



Balloons

BALLOONS Lit. Journal

Issue
One

Feb 2015

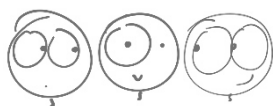
Alan Dennis Harris • Cat Dixon • Cathleen Cohen • Chelsea Sedoti • Emily Story •
Emily Strauss • Fern G. Z. Carr • Gervase Vernon • Gina Marie Bernard • Hilary Hauck •
Holly Hight • Janne Karlsson • Joanna White • Leonard Kogan • Lewis J. Beilman III •
Mercedes Lawry • Monica Clark • Nels Hanson • Travis Laurence Naught • Yuan Changming

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BALLOONS Lit. Journal (BLJ) is an independent biannual online literary journal of poetry, fiction and art primarily for school-aged readers from around 12 years onwards. BLJ sees it an important mission to bring the art of literature, and the creation of it, to our younger generation. The journal is freely accessible to all electronically. BLJ welcomes submissions from people anywhere in the world and in all walks of life. We love something that is fresh, surprising, unforgettable, extraordinary, mind-blowing, humorous, bold, unique, layered, witty, educational, original...etc. In short, we want something exceptionally good. For the most updated information about the journal, please visit the official website of BLJ:

www.balloons-lit-journal.com

Submissions are welcome year round. Writers are advised to read and follow the guidelines stated on the above website. Enquiries and submissions should be sent to: **editorblj@yahoo.com**

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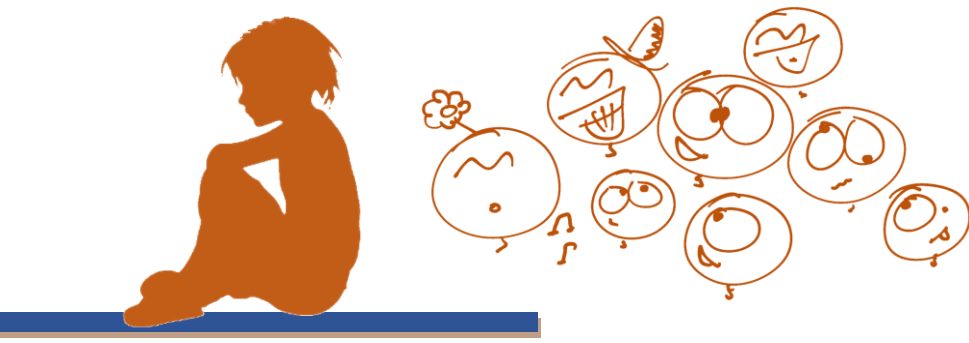
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* Cover Art






Words from Editor-in-Chief

I thought it would not surprise me anymore how well the world was connected today. But still, I was astonished by the heated response of people when BLJ first announced its call for submission.

As an elementary school teacher, I find it disappointing that we don't have a lot of literary magazines for young readers, let alone being freely accessible. Then I thought it was the time to produce one myself. I am so moved that so many creative minds share with me the same vision and are willing to contribute to the young literary world with their high quality work, be it poem, prose or artwork. I must thank each and every submitter for his/her trust and their support to this newly established journal for youngsters.

BLJ is aspired to be an international literary magazine and its first humble issue has proved to be nothing less than that. Despite the differing cultural features that stand out from the pieces written by creators of different origins, their common theme of childhood and values that every child should learn are prominent. I truly hope that this book will be adored by readers of all ages, particularly the young. I simply cannot ask for a better start.

 Ho Cheung LEE





The Elephant Reaches a Verdict

I wish I had no shiny tusks.
I'd much prefer ill-smelling musk
To ivory teeth that bring such fees.

We're killed to make piano keys
And pretty objects sculptors carve.
My trunk should wear a million scarves,

All black for fallen elephants.
Excuses are irrelevant:
Man says the elephant is wise

With memory that never dies
And yet the crimes man perpetrates
Imply man isn't thinking straight

And has a million things to learn
Before he knows the pachyderm.
And who you are is what you do:

The gun you aim is aimed at you.
One day when hunters are deceased
And wake expecting heaven's peace,

They'll find a jungle is a court
With trees much higher than a fort.
There man will stand before a judge.

An elephant who holds no grudge
Will sit upon a giant chair.
An elephant is always fair.

Poet

Nels Hanson

Nels Hanson grew up on a farm in the San Joaquin Valley of California and has worked as a farmer, teacher and contract writer/editor. His fiction received the *San Francisco Foundation's James D. Phelan Award* and *Pushcart Prize* nominations in 2010, 2012, and 2014. His stories have appeared in *Antioch Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, *Southeast Review* and other journals and are in press at *Fiction Southeast* and *ELJ Publications*. His poems have appeared in *Word Riot*, *Oklahoma Review*, *Pacific Review* and other magazines, and are in press at *Squalorly*, *Sediments*, *Blotterature*, *Digital Papercut*, *Indiana Voice Journal*, *Imitations & Allusions*, *Lost Coast Review*, and *The Write Place at the Write Time*. His poems in *Outside In Literary & Travel Magazine* and *Citron Review* were nominated for 2014 *Pushcart Prizes* and his poems in the *Sharkpack Review Annual* were awarded its 2014 *Prospero Prize*.

Poet Cat Dixon

Cat Dixon teaches creative writing at the University of Nebraska, Omaha. She is the board secretary of *The Backwaters Press*, a non-profit poetry press out of Omaha. Her work has appeared in *Sugar House Review*, *Midwest Quarterly Review*, *Temenos*, *Coe Review*, *Eclectica*, among others. Her full length book *Too Heavy to Carry* was published this spring by *Stephen F. Austin University Press*. Her website is www.catdix.com. She has two children, Pierce and Leven, who love *The Dancing Banana*.

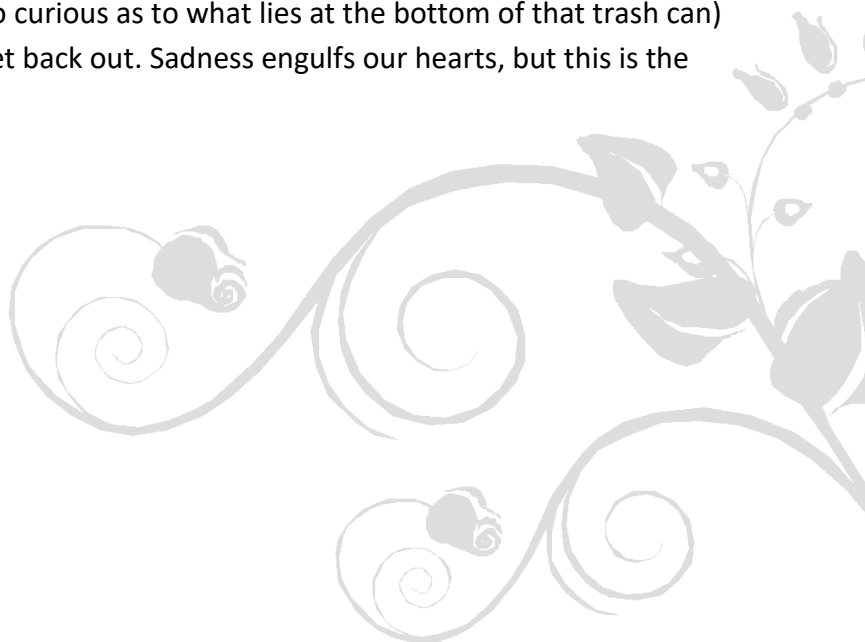
The Dancing Banana

This is the story of the Dancing Banana. It is a Sunday. My husband and I attend church, then we are invited downstairs. Hungry, we venture to their after-service coffee hour, but all that is offered are pancakes. So we head to the grocery store and purchase bananas. Five bananas for breakfast. Yes, we are trying to make healthier choices and pancakes just aren't healthy.

We love bananas. Or, at least, I do. I could eat bananas every day for breakfast — oh, wait — I do. We eat the bananas in the parking lot, and make our way to the sporting goods store. My husband sets the banana peels down on the cement.

The Dancing Banana with its many yellow tentacles strolls along the sidewalk with us. The Dancing Banana twirls and spins, finally it comes to the sporting goods store trash can and rests atop it for a while. From here, the Dancing Banana can see far, past the grocery store, past the sporting goods store, past the parking lots. This height reminds him of his place in the trees.

Then the Dancing Banana goes inside (so curious as to what lies at the bottom of that trash can) and because he's so slippery, he can't get back out. Sadness engulfs our hearts, but this is the story of the Dancing Banana.



Poet

Hilary Hauck

Hilary Hauck is a freelance translator and writer. She lived in England and Italy before moving to the US. She writes poetry, flash and novel length fiction, often drawing on the perspective of finding her feet in new cultures. Her poem “Peter the Printer” recently won first place in a poetry contest.

Balloons for a Village

Sherpas carried our backpacks,
 nothing of their own,
 high above a sapphire milk river across a rope bridge
 swinging like a pendulum, tugged by a tethered cow
 to a village where boys in woolen hats
 smiled for photographs they'd never see.
 We shared our gift of red balloons,
 drawing swirls of girls and boys no older than us,
 wearing clothes that once held color,
 until the balloons were too few for the flood of faces.
 Younger children cried,
 older ones passed their prizes down the row
 like Russian dolls until only the
 smallest of hands had something to hold.
 A single balloon now patted in play,
 red ball of air back and forth
 to bridge the gap of who was without —
 the gift they shared with us.



Cathleen Cohen

Poet

Step

As you waver then rise
your regard of the world
grows in height, widens out.
Vantage point has more scope
and a new radius.

