

The History of the Wood County Poor Farm by Alicia Matheny Beeson

Poor farms were established to aid those in need. Unlike our current state and federal governmental systems that support individuals living in poverty, individual counties assumed the majority of this responsibility in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. As historian Jerry Bruce Thomas explains, “Before the welfare reforms of the New Deal, county farms, also known as county infirmaries or poor farms, played a major role in the care of people who because of poverty, infirmity, or old age were unable to care for themselves. Early West Virginia law followed Virginia precedent, making counties responsible for care of the poor.” The land at West Virginia University at Parkersburg was once the location of the Wood County Poor Farm.

The first recorded owners of the poor farm property were the Kincheloes who maintained a farm primarily of grain and cattle.¹ The Kincheloes also owned slaves, including an individual named Morgan who he bequeathed to his wife upon his death, as well as Ninny and Samuel who he willed to his son Nestor (“Last Will and Testament of Daniel Kincheloe, Deceased”). Most of the property was willed to Daniel Sr.’s sons Daniel and Elijah. In 1858, the Kincheloe family sold a portion of their land to Thomas Bartlett, and in 1864, “the Wood County Overseers of the poor purchased the [nearly 300 acre] area of the former Cedar Grove Plantation from Bartlett for \$6,000 to be paid in six years” (Allen). The county poor farm started operating soon thereafter. A caretaker oversaw the operations of the farm and lived in a farmhouse near the infirmary; a county-appointed supervisor (a two-year term) directed the infirmary and resided within the building.²

The Kincheloe home, which was the original structure used for the poor farm infirmary, was not sufficient to meet the demands of the community. In 1901, reporter Will J. Cooper explained that the tin roof on the one-hundred-year-old building “forms but poor shelter for the inmates.” He explains that in the men’s quarters, “daylight can be seen through the cracks and crevices of the white-washed walls without any great strain on the eyesight.” The food, however, was “substantial and well cooked.” In 1902, a member of the court, Mr. Stahlman, similarly wrote, “a new and much larger and more modern house is a necessity. The house now in use is much too small; it is poorly ventilated, and is not built on proper plans for an institution of the kind. At this date there are but 27 inmates, but as soon as winter comes there will be twice that number in all probability” (qtd. in “New Building Contemplated”). Prompted by the negative reports, concerned citizen W. H. Karl visited the infirmary and wrote, “I found the place as neat and in as good order as it could be...The beds were clean and there was nothing that I noticed that looked as if the best of attention hadn’t been given.” (history continued on back inside cover)....

Though community members held differing opinions about the status of the poor farm, most agreed that improvements would be beneficial for those in need.

¹ The Parkersburg and Staunton turnpike that passes the land “was built by Irish immigrants” and completed in 1847 (Allen).

² From 1901 to 1915, George Nicely was the superintendent of the infirmary in Wood County.

These changes finally came in 1916 when a new sixty room, brick infirmary³ was established on the land by builder Joseph Hile and architect Theodore T. Sansbury (Allen). The superintendent of the infirmary lived with his family in the center of the building, while the women resided on the left side, or to the south, and the men on the right side, or to the north (Allen). Earle R. Bee, who lived nearby, recalls his visit to the infirmary: “The rooms were small but kept neat and clean by the inhabitants, sometimes by coercion.....Often those of better health would assist those less able to work” (qtd. in Allen). There was also a “pest house” located approximately where the college’s main building now stands that was “used for people with contagious diseases” (Allen).

In addition to the infirmary, pesthouse, and farmhouse, the Wood county poor farm property also included a spring, “a milk house, a chicken house, a smokehouse, and a pig barn” (Allen). The farm produced crops such as strawberries and raised animals like Jersey cows (Allen). Additionally, “an orchard of cherries, peaches, and apples [was] located near the present main entrance to the college’s campus” (Allen). In 1913, their “crop of wheat yielded 412 bushels, the corn crop 600 bushels, and in addition there were many tons of hay and cowpeas” (“Saved His Corn”). Residents of the poorhouse, often referred to as indigents or inmates, would assist on the farm as they were able.

In 1950, the infirmary building was destroyed by a fire thought to have originated in one of the boilers (Enoch 96)⁴; of the twenty-nine residents at the time, one, Lewis Coffey, died in the fire, and three other residents were hospitalized (Woofter). A smaller infirmary was built to use for the following decade, but the rise of new forms of welfare lessened the emphasis on poor farms (Thomas). Some reports indicate that Wood County “ceased to operate the facility in 1956” (Enoch 96). The building was used as a nursing home by a private party from 1960 to 1980, then it became a personal care facility (Hawk). It still operates today as an assisted living facility, Cedar Grove, on Nicolette Road.

Shortly after the transition of the infirmary, the County Court agreed to permit “a portion of the old Poor Farm property” to be used for the construction of “the Parkersburg Center of West Virginia University” (Allen). In 1969, “it became the State of West Virginia’s first comprehensive community college” (Allen).

The most prominent visual reminder of the poor farm is the cemetery near the parking lot of WVU Parkersburg, located near the original site of the Kincheloe family’s graveyard⁵. In fact, in 2001, it was called “the only active cemetery on a college campus in the United States” (Saulton). Even as recently as 2012, county officials reported that “there are an average of seven [to] eight burials a year in the old poor farm cemetery” for those who cannot afford other options (Brust, “Record”). Bob Enoch and Jeff Little, members of the Wood County Historical Society, presented the names of 800 individuals buried at the Wood County Poor Farm Cemetery.

³ The initial superintendent and matron of the new structure were Mr. and Mrs. Walter Simon, though Mr. and Mrs. D. G. Lodgson were appointed in 1918 (“Name Director for Infirmary”). Later superintendents included Swain Wigal, Mr. Dean, and John Holwelden (Enoch 96).

⁴ At this time, J.F. Metz was the Supervisor of the Wood County Infirmary (Enoch 96).

⁵ In 2015, the Wood County commissioners agreed to allow five gravestones to be returned to their original location in the cemetery (Brust, “Commission”). As of October 2019, the project has not yet been completed.

According to Enoch, the graves go back to at least 1888, though some were likely buried in the cemetery before that date⁶ (Meitzler). Though the cemetery is covered with white crosses, Bob Enoch explains that they “don’t necessarily mark gravesites. They are more just ornamental” (qtd. in Brust, “Record”). The crosses serve as a remarkable reminder of the lives of our local ancestors, friends, and neighbors who endured hardship. Additionally, the cemetery serves as a reminder of the centuries of community effort to support those in need.

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⁶ Earlier documentation was likely destroyed in the 1950 fire.

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The Poorhouse Rag

The Poorhouse Rag 2020 Prize Winners

Foundation Prize: Protection by Allison Butcher

President's Prize: Many Faces by Allison Butcher

Poetry Prize: Poem by Audrey Erb

Fiction Prize: Girl Next Door by Lois Spencer

Nonfiction: A Woman's Escape from Poverty by Amber Ward

**Produced by the Poorhouse Rag Editorial Collective
with thanks to the Parkersburg Community Foundation and
West Virginia University at Parkersburg**

A Note from the Editors

During this time of quarantine and isolation, many have been dealing with added stressors of a life in upheaval. Some of us may have found ourselves reflecting on the small moments of unexpected joy and happiness brought through these unconventional times while others may experience feelings of anxiousness that keep them up at night. No matter our feelings, how do we begin to process them? We create. In making art, music, and writing, we can begin to process our feelings and document these unprecedented times.

Recently, poet Mary Carroll-Hackett, wrote the following in encouragement of creating. She states, “Between so much illness and social isolation, we all can feel more alone now than ever before. But we’re not alone. We have each other, even at a distance. And we have words, so many beautiful words. Not only can we feel all we feel—fear, sadness, and, especially Love—but we have the rare and precious gift of language that lets us speak it to each other.”

We know many of us are overwhelmed, but contributing to the *Poorhouse Rag* gives us a chance to have a voice when we feel voiceless. The women’s suffrage movement sought equal opportunity where women raised their voices in order to combat marginalization. When they felt they didn’t have a voice, they persevered until they were able to have their voices heard. Isn’t this what we all want in life, to be heard?

How fitting that the Fall 2020 edition of *The Poorhouse Rag* deals with themes of feeling left out and denied opportunity, some common issues that are now heightened due to this pandemic. As we sit in silence reflecting on how life has changed and how our voices can unite to make a difference, the fine arts committee asked people in our community—faculty, staff, past and present students—to take a few minutes out of their day and create. We asked them to document their feelings, their experiences, ask themselves the what-ifs that have been racing through their brain and keeping them up at night. We asked them to create an essay, a poem, a short story, a song, or a piece of art that explored what they were feeling in this moment, in these times. Length didn’t matter. We asked people to ruminate on what the women’s suffrage movement has taught us of thriving when opportunity is denied because of gender, race, class, and religion and to reflect on general feelings about times when they have felt “left out.”

Creating a movement starts with one voice. History has taught us that one person willing to step out, step up, and express herself, can make a difference. Creating art, music, and writing comes at no monetary cost and can unite us all. Our goal is to give voice to all the members of our community, to give the opportunity to hear individual expression and unique experiences.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| 1. Awakening: Original Image from the Suffrage Era..... | 9 |
| 2. A Woman’s Escape from Poverty by Amber Ward, Winner of the Nonfiction Prize..... | 10 |
| 3. The Shower by Maggie Berdine | 15 |
| 4. Moments of Danger by Traci Mills..... | 16 |
| 5. Slave Story by Sandra Kolankiewicz..... | 17 |
| 6. Thank you by Matt Gable..... | 18 |
| 7. Drowning in Poverty by Amber Ward..... | 19 |
| 8. Poem by Audrey Erb, Winner of the Poetry Prize | 20 |
| 9. Rest by Traci Mills..... | 22 |
| 10. Seen but Unheard by Charis Mace | 23 |
| 11. Freedoms Long Forgotten by Traci Mills..... | 33 |
| 12. Girl Next Door by Lois Spencer, Winner of the Fiction Prize | 34 |
| 13. Many Faces by Allison Butcher, Winner of the President’s Prize | 44 |
| 14. The Franks in My Attic by Sandra Kolankiewicz..... | 45 |
| 15. 1 Through 10 by Kenna Reynolds Warren..... | 47 |
| 16. Falling Short by Joyce Stover | 48 |
| 17. Only a Woman by Kenna Reynolds Warren..... | 63 |
| 18. The Inner Thoughts of a Tired Mother by Kenna Reynolds Warren..... | 65 |
| 19. Regulator by Matt Gable | 67 |
| 20. Revised: Original Illustration from the Suffrage Era..... | 68 |
| 21. Legend of Leaena Vasta Part 1: Founder of the Warrior Queens of Leonia by Zechariah Edison Baskin | 69 |
| 22. Acrylic Image by Kimberly Matheny..... | 77 |
| 23. “Leda and the Swan” by William Butler Yeats: A Critical Analysis by Lydia Stout..... | 78 |
| 24. Elegy for Hector by Chris Gilmer | 81 |
| 25. Moving Forward by Lauri Reidmiller..... | 82 |
| 26. Just Coins by Jenny Dawkins | 83 |
| 27. <i>unum hominem</i> by Scott K. Turner | 84 |

28. **Women at the Ballot Box:** Original Image from the Suffrage Era85

29. **“To Demand Justice Is the Golden Rule”:** Women’s Suffrage in West Virginia by Alicia Matheny Beeson.....86

30. **Solace** by Allison Butcher94

31. **Afterward: What I Want to Talk About When It’s Done** by Sandra Kolankiewicz95

31. **Contributor Bios**96

Awakening: Original Image from the Suffrage Era



A Woman's Escape from Poverty by Amber Ward

Growing up poor taught me how to be a strong person and how to appreciate life's small conveniences such as indoor plumbing, electricity, and running water. Poverty created the conditions in my life that lead to my dropping out of high school, having poor health as a child, and getting married at the young age of eighteen. Being raised in poverty shaped me into the person I am today. My parents may have been poor in money and possessions, but they were rich in love, kindness, and faith. I feel very fortunate to have a loving, tight knit family. Poverty is a cycle that is very hard to break out of, and I feel blessed to have broken the cycle.

To begin with, I grew up in a very poor family even though both my parents worked full time jobs. My mother was head cook at a local restaurant, and my father was a diesel mechanic, but no matter how hard or how much they worked, they seemed stuck in poverty. For example, when I was born in 1984, my parents had just purchased a home in South Parkersburg near the bank of the Kanawha river. However, when I was three years old, a huge flood hit Parkersburg, and sadly our house was washed away in the flood. Consequently, after losing all of our earthly possessions, we had to live in a garden shed for roughly a year and a half because my parents had no insurance or savings.

The shed belonged to a friend of my mom's, and the space was not ideal for a family of four. First of all, we had to sleep on pallets that were covered with feed sacks. Second, we had only a small pot belly wood stove for warmth and cooking. Third, we had an outhouse for a bathroom, and a creek in the field was where we washed our clothes and bathed. The woman who owned the shed decided to sell my parents an acre of property on land contract with no down payment. Once the paperwork was drawn up and the land cleared, my parents began

building a house. Then, when the shell of the house was done, we moved our meager belongings to the house and began living there. Over the next five years, my dad continued building the house in his spare time, but during that time period, we had no running water, electricity, or any type of indoor plumbing. Instead of a bathroom, we had an outhouse. As a result of living this way, I felt like an outcast at school because all of my classmates had normal, finished houses with running water, electricity, and indoor plumbing.

To begin with, I am the youngest of my siblings since I have a brother who is sixteen years older than I am and a sister that is ten years older than I am. Thus, when I was five years old, my brother got married and moved out. Then, when I was seven, my brother had his first child, and by the time I was nine, I had three nieces. Unfortunately, my sister-in-law was not mentally able to handle three young kids, so she left my brother and their little girls. My brother worked full time and was not able to stay at home with his girls, so therefore they moved back home with us.

At first, I was extremely happy that they were living with us because I had playmates, and I thought we would have so much fun together. However, I soon found out that having my nieces living with us meant that I had to make sacrifices and take on a lot of the responsibility of my niece's care. Because my parents and siblings all worked full time and could not afford daycare, I had to miss school to stay home with the girls. Missing school and having the constant responsibility to babysit my nieces was definitely not the fun times I had imagined. Then, once my nieces were old enough to start school, I too was able to return to school full time, but after I had missed so much school, I could not get caught up with my classmates, and I continued to be behind the other kids in school. School was not something my family considered important, so I

just barely got by. Thus, when I turned sixteen, I decided to quit school and get a job to support myself and help my family.

