

Cardinal Sins Fall 2023  
Volume 43, Issue 1



# Cardinal Sins

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The fine arts and literature journal of  
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## Editors' Note

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As our final issue working as a team, we hope that this volume of *Cardinal Sins* really knocks your socks off.

To all of the contributors, thank you. Our reading and editing committees loved discussing your work and are so honored it has found a home with us. We can keep doing this because of your creativity and bravery. Thank you for your endless patience while technology spit in our faces. We hope this issue is worth the wait.

We have enjoyed working with returning staff members and new blood, and we're excited to see how this publication continues to thrive long after we've graduated. Knowing everyone who has devoted time and energy into reading and editing the journal, we know we are leaving it in good hands.

We believe in the arts, and we publish *Cardinal Sins* to make them more accessible. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you for your continued support and readership.

Now put your socks back on,

Megan Draper, Editor-in-Chief  
Gabby Bourgeois, Digital Editor



## Poetry

First Place Winner

Chloe: The One Not Chosen  
by: Claire Scott

# Chloe: The One Not Chosen

*Claire Scott*




The disappointing daughter left behind  
not chosen for wax wings or azure skies  
pounding grain, stirring porridge, curing olives  
only wiping dust from dustless walls  
while her father taught her brother to fly  
fitting feathers to his slim shoulders

Her father a master craftsman,  
convicted murderer, prideful, tyrannical  
her hapless brother in his thrall  
only one way out and the boy took it  
soaring straight toward the sun  
feathers like snow falling to the sea

Chloe left behind in Crete  
forgotten by gods and myth makers  
no painting of her in the Louvre  
no flying to freedom with her father  
Chloe still stirring soup, still washing floors  
her head down, her hands rough, but alive  
still alive, flameless and featherless

# Clay

*Virna Chessari*



Generous is Autumn,  
fraught with leaves, colours and dying flowers.  
They all cross over in the end  
and handle, drenched in rain, mud and bad weather.  
And I with them.

You waited till I came home to get away.  
You were my refuge.

I would like to ask why,  
but the whys do not help,  
do not console us.

I would still love you even if you were a bone pile,  
crouched together with the memories  
of shiny puddles and a cold temple pain.

## Pruning Bushes

*Richard Dinges Jr.*



My wife prunes wild bushes.  
They were not always wild.  
Someone long ago planted them  
in a tidy row along the fence.  
Now they wave their wild limbs  
in dangerous directions.  
My wife's vision is a tame one,  
her eyesight weak and her intent  
a powerful surge toward order.  
She wields her shears and snips  
away their lack of discipline.  
Trees' wild limbs wave frantic  
gestures to each other, aware  
they may be next in line.

## Who

*Richard Dinges Jr.*



My skin thins,  
a bag that contains  
urges and sticky  
fluids stretched  
tightly across  
my frail bones.  
Eyes hover in  
darkened sockets,  
unable to see  
who stares back  
from a mirror  
fogged by morning  
shower's steam or  
framed within a  
night's misted window.

## My green throat has turned into a garden

*Mykyta Ryzhykh*

My green throat has turned into a garden.  
I have to be silent a lot  
I have to drink a lot so that the trees will grow  
I have to breathe quietly so as not to frighten the birds  
I don't want to scare those who are happy.

## AMA: Against Medical Advice

*Claire Scott*

*What are your symptoms?*  
chest pain, chills, shortness of breath  
lack of appetite, insomnia, exhaustion  
sudden bouts of blahs  
what of bone-splitting sorrow  
grief the color of cold-lip purple  
his body silent as the full moon  
I scribble my way to the bottom  
of the last rumpled page

The nurse picks at her cuticles  
pulls nail polish from her purse  
then orders pepperoni pizza  
the man next to me snores like Vesuvius  
the woman on the other side howls  
for her mother, who probably died decades ago  
blinding florescent lights, ten hours without food

Spend the night says the doctor  
on a gurney in the crowded hall  
filled with hollering patients, scurrying nurses  
and the insistent beep of unattended monitors  
the tenth circle of Hell  
Dante never mentioned, too focused  
on ogling Beatrice

*Go to the ER* said my doctor ten hours ago  
really who would want to  
I sign the AMA form and call Uber  
asking Andrea to stop by Liquor Land  
before she drops me at my apartment  
where I spend the evening with my buddy Jim Beam  
symptoms spreading fast, the haze of a headache  
the wooze of wine, hoping my homeless heart  
will wave a white flag.

# An Ode to Crossword Puzzles

*Kate Shields*

Every sleepy Saturday morning, and  
some afternoons too, my father  
pulls out his most trusted companion, a Mr. New York Times.  
Simply black and white, lacking in color but certainly not in content,  
his pages crack open to reveal a new mystery to be solved,  
a riddle to decipher, decode, decrypt.  
Clue by clue, word by word,  
he pushes and reaches and stretches  
the limits of his reliability in  
the amygdala, the hippocampus, and the cerebellum.

So as to not meet an end like his father before him,  
a promise that his children will not  
be formed by his brain's deficiencies.  
An attempt to remember it all,  
47 down, 12 across, the name of his firstborn child.  
Or perhaps  
18 across, 25 down, his own date of birth.

But for now,  
he settles for answering 34 across.

# Cattywampus

*Brian Sluga*

Heard it when I was a young man  
never could quite understand.  
What was cattywampus?  
Did it mean a specific thing, a saying from yesterday?  
So is cattywampus a place or a thing, a scared animal?  
Could I be scatterbrain by being cattywampus?  
Does inebriation cause cattywampus? Do friends and people  
see me being cattywampus?  
It might be a time, a direction, or I'll go cattywampus on you.  
Am I dressed cattywampus, can it be all made up?  
Is it something disconcerting,  
often amusing or weird, a made-up word  
sometimes meant as a set of images  
am I lopsided for being all catawampus?  
Measure that entire structure will it turn out cattywampus?  
I'm feeling a little cattywampus today.  
Have you ever been to cattywampus?  
You can always picture somebody cattywampus,  
are they animated like a memory burn?  
Can it mean skewed, could it be a physical look?  
One's thoughts maybe cattywampus.  
Is my smile cattywampus?  
It's not a joke—you aren't above the law  
even though you maybe cattywampus.  
The beginning, or is it the end that's cattywampus?  
A tough conversation with my boss, went cattywampus.  
I could be out of sorts askew or an expression of disguises.  
Whatever is cattywampus?  
In the end  
are you  
or am I  
actually  
cattywampus?





*Cardinal Sins*

Fiction

# Looking for a Sign

*Dick Daniels*



Every boy who dons a Little League uniform dreams of playing in the big leagues. Actually, the dream starts when he's swinging at a Wiffle ball in the backyard, doing double duty by announcing the game simultaneously, "Bottom of the ninth, two men on, Yankees down by a run, Russell steps to the plate ...." A small fraction of these young men will sign professional baseball contracts; only a handful of those will make it to the majors.

Elliott Ogden Russell III had been working his whole life to make it to the major leagues. If his ancestors had a say, he would have been in the military. That's what the Russells did; with few interruptions, they had been serving their country since the Revolutionary War. His grandfather joined the Navy in 1942 just after Pearl Harbor was bombed. When Elliott Sr. volunteered for submarine duty, they gave him seven days leave before deployment to the Pacific Theater. Marrying his sweetheart, who was still in high school, he hastily honeymooned before boarding a troop train to San Francisco.

News of a pregnancy was delivered a few months later, but baby pictures of a son would never be seen. A towering typhoon wave caught Elliott Sr.'s sub on the surface one night and flooded the engine room. The boat was within sight of Tokyo harbor, and they were spotted before repairs could be completed. Japanese planes armed with torpedo bombs sank the American sub with all men aboard.

Elliott Jr. and his mother lived with her family in North Carolina. He married while attending North Carolina State on an Army ROTC Scholarship, and Elliott III's arrival coincided with graduation in 1963. Two years later, the war in Vietnam called. R&R in Hawaii enabled him to retrace some of his father's footsteps around Pearl Harbor and even board a submarine of the same class that carried him to the bottom. Luckily, Elliott Jr. made it home from 'Nam and enjoyed a military career that moved him and his family around the globe.

Half the stops were in Oklahoma since Elliott Jr. was an artillery officer, and Fort Sill was the home base for the men wearing crossed cannons on their collars. Russ, as Elliott III preferred to be called, attended Eisenhower

High in the neighboring town of Lawton. An Oklahoma All-State shortstop, he accepted a baseball scholarship to Oklahoma State. The Cowboys went to the College World Series all four years Russ was in school. Scouts and front office personnel from Kansas City regularly made the short drive to Omaha for those games, and the Royals drafted him in 1984.

Russ didn't have his first serious girlfriend until college. Ellen was from Shawnee, and they met in a freshman class. History 103 had a Monday morning lecture in an auditorium with assigned seats, and the cutest girl in the room sat beside him. G-10, her seat number, was the nickname given her by his fraternity brothers. Originally, Ellen had come to Stillwater only to meet the two-year requirement to be an airline flight attendant, but she completed her degree after things got serious with Russ.

Her dad, Charlie, had worked for the Post Office his entire life and lived on a fifteen-acre hobby farm just outside the city limits. Ellen wanted that same level of security; it worried her that Russ might be pursuing a professional baseball career living in isolated towns and traveling to games in other isolated towns. When he proposed on a bench beside OSU's romantic Theta Pond, she shook her head as streaming tears signaled her decision, "I can't. Let me know when you stop chasing this dream!" Ellen flew the friendly skies while Russ rode smelly buses on America's backroads. Breaking the family's military service tradition, Russ banked his modest signing bonus and pointed his VW Beetle toward the Royals' A-League affiliate in eastern Iowa, where the season had already started.

Adjusting to the tedium of daily play and monotonous life outside the ballpark was challenging. Russ was renting a garage apartment and ate most of his meals at the town diner. Buying groceries didn't make much sense because most of it would spoil while he was off playing games in Kansas or Illinois. He realized if Ellen had come with him, she would already be gone.

When spring training rolled around, it was a chance to meet and mingle with some of the best players in the game. Several were generous with advice, and the Royals' hitting instructors had him anxious to face those young arms in the A-League again. Back to Iowa he went; his apartment was available, and the diner was still open—unlike many of the other tenants on Main Street.

