

# louden singletree

WRITING AND VISUAL ART *from the*  
UNIVERSITY OF THE FRASER VALLEY



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# louden singletree

THE UFV ENGLISH DEPARTMENT'S JOURNAL  
OF CONTEMPORARY WRITERS AND ARTISTS

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## ISSUE 6

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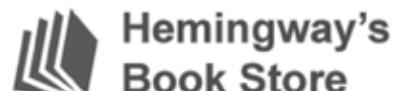
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**THE CASCADE**



# Editors' Note

Welcome to the sixth edition of *Louden Singletree*. Last year's edition — the fifth — was a milestone. This year, on the other hand, has no numerical significance. Six is not an auspicious number. However, this is the best magazine we could ever have hoped to create and the most unique issue yet. There are several exciting elements in this issue. First of all, we received more art submissions than ever before and, as a result, more than a third of the pieces included in this edition are visual art — a perfect balance between word and image. We are also very proud to host *Louden*'s first short play in print this year.

Perhaps the most satisfying part of putting together this year's edition, however, came at the very end of the submission process. Taking a step back, we noticed a subtle British Columbian theme weaving its way through the collected works, from the birch trees gracing our cover to literary pieces "Coquihalla," "Chehalis River," and "Downtown Eastside," to name a few. This B.C. theme is at the heart of *Louden* and has been from the beginning. As current and former occupants of the University of the Fraser Valley, we are surrounded by the shapes of the familiar buildings, but also mountains, fields, and wide-open skies. These are the things that shape us without our noticing and sneak their way into our works time and time again. In this context, this theme draws the magazine together into a whole. The pieces within these pages come from a multitude of creators; while they may find themselves lying next to unexpected bedfellows, they nevertheless belong together. As it has been for the past five years, this collection of paper and ink is more than a magazine; it is the expression of a community.

As always, this magazine would not have been possible without the help of many people: first and foremost, the invaluable guiding hands of faculty advisor Andrea MacPherson, and every other staff and faculty member of the English department who helped along the way. We also must thank our wonderful writer-in-residence Daniela Elza, who created a foreword and a poem to open the magazine.

The sixth year is not a milestone, but it is an issue to be proud of, because, no matter the year, *Louden Singletree* is an accomplishment we can stand by.

**Louden Singletree Editorial Board 2014**

# Foreword

*"Every life lived is also an inner life, a life created."*

—Margaret Atwood

The writing pre/occupation is multifaceted. On the one hand, we emerge through it; it can feel like looking for a needle in a haystack without knowing what a needle looks like. On the other hand, we are socialized into it; we stand at the mercy of inherited stereotypes, prejudice, opinion, myths, which in turn can affect our growth as writers.

Writing has become a way of knowing that I practice in our violently dichotomized world. A pursuit of a philosophy of the unsayable, which at best is still only a *pointing*. I think of writing as a transformative act, where *we become what we attend to* (Tim Lilburn), where *poetry forms the dreamer and his world at the same time* (Gaston Bachelard). As I write my poem, my poem can be writing me. Each poem becomes a piece of a continuous conversation I have with the world. In this sense, a poem has no beginning or end. Paul Valéry is known to have said that a poem is never ended; it is merely abandoned. He also says that the opening line of a poem is like finding a fruit on the ground that you have never seen before, and the poet's task is to create the tree from which such a fruit will fall.

A poem plays havoc with time.

Creates a hole one can dive into.

A place where time stops, and *we flow*.

It can be a pebble I drop in the mirror of a lake which leaves me at the centre of the ripples.

Yet, poems were taught to me fragmented, dissected, the excitement drained out of them. Somewhere along the clinical hallways of school, they had lost their soul. They were broken down into metaphor, metre, image, simile, dates, names, themes, etc.. This type of breaking down is reminiscent of what Michael Pollan observes we do with food: break it down into nutrients. Instead of a carrot, we need *carotenoids* in our diet. Despite all the effort to understand food by breaking it down, he says, *we still cannot understand what goes on deep down in the soul of a carrot*. It may be difficult to understand what goes on deep down in the soul of a poem, but we do not need to fathom a poem's complexity in order to reap its benefits. Each time I get discouraged with the small world poetry *can* become, I remember Heidegger thinking of poetry as

that which brings us into the *open clearing of truth*, and Robert Bringhurst saying that poetry knows more than any of us who write it. So, when you get despondent, do not despair. Just eat the carrot.

There are different forces that pull on writing and try to claim it. When you think you have *writer's block*, think of it as the block on which the writers live. In other words, think of yourself as part of a community. Go out and find your community. If you feel stuck, redirect your attention. If you can't write, read. If writing gets too serious and daunting, play. If you do not have the focus to read or write, send out a submission. When you feel empty, fill up. Do not expect you can pour wine out of an empty jug. Go for a walk. Follow the path a leaf takes when it falls, land where you did not expect to. Get curious. They say *curiosity killed the cat* but that is nothing compared to what lack of curiosity can do. Find a mentor who can guide you through some of these labyrinths. Discard what is toxic, what plagues you, what does not advance you in your practice. Create rituals. Be kind to yourself. Embrace that which delights, brings joy and contentment to you and your writing process. *Each thing attentively pondered*, says David Abram, *gathers our senses in a unique way*. And when it does, we will be the better for it, even if the attempt may not be considered satisfactory, successful, or perfect.

*Open them. Open the three fists clinging to the world.*

—Robert Bringhurst

*The sea has no end, in spite of its edges....*

*The seed is the tree thinking and speaking its knowledge of trees.*

—Robert Bringhurst

this is not the beginning of the poem. this poem was begun like the future long ago. a visitor on the blue threshold of sky. enters my words and is looking for someThing— (round and rounding while it makes its attempt to *open the three fists clinging to the world.* let go of these mountains where with every poem *the seed is the tree thinking and speaking its knowledge of trees.* you will) recognize this poem wrapped in its is in its questioning mountain mind in its attempting heart of sky.

it wants to hold. it cups its hands for you. to catch. to drink. but only enough for a few sips. only enough for you to remember the cool touch of being to your lips. then seeps through the attempting. through that gap you almost crossed. that shiver that almost turned thought but escaped while we were busy assigning words.

(in time.

*the sea has no end in spite of its edges.*  
forgive)

if this isn't the end of the poem  
I will)

try again.

**Daniela Elza**

WRITER IN RESIDENCE 2014

COLIN BALLARD

# Mancamp

First time out in the woods with no parents,  
fishing and marshmallows replaced  
with beer and more beer.

We set up tents in total darkness  
after driving four hours in the wrong direction;  
maps aren't really our thing.

Mancamps are where we gather to reminisce  
while hunting squirrels  
and eating Chef Boyardee straight from a can.

There's a certain majesty to it;  
alone in the wilds for three sleepless nights,  
staring up at the stars finally visible beyond street lights.

We swim in the same stream we drink from,  
and chopping firewood becomes a feat of strength  
as storebought hatchets fall apart in our hands.

On mancamps, we binge on untouched soil  
and brush past trees no one else has seen;  
Nature has become an elusive beast.

Back in the city, the night is too bright,  
and life too concrete, and we remember that forest  
where we tried to become men.

FRED STRUIK

# Chehalis River

A mighty cedar  
rests wearily on the bank  
of the old river.

His ancient red trunk  
bears gouges from determined  
men with axes who

gave up after all.  
But at least this bed of stones  
is smooth, the sharpness

labouriously  
worn away by incessant  
seasons and constant

rising and falling  
of the water. He watches  
as salmon journey

upstream, ever up,  
stubbornly, while small debris  
twirls and spins in a

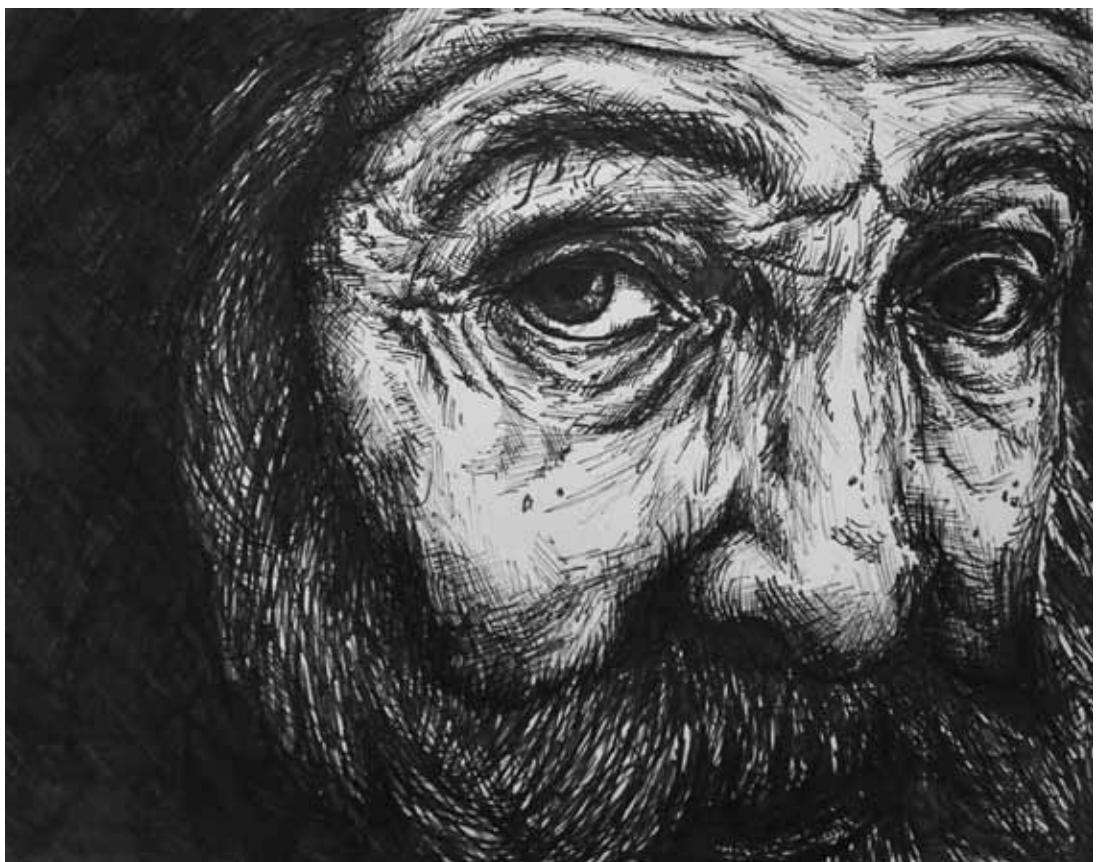
hypnotizing dance,  
borne along by the current's  
irresistible

