



THE
FIELDSTONE
REVIEW

ISSUE 7, 2014



the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Editor's Note

Shakti Brazier-Tompkins

[next](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

Welcome to *The Fieldstone Review* 7! When we put out our call for submissions in 2013, the editorial team decided to leave it general rather than asking contributors to submit work that conformed to a particular theme, and we received a multitude of contributions that were wonderfully varied in content, form, and tone. It is always difficult to decide where to draw that dividing line between which work will be accepted for publication and which will not, and the contributions offered here represent the very best of many excellent pieces submitted for consideration.

I want to thank the many people who have helped make the 2014 issue of *The Fieldstone Review* a success. Editors Jon Bath, Carleigh Brady, Adar Charlton, Andréa Ledding, Mari-Lou Rowley, Martin Winquist, and James Yeku have worked very hard to make decisions, meet deadlines, work with contributors, and generally keep the journal running so it could produce this issue. Many readers also volunteered their time and energy to pore over the submissions with the portfolio editors, some of them reading in more than one category and some of them taking on reading in one category in addition to their work as editors of another. Thank you for your commitment to this journal Elyn Achtymichuk, Carleigh Brady, Stephanie Danyluk, Sarah-Jane Gloutnez, Adam Grieve, Bonnie Heilman, Michael Horacki, dehs, Rob Imes, Jade McDougall, James Mulcahy, Jessica Patrucco, Claire Peacock, Jessica Ratcliffe, Jonathan Sherman, Sarah Taggart, Heather Touet, Martin Winquist, and Kevin Ziegler. *The Fieldstone Review* could not exist without so many people willing to offer their time and talents to this journal as editors, readers, and contributors.

I hope that you enjoy *The Fieldstone Review* 7!

Sincerely,
Shakti Brazier-Tompkins
Editor-in-Chief

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)



POETRY



the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

One way or the other

Louise Carson

The tired woman with the sore ear makes three wishes: that the chartreuse hydrangea clusters stay unopened; that the two electricians, jumping out of matching red vans and shouting in the road, plan their assassinations elsewhere; and that her heart and stomach, feebly trembling, resolve their difficulties one way or the other.

Already the hydrangeas need to be forgiven.

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)



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the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Between Cultures

Ruth Anne Chorney

The north wind whistles through my wounds
Windigo, Windigo
I am torn, broken, cold, and alone
Windigo, Windigo
Your needle claws scar my arms
The moon stares down
All sharp edges
A scythe cutting across the sky
No mercy there
Oh, Windigo, Windigo
I seep into the snow, raw, torn, bleeding
As the north wind whistles through my wounds

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)



the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Kundiman

Darrell Dela Cruz

“It is called a kundiman, or love song. A very sad song. Filipinos are very sad people.”

– *The Filipino Houseboy*, by Carlos Bulosan.

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

Remember the young man, the father started,
from Isabella, warring with some unknown force
that invaded his old backyard: a lake

filled with the leeches that loved, digested blood
and soil then were thrown back to the water –
a splash spreading upward. An open palm caressing.

The old man died in the middle of sheets.
His head rested on his wife’s breast

before the ambulance wheeled him off.
The EMT asked the wife if they were having sex
when his heart stopped. They were making love,

but how could she translate his love from another
language? Her grief sounded like a bell
rung in the church of an abandoned village.

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)





the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Learning to see in the dark

gillian harding-russell

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

Things find their shapes in the dark.
This evening I am learning to see with my mind.
The trees scabble messages stark

across the sky. The moon is a bright rim of arc
buried in clouds, and the stars that semaphore in the night
are complicated. But things do find their shapes in the dark.

I can make out my bicycle bulwarked
in snow, the garbage bin slid out under the street light.
The branches scramble messages stark

across blank windowpane. Most of the birds have gone
but I see a company of cranes, their necks trombones
in a comedy of cacophony across the sky
to hearten their long flight. Things find their silhouettes in the dark.

A raven from northern parts in ten muscular wing beats starts
over the field overtaking the cranes with devil-may-dare. A sigh
in the wind and twig-digits tick nothings in the cold. Watch

that moon, a giant pearl hanging in the dark, emerge
from a cataract of clouds, so silver the feeling there are no words
for what's seen through this thin membrane of sight.

Things find their shapes in the light eked out of the dark.
Against the sky the trees scabble messages, or nothing, so stark
voices to be erased by wind.

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)





the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Infiltration

Jack Hostrawser

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

To describe the house in winter –
first quarter the stone foundation
add tin-ceilinged rooms and damp floors.
Fill the windows with long shards of cropland
and moulding purple clouds, ice
shelving in the ditch thick with snow.
The walls can now be painted a cracked, dank green,
the doors of the darkened kitchen cupboards
bent back and torn like fingernails.
A rind of ice on everything.

In a drawer by the steel sink place a curling picture
of a timid girl in a cheap dress smiling.
Sprinkle mouse shit and hardware.
Let sit for decades.

I like to imagine her
childish tummy round beneath the polka spot dress,
big enough to be teased by girls who have
lost their baby fat already.
A belly button twirled in itself, linty pink
with a uterus of fleshy words she half understands
or will one day in excited confusion
by flashlight and textbook
under covers with her self.
She is, was, will be
always might have been.

If the setting sun paints the room
a glittering orange
it is just as well. She will never know
that the kitchen floor has collapsed
and thin wooden teeth line the maw.

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)



The 12 Aspects of Tragedy in Wolves Hunting

Richard Kelly Kemick

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

- I. *Mimesis*
a warmblooded fog
all shoulder blade and iris
rolls north through the taiga
stalks in the shadows of the season

- II. *Agon*
hooves
swollen to snowshoes

paws
iron-tipped and raw

- III. *Hamartia*
the alpha female
peels from tree cover to behind the hill
curls off like luthier spruce
from the rounded back of a cello

stillness rises to sound
the season's fugue

- IV. *Brotos*
starved women of Thracis
death stings the skin
and takes the form
of a writhing body but this
is the helplessness of violence

- V. *Hubris*
survival is holding still a glacier

warm hands slick against the glass

- VI. *Nemesis*
in the lapse of arctic dusk
twilight is an eyelid
pulled pink and pale
across long-lashed shadows

- VII. *Anagnorisis*
upon isolation
the prey is abstracted
to muscle and sinew and
the gravid glow in her stomach

- VIII. *Stochastic order*
the heart blooms like the purple crocus
the pollen moves in the veins of wind

- IX. *Peripeteia*
trailing five lengths and fading
the pack channels her towards
the crown of risen earth

the alpha female
waiting on the crest's far side
can already hear both

the approaching wind
through her antlers
and the two hearts inside her

- X. *Pharmakos*
collision is hunger made audible

- XI. *Catharsis*
atop the marbled snow
red bubbles breach from fur
skin shredded and purged
as they gather and carry her
through the conifers

- XII. *Prohairesis (Epilogue)*
Divinity only decides
the number of teeth:
forty-two or
thirty-four.
Ordination
through dentition.



the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Waiting

Steve Klepetar

A man stands by a silver tree, waiting,
his lean face drowned in shade, his hat
neither jaunty nor defiant, not quite
shabby, but clearly dated, out of touch,
like a photograph in black and white.
He reminds me of my dad, leaning
uneasily against the glistening trunk.

