

A close-up photograph of a lit matchstick. The matchstick is positioned vertically in the center, with its wooden handle extending downwards. The tip is covered in a dark, charred residue. From the tip, two distinct flames emerge: a bright blue flame on the left and a bright orange flame on the right. The background is solid black, which makes the colors of the flames stand out sharply. The entire image is framed by a thin white border.

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A Soldier's Heart *Excerpt*

Jaclyn Alford

"Welcome to Freia," she told them. "As of this moment, you are recruits for the army of Ismalia. You are going to be trained in how to use weapons of war. If you cooperate, then this war will be over much sooner and you will be able to return to your homes. My name is Jeriah, and I am your first trainer." She heard a murmur ripple through the crowd, the boys all staring at her even more intently than before.

"A lady's going to train us?" she heard one of the closest boys say.

"Maybe fighting isn't going to be as bad as we thought," another said.

"I don't know. She looks like she's been in a battle. Look at that huge bandage on her forehead."

"But she can't possibly be training us." Jeriah let them speculate about her for a moment or two. Then she smirked slightly.

"You're all surprised, I know," she said. "After all, I'm just a lieutenant. I've only been going into battle for two and a half years. How could I train a bunch of little boys?" She settled her eyes on the first one she had heard. He still looked skeptical. "Do you think you would be able to beat me in a duel?" She gestured to the rack of dulled training swords behind her. The boy was quiet for a second or two. Then another one said, "I'll do it! I can beat you!" He was in the middle of the crowd. He had a cocky grin on his face as he stood up and walked forward. Jeriah smiled and allowed him to come up to her.

"Well, then, pick your weapon." He looked at the training swords. The first one he went for was the largest one. Of course, it was immensely heavy. He dropped it as soon as it was off the rack.

"You might want one that you can keep a hold of," Jeriah said as she bent down and picked up the dropped weapon. It was really too heavy for anyone to carry into battle. She could hold it only long enough to put it back in its place, but to the boys who had never seen a sword before, the act looked effortless and she heard some soft oo's and aahh's, as well as some snickers at the boy's expense. Jeriah stood back and waited for him to find the right sword for him. He started testing the different swords, picking them up, weighing them, swinging them a few times. Jeriah knew he was trying just to find the biggest one he could hold. It was the way men seemed to think. Size tended to

mean strength to them, especially when they were young.

As soon as he found the one he wanted, Jeriah picked hers out in an instant. It was almost exactly the same size and shape of her real battle sword, though it was slightly lighter. Then she turned to face him.

"What is your name?" she asked. In polite, civil society it was customary to know the name of your opponent.

"Cabuto," the boy replied. He held his sword awkwardly, diagonally with the point down, resting on the ground almost. The only defense the position would be good for would be if Jeriah attempted to attack his legs. It seemed to her that he wasn't taking this fight seriously.

"Well, Cabuto," she said, raising her blade and taking a defensive stance, "I suggest you keep on your toes for this fight." In an instant she rushed him, switching from defense to offense in the blink of an eye. The sword Cabuto had picked was too heavy for him to raise in time, and Jeriah's blade was against his neck before it had moved more than a few inches. She smiled at him while he stared in astonishment.

"You would be dead right now," she informed him coolly. "But how about we see who is best, two out of three? I'll let you attack first this time." She backed away from Cabuto to her original starting position, taking her stance again. Cabuto took a minute or two, staring at her, then seemed to give in to his frustration and charged at her, letting out a throaty yell that he seemed to equate to a battle cry. He lifted his sword and swung it at her head. Jeriah leaned back and avoided it easily, bringing up her sword to change the direction of his. She rested her other hand on the ground and kicked the boy's legs out from under him so that he lay flat on his back, his sword lost and the wind nearly knocked out of him. Jeriah stood over him, one foot resting just next to his hand and her sword pointed at his heart. The position Cabuto was in reminded Jeriah of her last battle, when she had been knocked down and nearly killed.

"Your first lesson in battle tactics," she said, loud enough for everyone to hear, "Never get over-confident. Don't get cocky and underestimate your opponent. That is a sure way of getting yourself and your comrades killed." She backed away and let Cabuto stand up. "One of the best things you can do now that you are here is make friends. You don't want to get on the bad side of someone who has the choice

of whether or not to save your life in battle.” She thought of Jerghen, who had saved her life on that battlefield, and Matthew, who had saved her countless other times, and of the times she had saved them as well. “You are no better or worse than the others. You are all comrades and allies, and you all need each other to survive this war. Never abandon them, never run away. If you do, you are even worse than the Vrentians who are trying to destroy our land. Remember that.” She sighed and glanced toward the sky for a moment, then looked back down at the young men gathered in the courtyard.

“That is all I have for you today. Training begins tomorrow. For now, you will be escorted to your living quarters to adjust to the new place.” She gestured toward Matthew, who came and stood by her side. “This is Matthew. He will lead you to your quarters. Follow him and do as he says. Dismissed.”



Eye of a Hero

Linb Nguyen Anderson ~ Photograph



Shipping Out

Flannab Wells ~ Watercolor

Midnight Terror

Maegan Collins

Preface

Have you ever had only one place where you felt safe? Have you ever known only one life style? As a four-year-old child, I knew only one life—that of a drug addict’s child. I experienced the harsh reality of an unsafe world that should be concealed from a child’s innocence.

Shortly after my birth, my mother became addicted to crack-cocaine and began putting that addiction before her children. Although only four, my mind automatically turned to thoughts of protecting my younger brother, myself, and our mother. Strange men, often raging with anger, let themselves into the very place that should have served as a safe haven for young children. My mother dared not stop them from taking anything they desired. The ruthlessness that pulsed through them left them uncaring for anybody else. Anything they wanted, they took without giving a second thought as to the children living in the house. Thus, our welfare was eventually placed in the hands of another. Refuge only became apparent in the loving arms of my great-grandparents, who lived an hour away. A man and a woman with all the love in the world for their grandchildren changed the course of two very innocent lives.

I recall one specific night in which I felt sheer terror. A riptide of emotion stirs my soul, and I drown in the agony of unanswered questions. Perhaps I never need to know the “whys” and “what-if.” After all, when security becomes existent for the once insecure, should we tempt fate and beckon what could have befallen the innocent?

The dim lighting of the room makes it hard to see; it masks the filth of our apartment. Around me are pieces of stale popcorn and old candy wrappers. I reach for an open bag of potato chips and a cockroach scurries the other direction. With shaky knees I give my little brother a potato chip. Stumbling around the pieces of garbage, I make my way to a coffee table. I grab my brother’s training cup and pour out the old milk. Walking over to the refrigerator I get the gallon of milk. In a sloppy mess, enough is poured for my brother to drink. Slowly I make my way to my mom’s room to get her blanket. As I drag it down the hall, I wonder how long it will take her to wake up this time. Carefully I cover my mom’s legs up with the blanket. I do not want to disturb her

slumber. My mom told me not to touch the white stuff that helps her sleep, but I want to. I want to take it and give it back to the man who gives it to her. I don’t like it when my mommy uses the white stuff to help her sleep. Dazed, I lock the living room door in the hopes that the man will not come back this time.

