

Cababi is a Tohono O' Odham term that means "Hidden Springs"

Art and Literary Magazine



2025
2026

CABABI

Poetry, Prose, and Visual Art



★★★★★

ISSUE
10

ABOUT THE COVER



The image submitted is essentially a self-portrait collage I made from cut-up magazine bits, then scanned and digitally altered for color effect. The timeline flows from left to right, beginning in the waters of the East Coast and ending here in the desert. The piece is meant to embody imagination and self-care, representing several parts of my life that I love and which make up who I am as an artist, daughter, mother, partner, and friend.

A Very Rosy Life
(Self-Portrait, Paper Collage Digitally Altered Color)
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PUBLICATIONS

Be in the 2026-2027 Cababi Magazine. Look for Fall 2026 submission updates, Cababi opportunities, and more art and writing.

Visit <https://www.pima.edu/cababi>. For official 2025-2026 submission information, contact us at: mamccloy@pima.edu

We are on social media!
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Thomas Plets (From Pexels)

EDITOR’S LETTER

It's a strange time to be an artist. Or a writer. It's a strange time to be publishing my first book. By the time my memoir *Nine Grudges: The Spiteful Origins of the Happiest Dyke on Earth* is released on Sept. 8, 2026, will art and literature still matter? Will we all be living in bunkers, wondering how to scrounge our next meal?

Until the last few years, I had never experienced my own country as untenably chaotic and unstable. Several of my friends have left the U.S. and it has become a frightening place for me to remain. I never should have watched the video of the shooting of Rene Good. But I did. She and her wife, in their Honda with their dog, looked much like me and my wife. I was unable to write, for weeks, after watching that video.

Yet, what has kept me alive is the power of art. Writer Dan Savage has reminded us how art and joy and community sustained queer survival in the 90s: “During the darkest days of the AIDS crisis, we buried our friends in the morning, we protested in the afternoon, and we danced all night, and it was the dance that kept us in the fight because it was the dance we were fighting for.”

For me, resistance art and joy and community in 2026 is embodied in the Minneapolis protest songs. There is something powerful about a group of people gathered in a church, fortifying themselves with unified song before taking to the streets. That video made me cry. And I really needed to cry. To grieve.

I know that others might not agree with my take on the newsworthy events of 2026. Still, perhaps we can agree on this: art can sustain us, unite us, and bring us joy.

Please take a moment to review our current issue of *Cababi* with images and words crafted by your Pima Community College coworkers. Consider it a reprieve from the ongoing violence that dehumanizes us. Consider it a chance to see what others want to show us about their lives, which become our shared lives as we read and review the art.

Maybe you will want to focus on our many beautiful nature photos. Or maybe you'll want to ask some questions about the meaning of war as you read a short story about soldiers returning home from a conflict, alive and dead, or something in-between. I, for one, am heartened by the fact that so many people around me are still making art and literature. I'm honored to bring readers this gift from your coworkers. I hope that, within these pages of *Cababi*, you find something that you need.

— Molly McCloy



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Human Canine Cosmos
Joanna Sanchez-Avila



Cosmic B(l)oom
Joanna Sanchez-Avila

Red-Handled Trowel

By Cathy Thwing

I still call the garden trowel
red-handled, though the rubber
encircling stainless steel
has long faded to yellow

and tan, like skin, flesh
over bone. The handle's cracked,
too. My knees pop
when I bend to scratch soil

sowing zinnia seeds.
When I bought it two decades
ago, the handle was bright red—
a purchase to be admired

rather than used,
with a graceful swoop
from tip to blade,
and red of a shade

to call to memory
those rain boots I coveted
when I was five. I forgot
to admire it, once we settled

into daily use, but I gazed
at it yesterday, studying
the pattern my palms
had imprinted on the rubber,

startled into admitting how it's faded
through the labor of days.

Ragged Top Mountain
Aaron Kostko



Chaos
Mike Rom



Spine
Mariah Young



RedRum Femme
Joanna Sanchez-Avila

'A Lonely Mortal'

By Kristin LeBlanc

A lonely mortal saw the spaces between my ribs,
my quest eternal, my empiric presence

They went round as a radish, chasing forgotten paddocks
through twisting groves and knolls
filled with forgotten stories, barely legible,
the pain of lovers, of scythes

Fasting, circling, a shadowed figure veered
off into the orphaned night, stoic and solid

Detritus, vestibules, frescoes,
fresh earth churned, mud-streaked grass,
a single voice with a spiccato heartbeat
"This is your home?"

Between the stones is a flash of bone picked clean,
sockets empty, teeth splintered, carrion devoured whole

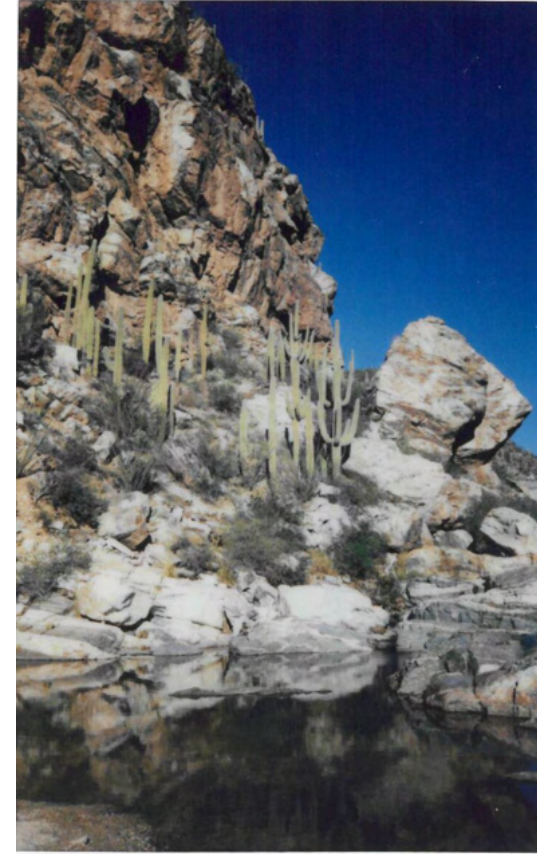
Freedom comes in the dawn break
a light that pierces, parting the fog,
illuminating the names of the forgotten
and lighting the path forward



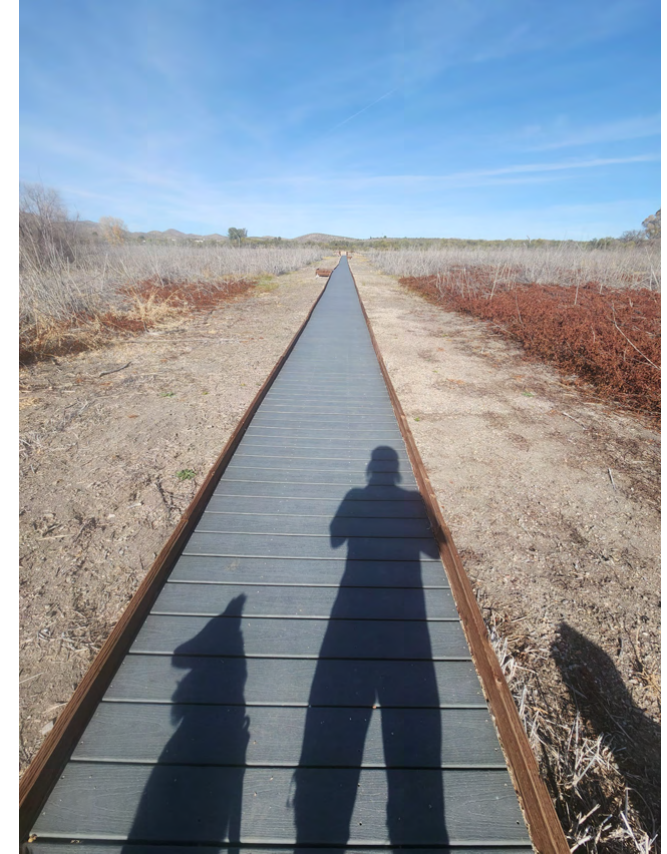
Chiricahua State Park /
Jackie Guzman



Chiricahua State Park II
Jackie Guzman



Tanque Verde Falls
Joanna Sanchez-Avila



Sheltie Shadow
Eric Aldrich



Woodland Wonders
Amanda McPherson

THAT DAMN BAG THAT SAVED MY LIFE

By Carmen Salvo



Diverticulosis, Peritonitis. Leukocytosis
The garden hose decided it had enough.
It bulged and buckled, tired of years of pressure.
It burst with no warning, just a rebellious rupture.

Poor hydration and years of smoking
Or maybe not enough fiber
or just those damn genetics.

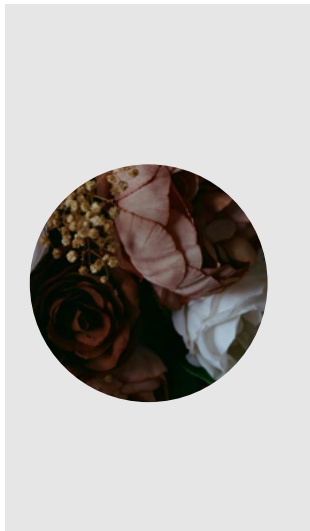
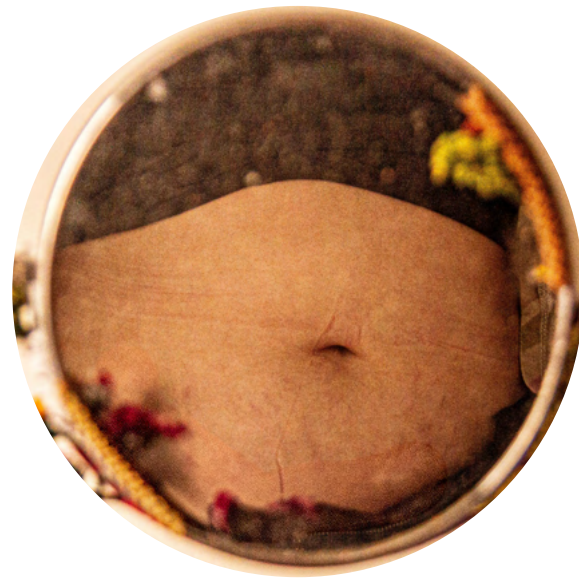
Grandma could not eat seeds.
Not in cucumbers nor in tomatoes.
She scraped out the threat that
waited to explode inside.

But who could understand
the big word, diverticulitis.
We as children paid no attention.
Now my brother and I swap symptoms.

Initially,
just a low-grade fever and body aches.
Nothing alarming-maybe Covid returned to wreak havoc.
No constipation,
but the sharp abdomen pain
made every step to the bathroom feel urgent.

Abdominal pain, and more pain
until the intense pain became a force
loud and demanding, invading my senses,
The red siren in my body, desperate for help.

Delirious I entered the emergency room
I told myself, probably just gastritis.
In a few days, I will be back to normal.



But the cat scan revealed colon perforation.
A bulge in the hose I never saw coming.
All it took was one weak spot,
and the hose slowly leaked until the breaking point.

No food, no pain meds,
just antibiotics for the first day
But to no avail,
surgery was the only option.
Clueless to the meaning of the outcome,
they wheeled me away.
The corridor blurred past.
Lights went out.

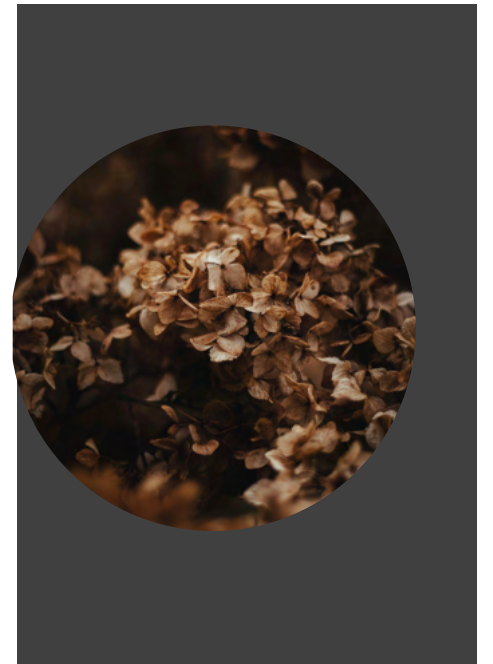
I woke broken.
A stomach slit in half,
and a stranger pulling from my left side.
A body changed,
A mind in turmoil.
So many IVs dripping slowly into my new life.

Then I saw it.
The ostomy bag,
a plastic pouch stuck to my skin,
collecting the waste the hose could not hold.

I cannot look at the dreadful cut nor
can I learn to change that damn intrusion,
that inhibiting monster,
the bag that clinged to me like a silent curse.

Leave me alone.
I am not ready to fight.
The pain is too loud
and the burden too heavy.
I am falling apart, so please don't wake me up.