Janie was still waitressing at the restaurant; they had flirted lightly the

year before. Although she was dating a plumber, she went out with Russ when the team was playing at home. The tradesman didn't seem to mind because he knew he was going to be the last one standing. Women liked dating the exciting type, "college boys," but they married the men with steady paychecks.

Riding a hitting streak to start the season, Russ's batting average was up to .335 when he was selected as the starting shortstop on the league All-Star team. It was a nice honor, but mostly he appreciated getting out of his garage and spending a few nights in a decent Des Moines hotel. There were some late-season call-ups from the Memphis farm club, and he was going to slide into one of those vacated spots. Russ and Olive, the java-green VW, had no trouble putting Janie in the rearview mirror and were on their way to join the Memphis Chicks.

Tim McCarver Stadium was home to the Chicks. To call the stadium "aging" would be disrespectful to America's senior population. "Aged" should describe fine wines or cheeses. If you said it was "past its prime," that erroneously indicated it ever had a prime time. The ballpark was "functional," so functional it had an artificial turf infield so future Royals would be accustomed to the same surface as Kauffman Stadium in Kansas City. The outfield, however, was natural grass, which made the stadium look like a teenager's badly-coordinated prom outfit.

Before Russ got his bearings in Memphis, the season ended.

Most of the '86 season was spent adjusting to the higher level of competition. The pitchers were much better at locating their pitches. After a rocky start, Russ was making steady progress by midseason. About that time, Heisman Trophy winner Bo Jackson arrived, and everyone else was forgotten. Bo had been drafted by the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers but refused to play for them, signing to play baseball instead with the Royals. He eventually played football, too, and became the only professional athlete to ever make an all-star team in two sports. When the major league rosters expanded in September, Jackson was one of the few position players called up; the majority were pitchers because the Royals needed fresh arms to "eat up some innings."

During the next year's spring training, a young kid from Venezuela appeared to be the shortstop of the future, and Russ was moved to third

base. The new position training was brutal. His body was completely bruised each night as he eased into the iced bathtubs. At the "hot corner," the ball was on you, sometimes, before you could react. It was also discouraging that the Royals had future Hall-of-Famer George Brett at third. Russ was uncomfortable in the field, and that transferred to the batter's box. There was no reason for butterflies when the call-ups were announced that fall.

Russ barely made the Chicks roster in 1988. Baseball was looking for power hitters, and that hadn't been part of his game. He started spending more time in the weight room, suffering minor injuries trying to bulk up. In August, he pushed it too far and tweaked his back. Within days, Russ was discreetly offered steroids in the clubhouse. Apparently, many of the players used them regularly.

That offseason Russ enrolled in the MBA program at OSU. As he settled into a seat for his first class, he thought of G-10 and wondered what Ellen was doing. Had she met a wealthy businessman on a flight and married? He drove down to Shawnee and stopped by Charlie's farm to see if he needed any help baling hay. "No, Ellen's not married," the Assistant Postmaster shared. She was working international flights and sending postcards from around the world.

Spring training in 1989 was approached with more hope than ever. George Brett had been moved to first base to prolong his career. If Russ could hit more consistently at Memphis, he might earn that long-awaited ticket to Kansas City. His average hovered around .290 most of the season, and his errors in the field were down. However, as the season wore on, teams started taking advantage of his eagerness at the plate. They weren't giving him anything good to hit, and getting a couple walks weren't going to get you mentioned in the daily report to the Royals.

Russ started lunging at bad pitches trying to get extra-base hits and bolster his RBI totals. Each day he saw his average dipping a few points with the frustrated swings. The Chicks manager had started alternating Russ and a Dominican teenager at third. On a day off, Russ walked by the office and noticed the after-game report from the night before still in the FAX machine. He couldn't resist reading the comments about himself, "Russell is a smart, steady player who has helped this organization for a long time. He deserves to be called up this year. He won't embarrass you." Not the

most glowing endorsement, but he had to thank the skipper for trying.

The young Dominican—with loads of potential—got the call-up, not the Okie who was nearly ten years older. Russ was straddling a bench in the locker room after the other players had left, nursing his wounded pride with a six-pack of Milwaukee's finest. A janitor entered the room; their eyes met and Russ spoke. "Hi, I'm Elliott Ogden Russell, eternal minor leaguer."

"Hey, my name's Junior," the elderly black man replied. "I know a little bit about your situation, Russell. If you want to talk to someone and wouldn't mind sharing those beers, I could take a break. Let's go sit in the stands." As they parked themselves in box seats behind home plate, Junior said, "You're probably looking for a sign right now, what to do. I'll give you my opinion on that, but first let me tell you my story. I was going to be the next Jackie Robinson!" He let that sink in for a minute because Russ was appropriately stunned.

Junior suddenly seemed taller and prouder as he began talking. He had been a shortstop, and the New York Giants wanted to keep pace with the rival Dodgers who got such a great first year from Jackie. They signed and sent him to their farm club in Jersey City for trial under fire. It was far worse than he had been warned; fans and the other team shouted racial insults nonstop. "I never knew white people had so many different names for black people," he recalled with a lingering sadness. But the hardest thing to take was his own teammates never coming to his defense. He overheard words in his own dugout and locker room just as hurtful.

One day, they were playing a team with a husky first baseman named Moose, a former linebacker at Penn State. Whenever Junior was on first, the pitcher was repeatedly throwing over, and Moose was slapping a hard tag on Junior's body and trying to spike his hands if he dove back. Moose promised to take Junior out if he got a chance coming into second base.

"Late in the game, it happened," Junior recalled. "Moose was running toward me like he was blitzing the quarterback. I had been taught if a runner didn't slide or get out of the base path on a double play, you should throw at them to make them hit the dirt. He didn't go down, and the ball fractured his right eye socket. The Giants 'washed their hands' of me; I was convicted of assault with a deadly weapon and sentenced to four years in prison."

Good behavior got him out in two, and he tried out for the Memphis Red Sox in the Negro Leagues. Taking infield practice, Junior reached for a grounder and came up to throw—but there was nothing in his glove. The other players thought he was clowning, but he wasn't. In his mind, he had caught the ball. Muscle memory was out of sync. In baseball parlance, he had "lost a step" during those years of incarceration. Switching to the outfield, where no recalibration was necessary, Junior played in the Negro Leagues until they folded in the early sixties. He never got another sniff from Major League Baseball. When the story was over, Junior asked his audience, "Now tell me, what's so sad about your life?"

Russ paused to take a swig of beer, which had been forgotten during the incredible tale. "I've dreamed my whole life of being a major leaguer. It's not going to happen. Yes, I'm looking for a sign," he sighed.

"Did you see that movie *Bull Durham* last year?" Junior asked. "You know how Annie adopts a player at the beginning of each season and prepares him for the next level? Well, I find a player at the end of each year who needs help with the next chapter of his life. In my experience, anyone who says they're looking for a sign hasn't really started looking yet. There are signs everywhere. Think about your body; you've got two eyes and two ears. Observe with the eyes, and listen with your ears. I don't know who said this, but it's powerful, 'I never learned anything while I was talking.'"

Russ nodded his head, and Junior continued, "After baseball, I got a job as a school custodian. Then a friend and I started cleaning office buildings at night. Now I have my own company with over one hundred employees. I fill in at the ballpark once in a while to enjoy the nostalgia." It was a lot to digest; the two athletes silently drank the rest of the beer while the sparkling stars remained in place—giving no sign.

Colonel Russell was retiring in a month, and Russ planned to attend the ceremony. As Russ and his faithful sidekick Olive consumed the interstate on their way to Fort Sill, a roadside billboard reminded him of a scene from *It's a Wonderful Life*. Young George Bailey was in a quandary about the poison capsules Mr. Gowen had prepared. A sign, an advertisement, hanging inside the drugstore gave him the answer, ASK DAD, HE KNOWS.

Russ listened closely as the Colonel told him about an Army program whereby college graduates could enlist and complete Officer Candidate

School, gaining their commissions in a year. Ellen, meanwhile, had decided perpetual jet lag was a serious medical condition; she was weary of waking up, not knowing where she was or what time of day it was. When Russ shared his plans, she took a job with a travel agency in Lawton so they could see each other on the occasional weekend off during his training.

At OCS graduation, just after his dad had pinned the gold bars on his uniform, Russ proposed again to Ellen—this time rewarded with a resounding “Yes, Sir!”

Ten years later, the two were seated on metal bleachers watching their first tee ball game. As their son came to bat, Ellen heard Russ start speaking in the announcer’s voice, using his fist as a mock microphone, “Fort Sill Cannoneers down by ten, Russell steps to the plate.” When Rusty swung and hit the rubber stand instead of the baseball, Russ condensed a lifetime of hitting instructions into one extended shout: “Keep your eye on the ball; level swing; just make contact; only takes one!”

The opposing team fielders chimed in with the familiar “Hey, Batter. Hey, Batter. Suh-wing.”

While the ball was being replaced on the tee, Ellen caught Russ’s eye and whispered, “He’s going to med school!”

## Water Beyond

Marco Etheridge



“I did not know there was so much water in the world. Look, Hasan, it goes on forever.”

Hasan stands beside his younger brother while dark water laps at their bare feet. A quarter moon silvers the sea near at hand, but the water beyond blends with the night sky. The horizon to the north is invisible, unreachable.

“Not forever, Nizar. Six hundred kilometers. That is nothing. We have walked three times that far or more. And this is not the first time we’ve looked on the sea.”

“Yes, but not like this, not all spread out. Maybe a peek from the top of a bus, or a bay with land all around it, but nothing like this. Black water as far as the edge of the world. It is bigger than the desert. Bigger than anything I’ve ever seen.”

Hasan turns to look at his younger brother. Nizar’s profile is etched in moonlight, a young face, feminine and masculine at the same time. He sees his dead mother’s features sketched in the moonglow. Her voice whispers in the gentle hiss of waves on sand.

*You are strong, Hasan. You were born with the strength of your father. I have given you the strength to endure, but this gift comes with a duty. Nizar is not like you. His body is fragile like a reed in the wind, but inside, in his heart, he carries a will of steel. You must protect your little brother. More than that, you must trust him. Nizar sees what others do not.*

“What is it, Hasan?”

“Nothing, little brother.”

The younger boy shakes his head, his face wrinkling into a frown.  
“No, not nothing. You were thinking about home, about our parents.”

A quick spark of anger kindles Hasan’s words. “We have no home. Our

parents are dead. And you talk too much.”