marathon to the  
sea, and he waits for his time  
when the floodwaters

rise again, and the  
swelling will lift him from this  
spot and carry him  
  
onwards to the sea,  
away from mountains and these  
mossy covered groves.

NIKITA GRIFFIOEN

# The Gaze



SHANNON MCCONNELL

# The Temple Bar

*Dublin*

Under the gold lettering of the temple bar,  
tourists stand and lean against its bright red walls,  
while clouds of smoke encircle heads.

Most hands either hold a pint or cigarette,  
while others smooth out fold lines in Guinness shirts,  
newly christened with thick expanding pit stains.

From the thin windows above  
pour mandolin melodies and inebriated cheers,  
a mix of unfamiliar accents.

Across the cobblestone street,  
I stand holding my passport tight,  
bearing a surname that says I belong.

Yet, the wafting stench of vomit and piss  
tells my smooth, inexperienced liver  
that I am still so green.

SHANNON MCCONNELL

# Oxford Martyrs

From the ledge, his desolate sunken eyes  
can see Broad Street nestled between his dangling feet.  
A weathered plaque and some stones  
are all that remain of the Oxford martyrs:  
Cranmer , Ridley, Latimer.

Each consumed; the flames of heresy  
singed and blackened their flesh.  
They winced, pushing their spines against the stake,  
their lungs consumed by scorching sin.

Below him, on Cornmarket Street,  
tourists with bags of purchased memories  
stretch their arms high as if for prayer.  
A ripple of flashes ascends from their hands,  
capturing and dispersing his last minutes  
through the air, silent praises to a binary deity.

He runs a fingertip along the stones,  
each callused pad eager to transfer  
the severed synapses from his skull  
into eroded spaces between the stones.

He is a pile, plastered by pills, not mortar,  
waiting for a subtle drift of wind  
to dislodge the weakest stone  
and smother his flame upon cobble.  
See how they scatter.

SARAH SOVEREIGN

## Masset

In October, when the fierce winds crawl  
along birch-filled skeleton roads,  
the trees,  
white-bright soldiers bounding rock cuts  
scoring the might of Mount McKay  
sway boldly towards the freshwater sea.

We left, before the winter turned too cold  
to find our way out of the warmth and hearth of home.

Along dead prairie roads, the truck cut as ice  
through pale mountain passes,  
along tree lines and cities and Highways of Tears,  
by rocking ferry arrived:

sleep-starved and bone-weary –  
to the canopy of old growth forest,  
to the eagles circling in gold against November sky.

Three of us, our family:  
scraping mussels from the side of rock,  
little birds marching towards groves of wild herb,  
an eight year old boy singing a Paul Simon song.

Siren-spun darkness warning:  
high winds tonight, and every night thereafter.

In the candlelit winter, with the hurricane winds,  
I read you a book – the curtains open, six chapters down –  
and thought: there is no more perfect time than this –  
with my pockets full of agates, Alaskan darkness fallen by four,  
the shallow ocean-stretched haze – made for heavy blankets wrapped warm–  
*James and the Giant Peach* with all the voices.

My heart, argillite carved and aching  
to stretch along North Beach roads,  
where the raven-song meets the howling winds  
whose voices thrum against the drums

of Haida Gwaii.

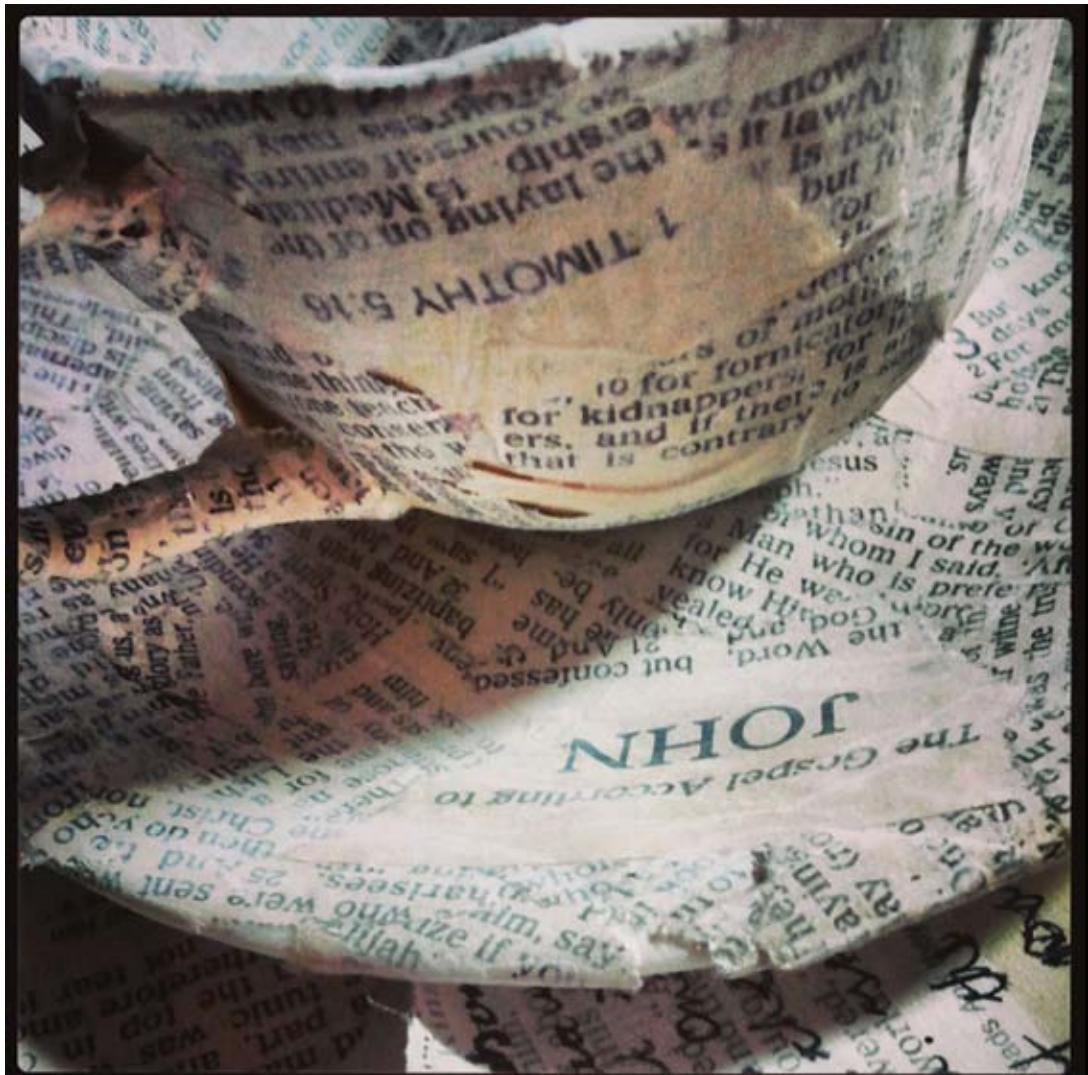
SARAH SOVEREIGN

# The Secret Garden



CHRISTIE DOS SANTOS

## Conversation Over Tea



KATIE STOBART

# Coquihalla

Late April afternoon and the mountains are beautiful. Vast canyons, steep snowy slopes, the great yawn of white sky above; Remy should remember being here before, but she was young then, and eager to reach the other end of the pass. Still, it is hard to believe she could forget this feeling, this resonance.

This is where the gods live; their presence is something she can taste, sharp and cold, as all-encompassing as the snow. Wind buffets the car in warning: what can happen in an instant, how easily the road can be erased, folded back into stone. She silently weighs this new word for God on her tongue: Coquihalla.

“We could have stayed in Kamloops,” Anna says in the back seat, “with Liz.”

“No,” Remy says. A green road sign rolls past, too quickly to see the numbers—how many kilometres are left? The road is slick with fresh snow. She reaches up to close the sunroof. It was open in the bright, clear spring morning and Mum forgot to shut it when the storm settled over them, this stubborn last shudder of winter. She doesn’t close the cover, and the pale light filters through. “She just moved in, and Mum has her meeting tomorrow morning.”