I reach for my brother and he wraps his hand around my index finger. We usher each other down the hallway and I lead him to the bedroom. Once he climbs onto the bed, I help him change into his pajamas. He hugs me goodnight and I kiss his cheek as I cover him up. I reach to turn out the light and feel my way back to my bed. This is the only life I have ever known. Maybe my Granny and Papa will come see us tomorrow and take us to the place with the clown for breakfast. I smile at the thought of warm food. My Granny and Papa love us very much. They tell me so all the time. I feel safer when Granny and Papa come to see us. They will not like that my mommy let the bad man into our home again. I begin to drift to sleep as I worry about my mother, also still hoping that my Granny and Papa bring us some warm food in the morning.

The sound of my mom’s voice disrupts my sleep. Quickly, I tiptoe to the edge of my brother’s bed. He remains asleep and I recover him with the blanket. I continue to tiptoe to the door and press my ear close. All I can hear are hushed reverberations of my mommy crying. Uneasy, I rush out to find the bad man standing over her. Her lip is bloody as the bad man has his fist raised high. She winces and I shout. When the bad man turns around and sees me he mumbles under his breath. He starts walking toward me and mommy screams. The bad man shouts at my mommy, and she tells him not to hurt me. My mommy pushes past him and kneels beside me. She tells me that everything is all right, and I should go back to bed. She pushes my hair away from my face and kisses my forehead for reassurance. I know what will happen to her if I leave her, so I hastily shake my head no as tears form in my eyes. She wipes them away with her thumbs and tells me again to go. If I do not do as she says, the bad man will hit me. He hit me once before and it upset my Granny and Papa. I do not want my Granny and Papa to be upset, so I run back down the hall and into my bedroom. With tears streaming down my face from the outburst, I fall back to sleep.

I wake to the sensation of soft, warm fingertips brushing hair away from my face. My eyes flutter open and my Granny is looking down at me with her bright blue eyes. In a hushed voice she asks me

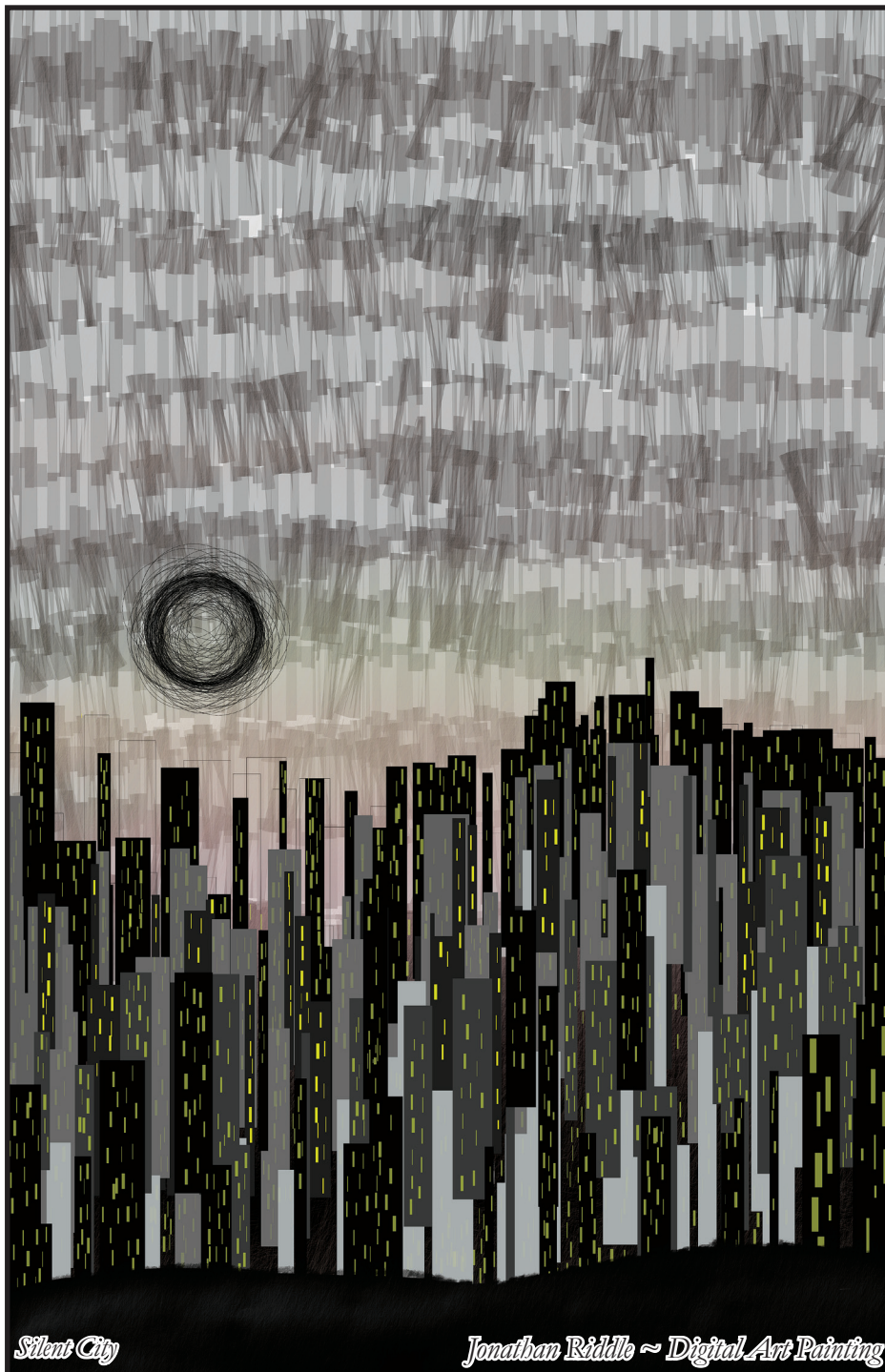
if I am hungry, and I groggily nod my head. I glance to my brother's bed and he stirs in his sleep. Granny tells me that she does not know where my mommy is, so she and Papa are going to take my brother and me to spend the weekend with them. Relief surges through my body as I throw my arms around my Granny's neck. Papa comes in the room and gives me a kiss on the forehead. Then he leans over and whispers something in Granny's ear. She shakes her head in disappointment and tells me to get dressed. When she walks over to my brother, he opens his eyes. She lifts him up off the bed and tells me to get dressed. A few moments later Granny has my little brother changed and dressed with a bag packed. Picking up my little brother, she takes me by the hand and leads me down the hallway. My mommy sits on the couch. Her eyes are black and bloodshot. Her shirt sleeve is ripped and her lip is swollen. I shudder at the thought of what happened after I went to sleep last night. She stands and gives me a kiss on the cheek and tells me she will come get me soon. Granny tells Mommy that they will come back for more clothes later. Then Granny hugs Mommy and whispers something in her ear. My mom shakes her head and says she has everything under control. Granny tells my mom that she will call her and talk later. My mom kisses my brother, and we leave the house. Papa has the car started already when we get outside. He sees us and gets out of the car to help Granny buckle us in. When I have my seat belt on I turn around and look out the window I see my mommy crying. She blows me a kiss goodbye as my Papa drives away, leaving my mommy behind.

