

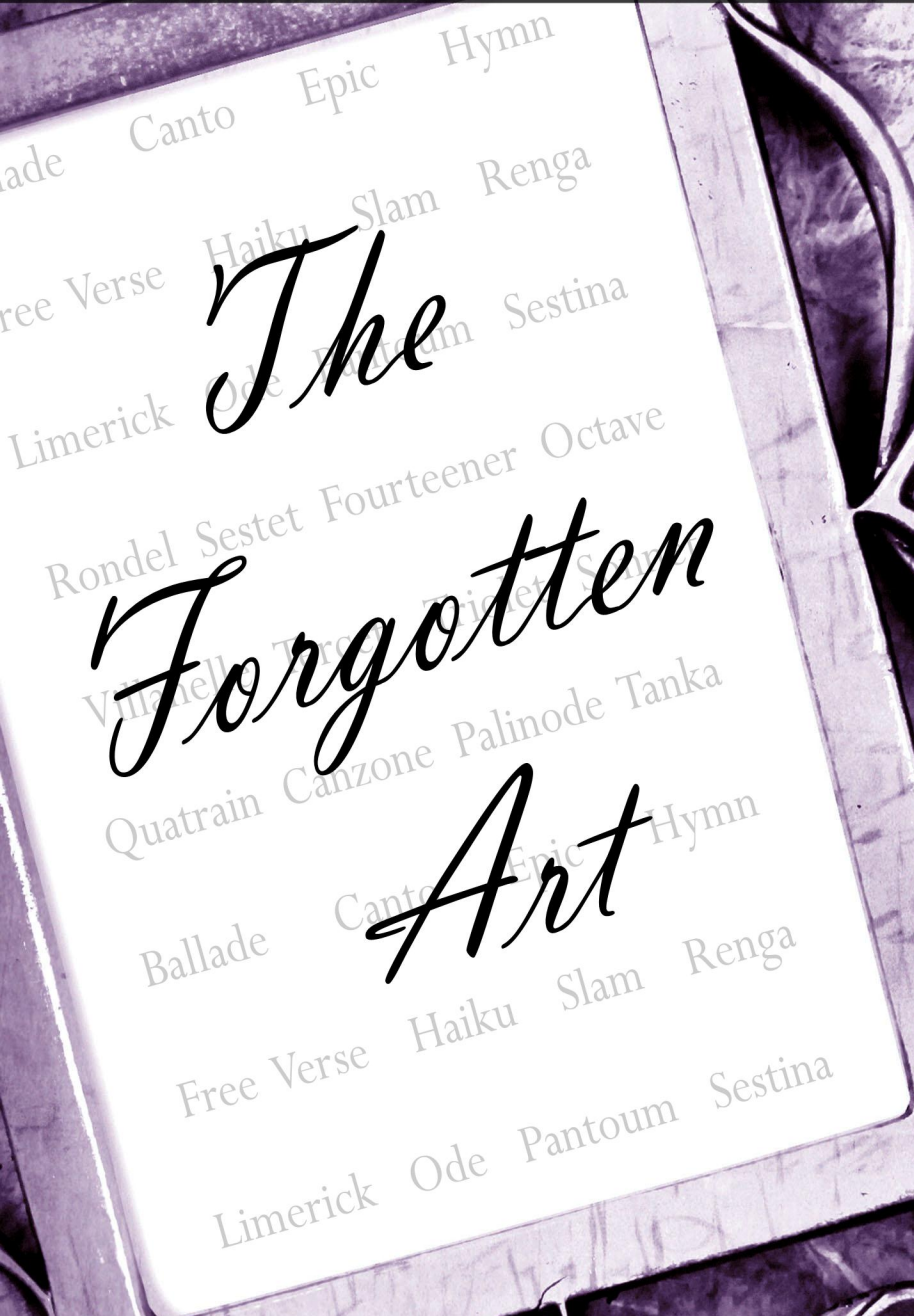
Volume III ~ July 2012

TORRID LITERATURE JOURNAL

GUEST COLUMNISTS: C.S. SPLITTER | TRICIA KRISTUFEK

FEATURED POETS: REBECCA WRIGHT | MARCELL DYON | AND MANY MORE!

MUST READ FICTION: "THE MAW" BY ELSA LEÓN



Torrid Literature Journal

"Literature with a voice."

VOLUME I

REDISCOVERING THE PASSION

Print | \$8.50

Online | Free

VOLUME II

THE BARE NAKED TRUTH

Print | \$10

Online | \$3

Volume III

The Forgotten Art

Print | \$10

Online | \$3

1 Year Print Subscription | \$35

Available at

<http://shop.torridliterature.com>

TL Publishing, Inc.

PO BOX 151073

TAMPA, FL 33684

ALICE SAUNDERS | EDITOR

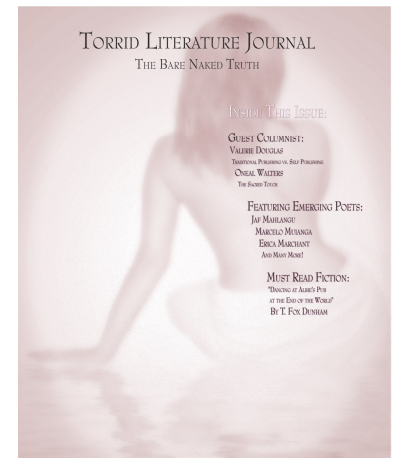
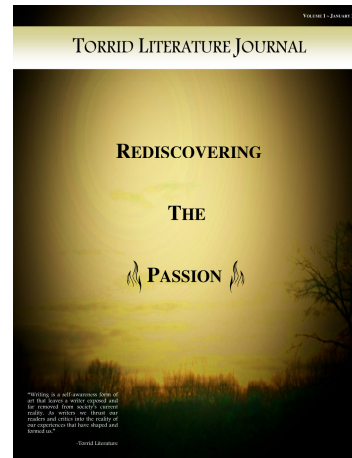
asaunders@torridliterature.com

AISHA MCFADDEN | EDITOR

amcfadden@torridliterature.com

TIFFANI BARNER | MARKETING & NETWORKING SPECIALIST

tbarner@torridliterature.com



Subscriptions:

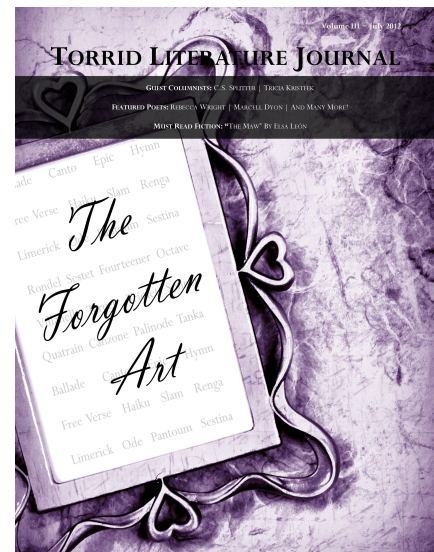
To subscribe, renew, or purchase a gift subscription, please send an email to tjournal@torridliterature.com.

Sponsorship & Ad Sales:

To purchase an ad in the Torrid Literature Journal or become an official sponsor, please contact Tiffani Barner, Marketing & Networking Specialist, at tbarner@torridliterature.com for more information.

Letters & Comments:

tjournal@torridliterature.com



Customer Service Information: The Torrid Literature Journal is a literary publication published quarterly by TL Publishing, Inc. To have copies of the Torrid Literature Journal placed in your store, please contact Alice Saunders. For all other inquiries, please send an email to tjournal@torridliterature.com.

Disclaimer: Any views or opinions presented or expressed in the Torrid Literature Journal are solely those of the author and do not represent those of TL Publishing, Inc., its owners, directors, or editors. Rates and prices are subject to change without notice. For current subscription and advertising rates, please send an email to tjournal@torridliterature.com.

FROM THE EDITORS

Poetry is an unrealized form of time travel. It pulls the reader into the poet's space, time, and dimension. Something happens to the reader between the start and end of a poem. Whether read or spoken, a reader does not finish a poem in the same state or condition he started. A transient segment occurs. A dream is conveyed, an experience is relayed, and a state of being is reproved or rebuked. This happens because writers carry intent. They *intend* for the reader to take something else away besides simple enjoyment. If anything, this should be the minimum goal.

Regardless, whether fact, fiction, or opinion is at play, the reader embraces the art of the poet, thereby becoming captive to the literary scientist who has mastered the art of cognitive time travel. Great poems speak with a base you won't always anticipate but they say boldly, "Hang on. I'm going somewhere." Even the shortest of poems will take you from point A to point E without skipping any imperative moments. This statement is truer today than ever thanks to the increase in literary forms, techniques, and styles.

Whether a poet is sticking to traditional means or employing new and experimental methods, the intent is still the same. Writers can and will transcend readers from their current times or situations and into the literary world contoured to the writer's intent. This is the primary purpose for writing. What better way to achieve change or question the state of all things fact or fiction, than to have a writer arrange words so the reader feels as if he is living the life of the speaker or character?

It has become easier for readers to walk in the shoes of those who have no voice thanks to the talented writers of the past, present, and future, who were brave enough to speak and be heard. Let's see this for what it is...what if poets and writers held their tongue during moments when revolution was necessary or during certain periods of history which needed to be captured for future generations as a learning tool? Where would we be without our motivators, inspirers, or teachers? Where would we be if artists in general didn't exist? What if there was no one to make us pause and think before we act or react?

This is exactly what the Torrid Literature Journal does. It provides an avenue, a stage, for writers to speak and be heard. This third issue brings you select literary work written by emerging and established writers located all over the world. These pages are the stage and you are the audience. As with any live performance, you will quickly discover the material speaks for itself. No real background or introduction is necessary. Just a stage and the poet.

Our poetry and fiction sections are not the only high points to get excited about, we are always eager to introduce our featured guest columnists, who are generous enough to discuss important topics which effect writers in the literary industry. Entertainment without education or information is the same as sitting in an idle car with the engine running; it is not enough to get writers at the start position, we want to get writers moving in the right direction and at the speed.

However, none of this could be possible without the gracious help of our family, friends, and supporters who encourage and push us to strive for more than just excellence.

Become a witness; experience first hand why this publication is growing stronger by the poet. Become a Torridian.

Sincerely,

Alice Saunders

Follow me on Twitter:
[@lyricaltempest](#)

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL CORNER

2...*Editors: The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly* | C.S. Splitter & Tricia Kristfek

POETRY

- 6...*The Reading* | Marchell Dyon
8...*Season of Our Years* | *Dreams Lost* | Patricia Lamothe
8...*Taste the Day* | Richard Hartwell
9...*The Gloves* | *Volvelle* | Loukia Janavaras
10...*Another Apology of Sorts* | *Attention Whore* | Linda Crate
10...*Haughty Culture* | *Difficult* | Anthony Ward
11...*Remembering Daddy* | Jedidaiah Joy Herrera
12...*Sonnet I* | *Sonnet II* | Saul Hughes
12...*Dover* | M.A. Schaffner
12...*The Buddha Beneath* | Colin James
13...*Please Enjoy the Music While your Party is Being Breached* | Jacob Erin-Cilberto
13...*Terms of Futility* | *Shimmering (Along the Surf)* | A.J. Huffman
14...*A Woman in Need* | Marchell Dyon
14...*Constant Dreams, Constant Memories* | John Grey
15...*Living is an Art* | *Set it Right* | Hal O'Leary
15...*My Body is Trapped* | Angela Brown
16...*Haunted by Ana* | *Progression* | Rebecca Wright
17...*Renewal* | *Passion* | *Hidden Deep Within* | Shelby Brooks
18...*Regret* | *Maple Leaves* | *Sarah* | Erren Geraud Kelly
18...*The Report* | Tiffani Barner

FICTION

- 20...*Isabella* | Shelby Brooks
21...*Disposable Wedding* | Richard Hartwell
21...*Child Switch* | Richard Hartwell
23...*The Shaman's Eye* | Frank Scozzari
27...*The Maw* | Elsa León

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 30...Advertisements: Sacred Grounds | WMNF 88.5
31...Advertisement: The Bunker
32...Volume II Open Mic Recap
34...Call for Submissions | Call for Art | 2013 Street Team
35...Upcoming Open Mic Event

"To me writing is as natural as inhaling and exhaling. I write because I breathe ."

Marchell Dyon

"I've always dreamed of becoming a well-known but still peculiar author that people talk about. I want my work to be used in a classroom as examples of literature. I want people to try and analyze why I wrote something and what it means, when in all actuality, I wrote it because I could. I want to be remembered for something great. I want to change the world with written words. I write to tell my own stories and memories to people. They can experience my life through the written word and build off my experiences. I write because it's what I love.."

Rebecca Wright

"I write in communion with mankind. Communion, I believe, is the very essence of humanity. I find the pantoum particularly satisfying with it's repetitive lines attention."

Hal O'Leary

GIVING BACK

Several interesting and noteworthy events have taken place since the release of Volume II - The Bare Naked Truth.

*“Let’s not forget it’s up to us, the general public, to make things happen and push for change.
Together, on one accord, we can get things done.”*

- Alice Saunders

Kathy McGuire, founder of Just Sang Productions, organized and hosted the annual Luminaria Ceremony for the Tenth Annual Relay For Life in Temple Terrace, Florida on April 27, 2012. This beautiful event provided the community with a wonderful chance to support and fund the American Cancer Society as well as raise awareness through music, singing, and spoken word.

Alice Saunders and Tiffani Barner of TL Publishing, Inc. had the humble opportunity to participate in the event by performing encouraging and uplifting spoken word pieces with several other artists.

“When I spoke to the crowd last year I explained they were my light. This year, through our service I was able to actively convey to all in attendance they still brighten my spirit with sincere hope that together we can successfully have sexual violence eradicated.”

* Tiffani Barner

On Sunday, April 29, 2012, The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay, in conjunction with other organizations, held their annual Take Back the Night at Curtis Hixon Park in Tampa, Florida.