The trees are thick again. The mountains farther back looked like half-plucked birds: naked with the occasional feather sticking up. She wonders if their sparseness is a symptom of the climate. *So bare you could walk right up to the top*, she thought, until Liz warned her that rattlesnakes live in the scrubby foliage.

But these mountains, with their trees rising up like an army of spears, remind her of home. Only they’re closer here. Too close for comfort. She knows now why the Rockies have always made her feel secure; the army is turned away, battling the wild storms on the high mountain road, its back to the Fraser Valley and its milder humours.

“Is the dog sleeping?” Mum asks. Remy nods, glancing back, where Bailey is curled up on a throw, her eyes closed peacefully. She looks ahead again, through the spatters of ice on the windshield, and grinds her teeth. The car in front of them has dissolved into fog.

“Well, is she?” Mum repeats. Her eyes are fixed on the road. Anna’s Buble album is playing. *Cry me a river, cry me a river. I cried a river over you.*

“Yes, she’s sleeping,” Remy says, louder and sharper than she intends. A small white sign flickers past. No stopping—avalanche zone. Her stomach tightens, feels small and

hard like a little rock. She tilts her head to look up the side of the mountain, up to where the snow-capped trees disappear into a veil of mist. She prays that mist does not conceal a foamy wave of snow lunging toward them. Like a tsunami. Reclaiming space. *Coquihalla*.

"You shouldn't sit with your leg like that," Mum points out. Remy slides her right leg out from under her left and sets her foot down on the floor of the car. Feels the heat there, flooding steadily from the vent. Remy wonders if Mum is expecting an accident. They drive into a tunnel, and she holds her breath out of habit, but it is a short tunnel.

"Do people live up here?" Anna asks.

"Nope." She doesn't tell Anna about the sign. Who would live here, in an avalanche zone, on the doorstep of the gods?

"What?" Mum asks. She turns down the music.

"Nothing," Remy says. "Anna's just asking why people don't live here."

"Oh," Mum says, and is quiet.

*Crack.*

The stone in Remy's gut flinches. Glass showers into the car. She slams the cover over the shattered sunroof. A shard, three inches long, lies flat against her left thigh.

"What was that?" Mum demands, as if someone should know. As if someone might have been waiting on the other side of the tunnel with something in his fist.

"It must have been ice."

"There were power lines back there," Anna offers. "It might have fallen, like on the new Port Mann." Remy recalls a video taken on someone's cell phone of ice falling onto his windshield from the bridge cables. It smacked into the glass, making circles in it like the rings on a tree stump. Cracks spread like branches from the point of impact.

"A rock. It had to be a rock." Mum's voice shakes. "Are you okay?"

"I'm okay." Remy pauses. There is something sharp—she reaches back and picks a few pieces of glass off her skin. "Ice is hard, too. It could have been ice." As if it matters what hit the sunroof. Tiny glints of ice and glass rain on the windshield. The weather wasn't like this on the way to Kamloops. On the way up, she hadn't been thinking, *What happens if we die here?*

Another sign: No stopping—avalanche zone. Where did the last zone end and this one begin? She looks back at the dog. Bailey's eyes are wide.

"I could pull into the runaway lane." Mum isn't looking at her. Might be talking to herself.

"Runway lane?" Remy asks, mishearing.

"If a big rig's brakes malfunction," Mum explains, "it can pull into the runaway lane—it goes way up, so eventually it loses momentum instead of picking up speed like it would on the main road." Remy can see the lane on the right, arching steeply up into the mountain. She can't tell whether it ends at the crest of the hill or goes over it.

"We can't pull up here. The snow's too deep."

"Too late anyway," Mum says. *Too late to turn back.* Remy looks up at the mist again and thinks morbidly of a white wall. A white end. Trees bending under.

"When we get out," she says to Anna, "I'll tell you why people don't live up here." *Avalanche.* She hopes the thought won't jinx them, that the promise to her sister will somehow ensure their survival. *Too late to turn back.*

"One day we can tell our kids about this," Anna laughs, splintering the quiet. "We can tell them about that crazy drive on the Coquihalla in April, when the sunroof broke."

CHRISTIE HOOS

## Who Will Remember?

My trip down memory lane this summer has sixteen lanes of traffic on both sides. Interstate 5 stretches all the way from Canada to Southern California and it's a road I know well. At every stop on this familiar road trip, I've been reading and re-reading an article written by Martha Gellhorn about her memories of World War II. She was front and centre at some of the pivotal points in history, and yet 50 years later she's struggling to make sense of it all. With her memory fading, the coherence and purpose she once had now eludes her. It's frustrating as hell. How do we make sense of the world when we can't make sense of ourselves anymore?

As I muscle my way across the lanes of traffic onto my exit, I try to focus on the mission at hand. This is difficult under a deluge of my own memories. I spent many blistering summers here in Eagle Rock, a relatively affluent suburb of Los Angeles. My holidays were punctuated by trips to the library, to the beach, to church, and to buy household items and underwear with my Grandma at the Glendale Galleria (which sounded so much more glamorous to my childish ears than "mall"). Occasionally, a longsuffering relative would bundle some of us kids off to Knott's Berry Farm or, on a really good day, Disneyland.

I angle my wheels toward the curb and pull on the parking brake before clambering out with an armful of bags and papers and empty soda cans. I once tried to roller skate down this very street with my cousin Janis. Lined with palm trees, Hermosa Drive is just as picturesque as I remember, but seems even steeper and more dangerous to my adult eyes. What were we thinking?

But today isn't a holiday. Nor is it time to wallow in nostalgia. Today, I'm here to work, reviving an old skill set for an important man. It's been years since I coddled, cajoled, and provided personal care to several elderly clients. It wasn't a job I loved at the time, but it feels important in hindsight. At least I know what I'm doing.

The white house halfway up the block is a poor man's Georgian mansion. What it lacks in size, and adjoining plantation, it makes up for in sheer panache. The four towering pillars at the front would seem pretentious on any other façade, but this house has the supreme self-confidence to pull it off. No longer pristine, it maintains an air of shabby elegance. The extra wide black door has an antique brass knocker on its brow and I'm thrilled to announce my arrival with a brisk rat-a-tat-tat. "Simple pleasures for

simple minds,” my husband always teases. When no one comes after several minutes, I’m forced to resort to the doorbell after all.

Shifting from one foot to the other, I juggle my packages back and forth, sagging under the weight of old insecurities. As extensively as the family has briefed me on the situation, there is still so much uncertainty. I’m not sure how I’ll be received.

When the door finally opens, I am surprised by the blast of heat. It’s even hotter inside than out. An industrious Mexican woman greets me before bustling past.

“I will see you next week, Señor Bob,” she calls over her shoulder.

The Señor is enthroned in a frayed green armchair on the other side of the room. Straight-backed, legs planted wide, with a cane in his hand like a sceptre, he scowls over the coffee table at me.

“Well...you gonna come in, or what?”

I’ve never encountered a more intimidating stranger.

I try to ease the heavy door shut, but the hot Santa Ana wind wrestles it out of my grasp with a resounding bang. I take a deep breath and paste a smile on my face. The key to confidence is fake it ‘til you make it. I’ll pretend he’s glad to see me.

I try to make nice; the polite chit-chat strangers use to grease the wheels of introduction. “It sure is windy. I guess they don’t call the Santa Ana “devil winds” for nothing. I thought they were going to knock me right off the road. Is it normally like this? I see they’re filming a movie in the house up the road. Do you get a lot of that around here? Have you had lunch yet?”

Smooth. Nothing says “trust me, I’m here to help” like a nervous ramble.

He’s unmoved. Not a word; just a glare.

I feel less like an intruder when I notice the food stains on his white dress shirt and catch a whiff of his scent. Unwashed Old Man will never make my top ten aromas, but today it smells like a welcome. He does need me, even if he can’t see it right now.

Putting down my things, I excuse myself to the washroom, a genteel Canadian-ism which makes him snort.

“The *bathroom*’s in the back. Don’t touch anything.”

The washroom’s a study in pink. Someone loved dusty rose once upon a time. Behind the toilet a faded sign, written on the cardboard sleeve salvaged from a package of pantyhose, is taped to the wall. The feminine script reads, “If it’s yellow, let it mellow. If it’s brown, flush it down.” Ah yes, the classy prose of drought country. Before I dare to let anything mellow, I help myself to a rag and give the whole room a wipe-down. It’s what my Grandma used to call “a lick and a promise,” but at least it’s a start.

He's right outside when I'm done, leaning heavily on his cane, stooped nearly in half.

"Might as well show you around," he snarls.

Waving his hand dismissively toward the stairs, "Bedrooms," then, nodding toward the front room, "Keep the curtains closed; we don't want the furniture to fade." As we inch our way through the dining room, "Fer company" is all he says. Apparently the kitchen is self-explanatory.

He lights up as he hobbles into the backyard. Rendered speechless, I'm impressed by its beauty: the charming nooks, the hidden paths to benches and bird feeders, the dramatic blooms and rustic gazebo. Then he starts talking. He shows me the system he's rigged to open the back gate with the touch of a button. He explains the construction of each sprinkler. He points out the fruit trees and names each type of flower. Even the grass receives an extensive lecture. "St. Augustine's the way to go. It's not like most grass around here, but it's tougher, better, needs less water. No weeds dare grow when it's taken root. Ya see how low to the ground it is. It don't grow much higher than that; it don't need much fussin."

