

Literary Landscapes

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THE GREATER LOS ANGELES WRITERS SOCIETY

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Original Short Stories, Novel Excerpts,
Poetry, Opinion, Educational Articles
and News of the Society by:
(in Alphabetical order)

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**THE GREATER LOS ANGELES
WRITERS SOCIETY**

WRITERS MENTORING WRITERS OF ALL DISCIPLINES

Literary Landscapes

Vol. 2 No. 1 2011

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Message From The President



By Tony N. Todaro

You are in possession of a very unique piece of literature, something I first dreamed of years ago. At the time we were having dinner with the president of IUUniverse and a flock of GLAWS Charter Members after a special speaker event. I got on my soap box about the fine and diverse writers that were members of the society – even though I hadn't the time to read everyone's work, yet. Still, I wanted the world to know about these talented individuals.

I envisioned a literary publication. Not a newsletter – anybody can do one of those. Rather, a literary platform for the best of the best to write about their interests, their passions, a few dreams and maybe some fears. Always with a unique voice. There were a few other such publications around the country, but nothing in Southern California.

In the scheme of things it was too ambitious to execute at the time: we were too busy taking care of a growing membership that virtually doubled every year, thirsty for more services. So, we produced a well-written newsletter that served a purpose, but little more. And it fell by the wayside when we switched to a timely and sophisticated Email program direct to members and attendees. Right and regular, it reached out with snappy copy and bright “calls to action.” It reached the greatest number of writers, but the snippets of clever wording and memorable prose we had in the newsletter were lost in the digital dust (is there such a thing, other than metaphorically?).

And while our thousands of writers learned about the craft and business of writing through our Special Speaker Events, workshops, critique groups, and networking events, and grew, and some found agents and publishers and actually got royalty checks, I never forgot that original vision.

It took half a decade, and the persistence of talented individuals including Charter Member Mike Robinson, Critique Group Leader Joyce Actor and Co-Founder Neil Citrin, who not only shared the vision but found the time to make it happen. We were also fortunate, through Hospitality Co-Chair Judith Swanson, to find GLAWS member Michael Rushlow (a professional production guy in his own right) who generously agreed to manage the Quark Xpress layout. After all, creative writing is best presented in a clean, easy-to-read format. Kerned and tracked like fine art, in its own right.

Under the editorial leadership of Robinson, we are proud to launch a terrific showcase for diverse and talented writers in vastly different genres with different points of view to present new works. In their own unique voices. Yes, some commercialism and a few announcements will find column inches on these pages. But only to the benefit of the writers and readers who may not be reached otherwise.

I won't promise you're going to love every line of poetry and prose. But I will say that we did our best to ensure you'll appreciate the freshness of these voices. Presented in a quality format. And perhaps you'll be inspired to make a contribution of your own to this new Literary Landscape.

Tony N. Todaro

President & Co-Founder



Editor's Forum

By Mike Robinson

With Washington sharpening knives for some comprehensive budget butchery, ideas abound for what to trim, carve or surgically remove altogether. Relatively obscured in the frenzied talk over things such as Medicare and defense is the addition to the chopping block of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), its sibling agency National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), National Public Radio and the National Gallery of Art, among others. For some, this has spurred recent debate on the importance of the arts in our culture. Bill T. Jones, a dance choreographer and MacArthur fellow, remarked, "Art is just as important as highways and hospitals", a statement which no doubt stirred the pot in some circles.

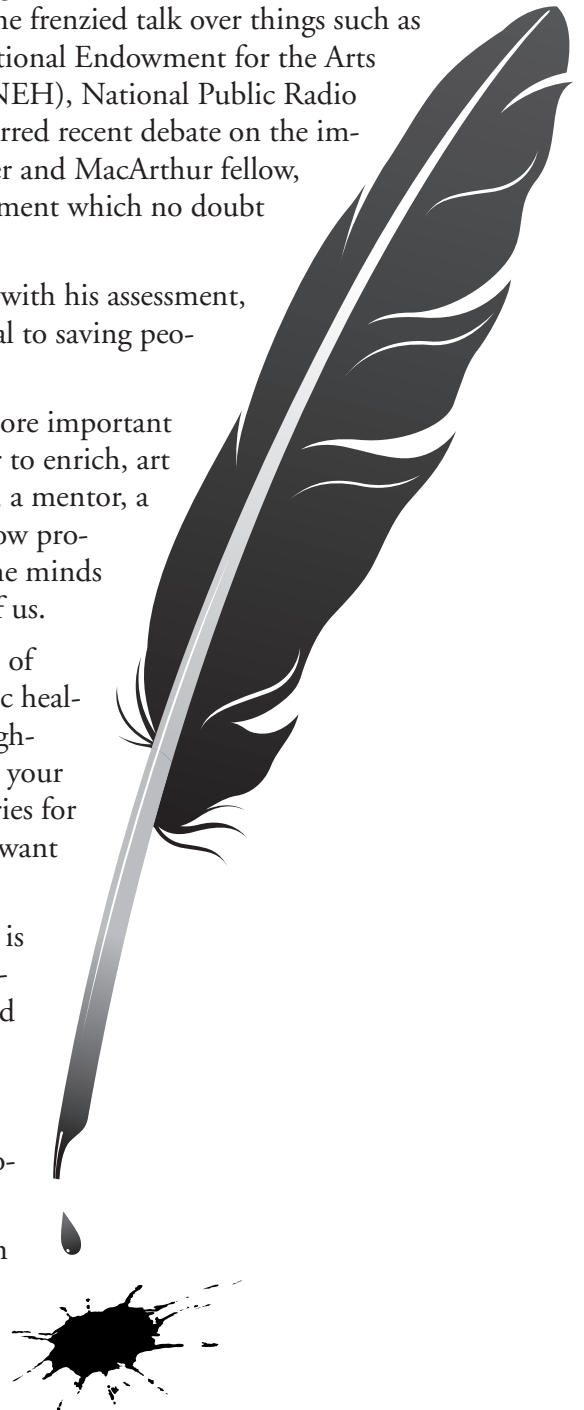
In speaking with Jones, TV host Bill Maher respectfully disagreed with his assessment, stressing that art is a diversion and that highways and hospitals are vital to saving people's lives. It's a nicety, essentially, not a necessity.

Yet I agree with Mr. Jones. I might even go so far as to say art is more important than highways and hospitals. For the latter saves lives, but in its power to enrich, art is integral in making life worth saving. Art is a nurturer, a companion, a mentor, a prophet, a diagnostic, a lifeline. It is impossible to comprehend just how profoundly great words, canvases, music, films and theatre have shaped the minds and motions of our civilization. Art is the cultural marrow, the stuff of us.

Of course, me being a writer, literature is my main spiritual opiate of choice. Yet while I use the word "opiate" to describe the quiet alchemic healing of a great book, reading can also, maybe paradoxically, open a rough-and-tumble panorama, unleash an expansive power that knocks about your neurons, that realigns your perspective. Such experiences are not luxuries for students and scholars – flatly, they are imperative for the species if we want to press on with this convenient little habit called survival.

Studies have shown recently that empathy among college students is on the decline. This may be the result of an increasing climate of hard-nosed empiricism and competition. For many, it seems, life is packaged and numbered. Where will such traditions lead us, without occasional glimpses of that panorama? Contrary to the adage that "knowledge is wisdom", we need the wisdom imparted by art to appreciate, understand, question and incorporate productively into ourselves and our society the revelatory nuts and bolts offered by the sciences.

Thus, we as GLAWS are proud to offer this publication as a forum for new artistic voices. Here's hoping we may be a drop or a chop in a burgeoning swell of a new Renaissance.



The Crows Of Misfortune

By Barry Dale Gilfry

Peter's head exploded supernova as the bat impacted his skull again. Death hissed, "This is your epiphany," before slithering away.

Casual crows arrived to dine on nodules protruding from Peter's head where he lay in the roadway, spirit unforgiven ebbing from another life.

Although Peter mistrusted religion, he summoned a life raft for his drowning soul. Acknowledging treachery, he clutched the shortest verse in the Bible, floating on a sanguine sea: Jesus wept.

Irony, Peter thought. If Jesus had spilt a tear for me instead of Lazarus, how quickly would my tainted blood have yielded rust?

Desiring the sanctity of the gutter, Peter discovered he no longer controlled his limbs. He tried scattering the crows using willpower, without success.

Without success.

Peter found irony in those words, too, since they handily summarized his life.

Homeward-bound office workers in shiny automobiles screamed past inches away, callous to a stranger's misfortune, former Good Samaritans inured to the travail of a fellow downed by fate. They would witness the carnage on the news at 6:00, and again at 11:00.

Fluttering wings revived Peter; words in foreign tongue lifted his heart. Tears from the bearded cabdriver's eyes sanctified Peter's brow as his soul passed.



About The Author: Barry Gilfry is a country boy at heart, having grown up in the woods: Hollywood, Brentwood and Westwood. Assigned at birth by a celestial entity the duty of chronicler, he is an avid writer and photographer and is currently at work on a novel about the apocalypse. See www.barrygilfry.com

A Writerly Choice

Excerpt from *Making Everything Count*, a memoir

By Sarah Beach



When bedtime came in our house when I was small, we had our little rituals.

My younger sister, Joan, and I shared a bedroom, a largish room with a single narrow window that overlooked our side yard. There was no real symmetry to the room other than that central window, with the door to the room exactly opposite it.

Our ritual, after all the usual hygiene concerns, was to be read to. Our father would come in and read to us most nights. I wasn't conscious of it at the time, but I think there was something soothing and comforting about that time that was just between us, and just about the words that rolled out. My father had a good reading voice, and he never over-played anything dramatic. So, night after night, the sounds of story poured into my ears, uninterrupted.

My father enjoyed the works of Rudyard Kipling, and so my earliest memories are of having Kipling read to us. I know he read *Kim* to us when I was small, but I suspect I was still just under the threshold of knowledge needed to really appreciate it. I have only a vague impression of adventures, of disguises, of the character being an outsider in the strange world of India during the Raj.

If the story of *Kim* made only a vague impression on me, the impact of *The Jungle Book* and *Just So Stories* was quite different. Perhaps because the stories in those books are shorter, they were retained more easily by the mind of this child. They were certainly favorites of my sister and myself, for I know my father read them to us more than once.

The language of Kipling's prose is ideally suited to being read aloud. The rhythm and sonority slides into the consciousness and takes root. But the stories themselves also enchanted me: Rikki-tikki-tavi prowling around the outside of the humans' home, matching wits with and finally defeating the cobra; the White Seal growing up and leading the other seals away from the hunters to a safe haven, after adventures exploring the wonders of the sea (somehow the sea-cows stuck in my memory); the wolves and their council as they accept the presence of Mowgli, while the tiger, Shere Khan, lurked in the darkness of the tall grasses. My father's own favorite story from the *Just So Stories* was

So night after night, the sounds of story poured into my ears, uninterrupted."