This annual event provides victims of domestic abuse and rape with the opportunity to speak out and become survivors, no longer labeled or known as a victim. This event also provides men with the opportunity to pledge, to boldly declare their stance against domestic abuse and rape. Most importantly, this empowering event encourages victims, old or recent, to come forward and seek proper help, counseling, and mentoring.

To learn more about these and other events, please visit the official blog for TL Publishing, Inc. at <http://torridliterature.wordpress.com>.

Need a poet to volunteer at your charity event? Please contact Tiffani Barner at tbarner@torridliterature.com.

Together we can make a difference.

EDITORS: THE GOOD, THE BAD, & THE UGLY

BY C.S. SPLITTER AND TRICIA KRISTUFEK

Change remains constant and the need for an editor has only grown in parallel to the recent changes that affect the publishing industry. Author C.S. Splitter and editor Tricia Kristufek team up to remind everyone that editors are the key to ensuring success between an author and his audience.



I am no expert on writing, but I am a self-taught expert on mistakes new writers make. How did I become an expert on writing mistakes you ask? By making them. Name the writing or self-publishing mistake and I have probably made it.

I published my first novel, *The Reluctant*, just to see if it was any good. While the feedback was positive, I knew that it lacked something. The story was good, the characters were more than I had hoped for, but there was no polish. Even the typos seemed to breed in the dark corners of the pages when no one was looking. I knew, to take the next step in producing a professional quality book, I needed to bring in an outsider to help clean up the messes I made.

In short, I needed an editor. You need an editor. Every author needs a second set of eyes on their work who will help forge the soft metal of their story into a finely honed weapon of

Did I mention that I love parenthetical expressions? You may not share my particular deficiencies, but it is a safe bet you have your own.

An editor will also tell you when you are on the wrong track with a story or a character. They look for inconsistencies such as horses changing color from scene to scene, dialect changes, and forgotten or over-used mannerisms. You know your story by heart because you have spent months going over it, and because of that familiarity, you will overlook those inconsistencies that your readers WILL notice.

You will type silly things your eyes, and your word processing software, will miss. I once wrote that certain evil people were *expandable* because the world did not need them. No, they did not have the ability to grow at will. I thank The Comma Queen for pointing that one out. She is not expendable.

“Your editor will protect you from yourself.”

literary glory.

Fine. That was probably a bit overly dramatic. This sort of thing happens when I put words on paper for others to read without first running them by my editor, Tricia Kristufek, whom (who? I never get that right... I should have put an ellipse there or would an em-dash be more appropriate) I lovingly refer to as “The Comma Queen.”

That last paragraph was difficult to read, huh? WRITERS NEED EDITORS!

What will an editor do for you that you cannot do for yourself?

Your editor will protect you from yourself. We all have bad habits. I use too many ellipsis and I detest dashes in any form. I also under-utilize commas (See, I can use dashes when I think hard enough even though it makes me feel dirty).. Now you see where Trish got her nickname. I admit to those things, alright? (In case you were wondering, “alright” is not a word one should use outside of dialogue which includes a dialect and, even then, some will disagree. But, I bet you knew that already).

How should you work with your editor? What traits should you look for in an editor?

Be humble. Realize what you have submitted to your editor is terrible but has potential. If your editor is doing his job, he will send back your greatest achievement marked up so vibrantly a kindergarten teacher would be proud to hang it on the classroom wall next to other artwork only a mother could love.

Trish is up to about six different colors with me, five of which represent particular types of mistakes. Purple is reserved for praise and encouragement. I think. It is hard to remember because I rarely see it.

“Dangling participles are something up with which I shall not put.” Sadly, there is no evidence that Winston Churchill actually uttered that phrase, but your editor might. Even if they do not use those words, the sentiment should typify their attitude. English (sorry, I am monolingual) is a constantly evolving language and the rules do, in fact, change over time. Your editor should know the latest trends in grammar and punctuation.

There is no doubt that proper grammar can make for awkward sentences. Your editor will probably lean toward making your sentences technically correct. You, as the writer, will be more concerned about conveying the message clearly and with

the proper “voice.” Those differences in opinion will lead to disagreements.

Conflict, handled properly, is good. You and your editor have the same basic goal, which is to polish your work into something that others might enjoy reading. How you get there may be the sticking point, which leads me to my final point:

How to choose an editor?

You do not want a “yes” person. If they agree with you on everything, they are useless to you. Just give your mom your manuscript and let her pat you on the head and tell you how proud she is of your accomplishment. Then burn that manuscript before anyone sees it and laughs at you. Your mom (or friend, or fellow struggling writer, or spouse) cannot be objective – your editor can and SHOULD be.

Always remember always that those humbling, colorful markings on your manuscript are suggestions made by a professional whose goal is to help you improve your work. Your words remain yours and you may either accept (preferred) or reject (be careful) those suggestions. I find that my Comma Queen is correct about eighty percent of the time, more if you include her rare bits of praise with which I never disagree.

If you reject a suggestion made by your editor, you better have a bleeping good reason... every time. “I feel” is not a reason. “Yes, but that makes the sentence confusing,” MIGHT be a good reason even though it probably means you will need to re-write the entire paragraph to incorporate your editor's opinion. Like your mom, your editor is right far more often than wrong.

Your editor should work with you, not for you, no matter how much you are paying them. You are partners and, after all, his or her name is also going on the book. Writing is a lonely endeavor and your editor had better be a true fan of your work and not afraid to apply foot to posterior when appropriate to make it better.

There is a stereotype out there that indie and self published books are trash. That stereotype is largely our fault as a group because so many of those works are poorly edited. Friends don't let friends publish aelf-edited stories.

C.S. Splitter

I see what you did there, sir, and you're right – that's why you shouldn't “aelf-edit!”

From what I gather, there are two kinds of indie authors. First, there are those who see it as a way to snub the Big Six, who snubbed them first. These folks gather around their editor, cover designer, and publicist, and turn out a product which makes money, or at least gets a few shiny stars. These authors know the process – they've probably even been published by a publishing house before – and figured out they could make a little more money if they put the time in themselves. Maybe they just don't

want the “strings” that come with a publishing house. They work hard, with good people, and turn out a good story.

Then, there are the others. The second group of indie authors is probably the larger of the two. They are the “Oh, wow! I can instantly publish this story I wrote in fifth grade” type, doing it because they can and it is “cool” to say you're a published author. They may or may not have an editor, probably have no idea how to format for several different platforms, and have their mom as their publicist. They may even believe that they don't need anyone to help them – they know their story inside and out and no one can make it better than they wrote it. These authors hit the publish button and expect confetti and hundred dollar bills to rain down upon them.

These are the ones that give indies a bad name! Now, there is hope! Just as Splitter reformed and now employs an editor, so too can this large group of indies. There are plenty of freelance editors out there – the challenge is finding one to work well with you.

Coddling is for your mom, not your editor!

Your editor shouldn't agree with everything you write. If they do then you wouldn't need an editor! And if you only want someone that's going to tell you “Wow! What a great job!” then please do as Splitter suggested and burn your manuscript. Go ahead, I'll wait.

Now, I'm not suggesting all-out war with your editor. If that happens, please, put down the pen and find a new editor. There should be a happy balance, a give and take, between the two of you. This isn't to say you won't have disagreements over something: whether to use em-dashes or commas, the merits of the semi-colon, or the correct form of lay and lie. It's ok not to know if you lay on the beach or get laid on the beach – as long as your editor knows the difference.

But typically, in a good author-editor relationship – for that's what it is, a relationship – you will be able to talk about the issue and fix it so your meaning is coming across and is correctly punctuated.

Not all editors are created equal!

Now, there are different types of editors for different situations. Developmental or content editors check for plot and character consistency. They look for big holes in your manuscript and try to give you the tools to fill in said holes. They do not, however, fill in the holes for you – it is your book, isn't it?

Line editors, sometimes called copy editors, look mostly at sentence structure and flow of the story. Where does it lose its rhythm? Where does your word choice falter? Included in this is also an eye for grammar and sentence structure. Your line editor cannot do an accurate job if your manuscript has no punctuation

GUEST COLUMNIST



C.S. Splitter is a business man, author, and stand-up philosopher living in rural Maryland with his beautiful wife, small dog, and astonishingly large cat. He is an avid shooter and loves being 5,000 feet above the ground, upside down, in an open cockpit.

He will never again jump out of a perfectly good airplane and feels the need to color outside of the lines.

Look for book three of the *Crayder Chronicles* (Lorena's Prequel) to be published in September 2012.

Amazon Author Page: <http://amazon.com/author/splitter>

Splitters World Blog: <http://splittersworld.blogspot.com/>

Twitter: @SplitterCS



Tricia Kristufek specializes in taking an author's project from A to Z. Her services include content editing, copy editing, and line editing, along with formatting for e-book and print publication. Reasonable rates, impeccable service. Kristfek is currently editing a two book series.

Website: <http://triciakristufek.com>

Editing Services: <http://triciakristufek.com/editing-services>

Editor: Freelance editor and formatter.

“Coddling is for your mom, not your editor!”

whatsoever or your lack of grammar actually makes reading your book – as well as comprehending – impossible.

Lastly, there are proofreaders. These editors look for the polishing details. They give your book that “last look” to ensure that, during this back and forth and “oh look I lost my updated version, can you send it again” process, everything is in its place.

Now, don't be fooled into thinking that because you have a line editor you don't need a proofreader! At some point in the book-editing process, your editor may become too close to your work as well, especially if they were there with you from birth. That last look-over in order to make sure your T's are crossed and your I's are dotted is very important. This is the final step before your book goes out into the world, and you don't get a second chance at a first impression, as they say!

Choosing an author/project.

Not all editors are created equal, neither are authors and projects. When presented with a manuscript sample in that awkward stage before the contract is signed, your editor will look at the level of work needed on your novel and figure out if they can see it working – the story, the relationship, the timing. Most importantly, they will be looking at your story, your “baby,” to see if they believe in it just as you do. If your editor doesn't believe you have a good story, they shouldn't be “your” editor.

There are still many factors that go into creating a working relationship not mentioned here, but it is more than just price: dedication, willingness to work to improve, and follow-through.

Ultimately, you get what you pay for.

Tricia Kristufek



CALL FOR COLUMNISTS

Speak and be heard! TL Publishing, Inc. is seeking freelance writers and literary professionals who are interested in appearing as guest columnists in future editions of the *Torrid Literature Journal*. Articles should focus on topics concerning the literary industry.

For more information, please visit our website or contact Alice Saunders, Editor, at asaunders@torridliterature.com.

CREATING ROOTS

To be fruitful is to plant seeds and leave roots. That is the driving force behind our efforts to support the arts by continually helping writers and poets connect with their readers. The Torrid Literature Journal is a seed and the artists who appear therein are the roots. We want people to grab one of our roots and start running with it. We want readers to close the last page and walk away with roots of inspiration, entertainment, education, and information. However, this would not be possible without our supporters. Thanks to people like Holly Wright, Sujata Narayan, Amy Snider, Quiana Frazier, Najah Frazier, Danielle Merkle, Kathy McGuire and many others, who have humbled us through their contributions of time, money, resources, and wisdom, we are better able to provide professional products and services that serve the community.



Thank you for your continued support and generous contributions. If you're interested in donating to TL Publishing, Inc. or sponsoring a particular event, please contact Tiffani Barner at tbarner@torridliterature.com for information.

TL PUBLISHING, INC. PRESENTS

ENTER THE GATEWAY

A POETRY ANTHOLOGY



"I AM THE DOOR; ANYONE WHO ENTERS IN
THROUGH ME WILL BE SAVED (WILL LIVE).
HE WILL COME IN AND HE WILL GO OUT [FREE],
AND WILL FIND PASTURE."
JOHN 10:9 AMP

ENTER THE GATEWAY

TL Publishing, Inc. is now accepting Christian themed poetry submissions for the upcoming anthology, "Enter the Gateway".

All submissions should be previously unpublished. Please send a maximum of five poems, of any length.

To submit, upload your submission at:

<http://torridliterature.submishmash.com/submit>

Details on where to purchase and/or download the book will be released at a later time.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Alice Saunders or visit the website for more information.

ODE TO LITERATURE

“...of all the things in life I keep
are the memories of youth that
make me weep...”
Dreams Lost

“...tongues of fern...French-
kissing the patio beams...”
Taste the Day

“...trapped in a glass house
of inclusion trapped by the
irony of self-deception...”
My Body is Trapped

“...you said I’ll miss the light
when I leave here...”
Volvelle

“...you always have to outshine me; if
I were the a star you’d be the sun...”
Attention Whore

THE READING

By Marchell Dyon

She shadows her words with a mellifluous shade.
As her voice covers and fills the room.
She pause for the effect of silence then reads again.
Her words the audience did embrace them,

As her voice covers and fills the room.
The audience some in blue jeans, some in ties, did listen.
Her words the audience did embrace them,
Like a kiss both tangy and sweet.

The audience some in blue jeans, some in ties, did listen.
With a kinship for the spoken word,
Like a kiss from her to the audience, words dripping honey,
This is her magic, her poetic slight of hand.

A kinship for the spoken word,
When whimsical words were spoken, laughter did thunder,
This was her magic, her poetic slight of hand.
This magic keeps its time and rhythm as it echoes.

When whimsical words were spoken, laughter did thunder.
She looks into every eager face,
Her voice keeps its time and rhythm as it echoes.
Her lips solemnly move as if saying prayers.

She looks into every eager face unafraid needing this contact.
She shadows her words with a mellifluous shade.
Her lips solemnly move as if saying prayers,
She pauses for the effect of silence then reads again.

Marchell Dyon is from Chicago Illinois. Dyon has taken various poetry workshops; she is currently working on her first chapbook. Her work has appeared in *Ouroboros Review*, *West Ward Quarterly*, *Lily Review*, and *Corner Club Press*.

