

Sassafras Literary Magazine

Issue 1 - September 2013

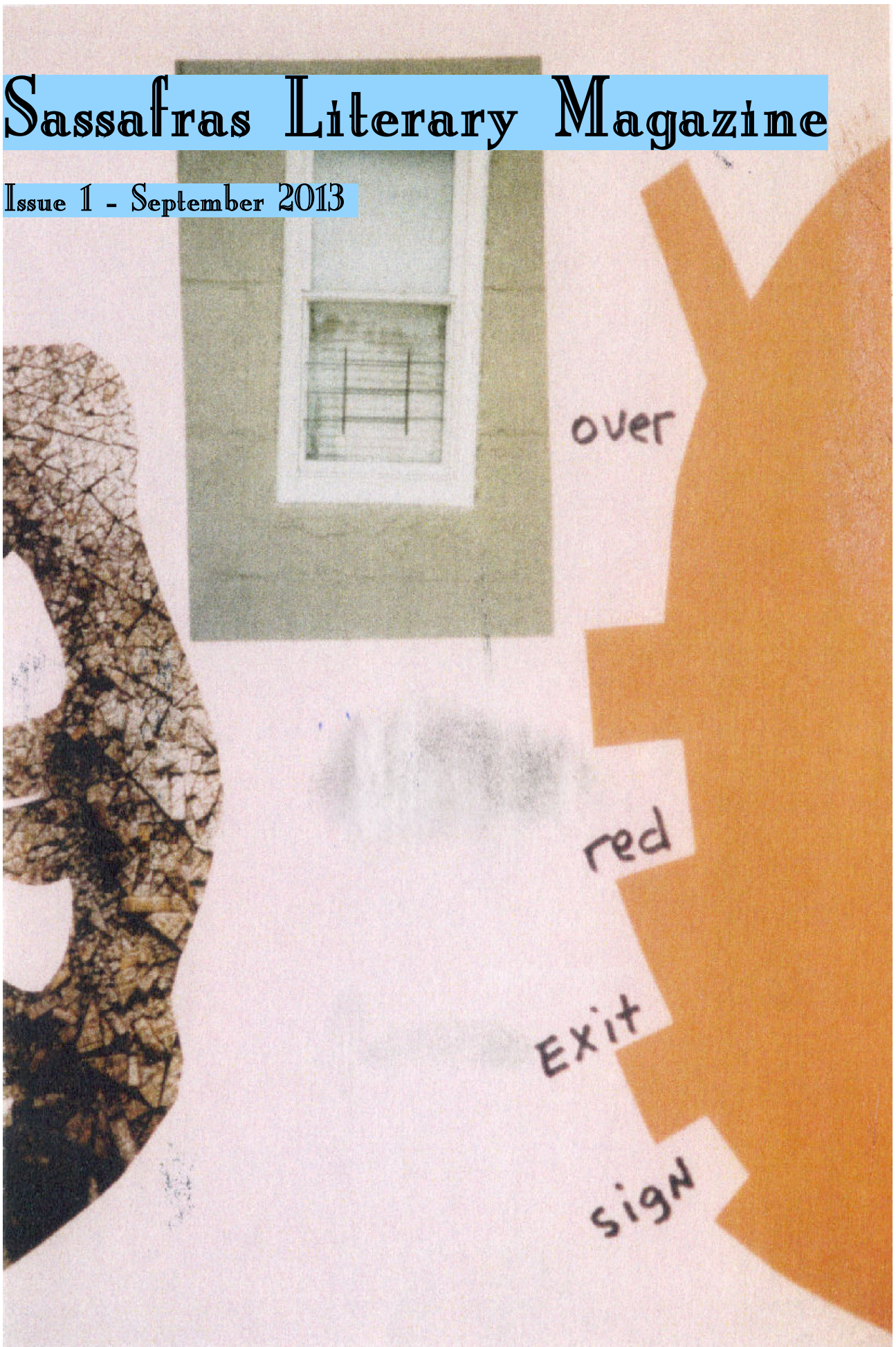


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About

Sassafras Literary Magazine:

Seeking minimalistic and/or enigmatic pieces, simple ideas, strong narrative, short stories, striking poetry & artwork.

