

# Prairie Ink

A literary Annual



Issue Eleven



Fall 2020



“There is a way to see inside by looking directly through to seed or marrow.”

-Joan Halifax

## **From the Editor**

Dear Readers,

This year has been, I'm sure we can all agree, full of unexpected and often disappointing surprises. During quarantine, many of us were reintroduced to hobbies, got to catch up on reading, or binge-watched some of our favorite shows. This has reestablished, in the mind of this editor, the need for stories and storytelling. Storytelling is one of the most humanizing performances in existence as we struggle to make meaning of our world and express those things that are not unique to us, but make us uniquely human

-Scott McDonald

-Cover art by Diane Engle

About the picture: *Black Eye, Susan?* is a watercolor of several plants of Black Eye Susans. When naming my artwork, I like to put a little twist on words to cause curiosity. I'm known in the area for my watercolor and photography. I just recently retired from Barton after 26 years of service.

-Submission page art by Cherish Robinson

About the picture: *Betty's Ray of Hope*. Betty Robinson, is my mother. One day after visiting with her I noticed the sun shining past the storm clouds over Fossil Lake and had to take the picture. The next day, when I shared it with mom, she commented “There is always a ray of hope after the storm. Keep looking for it.”

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# **The Birthing Tree**

By Olivia Herman

The memories I have with my family are ones I will cherish forever. I grew up on a farm in Northwest Kansas, where we raised cows and harvested milo and wheat. There is a pasture right next to my house as flat as most people assume Kansas is, except in one place. In this place, there is a drop-off where a beautiful, spiraling tree calls home. This tree is not like any other, although it used to be. It used to grow vertically, just like many assume trees grow, but one particularly harsh winter, it froze and cracked down the middle due to the weight of the ice. Now, the tree grows outwards as if it is trying to reach the sides of the hills on either side of it. Not only is this tree a spectacle for all the people who witness it, but for some reason, it captures the eyes of the cattle as well.

I remember one of the first times I ever went to check on the cows with my Dad. It was a cool morning where the rising sun shined brightly on the green grass that was blanketed with moisture. I hopped in my Dad's pickup while 80s rock songs blasted through the speakers. I was young, but my dad still let me sit upfront with him. I remember my eager self peeking out of the window at groups of fuzzy black cows. My dad explained to me how each newborn calf needed to get its "ears pierced" so we could tell which cow was its mother. Most of the cows and calves are all black and it would be complicated to pair them together without these tags. We started slowly

creeping through the pasture, tiny black calves tucked into themselves as the sun did its best to wake them up from their slumber. I was so interested in seeing the babies, especially the newborns, and I quickly made this known to my father. He gave me a nod and assured me that he knew where to find them. His pickup slowly rolled down a hill and revealed a beautiful entangled tree I remembered seeing as we would drive by this pasture to go to town but being this close to it was puzzling to me. I could not understand how this tree was able to grow the way it did. My eyes danced around the winding branches and twigs until they finally landed on something even more spectacular, a cow and her newborn calf. I gasped with excitement and pointed frantically to the new life that was kindly being welcomed into the world by its mother.

“I don’t know why they come down here to have their babies, but they always do. I know if a certain cow is close to having her baby, she will be at the Birthing Tree.”

The Birthing Tree. That name stuck with me for years to come. My younger brother and I loved playing in the crisp autumn leaves and often found ourselves near that very tree. Being the two youngest siblings out of four kids, we found ourselves bickering and fighting very often, but something about being by the Birthing Tree changed things. We could easily climb on the branches, with them growing so close to the ground, and run across them. We would bounce and wiggle on these branches until we would see more and more leaves come falling from the tops of the tree. When we got bored of this play is when our imagination would run wild and we would envision ourselves

to be mythical monkeys that we heard roamed around our forests. We would shout from the top of our lungs and find big tree branches to bang together to create a big clapping noise, to communicate to our ape brothers and sisters. We both knew how dumb these shenanigans were and would eventually end up laughing instead of howling like a sasquatch. After all this playing, my brother and I would be tired of the cool autumn air stinging our lungs and decide to call it a day. But not many days would pass until my younger brother would ask me again,

“Wanna go to the Birthing Tree?”

As I grew older, I became less interested in climbing trees, but on days I felt the need to clear my head, I would ask my mom to join me on a walk. There are many things my Mom and I do not agree on, she is a strong, strict woman who knows what she believes in and rarely strays from these views. But when we would go for these walks, those differences melted away. I would tell her about the boys I liked; the confusion I faced and the awkward encounters I had in school, and she would give me her very honest opinion on what she thought, which quickly had me laughing. My mom would tell me stories of her childhood and the kind of trouble she found herself in so that I could relate them to my issues with siblings or friends at school. The advice my mom has shared with me his advice I will never forget. Soon, we would walk down that same hill we had walked down so many times before to see that tree standing proudly to our left. I would always point out how interesting it was that no matter what storms mother nature threw its way, the tree

always went into bloom come spring. My mom smiled and told me,

“Things that have been broken in the past can still bloom into something even more beautiful than before.”

I knew I needed to get something that significant meaning to me. It needed to mean family, all the memories I have with my parents and siblings, and how much I cherish them. It needed to mean love, how strongly I cared for the people, who are rooted in some of my favorite memories, and everything I would do for them. It needed to mean perseverance, no matter what could bring me down I would still be able to get back up and fight harder than I had ever fought before for the things and people that mean the most. My family has been there for me, even when I have made terrible mistakes. My parents always told me no matter what, they would never leave me to deal with the mistakes on my own. I would not be the same me without them being there with me every step of the way.

I heard a buzzing sound behind me, and my nerves hit me all at once. I gritted my teeth, knowing the pain I was going to have to endure for the next hour was going to be tough. The hour went by quickly, to my surprise, and soon enough the tattoo artist announced he was finished. He held up a mirror in front of me so that I could look at the beautiful and meaningful piece of art on my back. The thing I knew I would never regret, dislike, or grow out of because it meant so much to me. The thing that will be on my back even when they put me six feet under. I gasped in awe of what the artist had created. It was just as I had envisioned. The Birthing Tree.