Yet another result of living amid poverty was that I had very poor health as a child and even into adulthood. To begin with, my parents did not have any kind of health insurance, so I did not have a pediatrician, a dentist, or an eye doctor. Therefore, I suffered from anemia for years and received no medical treatment, but instead my mom used home remedies to try to treat my iron deficiency. I did not get to see a doctor for my anemia until I was thirteen years old. Next, I suffered from constant toothaches that resulted from poor dental hygiene because I was not taught proper dental self-care, like brushing and flossing my teeth regularly. For instance, my parents had no idea of how important dental hygiene is, so they did not know to teach us kids. Since my folks could not afford a dentist, I did not see a dentist until I was fifteen years old when I got a state issued medical card. Also, I had bad eyesight for years, and since my parents could not afford to buy me glasses and take me to the eye doctor, I wore readers that we bought at the dollar store for five dollars. As a teenager, I got to go to the eye doctor and got my first pair of prescription lenses, but the doctor said I had worsened my eyesight because of lack of treatment. Therefore, poverty had many negative effects on my overall health.

By the time I was eighteen, I wanted to get out of poverty. My parents had gone through a few periods over the years where they were financially stable, but there always seemed to be some unforeseen event waiting just ahead for them. The financial setbacks always drained their bank accounts and sent them right back into the daily struggle to survive. As a result, I had been living my whole life surrounded by poverty, stress, and hardships, and I just wanted the security of a “normal” life. I wanted to live without worrying about food, money, shelter, and bills. I wanted to be able to see a doctor regularly and to have an easier life.

For whatever reason, in my young mind I thought marriage was the way to gain normalcy. Because I thought this way and I thought I was in love, I married my first boyfriend after only three months of dating. However, I soon realized that I had been wrong and that marriage had, if anything, worsened my poverty. Once I found out my husband had no plans of getting a job and helping me build a life together, I felt betrayed. Apparently, my husband's plan for the future was to sell weed, live with his parents, and keep me barefoot and pregnant. Therefore, after only two years of marriage, at twenty years old and with two babies, I filed for divorce. Then I swallowed my pride and asked my mom and dad if I could come home. I had a hard time admitting to myself that I had made a mistake, but after a few months, I realized that my mistake had taught me a lesson. Consequently, I figured out that I, alone, am responsible for my future which now included two small children.

Upon returning home, I felt welcomed and safe because my parents were so full of love and happiness for my kids and me. However, I soon began to feel like I was putting a financial burden on my parents by living there. My family kept encouraging me to believe in myself and told me that my lack of self-confidence was the only obstacle that was holding me back from achieving my goals. In other words, even though my parents had lived in the midst of poverty most of their lives, they believed that I had the strength and courage to escape poverty. Because my folks believed in me, I began to believe in myself and have confidence. Then, I got hired at the local IGA, and with my parent's moral support, I slowly became independent. Next, after saving every cent I could, I was able to rent a small trailer for my children and me.

After that milestone, I got my driver's license and saved enough money to buy a cheap car. Next, after five years of working, I was offered the position of assistant manager at the IGA. I was so excited, the promotion came with a great raise and health insurance, so for the first time

in my life, I was able to go off of welfare. I was also able to have a family doctor that my kids and I saw on a regular basis. What a great feeling to be financially stable and secure for the first time in my life. Last of all, I earned my GED and enrolled at WVUP. I am currently in my first semester, and I love being back in school. Thus, I have worked my way out of poverty, but the fear of being poor and of my children going without is always in the back of my mind.

Poverty created many unpredictable circumstances in my life, and I have a long strife and struggle filled back ground because I was dirt poor the majority of my life. However, I wouldn't change any part of my history if I could. I have achieved my dream of breaking the cycle of poverty, and I am proud of the person I am today. Consequently, poverty helped shape me into the strong, confident, and successful woman I am now. Therefore, although I appreciate the way I was raised and love my family more than anything, I am extremely glad that my children will never know the hardships of a life amid poverty.

Some acts are so monstrous that they are beyond even the power of imagination.

The Shower

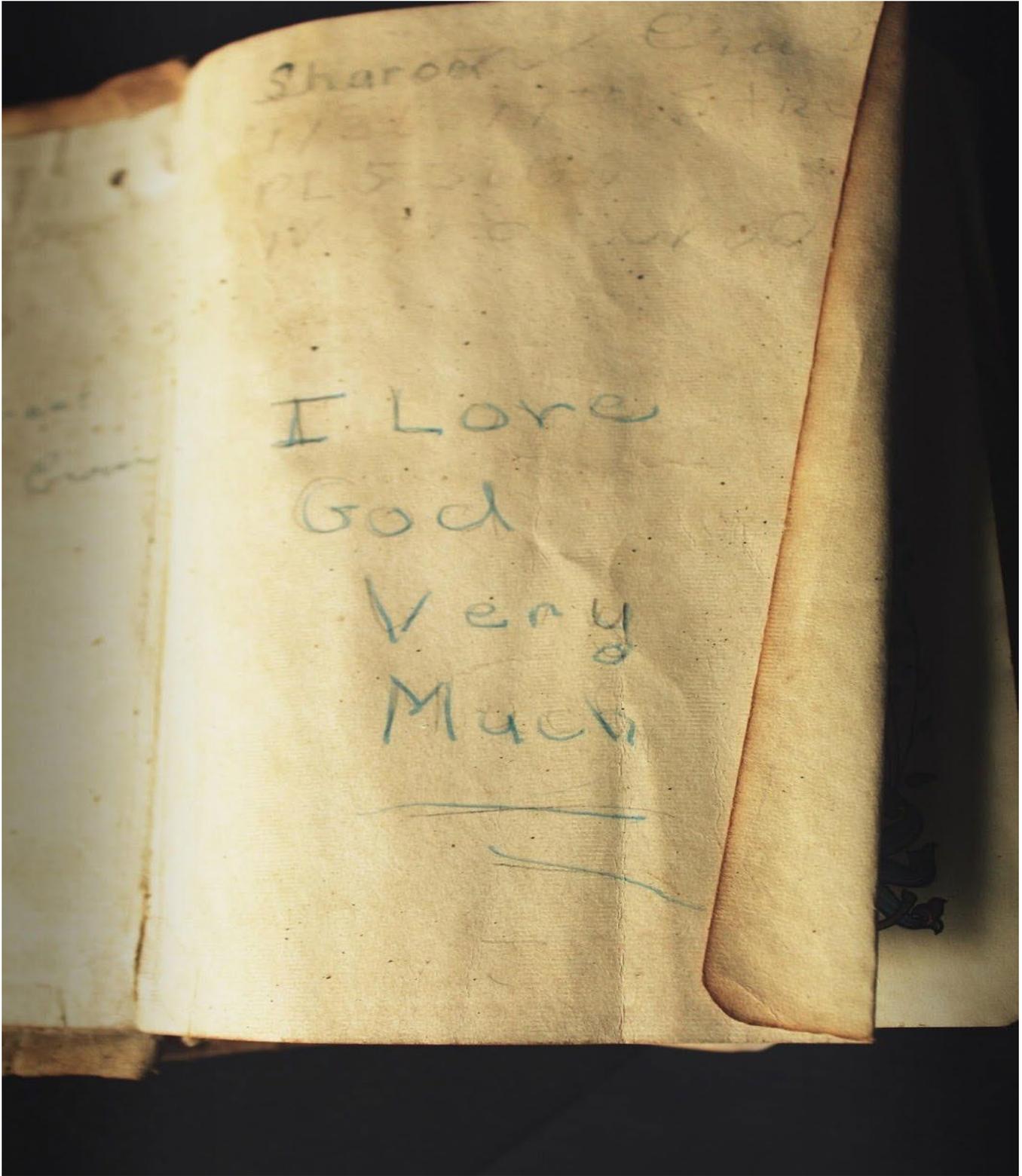
by Maggie Berdine

I stand in the shower
Wrapped in a sheet of warm soap and water
That flows down endlessly.
Through the mist the radio announces,
"Fifty years ago today Allied Forces
Liberated Auschwitz."

Instinctively, I turn to the wall,
The soap becomes leaden in my hand.
I stop my breath,
Checking for stinging jets of gas.
I imagine rows of women
Naked, scrubbed clean of clothing,
Of hair, of wedding rings, of children.
How cold, how cold they must be.

How could a man use his hand
To turn on a gas valve,
Spend an afternoon removing gold fillings,
Go through the coat pockets of others' lives.
How, after that, could he stroke
The feathery wisps of his child's hair
Or press his wife's breast with that hand,
Feeling her heartbeat.

Moments of Danger
by Traci Mills



Slave Story

by Sandra Kolankiewicz

The way we would do it was
we would each take five aspirins first
so it wouldn't hurt,
then Svetlana would be with some of them for three hours,
and so would I except with others.
Then we would switch until morning.

There were usually two rooms, and
we never fought over them
though we would describe them to one another later.

No matter that one day
I would have my
own bathroom with the men
urinating into a deep toilet
while she had just a bowl of dirty water
and a balcony the men pissed off of
into an abandoned courtyard.

No matter because the whole scene might be switched tomorrow—her
with even a slightly dripping shower, me
with nothing, not even a window while they grunted—
especially when they were drunk—
grunt grunt grunt and then
a dead piglet between my legs before
it had even squealed, and I would have
to wait until it revived again, until
grunt grunt grunt
he called out “Mother!” in his madness
while the others looked on.

I didn't mind when Svetlana would get
the better room.
No matter as long as
she was there.

Thank You
by Matt Gable

You showed me love
and the beauty in life.
You showed me I can feel whole.
Ranging among the challenges of life,
I still smell the roses.

Drowning in Poverty

by Amber Ward

My friends are all lost
My family is the cause
My heart is crying
My brain is dying
My soul is sold
My bed is so cold
My body is ruined
My fear is brewing
My stomach is growling
My shoulders are bowing
My face is frowning
My voice is not sounding
My life in poverty is binding
Me I'm drowning

Poem

by Audrey Erb

Dressed as a normal teenager would

Thoughts through my mind

Came and went as the day went by

Talking to no one

And terrible at making friends

What else to think during this time

Trying to talk to anyone

While still not growing closer

Just being there as a distant friend

As like the rest, they have

Not noticing that one detail

And not giving a compliment

Might have just ruined that person's day

Running down the hall

Looking for one friend

When realizing you have not one

Going to the bathroom

To cry all your tears

Out and to fall asleep

As soon as you arrive home

Lay your head down

Softly on your pillow

To not worry about any

Problems again or
Ever want them to enter
Into your brain again

Waking up in the morning
Wondering what had
Just happened the day before
And realizing that
You do not remember anything

Skipping breakfast and forgetting
Your backpack while also
Missing the bus and walking
To school and still being late

Staying at home
With your mom
Washing the dishes
And sweeping the floors
Being punished for
Not going into any
Of the classrooms
The day before

Rest
by Traci Mills



=

Seen but Unheard

by Charis Mace

The air is fragrant with the smells of a baking oven. I inhale the scents of dried spices, roasting meat, browning pie crust, and the tang of pumpkin. Fused together, they create a masterpiece that makes my mouth water.

Thanksgiving Day is laced with memories, from mixing pie crusts to waking early for our town's Turkey Trot. And perhaps the greatest of all, hosting my giant family for the afternoon meal. This year, I returned from college to the annual buzz that lasts for weeks, starting with at least seven grocery trips and ending with a scrub-down of our entire stainless-steel kitchen.

The morning's festivities began with Mom flipping on my bedroom lights and luring me downstairs with a steaming cup of pumpkin spice. Hours later, I'm left with chapped hands and a growling stomach to show for my hard work.

I reach into my closet for my Harvard hoodie and slip it over my ponytail, careful not to jostle my hearing aids. Maybe this year, a nosy relative will take notice. Ask me about my hoodie, start up a conversation.

Maybe this year, I won't spend my Thanksgiving alone.

It's a strange thought, a hope belonging to my younger self. Now, I know better.

My room goes dark for a moment, but the lights are immediately flipped back on. I whirl around to find Mom in my doorway, dressed in a pilled sweater and her signature yellow apron.

“Ready?” she mouths, or maybe she says the words aloud. My hearing aids are down too low for me to tell.

She disappears before I can answer, off to collect my younger brothers, Asher and Daniel.

My friends often complain about their extended family dinners. Hot, noisy rooms filled with greedy relatives searching for plates of food and gossip to sustain them until next year. Comments from nosy aunts, interrogations from snooty grandfathers. Children everywhere, smearing food on their faces and begging for a softer lap-seat.

My friends describe these events as annoying, but for me, they’re a normal I could only dream of having. If only my aunts and grandparents would say more than a few words to me. If only my young cousins overcame their curiosity and invited me to join their fun.

When I reach the living room, I find it already brimming with family. Hands peel off fur-lined coats, arms draw relatives into tight hugs, mouths open into pleased smiles. For them, the room is full of chatter and delighted laughter.

For me, an overwhelming orchestra of muffled noise.

As always, I stick near the edge of the throng, turning down my hearing aids. Hoping someone will notice me and at the same time dreading the attention. I wait for my mother to direct traffic into the kitchen, where counters lined with meat, vegetables, and buttered bread await. Some relatives find me as they pass into our kitchen, giving me hugs or waving hello. But most ignore me, already deep in conversation or attempting to wrangle hungry children into submission.

I join my parents at the rear of the group, much to the dismay of my stomach. The gnawing sensation has lodged underneath my ribs, and my mouth is watering like crazy. As we inch forward in the line, Mom finally turns to me.

“Excited for another year?” she says, mixing a few signs in with the sentence. Her eyes are bright, despite the faint shadow underneath them thanks to hours of prep time.

She doesn’t notice my pointed look. She doesn’t even wait for my answer. Instead, she turns to speak to my father, talking too fast for me to lip-read. I dig my hands into my hoodie’s pocket and shift back and forth on my heels until the kitchen is finally clear enough for us to enter.