Sure enough, the grass is unlike any I'm used to. It's prickly and barely gives way under my feet. It suits him.

He settles himself on the back patio; waiting, I assume, for his lunch. He barks out an order: "sardines and crackers." I try not to gag as I put a tray together. Whether that's the rather pungent main course, or my deep-seated aversion to submission, I can't tell. I don't generally take orders well.

We sit in silence. Chewing. Eyeing each other suspiciously.

"Used to have a dog around here, a stray. Just showed up one day begging for food and wouldn't leave. Huge slobbering mountain of a beast. Not a lick of sense. No use to no one, that mutt."

"What did you do?" I wondered.

"Spent a fortune on him, got his shots, took him to the vet, fed him here on the patio."

"So what did you name him?"

"Didn't name him. He weren't my dog. We just called him 'Dawg.' This one time he got hisself tangled up in some barbed wire the neighbour left out. Howled bloody murder; most awful racket I ever heard. I was in the shower at the time, but I hoofed it out here fast as I could to save 'im. There I was, buck nekkid, trying to unravel that dumb Dawg, 'til Doris comes screeching out, 'Grab a towel, Pa.'"

The floodgates have opened. Suddenly, he's talking about anything, about

everything. About his wife Doris and how she was always the smart one. About “The Meeting” and serving the Good Lord and walking the straight and narrow. About his son and grandson, who lived in an RV on the driveway for more than a year. About the doctors who told them to put their daughter in an institution when she was born and were surprised by their vehement refusal. About the time they got into the car to go on a drive and didn’t stop until Michigan.

With each mumbled story the picture of a different man emerges. He’s an old school patriarch living “in the world, but not of it,” rough around the edges, with an unexpected marshmallow center. Listening to him feels like coming home.

Sometimes he finishes a story before moving on to the next one but not often. Sometimes he simply trails away, then jumps in with a new thought from yet another decade. His memory seems to wax and wane without conscious control.

Out of the blue, he turns to me, tapping his fingers against his brow, “I’m losing my mind, ya know.”

There’s an edge of panic to his voice, but the statement is made with complete resignation. This man, who proudly pointed out his workshop and many homemade inventions throughout the house, who spent years building his own equipment, who was the go-to handyman in every sphere, cannot fix himself. And neither can I.

Without the mask of hostility, his confusion is more pronounced. Even as he reminisced, his memories seemed to slip through his fingers no matter how tightly he grasped for them; not just what he had done, but who he was and why he was here. Gellhorn once asked, “What is the use in having lived so long, travelled so widely, listened and looked so hard, if at the end you don’t know what you know?” It’s frightening, and worst of all, so very pointless.

I came here hoping he would recognize me. I imagined a few meals and a good cleaning and a friendly face could hold back the tide of dementia a little longer. I thought that was the job. But I was wrong.

At the end, when memory fails and we can no longer make sense of our lives, it’s up to our loved ones to do it for us. That is how memory, and meaning, lasts forever. This is the job. I am here to catch those memories as they slip away and make them mean something in the world, to make mean something. It’s all I can do.

I put my hand on his arm and lean close. “Don’t worry, Grandpa, I’ll remember for you.”

LUKE KOKOSZKA

## Are You Sikh?

A man asked me while I was working  
Are you Sikh?  
and I stopped counting his milk jugs  
and looked up to see who asked me that question,  
and upon seeing the man,  
I caught sight of his daughter  
who was beautiful, radiant the way some Indian women were  
when you knew they were out of bounds,  
and I saw the look of horror (or maybe shame)  
on her face as she turned from her father  
to me.  
I wanted to tell her how irresistibly human  
she made me feel,  
how bad I'd like to taste her and tear her apart,  
how I'd like to keep a souvenir of her Mediterranean Sea eyes.  
Instead I bit my tongue and answered the man  
no.  
But I understood the mix-up and maybe somewhere  
way back in my lineage there was Indian blood,  
and my beard was the manifestation of what remained.  
It wasn't 'til after they left I thought  
why didn't I lie?