With two children under the age of five, my mother turned her life over to drugs. If I had not had grandparents that cared so much, I probably would not have become the person I have developed into today. Child Protective Services was involved and getting ready to take us away from my mother. If my grandparents had not stepped in and agreed to sign adoption papers, we would have been separated. That moment in time changed my life forever, and for the better. The love and generosity in my great grandparents' hearts would forever put me on a new path in life. They gave me a life of love, nourishment and guidance. They were my escape path from a life of drugs and destruction.



Tiny Dancer

Janelle Durrrough ~ Photograph



Silent City

Jonathan Riddle ~ Digital Art Painting

Silence of the Night

Benjamin Whiteside

You think your world's gone dark
And you can't see the light of a shooting star.
There's no way of going back to who you were
Everything's changed and you think it's for the worst.
But you can't stay down long
Because you never know when a miracle's coming.

There's a time to grieve and a time to cry
But you should know better than to waste your time.
All you need to understand is that everything will be alright
If you listen to the silence of the night.

Nothing ever works out right
In this crazy scheme called life.
But one day you're going to look back and laugh
About worrying over these times of strife.
There's a perfect plan that's already written.
All you have to do is get back on your feet
And go out there and live it.

There's a time to grieve and a time to cry
But you should know better than to waste your time.
All you need to understand is that everything will be alright
If you listen to the silence of the night.

So don't stay down for too long
Because the rest of your life is waiting for you.
Open the door and walk outside
Wipe the tears from your pretty eyes.
Just take a moment to breathe it all in
And understand that everything will be alright
When you listen to the silence of the night.

Seek

M.E. Kirk

This
happened
once before in
my past days when I knew
not where I was, or who I was.

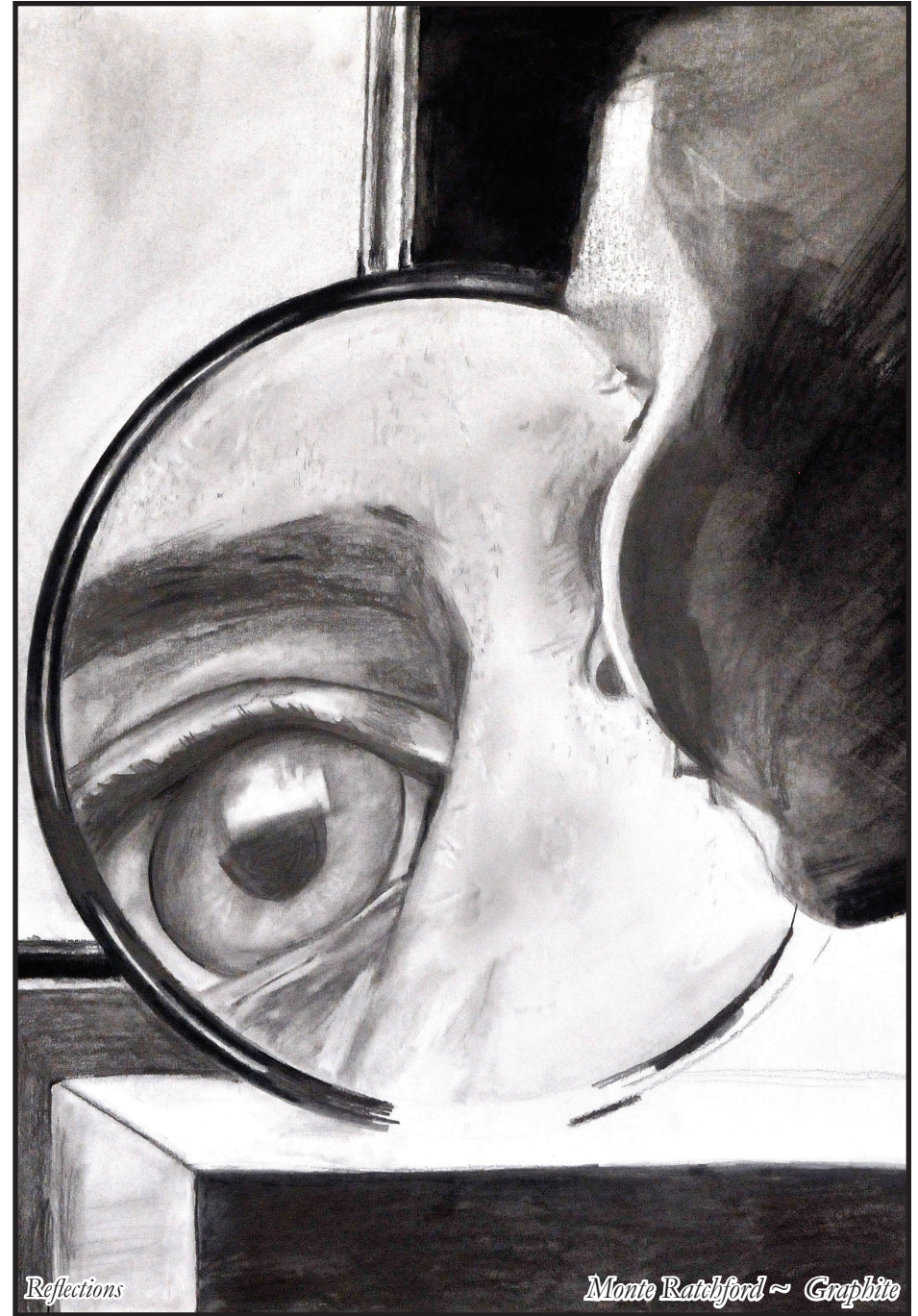
To the Lamas' realm: I sought meaning there.
Perchance a dreaming answer to be found?
Boot clad footfall on sandal sacred ground
among rarified peaks and tow'ring air.

Full lungs burning, mind wondering ahead
A scent of jasmine. Ascent into cloud.
Diaphanous mantle my soul enshroud.
I climb beyond my sins remembered.

Striding, stumbling up God's rocky stair
supplication rucked heavy on my back,
and then I fin'ly ceased the barren track.
To find nothing I hadn't taken there.

Lungs ablaze, feet stepping, stepping, stepping
ever down. Mind endazed; lungfuls thicker.
Shoulders lighter, difficulties ebbing.
The air is sweeter; heart pulses quicker.

Everything sought. Emptiness found
Rucksack unencumbered,
as I found my
spirit
is.



Convincing Evidence

Danny Andrews

[This column was written by Danny Andrews in 1999 when he was editor of The Plainview Herald.]

I find it fascinating the things you can learn in casual conversation.

About a year ago, I mentioned to one of my 98-year-old girlfriends—Myrtie Mills, who lives at IHS Heritage Home (now Plainview Healthcare Center)—that I had listened to Billy Graham’s autobiography, *Just As I Am*, on tape.

As Cliff Barrows, Graham’s longtime music director, reads the autobiography, he relates the story of how California radio personality Stuart Hamblen was converted to Christ as a result of Graham’s tent crusade in Los Angeles in 1949.

That’s the event that led newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst to send a telegram to his editors with the simple dictate: “Puff Graham,” meaning to give favorable coverage to the fiery young evangelist from North Carolina.