I rush forward, grabbing a paper plate and diving for the closest platter of food. I scoop on a mountain of mashed potatoes and a slab of juicy turkey, framed with baked veggies and steaming cranberry dressing. To top it off, I drizzle a huge spoonful of gravy over my creation.

Satisfied, I squeeze into our dining room. The adults and teenagers are stuffed around our massive wooden table, seated on the surrounding folding chairs. I settle beside an uncle and a group of chattering cousins.

Even if I dialed up the volume of my hearing aid, I wouldn’t be able to make out the full conversation. In a quiet room, my siblings and parents still have to raise their voices and slow their words. Here, surrounded by clanging dishes and background chatter, the noise would be too overwhelming.

My uncle taps my shoulder, then points toward the dining table. Hands are folded, heads are bowed, as my father begins to give thanks for the meal.

I place my plate in my lap and lace my fingers together, tilt my head downward in respect. Unlike the rest of my family, I keep my eyes open, watching to know when the prayer is over.

As soon as my father mouths “Amen,” I turn back to my plate as my relatives brandish their forks and jab at their feasts of food.

A fork! In my hungry rush for food, I never grabbed a fork. I groan and drag myself up from my seat. One of my relatives might have an extra but trying to make them understand my request will take too long. I left my phone in my bedroom, eliminating my easiest form of written communication.

I weave my way through the maze of legs and into the kitchen, careful not to tip my paper plate. Grabbing a plastic fork, I force myself back into the stuffy dining room only to find my seat occupied by one of my older cousins. All the other chairs have been taken, and there’s barely any room left on the floor.

My armpits are starting to sweat, and my hands are quivering. From anger or hunger, I can’t tell. It would be easier just to retreat back into the kitchen, but Mom insists that I be present, not wanting the other family members to think I’m rude. Like they would even notice if I left.

I suck in a breath and surge forward, tapping my cousin on his shoulder.

He looks up, surprised, and then his face creases in recognition. His eyes widen, and he stops chewing.

I do the talking for him, pointing to his chair, and then laying my flat palm against my chest. *Mine*, in ASL.

Panic settles into his eyes, and I think he might choke on his food. Finally, he swallows and shakes his head a few times. He elbows my uncle, who proves to be no help.

I glance at the space around me, only to be greeted by a few sets of curious eyes and not a single place for me to sit. Frustrated, I feel heat flood my cheeks and wish I had stayed in the kitchen.

My cousin shoves another bite of food in his mouth, reminding me how hungry I am. The need for food overcomes my embarrassment, and I retreat back to the edge of the dining room, plopping down onto hard tile.

I set to work on my food, spearing small bits of everything into one forkful. The turkey is tender and juicy, the mashed potatoes thick and creamy. My favorite dish is Mom's cranberry dressing. It's an old recipe, passed down through our family. Surely, our family is tired of eating it every year, but I could devour it by the bucketful. As always, I pick out the cranberries and set them aside, saving them to dip in leftover gravy.

Despite my late start, I finish my plate at the same time as most everyone around me. They're still entrenched in conversation but begin to rise, signaling the start of our chaotic cleanup process. I hop up, and as I have no conversation to slow me down, I reach the gallon trash bags right away. I toss in my soggy plate and plastic fork then beeline for the kitchen.

I'm alone, save for a small cousin clutching a soiled paper plate. Assuming he's looking for the trash, I stomp my foot to get his attention and point him toward the trash bags. I expect

him to give me the trademark glance, uncomfortable and yet curious. Instead, he just smiles and follows where I'm pointing.

He nearly collides with my mother, who pokes her head in the kitchen and waves her hand as soon as she sees me. I nod in understanding and follow her back into the dining room, plopping down on a plush loveseat my father dragged in from our living room. Family members have cleared out to deposit dirty plates and check on their children, giving me a chance to breathe. Prepare myself for the hours ahead.

After our huge meal is over, the adults always spend the afternoon talking, huddled around the dining room with cups of decaf or apple cider. While my cousins and siblings escape outside to play Capture the Flag or Mafia, I've spent every Thanksgiving surrounded by fast-moving lips, idle hands, and heads cocked away from my line of vision. I learned how to watch others around me to know when someone has said something funny, to laugh along with the group.

I feel a needle of hope prick my chest and have to fight to keep it down. Yes, I'm wearing my Harvard hoodie. Yes, I finally have my own experience to share, funny college stories to add to the conversation. But that doesn't mean anyone will reach out, put forth effort to include me. They've been practicing ignoring me for years.

My aunts, uncles, and grandparents begin to shuffle back into the room, settling into their seats and already launching into small conversations. Beside me, my mother taps my shoulder, and I jump.

"Don't stare," she mouths. "Dessert will be soon!"

I nod, then go right back to studying their lips, ignoring my mother's reminder.

"Where you... holiday trip?"

"... Last year, but now..."

"Yes! We went... expensive!"

Most of my family pays no attention to me, but a couple relatives catch me studying their lips. My hands find the loveseat's seam, making patterns along the suede fabric next to my jeans. Focusing on this constant movement calms me, and I lose myself in the motion.

I see something move out of the corner of my eye, and I snap my head up. Everyone else has stopped talking. Panic shoots through my chest and settles into my throat, making me gasp for air. Did someone ask me a question? Are they waiting for my response? How did I not notice Mom tapping my shoulder?

Thankfully, I realize that no one is looking at me. Instead, they're fixated on my mom's uncle, Bradley. He's telling an intense story, lips moving too fast for me to make out and eyebrows sliding up and down. I close my eyes and blow out a breath. Even though I have no idea what he's saying, I'm relieved I didn't embarrass myself in front of everyone.

Bradley says something that makes everyone else laugh, and I force my mouth to match their grins. I rarely use my voice and have a hard time controlling it, even when I'm laughing. A smile is safer, and it makes me look like I understand what was said.

Now that normal conversation has resumed, I make a show of adjusting my hoodie, hoping to grab someone's attention. It's petty of me, when in reality I wish I'd never worn it. My

armpits are soaked through my t-shirt underneath, and beads of sweat have formed around my neck. I roll up my sleeves and tug at the collar a few times, wishing for a glass of cold water.

I resume stroking the cushion until I feel someone nudge my elbow. I look up, only to find Mom frowning at me. She cocks her head and mouths, “Pay attention!” I purse my lips and let my hands rest in my lap, turning my attention back to the conversation.

“When... moving in?”

“... month! Staying... new roommate.”

“Have you... her?”

I give up following their conversation and study a nick on the opposite wall. Even though I’m surrounded by silence, I can feel the chaotic chatter around me. The room is hot and stuffy, perfume mixed with the remnants of lunch. I can still taste the spices from my meal, and the flavor has crept up into my nose. There’s movement all around me: gesturing hands, mouths rooted in conversation, heads nodding back and forth. I study eyebrows that lift and crease together, lips that form the select words I’m able to follow, eyes that wrinkle at the corners when someone laughs.

I feel a cold hand tap me on the shoulder. For a split second, I think someone has finally noticed my hoodie, bothered to include me in the conversation.

Instead, my aunt Sutton points to the kitchen. She says something, and though I only catch the word “dessert,” I know exactly what she means.

I nod my thanks and shoot up from my chair, weaving through the ocean of bodies. Once I reach the kitchen, I'm greeted by an array of pies, cakes, and ice cream, arranged by my mom and her sisters. I find a place in line and wait as the younger kids, assisted by parents or older cousins, craft mountains of sweets on their plates.

Once it's my turn, I rush forward and snatch up the last piece of apple pie, adding a huge scoop of vanilla ice cream and a sprinkle of candied pecans. I dig in immediately, rewarding myself with a giant bite. The ice cream melts against the baked apple filling, creating a perfect blend of sweet sugar and sharp cinnamon spice.

I think I make a noise when I sigh, but I don't care. The last tedious hours are forgotten in this single bite. I force myself to eat slowly, savoring the sweet ice cream, warm apple pie, and crunchy pecans. When I'm finished, I sigh again, mourning the thump of my paper plate hitting the others in the trash bag.

After dessert, the relatives with younger children will head back to their homes or hotels. For the rest of us, the remainder of the day consists of a dinner of leftovers and an evening of TV and games. Now that the official socialization time is over, I'm off the hook, finally free to escape to my room.

Parents carry babies and lead sleepy toddlers out of the kitchen and living room, but plenty of discarded forks and plastic cups remain. I spend the next few minutes cleaning up the leftover trash, stuffing the last trash bags to the brim.

Mom will want me to make an appearance, bid farewell to the relatives, but I'm sweaty and exhausted. My yearn for attention has faded, and as no one is paying attention to me, it will be easy to slip away.

I escape through the kitchen, down the hallway, and up the stairs to my bedroom. Up here, the air is fresh, and best of all, undisturbed. I peel off my hoodie and damp t-shirt, welcoming the cool air on my skin.

I change into my soft pajamas and flop into my bed, signaling the end of another Thanksgiving gathering. My stomach is full of rich food, my eyes are heavy, and I end the holiday as I started. Alone.

Freedoms Long Forgotten
by Traci Mills



Girl Next Door by Lois Spencer

The first time I saw Shirley, she was handing off a scuffed kitchen chair from the back of a pickup to a woman I assumed was her mother. Ruddy from the wind, the girl's face made a lively contrast to the woman's pallor. Just then, a heavy-set man strode across the porch and grabbed the chair before the woman could reach it, his face and manner declaring her incompetent. As the March evening darkened and streetlights came on, I remained at my bedroom window and watched other trucks arrive. The drivers tipped their caps at the woman who stood about uncertainly, her demeanor one of perpetual exhaustion and something I couldn't find a name for.

Finally, the show was over, porchlight extinguished, and window blinds pulled to the sills. Remembering that my cat Chester was still outside, I stepped onto the porch and waited for the disgruntled gray tabby to slink across the threshold. "Stop pouting, you big baby. You had a front row seat to all the excitement." Ready to follow him inside, I heard what sounded like shouting from the house next door and stopped to listen. Nighttime noises usually came from TVs turned too loud or boats pushing their barges up the Ohio River beyond the line of trees along its bank. But this was a single angry voice that continued until the chill drove me inside.

On Saturday, Mother whipped up a casserole, a friendly gesture intended to satisfy the newcomers' hunger and her own curiosity. Since I'd guessed Shirley's age a couple of years older than my thirteen, I informed Mother I was going too. By lunchtime, we were at the neighbors' front door, a foil wrapped dish in Mother's hands and a plate of no-bake cookies in mine. The ruddy face from moving day finally appeared, looking much less ruddy and holding

no hint of welcome. Another face came into view, and a pair of cautious gray eyes fell on the offerings we extended. The woman murmured what was probably a thank you, the dishes disappeared inside, and the door closed.

Mother managed to restrain herself until we were back in the kitchen. “Well, well,” she said, tossing her jacket onto a kitchen chair. “That was a gracious reception.”

Often, I caught a glimpse of Shirley while she waited at the bus-stop for transport to the consolidated high school, arms wrapped around a stack of books and just as alone as I was most of the time. Next year I’d be on that bus, and I liked to imagine high school as a chance to reinvent myself amid a larger group. Being smart, I’d discovered, wasn’t enough for the in-crowd; you also had to emit a sophistication some people must have been born with. Parents, too, were a factor.

My father operated a one-chair barber shop that kept the three of us sufficiently fed and clothed. He enjoyed the precision of his work, and his customers enjoyed the way he softened their beards with a hot towel before a shave and the monolog he geared toward his audience of one or two, ranging from the practical to the profound. My mother’s flaw, however, was sufficiently flagrant to cover them both. A hometown girl, she had become pregnant her senior year, and before the news got out, the boy was whisked away to private school by doting parents. School policy banned pregnant girls on the strength of an understood syllogism: Students reflect the standards of a school. Pregnant girls bespeak low standards. Therefore, pregnant girls must be removed promptly. Even though my half-sibling arrived too early to survive, returning to school and graduating was not an option for the morally compromised. She who bore the mark of Hester Prynne sealed the fate of her future offspring also.

Two weeks after she moved in, Shirley showed up at our door with Mother's baking dish and cookie plate, both empty. "Mom said to say thanks for the food." Errand accomplished, Shirley turned to leave and then suddenly whirled around. "You want to take a walk?"

Mother was sitting a few feet behind me, engrossed in a book. "I'm going out for a while," I said, but I doubted she heard; books had the same effect on me. I grabbed my jacket from the hall tree and closed the door.

"I'm Shirley," my new neighbor tossed over her shoulder as I hustled to catch up.

"Christy," I responded.

Signs of spring were all over—dogwoods, Easter lilies, new grass overtaking brown stubble. The river banks were full and littered with winter debris. Several blocks from where we lived was a paved boat ramp stretching the few feet from street to water's edge and bounded by a low concrete wall, most of it underwater. Finding this a satisfactory stop, Shirley sat down a few feet from where the water lapped in response to the passing of a huge barge loaded with steel girders. There, she broke the silence. "You always lived here?"

I nodded. "Where are you from?"

"Lots of places." She scooped up handfuls of loose cinders and let them sift through her fingers while she talked about some of the towns she'd lived in, always close to the river because her father worked the barges; four weeks on and two weeks off was his usual schedule. "A month gives you a chance to feel normal," she said. "But two weeks bring you right back to reality."

She stood and dusted her hands on her jeans, proving she was an expert at dropping information while withholding what it meant. At home, and alone except for Chester, who wrapped my ankles in a furry greeting, and my mother, whose mind remained absorbed by her book, I replayed Shirley's words over and over, the way I sometimes did my favorite forty-fives. But just like the words in the songs, however many times I repeated them, Shirley's words revealed nothing new in repetition.

* * *

It wasn't hard to tell when Shirley's father was home. For one thing, there was the shouting I'd heard that first night. For another, the blinds stayed down, and except for Shirley's trips to and from the bus, his were the only comings and goings; it was as if Shirley's mother ceased to exist. By contrast, during the four weeks he worked the barge, Shirley showed up for our Saturday rambles. Her mother made an occasional foray to the corner grocer's or the post office and tended neglected flower beds. She even sat in the porch swing on pleasant evenings; that is, until Mother made a neighborly overture to join her.