You are changed, not a child
but a sail blown by wind,
twist of leaf, flash of wing.

Soft the cry in my throat
as you race to a world
now set loose, leading out.

Cathleen Cohen, Ph.D., is Education Director of ArtWell, (www.theartwell.org), which has brought poetry workshops to thousands of children of diverse cultures and faiths in the Philadelphia area and abroad. A poet and painter, Cathy has authored articles on spirituality and a handbook on teaching poetry and Jewish prayer. Her poems have appeared in publications such as *Apiary*, *Moment*, *6ix*, *Layers of Possibility*, *The Breath of Parted Lips*, and *Bridges: A Jewish Feminist Journal*. In 2003, she received the *Interfaith Relations Award* from the Montgomery County Advisory Board to the PA Human Rights Commission, and in 2004 she received the *Public Service Award* from the National Association of Poetry Therapy. In 2013 she received 2nd place for the *Raynes Poetry Prize* (*Jewish Currents*) on "Justice". Cathy holds a Ph.D. in Learning Disabilities from Northwestern University and a certificate from the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.





Author

Chelsea
Sedoti

The Ice Cream Sandwich

Chelsea Sedoti is originally from eastern Ohio but grew up in Las Vegas, Nevada. Her experiences and memories in these regions have been a large influence on her fiction. When she's not writing, Chelsea spends her time rock climbing, baking and exploring abandoned places. Her work has previously been published in *Pantheon Magazine*.

We had all these adventures planned.

It's our last summer before middle school, so it's gotta be good. Cause we're not gonna be little kids anymore. We'll even have lockers. So we've gotta make this summer crazy awesome, we've gotta do all these things we'll remember forever.

But then July comes and we're bored.

"It's too hot to do anything," says Tyler. His voice is muffled cause he's got his tee-shirt over his face to block the sun.

We're laying in the grass in my backyard and the sun is beating down, over ninety degrees and crazy humid. We could move to the shade under the maple tree or onto the porch, but it's too hot to move.

"Hey Ryan," Tyler says, "Got any of those

popsicles still?"

"We finished them yesterday," I tell him. He groans.

"We could see a movie maybe?" says Amy.

But she's just saying it to say something. We've already seen all the movies, even the boring one with subtitles that's mostly people yelling at each other a lot.

"I can ask my dad to give us a ride to the pool," I say.

Amy wrinkles her nose. She stopped liking the pool ever since all the girls our age started wearing bikinis.

"Pool's closed," says Tyler's muffled voice, "They have to drain it. Some kid pooped again."



"Gross."

"You sure there's no popsicles left?" Amy asks.

I nod.

"We could walk down to the gas station and buy some."

"With what money? I've got nothing," I say.

"Same," says Tyler.

Amy sits up and feels around in her pockets. "Forty-five cents."

"What'll that get us, half a popsicle?" Tyler says. "I'll pass."

Amy shrugs and lays back down.

The insects are making buzzing sounds and I start to fall asleep. I feel like I could sleep the whole summer away.

"Hey," Tyler says. He sits up and the tee-shirt falls away from his face. "What about Mr. Bailey's ice cream?"

"What about it?" asks Amy.

Tyler smiles in that sly way and you can see why so many people think he's a troublemaker. Also, because Tyler's always making trouble.

"There's a whole freezer full of it, just waiting to be eaten."

"Yeah, and it doesn't belong to you," says Amy.

Mr. Bailey's ice cream is sort of a legend in the neighborhood. We see him bring it home all the time and pack it into the freezer in his detached garage. Drumsticks and creamsicles and ice cream sandwiches. All kinds of stuff. What did an old guy need with so much ice cream? He didn't even have any grandkids.

"So you'd rather let perfectly good ice cream go to waste on the hottest day of the year?" Tyler asks.

"No way is Mr. Bailey gonna share his ice cream with you," I say. "He hates kids."

"That's why we don't ask him, stupid."

I sit up and look at Tyler. Amy frowns. For a moment we're all quiet.

"You want to steal some?" I've never

stolen anything before. Not even a pack of gum from the gas station.

"It's not really stealing."

"That's *exactly* what it is," Amy says.

"Look, that dude has more ice cream than he could possibly eat. Really we'd be helping him. You want him to get fat and have a heart attack?"

Amy and I look at each other.

"Besides," Tyler goes on, "he's a jerk anyway. I heard he called Joey Kennedy's mom just cause he saw him skating near the highway. And Joey was grounded for, like, a month."

"That's a dangerous place to skate," Amy says.

Tyler rolls his eyes. "Are you in or not?"

"He won't even notice it's missing," I say. Plus. It's so hot outside.

"I'm out," says Amy. She stands up and brushes grass from her legs. "I have some books to take back to the library."

"Boring," says Tyler.

"At least there's air conditioning. Sure you don't want to come, Ryan?"

I only think about it for a second. "Nah, I'll stay here."

Amy shrugs and makes her way around the side of the house. Tyler and I watch her go. Then he grins at me.

We walk over to Mr. Bailey's house and my heart is pounding like crazy. What if Mr. Bailey's not just a cranky old man but, like, evil or something? Maybe he'll catch us and lock us in a basement dungeon and the police will hunt for us and the newspapers will interview Amy and she'll say "they just wanted some ice cream".

"I don't think he's home," says Tyler.

We stare at the house. It looks empty and lonely. The lawn needs to be mowed.

"Come on," Tyler says, and I follow him around back.

The garage is at the edge of the property. It's so small that it doesn't even look like it can



fit one car. The door is wooden, the old kind that doesn't have a remote to make it go up. There's a window on the side of the garage, open an inch or so.

"Through there," Tyler says, whispering.

"Maybe this isn't such a good idea."

"Don't be stupid."

Tyler crosses the lawn and I follow him again. My hands are sweaty. I feel like Mr. Bailey is hiding behind the curtains of one of the second story windows, watching us with a frown.

I'm sort of hoping the window will be stuck, but Tyler pushes it up easy. He climbs through. I follow him.

The garage is even hotter than outside, musty and full of boxes. We don't spend any time looking around though. Tyler heads straight to the big freezer. When he opens it I can feel the cool air hit me from the other side of the room.

Tyler whistles. "How much ice cream does this guy *need*?"

I creep closer. The freezer is just as packed with frozen treats as we imagined.

"Come on, take some," Tyler says.

I reach in and pick up an ice cream sandwich.

Tyler grabs an entire box of drumsticks.

"Hey. He'll notice that."

"So? What's he gonna do, call the police?"

Either that or our parents will call the police. After we disappear because Mr. Bailey locked us in his secret dungeon where he'll probably chain us up and make us watch him eat every last fudgesicle.

"Let's get outta here." I say, and climb back through the window. This time Tyler is the one who follows me.

As soon as we're outside we start running and we run, run, run until we're back at my house, sitting under the maple tree. We're out of breath and laughing hard.

"I can't believe we did it," I say.

Tyler pulls a drumstick from the stolen box. I unwrap my ice cream sandwich.

The cool vanilla ice cream melts on my tongue. I close my eyes and savor it. What will the other kids in the neighborhood think when they find out? Tyler and I will be heroes. They'll probably whisper about how brave we are. No one will ever think of Mr. Bailey's ice cream in the same way.

Then I think of old Mr. Bailey at his sad house all by himself. He doesn't even have a cat. Probably the ice cream is his one special treat, the thing he looks forward to every day. And we just snatched it like it was nothing at all. Now instead of being scared of him the kids in the neighbourhood will make jokes, maybe try to steal ice cream for themselves. Maybe the ice cream thefts get so bad that Mr. Bailey has to move to a different place and start over. Or maybe he stays here and just never eats ice cream again.

Suddenly I don't feel so good.

"Want one?" Tyler asks, offering his box.

I shake my head. "I think I'm gonna go in. I'm tired."

Tyler shrugs and unwraps another drumstick.

Later that night there's a knock on the front door.

"Ryan!" my mom calls.

I run downstairs and see her standing in the entryway with Mr. Bailey.

My heart does a skipping jumping thing. I feel my face go red.

Mr. Bailey's white hair is sticking up and he's wearing an old person sweater even though it's still hot outside. He smiles when he sees me.

"I was just telling your mother I'm in need of a young man to help me move some boxes."

I don't say anything.

"Ryan?" my mom says.

I still don't say anything.

"Of course he'll help you," my mom tells Mr. Bailey and she gives me a look like I'm being really rude.

"How's your summer going so far?" Mr. Bailey asks while we walk to his house.

"Okay. Kinda boring."

"I was always bored when I was your age. Then I grew up and wished I had time to be bored. Now I'm old and miss the days when I was busy. That's just one of the jokes life plays on us."

I don't know what to say so we just walk in silence. When we get to his house I follow him to the garage. The door is open and the light is on. I hesitate before going in.

Mr. Bailey beckons to me. "It'll only take a minute."

And it does. All I need to do is lift a few boxes onto shelves. They aren't even that heavy.

"Glad I could help," I say, and move to leave.

"Wait. Let me give you something to say thank you. Some ice cream?"

Mr. Bailey opens the freezer and when the cool air comes out it makes a chill go through my whole body.

"No thanks, I really should get home."

"Nonsense. Your mom won't mind if you stay a few minutes longer."

I walk over to the freezer. I see the space where the box of drumsticks used to be.

"Go on," says Mr. Bailey.

I lean in to pick up an ice cream sandwich and I wonder if this is the part where he knocks me out and maybe locks me in the freezer until he can move me to the dungeon. I wish Tyler was with me.

Mr. Bailey takes some ice cream for himself. He sits on a dusty chair and motions for me to have a seat on one of the boxes.