When Nizar is struck by his brother’s anger, he does not show it. Instead, he smiles.

Hasan sighs and his anger fades to nothing.

Such a strange boy, his brother, so different from the other children. A thousand-year-old jinn in a twelve-year-old body. That is what their father often said, but always with a smile.

His father would never smile again. A missile streaked from the sky, making orphans of Hasan and Nizar in the span of a single heartbeat. The missile erased their father’s smile, silenced their mother’s voice, and entombed them both beneath tons of rubble.

Hasan remembers the cloud of dust, how it muted the ambulance lights. The pile of broken concrete where their apartment building once stood. Searching with bloody hands, screaming into black crevices, being pulled away by men in uniforms. The huge man with the hairy hands, gripping his head, eyes black and fevered. We will find them, Brother. You take care of the boy.

Nizar is standing slack-armed in the chaos, with eyes to the heavens, tears streaming to his temples. The big man’s hand on Hasan’s back, pushing him toward his stricken brother.

“It’s not your fault, Hasan.”

Nizar’s voice drags him back. Back to the wet sand on night shore, a quartered moon dappling the black water stretching beyond the edge of everything, and his little brother standing beside him.

“It’s not your fault.” Hasan lays an arm across his brother’s narrow shoulders.

If not his fault, then who was to blame? Everyone. No one. Rebel factions, foreign militias, the government. Too many sides to count, and all of them shooting at each other. Shortages of everything except weapons. Civilians died, stranded between the ever-shifting battle lines.

The broken bodies of their mother and father were wrapped in white shrouds, buried before sundown on the next day. Hasan was a sixteen-year-old orphan. Every warring faction hungered for young bodies to feed into the endless war. If he remained, his short future was certain.

The war wanted Hasan, but no one wanted Nizar. A strange child, possessed by visions, and not shy to speak them aloud. Some said he had an evil eye. One brother hunted, the other shunned, both gathered their meager inheritance and fled south.

They walked for weeks, sometimes cadging rides atop dusty buses or in the back of lorries. The brothers dodged checkpoints, slipped through porous borders guided by Nizar’s instinct, and carried by Hasan’s strength.

Now they stand on the shore of the sea, the last obstacle. Europe lies six hundred kilometers beyond the watery horizon. Tomorrow, they must find a boat.

Hasan squeezes Nizar’s shoulder. Through his fingertips, he feels the boy’s slowness, bird-like bones beneath thin flesh. The night air is warm yet fear climbs Hasan’s spine on icy claws. His mind reaches for his mother’s words like a drowning man grabbing for salvation.

*Protect your little brother.*

Yes, and he will do what must be done. His fear recedes, but not far, not far enough.

“Tell me, little brother, can you see us in Europe? I’ll get a job. Maybe in a bakery. And you’re going right back to school.”

“No, I only see water.”

“So what? I see the water too. I guess your second sight is having a nap.”

“Don’t be an idiot, Hasan. It isn’t like television. I can’t just turn it on or off. I wish I could.”

Hasan pinches Nizar and drops into a wrestler’s crouch. “Who are you calling an idiot?”

“I’m not calling you an idiot. You are an idiot.”

\*\*\*

Nizar springs, slipping through Hasan’s outstretched arms. He locks a skinny arm across his brother’s neck and chest, then twirls his leg behind Hasan’s knees. Hasan outweighs him by twenty-five kilos, yet his big brother topples backward onto the sand. Nizar pounces on Hasan’s chest, bony knees pinning his fallen brother to the sand. Then he laughs and pokes Hasan in the ribs.

“You shouldn’t let me win like that.”

Hasan brushes sand from his face and grins up at Nizar. “What, and break a family tradition?”

“I’m not a little kid anymore.”

Hasan’s smile fades at the serious tone in his little brother’s voice. “I know, but we’ve played this game since you learned to walk.”

“We’re playing something else now, and it’s not a game. Or maybe it is. Maybe all of this is one big game, but it’s deadly serious.” Nizar raises his hand and points out over the silver-black sea. “Many have died trying to cross this water. They were just like us, dreaming big dreams about starting a new life.”

Hasan shakes his head, grabs Nizar’s pointing hand, and pulls it down. “No, not like us. We have luck on our side. Remember how we dodged the border guards and checkpoints? That was impossible, but we did it, and we’ll do this as well. We don’t have any choice.”

“We could go to one of the camps.”

Hasan’s voice turns hard. “No. No camps. We might be stuck there for years. You wouldn’t last six months in one of those shitholes. We’ve talked this over a hundred times. Are you changing your mind?”

Nizar shakes his head, smiling in the moonlight. “No, big brother, just thinking out loud. Tomorrow we will find a boat.”

“Yes, tomorrow. And you will help me make the wise choice.”

The brothers were far out to sea when their wise choice turned disastrous.

The smuggler had been easy to find. Hasan unbelted the pouch from beneath his shirt and handed over almost their entire inheritance. The brothers had no choice in the matter of boats.

Shoved onto a long open hull, they sat on a narrow plank near the prow. The boat had no canopy, no wheelhouse, nothing to shield them from the blazing sun. Hours passed as more and more migrants were crammed aboard. There wasn’t space left for a single child, and still they came. More than 100 bodies stacked into a boat meant for 20.

Outside the protected harbor, the sea rolled in long swells. At the stern of the boat, two outboard engines churned the water. One smuggler stood at the tiller. Another stood beside him, an AK-47 dangling from his skinny arms.

The prow climbed, crested a swell, then slammed down into the trough. Climb, drop, slam, over and over. Seasick-knotted bellies pushing bile up into their throats. People began to vomit. Those who could turn to retch over the side, their faces wet with salt spray. Others puked onto the floor, themselves, or each other.

All that day and into the falling darkness, the boat plowed north. The terrified mass of migrants clung to the gunwales, the benches, even each other. The sun sank into the West. Nightfall brought new terror.

Hasan and Nizar were wedged tight: hip to hip, shoulder to shoulder. The man beside Nizar prayed constantly, counting a string of beads through his trembling fingers. The woman smushed against Hasan moaned at each swell, every rise and fall, a feral noise from deep in her throat.

Without warning, the boat shuddered and veered off course as if the pilot had freed the tiller to its own mad desire. The prow dug under a black swell. A huge rending groan split the night. Steel tore from steel; wood splintered.

A greedy sea drowned human screams. The praying man vanished along

with the entire prow of the boat. The sudden shift in balance launched the stricken hull over the crest of the swell, catapulting Nizar and Hasan into black water. Then the next wave washed over the length of the broken vessel, peeling the doomed occupants from the wreck like peas shelled from a pod.

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Hasan breaches the surface, his arms clawing and splashing. His greedy lungs suck at the wet air. He coughs up salty water and curses. Then his eyes are searching, his head twisting left and right. There is no sign of Nizar. His brother is gone, and he is alone on the sea.

“Nizar! Nizar, where are you!”

There is no answer.

He listens, he prays. Water and wind, nothing more. Back to the boat, he must swim back and find his brother. Panic clouds his mind. Then something grabs his shoulder, and his heart goes frantic in his chest.

“Hasan.” A hand pulls him round and there is Nizar, appearing from nowhere like a water jinn. His magical brother, alive, one arm slung over a broken plank of wood. “Stop floundering. Here, grab on.”

Hasan snatches for the plank, rights himself, snakes a hand around Nizar’s neck. Kisses and salty tears slide down the younger boy’s forehead.

“It’s okay, Hasan. I’m here.”

“I was so scared. I thought I’d lost you. I broke my promise.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Never mind. Let’s go. We’ve got to swim back to the boat.”

“No, not the boat. Look.”

Nizar points, seawater dripping from his arm. Hasan searches the dark sea, but there is nothing.

“Wait.”

A swell lifts the two brothers and their makeshift float. By moonlight and star glow, Hasan catches a fleeting glimpse of a terrible scene. Writhing shadows cling to the dark shape of a capsized hull. Other shadows climb from the water, using survivors as ladders. Screams and curses as bodies fall back into the black sea. Then the swell passes and the hellish scene disappears.

“They’re killing each other.”

“Yes, brother.”

Another swell raises the boys toward the sky. The hull is already lower in the water now, sinking, dragging the struggling shadows down with it. Then they slip into the trough. When the next wave rises, the sea is empty.

“Hasan, you have to come around this side. If we both lay our arms over the board, we can paddle it like a boat.”

“Paddle to where? We’re in the middle of the Mediterranean.”

“Remember what you said? We already walked two thousand kilometers. Now we paddle.”

“Okay, we paddle. But which way?”

Nizar turns his face to the night sky, searches and finds the polestar. “That way, Hasan. North. We paddle north.”

Night passes, the wind dies, and the sea falls to a flat calm. Dawn colors the eastern sky with a faint glow. The brothers still cling to their plank, kicking their legs. Hasan feels his tongue swelling in his mouth.

“I’d be happy for a drink of ditch water. A mud puddle. Anything.”

Nizar reaches inside the swimming folds of his shirt, pulls something out into the feeble light. Hasan cannot believe his eyes.

“Father was right. You *are* a jinn!”



Nizar smiles through cracked lips. “No, I’m just a boy with a bottle of water.”

“Open it!”

As if handling a precious relic, Nizar cracks the plastic seal on the bottle. He offers it to Hasan, who shakes his head.

“You first, brother. And save some. Half now, half later, agreed?”

Nizar nods, braces his elbows on the plank float, and sips from the bottle. Then he passes it to Hasan. The clear liquid bathes Hasan’s throat and it is the best thing he has ever tasted. He holds the bottle out to his brother, but Nizar is staring ahead.

“Look, Hasan! Look there!”

Bright rays escape the rising sun. Far to the north, the fingers of sunlight find a strip of rugged coast on the horizon. Hasan sees the distant glow, and his heart swells in his chest.

“I see it, little brother. You did it. You found Europe.”

Nizar holds up the bottle of water, but Hasan shakes his head.

“Keep it safe. It’s still a long way to go, and our boat is slow.”

An hour passes. The sun is higher in the eastern sky, but the tantalizing strip of land draws no closer. The brothers kick their feet in rhythm, but the rhythm is slowing.

Hasan feels sleep tugging at his eyelids, slowing his limbs. Yes, they should rest a while, climb on top of their little boat and sleep. He blinks his eyes, sees the watery world gone sideways, his cheek pressing against his forearms. A dream is slipping over him, and in the dream, the sky and the water are dancing together. Smiling waves beat out a chorus: Thrup-thrup-thrup-thrup. The sound is everywhere, swallowing him, drinking the sea, and eating the sky.