Website: sassafrasmag.wordpress.com editor: Miranda Holmqvist

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Carly Breault

Unrefined

I find myself disbarred
From the society of refined people
Of people unafraid
Of sugar in their morning coffee, salt to liven their spouse's recipe
The mingling taste of champagne and expensive lipstick
Chocolate sucked from their lover's fingers
Eating in the company of other

Refined people

I Smell Smoke

Seven:

Schoolyard Witness: a genocide of trees.

Decapitated, blood of bark

Stains polyester playground, the eerie cries

Of glee, that laughter we exchanged

In the Forest come and go as ghosts

Buried into artificial turf

We cannot climb the monkey bars

Without reminiscence of freedom

Of climbing the trunks of our Supervisors

The old pine-scented wind at our backs
In the all-consuming fire, there is life lost
In a stack of shaved logs
Burning what kept us together
What kept adventure alive.

Now we are walking tombs
Marking a childhood without trees to climb
A forest to take refuge in.
To explore and find where we came from.
Where we belong

Carly Breault is an 18-year-old university student majoring in psychology. She is a feature writer for the university newspaper, and several of her poems have been published by the Poet's Institute of Canada, the Claremont Review, Re:Verse, and the Brick Rhetoric.

Tessa J Brown

Foundations

The building's foundation lies open in the gap between the shops. It is a tomb, a monument to the things people did in it before it was called upon to serve some new purpose. Wire fences grin too widely, and I ask myself for whom the first place was made, and if they counted on it to stand the test of time. And who among them came to see its end? Working in Spain I sought out a mausoleum from ancient times and found my shoulders' girth too wide. The tomb's foundation, too, would burst before it could hold all our worlds. Building will begin, and soon the tomb will become a womb and another place will spring forth and be as temporary as the first.

Tessa J. Brown is a Montreal-based writer of prose and poetry. Her horror fiction has been published in the anthology *Re-Vamp*, edited by Die Booth and LC Hu, and her short story "Escape" will be appearing in the upcoming anthology *Dead North: Canadian Zombie Fiction*, edited by Silvia Moreno-Garcia.

Alyssa Cooper

Towards the Light

The trouble with you and me is that I was already looking for a ride home when I saw your car gliding by. I was so desperate to get in out of the cold. I never thought to check that you were the right driver before I belted myself in for our tumultuous journey. I just held on. I ground my teeth and set my jaw, and I refused to cry out as I waited in vain for the shadowy road ahead to finally turn towards the light.

Goodbye Kiss

I found the last cup you drank from on my windowsill last night, tucked behind a stack of books that had allowed it to remain hidden for the weeks and weeks that you've been gone. I was struck by the spiderweb lines of Chapstick your lip had left on the glass; I touched the tip of my finger to them, blurring them under the weight of my desperation. When I lifted my finger to my nose, I could smell the strawberries that had always rested on your lilting laugh. I rubbed the old wax into my bottom lip, and I swear, I could taste you. When I pressed my mouth to the mark your lips had left behind, it was almost like kissing you goodbye.

Alyssa Cooper was born in Belleville, Ontario. Her first novel, *Salvation*, was released in 2012. Her first poetry collection, *Cold Breath of Life*, is scheduled to be released in the winter of 2013. She is currently working as a designer in Belleville, where she lives with her vintage typewriters and her personal library.

John Grey

THE CAR. IN THE STREAM

Old Mercury, dragged out of the weeds,
a rusty corpse, twenty years' worth of miles
dripping three feet of mud -
I could have told them years ago that it was there -
but the town's being beautified -
folks might even shave the bums.
Crane's hee-hawing like a mule.,
kids line the river,
one or two afraid they'll see
skeletal hands gripped to the wheel -
but this wreck was dumped here -
no plates, its numbers scraped,
its history as good as drowned -
someone says, "Joey Palmer
used to drive a car like that."
Car's hauled off to the metal crushers,
folks disperse, brown and murky
stream stays its course—
everyone soon forgets that Joey Palmer got remembered

John Grey is an Australian born poet. Recently published in International Poetry Review, Sanskrit and the science fiction anthology, "Futuredaze" with work upcoming in Clackamas Literary Review, New Orphic Review and Nerve Cowboy.