"The Butterfly That Stamped", where Solomon and his genies provide a lesson about the unpleasantness of domestic quarreling. He did not read that one to us very often, though, for I think it is more amusing to adults than to children.

For me, the story that most caught me was "The Elephant's Child". Snoopy little child that I was, I identified with the "satiated curiosity" (as Kipling puts it) of the Elephant's Child. But, beyond that, of longer lasting impact, was the mere sound of a single line: "the great, grey-green, greasy Limpopo River, all set about with fever-trees." I used to go about reciting it to

myself, enjoying the sequence of sound: “the great, grey-green, greasy Limpopo River.”

There is a certain inevitability, I suppose, in a descendant of Anglo-Saxon heritage having a love of alliteration. It is part of the tradition in Old English poetry (something I would learn years later). But I suspect that my penchant for punctuating my sentences with alliteration springs from this enchantment cast on me by Kipling. “Great, grey-green, greasy Limpopo River.” It stuck with me not just because it was fun to say, but because our house was painted grey. For my earliest years, the color was a light slate grey. Then, one year, while I was still in elementary school, my father decided to paint it a different color. I have no idea why he chose the color, but the new color was a darker, olive green. And so I continued to amuse myself with the association of the line to the color of our house. Of course, I didn’t consider either color to be “greasy”, but I made the choice to accept the inclusion of that word because the line was such fun to say.

To look back on this now is bemusing. I remember considering the matter of how the word “greasy” did not really describe the house accurately, and yet making the conscious choice to continue to associate the line to the house color. From my vantage point of training and experience now, I can see that this was almost a “writerly” choice. Yet, I was also aware that others might not be as accommodating about it. I think I knew that to publicly apply the term “greasy” to the house color would possibly sting my father, if not down-right offend the dignity of my older sister. So I don’t recall that I ever broadcast to my family that I had this private association between the house color and that line. My fondness for the line itself was well-enough known within the family, for I would trot it out on various disconnected occasions. But I don’t think I had ever revealed the connection with the house color that lingered in my mind. It was a private amusement.



About the Author: Born in Michigan, transplanted to Texas, and emigrated to California, Sarah Beach finds everything around her fascinating. Consequentially, she loves telling stories of all sorts, including how she came to tell stories.

The Lament Of Allen’s Hat

By Joyce Actor

I came to life in a tiny foreign country
Where indigent hands weaved my future
With deft fingertips,
One of thousands to be sold.

Straw is the fiber of my being and the strength of me.
Flaxen hues fit together like Mexican handcuffs
Sculpted into a copy of an old fashioned fedora
One that was so perfect for you.

I fitted over the warm skin of your bald spot
And kept your receding hairline in place.
I shone on your head like a golden crown
I was surely summer elegance.

Together we traveled;
We braved the winds on the beaches of Costa Rica
After beating out the sun’s rays in Australia,
And ran through downpours on Jekyll Island.

That family reunion, so happy and complete
With progeny to surround you on a sunny beach.
You were handsome with me cocked over one eye;
Just a snapshot is left, just a speckle of your life.

I now sit in the dark like a recluse,
My only companions, dust mites and berets,
My rumples rim looking ragged and ripped.
My life is over too, you know.



About the Author: Joyce Actor has a BFA in theater from The University of North Carolina School of the Arts. She has studied at UCLA and has an MFA in creative writing from Queens University. She leads the GLAWS memoir critique group and is currently working on a memoir.

Writing Life Lessons

By Marla Miller

Writers know to beware of agents and editors who bilk us out of the money and promise what they can't deliver. Several websites devoted to watch-dogging this aspect of our industry earn high marks in 'writer awareness.' As a writer once snookered by an agent, I am glad we have places to go to register our complaints and increase awareness.

Stories I don't read so much? Writers who trash editors and agents for no reason other than the writer's words didn't work for the agent or editor. Some GLAWS members know that I make my living as a writer. But I love to teach and on occasion take on a client or two who I usually meet at my workshops. My specialty is marketing our muse, a skill I've learned mostly 'on the job' as a writer marketing her own with various degrees of success.

This editorial is inspired by a recent experience I had with a writer who hired me to develop a marketing strategy for her self-published book of which she sold 35 copies at the time of contact. We discussed what I would do and my fee, \$250.00, the flat fee I charge for this service.

So why am I sharing this story with GLAWS members? For the lessons learned that might be helpful to all. In my initial contact, here's what this author told me: I want to get an agent's interest. Here's what I heard: she wanted me to help her develop a strategy which would strengthen her platform so she could sell enough books to get an agent interested in her novel. For a self published writer, there's only one way to do this: demonstrate your market by selling the hell out of your book.

I asked her to mail her query letter(s), synopsis and agent correspondence along with the check. Instead, she mailed the novel with a note stating that after I read it, she hoped I could help. I've had this happen before. For some reason some writers think it's okay to ask working writers to work for free. I told her I don't read for free and wished her well. She made contact again apologizing for the 'miscommunication'

and hired me. When the check cleared, I proceeded.

Over the next few days, I developed a marketing strategy: 4 pages of entry level strategies for an entry level author on the road. My time logged: 4.5 hours. She was not impressed and told me so. Usually, I have a good instinct about leaving well enough alone. After a few unsatisfying emails, I did and wished her well.

Lessons for authors on the road to learn:

Don't hire freelance help until you've exhausted your own resources. This way you will know if the person you hired is delivering solid information. For sure, scam artists lurk. The best safeguard to becoming a victim is to learn about this business.

Be realistic. I say this in every workshop: from our day jobs we don't expect what we tend to expect from our writing life. No agent will read your manuscript unless they see that your words, and you, are a good business risk. Show them you are by demonstrating that your product - you and your words - will make them money.

What this writer/editor learned:

Don't ignore yellow flags waving. Enough waved but I took exception because she was a friend of a friend. This writer/client could have trashed me on a website and damaged my reputation. She didn't. About 5 days later, she sent an apology email and then thanked me for my work that "I believe will be quite helpful."

Lesson for all:

Writers are not always right. Editors and agents are not always wrong.

Writers, be aware.



About the Author: Marla Miller RN, MSN writes for MORE.com, *The Writer Magazine* and other publications when she's not re-writing her book proposal on aging. Join her mailing list on www.marketingthemuse.com to receive information about this crazy writing life that includes where you can find Miller's Marketing the Muse workshops.

Some Of My Best Friends Are Writing Problems

By Dan Lambert

On Monday, May 16th, 2011, I was part of a panel discussion on writing. I decided to address the topic of “writing problems I have known.” This is a topic that any writer will wax eloquent about. After all, part of the writing process is confronting and overcoming problems. At the risk of trotting out a well-used cliché, the Chinese word for “problem” is said to also be the word for “opportunity.” Every problem is a potential opportunity to improve your writing. Here are my “Top Six”: the most serious writing problems I have encountered. This article is not about solutions; it is about identifying the problems. I will leave it to you to solve these problems in your own way.

Show, Don't Tell. Professional writers remind new writers that they should describe their characters through their actions. In the film *Back to the Future*, we get to see main character Marty McFly's messy bedroom, rather than being told that he is a messy guy.

Research. Stephen King once called a doctor to ask him if a grown man could swallow a cat. He made this phone call in the name of research. If we do not thoroughly research our writing, an observant reader is going to catch our mistakes. Too many mistakes take the reader out of the fictional world you worked so hard to create.

Description. How much description should we write? In Victorian times, very few middle-class readers were able to travel to other countries. This is why there is so much place description in Victorian novels. Nowadays, your reader may already know what Paris, France or London, England looks like. Still, it is important that we describe the people and places that populate our writing. But how much description is too much?

Character versus Plot. Stories and novels can generally be divided into two types: character-driven and plot-driven. It is a good idea to strike a balance between your characters and your plot. Readers may come away

from your book with memories of a unique character or a clever plot, but you should include healthy doses of both.

Avoiding Clichés. A few years ago, I was watching the Academy Awards broadcast with a friend from China. After the show, I asked her what she thought of it.

“Americans really like to use the word ‘amazing,’” she said.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

She pointed out that almost every Oscar recipient used the adjective “amazing” in their acceptance speeches. I rewound my DVR to watch the show again, and she was right. Winning actors, directors, and producers all used the word “amazing.” “This is an amazing award.” “This is an amazing night.” “This is an amazing experience.” The word “amazing” has become an over-used form of written and verbal communication. In other words, it has become a cliché. Try to purge your own writing of clichés, and you will improve your work.

Try to purge your writing of clichés, and you will improve your work.”

Dialogue and Dialogue Tags. About twenty years ago, science fiction author Harlan Ellison held a writing contest as part of his radio show, *Mike Hodel's Hour 25*. Nobody won. In fact, only one story was deemed publishable by Ellison and the other contest judges. Ellison invited the author to be a guest on *Hour 25*. Ellison and three other professional writers critiqued the young man's story on the air.

I remember Ellison's most humorous criticism. The story involves asteroid miners. An excerpt goes like this: “Move that drill over here!” the foreman barked.”

Ellison correctly pointed out that it is impossible for a man to bark that sentence. “Why not just use ‘the foreman said?’” Ellison suggested. Be careful not to let your characters bark, purr, cough, wheeze, or choke their dialogue. You want to draw attention to the dialogue, not the dialogue tags. “He said” and “she said” will do nicely.

Writing problems will always be with us, but with every writing problem comes a new opportunity to improve our work. A group such as GLAWS gives us the opportunity to share our writing problems with others. More importantly, the group gives us an opportunity to share solutions.



About the Author: Dan Lambert is a writer and educator. His first collection of prose and poetry, *Love and Other Diversions*, is available on Lulu.com. He teaches English at Santa Monica College and East Los Angeles College. His website is dan_lambert.homestead.com.

**The secret to being
a writer is that you have
to write. It's not enough
to think about writing
or to study literature
or plan a future life as
an author. You really have
to lock yourself away,
alone, and get to work.**

-Augusten Burroughs

Expect More, Pay Less

By Rosaline Bacchus

Consumers
voracious caterpillars
gobbling up
the gift of the earth
the creations of man,
fruits of sweat and tears
of laborers in the fields
of workers in the factories.

Caterpillars
grow fat
insatiable appetite,
instant gratification
worshipped and pursued
masters of the world
freedom from aging
Lord over death.

Trees
stand bare
devoid of life.
We revel in our glory,
bloated and bejeweled,
under a dying Sun
on a barren Earth.



About the Author: As a child of Planet Earth, Rosaliene is concerned about the future of our planet and its inhabitants. She is working on her first novel set in the land of her birth, Guyana.

The Necklace

By Leslie Ann Moore

It was an open secret in the town of Courcieville, Louisiana that the white de Courcies and the black Couries were kin.