## **Adventures in Central America**

By Don Gaeddert

It started with a simple desire to become fluent in Spanish. After several years of Spanish in college, I still couldn't speak or understand it very well. As a result, the only way I believed I could become fluent was to live in a Spanish speaking country. After several inquiries, I was told of a language institute in San Jose which catered to missionaries. If they could teach missionaries to be fluent in 9 months, they could certainly help me. I called and asked if they accepted non-missionaries into their program and they said they did. I didn't waste any time and sent them my contact information and asked them to prepare to receive me just prior to the beginning of the trimester. What followed were a series of adventures in Central America.

The flight from Denver to San Jose went smooth and we arrived in the evening. It was nice to get away from the frigid cold in Denver which the end of December brought. The airport in San Jose was small with few staff people. I fully expected to be met by someone from the school, but after almost an hour of waiting and looking, it didn't appear that anyone was coming. I was able to find a missionary family headed to the language school and they let me hitch a ride. Upon arrival at the school, one of the students took pity on me. Fortunately, he knew of a missionary family which was out of town, called them, and they said I could stay in their dormitory room. Looking back, even though I enjoyed adventures and didn't need everything to fall into place as



planned, I was relieved to have this added stress replaced by a very positive impression that God was taking care of me.

The next day I enrolled in the school and inquired about lodging for the next three months. It turned out that a professor at a local college was taking his family on a month long sabbatical and was looking for someone to stay at his house to keep the house secure. They'd found one other young man but wanted two students for safety's sake, especially since we were both expatriates. Even though Costa Rica was one of a few Central American countries with a sizeable middle class, the middle class were considered by many in the general population to be wealthy and bourgeois; and, as a result, their homes were often the target of burglaries. If you've ever traveled in Central and South America, you've seen the locked gates and the high walls with jagged broken glass sticking up from the top ledge which surround most yards.

It was settled then, for the next month I would live with Tim, a young man from California, who was fluent in Spanish and who had lived in Central America for several months having already taken classes at the school. I commuted to the language school on the local bus and soon became immersed in my language study. It was an intense schedule with four hours of classes in the morning and then assignments for the afternoon which included traveling to the Central Park and engaging locals in conversation.

After the month was up, I started renting a bedroom in the home of a Costa Rican family. None of the family members spoke English, but they were

very forgiving of my broken Spanish.

The wife was an excellent cook and I enjoyed being around their 7 year old and 2 year old. The 2 year old loved to talk, but as hard as I tried, I couldn't understand his Spanish. I finally confided in his mother that I was frustrated that I couldn't understand her son. She said not to feel bad, they couldn't understand what he said either.

Although the bedroom I rented was very nice, the local tarantulas came out at night. If you got up during the night to use the bathroom, you had to be careful where you stepped. One night I wasn't paying attention and stepped on what felt like a small furry stuffed animal which squished when my weight came down on it. Another time I had just stepped into the bathroom to shower and out comes a large tarantula out of the rafters. I jumped out of there and got one of my shoes. I took aim and threw it at the tarantula only to watch it catch the shoe and throw it back at me. OK, it may not have been big enough to throw it back, but I did hit it and it simply crawled back up into the ceiling.

The three month long trimester soon came to an end and Tim and I decided to travel north to Nicaragua. This was, I thought, a true test of the investment I'd made in language study at the language school in San Jose. Tim and I would then part ways in Managua, the capital city, and I would continue on my own to El Salvador by way of Honduras and Guatemala, and he would stay with friends in Managua.

Prior to entering Nicaragua, Tim convinced me to exchange my Costa Rican colones (dollars) on the black market which gave a much better

exchange rate for Nicaraguan dollars than the government rate. We then entered Nicaragua and boarded a bus headed for Managua. We saw bombed out buildings and a disabled army tank as we journeyed to Managua—reminders of the civil war which ended almost four years ago.

Upon arriving in Managua, customs officials confronted us at the bus station and escorted us to their office claiming that we had used the black market for currency exchange. How they knew this we can only surmise that a couple of blond, North Americans caught their attention and were watched carefully. They took all of our Nicaraguan money and said we would have to meet with the Central Bank officials to get it back. Fortunately I had some traveler's checks and we were able to check into a youth hostel.

The ruling party in the national government were the Sandinistas who had defeated the USA backed Somoza regime in the 1979 civil war. They had a physical presence at all the lodging facilities and our hostel was staffed by a young Sandinista woman dressed in army fatigues. Tim struck up a conversation with her and shared what had happened with the customs officials. She gave us the address and directions for the Central Bank, and we made plans to go there the next day.

At the bank, we were led into a large, posh office and seated at a desk across from a bank official. Despite our protestations and telling the official that we wanted to spend our money in Nicaragua, he told us that our money would be returned to us at the border as we left the country. Knowing that I would be leaving the country on my own, I was afraid that my Spanish

wouldn't be good enough to negotiate the return of my money or that the government would simply refuse to give back the money they took because I was from the USA. In addition, Tim was ready to leave that evening to stay with a friend in Managua, and I would be on my own for another day before I left for Honduras. After we discussed what to expect at the border, Tim excused himself and went to talk with the young Sandinista official at the hostel. Tim is a very good looking, tall, blond, man with a quick smile and a pleasant personality. This played in our favor with the young woman dressed in fatigues. Somehow he sweet talked this revolutionary Sandinista and her parting words to him were, "tell your friend I'll have his money in the morning.". Sure enough, in the morning I stopped at her desk and she handed me what was taken by the customs agents.

The next day I boarded a bus for Tegucigalpa and the trip went smoothly. Whether it was just the local dialect or the way all Hondurans spoke, I don't know, but I found it almost impossible to understand the Spanish they spoke. It was fast and emphasized the vowels almost to the exclusion of consonants. The City didn't interest me so I decided to give it one day and made arrangements to leave for the Copan ruins in Guatemala.

I spent the night at a youth hostel. The youth hostels in Central American cities were cheap and the rooms were plain with common restrooms and showers. The next morning, I went to the youth hostel's laundry room to wash some clothes. It was a fairly large, open ceiling room consisting solely of a few large sinks with cold, running water and some rubbing boards. As I was

hand washing my clothes, I watched a large black scorpion crawl out of the ceiling rafters. It unnerved me enough that I ran to the office to report it. The woman at the desk listened intently but was obviously unconcerned to hear my alarm. She then told me that the man who had stayed in my room two nights previous had killed one in the room. Such is life in Central America – tarantulas and scorpions where you lodge.