Desirée Jung

Taking a Deep Breath on Peculiar Days

His father's homosexuality bothers him

Even though he's old. He takes sides with his mother.

Hospitalized in a care facility, his deliriums include his lovers,

Imaginary, because he doesn't recognize anyone anymore.

In disharmony, he laments having abandoned them.

The hospital director, sitting in the entrance,

Welcomes Gustavo, who repeats his line again,

Like an echo. He often resists when visiting his father

and his resistance is a subtleness of his interactions.

The music in the hallways, as if a band was playing,

despite his misery, makes his sadness sound improbable.

"How is your father today," is the question that persists.

Desirée Jung is a writer and translator who spends her time between languages, Portuguese and English, and countries, Canada and Brazil. When not writing, she likes to go out for long walks and have warm talks with friends.

Victoria Martinez

Advance Preparation

I feel ready to – prepared to (shh) die.
 ,that is –
not equipped.
But the bite marks on my frame scream
Open mouthed.
A pitch only dogs can hear
violence! Violence!
Infinitely empty : the ether
 between the quarks
between the neutrons
 between my cells your cellsyourteeth
Infinitely neither here, nor

Victoria Martinez (@eigenmotion) is an editor and science writer, previously for the Canadian Light Source. Her literary work has appeared in Cactus Heart and Eat It, a literary anthology on food and feminism.

Corey Mesler

I am the light

under your door

you apprehend

just before

sleep comes. Your

dreams shimmer.

And in the

morning you will love me

as if it were meant to be so.

Be Aware

The demon

you fear

most

will be the

one who

wakes you

every morning.

His name

will be yours

backwards,

his tools

the ones you

crafted for him.

Corey Mesler has published in numerous journals and anthologies. He has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize numerous times, and two of his poems were chosen for Garrison Keillor's Writer's Almanac. His fiction has received praise from John Grisham, Robert Olen Butler, Lee Smith, Frederick Barthelme, Greil Marcus, among others. With his wife, he runs Burke's Book Store in Memphis TN. He can be found at <http://coreymesler.wordpress.com/>

Kenneth Pobo

Two Autumns Ago

I stopped in at Pete's, got us
bi-colored sweet corn. We argued
about cabinet space. The cats
cried to go out on the porch,
though Margot, approaching nineteen,
chose the warm area behind
the propane stove. I went to work,

you went to work, cataclysm casing
the house, checking when we leave
and return. Warm days got arthritic,
turned colder. Frost ate windows.

Even then we thought everything
would go on as it had. Fall fell. Winter,

barely a day old-mom died.

Hardly a warning. Chicken wings
browned in the oven. The basement
smelled damp, needed vacuuming.

Sometimes Pink

You're beat. Work flattens

us out so we'll slide easily

into coffins. I'm beat.

I'd kiss you but I'm coffee

that has drabbed in the percolator

for two days. Come,

let's walk in the garden.

The usual suspects: an orange

rose eaten by Japanese beetles,

a dahlia prepping a red

and yellow bloom, too slow,

too slow. What's this?

Behind a pile of wood

under a blue tarp—

a Rose of Sharon: how

did it get there? Something

pink and perfect leading us,

gently, back inside

to make love.

Kenneth Pobo has a chapbook forthcoming from Eastern Point Press called *Placemats*. His work has appeared in *Word Riot*, *decomp*, *Centrifugal Eye*, *Stickman Review*, and more.

Wayne Burke

Snapshot, 1958

The sound of the rain—its patter and drip
is as soothing as being held
in my father's grip
above his head
as he lies face-up on the ground,
my mother sitting at a picnic table
in the background.

My father has a white t-shirt on and is looking at me
while I soar at the ends of his arms,
a turkey-shaped bundle, in the air, looking
ahead.

Wayne Burke is recently published in Boston Review, FORGE, and Bareback.