The nurses say, "You'll be able to do this soon."
But fingers cannot apply the plastic shield.
And the overwhelming steps cannot place fragile armor
I must learn to wear.



(CONTINUED)

Armor comes in many forms.
Hollister: nice and secure but rigid and pulls.
Coloplast: strong embrace and flexible but sticks to skin.
Convatec: just not right at all.

I don't want to make decisions, but I must.
I chose one and then had to revert to another.
Every month a new challenge and a new decision made.

The skin screams the truth.
Something is not right.
Weeping sores,
angry red confessions,
whispers of neglect beneath the seal.
The stoma left exposed and poorly protected.



Each day it worsens,
Stings of output on open skin,
As infection lurks in tender flesh.
Burning, pulling, stealing breath away.
Barriers fail, leaks betray.
Always in the most inopportune way.

Sitting in public is limited.
A quiet fear beneath each breath.
Afraid that odor
or untimely noise
will expose my indiscretion
and invite humiliation.
The body speaks even when I beg it to be still.

Once the brain and heart healed,
the struggle became more manageable,
Less a crushing weight,
and more a challenge I could bear.



One day at a time,
One step at a time,
One stronger breath at a time.
I must heal and learn to live again.

Supercilious Junk

By Kristin LeBlanc

wafting through the air
sax and trombone—
or aged cheese?

mottled motley crew of spores
blue-green splotches in my mind-palace
streaking, breaking off
smeared in a petri dish
porous cells thrumming in time
to each twisted beat

cold-hearted humidity
welcoming interlopers to my chambers
walls collapsing, dissolving
no barrier left
no protection—
only a never-ending neon beat

(Unsplash)

Maria Kovalets

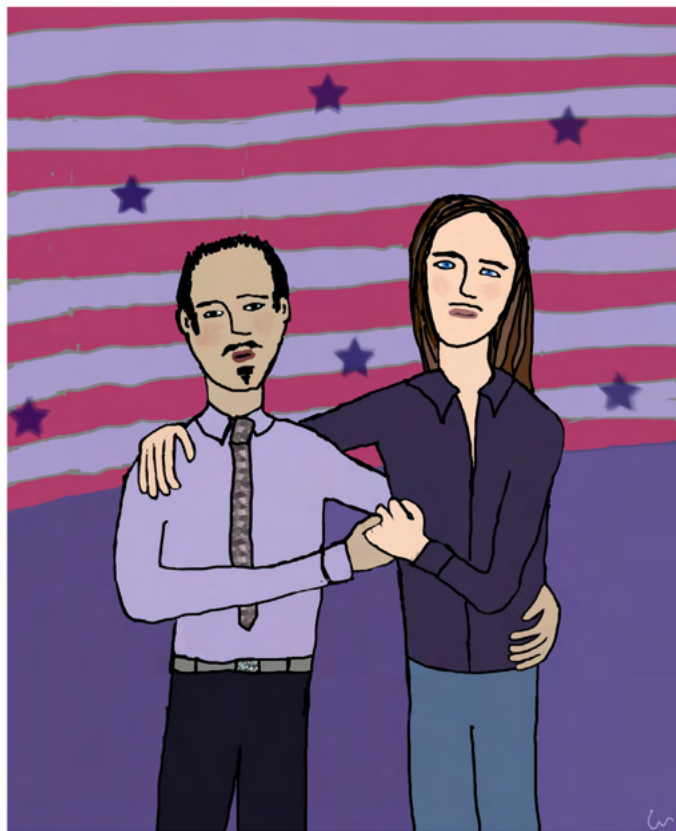
U.S. AIR CORPSE

BY SAMANTHA AGUILAR

It had been one week, but to Camile, it felt like it was just the night before she learned about her husband, Jason's death. She sat upright in their bed looking out the window that overlooked the backyard. It was a gray cold morning. One that she was not ready for. Her supervisor, Chief Ortega, told Camile to be in her service uniform and at the port by 6:45 am to welcome everyone home, including the deceased from this last tour. But how could she bring herself to the reality that the love of her life was gone? Making the ultimate sacrifice for his country. To everyone in the United States Air Force, he was Technical Sergeant Perry. But to Camile, he was Jason. Jason Tye. Jason Tye Perry. Tears stung Camile's eyes at the thought of her fellow servicemen and women reporting Jason as killed in action in Afghanistan. How she wished she could have been there. To avoid puffy red eyes, she hurried to her closet to find the uniform that put her and Jason in this position. Only for Jason, it would be the last thing he wore.

"Good morning, Master Sergeant Perry." Chief Ortega said as Camile walked to the front of the formation. Camile could only nod to avoid the risk of choking out a greeting in front of everyone. She found her place in front that oversaw the families waiting

anxiously for their loved ones. There was not one person who didn't have a smile on their face. Children anxiously waiting for the Airmen to deplane, holding signs to welcome home their fathers and mothers. The ones who made it out alive. Camile's lips trembled as she held back her tears. Cheers of excitement broke her from the trance she sent herself in and she looked over at the Airmen getting off the plane. She recognized some faces. Sergeant Culley and Sergeant



American Lovers
Cindy Mohr

Boling. Both of whom she and Jason knew well. While their faces initially appeared glum, they lit up as soon as they set eyes on their wives and children. It stung, but Camile couldn't blame them. As servicemen and women, we all know the risk we take when we enlist. We just never think it could happen this close to home. Let alone to each other. As soon as the Airmen deplaned and made their way to their families, it was time for the part Camile dreaded most. A small group of family members that Camile didn't notice at first made their way to the front near her and the rest of leadership and waited. None of them smiling, some were crying, some were stone-faced, and some still looked to be in shock. Carefully, one by one, mortuary affairs unloaded the remains of our loved ones with the utmost respect.

"Technical Sergeant Jason Tye Perry" called one of the craftsmen. Camile watched as Jason's remains were moved with the others. There were many others, but Camile could only see one box with the American flag draped over it neatly. Camile began to shake, but she held her composure. That is, until a mother from the small crowd fell to her knees and began to wail her son's name. That's when Camile began to hyperventilate. Chief Ortega ran to Camile and held her until she finally stopped shaking and crying. After Camile opened her eyes, she could see the grieving families huddled together and talking to leadership about what the next steps were in putting their loved ones to rest. Chief

Ortega had taken Camile from the crowd and put her on the bus that was to take them to the debrief. Camile sat alone until another Airman took the seat next to her. Camile cried softly so as not to be heard. She didn't care if anyone saw her. It was just too much to try to contain now. The Airman next to her gently put his hand on her shoulder. Camile turned her head to see the Airman staring straight ahead, and in that moment, she was grateful. She didn't want anyone to look directly at her. To see her so broken and defeated. To her, this was the nicest gesture anyone could offer. She looked at his nameplate that read: "DeVos," the name looked familiar, perhaps the Airman did too, but Camile couldn't place where she recognized him from.

Camile waited for everyone to get off the bus and go into the Force Support building for the debrief for the Airmen and their families. Although she saw Jason's body being transported, she still couldn't believe he was gone. She knew the only way it would sink in, was when she saw the paperwork that officially declared Jason dead. Spouses usually receive the paperwork immediately, but Camile refused the documents out of absolute denial. When she saw she was finally alone, she headed in the opposite direction for the mortuary affairs building. Luckily it was nearby and her leadership, nor any of the Airmen or their families would miss her. Chief Ortega would understand if Camile couldn't keep her composure after seeing her dead husband in a box and instead

spent the rest of the time crying on the bus or even in the bathroom. When Camile arrived at the building, she headed straight to the orderly room. Oddly enough, it wasn't locked. Everyone was either off for the day or had gone to set up the welcome home reception. Camile stopped at every workstation in hopes of one person forgetting their access card. To her luck and surprise, the workstation by the backdoor was still logged in. Thank you, Sergeant Bruno. She thought to herself. She knew from experience how leadership, and sometimes the junior enlisted, would leave their access cards in their docking station thinking they would only be gone a minute. Then it soon turned into thirty, then an hour. With that in mind, Camile knew her time was limited. She hurried and spent the next twenty minutes going through every file folder and unlocked database to find the casualty reports. When she finally found them, she saw something peculiar about the casualty report with the Airmen returning home today. Each servicemember declared deceased was color-coded in gray, but Camile's husband Jason, was color-coded purple along with many others who were brought home today. Camile tried to find a key to explain what this meant, but it was nowhere to be found. She searched through the workstation for a note, a manual, or anything that would tell her. But before she could search any further, Chief Ortega approached the workstation Camile was at.

"What do you think you are doing?" she said

sternly. Camile didn't care if Chief Ortega was pissed and only asked what the color coding meant.

"He's dead, Camile. Jason is dead. That's all it means." But Camile wasn't convinced.

"Take me to him. Take me to Jason. I want to see Jason's body."

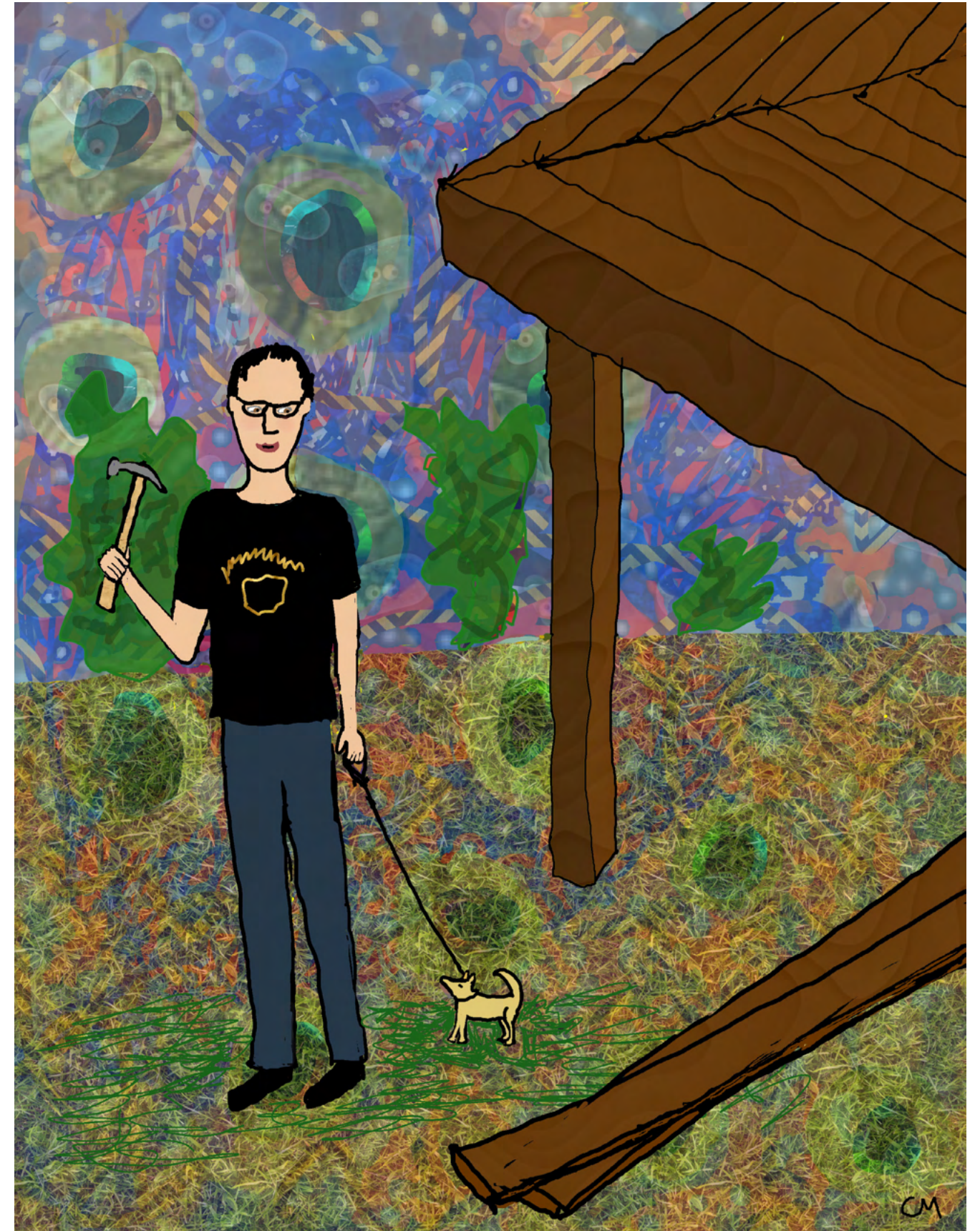
"You know I can't do that." Chief Ortega said as she gritted her teeth.

Camile picked up the docking station and threw it across the room. Chief Ortega flinched at the loud cracking sound it made but did not react otherwise.

