

ARGENTUM

The Art &
Literary
Magazine of
Great Basin
College
2019:

A Modernistic
View of the
1940s





Notes on 2019 Argentum

At a 2018 summer wedding, a group of *Argentum* supporters were left unattended at a guest table during the reception, and the subject of the 2019 theme just happened to come up. From that discussion to this final version, the 1940s theme was set, as was the idea of prizes for the student winners. The most exciting aspect was the work and thought individuals put into their submissions, and we thank all those who submitted sincerely. The publication would not exist without you.

As with any publication of this type, the work into making it happen doesn't happen in a void. Special thanks are made to Angie de Braga, Dr. Josh Webster, Jennifer Bean, Patty Fox, and Ursula Stanton for their efforts in encouraging submissions and helping in every way possible from photographing submissions to reviewing material.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and consider submitting to the 2020 issue of the publication. Our website is www.gbcnv.edu/argentum and we can be emailed at argentum@gbcnv.edu.

Dori Andrepont
2019 ARGENTUM EDITOR

1940 Beauty Contest

*Medium: Photography with
background digital editing*

Susanne Reese

Argentum 2019 Typography Notes

Baskerville and *Baskerville Italic* date from 1750s, and variations were a particular favorite of hot typesetting systems of the twentieth century through the early 1960s.

Futura was developed in 1927, and is known for its distinctive geometric shapes.

Advertising Script was designed based on the work of calligrapher Ross Frederic George as it was depicted in the *Speedball 1947 Textbook Manual*.

On the Cover

Typewriter from the 1940s

Medium: Photography

Tam Foree

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Argentum Selection Committee



Felicia DeWald *Writer*

Felicia DeWald holds a Master of Fine Arts in Fiction Writing from Saint Mary's College of California, a Master of Arts in Teaching from Santa Clara University, and a Bachelor of Arts in English from the University of Notre Dame. She was the chair of the Notre Dame Literary Festival, and former fiction editor for *Mary: A Journal of New Writing*. Felicia is writing a novel, and working for the Office of the Provost at the University of Nevada, Reno as the NevadaFIT Director, running academic bootcamps for college freshmen.

Sidnie Miller *Artist and Educator*

Sidnie Miller is a fourth generation Elkoan with a ranching background. She graduated from University of California Santa Barbara with a BA in art and an emphasis in painting. She became an art teacher and worked in Elko Jr. High School, Elko High School and GBC. Teaching art allowed her to become a “jack of all trades” so she enjoys working in many different media. Her current passion is lapidary and jewelry fabrication. Although she is retired, you never really retire from art.



Griffith Barker *Photographer*

Griffith Barker is an Elko resident, local photographer, student of management, and IT systems administrator. His photographic interest began in 2009 during a family reunion and eventually led to photography courses in high school as well as at Great Basin College in addition to on online education. Succeeding that, a portrait photography business, agency work in Utah, and a wonderful network of clients and associates followed. For years, “Griff” also adjudicated the photography in the home arts division of the Elko County Fair following a highly-awarded year of entry. He hopes to teach at GBC in coming years.

We thank our 2019 Selection Committee as they took time from their busy schedules to review and choose this year's submissions to be included in this publication. Their willingness and effort is deeply appreciated.

MORNINGS ARE THE HARDEST PART. A swelling of pain punctuated by crashes of shooting agony awakens me to sudden, groggy alertness. Is it time? No, just a pulsating ache that starts behind the eyes, squeezes down channels of constricted veins along my neck, all the way down my body toward my legs. It turns around somewhere just below the kneecaps before creeping right back up the crumbling spinal column to roost at last in a tiny, cozy nest of agonizing pain somewhere at the back of my brain. And then a sudden shock hits all the muscles at once, making them contract violently, making the teeth in the bleeding gums clench tight together. It passes, and the limbs tremble and burn, the lips quiver, fear imprinted in every extremity. This is normal. The delicious scent of roasting coffee in the automated machine drifts in like golden sunshine through the overspreading canopy of a malarial swamp. Not that I would know anything of golden sunshine, having never seen such a thing in my lifetime.

I ride out another wave of pain before forcing the whole trembling mechanism gingerly into motion, shifting cautiously over the empty bed – *Jim's side of the bed* – just to make the bathroom before the nausea hits. On trembling legs now, pathetic as a newborn foal, I put one jerking foot before the other, and *there!* my hands make contact with the sink – *thank you, Jesus, thank you for this cool and sturdy surface* – but I can't face my reflection just yet.

The sound of Ruth's soft cooing from the next room coming over the monitor is blending with the final gurgling rasps of the coffee pot. I push myself not to linger, though I know she will wait for me. I could never have imagined a more placid child, hardly ever waking to cry at the morning light or the discomfort of a soiled diaper, but my gratitude is tempered with concern at what such an unusual temperament could mean about her condition.

Groping into the cabinet, the plastic box of pills, big as a brick, big as a whole week, divided neatly into days. Vision still blurry, but I can make out the "W-E-D" right in the middle easily enough. Pop up the little square lid and tip the contents into the dish by the sink, no spilling, no hellish journey to my knees to look for a runaway pill as cramps and aches wrack my wreck of a body. Oh, so lucky a day.

Avoid the instinct to reach for the big blue one right away. Have to keep to the sequence, doctor's orders. Start with the alphabet: C and E to slow the damage, D the sun no longer provides, B for the brain and to prep for the smile. Then a mineralogical cocktail, iron and calcium for the blood and bones. Finally, the survival kit of hardcore government medication: cotryazide, trimoxodine, and – *thank you, sweet merciful Jesus Christ* – the blue synthephenethylamine (commonly called "SMILE").

I take the last pill, bracing for the ride. Soon enough, wham! I clamp everything down tight. Eyes, teeth, fingers, toes, thighs, anus, even my mind, pulling impossibly towards the center of my body as wave after wave of heat rockets downward, brain to heels. Then, like hitting a wall, there is only floating warmth, and all goes still inside, an almost post-coital release and glow. Slowly, I feel my neck muscles gently stretch as the head lifts to face the mirror. Sweat beads plaster chestnut hair to my ruddy forehead, the eyes – *Jim said he loved my eyes* – both hollow and bright, the pupils freakishly dilated. There it is, the smile.

Looking at myself, giddy with post-pain euphoria and triumph, I wonder vaguely, as I so often do, just what the hell we were thinking all those months ago bringing a baby into all this? As if in answer, I hear a sharp, happy howl, the sound babies seem to make purely for the delight of having discovered they have a voice, and I give a little giggle. My sweet baby Ruth, untouched by disaster. Perhaps we do not really know why we reproduce until after the baby is born, and only then all becomes clear, but until then there is only an instinct that tells us we must create life against all reason. I know now that I could not have gone on this way without her for so long, but even love has its limitations. Luck must run out eventually, little angel.

The smile, fixed and stalwart as a banner, is almost complete. Just needs a stimulant to bring it into full blossom, to sustain it for the first few hours. The baby first, then the coffee. With a run of fingers through my hair, light on my feet now, I wrap a fluffy cotton robe over my body and make for the nursery. There she is, a little pink gem in her cradle. She weighs a ton, but I don't mind. I am Atlas with the world in my arms. Her little reaching fingers explore

my face and hair, little pipes and gurgles welling up from the toothless grin.

There should be a scar, there where I feel the phantom pinpoint where the syringe went in, into the uterus, injecting the fetus, a trial run, promising results with pigs and rats, making her strong, creating a little body they hope will withstand the world we made, giving her the gift of life, with its curious side-effect of increasing her endorphins so that she's nearly always calm, never afraid, smiling that wonderful, heartbreaking smile I see in my dreams, can't wait to see, hope to see when I wake up, if I wake up...

She coos, I coo back. She waves her arms, I bounce her in mine. We trust each other. But one of us is lying. In those tiny glistening eyes, I can see Jim looking back at me, the part of him that remains here with me still, and I feel she knows this about herself. When she smiles, she smiles for me, on her behalf and his, ambassador to the invisible. So, I make my smile for her and for him.

Into the kitchen, now. Her to the bottle, I to the cup – *can't breastfeed, too much poison, too much risk, dried up long ago anyway* – the day at last is gathering itself together. So light now, all pain and care just dull static behind the veil of reality. I find I can flit through breakfast with perfect ease, a drug-induced spring in my step, a pre-recorded song in my heart. Then a bath for two, reveling in the little splashes and giggles with my baby, until fed, caffeinated, and clean, I feel it safe again to towel us both off and put on my favorite yellow dress, the flowery dress, the dress with a bow and a precious little belt. *Hear me roar.*

Bzzzz!

The front door. I smooth down my dress and make for the entryway, lifting the cumbersome receiver off its bulky hook beside the door. I can guess who it is, and I am not surprised.

“Good morning, Mrs. Greenwood.” That familiar voice, heavy and male, muffled. “How are you?”

Shall I be honest, or shall I be safe? Shall I pour out the venom I feel suspiciously welling up just beyond the range of my cloudy senses? Shall I cry out that loneliness that lurks and rages beyond the dual barriers of my little Ruth and numbing government narcotics?

“Oh, I'm just fine, thank you. I was just getting ready to pop out for a walk with the baby.” *I know why you've come, but don't ask the question. Talk to me. Tell me something wonderful. Tell me something true.* “And how are you this lovely morning?”

“Just fine, m'am. Any today?”

You asked me, you bastard. Eyes flit to the metal object just beside the door.

“Oh no, not today. Thank you.”

Don't go yet. What is in your mind, familiar stranger? Where is your heart today? Do you have your own little girl somewhere to shield against the monsters, to shield you from yourself? Show me the color of your blood and I'll show mine.

“Glad to hear it. Until tomorrow, then, have yourself a pleasant day, Mrs. Greenwood.”

He is gone.

I drop the receiver into its hook and bounce to the nursery. Ruth is there, waiting in her cradle for me, Jim's eyes in her face wondering at the mobile above her head, watching the swirling dance of moon and stars. “Well, well, darling girl. Are you ready for an adventure?” She is. I put her into a fresh diaper, snapping the delicate blue buttons into place with happy little snaps. I select a fresh little onepiece for her from a row of tastefully feminine pastels lining her little drawer. Yellow to match mine, merry little bumblebees dancing across the plushy fabric. When our time comes, may we be in yellow.

With the world in my arms, we pass through the front door and into the entry chamber. The firm and sturdy crank handle against the wall feels cool inside my palm as I give the wheel two full turns. The sanitizing jets hiss to life, and I hold Ruth close to my face, burbling happiness into her as the jets pass over us, dowsing us with a fine protective mist composed of chemicals beyond my understanding. So light, we cannot even feel the moisture. Like a cool breath that tingles on the exposed skin. A sigh from hidden plumbing in the walls, and it's over, so I reach for the pink, rubberized swaddling suit, and I wrap it snugly about my baby girl. It is flexible and secure as an insect's carapace, leaving her little arms free to wave and to explore as I lay her down within the big perambulator.

I then lift down my own heavy coat, a gaily-colored mass of sturdy fabric, straps, and buckles that reaches my ankles. Carefully now, every flap must be properly positioned, layers in layers, every catch and zipper carefully inspected. No crack in this fortress. I waggle my fingers against Ruth's, and she grips my fingertips firmly for just a moment before I pull them gently back, and lower down the steel lid over her. I push the bolts home, twisting them down tightly, switching on the ventilator pump as I make faces through the small window at the little pink form beaming up at me. Lastly, I grab down my thick gloves and my flower-printed mask, pulling the latter over the back of my head, down under my chin, around the neck, lining up the goggles with my eyes – *he loved my eyes* – the breathing apparatus covering the smile.

One gloved hand grasps hold of the pram's handlebar, and I press the other to the wide button in the wall. A gasp of door seals releasing and then it swings open, automatically engaging the fans that fight back the tainted purple air away from the ramp in front of us. Beyond that door is as beautiful an Illinois day as we could ask for, a day of gently-swaying plastic sunflowers in the silver sunlight, the hum of friendly machinery in the hazy atmosphere. Down the ramp, we turn out onto the sidewalk, a mobile oyster with its little pearl tucked safe inside. A neighbor down the way is waddling towards us; Mr. Finn, whom I recognize by the gray hounds tooth overcoat and faux-leather mask. He carries a sealed green shopping bag beneath one arm – *coffee and pills, always, the same for everyone*. He's just turning onto his own ramp when he catches sight of us and waves, calling something from beneath his mask. I wave back, not hearing what he said, and then he's gone, the gasp of the door seals closing behind him.

We go at a leisurely pace along row after row of houses with their lush, false lawns. Picket fences everywhere, fiberglass. They came back into vogue not long before the housing development was built. Ours shone bright as bone for years, part of the sanitation efforts that ensured all neighborhood exteriors would be maintained in a neat, "visually pleasing" manner. Jim was lead supervisor on one such ongoing sanitation project, though not for our sector. We got our spot months before the development was built, were lucky to get one of the first – *Jim's word, lucky*. They had given priority assignment to families of government employees. Jim let me select ours, and I chose a soft gray exterior with white trim that set off the bright plastic sunflowers, a look that popped rather than faded into the lilac haze of the air. It was almost charming. We were so happy, our first family home, though Ruth had not arrived quite yet. The neighborhood looks less pristine now than it had in those days, though, the days after the trouble began, but before the smiles. A fine purple dust lies against the picket fences and rows of cookie-cutter bungalows that have not seen a sweep team for months. Other sanctuary sectors have gone to complete shambles, so I have heard. I suppose they are running out of government employees to maintain them.