Will Fawley

The Black Spot

When he first noticed the black spot he wasn't sure how long it had been there. It was small and black and solid and on the palm of his hand at the base of his thumb. It looked like this: . It was the same size too. It was only a speck really, that's why, at first, he thought it was just a pen mark. But when it didn't wash off three days later he began to worry. He began to suspect that the spot was growing, though he still could not tell if it was under his skin or above.

He scratched at it as if hoping to dislodge it. He visited Dr. Angee, the man who had taken care of he and his wife and all three of their children until they left for college. He wasn't satisfied when the Doctor told him it was probably nothing more than a freckle. He also wasn't satisfied when the dermatologist told him it was a blood blister, or when the oncologist told him it could be a number of things but definitely not cancer.

The black spot was growing, yes he was sure of it. He couldn't prove it to Dr. Angee when he went back for another checkup, but he knew it. When the doctor saw him again he said the spot was nothing to worry about and said he could prescribe an anti-anxiety medication or cut the spot off whichever he preferred.

It was not in his head, he knew it, so he asked Dr. Angee to cut the black spot off. The doctor made a show, pumping the anesthetic into the syringe, pushing the air out, flicking the tube, and then squeezing it into his thumb, he needed to believe this would work.

His hand bled red, clear and healthy, and then scabbed up into a new black spot. In the back of his mind he worried that the new black spot would never go away, even though he knew that was ridiculous, the black spot was gone for good.

But the new black spot did not go away after three days. It did not go away after a week. Or three weeks. It did not go away after a year, and none of the doctors would see him about this new black spot. He watched the new black spot every day, sure it was growing. He watched the new black spot until he died.

Will Fawley holds an MFA from George Mason University where he worked as a fiction editor for *Phoebe: A Journal of Literature and Art*.

Miguel Gardel

The Sun Shines Bright in California

I once met a little girl with the wispiest blond hair I had ever seen. One day I slept with her mother who was as blond and pale as the little girl, and early in the morning I had to get back to base. The little girl was up and the mother was ahead of me and was pulling on the shade and suddenly the sun flooded the room and the little girl looked like a halo. Like a halo. Not that she had a halo. She was the halo. No angel, no Virgin, no saint: a glowing circle of gold, transparent and beautiful. It was the warm halo of the home I did not have. And her mother said, "Jennifer Ann, come drink your milk." And the little girl moved from the light and looked at me sensing that she was never going to see me again. And I had thought she would remember me forever because I had brought her candy in the evening and had kissed her face and she called me Sheeshis (my name is Jesus). Her mother had told me she had caught her drinking a little boy's pee while the little boy peed. But the mother didn't create a big commotion, she simply told her not to do that again. When I left them I thought of Jennifer Ann sweetly remembering me, the man who gave her candy and kissed her face.

Miguel Gardel lives in New York and attended the City College. He has worked at many things from janitorial to journalism. His stories and essays have appeared in Bilingual Review, Best Fiction, Red Fez, Pemmican, Press One and other publications.

Linda Hegland

The Repetitive Nature of Drowning

When Simon first drowned, he was nine.

The summer it happened, Simon woke in the bee-buzz somnolence of the oppressive, sweltering mornings, already feeling he gasped for every hot breath. His sweat-stiffened hair was cemented to his head and his skin felt like old paper – parched and thin. Though Simon spent the whole of his cricket-choked and star-lit summer nights in the screened sleeping porch, rarely entering the stifling hot house but to change clothes and eat, still the dog days sapped his small-boy exuberance from him. He felt limp as an effeminate wrist, as wrung out as a well-used dishcloth.

The only repository of coolness in the whole of Simon's small interior town was the lake – so wide that one could see nothing of the other side but a purple haze; so cold as to make one's hesitant degree-testing toe shrivel white and aching; so deep as to be bottomless – dank, dreary home of a behemoth sleek and lonely. Simon visited there every day, pushing his face close to the surface, inhaling great gulps of moist air, rolling goutts of biting water down his bony back. He wiggled his fingers to attract minnows, swatted at ravenous mosquitoes, and ventured no closer than the wet rocks at the very edge of the water.