"Mr. Bailey. I have something I need to tell you."

"Oh?"

There's a lump in my throat and more than anything I want to run away, run, run, run like Tyler and I did earlier.

"This afternoon we, I, took some ice cream from the freezer."

Mr. Bailey unwraps his ice cream sandwich and takes a bite. I watch him chew, swallow. Finally he looks at me.

"And I bet it was the sweetest ice cream you ever ate."

I stare at him.

Mr. Bailey smiles. "When life doesn't present us with adventures we have to make our own."

"So you're not mad?"

"I was a boy once too."

"But stealing is bad."

"Sure it is. But you've learned a lesson, haven't you?"

I think for a minute. Then a nod.

"As long as you're always learning lessons you'll be just fine. Now eat that before it melts."

So I peel off the wrapper.

"Why do you have so much ice cream anyway?" I ask.

Mr. Bailey laughs and I take that first, sweet bite.

When I get back to my house Tyler is sitting on the porch. He jumps up when he sees me.

"What happened? Your mom said you were at Mr. Bailey's."

I shrug.

"Does he know about the ice cream?"

"Go ask him yourself. I gotta go."

I leave Tyler on the porch and go straight to my room and call Amy.

"You won't believe what happened," I say when she picks up the phone.



For the Bullied

This is the boy who will not see himself.
 If he seems himself, he sees distortion.
 The mockery of self in words, the words a
 brutality, the sideways looks, the raspy
 laughs. Frame on the world and he,
 this boy, outside the frame and less.
 The rest a ride that flows in and flows out
 and he can never catch up. See
 the boy who sees only a pale outline,
 a vestigial shadow, nobody anchored
 to this tilting earth. See him summon
 the boy who knows magic, the simplest
 of tricks, turning invisible with one bright
 abracadabra on a calm, black night.

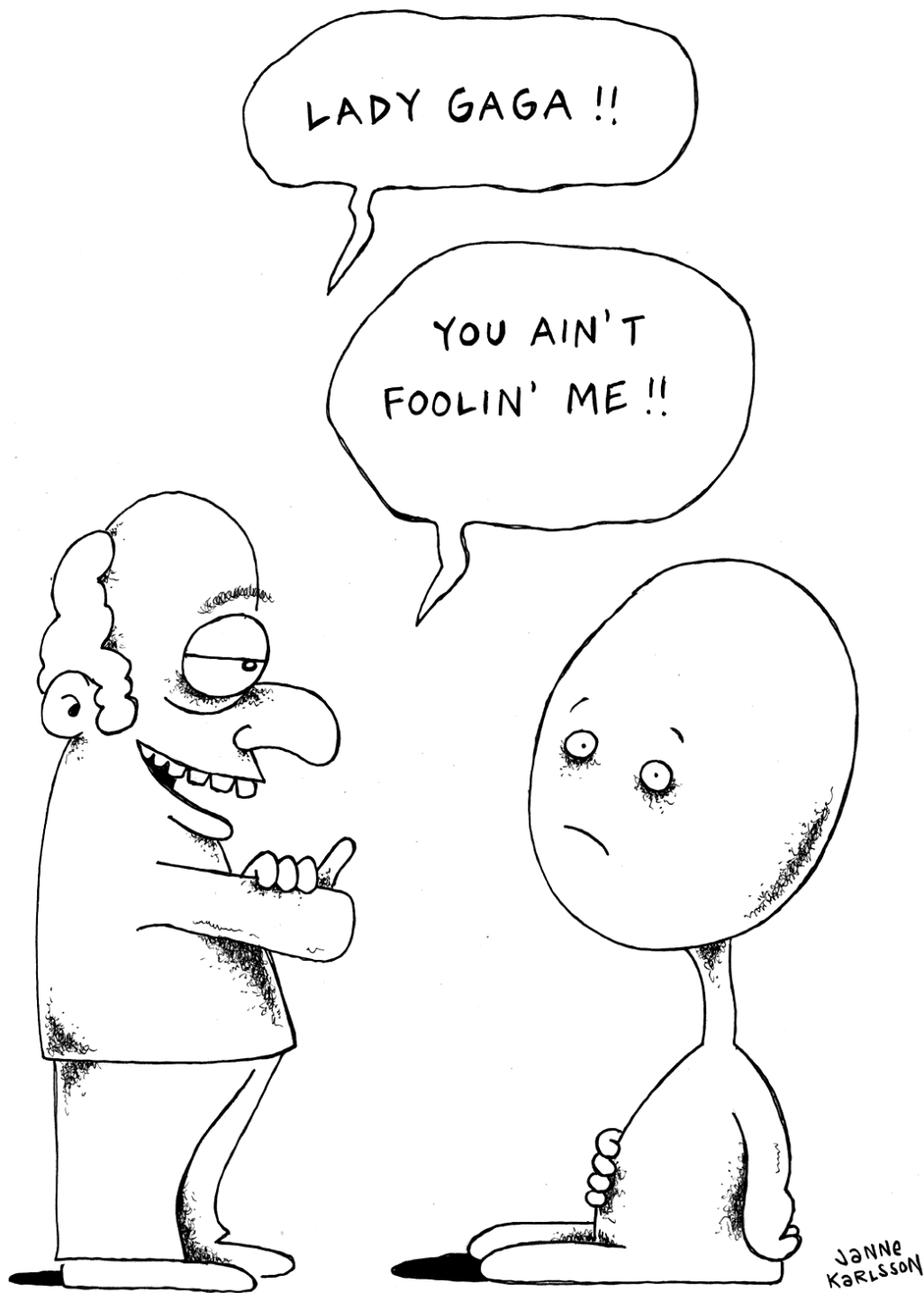


Poet

Mercedes Lawry

Mercedes Lawry has previously published poems for children in *Cricket* and *Cicada*. She has also published stories in *Humpty Dumpty's Magazine*, *Pennywhistle Press*, *Shoofly*, *Half Price Bedtime Stories*, *Spellbound* and *Literature4kids.com*. She has been publishing poetry (and a little fiction) for adults for over thirty years in such magazines as *Poetry*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Nimrod* and *Salamander* and she has published two chapbooks.

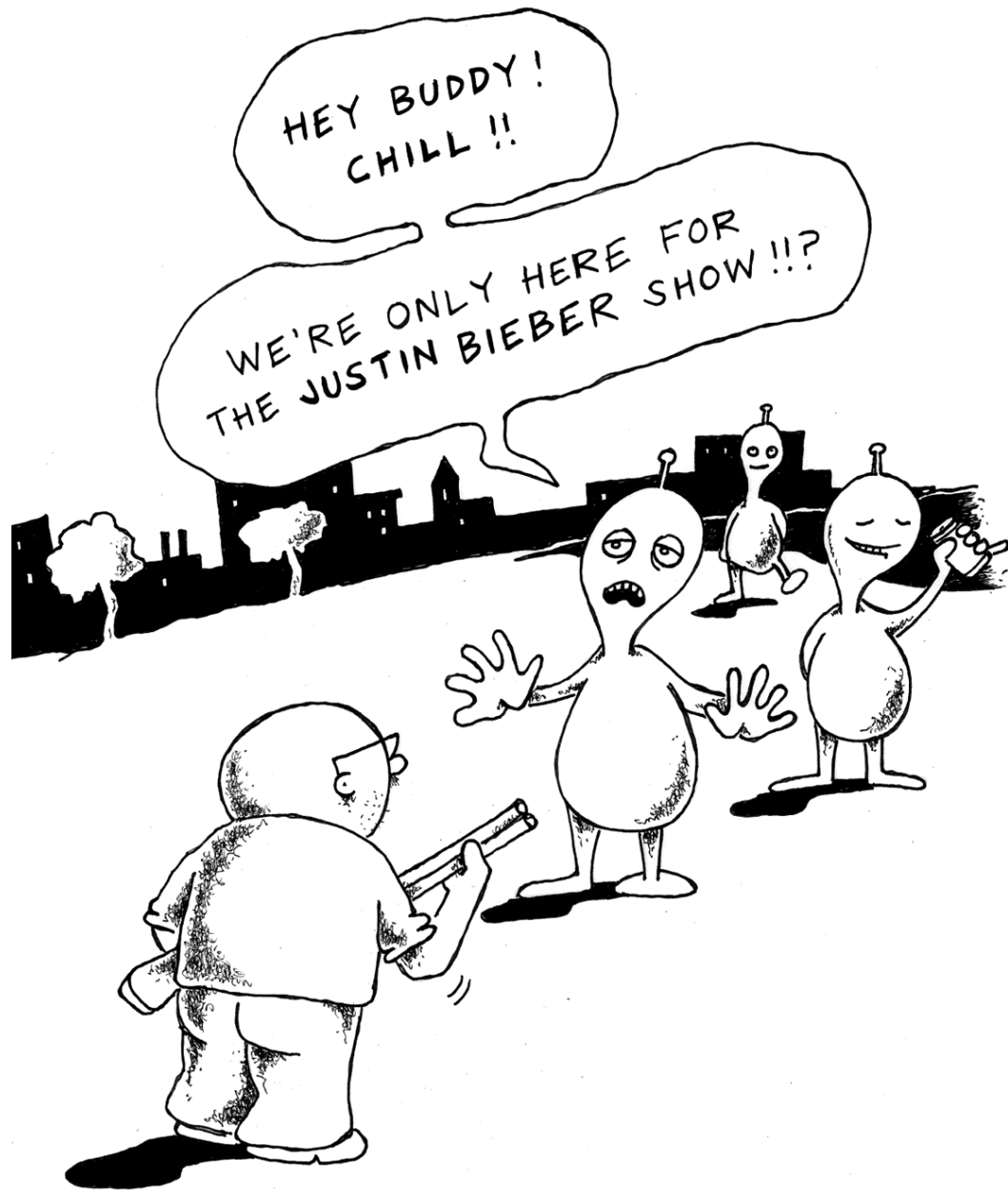




Alien Encounter 1

Artist **Janne Karlsson**

Alien Encounter 2



JANNE
KARLSSON

Janne Karlsson (1973) is an insanely productive illustrator from Sweden. His absurd madness is widely spread across the seas. Janne is also the proud illustrator of Rob Plath's children's book *Hearts for Brains* (epic rites press).