That same day I boarded and arrived by bus at the Copan ruins which were located in a very rural area. I was pleasantly surprised at how slow the people spoke and had little problem understanding their Spanish. The Copan ruins are not as touristy as what you might find in Mexico, but impressive none the less. I was the only one walking the ruins that day and found many ruins partially covered with vegetation and some with hieroglyphic carvings showing the old Mayan culture.

I spent only one night near the ancient ruins feeling a need to keep moving because of the scheduled flight out of El Salvador in a few days.

The bus trip to Guatemala City was most unpleasant. My bus was an old grey hound which they must have bought used from the USA. Although the highway was as straight as an arrow, the bus swayed from side to side constantly and by the time we arrived in downtown Guatemala City, I was sicker than a dog. I managed to find a cheap hotel downtown and hiked three floors to my room. I just barely made it up to my room when I vomited a couple of times in the common toilet area and then crashed onto the bed hoping to sleep off the nausea. I suffered with my nausea and a fitful sleep for

about 36 hours.

When I finally felt good enough to get out of bed, it was about 4 am. I looked out the window not remembering much about where I was. My room was on the 3rd or 4th floor and the window overlooked the vacant, narrow street below which was sandwiched between the high rise buildings in this down town area. The City looked to be as modern a City as those in the USA, but something caught my eye in the early morning light. A shepherd was herding a flock of about 10 goats down the street. He appeared out of place, but then, as I watched, he would knock on a door, the resident would hand him a bottle, he would milk one of the goats, hand the bottle back, and receive a payment. Just on the one block in front of my hotel, he repeated this three times. I was witnessing the old traditions meeting the modern world.

After leaving the hotel, I looked for breakfast and was surprised to find soldiers with submachine guns at all the downtown intersections. Although Guatemala was not in a civil war like El Salvador or having experienced the overthrow of its government like Nicaragua, it was obvious the government was not taking any chances of an uprising and made their presence felt. The next and final leg of my journey would take me into El Salvador. I had made arrangements to meet an acquaintance from college who was working with a Christian, international aid program. He was stationed in San Salvador but worked as a peace keeper during the civil war in a small rural mountain community. I was looking forward to visiting and learning about his work there.

On this leg of my journey the bus was a small minivan and eight of us climbed on board. I was the only gringo (white person). The road wound its way through the mountains with many switch backs as we climbed toward the border. After coming around a curve, a platoon of what looked like armed government soldiers flagged us down. Even though they were wearing army khaki dress, one could never be sure if they were government soldiers or revolutionaries. Neither was it clear whether they were from El Salvador or Guatemala.

What also added to my anxiety during the ride from Guatemala City, was the fact that we never saw any other vehicles. This absence of other vehicles added to the imaginations in my mind about what could play out in this situation. The soldiers looked like they'd been out in the woods for several days, but they also acted well disciplined. The soldier in charge kept a grim look on his face and told all of us to exit the bus and to line up on the side of the road. He asked each of us for identifying papers as he worked his way down the line. To everyone else he gave back the ID before moving on, but he kept my passport. He then told everyone else to get back on the bus but ordered me to keep standing on the side of the road. He stood looking at me and slapping my passport against his other hand; and then he came up close with his face about a foot from mine. To put it mildly, I was concerned for my safety not knowing with which army the platoon was affiliated and how they viewed the USA. He then said in a very loud voice, "How do you do?" and broke into a hint of a smile. The look of relief on my face must have been

apparent to the other soldiers because I heard snickers and saw them smile. I responded with a simple greeting and we tried talking in English for a little while, but it was apparent he didn't know much English so he cut off the exchange by giving me my passport and waving me back onto the bus. As we pulled away, some of the other passengers looked my way and the relief in their faces testified to the gravity of the situation we had just experienced.

The minivan arrived at the border, and we had to disembark, walk up and over the border, and stop at the small hut on the other side which served as the customs entry point. The other passengers went on ahead. As I walked the path by myself, all of a sudden I felt an oppressive heaviness in the air. It was almost like walking into a dense fog but the air was clear. I recognized it as a spiritual oppression that I can only describe as evil.

Back in Costa Rica at the language school for missionaries, I was introduced to what some of them called spiritual warfare. This had never been a part of my Christian upbringing and I found it strange to watch some of these missionaries driving out demons in some of the most innocent of situations as we walked down a street. If they saw a drunk, they cast out the demon. If we passed a house of ill repute, they cast out the demons. They definitely had a keener sense and awareness of the spiritual world around them, or maybe they were just a little too fanatical or just plain nuts.

That being said, spiritual warfare was the farthest thing from my mind as I walked across the border into El Salvador. Thinking back to that border crossing reminds me of a verse from the Bible. Something about our battle as



Christians isn't with this world but rather with the principalities and powers of the spiritual world. Maybe there was a connection between the violence and political oppression which still plagued El Salvador and this spiritual oppression or whatever you want to call it which caused an overwhelming oppression of my spirit. As I left the customs house on the other side, the spiritual fog lifted as if walking through a doorway; and I wondered if anyone else experienced what I had.

There was another minivan waiting and I boarded for the ride to San Salvador. Ron, a recent college graduate and a man of few but profound words, picked me up at the bus station and we stayed at his apartment for the night. He outlined his plans for the next day which was to take me to one of the mountain villages above the City.

After breakfast we got into his small pickup and traveled up the narrow mountain road into a dense forested area. Although the civil war in El Salvador was winding down, political leadership in most of these small villages was provided by the military who looked upon the civilians with suspicion. Trust on either side of the conflict hadn't been restored. Many of the revolutionaries came from the rural countryside or hid out in the mountains.

It was common for the local law enforcement officials to seek information about people in the village, usually male but women too, who might have ties to the revolutionaries. They would find and jail them, and interrogate them to get more names—interrogation which bordered on torture. Sometimes the person was released a week or two later, sometimes they were

transferred someplace else, and sometimes they disappeared.

We arrived at a village and pulled over near an adobe building. The streets were empty and no one came out to greet us. Ron took me into the now abandoned building and showed me the pock marks in the wall. “These”, he said, “were from the gun fight last week.” Possibly reading the question on my face, he explained why he was stationed in this village. “As in many other places in Central America, a small wealthy minority has been exploiting the poor majority for decades and a corrupt government was enabling that system to continue. A revolutionary guerrilla movement began attacking government and army positions in an attempt to force change. The army responded with devastating repression in large areas of the countryside where they determined the guerrillas had their bases.