Shirley's statement no longer puzzled me, but not so the bizarre dynamics of the household. And my feelings were never lost on Mother. "You know, Christie," she said, "it's an unfortunate fact that some men are dominating bullies and the women they marry are trapped. So are the kids." After that, she referred to Shirley's father solely as DB, short for "dominating bully," and I adopted the moniker, even in my thoughts. My mind played with the possibilities those initials invited, and I figured Mother's did too.

In May, during the last week of her father's absence, Shirley no longer rode the high school bus at the end of the day. Instead, a flashy red convertible delivered her home. Over the

course of the week, the car remained longer at the curb and Shirley remained longer in the car. One afternoon, Mother caught me observing the new development through my bedroom window. Instead of chiding me for spying on the neighbors, she sat down beside me and took in the scene and its implications. “I smell trouble,” she said, “but I can’t say I’m surprised.”

“What will happen when DB comes home?” I asked.

Sometimes Mother’s cryptic answers were irritating, so when all she said was, “Truth will out,” I repeated my question. She put a hand under my chin and lifted my face so that I was looking at my image in her pupils. “Oh, he will find out. Her wisest option is to send this guy packing and put up with DB long enough to graduate.”

“What if she doesn’t?” I asked around the lump forming in my throat.

“Then she will have to be tough enough to handle the consequences.” She kissed the top of my head the way she did when I was small and came running to report a catastrophe. And, as only the best of teachers know to do, she left me to put the pieces together on my own.

It was hard to tell whether Shirley had made the wiser decision. School was out, so there were no trips to and from, and I didn’t see her sneaking out the nights I lay awake, peering into deep shadows, listening to rustlings of night creatures and traffic on the river. There was shouting, of course, and one night it was followed by a crash loud enough to bring me upright. DB and Shirley’s mother crossed the porch and got into the pick-up. At dawn, they returned, and the cast on her arm and the sling holding it luminesced in the uncertain light.

As I had feared, the red convertible showed up once the confinement period ended. I’d decided, after staying awake to keep tabs on Shirley, that I was finished with spy games. So my first look at the driver was from my front porch glider in broad daylight. He was passable in

appearance but way too old for Shirley, twenty at least. One hand tapped the steering wheel and the other tapped the horn—twice. Shirley came running and slid across the seat until she pressed against his side. He engaged the clutch and pressed the gas, leaving a couple of black strips on the street. I was almost certain Shirley saw me, but she didn't wave, and neither did I.

My father came up the sidewalk in time to witness the display of horsepower, a roll of soiled white smocks under one arm. "That boy's got more money than brains," he said. On his way to the door, he bent to ruffle Chester's sleek coat. Heady scents of hair tonic and Aqua Velva always followed him home from the shop.

Shirley and her boyfriend were together a lot that month, and my sleep was sometimes interrupted by loud pipes and squalling tires signaling their return. I would almost have welcomed DB's furlough if it hadn't been for Shirley's mother, who needed a chance for her arm to mend. Instead of whiling away the summer obsessing over Shirley, I reclaimed my usual patterns. The library had been my sanctuary from the time Mother introduced me to picture books and alphabet blocks. School smells mingled with wood polish and book glue settled my spirit like the scent of lilacs. Every couple of weeks I pedaled my bike past power mowers spitting fresh grass into windrows and boaters on glass-smooth water under an unremitting sun. Each visit, I checked out books enough to fill my bicycle basket and cover a serious reading binge.

My mother, whose persistence astonished me, did not give up befriending Shirley's mother. Crocheted doilies, jars of strawberry preserves, and slips of flowers from the garden were left on the porch that summer but never acknowledged. When August was nearly gone, Mother went in for the kill. She brewed a pot of tea and placed it on her best tray, along with tea cups and saucers and a plate of triangular sandwiches from which she had trimmed the crusts.

“Hurry,” she said, “before she goes inside.” She picked up the tray, and I followed her to the porch next door with the card table, a floral tablecloth, and napkins. Shirley’s mother averted her face but not fast enough to hide the bruising. I opened the table, spread the cloth, and placed the napkins. Mother joined her in the swing as I unloaded the tray.

I spent the rest of the afternoon in the glider as Pearl S. Buck’s *The Good Earth* cast its spell on me just as Mother had cast her spell on our neighbor. A couple of hours later, she returned, awkwardly packing her tea party paraphernalia. Still in a reading daze, I opened the screen door and followed her inside. One thing about Mother, she never minced words: “Shirley is pregnant. Thelma says the man, Ted, wants to marry her.”

“Does DB know?”

“Thelma’s black eye is the thanks she got for telling him. She was afraid he’d do worse to Shirley, but once he’d knocked his wife around, he simmered down. Ted has a job and is willing to make an honest woman out of his daughter. By DB’s standards, what more could a woman want?”

Returning to the glider and finding Chester curled in the spot I’d vacated, I picked up my book, but as engrossing as Buck’s words had been before, they were powerless against the guilt I felt. I hadn’t talked to Shirley the entire summer. Watching her from the safety of my bedroom and obsessing over her stupid choices had been a total waste of time. If I had been as good a friend as Mother, I would have waited for Shirley to come home however late it was and tried to talk sense into her. Even worse, things might never have reached that point if I’d considered how helpless she was under DB’s control. Dropping clues to the neighbor girl may have been the only cry for help Shirley felt she could make. And a lot of good it had done.

School started, and despite the cloud hanging over my head, I became involved in classes and volunteer work as library aide and tutor; brains might not have made me popular with my peers, but librarians and English teachers loved me. The same strata system existed at the high school, just in larger numbers. In the face of my failure as Shirley's friend, making myself over to fit the in-group seemed incredibly juvenile.

* * *

Since Mother had won Thelma's trust, they got together a lot during the four-week spans of freedom. At first, I had imagined Mother devising a way to rescue Thelma from DB's clutches, but my story stopped right there. Before the days of battered women's shelters and laws to punish men who abused their wives, meaningful help was hard to come by. Mother was left to her own ingenuity. She provided books, trips to the fabric shop, matinees at the local theater—anything to empower Thelma, to convince her she was worthy of a real life. She might never get up the nerve to leave her abuser, but at least her life was good while he was gone. Most importantly, though, Mother listened when Thelma had something to share. Through Shirley's letters, we learned that the newlyweds had an apartment and the pregnancy was going well. Shirley requested recipes, asked questions a new housewife would. Only occasionally did she mention Ted. Mother told me not to read too much into that, but I had a feeling she was reading plenty into it herself.

In late November, after a brisk walk through the early dusk from the bus-stop, I found Mother and Thelma sitting in our kitchen. Thelma had a letter open on the table, and she was crying. "Sit down, Christy," Mother said, motioning to the chair across from her.

I obeyed, dropping my books on the floor, shrugging out of my coat. "What happened?"

“Ted came home drunk and knocked Shirley around. It wasn’t the first time, but this time it was bad enough to scare her,” Mother handed Thelma a box of tissues from the counter. “She needs a safe place to go, but Thelma is afraid she won’t be any safer at home.”

I heard my voice blurt the words: “Bring her here.”

Mother reached across the table and covered my hand with hers. “That’s kind of you, Christy, but there needs to be distance—not only between her and Ted, but between her and DB.” When Mother realized what she’d said her mouth formed a perfect O. Fortunately, her slip was of no consequence; Thelma was too overwrought to care what anyone called the man who had made her life hell for close to twenty years.

“Is there anywhere you and Shirley could go?” Mother asked. There was a long pause as the clock on the living room mantle repeated a series of chimes in preparation and finally struck five. Chester took that as a signal to pad into the kitchen and sit expectantly at my feet. I scooped him into my lap and lay a hand on his silky back.

Thelma wiped her face with a wad of tissues. When I first saw Shirley’s mother, there had been something about her appearance that I felt had to have a name. I’d run through a lot of possibilities: fear, intimidation, defeat. None of those had quite nailed it. But there at our kitchen table, the only sounds Chester’s purring and the surge of igniting fuel in the furnace below our feet, I realized it wasn’t what I had *seen* in her face that had puzzled me; it was what I *hadn’t* seen until that moment: “...the thing with feathers that perches in the soul.”

“My parents live in Indiana,” she said.

Mother and I shared a look that encompassed her pride in Thelma's courage, my relief that I had another chance to befriend Shirley, and our renewed sense of wonder at the bond between mother and daughter.

Many Faces
by Allison Butcher



The Franks in My Attic*

by Sandra Kolankiewicz

They wake at dawn but then must wait till after seven
at night to tiptoe across the room

in stocking feet, after all workers in the factory below
are gone for the day but me,

who has secretly agreed to bring them water and the
soft, round bread they eat, even during

those special times they want it flat, because anyone
who would make it unleavened is

upstairs, all of them, not just the bakers, but all the
Jews in Eastern Europe who haven't

been put on a train. I bring them eggs too and, when I
can, cabbage, canned beef, a few

shriveled carrots or potatoes. They are safe with me,
in fact have made a little living room

of sorts with the battered plywood they found
stacked against the chimney and the nails and

hammer I brought in my lunch box because a child in
a uniform trusts me and admires my

bicycle. Upstairs they sleep in imitations of cubicles
at best, but everyone has the illusion

of privacy, which is important, especially when one
can't leave the lights on at night,

and one can't walk by day or pee into a metal tub
because some bored woman below, who

doesn't have enough details to type, will hear and
make the dreaded report, even though that

deaf boy she knows from across her street is up there
too, his mother pleading with me

because he's next to vanish in the van, as soon as they
finish sterilizing the others. At the top

of the hidden stairs, behind the door that looks like a
bookcase, I have every person in a

wheel chair who hasn't been taken, along with the old
men who can't find the way home

anymore, the dark and suspected, frightened widows,
beloved ancestral homes seized by

the state. Way up there in the night, five stories
above the loading dock, far removed

from the lights of the city glowing below so the rivers
seem on fire though you still can't

see the stars, the blind find things for people in the
dark, the autistic ones stop flapping,

the ones with the palsy relax, and the most terrified
know when to be quiet. Of them

all, the homosexuals and Unitarians are undisputedly
the favorites, their wit boundless,

openness notable, capacity to problem solve and
ability to improvise outstanding, to keep

us entertained and reminded to share unrivaled in
such difficult and demanding circumstances

where there are so few props, the ending unspecified,
no prospect of a chorus line.

*What many people do not realize is that the Nazis didn't just go after Jewish people. They started with killing the disabled (the T 4 Program) and moved on to mass extermination of social justice groups, such as Unitarians; traditional 'outsiders' like Gypsies; men and women who had same-sex sexual orientation; peasants of many countries who became Nazi slaves until they died; and 6 million Jews.

Originally published in *Turning Inside Out*, Black Lawrence Press, 2008

1 Through 10

by Kenna Reynolds Warren

Ten.

Ten fingers & Ten toes

Ten weeks home for maternity leave-because the budget does not cover any more than that

Ten minutes minimum of rocking before sleep finally takes over that sweet angry tiny face

Ten loads of laundry backed up

Ten bottles in the sink that need washed

Ten minutes to myself to cry out the stress before the baby wakes up

Ten unanswered work emails

Ten appointments on the calendar

Ten minutes too long pumping at work, so people start to ask questions and whisper.

Ten people telling me they didn't think I would come back to work after the baby

Nine people who always have an unsolicited comment

Eight people who wished I hadn't come back from maternity leave

“Seven exercises to get your pre-baby body back”

“Six power moves to prove you're serious about your career post-

baby” “Five ways to keep your husband interested after children”

“Four self-care tips every new mom should know”

Three colleagues getting promotions

Two hours after work to spend with my baby to feed, bathe, and bond with before bedtime

One woman trying to balance being a mother and having a career

One woman attempting to do it all and wondering if she's doing any of it right

One.

Falling Short
by Joyce Stover

It was a time of time of celebration mingled with great sadness and loss. The Great War officially ended at the Treaty of Versailles after four devastating years that brought unprecedented death and destruction. But many Americans, including Georgia Winslow, never quite understood what Germany's invasion of France and Belgium, and the withdrawal of Russia from the conflict, had to do with the United States. Life during the years of 1914 to 1919 in the East Texas piney woods was concerned about a global flu pandemic, the most severe influenza outbreak of the 20th century in which 675,000 Americans died in that five-year period. There was hardly a family that was not affected by the pandemic, including the Winslows. Georgia's Uncle Harlen and two of the hands on the Winslow ranch had died of what was called the Spanish Flu.

The pandemic had also put the brakes on a passion of Georgia Winslow, the passage of a law giving women the right to vote. She had worked tirelessly organizing marches, tacking up signs, and talking to women's church groups, even stopping people on the street, pushing handbills into their hands expounding on the importance of women being able to vote. But fear of more deaths limited the number of women in the community that Georgia could enlist in the fight to secure voting rights for women. She persevered despite the jeers and shouts of "Go home where you belong, woman!" She worked tirelessly, campaigning for passage of a bill giving women the right to vote. To no avail.

Fierce arguments with her brother Slone only strengthened her determination. Leading those marches, giving speeches, distributing handbills advocating voting rights for women became her goal in life.

“Georgia Faye, come here!” The front door slammed with a bang as Slone Winslow strode into the hallway, flinging his hat to a chair in the entryway as he motioned to his sister. “Now!”

Chin held high and her eyes flashing, Georgia stood defiantly in the living room, her arms folded against her chest. “I’m not your dog to come running when you snap your fingers.”

Slone stepped toward his older sister. “You have to stop this foolishness, embarrassing the family, traipsing all over town, carrying signs. No way in Hell is there is going to be a law passed allowing women to vote.” He jabbed a finger in her direction. “And it’s women like you that will keep congress from passing such a law.”

“What do you mean, ‘Women like me’?”

“Women who don’t know their place, that’s what I mean!”

Georgia straightened her back, red creeping up her neck. “Who are you to tell me what my place is, anyway? You’re a privileged son born into wealth and position, that’s all you are. You’ve never had to struggle or want for anything, and you get to choose the people who make decisions about all of our lives. Well, I want to have a voice in those decisions, too, and so do many other women!”

“It’s never going to happen, so you might as well forget about it. Throw those signs in the trash where they belong, and go put on an apron and peel some potatoes for dinner. That’s what you’re here for!” His tone was scathing. “Besides, you’re too old for anything else.” With that, he whirled around and went into the library, slamming the door behind him.