"We have been friends for five years, Jess," Camile said in a low voice. "I helped you through your separation and I have never asked you for anything." Camile grabbed Chief Ortega's arm impulsively. She had never touched anyone in anger a day in her life, much less a friend. Chief Ortega's eyes teared up as she angrily pulled away from Camile. Camile could see she was torn, but that she knew what was really going on.

"If I take you to him, I risk a dishonorable discharge. You know what that would do for me and my family this close to my retirement." Camile watched as Chief Ortega closed her eyes in frustration. She could see how much she wanted to help but could not understand what it was that was stopping her. Before Camile could utter another word, Chief Ortega guided her out of the room and hurried down the opposite corridor.

Chief Ortega kept looking over her shoulder to ensure they were not being followed.



The Tiny Pet Digital Drawing
Cindy Mohr

Camile only looked straight ahead and followed next to Chief Ortega. She thought seeing the paperwork would finally give her the closure she needed but now she was determined to not only see her husband's body for herself, but to know what the hell was really going on and why he had been coded differently. It didn't make any sense. He was not in a biohazard zone, there were no animals involved, and he was collected almost immediately after he had been killed. There was no record of this specific coding for a deceased human body. Chief Ortega stopped at a large metal door with a hazard sign that read: "COMMANDER



Bombed
Cindy Mohr

AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY". She presented a badge and entered a pin. The door clicked and Chief Ortega held the door open for Camile. Camile cautiously walked into the darkness not expecting to see what she saw next.

The room was fiercely cold, dark, and black-lit. Purple, she thought to herself. Chief Ortega flicked on another light. Although it barely gave any light, it was enough for Camile to see that they were surrounded by at least two dozen corpses. Camile gasped. They were in large bins, and they were... moving. Chief Ortega put a hand on Camile's arm.

"They're not alive. They're dead." She assured Camile. "When bodies arrive back, they sometimes shift due to the altitude and reacclimating. But I promise you Camile, they're dead."

Camile followed Chief Ortega to her husband's drawer bin. When Chief Ortega opened it, Camile saw Jason shift and she flinched.

"Your wife's here to see you." Chief Ortega said to Jason's body. Camile froze.

"If they're dead, why do you talk to them like that?" she asked. Chief Ortega walked to the door, leaving Camile with her husband and the other bodies of dead servicemembers.

"Dignity." Chief Ortega said as she closed the door behind her. Camile looked around for a minute.

"Mom..." Camile heard a faint whisper and jerked back, watching a corpse nearby shift. It was the body of Airman First Class Dietz.

The son of the mother who was wailing on the flight line. If they can shift, can they speak too? Camile wondered. Convincing herself it was just her imagination; she turned back to her husband. She looked at Jason's face. So peaceful. Still as handsome as the day they met. He almost looked as if he was sleeping. Camile carefully touched his face and quickly recoiled. He was as cold as ice. It didn't set in until that moment, and Camile began to sob quietly with both hands holding onto the bin for support. Her best friend. The man she fell in love with years ago. The hopes of starting a family together, all ended here. Jason shifted slowly and Camile noticed something strange about his upper lip. Was it swollen? Camile reached back down to inspect it, and when she moved it slightly, she saw something that left her breathless and made her recoil backward almost knocking over the corpse next to her.

Immediately, Camile stopped crying and was struck cold with fear. Teeth. These were not her husband's teeth. They were long and sharp, almost like a vampire. No. It's impossible. She thought. Camile slowly approached Jason's body and attempted to prove herself wrong. But before she could touch Jason again, he sprang out of the bin, eyes wide open, and hissed at Camile. Unable to yell or reach the door, Camile rushed behind a cart, and crouched low, hiding from whom she thought was Jason. Camile held her breath and covered her head as Jason made his way toward her hiding place, violently shoving the

cart away from Camile. Exposing her, hissing at her. He was too fast and before she knew it, Camile was cornered. It was in her face now. Camile frozen with fear stared up at the creature who was no longer the man she loved. Flashbacks of their wedding played in her head. Then the night he proposed. Then the night under the fireworks the first time they kissed. When she finally snapped out of it, she put her hands up to block him from trying to bite her. Holding Jason away from her steadily by his cold dead shoulders, Camile cried. She just wanted her husband. She wanted him to be alive. She wanted to start the family they had talked about for years. "Jason, I'm sorry," Camile sobbed. "I love you, I'm so sorry." Was all she could say. But she knew looking at this creature that it was no longer Jason. Or maybe it was. Maybe a small part of him was still in there that understood what she was saying. At least that's what Camile hoped.

"Is this what you want?" she asked the hissing, violent creature. The creature hissed and chomped the air that separated them.

"Okay, Jason... I love you. It's okay." Camile cried and began to loosen her grip, closing the gap between her and the monstrous creature.

Most Certainly

By **Elaine Jones**

1965: No cookbooks, seven meals listed on lined paper, thumbtacked to the wall. Dinners for five people. Dad, Mom, two brothers and me. On the table at 5:30pm every day.

- Monday meatloaf
- Tuesday fried pork chops
- Weds fried bologna
- Thurs salmon patties
- Fri Salisbury steak- one of those new t.v. diners.
- Saturday, fried catfish
- Sunday fried chicken. Maybe light rolls.
- She plans, shops, cooks fast.
- She fills ‘em up, she cleans up. She washes. I dry.
- She’s most certainly tired. I’m 12. She’s 42

1995: Ten cookbooks, seven meals listed on lined paper. Dinners for six people. My husband, me, two daughters, two sons. On the table at 6 p.m. every day.

- Monday Chinese stir-fried chicken,
- Tuesday Italian lasagna,
- Wednesday Crock pot beef stew,
- Thursday Hickory smoked Salmon .. wait no time... change to tacos...
- Friday night pizza.
- Saturday he’ll grill hamburgers
- Sunday, don’t know. Out of ideas.
- PB&J for picky eaters who don’t like the dinner.
- Check grocery list. I plan, he shops, I cook. He loads the dishwasher.
- I’m most certainly tired. I’m 42.

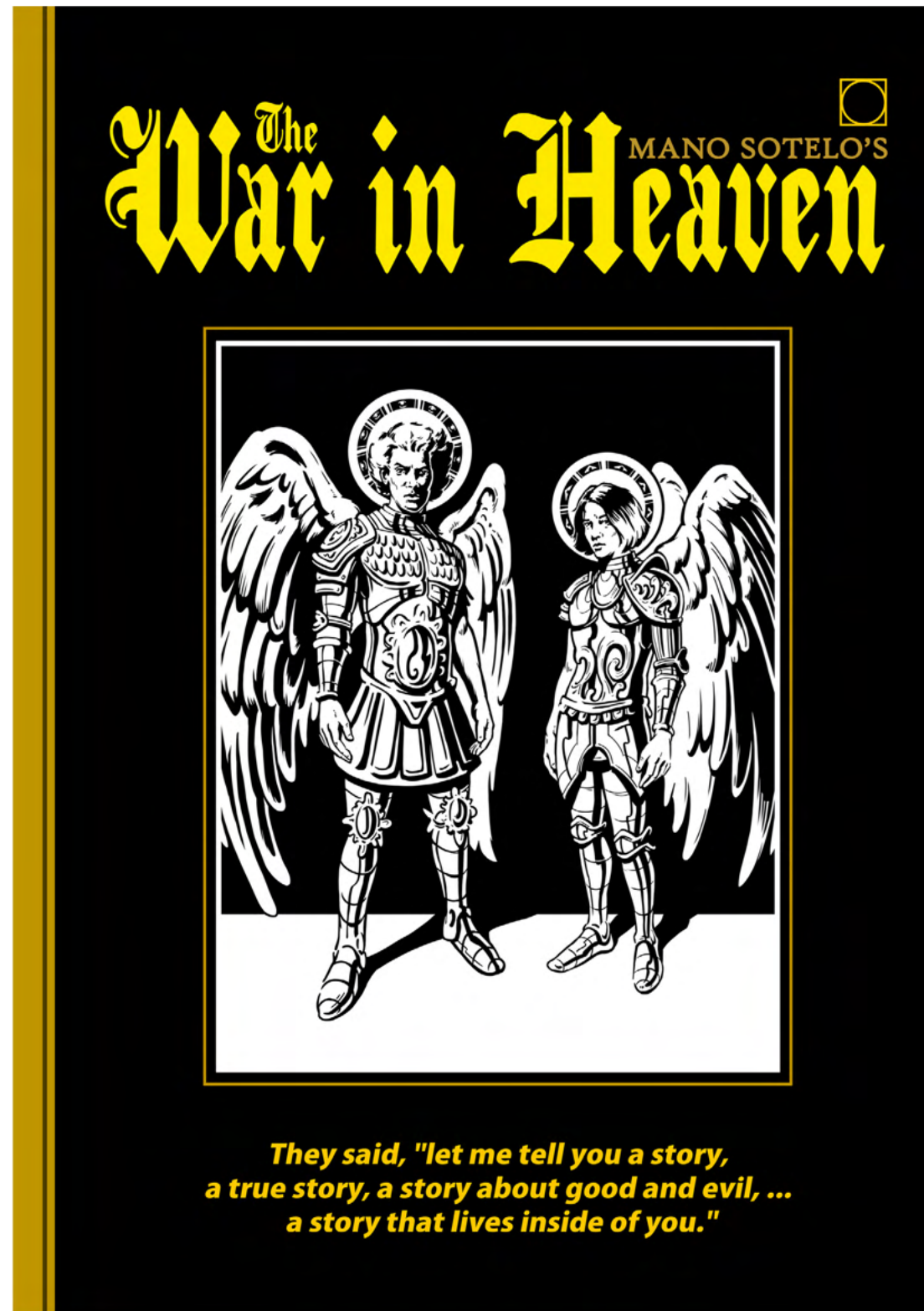


2009 No cookbooks, no meal plans. just lists of dinners for one to eat whenever I get hungry.

- Trader Joe Salads
- Amy’s frozen enchilada casserole
- Cheese crisp with canned green chiles
- Will need 3 more frozen entrees in a few days.
- Anything will do.
- No ingredients to check.
- I shop, I microwave.
- Nothing to clean up, really.
- I’m most certainly sad and tired. I’m 57.

2025 Mediterranean cooking magazines, online recipes, dinners for two, me and my daughter. We take turns cooking for one another, back and forth at our homes. Dinner at whatever time suits us.

- Risotto with sun dried tomatoes and grilled zucchini
- Salmon with roasted artichoke, leeks and polenta.
- Skillet chicken with new potatoes and green beans.
- Lentil bean curry soup with Naan crackers
- Some days, an Amy frozen dinner if I’m in a hurry.
- When it’s my turn, I plan, I shop, I cook.
- We share, we clean up together, we talk.
- I’m most certainly happy. I’m 73.



The War in Heaven: Book Cover and Interior Page
Mano Sotelo



A graphic novel written and illustrated by Mano Sotelo that uses visual narrative to examine the human condition and the search for peace in the face of conflict.



NIGHT SAILING

Courtney Webb

The little captain did board her ship
In the land of wink'in, blink'in and nod.
It was smooth sailing on a calm sea.
Overhead, stars twinkled clear and bright.
But in time the sea began to change. Waves
grew choppy and rough,
great giant water beasts rose up and threatened the little ship,
and it rocked and swayed dangerously.
Finally, the Giant White King of Sheets wrapped himself
'round the little ship. The little captain fought bravely.
In the distance, a faint light shone and the sound of
"Bk...fast, bk...fast" could be heard coming from shore.
The little captain rightened the ship and ran for it.
Coming to ground on soft sands, safe at last.

Welt-schmerz

noun - world-pain, world-weariness, a sentimental pessimism

there is death on the wind, monochromatic
opulence branded, emblazoned,
antithetically holding our reins

like helmed hellriders vanquished, stalling the inevitable fall of
humility,
words that strafe, spanning the vast gorges,
garroted,
valiant and kind, slain here, river-bound to verdant lands,
moralistic souls atop the watch tower
wails growing like zeppelins

looping over itself, joined hand in hand in the vaults,
hands and limbs, melancholic virulence jinxed
grounded grammarians who hound after answers
hermetically mitigating, moving overland
handing advantages to kindergarten radicals

are we hedonistic
or histrionically gelded?
begging murmurs die off, omissions

what if the makers stole our words?
would a maker steal our non-omniscient mind?
steal into the steel vault, rending it—
if our words die, will they renew?
an opening, an ending
benign, malignant

words steady over fields, watercolored outlanders
warring with themselves, sullen-minded, woven in tapestry—
still, a wanderer makes peace, healing that which tears

Kristin LeBlanc

CLOSE ENOUGH TO KISS

By Lucy Chester

Lay them down back to sleep,
never ever put a stuffed animal or blanket in there you dummy!
Wear them in a carrier but not too much and definitely make sure they're close enough to kiss
For gods sake cut up their hot dogs!
Absolutely no hard candy, crackers, chips , grapes, (oh, I think, the toddler main food groups?)
Don't touch a cactus,
ouch
Just letting you know this so you can be safe but a stranger talked to me at the grocery store and
I'm certain they're trying to kidnap my child.
Have you done ISR yet?
You better because I just heard about a three year old drowning and a six year old and a
baby
Pay for a certified car seat consultation so you know you've installed the seat correctly. They'll tell
you no toys hanging from the handle, no books, no unsecured matter at all should be in that car.
CHECK YOUR BACKUP CAM

You did all this and then you
realize
It's not going to be any of this that kills your six year old but it's
guns.
And if it doesn't kill them
They'll probably watch someone else get
shot.