Then something is pounding on his back, and his brother’s voice drags him

back from the depths of the dream.

“Wake up, Hasan. Wake up and look!”

Hasan lifts his head and sees a giant dragonfly swooping over the sea. Then Nizar is screaming at the top of his lungs.

“Here, over here!”

Hasan is yelling before his brain registers what is happening. “Help us, help us. We’re here!”

Splashing the sea with his free hand, whooping and waving. The dragonfly angles its flight, slewing sideways in the air, coming closer. Lights flare from below its belly. Thrup-thrup-thrup-thrup, the sound pouring out into the sky, filling the world.

“Do you see it, Nizar? Tell me this isn’t a dream.”

Then Nizar’s face is close, grinning from ear to ear, eyes shining. “It’s not a dream, Hasan. It’s our future. And it can fly!”

# The Valletta Affair

Ryan Kees

Hello again Jonas,

Thanks for pushing me to take this vacation. Valletta never crossed my mind while I was making plans. I totally would've missed out. The food here is amazing, and I haven't been to a club that good in a while. I'll make sure to pick you up something nice before I head back.

Your friend,  
Branton

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Dear Jonas,

Your suggestion to visit Valletta during my travels is most appreciated. The architecture of the Isles of Malta is stunning. I'm utterly captivated by it. You picked the perfect place for me to stay. I can see the Crusader castle walls from here, and they are a beautiful testament to how much this country has seen. As you know, our work is never completed. I trust you to ensure we stay on schedule. Our clients would prefer to receive what they paid for on time. It would be unfortunate if we were to lose good men and good money because of my absence. I'll return soon.

Your confidant,  
Muriel

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Greetings Jonas,

Thanks for the tip about Lumaceti ta' Mari, I'm a sucker for anything with lemon. But damn you for telling me about them! I drank so much I was in bed hungover 'til 3:00 this afternoon. I'm still walking around with a headache. Your tips for food here have been spot on, though I've only had one from your list. I made some friends clubbing last night, and I'm going to see them for some wine later. And don't worry, I'm being safe and keeping an eye out for anything sketchy, but I'm sure you've already taken care of that part of my vacation. And if anything should slip by you, I'm always carrying my .45.

Your friend,  
Branton

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Dear Jonas,

Today was fantastic, thanks to you. The private tours of the museum of the Knights Hospitaller, the Maltese Archeology Museum, and Palace Armory were all fascinating. I managed to make an in-road with one of the curators at the Archeology Museum, and hopefully we can use this relationship later on. Malta and Valletta pass under the radar quite well, and being so close to Sicily and Tunisia, this could be valuable for us. Don't berate me for working while on leave, as I know you will. I believe this city is too valuable to merely be a vacation destination. Not to mention, the museum ran my credentials, and there's a strong possibility that I could be assisting local archeologists on a dig not far from Valletta. I'm aware of the chance of discovery; however, I've made the proper arrangements should I need them. I trust that you've also been diligent in ensuring my security.

Your confidant,  
Muriel.

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My friend Jonas,

Seriously, why didn't you tell me about Valletta sooner? I'd've would've traveled here years ago. In fact, I'm thinking about making a purchasing a villa on the island. The people are nice, the weather is beautiful, the food is divine, the drinks are strong.

Your drunk friend,  
Branton

\*\*\*

Greatest Jonas,

Thanks for helping me out with getting the villa. The agent was more than happy to oblige with your requests, and even lowered the price for me. You've really proven to be a great friend to keep around. Consider yourself up for a possible promotion and maybe some cash. I'd like for you to reserve me a room at the Monte Carlo when my time in Valletta is up. This trip has me in high spirits.

Your friend,  
Branton

\*\*\*

Jonas,

I took your suggestion and visited the saluting battery for the noon

ceremony. However, there's a slight problem. I identified Branton in the crowd. He did a sweep and stopped when he saw me before slipping away. He knows I'm here, and the fact that he's here is worrying. I'll update you as soon as possible.

Muriel.

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Jonas,

We've got a problem. I went to see those cannons at noon that you told me about, and I saw that bitch Muriel on the other side of the crowd. I'm ending her right fucking now. I want a plane to Monaco or fucking anywhere else on standby to get me the hell out of here and a nice discreet way to finish the job. I also have a question for you, what the hell happened to all my security? There are only two damn guards here, the rest are AWOL. You better have a damn good reason for this. Don't make me doubt you.

Your friend,  
Branton.

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Dear Jonas,

I've been unsuccessful in terminating Branton. He's too elusive. It's time to switch to a different tactic. There's one hindrance to my plan: I cannot locate any of my operatives or personnel on the island to aid me. I don't understand the lack of our presence here. I assumed that you had taken care of my security on the island. Nonetheless, this will not stop my pursuit. I've resolved myself to ensure that he'll no longer be a problem moving forward, and we can continue with our plans. Thank you, Jonas. You've been an invaluable component of my success, and I cannot imagine what position I'd be in without your loyal guidance, and what position I'd be in if I were set against you. I trust you to look after my affairs should I not survive. And please, watch your back. I need you to stay alive.

Your confidant,  
Muriel

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Hello again Jonas,

Thanks for the intel, Muriel is as good as dead now. I'll see to it myself that this is done quietly. When it comes to guns, you know how to pick them, the Welrod pistol is the perfect tool to put down this bitch once and for all. From this day on, my friend, we're unstoppable! I'd hate to be fighting

against you, Jonas. I've told Kaleb that you'll be the one taking over my business if I don't make it off this goddamn rock.

Your friend,  
Branton

\*\*\*

Dear Jonas,

You never fail to impress me. You have always exceeded my expectations and proved beyond loyal. For your performance, you deserve heaps of trophies and accolades. You have achieved something that not many people have: you've surprised me. I was taken aback when I first felt the barrel of a pistol pressed against my skull, but I suppose that this was how it had to end for me. In that moment I had an epiphany: you were well aware that Branton would be here, you organized our meeting at the Saluting Battery. Jonas, I salute your brilliant game. I need not pray that you can live with these choices, because I know will. I offer a final word of advice, from a friend: watch your back.

Final regards,  
Muriel

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Jonas,

You son of a bitch. You played me like a damn fiddle from the beginning. Years of trust, friendship, all to cash it in for the big bucks; two times over. Kaleb told me about Muriel before I wrote this note, but not after he shot me in the leg. What an asshole. You sly piece of shit, I always thought myself two steps ahead of her, of the competition, but you were always two steps ahead of us. Congratu-fucking-lations, you won the big prize: two black-market crime rings. Don't lose your neck, like I'm about to lose mine.

Fuck off,  
Branton

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Master Jonas,

Branton and Muriel have been eliminated. Nothing stands in your way now. Awaiting instructions in Valletta.

Signed, K



*Cardinal Sins*  
**Artwork**

Cover Art  
**Aclarity**  
by: Michael Moreth

**Aclarity**  
*Michael Moreth*

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*Oil on Paper*

# Glazed

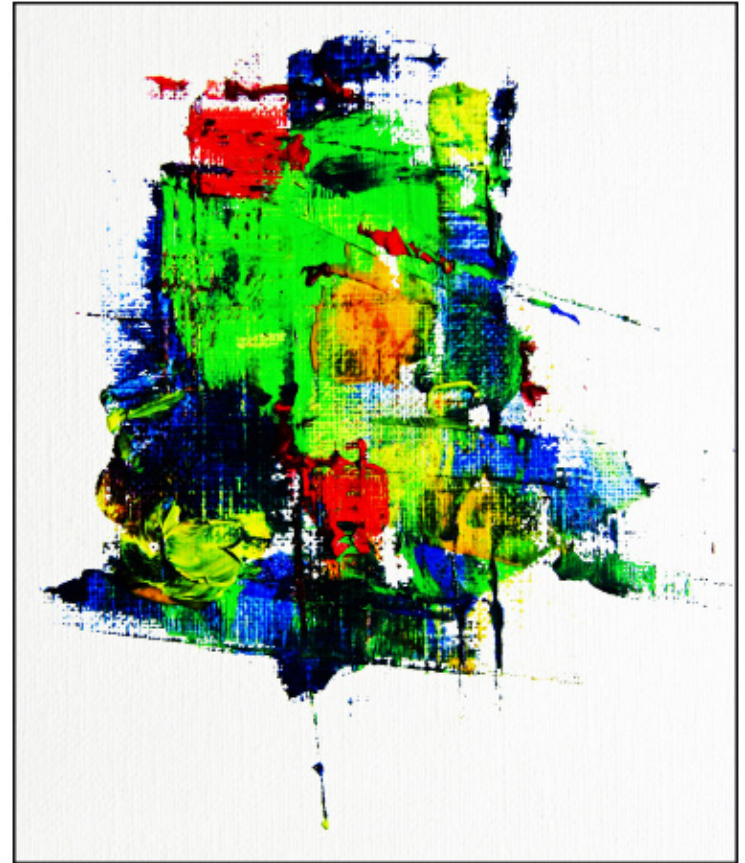
Michael Moreth



*Oil on Paper*

# Heritage

Michael Moreth



*Oil on Paper*



# Flash Fiction

First Place Winner

Mushroom Searching  
by Zary Fekete

# Mushroom Searching

*Zary Fekete*



These days there are many books, many pages, all promising, but the right way to begin is to ask grandmother. Which grandmother? Choose one. They are all correct and never lie. Nagy or Nagyika or Mamikam. From Pest or Dunantul or the Alfold, they each have their secrets. They each found a path. They were all young once. Their routes led them from little country hamlets and acres of chipped Communist blocs, down through the decades, past wall after wall, papered with propaganda, each sign promising something just beyond reach, not quite true. But the mushroom recipe doesn't lie. It just requires the right one.

Choose favorable weather. Just after a rain followed by a humid sun, hidden away in the shadows of the forest. Not a stir of breeze among the wet trunks. The only sound is the drip drip of soaked leaves and the tiny scurrying of beetles and ants among the underbrush. Bring along a basket lined with embroidered cloth for collection and grandfather's sharp knife for exploring beneath rotting logs. Make sure you aren't bitten by something waiting in the soaking darkness. Wear the right clothes. Tuck your tights into stockings and tie petticoats around knees, purposefully designating legs, so nothing can be caught in the grasping, greedy branches. Walk carefully. Pick a partner. Hold hands. Step where she steps.