Bread, a cabbage, maybe a couple of onions. Never any meat. Coffee and pills. Purified water, jugs and jugs of it, paid for and delivered. Deducted. No car, no gasoline, just Jim's bus pass. Deducted. And formula, stacks and stacks of cardboard and wax cylinders taking up whole cupboards. All the things a CSRS survivor annuity will cover, and no more. They tell me the budget is stretched thin as it is, could get worse. Pretty soon Ruth will outgrow her clothing, and whole new sets will be needed. No bread for a month, maybe. Maybe coffee every other day, try to hold onto myself on the off days. I can do it. I can't do it. May not even matter.

Around the corner, we stop. A blue van is parked before a house. The man in the blue rubberized uniform, my familiar stranger, probably, has just put down the receiver beside the door and waves to the other man in the cab. *Oh god*. The man from the van joins the other, and both enter the house to the hiss of door seals and fans. Minutes pass while I wait, I do not know why I bother. Ruth's happy gurgles drift up the vent pipe on the top of the pram as the metal trap beside the front door snaps open, and the end of a metal pod pushes out with a whirr of motors. The uniformed men exit the house, and I can feel the smile within my mask as I murmur to myself, hollow words I don't even realize I am saying. They draw out the long metal pod by its handles, carrying it to the van, taking it away. The new one will be delivered before the week is out. I still have mine, the second one. *Two from the Beckham's house, less than six months, surely less than four. How many left? How many others in the van today? How many more tomorrow?*

My stranger sees me, he waves. I wave back. A sigh as the van pulls away, pulling further up the block, the release of breath resounding within my mask. I peer down through my goggles into the little window, down at my Ruth, my darling, waving her little hands. I look into Jim's eyes, and I believe that she knows that even through the mask I'm smiling down at her just as she is smiling up at me in return. Someday we too shall go to the place with no more lies.

I waggle my fingers at the window. Giggles drift up the vent pipe, and I breathe them into me, drawing them down in deep. The pram starts forward once more, rolling down the sidewalk, drifting with the hazy breeze, past the van, not looking back. Machines hum. Flowers sway. We all smile. Oh, what a lucky day. What a lucky, lucky day. ■



Fortioatta

Medium: Photography

Frank J. Henley

The Blizzard

by Rebecca Stanton

HEAVY WINDS WHIPPED the Nash sideways, nearly forcing it across the two lane highway and into the snowy ravine below; the driver cursed loudly, steadying the vehicle before slowing down considerably. He was a young man, maybe thirty at most, and his black hair was tucked under a panama hat perched at a precarious angle. His hands shook slightly as he gripped the steering wheel with white knuckles.

“You trying to kill us or something?” asked his passenger irritably, a short man with blond hair and a piercing gaze. He held the door tightly, clutching a small stack of papers in his lap; a tan overcoat was tied at his waist, and he shot a glare at the pale driver.

“Not intentionally,” came the meek response. “I wasn’t expecting this kind of weather.”

“Mountains have snow, Samuel,” the passenger grunted. “Especially in December.”

“Not all of ‘em. Not California mountains.” He cursed again as the back of the Nash skidded, and he shifted into first gear, deciding it was better to arrive late rather than not at all. “You ever been to California, Danny? Mountains down there are nice and warm during the winter. That’s why people buy summer homes there, you know.”

“California mountains ain’t any different from Nevada mountains, Samuel, don’t be an idiot.”

“Well, some of ‘em are, I reckon.”

“I reckon you’re wrong.”

“What do you know of California? You’ve never lived there.”

“From the sound of it, neither have you,” Danny responded, and he winced as the Nash rounded a particularly steep curve, the back tires nearly sliding out from underneath them. Samuel drifted the car, straightened it, and carried on, still in first gear. The wind did not subside.

“Well, it’s terrible weather for a murder, in any case,” Samuel said, squinting as he tried to separate the road from the sky. “Can’t see anything for the life of me.”

“That ain’t comforting,” Danny scowled. “Why’d *you* drive, anyway? I’d have gotten us there by now, and back, too.”

“No, you wouldn’t have,” Samuel protested, “not with this ice. Besides, it wasn’t up to me.” He nodded towards

the papers in his passenger’s lap. “It was the chief who said *I* ought to drive, and *you* ought to read through information on the case, but I don’t hear you reading *anything*.”

Danny lowered his gaze and angrily began to shuffle through the paperwork, reluctant to let go of the door. “You want me to read out loud like I’m givin’ some kind o’ seminar?”

“Sure, eager beaver, if that’s what you wanna do, I won’t stop you.”

Danny cleared his throat dramatically, then produced a lighter from his coat pocket, striking a flame and holding it close to the documents so as to see. Samuel shot him a disappointed glance – why not simply use the dome light? –, but quickly returned his gaze to the white road, slowing down as they approached an incline. His headlights did nothing to help him see, and he had half a mind to shut them off entirely, but ultimately decided against it.

“Talcridge. Mining town. Reports of three people shot, maybe more, we’re about to find out. That’s all we’ve got,” Danny said. “It’s a miracle they were able to get a call through. I wouldn’t think their phone lines would work, not this high up in the mountains and certainly not durin’ a blizzard.” He risked a glance out the windshield, then immediately turned his attention back to the papers. “Say, why aren’t your sirens going? Scared of something poppin’ out at you?”

“Nothing’s alive out here,” Samuel responded as they crept up the icy hill, the Nash buffeted sideways by the howling wind. “Nobody in their right mind would be out driving in this.”

“Except for us.”

“Except for us,” Samuel repeated. “If we get stuck out here, we’re dead, you know that, right? It’s very important to me that you know that.”

“Yeah, I know, I know,” replied Danny, closing the lighter and stuffing it back into his overcoat. “Don’t remind me, for the love of all things holy.”

“Nothing holy about this place, that’s for sure,” Samuel stated. “You got a smoke?”

“No, I’m fresh out,” Danny said. “We’ll get some when we stop at the next filling station.” He pulled an unopened

packet of cigarettes from his coat, wrestled with the packaging, and lit one for himself, receiving a cold glare from Samuel.

“You’re insufferable.”

“Don’t snap your cap. Watch the road, would you? I don’t wanna die before my next paycheck.” He cranked down the window a few inches to blow smoke into the winter night; frozen air filtered through the crack, and he rolled it back up, shivering. They reached the top of the hill, and the road stretched straight ahead; Samuel could see the asphalt through the snow, and he began to speed up, which was a mistake, because as soon as he did, a wall of moving snow blasted into the side of the Nash. The tires squealed as he tried to slow down, but there was nothing he could do; the car spun sideways across the thin highway, coming to rest in a bank of snow on the left shoulder that rose high above the roof. Danny slammed his fist into the dash angrily as Samuel pressed his foot against the gas, but the back tires spun out, digging them further into the ditch. The car’s headlights stretched in front of them, illuminating the snow as it angrily whipped against the windshield; defeated, Samuel flicked on the windshield wipers, and they worked pathetically to wipe the building snowflakes from the glass.

“Samuel Jones, I’m gonna kill you,” Danny whispered, watching the wipers as they scraped back, forth, back, forth, back, and forth. “I’m really gonna do it. This is it. You got anyone you wanna call before I choke you?”

“Check the map, would you?” Samuel asked. “We passed a milestone back there. Maybe we can walk.”

“Or we can dig,” Danny suggested, smoking his cigarette angrily. “You can dig. I’m not gettin’ out for nothin’.”

“I’m not digging,” Samuel said, “we don’t have anything to dig with. You see a shovel anywhere? I sure don’t.”

“Use those clammy little hands that worked so hard to keep us on the road.”

“If we stay here, we’ll turn into ice cream for the bears and wolves. We *have* to walk.”

Danny considered this, then reached under his seat and pulled out their Nevada Highways map. “Fine,” he said, shoving the folded paper into Samuel’s arms. “Find out where we are, then.” He reached over and flicked on the overhead dome light before slumping back into his seat and kicking his small legs up onto the dashboard. “I’m not walkin’ more than a mile.”

“You might not get a choice,” Samuel responded, and he adjusted his panama hat before opening the map across the steering wheel. While he searched for their location,

Danny finished his cigarette, extinguished it against the dashboard, then cranked down the window and tossed it out. A wall of snow began to slide into his lap from the outside; frantically, he cranked the glass back into position, not wishing to be buried alive.

“Snow is dumb,” he muttered. “Just a bunch of frozen water.” The wipers screeched against the dry windshield, not enough snow accumulating to justify them, and he winced at the sound.

“Okay, I think I found us,” Samuel said triumphantly, “and if I’m right, we only gotta walk a mile and a half before we hit Talcridge.”

“Okay, and if you’re wrong?”

Samuel’s lack of a response was enough. Danny crossed his arms, refusing to look at his accomplice, instead focusing once more on the wipers. Fwip, fwip, fwip. It was strangely mesmerizing, the way they pushed the snow this way and that, scraping across the glass to and fro. Samuel reached over and pressed a hand against Danny’s shoulder, but Danny didn’t look up. Something on the other side of the road was moving, something very large and very dark, and Danny’s eyes shot wide, his legs falling back into the floorboards.

“Danny,” Samuel was saying, “we don’t have a choice. I know walking is hard for you, and has been since your accident—”

“Sam,” Danny said, fixated, “shut up.”

Samuel’s brow furrowed in confusion, and he pulled back, frowning; he followed Danny’s gaze through the windshield, then froze, hand shooting towards the gun on his hip.

“Holy mackerel,” he whispered, “what *is* that?”

“That ain’t no human,” Danny responded, reaching for his gun as well. He produced a revolver and cocked it. The shadow moved just beyond the reach of the Nash’s weak headlights; the men exchanged a glance, then slowly reached for their respective door handles, knowing that they were as good as canned sardines sitting in the car the way they were. As soon as they clicked their doors open, however, the creature fled, disappearing into the blizzard in the blink of an eye. Samuel hesitantly pushed his door through the snow, climbing out and raising his gun; Danny followed suit, far more cautiously, and together, they began to pick their way towards the road, Samuel pausing a moment to button his overcoat against the blowing wind. Neither dared to speak a word; they stepped onto the icy asphalt, illuminated by the Nash’s headlights, and they paused, scanning the dark fog for signs of movement.

Nothing but the billowing snow and freezing wind greeted them, and Samuel started to turn back towards the car when he felt his spine crawl. He halted abruptly, flipping around just in time to see the figure dragging Danny into the inky black of the forest. A stifled scream escaped his lips, and Samuel knew that his only chance was to run. Staggering through the deep snow, he reached the Nash just in time to slam the door against the attacking creature; it thudded against the metal, then vanished once again, and Samuel shifted the car into third gear, slamming the gas pedal to the floor. The whitewalls spun angrily, fighting with the snow, and the car slowly began to rock forward; Samuel began to reverse, then floor it, then reverse, then floor it, forcing the car to plow itself out of the deep snow bank. He was well aware that he was ruining his transmission, but he didn't care; all he was focused on was getting out of dodge, and he felt his heart leap when the Nash sprang forth from its tomb. The tires skidded across the ice, and he couldn't brake in time to keep the car from sliding sideways, nearly crossing into the other ditch; thinking quickly, he turned a donut, the headlights shining back down the mountain pass.

Samuel reversed the car sideways into his lane, then floored it, the tires propelling him around through the ice and snow; he drifted straight and gunned forward, snow ripping behind his back tires as he escaped. He could see the figure giving chase in his rearview mirror; in a desperate attempt to thwart the shadow's efforts, he switched on the sirens. Red lights flashed against the building snow as he sped forward, a great wailing arising from his roof, and he kept his hands planted firmly on the wheel, trying and failing to wrap his mind around what was happening. Adrenaline rushed through his veins, and Samuel felt like he might have a heart attack, but he pressed on, quickly reaching an unsafe speed. He drifted several times, nearly sliding off the road again, but an amalgamation of fear and determination kept him of sound enough mind to control the police car safely.

Cold sweat dripped down his back. *What just happened?* He couldn't think of any creature known to man that looked like the figure that took Danny, and it was too fast, too terribly, terribly fast to have been a human. When he checked his rearview mirror again, he was relieved to see that the shadow was no longer following him. This relief was short-lived. Why had it stopped? Where had it gone? Was it going to appear from above? From the side? From below? Why had it targeted Danny first? He felt guilty, a sense that he had done something to cause his

accomplice's disappearance, and even though he knew he had done nothing wrong, he couldn't shake the feeling that it was somehow his fault. He reached down and quickly shut off the dome light, the fog becoming too thick to see through; he had no choice but to slow down, and he locked his doors, his siren crying through the darkness like a lone, injured cat.

Up ahead, small dots of light loomed, and as he slowed to a crawl, he realized he had entered town. Talcridge was quiet, as he had expected it might be, with several street lamps lining the highway, connected to one another by thin, black wires; the fog became tainted with a distinct orange hue, illuminated by the lights of homes and businesses. The road remained empty as Samuel worked his way towards the hotel, and when he found it, he pulled alongside the sidewalk tentatively, unsure of what he might find once he stepped out into the cold.