His mother would have been mad as a cut snake had she known he was at the lake. Deep, and cold, and wide as it was, it was nothing like an algae-scummed swimming hole or friendly simmering stream at which small summer-bewitched boys were meant to spend their adventures. It was not the place for scabbed-kneed boys' antics or reckless dares. The family picnicked only once at the shore. It was a windy day and his older sister took a picture of him with her boxy Brownie camera, sitting on a rock. Behind him the water churned and swirled and lifted itself in irate curls of spume. Simon's smile was hesitant as his seat was precarious, and his hair was tousled and blown across his face. After eating they had hastily packed up thermoses and blankets and hurried back to their old car. The lake had seemed affronted with them; the sun had eclipsed itself behind dark clouds and the cold gray air had bled the gayety from their outing.

On a day when the sky was the colour of faded amber and the sun seemed to fill the entire sky, Simon went again to the lake. On that day, there was no wind.

The air was still, so still, holding its own breath in anticipation. The surface of the water was as sleek and as glossy and as black as the flank of his Angus calf – first prize in the 4-H fair, warm tongue sucking at his fingers.

And for no reason that Simon could say, nor could ever be asked, he stepped out onto the lake surface expecting the solidity of a marble floor and had remarkably taken several steps before he knew himself to be sinking, the icy cold numbing his body so as make him feel it had left him. He pulled his arms down by his side, lifted his head to look at the retreating sky . . . and accepted. He heard the lonely beast's aching moans; he was aware of sinking with the smoothness of a hot knife through butter, leaving nothing to the world - not even a memory of the event as there was no one there to witness his stepping out of the world.

At just the point when his lungs, on fire, were to fill with water; at just the point when there would have been no returning, he felt himself lifted and flung onto the shore with all the ceremony of a caught fish. He flopped and gagged, gaped and gasped. He stood and ran from the lake, ran as fast as squelching shoes and sodden clothes would allow him – and then swallowed the secret of his drowning along with the green water still sputtering at his lips.

The second time Simon drowns, it's for keeps.

An old man now; daily swims at the local pool. The walls are comfortably confining, the blue water holds no secrets. No rocks, no minnows, no moaning from the depthless depths. A sea-themed gallery of mermaids and seahorses on the ceiling solely for the benefit of back-strokers. Stroke and pull, stroke and pull.

Suddenly a cramping pain that clamps his heart and squeezes with a grip as if fearing a fall from a cliff into an abyss. As he looks up at the lights refracted and blurred through the water, as he watches the spindrift from his lungs bubble to the surface in fewer and fewer bubbles, as the booming in his ears reaches a dreadful dissonance, a great darkness fills his brain. With the undeniable, suffering perception that someone, something is coming to fetch him, he thinks, oh – I remember this.

Linda Hegland has published two short stories in the New Zealand 'Smarter Than Jack' book series, and is to be published (upcoming) in the Prairie Journal of Canadian Literature. She lives and writes in Port Coquitlam, BC.

Rob McLennan

Untitled 1

Driving hours down highway, we pass a houseboat docked on a small rise of earth, some twenty miles from the closest body of water. A dream of ocean, between blacktop and tree-line, tied to a hydro pole. What would happen if the houseboat unmoored? Perhaps nothing, perhaps everything. Perhaps the entire illusion of what the anchor holds floating away into unrecoverable distances.

Untitled 2

I prefer the theory that time is a single point, as opposed to a linear trajectory. Every moment ever happened or will sharing this, from the War of 1812 to the moon landing to the chaos in Egypt to the birth of my grandfather to the creation of Stonehenge to my fingers brushing up against your face the first time.

Rob McLennan won the John Newlove Poetry Award in 2010, and was longlisted for the CBC Poetry Prize in 2012. His most recent titles are: *Songs for little sleep*, (Obvious Epiphanies, 2012) and *Grief Notes*: (BlazeVOX [books], 2012), and *Missing Persons* (2009). As an editor and publisher, he runs Chaudiere Books, The Garneau Review (ottawater.com/garneaureview), and *Seventeen Seconds*: a journal of poetry and poetics. Blog <http://robmclennan.blogspot.se/>

Linda Nguyen

Pretty Things

Mom, Dad and I were in Wildwood, New Jersey for a vacation. I was only three. I didn't know what a vacation was, but I knew it meant that Dad didn't have to work for a while.