Georgia sat on the closest chair and sobbed into her hands. She knew that passage of the voting rights bill was unlikely. The pandemic made it harder and harder for her to get women to protest, fear of getting the flu and taking it home to their families, and she couldn't honestly blame them. That was true all across the country.

Georgia's despair at falling short of her goal was eased somewhat when she read a notice in the Longview newspaper seeking women to replace men in the greatly expanded munitions factories in the country. Determined to show her brother that her place was not only in the kitchen, she went to Longview and signed up to work any place in the country that she was needed, and on the appointed day, she drove to the courthouse, first in line to enlist. Slone's scornful remark about her age gave Georgia pause, but didn't stop her from volunteering. She signed up, agreeing to remain for two years after the war, if chosen and if needed. She went home and waited to hear if she had been accepted.

She wasn't a child, and enlisting wasn't something she did impetuously. Regardless of her age, she was a Winslow; she was chosen. It was the best thing that had happened to her in her entire life.

To Georgia's delight, it had created quite a stir when she announced her decision to join the war effort. The entire Winslow family had tried to discourage her, but at age thirty-six, Georgia had known that this was her only chance to strike out on her own. She left by train, headed east.

Georgia was sent to Norfolk, Virginia, and while she regretted leaving Texas and her suffrage work, no one was prouder of the opportunity to serve her country than she. Georgia had spent a lifetime being the odd one in the family, the one always falling short. Brother Slone was

a successful lawyer, and younger sister, Rebekah, was the local beauty, complete with charm and grace.

And Georgia, well, Georgia was just Georgia, too tall, too thin. Facial bone structure that was strong and masculine on her brother translated to severe angles on Georgia. To add insult to injury, she was stuck with frizzy orange hair the color of carrots instead of the soft strawberry blonde curls that Rebekah's had. Consequently, Georgia had kept her hair pulled tightly into a knot on the back of her head. She eschewed what she called fancy dresses, opting to wear trousers and an oversized shirt when at home. To the chagrin of her siblings, she only dressed for a trip into town or for church. And for dinner, of course. Winslows dressed for dinner.

Her mother had died when Rebekah was born, and although Jessie, the housekeeper, had tried, Georgia had stubbornly resisted all efforts to transform her into the ladylike creature that her sister was. Only her father had no complaints about Georgia. She sometimes had wondered if it was just because she was his namesake, but she knew better. George Winslow loved all three of his children, with no favorites. He was amused by Georgia, not aggravated, as so many others were. He had whispered in a secret in Georgia's ear when she was ten years old: one day she would outshine them all. Every time someone reprimanded or ridiculed Georgia and bitterness crept in, she focused on that thought: *she was going to outshine them all.*

With a number of young women, some who were almost half her age, Georgia had been transported on a Navy bus to Salem, Virginia. She was elated when she got her first choice of assignments, training to become a mechanic; she had proven herself not just capable, but skilled and was sent to Norfolk to work on machinery in the munitions yard. There, each person was

assigned a specific area in which to work. Georgia's specialty was repairing small machines. As time permitted, she also worked on truck engines. Georgia Winslow was in heaven.

Civilians worked alongside Navy men. It took some adjusting to, getting used to the men being there one day and gone the next, shipped off to who knew where, not even getting to say goodbye. Civilians also were subject to being sent to another location without prior notice, but Georgia's superiors liked her work and had kept her in the same area the entire three years. Although she had originally signed up with the idea of serving overseas, she didn't mind being stationed at Norfolk. The work was challenging and she secretly enjoyed working side by side with the men, earning their respect for her skill and willingness to work as hard and long as they.

At first, Georgia had lived on the naval base, but eventually she and a small group of women she roomed with were moved into a house off the base with a housemother who took care of the housework and laundry and prepared their meals. The women were civilians governed by military rules that determined even where they could go when off base. No matter. Georgia loved it.

The other women, most just out of high school, were cordial but the age difference meant that they had little in common with Georgia other than work, who soon tired of hearing about all the available young men. She had long since accepted that she would not likely marry. Georgia could not remember ever being as giggly and downright silly as those girls were, swooning over each new beau. It was not that she did not like the young women. She did, she found them amusing, but soon ran out of words when engaging in a conversation with them of any length. She pretended to not hear the comments about her age and appearance.

It wasn't as though Georgia was accustomed to having close friends. Her life had been spent pretty much alone, other than one friend she had during her school years. It had been her younger sister Rebekah, beautiful, charming Rebekah, who had friends and beaux. Georgia had settled for getting attention the only way she knew how; by playing pranks or telling tales. She always got caught, but never seemed to learn from her mistakes. It was only now, looking back on her life from a distance, that she even saw her childhood antics and fibs as mistakes, always falling short of the expectations of others.

It was different working in the war plant. She was respected there. And there was no beautiful sister or smart brother to cast shadows over her. The most exciting times were when she worked graveyard, the times when she was loaded into planes with other personnel and flown to the aircraft lots in North Carolina where aircraft were stored that had been so nearly demolished that they were no longer being restored. The war had created severe shortages and the crews took every piece of salvageable scrap metal from the planes down to nuts, bolts, and screws, back to the Navy yard to use repairing damaged aircraft.

Each night Georgia and the younger women gathered in the parlor after supper where one of them would read aloud from the evening newspaper, particularly articles about the war. She welcomed the opportunity to excuse herself and retire as soon as the paper had been read.

It was on one of those evenings that Georgia learned that the government had placed an advertisement in the paper seeking women with long hair. They had the opportunity to aid the war effort if they were willing to donate their hair.

“Women with hair at least twenty-two inches long are being asked to cut it and donate it to the war effort.” Sheila, a young brunette, was reading that night. Georgia listened intently as

the animated girl read the brief item. *What an easy way to aid the soldiers, donating one's hair to make rifle sights.*

The following day Georgia sent an inquiry to the address in the advertisement and quickly received a telegram asking for a hair sample. She complied with the request and a few days later, another telegram arrived pleading for her hair. Georgia's red hair fit the government criteria: it had never been bleached or touched with an iron, and had rarely been really cut, only trimmed. And it was almost double the required length of twenty-two inches.

Americans were giving up luxuries in the effort to win the war, and like many others, Georgia longed for a way to help the boys fighting overseas, not just working in the factory, but contributing something herself. This was it.

She stood before the small mirror in her bedroom and removed the pins holding her hair in place and slowly untwined the fiery mane. She brushed it until it shone, and then without flinching, picked up the scissors off the vanity and quickly cut the hair off at the nape of her neck. She sent it off in the next day's mail.

Shorter hair was becoming on Georgia, softening her features, and she was surprised to find that the natural curl that she had hated all her life made it easy to care for the short bob. She even liked the wispy curls that framed her face. Hard physical work had been good for her appetite and she had put twenty pounds on her thin frame. For the first time in her life, Georgia was proud of the way she looked.

Six months later, Georgia had received a commendation from the Virginia Historical Society for her personal sacrifice in donating her hair. It was her finest moment, humbling and

exhilarating at the same time, and there was not a single Winslow present to see it. Darn! Georgia hadn't been able to resist sending a clipping of the ceremony and write-up to her family in Texas, who were at first shocked, and then proud of Georgia's sacrifice in the war effort.

Next to donating her hair, Georgia's biggest thrill was being chosen to meet a visiting dignitary who was touring the plant. Her first reaction had been that of great humility, assuming that her mechanical aptitude was being recognized. She had laughed when told the actual reason she was selected was because she had good table manners. Being able to laugh at herself was another step forward for Georgia. There was a time--most of her life actually--when she would not have found humor in the situation...

Almost two years to the day that she had arrived in Norfolk, Georgia was released from duty in the factory. She was anticipating a warm welcome upon arrival in her home town where she had become somewhat of a celebrity.

Georgia lightly touched her short-cropped hair and smiled to herself as she boarded the train in Norfolk, bound for home. She had spent two years working as a mechanic in a munitions plant. Older than most of the young women in the factory, she had always had a knack for repairing things, learned from trailing after her father on the ranch. She settled into her seat and while waiting for the train to leave the station, reminisced about her time spent away from home, her first time away from home.

Georgia's reverie continued as the train slowly began its journey south-westward, the chug-chug of the engines willing her to sleep. When it stopped in Shreveport, Louisiana, a soldier boarded and took the seat next to Georgia. He removed his hat and nodded politely.

His name was Lawson Hood and he was headed for Marshall, Texas, just thirty-five miles east of Gladewater, Georgia's hometown. Recently discharged from the army, he had stopped off in Shreveport to visit a buddy who had been sent home a year before.

"Did you have a nice visit?" Georgia smiled at the slender youth who couldn't have been more than twenty.

Lawson cleared his throat before he answered. "Well, ma'am, I guess the visit went all right...no, ma'am, that's not the truth." He gripped his hat tightly with both hands. "It's a long story..."

"I have plenty of time, if you'd like to tell me about your friend," Georgia said gently.

Nodding, Lawson began. "I didn't know Kenneth until I joined the Air Force. We met in boot camp. We spent a few months training and eventually we wound up aboard a British plane on bombing missions. We thought we were hot stuff.

"But this one time," he swallowed hard, pausing slightly. "It was our nineteenth mission. We were bombing north of Berlin. Kenneth and me, we figured that it would be just another mission, you know? We joked about it being just another night out with the fellas. And it was, until we dropped a bomb on a jet propulsion lab."

He laughed, ruefully. "The Germans cut loose on us and before we knew it, there was a hole in the side of the plane big enough to drive a tank through. An engine caught fire and we were all scrambling, trying to get our parachutes ready to jump. Finally, just the pilot was left, along with me and Kenneth. Kenneth was the tail gunner. I waited for him before I jumped, don't

know why, I guess I just didn't want to leave him on that plane that I knew was going to crash in a matter of minutes.

"Well, we jumped, but when I pulled the ripcord, it hit me in the head. It knocked the daylights out of me for a little bit, but I came to before I hit the ground. While I was trying to get out of the parachute, I saw German soldiers coming down the road. I ran to some nearby woods and hid, covering myself with leaves and brush, anything I could get my hands on. I was exhausted and sore from the fall and eventually fell asleep. Looking at the sun, I guessed that I woke up a little before noon."

He shook his head, lost in thought. "I knew I had to try to get back to the front line."

Georgia listened intently as Lawson explained how he spent much of his time dodging German soldiers all that day, making little progress in getting back to an American outfit, so he made up his mind to sleep as much as he could during the day and to travel at night. He had light from an almost full moon, but had no food, just sugar pills. And he drank water from creeks.

"One night," he said, "I came up on a farm house and saw a little out building. I figured that it was a cellar and I might be able to find food there. There was a dirt mound inside and I knew it had to be potatoes. I had eaten three when I heard a dog growl. I grabbed two more potatoes and ran." He flashed a weak grin. "Best meal I ever had."

"They took me to Perieberg for interrogation. Because I didn't have a gun, they thought I was a spy. You see," Lawson glanced at Georgia, "our crew had decided not to carry weapons to lessen the chance of getting shot. We hoped they wouldn't shoot an unarmed man. But the Nazis hated us Air Force fellas, and I couldn't rightly blame them. We'd been bombing their homes and

families. Since they thought I was in espionage, they put me in solitary confinement." He looked out the window at the passing farmland. "When you're in solitary, you pray every prayer you ever heard, sing every song you ever knew, recite every verse of scripture you can remember—and wish you remembered more.

"We lived on black bread and coffee. I lost almost fifty pounds in a month. We were covered with lice, not permitted to bathe. Once, they let us brush our teeth with toothbrushes the Red Cross had sent, but they wouldn't let us shower.

"Then we learned that orders had been given to execute all prisoners of war. We didn't know if it was true or not, but we decided that the next day we wouldn't fall out. If we went outside, they could shoot us." He grinned, remembering. "They raised holy cane, cussin' and yellin' and they sent guards in, but we wouldn't budge. A Brit agreed to go outside and talked with the officer in charge. He told him that we had weapons and if they came in, we'd fight. We did have weapons, too. Our guard had traded us weapons for cigarettes. Anyhow, they settled it, and we just sat tight. But not for long. The British tanks rolled in and we were rescued."

Georgia smiled, relieved at the happy ending.

Lawson Hood sat for a few seconds, saying nothing. "But Kenneth wasn't so lucky. When he parachuted to the ground, he was picked up and taken to a POW camp where they tortured him, tortured him real bad. But I didn't know that until later."

The young man with old eyes stared at nothing in particular. "Kenneth was nearly killed that day. I got off with injuries that didn't amount to a hill of beans. In a few weeks, I was okay, but Kenneth was hospitalized for months. The doctors said he was well enough, but he wasn't.

He's still fighting the Germans." At Georgia's curious look, he explained. "In his head, he's still at war in his head."

"Oh my goodness. How sad. I had heard there were men who came home like that."

"He knew who I was, Miss Winslow, but he thought we were still in the Air Force. That's all he talked about, and his eyes, they were real wild-like, like an animal." Lawson slumped down in his seat, tears gleaming in his eyes.

"Mr. Hood—Lawson, you've been through a terrible ordeal. I'm so sorry. Your story is more than anyone should have to endure."

"It's just that we had been through much together, that's what makes it so hard." Lawson swiped at the tears on his cheek. "I knew Kenneth was acting kinda funny, but the doctors said he was okay to go back. I guess they thought that since he was a gunner that he was good enough to release."

He paused, ran a hand through his hair, then continued. "It wasn't till later that I learned all the details of what happened. He glanced out of the window at the farmlands dotted with cotton and cattle, then back at Georgia, who waited quietly. She had seen young men before who had come back from the war, all of them old before their time. She let him talk.

He leaned forward with his elbows on his knees, his face buried in his hands.

Lawson picked up his story. "Me and Kenneth, we both made it through that awful day, wounded but okay. I thought that we were home free after that. I hadn't counted on getting shot down and how what had already happened to Kenneth would push him over the edge..."

Georgia stared at the dejected boy, searching for words of comfort that didn't come. She hung her head in shame, remembering that less than an hour before she had been thinking that she was such hot stuff, giving up a luxurious home to work in a plant. How little she had sacrificed compared to the valiant men who lived and died at the battle of Verdun in France, at all the wretched places in the wretched war. They rode the rest of the way to Gladewater in silence, each in thought about the sorry state of war.