Gerard de Courcie, patriarch of the family from which the town derived its name, and Samuel Courie, owner of the local home improvement store, shared a common ancestor—none other than Jean-Phillipe de Courcie, the town's founder.

The de Courcies had inherited ten thousand acres of prime farmland and a grand, antebellum mansion they opened up each July Fourth for a town barbecue.

The Courie family had received no share of the original fortune of their ancestor; nevertheless, they'd done well for themselves, despite the many obstacles that folks of color in a small southern town had to overcome. The one inheritance they did have was great-great-grandmere Celeste's necklace.

Courie family tradition held that, upon the birth of her first child, Celeste had been gifted with the gold and aquamarine necklace by her master, Jean-Phillipe, who also happened to be the father of her son, Luc.

The necklace passed to Luc's daughter-in-law, Marie, born a free woman in 1917, and then to her daughter, and finally to Samuel, who had formally presented the necklace to his eldest daughter Jessica on her eighteenth birthday.



Jessie wore Grandmere Celeste's necklace to every Fourth of July barbecue at the de Courcie mansion. Sauntering through the crowd, the pale blue and gold glowing against her mocha skin, Jessie felt strong and beautiful. She always made a point to walk past willowy blond Danielle de Courcie, Gerard's eldest daughter. Jessie secretly reveled in the naked enmity and lust she saw in the other girl's cornflower eyes.

Jessie kept the necklace in a red silk pouch which she hid at the back of her underwear drawer. No one knew it was there except her.

One cold Tuesday evening in January, Jessie came home from a late class at the local community college to find her tiny apartment had been burglarized. The thief had jimmied the bedroom window, left muddy shoe prints on the threadbare carpet, and emptied all her dresser drawers.

He'd taken three things: her portable television, her new camera, and Grandmere Celeste's necklace.

Samuel accompanied his daughter to the police station that evening. A bored desk cop took the report and assured them in a desultory voice that the department would do its best to find the thief, but they shouldn't get their hopes up.

"House burglaries where there's not a lot of value stolen just don't get priority, not with the department having its hands full dealing with all the meth labs poppin' up 'round here like mushrooms after a rainstorm," the cop said, mopping his sweating brow with a blue handkerchief. "Damn heat's turned on too high again... Like a fuckin' oven in here. Oh... beg pardon." His gray eyes flicked to Samuel's face, then, with an embarrassed cough, he busied himself shuffling the stack of papers on his desk.

"Thank you, Officer," Samuel muttered. "Come on, Jess. Let's go."

Heartbroken, Jessie returned to her apartment to clean up the mess and get on with her life.

Days turned into weeks, which melted into months. After a year had passed, Jessie stopped calling the police station. She also stopped searching her apartment in the foolish hope that the necklace had never really been stolen at all, it had simply gotten misplaced, and if she looked hard enough, she'd find it.

On a hot Saturday in July, a year and a half after the theft, Jessie found Grandmere Celeste's necklace in a place she never would have expected.

Stunned to immobility on the sidewalk in front of Kathy's Kountry Kreamery, Jessie stared at the neck of Isabelle, matriarch of the de Courcie family. She had just emerged from Kathy's, her granddaughter Danielle in tow, both of them attacking double scoop cones with relish.

Grandmere Celeste's necklace gleamed against Isabelle's freckled décolletage. Jessie's fingers curled into fists, her eyes narrowed and her nostrils flared. Freed from stasis by anger, she surged forward, then abruptly stopped.

What the hell are you doing, her inner voice shrieked. You can't just run up to Isabelle de Courcie and snatch Grandmere's necklace off her!

A sudden flood of tears wet Jessie's cheeks as she forced herself to admit she could do nothing to retrieve the precious heirloom, not now, anyway. She stood and watched Isabelle and Danielle as they moved up the street, bright heads bobbing with laughter. Anger

wrapped icy fingers around Jessie's ribcage and squeezed until she thought she might pop. Questions swooped through her brain like frantic sparrows.

How did Isabelle de Courcie get hold of Grandmere Celeste's necklace? Has she had it all this time? Did she pay someone to steal it from me?

A cloud passed over the sun, plunging the earth below into cool shadow. Jessie sensed a kindred darkness uncoil itself like a snake within her heart.

It doesn't matter how the old bitch got it, she's not keeping it! It doesn't belong to her, it's mine, and I don't care what I have to do, I'm getting Grandmere's necklace back!

Jessie followed Isabelle and Danielle to a parking lot and watched them climb into Isabelle's shiny silver Escalade. As the SUV roared past, Jessie resisted the urge to run after it, screaming. Instead, she returned to her own dusty Accord, her reason for coming into downtown forgotten. She drove the two miles back to her apartment building with her mind in a fog.

She made it to her door just as the thunderstorm broke. Most afternoons, a bank of dark clouds piled up

One cold Tuesday evening in January, Jessie came home from a late class at the local community college to find her tiny apartment had been burglarized."

in the sky and for around a quarter-hour, rain sluiced down in silvery sheets, flooding potholes, gutters, and depressions. When the sun returned, curls of steam rose from the sodden vegetation, filling the air with the smell of mud and growing things.

Jessie retreated to her bedroom and flopped onto the patchwork quilt that covered her bed. She thought about calling her father and telling him what she'd seen, but decided against it, at least for now. There was nothing he could do either. If Isabelle had paid someone to steal the necklace, she'd never admit to it. All she'd have to say to the police was that her necklace and the stolen one were not the same. She might even claim that the missing Courie jewelry was, in fact, a copy of her own, original de Courcie necklace. The police would never doubt Isabelle's word.

Jessie pounded her pillow in frustration.

That night she dreamed she sat in a rough-walled room, a cooing, pale-skinned baby cradled in her arms. A fire burned on a fieldstone hearth. A man's voice whispered from the shadows, "Ma cherie, let me hold my son."

She lifted the infant and placed him in his father's arms, then looked down and saw an aqua and gold necklace resting against her caramel colored breast.

"My gift to you, ma coeur, for this fine boy. He shall always know the love of his father."

Jessie woke, her face soaked in tears.

She lay in the muggy darkness, her throat constricted and her heart hammering against her ribs.

How could Celeste love him? How?

Jessie could still feel the lingering intensity of her great-great grandparents' feelings for each other, and it bewildered and terrified her.

It's not possible! She had no choice but to submit to him, to whatever he wanted! That's not love...it couldn't be!

And yet...

Jessie could not shake the certainty that these two people had come together, not by violence and hate, but by something else entirely. The necklace was a testament to the power of human emotion and the ability of a man and woman to love each other in spite of their circumstances.

By morning, Jessie had decided to confront Isabelle de Courcie and demand the return of the necklace. She thought about asking her father to accompany her, but decided against it. She wanted to accomplish the reclamation of the family heirloom herself.

She pulled up in front of the estate just as the clock in her Accord's dashboard read ten twenty-eight. A pair of ancient magnolia trees stood sentinel on either side of the wrought-iron gates barring the driveway. Jessie had been up the curving gravel drive many times before, but today, no holiday festivities awaited her on the expanse of manicured lawn fronting the house. On July Fourth, the gates stood open, inviting the common folk to enter, for a brief, happy time, the realm of their betters. Today, the tall iron served its customary purpose, that of marking the inviolable border between the world of the powerful and the world of the ordinary.

Jessie climbed out of her car and stepped up to a little metal box set into one of the masonry gate supports. She pressed a button and waited. After a few seconds, a tinny voice crackled from a speaker. "May I help you?"

"Uh, yes...my name is Jessica Courie and I'm here to see Mrs. de Courcie."

"Do you have an appointment?"

"No...No I don't, but it's very important that I speak to her. She knows my father...Samuel Courie." This was not strictly a lie, as everyone in town knew the owner of Courie's Hardware and Home Improvement Center.

"Just a moment."

Jessie swayed from foot to foot, annoyed and mystified as to why she suddenly had a fierce need to pee. She gritted her teeth and willed her bladder to settle down.

After what seemed like an eternity, the intercom crackled back to life.

"Mrs. de Courcie is not receiving visitors right now. If you'd like to make an appointment..."

"Tell her I've come about the necklace!" Jessie could not keep the anger out of her voice. The intercom answered her with silence.

When the sun returned, curls of steam rose from the sodden vegetation, filling the air with the smell of mud and growing things."

Jessie took several deep breaths to slow her pounding heart.

What if she won't let me in? Then what? Do I climb the wall? She could have me arrested for trespassing...Damn her! She's got to let me in!

With a loud click, the lock disengaged and the gates swung open on well-oiled hinges. Jessie ran to her car and drove through. The gates closed behind her as she steered up the drive toward the house.

A middle-aged black woman in a crisp grey uniform dress stood waiting at the foot of the porch stairs as Jessie parked.

"Hello Mrs. Henderson," Jessie said as she slammed the car door and stuffed her keys into her jeans pocket.

"Hello, Jessie. Mrs. D is in the morning room." Jessie followed the housekeeper as she headed past the front of the house to a path leading toward the back.

"Um, Mrs. Henderson, may I use the bathroom, please?" Jessie flinched at Madge Henderson's stern look

as she pushed open a plain white door to reveal the house's expansive basement kitchen.

"Through the pantry to the left, and hurry, girl. Should've gone before you came. Don't do to keep Mrs. D waiting."

Jessie mumbled her thanks and followed the housekeeper's pointing finger. After relieving herself, Jessie followed Madge Henderson up the kitchen stairs to the first floor.

Jessie looked about her, taking in the beauty of her surroundings. She'd never actually set foot in the de Courcie mansion until this very moment. The July Forth celebration always took place on the front lawn, with port-a-potties provided to serve the townsfolk's bodily needs. Only friends of the family were allowed to use the flush facilities inside the house.

Madge paused in front of a set of half-open double doors and indicated that Jessie should stay put. She slipped through, and Jessie heard the soft buzz of voices, then Madge returned.

"Mrs. D will see you now," the housekeeper said, and before Jessie entered the room, added, "Whatever it is you've come here for, be prepared."

What the hell does that mean, Jessie wondered. She frowned at Madge's retreating back, then turned and walked through the doors.

"Jessica. You're Samuel's eldest daughter."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Do come in, Jessica."

Isabelle de Courcie sat in a leather wing-backed chair, part of a pair that formed a seating arrangement in the center of the room, along with a matching sofa. An unlit stone fireplace anchored the wall at Isabelle's back, and a large Oriental carpet hid most of the wood floor underfoot. A grand piano stood in one corner, a concert harp beside it. Old oil paintings hung on the walls.

Jessie walked to the sofa and sat, not like a welcome guest, relaxing against the cushions, but perched on the edge, as if she expected to be summarily ejected at any moment. She clasped her hands in front of her to stop them from shaking.