“...one of these Doctors
stuck his finger right through
my eye socket...”
The Buddha Beneath

“...peace comes only in small
allowance...”
Dover

“...I confine myself to my lot.
Tending to my vegetation...is
it perhaps controlling me...”
Haughty Culture

“...to be a prisoner of what we
own, deprives us of the life that is
our due...”
Living is an Art

“...we strainingly construct each day
to conceal the hollowness that is
laid...”
Sonnet I

“...your scent attached to my dreams hum-
ming in pocket discontent...”
Please Enjoy the Music While Your Party is
Being Breached

POETRY WITH A BEAT.



CAN YOU FEEL THE TORRIDIAN RHYTHM?

Patricia Lamothe, originally from Syracuse, New York, Lamothe studied at Syracuse University and sought a career in acting, performing for several years with a local group. Her career changes of being co-owner and operator of a funeral home and ambulance service, an insurance broker and mother of four children and six grandchildren, have influenced her life experiences which are simply expressed in her prose. She is married and resides in Tampa with her husband.

SEASON OF OUR YEARS

By Patricia Lamothe

I love the leaves falling from the trees
The sensual sights and smells
The colors of red, of yellow and orange
That make my heart just swell.

Those powerful trees that sway in the breeze
Their branches grazing the ground
Those mighty trees giving up their leaves
To send them down around.

I know it will be, like the colors we see
That our lives are changing too
From the gentle greens of the budding leaf
To a brilliant reddish hue.

DREAMS LOST

By Patricia Lamothe

I'm more than serious, or so you say
When I speak of my dreams that have flown away.

I pretended to laugh when I would not cry
When others I knew seemed to pass me by.

Of all the things in life I keep
Are the memories of youth that make me weep.

Is the sadness I feel that the years took their toll
Or was it just me who surrendered my soul?

Richard Hartwell is a retired middle school English teacher living in Southern California. He has been previously published in: *The Cortland Review*, *Midwest Literary Review*, *Birmingham Arts Journal*, and several others.

TASTE THE DAY

By Richard Hartwell

Tongues of fern,
Spiking up
and out
and over,

French-kissing the patio beams,
Overflowing
random pots in
hanging chains.

Afternoon breezes delicately
Tear tracteries of cobwebs,
Filled with spiders' stunned insects,
Caressed and lapped up each day;

I salivate
and taste again
the day outside.

Loukia M. Janavaras is originally from Minneapolis, Minnesota but currently resides in Athens, Greece where she has lived for the past nine years. Janavaras enjoys writing though she does not consider it a choice. Her poem "White" was published in *J.D. Vine publications The Creative Writer* in 2008 and in 2010 she received an Honorable Mention in the Writer's Digest 79th Annual Writing Competition for "The Neighbor" in the Memoirs/Personal Essay category. "The Neighbor" has also been recently showcased in *Gloom Cupboard*. Her most recent poetry is featured in *Wilderness House Literary Review* (Volume 6, number 4).

THE GLOVES

By Loukia Janavaras

These are the gloves of parting
left by you one morning without words
in a soft heap like two blackbirds
nestling on their last breath
not worn, to be worn
by me through the streets of Vienna
where leaves had fallen
all turned the colour of your hair
as I inhaled slow decay,
wove paths that vanished with the wind,
hands raw, gloves left on the table.

These gloves have witnessed departures, visitors
like you they have travelled, seen snow with you
filled tightly by your hands
their homeland stamped with pride,
an offering to be kept
perfect for parting
so tender, felt, black
left with you accidentally amid words
only to return
bringing you
despite their crumpled wings.

These are the gloves you handed me
without a word
they have taken residence here
permanent visitors in a warm welcome
they glide over my hands,
caress my skin like a gentle breath,
silent comfort as I walk the winter streets of Athens
I bring my hands to my cheek
close my eyes and inhale deeply
the scent that is you
and as they rub together, wings flutter.

VOLVELLE

By Loukia Janavaras

You said I'll miss the light
when I leave here
this place
where we'd begun
always lit by the sun
as if the gods were still children
who invited us to play
in their daylight.
You know this because you returned
to the light you missed,
rolled the blinds
as though they are yours
and we'd frolic in bliss.
I relished in the movement,
the way the room unfolded
to the world and let us in
again, through the seasons
we'd spin
as if there could be no end.
But the gods have put their toys away
pop-up books and all
and you no longer return
to raise the blinds.
Though I am still here
in the creases
you were right
it is the light that I miss.

Linda Crate is a Pennsylvanian native born in Pittsburgh, but raised in the rural town of Conneautville. Crate attended and graduated from Edinboro University of Pennsylvania with a degree in English-Literature in 2009. She has a passion for writing that she has nurtured since the age of thirteen. Her poetry and short stories have appeared in a variety of magazines the latest of which includes: *Nebo: A Literary Journal* and *Visceral Uterus*. Crate currently lives in Fort Fairfield, Maine.

ANOTHER APOLOGY OF SORTS

By Linda Crate

you reject me like an editor
tossing aside a manuscript
full of typographical errors,
and an uninteresting tale to
be told; all I ever did was
love you, I'm not really
sure it warrants this vicious
hatred that burns me like
a star lantern; if you could
swallow your pride and those
flames a moment, I'm sure
we could piece back some
semblance of friendship, I
knew that I hurt you, but I
only know three shades of
apologies and they're all the
same hue; I'm sorry if they
don't satisfy you like vodka —
next time I'll just pour myself
in a glass, let you drink me
down; let your acids erode me
into a perpetual state of nothing;
anything would be better than
this reigning entropy you sing.

ATTENTION WHORE

By Linda Crate

I wish there was some salve
that I could wipe upon my
wounds to make this all right —

yet you've cut into me like a
holly berry decimating the hold
of winter's white; you always

have to outshine me; if I were
a star you'd be the sun or if I
were the moon you'd be sun —

I don't understand why every
infinitesimal thing has to be
an argument; why you always

have to compete with me, I
would have been perfectly fine
just being your friend but you —

never seem satisfied with any
thing unless it's your stain printed
on the front page of every magazine.

Anthony Ward has been writing in his spare time for a number of years. He has been published in a number of literary magazines including *South*, *Word Gumbo*, *Perspectives*, *Crack the Spine*, *Shadow Fiction*, *Torrid Literature Journal*, *Snakeskin*, and *Blinking Cursor* amongst others. His poems "Normality", "Manifestation", and "Tongue Tied" appeared in Volume II of the *Torrid Literature Journal*.

HAUGHTY CULTURE

By Anthony Ward

I confine myself to my lot.
Tending my vegetation,
While I lavish myself with fruits of my labour.

They reckon I should get out more,
Discover the diversity beyond my borders.
Though I fear the capriciousness of the wild,
The arboreal malignancy of my naivety,
The deprivation of barren pastures.

Whereas here in my garden everything's familiar.
I can maintain it and manicure it into something manageable,
Something I can control.

Or is it perhaps controlling me-
Weeding me out?

DIFFICULT

By Anthony Ward

I have to practice in order to be myself,
It doesn't come naturally,
I wasn't born this way,
It takes a lot of work to be the way I am.
Though I suspect I make it look easy,
Which makes you unable to appreciate
Just how difficult it can be.

Jedidaiah Joy Herrera was born on December 9, 1994. Jedidaiah Joy Herrera is currently a college student in the University of the Philippines taking up a B.S. degree in Development Communication. An avid reader and great lover of poetry, she has written numerous poems and even stories that she posted in several websites.

REMEMBERING DADDY

By Jedidaiah Joy Herrera

Looking through old photographs
And some of Daddy's story drafts
I can't help myself but cry
Each time I see his faded smile.

I lost him once, I lost him twice
He was gone even before he died
He'd stare at me with glassy eyes
And I'll always be his estranged child.

He can't remember yet I can't forget
The simple memories that we both shared
Our pictures mounted on walls
They are to him meaningless at all.

It pains my heart to see him live
He has no thoughts, no memories
He lives in silence, no words or feelings
His existence erased by his memories.

I try to tell him about the past
Our memories together, how he made me laugh
But he'd just stare at me with his brown eyes
And in his lips forms a simple smile.

For days and months it went like this
Until the day he never stirred.
While in the grave he was being laid
I softly whisper, "I love you Daddy, I wish you could have stayed."

And while I was looking through his things
I found a letter he wrote for me
And as I opened it, tears fell from my eyes
For there I saw the picture of us, I drew when I was but a child.

In his scrawny penmanship
He wrote a line I can't forget
And in his letter as he bid me goodbye,
He wrote to me, "I've always remembered honey, that you were my child."

SONNET I

By Saul Hughes

The crackle and flutter of the light bulb,
Illuminated space dipped in eclipse,
Night's doubt-fattened wolves descend on that flock
Of ideas thickly-fleeced and deeply-fixed
That roam and crop our daytime's meadows,
And whose fear-fed hooves scratch at the thin soil,
As they squeak and gibber in the shadows,
To expose twisting roots that split and spoil
The electric neon-studded parade
That we strainingly construct each day
To conceal the hollowness that is laid
Beneath the designs of our flesh's clay.
The morning will try to back together stick
The fragile embroidery that night unpicks.

SONNET II

By Saul Hughes

Like queen ants with their distended egg sacks,
Milk-tinctured lozenges bloatingly vast,
We probe onwards with shoulder-slung backpacks.
Mushrooms of memory, toadstools of times past
Crammed into the canvas flapped compartments,
This mnemonic heft tapers down to straps
That slice at sinews and slit ligaments
And then all the flimsy framework impacts.
Their bubbles bulge to bring forth insect life,
Ours with dead weight of decayed images
Grow heavy and at our straining sides knife
With soaked cordage, rain-whetted ridges.
The bag we drag in our brief-candled wake
Heaves and teems and churns and then finally breaks.

M. A. Schaffner has poetry recently published or forthcoming in *The Hollins Critic*, *Magma*, *Decanto*, *The Monarch Review*, and *Prime Number*. Other work includes the collection *The Good Opinion of Squirrels*, and the novel *War Boys*. Schaffner's poems "Historical Survey" and "Apocrypha" appeared in Volume II of the *Torrid Literature Journal*.

DOVER

By M. A. Schaffner

Peace comes but only in small allowance.
Press coverage recedes and then the light
falls less kindly on the widow's profile,
the infant swaddled in a crumpled flag.

Leaves cover the remains while larvae feed,
their hunger an even greater necessity
without any ties to slogans or think tanks
nor thoughts for happy holiday specials.

Too many jobs depend on atrocity;
an excess of funding breeds principles
that rest on lethal enforcement. No one

can escape, even by changing channels;
the images have lives beyond our own.
We draw more blood for all of this each day.

Colin James has poems forthcoming in *Eudice*, and a chapbook available from Thunderclap Press.

THE BUDDHA BENEATH

By Colin James

We all fart in our sleep.
This opens a portal to another dimension.
Not necessarily a desirable location,
it is often populated
with left leaning, late term abortionists.
One of these Doctors stuck his finger
right through my eye socket.
It is with great consternation
that I stand here now, reading.

Jacob Erin-Cilberto currently resides in Carbondale, Illinois. A teacher, Erin-Cilberto, has been writing and publishing poetry since 1970. His work has appeared in numerous small magazines and journals including: *Café Review*, *Skyline Magazine*, and *Hudson View*. Erin-Cilberto also writes reviews of poetry books for Chiron Review, Skyline Review and others. His 11th and newest book of poetry, "An Abstract Waltz," is now available through Water Forest Press, Stormville, NY. He has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize in Poetry in 2006-2008 and again in 2010. He also teaches poetry workshops for Heartland Writers Guild, Southern Illinois Writers Guild and Union County Writers Guild. His poem "Anthem for the 90's from a Singer Who Lost his Voice" appeared in Volume II of the Torrid Literature Journal.

PLEASE ENJOY THE MUSIC WHILE YOUR PARTY IS BEING BREACHED

By Jacob Erin-Cilberto

i'm your cell phone lover
made up of genetics with no lips
just talking fingertips
walking over the keys
smooching you with hi fives
and Wii fives
and why do you swoon over Facebook smiles
and twitter tiles of scrabbled words
i could never put together
because your image keeps fading
every time i kiss the screen
&
your dial tone make-up smears
onto my ear
as i drop into a deep electronic sleep,

your scent attached to my dreams
humming in pocket discontent

as i put you on pulse
and mine keeps racing away
from what used to be my real heart.

A.J. Huffman is a poet and freelance writer in Daytona Beach, Florida. She has previously published three collections of poetry: "The Difference Between Shadows and Stars", "Carrying Yesterday", and "Cognitive Distortion". She has also published her work in national and international literary journals such as *Avon Literary Intelligencer*, *Writer's Gazette*, and *The Penwood Review*.

TERMS OF FUTILITY

By A. J. Huffman

My mouth is barren.
Incapable of orating
any semblance of thought. Full
coherence is a misery
I swallow dry. It changes
nothing. As the implicated invitation
far beyond manifestation
stands: uselessly unspoken
in all its over-rehearsed glory.
Abandoned. Now that is a concept
I can sink my teeth into. As you
laugh at scars I cannot
even identify. Though I can perceive
the echoes of their touch.
(Re)Sounding down my spine.
Till even my shadow shivers.
With shame.

SHIMMERING (ALONG THE SURE)

By A. J. Huffman

Laying in the midst [of memory's] motion,
I forget to breathe. And I take a new side
of fate's hand. (Softer.) We whisper together
against the sadness that has bonded my lips.
In the back of my mind, the curse cracks.
Slips free. The ringing stabilizes. Silence
rebounds. I am [reborn]. A vibration
's set. Against the wind I rock. Refusing
to fight. Let it take me. Let it break me.
Let it make me. Right?

Marchell Dyon is from Chicago Illinois. She has taken various poetry workshops; she is currently working on her first chapbook. Her work has appeared in *Ouroboros Review*, *West Ward Quarterly*, *Lily Review*, and *Corner Club Press*.