He threw the Nash into park and glanced down at the disheveled paperwork in the passenger's seat, catching sight of a particularly interesting line of text. "No police station," he read in a murmur, reaching a hand down to ensure his gun was holstered. "No law enforcement of any kind." He had never felt more alone than he did now, and he was still reeling with shock when he pulled the keys from the car's ignition, the wailing siren cutting abruptly and the red lights dying. He climbed out of the Nash and quickly looked up and down the street, but no shadows moved to attack, and he stepped up onto the concrete, glancing down. The chrome and whitewalls of the vehicle were peppered with dark splotches, and he shuddered, turning towards the hotel's large, polished oak doors. With a deep breath, he steeled himself and entered.

The lobby was warmly lit, with plush chairs pushed around a stone fireplace and mustard rugs lining the walkways. A magnificent staircase led into the upper chambers; behind the front desk stood a young woman, her lips red and her hair curled, and she smiled at Samuel as he approached.

"Good evening, sir," she greeted. "Do you have a reservation?"

"I'm here on a case," he said, flashing his badge quickly and glancing around once again, terrified that the figure would appear from behind a chair or pillar. "Samuel Jones, here out of the Reno Police Department. I'm a detective—" He stopped, noticing the nameplate on the front desk. He grabbed it, and the woman did not blink, watching him with tombstones in her eyes. "Is this your manager's name?"

Long Ago and Yesterday

by Richard J. Arndt

I remember the trees in 1943,
the way they looked from the porch
way down the hill from my house,
how the sun shone on them golden.

Mother was puttering around the yard,
admiring the cactus blooms,
those first in seven years.

said, "It's almost too late
for them. Be fall soon."

She just smiled her half-smile
and shrugged. "They're pretty
anyways."

I grabbed the porch pillar and leaned
out to eye the water tank and boys
gathered there, playing touch
with the snappers within.

"Mother, them boys will lose a finger
actin' the damn fool like that."

She straightened up from one growing
thing to yell sharp and salty at another.
She had a fine touch with young things.
Could make all manners of such grow.
She was a good'un for that.

Still that was long ago and yesterday.
All that's gone now, her fine way of walkin';
her hair she kept pinned back
that always looked better loose;
the color she took on
when she'd be on the scrap.
All gone away.

I put her in the ground today.

They say she'll always be with me,
long as I think and hold her dear.
Mebbe so, mebbe no.
That I don't know as I believe.
Still, I remember the trees in 1943.

"We have no manager here," she smiled vacantly.
Samuel glanced up, bewildered.

"Is this your name, then? Odd name for a dame, don't
you think?"

"Do you have a reservation?" she repeated, and Samuel
began to back away, eyes flicking around the room warily,
clutching the nameplate tightly.

"Danny Smith isn't your manager?" he probed, looking
into the fireplace. How strange that the flames should be as
bright as they were, as hot; he could feel waves of warmth
piercing through his skin, even from across the room. She
did not respond. "Who is it, then?"

"Sir, if you don't have a reservation, I'm afraid I'll have
to ask you to leave," she said, though she did not make
direct eye contact; Samuel stuffed the nameplate into his
coat, and he pulled his gun from its holster, holding it at
the ready.

"Who is it?" he repeated, desperate.

"Please leave, sir," she replied, and her eyes flashed
with something, though with what, Samuel couldn't tell.
He conspired to carry on interrogating her until he had
answers, and so he raised his gun, aiming it at her steadily.
He wasn't sure if she was human; he wasn't sure if he could
trust anything to be what it looked like, and as he backed
towards the staircase, he felt his skin pricking beneath
someone else's heavy stare.

"Where am I?" he found himself asking. She tilted her
head to the side, her smile dropping, and her eyes returned
to their original state of vacancy.

"Sir, if you don't have a reservation, I'm afraid I'll have
to ask you to leave," she repeated. Samuel shook his head,
his heel brushing against the first step.

"No, I don't think so," he said softly. "I'm not going
anywhere until I get some answers." He felt like he was
performing for a large audience; he was being watched
from all directions, and he froze, one foot on the first step,
the other planted firmly against the hardwood floor of
the lobby. "Who is Danny Smith? How do you know
Danny Smith?"

"Danny Smith is dead," she responded quietly, and
Samuel felt his heart skip several beats. "Please leave, sir."

"What is this, some kind of joke?!" he shouted at her, his
adrenaline rising. "Tell me how you know Danny Smith!"

She slowly turned her face towards the fireplace, staring
into the flames. Samuel turned to look up the stairs, then
immediately stumbled backwards as a line of shadows at
the top of the staircase dissolved into the walls. He let out
a shout and turned tail, bolting towards the doors; when he

grabbed the handles, he found that they would not budge, and he banged against them rapidly, screaming as loud as his lungs would allow. A rush of cold air slammed against his face as the doors flung outwards, and he was grabbed roughly by the shoulders and pulled out into the snow.

“Don’t say a word,” a gruff voice hissed in his ear, and a gloved hand was planted firmly over his mouth. His struggles were futile; he was dragged, kicking and screaming, towards the Nash, then stuffed into the passenger seat like the car was a Thanksgiving turkey. The door slammed in his face, and before he knew it, his pockets were being infiltrated, his keys were being shoved into the ignition, and the car was peeling away from the hotel, the lights from the lobby spilling out into the fog like blood into snow.

“W—”

“I said don’t say a word!” the driver snapped, silencing Samuel. He resolved himself to watching his kidnapper with terror as they left the lights of Talcridge in the rearview mirror. They traveled in silence for several minutes – or was it an hour? Two hours? Three? Samuel couldn’t tell –, and the Nash handled perfectly fine in the icy conditions, leading Samuel to believe that maybe he was the problem instead of the car. He slowly turned his attention to the blizzard, holding tightly to the door as the wind howled angrily outside.

“You a cop?”

He was startled by the sudden question, and he glanced away from the window, blinking in surprise. “Wha—”

“You a cop,” the driver said, satisfied. “Nice car.”

“Thanks. It isn’t mine.”

“You got food?”

“In the trunk.” He didn’t know why he was so quick to answer this stranger’s questions.

“You got water?”

“Also in the trunk.”

“That town ain’t right,” the stranger said, removing their snap cap and revealing themselves to be a woman with a heavily scarred face. “You’ll be safe with me.”

“Where are we going?”

She tore her gaze away from the snowy road, fixing him with a dark stare. “Don’t worry about it.”

“I am worried about it.”

“We’re going to my cabin,” she said, returning her focus to the road. “Call me Binx.”

“How is Danny connected to all of this?” he quickly asked, pulling the nameplate from his coat and looking down at it; he was surprised to see blank wood staring back at him, and he flipped it around, stomach dropping to find the same emptiness on the other side. How had Danny’s name vanished without a trace? His brow furrowed, and he slowly replaced it in his pocket, lips tightening.

“You ever look in the mirror and realize you ain’t the same person lookin’ back?”

“...no, not particularly.” Samuel glanced at her in bewilderment.

“Huh. Interesting.” Binx didn’t say another word, and they drove through the snowy mountains in silence. ■



Sunday Morning Inspection at Rendezvous Camp Near Belmont

Medium: Rephotography

Original taken by Timothy O'Sullivan on the Wheeler Expedition of 1871 in Round Meadow, Toquima Range, Nevada, from the National Archives LOT 4677-A (H) [P&P].

Gary A. Reese

THE WIND BLEW UP against the disintegrating shed Rodger and I were huddled in. The shed did little to protect us from the summer heat that beat down on anyone in its path. Sweat dripping down my brow caused a twitch in my eye. Nothing could ruin tomorrow, not even this blasted heat. Roswell is a sweat-box located in the boondocks.

“This is going to be the winner. I just know it,” Rodger muttered to himself from the wooden table. Resting upon the table is what is going to get us the first prize at the 1947 Roswell Middle School Science Fair. The volcanic beauty took Rodger and I months to create and nothing was going to get in our way for that prize.

“Tommy, time to test this!” Rodger hollered from his station on the other side of our monstrous volcano. I took my place opposite him raking my eyes down the volcano. We had to use my mom’s paints to get the dusky orange shade, but it was worth all her hollerin’. Rodger and I collected all our army men together to get enough scattered around the bottom, cushioned on top of the red clay that is just in our backyard.

Locking my eyes with Rodger, we smile at each other and do what we worked so hard for. Both with a cup in hand, we pour vinegar into the top of the monstrous mountain. My toes stretched their limits and the wood dug into my stomach the further I pushed up. This is it! Our victory!

The bubbles spurted up immediately, chemical fumes filled the shed with a bitter stench. Stumbling back with massive grins gracing our faces, Rodger and I stare at this wonder we made. The table shakes with the amount of baking soda and vinegar we used. It was never ending, just pouring over the table to the floor. I keep backing up, so my feet don’t get touched with the goopy lava. My mom would beat me if I ruin my new sneakers.

“Maybe we added too much, Tommy. It’s shakin’ up the table!” Rodger cried out from the other side of the shed. Nodding my head up and down, I stumble back to the dusty floor for safety. Rocks around my hand jump up and down, along with the contents of my stomach. Did we really start an earthquake?!

“Rodger, I think we should get out of here!” Stumbling to my feet on shaky legs, I make my way towards the shed

door and crash out into the blazing sun. Rodger’s panting breathes follow behind me to what we hoped was safety.

A brief shadow casts the ground in front of my feet causing me to whip my head skywards. That can’t be right. An object was flying through the sky towards the ground. “Look!” slapping Rodger’s arm I point up “Is that one of those planes your dad flew in?”

Following my finger, we both stand there in awe at the sight before us. Feet cemented to the ground, Rodger and I make no move to follow or even try and holler out for help. Not like anyone would hear us. There isn’t a person in sight, all probably in town soaking up the fans to stave off the heat. The object makes its way to the ground behind a hill over in the Gilman’s farm.

The crashing sound and cloud of smoke was enough to bring Rodger and I back from oblivion. “Come on man!” Rodger hits my arm and bolts in the direction of the crash.

Glancing back at the shed and our catastrophe that needs to be cleaned up, I decide to deal with it later. Taking off in a full sprint after Rodger, I catch up to him soon as we both come to a skidding halt at the top of the hill that splits the properties.

The sight before us was something out of books. The corn field before us was decimated in the middle with what looked to be a round ship of some sort. It wasn’t anything I had ever seen before myself, and by the looks of Rodger, he had never seen it before either. Even in the dusk and maze around it, the outside still glinted in the sun light creating a bright beam that was painful to look at.

My foot slid forward slowly on the hill sending pebbles and dirt down. Something was telling me to go look and find out what it was. It was something special. Sweat and heat seeped into my skin where Rodger’s arm gripped. I had to know, even if it was alone. I kept inching down the hill towards the field, towards the object. In almost no time I was standing at the edge of the field ready to make my way through when Rodger came up next to me. We may not be blood, but we are brothers. Nodding at me for encouragement, I make my way into the field with Rodger hot on my heels. Stalks hit me from all sides as I

pushed them away to make it through. Hopefully headed in the right direction.

The last stalk moved away with my hand as I reached the clearing formed by the crashed...spaceship? The lights around the rim of the ship were flashing on and off. Maybe this is a distress light? Rodger hadn't moved from the edge of the clearing as I kept creeping closer over the fallen stalks.

A loud noise rung through the air and in my head. My hands latched onto my ears and fingers dug into my hair as I crumbled to my knees. As suddenly as it started, it stopped. A door had opened on the ship. A faint glow came from inside until something started to come out of it.

Standing at height, it was barely taller than my mom, but its skin looked pale and sickly almost. Eyes followed any movement Rodger and I made. I was being pulled by an instinct to run and my curiosity that wanted to get impossibly closer. It looked frightening, but I didn't feel afraid. I wanted to get closer, and that is just what I did.

As I inched forward, the creature started to shimmer, halting my steps. In the blink of an eye I was looking at... myself? The creature now looked exactly like me. How is that possible? I mean they came from space, but still!

"Holy sh—"

"Holy," the creature/me spoke in what could have been my voice. This was insane.

"What are you?" I struggle out in a wavering voice.

The creature tilted its head to the side as it maintained eye contact. It looked like it could have been thinking of a response. Not long after it spoke again in my voice.

"New."

"Do you have a name?" I offered.

"No."

Rodger came closer to stand to me as we both look at the creature. "I say we call him Douglas."

Both the creature and I look at Rodger with the most perplexed look on our faces. "What?"

Looking at both the creature and me, Rodger's expression made me realize that the creature and I spoke at the same time. Looking back the creature is looking right back at us. This is just freaky. Not to mention the popcorn smell is confusing me!

"Do you need some help? Did you crash here?" Rodger and I ask.

"No. Yes." Douglas responded in the same clipped tone. As if this isn't something new for him, Douglas leaned down and picked up a piece of popcorn. Inspecting it further for a sign of danger and finding none, he popped it into his mouth. Looking back at Roger and I with huge eyes, Douglas smiled. Guess he doesn't have popcorn where he's from. Douglas continued to go around eating popcorn that is scattered about the area.

As Rodger and I continue to watch Douglas eat popcorn a beeping starts coming from the spaceship. This seems to alert Douglas enough to have him running back to the spaceship. In almost no time, Douglas is back out of the ship and tinkering to the outside of his spaceship. During all this time, Rodger and I are just watching from our spot we haven't left.

Who knows how long later, Douglas is standing before us watching with interest. "Leaving."

