destroyed in the 4th century by the Christian church on the basis of immoral sexuality. Since the Renaissance, scholars have been slowly restoring her work. The "Sappho fragments" refer to the words in her poems that have been salvaged.

I've always had an interest in constrained writing, a type of creative writing that sets parameters and rules in order to play within a preexisting form. Sappho's fragments are just that; they are by nature mysterious, laden with who knows what missing message? Poetry is subjective to the reader, so I wanted to see what themes would arise if I had to fill in the blanks. Considering her sexuality, and the ambiguous and often homoerotic relationships between deities and mortals of all genders in antiquity, queer desire is the theme that surfaced from my exploration with this poetry.

Words in **[bold]** indicate the original Sappho fragments, as translated by Carson. The rest is from my imagination.

Fragment 12  
In the shaded corners of my being,  
little light has warmed what is –  
I have known to be – ripe, ready.  
Never once satisfied pure **[thought]**,  
not until I slipped **[barefoot]**  
Into the silken night  
And began to sow the  
seeds of  
my own  
desire.

Fragment 18  
**[Pan to tell]** to his followers what the  
**[tongue]** of his master has known – and  
**[to tell tales]** as rich as the wine he bleeds

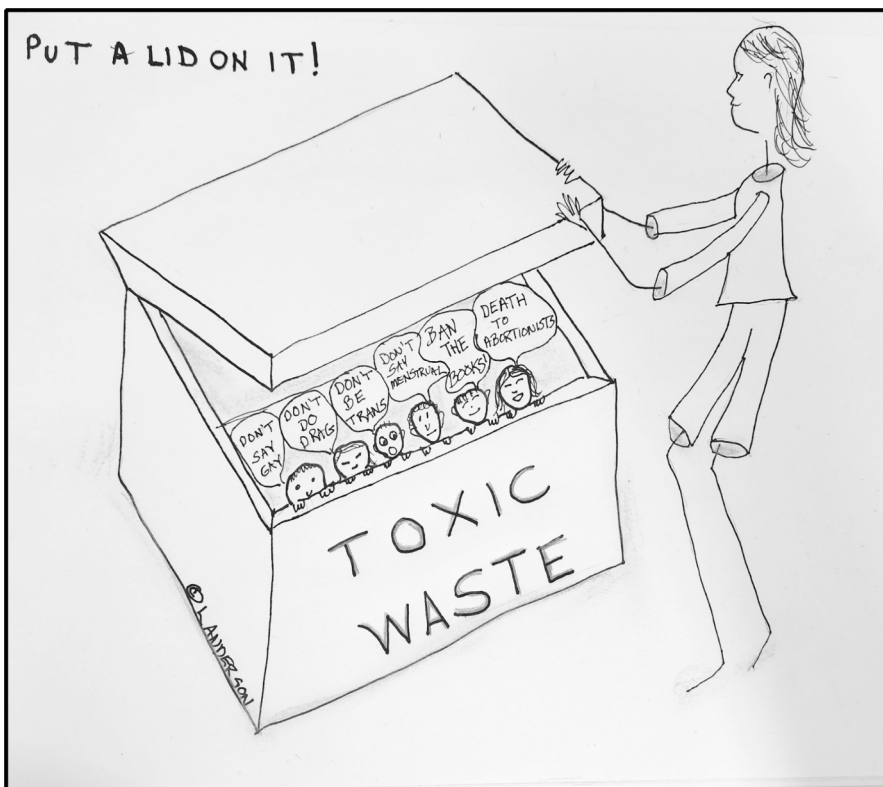
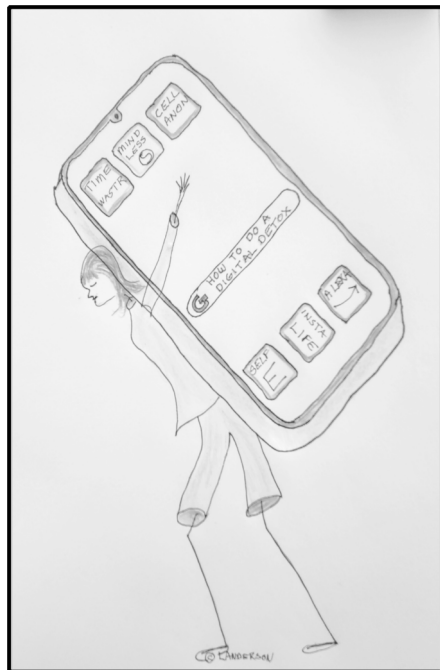
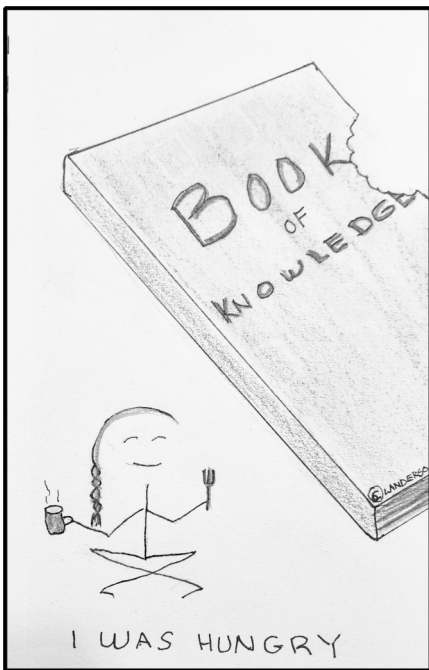
**[and for a man]** pleasure  
**[far greater]** than what his limbs of clay could understand.