Within a few years, a million Salvadorans were displaced from their homes. About half fled the country as refugees and the other half moved to nearby cities and villages where there was no housing, food, sanitation or other vital services.” Knowing that we had to get moving in order for me to catch my plane, he ushered me back into the pickup but continued his explanation. “My role is to give an international presence in the village which is effective in reigning back the abuses of the military and local law enforcement because the Salvadoran government, which receives significant funding from the USA, does not want to risk bad publicity. Sometimes we are successful in securing the release of villagers who, without our efforts, may be left in prison for weeks or maybe even killed.” I didn’t ask him what he was

risking by placing himself between the government military and the common people, but I knew aid workers sometimes disappeared too.

I slept most of the flight back to the USA. Upon entering the old Stapleton Airport in Denver, I was detained at the customs entry point. Several minutes of questioning about where I'd been and why together with an emptying of my travel bags and the ripping out of the lining of one suitcase didn't surprise me - may as well have an interesting ending to these adventures in Central America.

The official dismissed me and after riding the public bus for an hour, I arrived late in the afternoon and knocked on the door of my parent's house. My mother answered and simply stared at me as though she didn't recognize me. I said, "Hi Mom, its Don. How are you?" She finally broke into a smile and hugged me and apologized. She said "I simply didn't recognize you. You've lost so much weight and are now wearing a beard. I'm sorry." Actually I felt great physically and was looking forward to having my mother dote on me for a few days.

Now in my mid 60's, I thank the good Lord for keeping me safe and allowing me to have had these experiences in Central America. Reflecting back on the adventure with Ron and El Salvador in particular, why would someone risk his own safety for people he didn't know or have family ties to? Much like the UN peacekeepers but without carrying a gun, Ron had dedicated part of his life to the safety and welfare of the Salvadoran people. We should all be so dedicated and concerned about our fellow man (and woman).

# Anonymous Blackout Poetry

By The Collective

...inspired... comes together...  
for nearly a decade, Brian Reed, an illustrator for the New York Times, has drawn the images that appear alongside the weekly Modern Love column — now also a television show — which is dedicated to stories across the spectrum of love.  
Mr. Reed's illustrations, which feature quiet yet colorful line work, can feel like a fire at the end of the tunnel, a seemingly cohesive narrative — one linear story of love and loss being told through small, knowing lines. Mr. Reed, who lives in Los Angeles with his family, discussed his process and how his illustrations fit into a larger narrative.

How do you create the illustrations for Modern Love?  
Dan Jones, the editor of the column, sends me the essay about a week in advance. I give it an initial read on a Friday night or Saturday. I start it up on a computer. I have a piece of paper, a pen, and a cup of coffee. I read the article and take notes. I have a pen and a cup of coffee. I read the article and take notes. I have a pen and a cup of coffee. I read the article and take notes.

You have such a strong and distinct look and voice when it comes to your illustrations. Do you ever feel as if the voice of your work is competing with the voice of an essay?

It's a pretty quiet, and that's intentional, because especially for the Modern Love always look at the illustrations being visual love notes rather than being big picture. I think that's the best tool you have in your toolbox and I can just keep removing things from a piece until I get down to the core of that story that's when I realize that I've done my job. If I can't summarize out of the reader, then I don't need to do anything else. I want to fall into it emotionally and connect with the reader.

...to the Times

Do you illustrate by hand, or is most of what you do done digitally?  
Everything I do starts with drawing and painting. I'm a bit of a dinosaur that way. I tend to do all of the drawings by hand. None of it's done digitally in terms of the beginning process. The finished work, though, is done digitally. I'll scan swatches of color. I'll scan in my photos and it goes on a little bit of efficiency. Because if I were to just print them by hand, it would take a week longer to make the cards and those little boxes that need to be made.

What keeps you doing this job?  
I think it's the thing I love to do more than anything else.

You have mentioned that you use recurring characters in your illustrations. Can you tell me more about these characters?

I see them in a big Modern Love universe. All of these characters, they're all connected in some way. Sometimes it's their narrative, sometimes it's the clothing. The bad moments that are in the pieces, I've had my eye on them since the beginning. It's weird, the only thing I would be to take them all home and make one big animated series out of them.

Do your own trials, tribulations and triumphs in love, in any of its forms, ever inspire your illustrations?

deployment if it doesn't know what it might be

different and different locations  
a full-fledged  
"Regulatory certainty" is  
It would help,

the state Department of Motor Vehicles  
for various vehicle testing and deployment. The CPUC, whose main task is regulating utilities  
such as Pacific Gas & Electric, also oversees commercial transportation services from bus companies  
providing services to Uber and Lyft. It's up to the CPUC to decide whether companies can take  
steps of the

the commission declined to make commissioners or staff members available for an interview. A  
commission spokeswoman points to set rules  
vehicle pilot programs in California.

the three rides will identify the pilot program different from ordinary  
"and, therefore, will encourage to be more mindful of their experience  
and provide critical feedback to the commission and the permit-holders.

Other seemed baffled by the reasons

"It's very important for us  
California," said Jewel Z. Li of AutoX, which is developing autonomous technology and robotaxi  
systems in the U.S. and in China. It's important to test "real-life

Everything starts with a dinosaur  
drawing by hand swatches of

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

dogs hair clothing  
and

[Redacted]

Love

Some of the first ranks a journalist asked for the story, and the subject of the article was asking for comment from the people of [redacted] organizations [redacted] cast in a harsh light.

[redacted] met with a backlash. [redacted] the federal agency [redacted] under the Trump administration.

[redacted] drew the ire of campus activists [redacted] stating that the reporters had contacted [redacted] for comment: "ICE did not immediately respond to [redacted] request for comment [redacted] night."

Act on a Dream, the campus group that [redacted] the rally covered in the article, started an online petition demanding that The Crimson say to never [redacted] ICE and to apologize for the "harm it has inflicted."

"We are extremely disappointed in [redacted] ICE, a government agency [redacted] and retaliating against those who speak out [redacted] the political [redacted]"

"In this political climate, a request for comment is virtually the same as tipping them off, regardless of how they are [redacted]"

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More than 650 people [redacted] signed the petition. It has the backing of several campus organizations that represent Latin American students, as well as the Harvard College Democrats.

The Crimson's critics said the newspaper had compromised the safety of undocumented immigrants on the Harvard campus, including students. In August, a Palestinian Harvard student traveling from Lebanon was denied entry to the United States [redacted] an immigration official. After an outcry, the student was allowed to enter the country.