"Yay! Đi biển chơi!" I said in Vietnamese. "We're going to the beach!" I'd only learned the word for beach when we left Montréal by car, but I didn't know what the beach was until the sand was under my sandals, and the green-blue ocean I saw stretched on forever. Even the sky could touch it. Mom covered me in sunscreen while I built sand castles, the grains of which were coarse and uneven. Dad hobbled over to the edge of the water, testing how it was with his feet, and he came back with a pail full of cloudy water. He poured it next to my sand castle.

"Your castle will be stronger with water," he said, and it was! My dad was a genius!

My admiration of his genius was short lived as I was distracted by all the different rocks in the sand when the water washed over them. Some big, some small, some smooth, some colorful, and some with patterns on them. I found a big one though, the size of a chicken egg.

I took a break from castle-building and collected several of them, not as big as that first one, but I kept the ones I liked. I put them in my trouser pockets. Dad came back, drenched from his swim. He asked Mom to reapply the sunscreen.

"Amy, come here so I can apply sunscreen on you too," she said.

I crawled back from my sand castle, my shorts dragging below my waist, almost off my bum.

"What are in your pockets?" Dad asked.

"Đồ đẹp," I said. Pretty things.

Dad reached into my pockets, shaking his head but smiling.

"Don't put stones in your pockets," he said. "They'll just drag you down wherever you go."

"No they won't," I protested.

"Fine. Keep them," he said. "See if I'm right."

When it was almost time for dinner, Dad folded the beach chairs and umbrella. He carried them up to our motel while Mom brought up her beach bag and our cooler. I was tasked with bringing my castle-building tools, but my shorts kept falling down. Before we got to the massive stairs that led up to the boardwalk, I abandoned all my pretty things. Mom waited for me, smiling but not saying a word. Once we got to our motel room, Dad turned and asked me "Where are all your rocks?"

"I had to leave them behind," I mumbled, my eyes beginning to tear up.

"I was right, wasn't I? Don't be sad," he said while hugging me. "Giỏi, ba thương."

'Be good and I'll love you', he said, as if I had to be good or he wouldn't love me at all. Sometimes, it hurt to find out how much of a genius he was.

Linda Nguyen is pursuing her MFA in Creative Writing. She lives in Montréal where her mind wanders and her fingers type.

Amy Attas

Luck

Now that my grandfather has lived eighty-seven years, he chooses to remember his life in brief stories, filed under reductive headings like "Luck".

It was luck that his wife agreed to move across the world to marry him, and luck that they had healthy children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren.

It was luck that got him his first job in Montreal. If he'd not been offered that job at the last possible moment, he would have been sent back to war-torn Greece and conscription.

It was luck that brought him to Montreal, when he was desperate to continue his education to avoid deportation. He heard a man in the lab at MIT speaking French and struck up a conversation with him. My grandfather was lucky his parents had chosen to speak French in the home, in Salonica, Greece, when he was a boy. Because he knew French he could talk to the visiting engineer, explain his urgent need to find a new sponsoring university, and eventually gain entrance to McGill.

It was luck that gave him a one-year visa to the United States and Canada, not just the three-month visa he'd originally been issued. If he hadn't been delivering a parcel from Athens to the Greek embassy in New York City, the woman at the embassy wouldn't have offered to extend his visa.

It was luck that a peanut seller on the streets of New York City spoke Greek, and could give him directions to the embassy.

It was luck that got him out of Greece in 1948, when the country was in civil war and all males between the ages of 18 and 50 were barred from leaving the country. He was lucky to win a scholarship for summer study at MIT, lucky someone at MIT could pull favors with the American Ambassador to Greece.

It was luck that kept him alive in Nazi-occupied Greece. His family of non-practicing Jews spent the later war years in hiding in a mountain village. Whenever they heard rumour of Nazi inspections they'd spend a few nights in the woods outside town.