Stuart Hamblen—who urged his listeners to attend the Graham crusade after his own salvation experience—later wrote two famous gospel songs: “It Is No Secret What God Can Do?” and “This Old House.” Now, Myrtie Mills is a wonderful Christian woman who moved to Plainview, Texas, from Crowell about 10 years prior to our conversation. In Crowell, she and her husband Sam had been pillars of the Methodist church.

As I was telling her about the Stuart Hamblen story, she brightened up and said, “Oh, yes, Brother Hamblen was our pastor in Crowell when we first got married. I think Stuart was his oldest child. His kids were so ‘onry.’ One time, he said to the church: ‘You know why my kids are so mean? Because they run around with your kids all the time,’” Myrtie related with a big laugh.

Of course that immediately aroused my curiosity. Thinking Myrtie was confused, I asked, “How did Brother Hamblen spell his last name?”

“H-a-m-l-i-n,” Myrtie said.

Although I was pretty sure she was talking about someone else, I

never said anything. However, a few weeks later, the conversation about Stuart Hamblen came up again when I mentioned seeing his widow, Suzy, on a Bill Gaither video.

“I think he married her after he moved to California,” Myrtie decided.

Still unconvinced, I asked her grandson, Wes Naron, about the Hamblens and he said he was pretty sure it was the radio star-singer-writer’s family.

Wes also encouraged me to stop in Crowell sometime and see the beautiful Methodist church, which has a suspended balcony, big stained glass windows and a domed ceiling.

On the way back from Fort Worth a few months ago, I drove to the church late one afternoon, but found it locked. However, on the cornerstone was the date 1920 and the name of the minister when the church was built – J.H. Hamblen.

If I still needed any convincing about Myrtie’s recollections, happenstance took me into a bookstore in Grapevine earlier this summer and I ran across Billy Graham’s book. As I thumbed through it, I came across the story of Stuart Hamblen’s conversion and Graham’s mention that Stuart’s father had been “a Methodist minister in West Texas.”

Maybe it wasn’t just coincidence. As Hamblen’s song said, “It is no secret what God can do.”

He can even convince a skeptical newspaperman that a sweet little lady almost 100 years old knows what she’s talking about.



The Prekarus

Jacob Hackett

Tune down 2 step
①=C ④=Bb
②=G ⑤=F
③=Eb ⑥=C

♩ = 215

E-Gt

Intro

mf P.M.-----| P.M. P.M.-----| P.M.

Verse 1

Verse 2

35

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M.

T 7 8 9 10 9 7

A 7 7 7 7 7 7

B 5 7 7 7 7 7

38

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.-----| P.M.

T 9 7 8 10 8 7 5 5 5 10 5 8 5 7 8 9 7 9

A 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

B 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

41

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M.

T 9 8 9 9 7 8 10 8 8 8 8 10

A 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

B 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

44

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M.-----| P.M.

T 8 7 8 8 7 15 14 15 14 9 8 9 9 7 8 10 8

A 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

B 9 8 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9

47

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M.

T 7 5 5 10 5 8 5 7 8 9 7 9 9 8 9 9

A 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

B 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

50

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.-----| P.M.

T 9 7 8 10 8 8 8 8 10 7 8 8 8 8 8 7 8

A 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

B 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

53

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M.

T 9 8 9 9 7 8 10 8 7 5 5 5 10 5 8 5 7

A 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

B 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

56

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M. P.M.-----| P.M.

T 8 9 7 9 9 8 9 9 7 8 10 8

A 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

B 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

59

Pre Chorus

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M.-----| P.M. P.M. P.M.-----| P.M.

T 8 8 8 8 10 7 8 8 8 8 8 8 7 8 8 8

A 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

B 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7 7

62

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M.-----| P.M. P.M.-----| P.M.

T 10 10 7 7 5 5 7 5 5 7

A 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5

B 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5

65

P.M.-----| P.M. P.M.-----| P.M. P.M.-----| P.M.

T 8 8 10 10 8 8

A 10 7 10 7 10 7 10 7 10 7 10 7 10 7 10 7

B 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5

68

P.M. P.M.-----| P.M. P.M.-----| P.M.-----| P.M.

T 7 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5

A 10 7 10 7 10 7 10 7 10 7 10 7 10 7 10 7 10

B 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9 5 9

Abbreviated due to space limitations.



Tān Pua Tatanu

Ioane Tafaese ~ Acrylic

For Noah the Rainbow... The Redbird For Me

Charlene J. Smith

Isaiah 41:10 "Fear not, for I am with Thee"

It wasn't my imagination this time
Some flicker or flutter of something in a tree
Not "a hope so"
Or "a thought it was"
Or "I sure wanted it to be"
It was real, a moving, gliding, small mass of energy
Like the promise given Noah
Whenever a rainbow he would see
Such a similar promise was given
To the plain, the simple, the unsophisticated me.
To symbolize hope that the bleakness and the dread
Does pass away to brighter days that are lying just ahead

It took wing just as I was passing,
Flying low and slow and in full view of sight
From the left, straight across in front, moving to the right
The striking, flaming plumage of that beautiful red bird
Created for me a Word I could see
It said "It will be alright...you'll see!"

It will be alright because it is in Him that we live and that we move and we have our being whether we think so or not

It will be alright because He holds us in His hands and He will never let us go even if we let go

It will be alright because nothing can separate us from His love, even if we stop loving Him He won't stop loving us.

It will be alright because when we come to the end of our resources he is just beginning to tap into His

It will be alright because when there is disharmony and disorder all around us there is fullness of joy in Him.



The Boat of Lost Dreams

Tori Huddlestone ~ Acrylic

The Weirdness of Words

Haley Bonner

Nouns
Pronouns
Adjectives
Verbs
Objects
Subjects
Adverbs
Conjunctions
Interjections
Contractions
Articles
Compound
Simple
Prefix
Suffix
Dependent
Independent

...With so many ways to use twenty-six letters, how is it that still we have nothing to say?

Incidentals

Hannah Wells

The milk was left
warming on the table,
pearly buds
in the hoary light
like a crimp on the skirt
of some galaxy,
condensed for consumption
to a soured thickness
skimming the lips of babes.



I have eight legs, what do you have?

Victoria Pollard ~ Acrylic



Homelessness

Audrey Sisemore ~ Graphite and Charcoal

Invictus

Music By: Joshua Faupel

Lyrics By: William Ernest Henley

Baritone

Out of the night that co - vers me,

B

Black as the pit from pole to pole, I thank wha - te - ver gods may

B

be For my un - con qu'a-ble soul.

B

In the fell clutch of cir-cum-stance I have not winced not cried a -

B

In the fell clutch of cir-cum-stance I have not winced not cried a -

B

loud. Un-der the blud-gio-nings of chance My head is

B

bloo - dy, but un bowed

B

Be - yond thi - is place of wrath and te - ars

24

B Looms but the horr of the shade, And yet the me - ne - ce

27

B of the ye - ears finds, a - nd shall fi - ind me, un - a -

30

B afraid.