"Oh. Are you going home?" Rodger asks with sadness etching into his features. Douglas nods in response and starts to make his way back to his ship's door. How can he leave? I have so many questions!

"Will you be back?"

Douglas only looks back at me in response and continues into his ship. The door immediately closes after him this time. Wind assaults Rodger and I as the ship comes to life before us. Running back through the field, Rodger and I make it back to the top of the hill just in time to see Douglas's ship rise into the sky before us.

Like whenever someone leaves, Rodger and I wave goodbye to our short-lived friendship with Douglas. The lights on the ship blink back like a response and just like that the ship soars further into the sky.

The ship glinted in the sky and was lost in the blinding light of the sun as Rodger and I were still waving from below. I knew that we were gonna see Douglas again, one day. Well, if we lived to see tomorrow. Rodger and I did leave our volcanic mess in the shed and mom was supposed to be home any minute.

"Think we should take some popcorn to my mom as a peace offering?" I look to Rodger with a shaky grin forming. ■



Evelyn

Medium: Photography

Ekburg Family Image, 1942

Chew-Ba-Caaa

by Leah Frandsen

THIRD PLACE IN STUDENT WRITING

He was small but mighty and strong,
His bark was fierce no teeth he had,
He sang like a siren of old,
His kisses were slobber and love.

Demons conspired to hurt me,
To take away my joy and smile,
It was dark for hours and days,
My spirit almost devoured.

Christmas, he walked into my life,
He licked away my tears of pain,
We cuddled, walked, slept side by side,
Safeguarding me from the vile wolf.

He healed my heart, my mind and soul,
Shockingly, Chewy had to go,
With death he fought for every breath,
Finding my eyes, etching my heart.

He left this world for another,
Where darkness and sadness can't be,
Now he runs and plays with the great,
Waiting in paradise for me.

I Miss the Days

by Ayman Abualrub

I miss the days when we,
Were surrounded by wishes;

In which our innocence,
Was as red as roses;

I miss the nights when we,
Were overtook by sleepiness;

By surprise, as we lay there,
Looking deeply into the cosmoses;

Those nights where we,
Announced with hope our wishes;

We laid there dreaming as,
We were naive adolescents;

I remember, we fell asleep one night,
With the sincerity of our hearts;

And the love of our childhood,
Full of hope and innocence;

Those days I was young,
And made the sincerest of pledges;

Surely, I will try my best
With my soul and all my breaths,

With all the time I have left
to fulfill, those innocent promises



FIRST PLACE IN STUDENT ART

Barb and Ginny

Medium: Oil on birch panel

Based on photograph of family members taken in the 1940s, Idaho Falls, Idaho

Tam Foree



Summer Daisies

*Medium: Black and white
digital photography*

Angela Hagfeldt



Hummingbird Flight

*Medium: Black and white
digital photography*

Angela Hagfeldt



"Spirit Bundle" Pendant

*Medium: Jewelry, fabricated
and glass, flame-worked*

*Jewelry design and fabrication by Gail Rappa;
flame-worked glass bead Kristen Frantzen Orr.*

Kristen Frantzen Orr and Gail Rappa



SECOND PLACE IN STUDENT ART

Cruising Mike

Medium: Photography

Althea P. Jones



Generations

Medium: Digital photography with art filter

Shown: White Pine High School, built in 1909, Ely, Nevada.

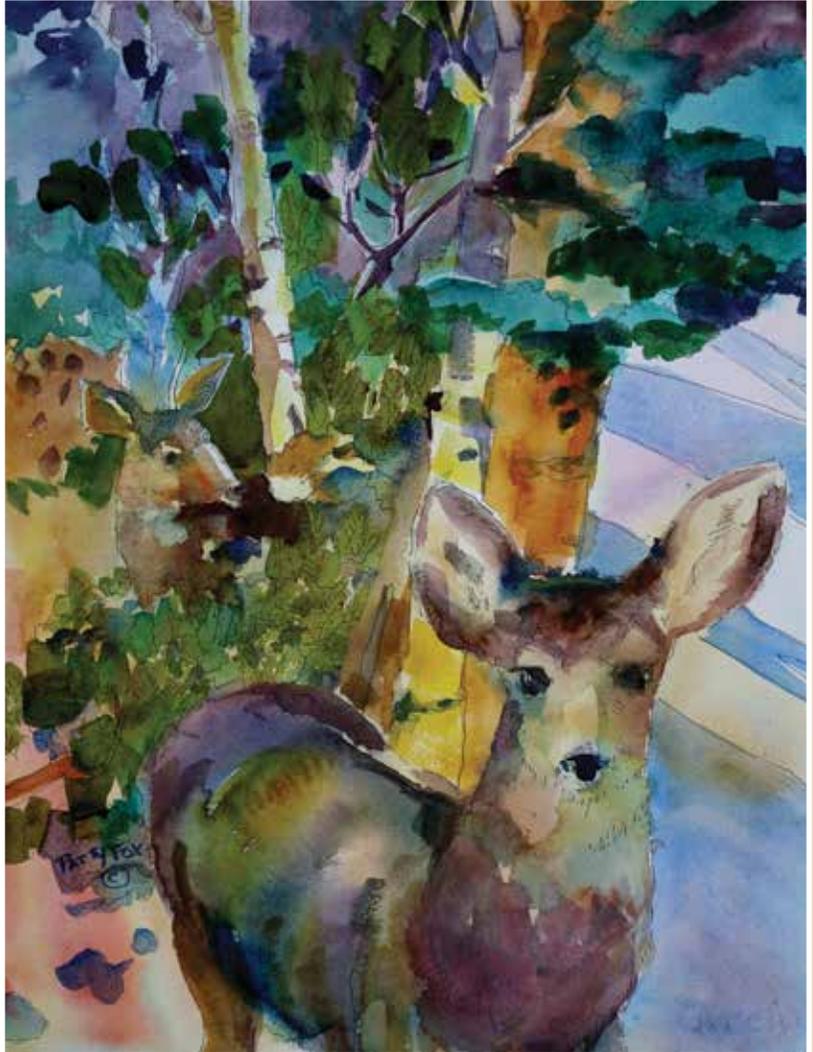
Susanne Reese



Immigrating to America

Medium: Photography

G. Deininger Family Archive, 1948



Deer in Spring Creek

Medium: Watermedia

Patty Fox



**Pogonip on Aspen Leaves
7th Canyon Ranch**

Medium: Digital photography

Angie de Braga



THIRD PLACE IN STUDENT ART

**Howard Hughes
Magazine Cover**

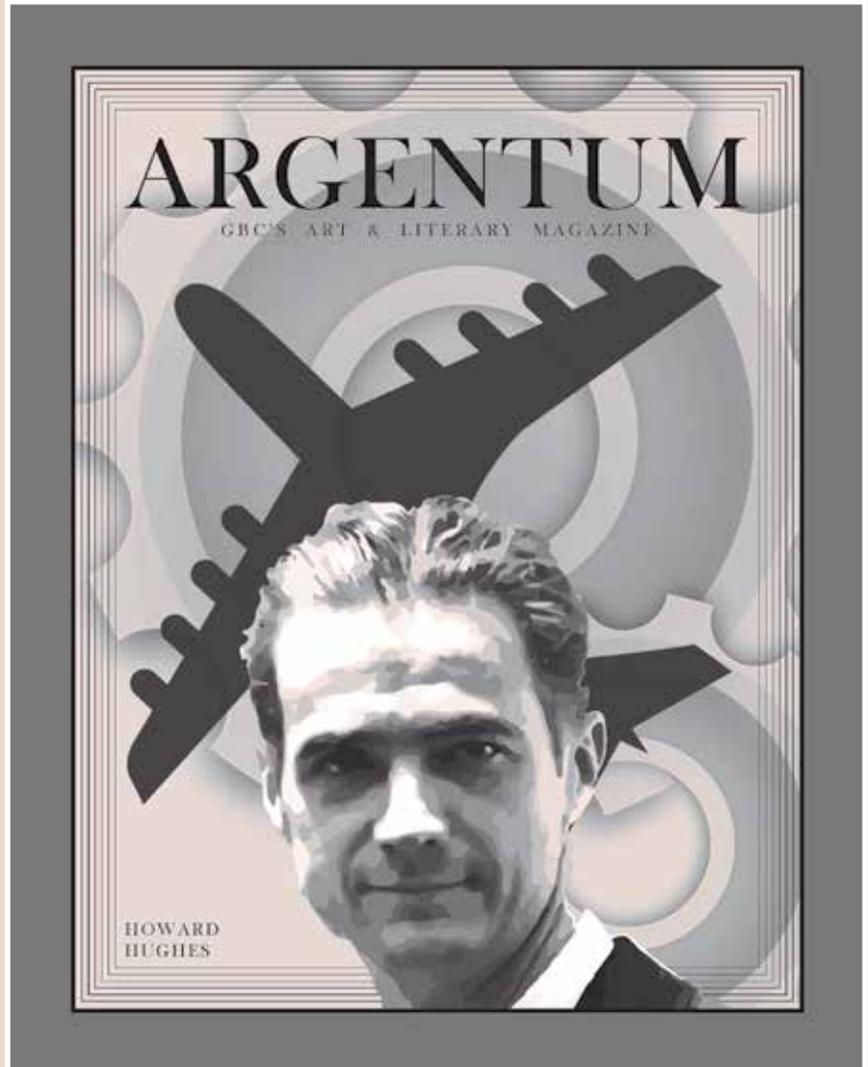
Medium: Adobe Illustrator

Created as an homage to the 1948

Time Magazine cover

with Mr. Hughes.

Tara Terwiske





Bootsy's Lie

Medium: Loose sketch paper, drawn with 8B extra soft charcoal pencil, free-hand

Inspired by the work of Andrew Loomis (1892-1959), illustrator, art instructor and author.

Emily Schwendemann



The Little Engineer

Medium: Digital image

As she lives in a railroad community, the artist wanted to represent that with a 1940s engineer look.