A WOMAN IN NEED

By Marchell Dyon

A woman who ran wearing nothing, not even shoes.
A fragile drawing of a woman in need,
A woman whose skin is both red and raw
She surrounds herself in a battlement of elderly nuns.

A fragile drawing of a woman in need,
A woman reduce to a stick figure,
She surrounds herself in a battlement of elderly nuns.
They become holy warriors ready for battle, if after her he comes.

A woman reduce to being a stick figure,
A mad artist could not have drawn such skin and bones.
Holy warriors ready to do battle if after her he comes.
Elderly nuns swaddle her babies the best way they know how.

A mad artist could not have drawn such skin and bones.
A skeleton of a once human animal,
Elderly nuns swaddle her babies the best way they know how.
Little ones needing God's compassion and protection,

A skeleton of a once human animal
Reduce to the most basic of instinct: to get away
Her little ones needing God's compassion and protection
Seeking sanctuary from a husband, who would stave and beat them

Reduce to the most basic of instincts: to get away
A woman who ran wearing nothing not even shoes,
A woman seeking sanctuary from a husband, who would stave and beat them,
A woman whose skin is both red and raw

CONSTANT DREAMS, CONSTANT MEMORIES

By John Grey

These dreams are not my memory's lover.
They are as dissonant as chalk and rain.
One seeks to remind, one's on edge to explain.
What dreams divine, memories discover
In thoughts of place, of someone other.
But dreams mask well the hurt, the pain,
Recollection takes them plain,
Says, this is where you come from, brother.

If a memory could envisage tomorrow
It would be as close as ever to a dream.
If that dream brought to sleep, the pain, the sorrow,
It would look back sadly and not redeem
The constant pay back of what the past must borrow,
For what dreams escape from, memories deem.

John Grey is an Australian born poet, works as financial systems analyst. Recently published in *Poem*, *Caveat Lector*, *Prism International* and the horror anthology, "What Fears Become" with work upcoming in *Potomac Review*, *Hurricane Review* and *Pinyon*. Grey's poem "Whoosh" appeared in Volume I of the *Torrid Literature Journal*.

Hal O'Leary is an eighty-seven year old veteran of WWII who has come to realize that all wars are fought to enrich a wealthy elite. As a Secular Humanist, and having spent his life in the theatre he believes that it is only through the arts, poetry in particular, that we are afforded an occasional glimpse into the otherwise incomprehensible. Hal has been inducted into the Wheeling Hall of Fame and is the recent recipient of an Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degree from West Liberty University. O'Leary's poem "My Day of Bliss" appeared in Volume I of the Torrid Literature Journal.

LIVING IS AN ART

By Hal O'Leary

Let's not forget that living is an art?
The phrase to make a living is a ruse.
There is a choice for us twixt head and heart.
Society insists we cannot choose.

The phrase to make a living is a ruse.
There must be more to life than just provide.
Society insists we cannot choose.
Must we ignore the voice we hear inside?

There must be more to life than just provide.
There's love and joie de vivre that can be known.
Must we ignore the voice we hear inside?
We'll reap the fateful harvest we have sown.

There's love and joie de vive that can be known
Providing us the life that is our due.
We'll reap the fateful harvest we have sown
Denying happiness we might accrue.

Deprives us of a life that is our due?
We're speaking of a life that we design.
Denying happiness we might accrue?
Not only tend the vine but taste the wine.

We're speaking of a life that we design.
There is a choice for us twixt head and heart,
Not only tend the vine but taste the wine.
Let's not forget that. Living is an art.

SET IT RIGHT

By Hal O'Leary

You've got to fight...fight...die to set it right!
Today your country's wrong in what its done.
True patriot! You see your country's plight.
Illegal wars like these cannot be won.

Today your country's wrong in what its done.
The time has come for you to take a stand.
Illegal wars like these cannot be won.
You'll do it if you really love your land.

The time has come for you to take a stand.
You true ones who refuse to join the throng.
You'll do it if you really love your land.
Shout down who shouts "My country right or wrong".

You true ones who refused to join the throng
Do not stand by and see your country shamed.
Shout down who shouts " My country right or wrong".
Insist on righteousness so rightly claimed.

Do not stand by and see your country shamed?
True Patriot! You see your country's plight.
Insist on righteousness so rightly claimed.
You've got to fight...fight...die to set it right.

MY BODY IS TRAPPED

By Angela Brown

Within its concave of demotion
Trapped in a glass house of inclusion
Trapped by the irony of self-deception
Trapped from half-truth rumors
My body an epidemic of self-hatred
Frustration, denial and abandonment
Trapped in deception of immortal truth
My body is a victim of
Verbal, physical, and mental abuse
Trapped within its hull demanding affection

Angela Brown, born in Meridian, Mississippi, is a native of Las Vegas, Nevada. Brown is the author of several books and the recipient of several literary awards.

Rebecca Wright is a 21-year-old fresh graduate of University of South Florida with her BA in Creative Writing. She wants people to analyze why she wrote something and what it means, when in all actuality, she wrote it because she could. She currently resides in Tampa, Florida with her polydactyl cat, Huckleberry Fynnigan. She plans to receive her M.F.A. in Creative Writing and in the future, change the world. Wright is a veteran Torridian who regularly participates in the open mic events hosted by TL Publishing, Inc.

HAUNTED BY ANA

By Rebecca Wright

Lily-white skin grips to brittle bones keeping the entrails
inside, there is no escaping the monster when it's a part of you.
Ridicule burns words into the skin, burning flesh, burning soul;
embers are all that remain.

It's impossible to escape the monster inside of you
while blue eyes like marbles see the reflection of
burning embers that only remain
to mock and stare at the cracked image.

Blue eyes spinning like marbles saw reflections with
too much flesh, too much skin; you take up too much space.
You mock and stare at your destroyed image
that I can't save you from.

You believe you takes up too much space, but I
whisper against your skin that your beautiful in my eyes.
I grip your shoulders but I can't save you from
your skeletons shaking the closet door.

You're beautiful in my eyes but you don't see the
truth. Stop staring, stop worrying; you can't block
your skeletons screaming against the door.
I want you to see the reality that your killing yourself.

Stop staring. You can't block the sight
of flesh sitting against bone and stretching.
I need you to see that your killing yourself,
you're becoming skin and bone.

Your flesh stretched across your bones and
I whisper that you need to eat, you need to gain.
All that's left is skin and bones and I frown
and move my hand to your barely-there hips.

Whispering you need to eat against your mouth
and please save yourself, please fight
Moving my hand to your barely-there hips,
I don't want you to give up.

Please save yourself, I need you to survive.
and see your skin holding brittle bones and entrails inside.
I can't give you up just yet but
you just see the ridicule burned into your skin.

PROGRESSION

By Rebecca Wright

We were nothing more than
clumsy caresses of
two torn teens
shy smiles
that didn't fit in
any moment of
time.

We excelled at creating passion,
marking skin,
glazed eyes,
heavy breaths,
moans that reverberated
through the
skin.

On soft sheets our minds
were intertwined,
legs tangled,
hands bruising,
lips pressing
against
skin.
Can you find me
amongst the stars
where airplanes
create fake
wishes that
won't come true?

Shelby Brooks has always enjoyed writing. Lately, Brooks has chosen to delve more into poetry and short stories rather than novels, but in the future she intends pursue novels as well.

RENEWAL

By Shelby Brooks

Rain heals our world.
Springy hair is uncurled.

Wounds are washed out,
Thereby purging all doubt.

War heroes' hope is restored
To energize their intense hordes.

Nature's dusty covering has been wiped away,
A new beginning to the day.

A whole new world to explore
Bare feet to tread on the green green floor.

A sweet smell satisfies.
Our awareness of the world around us is magnified.

Our soul calms inside,
Urging the woody trees to, in us, confide.

PASSION

By Shelby Brooks

Do what you love,
So you love what you do.
Grin upon opportunities.
Take pride in talents.
Develop a passion.

Do not ignore insistence
For insistence lacks escape.
Do not settle for another path
For paths determine who you are.
Face that passion.

Joy everlasting
And happiness each moment
Awaits those in their human life
Who turn dreams to reality.
Accept your passion.

HIDDEN DEEP WITHIN

By Shelby Brooks

Very few can scale these walls.
Hardly any can hear my feeble calls.

Alone inside myself,
I stash my Book of Secrets on a high high shelf.

"No one must find me here!"
I whisper with fear.

Through isolation I will be secure,
Only by this can I be sure!

Humanity always betrays with a cruel laugh,
Please understand this on my behalf!

Trust must be kept within.
Only by this can an individual win.

Erren Geraud Kelly is poet based in New York City, by way of Louisiana, by way of Maine, by way of California and so on. I have been writing for 21 years and have over three dozen publications in print and online in such publications as *Hiram Poetry Review*, *Mudfish*, *Poetry Magazine*(online) and other publications. Kelly was also published in anthologies such as "Fertile Ground", "Beyond The Frontier" and other anthologies.

MAPLE LEAVES

By Erren Geraud Kelly

like the trees
blooming scarlet and gold
your kisses
make scandal
come to my cheeks
(and i will fall)
though my skin will
never tell
and you
will never know

SARAH

By Erren Geraud Kelly

if i saw you in egypt
you would be cleopatra
holding a serpent before it
looked at you and told you
your fate

if i saw you in france
you'd be simone de Beauvoir
you'd say there's more truth in poems
than in wars

if i saw you in Italy
ou'd be virginia woolf
you'd walk among the ruins
in pompeii
telling me " never forget "

but i see you sitting in
a coffeehouse, enjoying this moment
my favorite place of all

REGRET

By Erren Geraud Kelly

if our bloom
did not come through
the frost
it was only because
the winter in your heart
failed to let
the rose
Grow

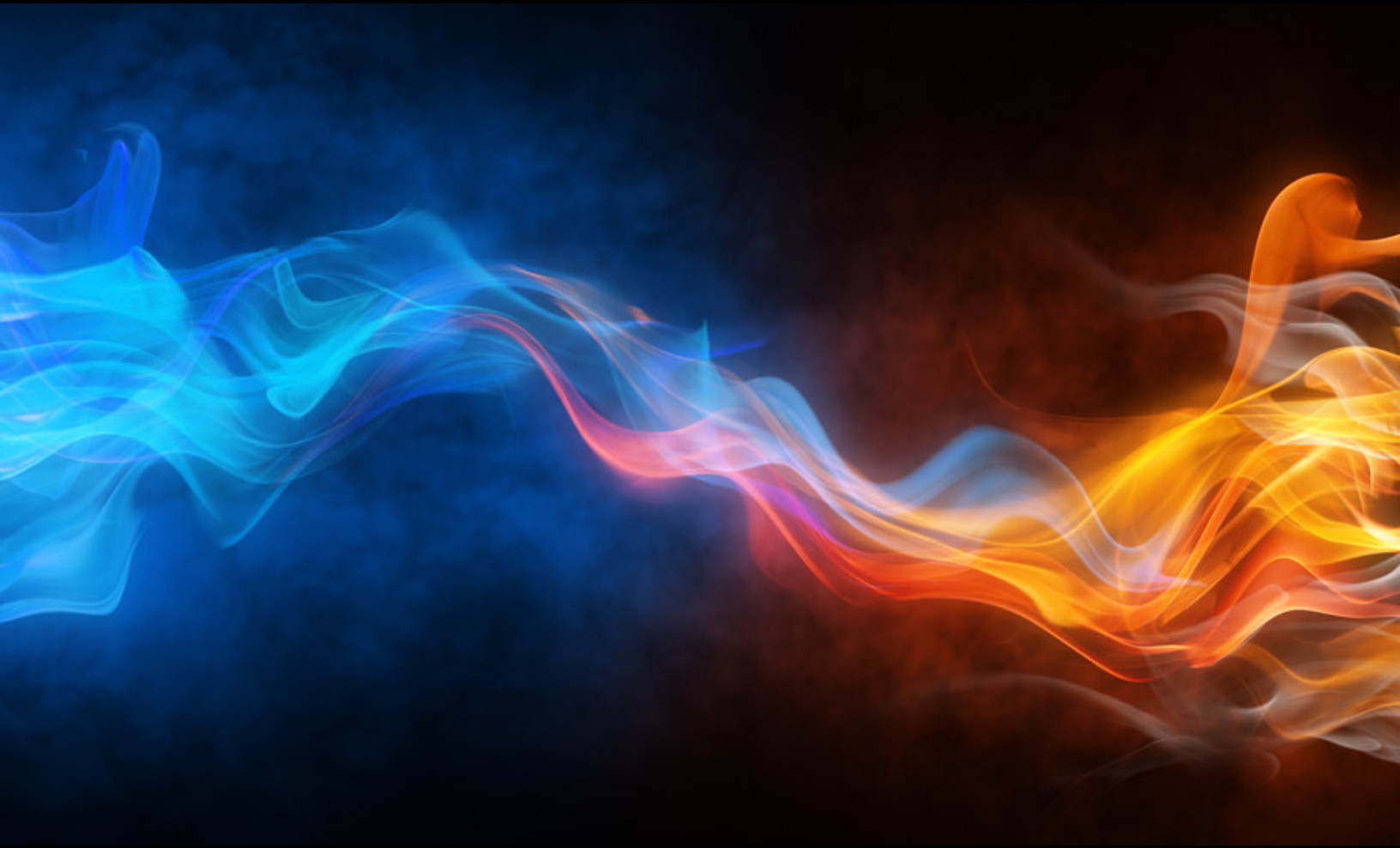
Tiffani Barner was born and raised in Tampa, Florida in the year 1974. She discovered her love of writing in the sixth grade, when her then teacher encouraged her to continue writing short stories and poetry. She took his advice and later joined her high school's yearbook staff as well as the literary magazine the HELM. She has been reconnected with her original love of writing when she joined TL Publishing as their Marketing and Networking Specialist in 2011.