Travis Laurence Naught is an author of two full-length poetry collections who happens to be a quadriplegic wheelchair user. His poems and stories have also appeared online (*Empty Sink Publishing*, *Kind of a Hurricane Press*, etc.) and in print (*Lost Coast Review*, *Falling Star Magazine*, etc.). Public speaking about his disability and art is one of his passions. Travis is honoured to have been an invited guest in multiple classrooms from grade school through the college level.

Travis Laurence Naught

Poet

Adversity

Walking through the forest
I heard not one tree fall,
but when I turned around,
there were many downed logs
in my path.



Feeling Royal

Crowns perched on the tops of heads
Do not give anyone the right to be king or queen

Do not grant any person indemnity
Against crimes committed against humanity

Do not give them the right
To haphazardly cast commands
Ordering slaves below them on society's ladder

To act on their every whim and fancy
For a good show

Do not be fooled by people in these positions
Who just might have a vocabulary
As impressive as that false title they flaunt about

Creating a confusion
So you will not know to argue
Do not go to them asking for help

Since groveling is beneath even
Ants on the sidewalk that are capable enough
At figuring out how to survive

Teaching us all important lessons

But none more so than
Do not allow yourself to be looked down on



Jack's Beanstalk



Monica Clark

Author

Call me Simon, simply Simon, Seller of Magic Beans. Why, it was my magic beans that led Jack to the greatest adventure of his life. Jack? You don't know Jack? Tall fellow, beanstalk, evil giant...Yes, yes, that Jack. But, wait, that's not the end of the story...

You see, after he cut down the beanstalk, Jack's neighbors were pretty mad. The beanstalk blocked roads, stopped traffic, and sprawled across farm fields. Folks complained and the mayor paid Jack a little visit. Now, Mayor Dumpty was a good egg, but he was a real hard-boiled sort of fellow.

"Dagnabit, Jack!" the mayor bellowed, "You do something about your blasted beanstalk!"

"My beanstalk?" Jack gasped.

"Yes, your beanstalk! You sowed it, you reap it, my boy. That big blight of beanstalk is everywhere! Why there's even a branch of it stuck on top of my garden wall. I promised the wife I'd climb up there this afternoon and pull the thing down! I mean it, Jack. You've raised enough ruckus with that beanstalk. Get rid of it!"

I was judging a pie contest down at the fair when Jack found me.

"Simon, you got me into this, you can help get me out."

I couldn't argue with that, so we got right to work. We started by picking up leaves. Now, don't let anybody kid you, beanstalk leaves are heavy. It took both of us to lift them. We gathered and stacked them in a big pile.

"Are we ready to burn them now?" Jack asked.

"Burn them? We're not going to burn them, Jack, we're going to sell them. Help me

load the cart. We're going down to the wharf."

Turns out those leaves were perfect for sailcloth — big, sturdy, and waterproof. We made a tidy profit selling them to a couple of sea captains.

Then, we gathered up the branches and stacked them in a huge pile. That left the biggest job of all. What could we do with the beanstalk's giant trunk?

"We could chop it into firewood," Jack suggested.

Now, Jack could be nimble and Jack could be quick, but sometimes Jack was a little dense — and they call me Simple. That beanstalk was bigger than a giant redwood. Chopping it up was not going to cut it.

"Jack, my boy, we're going into the lumber business."

I could see the idea taking root.

"Simon, let's go to town and rent a portable sawmill."

"Now you're talking."

On the way to town, we met Jack's neighbor.

"Jill, what are you doing home so early?" Jack asked the pretty young woman.

"Things are really slow at work, so I got laid off," she said with a sigh.

"Laid off?" Jack asked.

The boy has a flair for stating the obvious.

"Well, I am sorry to hear that," I told her sincerely.

"It's okay, really. Believe me, chasing sheep out of the cockle shells all day is not my idea of fun."

"I've got an idea, Jack! Jill here is a

Monica Clark's stories and poems have appeared in *Highlights for Children*, *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*, *Birds and Blooms*, and in several poetry anthologies. She lives in a rural community in northern Indiana with her husband, daughter, and an absurdly indifferent cat.



salesclerk. She can help us sell your beanstalk!"

"Sell my beanstalk?" Jack gaped. "Who would buy a broken-down beanstalk?"

Like I said, the boy is hopeless when it comes to business opportunities.

"Say, I like that idea," Jill said, her eyes twinkling like stars. "Beanstalk is rare, and people like to buy rare things. You can pay me on commission."

"Okay," Jack agreed.

Well, Jack got to work while Jill and I headed out to make some sales calls. My first stop was Merry Mary's Sheep and Garden Emporium. Now, even a blind mouse could see Merry Mary could not keep track of her sheep. And, contrary to what people think, her flowers are a flop.

"Mary, what you need is some high quality fencing. Keep your sheep corralled, and they'll stop wandering off to school. Maybe your flowers will perk up, too."

"Simon, you're right. I am so tired of counting sheep."

Just like that, I made my first sale. Merry Mary bought some beanstalk boards to build a bunker for her sheep.

Later, Jill and I met Jack for lunch.

"Guess what?" Jill was giddy with excitement. "Mr. Baker at Three Men's Tubs bought a bunch of our best beanstalk for a new line of wooden hot tubs!"

"Fee, fie, fo, I'd better go saw some logs!" Jack gushed.

Jill was a natural saleswoman. She sold beanstalk branches for firewood to Mrs. Peters down at the pumpkin pie factory and convinced that woman with all those kids down in the old giant's shoe to add on an addition. Jill even sold a bit of lumber to Old Farmer Diddle.

"Need to raise my fence," the farmer grumbled, "Pesky cow keeps jumping out!"

Boy, that cow was a jumper, too, like she was aiming for the moon or something.

Word spread quickly, and when the king's cook came to town to buy some blackbirds for a

pie, he heard about our little venture. He raced back to the castle on a quick horse. Ol' King Cole himself came down and bought a bunch of beanstalk beams to beef up his castle.

Soon, all that was left was a basket of sticks. Jill sold the whole bundle to a wee, little pig she met at the market one day.

"I'm gonna build a house," the little pig sang, and he ran all the way home.

Can you believe that? How's a pig gonna build a house?

Well, Jack ended up making a fortune on that beanstalk. You know what that young fellow did next? He climbed right up the big hill and asked Jill to marry him. You should have seen the two of them laughing and racing down that hill.

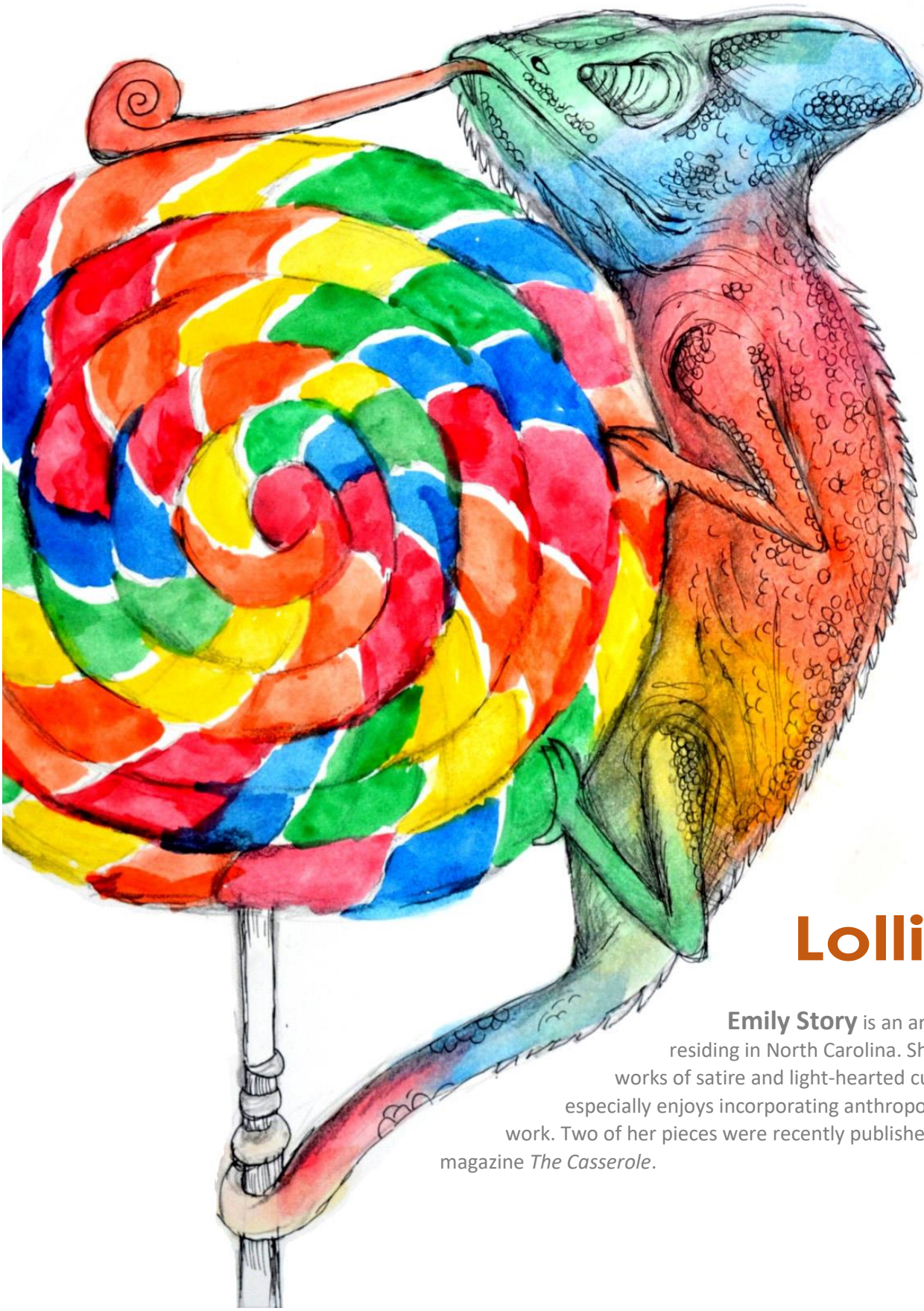
"Be careful!" I yelled. "Don't fall!"