Fragment 21  
O, Crone.  
I hark upon you now  
and it is with **[pity]**  
I witness you, **[trembling]** comprehending  
the life you have denied, the skin – now shed –  
that once held you, **[flesh by now old age]**  
Yet it **[covers]**  
what still persists under the surface, the impulse that **[flies in pursuit]**  
of what has been deemed the truth.  
But **[noble]** Crone, in your last hour,  
Consider what might have been yours for the **[taking]**  
And **[sing to us]** what  
**[the one with violets in her lap]**  
had once sung to you. You remember her  
**[mostly]**  
in the muted recesses of your mind, the pleasure that  
at once **[goes astray]**

Fragment 23  
Well **[of desire]** –  
O, my honey-tongued  
flaxen friend **[I look at you]**  
reflecting **[such a Hermione]**  
in temperament, **[and to yellowhaired Helen I liken you]**  
in countenance.  
Only a few **[among mortal women, know this]**  
unsung blessing: that **[from every care]**  
at once **[you could release me]**  
in your sanguine voice  
and have me spill into **[dewy riverbanks]**  
that thrash and pulse, determined **[to last all night long]** –  
never again to know my body  
as it once was.



Cartoons by Lisa Anderson



# ANARCHY RADIO

## with John Zerzan

**KWVA 88.1 FM**  
**Streaming: kwvaradio.org**  
**Tuesdays 7 p.m.**

**Archive: johnzerzan.net**

## Who's Joking?

John Zerzan

The Denver Nuggets' all-star center, Nikola Jokić, is called "The Joker." As I watched a bit of the NBA playoff finals, Denver vs. Miami, another Joker came to mind. A fan sported the clown makeup of the protagonist of the 2019 movie *The Joker*.

Bit of a jolt to have been reminded of that very nihilist figure, especially in the context of a basketball game. The movie powerfully portrayed "Arthur's" plight, his violent escape from convention into madness in a ruinous, collapsing society.

The Joker—the film, not the hoopster—is a very potent reminder of the situation we are in. The calamity of eco-collapse, the mental health crisis, especially among youth, Trumpism, the rising suicide rate, mass shootings, the drugs scourge, etc. A pretty endless ensemble of pathological symptoms of decaying civilization.

Arthur is not a "political" character in the movie. I think that gives him an even stronger, more telling significance. In the final scene, as he's being taken to jail, the crowd hails him as a hero for revealing the violence he's committed. So in that ending one could discern a kind of political point. And overall, one is led to ponder the depth of our predicament in reality.

In the 1980s Donna Haraway revealed her Cyborg, a projected avatar of "transgressive boundaries" and "a potent fusion between nature and artifice." That is, when we meld human and machine, gender will be transcended: no more patriarchy!

But here we are in the barren technoverse, certainly no closer to the end of gender inequality. One more unhealthy techno-pipe dream.

Getting back to *The Joker*, Arthur's self-destruction is not a way forward. Rewilding, a refusal of this techno-landscape, however, might be glimpsed or hinted at in his break with society. ☺ ☺ ☺



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Snake Charmer, by Dave Henderson



The Wanderers, by Dave Henderson

## We make our own wings around here.

We've stopped waiting for the right time.  
 We've stepped to the edge and looked down.  
 We've taken all our bits of dreams, duct tape and chicken wire;  
 Scribbles in margins, late night planning and the fear  
 in the pit of our stomachs;  
 Sweat, tears and feathers, lovely blackbirds left behind  
 And put them all together  
 To make our wings.  
 We've stopped waiting for permission  
To be bigger  
To be bolder  
To create  
 And instead, we wrote our own ticket.  
 (Because that's what we do in these parts.)  
 We are the ones who stay hungry  
 Staying on our toes, tip-toed at the edge  
 With half-broken, rigged together wings that  
 We've made ourselves  
 And then we leap.