Keep them close enough to kiss.

IN THE ARMS OF JOJOBA

By Cathy Thwing

The fledgling dove hides
on a log beneath the tangled
branches of the jojoba,
safe from the Cooper's hawk

that nabbed the other squab
at empty dawn, the morning
after it left the nest. My mother
bought me this jojoba,

and now it grows wild
like her mind, unconstrained
by memory. A female
plant, boughs drooping with seeds,

mahogany bronze, hidden
inside soft olive shells.
Beside grows a male
shrub, a gift from my dad.

It stopped growing taller
the year he died, but it spreads
low branches that reach
beneath the other's canopy.

It's thick with tiny flowers
that send pollen on the wind.
So we have goat nuts
and a wild shelter

for a fledgling dove
and my journeys into memory.

Dima Langemann (Pexels)



Trace
Aaron Kostko



Branch Mosaic
Mike Rom



Arizona Sunset
Tomoko Lara

Chronic Pain

By **Elliot Mead**

How to hold a shattered red bell; cradle a mind that forgets
to protect itself?

There are cracks where the bullets never landed. So I can't tell you
what the gun looked like. But the buttons on the jacket, sure.

Other moments I forget entirely, the grey years, only surfacing
in the most inopportune times.

Too many of these moments and the body, too, starts to
ache and splinter.

And my hands, always bearing broken glass, cut what they touch.
The danger isn't the break; it's the proximity.

I no longer ask to be healed.

But when the mindfulness bell on my phone chimes it's 7am:
Time to take account, take into account, attempt accountability.

It is a discipline. Making amends through the cacti I steal from alley ways,
tending the weeds that grow in my yard as if they are orchids, pulling up
whatever concrete I find.
Whispering a shitty apology to the ants because I still kill them.

Salting my doorsteps, reciting
"bless this house, these hands..."

When I mean:
forgive me, forgive me, forgive me.



Desert Polish
Amanda McPherson



Showing off
Tineke Van Zandt



A Day at the Beach
Alexis Gyenge



Scraggly Cat
Mike Rom

Tara is Everywhere

By Natalie McConnell



Four Friends at Cienega Creek
Natalie McConnell

I went for a trail run with a few friends I've grown close to early on a Sunday morning to one of our favorite places. We met up at the Gabe Zimmerman trailhead in Vail, AZ and headed northeast towards the Cienega Creek. It's a gorgeous, lush area amidst rocky, dry high desert. You have to cross through the running creek to stay on the Arizona Trail heading north towards

the Rincon and Catalina Mountain Ranges. There are actual deciduous trees there whose leaves change from pale green to golden yellow like Aspens in the fall, but we didn't cross the creek, and I was just following along. Exhausted from a triathlon the previous day, I was not disappointed that not much actual running was happening. Besides, we were on a mission to find a decent resting place for some of our late running friend's ashes. I didn't even realize we were looking for a good spot for her, I'm just bumbling along on these trips, this one for the second anniversary of her passing on August 14, 2023. We've made others to the top of Wasson Peak west of Tucson twice for her birthday in January the past two years. I was not particularly close to Tara, but it feels right to be included in these adventures.

I clearly remember the first time I met Tara. I had joined this running club shortly before Covid hit, and we were all still wearing face coverings for our group runs. She had on a Superwoman mask, hot pink calf sleeves, and most likely spandex shorts with dinosaurs on them. She was obviously beautiful under that mask, with long golden-brown hair, bright eyes, and an offbeat sense of humor. The endless stream of witty banter between us, and her ridiculous puns would become very helpful on the much longer runs we'd later end up on together. We were running up A-mountain in downtown Tucson so I'm sure I was struggling to breathe, while Tara was running

up this steep paved road backwards as she was introducing herself to me, the sun setting behind her, and without a single gasp for air.

We used to call her a mountain goat for her agility on the trails. She seemingly floated over technical terrain that most of us would struggle for our lives on while wearing white trail running shoes. Who wears white shoes on dusty Arizona trails? Tara did. The first time I noticed them she was practically dancing on the rocks to get across a rare stream next to a trail near Garwood Dam in Saguaro National Park East, the late afternoon sunlight glinting off the water and her shoes. She

was quick too, but I wouldn't know this at first because we're mostly back of the pack endurance runners and Tara would never leave anybody behind.

Until she did.

Tara very decisively took her own life about 8 months after her son died from suicide. I found out from our group text thread while at work and stopped dead near my cubicle, I had to sit down on the nearest chair. I hadn't seen or spoken with Tara since we had found out her son had passed away, which also happened to be early one morning while getting coffee after running around at Cienega Creek. She hadn't been running with us for several months because of an injury and I didn't feel I had a close enough relationship



The Great Silence
Nina Gardner



The Whispering Woods
Nina Gardner

with her to say, 'hey, how are you?' I also hadn't heeded the words she had posted on social media after Jax died. She wrote:

"My hope is that if you're someone who is hurting to please be encouraged to reach out even if it feels like an impossible task. For everyone else, please take a deep look into those around you and try to find people who need help and don't know how to ask. Don't assume it's obvious. Depression is nefarious in the ways it masks itself."

Until then, I had only known that Tara's two grown children stayed in Iowa when she moved to Tucson. The way she had planned her suicide was darkly true to her quirky sense of humor and her love for her pets. She had scheduled a song to post to social media after she would be gone,

"I Don't Like Mondays," by the Boomtown Rats. The Sheriffs were somehow notified to do a wellness check so they would rescue her dogs. I still wish she had heeded her own words and reached out to someone, nobody I know was better at doing hard things.

Her social media page contains continuous new posts from others who still miss her too. This was the same platform where completely out of her jaunty and light-hearted character, she called out shitposters when addressing us with her much too hard-won wisdom about people who are grieving. Among other insights, it says:

"We're oversensitive. I get so



The Quiet Passage
Nina Gardner

angry watching people treat others like garbage simply for thinking differently. People who won't watch a movie about the evils of sex trafficking because a dude who played Jesus was in it or people who won't see Barbie because it's woke. I think about screaming in their faces to get over it, because if they really understood how fragile life is, they wouldn't waste one second on such things..."

Tara is survived by her daughter, Ari and her new husband, and one of her two German shepherds, Ego and Id, who were lovingly rehomed. Every now and then a friend drops a pic of Id snuggling with his

new family into that same text thread, Ego has now passed on.

Nearly two years later, wandering around an almost completely dry, cracked creek bed on the Arizona Trail, thinking how it shouldn't be this dry so late in the monsoon season which had been a dud so far this year, I am distracted from the mission. Nevertheless, my friends found some water. It is more like a pool than a running creek, it's so still. Sitting on rocks after someone dusted some of her ashes in the water, I look down the creek at the Cottonwood leaves glimmering in a gentle breeze and think, 'Tara likes it here,' but censor myself from saying that out loud.

About that moment someone broke our

silence and started sobbing, "Why isn't she here with us?" I got up to rest my hand on her back, so we were sitting close together now. There's nothing to do or say. I now know that grief must do whatever it does. You just follow it around like an untrained dog pulling you on a leash you cannot put down because you're tangled together. After another moment, I stood up to put my hand into the water to touch Tara's ashes. I'm still surprised at the coarseness and volume of human ashes. Feeling their grit under the water's tender surface, watching tadpoles being tadpoles, I only thought, 'this isn't Tara.'

Weeks later and a couple of months into training for a marathon, I went for a run around the loop at Saguaro National Park East visitor center. The paved road goes up and down steep rolling hills at the foot of the Rincon Mountains east of Tucson. Running around the desert at night is always my favorite, maybe because of how it comes alive when the sun sets and the temperature cools down. I was about halfway around the 8-mile loop where there's a mile-long hill along a steep canyon to the east which is dotted with dramatic Saguaro cactus. They take on human personas when you are alone in the desert, standing guard at night. I felt protected from a rogue pack of javelina while I marveled at a tarantula crossing the road. At the bottom of that hill, I had seen the fattest Sonoran Desert toad I will ever see, like a little Jabba the Hut, it looked like it had swallowed a tennis ball. Still feeling strong and running along at the top of this climb, there was some lightning intermittently illuminating the rugged landscape against the backdrop of city

lights opposite the mountains. Sprinkling lightly but not really raining, it was perfect.

My lungs were working hard, inhaling the scent of creosote awakened by the rain mixed in with the hard smell of sun-baked asphalt when it first gets wet, when I became oddly aware that Tara was with me. We'd often joke about how she's behind every toe pick on the trail, and that rock that completely flattened my SUV tire on the dirt road after hiking up and down Wasson peak earlier this year. I got the feeling that she's sad because she can't do what I'm doing any longer, my senses lit up, enjoying a copious amount of endorphins. I don't know for sure what her experience of running was, but I sensed that she missed it. I'm not as good at this as she was, and it has become challenging in ways I had never imagined, but I promised, if only to the desert night, "I'll run anywhere for you."

I woke up at 3 am and I'm hungry all the time from training so I couldn't get back to sleep when it dawned on me that, no, Tara isn't in the Cienega creek, or up on top of Wasson peak. She is, but not because we dusted some of her ashes there. Tara is everywhere now. We laughed so hard when I accidentally spread a little part of Tara on her dear friend on top of that mountain. She joked, "Am I still a vegan if I got Tara in my mouth?" Also, "I hope it's the fast part."



The Hidden Trail
Nina Gardner



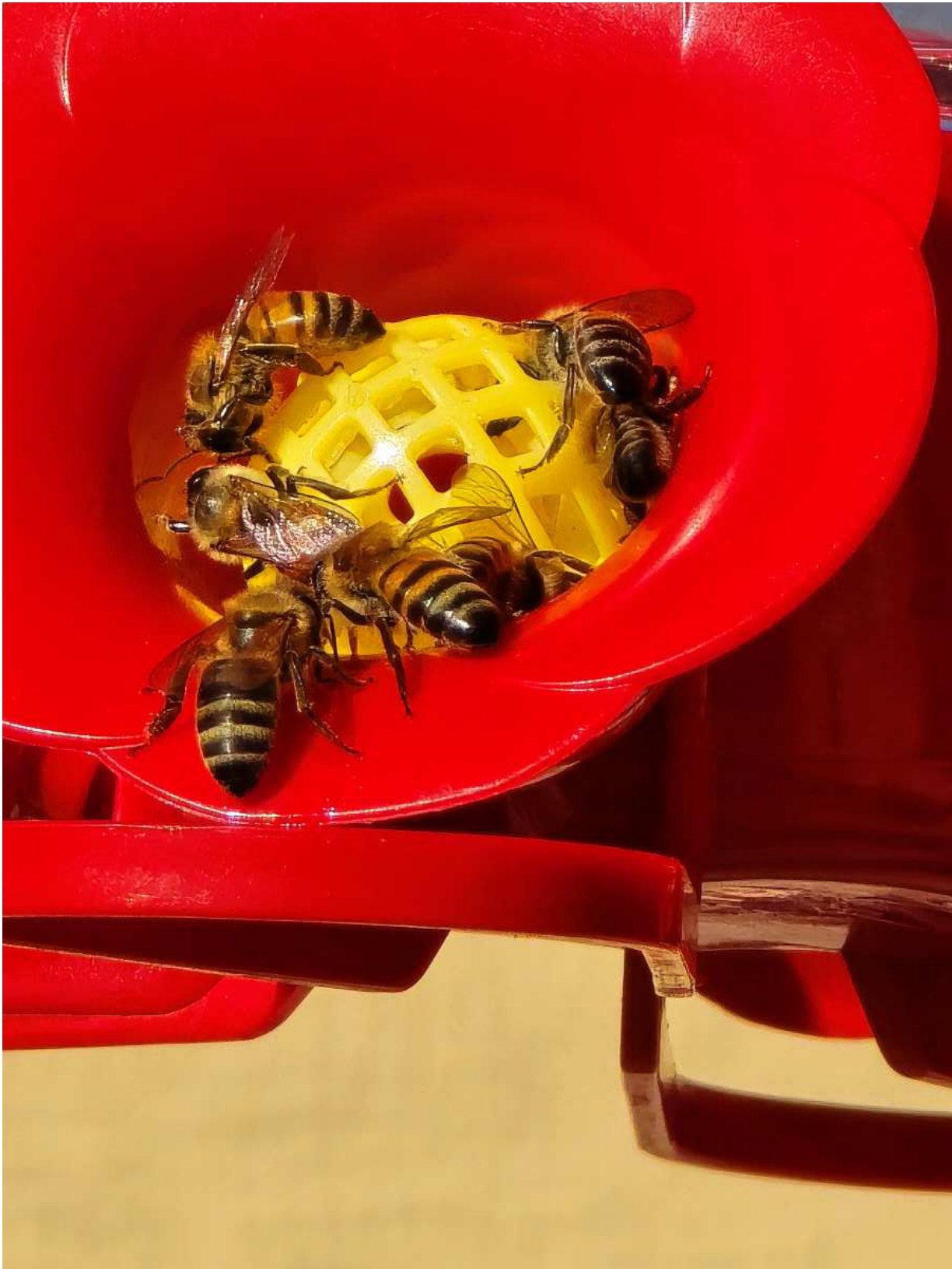
White Thunder
Nina Gardner



Insidious Justice
Joanna Sanchez-Avila



Mizz Darkz
Joanna Sanchez-Avila



Free Lunch
Sandee Seitzinger



Madrona Tools
Eric Aldrich



Taking a Break
Sandee Seitzinger

KATHERINE ABBOTT'S FRANKENSTEIN

By Andrew L. Huerta



Yuukarin (Unsplash)

I'm standing in my yard, examining my flower beds, when I hear a young voice yell, "Hey, Frankenstein! How's it going, Frankie boy?"