One morning, returning from the woods to their temporary home, they encountered two Nazi soldiers. One of the soldiers shouted at my grandfather, and my grandfather thought he'd be killed. Luckily, the soldier only fancied my grandfather's walking stick, and took only that.

It was luck that a Nazi patrol outside Athens was disorganized. My grandfather fled Athens for the mountains in a crowded truck, but was halted on the road by that patrol. My grandfather's mother told the soldiers they were attending a wedding in the next town. The soldiers were late, and didn't have time to search the vehicle. They ordered the passengers to check in at the next town (they never did) and let them carry on their way.

It was luck that my grandfather's parents fled from their home in Salonica to Athens. Very few Jews from Salonica survived the Holocaust.

Genealogically, I'm one-quarter non-practicing Lucky to be alive.

Amy Attas is a graduate of York University's Creative Writing program. Her stories have appeared in anthologies by Summit Studios and Cumulus Press, and her reviews in *The Rover* and *The Winnipeg Review*. She grew up in Pinawa, Manitoba, and now lives on the road, paying the bills planting trees.

Dora Mushka

Carrots

She stands in the carrot patch mulling over this year's harvest. A deformed rainbow blend of reds, purples, yellows and oranges. She hoped their roots would grow strong and straight; penetrate deep into the rich dark soil. She sorts through the sad harvest; biggest to smallest. The small pile grows fastest. She remembers putting the seed in the ground. She imagines them on her plate. Perfectly shaped and shaved legs, the warm butter melting and sliding down their smooth round thighs, colors glistening, inviting her to take a bite.

Not these carrots. Planted too thick again! She didn't have the heart to thin; to pull things out that wanted to grow. She could have mixed carrot seeds with radish seeds, planted a seed tape, but she never did. But it wasn't all her fault though, every rock or lump of dirt seemed to divert their growth, stop them up into stubby toes, or shred them into octopus legs. None looked like the marketing marvel of mechanically formed baby carrots in the grocery store. Easy to eat, easy to clean; perfect fast food snacks. She picks up a carrot, wipes it on her pants and munches it down as she walks back to the house. Maybe next year she will plant a seed tape.

Pickle Relish

Tart and Tangy Pickle Relish; the recipe appeals to her. She has a lot of cucumbers. She watered them well a week before, and they exploded onto production, climbing the corn stalks, growing fat and juicy. The best crop she'd ever grown. She remembers reading that cucumbers hated corn. It seemed a harsh emotion for cucumbers, but she made a mental note at the time, and then quickly forgot. It's a small garden after all and things that hate one another have to get along. She picked a good two dozen large ones and set them to crisp up in cold water.

The recipe suggested using the food processor to chop the vegetables. Easy. Her mother used a food grinder with a hand crank. The same one dad used for sausage. It was mounted onto a wooden board that clamped to a table top. A bushel basket of cucumbers sat to the side – another equally large tub sat under the grinder to be filled with ground relish. She remembers helping push the cucumbers into the feeder while her mother turned the crank; watching as the blades cut through the flesh. They would make dozens of jars, and eat them all the next year.

Today, however, she cuts the recipe in half and makes only four or five small jars. She pulls out the food processor, roughly chops the cucumbers, red peppers, a couple tomatoes and onions then places them into the container. They are minced in seconds. She measures out turmeric, mustard seed, cloves and allspice, places them in vinegar, water and sugar to boil. She works from generations of practiced competence, sterilizing jars, filling them with hot relish, and processing in hot water. She loves the satisfying “thunk” of the lids as they seal. Feels pride as she writes on the labels: Tart and Tangy Pickle Relish 2013.

Dora Mushka is an aspiring writer, seeking her creative writers voice after a career in writing for governmental publications, finding support in writer- in-residence Bernadette Wagner at Last Mountain Cultural Centre ([LMLCC](#)), Saskatchewan, Canada.