But you know how young people are, they never listen. So, now, about those magic beans...how many would you like?



Emily Story

Artist



Lollipop

Emily Story is an artist and writer residing in North Carolina. She mostly produces works of satire and light-hearted cultural criticism. She especially enjoys incorporating anthropomorphism into her work. Two of her pieces were recently published in the Canadian magazine *The Casserole*.

Gina Marie Bernard

Poet

One Smelly Sunday

One smelly Sunday, while still in his bed,
Zachary Strumbowski covered his head
as his mother approached him, and said, "Okay, bub —
get out of that bed and into the tub."

He wiggled, he squirmed, he scrunched up his feet,
which were beginning to stink just a bit like some meat
that has been left in the sink overnight in stale air.
The reason — it's plain — why his mother was there.

"The water is drawn, neither too hot nor too cold,"
she said as she reached for the boy, but he rolled
onto the floor and went under the bed,
leaving her nothing to grab as he fled.

"You'll never catch me!" he said with a laugh.
"If you like the water, then you take a bath!"

Monday dawned early with bright yellow light,
and Mrs. Strumbowski prepared for the fight
she'd have with her son. (How she wished for a daughter!)
Today she would see him submerged in some water!

She crept up the stairs without making them creak,
eased open his door to take one little peek
before rushing to grab him — yes, that was her thought.
But out the window he went without being caught.



Gina Marie Bernard

writes and teaches in Bemidji, Minnesota. She is also a dangerous, tattooed blocker for the Babe City Rollers roller derby team. Her daughters, Maddie and Parker, are the two halves of her heart. Her work has recently appeared in *Appalachia*, *Border Crossing*, *Fox Cry Review*, and *Midway Journal*.

His mother stood frozen, queer look on her face.
Nose twitching and itching, breath hitching, she raced
down the stairs, out the door, while gasping for air —
his stink the lone proof that her son had been there.

“You’ll never catch me!” he called down the street.
“They may be quite stinky, but I still have fast feet!”

At 9:30 Tuesday the telephone rang
and Mrs. Strumbowski tried to explain
to the upset young man who had called from next door
why the neighborhood reeked of such filth and such gore.

“You must make it stop!” the neighbor declared.
“My wife, she is angry! My children are scared!
I’m begging! I’m pleading! Please, wash that boy!
His stink — it is robbing my life of its joy!”

But Zach didn’t care — not a peep, not a wit.
In fact, he just smiled, as he chewed on a bit
of limburger cheese he’d found deep in the gunk
that littered his closet, creating a funk.

“They’ll never catch me,” he said between chews.
“If the neighbors don’t like it, the neighbors can move!”

By Wednesday the smell had caused such disaster
three firemen, two cops, and even a pastor
showed up at the door (to their ultimate doom)
and were air lifted away after breathing the fumes.
It must sound absurd! Unbelievable! Not true!
But some kids can stink like that, and they do
when they won’t take a bath and scrub away dirt
that drapes their wee bodies like a well-tailored shirt.

His hair, to describe it, was like bits of twine
that have been coated and dipped in backwater swamp slime.
And this was quite clean compared to the glup
that encrusted his toes and stunk its way up!

It began to send shock waves when the stench, at its height,
caused a huge stampede that Thursday night.
For it wasn’t just neighbors who left with packed trunks
but also cockroaches and families of skunks!



"You couldn't catch me!" he yelled from above.
"Bon voyage! See you later! Take care! Lots of love!"

A green sickly cloud had engulfed the whole scene but Zachary, The Stubborn, still refused to be clean; and his mother, to live with her malodorous spawn, moved his bed outside and onto the lawn.

Now legend has it at about that same time the Man on the Moon caught wind as it climbed. It made his eyes water, and his nose it did burn so he caught the next meteor that Friday for Saturn.

Back on Earth, I'm afraid, folks could not get away. The birds did not sing, and no one would play outside in the sun that shone brightly down on Zachary's stench hovering over the town.

"I'll never be caught!" Zach vowed with a sneer. But no one was near him, so no one could hear.

This type of smell comes but once in an age! Zach had stink lines (like those on this page) that rose from his body in creepy green squiggles — each like an earthworm that moves as it wiggles.

But just when it seemed no end was in sight something beautiful happened that Saturday night. Mrs. Strumbowski, nose pinched with a pin, lifted her head, and exclaimed with a grin,

"I must lock the doors and bolt fast the shutters!" She mumbled and murmured with occasional mutters to see how he'd like it, that stinky boy wonder: The beautiful thing that she'd heard had been thunder.

So the rain fell on Zach — on his feet, on his head — the goop glopping off him and onto his bed.
"You were right," said his mother. "I couldn't catch you."
Then she laughed as she tossed him some soap and shampoo.



Tornado in a Bottle – Just Invert and Swirl

tornado in a bottle

t o r n a d o i n a b o t t l e t o r n a d o i n a b o t t l e

Heavier than
the air below
water wants
to sink

a vortex vortex v o a
b r t e x v o r t e x v o r b
o t e x v o r t e x o
t v o r t e x t
t v o r t t
l t e l
e x e
t u b e
t u b e
t u b e
t v t
o o o
r r r
n t n
a e a
d x d
o i n a b o t t l e o i n a b o t t l e

Lighter than
the water above
air wants
a drink.

tornado in a bottle

Note:

With the help of a tornado tube connecting two plastic bottles, one containing water and the other air, the vortex motion of a tornado can be simulated in the bottle containing water – just invert and swirl.

Fern G. Z. Carr *Poet*

Fern G. Z. Carr is a lawyer, teacher and past president of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. A member of and former Poet-in-Residence for the League of Canadian Poets, she composes and translates poetry in five languages. Carr is a 2013 *Pushcart Prize* nominee and has been cited as a contributor to the Prakalpana literary movement in India. She has been published extensively world-wide from Finland to the Seychelles. Some of her poetry was assigned reading for a West Virginia University College of Law course entitled “Lawyers, Poets, and Poetry”. Canadian honours include: an online feature in *The Globe and Mail*, Canada’s national newspaper; poetry set to music by a Juno-nominated musician; and her poem, “I Am”, chosen by the Parliamentary Poet Laureate as Poem of the Month for Canada. One of Carr’s haiku is even included on a DVD currently orbiting the planet Mars aboard NASA’s MAVEN spacecraft. www.ferngzcarr.com



Not Being Small Enough

A flock of Least Warblers
flew into the yard, suddenly
twittering among
the rosemary and oaks,
nervous, hungry wending
south —
I believe I missed
the best of their flighty show
not being one of the late flowers
or hanging tassels,
they grazed so fast
their wings lightly touching
the tips of petals and leaves.
I only heard their soft
chatter, imagined the talk
of seeds, fruit, the journey.



Emily Strauss has an M.A. in English, but is self-taught in poetry, which she has written since college. Over 200 of her poems appear in hundreds of online venues and in anthologies. The natural world is generally her framework; she also considers the stories of people and places around her and personal histories. She is a semi-retired teacher living in California.



The Stream Speaks

Under rocks the stream's
tiny voice sounds,
alder and willow hide
its slight movement,
its quiet smooth
flowing abides.

I listen closely, hear its
small murmurings like
children in a distant glen,
soft pillow talk all night,
faint in my sleep
on the sandy bank.

Morning returns in green
light, the rest unchanged —
the river's voice still speaking
its secrets among the rocks.
Look — a water snake
darting to another hole,

the river says.
I carry its voice away
trailing my journey home,
a memory of the forest
reflected in the water
one night under the stars.

Emily Strauss

Poet





Author

Alan Dennis Harris

Alan D. Harris writes short stories, plays, and poetry based primarily upon the life-stories of friends, family and total strangers. Harris is the 2011 recipient of the *Stephen H. Tudor Scholarship* in Creative Writing and the 2014 *John Clare Poetry Prize* winner from Wayne State University. In addition he is the father of seven, grandfather of six, and 2013 *Pushcart Prize* nominee.

The Principal's Principle



The principal's office was cold. There were no posters, chalkboards, pencil sharpeners — nothing that would remind you of the classes surrounding this room. And I didn't see any bookshelves. Maybe principals don't need books. But they sure need files. I counted five file cabinets almost as big as Matt Boles himself.