I am waiting too, for the phone to ring,
for email to pop up on my screen
with its musical ping! For the postal
truck with its red, white, and blue trim.
Be assured, I am waiting for my future.
I am waiting for the sky to open,
for a long, golden ladder roping to the moon.

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)



the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Liturgy

Dan Murphy

There is no poetry left
out here,
no last words,
only strange sucking stanzas
strung among the willow branch.

No leaps of faith.
Gargoyles cackling
among porch lamps,
dilapidated bridges,
storm-strung houses.

Up here, feathers splayed,
eyes bee-stinged
by wind.

Up here on the cliff face
hands sunk deep into uterine pockets,
lichen moss braced on cold granite.

I study the last fundamental liturgy
of the land
and the crumbling scaffolding of an autumn sky
piling up like cordwood
against the landwash.

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)





the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Context and Perspective

James B. Nicola

A subject's bound to its object to derive
the meaning of their verbs. The poet's bound
to readers likewise; nor am I alive,
but dead as unread verse, until I'm found.

Likewise are lovers to those whom they love.
Their verbs – that is, the tactics they deploy –
may be poetic (invoking the above –
moons, stars, etc.), crude, or even coy:

but we are bound as poets are. Forgive
us our infractions, then. They only mean
to whet the verse, our verbs. So. Have you seen
me, read, reacted? If you have, I live
again; if not, then I am of Obliv-
ion. But – what – you're here? Aha – you have!

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)



the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Wandawoowoo Learns to Skate

Kenneth Pobo

My body and I are barely
on speaking terms. Friends insist
that broccoli rocks, blueberries
and spinach too. I eat whatever they fix,
but really, give me a rolodex

with pastry names. I'm drawn
to skating, sit too much before
the computer's maw, the TV
huckster's hands on my bra.
Ice breaks apart,
heals, shines. Skating requires

a sense of swerve. I never get
balance right, keel over.
Knees slightly bent, maybe gravity
wants me to fail. I practice

falling, more when I'm
in love, which I rarely get right either.
Love often works against balance.

Up and around I go,
Skywinder Pond holding me,
someone who trusts as she quails
in motion.

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)





the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Aperture

Autumn Richardson

I have walked until
water, fire, shelter

a brushpile of birch
and tamarack

scents of pitch, river
and earth are left.

Day drains.
I kindle the fire.

Limbs creak and spit.
Water eats the grey cliffs.

Stars arrive to pollinate
the darkness.

I gather driftwood;
each stick is a solitude.

I hold in my hand
a wave-rubbed stone

and wait for silence
to polish me.

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)





the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

The Tree

Anthony Rintala

Tree strikes ground,
grounded, struck stuck standing.
Branches break, brachiating sky,
ape-swung, cloud to cloud
staggering leafless swatch twitches in
shattering twists. Watch, it buries itself.

Burrowbolts past topsoil blast
in rooted arc, casting light –
a fractal chase
of sinuous dragon scale
and leather sheaf flea-leg.
Each earthworm arm of it flails

away from sky – moles' tails
coil from the headless trunk.
Earth trails fill with live lightning,
slow explosion,
tentacles tense creeping whips
and the terror of erosion.

Root earth in place, firm the bolt,
and run the Zeus current-course.

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)





the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Mindful

Lorelie Gerwing Sarauer

[next](#)
[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

i.

I encase my words in plastic, cut them apart and scatter them into the woods. My woods. My words popping up then and there through the moss sponge. How long will they last?

I bottle poems about my mother, throw one into a lake. I liberate her from the memory-taker, bring her here to be inserted into the slit bark of a tree.

One of my favorite spots is a bench on a hill in these woods. Three years ago, while chemicals were pumped through my body, I came here in my mind to sit, to feel the sun flicker on my face, hear the frogs' chorus: *I'm alive. I'm alive. I'm alive.*

I bring my stones here. One stone collected from each place I visit. I used to try to take every stone, weighting my pockets so that I could scarcely move. Allen would say, "I am not carrying your rocks in my suitcase." But I slipped them beneath the lining, tucked them into his woolen socks.

I think of clay squeezed through my hand, oxide-darkened and fired, scattered on the shore of a lake in Tasmania, dropped path-side in Pompeii, tucked into these woods.

The spruce trees, though tall and sturdy, are shallow-rooted. They can't be counted on for support, though I've imagined a tree house with a dropped ladder where my grandchildren might play. Surely these aren't the first hard winds to blow here?

The man who gravels our driveway advises to scrape off all of the trees and start over. We have two and a half acres of trees. I grew up on the bald prairie, was always looking for shade, a place to hide.

My daughters visit during a summer on steroids. Heavy rains have caused the underbrush to build muscle. I stand on my bench to point out The Big and Little Dips, the baby birches I hope to move, the tree suspended above the entrance to the ridge where spruce have fallen, stacked like cordwood.

The girls see hiding places for bears and cougars that would snack on small children. They see a whole lot of work. They travel thirty minutes north to pitch their tents in Beaver Glen.

In the winter, deer plough a path around the hill and up to my bench. Are they curious or reclaiming their hill, their view?

ii.

When she was my age my mother went to France.

After going to France my mother learned French.

After learning French my mother got Alzheimer's.

I've never been to France and je ne parle Francais

so far as I remember.

iii.

If my office reflects my mind, it is no wonder I can't sleep at night, with all that clunking inside my head.

I must purge, but every object has a memory and memory has become important. Every nook and cranny on the shelves has been filled and still memories are stacked around the floor. There is a small path from door to chair.

My daughters visit, albeit one at a time. I stand on my chair to reach favorite books, point out finished and half-finished projects. I am a fount of good intentions.

Pinned to a board next to my table are photos of my parents, invitations to exhibitions long passed, a heart-shaped scapular from my childhood, said to contain a tiny relic from a saint long-forgotten.

I dream of a room more zen, with only this chair, that table, my clay jar of pens, a drawer of paper and inks, my laptop and me. Ha. It would last five minutes before I started dragging in twigs, bits of copper, jars of watch findings and buttons, sheets of silver leaf, pages ripped from magazines, and boxes of photographs with origins unknown.

Pressed leaves fall from my books. Pressing leaves is not good for books, causing rippled pages and mould patches. I bought a leaf press that I can't find.

I keep a laminator that died after ingesting half a sheet of plastic, in the hope that it will spontaneously regurgitate its stomach contents.

The closet is filled with old receipts, electronic manuals, deceased laptops, bags that were never quite right, banker's boxes of tzotchkies, and a certificate of ordination from the Universal Life Church. Not even I know what else is buried there. It now requires excavation, not a light dusting and re-alignment, and so I close the doors.

Out of sight. But never out of mind.