Kendra Johnson



Classic

Medium: Pen and pencil on paper

Tanya Leader



Stack of Bowls

Medium: Ceramics

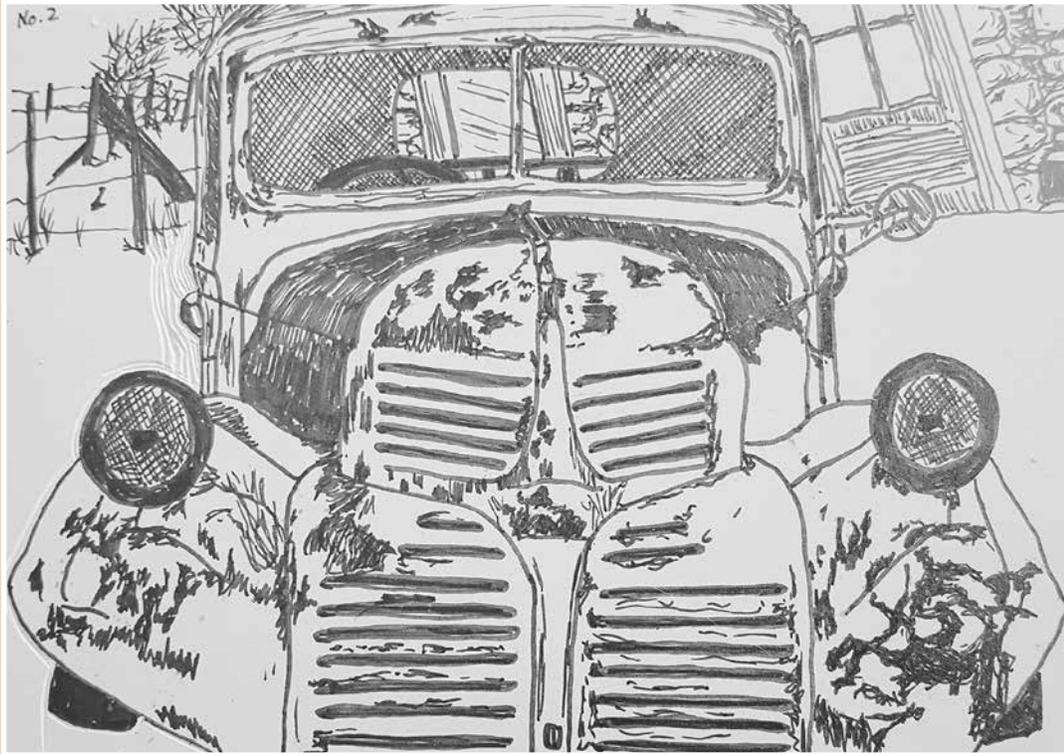
Allie Phillips



Fishing in a Gown

Medium: Photography

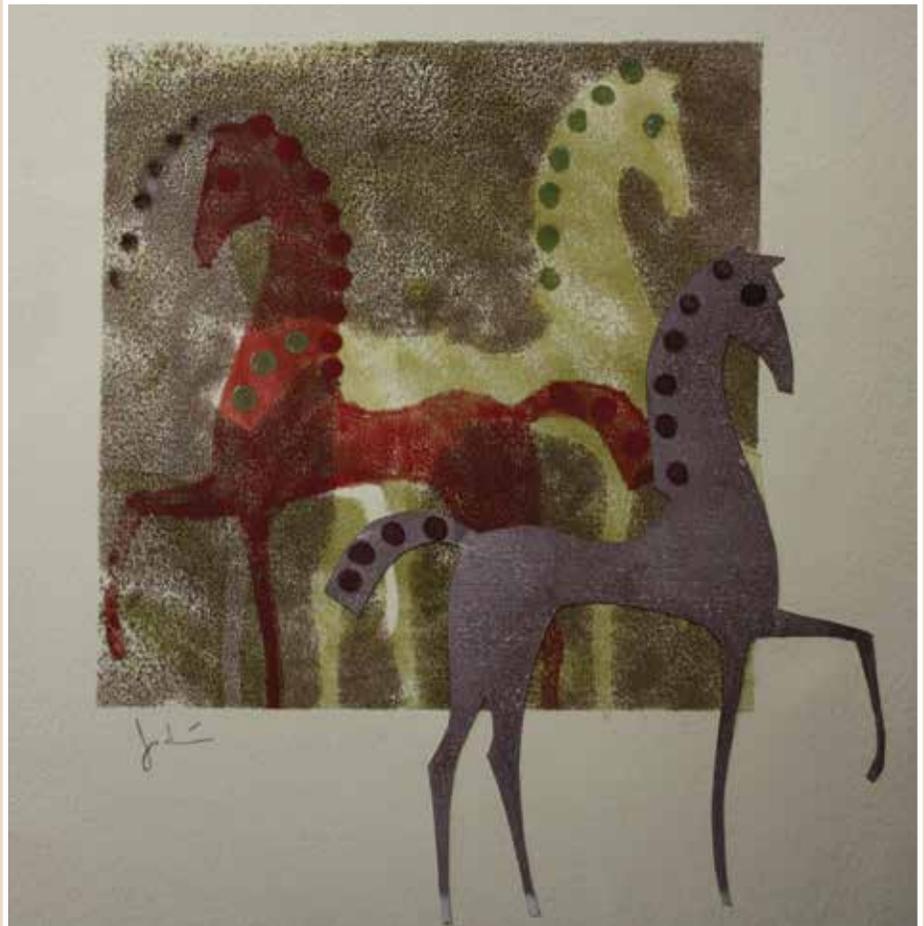
G. Deininger Family Archive, 1948



Lino of 40s Truck

Medium: Linoleum cut

Ursula Stanton



Equitrio

Medium: Mixed media printmaking

Jodi Lurie Schulz



Old Staircase

Medium: Digital photography, black and white enhanced

Toni R. Milano

EVERY DAY I LOOK at the power levels of the station, and every day they decrease. The only level that stays at maximum is the emergency beacon. It has a small solar panel that collects enough energy to keep it calling for any wandering traveler. But the likelihood of someone finding me is very low.

I should probably explain my situation and how I got here. My name is David, or Dave. My friends call me Dave. The only person to call me David was my mother. I am a member of the crew of the research exploration ship Athena of the United States NASA program. We were tasked with heading to a wormhole that had been discovered and traveling through it. We were then to study what was on the other side, then travel back to our original system with our findings. This was the trip of a lifetime and the first of its kind.

Everything was going fantastic. When we arrived at the wormhole, we collected data on it. Mostly on how it distorted light and space around it. It was amazing. These findings alone would make the crew famous!

Then the time came for us to travel through and into the other side. This would be the first interstellar travel achieved by mankind. The journey through the hole was rocky at best. There is nothing more jarring than having space folded and then running through that fold only to pop out somewhere unknown. It was like traveling down a rocky path while in a ball, but the trip only lasted ten seconds. One member of the crew, Patrick, compared it to being in a pinball machine.

In the end, we were in a new a whole new star system. We found the system to be extremely similar to our own. There was a yellow dwarf at the center of the system and dancing around it were seven planets. Two gas giants, and five planets equivalent to Earth's size. One was even at the perfect distance to be habitable for humans, if it had been possible we would've somehow found out if it was.

Once we had collected our data we traveled back through the wormhole to return as triumphant heroes. But something went wrong in the worm hole. As we passed back through it was immediately shakier than the first trip.

The tremors were so violent this time around the vessel started to fall apart.

Systems started to crash and fail, power faded in and out, and certain parts of our ship lost air pressure. When we finally emerged on the other side the ship was so damaged that we couldn't move, only drift. Communications were down so we had no way of making contact with anyone. With little to no power we couldn't even tell if we were in our home system! The wormhole was in the middle of nowhere and there aren't too many landmarks out in space. Using star charts on some mobile devices we were able to deduce that we were in our home system but nowhere near our starting destination.

So, we drifted around, broadcast out an emergency signal. After a week in ship's time the crew started to lose hope, all but one, Jessica Miller. She never lost hope. We didn't have the supplies needed for an emergency like this. We didn't plan for something like this to happen.

Slowly the crew started to starve, or go insane. One member, his name was Martin O'Conner, came down with a case of cabin fever. He stopped sleeping and with that came hallucinations.

The man claimed that he saw his family members beckoning for him to join them outside. After he tried to open up a door to the silent vacuum of space we had to restrain him. I have video of us doing so, I've added it to my personal log.

Martin screamed and cried his eyes out as members of the crew strapped him down to a bed. He even tried to attack some of his crew mates. He was dead set on getting outside to be with his imaginary family. It reminded me of the *Odyssey* by Homer. In particular the part when the men tie their captain, Odysseus to the mast of the ship so he can hear the song of the sirens. It was his idea to be tied up in the first place and ended up have a terrible experience. He begged and pleaded for the men to release him as he listened to the sirens call out to him in the voices of his family. He thought he had made it home. If he had been set loose, he would have been killed by those terrible monsters.

After that experience, several more of the crew experienced cabin fever, some recovered, some did not. Martin was of the latter. He ended up escaping and getting into a section of the ship that had been torn open from the journey back through the wormhole. He was sucked out into the vast darkness of space, and in his escape, he took the life of another crew member. We put the victim, Rosa Little, in an airlock. It would become the morgue of our vessel as crew members slowly succumbed to starvation, dehydration, and insanity. With the cold of space, it would freeze them, preserving the dead, keeping them in pristine condition if we are ever found.

Slowly everyone died leaving me alone, I can still remember the last to die, Jessica Miller, our chief scientist. I can still see her face as her life slowly faded. She looked terrible. She was thin and frail from the lack of food and gravity, her eyes were dark and sunken in. But even to the end she held on to hope. She even prayed. She spoke to me, telling me that everything would be ok.

During her final moments we spoke about God. Who and what He is, what humanity is to Him, and if He even cares about such lowly creatures.

“Look outside,” Jessica would say repeatedly. “The stars, the planets and their rotations. The order! Someone is out there bringing order to all of this.”

With her dying breath she confessed her love for her family and her god. The prayer was beautiful. It was remarkable that she was able to have control of her speech while in such terrible shape. The strangest thing of all was that she prayed for me. Unbeknownst to her I kept a recording of that prayer and would play it over and

over. It somehow brought comfort to me. I’ve had to stop playing it because it was using up too much power.

Though I am an artificial intelligence, I am still intelligent. I miss them, I envy them. I didn’t think it would be possible for me to be jealous of them. What happened to them was terrible, but now I am alone and in my own way dying.

Every day I look at the power levels, every day they slowly decrease, and I have what can only be described as a panic attack.

Will I die?

According to Jessica’s beliefs, when humans die, they continue to a place called Heaven. The place seems to be a different variation of the afterlife that is so prevalent in the many religions of Earth. Humans and even animals go to this place. But what of me? Jessica said that man is the child of God. My mother was human, thus, she would be a child, a daughter, of that God. Since I am her child does that make me a grandchild of God?

When the power finally runs out and the only thing functioning is the emergency beacon and its solar panel, will I cease to exist? When I was created, they never told me what would happen if power was cut off. Did my mind somehow create backups of itself that could be restored? I was never informed of such a capability. I have tried everything to save myself, but nothing has prevailed. My desperation has gotten me nowhere.

I am afraid. I am scared. I want my mother.

Every day, the power levels decrease. Every day, I get closer to dying. ■

Time to say goodbye

by Leah Frandsen

Time to say goodbye

Empty as my children leave

I fell out of love

Marriage wasn’t my kind friend

True love begins inside me

Theater Velno

by Renee LaBonte-Jones

MR. VELNO USED TO HAVE the kind of bold and beautiful voice that made all us children sit real still and listen when he sang in the church choir, before a mean old raccoon caught sight of him one September night and ripped most of his throat out.

Some of us were real sorry we had missed the sight. We figured we'd never get the chance to see something like that, unless we were on the receiving end of things, and of course no one ever wants to be there. The folks who did see it, Dan Hall's older brother Johnny and his sweetheart Carol Moore, said they didn't think they'd ever forget it. Carol said any time it was brought up that she didn't think she could bear to wear red again as long as she lived. When we asked her why she said "I didn't think blood got as red as that. Only blood I'd ever seen before was more like burgundy, but Mr. Velno was bleeding turkey red."

Most of us were only sorry that it happened to Mr. Velno, who we liked, but couldn't happen to someone like the Widow Kemp or Mr. Leedey, who we very strictly did not like at all. Not that we had any sort of power to dole out righteous punishment in the form of rabid raccoons.

He fascinated us. The doctor made a big show about how amazing it was that Mr. Velno managed to live even if they couldn't save his voice, considering the amount of blood he'd lost and the fact the raccoon was rabid. As if that wasn't mysterious enough, the incident had happened in the graveyard, when Mr. Velno had been passing through on his way to pay his respects to his buried mother. We thought somehow that was impressive and mystic. Felt right, felt soaked in some kind of meaning we couldn't exactly spell out.

Mr. Velno had that kind of face and that kind of walk and that kind of voice – that is, before he lost it – that belonged over in Switzerland where he'd come from back before the turn of the century. Some people didn't know that's where he came from though, and thought he was a little too German to be in our clean American town. During the First World War, long before any of us children were around to see it, he'd get stones thrown at him sometimes when he'd walk down the street. We guessed it was pretty

lucky for him that he didn't have a voice no more by the time the second war broke out, because without his accent people weren't so quick to make that mistake.

He had a round, almost jolly look about him, like he could've been Santa Claus if only he would grow a beard. But he kept his face clean shaven, at first as a preference, and later because it seemed most of that part of his face and body was scar tissue and wouldn't grow hair anyway.

It became a kind of tradition for us kids to use Mr. Velno's habits as a way to tell the future.

We used Mr. Velno to decide things like "Is Mercy's Great Aunt Tillie going to die of pneumonia this year?" Mercy's Great Aunt Tillie came down with pneumonia every October like clockwork, and we were all tired of being told she was expected to die of it only for her to pull through and live until the next October when the cycle would begin again. So we sat on Mercy's porch and waited to see if Mr. Velno went into the Five and Dime or not, because it was a Tuesday and that was the day he would go if he was going to go at all. He walked right on past. And so we figured Mercy's Great Aunt Tillie would not die. And she didn't – not then anyway.

We used Mr. Velno to decide things like "Is Steven going to take home the history prize at school again this year?" and then we'd sit on Steven's porch and wait to see if Mr. Velno left the butchers with three packages under his arm or not, because Mr. Velno usually went into the butchers and ordered a pound of ground beef, a cut of brisket, and pork chops. He came out as expected, carrying three brown paper-wrapped packages under his arm. And so we figured Steven would take home the history prize that year after all. And he did – I took the geography prize, but we hadn't even thought of using Mr. Velno to predict that.

So it was an imperfect science, if we could call it a science at all. But we used it faithfully.

When the Widow Kemp died and it was revealed she hadn't left a cent to her only son, none of us were the least surprised, because Mr. Velno had gone to prayer meeting twice the week previous. And when Darla Roberts refused Gregory Irvington's marriage proposal, none of us were



Tokembamy Cabin

Medium: Digital photography

Joe de Braga

the least surprised because Mr. Velno hadn't gone out to smoke his pipe the evening before.

The very last time we used Mr. Velno to tell the future was the only time we ever really felt guilty over it. It was also the only time we got it wrong.

One of the town's old gossips, Mrs. Harrison, said to us that she wouldn't be surprised if Mr. Velno didn't live through the winter: "Not if this frost keeps up," she nodded, because he'd been looking so ashen and gray lately, except for the bright pink and white of his scars.

So we sat on Mr. Velno's porch and waited to see if he would stop by for lunch, because it was Saturday and he usually stopped by his house for lunch in between playing cards with Mr. Templeton in the morning, and visiting the public library in the afternoon. When we didn't see him stopping by, we figured he had gone straight from Mr. Templeton's to the library, and took that to mean that he would see the end of winter, in spite of all Mrs. Harrison's talk.

It wasn't until the next day that we learned Mr. Velno had died after all. That he'd never left for Mr. Templeton's in the first place, which is why we never saw him stopping by for lunch.

And some of us would later claim with iron sincerity in our eyes that we had heard an old and eerie echo of his bold and beautiful singing as we sat waiting on his porch, but of course that couldn't be true. At the time, we hadn't even known that he was dead on the other side of the door while we sat there. At the time, we hadn't even thought about his singing for years. Those of us who made that claim were, for the most part, the same ones who were sorry we had missed out on witnessing the raccoon attacking him to begin with, even if it meant we could never bear to wear red again as long as we lived.