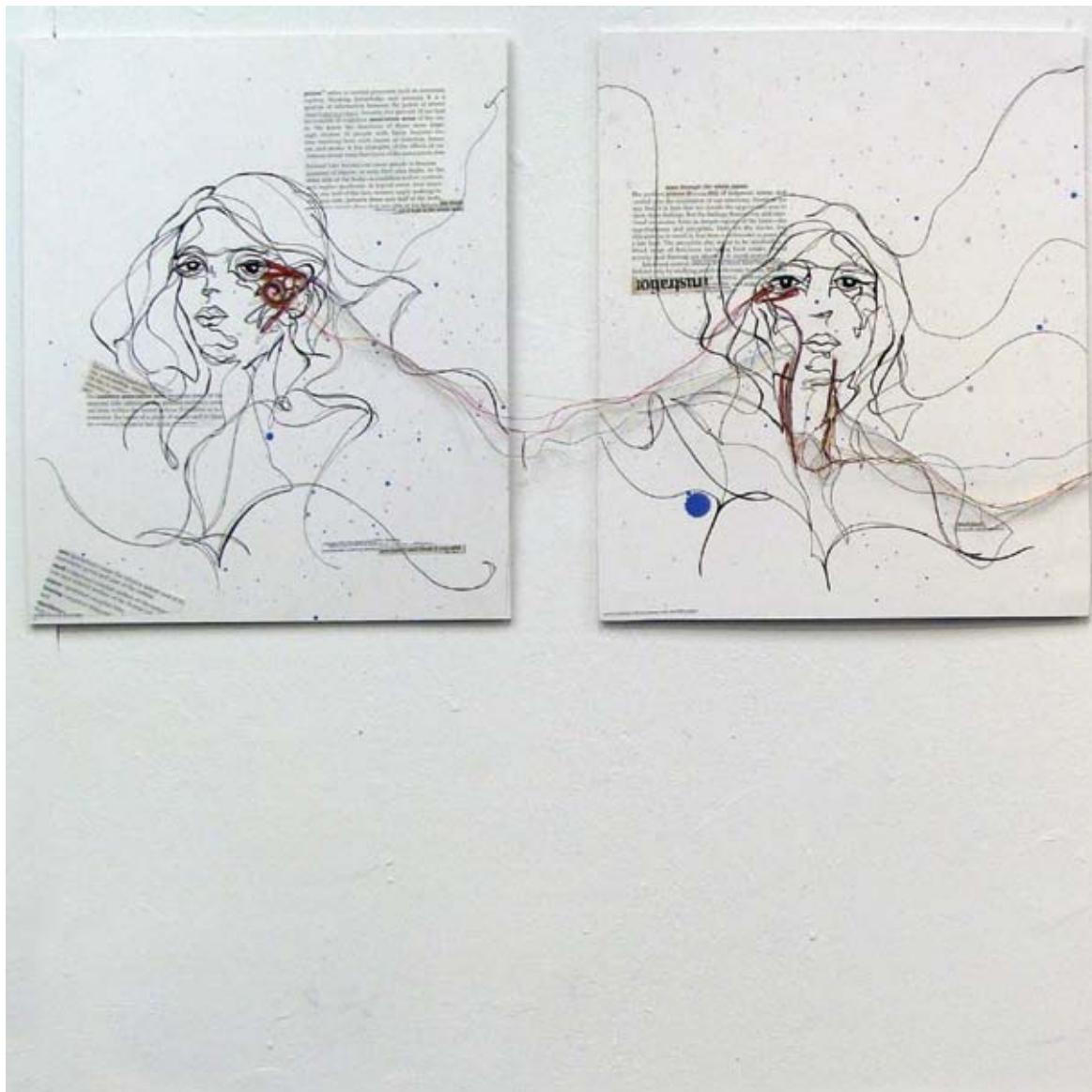
RADIANCE DREAM

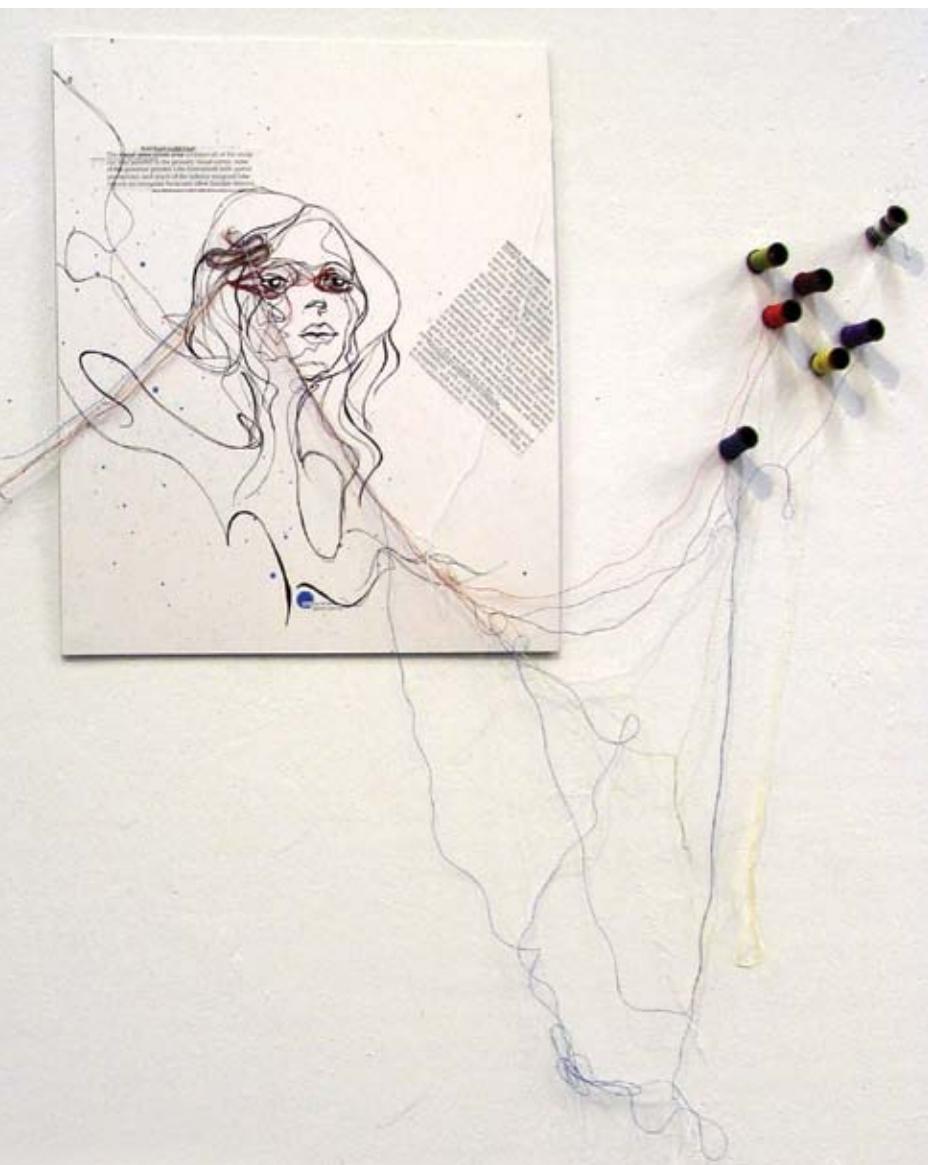
# Beauty Resting



OLIVIA MATNI

# Espaços Vagos





RADIANCE DREAM

# Ode to Klimt



JULIA DOVEY

# Home by Nine

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

FRAN..... Janitor in funeral home, early 20s

DONNY ..... Crematory operator, 30's

WOMAN..... Woman that comes to funeral home, late 60's.

TIME: Evening, close to 9 PM

SETTING: The front foyer of a small funeral home. A glass plaque on the wall dictates the name of the home: "Personal Touch Funeral Services". At the sides are a few dark wooden chairs and a small table with a leafy potted plant sitting on it. On one side is a door leading outside, on the other is a door leading to the crematorium. In the middle of the stage is a mop bucket filled with dirty water.

*(The lights rise on FRAN, dressed in a janitor's uniform and iPod earbuds, who is mopping the floor, a bucket by her side. She is humming horribly to the music, pausing every so often to give the mop a twirl, as though dancing with it. DONNY enters from stage right, wiping his hands on a cloth. He is wearing jeans and a dark blue work shirt.)*

DONNY: Yo, Fran. Did you mop the bathrooms yet? We've got a funeral tomorrow at three, and God forbid they don't have a clean floor to piss all over.

FRAN: *(She yanks down headphones)* Hi, Donny. I've done everything but this floor.

DONNY: *(He looks at mop critically)* Christ, you need a new one. I've got more mop on my left nut than that thing does. Wasn't Lance supposed to buy you new materials?

FRAN: I think he must've gotten lost halfway through Home Depot or something. Probably stressed; he had his first funeral to direct last week, didn't he? He did get me a box of TSP, though, so points for that.

(DONNY sits down on one of the waiting chairs while FRAN is talking and gives a great weary exhale)

DONNY: What the hell is that? The sixth sense?

FRAN: (*Emphasizing first letter*) TSP. Trisodium Phosphate, I think. It's a soap. Gets the job done while managing to keep the floor looking the same, apparently. (*She indicates the floor, sarcasm in her voice*) Though at least it works better than a sixth sense. In cleaning floors, that is.

DONNY: That floor will always look like ass. And I don't need a sixth sense; I see dead people already. All goddamn day.

FRAN: What are your plans for the rest of the night?

DONNY: Going home, chugging an entire freaking bottle of Advil, and going to sleep. After I finish this cremation. Third one today—I think my face is melted off. You know what a body looks like when it's in the oven? (*FRAN shakes head*) It does the Thriller. (*DONNY demonstrates dance*) I swear to God.

FRAN: (*Laughs*) Maybe that's where Michael Jackson got the idea. How long do you have to wait for this one?

DONNY: It's nearly done. (*He looks around and drops his voice*) Guess who it is?

FRAN: (*Faux shocked voice*) Michael Jackson?

DONNY: Nope. Think smaller.

FRAN: (*After a pause*) Janet Jackson?

DONNY: I'll give you a hint. His name was "Whiskers."

FRAN: Ohmigod, ZZ Top?

DONNY: No! It's my buddy Lar's cat. He got hit by a moterscooter some old geezer was driving. I offered to give the thing a quick bake, since he's broke. They charge an arm and a leg at those pet cremation places.

FRAN: I mighta heard that, too.

DONNY: Don't let the big kahuna know, though; he'd *flip*. What's your night gonna be?

FRAN: I want to get this all done and get home by nine. I have this show I want to watch. Get my mind off the hellish midterm I had to take this morning; I'd read the wrong chapter in the text. (*She takes a mock bow*) A university student, people.

DONNY: Hey, university's important. Without it, you won't ever be able to get from mopping piss to shoving dead people into fire. (*He stands, stretching his back*) I'll leave you to it. Whiskers should be pretty much cooked by now. He was mostly fucking hair anyway.

(DONNY gets up and leaves through the crematorium door. FRAN puts headphones back on and begins mopping with gusto, singing along with "Don't Fear the Reaper" by Blue Oyster Cult. A knock is heard from the outside exit door. It takes a few rounds of knocking before FRAN hears it. She goes to the door and indicates through dramatic gestures that the funeral home is closed. The knocking begins again. Looking peeved, FRAN unlocks and opens the door. A WOMAN stands on the stoop. She is sixty-ish, a little heavy, and is wearing a puffy winter coat. Over her arm is a large, chunky purse.)

FRAN: Sorry, but we're actually closed.

WOMAN: (Overlaps) Brr! It's cold out there. (She shuffles through door in quick little steps) Hello, sorry to burst in, but I'm here to pick up my husband.

FRAN: Well, all the directors have gone home, I think. Unless your husband is Donny. He's in... (She looks despairingly at the muddy footprints the woman has left) ...the crematorium.

WOMAN: (Amused) No, no, no, dear, he's already dead. I'm here to pick up what's left of him.

FRAN: Oh! I—well—did you contact your funeral director? I'm sure he could tell you—

WOMAN: (Interrupts) Oh, I did, believe me, dear. I swear on my mother's grave! But he never answered, and I really do need my husband tonight.

FRAN: Um...I'll go ask our crematory operator. He'll know where...well...

(FRAN awkwardly leaves through crematorium door. WOMAN looks around foyer, giving little tuts and clucks at things like the chairs and the potted plant. After awhile she sits and takes a large notebook out of her purse. She begins checking through pages, again giving little sniffs and tuts. FRAN enters.)

FRAN: He's checking now. (Awkwardly) Can I get you a...a bottle of water?

WOMAN: No, thank you, dear. I need to get my husband and be off. I've been on my feet all day; I'll probably have the most swollen ankles at the funeral tomorrow. Did you know that salt swells ankles like a couple of balloons? Of course, tell that to me when I see a McDonalds! (She laughs comfortably)

FRAN: (She begins mopping again) I might've heard that.

WOMAN: That reminds me, I need to pick... (She starts scribbling in notebook) ...up...pretzels. Lord have mercy, there's a heapful to do. And here I was thinking that Terrence was the last thing I needed to pick up.

FRAN: Wouldn't it be better to pick him up just before the funeral? You don't want him... (*She glances at potted plant*)...wilting.

WOMAN: Oh, my dear, I had him cremated! Well, actually, I didn't—his mother did. *Mothers*, you know.

FRAN: Oh...um...yes?

WOMAN: (*Overlapping*) I always thought it was silly, burying a box of ashes. I wanted to have a viewing, personally. My Terrence *never* liked meeting relatives and friends, it was like pulling teeth, so I wanted him to meet them at least *once*. But his mother insisted on the cremation. *Insisted!* She blathered on about how it was due to their religion, but I think it's more due to the price they tack on a full burial. Though, I suppose for her it could be almost religious; she can read a bank statement as though it were the gospel. Though, it might have done my Terrence right to take a leaf out of that gospel. Never thought ahead, he didn't. It's what got him killed, I swear on my mother's grave!

FRAN: Or *his* grave.

WOMAN: He hasn't got one yet, dear. They aren't in their grave 'til the undertaker throws on the last shovelful. I suppose it will be a rather *well*-like grave, wouldn't you say? Six feet for a tiny little box. It's quite ridiculous, as I said. Though I suppose it's better than the alternative; I just don't think I could stand having an urn. He spent his entire life loafing on my couch; I'll be darned if he spent the afterlife loafing on my mantle.