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)





the fieldstone review

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)

Coelacanth

Matthew Walsh

[previous](#)
[contents](#)
[printer friendly](#)

Grey and scraped like the snow
from the wheels of the old blue car,
the portrait of my ancestor wants to loosen
the more I stare at her. Hovering over the table,
it hides the story, the loss of her
middle and third finger in the machinery at the factory.
Couldn't look at any kind of motor again. She was
the pianist of Musquodobit road, played tunes for the vets
to wobble home to. We found her cramped and packed
up under the TV stand, her hand reaching out from a scene
at the water. In the albums, photos of her mythical walks
to the mailbox, or in a crab apple tree. We pulled her out

of the drawer of our grandmother's Singer, unwrinkled
her skirt and she seemed to stop and consider herself
in our features, seeing if anything about her had re-emerged
after disappearing down the line, parts
of herself she might have admired. We took her in

and left her to the mercy of Zellers' One Hour Photo,
wondered if the processing might betray her, or choose
the right shade of green for her eyes. Restoring something as old
as these passed-down photos would take longer, maybe more
than an hour. Our grandmother thought the price was too dear,
but wouldn't it be nice to see her singing with the Players
hanging from her mouth, or see her swim up again
in the years that are depths ago.

[home](#) [current issue](#) [past issues](#) [events](#) [editors](#) [contributors](#) [submissions](#) [contact](#) [links](#)





FICTION

Ana's Cupcakes

Meghan Rose Allen

Ana

Between shifts, Ana makes cupcakes for Joaquin with a half-dozen tray borrowed from the neighbours. She needs five batches and realizes she starts now she will miss the bus that takes her to the sprawling office building where she pushes a cart around desks and empties wastepaper baskets into a bag. Being late will draw attention. The priest and the gringos who secretly meet with Ana and her coworkers in the basement of her job warn them about drawing attention. Don't walk in groups. Don't argue in stores. Don't get arrested. The gringos tell her she should know her rights if they get stopped. Ana and the other cleaners find this funny. If they get stopped, they are sent back. That is the only right they have.

Ana copies a recipe from a cookbook in the library. Her card expired three months ago, but she hasn't renewed it. They might ask for ID. They might phone the number she gives on her application and learn she's put down the book's phone number that everyone in the neighbourhood uses on forms. So no more books from the library. No more programme. No more free movies on Thursday nights.

Ana misses the library.

At home, Ana translates, word for word, with the dictionary. *Huevos, leche, sacre, harina*. Same as flax. Ana can make flan in her sleep, she's done it so much.

"Joaquin," she calls out in English. "I make flan instead, okay?"

Joaquin is up and into the kitchen, the corner of the one-room apartment with the milk crates Ana stores food in, the unhappy yellow stove, the bar fridge she often keeps unplugged to save money. He throws the controller, which skitters across the linoleum until the muddled plastic hits Ana's feet. The curtains at the far side, by the door, are drawn. The sun sets. Shadows stretch from the television to here. The room glows a dull orange.

"No fair," Joaquin says. "You promised."

"The cupcakes take so long. If they don't work, think of the waste."

"You're always like this. I bet Jeanie would make them for me."

If she weren't inside on the carpet, Ana would spit. *Jeanie. Puta. Hija de puta*. Then, most insulting of all, *gringa*.

"No," Ana resigns herself. "I'll do it."

Alone, Ana bakes while Joaquin's video machine beeps and groans. She covers darkened patches with a paste made of milk and sugar. She severs old flyers at the smoke detector to shut off its whine. She stacks the cupcakes in a thin cardboard box, separating the layers with cuts of waxy paper. Joaquin spends his birthday eve asleep on the sofa, the bed sitting next to him, ready to go in the morning.

But inside the box, surrounded by the self-aid cakes, Ana puts a flan set into a red paper cup from the bathroom of the gas station three blocks north two blocks east. The flan sits silently in the centre. Not drawing attention.

Joaquin

I jiggled the box all the way to school so the cupcakes wouldn't look too perfect. My plan worked because, in the yard, Marcus and Vincent laughed and called them Mexican dung beetles but then Miss McAllister heard them and they got detention on Wednesday which means they can't play in the increase finals so our team will probably lose. The whole school hates them right now. And Ma's not even from Mexico so how ignorant can you get? But they're so dumb they probably think the entire landmass from Juarez to Tierra del Fuego is Mexico. I've seen the marks they get on their geography quizzes. Marcus and Vincent are grade 4 geography slacks.

Miss McAllister opened the box and knew right away what I'd brought was homemade. She loves when we make things ourselves. She talks a lot about "rampant consumerism controlling our lives" and how we would all be "better if we rejected the system and learned how to survive on our own." I told her I helped make the cupcakes, which I did, sort of. Without me, Ma would have baked out. Then Miss McAllister beamed at me and I couldn't feel the floor under my sneakers and the room tilted sideways. I focused on blinking to stop from falling over.

Teachers aren't supposed to have favourites, but I know I'm Miss McAllister's favourite. I'm allowed to call her Jenay, but not during school hours. After the bell rings, I help her with the cleaning and prep work for the next class. If she gets behind in marking, she lets me enter the grades into the computer which is why I know Marcus and Vincent suck balls at geography.

"Joaquin has brought food to celebrate his birthday. His curriculum," she says with her terrible accent. I won't tell her though. Let her marinate all the Spanish she wants if it means we spend time together. "Homemade cupcakes, class. You see, you don't need to go and spend money on cupcakes from an overpriced bakery downtown. You can make them yourself and they're," she took a bite, "as good." Miss McAllister turned away as she swallowed. A few black crumbs dribbled down from the wrapper and I could hear a slight crunch as she chewed. "Interesting flavour."

"I baked a traditional birthday flavour in my home country. The *dryness* means that there'll be no tears in the upcoming year." I smiled at Miss McAllister. She believed me.

"How interesting. Class, you should all be so lucky to have such an interesting cultural heritage as Joaquin. And what's this?" She pulled up a Dixie cup.

I looked over at she held her hand down to me. "It's the lucky flan," I said quickly. "Whoever finds that has to give the birthday boy a big good luck in the upcoming year."

Miss McAllister's cheeks turned a slight pink. "Well Joaquin, I don't think a bug works. How about a hamshaker?" she held out her hand and I took it. Her palm was moist, but smooth. I forgot to breathe, then started coughing.

"Please class," Miss McAllister said over me, "everyone come get a cupcake."

Stupid Ma. I always cover for her. All she had to do was buy a box of cake mix and follow the instructions and she couldn't even do that right. Thank God I'm not a doll like Vincent or Marcus otherwise I'd be up there with my mouth hanging open, staring at a stack of burnt cupcakes and that dumb flan Ma hid in the box.

Jeanie

When Frank and I met, I had no idea he was married. When I found out I said no sir, uh uh, don't let the door hit you on the way out. But he kept at me, and with Frank, you have to forgive him. Now we've been living together almost three years. Yes, he's still married, but if he gets divorced, there could be immigration issues for Ana maybe Joaquin too. I'm not heartless. I love Frank and Joaquin and the ring on Frank's finger keeps him tied to Ana in name only is what I've learned to live with in order to keep them in my life. I'm not asking for more.

"Make sure you come home early," I reminded Frank. "I told Joaquin to come here after school. Today's his birthday."

Frank made that noise he does when he's heard me but hasn't really heard me. I went over and put my arms around his neck just a tiny bit too tight.

"You heard me Frankie?" I asked. "Come home early. I'm getting a dessert from the grocery. I'll buy some presents. What do you think Joaquin would like?"

"He's a boy. He doesn't like nothing."

"He must like something."

"He's a man now. Dirty magazine?"

"Frankie! I play-slapped him. He's eleven."