"I'm disappointed that The Crimson would [redacted] and [redacted] Dream [redacted] 'They're our peers calling ICE,' she said.

The Crimson has stood by its reporting and none of them on Monday, the paper's president, Christine St. Guillaume, and its managing editor, Angela K. Liu, wrote that "we [redacted] named in a story [redacted] a right in [redacted] of contest [redacted] against them."

The paper went on to cite the Student Press Law Center and the Society of Professional Journalists, both of which approved the practice. It also noted that The Crimson did not contact the agency until the rally had concluded.

"A world where news outlets categorically refuse to contact certain parts of society — a world where news [redacted] third-party groups dictate the terms of their coverage — is a less informed, less accurate world [redacted] democratic world," the note said.

The magazine declined to comment further when contacted for this article.

A leader of the Harvard College Democrats said the group [redacted] with The Crimson's stand [redacted] sided with Act on a Dream.

"It's very much in line with our values," Isabel Giovannetti, the Harvard College Democrat [redacted] ICE activists' point of view. "It lines up with our commitment to protecting these movements, making sure people's voices can be heard, that immigration [redacted] ICE doesn't prevent these students from exercising their rights to assemble and organize."

Wednesday, Venice, ironically, to find breakfast. Forced out of my house for the first time, I caught a glimmer of what the fire refugees I've interviewed over the years know fully—that eerie slip from normalcy. Just a couple of miles away, it was life as usual, but I couldn't access it. It reminded me of growing on a crowded subway. I know I might be time travel, might be I bought a couple of chocolate bars and gas up the car.

When my kids were settled, with friends who offered to take us in for the night—generosity we've now stretched to two nights—I set out to see how preparations were going in other parts of the city. I headed to Topanga Canyon, which was under evacuation: follow on the map. Topanga, a densely wooded mountain community is known for its lush and hippies wearing buckskin suits, and many who moved from Santa Monica in search of a bigger back yard. Reporting on the Woolsey Fire last year, I often heard about the threat to Topanga, which lies between Pacific Coast Highway and the 101. Of the four passes through the Santa Monica Mountains, it was the only one that the Woolsey didn't touch. Eighty-five per cent of the Santa Monica burned; some fifteen per cent of the remaining fuel is in Topanga.

Everybody calls it the Perilous Paradise. James Grasso, the director and agency liaison of the Topanga Emergency Operations Center, an all-volunteer communications unit that was established after a catastrophic fire in the canyon in 1993, told me. The E.O.C. occupies a couple of trailers across the street from the Inn at the Seventh Day restaurant where, well into the two-thousands, the menu was organized by situational frequency. Describing the local ethos, Grasso told me that last year, on Halloween, at the site of a bar where Neil Young used to play, a woman named Moonshine accidentally burned down her sweat lodge, though the fire was contained before it spread—a near-miss. Grasso is in his fifties, with neatly brushed white hair and blue eyes. He moved into the canyon in 1994, an ex-New Yorker who works as the first assistant director on commercials and music videos and likes the outdoor life: hiking and camping and seeing mountain lions in his front yard. He lives at the dead end of a narrow, oak allée—the house that was there before his burned to the ground, and the fire department has warned him it will not go to his property. He compensates by keeping two sets of brush gear and a fire shelter tent in his car, and he built a



*Times Insider* who we are and what we do

is the

story of love and loss fit into a larger narrative.

of

quiet and shouting Restraint

## **Family Ties**

By Lily Hoskins

At the dinner table, he sat across from her, the love of his life. After another mind numbing day at work, he was glad to be back inside his own home. Except it wasn't just him and his family there, because eyes and ears followed him home, as they do everyday. With a somber feeling in the air, he pulls a crumpled piece of paper out of his pocket, and scratches something on it with his pen. He looks up with an almost dead expression, hiding the constant fear that he has to endure. Bending over, pretending to tie his shoe, he gently tossed the ball of paper under the table towards her, cringing as it hit the ground with a soft thud. After picking it up, trying to look like she dropped her fork, she then set it in her lap and seemed as though she was eating. She tries to not let her eyes widen in surprise as she reads it, causing it to look like she has a twitch in her eyes. She glances up at him quickly, trying not to look suspicious. Her eyes then shift to their son, with his black eye on his damaged face, and her expression softens. Even with him currently glaring at his dinner plate and occasionally shooting glares at his parents, it is clear he is still shaken at the experience with the authorities.

After a few seconds, silent except for the sound of eating utensils hitting plates as they eat, she responds. Carefully tapping something out in morse code, she notices the mans delighted expression that lasted for only a moment, until his somber mask was worn once more.

Later that evening, the woman pulls her son aside after the father leaves to clean dishes. She gets on her knees to hug him, as he is no more than six years old. He tries to struggle out of her affection, until she whispers into his ear about how they are going to leave together with his father's "friend".

When she pulls back, her husband makes eye contact. He slyly gestures at the semi-hidden cameras and microphones. They had spent the rest of their dinner planning when to escape. They finally concluded on leaving the night after the Search Day, and letting the "friend" know as soon as possible. They were going to leave after curfew, but before the patrolmen went to their posts.

The next week, they were finishing details when suddenly on the radio there was an announcement. The loud, robotic voice boomed, "This is a national announcement. Due to certain rumors, which have been brought to our attention, authorities decided that curfew will end two hour earlier than usual. To let employers change with this new rule, we will give them a day to adjust. Thank you, that will be all."

Stunned, the two listeners realized how quick they needed to make changes, since they were counting on the darkness to conceal their escape. They had to change their plan that night.

The man said a quick prayer to his coworker, as they didn't have enough time to let him know about the change and that they were going to leave without him. He was the one to introduce the idea of leaving. Charles was such a strange man, and a co-worker he usually avoided. He spoke in a different accent, and was usually called "filthy foreigner". The man sometimes

noticed how Charles' eyes would dart around when you spoke to him, as if having a conversation would get him in trouble. Surprisingly, he didn't feel too bad about leaving Charles behind.

Later that night, holding her son's hand, the mother kept hiding in the shadows, not letting the recently released patrolmen see them. As she listened to make sure her husband was following her, she quickly scanned to see if the street before her had any good hiding spots.