My sister and I and big Matt the bully sat together facing the principal's desk.

"You again, Mr. Kogut," asked the principal.

"This is my first time, Sir," I replied.

"Not my first time," said Matt. "Did you get another file cabinet in here?"

"Robert Kogut, I have your file right here. Don't fool with the principal, young man."

"Robert's my brother, Sir. My name is..."

"He's Peter," my sister said as she

interrupted me. It was just like we were at home. "My name's Shelby and this big dipstick next to my brother is..."

"Matt," said Matt. "He knows who I am. But who's Robert Kogut?"

The principal got up and walked over to the only wall that didn't have a file cabinet up against it. There was a piece of wood hanging there on a hook. He lifted it off the wall, and swung it around a little like it was a baseball bat. Then he brought it over and showed it to us. "See there?" he said.

"What's a Bard of Education?" asked Matt.

"Look again, Mr. Boles."

"It says it's the *Board* of Education," said Shelby.



Matt scrunched his fat face up and read it slowly. "Baaard of Ed...ju...ka...shun."

"Board," repeated Shelby. For a moment my little sister reminded me of how Mom corrects Dad.

"I'm gettin' bored with this conversation." With that, Matt sounded exactly like Dad when he's done talking and would rather go to the bathroom.

"You know," said the principal, "she sounds more like your older brother than you do. But you sure got his look. It's like Pete and repeat."

I didn't want to correct the principal, but wouldn't it be more like Rob and re-rob? Then I looked closer at the Board of Education. Our big brother had signed his name to it — Rob Kogut. The principal started tapping the wood against the palm of his hand and said, "Used to be that the Board of Education would teach you a lesson about telling the truth. Every signature on here is my proof that some kid just like you had to learn that lesson the hard way."

Matt asked, "The hard way?"

"An up close and personal conversation with the old Board of Education was all any young tough ever required. Get my meaning," asked the principal.

Matt responded, "Can't we just do it the easy way?"

"There is no easy way to the truth, young man. Now somebody better tell me what happened on the playground today. I want each and every detail. Leave nothing to my imagination."

Matt asked, "Are you gonna hit us with your wood? My dad hit my mom once and he had to pack up his stuff in a black plastic bag and move out."

"That's sad," said Shelby.

The last thing I wanted was to watch my sister show sympathy for the biggest bully in school. "I'll tell you what happened," I said. But before I could go over the details, Shelby

interrupted.

"We were all having fun and then somebody called somebody a butt crack," she said.

"I see," said the principal. "And then what happened?"

So Shelby finished her explanation with as much detail as any of us was willing to say, "Then somebody got punched."

"That's pretty much it," Matt added. I nodded my head and smiled, hoping we could all leave soon without signing our names to that old Board of Education. The principal stopped pacing around the room and finally set the Board of Education down across his clean desk.

"I have heard the same story a thousand times. It used to be that we could teach lessons about violence before things got out of hand. But those days are gone. As principal there's not many lessons I get to teach. But let me say this, the day they said I could no longer paddle you troublemakers was the day I stopped teaching the only lesson I enjoyed teaching around here."

"What lesson was that?" asked Matt.

"The most important lesson in the world — that violence is never the answer to solving problems."

Shelby asked, "Did our big brother learn that lesson after..."

"After an appointment with the Board of Education?" said the principal. "You tell me. Does somebody get punched at the Kogut ranch?"

"Not by Rob. He doesn't bother punching anybody," I answered. "He doesn't punch, spit, kick, or even talk to us."

"See there. A lesson learned."

"I punched Peter last week," Shelby admitted. Matt smiled. "And Dad punches walls — does that count?"

"Fear of the Board was a guiding principle that kept order. Sadly, it's not the case anymore."

"If you're not gonna hit us, can we go now?" asked Matt.



"You boys have one more day left in elementary school. After the summer you'll be trying to get along on the middle school playground with much bigger kids. It's important that you watch out that nobody gets punched anymore."

"Got it," Matt said.

Then everybody looked over at me. And for the first time in my life I nodded my head in agreement with a bully.

"Well that's just fine, fine as fudge. Any questions?" asked the principal.

"I have a question," said Shelby.

"Yes, young lady?"

"Why are there holes in the Board of Education?"

The principal smiled as he picked up the board like an old ball player who tipped his cap to the crowd as he stepped up to the plate one more time before the end of the game. "I'm glad you asked," he said. "These holes here would help my swing."

"How'd they help? How'd a hole filled with nothing do any good," asked Matt.

"Wind resistance," the principal replied. "Each hole cuts down on wind resistance. Sometimes less is more."

"Wow," said Matt. "I learned something today."

The principal walked over to the wall without a file cabinet and hung the Board of Education back up. He shook our hands as hard as he could and just before he sent us back to our rooms, one of the secretaries knocked on the door and stuck her head in.

"What is it, Royanne?" asked the principal.

"Sorry to interrupt your big meeting, Ed — but there's a call from the Board of Education parked on line two."

The three of us looked at each other and ran out of the principal's office as fast as we could.

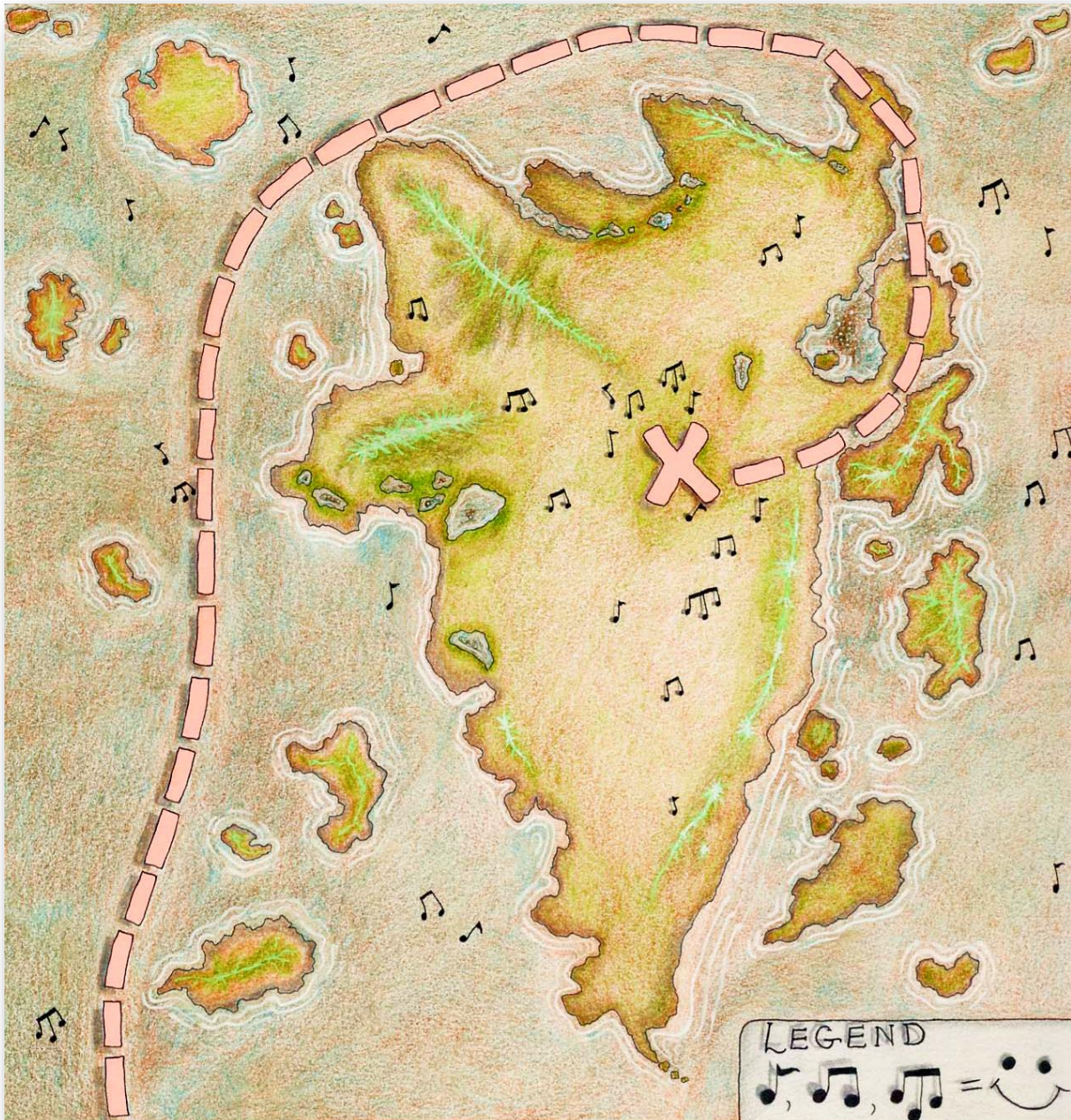




Daydream

Artist

Holly Hight



Land of Joy

Holly Hight has loved to draw since she was two years old. It had always been a hobby before she decided to quit her job in the government and write/illustrate full-time. She got her start writing nonfiction in 2008 and has since sold stories to *Running Times*, *Competitor Northwest*, *Cosmos Magazine*, *Marathon & Beyond*, *Apex*, and *Analog*. She has also illustrated for *Running Times* and *Marathon & Beyond*. Her dream is to illustrate for children (that dream is coming true). She lives in Oregon with her husband and son.