Watch the ground carefully. Remember the legend of the boy who wouldn't share his bread while he walked with his friends through the woods. He had a full mouth every time they looked back at him, so he spit out each guilty mouthful. The bread-droppings left a trail. They transformed into mushrooms, and that's why when you find one, there are always more nearby.

Once your basket is full, bring it to the village examiner. Some mushrooms are safe, but some carry poisonous secrets. Some promise succor but silently wound. Some sing sweet songs but echo with a hollow gong. All taste sweet and feathery on first bite, but some have dark pools in their past. Bring home the good ones, but throw the rest into the stream and watch them float away.

Mix the mushrooms with the right broth. Thin-sliced for clear soup.

Thick-chunked for heavy stew. The mushrooms will take on the flavor of their companions. In this way they make good neighbors. They don't betray secrets. They keep what is given to them. They protect what is beneath them with their widened heads.

# Supersonic

Sirnovia Laurie

*Thump. Thump.*

*Thump. Thump.*

Her heartbeat pounded through the stethoscope.

“We’re going to have to keep her overnight.” The woman assured them.

The two men pushed the stretcher against the wall.

Both looked down at the young lady and told her to take care.

Renee sheepishly responded thank you. The men left and carried on in conversation down the hallway. She turned her eyes to the ceiling to avoid the busyness. Prior to that she had been asleep. Now she had to explain what happened to the nurse standing beside the gurney.

The nurse reached for Renee’s wrist. She scanned the hospital bracelet, laid her wrist back down, and placed the scanner back onto her cart. She tried to provide some comfort to her.

“Hi there, honey. What’s your name?”

*Renee Harris*

“Date of birth?”

*January 1st 2000.*

The nurse opened her eyes. “Wow! So you’re a New Year’s baby?”

She moved even closer to the stretcher this time. “Renee, I’m nurse Gladys. Can you tell me what happened?”

Renee was still groggy but replied, “I don’t know. I was sleeping.” She continued, “I remember waking up. My heart was beating so fast.” Renee

pressed her hand against her heart. “Then I heard it.” She swallowed her spit.

Nurse Gladys concerned, questioned, “What did you hear?”

Renee answered, “There was a party going on.”

The nurse paused, “Were you drinking, Renee?”

Renee immediately and weakly replied, “No, but it hurt so bad.”

“What hurt you?” asked Gladys.

*My ears.*

*My eyes.*

Her breathing began to pick up.

Her legs felt wobbly all over again.

There was phantom pain.

Her skin crawled. Her eyes burned. Her body vibrated.

*Bzzzz*

*Bzzzzz*

It wasn’t from the trending rose. The one meant for ladies and their parts. It was the wall in her bedroom. It transported it. It was electrical. No, it was more spiritual. There were wavelengths that traveled. It was the New Year’s Eve party next door. This wasn’t the first party either. There were the parties to celebrate Fridays, paydays, sad days, and even all night long days. She never had to attend any of them. It was the beat like everybody said that came through the wall The beat that made you like a song even if the words were catastrophic. If not catastrophic to you, but to communities some listeners did not even live in. The buzzing woofed and wafted in the atmosphere. No, it was a more of a humming. Not the kind from a bird or an old lady rocking in her seat at church. The wall regurgitated a plethora of sound. 10, 9, 8. Renee tossed and turned. 7, 6, 5. She whimpered. 4, 3,



2. She was sleeping, not dreaming. *1. Happy New...* Had Renee become a dog to sound? Too many beats left her body syncopating in the emergency room.

Nurse Gladys and an assistant held onto Renee as her body shook. The room left her out of place. Her bonnet loosened, revealing a lace-front wig. Renee's abdomen tightened as her throat did. Vomit forced its way out as the vibration forced its way in. Nurse Gladys immediately called for blood tests and meds. "Have the lab run a pregnancy and drug test, too."

*Let's get her into a room* is all Renee heard. She didn't want to go back in the room. How could she? She held on to the pan and its contents. Renee looked up at the nurse as she wheeled her to her room. "Nurse Gladys." She paused. "They have speakers." Gladys did not know what to say as she had never heard of this before. Nor did she ever listen to music that loud. She simply replied, "Speakers. What do you mean?"

"I mean subwoofers."

Renee saw the confused look on the nurse's face.

"I'm not sure what that has to do with you, Renee."

The nurse offered her a warm blanket, a Seagram's Ginger Ale, and saltine crackers.

Renee was doomed like the drumming of an 808 beat against drywall.

*Dooooooooomed.*

*Dooooooooomed.*

*Doooooooooom* went the beat against a girl's body. Against some girl's cheaply built apartment. This black girl's body enduring trap and drill music during witching hours. There was nothing the doctor could find or say.

"Renee, your discharge nurse will give you your prescription and follow-up."

He patted Renee on her head like the dog she'd become. "Try to get some rest. You are way too young to be under so much stress. Perhaps you

should speak with your landlord."

# Hunting Accident?

*S. Frederic Liss*

Mud clung to Sonny's boots as he staggered along the abandoned logging road. Snow on dead leaves created a calico effect. Bare trees colored the mountains gray. Trailers squatting on cinder blocks peeked from clearings. Cold air burned his lungs. Fatigue made him heavy footed. Spread-eagled across his back like a dead buck, his son Junior bled from a gun shot wound. Sonny sank into the mud, wiped sweat off his face. The drops frozen on his cheeks felt like pebbles. He checked the numbers on utility poles. Three more to the trailer where he lived with his wife Peg, his son Junior, daughter Hannah. His muscles ached.

Sonny stumbled on the wooden planks between the road and the trailer. "Junior tripped and fell. His gun went off," he told Peg. "I made a tourniquet, but couldn't stop the bleeding. Call Soigner." The local veterinarian, Soigner treated people in emergencies because the nearest medical doctor was too many valleys away.

"A lot of blood loss," Peg told Soigner, her voice calm as if she were giving Soigner's wife a recipe. "Type O."

Peg dampened a cloth and bathed Junior's forehead and cheeks. "It's not like Junior to be walking with the safety off."

"He was behind me. Heard the shot, turned, seen him on the ground top of his rifle."

Soigner arrived and looped a pint of blood on a hangar, hanging it from the coat rack. "Keep it vertical, Peg. Hold the tubing steady. Can't have blood backing up."

"He going to live?" she asked.

"If I stabilize his blood pressure."

"What about Recruitment Day?" Sonny asked. "He's counting down to it like it was Christmas."

Every winter, recruiters from the armed services visited the valley to enlist seniors. It was the surest path out for those who wanted to escape.

Junior rested, his blood pressure stabilized, the bullet removed, his wound bandaged. He drifted in and out of consciousness, garbling the pronunciation of 'Tripoli' and 'Montezuma' as he tried to sing the Marine hymn.

The pale light of the moon illuminated Soigner's jeep in a ghostly white. "Bullet entered horizontal, Sonny. Would have angled if he tripped and fell."

Dinner the next night, Sonny said grace. "May God grant Junior heal in time for Recruitment Day."

Later, Hannah said to her dad, "He wants to be a Marine like you. Mom showed us your medals. You were a hero."

"Last mission, saved two, lost six. A hero with a losing record."

"Junior don't recall falling, Dad. Said he was sighting a squirrel. Standing straight."

"His mind's helping him forget so he won't be afraid to go hunting again."

Sonny looked away. When she becomes a mother, a grandmother, Hannah still won't understand. Saved two, lost six. The dead stick with you. There were other ways out of the valley.

In bed, Peg said, "Junior said you shot him."

"War's truth. Young men fight. Young men die."

"You came back."

"That stone on the town common, how many boys didn't? I don't want them reading Junior's name off that stone every Memorial Day."

"You had no right."

The night after Recruitment Day, the moon didn't rise, the stars didn't shine. A cold front descended from Canada. Plumes of smoke rose from

the trailers as straight as frozen ropes hanging down from heaven. At dawn, Junior ascended one of those ropes.

## The House on East 86th

Stuart Silverman



Old Foster moved past packets of paper. He was careful, not cautious. They were his past and made his present bearable, maybe even comfortable. They would be there for a long time, he knew, and their presence would reassure him for as long as he respected them. That meant no touching, let alone moving them from where they lay, had lain, would lie.

Hattie was in there somewhere. For quite a while, he'd been bothered by the smell, the souring that rose from her flesh to percolate through the dust-strewn air, but it had gone, or lay under the mildew and rotted paper, the smell that ancient news exhaled into the space packed alongside it. The smell had crept through the brownstone for so long that it seemed a part of the place, like the walls expressing paint in fractal sheets, or the rust crusted on the porcelain basins.

Had he shaved, he wondered, and reached up mildly puzzled. Not today. Maybe, yesterday, Tuesday, he thought, or before, Monday, perhaps. Shaking his head, he made his way along an aisle of *National Geographic*, passed *The New York Times*, a corridor-long stash ending where the hallway bent its tired shoulders making a corner he sidled through to get to the working bathroom. Then, he stopped, respecting the doorway, touching the doorframe at the height of his head, then waist height, and, finally, as low as the back of his hand could touch without requiring that he bend or slouch down. Under his breath, he muttered I'm coming in, I'm coming in, I'm coming in, not to placate but to assure the space that he meant it no disrespect or harm. Here, he was always cautious, uncertain when the faucet would spitefully withhold its benison.

Then the knocking began again, booming against the walls in irritation, or so it seemed to the old man who stood perplexed, irresolute, unsure which of two contending demands he was meant to obey. But the booming had stopped. He waited in the doorway, touching once more that hopeful frame. Above, the embracing frame's once green wood, the pine stripped away from its hidey-hole in the forests of upstate New York, peered down and nodded in tacit approval of his plan.

On the other side of the threshold, he bowed to the mirror; its silver dark-

ened where the years had rubbed against it. Flecks of Barbasol stuck to the glass. Monday, he thought, or maybe not, turning the round gray handle to allow the water to pishpish into the basin, first orange-brown with rust, then a muddy ochre, and finally almost clear.

A remainder of soap, slim like an empty wallet, produced a few bubbles which glinted lavender and green in the light slanting in from the alley into which the sun would peer for a few hours every day, as though to check whether all was well. There was a razor, he noticed, on the grit-gray porcelain. Picking it up, he felt a wave of helplessness lift him, and for a moment he wondered what he had come for, and why. But it passed. The wave sank back into the shallows of that mysterious sea.