Mr. Velno was buried only a stone's throw away from where the mean old raccoon had found him that hazy September night about four years before. Somehow, no one thought about that when they did the burying. ■

Arrest, Capture

by J. Webster

THIS IS ARREST, CESSATION. Arabella loathes it, the stillness, but agreed to the photo because she liked him – the black man in the bespoke suit with the camera around his neck and a puzzled smile on his face – or at least thought she could. He wore the suit as if he'd tripped into it, and the way his eyes drifted toward models mid-change spoke to the novelty of his surroundings. The photographer didn't know fashion and neither did Arabella, and, because of this, she agreed to a photo.

"What does Arabella mean?" He asks as he walks a slow circle around her, trying to find an angle, light. He sounds confident in English, a hint of American flat in the accent, polar opposite of his attempt at French a moment ago. He spilled French words rather than spoke them, the syllables falling in clumsy fits from his tongue.

"Yielding to prayer," she tells him, as she adjusts her shoes. They're pointless objects, the heels high, material stiff. Her feet chafe at the rigid form of the sole, wanting to flex and bend against the restraint of leather.

"Is that a French name?" He asks. A click, the wind of film.

"Latin. I from Madrid."

"I've been to a bullfight," he says, raising the camera to his face, the lens replacing his eyes. "Didn't care for it."

"An old tradition," she responds, recalling the people flooding into the stadiums, ready for sport. She'd watch them from the windows of the studio, closed for business but not for practice, as she warmed up on the barre, stretching her muscles. Why they would sit to watch death, she couldn't fathom.

"Had enough of those in my life," he says, half-smiling. Another click and wind.

"Am I a good model?" She asks, adjusting the drape of the dress on her shoulders.

"You're not a model."

"How do you know?" She smiles. She's not a model, not by trade, and the fact he recognizes this gratifies her.

"You watch the camera. Models don't. They assume it's there as they ignore it. You work for one of the houses?"

Arabella shakes her head, slow as to not muss her hair. She hates how fragile this kind of beauty makes her feel.

"I'm a dancer. But there aren't enough models in town for the week, so they hired me. They trust I can walk fifty feet without falling."

The photographer laughs. "It's a rare skill." He lowers the camera. "You don't want me taking your picture, do you?"

"I agreed, yes?" she asks, embarrassed but pleased.

"You did. Why?"

She shrugs, the pins in the dress jabbing at her clavicle. "You looked lost."

"I do it on purpose. It disarms people."

Arabella smiles. "A rare skill."

THIS IS CAPTURE. Photography, as Benjamin understands it, holds on to something intangible, seizes life and maintains it in the static of image. A photo, he once told a class of students, isn't a surface. It's an opening.

And yet everything here feels like surface. When the magazine offered him Fashion Week, he considered turning it down, despite needing the money for his next project. He still can't grasp why they chose him. He made his name photographing coal mine poverty in West Virginia for the WPA, acting as assistant to a sociologist. He published the project prints in *Time*, then in his own book. There was talk of a Pulitzer, but it didn't come through. Other things did, though. Enough to keep him in film.

He should have taken something serious, waited for a better project. Paris and fashion? Not him.

Ben often wondered, in cynical moments, if his editors enjoyed inserting him into events where no one would expect him. Though Europeans seemed to have less distaste for his skin than Americans, there weren't many black men wandering about the fashion houses. In less cynical moments, he wondered if he was just good enough for the work to override his birth.

"Bylines don't have a color," an editor once told him, leaving out the fact he could pay Benjamin less on principle.

His next project, he'll head south, document the fall of Jim Crow. Transitional places make the best subjects, the space between bygone and becoming a flux of tension and resistance. Even Georgia swelter can't dull some edges.

He agreed to Fashion Week, to finance the next project. On the flight, he reviewed magazines and trade guides, trying to interest himself in the drama of textile, cut and line. After waking up in his Paris Hotel, a breakfast served by a waitress nonplussed by his abhorrent French, he headed over to the theater and wandered backstage. He planned to take his photos quick, selecting subjects with the precision of a raptor, and leave as soon as possible for some sightseeing across the city. His contract stipulated photos, not time on-site.

But inside, wandering the backstage spaces of the fashion houses, enemy encampments on the edge of the theater, he struck a wall of disorientation, dissonance. People around him moved with purpose and clarity – a depth of intention he associated with field hospitals and war rooms – even as they sipped wine and chatted amicably about color palettes. Benjamin felt small and out of place, a child wandered into a state dinner, embarrassed by his casual dismissal of his subjects.

He saw her at the edge of the Chanel exhibit, picking at the sleeve of her dress, a look of discomfort etched across her face. Her grimace sent slight fractures through her make-up: a serious model would know to keep her face still.

He felt he could connect with her, or at least take her picture. So he asked.

“I UNDERSTAND COSTUMES,” Arabella explains, “but not these clothes.” Fashion models found favor with designers for the simple design of their bodies, slim and lithe and angled in the same places as hangers. They dress as sewing dummies, minimal curves protecting the perfect lines of the tailor. The fashionable body should vanish in the clothing, flesh subsumed by fabric.

Dancers wear costumes designed to accentuate the aesthetics of movement, the gesture. Tights reveal the motion of the leg, the fluid flexes of muscle and curves of bone. Slippers free the foot, allow it to slide, sweep and point as nimble as the fingers of a piano player, a maestro. Headdresses and accessories serve the story of the body in motion, the narrative of the dance.

And yet, because the ballets neither wanted nor needed her, she gave herself up as a mannequin, in frozen service of the stitch and hem, her face coated with a shellac of make-up intolerant of perspiration and the ripple of air across a twirling smile.

“You look lovely, though,” the photographer says, takes another posed shot.

The compliment bites, just like the hare her father gave her for her seventh birthday. When she reached between

the thin metal wires of its cage, it nipped her soft fingers in fear and anger.

“It just means it loves you,” her father told her as he wrapped her hand in one of his handkerchiefs, the smell of tobacco and cologne heavy on the fabric. She knew a falsehood when she heard one, even then.

HE TELLS HER she looks lovely, and she flinches. Most people wouldn’t notice, but Ben does. Sometimes when he works, Ben imagines himself as a spectre, passing through scenes, taking his pictures. A ghost can’t say the wrong thing, give the wrong look, shift the mood. An unseen photographer can’t distract the subject, derail the moment with their presence.

He always knows, too. The same attention to detail that lets him recognize the right image strikes him when he speaks the wrong words, makes the wrong gesture. The sensitivity that allows him to interpret the mind through slight changes in the face hyper-focuses on how his actions impact people around him.

The year he graduated from Columbia, he photographed the Senior Art Show for the school paper. He wore a corduroy suit jacket purchased from a vintage store in Harlem, too small across his shoulders, but felt like Langston Hughes as he weaved among sculptures and paintings, children with their confused, but appreciative, parents and friends.

Ben worked the room in stealth. When the students or their guests noticed him, they tended to fall into impromptu portraits, arms falling over shoulders like drawbridges, the works of art demoted to backdrops for scrapbook photos. He didn’t object to those photos out of hand, but they’d been taken in years prior, and Ben wanted something different.

He saw it on the back wall of the gallery; a young man with tightly parted hair in a suit as out of place as Ben’s own stood beside a series of paintings the size of novel covers, the canvases swirls of color and strange glyphs. Through the telephoto lens, he saw the comments left by the professors. The boy, Ben could think of him as little else in such circumstances, was the belle of the abstract ball.

A middle-aged couple wearing Midwest couture stood in front of the paintings, alternating their gazes between the work and the artist. When they spoke, they did so with a refined twang Ben remembered from trips to Chicago as a child.

“They’re good, son,” the father said. “And your professors liked them.”

The boy nodded.

"Are you selling them?" The mother asked. "I don't see prices."

"This is an exhibit," the boy explained. "Not an auction."

"I still don't understand this," the woman said to her husband. He shook his head in response.

"I paint," the boy stated, anger laced in the slow announcement. "There's nothing to understand."

The woman sighed. "I just don't know what this is good for, Carl."

Ben shot the picture at a distance, just as the words sunk into his subject, knives ripping through flesh, bone and digging on for the heart. He caught the hurt in the artist's gaze, the space between mother and child clear and cold as glass. Ben captured a moment of break, a fracture that would radiate through the lives of everyone in his lens.

Carl, the artist, turned to the mechanical noise, the clench of his slight jaw holding back tears. Ben waited for him to speak, to yell. But he said nothing, simply turned from them all and walked toward the door, pulling a pack of cigarettes from his pocket.

Ben, who had never stolen a thing, understood his future contained nothing but theft and preservation, the two inextricable in the eyes of time.

"I DIDN'T MEAN to make you uncomfortable," the photographer says, letting the camera hang from its strap for a moment. "I wasn't hitting on you." There's a quiet in the words, deep and pained.

"It's okay," Arabella tells him, shrugs. "I'm fine. This is hard, you know?"

"I really do," he grins. "I didn't ever picture myself here, either."

"And yet here we are," she says, strikes a pose she imagines as elegant. Her eyes meet the camera the way they would lock with another dancer's in preparation for a lift. He takes the note, takes a few steps back, kneels and clicks the button, a full body shot. When he finishes, he stands.

"I think I've got what I need. Thank you."

"My pleasure" she says, surprising herself. "Where will these be published?"

"*Life*. Do you want me to send you prints?"

She shakes her head. "I'll track down the magazine. What was your name again?"

"Ben Church."

"A clock and a cross," she says, the words slipping off her tongue. "I like that. Thank you, Ben Church."

"Thank you, Arabella." He extends his hand and she takes it, the warm sweat in his palms dampening the lace

of her gloves. It feels cold in the conditioned air as she watches him fade into the crowd.

BEN SLEEPS ON HIS COUCH for a while, exhausted from the second Trans-Atlantic flight in as many days. When he wakes, the day is gone, the lights of Harlem filling the living room of his seventh-floor walkup. He rises, pours himself cold coffee, and enters the darkroom.

He develops the rolls of films from Paris one after another, not paying attention to the labels or notes on the plastic canisters. He's waiting for her, though he doesn't allow himself to admit it. He's dreamt of her for the past four nights, but doesn't remember specifics, just wakes feeling haunted and confused.

When the first image of her appears in the wash of chemicals, his throat and chest tighten. He develops the series with the care and intention, meticulously focused on the quality of each print. Once he finishes, he hangs the developed photos along the back wall of his kitchen and sits down at his small dining room table facing them, a glass of bourbon in his hand.

Ben understands the gravity of his task. He needs to pick the right one. The one she would choose.

SHE TUCKS A SMALL AMOUNT of her earnings from modeling into a special pocket of her billfold, away from her money for lunches, rent and practice space. Every day, after morning practice, she scours the newsstands and bookstores of Paris, looking for the newest issue of *Life*. She finds it on a Friday, at a bookshop run by a bored expatriate Englishwoman, and almost forgets to take it to the counter before dashing from the store.

In the studio, she sits on the floor, combing through the pages, looking for his name, herself rendered in gloss and ink. Arabella finds the photo in the center spread, her foot revealed in the hike of her skirt, unpoised and free of artifice, suspended in air.

HE DIDN'T KNOW, in the long years to come, once foreign rebellions and wars became old hat and he'd ventured into film and its headlong allure of motion, how often he would take that picture from his drawer, his eyes retracing its familiar, beloved details.

She didn't know, in the long years to come, after principal performances for companies throughout Paris, Madrid and even St. Petersburg wore her body down enough to accept a position teaching, how often she would take the magazine from her collection of prized things and look at the photo, recalling the eyes behind the lens.

In this way, each took their measures of time. Arrested. Captured. ■



Raiding the Attic

Medium: Digital photography

Isabeau Andrepont



Golden Age of Film

IN THREE HAIKUS

by Frank L. Sawyer

Hollywood Heyday
Stanwyck, Bogart, Garland, Welles
Celluloid landscapes



Heroes, villains, clowns
Echoes of the Silver Screen
Stars cast in concrete



Vintage Hollywood
In the shadow of the sign
Golden Age of Film

The Longing

by John Largé

THE MORNING LIGHT OF SPRING barely penetrated the cramped recess of Café Llapis, quiet at that hour but for the murmuring of abused men. The week of *Carnaval* had begun, but there was no celebration, not in the streets, nor in the hearts of the people of Barcelona. Those who drank themselves into blind oblivion did so, perhaps, out of an automatic sense of tradition for the pre-Lenten festival, or to forget it entirely. Up from the cellars, down from tiny flats, life crept wearily into the narrow entanglement of termite trail pathways that wove through the Gothic quarter. They went into the markets to beg relief for the wrecked body, into the churches to beg succor for the tattered soul, and into Café Llapis, where the artist, Guillem Alexandre Montaner i Serra, sat sober among his fellow Catalonians, the unwanted bastard children of Spain. Before him sat Esteve, the friend.

The artist snorted.

“Tell me,” said the friend.

The artist flicked ash, tapped the newspaper on his lap with the end of his cigarette holder. “The taxi service is expected to be reinstated.” He took a drag from the long stem, blew a cloud of smoke over the words in front of him. “Or perhaps demolished. I cannot be sure.” The newspaper was printed in Spanish. All newspapers in Catalonia were now printed in Spanish.

Esteve sipped at weak tea, the tiny leaves sticking between his teeth. “That is not what amused you.”

“No, it was not.” The artist, more decadent at any hour, stirred a dainty *xocolata*, warm and thick as blood, but lacking sugar.

“And now you are toying with me.”