—Stephen Swiftfox—

## Dreams and Destiny

fredX

Strange dreams are tormenting me. I used to find their strangeness intriguing and spent time recalling them and finding meanings. There were recurring themes: architecture, shifting landscapes, quests. But these dreams are different—delusional, delirious.

They are too close to the hallucinations I had in the hospital when I was slipping in and out of consciousness and struggling for my life. When I wake, I have to tell myself it was all a dream, try to put them out of my mind, replace them with fantasies of blue skies or the wet, washed sands of an ocean beach. I wash dishes, organize things, open drapes, step out the door, turn music on.

It is because of internet imagery. Online imagery becomes intertwined with my own cognition. For spellbinding imagery, the web is the heavyweight Champeen o' de Whirl. The sheer volume of bombardment of stereotypical visuals and contrived ideals spawned by the internet subverts normal thought-processing. Content is relentlessly layered with manipulations that supplant operations normally performed by one's own mind. The constant interplay between my own thinking and media-driven "fake" thinking produces an unsettling cognitive mish-mosh that manifests itself in my dreams.

I understand why we dream. Dreams are generated to sort out and give "air time" to events during the day that demanded high attention but didn't get resolved. If we tried to consciously sort out all our senses took in, we'd go crazy. It's a way our minds process emotional strains, a way to tie up emotional loose ends so that we don't go from day to day running from a juggernaut of subliminal baggage.

Dreams come from our imagination but are also the products of our souls. They give meanings and feelings a way to expand—to the wildest scopes of our imaginations. They can feel profoundly real and, because they are also products of our souls, can influence our beliefs and actions.

Steve Harris once said, "Your thoughts determine your ideas, your

ideas determine your values, your values determine your actions, and your actions determine your destiny." Steve was also quick to point out the difference between fate and destiny. Destiny is something you have control over. Fate is something you don't.

Where the rubber meets the road is when a dream seems to be announcing some future event we will have no control over. A vision. "It came to me in a dream, as real as if I was standing right there, and it seemed like some spiritual entity was there, telling me: blippity blappity blah blah blah—and now I'm scared and I just know it could be true." Or, "It was deliverance! I know everything's going to be all right." We go forward with these thoughts. As though it was pre-destined—fate—these things come to pass, and we say "I knew it, I knew this was going to happen, I saw it coming, oh woe is me." Or, "Wow, this is great. It's true, I must be the luckiest guy in the world."

Our imaginations have taken charge, and now our thinking, our ideas, our actions—and our destinies—are run by our dreams. Is this bad? No. But it tends to be spectacular. Look at the world dreamers and visionaries have built. Look at the horrors the mad dreamers have created. Imagination is only a tool; what can be done with it depends on who's using it and how they use it. It's like any other tool: a violin, a gun, voice, or a cascade of internet imagery.

We set our cognitive clocks by voice and the internet, phones in our hands, subsumed with the passive entertainment provided by our pre-paid toy. But our dreams should come from our own souls, from our own native thinking, from our own inspirations, passions, and imaginations. Give air time to your own mind; try keeping the phone hidden. Turn your computer off. Shut down the TV. Turning my computer off did away with the strange dreams.

How long can you last? If you can't equal the time of media-driven thought with your own thought, you're . . . well, you're just part of a herd. ㄹㄹㄹ

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Photo by James Otter

## The Secrets We Keep

Stephen Swiftfox

Yo, Bob, pull up a chair if you can. I have some questions for you.

Everyone knows that you came from San Diego. Most wondered why someone would leave that Paradise for a small mining town in the high desert of North Western Arizona. Rumors had it ( and we have plenty of those) that you were a drug dealer. How else could you buy a house for cash. Or perhaps you wanted to set up shop here. Doesn't really matter anymore.

It was appreciated that you volunteered to be the chairman of our water board. No one suspected that you'd be a power hungry tyrant.