This leather belt, a wet tongue lolling on the side of the basin, tried to tell him, but gave up with a gasp. Still, old habits die hard. He stropped with automatic hand the blade worn by the years into a shallow crescent. Lovingly, he pulled his cheeky flesh tight and made snow-plow paths upon his face before rinsing the stipple of beard away.

All done, he thought to himself, hearing the boom echo in the room, or deep in the hallways of his head, or both, and went out to negotiate the crammed passageways.

The woman at the door gave up and left and the booming gave up, too. Old Foster waited on the other side for her to leave, his heart fluttering in its cage. A tentative drop of soap fell to the floor and seeped through a crack and was lost in the parched wood.

He thought of Hattie. Had they been married? He thought so, but certainty was a struggle for which he had no patience. She had been his wife, he was sure, and maybe there had been a ceremony. Of that, he couldn't be sure. The magazines and newspapers reassured him, swaying in the hallway, spilling out over the floor here and there, their brittle yellow pages, flaxen as her hair, flaking off like dandruff. Like seeds, they might sprout. Maybe. Maybe not. He would not faint, he thought.

He sat to wait out the dizzy spell on a half-pile of papers whose top had collapsed into a heap like a tattered pouf near the door to the kitchen. His heart mewled like a kitten. He thought of Hattie in her taffeta dress, a lilac like her eyes. She was somewhere here, he knew, hiding, playing a game. He had always been the serious one.

The booming started up for a moment, faded, and the swish of water washed it away. He went deep inside while the door opened and a voice said cripes would you look at this shit. He went deeper and feet made shuffling sounds against the papers and a cough jumped into the silence and he thought he could hear Hattie nearby saying naughty naughty.

Forty years, the papers said, of periodicals. Took ten days to cart it away. He had left no will. The city sold the house on 86th for back taxes the year after.



*Cardinal Sins*

# Creative Nonfiction

## Dear Gram: May you rest in memory

*Carmen Antreasian*

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I want to tell you because I know you don't remember, because you didn't remember who I was at that time, which was rare because even through the six years you had Alzheimer's you always remembered me, always knew who I was. Even on the phone, you would hear my voice and say, "Carmen, is that you? Where the hell are you?" But that day, at that time, you didn't remember. You didn't know who I was or where you were, but you did know what you were, which was what you WERE, not who you are or who you had become, but what you were when you were a little girl. A little girl who still loved her daddy, before seeing his true colors, before he instigated all the bitterness you carried with you. The little girl who loved playing bartender for her daddy, who made him drinks with 'gininit.' You told me that story; you loved that story.

I met with you for the last time that day, meeting you for the first time as 10-year-old Betty Lou, and you were coloring a shamrock for St. Patrick's Day at a table in the dining area of the Alzheimer's unit where you lived. But you didn't know you were in an Alzheimer's unit, and you didn't know you were a wife or a mother or a grandmother or a great-grandmother. And you were content, just coloring with your green crayon.

You didn't look up when I came to sit with you. I said, "Hi, Betty," and you looked at me with eyes devoid of recognition, but not altogether void like the usual stare that often accompanies those with Alzheimer's. Rather, your eyes were bright and wonderous, yet cautious and questioning—the eyes of a child. "Wow, you're pretty," you said matter-of-factly when you looked up at me. "What's your name?" I told you and you asked where I lived. I said New York City, and your eyes got wide and then you got this smirk on your face, and you said, "Don't tell Cris, she'll be jealous." Then you went back to coloring.

I watched you color, and I told you I liked the color you were using—chartreuse—to which you replied smugly, "I can spell that" and proceeded to spell 'chartreuse' with so much attitude that I sat back and shook my head. And you didn't even look up from coloring, and I thought of how that spunky little spelling know-it-all would grow-up to be the crossword queen. But I knew some word play too, so I said, "Hmmm... chartreuse..

char.. Char, like... like Charlene, like your sister,” and you put your crayon down and looked at me cautiously and said, “you’re good, how’d you know that?” And then I said, “Chartreuse... char, like... like chardonnay. You like chardonnay, right?” And with a completely disgusted look on your 80-year-old face, left eyebrow raised in a why-would-you-even-ask-me-that-question fashion, looked at me and said, “Ew. Yuck,” and I laughed because you not liking chardonnay is heresy. You with the extra large bottle of Barefoot chardonnay that you would drink every night. You with the massive wine glass you always used that read ‘cheap white wine’ because you knew Barefoot was cheap. You were a realist who knew that it was fiscally responsible to budget your chardonnay consumption, not by drinking less but by buying cheap chardonnay. I assume that’s also why you bought cigarettes by the carton.

You then looked up at me with a devious smile on your face and asked me if I wanted to help you “break all the rules,” to which I replied, “of course,” and so according to the rules your mind had created, we proceeded to ‘break all the rules,’ by using differently colored green crayons. Green colors that clashed with each other on the page, a clash of colors that would have horrified the you that I knew. You who insisted that black and brown never be worn together, who would make a man change clothes if he were caught at a party wearing a black belt with brown shoes or would intermittently make snide remarks about how awful it was to notice that unfortunate man’s disturbingly unfashionable clothing choice. You never ‘broke all the rules’ in fashion, never wore white below the waist between Labor Day and Memorial Day, but you did love to break rules. You loved to serve my cousins and I alcohol when we were teenagers, saying, “It’s important that you learn how to drink.” You never wore a seatbelt in the car. You drove through red lights when there were no other cars on the road, saying, “the red light is just a suggestion.” You were the matriarch. You broke the rules and made your own.

When I was with you that day in the Alzheimer’s unit, you were certainly still you, perhaps even more you than the you that I knew. And in that moment, I felt ok about you having Alzheimer’s because you were content. For the first time in the past six years, you were not angry or bitter or confused or depressed; you were a content little girl. And that is how I left you that day and for the last time. As I walked away, I looked back and saw not the Gram I had known but an innocent little girl with blonde pig-tails coloring her picture with those prohibited, clashing green crayons.

I was happy to leave you that way because you were happy, but that was not the last time I saw you, Gram. The last time I saw you, your body, was at your funeral. You would have hated the open casket; I know you would have. Aunt Char knew too and didn’t go up to see your body. But I saw your body. Laying there, your body, your tiny body, made up to look exactly like you with eyes closed. It was too much for me to handle. Without the void eyes that distinguished you as one with Alzheimer’s, you became Gram again. The Gram from six years ago. The Gram I lived with in my early 20s and stayed up until 4 in the morning with, drinking and chain-smoking and talking. You told me you hated getting old, that you were happiest as a girl. You told me when you started losing your memory that you didn’t want to live, and I understood, but you are so naturally stubborn and strong-willed that instead you lived six more years in spite of yourself. Yet you did get to become that girl again. Seeing you in that casket was mourning you as Gram all over again. I had been mourning your loss for six years and thought I had let you go, but when I saw your body, I was forced to mourn all over again.

This isn’t what you would want to hear, though. You are crying, I’m sure, because you cry at everything, even though you hate that you do. You would say, “Ugh, Betty get ahold of yourself,” close the casket and lead us all to the bar, where you would have everything ready for a party. You always knew what everyone drank, and because Grandpa Charlie had passed, you would elect another man to be the bartender. You were the best hostess. You threw the best parties. The night after the funeral, in your honor, we feasted, we partied. We were joyful and rambunctious, and I picture you with your crooked pointer finger with its perfectly manicured almond-shaped nail raised up in the air in celebration, saying this, THIS, right here, this moment is—to use your favorite word—*divine*. Yes, Gram, it truly was divine.

# Saturday Morning Commute

*Carmen Antreasian*

Waking up at an ungodly hour on a Saturday morning to teach children who can barely piss on their own to ‘do ballet’, I shut off my LEAVE alarm at 8:53 - earlier than normal. I know it’ll take approximately four minutes to roll the cat hair off my entire body, put on my shoes, coat, headphones, sunglasses... dammit, I forgot my mask. Stupid mask. I take off my sunglasses and my headphones and wrap the straps of the mask around my ears that are adorned with bulky, glittery earrings. It’s no small task, especially when criss-crossing the straps so the adult-sized disposable mask fits my tiny face. That’ll add at least 40 seconds. Shoulda gotten the child-sized ones. I reapply the sunglasses/headphone combo, adjust my mask, pick up a baggie of cat shit to throw in the dumpster and leave. Bubby! Rittle! Bye bye silly heads, I ruv youu! Muah! 8:57? Purrfect.

I’ve learned not to take the F on Saturday mornings. Or the E or whichever the hell train decides to stop at 2nd Ave. The RW it is then. I might as well take St. Mark’s instead of 7th St. It’s probably filthy as fuck on Saturday mornings. Just one massive walk of shame between 2nd Ave and Cooper Union. Should be entertaining. I pull my mask down under and my chin and light a cigarette right before I turn left onto St. Marks. If ever there was an appropriate place to tar one’s lungs whilst blowing clouds of spit-filled smoke in the paths of a generally anti-smoking population during the age of COVID, St. Marks is it. My stroll down St. Marks does not disappoint. Of course the vendors with all the random shit are already trying to get the few people passing by to buy whatever it is they think the person would like. Profiling, much? In a half second too—now that’s what I call a good salesman. “Miss, miss! Nice rings in here. Pretty rings for pretty girl!” It’s 9:03. No, I don’t want a five dollar ring made of who-knows-what-kind of metal that’ll turn my finger green. But go get ‘em today, my hustling friend.

St. Marks on a Saturday morning, what a trip. Sticky plastic cups, greasy paper plates, smushed half-eaten pieces of pizza, vomit and torn newspapers cover the sidewalk. Wait, they still print newspapers? Good toilet paper for those gems of humanity who shat in the street last night, I guess. Yum. Piss and booze pool on the sides of the street. It’s like what NOLA locals call ‘Bourbon juice’ except ‘St. Marks juice’ is frozen—a mixed-flavored icee. Don’t want a brain freeze? Head south to the French Quarter.

Me, I’m headed to the northbound 8th St. NYU subway stop past Astor Place, past the massive, empty building that used to be a Walgreens. I used to get my prescriptions there. It closed during COVID. Seeing it now with a Retail For Rent sign on one of its large windows makes me feel nostalgic. Whatever, it’s not like I really care about some huge drugstore franchise. Fuck Walgreens.