THE REPORT

By Tiffani Barner

My initial observations have me troubled
Cries for help from ancestors haunt me
A knot I feel is tightening around my neck
I feel these generalizations these assumptions of us has reached an all time low
How do we shed these egregious mishaps these horrific injustices?
I'm outraged that in the court of public opinion a celebrity can be sentenced to life for fighting dogs
But
When a black man is shot down in the street for walking while black that same court of public opinion can't decide if his shooter should be arrested
And so in these four years of change and a half black president later I ask have we progressed?
I say we have a ways to go
I regret to report to you Ms. Billy Holiday that southern trees still bare strange fruit. Yes, rotten strange fruit in 2012
I regret to report to you Dr. King were still striving to gain equality for all. We're still working overtime to make your dreams of little black boys
and girls playing with little white boys and girls just simply acceptable
I want to assert that I am not a walking stereotype
I am not the boogie man you accuse so quickly and without hesitation of kidnapping your kids just because you can
I am proud to report I am a young, black and gifted woman. I'm here and I'm not going anywhere
I am the voice of a silenced young man who walked in a hoodie. I'm deeply sadden we will never see him grow and prosper
I am Trayvon Martin
Are you?

TORRIDIAN FICTION



THE PLACE WHERE REALITY AND DREAMS COLLIDE.

FICTION

ISABELLA

By Shelby Brooks

Shelby Brooks has always enjoyed writing. Lately, Brooks has chosen to delve more into poetry and short stories rather than novels, but in the future she intends pursue novels as well.

I knew her as Isabella—that girl in the River of Dreams. At one time in the innocent smiles of childhood, I truly believed that she lived down in those watery depths and had existed unbeknownst to all until I discovered her. My childish heart had beaten with pity and wonder for this silent girlish creature. There were so many words I wanted to offer her, but I never did. I knew her, and she knew me. In each other, meaning was sought—and found.

In my time as a child, I found great joy through moments spent among the reeds of the River of Dreams accompanied by the beauty. I would spend grand quantities of time listening to the soothing laugh and murmur of her voice. She taught me the benefits of an ideal world, free of human corruption and tyrannical control. Hope had shined brightly in her expressive eyes, and I had snatched as much hope as my skinny child arms could carry. I had needed her optimism and genuine touch of real to fight through the misleading illusions of the world I had encountered outside of that place.

To myself, I vowed to never lose to eroding memory the true delights of my childhood days. I never wanted to forget how my little child hands were instantly cooled by the pinprick touch of my watery companion. I did not want to forget the movement that pulsed to the very depths of those waters, their musical rhythm a comfort. With pink, bare feet, I would clamber my way onto my favorite rock cluster from which I simply studied the beauty who spirited playfully through those twinkling waters.

In the unrealistic views of Earth's child, she might have been my small otherworldly guardian angel or perhaps a messenger between human souls. Those short childhood years soared with boundless imagination that carried me always back to her, and nearly every waking moment was spent at her side. Separated by the river, my childhood self gazed deep into the swooshing waters of that beloved place. In numerous ways, she bewitched my naïve human soul. An enchantment captured me into its whimsical spell—one that I have never entirely outgrown. That magical place still calls to my soul quietly and urges me to return even as I age into more years. Past fantasies dreamt up by the imagination of my youth grinned impishly on the all too restrictive world of adults and chattered with the impossibilities elders frowned upon. Those inescapably bound by human forged rules could barely have fathomed the wild marvels within my child mind. And now I hold them, trapped and weeping, in my adult body.

Though I always knew the developmental stage of being a child would never last in the deepest, gloomiest, cobwebbed depths of this heart of mine, I still clung with fierce stubbornness to each last whimsical thought and creative spurt until childhood's ultimate death. In those mourning hours following the death, bitterness had poisoned my angry soul at being forced to adapt to the world of fully developed human beings established by generations of box-minded followers. Instead of a puppet follower, my crying soul had sobbed to fulfill the grand societal role of a leader with the mind of a child in this marvelously mysterious world! I had not wanted to abide by restrictive laws; I had wanted to discover wonders yet unfound. Children see and know; they should lead in mind and spirit. Wisdom should be redefined from the wide eyes of a child, and trust should be placed in these too often dismissed believers of astounding creativity and revolutionary thought. The child trapped within my adult casing wailed for want of escape!

My time with the river and my watery friend remained cherished in my mind though. Even still, I can recall the way that my own self seemed to gaze upward at me from those depths. Down there, silvery minnows had circled and spiraled artistically upward towards a brilliant burning daylight sun. Dappled shadows had playfully kissed the smooth rocks and algae coating the creek bottom. Stray leaves had twirled forlornly with the current. Occasionally, my eye had caught on a lovely frog propelling itself through those waters. I had loved watching their long, sinewy legs pushing with great thrusts to overcome the friction of the creek. They were small and quick on land yet marvelously graceful and languid amidst aquatic surroundings. Tiny turtles too had snatched my attention with their sleepy, drunken air while sunning themselves atop a lone broken branch floating on the water. So still in their simple enjoyment of the sun's welcome warmth, the turtles had closely resembled solid statues solemnly bearing witness to the happenings both above and below the creek's murmuring waters. Often, I had strained my ears to hear those quiet murmurs. Oh, how I had wanted to make sense of those whispered words! But alas, I was never privy to the secret talks of that captivating creek. Although with the passage of time, I came to content myself with the privilege of the incomprehensible understanding I shared with my watery companion. What marvels!

But none of these exquisite splendors ever held the same beauty for me again. Reality harshly threw me an angry, hot slap upon crossing the threshold from child to adult. It broke her image and destroyed our friendship; our connection was severed with cruel pleasure by our enemy. Age killed her. And nearly the child within my soul as well.

For days upon days, my eyes did not pause in the continuous outpour of my sorrowful weeping. I would never again be that child. Those beauties known to me as a child then were lost to eternity's greedy grasp.

Yet I can always carry with me one consolatory truth: We were and always have been the same. We are Isabella.

DISPOSABLE WEDDING

Richard Hartwell

Richard Hartwell is a retired middle school English teacher living in Southern California. He has been previously published in: *The Cortland Review*, *Midwest Literary Review*, *Birmingham Arts Journal*, and several others.

Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue. Cute and catchy; a wedding cliché designed for ease of memory and a bridesmaid's scorecard. Millions -- no, that's not right -- tens of millions of weddings have catered to the assurance of the presence of those four items: garters, hankies, ancestral jewelry, a robin's-egg-colored ribbon sewn to a bodice. But how many of those weddings have been designed for permanence?

Oh, certainly, the words are there: "forever," "always," "eternity," "never to part," "no man to put asunder." But the divorce rate in the United States still hovers, as it has for nearly five decades, in the range of one out of every two marriages. Perhaps more attention should be placed on the wedding's commemoration of permanence rather than its easy disposability.

I can only refer to the most recent example of a wedding that I observed. The preparations were being made, and the wedding was later to take place, outside the main chapel of The Mission Inn in Riverside, California. Please notice the capital T on The Mission Inn. This is an historical monument of some great note, with a history of prior, successful, permanent unions between husbands and wives, most notably, perhaps, that between Richard and Pat Nixon. Perhaps his Presidency didn't last, but that can hardly be blamed on The Mission Inn. After all, he didn't get married at the Watergate. But I digress.

I was on a tour at The Mission Inn and only had four or five minutes in front of the chapel to take in all the preparations for the wedding. Sadly, I remember nothing remarked by the docent about the chapel, only my inventory of the wedding.

The long serving tables were covered with plasticized paper tablecloths, at the end of which were stacks of various sizes of Chinette plates, platters and bowls. There were fanned displays of clear plastic knives, forks and spoons, two sizes of clear plastic cups, and two-piece, interlocking, clear plastic champagne glasses, two encircled with white paper ribbon streamers and plastic bells. Arranged at the center of each table was a magnificent floral display: a spray of angels' breath, lupin, yellow and white daisies, and other flora of variegated type and hue. All were eminently reusable as they were plastic, too.

I could go on and on. It was all so lovely, no doubt, and doubtless the bride and groom would never remark on this, their eyes being filled presumably with each other on this, their wedding day. But captured in the family photographs of these precious, plastic, Kodak moments, snapped with the disposable cameras of various aunts and uncles and cousins and friends, will remain for years the evidence of impending impermanence. Why, even the tuxedos were, like as not, due to be returned to the rental shop by 5:00 p.m. of the day following.

But what of the gowns you ask? Surely those were bought and paid for, in whole or in part, or at least with payment to be completed within the year. What, you ask, of those silk and satin and lace and organdy wonders, sculpted and colored so beautifully for the bride and chosen for their architectural incoherence and obnoxious color combinations for the bridesmaids?

Well, it's a surety that the maids will not wear them again, so they may as well have been fine Japanese paper apparel. The bride, to be certain, will save and treasure her wedding gown; salt it away with mothballs and cedar chips in the bottom of a hope chest at the foot of a double bed. There it will remain until resurrected on the day of announcement of the impending marriage of a daughter, who would as soon go naked as wear that sepia-faded concoction; or, until the day when the bed is singly occupied, when hope turns to hate, when salt becomes a noun and flows in liquid from her eyes, when it is disposed of at a yard sale as part of her dowry of divorce.

Let's see, if I recall correctly, Richard and Pat were married in the Presidential Lounge, which later became a bar, and if nothing else, their marriage lasted. Perhaps our permanent unions should be baptized in bars and our divorces consummated in church, rather than in court.

CHILD SWITCH

Richard Hartwell

Everyone, or at least everyone who has been there, has her or his own favorite location in Disneyland. This self-proclaimed "Happiest Place on Earth" has numerous attractions for virtually all the personality types in the broad human spectrum. There is adventure and fantasy, futurism and nostalgia, thrills and placidity, even romance and apprehension. There is so very much to see and to experience. It has become a cliché that it cannot all be done in one day.

My first experience at Disneyland was in 1955, mere weeks after it opened. I even found a twenty-dollar bill on the ground on the way from the parking lot that I gave to my uncle. It must have paid for half the day! Such were the times. I have visited the park periodically since then, perhaps averaging once every two or three years. While not an Annual Pass holder and

theme-park-voyeur like my wife, daughter and youngest son, I had always considered myself quite knowledgeable. Thus, I was devastated when the People Mover was replaced by the Rocket Rods. I had declared that that was the last straw! I felt that Walt's legacy was being squandered by the corporate moguls and what Allen Greenspan referred to as an "uncontrollable lust for greed."

I did, however, return a few years past and was caught by surprise when I stumbled across what would then become my favorite place at the park. It was a small alcove, off to one side of the castle at the entrance to Fantasyland. There was only a small sign, cunningly crafted in ubiquitous plastic and scripted in faux Old English, to indicate its existence. It was deliriously delicious in its simplicity. Three simple words in black on beige: "Child Switch Location." Oh, I know what you're thinking. You believe that merely designates the appointed place to meet one another after synchronizing watches, doling out baksheesh, and admonishing each diminishing, disappearing, and hard-of-hearing member of the family to be careful, be polite, and be on time. But you are being much too obtuse!

Perhaps I need to take you back, to remind you, to reacquaint you with the wonder of Walt's world. There was a delectable and diabolical delight Walt Disney took in translating the villains of mythical orality and text, to the silver screen. They were ferocious and fearsome, deceitful and dastardly, sinister and sly. The young and the disobedient were often the targets of these antagonists. Their joy in life was to lure, to entice, to trap, to steal these wayward youths and, by turns, to change them into ugly animals, or bake them in ovens, or place them under spells, or confront them with unknown perils. Walt Disney never lost sight of the appeal of these morality lessons to the adult segment of his cinema audience, nor was he unmindful of the base nature of children. He would apply this knowledge to his vision of Disneyland.

I like to think of the Child Switch Location as The Most Hopeful Spot within the vast kingdom of The Happiest Place on Earth. It is the place where the agonized adult, out of options money and patience, can go and exchange burdens. It is the place for the young in heart to swap the young in fact.

It is axiomatic that one's own children never act as well for their own parents as they do for others. It's like genetic magnetism: likes repel and opposites attract. While true that one never knows what sort of child one will receive in return, the likelihood is that the new child will be far more tractable than the old. The shock of finally receiving fulfillment of a threat will mute and subdue both of them for quite some time to come. The Child Switch Location offers an alternative to corporal punishment, coercive bribes, cacophonous screaming, or child abandonment. In this age of burgeoning divorce it may even offer a centralized point, neutral ground if you will, to pass the focus of joint custody back and forth according to a prearranged schedule. For those estranged couples with multiple children, it will serve as the location for exchanging siblings periodically, thus obviating destructive legal-custody battles.

Walt Disney was nothing if not prescient. As an entrepreneur he knew the wants of the public and their willingness to pay to play. Personally, I think his alphabetically-scaled-and-priced tickets were a stroke of genius, for the time. But as a visionary he also foresaw what the Magic Kingdom could do to kids. He knew he had to plan accordingly. He could not afford to let his economic base erode over time as families refused to return to the park because of the behavior of their children during the last outing. He provided the alternative with the Child Switch Location. It would be sane and safe. It would avoid legal entanglements. It would cost nothing and thus preserve all disposable income for use in the park. It was a masterly stroke of genius.

When I learned that the Child Switch Location had been discovered by the then Disney CEO, Michael Eisner, I was devastated. I knew what could happen next. No longer would it be the safe haven for exasperated parents. Driven by the prospect of additional sales, Mr. Eisner could decide to centralize the Child Switch Location. Real willow switches were to be rented. Various styles and sizes of model switches were to be offered for purchase. Those with compunction against physically correcting their own offspring could pay for the services of appropriately costumed park staff to do so. These cast members would be dressed variously as the villains known throughout childhood. As soon as the punishments were administered, the families were to be escorted together through a bazaar of treats from which the children could choose, with cash registers at all exits of course. The spoiled could again be sated and the spoilers could continue the spoliation of the newest generation, ad infinitum, or ad nauseam.