"What can I do for you, Jessica?" Isabelle spoke in a soft drawl that, for some reason, reminded Jessie of her father.

"I came about the necklace...my grandmother's...great-great grandmother's, actually."

Isabelle smoothed an imperceptible wrinkle in her

cream silk trouser leg. The light from the morning sun streaming through a picture window brought out the highlights in her silver blond hair.

"Would you like something to drink, dear?" she asked. Jessie shook her head and took a deep breath.

"You have my grandmere Celeste's necklace. It was stolen from me and I've come to get it back!"

The words tumbled out almost before Jessie could form them in her brain. Isabelle's hazel eyes narrowed.

"I don't know what you mean, Jessica. I'm not in the habit of stealing other people's jewelry." Her coral-lined mouth set in a hard line.

"No, that's not..." Jessie squeezed her eyes shut for a heartbeat, took another deep breath, and willed herself to relax. "I didn't mean to imply that you stole it, Mrs. de Courcie...A year and a half ago, my apartment was robbed and the thief took something very precious from me. A gold necklace set with aquamarines. That necklace was a gift from my great-great grandfather Jean-Phillipe de Courcie to my great-great grandmother Celeste, his slave. I know you know the story, so please don't pretend you don't. I also know you have the necklace now because I saw you wearing it yesterday while you and Danielle were out shopping. I don't really care how or where you got it, I just want it back. It rightfully belongs to me."

"Well, well," Isabelle murmured. She gazed through the picture window at a back garden planted with rose bushes. Her square jaw and patrician nose seemed familiar to Jessie.

She looks like one of those old statues from ancient Rome, Jessie thought.

"My roses are doing really well, 'specially the Lady Dianas. Should get me a prize this year at the county fair." Isabelle looked back at Jessie. "My granddaughter gave me that necklace for my birthday," she said. "What makes you think it's the same necklace?"

"Because...Because it's identical!" Jessie reached into her back pocket and withdrew a photo. She brandished it at Isabelle. "This photo was taken by my sister at our family Christmas party two years ago." She stabbed a finger at the image of herself. "You can clearly see I'm wearing the necklace...You can't deny it looks exactly like the one Danielle gave you."

Isabelle's eyes flicked to the photo then settled again on Jessie's face.

"I can see the similarity, but I'm sorry, Jessica. It simply is not the same necklace."

Jessie felt like a vise had tightened around her chest.

She opened her mouth to speak, but only an incoherent croak came out.

This can't be happening! She's lying... Why is she lying?

"Now, I know you feel the loss of your family heirloom quite keenly and I wish you luck in recovering it. I'll put a word in with the police about it, and ask them to try as hard as they can to find your necklace."

Hot tears stung Jessie's eyes. She stood and glared at Isabelle.

"Why are you doing this? Why are you lying to me?"

Isabelle looked away.

"WHY?" Jessie screamed.

A sharp knock sounded on the door.

"Mrs. D, you all right in there?" Madge Henderson called out.

"Yes, Madge, everything's fine. Miss Courie was just leaving."

"You'll pay for this. I don't know how or when, but you will," Jessie sobbed. She flung the photo at Isabelle's face and ran from the room, nearly knocking over a startled Madge. As she fled the house through the front door, she tripped and fell to one knee. Crying now with both pain and rage, Jessie limped to her car and flung open the door. She sank into the driver's seat and rested her head on the steering wheel. She screamed and moaned and banged her hands on the dashboard until the storm of fury passed, to be replaced by a desolate ache.

Her knee throbbed with each heartbeat. Gritting her teeth against the pain, she slammed the car door and turned the key. The Accord's engine roared to life.

"Jessie! Jessie wait!"

Madge Henderson approached the car. She bent down and peered at Jessie through the passenger side window.

"Jessie, I got to give you something... something you and your daddy outta have." Madge thrust her hand in the car and dropped a small square of paper onto the seat. "Show it to your daddy, girl."

Jessie picked up the paper and stared at an old black and white photograph of a beautiful young woman holding a baby. She turned it over and saw the words Me and Jamie, Sept. 2nd, 1960 written in elegant script.

"I don't understand." Jessie looked at Madge and saw a tenderness in the older woman's eyes that hadn't

been there before.

"You will." Madge nodded, then stepped away from the car. Jessie put the Accord in gear and drove back up the drive, through the already opened gates out onto the road and headed home.

Later that evening, Jessie sat in her parents' living room and told them everything that had happened.

"I can go to the police and tell them what I know, but it's my word against Isabelle de Courcie's. Of course they'll believe her!"

"Are you absolutely sure it was Grandmere Celeste's necklace, honey?" Agnes, Jessie's mother, asked. "I mean, it could have been a different one, just like Isabelle says."

"No Mama. I know what I saw. It was my necklace! The old bitch knows it, too... That's why she wouldn't show it to me, the thief."

"Jessica, watch your language," Samuel admonished. "Whatever you think of Isabelle de Courcie, she's not a thief. She's done a lot for the folks of this town, both black and white. She's a good woman."

Jessie snorted. "I know she's one of your best customers, Daddy, but doesn't it bother you, even a little, that she might have our family heirloom and refuses to give it back?"

Samuel fixed his hazel eyes on his daughter. "We don't know that for sure."

Jessie stared at her father, her mind a swirl of confusion.

Why is he defending her?

She could think of nothing else to say that would move him. Instead, she pulled the old photo Madge had given her out of her purse and handed it to her father.

"Mrs. Henderson said to show this to you," she said.

Samuel scrutinized the picture, then handed it to his wife, who bit her lip and placed it face down on the dining room table.

"I don't know why Madge Henderson thinks this photo would mean anything to me," Samuel said. He cleared his throat and for a few heartbeats, he seemed to forget what to do with his hands. Abruptly, he stood and announced, "I'm getting some ice cream. Anyone else want any?"

"Sure, Daddy. I'll take some," Jessie said. She watched her father leave the room, then looked at her mother.

"Mrs. Henderson seemed so sure this picture would

mean something to Daddy. I wonder why?"

"I don't know, honey" Agnes said. She hugged her daughter. "I'm so sorry about Grandmere Celeste's necklace. I know you think you'll never get it back, but I have a feeling Isabelle de Courcie will have a change of heart."

Jessie sped down the road toward her apartment, her mind a jumble of conflicting emotions.

Why wasn't Daddy as angry as I am? It's like he doesn't want to believe Isabelle has my necklace. Damn her, the bony old thieving bitch!

Jessie gripped the steering wheel and imagined she had Isabelle's neck between her fingers. She squeezed until her knuckles shone like pale knobs in the dim light of the dashboard. She pressed her foot down hard on the gas pedal and the old Accord shuddered and jolted as it gathered speed. The trees at the side of the road whipped past in ordered ranks.

That necklace is mine! It belongs to me, not her! I hate her! I hope she chokes and dies!

Jessie's heart slammed like a trapped wild thing against her ribs. The roadbed, a black blur in the Accord's headlights, started to shimmer and dissolve as tears flooded her eyes and spilled down her face.

Somehow, I'll make her give it back!

A black shape rushed at Jessie from out of the darkness beyond her windshield.

Toolatetoolatetoolate! Her brain screamed as her foot slammed down on the brake pedal.

As the sound of crunching metal and squealing tires filled her ears, as the world outside the Accord did a lazy somersault, the last thing Jessie saw before the dark claimed her was a pale face topped with silver-blond hair, hazel eyes wide with horror, coral-lined mouth stretched in an O.

Jessie woke three days later in the county hospital. She only knew how much time had passed because her family had been there at her side the entire time and had told her so.

A parade of doctors, nurses, and orderlies came through the ICU over the next twenty-four hours, poking, sticking, adjusting, and changing all of the assorted medical devices attached to and protruding from her. A compound fracture of the left femur, several rib fractures, a lacerated spleen, and a fractured left radius comprised the list of her injuries, along with multiple cuts

and bruises.

The day after she woke, the police came. They questioned her about the accident and Jessie answered truthfully. Of the accident itself, she had no memory. The last thing she recalled was leaving her parents' house that night. The police took her statement, then went away, leaving a cloud of unease in their wake.

As Agnes fussed with the gray hospital blanket covering her daughter's torso, Jessie reached out and touched her mother's hand.

"Tell me what happened, Mama." Her voice sounded rusty and strange to her ears, like that of a much older woman.

"Jessie, honey, you need your rest. There's plenty of time for telling later on, when you're stronger."

"No, Mama. Tell me now. I need to know."

Agnes sighed and pulled a chair up beside Jessie's bed. She sat and closed her eyes for a heartbeat. When she opened them, they glistened with tears.

"Your car hit an SUV out on Route Six, an Escalade, so it didn't get smashed nearly as bad as your little Honda. You ended up in the ditch, upside down."

"What happened to the other driver?"

"She was killed, honey. Apparently, she was standing by the side of her car when your car hit hers. The cops say the Escalade was partly blocking the road, it was dark, and she didn't have her hazard lights on. One of her tires was flat. They're telling us it's probably going to be ruled an accident."

"The other driver was a woman? Do we know her? Who was she Mama?"

Agnes wiped her eyes with a tissue.

"Isabelle de Courcie," she whispered.

Jessie stared at her mother, unsure of what she'd just heard.

"You mean...I ran down...I killed..." Her voice trailed into silence.

"Now, honey...It was an accident! You didn't mean to hurt Isabelle..."

"But that's just it, Mama!" Jessie twisted the edge of the blanket into a ball between clenched fingers. "I remember now what I was thinking, right before I...right before the accident. I wanted to kill her...I wanted her to die for stealing Grandmere Celeste's necklace from me!"

"Don't do this, Jessie. You know you can't just wish

another person dead!” Agnes laid a hand on her daughter’s cheek. “Isabelle dying out on that road is not...is NOT...your fault!” Agnes reached toward the floor and picked up her purse. She withdrew something and placed it on the blanket. Jessie stared at a padded manila envelope with her name written on it in elegant script.

“What’s this?” She touched the envelope and it responded with a soft rattle.

“The police gave it to me to give to you. They found it on the front seat of Isabelle’s SUV.”

With trembling hands, Jessie opened the envelope and looked inside. Something metallic glinted back at her, gold and aquamarine. She reached inside and withdrew Grandmere Celeste’s necklace, along with a folded piece of notepaper. Agnes gasped and covered her mouth with her hands.

“Did you know what this was, Mama?”

Agnes shook her head.

“I suspected, but I didn’t want to open it. Isabelle meant this for you.”

Jessie unfolded the note and read.

Dear Jessica,

I am returning something that rightfully belongs to you. I am just so very sorry you had to meet me this way. If I’d made different choices a long time ago, you and I would not be strangers now, but I didn’t. I was too afraid, and truth be told, I still am. Forgive me.

Your grandmother,

Isabelle de Courcie

“What does the note say, honey?” Agnes asked.

Jessie shook her head.