Whenever I take the northbound RW, I always use the entrance across from Tisch because I know there are no attendants, only turnstiles. One way I save money is by sneaking under them, and it takes skill to save money in this city. A dollar here, a quarter there - every little bit counts. Swiping your Metro card is a whole 2.75. That can get you two full meals: bodega coffee for breakfast, 99 cent pizza for lunch. Two dollars and seventy-five cents. That’s more than two small coffees at my regular morning food truck. Usually a buck fifty, I get my small coffee for 1.25. “Mornin’ gorgeous, small coffee, yes?” A little cream, no sugar, please. “When you will let me see your eyes? I want to see those beautiful eyes!” Although my mask rests under my chin when I’m outside, I always wear my sunglasses, so he only ever sees the bottom half of my face.

“Teehee someday, babe,” I always tell him. I wink, but he can’t see it. I will play this game as long as I can, try to get that small coffee down from 1.25 to a buck. Someday.

Sneaking under the turnstiles is a strategic process. I prepare myself, think ahead. As I turn left onto Broadway, I unzip my calf-length winter coat, so my zipper doesn’t rip open when I crouch under the bar. Fixing a ripped zipper in 20 degree weather is awful. Even worse? Failing to fix said ripped zipper in 20 degree weather and having an awkwardly unzipped coat held together by that unbudging zipper for the rest of the day. I take my bag off my back and hold it against my chest with one hand, the other clutching my white-ish faux fur scarf so I can see the stairs as I make my way underground. When I get to the turnstile, I quickly duck my head and squat-walk under the bar. There are some perks to being under five feet tall, one of which is sneaking under things unnoticed. I hope I don’t hit my head this morning...just compound the always-existing bruise on the top of my skull, my form of payment to the MTA. Once I’ve cleared it I stand and nonchalantly walk down the rest of the stairs to the subway platform.

The R is scheduled to arrive at 9:13, but the trains are so unpredictable on

Saturday mornings. I look up at the monitor that displays the times when the next trains will arrive. Let's see... looks like the R is delayed, so I guess I'll take the W... or the N apparently? Matters not—all roads lead to Times Square. I'll take whichever train arrives first. According to the monitor the W is one minute away, but the N beats it to the platform. I take it. Ahh, a quiet ride this morning, lucky me. Well, there is a man yelling about classism and income inequality, but it's to be expected. He's not wrong, but I'm not interested in listening to any unsolicited rants this morning. I drown him out by turning up my headphones to full volume.

A playlist of techno, pop, piano, disco, classical and lo-fi hip-hop blast my eardrums. The heavy bass of a Zed's Dead track, followed by the entire Spartacus ballet adagio suite, followed by all 17 minutes and 35 seconds of Donna Summer's MacArthur's Park suite—I have a long commute—followed by a Japanese version of a SZA song, followed by an actual SZA song, followed by something from an anime soundtrack... My musical tastes are as unpredictable as the trains on Saturday mornings. As unpredictable as this entire goddamn city. I relax. I will make the 10 o'clock bus for sure this time. I don't have to rush. What a wonderful, rare feeling! No stress during my Saturday morning commute? It almost makes me anxious, but I try to bask in the calm because I know it will be short-lived. Get ready for those screaming children. Go get 'em today, you hustler, you.

## The House of the Four Buzzards

*Angela Townsend*



I'm no swan, but I never expected to dwell in the House of the Four Buzzards.

Roy has the broadest wingspan, airbrushed with neon. There are tags around his legs that he wants you to believe are from falconers who couldn't hold him, but really they are milk-jug rings he put there himself.

The day I moved in, Roy made himself known. "May I make a humble request?"

I am an accomplished magnet for the odd, so I felt at home. "Sure!"

"If you ever cut your hair, can I have it?"

I gaped into his glassy eyes and watched the continents bob like apples. "Well, I have no such plans."

"Just remember that I asked."

"You were the first," I promised.

Living upstairs and many flights away, Roy fancies himself a vulture. But his caw is a second language, thin cover for a lonely owl. He perches on his balcony ten hours a day, cigarette sighing meteors down my railing.

"Someone got robbed in Building Two." He writes fiction out loud. "We're gonna lose power in this thunderstorm."

We never lose power. "Roy, let's stay positive."

"Never did me any good. Did you read that Florida's gonna break off into the ocean in the next ten years? Do you have an Amazon Fire Stick?"

He reads my bumper stickers selectively. "I listen to your station. There's nothin' else good on the radio."



I throw him careful kebabs. “You have good taste.”

“WE have good taste.”

He is “too old to be dangerous,” but I still prickle like prey. When I see him patrolling the parking lot, gallon jug of unidentified yellow fluid in hand, I wait to get the mail. I feel guilty.

Sol does not feel guilty about loathing Roy. “I can’t be friends with anyone with his grammar,” Sol explained in the hallway. “Does that sound elitist? I was a pharmacist. I don’t know what Roy did, but he starts every sentence with ‘me and so-and-so.’ I don’t have time for that.”

I look at Sol, unshaven and haircut-resistant since the start of the pandemic. He is an underfed Jerry Garcia in beige. “How long have you lived here, Sol?”

“Forty years. Same as Roy.”

“You’ve been neighbors forty years?”

“I’m afraid so.”

I stifle a smile. “Well, at least he’s a known quantity.”

“You, I like.” Sol has been paying more attention than I’d realized. “Vassar and Princeton, huh?”

He reads my bumper stickers too. “Princeton Theological Seminary. Not connected to the university.” I am always careful here. “I don’t like to get credit for an Ivy League education I don’t have.”

“Seminary. You’re one of those mystical types.”

“Try to be.” I catch myself. “I try to be.”

“I’m not, but I like it.” Sol has committed to liking me. “Well, I’m upstairs if ever you, I don’t know, get scared or anything.”

My mother insists I give her Sol’s phone number. “It’s good for me to be

able to get in touch with someone in the building.”

“I don’t know what he’d do.”

“He could bang on your door, and if you don’t answer, he could call the police and have them break in.”

This is how my mother thinks. We shall not discuss the level of her concern if I go to Target after dark.

If my mother trusts Sol, my money is on the buzzard of happiness, sky blue Andy. Persevering behind a walker, moved to tears by irises, Andy loves John 3:16 and his long-haired Chihuahua. If the weather is anything short of apocalyptic, Andy can be found outside, usually asleep.

Roy is lonely and Sol is a pharmacist, but Andy has flocks. Friends and siblings frequent his nest, back and forth through the patio doors. I hear Beach Boys music and the laughter of lambs. When my husband moved out, Andy looked me in the eye and declared, “You deserve everything good.”

Sol says Andy is too frail to consider. “Seems like a nice guy, but always sick, isn’t he? I don’t go down there.”

Sol doesn’t go anywhere, other than to move his Toyota from one parking spot to another. “It’s not good for it to just sit, you know.” The grocery store delivers flats of Fanta and rotisserie chickens, and Amazon keeps his cat full of Fancy Feast.

But he has a daughter at Northwestern, and she arrives with big bags of fruit and stories. The visits leave Sol replenished with electrons, waves and particles giving away a smile he prefers not to admit.

We have reason for gratitude, nestled in a jaunty complex where little goes wrong and tulips and toadstools tell fairy stories. We are a two-minute walk from the supermarket and a seven-minute hike from the hospital. I love my late-70s fortress, nine hundred square feet made for Rapunzel’s safe keeping.

I landed here as a lovebird, but my green and orange feathers molted. I

sang for a bird of prey. I would have stayed forever, solemn as a nightingale. But he played with many things, including the cage door, and one night he left it open while he walked to the store for booze. The moon was full, and I was small enough to be taken by the breeze. I am no swan, but a brown sparrow can fly.

My flight circled back to the House of the Four Buzzards, while the bird of prey retreated to the tree of his birth. I pray for him and the turkeys who bore him every night before a bite of dinner. I will never forget.

The buzzards seem to have forgotten, happy to call me by my maiden name, happier to study my habits.

“You send a lot of Valentines,” Sol observes. Our outgoing mail is public, and mine is pink and prolific.

“Birthday cards,” I admit. I would not tell Roy this. “It’s my thing. Once someone gets on my birthday list, they stay there forever. Everyone I ever went to school or church with...”

“That’s nice. See, that’s nice. People need to do more of that sort of thing.” He strokes his steel wool hair. “Well, you keep being good.”

Roy knows Sol doesn’t like him, and he knows I’m guarded with him, but he knows Andy is an oozing yes. They sit on Andy’s porch, the sweeter man a captive audience, talking about Fire Sticks and Florida until Andy falls asleep.

But Roy is reaching for the light, as winged things do, even if he can’t have my hair or my niceties. I find bags of pretzel nuggets dumped in front of his Mustang, English muffins sprouting like mushrooms after heavy rain. Once he lined up a dozen vegan hot dogs, a rubbery Druid offering for our smallest neighbors.

“Friendly squirrels we got,” he tells me. “Me and the squirrels, we look out for each other.”

The same squirrels trundle branches up and down my balcony, delicate agony for my cats. I ask them if they appreciate Roy’s offerings, but they are too important to answer.

I feel safe and bashful with the buzzards, guilty when I pretend to be busy or wave when I could pause for a conversation. One day I will flap hard enough to be good and ask for their birthdays. We know each other’s flight patterns, and I am grateful that they pay me too much attention.

Usually.



# Photography

First Place Winner

Saginaw Brick,  
Saginaw Steel  
by Caroline Helmstadt

Saginaw Brick, Saginaw Steel  
*Caroline Helmstadt*

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*Digital Photography*

## Remnants

*Caroline Helmstadt*



*Digital Photography*

## Beauty from Above

*Anastasia Noelle Pirri*



*Digital Photography*

# Together

Anastasia Noelle Pirri



*Digital Photography*

# Portrait in Spring

Eric Suchy



*Digital Photography*

# Acknowledgments

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There are so many amazing people who put work into this journal behind the scenes. This page is only a small representation of our gratitude for their time, support, and skills.

Thank you to J.J. Boehm and the PJPC team; Taylor Hart for designing a fantastic logo; everyone at the Graphics Center for faithfully printing our journal; SVSU's English and Arts department and the RPW department for encouraging students to join our team and submit; and all of the SVSU students who have shown interest in our publication over the past few years.