I hated to see Walt's vision of the Child Switch Location go the way of the People Mover. I hated the possibilities boded by Mr. Eisner's cash register regency. Perhaps it's my age. Perhaps it's my basic belief in the efficacy of a barter and exchange system. Perhaps it's the realization that childhood needs magic too, even when it's a second childhood. Whatever my reasons for perpetuating this idyllic, iconic location, they were dashed and abandoned. As one corporate takeover after another occurred, as one boardroom scramble superseded another, so very much was lost in the Happiest Place on Earth. Gone are so many of past's remembrances, not the least among them The Child Switch Location; once you enter now, you are stuck with what you brought, beware. I'm still debating whether I'll take my grandchildren.

THE SHAMAN'S EYE

By: Frank Scozzari

Frank Scozzari is based out of Nipomo, California. Scozzari's fiction has previously appeared in various literary magazines, including *The Kenyon Review*, *South Dakota Review*, *Roanoke Review*, and many others. Writing awards include Winner of the National Writer's Association Short Story Contest and two publisher nominations for the Pushcart Prize of Short Stories. His fiction has also been featured in *Speaking of Stories*, Santa Barbara's preeminent literary theater.

The chest wound was deep and Ben Gordon knew he had to stop the bleeding and stop it soon, or he'd lose yet another patient. After all he had been through in the past week with all the wounded and displaced refugees pouring in from the region north, the delayed shipment of medical supplies, and their water source going foul, losing another patient now would be more than he could bear.

The boy, barely sixteen, lay beneath a hanging fluorescent light. Beads of perspiration covered his dark black skin. The wound, caused by a single slash of a machete, split his chest diagonally from above his left breast down nearly to his waist.

"You are not going to die," Gordon said. *You are too young to die.*

The boy's eyes flashed up at Gordon then he turned his head away and fixed a gaze on the southeast corner of the tent. Squatted there was the old medicine man. He sat on a woven, reed mat with colorful ceremonial beads draped down from his neck, and he held a long spear upright in his hand.

"I have seen him before," Gordon said.

Kairubu, Gordon's young Tanzanian aide, looked over at the old medicine man. "Yes," he replied.

"He's been here several times this week," Gordon said.

"Yes."

"Why does he come?"

"He come for the dead."

Gordon looked up at Kairubu. "What?"

"He come for the dead."

"Is he an undertaker or something?"

"No, he is *Malaika*."

"*Malaika*?"

"Yes."

"A witchdoctor?"

"He takes the dead to the *High Place*."

The boy began to shake. His skin looked pale and clammy.

"He's going into shock," Gordon said.

Kairubu pulled the makeshift I.V. stand along side the stainless-steel operating table and opened the flow-bag wide. He then went to the end of the table and lifted the boy's legs to his shoulders. Gordon, meanwhile, grabbed a handful of gauze and held it to the wound, but blood immediately oozed up through it.

"He's hemorrhaging again," Gordon said. He tossed the gauze to the floor, grabbed a fresh handful, and pushed it deeper into the wound. "Let his legs down."

Kairubu promptly complied.

"Hold this!" Gordon said, grabbing Kairubu's hand and placing it against the gauze. Gordon took a syringe, drew it full of medicine, and injected it into the boy's arm. He held the boy steady waiting for the medicine to take effect. He could see the blood again oozing up through the gauze.

What's happened to your magic? he asked himself. *What's become of your science to make people live? To repair what men have done?*

Gordon knew, in a land where it was more economical to use machetes for killing than bullets, it was easy to lose faith. Surrounded by the daily carnage of man's brutality against itself, and despite the *World's* efforts to stop it, it seemed he and the other Red Cross volunteers were all destined to fail.

The boy's eyes remained fixed on the old medicine man.

Gordon glanced over at the old man.

"Is he kin?" he asked Kairubu.

"No."

"He's upsetting the boy," Gordon said.

"The boy would want him here."

"Why?"

"He is special."

"Is he kin?"

"I said no."

"Then, he must leave."

"But Mr. Ben, you don't understand. It is a good thing he is here. It is African tradition."

"You're not convincing me, Kairubu."

"He will ensure the boy's safe passage to the spirit world."

"What?"

Passage? Gordon thought. *What passage?* "Wait a minute... you aren't saying...?" Gordon stopped, turned to Kairubu, and said firmly, "Unless he's the boy's grandfather or something, he must leave."

"I tell you Mr. Ben. It is a good thing. The boy would want him here."

"Sorry Kairubu, this boy isn't going to die, not today, not on my table. Tell the old man he must leave."

"But Mr. Ben..."

"Get him out of here please, now!"

Kairubu's white eyes flashed from his jet-black skin. He reluctantly motioned to the soldier at the doorway and said in Swahili, "*Chukua mzee nje. Tokel!*" The soldier took the old man by his long, slender arm, and escorted him to the exit.

Gordon watched as the old man moved slowly toward the door, and as he did, the old man turned and looked back at Gordon and for the first time Gordon saw clearly his face. He had dark, sullen eyes which were sunken in his head. They appeared as black canker sores from beneath snow-white brows.

It dawned on Gordon that old man's presence coincided with the deaths of many of his patients. In the past week alone there was the old woman on Tuesday, the little girl with dysentery, and the man who had lost his arm to a machete. Each time the old man had been sitting there, like he was now, a buzzard waiting for the carrion.

As the tent flap closed behind him, Gordon looked over at Kairubu. "Is that you're *Dark Africa?*"

Kairubu did not answer.

Gordon slowly lifted the gauze from the boy's chest. The wound had stabilized. The blood had begun to coagulate. Gordon sighed.

"We're getting it, Kairubu," he said. He dabbed the wound with the gauze. "Yeah, that's the way it should look."

Kairubu broke a little smile.

"You are going to be fine," Gordon said, wiping the young man's forehead with his free hand.

The wound was deep, down to the sternum, and the tissue surrounding the lesion was blue and swollen. But it was a clean cut, as if it had been done with a surgical knife, which would make it easier to close. He took a nylon string from the tray, threaded it through a needle, and began to suture the wound. *It is time to make your magic,* Gordon thought, *to use your hands to repair what man has done.*

"He does not come for everyone," Kairubu said, returning to the old medicine man, "only for special people, those with a pure heart. A heart must be pure."

"Yes?" Gordon replied, sarcastically. "It must be real special to be dead with a pure heart."

"It is African custom," Kairubu assured. "It is part of life."

"Okay, I'm sorry."

"He takes them to *Peponi*," Kairubu said, "a place way up in the mountain. It is a beautiful place, most beautiful place in all of Africa. You can see far out across the Savannah, and all the animal life is one and the same, and all the places you wish you could be are there, all in one. It is like your heaven, the dwelling place of God."

Gordon looked skeptical. Being a man of medicine, trained in science, he had always been cynical about such things. He was not one to believe in something that was not supported by science, but he did not want to offend his young friend. "Is it like Arusha?" he asked.

"Is Arusha a place of peace and beauty for you?"

"Yes. It is my favorite spot in Africa."

"Then it is like Arusha. It is beauty in its purest form; beauty of the natures, and beauty of the souls."

Gordon smiled. He knew of this place; a place high in the mountains where his mind could go to rest; to find asylum from the horrors of this world. It was a place he wished he could be now. And now, as he sutured up the wound, he recalled a time he was in Arusha, especially beautiful after the long rains of March and April, although it was September now and the rains had not come yet. The rains are good, he thought. They wash away all the blood and horror of war; they cleanse what man has done and bring back to Africa what it has always been, a beautiful place of natural bounty.

"What did you call him?" Gordon asked.

"*Malaika.*"

"*Malaika?*"

"Yes. It means *Special One*, touched by the spirit of the animal world, like an angel is touched by your God. It is a great honor if he comes for you."

"Yesterday they were no one. Today they are the honored dead," Gordon recited softly.

"What?"

“Nothing.”

“We all die. We all do not go to *Peponi*.”

“If you don’t mind, I think I’ll pass on this *Peponi* for now.”

“*Peponi*... heaven... no different, Mr. Ben, just called different things.”

“Heaven waits only for those who believe,” Gordon said. He looked down at the boy. “He believes, especially now,” he said.

“Here, hold this.”

Kairubu held the gauze against the boy’s chest as Gordon tied off the last suture.

It finished nicely, Gordon thought. The sutures were well-spaced and pulled tightly together against the skin. He cleaned the wound with an antiseptic.

“You are well!” Gordon announced triumphantly to the boy.

As he smiled at the boy and then turned his head to Kairubu, a gush of wind outside whipped the roof canvas like a blanket. All those inside the surgical tent glanced skyward as if waiting for something. The militia had set up eighty-millimeter *L’egers* in the low-lying hills to the south and had been periodically bombarding the camp.

“Look at us!” Gordon said. “We’ve all lost our nerve.”

He dropped his eyes back down to the boy. The boy looked relieved and alive again, and his skin was back to its beautiful natural color.

With Kairubu’s assistance, Gordon helped the boy upright. Together they dressed the wound with gauze and wrapped it completely with bandages around his chest.

“He will need plenty of rest and plenty of water,” Gordon said. “Water is best, but hot tea with lemon juice is good too. The antibiotics must continue all night.” Gordon looked down at his youthful patient and smiled. “Take special care of this one for me. I will see him first thing in the morning.”

Gordon pulled the plastic surgical gloves from his hands and laid them on the tray. He grabbed Kairubu by the shoulders and shook him playfully. “You did well, Kairubu. We did well! I’ll be in my tent if you need me.”

Gordon exited the surgical tent still wearing his blood-covered apron. He was surprised to see the old medicine man seated across the dirt corridor, there in the long shadows of an old wooden cart with his legs crossed and his long spear held tall beside him. The cart, drawn by a single mule and oddly sporting car tires, was empty now, except for a single throw rug which lay flattened in the bed.

Gordon took off his apron and rolled it into a ball. “Sorry to disappoint you old man,” he said.

He glanced down the long corridor between the tents. There were thousands of white canvas tents, and smoke coming from many makeshift, cooking fires, and there were children playing, kicking up the African dust into the late afternoon light. The sun’s rays caught the dust and with the silhouetted children dancing beneath it, for a moment Gordon saw beauty. It was good to see beauty again, Gordon thought.

Just beyond, in the hills below the fading light, he knew, the genocide continued under the hands of the *Hutu* militia.

As Gordon turned south heading toward his tent and passed the medicine man, he nodded and offered a smile. The old medicine man’s face was too dark to reveal an expression, but Gordon noticed the crown of his snow-white head turned and followed him.

Sorry to keep you waiting old man... Gordon thought, waiting for nothing. Today was not your day. But don’t worry old man. If it is the dead you seek, there’ll be plenty others for you.

Gordon lay back on his cot staring at the canvas-ceiling. At a quarter to six, the evening attendant came to spray the tent with mosquito repellent. When he finished, Gordon asked him to bring some beer. In several minutes the attendant returned with a bucket of river-drawn water with three bottles of *Tusker* beer in it. Gordon thanked the boy, tipped him the customary Swiss franc, and sent him on his way. He popped off the top of one of the beer bottles and took a long drink from it.

The smell of the insect repellent was still strong, so Gordon began opening the tent windows, rolling up the canvas of each and tying it off. When he reached the door, he pulled back the canvas and was startled to see the old Shaman’s cart parked across the way. Squatted in the shadow was the old medicine man.

“Sorry to deny you a corpse today, old one,” he said. “I hope you are not upset by it.”

It was not I who denied you. It was the power of a surgical knife. You may know death better than I, you may not despise it as I do, but it is I who holds the knowledge of life... the science of reparation.

Gordon shook his head, fastened the outside clasps, and retreated back to his cot.

It was true! he thought. The old medicine man had been there in the surgical room each time a patient had died that week. But today he was denied.

He lay down, took a long swig from the *Tusker* beer, and recommenced his long, thoughtful gaze at the ceiling. He considered now, how it was that he came to this wretched place, this indentation in the earth where two rivers met where the Red Cross had pitched the first of three refugee camps closest to the war. Everyone coming out of Rwanda was a refugee in the strictest sense of the word, starved and wounded, desperate for shelter and food, and medical care, some missing limbs, and if they could walk, carrying all they had in their arms.

Gordon retraced his steps as though he were telling the story to someone. He remembered how there had been plenty of pilots at the hotel in Nyanza. Wherever there are U.N. people there are always plenty pilots around looking to make a dollar. But none of them were willing to fly them to Ngara, even though a flight had been pre-arranged with the Red Cross. That should have been a sign in and of itself. Still, after an afternoon of searching, their team leader tracked one down, and because the money was good, they had been guaranteed a flight to their distant outpost. The following morning, they were led to a dirt tarmac where they all squeezed into a small, Spanish-built CASA. They made themselves comfortable among crates of medicine and food destined for the refugee camp. The ninety-minute flight was uneventful, except for the trip over Lake Victoria. From the altitude of the plane, they could see tiny islands floating in the turquoise water. It was shocking to all of them when they realized they were bloated bodies floating in the water, turned white by the sun.

They landed on a dusty runway surrounded by a tent city that stretched for many miles. A fleet of Land Rovers arrived to collect their supplies and take them to the U.N. headquarters. The place was a conglomerate of relief organizations – the Red Cross, MSF, CARE, and the Red Crescent.

In the morning they headed out for the border, an hour to travel fifteen miles. They felt like salmon swimming upstream against a ferocious river. There were endless lines of Hutus and Tutsi, people carrying the last of their possessions; even children carried bundles. Old men carried firewood, now a valuable commodity. It took them all day to reach the Tanzanian border post on the eastern shore of the Kagera River. There was no longer a need for visas - there was not much of a government left. They were waved across with little fuss. They crossed the bridge high above the Kagera River. He could see bodies floating downstream. It is strange, he thought, having just a day earlier been in a St. Louis airport, and now seeing bodies in a river. There were clusters of children, newly orphaned and wandering around with blank expressions of their faces. He remembered being stopped by armed members of the RPF - *Rwandese Patriotic Front*. They were questioned and identified, and allowed to pass. Their Tutsi driver didn't fare as well. The guards treated him like a deserter and question his ownership of the vehicle. He was escorted away to a nearby building and never seen again.