Author

Lewis J. Beilman III

Lewis J. Beilman III lives in New Haven with his family and two cats. He writes short stories in his spare time. His stories have appeared in *Reed Magazine*, *The Middle Gray*, *Blood Lotus*, *Gravel Magazine*, *Straylight Online*, *Red Fez*, and *Larks Fiction Magazine*. In 2009, he won first prize in the *Fred R. Shaw Poetry Contest*.



Little Özil

The ball blasted off the wall. Mustafa received it with his instep, switched it to his left foot, and launched it back. When the ball returned to him, he repeated the motion, this time taking it with his left foot and switching it to his right.

Mustafa had been at it for an hour, alternating his delivery from one foot to the other and chastising himself if his touch was off. Before that, he had been dribbling around cones he had set up in the backyard and shooting at a small goal he had placed against the plank fence.

The door to the backyard opened, and Mustafa lost his concentration. The ball rolled past him into a sea of grass. Wearing a headscarf, his mother stood in the doorway.

"Musti, come inside," his mother said. "You've been out here all morning. You need to wash and say your prayers."

Mustafa nodded, grabbed his ball, and ran into the house.

* * *

At school, Mustafa played soccer during recess with a group of Hispanic kids. He evaded tackles, ran with pace, and scored often. He loved feeling the sun on his cheeks, having the ball at his feet, and hearing his cleats whisper over the grass on his way toward goal.

The other kids admired Mustafa for his skill, but they were less than friendly. Once recess ended, they retreated to their cliques, leaving Mustafa by himself. In fact, when he walked the halls, he heard them talking about him.

"*Terrorista—Sucio moro—Infidel—*" they said.

The white kids were the same. To them, Mustafa seemed strange, even stranger than the Hispanic kids.

* * *

Mustafa's father knew soccer kept his son grounded. Mustafa was a good student — but he was an exceptional soccer player for a child his age. His father told Mustafa he should try out for the city's traveling team now that he had turned seven.

At the try-outs, Mustafa was clearly the best player. The coach invited him to join the team, hoping to place Mustafa in center midfield and build his team from there. The coach was very excited to have a child with such talent on his team.

Mustafa smiled on the way home from try-outs. His father patted him on the shoulder.

"Good work today," his father said. "You played well."

Mustafa nodded.

At the next intersection, Mustafa's father turned into a 7-Eleven parking lot. A breeze rustled the palm fronds above them as they walked into the store. He bought his son a Slurpee, Mustafa's favorite drink. He tousled his son's thick, black hair.

* * *

Before the team's first practice began, the coach divided the players into four groups of four. He had them play four-on-four with no keepers. Mustafa's team dominated. They won all of their games.

During the practice, Mustafa exhibited an exquisite touch on his passes. He knew to play the ball to space and allow his teammates to run to it. When he held onto the ball, he often feinted with his shoulder and reversed direction, leaving his defender behind him. He recorded several assists and scored many goals that day.

Afterwards, while Mustafa drank water on a bench, two players conversed near him. One of them had been victimized by Mustafa several times. He was a white kid with sandy hair and freckles on his face. His name was Mike. The other kid's name was Charlie.

"Do you know that kid's name?" Charlie said, nodding toward Mustafa.

"Yeah," Mike said.

"Who is he?" Charlie said

"Name's Al," Mike said. "Al Qaeda."

The two boys laughed.

* * *



For most of that autumn, Mustafa found little enjoyment in life apart from soccer and time spent with his family. When he wasn't kicking a ball or eating dinner with his parents, he retreated to his room and read an illustrated version of the Quran.

Mustafa found particular solace when he read about the indignities Muhammad suffered at the hands of the Makkans. He sighed for the burden Muhammad bore and marveled at Muhammad's strength during times of adversity.

If the Holy Prophet could endure such things, Mustafa thought, *surely I must try to do the same.* He closed the book and shut his eyes. In the darkness, he cleared his mind of all he could and contemplated the gifts Allah had bestowed on him and his family.

* * *

One day, Mustafa's father came home from work. As he removed his suit jacket in his bedroom, his wife approached him.

"Ahmet, we must do something," she said. "After Musti came home today, I found him in his room. He was crying. He said the other boys at school and on the soccer team make fun of him."

Ahmet sighed. "Beyza, do not tell Musti you told me this," he said, wiping the tears from his wife's cheeks. "I will speak to his coach and principal. When the time is right, I will talk to Musti myself."

Ahmet went to the dining room. Beyza called Mustafa to eat. Before eating, they each recited their du'a.

Mustafa said little as he ate. His eyes drilled into his plate. He felt ashamed for crying earlier.

Mustafa's parents respected their son's silence. After they had finished eating, they prayed again to themselves. They excused Mustafa from the table.

Mustafa returned to his room to read.

* * *

Coach Kohl received a phone call later that week. Although he had lived in South Florida most of his life, he retained his German accent. He paced

across the terrazzo floor of his den as he spoke.

"Yes, Mr. Sadik," Coach Kohl said. "That should not happen...Your son is a very good player and a good child...Children can behave very foolishly at times...Don't worry. I'll take care of this...Thank you for calling me."

After Coach Kohl hung up the phone, his wife asked him if everything was all right.

"Yes," Coach Kohl said. "Just a small problem with the team."

* * *

In lieu of the next practice, Coach Kohl invited his players to his home. He told their parents that he wanted the team to view footage of the best players from around the globe. He said he thought the exposure would improve their play and give them something to which to aspire.

After the children had arrived, Coach Kohl plugged his computer into the television and played clips from the Barclays Premier League, *La Liga*, the *Bundesliga*, *Serie A*, *Ligue 1* and Major League Soccer. He focused on players from every position. The children marveled at the footwork of Messi, the wiliness of Pirlo, and the defensive prowess of Silva.

Mustafa's tormentor, Mike, who played striker on the team, told Coach Kohl that he would be the next Messi. "I'll score a ton of goals this year," he said, high-fiving the teammate who sat beside him. "Just you wait and see."

Coach Kohl, who thought Mike to be a little cocky, told the boy that his style of play was more like Ronaldo's than Messi's. "No one scores his goals alone," he said. "The best strikers receive good service, and, until recently, Ronaldo had one of the best playmakers behind him."

Coach Kohl then played footage of Mesut Özil for the team. The German international's vision, ball-work, and creativity dazzled the children. "Özil is a large part of the reason Ronaldo scored as many goals as he did," he said. "Mike, if you and Mustafa could play like

that, we could have the best midfield-striker combination in the league.”

* * *

Coach Kohl admired Mesut Özil for more than his play. Özil, who was of Turkish descent, represented Germany in world competition. And, despite his many years in the United States, Coach Kohl still rooted for *Die Mannschaft*.

To Coach Kohl, Özil represented a changing Germany, a Germany that was struggling to integrate an increasingly diverse population. He thought Özil epitomized the growing numbers of first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants who called Germany home. “I will always be Turkish but I was born and live in Germany,” Özil said in 2013. “I feel more comfortable in a Germany shirt.”

In the 2010 World Cup finals, Özil’s creativity helped to carry the German National Team to third place. The German people, often at odds with Turkish immigrants, rallied behind Özil and his teammates — teammates who included players of Polish, Spanish, Bosnian, Brazilian, Tunisian, Ghanaian, and Nigerian roots. The team looked very different than the German national teams of the past.

Of course, many right-wing zealots harangued against this “un-German” national team, but those malcontents represented a dying past. German Chancellor Angela Merkel voiced the more common opinion when she spoke about the new representatives of Germany. “It is an example of how role models can be created — role models for our whole country,” she said. “For those who are of German origin just as much as for those who want to integrate.”

* * *

Although things improved little at school over the next few weeks, with his team, Mustafa began to find acceptance. Mike and he became a powerful goal-scoring combination — and the insults stopped. Without having to address the matter directly, Coach Kohl had got his point across.

At home, Mustafa spent less time in his

room. His mother noticed the change. She believed her prayers had been answered.

“Ahmet,” she said one night after her husband had arrived home. “Thank you for speaking with Coach Kohl. Musti is much better now.”

Smiling, Ahmet placed a hand on his wife’s shoulder. “We are very lucky,” he said. “We have a good boy.”

* * *

At halftime of their last game, Mustafa’s team led 2-0. They had a chance to finish the season undefeated. Coach Kohl spoke to his players, warning them not to get complacent. “Keep it up,” he said. “You can do something special here.”

Five minutes into the second half, the left back on Mustafa’s team stole the ball from the opposition’s right wing. The left back booted the ball up the pitch. Mustafa streaked at an angle toward the sideline and, lifting his left foot slightly, brought the ball under control with a single touch.

The ball bounced twice up the line, and Mustafa crossed it with his left foot into the penalty box. Mike moved to the ball unmarked and struck it past the keeper into the corner of the net. The game was over.

After the goal, one of the opposition defenders approached Mustafa. “Lousy camel jockey,” he said. He pushed Mustafa.

Mustafa turned away, shaking his head. As he walked toward midfield, he heard Mike behind him.

“Hey, assface,” Mike said to the defender. “If you have a problem with Little Özil, you have a problem with me.”

The defender said nothing.

Mike patted Mustafa on his shoulder as he trotted past him. Mustafa, picking up his pace, met his teammate at the center circle.





Above: Boundary Space. Mixed media on canvas. 12x16 inches. 2014

Right: reflux Oil on linen 44x34

Artist Leonard Kogan

Leonard Kogan is an artist who lives and works in Baltimore. Leonard's current works consist of layered coloristic brush strokes juxtaposed with expressionistic gestures. His current works are a synthesis of philosophical and psychic junction. The compositional structure in his works represents fragmentary set-stages, which moves between figuration and abstraction. He attempts to address issues such as assimilation and dissimulation, displacement and migration. The hybrid, the incomplete and the fragmentary are conceived as underlying principles of Leonard's visual representations. These ideas are conceptualized via the portrayal of sequence-images, imperfectly clonal repetitions, rebus and moments of exuberant melancholy.