Georgia wished Lawson Hood well when she got off the train. As she gathered her belongings, she turned and spoke to the young soldier. "Lawson, if you are ever in Gladewater, or if you just need someone to talk to, please call me. Just look in the phone book under George Winslow."

"I'll do that, Miss Georgia. And thank you. I had hoped that Kenneth would have improved by now, be back to normal. It shook me up to see how he is." He smiled wanly. "I feel better having gotten it all out. I don't want to alarm my folks with talk about the war. They think it's all flag waving and marching around. They don't know what it's really like and I don't want to tell them."

Georgia nodded in understanding. "I'll look forward to hearing from you."

As she waited at the depot for Rebekah's arrival, Georgia's thoughts returned to the tale of horror that she had listened to from Lawson Hood. Moments later a black Oldsmobile pulled into the station and Rebekah exited, waving and smiling,

There was a party that night in Georgia's honor at The Pines, the Winslow estate that her grandfather had built nearly a century ago. The long circular driveway curved gracefully through

the loblolly pine trees from which the ranch's name had come. Soft light from the tall windows of the Federal style house welcomed guests as they arrived. It was a grand house, symmetrical and boxy, with center entrances in the front and rear, set off by tall columns and broad porches. The entire Winslow clan was there, along with the cream of Gladewater's society. The mayor came and gave a champaign toast in Georgia's honor.

“It's a real privilege to offer this toast,” he said, lifting his glass, “to a real hero.” When Georgia protested, the mayor shushed her. “Miss Georgia, without you little ladies stepping up to the plate so our men could go fight the Germans...”

Georgia didn't hear the words of praise, scarcely felt the pats on the shoulder from well-meaning friends and long-time neighbors. She smiled and graciously thanked them for coming. She admired the fresh flowers in the candle-lit setting, the beautifully spread table laden with home-grown vegetables and fruit, hams from their own smokehouse, and trays of soft, buttery hot rolls. But she had no appetite, and just moved food around on her plate with her fork as visions of Lawson Hood's best-ever meal of three raw potatoes swirled before her eyes.

The celebration, that grand event that she had wanted, dreamed of, being the center of attention in an overachieving family for once, did not hold the joy Georgia had anticipated before the train stop in Shreveport. Her heart was heavy with the knowledge of how pitifully inadequate her contributions had been, how insignificant. On one hand, she had contributed to the war effort, done everything that she could, and in so doing had come to the realization that she was no longer falling short in everything she attempted. She was strong and sure of herself, no longer the sister hiding in the shadows of her overachieving siblings. She had found herself while serving others. Of that, she was proud. No more falling short for her.

But on the other hand, long after she turned out the lights in her bedroom, Georgia lay staring at the ceiling, not recounting her accomplishments of the past few years. She could not blot out an image burned into her brain of a young soldier hunched over on a train seat, retelling the horror of war as it really was, not noble or honorable, but bloody, uncivilized, and life-altering.

Only a Woman

by Kenna Reynolds Warren

I have created life with my body
I have sustained life with my body
I carry the evidence on my body
Stretch marks, an 8 inch incision
But I am only a woman

I am a daughter and a sister
I am a wife and a mother
I am the maid and the cook
I am the launderer and the secretary
But I am only a woman

I am the kisser of boo boos
I am the warmth of a hug
I am the voice of reason
And for now, the knower of all things
But I am only a woman

I am educated and logical
I am strategic yet sensitive
I am firm and just
I am the balancer of many things
But I am only a woman

I am calm under pressure
I am quick on my feet
I am an excellent employee
I am a team member

But I am only a woman

Yet I sit here and I wonder

how can I be all of these

but still be less than a man?

The answer is simple - because

I am only a woman

The Inner Thoughts of a Tired Mother

by Kenna Reynolds Warren

Wake up.

Calm the baby.

Make breakfast and coffee.

Unload and reload the dishwasher while the baby eats.

Notice that he's not really a baby anymore and your child is looking more like a toddler.

Silently mourn the moments you miss of him growing up because you have a demanding job.

Pack the diaper bag, feed the dog, wrestle the toddler into his car seat.

Keep a positive attitude as you peel him off your legs at daycare.

Tell him it will be ok, he's going to have a great day.

Wipe a tear from his red little face and leave.

Cry a little in the car before you go to work.

Check your makeup for smudges.

Always look put together.

Clock in.

Answer emails.

Meet with the boss.

Work harder to get ahead.

Don't snack, it's bad for your figure.

Be a top performer, but you can always do more.

Do not be assertive or aggressive, it's unbecoming for a woman.

Sit through a meeting where a male coworker reiterates your idea and gets the credit.

Be a friendly face, even on bad days. Women should always be welcoming.

Never ask for help, it shows you are incompetent and weak.

Drink more water, it's good for you.

Bite your tongue, not your nails.

Be educated but not smart.

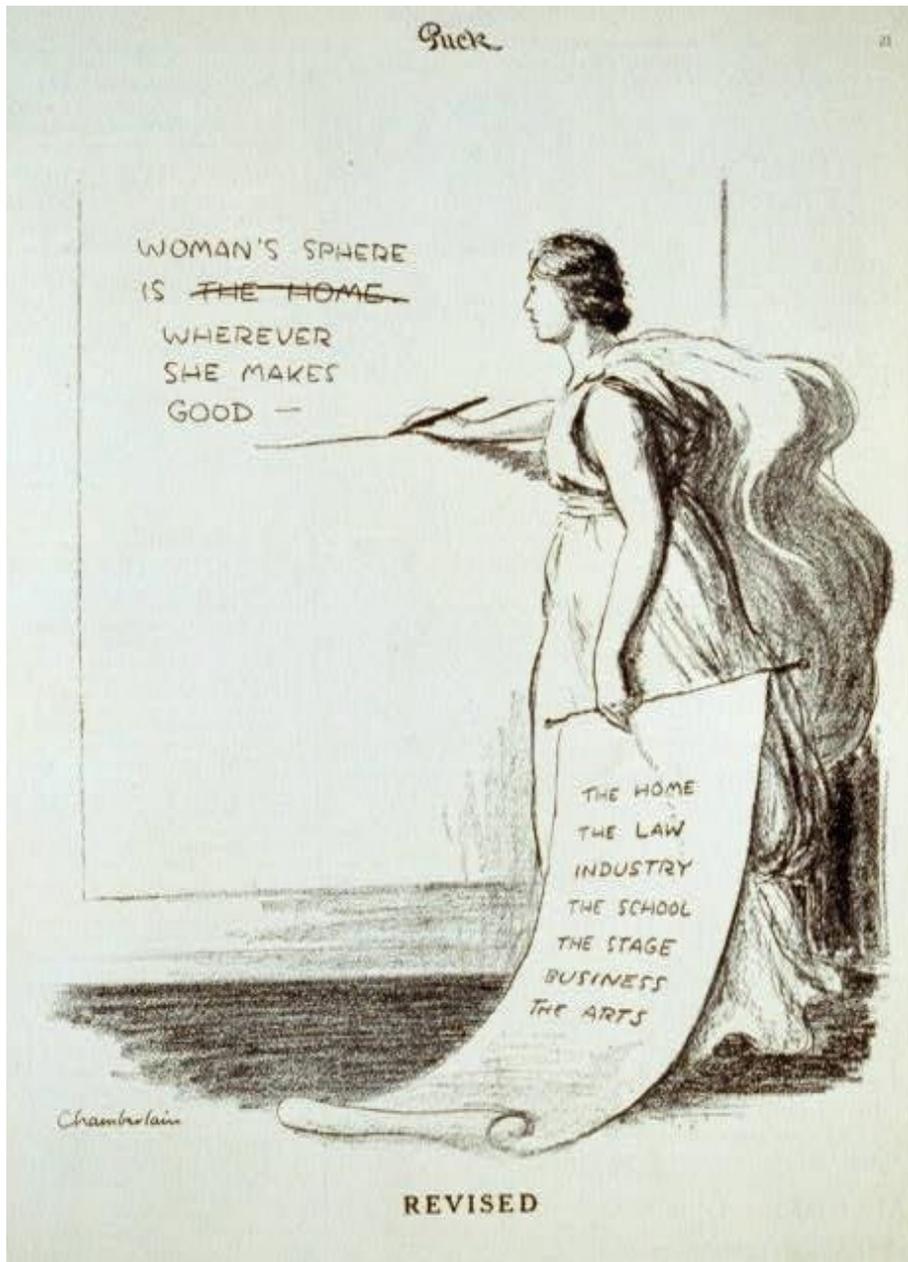
Grind harder.

Clock out,
Drive home.
Calm a cranky baby.
Time to work out? Nope.
Decide what to have and start dinner.
Feed baby. Wipe baby, floor, walls, and dog.
Quickly eat your dinner, standing over the kitchen sink.
Run bath water. Splish Splash. “Hold still so I can wash your hair!”
Wrap you up! Dry you off! New diaper, fresh jammies, sleepy baby blinks.
Read no less than TEN bedtime stories. Any less and there will be revolting.
Rocking back and forth, back and forth, while singing his favorite song.
Snuggled into your arms tight, Momma. Kiss your baby goodnight.
Hold him a little longer tonight to make up for missing him all day.
Quietly, gently slip him into the crib and silently sneak out.
Finally, some time to yourself! Oh, wait, laundry.
Finally done? It's awfully late, get to bed!
Remind yourself that you are strong.
You have the strength of a mother.
Tomorrow will be better.
You can do this.
Go to sleep.

Regulator
by Matt Gable

Passive as a defense;
Passive minimizes disharmony;
Passive enables takers.
Is it worth it to fake stability?
Are you offering up everything?

Revised: Original Illustration from the Suffrage Era



**LEGEND OF LEAENA VASTA PART I:
FOUNDER OF THE WARRIOR QUEENS OF LEONIA**

by Zechariah Edison Baskin

The entirety of the senate chamber was reduced to a haunting silence. The final words of Leaena Vasta's speech parting her lips and lingering like smoke after a vicious battle. Leaena slowly lowered her arms to her sides, signifying that her address was done for the moment and giving the Senate of Reges to retort.

"How dare you!?!?" Roared Regem Cicero, jumping to his feet. The dark grey mane surrounding his face was shaking in time with his words to accentuate his fury and indignation. His roar of outrage broke the spell that had been cast on the rest of the Senator Reges. One by one, the Senator Reges rose to their feet and began to shout at Leaena in a rage that even the mightiest volcano could not match. After a few minutes, the shouts began to merge as one that Leaena could no longer distinguish who was speaking.

"This is an outrage!"

"Never in all my years..."

"This is a disgrace to our traditions!"

"ENOUGH!" Roared a Leonian male standing behind Leaena. He was younger than most of the other kings in the assembly. His stature was that of one who commanded respect from all those around him. His mane was of an auburn red coloration, and his feline eyes seemed to radiate with the power of the sun. Like everyone in attendance, he wore a toga that was golden in coloration with a strip of red running along the edges. It covered most of his body, leaving his head, left arm, hands, feet and the tip of his feline tail exposed. With the feline grace inherent to

their species, he stepped forward and stood beside Leaena. Once again, the assembly was stunned into silence. Then Cicero spoke up.

“So, the great Regem Leonidas speaks at last.” Mocked Cicero, still standing in front of his seat in the back upper ring of the assembly. “Now that you have proven that you have not lost the ability to speak our tongue, then perhaps you should use it to put your queen in line.”

“I am not the one that needs to be put in my place, Cicero.” Retorts Leaena. “If you wish to debate me, Cicero, then I suggest that you come down from your perch. As our traditions dictate, if a senator king wants to discuss with another individual, then he must come down onto the Senate floor. Not hide in the back like a sniveling coward.”

“You have no right to lecture me on what our tradition dictates, *girl*,” Cicero says as he made his way down to the Senate floor, putting extra venom on the last word to assert dominance over Leaena. “You prance around this city, dressing in the garb of a Leonian male and carry a sword on your belt. You’ve spent most of your young adult life shirking your duties as a female, and instead, you go about pretending that you're some maneless Leonian male.”

“If I am not allowed to carry a sword upon my waist, then why is it that I have been allowed to do so for long? I will tell you why, Cicero. It is because of my Father, the great High Regem Tiberius Vasta. Was he not the wisest Regum of your generation? Was he not the greatest advocate for maintaining Leonian culture? Yet he saw the potential that we females had. That we could be more than just breeders and pretty faces, he saw that we could be defenders of the Pride, just like our primal ancestors. So, my Father took it upon himself to train me in the ways of warfare. Through his teachings, I have become stronger than what I would have been if I had abided by the traditional roles for the Leonian female.” Leaena turns towards the other Senator

Reges. “All of you have seen me in the Colosseum. You have seen me vanquish beast after beast that was thrown my way, both with my sword and my claws. So, who among still doubts the wisdom of my Father? Who among you would side with Cicero and hold our people back from the glory that would be rightfully ours should we follow the path High Regem Tiberius Vasta has laid at our feet?”

Leaena again let her words float upon the atmosphere of the Senate chamber. Still, the Senators remained silent, giving Leaena the impression that they would actually consider her argument and possibly vote in her favor. Leaena’s heart began to race with anticipation. She was on the verge of achieving the dream that kept her up for many a night. An idea Leaena had held close to her heart, ever since her Father first began training her in the way of the sword. Her heart began to beat faster and faster, to the point that surely the Senator Reges could hear its rhythm and recognize it as the Pride of a Leonian warrior yearning to be free from the bounds of being a simple housewife. A life that Leaena knew was entirely unfitting for any true Leonian.

Once again, the silence of the room was shattered. Though it was not the rapturous applause or shouts of agreement that Leaena had been expecting, instead, it was laughter. Though it did not come from the Senator reges seated before her. But from the Senator Regem that was standing behind her. Leaena turned to see Cicero with his head tossed back in a cruel fit of laughter.

“What is so funny, Senator Regem Cicero?” Leaena growled, her hands slowly closing into fists.

“The very notion that you believe that the Great High Regem Tiberius Vasta would be willing to train a female over a male is a joke. The thought that He, who valued our traditions

even more than I, would encourage a daughter of his that she could be something more in our society, is as hilarious in my mind as it is insulting to his legacy.” Cicero ceased his laughter and glared down at Leaena with eyes full of self-righteous indignation.