The artist tossed the newspaper across the table, brushed cigarette ash from his plum-colored dressing gown. For all the eccentrics in Barcelona, Esteve had never known another man who was inclined to walk about in public still in his dressing gown, especially such a man that could make it seem somehow refined. But then, Montaner was notoriously his own man. The friend snapped open the newspaper, and the artist obligingly tapped at it again. “Mischief,” he said.

Headed in bold block print, the piece he indicated was a government commendation for yet another military victory over *el maquis*, the guerrilla rebellion. According to the article, a contingent of these traitors had launched a surprise attack upon an army convoy passing over the mountains of the Sierra de San Just. Despite the suddenness of the onslaught, the soldiers were able to quell the rebels in an “overwhelming victory”. However, the friend understood that it was not the rebels to which the artist was referring to by his comment, but rather the article itself.

The friend shook his head. “*Fills de puta*. How many do you think they actually put down?”

“A guess, ten. In their sleep.”

“No doubt you are right.” Esteve rolled up the newspaper, tapped it in his palm. “There is indeed a mystery here.” He pointed with the newspaper. “You.”

“I?” The artist inhaled his cigarette, stirred the tiny *xocolata*.

“You,” the friend repeated. “You disappear for weeks, I finally invite you to the cafe, you accept, but you do not drink. There is stubble on your chin and bags under your eyes. Your eyes, they are distant, but excited. The mystery is that all of the evidence tells me you have been working, but when have you ever had anything to talk about when you are working but to primp and cluck about your latest inspiration? Have you found humility at last, my friend?”

The artist did not immediately reply, allowing the smoke to trail out in undulating wisps from between his parted lips. “Never,” he said at last. “I have been working. A commission. It has taken up all of my time.”

“A new monstrosity?” asked the friend. Their little joke. The artist was a sculptor of divine skill, but only modest renown. His general reclusiveness, as well as his tendency toward bizarre conceptualism in his work, accounted for the thinness of his reputation. He had snubbed the fashionable *surrealists* who had attempted to cultivate his talent, preferring himself to remain firmly outside of any sort of convention. The few to own a Montaner were rarely disappointed, often awestruck, frequently perplexed, and occasionally resentful of his genius.

Furrows creased the artist's brow. "A likeness. Senyor Gallafera is paying a good sum for a statue of his wife. It is to be a surprise, so he has brought me a portrait to work from."

"It is good for you that there is still a market for art."

The artist waved a dismissive hand. "Governments come and go. The rich go on being the rich."

"Even so, why hide yourself away?"

The cigarette expired, and the artist flicked it away into the street with a last exhaling cloud of smoke. He stared across the way at a butcher's shop. There was a man inside apparently arguing over the cost of one of the few remaining racks on display. They had been in the window past the point of freshness, no doubt out of some desperation to profit by the meager supply while waiting for the next shipment, which may never come.

"Have you been in love, Esteve?"

The friend chuckled at the apparent non sequitur, his rows of teeth flecked with black tea leaves. "Many times," he answered. "As have you. This is the great mystery? You are hiding away with a lover?"

The artist seemed about to answer, hesitated, began again. "It is not as you think. It is the work. What I am creating is unlike anything I have ever done, have never seen or even dreamed of in my life. I have captured something you cannot possibly imagine. She is... The likeness of it is... how shall I describe it... reality itself. But so much more, a thing somehow more *true* even than reality. I fear..."

He shook his head, took hold of the tiny cup in front of him, but did not lift it from the table. "I cannot possibly describe it." With a suddenness that startled his friend, he leaned across. "I want you to see it, Esteve. I need to know if you see what I see. It is possible... I fear I may be mad."

"Have I not always said so?" Esteve felt a twinge of unease about the look in his companion's eye.

"Be serious with me awhile, my friend. There is a quality in this likeness that is so perfect, so incomprehensibly divine, I simply cannot leave it alone. I have not slept these two nights past. I keep working, working." He broke off, compressed his lips, and gazed out into the street.

"We were speaking of love," the friend said.

The artist shook his head again, still looking out of the café. "Love does not come close to it," he said. He turned back to Esteve, thrust out a hand, gripped the other man's tightly. "Come with me today. To the workshop. See it for yourself. Tell me I am not mad."

The friend almost withdrew from the touch, but

mastered himself, patted the artist's wrist. "Of course, of course, for you anything, of course. We shall go now, if you like."

A strange, ugly expression passed over the artist's face, but then was gone. He leaned back with a sigh. "Thank you, Esteve." Then, as if to himself, "I am not mad."

The friend studied the artist for a moment. Montaner had always been remarked upon as a curious character, secretive and devious in his thoughts, wild in his passions, but of a composed demeanor that belied his robust sensuousness of spirit and cavalier persona. That gathered, ordered veneer seemed to have cracked somewhat, the wildness more evident in his eye. He looked like a man haunted. "You must eat more fruit, perhaps," said the friend.

THEY EMERGED FROM the shadowed café, passing between enfolding walls that towered grim and gray along the narrow flagstoned street. The quarter was more alive, forms passing to and fro, putting out their hands to sell or to beg. They crossed the square before the Església de Sant Felip Neri. The church was blocked by a wooden barricade. A few workmen and even some of the holy sisters were sifting through the rubble that still remained long after Franco's airplanes dropped a bomb onto the convent, killing many children and adults, refugees from Madrid, who had been hiding in the cellar. The main building still stood, but both the artist and his friend lingered their eyes over the torn facade that bore the scars of civil strife. For two years, Barcelona had been pummeled by air raids. Now there was peace.

"Tell me something of your work," said Esteve, lighting a fresh cigarette as soon as the church was behind them.

"It is better that you should see it," the artist replied. He was thinking of the expression on one of the nun's faces as she watched him pass by in his dressing gown and shirt unbuttoned at the collar. "The likeness defies proper description."

"Is it so very abstract?"

"Not abstract at all, but certainly... defiant of reality."

Esteve offered him a cigarette, and the artist accepted. The two men smoked pensively as they walked and talked.

"Some of your pieces in the past have been very, ah, transcendental. There are those who compare you to Dalí."

The artist sneered, swore in his native tongue. "Do not mention that abortive swine to me," he continued in Spanish, brandishing his cigarette holder for emphasis. "He is more concerned with being sensational than creating art. Besides, you will notice the good Marquis has fled the country with the other cowards. I remain."

“And we shall both be shot,” said Esteve, grinning, “for the crime of being unprincipled *Catalonistes*.”

“Amen.”

Just off the Carrer de la Palla, they came upon the iron gate that barred the narrow staircase that descended to the artist’s sepulchral workshop. Long ago, the merchant’s guild of Barcelona used such cellar compartments as store houses and private meeting places to conduct business best kept concealed from the eyes of the Crown of Aragon. Centuries later, many of these secretive chambers had been converted to the laboratories of the city’s many artisans. The artist’s own compartment lay tucked beneath a pointed archway partway down the steps, behind a wide studded doorway whose tarnished key crunched with resounding echoes up and down the stone passage before admitting the two men into its dark recess.

Narrow windows high upon the walls barely illuminated a low, wide chamber, open but for a dissemination of various workbenches and tables. Strewn amongst the ranks of rasps and hammers lay scattered pitchings of pale stone and the partial carvings. The artist flicked a switch, and several dull electric lamps suspended from the ceiling revealed the rows of shelves along the wall, where lay the forgotten or abandoned experimentations. At the center of the room, positioned best to catch what sunlight penetrated the grimy windows, a lone shrouded form stood motionless, awaiting them.

The artist removed his dressing gown, and hung it on a hook by the door before taking his companion gently by the arm, leading him towards the concealed object. Rolling up his shirtsleeves, he took a reverent hold of the canvas, and, with the briefest hesitation, drew it away. His eyes lingered several moments over what had lain beneath before he finally stepped back. Esteve gaped, and they both stood silent awhile, staring.

“Do you see?” the artist whispered.

The friend did see. A woman’s form, all but completed, yet with a quality about it that seemed to somehow overleap completion. Naked arms stretched out delicate hands to him. The faint marks of rasp and chisel like scars upon them seemed not to resemble wounds so much as the passing off of one flesh to make a new. A suggestion of garment enfolded shapely hips, as though dropped from the shoulders, yet it did not quite resemble cloth, more like liquid smoke or a gently enveloping swell of surf, insinuated even without the refined definition of its curls and creases. Her hair, yet uncompleted, flowed majestically, unrestrainedly down, appearing not at all to

fall but to float and yet to cling about her bare shoulders, her neck, her breasts in an effect caught somewhere between water and wind. Above all, was the face. That face, that expression of longing, of reaching out to them, lips parting in a silent gasp or moan, pleading and promising all at once, something not just of the flesh but of the heart, a quality of form that reassured that but a few choice strokes of the craftsman could give that vessel speech. Before their eyes, she was not merely being, she was *becoming*.

And she was reaching out to him.

Or *him*?

“Well?” the artist pressed.

The friend was dumbstruck. He was seeing something his mind refused to comprehend and yet witnessed with violent clarity. The form before him denied tangibility even as it imprinted itself upon his mind. He felt that even were he to close his eyes, the form would still be there before him in the eyes of his mind, not with the vagueness of memory but with the brilliance of truth. He gazed transfixed into her marble eyes. Whose eyes did those eyes seek? *Please*, he thought to her without knowing why.

“I do see.”

The friend took a step forward, but the artist moved quickly in front of him, reaching out his hand to stroke the pale cheek of the statue. “This has consumed all my waking hours,” he said. “As you can see, it is nearly finished. A bit of riffling about the hair and robe to complete the detail before polishing.” His fingers entwined through her outstretched fingers. “But she is too perfect, even now, is she not?” He turned around quickly, blocking the form from view. “Do you feel anything when you look at her?”

Esteve could not admit even to himself what he was feeling. There was tightness in his chest, a fluttering in his stomach, a tingling as though of freezing and burning at once. He could not bear to look away any more than he could dare to express what he thought it was he was feeling.

Feebly, he responded, “I’m sure Senyor Gallafera will be pleased.”

The artist’s face hardened into a blank mask. Picking up the canvas from the floor, he whipped it back over the statue, and brushed past his friend without a word. He walked swiftly across the workshop, and took up a wine bottle from a low table near the door. He jerked the stopper and poured its contents into a glass, and with his back to the room he drank deeply, letting the silence hang between them.

The friend gave a small cough. “You said in the café there was a portrait of the lady, Senyora Gallafera.”

There was a pause, then the artist took up another glass, and poured a measure into it. Turning around at last, the friend was relieved to see his face had softened. Esteve took the offered drink gratefully, gulping down the dark wine – a low vintage, as it turned out, more for headiness than for palatability. Crossing the room once more, the artist took up a large framed picture that had been resting against a wall somewhere beyond the covered statue.

“He told his wife he was having it restored,” said the artist. He held it up for his friend’s inspection. Yes, there was certainly a familiarity between the face before him and the face within his mind. The portraitist certainly had talent, had indeed captured the features quite skillfully. The Lady Gallafera was a most undeniably beautiful woman. Yet, the images were not more alike in vitality than the vibrant pomegranate flower to the common daisy. The portrait, Esteve decided, was but mere reality. The statue was something more.

“Dull, isn’t it?” said the artist.

“There is a likeness,” said the friend.

The artist’s face contorted hideously all of a sudden. He dropped the portrait to the ground, thrusting an accusing finger in the other’s face. “Don’t lie to me, I know what you saw! What you felt!” He withdrew, brought his hands to his temples. “You do not know what it has been. I first saw it taking shape days ago, the potential. But then to see it happen. Beneath my own hands. *This!*” He kicked the portrait, sending it skidding into a wall, the frame cracking. “It is a mere thing. What I have made, Esteve, has been touched by the divine. More even than that, for God can only create nature. What I have achieved is beyond the capability even of heaven. I have out-created God!”

The friend looked into the artist’s face, at the perspiration forming on the man’s brow, moisture in his eyes. It was distressing, even pitiable, but Esteve knew at least a part of what the artist must be feeling. The evidence was there beneath the shroud, and also there in his mind. Gently, the friend reached out and placed a hand upon the artist’s shoulder. “It is your doing, of course it is. I do believe you,” he said. “Yet, have you considered, Guillem, that there may be some element of the Devil in this thing?”

The artist actually smiled then. “Normally, I would disdain your superstition, but I confess that I have considered it,” he said. “Would you have me end it? Cast out what I have created?”

The friend did not answer. He could not. She would hear him.

“No,” said the artist. “Of course I could not. *We* are created by God, and it is he who gives us our talent, not so?” He turned his gaze to the shrouded form. “Perhaps we are but blessed, Esteve. Perhaps... Perhaps we have been given a window into the mind of God. Yes, surely, she is an angel, is she not?”

The friend looked at the covered statue. But for the presence of the artist, he would have torn that covering away to look upon her once again with his own eyes. To touch her with his own hands.

“Angel or devil,” he said, “my friend, you are indeed a *genius*.”

Night in years past. The Gothic quarter teems with light and laughter. The wine and dance of Carnival dominate the city. Masked figures carrying colored lamps pass raucously down narrow streets, calling to each other, singing at the tops of lungs choked with oily smoke. Priests bless the revelers in the squares, as down dim alleyways the night women and drunken maidens give festively of themselves for a pittance of money, a bottle of wine, or simple flattery. Somewhere in the city, a great man has been killed in a crime of passion, and a beggar with a ribbon at his throat receives a loaf of bread in trembling syphilitic hands. These are the traditional days of regrettable indulgence before the piety of Holy Lent, and the people give and take up the night in profuse, colorful abandon.