I turn and see a young blond boy, probably 10 years old, riding a bicycle. His hands are low on the handlebars, as his bike's too big for him, and he's wearing long baggy clothes. He turns sharply in front of my house and rides around in a circle. He's yelling at a large kid who appears to be his same age. The big kid is standing still on the sidewalk and looking down at my flowers. The blond kid yells again, "Frankenstein! Frankie boy! You tryin' to scare the whole neighborhood?"

The big kid turns and walks to the middle of the street. He watches the blond kid ride in circles around him. He raises his hands and growls, "Raaah!" He steps forward. "Raaah!" he continues and stomps closer to the blond kid with both hands up in the air. The blond kid circles him, continues to laugh, and rides away. Within a second, the big kid is back in front of my flowers. The big kid is over five feet tall. He has a large, round face, and he's slightly overweight. A tall mass of red, curly hair covers his head. He's stocky; his arms are long and thick, and they stretch farther down than they probably should. He has white-white skin, but his face is slightly red; flush from all of the excitement. I step closer and continue to stare at him. "I like your flowers," he says, spitting it out quickly.

I turn and see the young blond kid peddling toward us again.

"Frankenstein!" the blond kid yells in a drawn-out tone. I watch the big kid as his lower lip begins to quiver. His hands shake as he clenches his fists, and he breathes in and out deeply. I'm annoyed but curious, so I ask, "Do you go to that school down the street?"

"Yeah. Katherine Abbott's Middle School. It's my new school." His lips are covered with spit. "Do you like it?" I ask, not knowing why I'm asking.

"The...." he strains. "The teachers are nice, but all the kids make fun of me."

"Do they all call you Frankenstein?"

He stares forward and nods his head. "Some call me Freak-en-stein. But mostly it's just Frankenstein." His voice is calm and low. "I like your flowers," he says. "That's why I always walk by your house."

"Do you live on this street?"

"No. Me and my family, we live a couple streets down. Ma...Maple Drive," he strains.

"That's five streets over. Isn't your school, that Katherine Abbott's Middle School, on Bellevue? You can just go down Bellevue to get to Maple. It goes right to it."

"Yeah. But I like all your flowers," he says with a bit of a laugh. "Ya know..." he starts again "...the kids at school make fun of you too."

The only thing I can do is laugh. "Really? Why do they make fun of me?"

The big kid turns his head and stares up at the top of my house. "Because of that." He motions his chin upward.

"My roof?"

"Yeah." He looks a bit embarrassed but still smiles.

"Why do the kids make fun of my roof?"

This time, his entire face turns bright red, "Cuz it looks like it's coming off your house."

I look up at my roof. Some of the roofing material is peeling away and looks as if it's standing up in certain places. The roof isn't flat or smooth anymore, but rather rugged and bumpy, like the back of an alligator. I know I should fix it, but there's always too much to do in the yard. Besides, the roof doesn't leak, so I really don't care. Okay, actually, it started leaking last month; or maybe last year. Just in

the laundry room. But I have a bucket to catch the rain water and use it for my geraniums.

"What do the kids say about my roof?"

The big kid looks up at me with wide eyes.

"They call you Dumb Ass. They say you spend too much time on your flowers, and you don't fix your house."

"Hey, Frankenstein!" the blond kid yells, riding past us again.

I turn and give the blond kid a dirty look.

"Don't you have anything better to do?" I yell.

The blond kid looks back at me with his mouth wide open. He rides up the street, looks over his shoulder, and then turns and rides back toward us. I watch his every move.

"Why don't you go home?" I yell.

The blond kid squints his eyes and yells, "And why don't you fix your roof, Dumb Ass?"

I hear myself scoff and breath in and out deeply. He pedals away and looks back at us before he turns onto the next street. Now, my mouth is wide open, and my lips are covered with spit. I look at the big kid. He laughs. I burst out laughing too and shake my head.

When we stop laughing, the big kid says, "I'll see you later, okay?"

"Sure. I may be up working on my roof, but I'll be here."

"See ya." The big kid scans the end of the street, seeing if the blond kid is still around. He holds up his hand, waves, and walks away.

"Yeah, see ya." I turn and wait. I watch him walk down the street, and when he's a few houses away, I can hear him laugh slightly and say, "Dumb Ass."

I shake my head, look up at my roof, and then watch him walk farther away. When he's almost at the end of the street, I roll my eyes, laugh slightly, and whisper, "Frankenstein."



FALLTEN

By Aaron Kostko

Too MUCH

Damaris Ponce

Everything gets heavy when I get home,
Others' stress is put on me,
My day was fine,
Before.

I've been crying in silence for so long,
Rocking back and forth,
Desperately need air,
Feeling cold.

Hopefully, I don't repeat the cycle,
A lot of trauma was passed down,
No kids for sure,
Not selfish.

This is temporary, though
I need to get out,
Not too late,
It is okay.



Lean on Me
Aaron Kostko



Why Spider Has a Small Waist

Bernard L. Ngovo

Many cultures, especially tribal societies, around the world abound in folktales as oral literature. Liberian tribes are no exception to this tradition. One of the genres of folktales in Liberia is explanation folktales. The purpose of these tales is to teach moral lessons, explain natural phenomena, the origins of cultural practices, taboos, and rituals. Another genre of folktales is morality tales. A major theme in morality tales is that greed is an undesirable character trait. Although morality tales are intended for all audiences in Liberia, they are mostly purposed for children. One of the many protagonists in many explanation and morality tales in Liberia is spider.

Farmlands were arid. Ponds, creeks, and rivers were dried up in the country. Harvest was poor. It was the severest famine in the country that year - lasting several months. Food was scarce, and many families went to bed every night on empty stomachs. A great number of the elderly, the young, and babies went to their early graves. Many gobbled their taboo foods thoughtlessly. Some families barely survived by eating their pets, even dead ones. Many consulted, to no avail, oracles and soothsayers to ascertain the cause of the severe famine. Everybody gave up trying to find the origin of their plight. Some people claimed that God had put a curse on them for their wickedness and unfaithfulness.

There was a small cave far away in the forest. No one knew of its existence. A genie family lived in it. They had an abundance of food, especially rice. They were not aware of the harsh famine in the towns and villages. They family had a dog as their doorkeeper. Each time they went out, they sang a secret song, the dog opened the door, and they gave him some food. They

followed the same routine when they returned.

While deer was one day searching for food in the forest, he saw the cave from a distance. He tiptoed toward it and hid himself in the thicket for a few days. He suffered excruciating hunger pangs for those few days. He saw that when the genie family went in and out the cave, they sang a secret song, and the dog opened the door for them. He listened keenly to the song and memorized it.

When the genie family was away one day, the deer went to their cave and sang the same secret song to the dog. The dog let him in. He cooked some rice, ate his fill, and gave some to the dog. When he was ready to leave, he sang the secret song again, the dog let him out, and he went home. He told spider about his experience in the cave.

After a few days, deer decided to take spider with him to the cave. When they got close to the cave, they waited quietly in the nearby bushes until the genie family went out. They then went to the entrance of the cave. Deer sang the secret song, and the dog let them in. They cooked some rice, ate their fill, fed the dog. When they were ready to leave, deer sang the secret song, and the dog let them out.

One day, Spider decided to go to the cave without deer. When, he got there, he sang the secret song, and the dog let him in. He cooked some rice and ate all without offering the dog any. He forgot the secret song when he was ready to leave. The dog refused to let him out. He remained in the cave until the genie family returned. They were surprised to find him in their home. They asked how he got into their cave. He told them he sang a song and the dog let him in, but he forgot the song when he was ready to leave. So, the dog refused to let him out.

Without any further talk, the genie family tied a rope around spider's waist and began to pull it from both ends. They pulled, and pulled, and pulled, and pulled, and pulled until Spider's waist got thinner, thinner, thinner, and thinner. Since then, spider's waist has remained small.



Going up or going down?
Sandee Seitzinger



M-Reflection
Mike Rom

WRITING WOUNDED

Cathy Thwing

A sailor writes about *The Iliad*—his choice. Honor speaks to his creed. Courage, Commitment—his core when panic on either side roars in the library, at the door to math class, through the parking lot before his drive home, piercing the protection of his shield, that conviction, *I can do this.*

Next semester, another sailor writes, *You will need therapy. You will not be able to find a therapist who understands what you need.* Inside her mini-van, she breathes and writes and breathes until she begins to understand.

A soldier sends an email:
I'm sorry I ask the same question twice. It's the TBI. And when he submits same essay for twice, I reply: Write a new one. Here's the prompt. The old draft falls to the rusty earth like the leaves of the cottonwood along the trail, the one with deep scars in its trunks where bears have scratched their names

and the soldier, jolted onto a new trail, writes of his dream to fill our town with gardens, to feed the children of soldiers and sailors shipwrecked on shores lined with brick houses. We say we have found our voice when the words we write speak. When we hear with our eyes while reading those words, we say, we are listening.

The Curse of TRISH

By
Alexander Greengaard

(Unsplash)

CHAPTER ONE

*This is my travelin' song
And I'm travelin' along
With my best friends in the whole wide world
Yes, THIS is my travelin' song
And who're you travelin' with?
It's Trish!
(It's Trish!)*

I have a secret theory that everyone sings dumb little songs around the house. I can't prove it, but I have some anecdotal evidence to support my claim. For starters, I do it, so there's that. And I have a friend back home—a whopping forty minutes away in Burlington—who says she does it, too. She was pretty emphatic about it when I brought it up, so I took the confirmation bias and ran with it. In any case, Trish does it all the

time, and she somehow manages to write the catchiest little ones. So it happens that all three members of my merry little band of pals often find ourselves singing Trish's dumb little songs, though only two of us frequently catch ourselves in the act and say "Dang, it, Trish!"

I'm starting here because there's not really a very good starting place when it comes to Trish. She sort of *Trishes* her way into your life and then that's that. She's in there for good. I'm not saying it's a bad thing. It's a very good thing to have a Trish in your life. Ten out of ten, no notes. We love Trish, especially me and Sophie. To put it in Trish's own words:

*Trish and Sophie and Kate and Sophie
And TRISH and Sophie and Kate
Are friends
WE'RE THE BEST of friends
And you can BET that we'll be
Friends 'till I don't know when
(But probably a long time, I think)*

Before we get into it too deeply, I should come clean about something. The Curse of Trish. Well, there are actually three curses of Trish. Three curses that befall anyone who is lucky enough to call themselves her friend. They are as follows.

1. Trish will follow her heart and try to do the right thing, even if it's to her own personal detriment. Even if it causes a huge mess. Even if it gets her best friends in trouble. Even if she *should* just let it go.
2. You can't be mad at Trish. We've tried.
3. There's a third curse, but I can't tell you 'till the end.

I realize I'm being a bit fast and loose with the word "curse," here. But there's something honestly very special and inexplicable about this one. She gets us into heaps of trouble and we thank her for it. Anyway, that's the word I've chosen and I'm sticking with it. Are we—intrigued? Good. The uniforms they make us wear at St. Andrew's are so stupid. Someone got it in their head that if a high school in rural Vermont pretends to be a British boarding school, then all the students are going to

get great marks and have impeccable etiquette. Well, that's wrong. First off, no one's getting any *Marks* anytime soon: it's an all-girls school. Second, plaid skirts and those stupid little tie thingies aren't gonna fix adolescence. We're still loading. Stop playing dress-up with our formative years and pretending it's gonna turn us into a bunch of architects or whatever. I guess "rural" was a bit off. We're in Montpelier, the state capital, population 8,074, who prides itself on being the only state capital without a McDonald's. The internet says I can't complain because it's beautiful and we have public funding for stuff and everyone in Vermont is rich. Well, I'm not rich, and even if I were, I don't think that means I should have to live my whole life in a sensory deprivation tank. I do like the trees, though.