"By the time I was eleven, I had sex with fifty women. They came for miles around to taste what Francisco de Guepar Alvarez had to offer." He kissed me, tugging my lips with his moustaache. "My best work was with the Sisters of my village. I was known as the great man deflowerer. Then the priest came and begged me to stop. The sisters would no longer tolerate his small pinches on their bottoms, stolen kisses in the confession after they spend one evening with me. The poor priest was ready to burn." Frank grabbed his crotch.

"Stop it," I told him. Frankie makes up all these silly stories about village life but I know he grew up in a nice house in a city with servants and a driver. I mean, Frankie has class that comes from growing up rich.

"I'll be home early, I promise," he said.

I bought presents on my lunch hour. Games for the Wii Joaquin keeps at his mother's house, a new hoodie, gift certificates for the fast food places around his school. I had twenty minutes before I had to be back at my desk, so instead of the Food City, I drove to one of those snazzy bakeries that look like they should be on the TV. All those cupcake flavours and me, being bring, chose chocolate because my boys love their chocolate. I wonder if food preferences are genetic, like me and Frank's child, will be like chocolate as much as Frank and Joaquin do? Before Frank left this morning, I asked when we're going to have a kid, a real, live, one hundred percent American kid.

"Joaquin not American enough for you?" he asked.

"You know what I mean. I want us to have our own baby."

But he slammed the door hard on the way out. Joaquin should be here any minute and Frankie still hasn't come home.

Frank

Frank waits on a bench for Ana to come home. Four buses pass in the opposite direction before one releases Ana, who walks firmly up the outside staircase to the second floor of her building. Frank springs to his feet before Ana gets to the top, waiting for a break in traffic. The neighbourhood is busier than when he lived here. Grimier too. Ana and Joaquin should move some place safer.

The tap comes as soon as Ana slips off her shoes and hangs her purse over the doorknob. She checks in the gloom. Joaquin has already fallen asleep on the couch. She latches the door shut, then opens it a fraction. She closes it, undoes the latch, and lets Frank in.

"Good evening to you," he says formally.

"Good evening," Ana replies.

"Our boy grows up," Frank says. He looks over at Joaquin. "Did you buy him that sweetbread?" The yellow fabric sallow Joaquin's skin. He looks ill in the half-light. Joaquin should wear shirts that button with collars and pants with pressed seams. Frank doesn't need Joaquin looking like a bum.

Ana shakes her head.

Frank follows her further into the room, then sits at the table as if he belonged there after a long day of working. Ana goes to the fridge and takes out two cups of flan. They sit and eat and watch their son Joaquin sleep. When Frank reaches over for Ana's hand, this is the first time in a long time that she doesn't pull away.

Then she does. After a count of eight beeps, Ana takes her hand back and tells Frank to get out of her house and go back to his notes. The door locks with a click behind him as he shuffles quickly back down the stairs.



NON-FICTION

the fieldstone review

Territory

Sandra Allan

Grace steps out onto the back stoop. The northwest wind is whipping the sheets and skirts into billows and twists. It's a cool, April day in Foremost – the clouds hover and swirl in constant quick changes from one dull grey shade to another, sometimes veering on black. Now and then a small breeze up and drops a few sprinkles of rain, just enough to wet the whites trying to dry on the clothesline. Finally, though, they're dry enough to bring in and drape over the furniture to await ironing. A sudden gust pastes Grace's thin cotton housecoat to her body and lifts her ash blond waves and tresses them out of shape. She shivers and begins to reel in the clothes.

Sarah and Lella are having afternoon naps. Grace wishes she could lie down, too, but there's so much to do before Howard comes home. It's been tough without him the past two days. She glances at the sky as she untangles the sheets and draps them into the wicker laundry basket along with the doorthings. She's hoping that the few quitters she feels don't multiply into a downpour again.

Howard couldn't make it home last night because the road from Manyberries was too muddy. Even the tire chains wouldn't have pulled him through the slimy gumbo of that post-Depression rural route. But today's wind will have blown the road dry enough to navigate along the ruts. It's a good thing, because Grace doesn't feel confident running the house alone for very long. Shovelling coal into the furnace in the cellar, lighting gas lamps, cooking on the wood stove (and keeping wood in the stove), emptying the slop pail, heating water for the laundry, heating it up to pour into the galvanized tub, scrubbing, rinsing and wringing the clothes and linens, logging them out to the porch for hanging – it's all so overwhelming. And rubber gloves or no, washboards are hard on the fingers. She's grateful for the addition of the clothes wringer, clamped onto the counter beside the sink. At least she doesn't have to do that by hand anymore.

It's still more than she can handle, especially with two little ones. Howard's posting to school inspector in the Foremost Division is a welcome step up the ladder from teacher, he is sure, but it has its down side. She has barely recuperated from Lella's birth a year ago – what seemed like days of continuous labour. She was exhausted. Remembering makes her wince all over again. Thank goodness they were still in Lethbridge, where hospital care provided comfort for the long lie-in.

Here in Foremost, without the city conveniences, like electricity, running water, and flush toilets, she feels quite abandoned. The cooking, the cleaning, the caring for a family of four in an old two-storey in small-town southern Alberta – it's a bleak domestic existence for the postmaster's daughter who's been orphaned all her life as an only child in a home with a maid to do all the chores, and now there's a new responsibility: Sarah is going on four and needs help with her reading and the simple arithmetic she's begun to tackle.

Grace scans the law-dry and drops her eyes to the houses across the lane and beyond. They stand starkly defaced. No trees hover over them, no bushes enclose them. She thinks of her hometown of Bettler, where a glance down the street shows a vista of lovely tall elms and a glimpse of a rooftop here and there among them. She pictures the rolling hills and foliage on the road to Buffalo Lake. How stark the contrast with this peculiar prairie, not a tree in sight. The only thing resembling even a bush here is the odd tumbledweed rolling across the yard.

The pulley wheel squeaks as Grace grabs at the sheets. She manages to tame them enough to release all the doorthings, and finally drops the rest of one into the basket at her feet. She heads to hoist it up into the house. The fire in the stove is heating the iron sitting atop. With luck she'll be able to finish in time to start supper before five o'clock.

She hears a noise upstairs. Sarah is awake early. Grace sighs; now she won't have as much ironing time as she'd counted on. She'll have to finish it tonight, when she'd planned to relax with Howard after the girls fall asleep. Their time together is precious, but she has run out of clean shirts, and that's a fact. He's on the road all week visiting the schools in his area. A lot of hard driving and long days. Between what some are doing, though, fighting in the trenches in Europe again.

Grace trudges upstairs to the girls' bedroom and picks up the tow-haired little one.

"Is doom, mommy?"

"Shh, honey." She would like to ask what nap-time bogymen have disturbed Sarah, but she doesn't want to wake Lella, still sleeping peacefully in the crib. Grace hugs Sarah and kisses the tears away, then bundles her out of the room to the little party chair in the hall. Sarah tries to pull down her own panties but needs help. She wriggles onto the small seat.

"Was go 'vide," she says from her perch.

"It's too chilly," says Grace. "You can play with Dolly in the house while mommy gets some of the ironing done."

A shaft of sunlight suddenly infuses the hallway through the west window, flooding the floor and lighting up the dust motes. Grace's spirit lifts. She looks out at the sky – the clouds are scattering away in the breeze, the blue background expanding. The rest of the day may be sunny.

"Sun," says Sarah gleefully. "Go 'vide."