I'm sure that fateful July evening when Halley's house caught fire is burned into your memory. Pun intended. It was the worst fire in our town's history. He was a pack rat. Two other departments came to our aid. I had my hands full. Halley had a shed in back with det cord and blasting caps and 13 junk cars with gas in their tanks. Houses on either side had their paint blistering already from the radiant heat. Behind the Southeast corner of the house I kept seeing a water stream start up then spray out of control, return, and be a crazy snake again. After I ran there I discovered that Halley had a water cistern whose concrete had rotted out and my fire fighters were falling into the cistern. About that time the cars caught fire and let loose their gas. We had a river of flame running down Tennessee Avenue. Ambulances arrived to haul off Halley's injured ass and two injured volunteer firefighters.

A county sheriff's deputy was always at my side asking if there's any more aid that he could render. I hardly heard him over the radio calls, shouts of firefighters, and the yelling town drunks. Suddenly, and you'll remember this, all our fire hoses went

flat. Nobody knew what the shit happened. Panic ensued. I followed the hoses uphill to the lone fire hydrant we had in the area. There you were, Bob, standing with a wrench in your hands having turned off the water. Deputy Roberts cursed and asked what you did. You said that we were using too much water and draining the town's tanks. I turned the water back on after the deputy pulled his gun on you and told you to back off.

Two days later, with Halley's house still smoldering, I was in my office with my wife. Deputy Roberts showed up and told me to cite you with interfering with the operation of a fire department during an emergency. I nodded, my wife cursed you. I got into the deputy's car and we drove to your house. Your wife saw us drive up and came out to ask what we wanted. I said that I needed to have a word with you. She led us to your back patio. Deputy Roberts explained why we were there. I wrote out the citation and got you to sign it. I explained that it is only a misdemeanor but that you will need to appear before a judge. You just grunted. And signed. I gave you your copy and we left.

Later at the fire house we got a 911 call for your house. My wife drove the ambulance while I sat in back preparing my things. The deputy followed us. We arrived at your place. I got out with my crash bag and we all were greeted by your hysterical wife. I already knew what happened. Gut instinct. It happened many times before and still happens now. I went to the back patio and saw you still sitting in your chair. The area was a mess. Shotgun to the head isn't pretty. I felt such overwhelming pity for you. It was so unnecessary. It was only a misdemeanor. A small fine.

What were you afraid of Bob? What secrets did you keep? ☺ ☺ ☺

### Frolic like a goat

I delight at the curl of a frond  
Enchanted by its simplistic symmetry  
It just is...and does what it does  
As it reveals itself to you, me,  
the sun, moon and wind  
Really, it poses a question  
Are your wings gilded? Or gutted?  
Have you figured out how to frolic like a goat?  
Accept the kiss.

Sarah Johnnes

### Appreciation roulette

One moment she breathes out sunshine  
coating you with warmth and goo as if  
kind honey finds its way to all your  
callused cracks when she calls you a gem.  
She can just as easily cut you with the  
next breath. A precise paper's edge  
slicing your finger. Pain doesn't register  
till you see beads of perspiring blood  
dot your imperfections like an ellipsis.  
She will say, you are a gem. But this  
time she puts a modifier on it.  
You. are cubic zirconium.

Sarah Johnnes

### A Boy, A Dog, A Ball

I see a dog, a ball  
And a boy in a shirt that's  
A little tight in the shoulders.  
It could be a collie,  
Or a shepherd mix,  
The ball, maybe a tennis ball,  
Maybe a hand ball.  
The boy, full of life,  
Full of hell and  
The things that matter.  
There is no end of combinations  
That this troika can or can't do.  
The boy, like his dog,  
All ears and imagination  
Interprets life in simple form.  
The dog, if he likes you,  
Lays his head on your knee,  
If he doesn't, he bites.  
The ball only bounces and rolls  
To find the bounty of teeth  
Or a small hand.  
A small ball,  
A small boy,  
And a dog that loves and defends,  
Plays like an acrobat,  
And lies in bed with the boy,  
Both totally spent.

Bill Gunn

### Dig a Pony

A while ago on the radio  
When I was the boy disc jockey  
And part time genius  
I locked myself in the studio  
And began to play the Fab Four  
So that all of Indiana  
Or at least Peru  
Could hear.  
After a bit the listeners became callers  
And all they said was "play more Beatles Genius!  
Play more Beatles!"  
And I did until the boss unlocked  
the door and cut me off.

I wish all four were still alive,  
The boys from Liverpool.  
I could use some new tunes to be  
"The soundtrack of my life."  
I know it's a cliché  
But Ringo, Paul, John and George  
Seemed to know my heart.  
When they sang, "I want to be a paperback writer"  
They were talking about me.  
I knew them and they knew me  
Though we had never met save through music.