Thank you to Dr. Kim Lacey, our faculty advisor who is constantly fighting for us, answering our questions, and encouraging the growth of *Cardinal Sins*. We so appreciate your continued dedication to this publication and to the students involved.

Thank you to all of our talented contributors. We are so pleased to feature you in this issue. We hope you're as proud of this journal as we are.

Thank you to our staff, both new and old, for killing it this semester. We appreciate your hard work and passion for the arts. Seriously, we would have been floundering without you.

To everyone we forgot to mention, thank you.

Lastly, thank you for reading the Winter 2023 issue of *Cardinal Sins*. We hope you enjoy.

All the best,

Megan Draper, Editor-in-Chief

Gabby Bourgeois, Digital Editor

# Biographies

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## Winners

**Zary Fekete** ...grew up in Hungary

...has a novelette (*In the Beginning*) out from ELJ Publications and a debut novella being published in early 2024 with DarkWinter Lit Press

...enjoys books, podcasts, and many many many films.

Twitter: @ZaryFekete

**Caroline Helmstad** is a writer and photographer from Saginaw, MI. She enjoys exploring the world with her partner, Julien Clolinger, and documenting their finds in words and pictures. Her photos that appear in this journal are of Potter Street Station in Saginaw--a Victorian era train depot from 1881.

**Michael Moreth** is a recovering Chicagoan living in the rural, micropolitan City of Sterling, the Paris of Northwest Illinois

**Claire Scott** is a retired psychotherapist who is enjoying having more time to write, take long walks and try to stay ahead of the weeds. She is excited to be spending more time with her five grandchildren who are scattered over the country. And, OMG, this granny just turned eighty.

## Contributors

**Carmen Antreasian** is an amalgamation of creativity and performance with a resumé so convoluted that it makes hiring managers' heads spin. A writer, dancer, teacher, theorist, anime enthusiast, fashionista, and cashier, Carmen embodies the NYC hustler. In her 'free time,' you can find her cuddling with her two plump kitties.

**Virna Chessari** is an Italian and Latin teacher at a high school in Palermo with a great passion for writing that she shares with a few special friends and her adorable dog. She is the author of the bilingual Poetry collection *The Ulysses Butterfly La Farfalla di Ulisse, I Finsword. L'alba dei Purosangue*, and *Il Favolfiore, favole per crescere*. Other mail: virnachessari@gmail.com

**Marcus Colasurdo** is a writer, occasional playwright, and part-time poet. He writes in Vienna, Austria. His work has appeared in over one hundred

reviews and journals across Canada, Australia, the UK, and the USA. “The Wrong Name” is Marco’s latest collection of short fiction. Website: <https://www.marcoetheridgefiction.com/>

**Dick Daniels** is a Vietnam vet and frustrated baseball player whose “career” highlights were in an Over-35 Senior League in Minnesota. He has tried to capture what it means to be “not quite good enough.” Another of his baseball stories appear in the 2023 issue of *Alabama Literary Review*.

**Richard Dinges Jr.** works on his homestead beside a pond, surrounded by trees and grassland, with an uneasy truce between his wife, two dogs, two cats, and six chickens. *Oddball Magazine*, *Sequoia Speaks*, *Poetry Pacific*, *Rundelania*, and *MockingHeart Review* most recently accepted his poems for their publications.

**Marco Etheridge** is a writer, occasional playwright, and part-time poet. He writes in Vienna, Austria. His work has appeared in over one hundred reviews and journals across Canada, Australia, the UK, and the USA. *The Wrong Name* is Marco’s latest collection of short fiction. Website: <https://www.marcoetheridgefiction.com/>

**Ryan Kees** is a fish man, meaning an aspiring fish and marine biologist. He’s a tuba player, avid writer, an eagle scout, sailor, and obsessed with sharks and rays. A lifetime of living in Arkansas has given him an appreciation for being away from cities and normal people.

**Sirnovia Laurie** believes “to earn a language is to earn a soul” (Adrienne Rich). In her spare time, she watches YouTube pranks by Calvin Grindz. How her belly aches from sheer laughter. This is one of the things that reminds her of the joy of being a teenager twice.

A perpetual runnerup, **S. Frederic Liss** is a multiple Pushcart Prize nominee and was a finalist for Flannery O’Connor Short Fiction Prize, St. Lawrence Book Award, and Bakeless Prize. This is his 60th publication.

**Anastasia Noelle Pirri** is a Connecticut-based photographer who finds solace in nature and seeks to display its beauty. When she is not spending most of her time with her cat, she finds herself traveling, exploring the complexities of the outdoors.

**Mykyta Ryzhykh**; winner of the international competition Art Against Drugs and Ukrainian contests Vytoky, Shoduarivska Altanka, Khortytsky dzvony; laureate of the literary competition named after Tyutyunnik, Lyceum, Twelve, named after Dragomoshchenko. Nominated for Pushcart Prize.

**Kate Shields** hates reading poetry. And writing it.

**Stuart Silverman** is an east coast expatriate (full disclosure: Brooklyn, NY). Retired from college/university teaching, Stuart divides his arthritic old age (90 this December) between an equally aging house in Chicago and a rural homestead in Arkansas. He practices meditation to limit road rage going back and forth. He has 5 books of poetry in print, the latest being *PROXIES*.

**Brian Sluga** is a customer experience consultant, bicyclist. Brian has a Bachelor’s degree in PR from Bradley University, in 2023 he received an MFA in creative writing at Lindenwood University. Brian daydreams about his next book, enjoys Italian food, laughs at Progressive Insurance commercials and listens to 80’s music. Words bring imagination to life.

**Erik Suchy** is an amateur photographer from St. Paul, Minnesota. His visual work often incorporates themes of isolation and disharmony from both natural and digitally altered perspectives, although he frequently pursues a variety of different, cross-genre ideas alike.

**Angela Townsend** is Development Director at Tabby’s Place: a Cat Sanctuary. This was not what she expected with an M.Div. from Princeton Seminary, but love has been the best author of her life. Angie giggles with her poet mother daily and gives thanks for mercy, knee-slappin’ bluegrass, and the moon.

## Staff

**Megan Draper** is probably gushing about *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, petting a cat, or planning her next trip abroad. She's a fourth-year Creative Writing and Spanish double major, and the Editor-in-Chief of *Cardinal Sins*. Her work has previously been published by Owl Hollow Press and is forthcoming in *Belmont Story Review* and *300 Days of Sun*. Learn more about her writing at [www.authormeganriann.com](http://www.authormeganriann.com).

**Gabby Bourgeois** is blowing this popsicle stand. Their tired fingers thank you for reading the final issue of *Cardinal Sins* they will ever format.

**Kim Lacey** is still wondering, like twenty years later, if she remembered to drop off the refill to table 62.

**Chrissy M. Hansen** is a graduate of SVSU. She has a bachelor's degree in Creative Writing and has published on a wide variety of issues in academia, from historical Jesus studies to Tolkien studies to Ethics. She has always loved fiction and poetry, particularly epic fantasy writing and surrealistic poetry. She plans to work as a writer and editor in the future. Outside of academia, she is an activist for LGBTQ+ rights, women's rights, and is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America.

**Liliana Orozco** is either petting a cute cat or customizing a cat family in her sims world. She is also a first year PTW major and this is her first year on the editorial team!

**Leah Richardson** is a first year PTW major, and is a reader and editor for *Cardinal Sins*. When not reading or editing for the magazine, she can be found procrastinating, jamming out to a good song, dancing for SVSU Hip Hop Crew, or reading and editing.....for fun.

**Zach Vance** is a Creative Writing major and Religious Studies minor who formerly wanted to go into Psychology but determined it was too much work. He is currently a senior at Saginaw Valley State University and his billionth year as a college student in general. He is a reader/editor for *Cardinal Sins*. He has two cats who he loves very much, and has never kicked a puppy, despite what Editor-in-Chief Megan Draper might say about him.

**Lily West** is a Creative Writing Major and English Minor who dreams of being an author and living in the library from *Beauty and the Beast*.



# Submission Guidelines



## All general submissions must:

- be submitted through (<http://cardinalsins.submittable.com/submit>)
- include multiple submissions for a single category in one document
- not contain any contact information within the attached document

## Text submissions should:

- be in 12-pt. Times New Roman font, single spaced, with 1" margins
- include the title at the top of the piece
- be attached in .rtf, .docx or .doc format
  
- Poetry should be no longer than 70 lines
- Flash fiction should be no longer than 1,000 words
- Fiction should be no longer than 3,750 words

## Artwork/Photography submissions should:

- be 300 dpi or greater
- have high contrast and sharp definition
- be attached in email in .jpeg or .png format
- be saved as their title

Note: Photos that have been manipulated with a computer program should be submitted as artwork, not photography

## Maximum number of entries:

- Submit up to 3 poems, 3 flash fiction pieces, 2 pieces of fiction, and 2 pieces of creative nonfiction
- Submit up to 5 artwork and photography pieces in each category
- You may submit to as many categories as you would like

## Prizes and Judging

Prizes may be awarded to SVSU students, faculty or alumni in each of the 8 categories we publish: poetry, fiction, flash fiction, creative non-fiction, black & white photography, color photography, black & white artwork, and color artwork. Outside SVSU artists and writers are free to submit and are eligible for publication; however, they will not receive monetary compensation for a general submission category prize.

Staff reserves the right not to award a winner in a particular category if no submissions are judged worthy of the award.

The SVSU-affiliated winner in each category will receive \$100 and recognition within the publication. All submissions will be entered into their respective category's contest unless otherwise requested.

Judging is done through blind voting by the editorial staff. Members of the editorial staff are permitted to submit entries for publication but cannot receive prize money for winning a category.

By submitting to *Cardinal Sins* you affirm that the work attached is solely your own. You agree to abide by *Cardinal Sins's* requirements governing submissions. If your work is accepted for publication, *Cardinal Sins* has the right to publish and distribute your work, in print, on the *Cardinal Sins* website, and, on occasion, in an audio format.

You retain all subsequent rights to your work.

Thank you for submitting to *Cardinal Sins*.

These guidelines are subject to change; please visit our Submittable page for the most current guidelines and for deadline dates.

## A Note on Content & Taste

Though *Cardinal Sins* has no set theme, note we do not tend to publish works that feature explicitly sexual content, overtly triggering content used for shock value, glorified abuse, and/or similar content. Those topics may have their places, but they likely won't work for our university-funded publication. Please be conscious of this as you submit.

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