“Nothing much, just that she’s sorry she stole my necklace.”

Jessie crumpled the note in her fist and shoved it back in the envelope. She handed it to her mother.

“Please, Mama, would you throw this away for me?”



About the Author: Leslie Ann Moore has been a storyteller since childhood. Her debut novel, *Griffin's Daughter*, the first in the *Griffin's Daughter Trilogy*, won the 2008 IBPA Ben Franklin Award for Best First Fiction. She is a native of Los Angeles and practices the ancient and beautiful art of belly dancing.

On A Back Road To Arroyo Seco

By Daniel Hentschel

In a season of clowning evenings, sparrows
align and lilt like Dante’s lustful
disavowed from the air. The sun is crisp.

A hollow car rounds a
low lying hill; from its mirror hangs
a compass leaning centripetal. I raise
my left palm of ravines and signs;
I am empty and blessed and look west past.

The winter sky
at night is Braille to the naked eye.



About the Author: Daniel Hentschel studied Creative Writing at Georgetown University where he received his degree in English and Philosophy. He established the Georgetown Poetics Society and was a Mount Vernon Poetry finalist. His first book, *Mendicant Suites*, is available on Amazon.

Endless Echoes

Five Classics Especially Relevant Today

By Mike Robinson

While many of us may not dispute the status of ‘classic’ for many esteemed tomes, we can’t deny that a good lot of them might not seem pertinent to us today. The assumption is that they emerged from the fog of their age with the clearest snapshots of what went on, and, as the scholars tell us, are superior in their historical, intellectual and social utility. Yet as many might argue, we live in this age, in this time, with these brains and these problems; as such, the ‘classics’ seldom bear greater significance than boosting GPAs or impressing a date.

When read in a certain light, however, when approached with a certain frame of mind, one finds in the following works no decrease in their ongoing reverberation. They continue to tear us open, and tell us who we are.

A phenomenal bestseller in the years after its release though now sadly neglected, *Main Street* by Sinclair Lewis is crucial for anyone wishing to better understand the broad tensions between City America and Rural America. Carol Kennicott, cultured idealist, is transplanted into Gopher Prairie with futile dreams of carving it into a classical utopia. In the modern voices of Tea Partiers and their liberal decriers, we can still hear Carol and her contesters.

For very different insights into familiar economic woes, there’s *Miss Lonelyhearts* by Nathaniel West and *Galapagos* by Kurt Vonnegut. The former involves a nameless man running an advice column during the Great Depression, all the while struggling to reconcile his religious faith with the suffering that each day pours into his mail box. The latter, in my opinion one of Vonnegut’s best, takes a more macro and darkly comical look at an international crisis, how we create our own problems, and how the human species might be better off had evolution not overgifted us with our big brains.

Anyone who speaks high of “rugged individualism” or the Zane Grey-glory of the Wild West ought to be handed a copy of Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian*, easily one of the most brutal and powerful novels of the late twentieth century. Violence is deep in the American DNA, McCarthy reminds us, as is a kind of primal loneliness. Such a cocktail can put madness within arm’s reach. However, the possible fruit of this individualism, and the benefits of a chronic distrust of authority, are well-captured not by an American author but by Herman Hesse in his *Siddhartha*, when the titular seeker rejects the Buddha himself in favor of discovering his own inner teachings. Once a staple of the counter-culture, it is nowadays a poignant reminder that we all contain the wisdom we need. It’s only a matter of time, and tools – tools like books.



About the Author: A charter member of GLAWS, Mike Robinson is the managing editor of *Literary Landscapes*. He has published a dozen short stories, and his novel *Skunk Ape Semester* debuts this fall. He is also a freelance editor and can be reached at mrobwriter@gmail.com.

Glorious Day!

By Daniel Hentschel

WHAT A glorious day!
I went out in the city
And spent nothing.

Five Things To Address After Completing The First Draft Of Your Novel

By Lisa Marguerite Mora

Writing the first draft of a novel is a major accomplishment and not to be undertaken by the faint of heart. Celebrate. Have a meal out. Buy something you've coveted. Or just go someplace beautiful and soak up that experience for awhile. Now put the novel away. Start another project if you must, or go do something completely different. Take an art class or catch up on all those movies you missed.

Next: don't look at your work again for a few weeks. After a chunk of time has passed, take out your manuscript and read with a cold eye, keeping these in mind:

1. Is there a balance between action, description, and dialogue?

Avoid walls of dialogue where people are talking and talking and talking, and description that goes on and on with no clear purpose. And yes, action too, can be relentless. Our brains like to take a different direction—frequently. We get bored if the prose drones along in the same tone, the same subject, the same novelistic variable. Mix it up. Switch gears before the brain zones out.

2. Do we know what's going on in the scenes? Do you know why you've written the scene?

Do we know whose talking, where they are, what the mood is? Can we see it? Can we feel it? Does the scene serve the storyline?

3. Are there gaps in logic or omissions? If a scene starts in the kitchen, why are we suddenly in the backyard? Why weren't we told Imelda has a black belt in karate in the first chapter instead of when she faces her attacker on page 200?

4. Is there unbelievable dialogue used for the wrong reasons or that is not in character? Don't say: "John, your mother who broke her hip last week is calling from the hospital." Or a character whose voice tends to be cynical, later in the story

sounds cheerful and sweet using language that is not in keeping with what you know about them.

5. Are you creating psychological tension within the action or dialogue? Rather than "Miranda glared at Joseph and slapped him hard across his face," use detail to draw out the moment: "Miranda glared at Joseph. He needed a shave and the white of his eyes were cluttered with tiny red veins, a treacherous and deceitful web. Three times the clock on the wall struck while outside the first drops of rain clicked against the window. She was so close she could hear him swallow. Miranda took a breath and slapped him hard across his face."

The great writers can break all these rules from the sheer force of their voice."

The great writers can break all these rules from the sheer force of their voice. Often the writers we still read made up for what they didn't do, by doing a few things that registered off the scale in originality and vision. Melville, Bronte, Henry James, David Foster Wallace. If you want to write a decent novel, follow these rules until you've earned the right to break them.

There are many other considerations when editing your novel. But if you address the five here, you are on a strong path to creating a living breathing experience: a book worth reading and maybe reading again.



About the Author: Lisa Marguerite Mora is a prize winning poet and published writer. A nominated member of PEN, she now facilitates Wordsmith Creative Writing Workshops. Lisa was a recent panelist for Beyond the First Draft for the Greater Los Angeles Writers Society. Lisa is working on a novel. www.barringtoneditorial.com.

The Fisherman And His Wife

A Revisionist Tale

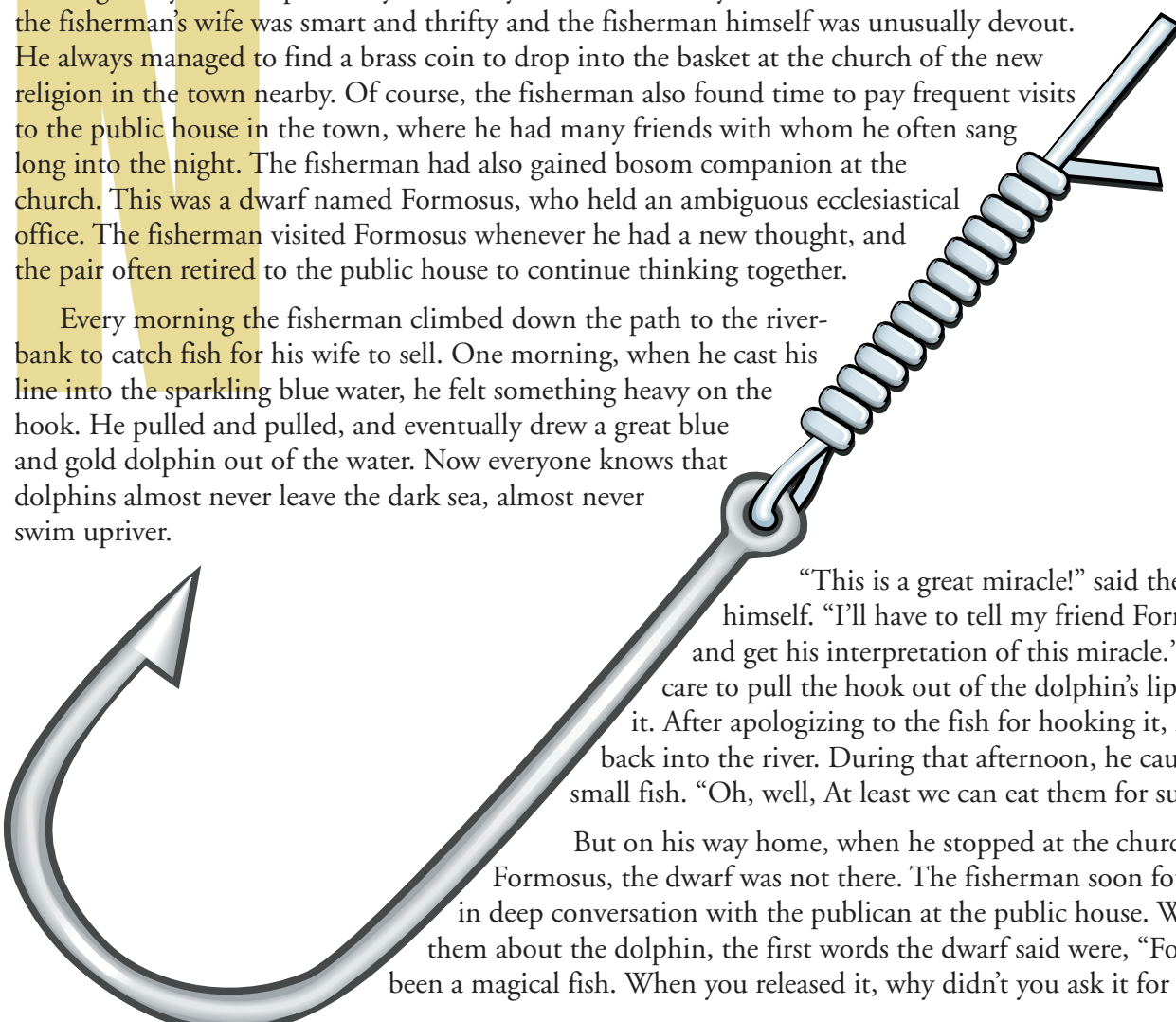
By Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D.

Historical note: I took the name Formosus (9th century) from one of the popes of the Dark Ages. After his death, his body was exhumed, dressed in papal vestments, and put on trial for political crimes. The corpse was found guilty, and the vestments were torn off it, then it was thrown into the Tiber. A monk pulled it out. It is said that the corpse was then burned. Like the rest of us, popes are susceptible to the seven deadly sins.

Of course, if the fisherman resembles anyone who supposedly works in Washington D.C. today...