34

B It ma - ters - not - how - straight - the gate, How charged with pu - nish - ments the

37

B scroll, I am the mas - ter of my fate: I am the

41

B cap - tain of my soul

45



To

Sarah Van Der Linden

you ask where i go on the weekends
nowhere in particular i answer
to marinate in the salty sunlight
to cut myself upon the pages of experience
to find myself in the nightmares of cherry fire
to dilate eyes of dark strangeness
to bring the game that will remove tongues
to find the creases around my temples
to run my fingers over the silken of time
to taste the cement when i bleed into it
to absorb the leathered feathers of free
to recall your eyes lasering darkness
to forget you from the place you haunt
yeah
that is where i go on the weekends



Wonders of the Maker

McAllister Moore ~ Photograph

32 ~ embers '14



Self Portrait

Angel Azúa ~ Graphite and Acrylic

embers '14 ~ 33

It's Now or Never!

Stephanie Barr

Cast of Characters

Delilah Lopez, age 23, aspiring young artist who is waiting for her break

Michael McPherson, age 26, Delilah's dominant boyfriend

Gabby Martinez, age 23, Delilah's sassy best friend

Kevin Edwards, age 25, Rich, laid back, cunning college student, who falls for Delilah

Mark, age 26, Kevin's best friend

Act I: Scene 1

Time: The present. Between the hours of 9 p.m. to 11 p.m.

Scene: The women's restroom of Jake's Sports Café. Restrooms stalls are aligned against the back wall. Three sinks with mirrors above them are against the front wall. In between the sinks are two soap dispensers.

At Rise: Delilah is in the restroom stall crying. Gaby enters; she is a little drunk. She knocks on the stall door where Delilah is.

Gaby: (knocks on door) Delilah, are you in there?

Delilah: (sniffing) Yeah, just give me a second.

Gaby: Sure thing, girl.

(Gaby staggers towards the sink. She fumbles through her purse for some lipstick. Delilah comes out of the stall.)

Gaby: (opens lipstick tube) Delilah, why do you let him do that to you?

Delilah: (dries her face off) Do what to me?

Gaby: (closes lipstick tube) Don't play dumb with me. I might be drunk, but I'm not that drunk! I saw the whole fight.

Delilah: Gaby, drop it okay! This is not the type of place to have this kind of conversation!

Gaby: (throws her arms up) (raises her voice) Where are we supposed to go? ... You know as soon as we step out of this door Michael will be watching you like a hawk!

Delilah: Why are you yelling at me?

Gaby: I'm not yelling. I'm trying to talk some sense into you.

Delilah: Besides, he's too busy getting ready for his show.

Gaby: I know Mr. I'm-in-control-all-the-time will still be watching! Can't you get it through your head that Michael's a total psycho! He acts like he's the "one" with all the answers and doesn't let you have an

opinion of your own! Stand up to him, Delilah!

Delilah: (leans against sink) (sighs) I try to stand up to him, but Michael is the type of guy that just keeps on and on until he knows he has won.

Gaby: Well here's a thought....Dump him!

Delilah: It's not that simple.

Gaby: Umm...yeah it is....you just walk right up to the guy and say: "Mikey, this isn't working out. Oh, and by the way you're a jerk." See? Very simple. Why do you keep putting up with his crap?

Delilah: I just want to sing with his band, Gabby.

Gaby: Are you freaking kidding me?

Delilah: (nods her head) Yes, that's pretty much it.

Gaby: (puts an arm around Delilah) Delilah, do you remember when you tried out for the leading role for our high school musical?

Delilah: Of course. I was so nervous that I wasn't going to get that part.

Gaby: Yeah, but you did...you hit every high note and not to mention, you out sung Miss-know-it-all, Stacy Crawford!

Delilah: (laughs) I remember that. I was a great Eliza Doolittle, wasn't I?

Gaby: Yes, yes, you were...so if you did that all on your own, tell me why you need Michael? (Before Delilah can answer, Gaby receives a text message.) Hold that thought. (looks at her phone and reads message to herself) [Darn] it! Hey, I got to go. Jason showed up to the wrong club and is drunk. I'm going to catch a ride with my brother to go get him....will you be okay until I get back?

Delilah: (nods head yes) Yes.

Gaby: Ok, I'll be back as soon as I can.

(Both women exit out of the bathroom.)

Act I: Scene 2

Time: moments later.

Scene: The club area. There are about three pool tables near the back wall. The bar area is in the middle of the room. There are about four tables between the bar area and pool tables. The stage is near the back of the room.

At Rise: Kevin and Mark are playing pool and drinking beer. Kevin suddenly looks up and sees Delilah as she leaves the restroom and walks across the bar.

Mark: (elbows Kevin's arm) What are you looking at buddy?

Kevin: Nothing.

Mark: (glances over towards Delilah) I spy a pretty girl.

Kevin: (lightly shoves Mark) What, are we ten?

Mark: (looks to see what they are looking at) No man, but she's a ten! (pokes Kevin's side with cue stick) Why don't you go over there and talk to her.

Kevin: Nah, I'm enjoying beating you at pool way too much.

Mark: That's because you cheat!

Kevin: How am I cheating?

Mark: Well for one, as soon as she walked by you made the eight ball into that right pocket and decided it was still your turn. I believe in America we call that a scratch.

Kevin: Oh?

Mark: (lightly punches Kevin's shoulder) So, are you going to go talk to her or what?

Kevin: I don't know.

Mark: Now this is something new...Kevin Edwards is scared to talk to a girl.

Kevin: I'm not scared!

Mark: Prove it. Go over there and talk to her Romeo!

Kevin: Maybe I will.

Mark: Then go.

Kevin: I'm going.

Mark: Ok, then go. We haven't got all night.

Kevin: (gives him a cocky grin) Fine, I'll go. Besides, what girl can resist my absolute handsome face and my southern charm?

Mark: (with sarcasm) Really?

Act I: Scene 3

Time: Moments later.

Scene: The bar area. The bar area is in a U shape. There are about six bar stools on each side of the bar. There is a cash register and a glass tip jar to the right. In the middle of the bar, there are eight shelves filled with different kinds of liquor. On the bottom of the shelves, there is a counter full of mugs and glasses.

At Rise: Delilah is sitting alone at the bar with some mixed drink.

Kevin approaches her with his beer in hand.

Kevin: (leaning on the bar facing Delilah) Well, hello. I would like to

[give you an] award for looking so good. Now if you will give me your name, number, and other vital statistics, I would like to enter you in our grand prize drawing for an all-expenses paid date with me.

Delilah: (rolls her eyes) I would like to withdrawal myself from this drawing because the grand prize sucks.

Kevin: (remains confident) Too smooth for you? How about this: you must be a [heck] of a thief because you stole my heart from across the room.

Delilah: (looks up at him with a sly grin) Yeah, still not feeling it, prep boy!

Kevin: Prep boy? I see we are playing hard to get; alright, I bite. I always loved a challenge!

Delilah: Well, you might as well save yourself the embarrassment and walk away quietly because you are so not my type, and I have a boyfriend.

Kevin: (sits down on bar stool) I can tell that you are not so into him.

Delilah: (crosses her arms) You can tell all that by just coming over here and annoying the [heck] out of me?

Kevin: Yes.

Delilah: Really? Well, I also have psychic abilities, too.