“If it was such an insult to my father’s legacy to train me,” said Leaena through gritted teeth, “Then tell me, Cicero, why you and the rest of your colleagues would allow him to train me?”

“You insolent child! Do you forget the plague that fell upon your family at the moment of your birth, or did your birth mother not tell you?”

Leaena’s claws were beginning to dig into the flesh of her palms, she knew where this dialogue was going, and she was tired of hearing it.

“Aw judging from that sour expression on your face, it is a story that has been hammered into you quite frequently. So, allow me to beat it into your head one more time. Your Father only trained you because all your potential brothers and sisters had either died in the cradle or the womb. So rather than let his style of swordsmanship perish from the face of Zodai, he decided to train his last remaining child. It was out of respect for a Leonian of his stature and sorrow for the loss of his potential sons that this Senate of Reges allowed Tiberius Vasta to train you. It was respect for his Pride as a Leonian that we let you carry on as you have. That is why we have not raised a hand against you for most of your young adult life, no matter how many of our traditions you break. We had hoped that marrying you off to Regem Leonidas would temper your prideful nature or potentially turn you away completely from your controversial ways. But still, you insist on making a mockery of Leonian culture even after being married off. Now you dare to step into this chamber and demand that we allow all Leonian Females to be trained in the way of the

warrior, a right that has been reserved for us males since the Creator Deus sent down his servants Verchiel and Raziel to bring our kind to sentience. Oh, and let us not forget the outrageous demand that we allow our wives to carry on as those disgusting Scorpions do.” Cicero lowers his arms to his sides to indicate to everyone that he has finished speaking.

It takes every ounce of strength and discipline that Leaena possessed not to rip Cicero apart right there in the middle of the Senate chamber with her bare claws and teeth. Instead, she continues to dig her nails into the calloused flesh of her palms. Leaena takes a moment to compose herself and then counters Cicero’s argument.

“I agree with your sentiment, Cicero,” Leaena said through gritted teeth. “Traditions are vital to keeping society together. But traditions will not ensure the survival of our species! You males only make up to twenty percent of the total population of our people. Yes, in the beginning, after Verchiel and Raziel rose the first Pride to sentience, only a few warriors were required to defend themselves from the dangers of Zодаi. But we are beginning to venture out of our native Leonia, and we will no doubt be facing off against the eleven other Zодаi species for resources and territory. Our primary enemy, the Scorpions alone vastly outnumber our military forces, and one of their females is capable of producing almost seven times the amount of offspring in comparison to us Leonian females. Not to mention that all of those Scorpion offspring enter military service when they come of age. If we continue to abide by ancient tradition, all it would take is one decisive victory of the Scorpions or in any other Zодаi race’s favor for the entirety of our military to be wiped out and the extinction of all Leonians to be assured. All I ask is that the females of our species to be trained and incorporated into the military; that way, we can have a fighting chance.”

“Bah!!” Cicero says while throwing his hands into the air, showing that he had grown tired of her argument. “I speak for my colleagues when I say that we have enough of your inane ramblings, *girl!* You say that taking this action will benefit all of Leonian, but I, for one, see through this charade of yours. It is an attempt to grab more power for yourself that is above your station. You have let your Pride of being a female trained in the ways of war to turn into arrogance. As we all know, there is always a heavy price for any Leonian who allows their Pride to become arrogance. Therefore, it falls upon this assembly of Reges to deliver a potent dose of humility and send you home with your tail between your legs. So per our laws and traditions, we will now vote on this ridiculous request.”

The debate having been concluded, Leaena Vasta’s proposition, was turned over to the assembly of Senator Reges for the final vote. It felt like an eternity for Leaena, who waited with bated breath and fists clench. But not once did she allow her gaze to fall from the eyes of the Senator Reges sitting before her, she held her head high and braced herself for the results of her labor. No matter what they may be. Then one by one, each Senator Regum raised their fists and gestured downward with their thumbs, condemning Leaena’s request. Cicero cast the final vote. He threw her a self-satisfied grin as he motioned his thumb downwards. Her claws dug further into the flesh of her palms that blood was now flowing freely from her hands. She wanted to tear Cicero’s head from his shoulders or, at the very least, wipe that smirk off his old face.

“Now that has been decided, Regem Leonidas, would you kindly escort your wife back to where she belongs,” Remarked Cicero concluding the session. As Leaena Vasta and Regem Leonidas turned to leave the council chamber, Cicero decided to deliver one last blow to the Leonian female’s Pride. “*Girl*, if you step foot in this assembly again, you will be arrested as an agitator and be executed on the spot.”

The words hit Leaena with all the force of a battering ram, but her gait did not falter. They made their way out onto the cobblestone streets of Rome and made their way back to their home. Leaena kept her head as high as her husband's, but she could feel the eyes of the Leonian people burning holes into her. She was used to the sidelong stares and the judgment of others. However, she had the certainty of purpose to push them far from her mind. But now her dream had been dashed before her eyes, and she was more of a pariah now than when she started that day. Once they reached their Villa, she allowed the full force of her emotions to come to the forefront. The two primary emotions were rage and sorrow.

“May the Great Creator damn Cicero and his colleagues to the deepest parts of the nine hells for their arrogance!” Roared Leaena making her way to the kitchen, “They are blind fools! Do they not know that they have condemned our species to inevitable extinction!” As the words part her lips, she picked up a bowl from the counter and threw it against the adjacent wall, nearly hitting one of their servants. The young servant girl looked back at Leaena with fear in her eyes, but Leonidas quickly reassured her that she was not at fault and that it would be wise to give him and Leaena some privacy. The servant nodded her understanding and made her way out of the kitchen, avoid any eye contact with Leaena. Once the girl was gone, Leonidas stepped forward and placed a hand on Leaena's shoulder.

“I know you are disappointed about what happened at the senate chamber today Leaena,” Leonidas started, “but you can't just go breaking everything in sight and terrorizing our servants.”

“They should be terrified!” Leaena shouted, turning to face her husband, “Terrified that their leaders have condemned them to not only a life unfitting for a Leonian, but that they would allow for our inevitable destruction at the hands of our enemies!” Tears began to form in

Leaena's eyes, but she did not bother to wipe them away. "All I wanted was to give our people a fighting chance."

Leonidas brought her in for an embrace, and she did not resist him. How could she make them see? Her Father had seen the potential in her and begun her training with the knowledge that it would usher in a new age for all Leonians. Even Leonidas saw it, and he was the only male in all of Leonia that had no qualms about taking on a wife that could not only match his skill with the sword but surpass it. Then a thought entered Leaena's mind as if the Great Creator himself was speaking to her directly. If she could not use words to convince the Senate Reges of the value of a Leonian female's sword arm, then she will have to demonstrate it on the field of battle. But the question remained, how was she to gather enough female Leonians to train with her in secret without Cicero and his fellow Senate Reges finding out. Like a whisper, the solution came to her. She would start close to home, with Leonidas' three other wives.

"My King, I have an idea," Leaena whispered into her husband's ear. "Have Valeria, Annia, and Plinia come to the sparring area before dinner."

"What do you have in mind?" Leonidas asked as he pulled away so that he could look Leaena in the eye.

Leaena returned a wry smile to her husband's quizzical look. "Trust me, my love. What I am about to do will change the course of Leonia's future for the better."

Acrylic Image
by Kimberly Matheny



“Leda and the Swan” by William Butler Yeats: A Critical Analysis
by Lydia Stout

This poem is based on the myth of the same name. According to the myth, Zeus, the ruler of the Greek gods, transforms himself into a swan. As a swan, he comes to Leda who is a princess and seduces or rapes her depending on the version. She becomes pregnant and births multiple children. In one version, which Yeats refers to in the third stanza, she gives birth to: Helen of Troy, Clytemnestra, and Castor and Pollux. Now all of these children are famous for different reasons. Castor and Pollux are the mythological creators of the city of Rome. Helen of Troy began the Trojan War. Clytemnestra’s husband was Agamemnon, king of the Greeks. His brother Menelaus was Helen’s husband who was stolen by the Trojans. Menelaus went to ask his brother to help get Helen back. Agamemnon then called up the Greek army which consisted of all of the kings who had made an agreement that they would not fight with whoever became Helen’s husband and if she was kidnapped would go to war to get her back. Upon returning home after the war Agamemnon is killed by his wife Clytemnestra.

The poem is in four stanzas, and it is similar to a Petrarchan sonnet. The first two stanzas have an ABAB rhyme scheme, rhyming the first and third lines and the second and fourth lines of each stanza. The last two stanzas are a sestet, the rhyme scheme changes to EFGFEG in which the third stanza and the last three lines of the fourth stanza rhyme.

Yeats wrote the poem from third-person narrative point of view. There have been two different perspectives on this myth. One perspective is that Zeus seduced her, she fell in love and was a willing partner as they made love. The other perspective is the one that the author uses in the poem which is that Zeus forced her and raped her unwillingly. This is shown in the first phrase of the first line “A sudden blow” occurs.

A swan is a symbol of purity which makes a stark contrast in the poem. This pure symbol is coming to a pure maiden to defile her which will make her impure. The swan is also a symbol of divination or intuition which the author touches on in the last two stanzas. The author questions whether through Zeus's divinity she was able to see that her child would cause the Trojan War and the death of Agamemnon. In India, tantra (tantric sex), it is believed that the joining of male and female and the climax itself in which the people involved can reach enlightenment. While not specifically stated, the "shudder in the loins" and "being so caught up" could suggest an orgasm which would cause her to be in the correct state for stanza three. The "broken wall" can be a metaphor for the hymen. The act of penetration and tearing the hymen has long been associated with phrases which use a gate, wall or castle which must be broken.

I do not know how Ancient Greece viewed rape, chastity, or virginity. I do know that historically great importance has been placed on women being pure or a virgin in order to marry well. I believe that is also the Greeks view because in another myth the father hides his daughter in a tower to save her from Zeus. There were cultures though who would honor women who were believed to have had relations with a deity. There is also a dichotomy of thinking because in some cultures a woman could prove that she is fertile and could bear children by becoming pregnant from her premarital sexual relations would also be highly prized as a marriage option. But according to the white patriarchal Euro American Christian background being raped is shameful. In the past, the woman was ruined and an outcast from society. No decent women would speak to her and no man would marry her. If she does become pregnant either society would publicly shame her or her parents or herself would have her miscarry.

I find this poem to be very realistic in its imagery. To paraphrase: a sudden hit occurs, the female staggers. Her thighs are touched while she is helpless, held at the neck. Chest to

chest, the thighs open, “a shudder in the loins” (orgasm?). Finally, he uncaringly lets “her drop”. As rape was not be talked about and was seen in a negative light, literature and life generally glosses over rape. So, whether it took more to wake up fairytale princesses than kissing or if the Sabine Women really did call the men their husbands doesn’t matter because it is overlooked in literature. This poem on the other hand instead focuses on this act instead of making it romantic or seductive shows it was forceful and nonconsensual in graphic detail.

Elegy for Hector
by Chris Gilmer

Pallas Athena Mother-God
Will you not deliver your children
From the millennium of the mindless
Who accept what we are told
Without inquiry

Must there be a new Trojan War
Where gods strive alongside us
And fathers sacrifice daughters
On the altar of Artemis
Simply for wind to puff the sails
Of vengeance

Are there no more priestesses
Overcome by their virginity
And the burning incense
To run naked and wild
Through the night
And chant prayers
Around the open fire

Is the thunderbolt of mighty Zeus
No longer able
No longer willing
To awaken the zombies
We have become
To the primal
The truly celestial
The Olympian within us all

Moving Forward
by Lauri Reidmiller



Just Coins

by Jenny Dawkins

coins on the sidewalk
always under your feet
coins on the sidewalk
just kick it in the street
coins on the sidewalk
I find it oh so pleasant
coins on the sidewalk
can buy a child a present
coins on the sidewalk
can help someone to eat
coins on the sidewalk
might help you pay for heat
coins on the sidewalk
even if it's sandy
coins on the sidewalk
can buy a toddler candy
coins on the sidewalk
might help you with your strife
coins on the sidewalk
can really change a life

unum hominem
by Scott K. Turner

Social life is full of color, preferences, experiences, and thought. Attributes that represent diversity- totality – wholeness. Opening new dimensions, space becomes of our minds and our senses. We arrive at syzygy from the outside in to the inside out and breathe.

Women at the Ballot Box: Original Image from the Suffrage Era



"To Demand Justice Is the Golden Rule": Women's Suffrage in West Virginia
by Alicia Matheny Beeson

"The ballot is the weapon of civilization. Women need it in every walk in life. Our cause is not alone ours but that of all humanity . . . Let us be courageous . . . Let us persistently insist that in the purpose of the Infinite, self-government is the ultimate destiny of mankind. This is our ideal. Let us remember it always. We must keep it burning upon the altar of our hearts, a passion for freedom, a determined purpose not only to be just, to do unto others what we would have them do unto us, but to demand justice, is the golden rule." - Mrs. M. Anna Hall's Address to the West Virginia Equal Suffrage Convention, 1905

The nineteenth amendment states, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex." This amendment was passed on the national level in June of 1919, and thirty-six states needed to approve the change in order for the amendment to become a law. West Virginia became the thirty-fourth of the thirty-six required states, but the road to this victory was long and arduous.

West Virginia women worked toward suffrage at the state and national levels leading up to the Constitutional amendment. Even as early as 1867, "just as Kansas was holding the first state referendum on women's suffrage, or the right of women to vote, Samuel Young, a minister and state senator from Pocahontas County, introduced an unsuccessful resolution calling for the enfranchisement of women in the young state of West Virginia" (Effland, "Women's Suffrage"). Support for the cause grew over the following decades. Anne Wallace Effland explains, "Active work for the woman suffrage movement began in West Virginia in 1895, strengthened by a statewide suffrage convention in Grafton at which nine local clubs joined together to form the West Virginia Equal Suffrage Association (WVESA)" (Effland, "A Profile of Political Activists," 103). Though nine chapters formed after this convention, only two in Wheeling and Fairmont survived for more than a year (Effland, "A Profile of Political Activists," 103, 107). Though in some ways a radical cultural change, many women saw suffrage as an extension of

their domestic duties into the public sphere. As Anne Wallace Effland writes, “The West Virginia suffragists did not view votes for women as a radical political aim, but as an integral part of and a necessary tool in their overall effort to reform the society around them” (Effland, “A Profile of Political Activists” 114). Suffragists convinced some West Virginia congressmen of their agenda; Delegate A. J. Mitchell of Wirt County proposed suffrage resolutions in 1907 and 1908, but both unfortunately failed (“Chapter Two: ‘[H]ike back home and look after the children’”).