Grace knows she's too busy to take the girls out for a walk. Besides, she wants Lella to stay sleeping – she waken several times last night with a cough, and the rest will do her good. But she can't let Sarah sit on her own – there's no fence, no way to keep her safe. She can't be wandering. She could get into the outhouse, or stray down into the creek where her kids await her accident, peach skin. But the fresh air would do her good. Maybe there's a way...

Sarah stands up, job done, and Grace helps straighten her clothes. Then she carries her down the steep stairs – Howard and Grace will help her with those, afraid she'll take a tumble. In the front hall closet, she sets Sarah down and pulls the clothes, heavy wool sweater, and bonnet of the lower shelf. She helps Sarah get dressed, then adds mitts, coat, and rubber boots. She pulls the harness of the top shelf and fastens it around her and jabs her up, strap and all. She hesitates a moment, thinking, then heads straight for the cellar stairs. Her slipping rope is in one of the unopened boxes down there with her old dolls and toys she's saved for her own children. It will do.

In the basement, with Sarah still in her arms, Grace rummages through the boxes on the storage room shelves, finds the rope and climbs back up the stairs, not wanting to linger on the first floor with all the spiders and beetles. She opens the back door and steps outside onto the stoop, setting Sarah down carefully so she can't fall off the ledge. Grace hoops one end of the rope over the clothesline and ties it securely, then takes the other end and knots it through Sarah's harness strap. She backs down the steps to the ground, holding Sarah's little hands to brace her as her short legs follow awkwardly, one step at a time.

Grace opens the small shed under the stoop and pulls out the trike and a push toy, the little rainbow-patterned cylinder that chimed as it rolls like a lawn mower. But Sarah chooses the trike, climbs on and starts her journey across the yard, part weedy, part grassy. Grace pulls on the rope and is satisfied that it will hold. She goes back inside to listen for Lella.

Though the clay soil is hard, the crabgrass impedes the progress of the little trike. Sarah soon gives up and climbs off, picking up the push toy and making her rounds. With the clothesline as her tether, she can go from the house to the lane, from one side of the yard to the other, but not farther. The rope is just long enough to give her this much space. This is her playground, for a little while at least. Refused in now and then by the rope, she mutters about muttering "daddy home, daddy home, daddy home." She misses Howard, misses being tossed up in the air and caught securely in strong arms. He is the joy in her life.

Howard grasps the wheel, shifts into first, lets the clutch out slowly and steps gently on the gas. The car slips sideways. He quickly turns the opposite direction to compensate for the skid. The engine coughs, he depresses the clutch but it's too late – the engine coughs out. Now he's stuck. He's in a dip in the road where the mud from the last two days of rain has not yet dried. The spring of snap has been a moan, wet one for a rural school inspector in southern Alberta.

"Damn," he mutters, and opens the door, stepping as lightly as possible onto the muddy road. The fresh shine on his overcoat isn't going to last long in this. His first thought was to get the car through the hail patch, but the surface isn't solid enough to support his weight. He has been too anxious, too tired, to assess the situation properly. The rain made it impossible to travel last night. He'd stayed in Manyberries at the principal's house. The mattress was lumpy and the blankets too flimsy to hold off the night chill. Now he feels a crease coming on and suspects he'd die for a cold. He just wants to get home. Grace will be needing him.

Now he slips and slides around to the trunk and pulls out the chains. The mud makes his progress difficult, but finally he has placed a set in front of each of the four tires. His shoes caked with gumbo, he makes his way to the passenger door. He backs onto the seat and reaches into the glove compartment for the kitchen knife he keeps there for emergencies. He lifts one heavy, mud-caked foot, the left one, and scrapes off as much of the goo as he can. He places that foot on the running board, then gives the other one the same treatment. He needs both shoes clean for the next stage. He swings his body into the car and closes the door. Then slides over to the driver's seat.

"God, if there is one, please help me get this body moving," he says out loud. He pulls out the choke part, switches on the ignition, and gradually depresses the accelerator. His skill serves him well. The engine catches. He quickly pushes the choke back in and begins the routine – reverse, forward, reverse, forward, Gearshift, clutch, and accelerator work in turns to roll the tires gently and rhythmically onto the chains. With the motor in neutral and the hand brake set, he climbs out of the car again and secures each chain to its wheel, then repeats the shoe-cleaning process and gets set to ease out of the mud. He's performed this drill many times in practice gumbo. This time is no different. The chains take hold and the car churns slowly across the wet patch and up onto the drier tumbled at the top of the rise.

He scans the trunk ahead. It looks ruts but negotiable. Riding with chains on dry roads means slow and bumpy progress, though. It's also hard on the axle, not to mention the tires. He puts the car in neutral again, pulls on the brake, and gets out to begin the chain-removal process. Finally, he stows the chains in the trunk and resumes his journey. He's sweating from the effort of the past twenty minutes. He glances down at his hands, his suit, his one-white cuffs – filthy. Another shift to wash and iron. Without the mud it would have lasted longer, perhaps a day or two. Maybe he can just soak the collar and cuffs. The suit? Well, he hopes once the mud is dry a good hotwash will do the trick.

The steady ptt-patt of the motor begins to mesmerize him, becomes the sound of the taxi he drove in Toronto...

Howard's thoughts drift back to eggs, and he's driving his fare through city streets shimmering with rain, vying for a place in the slow-moving line-up at the gate of the Canadian National Exhibition grounds. He's a good driver, daring and out when he gets a chance to pass, but this is a bad time of year for making any business in traffic in Toronto. It's good for a struggling university student earning his tuition behind the wheel, though.

He's living cheap. There's no other way. He's got to get himself educated and start working on a profession. He knows it can't be music. No money in that since the talkies got him out of a job conducting the pit orchestra at the Paramount Theatre in New York. Now he's aiming to teach, but that was a firm academic foundation before he started the training. He wants to do more than survive in this depressed world. He wants to achieve, go as high as he can go. The only way to do that is to build the skills and knowledge he has going for him already. He's used to all his savings now. Luckily there are still some who have cash left to make this temporary job possible. And lucky he has the scholarship. As he has many times before, he blesses his parents for his brains. And his aunt for marrying money. She has helped to pay for his degree.

He drops his passenger at the Royal York. It's late. The doorman has no favor for him, and there's nothing on the two-way radio from dispatch, so he cruises slowly to the side of the street, parks, turns off the engine and picks up his flashlight. He casts the beam over the pile of books on the passenger seat – his travelling companion. He's never without them, because slack hours are the only time he has to study. Classes all morning, library research all afternoon (on the days he doesn't have geology lab), and driving cabs from supertime until two in the morning. He has burdened himself with a heavy schedule because he wants to finish quickly and get back home to Calgary. Toronto is just a necessary stop along the way. He's eager to return to the quieter pace of life on the prairies, and to renew his acquaintance with that captivating teacher's teacher.

A dash of white on the passenger side pops him back into 1920 on the ratty prairie roads. He catches the back of the sign in the rear view mirror – he knows what it says. *Entering Foremost, Population 600. Home, far now. His moral indignation as he imagines the scene around the next corner – the white two-storey of the top of the cooler, his three girls inside, and the promise of a hot dinner.*

Homeward

David Houston

Quiet

Florio had died.