There was a group of four European Red Cross volunteers stranded on the roadside. The tires on their vehicle had been blown when they had run over sabotage spikes which had been laid across the road. They had continued on until their jeep had gone down to its undercarriage in the mud. They loaded as much of their medical supplies as they could into their Land Rover, and they had room for only one; a Swiss nurse who sat herself in the back among the supply crates, her knees cramped to her chest.

Finally they reach this godforsaken outpost; this place where streams of broken humanity poured down into a hollow in the earth. It had been five months now that he had been there, five months too long.

Now in his mind Gordon saw the children playing outside the surgical tent. He saw the long columns of white dust they kicked up and how the afternoon sunlight filtered through it so nicely.

It is good to see the beauty again, he thought. It is good to find an island of beauty in a sea of war. There were times he thought he'd never see beauty again.

He took another drink from his beer and rested his head back on the pillow.

It came suddenly, a flap of wind against the tent canvas, a loud gusting sound, followed by that awful screeching. In his mind he knew what was coming, but he lay there hopelessly paralyzed. There was nothing he could do. The sound of splitting air was followed by a thunderous roar and a blinding flash. Then there was nothingness.

When he awoke, he found himself in the center of the rubble of what remained of his tent. The air was full of dust and smoke, and the smell of sulfur. His legs had no feeling, nor did his torso. He was not sure if he still had legs, or if they had been blown off by the blast.

I must check my body, completely as a physician would check it, he thought.

But his hands would not move.

There was a silhouette above him. He realized he was not alone. Slowly a face came into focus.

Kneeling above him was the old medicine man.

Gordon tried to move, restlessly, but could not manage even the slightest of movement. Fighting it, finally giving in, he eased back and looked up into the deep, dark canker-sores which were the old man's eyes. In the second past, which seemed to be a millennium, he saw into another world. Within the old man's eyes was the accumulation of all the colors of the earth; of all the magnificent spirits of animal kingdom; and of all the benevolence of mankind.

Gordon's mind faded back into darkness.

The next thing he knew he was inside the back of a Land Rover racing swiftly across the Savannah. He could feel the ground rolling swiftly past beneath him. He was so thankful that he was alive and had survived the blast. *But where was it that they were taking him?*

He lifted himself up and looked out across the countryside. He was amazed to see the beautiful green hills of Arusha. It was strange, he thought, to see the grass so green in September. *The rains must have come early.*

He lowered his head back down in the bed and pictured the lovely green hills of Arusha rolling past. It was good to see beauty again, he thought. At last, he had returned to his favorite place in Africa, to Arusha.

THE MAW
By Elsa León

Elsa León was born in Miami, Florida to Cuban and Dominican parents. She currently lives in Tampa and attends the University of South Florida with plans to move on to graduate school in pursuit of many artsy interests.

Kiria's obsidian doll eyes caught the pale shapes first, swinging side to side deep within the eternal belly of the forest behind her house, swaying as the trees swayed. The nine-year old stood at the sink on a step-ladder, her petite snow-ashen hands jammed into the cold bubble-infested dishwater and gazed out the window. The plate she had been vigorously scrubbing eased out of her fingers, along with the bubblegum-pink sponge, vanishing into the murky recesses of the water. She lifted her arms from the sink, letting them drop limply to her sides. The sound of water striking the polished floor was unnaturally thunderous in her ears, though it did not take her attention from the hanging white figures in the trees. She twirled and hopped off the step ladder, her long hair sweeping and writhing behind her, ravens' wings opening to take flight. The pin-straight locks settled against her back and she abandoned her mundane task, fleeing out the back door and out onto the crisp, sharp-looking grass.

Outside, everything was quiet, a silence and stillness that was as white and untainted as the pale things appeared to be. She moved towards the forest, her polished black shoes bending the brittle grass and in this silence, she could hear the grass breaking and splintering like tiny animal bones. She reached the edge of the woodlands and once there, she found herself stopping. She couldn't see the figures anymore; all she saw were the trees, spindly and gaunt, their branches gnarled and grasping, lining the great black maw of the forest. Kiria hovered there, her hand settling on the nearest tree. A wind roared out at her from the foliage, like the breath of something sleeping. The wind tugged at her flawlessly pressed white dress, one of her favorites, with the stream of crimson blossoms creeping sideways up the skirt and an equally deep red band around her waist, tied into a bow in the back. Kiria slipped a stocking-clad leg into the darkness.

"Kiria!" her mother, a tall, wistful waif of a woman, called from the confines of the little house on the hill, isolated from the rest of the houses, with only the forest's decaying arms to assure it.

"These dishes aren't done. I'm tired of you always running off and leaving things half finished. *Kiria!*"

The girl had already faded away into the woods, barely hearing the words her mother had shouted. Kiria glanced upwards; the air kept that fetid odor and it was darker here than it was outside. She turned and could no longer glimpse the house; the branches curled and twisted, snapping loudly, like flesh breaking, curling around one another, slowly strangling the sunbeams trying to reach to her until they were crushed completely as the branches melded together into a wall of gnarled blackness. Fear welled up in her gut, twisting viciously there, like some parasitic worm gnawing at her insides with spinning rows of teeth.

You can't go.

The voice crawled up her spine, though it seemed to calm the toiling, primal fear in her belly. It was the fear of things unknown, of gnashing teeth, and of dormant things that smiled in their slumber, hungry things that waited in the wet darkness of the forest. The little voice though, like a lost child's, held her and the fear was calmed, but replaced with a sudden terrible urgency.

You can't go. Help me, help us, pleeeeee—

She whirled around, staring intently into the bowels of the forest, which seemed to stretch on forever, no light at the end, no certainty. Still, she pressed on, unyielding, and she plummeted into the depths as fast as her legs would push her.

The stench grew more and more oppressive, like the smell of something dead and writhing with maggots, its entrails picked to pieces. The wind blew hot against her, moisture sticking to her face and clinging there thickly. After what seemed like hours of aimless running, Kiria tripped and fell heavily to the damp, leaf-strewn ground. She held back instinctive tears of pain and bleated softly with fear again; blood trickled in a steady rivulet from the rips of her stocking where she had scraped her shin. Another red dribble oozed from her left nostril. She shuddered and hitched in a breath to wail.

Something hopped into her lap.

She jumped, choking on her rising wails, the leaves below crunching like minuscule bombs in the stillness. She looked down to see a small rabbit, its face extended towards her own, little nose twitching spasmodically; its fur was lush and resembled crisp frost, sticking up slightly, uncontaminated white. Its ears pricked towards her, huge, round black eyes luminous.

Kiria could only stare at the little creature and before she realized what she was doing, she had snaked her arms around the animal, cradling it against her chest. It twisted until its back was against her front, the tiny front paws settled on the little girl's arms. Its eyes bulged, neck jutting forward as it stared in the direction that Kiria had been running. Kiria stared as well, her fingers stroking the rabbit's sleek fur.

Let's go.

Once again, she didn't question where that voice came from; she felt that it no longer mattered.

*

Another eternity passed and it occurred to Kiria how vast the woodlands were and her fate was suddenly a horrifying reality; she would wander this abyss forever until she had rotted away on her feet and the ground would consume her, dust and bones and all. The thought was bashed from her pretty little head as a wayward bough connected with her brow, reacquainting her with solid dirt and

rocks. Frustration bubbled up with the pain this time and had the rabbit not leaped out of her arms as she had fallen, she probably would have flung him away in a rage. She regretted her curiosity severely now. She snarled at the rabbit as he hopped back into view, creeping over almost sheepishly.

“What am I supposed to do? What do you want? I want to go home, now! *Right now!*” Kiria burst into miserable sobs, the rabbit stiffening and staring upwards at something Kiria couldn’t immediately see. She raised a hand and stroked the livid bruise that was forming on her brow. Something warm flecked her palm suddenly and oozed down her hand, trailing down her arm. Kiria lowered her arm and the stark contrast of the blood against her pastel skin startled her. She smeared it across her flesh, staring at it, unable to comprehend what she was looking at. Another trickle dotted her head and she shuffled aside, looking up sharply. A long dribble fell across her lips, as though trying to paint them crimson. It was a white shape. Kiria stood and stepped back until she could make out what it was; a scream ripped itself from her throat, brief but horrified, echoing in the dark.

Hanging from a slightly frayed rope was a white rabbit, just like her companion. The rabbit’s lower half had been ripped away, ribbons of snapped flesh dangling. Blood and other bodily fluids drooled steadily from the gaping hole, sliding down the fat, exposed entrails that swung in the air. The rabbit’s face was tilted back, eyes wide and bugged out and she actually saw whites; its eyes were human-like in its pain. The rabbit’s burst stomach sagged out suddenly and snapped free, ripping open further, spilling fluids and parasites into the leaves. Kiria slapped her hands to her mouth as she turned on the spot, staring at the dozens of white shapes hanging in the trees. Another rabbit hung from one leg, its front split right down the middle, stretched open, exposing the ribs and glistening insides. The innards had tumbled out and hung there, sliding across the ground as the tree swayed whenever the wind hit it. Blood stained the whiteness of the fur around the gash and the mouth. It kicked feebly; indeed, many of the poor creatures were still alive, hanging onto the last string of life—and they hung everywhere; the screams were shrill and heart-wrenching. Kiria vomited onto the ground, hacking and coughing, saliva trailing down her chin. Sobs punctuated her gasps and the little rabbit that had guided her here rubbed up against her side.

Help us. Please.

Tearful dark eyes met gleaming black orbs.

“H-how...?” Kiria felt a heaviness permeate the air. The forest pulsed around her, the darkness growing and writhing in the air. The trees looked skeletal, rotting, and that horrible dead stench blasted her again, as though the forest breathed out at her as it awoke. Kiria turned towards a guttural moaning and screaming that dominated the screams of the rabbits.

“What is that? *What is it?*” There was the panic worm again, twisting its teeth into her gut. Nearby, something was pulling itself free of the dirt and leaves. Its long, lean body slithered upwards, arms cracking and bent at odd angles, like the trees around it. It fell forward onto its hands, head hanging low. Its upper torso slid and shuffled forward, its talon-adorned hands crunching heavily across the leaves. Its skin was a dark grayish-pink and glistened baldly; if asked, Kiria would swear it was the color of brains. Its lower torso yanked itself free of the earth and it stood, slightly hunched over. It resembled a bald fox, though umpteenth times bigger than any fox should be. Its lanky, twisted body looked malnourished and mangy; the only hair was in the form of grayish-silver patches along the now rat-like tail. It stretched its neck forward, its long muzzle lipless, and the gums and jagged, yellowed-brown teeth completely exposed. It had no eyes, only a wall of glistening flesh that looked grafted. When it opened its mouth, a horrific din blew out, guttural screams and grinding growls overlapping one another. The rabbits answered with their own cries and Kiria was convinced that the only way to block out those awful sounds was to scream as well, until her lungs collapsed in on themselves.

The fox demon slowly seethed forward towards them, lurching and twitching, its fat, blood-blackened tongue lolling out the side of its mouth. It gave off a wet, rotting smell. Its spider-limbed hands reached forward and snagged a rabbit from one of the trees; it shrieked as it neared the horrible stinking maw. With one pull, the fox’s mouth popped the rabbit’s head off with a squelch and a meaty crack. Blood streaked the grass in Kiria’s direction. She screamed; she couldn’t help it. The forest had taken her into its mouth and the thing that had waited here for her since the day she had been conceived had finally been allowed to awaken, summoned by the woodlands themselves. The pointed face twisted around and though it had no eyes that she could see, it *looked* right at her. Kiria turned and bolted into the darkness, her rabbit companion desperately leaping into her arms before it was abandoned. Those guttural noises roared out behind her and the ground began to tremble as it lunged through the trees after her. Kiria leaped and ran through the foliage and the trees reached, their branches slitting her cheeks. Her legs practically blurred, carrying her forward. It was as if her terror had unleashed an entity into her legs that kept them from tiring. She chanced a look back and found the thing in her face, caustic breath threatening to singe her eyebrows, fleshless smile curling upwards. Kiria screamed as it raised one hand and swiped at her legs. She fell and tumbled; the world spun in a blurred circle and there were bursts of color, reds and bright, fluorescent whites, punctuated by black.

A horrible pain shot up her spine and she sat up, coughing up water. She groaned, shaking, blood trickling from unknown orifices. She had landed in a little creek; a huge rock towered above her, overlooking the creek. The water laughed across the rocks gently. She gritted her teeth, crawling towards the rock in order to take cover beneath it. She fell onto her side, soaked hair plastered to one side of her face, mask-like. Her thin chest heaved up and down and her dress was bloodied and torn. She had lost a shoe somewhere in her fall. She scooted back into the dampness below the rock and her hand brushed up against something bald and sleek. She looked down to see a nest of bleached animal bones, some sharpened and jagged from being chewed on. She gasped. The rabbit! Where was it?! The grinding, guttural noises shattered the silence like glass and Kiria’s hand curled around the longest, sharpest bone. She dashed out of cover, feet punching the water and flinging it upwards and she whirled around to face the rock just as the shrill, lasting screech of a rabbit wrenched the air. The fox demon clambered up onto the rock, staring down at her, the twitching body of a little rabbit in its mouth.

Its bulged, dying eyes slowly rolled down to look at Kiria.

"No!" she cried as the fox shook its head violently, tearing the little animal apart and swallowing down the rest. Kiria could see the throat distend as the rabbit vanished. It growled at her, stretching its limbs forward as it crept down the rock towards her, licking its bloodied teeth, teeth like jagged fence posts.

Kiria stumbled back, the water lapping at her ankles. She lifted her head, staring up at the slobbering thing above her.