(DONNY enters stage right. *He has a fake smile on and is scratching his neck nervously.*)

DONNY: Ma'am, are you sure you were supposed to be picking him up tonight?

WOMAN: Yes, of course! I must get him tonight. The traffic will be awful tomorrow, and the service is at ten! I have it all planned, and I'm already *very* behind. I still need to stop at the store and have all the memorial cards folded tonight.

DONNY: Well, I can't seem to find any ashes ready for pickup. Now, if you call your funeral director, he might have an idea where they are. He could have taken them home for some f—weird reason.

WOMAN: He isn't picking up on the number he gave me. I called *twice* already. But I was told *explicitly* that his ashes would be ready today!

DONNY: I can check the...ah, the freezer, if you want. (*He begins backing toward crematorium door*) Just in case he wasn't cremated.

FRAN: His name's Terrence. (*DONNY exits. FRAN begins mopping floor again*

*(after DONNY walked on it)*

WOMAN: Highly unprofessional, I must *say*. It reminds me of Terrence's last birthday. I'd ordered a cake from that Dairy Queen restaurant, and I went to pick it up, only to find they'd written "Lawrence" instead of "Terrence" in the icing. Places just seem to have trouble with him, I suppose. Would there be time to cremate by tomorrow?

FRAN: Oh, probably. Maybe. (*She begins mopping by WOMAN's feet, forcing her to lift them up*)

WOMAN: Terrence was never one for cleaning. He'd get lost halfway down the instructions for a washing machine. Once, he attempted it—*once*—and I came home, and half the upstairs hallway was soap bubbles! He'd misread the amount of detergent needed for a load and emptied half the bottle in. I gave him a good tongue lashing, I tell you. And it isn't easy being stern when you're knee-deep in soap bubbles. It wasn't cleaning that killed him, though, oh no. It was the building.

FRAN: A building fell on him? (*She checks her watch*)

WOMAN: No, no! He'd been building a chair in the garage. I have no idea why—if there was one thing we didn't need, it was a chair. And he wasn't a carpenter, bless his soul. But he did like trying things...just not long enough for the things to be of any use. Anyway, he had a habit of putting his screwdriver in a coffee mug on the floor, just so it'd be on hand without scraping his knuckles on the concrete. Well, last Tuesday, he tripped and fell, and the screwdriver went right through his poor little head.

FRAN: Oh...my...

WOMAN: Yes, it was awful, finding him like that. Especially since the mug didn't break, so when the paramedics arrived they found a nearly full mug of perfectly poured blood on the garage floor. *Oh*, they were so *confused* until I explained.

*(DONNY walks in with an even faker smile on his face.)*

DONNY: There isn't a body named Terrence in the freezer. Ma'am, are you sure you have the right funeral home?

WOMAN: Of course I do! This is absolutely unacceptable. He was here yesterday! Lance Whoever had told me his ashes were packed and ready. I *must* get him tonight, and I need to stop off at the store for pretzels! It closes at nine, and I cannot go tomorrow morning.

FRAN: Don't worry Ma'am, we'll get this figured out *before nine*. (*She gives DONNY a pointed look*)

DONNY: Okay, okay, you know what, I'll call Lance. (*He pulls out cellphone and places call*) He's probably forgotten he has a job here. Lance! (*A pause*) Lance, there's a woman here; she needs to pick up her husband's ashes. (*Whispers*) They aren't here, Lance. (*A pause*) Name? Ma'am, what's your husband's last name?

WOMAN: Pitt. Like a cherry.

DONNY: Pitt, Lance. Yes, like the actor. (*Mutters*) Moron. (*A pause*) Well, I never saw them. (*A pause*) Fine. I'll call you back. (*He hangs up*) He said they're on a table, in a box, with the initials written on it. I suppose I'll look again. What's his middle name?

WOMAN: Sebastian.

DONNY: So, it'd be T, S...

(*He stops talking, and slowly looks around at FRAN. She has now stopped mopping. Simultaneously, they look at the mop bucket. There is a very long pause*)

DONNY: (*Cheerful voice*) So, Fran, how much stuff did you use in that there bucket?

FRAN: (*Equally cheerful*) Oh, pretty much the whole box. It didn't seem to make a good lather, so I was generous.

DONNY: Well! I'll just...check around again. For those ashes.

(*He leaves, practically running off stage. WOMAN sighs loudly, then notices FRAN eyeing the bucket, and looks herself.*)

WOMAN: Oh my, those floors must not have been washed in some time!

(*DONNY returns, holding a box, and gasping for breath.*)

DONNY: Well, I found it! Weird how things are in the last place you look!

FRAN: Good job, Donny!

(*WOMAN takes box*)

WOMAN: (*Relieved*) Oh, thank heaven. I can finally get those pretzels. What do you think a group of thirty would eat? Should I get more than five bags?

DONNY: I think five would be enough.

FRAN: Yes, five is fine. It's perfect.

WOMAN: So much to do, so little time, as my mother would say! I suppose

I should get a nice box for these ashes, as well—this is a bit small. They sell some wonderful boxes at gift-wrapping shops. I wonder if they're open at nine. You two have a lovely night!

*(She leaves, wiping her feet on the mud mat beforehand. There is a long pause between FRAN and DONNY)*

DONNY: Just so we're on the same page...we aren't mentioning this to anyone.

FRAN: I think we're on the same page. *(A pause. FRAN then picks up bucket and mop, and they start walking toward crematorium door.)* But I used the whole box. What did you give her?

DONNY: I'll give you a hint...

*(Lights go down)*

TORI THISTLETHWAITE

# He Called It Healing

The marbled stone was hard against his bones, but it was nice to be reminded of the discomforts of life when death was so close. Simplicities became

the focus of a ravaged brain because it was not simple  
it was particles matter space  
and he planned to fall through and find the life  
that was inherent in death, the transition that the body kept a secret  
as the soul escaped  
and went where?

He did not know but his unrestrained curiosity had grown toxic and answers became the only medication that could satisfy the madness that lived inside his skull of battling philosophy and reason and subdue them into a quiet discontent.

But there were no more earthly answers; they resided within the parallels, in dimensions life could not reach

and it was with sound logic  
that he swallowed a copper bullet  
for a hypothesis that ended with—

NIKITA GRIFFIOEN

# The Prayer



JEWELL DELAIR

# And the Sun Still Shines



CHRISTOPHER DEMARCUS

# Downtown Eastside

You can see the majestic North Shore Mountains between the buildings, but the alleys always smell like piss. The Downtown East Side has gotten worse, more condensed. Before the Olympics, before all that money, this place was a little even. Now it's a pile of human wreckage, stacked higher and tighter, placed farther away from encroaching condos. There used to be a track. It was ten blocks. Junkies would walk it, looking for dropped crack rocks. But now the track is piled up; the crackheads live on top of one another like ants.

Abbott Street is the new border between East and West in the downtown district: business on the left, junk on the right. Like a mirror, the 'W' of the Woodsworth building looks better in the reflection of the dirty puddles below. The two cities reflect, but they seldom see the other side. They walk in opposite directions. Once in a while, a yuppie (or one of their kids crying from a twelve-hundred dollar stroller) will scoff at the city below. *Those poor people down there. Someone really should help them*, the yuppie thinks. *That stroller up there, that'd pay my rent and a hit*, the junkie thinks.

I came to the corner of Carrall and Hastings about ten years ago, back when the Woodsworth building was an abandoned shell. It lay on the edge of the East Side like a dead elephant. It was only a matter of time before developers came to poach its prize: the large red 'W' sign on its head. Canadian homeless come here for the winter. The 'W' calls out to them like a beacon to the busted.

It's warm on the west coast. You can survive. The Downtown East Side is where broken hearts land after a hubristic journey into the stars, when all the money is spent on trying to get out West. It's a community of fallen people. It's where the lost and denied souls of modernity do the cocaine shuffle from one obstacle to the next.

## The Present

East Side souls are disposable. Pigeon Park is clean now. It's empty. There is a wine bar on the corner. Near the curb sits the same trash can I used to eat out of. The smell of overcooked Canadian-Chinese food wafts from it. Old instincts kick in. It's hard not to grab it. I rear it in with reason: *You don't need it. They're coming. They'll see you looking. Ignore it.*

I'm waiting for some new business partners. If the deal goes through, I'll be working

side-by-side with them in their new office. I can't afford to be caught eyeing lunch from a trash can. We're going to be talking about business projects: they're the marketers, I'm the creative juice. But I can't look that eccentric and artistic. "Hey fellas, nice to meet you. Want some free lunch? Fresh from the can!"

Thank Christ. I see them first. *Always get there first, so you can see what they look like before they see you.* They're within proximity. I pull my eyes off the trash can, lean up into my coat, look as big as possible. The coat is warm, safe armour. Lets me think clear. Lets me watch.

Everything about them is expensive. Their teeth are as white as their collars. Hair shaped like statuesque faux-fur helmets, like the cover of a magazine. They smell good. Rich. Dry cleaning and pressed slacks. Aftershave from a glass bottle. One of them towers with twisted confidence over the other.

We exchange greetings as young businessmen do: firm handshakes, pretend smiles, critical eyes. The small one is David; the tall one is George.

"Should we check out the space?" I ask.

"Sure. You're gonna love it. We have our own gym. It's just down here at the end, on Water Street."

"Left or right of Abbott?"