When John Lennon died of fame, by gunshot  
I had a guitar in my hands  
Playing one of his songs.  
I could not believe what I had heard.  
John Lennon Dead?  
It couldn't be!  
A gunshot wound?  
Not possible!  
He was "Give Peace a chance"  
In bed with Yoko in Amsterdam to stop war.  
He was the one who bought farms with his wealth  
Because Cows and Sheep had no part of war!  
He was "Imagine all the people, living life in Peace."

How the hell could he be dead of a gunshot  
wound?

And now George; the quiet one  
Whose Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare  
Called the soul in us to touch the face of God.  
He was eaten by cancer but on him,  
(Another peaceful man)  
The price of fame brought crazies  
To attack him in his bed  
As if he weren't dying fast enough.

We have Paul and Ringo still  
But the four are no more, and it makes me want to  
cry  
But I don't anymore.  
I just Play more Beatles  
The soundtrack of my life.

G. L. Helm

## What if we loved?

What if as sisters and brothers across the globe we could really  
feel and empathize with one another?

What if when immigrants came knocking on the door, we could envision  
the horrors they were escaping and had some sense of what these  
families had seen and witnessed - felt within our own bones the  
collective pain they'd endured?

What if our foundation were based on shared resources, not the  
capitalist society we live in so clearly benefiting the few, the one  
or two, so brazenly guilty and full at the tip top of our species?

What if children were more familiar with flora and fauna than Belle  
and Madonna?

What if when others fell, others did not kick them?

What if all mothers and fathers took responsibility for their  
offspring... sheltering them from harm, gore, and neglect?

What if we cared for our ecosystems by replenishing them with  
buffalo and bees, and by refusing to sell people bottled city water  
labeled "Mountain Spring"?

What if big-box store demolition was a favorite pastime?

What if native indigenous cultures were restored and revered,  
guiding us to unity on this shared Earth?

What if one life were as equally valued as the next?

What if we utilized all of our senses... sight, sound, taste, touch  
... to understand one another, to create harmony together, in our  
own little tribes and families, while understanding the challenges  
facing those less fortunate outside of our own circles?

What if we understood that every choice has a butterfly effect, and  
that we are acting like a bunch of elephants?

What if less was enough?

What if minimalism was magnified?

What if we understood this: Earth is not ours for the taking but  
ours for the making?

-Terah Van Dusen-



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Decaying car. Photo by Morgan Smith



Yachats, Oregon. Photo by L. Eskridge

### The Drive

The town does not exist  
As we thought it did.  
The last mile marker read some  
Astronomical number,  
As if we were hurling ourselves towards oblivion.

All we could see were fields  
Of shining wheat,  
Red farmhouses,  
And the vast expanse of thickening skies.

I looked over at your fiery face.  
The eyebrows had betrayed you, the turned down  
Edges of your sharp mouth  
Holding back equally sharp words.

We were lost, although with each other.  
I can almost say, "I love you."

A. Dylan Chaddock

### Big Black Truck

There's a great black truck  
Under that old withered tree.  
That weeping willow with ashen leaves.  
The tree grows through it,  
Through the windshield and doors.  
They hang up there, in the branches.  
Some nights,  
I can hear its horn blaring.  
Calling out my name.  
It roared like dry thunder.  
Other nights,  
I can smell it coughing up smoke.  
My name in inky letters  
Made of filthy, blinding clouds.  
Other nights still,  
I hear it spinning out in dewy night.  
It's six wheels carving my name  
In that sweet moon grass.  
Now though,  
I think that big black truck,  
With its rotten plastics,  
And its rusted metals,  
It can have my name.

Kacey Pink

### Who's There

A ghost car  
like a dark star  
invisible but powerfully pulling  
has driven in my blind spot  
all my licensed years  
never visible but heavily present  
on my mind much of the time

Does he wait for me  
my silent escort  
to give in to his grip—  
make a mistake  
forget to signal  
change lanes without checking  
drift into him in a moment  
unaware or aware

After so much time  
I don't even know  
what this vehicle looks like  
or its driver  
for surely someone is driving  
or how he's managed to read my mind  
and stay in my blind spot  
speeding up when I do  
slowing down when I do  
even if I slam on the brakes  
or swerve sharply  
between the unending lane lines  
that contain my progress  
all down the freeway

Sometimes I want to know  
who he or she or it might be  
so urgently I daydream  
crossing the grassy median  
into oncoming traffic  
to force him from his blind  
but counsel myself  
be patient  
someday he's bound to show  
maybe all too soon  
and then you might not  
want to know.