Kevin: (smiles at her) Really? Show me then; read me. (holds out his palm towards her)

Delilah: (looking at his palm) I see that you are a college student, mommy and daddy pay for your way, you're a bit of a spoiled brat who is used to having his way, and you pick up chicks by using cheesy lines off the internet from your iPhone.

Kevin: (smiles, then pulls his hand back) Whoa, you're good except I have a Droid X.

Delilah: (turns away from him) Whatever, leaving now!

Kevin: (touches her arm) Wait, where are you going? I'm sorry; I'll play nice. I'm Kevin by the way. What's your name?

Delilah: (turns back towards him) Delilah.

Kevin: (still smiling) See, that wasn't so bad to play nice. How about I buy you a drink? What is it you are having?

Delilah: (smiles) Ok prep boy, I can use another drink since you wasted my time. I'm having a [Shirley Temple].

Kevin: (laughs) Good choice! (waves for the bartender)

Delilah: (yawns, then takes a drink) I think I should warn you that you

are risking your life by bothering me, Kevin.
Kevin: (raises an eyebrow) Oh really and how is that? Is your boyfriend going to be jealous?
(Up on stage finishing up on sound check, Michael sees Kevin buy Delilah a drink. He goes over there to confront this new guy.)
Michael: (facing Delilah) (points at Kevin) Who the hell is this guy?
Kevin: (stands up) Whoa, man, back up. We were just talking.
Michael: Is that what this is, just talking? It looks like to me you were coming on to my girlfriend, with buying her a drink and all!
Delilah: I wasn't doing anything, Michael!
Michael: It didn't look like it from where I was standing!
Delilah: Like Kevin said, we were just talking!
Michael: So Kevin is the name of this wimpy looking rich mama's boy?
Kevin: Dude, who are you calling a wimp?
Michael: (gets in Kevin's face) The one I am looking at!
Kevin: You really need a breath mint, man. Seriously!
Delilah: (steps in between them) Guys, stop this isn't the time or the place! Michael, don't you have to get back; you're up next!
Kevin: Up next for what?
Michael: My band "Loves Hated Hearts"! I'm the lead singer!
Kevin: Oh wow. Good for you! That name is so stupid!
Michael: It won't sound so stupid once my fist meets your face!
Delilah: Michael, go they're calling you!
Michael: I'm not deaf, Delilah!
Delilah: Just go, Michael.
Michael: (points at Kevin) You're lucky punk.....this isn't over!
Kevin: I'll see you around, Sweetheart!
(Michael walks away and goes towards the stage. He positions himself with the rest of his band mates to get ready to perform.)
Michael: (speaks into microphone) 'Sup everyone! We're "Loves Hated Hearts"! It's so awesome to be here and play for you guys!
(Michael and his band begin to play, and a crowd gathers around stage. Music fades out slightly. Kevin and Delilah continue their conversation.)
Kevin: (rolls his eyes) So, that was the big, bad rock star that I should be worried about?
Delilah: Yep, that was him.
Kevin: Well one thing is for sure: he can play; I give him that.

Delilah: (sits down) (begins playing with her straw) Yeah he's good I guess, but I'm a better singer! I just wish I could get a break.
Kevin: (sits down) Don't we all...why don't you join his band?
Delilah: (looks up at him) He won't let me.
Kevin: (throws his hands up) Really? Now that's messed up!
Delilah: Tell me about it.
Kevin: (leans closer towards her) Well, if lover boy doesn't know how to share, why not start your own band?
Delilah: You know, prep boy, that is actually a great idea!
Kevin: (shrugs) Us prep boys can be masterminds, too.
Delilah: (turns towards him) Do you really think I should try?
Kevin: (smiles with his drink in his hand) It's now or never!



Droplets on the Sun

Dylan Clark ~ Photograph

Traveling Light

Deborah Kublmann

They that shake off the shackles,
the hackles, the manacles of the world,
find power.

They that dance on air, step aside,
and let it pass,
find grace.

They that do not grasp nor gasp
nor carry grudges,
find peace.

They that delight, celebrate,
and prostrate fall
find joy.

They that release desire,
sell out all to serve
find love.

They that walk humbly
rise up.

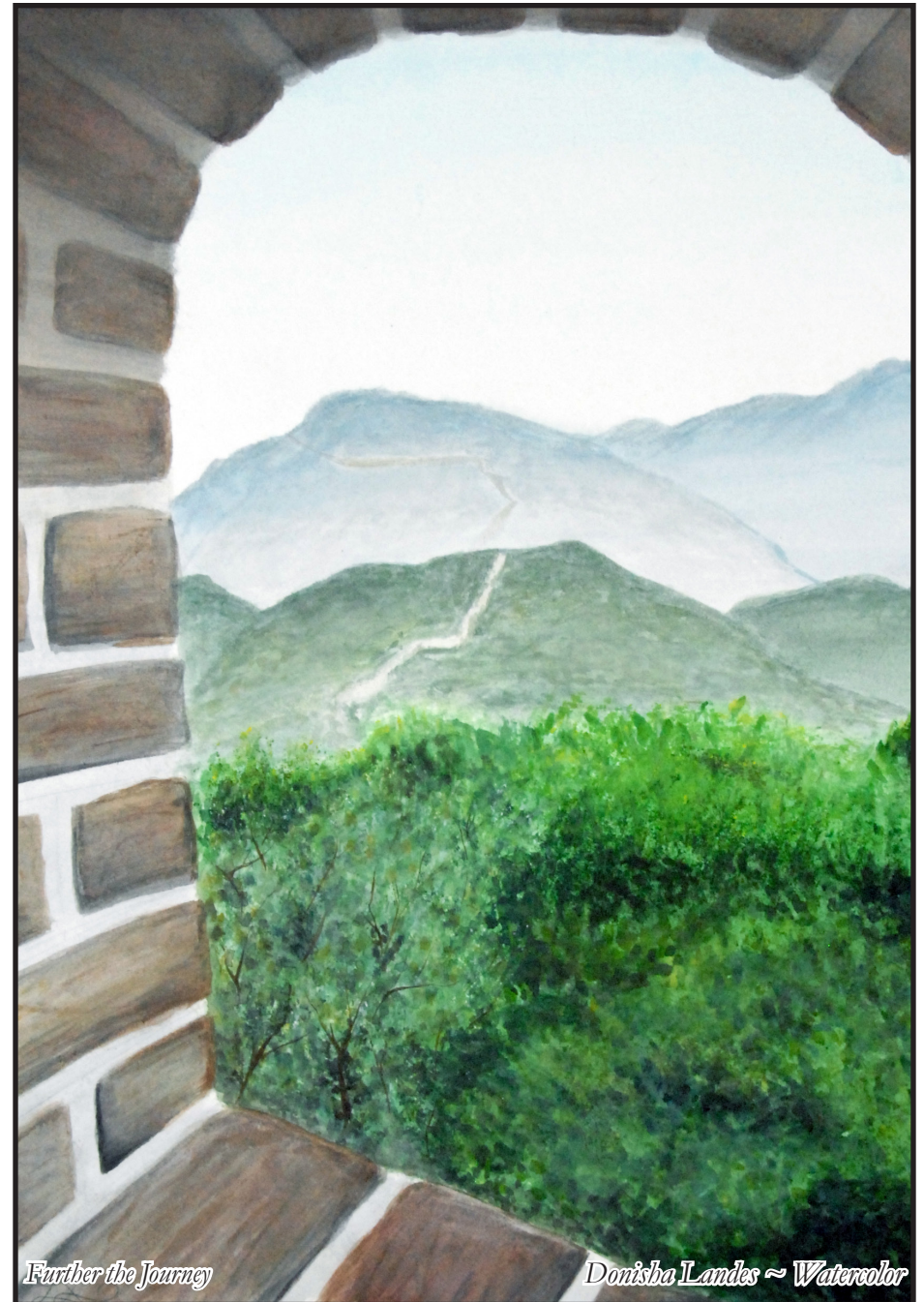
They that love mercy
are free.