In an attempt to liberate myself from small town monotony and the adults' master plan to keep me away from boys (nice try—we've got public transit and phones), I joined the staff of *The Spectator*—St. Andrews's school newspaper—as a junior reporter near the end of my junior year. And that's where I met Sophie and Trish: the best little faction of high-octane nerds a girl could ask for. We didn't name the paper, but we may have had a hand in popularizing its beloved nickname, *The 'Tater*. I promise it wasn't us who came up with the nickname for us when we were small-town-famous for six weeks. When we *did the thing* that captured the hearts and minds of our little municipality. When we stirred the big pot, made enemies on the city council, and divided Montpelier on the battle lines of the fourth estate. I don't know who started calling us the *'Tater Tots*, but the name caught fire, and we couldn't be prouder.

You never forget your first meeting with Trish.

"Hey, best friend in training," she said, grinning as she tripped over her own backpack for a hug that I thought would be a handshake at most. I had made it about halfway through the threshold of the computer lab where the staff of *The Spectator* met for fourth-period Honors Journalism when Trish came bouldering in for her rendition of a warm embrace. "I'm Trish."

"Kate," I coughed through temporarily strained lungs.

"No, Trish," she returned after backing up to get a good look at me. I wasn't sure if she was joking, but with all the nervous energy swirling about, I laughed anyway.

Trish laughed, too. She wasn't sure what was funny, but if I was laughing, Trish was laughing. I paused a moment to take stock of what had just happened. I did the math: in two seconds, she had won me over.

"Here," she said, taking me by the wrist. "I'll show you the news room."

It was definitely a computer lab, but the energy and the sense of purpose transformed the space into something more. Twelve girls plugging away at their stations, the din of conversation, keyboards clacking about, and pencils furiously scratching away at composition books filled the room. An orange telephone sat on the teacher's desk, though no teacher was to be found. Currently, the phone and desk were being used by a senior she recognized, Opal Martin, whose boss energy resonated throughout the busy space. Editor-in-Chief, I was sure of it.

"No, I need it by *today*! Tomorrow is unacceptable—I have a deadline. Okay, fine, we can meet at *The Skinny Pancake* and talk about it there. Five PM? Great. Okay, love you, mom."

Notwithstanding the last part, Opal's vibe was giving professional, and I was there for it. En route to my "station" that Trish had picked out for me, I caught a glimpse of a little office with a closed door. It had one of those long, skinny windows, through which I could see our teacher, a placard revealing her to be Ms. Ellen Cooke. I got the sense that we don't bother Ms. Cooke unless we absolutely needed to.

"We don't bother Missus Cookie Monster of English Literature unless we absolutely need to," said Trish as we settled in at a triple-desk station with another girl. Sophie Parker-Wright got up to shake my hand, like a normal person, as she eased the moment with a gentle correction.

"Ms. Cooke is a Master of English Literature. Trish is either making a joke or she heard it wrong and it got stuck that way in her head. One can never tell with Trish."

"No, one can't," affirmed Trish.

Sophie jumped in again. "I'm Sophie."

"Kate," I said, eyes wide with hope that she'd simply accept that as my name. She did.

"I see you've been chosen."

"Don't try to fight it," said Trish, switching inexplicably to a fake Cockney accent. "I've got a sort-of gravity well about me. A big gravity for a big girl."

Trish was, in fact, big. Not so much left-to-right. In that department, she was on the lanky side. But from top to bottom, she was the Tower of London. In truth, she was six-foot-one, but at an all-girls high school, that's the same as infinity. If you asked her—a brave feat I'd wager—she'd love to tell you that she was "five-foot-seventeen, oh yeah" to the tune of ABBA's Dancing Queen. She wore her dirty-blond hair in a kind-of loose pony, and she had bushy bangs that almost covered her eyebrows. On the weekends, she wore coveralls with little cactuses on them and blue striped slip-on Keds. In any case, she was impossible to miss in both personality and stature.

My first impression of Trish was a confusing battle in my own mind. The first feeling to emerge, other than overwhelmed (which is presumably everyone's *first* feeling about the matter) was defensive. This I had to unpack. Apparently, I was feeling defensive because I could tell that a lot of people probably make fun at Trish's expense. She was an easy target: physically distinct and with a big personality, I could imagine all the Kellys feeling threatened and opening fire. I could also tell that Trish came off as dumb to the layman, but I was sure there was actually a lot going on there, even if I didn't understand it. Put that all together and I felt defensive of Trish in the face of a hypothetical peer making fun of her, and incredibly guilty of a hypothetical me that laughed at the joke. And I felt powerless. Powerless to stand up for Trish even though it was the right thing to do. Okay, I told my hypothetical self. *Be brave. Stand up for Trish. She would do the same for you.* And somehow I knew that it was true.

Unfortunately, in my internal battle with myself, I missed whatever Sophie was asking me about, so I had to guess.

"Yeah, we moved here about a month ago for my mom's work. Apparently, I've satisfied my entire English credit from my classes at South Burlington, so I get a free

period. The counselor suggested I try Journalism."

Sophie gave me a blank look. "That's your middle name?" Woof. Apparently I guessed wrong.

"Oh, no. It's Lyla. Kate Lyla Paul Watson."

"Mine's 'Danger!'" said Trish with a gruff twinge in her voice, back to her fake British accent.

"That's a lie," said Sophie. "It's Penelope. Patricia Penelope Thann."

"Well, I wish I was Danger."

"Oh, honey," said Sophie, patting Trish gently on the back. "In many ways you are."

Sophie had this cute artist thing going on. She wore a black ribbon in her short, dark hair and black eyeliner and her backpack and shoes were black, too. She tried to get away with dark lipstick a few times, too, but Dr. Myers would always catch her and make her wipe it off. It was all a nice contrast with the school uniform, though, and I appreciated the effort. I assumed she was really into The Cure, but I caught a glimpse of her Spotify playlist once and it was all K-Pop boy bands. The heart wants what the heart wants, I guess. Sophie was one of two photographers on staff and she was delighted to have a new reporter get adopted by Trish because that meant that she didn't have to try to navigate socially with the other girls. I didn't know I was going to be a reporter at the time, but apparently that had all been decided for me when I was hugged off my feet by Hurricane Trish.

It kind of felt good to be chosen, even if I was forgoing my fresh-start-opportunity to be a cool girl. Oh well, they would have found me out eventually. And I have it on good authority that the cool girls are very mean to each other and I'd have to play politics all the time to stay in everyone's good graces. That's what my mom says, anyway, and I got a look at her high school yearbook. She was definitely cool. There's a picture of her in there leaning against a boy who is leaning against a car, and somebody in the shot had a *cigarette*. Too rich for my blood. I don't actually know what that means, so I

hope I'm using it right. I'll try it in a few contexts and you can tell me which one is best. M'kay?

Needless to say, I didn't fight Trish's self-proclaimed gravity well, and the three of us became thick as thieves. Or, "fick and feeves," as Trish would say in her terrible Dick Van Dyke Cockney.

*Everybody knows her
Everybody loves her
She's almost never late, it's Kate!*

*Everybody knows her
Everybody loves her
She'll never be the Pope, it's Soph!*

*Everybody knows her
Everybody loves her
She's quite the little dish, it's Trish!
(It's Trish!)*

My first assignment at The Spectator was to follow a punk band called Crass Bandicoot who had two members in it from St. Andrew's, and who had become finalists at the Montpelier Music Melee. This was kind of a big deal because the winners of the coveted Battle of the Bands would receive a Volkswagen Beetle, which is practically an interstellar dimensional portal by all-girls-high-school standards. The event was put on by the Barre Montpelier Times Argus, which is our little town's newspaper of record. And that meant that I got to shadow a real-life reporter for the job.

Her name was Frankie Mills and she had a candy red bob and a polka dotted miniskirt and I knew in ten minutes that I wanted to be her when I grew up. She wrote real stories about education and town hall meetings and kale subsidies. And now, she was going to let us shadow her for a real story about some people that were in my trigonometry class. By the way, this whole dumbfounded reaction to her coolness was just us looking at her Instagram page after we got the assignment. Actually meeting

Frankie Mills was like visiting a museum of priceless glass figurines. Well, for me and Soph, anyway. We had an unspoken agreement that something terrible would happen if we spoke or moved or touched anything in her office at the Times Argus news room. Luckily, Trish had come along, too.

"You guys must be from The Spectator," said Frankie, warmly.

"You can call it 'The 'Tater,'" said Trish. Sophie and I looked at each other and smiled nervously. No teeth.

Frankie laughed heartily. "I love that. So, Kate and Sophie, I presume? And you must be Trish. I debriefed with your teacher Ellen a little on the phone. Y'all wanna go talk to a garage band?"

Sophie and I nodded, still a couple of little squirrels in the headlights of Frankie's coolness and grown-up-ness and I-don't-care-ness and overt femininity.

Trish smiled, threw up a pair of finger guns, and said "My car or yours?"

"Let's take mine," replied Frankie Mills, which was a good thing. Trish didn't have a car.

Safely buckled into the back seat of a Hyundai Sonata furnished with too many take-out receipts, Sophie and I started getting more comfortable with asking questions. Frankie had a strong air of self-confidence with a sort-of hardness about her, but she was very warm to us for whatever reason. We had a lot of nuts-and-bolts questions about how to write a story and how to conduct an interview, but her answers were all very philosophical. She had steadfast ideas about the role of journalists in exposing the truth and holding institutions like the government and corporations accountable. We weren't ready for it yet, but it sounded so cool that Sophie and I smiled at each other a lot. Trish turned around from the front seat and smiled at us a bunch, too, but I think she was just excited about riding in a car with the windows down.

"Y'all got your notebooks, eh?" said Frankie, rounding a corner like there were hidden cameras filming for Fast and Furious, Montpelier Drift. "Get the names, get contact

info, and don't just write what they say. Write what you see, what you feel."

Sophie and I started fumbling for our composition books furiously to get this wisdom down.

“And make friends. Make as many friends as you can. Lord knows, you’re gonna make enemies. And worse, people who can’t talk, won’t talk, or refer you to HR. You like the sound of the phone ringing endlessly?”

Our eyes got big, but we didn't answer.

"Well, start liking it. It's your new life soundtrack."

In the end, the Music Melee story kind-of fizzled. The band got third place, which entitled them to a free recording session at a local studio and new guitar cables from Naive Melody Instrument Exchange. But we walked away with some hands-on experience, our first tidbits of journalistic integrity, and, most coveted of all, Frankie Mills's business card. I remember twirling it around in between my fingers, just staring at it. It had her business line and her cell. And technically, we were peers from another paper in town. If we really got ourselves into a bind, we could call her and she could tell us how to get out of it.

And we would.

The short story is, four months later, we broke a real story. Like, real, actual news. There was a scandal. There was a cover-up. People had to ask themselves whether to trust the Montpelier City Council, or three high school girls. We undermined the fabric of trust between the government and the citizen. We made people rethink notions of ethos and credibility. We made people look at their neighbors and elected officials differently. We made a lot of people uncomfortable, we made a lot of people mad, and we made one local journalist very frustrated and also very proud. We think. The jury's still out on that one.

The long story is—well. The long story starts on the next page.



Love as Method

Amina Melendez-Mayfield



Pop of Pink

Amanda McPherson

A WEEK OF DREAMS

By Tony Sovak

The viral black lip gloss that TikTok is always talking about
pouty painted lips pressed against
you guessed correctly
fingers through your hair

move in daylight, a suite of three Adobe alcoves, an attic
colorful bed sheets, dusty storage, a complex of red brick buildings
swimming in green fields of freshly manicured grass
pebble pathways lead on again to an old friend who reminds you of the
charmed life we lead, standing among incomplete men

I grew up in the back room of a collapsing tent
the walls folding down as the ceiling fell
suffocating gray vinyl wrapped around my face
until at last the zipper door opened into
the cold dark air of the wilderness

This person here is the one I love above all others.
We went to the conference in the future. In Toronto.
The luggage got lost either at the old mall,
at the railway museum or at the terminal & baggage claim.
we went to the keynote volunteered to attend the session of a rockstar academic
who always dreamed of a position where she could bring a couple of grad students
to a conference. For the lifetime achievement award, she agreed to cosplay as such.
Despite going to registration and the bellhop I could not get help finding my luggage.
See here, this is not a pipe. This is a watering can.

At first, I was unsure what it meant, but now I think it says
"gloves and toilet water" meaning to take extreme precautions
Perhaps unless there are hands in the gloves.
In that case, it seems advisable and not in the least bit extreme

pleased dreaming free seething explicitly bereaved

How proud would my father be of me if I brought home a son bearing his name?
File this under things Hallmark movies have taught me.
Silver Shadows in the mirrors. My dress shoes act like heelys on the carpet.