Her son tugs at her shirt, and she looks down in surprise. He looks confused, and opens his mouth to speak. Like a flash of lightning, she puts her hand over his mouth. Shakily, she puts her finger to her lips. She spots a patrolman within hearing range and scoots deeper into the alley.

As soon as she can't see the patrolman, she grabs her son and runs across the street. She glances back, and sighs a breath of relief as she acknowledges she wasn't spotted.

"The woods are so close", she thinks to herself, "As soon as we make it in there, we will be as good as gone."

She gestures to her husband to cross over. As he does, out of the corner of his eye, he notices the patrolmen turning around.

As he skids across the street, he keeps running past his wife and child. Realizing this, she grabs their child, and runs, following her husband. The child, still confused about what was going on, he could barely keep up with his mother. Scared he would fall behind, she scooped him up into her arms, and carried him in her arms.

Suddenly, they hear dogs barking, and a group of people running, almost marching, nearby, but they just make it into the woods. Suddenly, they hear gunshots. The mother goes down, and drops the child all the same. When the boy gets back up, her breath has become irregular and ragged. It was dark, he could barely see her, but the smell of iron was in the air.

She urged him on, almost begging for him to go without her. She told him to go find his father, which he quickly agreed on. As he runs through the woods, searching for his father, the slow realization comes upon him, and he realizes he is lost. Even the threatening march of the enemy and their dogs had quieted.

Suddenly, multiple gunshots go off. They happen automatically, so he knows that multiple people were firing. He tripped and fell to the ground, startled. Instead of getting back up, though, he laid there for a moment, and started to cry. He moved himself behind a tree and leaned his back on it.

Hugging his knees, he admitted to himself that he had been scared ever since that Charles man talked to him. He had described to the little boy about how life was different outside of their town. He also told him about how his own parents were evil, and they wanted to leave him behind.

Charles started to talk to him everyday when the little boy went to school. He would pull him aside and tell him about the danger he was in. One time he described to the boy that he once overheard his father talking at work about leaving his family, or he would describe life outside of their city, their country.

The boy had grown to love Charles, and hate his own family. So when Charles told him that his family and them were going to escape, he was excited. When asked, Charles said he was going to get rid of his father and mother. So when he realized Charles wasn't going with them, he got scared.

And he was scared now. He began to cry for Charles, his parents, anyone. Slowly the sounds of people chasing him got louder as he drifted to sleep. He was tired from running, crying. Of fearing...everything.

Suddenly, the clear sound of a twig snapping brought the boy back to reality. The bush in front of him revealed the crooked smile of Charlie. As Charlie stepped out of the bush, the boy noticed him holding a pistol wearing a guard uniform, the same uniform the people that are chasing them are wearing.

In a hushed, excited tone, Charlie whispered, "Did ya think was gonna give ya up? Something as simple as yer traitorous parents leaving me behind won't stop me from savin ya. I even stopped yer parents, with the help of this disguise. Blasted Guards don't even know I wasn't one of them."

Exhausted and full of relief, the boy ran up to Charles, and cried into his guardsmen jacket.

Trying to comfort the boy Charles said soothingly, "Ya know, I wasn't much older than ya are now when I moved to this wreck of a city."

Charles picked up the boy, saying, "Good thing yer so light and small, we should make it into another, better city in a couple hours. C'mon boy, let's be filthy foreigners together."

## **My Familiar**

For Jim and Gretchen

By James Miller

Run with me barefoot laughing in waves that caress our toes

Swim with me in the wild blue oceans of tomorrow

Walk with me in Autumn Leaves

Tenderly through moss-covered forests and giant redwoods

Rest with me in meadows full of new life and spring blossoms

Dance with me in the blue-white snow and keep me warm through icy nights

Sit with me in color-washed sunsets

Hold my hand and unfold yourself to me and me alone

You are my familiar

I know your face better than I know my own

Your habits and your hidden smiles

Your moments, your desires, your fears,

Your Music only I can hear

You are my champion, my lover, my friend

You are my mystery and my everyday

You are my familiar. Today, Tomorrow,

Forever.

# **The Vessel**

By Janie Hanes

It is a beautiful sunny morning. Barty is sitting in by the berry garden. Barty, a young elf of 70 is tall and slender. He is good natured, yet quiet. Barty likes to garden and is a good archer. He eats quite a bit of berries and nuts. One of his most favorite things to do is ride in the magic crystal wagon.

The crystal wagon can take Barty anywhere he wants to go. As long as he gets out of Crystal Valley, now and then, he is happy.

Today he thinks about the experience that happened twenty years ago. He and four other elves had taken a walk outside of the village to a group of caves. They explored each of the caves. When they got into the third cave they noticed some wheels sticking out of the wall of the cave.

None of them knew what to think or do. They looked at each other blankly. They began talking amongst themselves and decided to go back to the village and get shovels and picks to dig with to find out what was behind the wall.

It took them three days to dig the wagon out. Then they cleaned it up and discovered it was crystal. They didn't know that it was magic.

They took the wagon to the valley and showed it to the elders.

The elders recognized it and were amazed it was still around. They asked the young elves where they found it, the elders then told the young elves the history of the crystal wagon and about its magic.



,Back to the present, Barty decides to get in the wagon, now, and go for a ride. He does not know where he wants to go, but starts out of the valley then soars into the air. He flies over the mountains, over Crystal Lake and many villages.

He flew for miles high in the air looking down at the land below. He flew into the night then lands to find a place to rest. He pulled out his pack and grabbed some berries and nuts to eat.

After Barty ate he lie down and looked up at the sky and stars then fell asleep.

The next morning he was startled awake by voices around him. He opened his eyes and saw short, stalky creatures encircling him. He jumped up and they all jumped back.

Both he and they had never seen the likes of then other. Barty speaks first, "What are you creatures? Where do you come from?"

The creatures looked at Barty in and amazement and on speaks saying, "We are dwarves and come from the tunnels in the mountains."

Barty asks, "What are you doing here?"

We saw something flying in the sky and land here last night and came to check it out. What are you?"

"I am an Elf."

"Where did you come from?"

"I came from Crystal Valley about 120 miles from here."

"Where are you headed?"

“Nowhere in particular. Why?”

“We need to go to Mushroom City and get some supplies, but have no way to get there. Would you be willing to take us there?”

“How far away is it?”

“About 130 miles.”

“I think I can handle it. I won't do it for free.”

“How much do you want?”