Near the bend of the great blue river where it empties into dark sea there once lived a fisherman and his wife. Although they were so poor they had always lived in a rickety hovel on the little bluff above the mouth of the river, the fisherman's wife was smart and thrifty and the fisherman himself was unusually devout. He always managed to find a brass coin to drop into the basket at the church of the new religion in the town nearby. Of course, the fisherman also found time to pay frequent visits to the public house in the town, where he had many friends with whom he often sang long into the night. The fisherman had also gained bosom companion at the church. This was a dwarf named Formosus, who held an ambiguous ecclesiastical office. The fisherman visited Formosus whenever he had a new thought, and the pair often retired to the public house to continue thinking together.

Every morning the fisherman climbed down the path to the riverbank to catch fish for his wife to sell. One morning, when he cast his line into the sparkling blue water, he felt something heavy on the hook. He pulled and pulled, and eventually drew a great blue and gold dolphin out of the water. Now everyone knows that dolphins almost never leave the dark sea, almost never swim upriver.



“This is a great miracle!” said the fisherman to himself. “I’ll have to tell my friend Formosus about this and get his interpretation of this miracle.” He took great care to pull the hook out of the dolphin’s lip without tearing it. After apologizing to the fish for hooking it, he released it back into the river. During that afternoon, he caught only a few small fish. “Oh, well, At least we can eat them for supper.”

But on his way home, when he stopped at the church to see Formosus, the dwarf was not there. The fisherman soon found his friend in deep conversation with the publican at the public house. When he told them about the dolphin, the first words the dwarf said were, “Fool! It must have been a magical fish. When you released it, why didn’t you ask it for a favor?”

"I never thought of that," the fisherman said, "but it's a good idea. I think I'll go back and see if it's still there. Uhhh, but what would I ask it for?"

The dwarf was very clever. "You could ask it for a nicer home for your poor wife. And be sure to tell her it was my suggestion."

Unfortunately, on his way down the cliff in the dark, the fisherman slipped and injured his legs. Climbing painfully back up, he thought he saw a large eye watching him from the river, but when he limped through his door, he had very little to say to his wife.

"Oh, well," said the wife. "Misfortunes happen. But how are we going to eat tomorrow? There's almost nothing left on the shelf." She bandaged her husband's legs (and other parts of his body) and put him to bed. When Formosus came by first thing in the morning with a prayer book and a bucket of beer, she let the men talk and went outside by herself to think. "Well, I guess I'll have to be the fisherman today," she finally said to herself.

When she went back in to tell her husband her plan, Formosus took her aside. "I was going to give this talisman to your good husband," he said, "but I will give it to you instead. It's a charm to protect you from the dolphin's power, which is surely evil." He handed the wife a piece of parchment attached to a purple cord. Drawn on the parchment was a man-faced fish wearing a tall, oval head covering. "This will keep you safe," he said. "And remember that you must give my church a tithe of any fortune you receive from this dolphin."

When she reached the riverbank after taking a different path, the wife cast her line into the water and promptly caught a fish of respectable size. As she was unhooking it and setting it into her basket, she heard singing in the water. She promptly held the talisman out over the river and recited a summoning spell she had learned from the town's seeress.

Subtle dolphin of the sea,

As I command thee, come to me.

I wish to beg a boon of thee.

After a minute, she was astonished to see a great blue and gold dolphin come swimming to the shore. "What kind of spell is this?" it asked, "And who thinks I can be bound up by it? Why do you call me?"

The fisherman's wife curtsied. "My husband caught and released you yesterday," the dolphin nodded, "and his friend said that you might grant us a favor. Good Sir, let me beg this of you. We live in a hovel. It's cold

and drafty and it stinks. My husband is unable to catch enough fish to enable us to earn enough to repair our roof and hearth. Now, I don't want to vex you, Sir, but could you perhaps give us a new home?"

The dolphin considered this for a minute. "Your husband has a good heart," it said, "and so do you. Your request is reasonable. I'll grant your wish." It waved a fin at the wife's basket, and suddenly the basket was filled with fish to sell. "Go home now and see what you will see."

The wife stuffed the talisman into her apron, curtisied again, and climbed up the path. She walked home singing.

The hovel was gone! In its place stood a pretty little cottage with a water-tight roof and two windows of real glass. Her husband was sitting on a little carved stone bench outside the door. As soon as he saw her, he stood up, using a crutch a neighbor had made for him, and led her inside, where he showed her a kitchen with a full larder, a sitting room with comfortable furniture, and bedroom with a tall, curtained bed.

"Is this not fine?" he asked. "It's surely what we—what you deserve. I'm sure the dolphin sent it. Formosus is the best friend we have, for that dolphin was obviously caught in his spell."

The wife had little to say, except that someone had to sell the fish she'd brought home. Her husband was unable to carry the basket and manage his crutch, so with another look around the cottage, she set out for the marketplace. After selling all the fish, she bought a few things she needed and hid the remaining coins in a safe and secret place.

The next day, the fisherman's legs were weaker. Even with two crutches, he was barely able to stand, so he sent his wife to the church with a silver coin for the basket. When Formosus came out of the side chapel, he thanked her and said he would watch over her husband for her. The wife sighed and picked up the fisherman's gear and headed for the river.

Three days later, the fisherman was still sitting on the carved stone bench, but he seemed dissatisfied. "Wife," he said, "my friend Formosus says we surely deserve a better house. After all, it's because of his charm that I—we—you received a boon from the dolphin."

The wife put down her broom, picked up the fishing gear, and set out for the river. Today, she noticed that the sun was hidden behind gloomy clouds and the surface of the river was gray.

Subtle dolphin of the sea,

As I command thee, come to me.

I wish to beg a boon of thee.

The dolphin swam up and raised his head. "Oh, it's you. What do you want?"

"Not I, Sir Dolphin, but my husband. We seem to have changed roles, and now I must support him. And now he's not satisfied with our nice little cottage. He and his friend say it's insufficient for his ... well, he says, for his improved status in the town."

"Good wife, for you and your good heart, I'll grant the wish."

The fisherman's wife curtsied to the dolphin again and set about fishing. When her basket was full, she went back up the path, not really expecting to find anything new.

But, lo and behold! there above the river stood a great castle lording it over the town. As she crossed the drawbridge, she saw the fisherman sitting in a tall sedan chair with four men standing behind him. Formosus was seated in an identical sedan chair. They promptly led the wife into the great hall, where they were served a dinner of venison and stuffed quails and doves' tongues by a butler and three pretty pages, one to serve the fisherman, one to serve Formosus, one to serve the wife. The wife sent her basket of fish to the town's marketplace with one of the other servants. She put the money he brought her in a safe and secret place.

After a few days, the fisherman called his wife into his bedroom. "Wife," he said, "I want to be King. My greatness is becoming known far and wide. People come to listen to me. They ask me to judge their disputes. Formosus agrees that I should be King. Go back to the dolphin. Speak the spell and demand that it make me King."

"But, husband, how can you be King? You're of humble birth."

"Simpleton, do as I command! Go!" And the fisherman turned away and commanded the publican to deliver more wine.

Shaking her head, the fisherman's wife pulled out the talisman again and climbed down the path to the river. She saw that half the sky was dark and threatening, that the surface of the river was black and rough.

Subtle dolphin of the sea,

As I command thee, come to me.

I wish to beg a boon of thee.

"What does he want?" the dolphin asked.

The good wife blushed. "He says he deserves to be King."

"Does he know the responsibilities of a King?"

The wife smiled. "He's thinking of the honor and the glory and the fame. But he's my husband, and I want to please him."

"Well," said the dolphin, "you're a good woman. You're doing the best you can do. Great Mother Earth will reward you. Go home. Your husband is King."

Now there were great heraldic flags flying from the tallest towers of the castle. There was an army of knights practicing with their swords and lances in the courtyard. The common people of the town were waiting quietly in line for an audience with the King, who was seated on a golden throne.

He handed the wife a piece of parchment attached to a purple cord. Drawn on the parchment was a man-faced fish wearing a tall, oval head covering."

"Well, husband, I see you're King now."

"Yes. I am King."

And he dismissed the common people and showed her around the throne room, which was paved with marble. Golden chandeliers hung from the ceilings, and the walls were hidden by golden tapestries. The ladies in waiting were sitting in a corner with their embroidery and the Fool was singing a foolish song. Formosus, wearing a bishop's miter, sat on an ebony throne beside, and one step down from, the King's throne. He was now the Chancellor.

After a week, the fisherman summoned his wife into the Hall of Mirrors. "Wife, I find that time hangs heavy on my hands. Formosus says that a gentleman of my dignity should be Emperor. King is insufficient. Go back to the dolphin and command it to make me Emperor."

"But, husband, it's a fine thing to be King. And I cannot command the magical dolphin. It's only through his kindness that you have received so much."

"Nevertheless, I am dissatisfied. Let me Emperor. I will build a great cathedral for the new religion and Formosus will be my Minister, General, and Champion, all

in one. Go! I command you!” And the King turned away and commanded his pages to bring more wine.

Heavy of heart, the wife went to the river. She saw that the sky was all black except for one small patch of heavenly blue in the distance. Fierce winds were blowing and great waves were agitating the river, which was grayish green. She and took out the talisman and tried three times before she could recite the spell properly.

Subtle dolphin of the sea,

As I command thee, come to me.

I wish to beg a boon of thee.

“What does he require now?” the dolphin asked.

“Alack and alas, he wants to be Emperor.”

“Go home. He is Emperor.”

The magnificent palace the fisherman’s wife saw was ten times more resplendent than the King’s castle. From top to bottom, it was decorated with fine marble statues, and soldiers in uniforms decorated with medals and epaulets with golden fringe were drilling in the courtyard, blowing their trumpets and beating their kettle drums. A part of the old familiar town had been leveled, and now men swarmed like ants building the cathedral.

The wife crept into the palace by the scullery door. Following the sound of singing, she found her husband in the throne room, which was as large as a whole city. Its floor was inlaid with a mosaic of precious stones and the walls were too precious to touch. The Emperor sat on a golden throne a mile high and held the orb and scepter in his hands. Formosus sat on his throne, too, and he wore an amethyst ring as big as a mountain.

“Well, husband, you have your wish. What more can you want?”

“I must think on that awhile.”

Formosus stood up on his throne to be able to whisper in the Emperor’s ear, and they conferred together at length while the courtiers and bishops and generals waited in respectful silence.

“I will be Pope.”

“But the dolphin won’t do that! He wouldn’t want to.”

“Nonsense. You’ve got the spell to control the damn fish. If it can make me Emperor, it can just as easily make me Pope. I must be Pontiff Of All The World.”

Now the wife began to be frightened. Where would this end? “But husband—”

“Woman, you are a nothing but a feeble vessel. You

are my vassal. Do as I command, or I will sell you as a slave to the Moors.” And the Emperor turned away and commanded his generals to bring more wine.