Dan Liberthson

# Men Are Like Dogs

## Call Me Cross

The powerlifting gym Westside Barbell's logo features a pitbull named Nitro holding a barbell from his neck. When the late owner and founder Louis Simmons was asked about the logo he said, "You can lock your wife in the trunk, and you can lock your dog in the trunk. You can open up the trunk, your wife will be mad, but your dog will be glad to see you." According to Simmons, Westside was built on the foundation of dogs because they have never let him down. Men, well, men are like dogs. Most of the time.

Most men I have met are loyal to the bitter end. Most of them are fighters, now what they fight for and are loyal to may vary, but they will be loyal to those who are loyal to them. Even if those they are loyal to make them work to the bone, it remains intact. Loyalty is ironclad, but if it is broken it can send shockwaves.

*...if you lock a dog in the trunk it will be happy to see you when you open it. Well just make sure you don't do this over and over again, or the dog just might bite back.*

People shatter and their sense of self and purpose becomes damaged. Men need a purpose, a reason to be, and as C.G Jung put it, "Man cannot stand a meaningless life." Men, well men are loyal to their purpose, even if their purpose isn't having one. Most of the time.

Most men I have met have a troubled past. I remember meeting a man in his early twenties who had a cocaine addiction in middle school. I met another whose mom was an amphetamine addict while she was pregnant with him, resulting in him being a genetic addict to meth. One man was a former Marine with PTSD who wanted to participate in local politics again, albeit with the guidance of his AA sponsor. I was only able to learn these things about them because they trusted me with this information, there was a degree of loyalty (which is also why they will remain anonymous). Now, don't get me wrong, I have seen men open up to each other, but for the most part, they can be vicious. Jokes are thrown around which some would find to be distasteful, but the jokes are handled. Men understand the jokes as such as long as respect is present. Men, well men will respect each other. Most of the time.

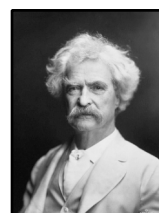
When owning a dog, the dog is loyal and respects its master, just as long as the master respects them. Usually, these bonds are ironclad, and it takes a master welder to break them apart. Dogs, well dogs can take a lot of punishment until they break,

and so can men. For the most part. Unfortunately, men and dogs are made of flesh, and they have a breaking point. Sometimes the breaking point comes in the form of dishing out punishment instead of receiving it. Because of this, some dogs need to be put down and disciplined, as do some men. It is a sad reality, but a reality nonetheless. Sometimes men and dogs will do bad things for the right reasons. Dogs will attack those who hurt their master, and men hurt those who hurt whom they love. The fire of loyalty is something that is seldom broken. Most of the time.

When a dog does something wrong, you can tell it feels remorse. It whimpers and has a defeated look on its face. How can a dog live when it disobeys its master, when it strays from its purpose? When a man does something wrong, you can see the remorse as well. Man will apologize and try to find a solution, even if it is difficult to execute. How can a man live with his evil, when he strays from loyalty? Russian author Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said, "The line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?" What man is willing to relinquish loyalty to that? To cut out one's heart is to cut out one's soul. Men, well men will be loyal to this. Most of the time.

It was just as Simmons described earlier, if you lock a dog in the trunk it will be happy to see you when you open it. Well just make sure you don't do this over and over again, or the dog just might bite back. Better yet, don't engage in locking conscious beings into trunks. Now, if you did the same thing to a man, he won't be happy, but there is still a chance he will be loyal. In this lies man's greatest strength, and his greatest flaw. When loyalty is used for benevolence, families are started, and teams can come together to accomplish great goals. When at its most malicious, gangs take hold and men follow their evil. All men are loyal to something or someone, and those who claim to not be loyal are liars or are only loyal to themselves. A healthy synthesis can be reached, but it requires maturity of heart and mind, which is a respectable task to behold.

To whoever is reading this, take care of the dogs and the men in your life. Throw them a bone every once in a while. Most men have good hearts and intentions, yet they all have some sort of shortcoming(s) resulting in misunderstandings and mistakes. Men aren't perfect, but most men I have met try their hardest. I am not exempt from this rule. I mess up quite often, but I try and I try. Some days I fail, and some days I don't want to even get up, but I do. I have seen the good hearts of men as well as the evil ones, but I cannot in good faith say that evil will triumph. To the reader of this, I believe in the goodness of your heart and mind, and I will be as loyal as much as I possibly can. ☺☺☺



"Substitute 'damn' every time you're inclined to write 'very'; your editor will delete it and the writing will be just as it should be."