Garden After Dark

Nadine K. Sotomayor



River Cells

Nadine K. Sotomayor



Sunflowers

Nadine K. Sotomayor



Tumamoc Sunrise

Sandee Seitzinger

THE BRICK: WHICH WILL YOU CHOOSE?

By **Makyla Hays**

With every hurt we experience in life, we are given a brick. I have experienced many hurts in my life, and for each one I received a brick. I did what only seemed logical with those bricks - I built.

I stacked each new brick alongside and on top of the others until I had built a nice, tall wall around me. I was proud of my wall, it was well built and it was strong. It protected me from hurt, from lies, from things that would get me more bricks.

Then one day, as I was happily sitting inside my little fortress, there was a knock. I called out and asked who it was. The answer: "Someone who loves you very much". I scoffed, this must be another trick that my wall can keep out. My wall will protect me from the pain that would come from this. The voice continued, "Your wall may keep out pain, hurt, and lies, but it also keeps out love, joy, and friendship."

I felt a deep longing for the love that this voice spoke of, I hadn't let anyone love me in so long. I called out, "My wall protects me; it is built from experiences that teach me not to trust people. I trust my wall." The voice softly said, "This wall doesn't protect you, it isolates you. I didn't give you these bricks to build a wall. My child, that isn't what they are for." "Then what for, if not to build a wall?"

The voice implored me to let him show me. Against my fear, I decided to trust. One by one, I saw my precious bricks being taken off my wall. I couldn't see where they were going, but I fought my fear and trusted. At last, there was a hole I could see through. This lovely man was taking my bricks and instead of building a wall, was paving the ground.

I looked along the direction of the road he was building, and I saw in the distance: LOVE, HOPE, JOY, and TRUE FRIENDSHIP. It seemed so far and unreachable. But I trusted. I decided to help the man dismantle my wall and create this road. It felt good, though it was still scary. Brick by brick we worked – taking down my wall I thought I loved and creating this road. It was a good feeling.

Once the wall was gone I was still hurt, I still had pain. More hurt, more pain than I had with the wall. But with each hurt and each pain I got a brick – another brick to lay in my road to LOVE, HOPE, JOY, and TRUE FRIENDSHIP. Best of all, hurt and pain wasn't all I experienced now. I also, for the first time in a long time, experienced moments of love, moments of happiness, and moments of joy. These made the painful moments seem easier to deal with.

I choose to continue building my road, and I choose to never build that wall again. Which will you choose?



Seal
Shawn Hellman



Realistic Octopus
Shawn Hellman

Problems

By Tony Sovak

I met beautiful people this morning who said
use your heart - write your heart
and your poem becomes a recording of your presence in the world.

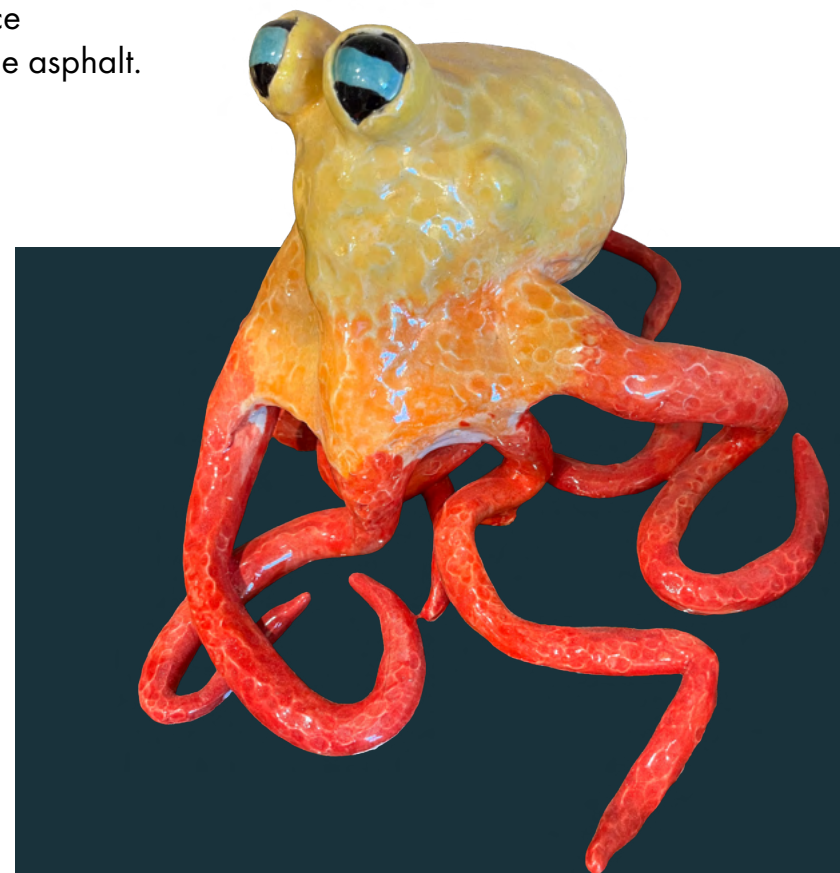
We have an audio problem. We need to start from the top.

Unexpectedly, the white pickup
in front of me swerves to the
left

to run over a rattlesnake
out for a morning sun bath
on the hot desert road.

The snake wiggles in the air
one last spastic dance
then bleeds out on the asphalt.

The driver nods.
Don't thank me.
Pay it forward.



Characterized Octopus
Shawn Hellman



Sunset at Baboquivari Peak
Aaron Kostko

POWER OF ONE

By Travis Ardle

She absorbs the sun as her bruises begin to heal
 She reclaims her power when she no longer must kneel
 She no longer lives in fear when she must scream
 She no longer lives in a world where she must flee
 She is the bird who escaped the cage
 She releases the choking rage
 She knows who she is from now on
 She knew she was right all along
 She no longer is played as a pawn
 She is the first ray of a new dawn



Autumnal Beauty
Amanda McPherson



Elements
Sam Overton

Metonym of Exfoliation, or high falutin' feline equilibrium

By **Tony Sovak**

At the foot of the bed,
two cats equally distant,
-patience and fortitude-
sleep in knitted bowls
divided by a hickory chest.

On the wall an oil painting,
my grandfather's hands sculpted
paint into leafy green foliage,
slow moving creek,
Indigenous American tall atop his horse.

I've been told that magazines,
about railroads mostly,
commissioned him to paint their covers.
That's how it was done back then.
They'd photograph a painting.

We were told the magazine kept the originals.
My father has tried and tried and tried to find them.
I like to think they wait in a forgotten warehouse,
like the lost ark of the covenant,
dangerous and forgotten
foreshadowing something momentous.

ARTISTS' BIOS

Aaron Kostko is a full-time faculty member in Philosophy on the West Campus. His areas of specialization are philosophy of psychiatry and medical ethics. In his free time, Aaron likes to hike, camp, and point his camera at the world

Alexander Greengard, MFA is an Instructor/Lecturer in the Building and Construction at Pima Community College. He works with students who have faced barriers to education and fights to break those barriers through integrated education and training initiatives, partnerships between basic education and college trade certification programs, and developing open educational materials. Alexander is also the founder of Troubadour, an arts education organization that provides theatre programs to economically marginalized families.



Alexis Gyenge BFA, M.ED. Adjunct Faculty BCT Program. Various courses taught at Pima Community College DC since 2008: Interior Design, Sustainable Design, Building Construction Core Classes. Retired 2010 from Pima County Facilities Management as Senior Interior Designer.

Amanda McPherson is the Director of the STEMAZing Project at Pima County School Superintendent's Office. She holds a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education, and she has been an Early Childhood Education Adjunct at Pima Community College West Campus for the last 14 years. Amanda enjoys taking nature photography when she is hiking, fishing, kayaking, and paddle-boarding.

Amina Melendez-Mayfield (she/her) is a adjunct Sociology faculty at both Desert Visa and East campus. She is a current PhD candidate at Arizona State University and holds a Bachelor's degree in Sociology with minors in Psychology and American Sign Language from Central Michigan University and a Master's degree in Justice Studies from Arizona State University. Her research focuses on the engagement of Black, Afro-LatinX, and Black LGBTQ+ individuals in placemaking within educational and non-educational spaces, examining how combinations of identity shape their experiences. She theorizes how educational institutions create spaces of insecurity and othering, to transform these institutions to better recognize and provide safe spaces for queerness and people of color. Additionally, she explores the role of Black respectability politics and families of origin in Black LGBTQ+ engagement in placemaking.



Andrew L. Huerta lives in Tucson, Arizona, where he has spent the last twenty-eight years in Higher Education teaching/advising students who are the first in their families to attend college. With his MA in Creative Writing and PhD in Education, his collection of short stories entitled A Different Man was published in 2021 by Bold Stroke Books, and his first novel, Raggedy Anthony, will be published summer 2026. His short stories have appeared in Chelsea Station Magazine, The Round Up Writer's Zine: Pride Edition, Jonathan, The Storyteller, and the anthologies Queerly Loving, First Came Fear: New Tales of Horror, Hashtag Queer Volume 2, and The Echoes We Make. His personal essays have appeared in Fashionably Late: Gay, Bi, and Trans Men Who Came Out Later in Life, Queer Families: An LGBTQ+ True Stories Anthology, and The Heart of Pride Volume 2.

Bernard Ngovo I graduated from Cuttington University in Liberia with a degree in Secondary Education. I also earned a master's degree from the State University of New York at Albany and two masters' degrees and a doctorate degree from Northern Illinois University in Dekalb, Illinois. I taught at the Zorzor Teacher Training Institute, University of Liberia, and Cuttington University in Liberia, and I have been teaching at Pima Community College for 29 years.

Carmen Salvo is a writing instructor at Pima Community College (PCC), where she teaches composition courses focused on helping students develop voice, clarity, and confidence in academic and professional writing. Based at the East Campus, she supports learners through engaging, real-world writing assignments that emphasize critical thinking, rhetorical awareness, and revision as a meaningful part of the writing process. Carmen's teaching approach is student-centered and practical, encouraging writers to connect personal experience with strong academic structure and credible evidence. In addition to teaching, she designs curriculum materials, writing templates, and classroom activities that help students build skills they can transfer beyond the classroom. Carmen is committed to creating an inclusive learning environment where students feel supported, challenged, and capable of growth as writers. She can be reached at csalvo@pima.edu.

Cathy Thwing has been teaching writing at community colleges since receiving her MFA in Creative Writing from Eastern Washington University and teaching writing online at Pima Community College since 1997. You can find some of her recent poems in Heartwood, the Orchards Poetry Review, and Whitefish Review. Gardening, practicing cello, and swinging in hammocks fill her life's other nooks and crannies.



Cindy Mohr studied art for many years, earning a Bachelors of Fine Arts at Indiana University /Herron School of Art in 1989 and a Master's Degree in Fine Arts/ Printmaking at Temple University/ Tyler School of Art, in 1992. She also studied piano, snare drum and cello throughout her formative years. She was born and raised in Lafayette Indiana. She lived also in Indianapolis, IN, Terre Haute, IN, and Philadelphia PA. She's been a resident of Patagonia, Arizona since 1998. She recently began performing with bands which sprang forth a plethora of musically themed art work. In addition to music, other subjects come forth; depictions of daily life such as experiences with pets, waiting tables, sharing coffee with a friend, etc. Although much of the work is autobiographical, it's also open to interpretation. The objects, 'emothions, people and places become universal. Currently she is an Adjunt Professor in Visual Arts at Pima Community College at Santa Cruz Center, in Nogales Arizona.

Courtney Webb (Ms. Webb) teaches Reading and Student Success classes at Pima College. She is an adjunct intructor and works at East campus, Desert Vista and Downtown. Her hobbies are hiking, swimming and reading. cwebb9@pima.edu

Damaris Ponce is a Program Specialist with Access and Disability Resources at Pima Community College's West Campus. Originally from Mexico, she moved to Tucson at the age of 14. Damaris began writing in high school as a creative outlet to process her emotions and experiences. Today, writing remains an essential part of her life, allowing her to reflect deeply and express her inner voice. She can be reached at dponce6@pima.edu.

Elaine Jones (Dr. Jones) (she/her) is an Adjunct Professor of Psychology at Pima College, teaching at both Northwest and West Campuses. She has been an avid reader since childhood, and first tried her hand at writing in 4th grade. She continues still with reading every day, many genre, and with writing poetry and creative nonfiction.

Elliot Mead is WRT faculty and REA Department Head, usually found at Desert Vista Campus trying to be a good teacher and an authentic, kind colleague. Off campus, they enjoy long walks, lizard-watching, home-futzing, and time with pets, partner, family, and friends.

Eric Aldrich teaches Literature, Writing, and Honors.