It's on the left. We dodge around a couple of beggars; they usually don't cross over to this side, but tourists are out and the pocket change is too plentiful to ignore. The taller one's mouth slams open and closed like a toddler's playhouse door, "We got a fob. The fob will let you get in without a code. Totally secure. We got a great bunch of companies in the building. Spaghetti Factory and Concord Pacific. National chains."

We walk into Gastown on the edge of the East Side. The neighbourhood is a mix of hipsters, professionals, and panhandlers. At night the place turns into a vomit trough. Yuppies can't hold their booze. It mixes with stomach acid all over the streets. It's too bad their money doesn't fall with it. Sometimes it does.

"The building has rooftop access. Really great for afternoon meetings," trumpets the tall one.

The short one stays quiet. His face set to a continuous scowl.

Further down the street, a familiar figure is walking toward me. It doesn't belong on this side. It's waving, saying hello. Embarrassment swells inside me. I ignore the shadow. Shame it away with one cold look. We shuffle between it and an old burned out nightclub. Smoke and traces of past fires reach out the nightclub door and up to the second floor windows. The shadow lets me remember.

## **Let's Go Back**

The Purple Onion was *the* club in the early 2000s. One room was hip-hop DJs, the other an alternative rock crowd. In the basement there was an after-hours comedy club. A couple of homeless guys hung out near the front door. Street performer Gassy Jack would play the same song over and over again, but he'd write spontaneous lyrics by request. I'd ask him to play something about a musician or politician I didn't like: "Oh that Stephen Harper can suck my... That Billy Leeb can suck my cock!" The lyrics didn't change as much as the names. It was juvenile. He was hilarious.

One of the homeless guys that set up in front of the club was Roman. I'd met him back before I started going to gigs at The Purple Onion, back when I was living out of my car. He'd helped me find the library and given me tours of the area. We became friends. But I'd been luckier than him. I found a nice Indonesian-Chinese-Canadian family to take me in, on the south side of Vancouver, in Richmond. He was still roaming around in the cold. We were stray dogs. I got picked up. He was left behind. Bored with the yuppie action inside the club, I spent most of my nights hanging out with Roman. We had worked up a deal; he'd keep me up to date with street stories and I'd smooth over his panhandling with the bouncers.

Most nights Roman spoke with an angelic intellect. We talked about the economics of his home country, Romania. Sometimes Roman would disappear for a couple weeks, then return with piles of leu in his pockets. Despite being loaded with foreign currency and his knowledge of exchange rates, no one believed that Romania was where he disappeared to. We spent time playing chess and he lectured to me about economics and Adam Smith. He would grind his teeth hard. It sounded like bricks falling on the sidewalk, a side effect of the cheap meth he smoked. Roman taught me a lot about drugs. How to notice who's on what and how deep they were into it.

Roman's harsh habits kept him on the streets, but they also kept him sharp. Gave him purpose. Roman had his meth and I had shots of bourbon. But it wasn't always fun. The horrors in Roman's mind came out a couple times a year, and they came violently. His rages and fits reminded me of how Allen Ginsberg wrote about his own mother, Naomi Ginsberg: crazy wasn't fun, crazy was catastrophic. The madness wasn't a trip; it was a crash. There were cybernetic implants in his neck, remote control wires in his head, and metallic probes in his chest. All of *them* were watching *us* from up *there*. When Roman lost it he would thrash his head into the sidewalk until he passed out. I would walk away. The next night we'd both forget it happened.

## The Present

Roman ignores my cold look. His smile is big and authentic.

“Hey man! How are you? Long time no see!” he says.

The two businessmen are disgusted as I shake Roman’s rusty hand.

“I’ll meet you guys up in the office in a few,” I say.

I try to ignore their shocked faces as they walk away.

“Office? You’re one of them now?” Roman asks.

“Yeah.” I look like the tourist side of the city. So clean now. “Remember that time we kicked the trash can down the street like a soccer ball?” I say.

“Yep. Like Kapuściński.”

“I saw they got a new can now. Its got a special shelf built onto the side for people to leave bottles. You don’t have to dive to the bottom anymore.”

“Yeah, improvements. I got myself a place now, too.”

“Where you livin’?”

“Small room off of Hastings. I get six-hundred disability a month. The room is five-hundred. There’s a bathroom down the hall. I share the room with others sometimes, make some extra money”

I wish him luck and move on. His teeth have been shattered. There were a couple fencepost nubs left. His face was healing from blunt force trauma.

The downtown isn’t my playground anymore. It’s an unfixable mass of problems. I needed to leave it.

SANDRA MOULTON

# Journey



SIMERDEEP SINGH

## Dignity and Freedom

On the night before Baisakhi, Kaka tossed on his bed, thinking about the sermon that Baba was going to deliver in the morning. Baba had told him that the day was special, and he was to wear saffron turban, loose kurta-pyjama, and sleek, embroidered Punjabi-jutti with pointed fronts. He must also bring a bowl of kadah and a kettle of chah, cooked all by himself, without his parents' help. While preparing kadah, he must ask himself the same question that he had asked Baba a few months before: *Why merge in God tomorrow? Why wait and suffer for an entire life? Can't we succeed today in a simple way?*

Kaka did the same and went to Baba's home. Baba recited Ardas in the room of the Holy Book, after which they had kadah with chah. Then Baba took him to Jallianwalla bagh. The magnitude of celebration was evident from the kite-filled sky, splendid outfits, packed-up parikarama of the Golden Temple, beats of dhols, and long line-ups outside sweet shops.

"We were here before. You remember? You were a child then," said Baba.

"Yes," said Kaka, looking inside the Martyr's well, which was as deep and dark as seven years before.

"I know you do. Our memory is as mysterious as this well. It sucks in whatnot. You look into it, and you find nothing. Again you look into it, and you find a whole world that had always been there."

"This well is cruel. It sucks in corpses without any mercy," said Kaka, visibly shaken as he thought about the massacre that had happened here during the British Raj.

"No. Don't say that, because this well gave our ancestors the opportunity to die with dignity and freedom, and that should explain two things: why do we live, and why do we die? So far I have given you only one answer that birth and death are soul's play."

"How do you know if I still remember that?"

"Your soul tells me everything. It is transparent, Kaka. It is like a peak that always stands out no matter how dark, misty, or foggy it is. And it is never satisfied with words. That is why we have words and words. That is why we have religions and religions in this world, and that is why the Holy Book of Sikhs contains the hymns of Hindu and Muslim babas, along with those of the Sikh Gurus. We can look at life and death from many perspectives, but today let us look into the well, smell the blood

and flesh of the corpses, and listen to the souls that are shouting two words: dignity and freedom. That was their life, just as science is the life of a scientist. Dignity and freedom is the life of some people. When their dignity or freedom is threatened, they risk their lives to guard them, and sometimes they die. They are the ones whom we honor as saint-soldiers. The soul of such a human being is the master of its body. If the soul commands the body to sit in a boiling cauldron for the sake of religion, the body sits in a boiling cauldron and feels no pain. Such a soul is liberated after the death of the body and does not return in another body. You already know something about this from the life-stories of the Gurus, but bear in mind that dignity and freedom are the essential words here."

The words dignity and freedom exploded in Kaka's head and then reverberated to his very heels. The idea of liberation sounded extraordinary to him. Not coming back to the earth, bidding farewell forever. To go where?

Kaka imagined the horror of this massacre. Never before had it agitated him so deeply. What if it happened just now? What would he do? The best thing, he told himself, to do in such a situation would be to hold Baba's hands, go wherever he went, and if Baba chose to jump in the well, he too would join him; both would passionately and proudly proceed to heaven with liberated souls.

"This message is too heavy," said Kaka. "Let us call the day. I want rest now."

"If you go and rest with this message, life would become as heavy as death for you. We need something to balance the depth of this well. Guess what?"

"What?"

"Ask a scientist? The opposite of depth is?"

"Height."

"On this day in 1699, the tenth Guru prepared nectar to inculcate within his Sikhs the spirit of warriors. Mata Jeeto, the Guru's wife, added sugary *patasas* to it. With swords, sacrifice, and struggle, Sikhs can win over death, but to win over life's vicissitudes, we need sweetness. Come, let us have some sweetness today."

From a general store near the temple of Baba Atal, Baba bought three white, diamond-shaped kites and a ball of red string. On Baba's terrace, waxed with cow dung the previous month, Baba threaded the kites and said, "Kaka, through kites, we will explore heights. There are four types of kites that you will find in Amritsar. The little ones are called Paddads; the medium ones, like these ones, are Guddis; the larger ones are Guddas, and the largest ones, butterfly-shaped, are called Patangs. Guddas are for young blood and Patangs for obsessed fliers. And Paddads are out of fashion

these days. Beginners like you and retired fliers like your Baba stroll in the skies with Guddis."

"Before I initiate you into flying, let me tell you that I always fly with red string because kite strings are coated with powdered glass to tussle against their rivals. No matter how experienced you are, you will have cuts on your fingers every now and then. If the thread is red, you won't stain it with your blood. I have heard about leather protectors for fingers, but that, if true, is in some other part of the world. We, in this region of rivers, have tough hide. "

KATIE STOBART

# Origin

The orange has always been  
round. Small pores gather  
the colour of the sun and thick skin

peels away, revealing a layer  
of white lace, warmth  
beneath. What is it like to bite

into its full spherical glory—  
not to separate it into sections, strip it  
of its stringy, fibrous veil, or brush

away the bead of sweetness as it falls  
over the lips and leaves  
a transparent mark on flesh.