— Mark Twain

*The Touch of Death*

I reach out to death with a sense of longing, hoping it will reach back.  
 It touches my fingertips ever so softly and I wait for it to take hold. I expect it to grasp me tightly, pull me in and never let me go.  
 Instead it's faint touch fades away, and goes cold.  
 I reach out again with more urgency this time, but am met with air alone. My soul feels lost, my mind is troubled, my heart is stone.  
 In my despair, I cry out for death and ask where are you? Why do you tease me? Surely death would relieve me.  
 I call out to death, come here, come near. Take away my pain, cease my suffering, end my shame.  
 My shoulders slump and I turn away, my efforts are in vain.  
 Then I hear death whisper my name. It summons me closer, almost in taunt. Daring me nearer, much like a haunt.  
 In haste I start towards the whisper and comply. Today will be the day that I die. I soon will find peace in the place that I'll lie.  
 There at the crossroad is where death and I meet. My journey is ending, the path under my feet.  
 I reach out once more as death awaits. So long I've waited, I won't be late.  
 Swiftly the weight of death encompasses me, my body goes limp and I hear the words, you're free.

erika jones

*Different Ways*

We all have different ways  
 of waiting for death,  
 different diversions,  
 myriad ways of passing the time.

Some sit on benches  
 and stare like cows  
 chewing their cud,  
 waiting and watching  
 for a car to pass.

Some busy themselves  
 with crafts, or religion,  
 or religious crafts gone askew.  
 Some travel the U.S.  
 visiting all the states  
 and converse with people  
 they will never see again.

There must be a special  
 bench in bedlam,  
 hard as concrete  
 that constrains the small talkers.

Some drive their 4-wheelers  
 over sand dunes  
 again and again  
 enjoying the spray  
 and the roar of the engines.

Some go to trailer park communes  
 in Apache Junction  
 to play golf every morning  
 on a grassless course  
 that has oiled sand for greens,  
 sweeping their footprints  
 with a stick attached to  
 a piece of carpet.

Some become hermits  
 and forsake their families,  
 never wishing to share  
 the sorrows, joys and mishaps  
 that keep a family sane.

Some get sick and have no choice  
 but to languish in self disgust,  
 digesting platitudes and tabloids.

Some find it necessary  
 to make more and more money  
 right to the end, as if  
 that's what it is all about.

Some stare blankly into space  
 from the bed in a V.A. hospital,  
 wounded so badly  
 that their own people  
 don't recognize them,  
 and care no longer  
 because the change  
 was so great.

Some play with dolls in a nut house,  
 their meaning of life escaped.

Some dream of ending it  
 in a winter desert  
 under a juniper tree  
 reading some out of print book,  
 jerking their shirt off  
 to revel in the cold,  
 hoping that it will be quick.

Some blabber incessantly  
 and incoherently.

Some write poems.  
 bill gunn

*Waving Leaves*

The morning after my dad died, I woke up in my old childhood bed in the house where I grew up. It took me a few moments to remember where I was, and why. Then reality came flooding back, bringing with it the pit in my stomach that had been a constant companion for many months. As my dad's condition had deteriorated from bad to worse, I felt that nothing would ever be the same again—nothing would ever be good again. I felt hopeless.

Staring blankly out the bedroom window, my gaze landed on a group of trees a short distance away. It was a calm morning—scarcely a breeze. But then one leaf on one tree grabbed my attention. It was waving back and forth constantly, wildly. Just the one. Nonstop. And suddenly I had to smile and even laugh to myself. I just knew that leaf was my dad waving at me—and not waving some maudlin goodbye, mind you, but rather a joyous, "Hey kiddo, snap out of it! I'm still here, and everything's going to be okay."

Well, that was a long time ago, and now it's me on the slow decline. I figure the first sign you've gotten on the down escalator is when you need reading glasses—for me that was maybe late 40s or early 50s. I tried to get by squinting for a while, but eventually that no longer worked, and I had to succumb to the granny glasses. Then, not long after that, the gray hair started setting in. First it was just at the temples, which I could pretend was at least "distinguished." Alas, it inevitably spread to the rest of my head. At one point I had to renew my driver's license, and the form asked for hair color. I wasn't sure what to put, so I timidly asked the clerk, "Does my hair look brown or gray to you?" "Gray," he said, with the utmost empathy but without hesitation. Finally, my mustache went gray. It was the last holdout. I found that particularly depressing.

But all that was just the start. Now I only wish I had all the gray hair I had then. About when I turned 60, I started to shed my locks in that familiar old-man pattern. I tend to wear dark blue fleece fuzzies on a regular basis, and it occurred to me I might need to either buy a gray fuzzy or dye my hair dark blue. Fortunately, my lovely inamorata has become adept at picking random hairs off my collar.