The statewide suffrage movement did not gain substantial traction until after 1910. A statewide amendment was proposed in 1913 but did not pass, even with Governor William E Glasscock’s encouragement in his 1913 State of the State Address:

I believe the time has come when the rights of suffrage should be extended to women. Our constitution provides that only male citizens shall vote and that no person, not a voter, shall be elected or appointed to any State, county or municipal office. Is this right? If a woman has property she must pay taxes thereon the same as a man; but she cannot be elected or appointed to any office. She cannot be appointed a trustee of a school or a notary public. I am in favor of amending our constitution so as to give her all the rights and privileges that are guaranteed to our sex. (qtd. in “Chapter Two: ‘[H]ike back home and look after the children’”)

Even with the state’s leader in support of the change, it took years for enfranchisement to become a reality in West Virginia.

On the national level, the Senate Committee on Woman Suffrage “reported favorably on a Constitutional amendment giving women the right to vote” in 1913, but the Senate did not have enough support to pass the amendment (“Chapter Three: Let the Voters Decide”). This prompted

rallies around the country, including West Virginia, with perhaps the largest in the state occurring in Parkersburg. Clarabel McNeilan organized the activities in the absence of Cora (Cara) Ebert, the president of the Parkersburg Equal Suffrage Association (PESA). The rally began with women singing a suffrage song to the tune of “America,” which was likely the song distributed by the National American Woman Suffrage Association. Doris Stevens, National Secretary of the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, and Hunter H. Moss, a Parkersburg who was elected to Congress in 1912, both spoke at the rally (“Chapter Three: Let the Voters Decide”).

Parkersburg took an even larger role in the state’s suffrage movement after some individuals, including Clarabel McNeilan, went to Washington D.C. to advocate for the bill to be considered in the House of Representatives:

At the end of July, suffragists met in Parkersburg to implement a re-organization of the state suffrage organization. In April, a committee of three Parkersburg women had been appointed to draft a plan, and the plan was presented at the July 30 meeting. In a shift in leadership away from the previous domination by Wheeling and Fairmont women, Cora/Cara Ebert of Parkersburg was elected president of the West Virginia Equal Suffrage Association, Lenna Lowe Yost of Morgantown vice president, Daisy Peadro of Parkersburg corresponding secretary, Harriet Schroeder of Grafton recording secretary, and Carrie Zane of Wheeling treasurer. (“Chapter Three: Let the Voters Decide”)

As part of the WVESA’s efforts, women collected money for other states who had suffrage bills on their ballots and set up booths to distribute information. In Parkersburg, “Melting Pots” were placed at two street corners in Parkersburg on August 15 for the deposit of gold and silver

trinkets as well as cash,” and the PESA set up a booth at the county fair (“Chapter Three: Let the Voters Decide”).

In 1915, the amendment was passed in the West Virginia legislature but ultimately failed when only Hancock County and Brooke County had a majority of voters in support of women's suffrage (Effland, “Women’s Suffrage”). Monongalia, Marion, Ohio, Marshall, and Wood counties followed with 39-49 percent of voters supporting the change (“Chapter Four: The 1916 State Referendum”). Many supporters were surprised by the results, and after this, many shifted away from suffrage work and “turned their attention to support of the American effort during World War I” (Effland, “A Profile of Political Activists,” 104). However, women such as Marion-county native Lenna Lowe Yost, who became president of the West Virginia Equal Suffrage Association when Cora (Cara) Ebert stepped down in 1916, persisted in the fight (“Lenna Lowe Yost”). In this same year, anti-suffrage efforts expanded across the state, making the work of supporters of enfranchisement more challenging. Some women saw opportunities to advance suffrage efforts by supporting war work. For example, “Lottie Cochran of Parkersburg, president of the West Virginia Federation of Woman's Club and a supporter of woman suffrage, was named to the Advisory State Council of Defense in May 1917” (“Chapter Five: ‘We will not cease to ask for the ballot’”). Women across West Virginia conducted food drives, learned how to repair automobiles and drive ambulances, and opened community kitchens. WVESA persisted in their work, and Julia Walker Ruhl of Clarksburg became President of the WVESA in 1917 (“Chapter Five: ‘We will not cease to ask for the ballot’”).

Women across the country finally pushed the legislation through at the national level when the House of Representatives approved the amendment in March of 1919, followed by the

Senate in June. *The Wheeling Intelligencer* published a comment in June 1919 from Henrietta Arbenz Romine, a member of the state suffrage executive committee:

All suffragists of West Virginia have every cause to rejoice over the good news, not only from the standpoint of the wonderful victory women have gained after a long and at times bitter struggle, but because we had a 100 per cent standing in congress, every one of six congressmen and our two senators standing absolutely pat for suffrage. The solid south, eleven states, is conceded against equal suffrage, so West Virginia has the great distinction of being the pivotal state to secure the necessary thirty-six for ratification.

(“Chapter Five: ‘We will not cease to ask for the ballot’”)

Even with this tremendous win at the national level, the fight was not over; thirty-six states were needed to ratify the amendment, and suffragists in West Virginia needed to persuade enough congressmen to vote in support of the amendment.

To enable the vote for ratification, Governor John Cornwall called a special legislative session in West Virginia in February of 1919. The West Virginia House of Delegates quickly approved the measure, but the Senate tied. Renate Pore, the project director for the Kanawha Valley National Organization for Women Centennial Celebration, explains that Governor John Cornwall delayed the end of the session in order for Wheeling Senator Jesse Bloch to rush back from vacation in California to approve the amendment, making West Virginia the thirty-fourth state for ratification (Douglas). Carrie Chapman Catt, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, wrote of the victory, “The people who have followed the course of woman’s suffrage from outside with indifference or small understanding of what has been at stake will have no comprehension of the real message which the West Virginia victory carries to women. To us it means that the nation is won, that the seventy year struggle is over, that the

women are enfranchised American Women” (qtd. in Effland, “A Profile of Political Activists,” 104). Washington and Tennessee soon followed, and on August 26, 1919, “the United States Secretary of State certified the amendment as part of the U.S. Constitution” (“Chapter Six: Ratification of the 19th Amendment”).

In September of 1920, the Governor called a special session to determine how to register women voters prior to the November election. Later that month, the WVESA met one more time in Huntington, where they also launched the League of Women Voters, of which Julia Walker Ruhl was the first chairman. In her speech to the hundreds of women present, and later quoted in the *Huntington Advertiser*, Ruhl states, "if we are to be worthy we must work as we have worked before, inspired by the highest motives, and using our every influence to make America better by voting” (qtd. in “Chapter Seven: West Virginia Women Prepare to Vote”). Women learned about voting and politics, registered to vote in October, and voted for the first time in November of 1920. In West Virginia, approximately 200,000 women voted, which made up 39 percent of total voters (“Chapter Seven: West Virginia Women Prepare to Vote”). In the following years, West Virginia women continued to vote, and some women were elected into public office. However, women of color continued to fight for their rights to the voting booths; laws prohibiting or deterring various racial and immigrant groups from voting continued into the 1960s. Today, we build on the rights obtained by the fights of these women and work towards greater justice, equality, and goodness in our world.

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Solace
by Allison Butcher



Afterward

What I Want to Talk about When It's Done

by Sandra Kolankiewicz

My children don't eat unless they're at school;
neither do my sister's. The old man who's
my neighbor's sick & can't get help. He's
ill, afraid & denied, vulnerable
& frail, & he fights with his kid, just like
me & my mother or you & your dad.
We have chickens in the street instead of
ambulances. We're too poor or too black
or wear a penis under a dress, for
we can't afford the hormones to make us
feel whole. I can't breathe, need an inhaler,
forty miles from the closest doctor, but
I can't miss work to go, must scrub toilets
for those hairy bums of the men in suits,
the pale seats of ladies whose shoes cost my
rent. I'd sleep with a *Farragamo* if
I could find him or his sister, for such
are my accidents. I'm so tired. When the
wind blows in my part of the county, the
Internet won't work, the homework's undone,
college class I'm supposed to finish left
in the notebook because what's the point? I
can't drive to the closest McDonald's to
grab the Wifi, for I'm on empty, can't
locate my own safe place at a table,
the list of all I have to do too long
to win. If I can't get there, I won't vote.

Poorhouse 2020 Contributor Bios

Zechariah Edison Baskin is an alumnus of West Virginia University at Parkersburg. Zechariah Baskin was born in Nashville, Tennessee, and raised here in the Mid-Ohio Valley. He is currently working on a series of short stories called Zodiac Tales. So far, he has published one of these Zodiac Tales, called “Kamchatka Hunt,” in the Poorhouse Rag.

Alicia Matheny Beeson, PhD, works as an assistant professor at West Virginia University at Parkersburg where she teaches literature and writing. Her scholarly interests include American literature, the Progressive Era, utopian and dystopian work, women’s literature, and gender studies.

Allison Butcher is a female artist and muralist from WV, currently based in Los Angeles, California. She graduated from WVUP in 2013 with a degree in nursing. She has always pursued art and painting alongside nursing; it is her true passion. As a woman, she has had many experiences in feeling pushed out or talked down to. In her work in Los Angeles, she works with mostly men in the world of street art. Women are a minority in this world. For example, it is common to be blatantly ignored, then have her ideas repeated as their own. Her attitude towards this is to always make herself heard in any situation. Her artwork reflects different feelings tied to the experiences women have.

Maggie Berdine Meyer is a retired, longtime English professor at WVUP. She is a former recipient of the Faculty Member of the Year Award. She earned masters' degrees from the University of Hawaii and Ohio University, and is West Virginia University at Parkersburg Professor of English, Emerita.

Jenny Dawkins is a professor of Computer Information and Technology at WVUP. She has a bachelor’s degree from West Liberty State College and a master’s degree from West Virginia College of Graduate Studies.

Audrey Erb lives in Marietta, Ohio, out in the country with her cows and three dogs. She loves the outdoors and making the world a better place by being positive. This is her first publication. Matt Gable is currently living with one compelling view of evergreens and lilies. While a naturalist underneath, he remixes code and technology in today’s digital wilderness as a software developer. He is a graduate of West Virginia University (‘06, ‘08) and West Virginia University at Parkersburg (‘16).

Chris Gilmer has published widely and is the President of WVUP. He is an avid supporter of all arts-related efforts at the college and beyond.

Sandra Kolankiewicz is a professor of English at WVUP. Her collection *Turning Inside Out* is available from Black Lawrence Press. *The Way You Will Go* and *Lost in Transition* are available at Finishing Line Press. Her poems and stories have appeared widely. She lives with her family in Marietta, Ohio.

Charis Rae Mace is a book enthusiast, ballet dancer, and daughter of God. Her first story, "The King Who Went Through Much," was written on blank sheets of paper with stick-figure illustrations. She now pens novels and short stories, fueled by large amounts of porridge. Charis is an early college student at WVUP and hopes to pursue a future in the literary field.

Kim Matheny is a student in the Legal Studies program at WVUP. She is a retired operating engineer and plans on a second career in law. Kim has loved art since she was in junior high school and keeps in touch with her high school art teacher, Ken Gilbert, taking classes from him periodically. She is currently active in art classes at WVUP and is studying art appreciation with Dr. Lauri Reidmiller as her mentor.

Traci Mills is working towards her BA in Drafting from WVUP. Married to her high school sweetheart, they have two children and are looking forward to welcoming their first grandchild later this year. Along with taking photos, Traci also enjoys reading, nature, creating art out of old random objects and learning about other cultures and old houses. She had a poem published in "Moments of Solitude." After she graduates, she plans to travel and help disaster relief efforts with affordable, stylish, modern housing. "Learn to be still and look at all the beauty around us. Make something unique out of every day and cherish what you've been given."

Lauri Reidmiller is a painter, photographer, textile artist and educator. She received her PhD in Art Education from The Ohio State University and her MFA in Painting from Radford University. Dr. Reidmiller is an associate professor and teaches all levels of studio classes at WVUP. She also serves as the faculty advisor for the WVUP Art Club. She is the recipient of the West Virginia Higher Art Educator Teaching Award and was recently awarded the WVUP SGA 2020 Faculty of the Year Award. Her artwork has been accepted into juried, invitational exhibitions and solo exhibitions. She creates a diverse array of contemporary abstracts in acrylics, using contrasts in form and color to underscore emotion in each piece. Her art reflects a wide range of moods, from light and joyful, to deep and mysterious.

Lois Spencer graduated from Ohio University in 1984, then taught English at Fort Frye High School and later at Ohio Valley University. During her teaching career, she earned two master's degrees, one from Ohio University and one from Marietta College. A life-long writer, Lois has recently placed her work in *Women Speak*, a publication of Women of Appalachia Project, and *Anthology of Appalachian Writers*. Her memoir, *In the Language of My Country*, explores her Appalachian roots and her experiences living in the MOV.

Lydia Stout is working towards a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with an English specialization. She has been an avid reader since she first learned to read. She believes literacy is very important. Without it students are unable to excel in other subjects. She does not often write for pleasure, but she admires those who feel a calling to be a writer whether for children or adults.

Joyce Stover has published widely, including in *Redbook*, and has won numerous writing awards. She is an Associate Professor of Humanities at WVUP and teaches at the Jackson County Campus of WVUP, where many times she has been the Faculty Member of the Year at that location.

Scott Turner taught Legal Studies at WVUP for several years and makes his home in the Garden State of New Jersey. He earned a master's degree from Rutgers and juris doctorate from New York Law School.

Amber Ward is a first-generation college student at WVUP. Amber has lived a hard life because her family lived in poverty, but she has been able to break the cycle of poverty. Amber has three children, and she loves her life today. She enjoys gardening, reading, writing, and spending time with her family. Amber hopes to open a restaurant when she finishes school, and she wants to be active in helping those who live in poverty to break the cycle. Amber also plans to continue writing as much as possible.

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