“I don't want money. I want the wagon cleaned. It needs its 100 mile cleaning and I need help to get it done quickly.”

“That's all you want? That sounds fair enough, I'll talk it over with the others and let you know.” So the lead dwarf gets the others together and they discuss the fee for going to Mushroom City. They all agree that it's fair. “We all agree to your fee.”

“Good. Thank you. We will begin at once. I will take care of the crystals.”

They all worked on a different area and got it cleaned in no time at all.

Then the dwarves go to their village, Copper Crag, to get some food and water for the trip. They all get into the wagon and Barty starts it up. Over the mountains they soared.

The dwarves looked down below and quickly looked back inward. Dwarves do not like height. They rise into the air and head toward Mushroom City. In about four hours they arrived at their destination.

Barty found a place to land. Here the residents were Gnomes. They reacted with awe at the sight of an elf with the Crystal Wagon. They had heard

legends about the Crystal Wagon, but didn't really believe it existed.

The Gnomes won't go near the wagon, as they fear it. The legends have said the wagon has unknown powers. So they fear it might do something harmful to them.

The dwarves started talking to the gnomes about the supplies that are needed. The lead dwarf and the lead gnome go off to start gathering the supplies. The rest of each group follow and start carrying the supplies back to the wagon. The gnomes drop off the supplies some distance away from the wagon.

The wagon is filled with flour, oats, iron, material, kerosene and each dwarf got a new pair of boots, even those back home.

They got everything loaded and it was getting late. Barty said, "We need to sleep here tonight and leave at day break". The dwarves grumbled but conceded. They stayed at the inn for the night.

At day break everyone got up, ate and then got into the wagon. Barty asked. "Is everyone here?"

The group responded, "Yes."

Barty started the wagon and then headed back to Copper Crag.

Everyone but Barty was tired from hauling and loading supplies. All the dwarves were a sleep not a mile out of Mushroom City.

The wagon moved a little slower with all the supplies aboard. Barty was puzzled by this. He knew a regular wagon would slow down, but the Crystal Wagon, which was magic?

Barty had never hauled so much stuff and five dwarves before. Barty searched his mind for words to use to speed up the wagon. It has been an hour and they have only gone five miles out of Mushroom City.

Finally, Barty remembers the words one of the leaders used that made the wagon speed up, when it was loaded heavy. He spoke the words, “razza-pan, razza-bon”. Immediately the wagon began to gain speed. Eventually it was up to the normal speed.

When they were about five miles from Copper Crag, the dwarves began waking up. One pulled out a time piece, and then said.” What has taken us so long to get here?”

“The wagon was going slower due to the weight of the supplies.”

“How did you get it to go faster?”

“I coaxed it with magic words.”

The dwarves cringed at this. That worried Barty. “Why do you cringe at me using magic words?”

“We have heard that the Crystal Wagon has unknown powers and may harm us.”

Barty stifled a laugh. “The Crystal Wagon does have unknown powers, but it will not harm anyone or anything.”

By this time they had reached Copper Crag. The wagon slowed down for a soft, careful landing. The dwarves were in awe.

Barty helped them unload and take the supplies where they needed to go. He hung around the village and interacted with as many villagers as he

could.

The dwarves' leader asked Barty to stay for supper, and he agreed. Everyone gathered at the banquet hall, a place rarely used, only on holidays and when guests were there.

It was a large feast and very good. Barty was stuffed. He didn't eat any meat and hoped the dwarves were not offended, they said they weren't. They respect the differences of cultures.

It was late when supper was finished. The dwarves asked Barty to wait 'till morning to leave. He agreed to do so.

In the morning as Barty was preparing to leave, the dwarves came to him with a basket of nuts and berries, as a thank you gift. Barty took it and told them, "Thank you very much. I enjoyed this trip immensely."

"You are welcome, and you are invited to visit us any time you wish."

With that Barty got into the wagon and waved good-bye to the villagers of Copper Crag. He then headed back to Crystal Valley. He munched on the nuts and berries thinking, "I should not be hungry after last night."

For the rest of the trip home, Barty reminisced about his adventure. He wondered what the elders would say about him being gone so long and the adventure.

When Barty landed with the wagon, the elders came out as fast as they could and began talking all at once.

"Where have you been? We were worried about you! What happened out there?" the elders bombarded Barty.

“I went for a ride and became tired. So I lied down in Copper Crag. The next morning the villagers were standing over me. That led to an adventure. I did not mean to worry you. I am fine.”

Barty began to tell them all about his adventure while they walked to the hall in Crystal Valley.

## **Introductions in Verse Form**

By Marie Gaeddert

At the dinner table, he sat across from her, the love of his life, and pondered if he should risk it. What would she say? Would she betray him? He decided to risk it.

I grew up not far from here – Larned was the place to go for everything we needed! So many brick streets hold memories – trips to the new hospital up on the hill, visiting folks in a house the next street north of 15<sup>th</sup> street (the highway) before it was a paved street! My father, like many other folks, worked at the State Hospital, and sometimes visited a friend & co-worker in Larned. My mom, my little brother & I waited in the car, while my Dad went in the house for a visit. His house was close to the laundromat.

Also there were many trips to the grocery store - C.O. Mammel. Bill Gross was the butcher, the check-out clerk - Hazel Callahan! There was also a Safeway store a couple of blocks north of the current Dillon's. I loved to go “window shopping” at Lischesky's, fascinated at the way change was made from the “cage,” sent flying just over our heads, across the store via a metal “cup” on a wire to the waiting clerk! Penneys, Montgomery Wards, Tot-to-Teen, The Toggery, all with friendly clerks - so many options for a town this size back then!

Christmas parades, all the animals at the zoo - monkeys, coyotes, peacocks, and other animals - so many memories from my childhood! I would

add the Theatre, but I only saw a couple of movies there; my dad didn't let me go!

My father's uncle and aunt (McKibben) established the Post Office in the late 1800's in our little town south of Larned. My Grandpa was best known for spinning his stories – sitting on a chair, somewhere near the town square! Men especially never seemed to tire of hearing about his adventures in South Africa.

South Africa was the birthplace of my grandpa's two eldest, my father being the first! Funny how my father didn't like to get very far from home as an adult – maybe he was worried he would get lost? He seldom traveled to Wichita, or to points west – Gray, Haskell or Greeley County, only visiting family, always before frost!