After 60, it's easy to find yourself waiting for the other shoe to drop. Last year, I had a scare when a radiologist looked at an MRI of my Idaho-spud-sized prostate and said, "Gee, looks like cancer to me." That put me in a tailspin for a week or two until my insurance changed and I had to see a different doctor, whose radiologist scoffed and said, "Naaaah, that's just inflammation." Crisis averted.

Last week, however, I had a CT scan for my now-antiquated plumbing system and it turned up something they weren't looking for—pancreatic cysts that may or may not be cancerous. Ouch. This time the shoe may really be dropping, and it's looking like a big, steel-toed work boot. My dad died of bile-duct cancer, so it seems I may have a genetic predisposition to problems in that neighborhood. Needless to say, this development has sent me back into another tailspin. My dad made it to 88, and my mom made it to 91, so I thought I'd be checking out around then, too. But nothing is certain in life, is it?

I was contemplating all this as I lay in bed this morning fighting off tears of self-pity, when I happened to look out the bedroom window at the trees outside. Wouldn't you know it, there it was: one leaf—just one—inexplicably waving like mad at me. And once again, I broke out into a grin of gratitude. Thank you, tree. Thank you, leaf. Dad's still here, and everything is still going to be okay.

don root



james otter

*Right of Way*

Where Right and Wrong Streets meet  
 outside the boundary of our town  
 there is no signal or stop sign—  
 just a Yield sign can be found.

I have the right of way on Wrong  
 And in my bright green Fiat zoom  
 heedless on a sunny afternoon  
 past the park at our town's entry—

Morgan's statue stands sentry.  
 Past grocery and gas station I drive;  
 beyond them lies my little home,  
 tucked way back on a cul de sac.

It's a quiet, shaded, green abode  
 at the far end of a gravel road  
 with a mailbox on the shoulder—  
 A fine place to grow older.

The right of way is mine!  
 Dying to be home I shoot ahead  
 without a sideward glance, then  
 feel a looming on my left

and from the sun-glared west  
 a huge black hulk bears down.  
 I see it is a semi in a flash  
 and think the quickest prayer

before the smash, and darkness.  
 Now I know, wraith without breath,  
 whatever road you might be on  
 the right of way belongs to Death.

dan liberthson

*Spring*

Slo-mo leap, soft lightning rise  
 the world kissed awake,  
 the spell morphs to a new song  
 gentle power meets hard hail with a flower,  
 beyond confidence, beyond courage,  
 though it gives me both—

green me, feed me, break my last gasp fast  
 kick my sluggish sighs over humanity's dark times  
 give me the eternal news,  
 hide & seek & found again!  
 the comatose colt shivers,  
 lurches to its feet  
 the galloping wind blows away  
 sentimentality and rues  
 the zombie apoca-lypse-locked with darkness,  
 kiss of death—  
 I wanna armageddon it on!  
 bust out some moves,  
 I'm feeling Rumi again

I've died so many times,  
 and here I am, I AM!  
 buds bulge, loins answer,  
 people seem more beautiful—  
 how could I forget?!  
 and though bodies keep dropping into  
 the earth like flies  
 I see more the birth,  
 the life behind every death disguise  
 that better may yet come, and come  
 see the spirit that can never die  
 and the Why's slough off my grateful heart  
 grateful even for winter,  
 hard teacher, bare-branch crystal sight—

I look out and see, see in you,  
 the sun abides through coldest night  
 that we are unstoppable dancing light.

charles mattoon

*I am a childless dog mom. Rest in peace, my canine beloved. Twelve years you chose me, faithfully. I miss you tremendously. March 4th, two days before my own birthday. Pain still so raw; not processed. God Damn it and God Love it; Gratitude. —L. Eskridge*



Ashkelon, by Indy Stetter-Johnston

# Homeroom Oasis

Mary Ellis

Every day this chalice is part of my life. You made this chalice. This makes you part of my life every day, too. I've known this about you for quite some time now. More recently, you have become an oasis for my mind. Thinking about you evokes a calm and soothing serenity. Thinking of your gentleness graces me with ease. A garden of peace grows in your presence; and so too, that garden grows when thinking about you. Unique and feigning openness, albeit slightly constrained, I appreciate this. I see me reflected in you, and in that moment, we get to be us.

You share your homeroom with me. And in that room, I feel at home. This homeroom-oasis is a reprieve for my tattered soul, tender and gritty, from having been home-less for far too long. 🚲🚲🚲

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