The Hermit Crab

Mrs. Rune picked me to take Hermie home!

my son hollers as he leaps
into the passenger seat, thrusting
scrunched photos across the dash.

I hold black pop-out eyes
at arms length.

I never actually say yes.

Hermie moves in anyway
with a spiral shell
into which he has quadruple folded
his crabby body.

My son cradles

this spiky creature

like a kitten, setting him down to spelunk
across the carpet while I watch from afar.
He feeds the crab carrots and smiles.

But Hermie turns sluggish. We set
three bigger shells in the tank...

wait.

One day his shell is empty. We peer

from bent angles, bumping heads
but all shells are empty.

Scanning, we spy

Joanna White

Poet



the naked crab, listless
 under the peppery silt,
 lobster orange faded
 to papery gold.

I slip a tear.

My son swivels to look at me
 with new eyes.

I thought he creeps you out!

He's so helpless, I say.

I expect the worst, but the next morning,
 the blue conch has moved to the rear
 of the terrarium.

My son waves
 as he leaves on his bike
 I gaze until the blue shell
 lifts,
 lurches.

Lowering my head
 to tank side, I catch a blush

of orange under its craggy burden,
 spindling crosswise.

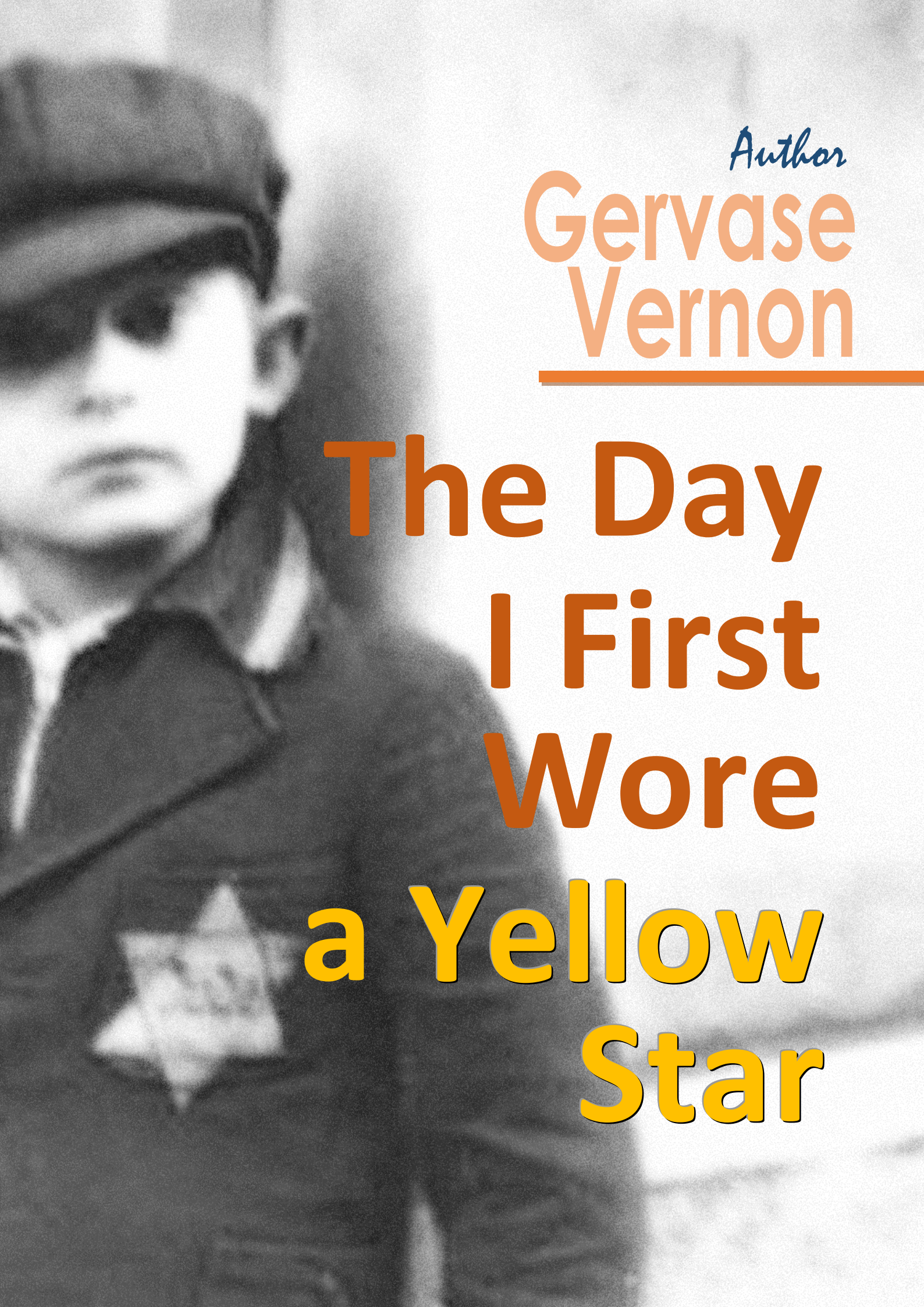
Hermie's safe in a new shell,
 I call to my husband.

At least until next time, he says.

We look up
 just in time

to see our son fly past the window,
 helmet secure
 atop his head.

Joanna White is a music professor at Central Michigan University. After performing with a poet, she returned to an early love of creative writing and studies poetry with Robert Fanning and Jeffrey Bean. She has poems appearing or forthcoming in *The Examined Life Journal*, *Ars Medica*, *Pulse*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, *Milo Review*, *Flare*, *Chest Journal*, *Open Palm Print*, *Flute View*, *Central Review*, *Minerva Rising Literary Journal*, and in both *Snow Jewel*, and *Naugatuck River Review* as a finalists in their poetry contests. She lives in Mount Pleasant, Michigan with her husband and has a daughter and son in college.



Author
**Gervase
Vernon**

**The Day
I First
Wore
a Yellow
Star**

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You have asked me to write down my memories of that day. It was in June 1942 in Paris, I was eight years old. I can remember that it was my big sister who sewed on the yellow star, as my mother did not sew. Did it mean anything to me as we walked to the lycée? Perhaps not a lot, my sister wore one too and she was everything to me. Did the adults look away? I was not interested in them. The headmistress, whom we had never seen before, came round each class. She said we must be gentle to those wearing yellow stars as it meant their families had many other troubles; there was to be no bullying. At break times I was one of the few boys to play with both the girls and the boys. Isabelle was my girl-friend, though we were too innocent to call it that. She came across the playing ground to tell me that she too would wear a yellow star just for me. I don't think she knew what she was saying, but to me the leaves on the trees seemed to shine more and look greener because she had said it.

The walk back home up the hill from the lycée took half an hour. I was on my own this time; perhaps my sister had stayed behind for a PE class. I took a short cut up a dusty, unadopted road. Half-way along a rough boy came out to stop me. He was my age, but much bigger. He was not from our school.

"Drop your pants."

"You heard me, drop your pants, or I'll hit you."

He was bigger than me. There was nobody about, nowhere to run.

I dropped my pants.

"Now do it properly, take them right down."

"Dirty Jew." He spat.

I put my trousers on again.

"Give me your pocket money."

I gave what I had.

"You may go."

I walked home. I did not tell anybody. Soon the incident seemed nothing compared to the hell that we fell into. Yet that casual cruelty, sanctioned, encouraged, by the adult world, was like the first heavy raindrop that announces a storm. I understood that bad things would befall us from wearing this yellow star.

Poet **Yuan**
Changming

The Kite

When still a village boy
Far beyond the pacific
Often did I run as fast as I could
Against the southern wind
To keep my kite high in the sky

Now swinging around, ready to fall
Like the paper bird I used to fly
I saw no-one but my own shadow
Trembling non-stop on the ground



Yuan Changming, 8-time *Pushcart Prize* nominee and author of 4 chapbooks (including *Mindscaping* [2014]), is the world's most widely published poetry author who speaks Chinese but writes English. Tutoring and co-editing *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan in Vancouver, Changming has poetry appearing in *Best Canadian Poetry*, *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Threepenny Review* and other 959 literary publications across 31 countries.

Childhood Secrets

When I was three or four, I buried
Several hard-gained marbles
Near our rented room, hoping one day
They would grow into magic trees

Half a century later, I dug them all out
On a dull afternoon. The moment
I put the first one on my table, a flock
Of crows flew up; when I thought of
The second, it burned like a forest fire

Now I hesitate to write the word 'immortality'
Lest my last marble should melt with diamonds





BALLOONS Lit. Journal (BLJ) wishes to thank all the contributors for bringing us their best works for young readers and all those who have read this book and adore it. BLJ would not have been created if it were not for the young generation of our literary world. We have to thank all children of the world who have inspired the creators and contributors of this book. Thanks must also be given to our voluntary readers of the earlier drafts of BLJ who have helped shape this first issue by words of praise and criticism, in particular Flora Chan Wai-shan, Dennis Wan Lok-hang, Sean Leung, and Justin Lee Chun-hei. It is our hope that you share this work with your students, children and friends to make more people aware that there are still people among the small presses who care about literature and art for children and young adults.

Last but not least, we appreciate your tolerance to the moody “balloons” swimming around this book. We don’t know exactly how many of these intruders are here but we think they are peaceful, loyal, and harmless. Happy reading!

Balloons

BALLOONS Lit. Journal