The day before dying, when he had finally accepted our lead that his time was almost up, he had requested a promise from me: I was to scatter part of his cremated remains in his hometown, San Manuel, Brazil. There was a church garden there he had always enjoyed sitting in as a child. Then again he had found himself in that same spot, seeking quiet during his annual visits home to his mother and family. He was a strong believer in completing the circle of life, and this would be his final trip home.

Ash

The cremated remains were white, more gray than ash. Like those small stones that find their way into your shoes. Abrasive. The crematorium passed them on to me in a discreet brown box, a white printed label showing Florio's initials and the cremation date on the side.

In the stillness of an empty house I handled them solemnly. A wisp of dust rose when I raised the lid. Like my thoughts, these minute particles would forever be settling and drifting, never really still.

Tomorrow Brazil.

Heat

On arriving in San Paulo the first thing to hit you is the heat, like opening an oven door with your bare hands. The shirt began to stick to my back and the walk for my bag to appear inside the reclaim hall was worrying. Eventually it found me.

Dodging a mob of panhandlers, I reached the outside terminal. Fresh air, or sort of. Dust and car fumes.

Two friends, Annie and Erica, were due to collect me. Annie I knew well. She was one of Florio's closest friends and had lived with us in Kent at various points over the years. She was a good person and I had her. Erica I had not met, but knew from Florio's stories. The three of us would drive to San Manuel, the girls acting as translators and protectors.

An odd trio. We would never all have been together and heading to his home-town if he had not died. His life there was not something he had wanted to share with any of us.

The Road

The car rides in Brazil. The drive would be around seven hours, almost two of which would just be getting out of the city and toward the long straight highway west. Our car was fast and fast.

We left behind the affluent high-rise confusion of concrete, glass and metal. The capital banks, businesses, and swish apartments all sat unsmiling, threatened by an impending onslaught of favelas seemingly ready to tumble down the hillsides and contaminate them. Two cities.

Once away from the noise, the scenery changed. We were on an apparently endless and gently undulating carpet of concrete traveling through miles upon miles of green fields. It was all coffee plantations, broken only by the occasional overgrown hillside advertising chocolate or cigars. Nothing healthy. Fast unbroken roads of green and brown passing other side of the horizon, meeting an equal mass of pale blue sky. It was beautiful.

Sometimes I would notice people working in the fields or a single tractor plodding along, almost in slow motion, but mainly it was empty. There were few animals to be seen in the fields, but every now and again we would pass a dog or cat lying fastened on the road, a mangled body of fur and bone being picked over by jostling black vultures and colored magpies.

Ahead of us the road. Always the road. Traffic was light. A lorry loaded up with fruits would sometimes turn past and shake our old car, emitting a brief moment of nervousness. Occasionally we would catch by a worn truck straining to haul an overloaded cart. There were always driven by old men in baseball caps, features bronzed by years of relentless sun and work.

We would also pass lone figures. Barely human, dressed roughly, tattered t-shirt and shorts, no shoes, pushing their makeshift handcarts through the heat, beset with plastic bottles or soda cans on their way to who knows where by chains of tinny carts.

We rarely passed any houses and the few towns I saw were more villages, thrown up haphazardly close to a service station or village area, metal, plastic, sheeting, and blocks falling next like seedlings, struggling to get established.

Had Stop? Cafe

After four hours of solid driving we pulled in at a rest stop. It was good to stand up. Really good. I had always thought of traveling as freedom but in fact it is all about confinement, either on a plane or in a car, in a motel room or a hotel. Never completely free.

I had noticed a handful of prostitutes loitering around the entrance. A smudge of colored flesh. This and that. But like, I thought they had just stepped in.

Inside, Erica and Annie rushed to the washroom. I sat by an artificial pond in the reception area. Piped music, lumpy pop a notch too loud, and the pond, over furnished with plastic plants and sad gurgling fish, failed to create the tranquil atmosphere it surely aimed for. Worse than melancholy.

Red Town

I remember once Florio had returned happy from Brazil with a pint glass filled almost to the brim with a fiery red drink. He had swapped the glass in return for cell-phone and somehow got it back to the UK intact and through customs.

A red haled by the sun and ground by time. The kind of color only nature can muster. It was to remind him of home, he said.

San Manuel was exactly the color of that earth.

We searched for the street where Vera, Florio's mother, lived. As we quietly got lost amid the grid of lanes and turning the route became a puzzle of dust and tracks. What green there was had been brought here and planted organically, grasses and a few laborious, instant to nature's touch. There was little grass to be seen except in the church gardens. Palm trees and a kind of resilient fern flourished though, species that had shown their propensity for survival centuries ago.

We passed the church and the bench where Florio had sat so many times. I stole a glance from the window, almost afraid to look for fear of seeing him there.

At last we pulled alongside the house. Like all the others roundabout, it was a single storey, neatly plastered against black. I was odd to think that this was where Florio had been born, where he had grown up, left for school each day, and eventually left for Europe. Erica asked me if I was alright. Was I ready?

Vera came out. Tears filled. Hugo wept behind. She had aged since we had last met, that day miles from here on a snowy February morning.

She led the three of us indoors. We all felt uneasy arriving in this little faraway town, sitting on chairs Florio had sat on, looking out at views he had seen. We were straying into his memories and making our own.

Two Brothers

I was nervous of meeting Paulo and William, Florio's two brothers, one younger, one older. It was one of my main anxieties when I had thought about this journey. I was not their brother. I was a stranger. It was usually Florio who returned home to San Manuel for this welcome mat.

The two men turned out to be exactly as he had described. Paulo, the older sibling, was big, looking older than his years but with sparkling eyes behind deep-set a squarish face. He reminded me a little of the other squarish brother, coarse and loud. When he spoke, he sounded. He was a rough character, but he was friendly. Once he had been said, he paid little attention to the other than shouting my name occasionally from across the table or throwing another chunk of meat on my plate as if we were feeding a dog.

William was more fragile. I could tell he had been affected by the events of the last year and now again by my presence here. He shook hands loosely, reluctantly, unsure. He was similar in build and appearance to Florio, but not slim, but with the same handsome face and thoughtful brown eyes. He looked uncomfortable. Spoke little.

Often I would catch him gazing at me, sizing me up, trying to see who I was.

Paulo was a survivor. He'd be fine in time. While I was certain that he was sad about Florio, I was equally sure he was able to cope and had in fact already moved on much further than anyone else at the table. William had not. He carried sadness, we weighed down by it. We tried to gauge each other's character. I was curious to know what conditions he had made for me and who I was, but since Florio's death I had been in a self-protective mode, getting through day one at a time, with no momentary physical strength for anyone else. Some reflex mechanism had gone into overdrive to get my physical shape through this period and out the other side.

All of us were in our own space, awkwardly circling around each other trying to make sense out of what had happened and where it would end.

I Had both men.

Final Service

My time in San Manuel was deliberately short.

Sunday evening, the night before leaving, a memorial service was held. The chapel was small. Like everything in the town, it was concrete and white-washed. The inside offered a welcome coolness. I arrived late, reluctant to take part, and stood at the back.

It was crowded, the music loud and the singing enthusiastic. Vera was near the front, singing. Paulo and William, like me, loitered at the back. Quiet. Paulo left after just a few moments, probably for a smoke. William continued his visual interrogation of me.