How do we know love is eternal?  
How does it feel to clasp

perfection, a tiny godless planet, sun-bright,  
older than memory, born before Eros,  
the germ in the seed of infatuation.

Now think of that momentary space  
between two mouths about to meet, to create  
a circumference for something

four letters fail to circle, something too large  
to hold in your mouth—like a secret—but small  
enough to settle just below the navel.

SHERYLYNN SMITH

# Helping the Missing

saw a man yesterday  
stapling up posters  
someone was missing

a reward to anyone  
who could find the body  
to match the face in the picture

upon closer examination  
the face of the missing man  
was the man stapling

inform psych wards?  
perhaps a chat to diagnose sanity level?

*Sir may I ask why you look for this man?*

desperation evident  
he needed to find the lost  
for without  
he was not whole

*Have you looked around for any clues?*

that was the problem  
everything was identical  
but void of an entire human being  
not sure when the poster face left him

he turned away then  
long path of excessively stapled poles to go  
a mission to find the mystery solution  
low whimper of what his family would say

let him leave  
praying he would find himself  
before he was lost for good

COLIN BALLARD

## Ides of Swing

no lessons, just hold my hands  
like this; follow my feet,  
oh, and learn to lead.

the band oozes style like suede,  
but i've always been partial to vinyl, myself,  
and i worry all this spinning is bad for my health.

sign-language turns, southpaw twists  
i dance with my hands, shy toes  
and dusty khakis unconvinced.

i'm a drummer, i should be good at this,  
but the count is all wrong, syncopation  
as i waltz through the swing, smile without charm.

but she smiles back, as i move through the motions,  
slowly, out of time, rhythmless;  
with a graceful girl against me, though, this is bliss.

# Notes on Contributors

**COLIN BALLARD** has two poems featured in this edition of the Louden. They are about being bad at camping and being bad at dancing, respectively. Look for his upcoming self-published collection, “I’m Terrible at Everything,” due to be released as soon as he runs out of things he doesn’t do well. This is Colin’s last year at UFV, and his biggest regret is not partying harder. So, party hard for him.

**JEWELL DELAIR** is currently enrolled in the Bachelor of Fine Arts program at UFV. To save money on therapy, Jewell works out her inner conflicts and repressed emotions through her various artworks. Her favourite medium is film photography, and she enjoys creating images that combine realism with a slightly surrealist spin. She also hopes to create artwork that provokes self-reflection and thought from the viewer.

**CHRISTOPHER DEMARCUS** is an alumni of UFV.

**CHRISTI DOS SANTOS** has long been interested in the intersection between faith, theology, and gender. In looking for a means to go beyond the familiar presentation of these discussions, she turned to the visual arts. Christi is in the process of completing her Bachelors in Fine Arts with extended minors in Visual Arts and Theatre. Her future work interests include looking at online community art projects and contemporary forms of Surrealism. You can join her in conversation at @ChristiDosSan

**JULIA DOVEY** lives in Aldergrove, BC, and is working towards an English degree. She currently works as a janitor in a funeral home. She began writing in high school and has continued ever since. In between class assignments, she is working on yet another novel beginning and hopes to see one to its end for once. Other interests include drawing, sewing, taking walks, and petting dogs. She hopes to one day venture outside the province, if only to make sure the rest of the world isn’t just an elaborate hoax. She is in her second year at UFV.

**RADIANCE DREAM** works in acrylics and mixed media. She enjoys experimenting with acrylic media and is particularly interested in depicting variations of the human form that don’t conform to classic standards of beauty. Radiance studied art at College of the Desert in California (1988-1990). In late 1990 she moved to Greece where she worked as a teacher and web designer, continued painting, and exhibited work at local shows. Back in the Fraser Valley after retiring, Radiance began studying in the

Visual Arts programme at UFV in 2013, where she's currently enrolled in drawing and painting classes.

**NIKITA GRIFFIOEN** is a current student at University of the Fraser Valley, working on a major in English and a minor in Visual Arts. Although when her degree is finished she hopes to go on to law school, Nikita also wants to write and illustrate kids' books. Art is one of her utmost passions; her entire life has been spent exploring all areas of it. Nikita's favourite modes of artistic expression are painting and drawing.

**CHRISTIE HOOS** has been labelled "mature" by the UFV administration, an appellation that makes her husband laugh. She escapes her four children and mountains of laundry to attend one course per semester, inching her way toward an undergraduate degree in English... or Psychology... or both, depending on her mood at the time. She's recently discovered writing, proving that it's never too late to become someone new. She blogs about that sort of thing at SoHeresUs.com. "Who Will Remember" is a fictional arrangement of factual events inspired by Grandpa Bob, who followed Grandma Doris into the hereafter seven years, to the day, after she died.

**LUKE KOKOSZKA** is a student at UFV.

**OLIVIA MATNI** is an international student at UFV. She is from Brazil and her major back home is Visual Communication/Design, and at UFV it is a mix of Visual Arts and Graphic Design. She developed her piece "Espaços Vagos" in a Visual Arts course and it surrounds the language barrier topic and learning process.

**SHANNON MCCONNELL** graduated with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of the Fraser Valley in 2012. She is currently enrolled in the Secondary module of the Professional Development Program at Simon Fraser University.

**SANDRA MOULTON** Drawing and designing have been part of her existence for as far back as she can remember. Art is therapy. It is a way of speaking that helps her be heard. She feels confident tackling any medium in order to gain experience and put forth an idea to tell a story. She holds 2 diplomas and a degree in Fine Arts and Graphic and Digital design which helps her think creatively and out of the norm. With her skills and experience, she is confident that no project is impossible! Love more and laugh often are her goals in life.

**JESSICA NIVEN** is a student in the Bachelor of Fine Arts program at the University of the Fraser Valley. She is majoring with a Visual Arts degree and hopes to continue

working in an art related field once she graduates. Her biggest goal is to become an art teacher. She mostly paints and draws, but is also learning and working more in photography and print media and loves any 2D medium.

**SIMERDEEP SINGH** is a novelist, short story writer, software engineer, and a student of Physics. Born and raised in Amritsar, India, Simerdeep has lived in New Delhi, London, Vancouver, Surrey, and Rosedale (Chilliwack). To his credit, he has a few short stories published in various literary magazines of India. One of his short stories was translated into sixteen major Indian languages. Most of his works explore the existential struggle of human life. Through his characters and plots, he meditates upon the themes of life, death and survival. Last year he returned to his passion for Physics to find out how Schrodinger's cat can be both alive and dead.

**SHERYLYNN SMITH** graduated from UFV in 2011 with her Bachelor of Arts Degree in History and English. She loves smiling, inspiring, and motivating people as well as thinking up unique situations that create great stories and poems.

**SARAH SOVEREIGN** was born in Thunder Bay, Ontario, spent some time in the prairies, lived for a spell on Haida Gwaii, and now resides in beautiful Chilliwack, B.C., with her husband. Her poetry focuses mainly on her family, their stories, and their connection to the Canadian landscape. With a background in film and fine arts, her photography visually attempts to explore the organic relationship between symbols of myth and the land.

**KATIE STOBART** is pursuing an English major in creative writing and working on her first novel. She is currently The Cascade's copy editor and also edits... well, almost anything she can sink her red pen into. Katie is a vice-president of the English Students Association. She also volunteers off-campus as a facilitator for a creative writing group. Katie grew up in Abbotsford with her mom, her sister, and their beloved clowder.

**FRED STRUIK** is a sinner saved by grace. He's a fourth-year English lit student at UFV and his favourite books are *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door. You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no knowing where you might be swept off to."

**TORI THISTLETHWAITE** is a third year student at UFV and is an English Literature major. She reads whatever she can get her hands on and often forgets people actually exist outside of books.

# About *Louden Singletree*

Since its first issue in the spring of 2009, the *Louden Singletree* has showcased writing and visual art from the Fraser Valley. Poetry, fiction, drama, creative non-fiction, and visual art converge annually to create a new and exciting issue. In vision and in voice, the magazine strives for original perspective and evocative language from its contributors.

The name *Louden Singletree* was originally selected to acknowledge the agricultural history of the Fraser Valley, and refers to a specific make of a late nineteenth-century farm tool used to balance the pull from plough animals. The creators of the magazine adopted this image to symbolize UFV's creative voice, resounding from a carefully tilled land separate from the city lights and street noise. They envisioned a world to which the artist can return, stand as a single tree whose branches reach up into the starry expanse.

As the publication has evolved, so has its affinity with the singletree; UFV's literary and visual arts magazine continues to be the load-bearing leader bar that carries our artistic voice into the community.

The Louden Singletree is UFV's literary and visual arts journal. Since its inception in 2009, the Louden Singletree has been a forum in which students, alumni, faculty, and staff of the university can share their creative work.

Colin Ballard  
Jewell DeLair  
Christopher DeMarcus  
Christi Dos Santos  
Julia Dovey  
Radiance Dream  
Nikita Griffioen  
Christie Hoos  
Luke Kokoszka  
Olivia Matni  
Shannon McConnell  
Sandra Moulton  
Jessica Niven  
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Sherylynn Smith  
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Katie Stobbart  
Fred Struik  
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