Guy R. Beining - Screenplay

Xitonorus, crawls under camouflage of a giraffe

(Set 2)

CAST:

Xit - Thoughts covering 1938 - 54 (youth)

Xon - Thoughts covering 1955 -70 (adulthood)

Xor - Thoughts covering 1971 - 86 (middle years)

Xus - Thoughts covering 1987 - present (ripened)

SCENE:

All four characters are seated below a billboard with large white letters across the top reading: BETTER TO FALL BACKWARDS RATHER THAN FORWARD. All four figures appear to be handcuffed, & each is wearing a white sweatshirt with a red letter in the middle of the chest area. Seated from left to right are Xit as T, Xon as E, Xor as A and Xus as M. At the end of the scene Xus and Xit exchange positions, thereby spelling out MEAT.

Xus: (matter of factly.) In late March City Works, a literary magazine from San Diego City College accepted 2 of my word breakage poems, 3f & 3u...

Xon: (Brightly.) Ahhhhheeeee.....there I was with a sudden thump. I guess there was something between the rafters or under the bed wetting my area, that area being my head. It was all in the splash of a gun, moments before or after.

Xor: (loud but with a sense of vagueness.) I shook the tree full of ravens or pears in the bitching ours of dawn.

Xus: (With derision.) Your memory is glazed by alcohol, by being bitten deep in the bowels of bars.

Xon: (In sweeping tones.) The lawns of the University just kept going, creeping past

the stadium in the roar of Autumn.

Xit: I didn't have a very youthful pitch. Mirth was under the covers. I remember irritating rehearsals in the school basement for a puppet show. I'd rather have been walking along the railroad tracks where dust would rise and be an enchanting mistress by my side. (With conviction.) Convergence is shit!

Xus: (Bitterly.) Then weeks later they take my poems off the table because as they put it I wasn't plugged in, not part of the world wide web. Who wants to be strung up, or webbed in? Technology is clubbing creativity, & the so called artists can't see it. Consumerism has wrung the balls of true vision. Damn blinding slosh pit, germs from T.V. floundering, with repercussions from it all! (Annoyed.) I kept repeating things in the neat slit of night.

Xon: Slice?

Xor: Slot?

Xon: No, sliver.

Xor: Traitorous slice!

Xon: (With glee.) Traitor, yes. Arms out as far as they can go (Smiles.)

Xor: (Defeatedly.) What, what? (pause) The flesh is tearing. (longer pause.) Tracks, it is tracks. (with gloom.) I'm not up for this. Anyway, I was just stumbling along and biting myself again & again. Too much drink erodes one. No key fits & you're always standing, or wavering with a hand full of them and not knowing what direction to go in, or which key belongs where and why.

Xit: (Softly) I watched spiders as much as possible. Their nets are such fascinating structures. Such sheen..... A fine fabric. There was this spider that lived above my bed, & all Winter it moved above me, less and less as Winter progressed. It began to look like a starved prisoner. Its brown sac shriveled up and it weaved as little as possible to save energy. I searched all over the house for a fly. What a meal that would have been.

Xon: (Excitedly.) One day in early Spring I lay on the ground between two dormitories studying, and I spotted this tiny ball bouncing on the cut grass heading my way. I was going to reach for it but suddenly saw the flaming fuse and covered up. (With disbelief.) This cherry bomb exploded just below my crotch.

Xus: (Desperate.) What? (pause.) Must I hold the bag for that? I mean I've grown older, old some days it seems, and people are still playing tricks, but more sinister, and we are the baggage being left by the side of the road, and people passing by will eventually fall further along the roadside. It's not good to be the last one, for no one will pass you by and give you hope.

Bio: Guy R. Beining, author, poet and painter, resides in Great Barrington, MA, and has published numerous poems in magazines such as *Iowa Review*, *The Bitter Orleander*, *South Carolina Review*, *Fiction International*, *Cairn*, *Indefinite Space*, *Presa*, *New Delta Review*, and *Black Scat Review*. He has showed hundreds of [collages](#) and drawings over the years. Most recent art exhibition: Hudson Opera House, Hudson, NY, 2010. Selected artworks paired with worded lines was published by Kamini Press in the collection *Out of the Woods into the Sun*. (bio from [Kamini Press](#))



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