Shaking down to her clogs, the poor wife trudged back to the river. It was now as dark as deepest night. Fearsome winds were blowing up and down, and a great storm was brewing over the sea. The waves nearly washed the woman off the path.

“Well,” said the dolphin, “now what?”

“I am ashamed to say it. Yet, he is my husband, and I have loved him for many years. He would be Pope.”

“He is foolish behind measure. Still, you don’t put on airs. So, yes. Go home.”

The new throne room as nearly as large as the whole known world. The papal throne was solid alabaster and as vast as ten barbarian cities. The room was overflowing with gold and candles and works of art and incense. Multitudes of nuns and monks were on their knees before the fisherman, who wore the triple crown and vestments of cloth of gold.

“Husband, are you Pope?”

“Wife, I am Pope.”

“Are you content?”

The fisherman sat without moving. Not acknowledging the prayers coming from below, he sat as still as one of the marble pillars supporting his throne. Soon Formosus, who wore a red cape and tall red shoes, spoke into the fisherman’s ear, and they began to confer aloud concerning indulgences to be sold, nephews to be promoted, nieces to be rewarded, lands to be conquered, armies to be purchased, riches to be seized, and art to be created to magnify the new Pope’s magnificence.

A week later, the fisherman’s wife was summoned again.

“Wife, why cannot I command the sun and the moon to rise and set and the stars to shine?”

“Husband, what on earth are you saying?”

“I must be Lord of the Universe. Formosus says that for a man of my stature, dignity, and intellect, Pope is insufficient.”

“But, husband, no one can make you Lord of the Universe. There are only Great Mother Earth and Her Sisters. They have always managed the universe. I beg you—be satisfied with what you are!”

But the fisherman flew into a rage, and it was such a terrible rage that the earth quaked beneath him and

thunder and lightning split the sky above him. “I will be Lord of the Universe! I will command the cosmos to move!”

At the river, all was dark. All was calm. The water and the land shone under a blood-red light.

“What now?” asked the dolphin.

“I cannot say it. Wise and Holy Dolphin, he would be—no, I cannot say it. Only our Great Mother Earth can command the universe, but even She is not so proud.” And the wife fumbled with the talisman and finally threw it into the river. “I cannot ... but I ... but still ... still, I want to please my husband, for I have always loved him.”

“Such foolishness,” said the dolphin. “He suffers from hubris, and you are his enabler. The talisman and the spell? They never had any power over me. I granted your wishes out of a larger power that I am part of, but now you have touched the end of my patience. Your husband has no shame. And the dwarf Formosus is a tempter unto overweening pride. He was sent for fools like your husband. Be done with this folly. Go home.” The dolphin sank into the river. A minute later, the wife heard the echo of its last words. “Go home.”

She sank to her knees and cried, but the dolphin swam away toward the dark sea. Finally, the fisherman’s wife crawled up the path. And there, where it had stood for as long as anyone could remember, there stood the old hovel. The fisherman was limping back and forth, naked and mad, soiling himself, kicking at empty wine bottles, pulling out his hair, shaking his fists and cursing all the goddesses and gods.

The wife stared at him for a long time, and then, finally, she retrieved her money from its safe and secret place and, without looking back, set off along the road beside the river.

And Formosus the dwarf? He was driven from the town to live with the beasts of the field. He ate grass with the wild asses, spoke no known language, and his nails grew until they were like birds’ claws. Eventually, he crawled downstream toward the unknown lands.



About the Author: Barbara Ardinger, Ph.D. (www.barbaraardinger.com), is the author of *Secret Lives*, a new novel about crones and other magical folks, and *Pagan Every Day*, a unique daybook of daily meditations. Her day job is freelance editing. She has worked on more than 250 books, both fiction and nonfiction, on a wide range of topics. She lives in Long Beach.

Poems

By Daniel Hentschel

As mayflies catch fire and sunflowers clasp sun,
what is a human,
you ask, meant to do? Is a human the king fisher
who
fishes for his soul—big as the tale may be?

MY MOUTH IS a forest
and the wild leopard of your tongue
drives the wind through the trees
crying, “kisses, kisses, kisses!”

I can see that you are
the little wind
the little wind lost
in a musicbox.

The Eyes Of God

Excerpt from a “Xander Hunt” Novel

By T.N. Todaro

We all have a role to play in the grand scheme of things. For most of us, it is written in stone.

For some, it's ad-lib.

– Montgomery J. Buffalo III

Governor General of Nuevo California

History tended to judge its legends by the grandeur of their actions, rather than the truth of their motivations. This was especially fortunate for Major Xander Hunt, who otherwise would have been branded incurably reckless rather than heroic under fire. There was something in his nature that believed he could fight better, think smarter, or solve problems faster by diving into the deep end of the pool. A mindset that plunged him into dark waters the moment he approached the old warehouse.

Hunt unholstered his S&W 5000X, a .50 caliber, double-action handgun that required a special individual to wield. He had dubbed it the Eastwood Special after an action hero from the vintage days of cinema, not because it empowered him, but because he felt a kinship with the actor's inner pain.

He used the tip of the Eastwood to nudge the warehouse door open, which swung wide with a groan. He followed it into an ominous cavity of shadows, alert for the slightest hint of movement, the glint of gunmetal, anything that might foreshadow his death or dismemberment.

And then there were perps. There were always perps, oozing out of the earth like mutant vermin, anxious to make their bones with the river gangs by killing a federal agent. Especially one with a pedigree like Hunt's. It was the reality of life for a LEO in New San Angeles, like recurring earthquakes – something else he knew well.

Inside, the warehouse was a downer. Instead of walls sprayed with gang signs in garish colors or burnt with a hand laser, he found a lifeless cavern as eerily haunting as an abandoned tomb. The only color came from the pale light of the moon as it beamed in through small windows above the rafters and danced on a latticework of cobwebs, cold eyes from a colder world.

Hunt adjusted the contrast of his night-vision goggles, then ventured deeper into the warehouse, aiming the Eastwood at one shadow after the next. In the digital light of the NVGs, old cargo containers glowed like giant loaves of bread, each marked with a history that no longer mattered. They would have made suitable cover if the open space between him and the next stack weren't fifty-odd feet, which left him exposed in all directions.

He usually moved with the stealth of a jungle predator – except for tonight. He had only advanced a few paces before stepping onto a loose patch of gravel. It crackled beneath his boot like fireworks. Echoed off the corrugated walls.

He cursed. *So much for the element of surprise.*

He reassessed his surroundings, knowing that things could change quickly in the urban jungles of New San Angeles. He was somewhat disappointed that he remained unchallenged.

The warehouse district of San Pedro had suffered badly after the Big One and a devastating series of aftershocks had reshaped the Southland into a myriad of island communities, broad peninsulas and muddy canals that flowed inland for miles. Malibu had crumbled into a raging sea, Orange County became a shallow lake, and the Channel Islands had split into atolls. Almost six years later, parts of the Southland were still being rebuilt with a new respect for Mother Earth, though the shattered nerves of the locals might take longer to mend.

San Pedro, once a thriving hub of international commerce, had sunk to sea level leaving a maze of muddy canals and islands covered with rusting, dilapidated warehouses. Abandoned to the river gangs, the hulks had become havens of the unimaginable.

An informant had tipped Hunt that the Snaketagers used this warehouse to smuggle weapons. The gang was known for its sick initiation rituals and links to international terrorists with enough firepower to victimize entire zip codes of the Southland. At least until Hunt formed a task force to arrest or kill every one of them – a mission he hoped to further tonight.

“What’s the word, Major?”

The anxious voice in his earpiece was his partner, First Lieutenant Enrico Mendez. Charged with the hormones of youth and eager for action, Rico had offered to recon the warehouse. However, as senior agent-in-charge, Hunt had taken the lead and left Mendez and a TAC-Team to maintain contact from outside.

Hunt responded by *tisking* twice, paused, then *tisked* again, barely louder than the sound of his breath. It was an audible from his former days as a black Ops agent – loud enough for his jawbone mobile to relay a response, yet cryptic enough to protect his position. It was a BOA’s way of signaling that he was “still alive and healthy but could not respond normally.”

Knowing that backup was only a breath away, and the warehouse appeared deserted, Hunt chose to continue. He trained his weapon on the path ahead and ventured into the open. He’d barely cleared the safety of cover when a sharp report broke the silence. A large caliber bullet whizzed past his head. Then two more. If he’d had a Cuban Montecristo between his lips, the slug would have trimmed and lit it.

Hunt recognized the sound of an AK-75 in three-shot mode. The shooter was an amateur, he figured, reasoning that a pro would have used a silencer and not missed thrice.

A fresh burst of gunfire slammed into Hunt’s flak-vest. The impact was absorbed by five layers of carbon-fiber nanotubes each one-atom thick, a fabric stronger than dragon-skin, yet so lightweight and pliable it hung like fine linen. It was vulnerable only to mega-joule lasers and *Maggie’s* – magnetic-rail guns, which fortunately didn’t fit the budget of the average river gang.

Still, the blunt force punched him backwards to the ground. Dust billowed up around him. The goggles went flying, plunging him into darkness. He never heard them land.

So much for remaining unchallenged, he thought.

Hunt remained prone on the cold grimy concrete, picking the still-smoking slugs from the vest as he assessed his condition. As he pitched the last, another volley sang overhead. This one came with a revealing muzzle flash thirty-odd yards to his right. It was little more than a spark of light, but it was all he needed.

He rolled to the right, holding the Eastwood level with his arms outstretched. Since the perp was likely right-handed, he would fire to the left, which gave him a slight edge in the gloom.

C’mon, you bastard. One more time. Show me your 20!

“Major!” Rico whispered in his earpiece. “Is that gunfire?”

Hunt was hesitant to breathe, let alone reply. The muscles in his neck tightened. The heat seemed to rise tenfold despite his fatigues climate-control. He’d been through this dance of death before, yet it never seemed to get easier.

“Xan – are you hit?” came the worried voice again.

Hunt tisked brusquely. No.

“But you are taking fire?”

Tisk, tisk. *Yes.*

“Do you need backup?”

TISK!

Another flash of light. A rude burst from the AK. The slugs chipped the floor, stinging his face with bits of concrete. He exerted the slightest pressure on the trigger, which activated the laser tracker beneath the barrel. It cast a fine thread of light through the gloom, targeting the shooter, then relayed the data back to the smart bullets.

Without hesitation, Hunt squeezed harder. Fired twice.

The report of a S&W 5000X was akin to the hellfire of a small cannon. Hunt often quipped if the slug didn’t drop a perp in his tracks, the thunderous report should frighten him to death. In this case, it was the former as a hundred-and-eighty-plus pounds of shit crashed into a pile of crates somewhere in the dark, then slumped to the ground.