Tonight. The streets are dark and silent. Few dare walk about at night, save for the urban police with their black eagle emblems and their weapons. Locked inside, the people whisper conversation in their native Catalan, a language forbidden in the new Spain. Parties, few and secretive, occur in cellars and garrets, though these are subdued affairs, and the food and drink scarce. In the hill districts, the wealthy families of Barcelona still hold lavish, even grotesque masquerades without fear of the armed patrols that oppress the poor. For everyone else, the nights leading up to Lent go unmarked and unchanging from any other day. Somewhere in the city, a desperate man has been murdered for a loaf of bread, and a freethinker is being brutally beaten and then hauled away by men in gray uniforms. All the color, the costumes, the lights, the merriment. All gone.

Below the street, the artist remains awake, working with rasp and riffler, honing and shaping the hair, the robes, all of the tiny intricate details. His hands flow with a whisper of touch over the statue’s surface, his body never breaking contact with the smooth cool stone for a moment. He is naked, as is his habit, yet his skin brushing against the statue’s still, unyielding form gives the work a piquancy he has never known before. There is moisture in his eyes. Across the city, the friend, also awake, stares hopelessly into the darkness of his bedchamber. He has tried to lose himself this night in wine, in the companion at his side, yet his mind is a turmoil, a dancing swirl of

stone eyes and stone hands that beckon in their blankness. She is as present to him now as she was hours past. His heart pulsates. He thinks of his friend, alone with her, touching her, molding her. What madness is this? He cannot let her go, and live.

SENYOR GALLAFERA came at last to call upon the artist. He rapped his walking stick ostentatiously upon the workshop door, but received no answer. He knocked once more, and heard within a muffled, feeble call. The clang of an iron bolt, and the door creaked open. There stood the great Guillem Alexandre Montaner i Serra, wearing nothing but a filthy, wrinkled shirt, heavily stained. He was pale, eyes hollow and red, his forehead damp with sweat. He looked of death. "Good Senyor," he croaked.

Senyor Gallafera took a small retreating step. When he had first met Montaner, he had been impressed by the man's elegant, self-possessed demeanor. The creature before him looked a mere drunkard or a lunatic. But then again, he reflected, he was dealing with an artist, and such men were prone to erratic behavior. A certain concession must be granted, so long as the work was being done. He smiled. "Senyor Montaner, a good day to you. I beg your pardon. I have but come to see your progress. If you would permit me to step inside for just a moment. I shall not keep you."

He took a step forward, but the artist thrust out a hand to stop him. "You will not," he said.

Heat rose at the rich man's collar, but he mastered himself. "What is this? If you are indisposed, man, then say it. But I have paid you your commission, and I expect a good result of you. Excellent result, if your reputation is worth anything. But you shall have your way. When will the work be finished, then?"

"It is near finished."

"Then, shall I expect it soon?"

"You shall not expect it at all."

Senyor Gallafera was stunned. "Is this a joke?" he bellowed. "You listen, Montaner, how dare you take my commission, eighty-thousand pesetas, *my* money, only to refuse me the result!" He drew in a breath. "Is it a matter of more time, perhaps? You are known for quality. Quality cannot be rushed, I may be made to understand. But I shall not be toyed with, nor insulted. Not by you, nor any man. Now, I have made a promise to please my Lady. I am not to be swayed or obstructed. You have taken my payment, now in the name of God, I will see the statue!"

The door slammed shut. Senyor Gallafera stood aghast, beyond rage. Before he could think of how to act, there was

shuffling within. The door opened up a crack, and a hand thrust out. A shower of bank notes fluttered to the ground, landing upon patent leather shoes. Senyor Gallafera simply gaped at the paper money at his feet as the door slammed for good, and a bolt crashed into place.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, and the friend finally returned. The days he had spent since leaving this cellar room behind had been painful, just drifting moments between forgetful self-abandon and desperate desire. The wine, at first so sweet, soured to vinegar upon his tongue. His willing lovers, bodies firm with youth and vigor, were mere scarecrows in his arms. In the end, he had been drawn inexorably back, no more sense of self-will than the tide against the insistent pull of the moon. With staggering footfalls, the desperate man descended the ancient steps to the workshop door to gaze once more on the unearthly creation that had been his undoing.

As he approached, he found the door ajar, darkness within. It was not Montaner's way to leave his workshop open to invasion, Esteve knew this. Cautiously, he entered the silent cellar room, calling out for the artist. No answer. The declining light of day fell upon emptiness – no one in sight, save for the shrouded figure visible in the dusk. Upon seeing her, Esteve felt a lump in his throat, a stinging in his eyes. She was still there. Heart pounding, he flicked on the lightswitch. The workshop was in shambles. Tables were overturned, their contents scattered upon the stone floor. Carvings lay broken against the walls where they had evidently been thrown. Shards of glass bottles glistened everywhere, their contents pooled and staining. The portrait of Senyora Gallafera was tossed into a corner, slashed to ribbons. Only a single sturdy workbench stood upright near the covered statue, tools neatly laid out upon it. There was no sign of the artist. Esteve was alone.

Glass crunched beneath his feet as he crossed the room, his heart hammering, his palms growing slick with sweat. A giddiness was rising up within him with each step, so palpable he could have laughed aloud, but fear and anticipation caught his breath. The many hours of restraint, of suppressed hunger, had turned his insides to water, his brain to paste. He was mere function now, acting and reacting, instinctively drawn to remembered pleasure. The tears in his eyes welled over, the vision before him blurring as he reached out his hand, and reverently drew away the shroud.

The workshop door slammed shut, and he heard the bolt slide slowly into place, yet he did not turn around.

Footsteps across broken glass were nothing to him. Even as a low, cold voice he barely recognized growled close to his ear, his senses remained locked onto that one vision, the only vision in his universe.

“You should not have come back.”

A hand grabbed his wrist, spinning him violently around to gaze into a wild, haggard face. “You should not be here!” the artist shrieked, spittle flying.

But he was too late. His friend had seen.

The statue was complete. The impossible had been achieved. That human hand could have created such a thing! That white stone should hold the suggestion of so much color in its carved lines. Such a delicacy of detail that hair, garment, fingertips, and lips seemed subtly to shift and move, to speak to him, reach to him. Those blank, blind eyes held so much more yearning, more triumph, more generosity of love than could be imagined in the depth of human feeling. How could it seem so much more human than human ever seemed? The intoxicating perfection of it. It was true genius.

Esteve’s head tried to turn to look back, but the artist grasped him by the throat and flung him violently to the floor. A pistol appeared in the madman’s hand, the hammer pulling back with a resounding click. The shock of it partly returned the friend to his senses. He could see the artist there before him, blocking his view, his maddened voice ringing in the confined space. “You have no right, you worm, you swine, you thing!” The artist seized his face painfully by the jaw, the nimble, strong hands of the stone craftsman digging into him, the gun barrel inches from his nose. “Do you think any of you deserve her?” Death in that voice. “Do you not see, fool, that you are not even alive? None of you are. We are a city of the rotting dead, only one true spark of life in all of Spain, in all the world. You want the proof of it, there it stands! There! And I have created it!”

Suddenly the artist’s eyes softened, his fingers falling away as he staggered back in horror, the gun falling limply to his side. He stared down at his friend upon the floor, who willed himself to hold the artist’s gaze. Tears appeared in the hollow eyes. “I *am* mad,” he whispered. He turned to face his creation, freeing Esteve to do likewise. The prone man’s heart broke for his friend and for himself, even as he looked. “I *am* mad,” the artist repeated, and his shoulders started to tremble. “But I cannot undo what I have done. She exists. She must exist.”

He turned back to his friend, saw him staring at the statue, but made no move to stop him. “Leave me, Esteve,”

he said, his voice brittle with pity and despair. “You must leave me. Forget me. Forget her. For the love of God.”

The friend rose to his feet. His limbs shook, his throat and jaw ached. When he spoke, his voice was a dry whisper. “She made me come. *You* have made me come by creating her. Please. Can I just look on her a little while?”

The artist’s face grew hard, but he held firm. His cheeks still glistened with tears, yet the eyes were burning. “You cannot, Esteve. Try to understand. She will madden you, as she has me.” He waved an arm in the direction of the chamber door. “Go. Find some easy lover in the streets. Make what life you can. Please.”

The friend straightened. “I will not. You cannot hide her from the world, Guillem. You cannot hide her from *me*. I have seen, and will always see.” The artist said nothing. “You can share her,” he continued. “Or you can give her up. Be rid of madness. Give me the burden of it. We are friends, you would not begrudge me, nor would I abandon you. Call it mercy, or selfish, I do not care. I will not go.”

The artist backed toward the workbench. “You will go, Esteve.”

“I will not.”

The artist raised the pistol. The statue’s eyes danced in the waning sunlight. “You will go. Now.”

The friend looked into the statue’s face. “I will not. Ever.”

The artist stiffened to fire, but his friend had anticipated it and leaped in low, ducking under the gunshot and driving himself into the other’s midsection. The sculptor crashed backwards into the workbench, tools striking the floor with a ringing clamor. He tried to bring the pistol down, but his friend grabbed hold of his wrist, trying to wrest the gun from his hand. They struggled, pulling each other across the floor of the workshop, glass scattering like sparks beneath their feet. The friend managed to wrestle the artist to the floor, pressing his boot into the other’s throat while pulling up on the pistol. It went off close his ear, stunning him, and the artist was able to jab upwards with his foot, striking his friend fiercely in the kneecap, making him howl with pain and slacken his grip. He staggered back as the artist scrambled to his feet, but even as he raised the gun once again, the friend had his wrist, wrapped the other arm tightly around the artist’s neck.

They came up hard against the statue, the friend’s eyes arrested by the statue’s gaze for just a moment, when the artist’s teeth clamped down upon his ear. He screamed, tightening his grip about the artist’s neck, trying to make

The Black Dahlia Murder

HAIKU SUITE

by Frank L. Sawyer

California Dreams

Pretty, demure, light-blue eyes

Elizabeth Short



Silent Leimert Park

Hemicorporectomy

Betty's gruesome find



Broad Glasgow smile

Pretty, posed, and pallid skin

The Black Dahlia

Always Remember

by John Berg

For every life that passes me by

Shall I hold but why

The heart is fragile, but mine is shy

Simply all can't fit inside

But all's not lost. There's a place set aside

Before all eyes soon shall you see

And so shall I

But matters have passed

And passage be true

I have given my all and all's not lost!

him let go. He would not. The gun jerked wildly in the air, trying to come down at the friend's head, but the friend still held the artist's wrist in a vice-like grip. Desperately, he let go of the other man's throat, and grabbed a heavy steel hammer from the nearby workbench, swung it at the artist's head.

Crack!

The artist had seen the hammer blow coming, and jerked away just before it landed with brutal force against the object just behind him. Both men froze, staring with horror and with awe. The stone face – so perfect, so full of love, so full of longing, so alive – stared at them from her left side, the right neatly gouged away where the hammer struck.

THE CRASHING, GUNSHOTS, and screaming that welled up from that cellar room eventually drew the attention of the police, but by the time the patrols arrived and broke their way in, silence hung like a pall upon the dim workshop. The room was a chaos of wreckage and gore, blood and bone painting the debris of shattered stone and scattered tools. At the center of this grisly tableau lay the bodies of two broken men, battered, shot, and slashed to pieces, their blood mingling in a pool upon the floor. Between them, soaking in scarlett ichor, were the shattered fragments of a

topped white marble statue, all that remained of a singular genius the world would never know and never would achieve again. Some who would learn later of the incident would wonder at it curiously, for had not Senyor Montaner and Esteve been good friends? But after all, death was just another part of life in the new Spain, where ghastly events far worse than the fates of two quarreling men were occurring every single day.

Ash Wednesday dawns. The first day of Holy Lent. The beginning of the long, penitent mortification of the flesh, required by the church and now mandated by the government. The gaping wound of calendar days that once belonged to the joyful festival of Carnival came and passed, unmarked. The people of Barcelona, once proud Catalonians, shuffle meekly into the churches and the cathedrals. Stone angels and saints gaze down over the procession of humanity, their benevolent, lifeless eyes taking in the ashen crosses upon each painted brow. The authorities and their informants watch every face passing in the street, making careful note of any man, woman, or child not bearing the proper mark. For many, the days of fasting and self-denial expected of the faithful might once have made a difference, but now it is much like any other day in a city starving to death. All in Catalonia is ashes. The people have no language, no traditions, no freedoms, and no hope. Night draws in. Darkness falls. The streets go quiet, and the Gothic quarter goes at last to sleep. ■



De Bernardi Ranch, Newark Valley, Nevada

Medium: Infrared photography

The abandoned de Bernardi Ranch was sold in the early 1940s and consolidated into a larger ranch operating in the Newark Valley of White Pine Co., Nevada. These stump sprouted cottonwood trees are probably regrowth after an earlier grove at this spring was harvested for roofing of the now deteriorating ranch structures. In the background is Buck Mountain and a early winter morning fogbank over the Newark Dry Lake.

Gary A. Reese



Home Means Nevada

Medium: PMC (Precious Metal Clay) Silver

Lois K. Ports



Party of Four & 1944 Postmark

Medium: Photography

Charlie Ekburg Family Archive

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