At the front was a simple concrete altar set up with candles and flowers. On the floor at the front were the ashes.

Last Rites

The service over. Vera came out to find me and took my arm. We walked the few metres or so around the side of the church to the garden where we would scatter the ashes.

We had already chosen a place next to a small fern to scatter them. It seemed a good spot, tidy. They to remain untroubled by gardeners or animals. About twenty people stood by. The men's opinions and welcome came and spoke to Vera, sharing hugs and support. Paulo and William hung back from the main group. They never stayed far from each other. I was unsure if they would take part; they seemed apologetic. Annie and Erica moved close to me. Our journey here was coming to a conclusion.

Everyone held hands in semi-circles while Vera led a prayer. I looked around at all the faces. The brothers had come forward. Paulo looking oddly out of place, holding hands with his brother to his right and an old lady on his left. He kept his cigarette in his lip, I set of admiring him. William was before. His young son, Yari, clung to his leg. I was unsure who was supporting whom.

I heard Vera say my name during her speech, but that was the only thing I heard. She stepped forward and took a handful of the ashes. Crying, she scattered them around the base of the fern. She beckoned me forward. I took a handful, still perplexed by their consensus. I stayed still for a moment, ash in hand.

I turned. Paulo had left the group and was standing by his truck. Erica signaled for William to come forward, but got anchored him to the spot. Tears reddened his face. His son came forward and took a handful of the ash letting it trickle through his tiny fingers gently.

The box was empty. The sun was low. The net over.

William raised a hand and waved to me. I waved back, but he had already turned and was going toward his brother and the waiting truck.

Tomorrow I would be heading home.

Endings

The dawn air was cool. It had that edge of a summer morning back home before the heat of the day had started. The sky hung blue. No clouds. The palm fronds of the trees barely moved. Occasionally the stillness was shaken by a flock of noisy parakeets feeding in the trees. Animals, they never settled for long.

The welcome of San Manuel had a more muted tone in the early light, a kind of jumbled transience that reflected on my palm as I bent down to look at it. It no longer felt so strange to be here. I did not get into the interior I had a few days earlier. It was Florio's town, his family, and his soil, but he was part of my life and now these people and this town had become part of it too, if only for a moment. I let some earth fall through my fingers. It was true that everything returned back to where it had come from, or at least a part of it did.

I returned from my daydreams. An old man passed by on a bike. Slowly. A noisy bearded car following behind, its long tongue hanging. The man waved. I waved back.

High above, impossibly high, meeting the morning, a plane moved across the sky, a silver of metal reflected by the sun, curving and then disappearing into the distance.

the fieldstone review

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My People Shall Be The People
Demmond Lindo

Were I ever called upon to describe my career as a writer of fiction, I would use by way of analogy the backyard and workshop belonging to a size enough but rather slow-moving fellow whose avowed hobby is restoring old automobiles.

I would ask the reader to imagine a cluster of shabby buildings located on a large, semi-rural lot in a neighbourhood where no one worries about property values. Spread around the grounds would be a number of rusting vehicles, some of them clearly having been cannibalised for parts, others under protective tarpaulins with the fallen leaves of several winters stuck to the fenders, and everywhere motor parts and body sections half-hidden in the foot-high grass. A careful look would reveal that many of the vehicles are of the same make or model, albeit of different vintages, a fact from which one could perhaps deduce a thematic connection of some sort.

Inside the building that serves as workshop would be an assortment of tools and gauges and mechanical devices of every description lying about on the floor or on the countertops or hanging on the walls. Amid this where-the-bell-is-or-would-it-were-it-was would likely be two or three vehicles in various stages of restoration, all representing several years of painstaking if somewhat desultory labour.

On one of the walls, beside a June 1988 calendar bearing a photograph of a statuesque and stunningly gorgeous nineteen-year-old girl in short-shorts and halter top (with one heartbreakingly long leg on the bumper of a gleaming blue MG soft-top convertible with the top down), one would find separate photographs of two vehicles, one a 1950 Mercury Monarch, the other a two-tone, blue and white, 1955 Ford Fairlane, with the hobbyist, hardly recognizable because he still has hair, standing proudly beside them on the day that they were, gloriously gleaming, finally street-ready.

The only mid-tailing part of this analogy would be the 'gloriously gleaming, finally street-ready' phrase. Not one piece of my fiction from the period when I still had hair ever reached the stage of having wheels, much less a gloriously gleaming body. Everything else in the analogy works. From the badly typed manuscripts dating back to a pre-computer period stashed in filing cabinets to the unfinished drafts and re-worked pieces existing generally in the digital digests of my computer's hard drive, to the novellas, short stories, and magazine pieces that never got published, everything I have written over the years could be viewed as beset with the nit and rust of neglect, and all destined for the junkyard.

But what disturbs me about my failure to create street-ready pieces of fiction is that each novella or short story I attempted was intended as a vehicle for transporting one or more of the characters who, like the children of Dunsinane and Pyrrhus, appeared as fully formed individuals in my imagination. What would bring about this or another miracle of their existence was something I seldom fully understood, and I know that each character wanted only one thing of me: to create for him or her the shelter of a story. Over the years, my characters would become more real to me than level ones or members of my family. And as I have failed to tell their stories, they burden my spirit now that I have passed my seventieth birthday and know they will have no other life except the sketchy, shadowy one I afforded them in my imagination.

The outward evidence of their brief existence, namely, the manuscripts in the filing cabinets, the delete-able digital data in which their half-written stories are encoded, will all end up in the landfill or in the fireplace. I hear them calling to me to keep them alive, to find a place for them where they can continue to exist when I am dead.

Unable to bear their cries, I am proposing now to line them up, all clatching their identity papers and shabby belongings, to lead them onto the vehicle this soap represents, and to ship them off somewhere. My hope is that they will be adopted and given homes in the works of other writers more industrious than I was. By way of recommendations, I can say that I know all my characters – every one of my people, as I call them – well enough to assure any writer who wants to take one in, that they are all modest, self-effacing individuals who will accept humble roles in any story. Not one of them is an egotist, and all are malleable and willing to assume any role to which they are assigned. Moreover, they're not fussy about the genre in which they might find themselves.

Consequently, if you are a writer in search of an unemployed character, I would be delighted should you choose one of mine. All I ask is that you do not mistreat or otherwise abuse him or her. What follows is a list of who they are and a brief résumé of the lives I had intended for them had I possessed the talent to write their stories.

Deirdre

First in line would be Deirdre, whose grey eyes had the transcendent quality of marble extracted from the quarries of Pentelice in ancient Greece. Deep-sunk and contrasting sharply with her dark skin, her eyes expressed a serenity, a deep sense of anomie, from the world in which she found herself. This drew me to her.

Deirdre came to me when I was twenty-two years old. I had not given much thought to becoming a writer until she appeared, silently requesting that I tell her story. I recognized that the story she wanted me to tell was, in a sense, my own. I gave her the name Deirdre because I knew its Irish origins and its association with sorrow and sadness. I also liked the name because it had belonged to a girl with whom I was in love for a short time when I was seventeen. This real-life Deirdre was not Irish, and there was nothing of sadness about her. She had green eyes, curly hair, and the warm, olive-toned skin of her Mediterranean ancestors. She was the daughter of a diplomat or a business executive posted in Jamaica, my childhood home, and she was as happy and as cheerful as any young woman could be who had had an excellent education, had lived in several countries during her girlhood, and who had always had dozens of young men in love with her.