They that do justly
gain wisdom.

They that empty out
fill up.

They that wait
to expand the space
of Grace for all
renew their strength.

They that follow Christ
above all things
soar with wings
as eagles do
and fly.



Further the Journey

Donisha Landes ~ Watercolor

On the Shores of Inisheer

Rebecca Davis

The waves crash, clashing against the shore
Battling its ancient enemy once again,
Locked in a war that will never end,
Til the shore is gone and the sea no more.
Eons have died submerged in the watery gore,
Of this battle field.
Desolate, and yet refusing to yield
A skeletoned ship lies unburied where it was cast ashore,
A once proud tower stands ruined sentinel,
If granted speech, what truths could they tell?
The wind brings in the scent of brine upon its breath,
Sweet incense that will cleanse and bless.
Time goes on, the Tide goes out and then returns,
And finds in dying that it is reborn.



Inisheer Waves

Rebecca Davis ~ Photograph

I am a Tree

Hannah Wells

I am a tree
foretold in the blood of Adam
and of Isaiah
and of John the Baptist;
I am the roots
thirsting by a river
at his feet,
hesitating to dip
because I am all bark
and no bloom.
Even with faith
he said that mountains,
the shoulders of the earth,
would move;
yet here am I
barely a breath
spanning the horizon
hoping for the flood to rise instead
that I may submerge
what I cannot see.
I am this tree,
few and far between
I weep for the part of me
holding back
the whole of me,
ageless in the pooling rings
that lap at will, without release,
at the insurmountable edge
still, always,
ready to fill my bough with more than leaves,
more than me,
as he woos me from petrification
into pulse, into unknowns.

The Time We Had

Gabe Villarreal

I love her.

Three simple words that can simply roll off the tongue effortlessly, especially after nearly 30 years of unwavering devotion. But as I look at Evelyn, I can truly say I love her more than I ever have. She is my angel, my safety, my place to run to for comfort and security. And even though she is laying on a hospital bed – asleep, no less – I still run to her for guidance.

She has cancer, breast cancer to be exact. Stage 4. The doctors say she will never recover, that she will never leave that bed. But then, since when do the doctors know what they're talking about? I have faith that she will come back to me, that she will open her eyes and find the family we created together waiting for her smile to tell them she's going to make it. But I don't need the smile to tell me she's going to make it past this; I only need her hand. I need her to make it . . .

(Portion omitted to space limitations.)

Hours have passed, but I don't meddle with something as trivial as time. I have spent every single day by Evelyn's side; hours are but seconds to me. The prayer group had dissipated long ago, and I sit on the couch beside Evelyn with Jerry, Jack's boy of 20 years. Jerry has always been a goofball, at times pushing the joke a line too far, but he knows his place here. He lets me savor these precious moments with Evelyn, however solemn they be, moments I love as much as the many years we've known each other.

Years. Saying that out loud has never had as much significance as it does now. Has it really been 30 years? Granted, we married late in life, but we'd known each other much, much longer than those 30 years. Much longer. We actually grew up together, here in the town we were born in and now made a home in.

"Grandpa, tell me a story about grandma." The words careen into my ears through the silence that has pervaded the air these past hours. I immediately turn my head to Jason, Tracy's 7 year-old son, but he is occupied by the game he plays on his mother's phone. "Grandpa?" I turn to Jerry; my eyes meet his gaze. At 20 years, he still holds a trace of innocence in those eyes I can only guess his mother gave him. It is odd, though, that he of all people should ask me that. He, the one man in this family that has always made a point to consistently visit his grandmother every weekend for three years now. He is the most likely person to know every story I've ever told him.



To the Sea

Ian Pyeatt ~ Acrylic

“Tell you a story?” I ask somewhat dumbfounded. This 20 year-old man, pre-law at that, is asking for a story?

“Yes” he replies.

I ponder that for a moment. “Ok, what story?” I say, now eager to tell a story. Perhaps it will pass the time.

“How did you meet grandma?”

And that, that is the story that I realized I never told my own grandson. And that is the greatest story I will ever tell.

It was the summer of 1941 when I first met Evelyn. I was only 7 years old, no older than your cousin Jason. As any other kid living in that era, playing outside was a favorite of mine, so more often than not I was always running around the front lawn. My family wasn't by any standard a rich family, but we did live in a nice part of town. One afternoon, after I had finished eating lunch I was running around the lawn as usual, pretending I was superman, when I noticed a big white truck parked across the street from my house. Several people trekked to and from the truck lugging these huge boxes. Apparently we had some new neighbors moving in. I actually had zero interest in these people until I saw a girl about my age playing in their yard, and boy was I star-struck. There was actually a pretty girl in the neighborhood! Of course, I couldn't just go over to her and say anything; I was totally terrified. I mean, she was a girl! I hadn't done it before!

I saw plenty of that girl after that first day. I always went out to play, but I only did so out of the probable hope that I would see her. Thankfully, she played outside just as often as I did, and I played outside a lot. I did this up until school started up. I was in the first grade, but I should have been in the second grade. I had some kind of dyslexia issue growing up, so I absolutely bombed the reading course of school. I always cursed myself for that, but this year was different. My neighbor was in my class.

Jerry, understand that when I say she was in my class, I don't mean that there were individual classes for individual grades. Back in the forties, we had these things called school houses, and a town as small as mine only had one. Everyone from pre-k to 6th grade was in one part of the school, and everyone from 7th to 12th grade was in another. How that worked is an intricacy I won't get into, just understand that it wasn't too efficient. But anyway, Eve was in my class. This is when I learned that her full name was Evelyn Kay. She was one of the Kays, a very wealthy upper-class family living in the area at the time. So automatically, my soul sank three feet. Like I said earlier, I was never a rich kid by any standard; my father drank and gambled to excess, and mother was always too busy tending to my brothers, so I never got any quality attention from either of

them, save when Pop was screaming at me. We never had any money, because as I just said, dad was a gambler, and a pretty poor one at that. So the boys and I had to work out in the fields just to pay rent. The Green family was known for this kind of lifestyle and we usually got help from the neighbors. So once my name was called for roll, I felt my heart sink again, for surely Evelyn would think terribly of me. To my shock, the opposite happened. She was friendly to me. At recess, she made a formal introduction of herself and I did too, and from then on, we were inseparable. Best friends. Then December 7th happened.