"Come on! I'll kill you!" she cried and it roared, lunging at her. She had wanted to help; she didn't want the rabbits to die anymore. It landed in the water, sending her careening back with one slash of its clawed hands. Kiria grunted as she struck the rock-laden bottom, the water embracing her. She leaped up and rushed the fox demon, burying the tip of the bone into the muzzle. Sharpened bone laid the grey-pink flesh open and deep red blood slapped against her arm. She twisted her arm and the bone slashed open the cool wetness of the fox's nose. It reeled backwards, screaming, tail whipping side to side. Kiria's breath sobbed from her throat as she plunged the bone into the exposed belly. She slashed down in an S formation, plunging the bone deeper as she went, as powerfully as she could; terror and adrenaline and sheer determination to kill her attacker raced through her veins. The fox snapped downwards, its jaws coming down and closing like a steel trap on her arm.

Kiria shrieked as she was shaken like a rag doll and she could feel flesh giving way. She had managed to keep hold of the bone and drove it into the spot where the fox's left eye should have been. The fox flung her from its body and Kiria landed at the creek's edge. She lifted her arm and it was torn open to the bone, the flesh practically in pieces and gleaming wetly. A shriek hissed through her teeth. Through one of the flesh holes she could see the fox approaching, slithering along on its feet. The bone was still jutting out of its head.

The fox rose and stood like a human with legs planted far apart, leaning down towards her, grinning widely and another voice oozed from the coils of her brain, this one ancient, hoarse, and gurgling.

You're going to stay here forever and I'm going to eat you little by little...then spit you back up and do it all over again...I do it to every one of you that wanders here and I'll call more of you here to me...I'm waiting here, I'll always be waiting...

Kiria cried out and wrenched the bone out, giving the fox one gaping, churned black hole for an eye. It yowled as Kiria plunged the bone into the roaring throat, twisting it. The fox fell onto its side, hacking at the bone with its claws, in a desperate attempt to yank the nuisance out. Kiria jumped up and ran, leaving the creek and the feebly thrashing demon behind. She dashed blindly, unsure of where she was going but sure that she had to escape, she had to go as far away as she could because the farther she went the surer she was of her survival. Her breath shrieked in and out through her clenched teeth agonizingly, her maimed arm quivering violently and uselessly at her side. The little rabbit voice came to her again and she felt tears brimming in her eyes.

Escape

Break free

Escape

Break free

Kiria heard the roars behind her because the thing wasn't dead

Escape

She hadn't finished it off, she never finished

Escape

Of course, it couldn't be dead, it couldn't be so simple

BREAK FREE

Nothing ever was or ever would be.

Half finished

I'm tired of you running off and leaving things half finished!

Kiria's arms had reached forward just as something smashed into her back and she felt blood burst hotly from her eyes, her mouth. Something cracked sickeningly at her neck and agony throbbed in her head. There was a flashing white-hot light and blackness began seeping towards the center of her vision from the corners of her eyes, erasing her vision.

And deep in the dankness of the maw, lined with teeth-like trees, Kiria was now a white shape hanging from a limb, one of her little paws mangled, a red bow wrapped around her middle, dark doll eyes staring, little body writhing in anguish forever. She stared at her body, which now lay crumpled and empty at the edge of the forest like a discarded cocoon, half in and half out, eyes wide open and faded in death, the pupils gone, her mouth partially open and steadily dripping blood. Her hair was spread like a nest of raven feathers around her body. Her maimed arm was outstretched towards the little house. And from those bulging, agonized rabbit eyes, Kiria watched as the hideous, one-eyed shape limped away and settled into an ancient slumber, sinking into the damp, pungent earth.

ORGANIC COFFEE, TEA, SMOOTHIES
VEGETARIAN & VEGAN FRIENDLY

Sacred Grounds

BREWING COMMUNITY SINCE 1996

INDIE MUSIC, OPEN MIC, POETRY, ART, DIVERSITY

SACREDGROUNDSTAMPA@YAHOO.COM

WMNF 88.5 FM
COMMUNITY RADIO

wmnf.org # tampa

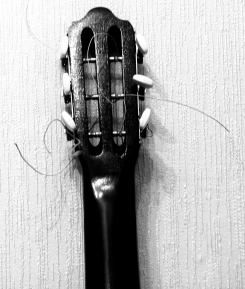
The Bunker

Singer/Songwriter Night

Join us Thursdays for Singer/Songwriter Night at The Bunker.

Come here live original music by three artists each week with host Amy Snider of WMNF 88.5FM's It's the Music/Thursday Nooners!

Thursdays 7:30 to 9:30 PM



THE BUNKER

The Bunker
1907 N 19th Street
Tampa, FL 33605

Phone: (813) 247-6964

AMENITIES:

Food
Drinks
Prime Location
Free Wifi
Weekly Entertainment
Amazing Staff

If you're looking for a home away from home type of environment then you will feel right at home at The Bunker, located in Ybor City.

Stop by on Thursdays for "Singer/Songwriter" night where musicians from across the bay stop in to perform. While you're there don't forget to order your favorite drink of wine and pair it with one of their delicious appetizers.

With comfortable seating, free wifi connection, excellent entertainment, and an incredible menu, it's impossible to not feel at home.

Visit <http://yborbunker.com> for more information on the latest events and menu specials.

VOLUME II OPEN MIC RECAP

One Night
Five Hours
Over 15 Torridian Artists





TORRIDIAN ARTISTS

Nick Tumi
 Rebecca Wright
 Yvon Jean-Jacques
 Moe
 David J (David Bierley)
 Mike Freed
 Quiana Frazier
 Papos and Michelle LaGrandier
 Bill LaGrandier
 Chris Harmon
 Cynthia McGowan
 Michael Bath
 Alice Saunders
 Tiffani Barner
 Lynze Poet
 Makeba Jackson
 William Johnston
 Mark Paycer
 Jim Gaus
 Heather Magness
 Canadian Mike
 Gary McDonald
 Conscious Shift



VISIT US ON THE WEB!!!

Be sure to visit our official website or one of our social networking sites. We have a lot of exciting events planned and in process that you do not want to miss out on.

We also enjoy feedback, so make sure you sign our guestbook located on our website or leave a comment on one of our fan pages.

In addition, these sites are a great way to stay connected and current concerning the latest events and news that affect the Torrid Literature Journal, writers, and readers everywhere.

Official Website:

<http://www.torridliterature.com>

Online Store:

<http://shop.torridliterature.com>

Twitter:

<http://www.twitter.com/torridlit>

Facebook Page:

<http://www.facebook.com/torridliteraturejournal>

Facebook Page:

<http://www.facebook.com/tlpublishinginc>

Facebook Group:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/torridlit>

WordPress Blog:

<http://torridliterature.wordpress.com>

You can also find our calls for submissions listed on:

Duotrope:

http://www.duotrope.com/market_5531.aspx

Newpages:

<http://www.newpages.com>

To Submit:

Email:

submissions@torridliterature.com

Submishmash Upload:

<http://torridliterature.submishmash.com/submit>

CALL FOR LITERARY SUBMISSIONS

TL Publishing, Inc. is now accepting submissions for the Torrid Literature Journal. We look for work with strong literary content. That being said, send us your best. We're all about diversity and communication through the arts.

We don't look for a particular theme. We look at the poem, its message, and its structure. We consider poems in multiple genres as well as different forms and techniques which means we will also consider experimental work.

Writers may submit up to 3 poems or one fiction story with 3,000 words or less. All submissions may be uploaded by visiting:

<http://torridliterature.submishmash.com/submit>.

We encourage everyone to become familiar with the Torrid Literature Journal first by reading previous editions. This will give writers a general idea of the type of literary content we look for. Our submission period for the Torrid Literature Journal is year round. Our response time varies depending on the volume of submissions received.

Please keep in mind we are now accepting poetry submissions for our Christian Anthology as well. Visit our website for detailed submission guidelines.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact Alice Saunders at asaunders@torridliterature.com. We look forward to the reading experience.

CALL FOR ART

Get your art and photography supplies ready. The editors are expanding the submission guidelines for the Torrid Literature Journal to include artwork, such as drawings, paintings, sketches, photos, and etc. Artwork submissions will be considered for Volume IV of the Torrid Literature Journal starting August 1, 2012.

Please visit the website for more details.

2013 STREET TEAM

Supports the arts! Become involved with TL Publishing by joining their 2013 Street Team where members will be commissioned to market and promote TL Publishing, Inc., its products, services, and events.

Joining this team provides members with the opportunity to learn valuable marketing and promotional skills that can be carried into future careers, especially those in the literary and entertainment industry.

Training and nonmonetary compensation will be provided. To apply or learn more about this position, please contact Tiffani Barner, Marketing & Networking Specialist, at tbarner@torridliterature.com.

UPCOMING OPEN MIC EVENT

You're invited!

What: Open Mic Event

When: Saturday, July 14, 2012 from 7 PM - 11 PM

Where: The Bunker (f.k.a. Tre Amici)

Sign up starts at 6:30 PM. All artists, emerging and established, are encouraged to sign up to perform. There will be food, prizes, and most importantly, amazing Torridian entertainment.

Come out and support our local artists! This event is free to the public. We look forward to seeing everyone there as we celebrate the arts and the release of Volume III of the Torrid Literature Journal. Please visit our website closer to the date for more information regarding this event.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Tiffani Barner, Marketing & Networking Specialist, at tbarner@torridliterature.com.



Dear Reader,

Go ahead. Let your senses adjust to your recent experience. The feelings flowing through you are a preliminary taste of what is to come. A beautiful foreshadowing. Join us on this never ending journey to unlock and rediscover the truth about the forgotten art otherwise known as literature. Literature in itself is a voice but with the changes that constantly attack our society and way of living, this is easily forgotten. Literature is more than just words read or spoken. Literature, good literature, embodies the soul of the creator and turns words into walking, breathing beings of power; beings as diverse as the colors of the rainbow, with a few colors yet to be discovered.

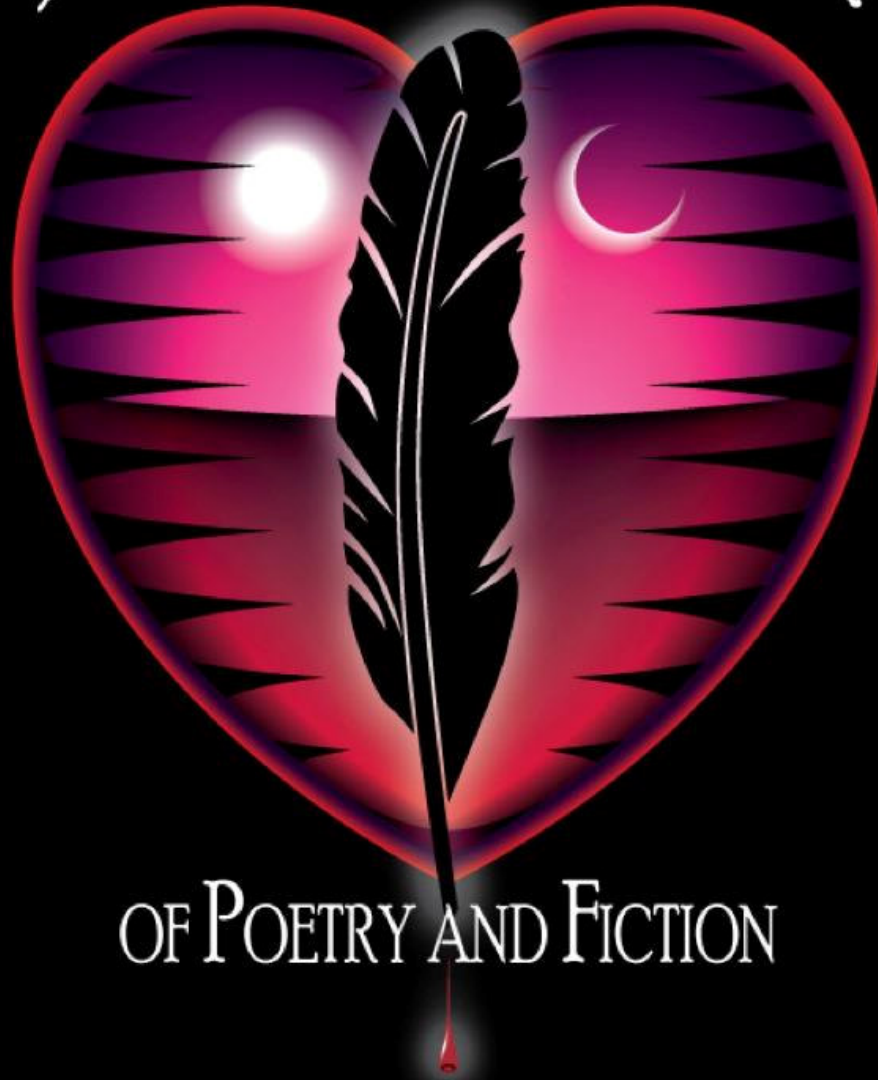
This is how poets and writers escape time and leave pieces of themselves everywhere. This is how they become accomplished. They have a clear understanding of the cause and effect relationship when it comes to them and their audience. They grasp that connection and hold onto like it is a vein; one where readers can siphon what they need. The Torridian artwork will compel, encourage, and motivate you into action. This is why we carefully select each poem, story, and article that appears in this publication. Look closely at their footprints; the originality which speaks on for itself. Torridians have a signature that can not be mimicked.

Thank you for taking this literary journey with us. Please visit our website and stay in touch with us on Facebook and Twitter. We humbly invite you to become a part of our family. Become a Torridian; submit, support, share, exchange, and grow with us. We look forward to our next encounter together where we continue to bring you material crafted by gifted artists all over the world.

- Editorial Staff



Romancing The Craft



OF POETRY AND FICTION

1ST ANNUAL ROMANCING THE CRAFT OF POETRY & FICTION CONTEST

The submission period for this contest has officially closed. We would like to thank everyone who participated in this contest.

The winners will be announced in Volume IV of the Torrid Literature Journal which will be released October 1, 2012.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Alice Saunders at asaunders@torridliterature.com.