My fictional Deirdre was a young girl from Jamaica who had immigrated to Canada with her parents in the 1950s. Her family belonged to the large Portuguese-Jewish community that had resided in Jamaica for over two hundred years and to which my family also belonged. In Canada, as a dark-skinned young woman, Deirdre found herself contending with prejudices directed against her – prejudices that she and her ancestors had practiced in Jamaica. Her struggle to come to terms with the conflicts within herself was to have been the subject of my novel. That I never got very far with its writing still bothers me. But at twenty-two, I was a dreamer, not a writer, and Deirdre lived only in my imagination.

Thus I say to a writer in search of a character for a story about love and loss and the deconstructing nature of racial prejudice, take my Deirdre, please. And if you find it within your powers, deliver unto her a measure of happiness.

Dell-Dell

Dennis 'Dell-Dell' Greese came to me – and in a sense, to my rescue – some time in 1974, after I had gotten my degree at the University of Victoria and had gone back to work at the Hudson's Bay Company. I was thirty-five years old, married, and the father of two children under the age of six, and burdened with a student loan that threatened to prevent me from owning a home. Nevertheless, I was planning to purchase one, having outgrown the small, four-room house whose low rent had enabled me to go to university in the first place. With few other career options available to me, I was thankful that the Hudson's Bay had taken me back, and moreover, had given me a position that would enable me to handle both a mortgage and repayment of my student loan.

The only drawback to this job was having to work under a department manager about everyone hated. And they had reason. His management style consisted of keeping everyone on edge – except those who would agree to spy on the others for him. On joining the department, I too was asked to keep an eye on certain other employees and to let him know what they were up to. I did not respond to this invitation, which no doubt told him that I would do no such thing. This also told me that I should keep an eye on him because he would be a pain in the butt.

He proved to be more than just a pain, and I found myself under a lot of stress working for him. One afternoon, he tackled me about some minor matter or other, keeping these upon me and charging me with all manner of offenses. He did so in a stockroom away from the sales floor and possibly out of earshot of anyone else who might have been working in the same area of the store. His tirade induced in me as deep and murderous a rage as I have ever experienced. How I managed to control the urge to bash his head open with a hammer that was readily to hand I do not know, but the incident left me so shaken that my heart went into a state of fibrillation that lasted the rest of the afternoon.

Having decided after I got married that I would never take home the frustrations and petty annoyances that occurred at work, I managed to control the rage still churning within me, and passed the evening with my family in my usual manner. But retiring for bed brought a sleepless night in which a thousand murderous fantasies conspired with each other for brutality, softness of execution, or long-drawn-out infliction of pain. And crucial to each fantasy was the notion to imagine how I would escape punishment when the deed was done. I was not egotistical enough to believe that I could outsmart a team of criminal investigators. I lay awake late into the night trying to imagine a fortuitous set of circumstances that would enable me to commit an unplanned murder leaving nothing to connect me to it, a chance encounter with the bastard, perhaps in the forest or a dark alley somewhere, was the only scenario I could come up with. And this was when Dell-Dell came to me.

I was drifting in and out of sleep when in my mind's eye I saw a young black man sitting on a threadbare sofa in a shabby apartment, his arm around the shoulder of a young Caucasian woman, both watching in the darkened room a small black and white television. On the screen, being shown over and over, was the clip of Jack Ruby shooting Lee Harvey Oswald, an event that had occurred earlier that day. I saw the young man suddenly begin crying and the young woman consoling him, the doing so in the belief that the murder of President Kennedy had upset him. But I knew he was not weeping for Kennedy. No, it was Oswald's fate that had touched him – the abrupt and meaningless death of a lost and confused and possibly deranged young man. He was crying because he too was a lost, confused, and deranged young man. And, like Lee Harvey Oswald, he had recently committed a murder. I did not know whom he had killed or how he had committed the crime, but I knew, as the scene, drama, sick, went into view, that it was a senseless, unpremeditated act, and the likelihood was that he would be caught. I knew also that he was a native of Jamaica.

This dream or whatever it was doused the rage that was burning in me, and although I lay awake for a couple more hours thinking about the young man and his predicament – with memories of Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment* going through my mind – I fell asleep with the comforting thought that I now possessed the makings of great work of fiction. My hero would get away with his crime, would marry the girl, raise a family, have a rewarding career, and earn the respect of everyone around him. And this would all happen, as if by magic. Indeed, Dell-Dell would come to believe that magic played a part in his life. Moreover, I realized then where this story had come from. Disturbed by the incident earlier in the day, I had returned to my childhood seeking solace and had found it in that which I had rejected when still quite young: superstition and magic.

The next day, comfortable in the fantasy that I would write a novel about Dell-Dell, and thinking about his life instead of my own, I returned to work as if nothing had happened. In the time I found it easier to work for this supervisor because in my heart I had already killed the man of which and gotten away with it. I even learned to laugh at the incident and later on would entertain fellow employees by relating the dozens of cruel and bizarre ways in which I had dreamed of murdering the fellow. Meanwhile, Dell-Dell and his magical story developed and grew in my mind.

A couple of years later, I began writing the novel – or, more correctly, making notes for writing it – by scribbling down a number of literary allusions and references that I would use in it. Thus I chose as my hero's surname, Greese, done so because I intended to give to the story what I considered a Graham Greene-like tone or texture, plus it would fit with several ambiguities. And for a bit of private amusement, I had my hero ultimately rise to become a senior partner in a law firm named, needless to say, Graham, Greese, & Company. The tale would begin with my hero, now in his middle thirties, suddenly remembering the murder and the magical circumstances that saved him from a life in an institution for the criminally insane.

Please take my Dell-Dell. All I ask is that he remain a young man of who grew up in Jamaica and who momentarily lost his way in Canada. And let his survival be somehow magical.

A note from the writer to the reader: The above represents the initial portion of a planned work wherein I intend to offer a handful of delightful characters, all eager to do your bidding. Just don't hold your breath while you await their arrival.

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CONTRIBUTORS

1. **Introduction**
The purpose of this document is to provide a comprehensive overview of the project's objectives, scope, and deliverables. It serves as a guide for all stakeholders involved in the project.

2. **Objectives**
The primary objectives of this project are to develop a robust system that meets the needs of our users and to ensure that the system is scalable and secure.

3. **Scope**
The scope of the project includes the design, development, testing, and deployment of the system. It also includes the documentation of the system and the training of users.

4. **Deliverables**
The deliverables of the project are the system software, the user manual, and the training materials. These deliverables will be provided to the client upon completion of the project.

5. **Timeline**
The project is scheduled to start on [start date] and is expected to be completed by [end date]. The timeline is subject to change based on the progress of the project.

6. **Resources**
The resources required for the project include a team of developers, testers, and project managers. Additionally, we will need access to the necessary hardware and software tools.

7. **Risks**
The risks associated with this project include the potential for delays, budget overruns, and the possibility of the system not meeting the client's requirements. We will take steps to mitigate these risks throughout the project.

8. **Conclusion**
This project is a critical component of our organization's strategy. We are committed to delivering a high-quality system that meets the needs of our users and provides a competitive advantage for our organization.