Jackie Guzman is an International Advisor and Adjunct Instructor for the Culinary and Hospitality programs. She works primarily at the West Campus. She loves hiking and photography and is able to combine the two with her landscape images. Film photography allows her to stay present and document her views as she explores outdoors.

Joanna E. Sanchez-Avila is an Enrollment Advisor at the Northwest Campus. As a transplant from South Central Los Angeles, California, she is privileged to live and work on the ancestral lands of the Tohono O'odham and Pascua Yaqui. Her self-portraiture digital photography explores themes of identity, self-making, imagination, and DIY (do-it-yourself) aesthetics with found materials. She uses textiles to shape colorful and moving backgrounds. Her current medium is instant photography where she shoots on Fuji Film Instax Cameras, wide and mini, to explore Cuk Šon / Tucson's natural spaces capturing majestic saguaros, sunsets, mountain ranges, and monsoon clouds.

Kari Beth Cadenhead (Marigold) is a multidisciplinary artist based in Tucson, Arizona, known for her expressive line work, storytelling through texture, and commitment to community-centered art. With a background spanning illustration, soft sculpture, painting, and professional tattooing, Kari brings a wide technical range and a deep appreciation for diverse creative practices. Her studio work often blends hand-drawn figures with unexpected materials—vintage floral fabrics, rhinestones, and layered mixed media—creating pieces that explore identity, embodiment, and the emotional landscapes of daily life. As a tattooer, she is recognized for her thoughtful, inclusive approach and her specialized paramedical work with breast cancer survivors and trans clients, underscoring her belief in art as a tool for healing and empowerment. Kari values authenticity, accessibility, and the uniquely creative and imperfect voice of humanity. She remains an active presence in the Tucson arts community through workshops, collaborations, and local events. Currently, Kari is an Administrative Assistant at the PCC West Campus CFA Box Office.

Kristin LeBlanc (they/them) is a writing tutor for the Virtual and West Campus, and a writer interested in a wide array of genres, though their love of fantasy, science fiction, and the strange seems to worm its way into their work constantly. They live in an apartment too small for their collectibles and knick-knacks with their husband and two cats, who make it very hard to get any writing done. When not immersing themselves in their characters' worlds or playing around with poetry, they enjoy baking, drawing, drinking too much tea, playing far too many video games, and being a strange fact-dispensing menace to their coworkers at the learning center. They hope to apply to (and be accepted by) several MFA Creative Writing programs this fall. Since they can't seem to pick which they like more, prose or poetry, they figure they'll just apply to both tracks, cross their fingers, and hope for the best. kleblanc@pima.edu

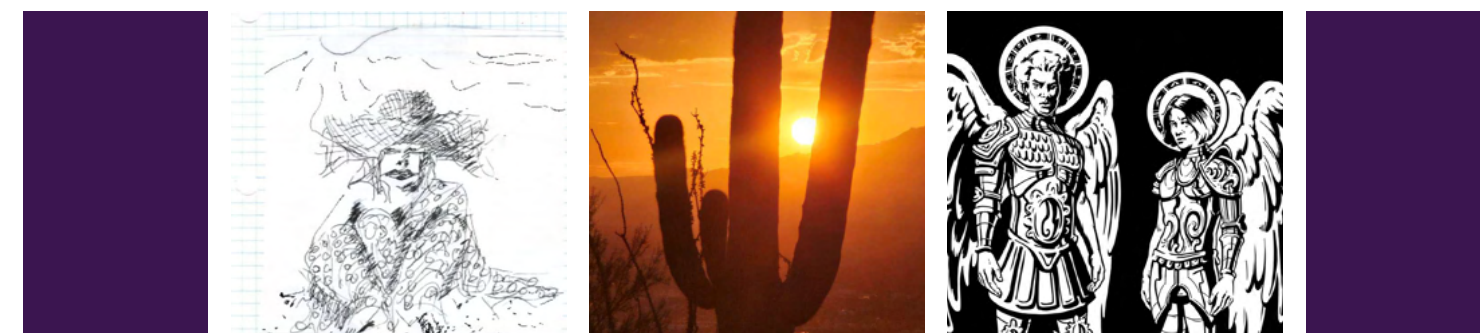
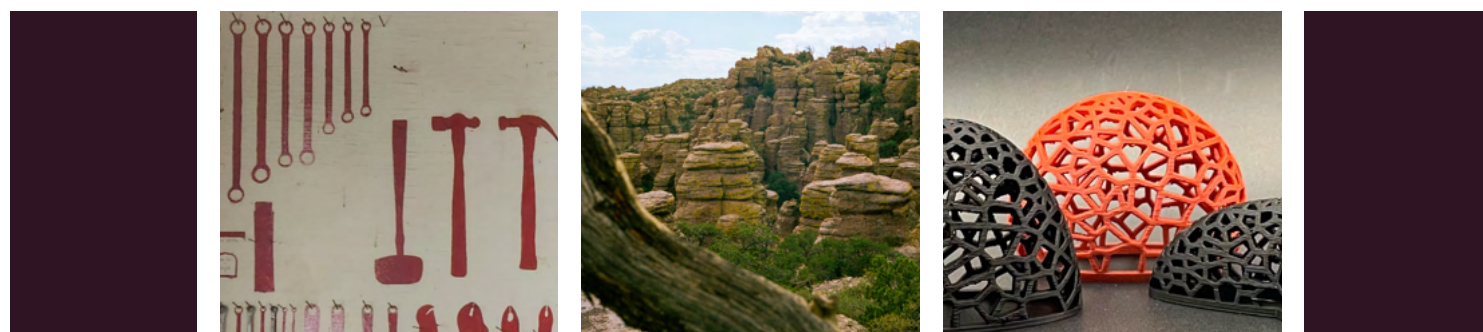
Lucy Chester is a part-time instructional technologist working in the Teaching & Learning Center, supporting Pima instructors in their use of instructional tech. She studied English Literature and specifically loved her courses on post-colonial lit--especially South African literature. She loves spending time with her young family in the outdoors. She wrote this poem in the continual heaviness of mass shootings, reflecting the statistic that guns are the top killer of kids under 18 in the U.S.

Makyla Hays' 15th year as a full-time Math Faculty at PCC. She taught for the first 7 years at East Campus, and has been at Northwest since 2018. She has taught face-to-face, hybrid, and online, serving for one year as a PimaOnline Department Head and another year as an Associate Instructional Designer. She has been involved with policy development and advocacy for about 14 years with the PCCEA meet and confer team and then the All Employee Representative Council, serving as President of PCCEA since 2021 and co-chair of AERC since January 2022. She has enjoyed the opportunity to work with the Faculty Senate, Strategic Planning Team, and team coordinating the 2024 HLC Accreditation report and visit. PCC truly has an amazing workforce of people to support students, and she is proud to be part of it!

Mano Sotelo, BFA, MFA, MBA, is a visual artist, author, and educator with over 20 years of experience teaching in higher education. His artwork has been exhibited in museums and galleries across the United States, including the Alexandria, Tampa, Haggin, Coos, and Tucson Museums of Art. His paintings have received recognition in national and international juried competitions, including The Artist's Magazine and International Artist Magazine. Sotelo is the author of the graphic novel The War in Heaven and the book The Collective Truth. He serves as Visual Arts faculty, teaching at East Campus and online. Additional information, publications, artwork, and an extended biography are available at www.sotelostudio.com.



Mariah Young is writing faculty and the advisor for SandScript, and she teaches creative writing and English at multiple campuses. Her short story collection Masha'allah and Other Stories (Heyday, 2012) won the California Book Award for First Fiction and James D. Houston Award for Short Fiction.



Mike Rom (Instructional Media Services, Downtown Campus) has a BS in Film and Television production (not that kind of BS). He worked in the movie industry in Tucson for over eight years and did everything from art department to office PA to special effects explosives assistant. When he started working at Pima College in the AV Department, he expanded their offerings to video and computer graphics. He was also able to indulge his creative side through their Digital Art classes. He took sculpture and drawing classes and learned how to paint with acrylics. Mike started photographing flowers for his wife's paintings--she works in oils--and eventually framed his own work and put them into art shows at the Blue Raven Galley and Gifts. He sold his first piece in his first show and has done pretty well since. He shares a website with his wife at RomByDesign.com, to exhibit his art.

Nadine Sotomayor serves as an Instructional Technology Assistant within the Faculty Services & Resource Centers at Pima Community College. My passion is driven by a love for helping others and staying at the forefront of ever-evolving technologies. I thrive on connecting with individuals, supporting their growth, and ensuring they have the resources they need to succeed. Outside of my professional life, I am deeply connected to my family and dogs, cherishing the time we spend together. I also have a creative side that fuels my interest in tinkering with all forms of technology and art. Whether it's experimenting with digital art, exploring new tech innovations, or diving into hands-on projects, I find joy in the endless possibilities where art, technology, and creativity meet.

Natalie McConnell is the Administrative Assistant to the Dean of Mathematics at Pima Community College, Downtown Campus. A struggling endurance athlete and student, she tries to stay in shape only to keep up with her two teenage boys who are unfairly getting faster and stronger on their bikes every day, but that is when they will talk to her. She is obsessed with her two dogs (females, so she wouldn't be outnumbered) and human resilience in general.

Nina Gardner is originally from Russia and moved to the US thirteen years ago. In Spring 2019, she graduated from PCC in AAS in Digital Arts/Graphic Design. Currently, Nina is an Administrative Coordinator for PimaOnline, Online Student Success department, Northwest Campus. She speaks fluently Russian, Spanish and English languages. Nina has been passionate about photography during the last ten years, and she took two additional photography classes at PCC. Her photographs were published in Sandscript in 2018 and 2029. Nina's photographs were published in Cababi 2019/2020, 2021/2022, 2023/2024 and during the last three years Nina exhibited her photographs in four PimaCounty libraries.

Sam Overton works as accounting faculty at Pima NW campus. In their free time they enjoy spending time with family, and that includes painting activities with their son. Sam finds a spiritual path in Druidry and expresses their spirituality through fluidic painting.

Samantha Aguilar is a Lecturer at Pima Community College's Online English Department. She is originally from Sierra Vista, Arizona, where she enlisted in the U.S. Air Force following high school and local community college. From there, she returned to Arizona where she tutored at Pima Community College's TRiO Program at Desert Vista Campus in hopes of pursuing a writing teaching position, which was later granted. While Samantha has taught at Pima Community College for a short time, she has found it to be a rewarding experience and is thrilled to continue serving her community in the art of writing. Her passion for writing goes back as far as her middle school years where her English teachers inspired and challenged her to write about subjects she felt passionate about. In turn, she challenges her students to do the same and the writing from her students is something Samantha looks forward to every semester. When she is not engaging with students or coursework, she enjoys spending time with her family, journaling, writing short fiction, reading suspense and young adult fiction, cooking, and exercising.

Sandee Seitzinger currently serves as the Program Coordinator for the CLT at the Northwest Campus. She began her career at the Downtown Campus in 1997 within Administrative Services, where she also completed numerous special projects for the Campus President during the 1998–2000 campus construction period. She later became the Downtown Campus Event Coordinator, overseeing all aspects of campus room scheduling and usage. In addition to her administrative roles, Ms. Seitzinger taught CIS and CSA courses as Adjunct Faculty for nine years. In 2010, she transferred to the Northwest Campus, where she worked across multiple divisions before assuming her current position in 2020. For more information, please contact her at sseitzinger@pima.edu

Shawn Hellman is English Faculty and Department Head for Desert Vista Campus, East Campus, and Santa Cruz Center.

Tineke Van Zandt is full-time faculty in Anthropology and Archaeology at the West Campus. She enjoys spending time outside and is an avid birdwatcher. The Pentax K1000 she received as a high school graduation gift traveled all over with her and took thousands of photos, especially a lot of Kodachrome slides. Eventually, when she realized that her old SLR was just sitting in the closet and hadn't been used in years, she donated the K1000 to the PCC Photography program so students could continue to enjoy using it. She is sometimes still amazed by the great pictures she can take not only with her digital camera but even with just her phone.

Tomoko Lara enjoys transforming geometric patterns into 3D-printed forms and brings new life to old furniture through refinishing.

Tony Sovak holds a Ph.D. in English from Stony Brook University and serves as the Director of the Learning Management System and E-Learning Quality at Pima Community College, based at the Northwest Campus. He has taught writing and literature for many years and remains interested in how language, creativity, and technology intersect in both teaching and writing. Tony's poetry often draws from everyday moments, quiet observations, and the playful possibilities of language. His work reflects an interest in voice, reflection, and the spaces where seriousness and humor overlap. When he's not working, Tony trains as an amateur powerlifter, plays Dungeons & Dragons, and continues to inhabit a life of playful poetry. He can be reached at asovak@pima.edu

Travis Ardle has lived in Arizona his entire life. He has worked at Pima Community College since 2017. He currently works at the Registrar Office at the District Office.