Hunt took a breath before scrambling to his feet. He was determined to finish this, even if it killed him – figuratively, of course. He was six-two with chiseled features and honey-colored hair, flavored with a hint of grey and a seasoned charm that fashioned him a magnet for the ladies – much like his late father.

Only those closest knew that underneath his rugged façade was an aging body patched together by nanobots, risky surgeries, and a regimen of bio-drugs. Anything to keep the machine that was Xander Hunt alive and in the field.

In a well-practiced move, he used a quick-loader to replace the spent cartridges, then retrained the weapon along his line of sight. Every good agent knew the best time to reload was before one came under attack, not after. He searched once again for the goggles, even though the odds for success were better in Vegas.

He lumbered over to the containers and threw his back against the nearest. Held his breath until the echoes of his move faded into the night. The loudest sound now was the beat of his heart.

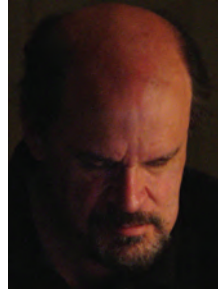
Confident he was alone, he began a search through

the shadows until he found the fallen shooter. He kicked the perp's rifle away, then crouched to check for a pulse. There was none.

"One down," he announced in a whisper.

"Roger that," Mendez replied. "We good to go?"

"Hold your position! This probably isn't over."



About The Author: Tony N. Todaro is President and Co-Founder of the Greater Los Angeles Writers Society. He's been a writer since high school, authoring non-fiction and marketing for companies from startup to Fortune 500. He's been writing fiction for decades, but will only admit to being the author of two novels of the Lightriders Saga, *True Light* and *Nexus of Swords* and, more recently, the futuristic thrillers *What Comes Around* and *Eyes of God* in the Xander Hunt series.



Watercolor by Jean Campbell

The Child & The Show

Excerpt from *The Selfsame Parade*, a novel

By Mike Robinson

During the morning meal he did not have much of an appetite and this worried him. Two of his classmates had fallen ill with what whispers said was the new plague and he was afraid he would follow suit, frightened more so because vacation was just ahead and he wanted nothing to spoil it.

Now the school day was almost over and because it was summer the daylight had yet to concede to night. He shifted again on the harsh wooden bench, aware of the classroom's every cough, every sneeze. The master sensed his fear too and this did nothing to heal his imaginings, if only because lack of full attention could result in a whipping.

But he was dreadfully tired. The day, beginning as always in the summer dawn, had been insufferably long, built of anxious thought between long rote memorizations of Latin synonyms. In the Erasmus text they had memorized over a hundred variations of the phrase *Thank you for your letter*. Despite his adoration for language – he often loved to tinker and tweak words as though they were play-things – the repetition grew stale. The last two hours of the day – spent largely on Ovid – were always those most anticipated by him.

When dismissed, he was the first out of the door of King's New School. While generally of a solitary nature despite his fascination with people, never had he felt a more aching desire for solitude as he did now. People were infectious, demanding, and what he noticed most (as it seemed to him through personal observation) was how deep asleep so many were. They spoke and strode through life in a kind of wretched slumber, unknowing what had made them, often dubious as to their own convictions, deathly afraid of change. There was something absent, something missing, in them all and this lack was felt yet seldom acknowledged, even as it brought words from their throats and manners to their countenance. Life to them was dark, as it was for

him as well yet he suspected many were not even aware of this dream, as he was. An existence, a permanent existence, stayed close in shadow performing fickle theatrics through people upon this rugged stage, perhaps in jest – perhaps many a laugh had been had at mankind's expense.

An enigma awaited discovery.

He descended the steps and passed the guildhall and strode towards the edge of Stratford, which dissolved into the splendid rolling infinity of green country, where he always imagined he might cross the Knight and the Merchant and the Wife of Bath and all others in their path to Canterbury. That was the greatest facet of humankind – the telling of stories. He wondered if any of the beasts or animals told their own stories, in their own ways.

In several timeless moments he found himself by his favorite stream where the water chopped and gurgled, the divine vein in this fertile forest – one of innumerable natural metaphors for things the way they truly were. Time flowed strong, but much as with the stream he now sat apart from it, could watch it and collect it and know the transparency and unreliable consistency of it. Untouched in a beautiful stasis. This was the enrapture of letters, the vessel of spiritual transport, illuminating a place shared by all, glimpsed by so few.

He sat there for almost an hour, every once in a while murmuring under his breath a nursery rhyme his mother had taught him that utterly fascinated him. It also helped calm his nerves, for whatever inexplicable reason.

“Pillycock, pillycock, sate on a hill...If he's not gone – he sits there still.”

When he returned to the road he crossed a rickety wagon creaking and swaying towards Stratford. Several men occupied it and he could tell instantly they were

entertainers, noticing not only the attire and the props in the carriage but also the zest in their eyes, the light of a thousand possibilities had and to be had. Cautiously he walked with them, saying nothing until one of them took notice and called to him.

“Do you enjoy shows, boy?”

He nodded. As part of Latin lessons he had performed in several Terence and Plautus comedies at school.

“We’ll be having plenty of shows here,” said the man with a kind of smarmy, knowing manner. “I take it you live in Stratford?”

Once again he nodded.

“What’s your name boy?”

“William.”

“William,” said the man, tasting the name. “Where might we find the bailiff of this fine town?” He said this with a face that knew the answer to his query – as if the man was merely humoring him, as was their trade.

William blinked. “My father is the bailiff.”

“John Shakespeare of Henley Street, I take it?”

He nodded. They neared town and the showmen readied themselves for a grand entrance, donning liveries and crimson hats and scarlet cloaks that fell about them in rippling currents. They toted horns as they marched through the streets of Stratford-upon-Avon and William followed behind them, watching and fascinated.

John Shakespeare granted the acting company payment and permission to perform in the guildhall. In lead-up to the first night, the showmen maneuvered throughout town, posting bills to announce the event. William followed them when he could, and engaged in conversation usually when they initiated it. Though they embraced his curiosity, he noticed a sense of distance and restraint that kept interaction generally to a minimum. This was to be expected, given William’s long school days and their preparation for the performance. Yet the preoccupation was enough to stave off stories of a coming plague, or at least relegate the worry to further corners of his young mind.

William, of course, was not the only one excited by the upcoming show. All Stratford trembled with anticipation, so much so that the first performance –

dubbed the Mayor’s Play to honor the bailiff of a given town – saw on its opening night a regrettable carnage in the numerous attempts for adequate seating. Benches were overturned and windows broken. As his father sought to exercise control William watched with what began as reflexive terror but became detached bewilderment, what he farcically imagined as invisible observation, a ghost in the court of human folly, witness to the rugged base of this being denied that of what it needed, whatever that may be; yet he knew it was in the stories, in the art about to unfold in entrancing color and voice. There was a sublime cleanness to what these performers gave them, a refuge from the diseased earth, a glimpse perhaps of a before and after-life stasis.

Doctors worked on the flesh, dealt with the physical stuff of being. But there was more to be had that neither medicine nor even religion could provide, for the latter was mere seasoning, an assurance and a positive affirmation that failed to dissect, that indeed – to him, though he never spoke such aloud – was too afraid to dissect. And that was the job of the artist. That was the job of the performer and the person of letters: to operate in places untouchable by the medical knife, to find and catalogue those things disguised in the physical, the audible. Surgery on the soul. Only then could light find it in its darkness.

**Every man's work,
whether it be literature,
or music or pictures
or architecture
or anything else,
is always a portrait
of himself.**

-Samuel Butler

Upcoming Events

The Greater Los Angeles Writers Society presents:

"Write Your Movie - First - As A BOOK"

January 21, 2012, Saturday 2:30 pm

Think you have the next great idea for a movie? Since studios seem allergic to original material but traffic exclusively in adaptations of material from other media, **Professor Richard Walter** (Head of screenwriting at UCLA) advises how to work your way backward and write your screenplay first as a book. You'll be able to market the movie rights more easily since the project is no longer 'original' but now a potential adaptation of material from another medium.

Learn to market the material simultaneously in two markets— literature and film – on two coasts, and it doesn't matter which gains traction first. The sale of the book enhances the chances for the movie. The sale of the script expands the chances for a book deal.

Los Angeles Valley College
Monarch Hall, 5800 Fulton Avenue, Van Nuys, CA 91401

The Greater Los Angeles Writers Society presents:

Why The First Three Pages of Your Novel Are Crucial

February 18, 2012, Saturday 2:30 pm

Noted author / educator **Sherwood Smith** will hold a special **live critique workshop** and reveal the tips and tricks to getting an agent or publisher to read beyond the first paragraph, let alone the first three pages. It's an important key to getting your work sold!

Palms-Rancho Park Library, Ray Bradbury Room
2920 Overland Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90064

The Greater Los Angeles Writers Society presents:

The Art of Writing Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Tales of Imagination

March 24, 2012, Saturday 2:30 pm

Never before have we had a topic like this. And never before have we had such a line-up of major best-selling, award-winning authors on one panel, including **Tim Powers, Harry Turtledove, Todd McCaffrey** and **Sheila Finch**. Plus, there will be a special award ceremony beforehand, and dinner afterwards!

No matter what genre you are writing, you won't want to miss this very special celebrity event.

Palms-Rancho Park Library, Ray Bradbury Room
2920 Overland Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90064

The Greater Los Angeles Writers Society presents:

Annual Business of Writing Roundtable

April 28th, 2012, Saturday 2:30 pm

This panel of **Attorneys, Literary Agents** and **CPAs** will discuss the essentials every writer should know, including copyrights, trademarks, tax deductions, and much more. If you are serious about a career as a writer, you must attend this important event!

Palms-Rancho Park Library, Ray Bradbury Room
2920 Overland Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90064

Note: Schedules and topics/themes and location/facilities are subject to change. Please visit the GLAWS website for monthly updates at: <http://www.glaws.org/events/monthlyeventcalendar.html>

West Coast Writers Conferences - WC² - Presents:

The Digital Author

February 11th, 2012, A Full Day Conference, Saturday 9:00 am - 6:00 pm

A special full-day of lectures and workshops that reveal how to develop, produce and sell your books digitally. Plus you will learn about E-book formats, software, Social Networking tricks, Book Trailers, Audio Books and much more. Scheduled to appear are educators, industry experts and company presidents who will share their expertise and the latest information with attendees. There will be a Resource Room where you can acquire further information and special service discounts. Keynote lunch speaker is literary agent, Ashley Grayson. This is a fee-based event. GLAWS Member's & LAVC student discounts available. Register early and save at www.WCWriters.com

Los Angeles Valley College, 5800 Fulton Avenue, Van Nuys, CA 91401. Various campus locations.



**THE GREATER LOS ANGELES
WRITERS SOCIETY**

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