On the day of the Pearl Harbor attack, the radio was cut off. Telephone lines went down, and we only had the one newspaper for a good while. I had always hated the Japs for what they had done to me. No, I was not directly affected by the attack, but Evelyn's family was. You see, the Kays were wealthy because of many of their occupations, but mainly because her father had recently struck oil in Hawaii. As I said, everything was cut off, and because we were living in Texas, her family couldn't get the resources they needed to sustain the rig. A week later, the Kays packed their bags and moved to California to be closer to their rig, I wouldn't see Evelyn for 10 years.

I was a Senior in high school when I finally saw Evelyn again, and what a sight she had become! All the guys wanted to know her name, to be her friend, maybe even more than her friend. But I had a slight advantage over every one of them: I had known her before all these other jerks, so surely she'd remember me. I used that to my advantage and somehow got her to go out with me. She became my long-time girlfriend even after we graduated, and so much love was there between us. I remember falling asleep thinking of her, having dreams of her being with me. It was the happiest three years of my life.

Sadly, our relationship ended in the middle of 1954. There wasn't anything in particular that caused us to split; there was just too much distance and not enough physical contact. I was still in Texas while she went off to New York University. We saw each other in the summer, sure, but it just wasn't enough to convince her that we could last much longer. Eventually, she found a good man, a respectable man. He came out of old-money, which was one thing I could say they definitely had in common. She went on to marry the guy right after college. I was happy for her, really, and I wanted the best for her. But I could not for the life of me be around for the marriage, so I joined the army in the summer of '55. I then spent the next 5 years of my life in Vietnam . . .

(Portion omitted to space limitations.)

I woke up in a hospital with a long gash in the calf. I was pretty out of it when I came to, but I knew for a fact that my nurse was none other than my very own Evelyn. How did I know? Call me crazy, but I'm sure I know how to

read a name tag. I hadn't known that she had become a nurse. We had lost touch years ago, so I wasn't too caught up on her life story, but what I did know is that she and what's-his-name divorced; she had no wedding ring. I'm guessing they had been separated for a while because I couldn't even see a wedding band impression.

The next few moments were spent in silence. She had realized that her newest patient was her oldest boyfriend long before she entered the room. I know she wanted to see me because she could have passed me on to another nurse, but didn't, so I took that with a grain of salt. We spent a good while talking about anything, about everything, but she eventually had to go check up on her other patients. When she came back several hours later, I asked her to dinner for the night I got out. She agreed with a smile and continued her check-ups. When I finally got out a week later, I asked Evelyn if she was still up for dinner with me. She said yes, and I got Henry to give me the day off. Not that I had to ask; I had a doctor's note preventing any physical activity.

That night went pretty well. I had found out that Evelyn divorced her husband only two years after they married. They hadn't had any kids together because he wasn't able to produce the seed properly. He took advantage of that, and... well, let's just say he slept with everything that moved without fear of any repercussions. Then Evelyn found out and the end of that story came swiftly. I told her about Vietnam, about Henry, how my life was going, and then we just talked about nonsense. It was like nothing had changed in the last 10 years. We ate and drank unsparingly and just enjoyed the night together. The night went fairly well, but I couldn't remember half of it, and I wouldn't get to hear how it went for another four years.

Four years. That's 1,826 days without any word from Evelyn. Actually, it was longer. It was about 4 and a half years. In that time, I had left working for Henry, took up another job at an accounting firm and even became a supervisor. I enjoyed my life more than when I had worked for Henry. I was in a nicer town (I had moved back to Texas) with a nice apartment and good income. All was well with me, and then one afternoon, someone came to the door. I opened it, and there was Evelyn, standing in my doorway. She gave me the biggest hug and the sweetest kiss. Then I noticed the bags next to her. Was she moving? The thought was too good to be true. Then I heard the sweetest, most innocent voice down the hall. I looked and saw a young boy, maybe 4 or 5, walking up to Evelyn. Then he called her mommy! Who was this kid? Well Jerry, this kid was Jack, your father.

Evelyn explained the entire situation. The night we had our date went as well as I thought; it went so well, in fact, that it produced a child, a child

that Evelyn thought the world of. He was her baby, her angel that could do no wrong, and the first time I talked to him, I even bought into it. Then the obvious explanation of her being there came: she needed a home. Not a place to stay, not a place to go to when she was bored, she needed a home, and she knew she had one with me. Heck, she did. I had waited so long for this moment, however unorthodox it was, to come. She loved me before I was successful, but to be honest, it did seem slightly convenient for her. She explained that she had been looking for me for the past two years, that she could not parent this child alone, and that he should grow up with the father who made him. At that, I was sold. Maybe Evelyn did have poor timing, but she was the kind of woman who cared about others first, and in the case of her own kid, well, I agreed. Soon, we wed as an act of me taking responsibility for little Jack and began a family of our own. Of course I had loved Evelyn, that's why we lasted 30 years. It's the only way we could have lasted so long. And that, Jerry, is the story of our lives.

The day came and went, family members came and left, some to see Evelyn, some to give her their farewells. Even Jerry, as desperately devoted to his grandmother as he was, had to leave. It's been hours since I finished that story to him. I am the only one in this room, and as I sit next to Evelyn holding her hand, I realize there isn't a place on this earth I'd rather be. All I want is to hear her voice, and if I have to wait until the end of forever to hear it, I will. Because I love her.

Finally I hear it. I'm dozing off, my head on one of her hands. She wakes me up by brushing her free hand through whatever hair I have left. I look at her, and I smile. Her eyes looking into mine, piercing into my soul, telling me she's fleeting, that she only came to say goodbye.

"I love you." She smiles at me with that smile, that smile that I fell so deeply in love with. Her eyes, though dimming, are still as beautiful as when I first looked into them. I watch her fall asleep, and it's now that I understand something that my pastor son will take forever to learn: her healing has come. She may not make it through the night, but as long as I am here to hold her hand, she will not go unhealed. Love mends everything, and [forget] the man who says otherwise. This is my wife, and whether or not she wakes up in the morning, she woke up for me now to tell me those words that I so longed for. And whether or not I see her again doesn't matter because I healed her, and she healed me. I will never forget the story that brought us together, our very own love story. I will never forget the first time I saw her, the first kiss we ever had... and the very first time we said those words...

I love her.



Bat city

Kierra Proctor ~ Ink and Pastel

Childhood Tricks

Dylan Clark

I miss when cutting
Was a trick at the age of nine.
With the tut-tut-tutting
Of teachers as you get ahead in line.

Now you hurt yourself on the outside
Trying to kill the monster roaring within.
You have no one in whom to confide—
Not a single friend or kin.

What is one supposed to do
When cutting has deeper ramifications?
Each incision gleams brand new
And each scar offers solemn salutations.

I miss when cutting wasn't a trick
Performed in a desperate hour
With everyone thinking you're sick.
So all you do is cower.

Handmade & Priceless

Janie Keller

One of a kind, no other one fabricated
Everything unique, nothing duplicated.
Formed by hands that knows no time,
Made in His image, by His design,
A priceless treasure, to the Creator of all,
The one who knows me, upon my heart He does scrawl,
I am fearfully created, wonderfully made,
I am His work of art, by God I am made!