My mama loved music, and sang many songs – often about a Mother's Love. But Mom being third from the youngest of ten, her mother had little to give her. The music books my mother had were written by her - written verses of songs from other's books/resources; she spent lots of time copying them. It was from the Charlie Davis Tillman era. And a Jimmy someone - I can picture the lad on the cover of the little book of songs! These songs about faith in God got her through many difficult times in her life. Both my parents sang in the house, or out in the garden while they worked – memories for which I am grateful and blessed!

Now for me, no big family - I was nine when my brother was born. And my class at school graduated ten. Our teachers were strict, yet showed us re-



spect, and we were blessed with each one of them!

I've learned that music builds into us resilience in life – and we may never know this till we need it! Like the Holy Scriptures memorized – during trials in life they feed us!

My mama always wanted a piano to play – she told me often, and longed to hear it played. So when our two youngest showed an interest in music, a well-loved piano could be obtained! Their Grandma, overjoyed she could visit at our house, and with two grandkids be entertained.

Our youngest continued to learn more difficult pieces of music – she would come to the nursing home to play for Grandma & friends! (Now she often plays hymns, accompanying for her church.)

Our children number five, grandchildren six, and likely there will be more! All went to college, but the biggest conundrum is how long will our oldest seek knowledge? He turned 50 in May, still in classes at Univ. of Colo. Boulder – and we're (the only ones?) worried that he's getting older!

I've covered about everything worthy of sharing, I can reiterate music is a great way of caring. We're far more blessed than we would be without it!

## **The Way**

By Austin Smith

I can see the fires burning in the distance.

The forest seems to glow with that unnatural light

Made a deeper and brighter red by the smoke

Pouring into the night sky.

My neighbors and I look to each other

Waiting for the first one to break.

The way is shut it cannot be opened.

I wake up the kids and call my wife.

We pack our bags as quickly as we can.

I don't like the way the kids are getting

So good at shoving their belongings into

Their pastel, stiff backpacks.

We thought it would be safe here.

We thought that no one could be this cruel.

We'll probably tell that lie a few more times.

The way is shut it cannot be opened.

Something's different this time.

I can see it in the way that the old lady

Across the street looks at us.

She knows something, but she isn't telling

Her secrets. Maybe, she's right to do so.

Too late we see the flashing lights.

The way is shut it cannot be opened.

## **The Librarian's Lament**

By Landon H. Winkler

The white-crowned Mrs. Birdie Howards warbled and nagged from across the backroom office of the library at poor Miss Shannon Reynolds, whose tall willowy frame, adorned with a lavender blouse and a royal purple sweater that secured snugly as a cloak around her neck and shoulders, sat wedged between her desk with a green-hooded lamp and the antiquated limestone wall, and tried desperately to force back a sigh as the paperback in her hands felt the true pressure of being interrupted.

“Make sure to tidy up the sections before you leave, and don't forget to turn off the lights before you go. But I expect everything else to be taken care of before tomorrow.” she said while preening her brilliantly colored shawl, “And as far as I know, you should still be the discussion leader for the next book club meeting, but tomorrow morning is canceled as the majority of the other members are sponsoring their children's field trip to the Smithsonian. Speaking of children, have you seen Stacy's precious newborn twins? Such cuties. When are you gonna get out there, find a man and build a nest of your own, Shannon? I bet that if you started now, you'd be able to give us some good-looking babies to show off around the office like Stacy before it's almost too late.” Ms. Howards adjusted her bifocals and switched back to her brand of professionalism, “I think I see a couple of gray hairs in your brush, that you really shouldn't leave on your desk.” Ms. Reynolds clenched her book tighter

and grit her teeth, trying to not give off the fact that she'd been so blatantly insulted by this old crone of a woman whom she had to tolerate every day, if only because it paid for her and her cat's rent.

"Anyhow, it's getting late and I still have some errands to run. Oh, did I remind you that tomorrow's book club meeting is canceled?" the old bird chirped once more.

Barely able to avoid an eye roll, Ms. Reynolds said, "I'll get it done, and yes Birdie, you've told me." and with that, old Mrs. Birdie Howards shuffled silently off into the orange tinge of the evening, dimmed by the expansive library's archaic stained glass.

Ready to jump back into her story, Ms. Reynolds flung open her paperback version of *The Darkest Dawn's* latest installment of the romantic supernatural thriller, *Unto the breach: An Arturo and Olivia Adventure*. The main character of the series, Arturo was an archetypal hero, with the brains of Odysseus, the brawn of Heracles, and supposed good looks of 'Fabio' all lumped into one and has been Ms. Reynolds gold standard since she was a young adult.

Getting back to her one true love, she muttered to herself, "I'm not THAT old yet, besides the only man I'd need is Arturo, but even he isn't a good enough detective to figure out why you bother me so much. I'm pretty sure it's clear that I'm busy reading."

As the darkness and chill of night peered in at her through the maroon stained glass, Ms. Reynolds realized that she'd become lost in the story and in

time, forgetting to lock up. Eager to finish her book, Ms. Reynolds' eyes darted across the page, as her grip tightened on the softly worn paperback. When she devoured the final page, tears welled up, and she broke down. The author killed him off! How could she? Torn to shreds like paper by the talons of the monster, whose ghastly appearance melded with her imagination.

As she slammed shut the novel, she continued her protestations, at first in her head, then loudly to herself, as though someone was there. Of course, she knew no one was there. Standing, blushing for her debate partner, she hurried past the wall of books, shelves of Dickens, Doyle, Dumas, Irving, and Stevenson. Past the contemporary authors as Grisham, King, Martin, Patterson, and Roberts, and finally by the children's literature. Ms. Reynolds berated herself for letting it get so late.

“The audacity of that writer! The nerve to kill off her longest-running character in the series, not to mention the fact that he's carried the series for the amazing twelve books he's been in, only to die at the end of the thirteenth to such a monster! And keeping Arturo's so-called lover alive!” She said, rambling on, completely unfocused and running her hands through her long thick curly brown hair.

‘So-called’ indeed, as Ms. Reynolds, in her head at least, killed off her blonde bombshell of a rival Olivia and placed herself in the character's stead. Every joyful and intense moment the characters shared, she had experienced herself. No one, not even the book club members, quite understood Ms. Reynolds, nor spent as much time with her, as much as her favorite long-time

fictional hero Arturo. The librarian was so distraught that if she worked herself up anymore, she'd die of heartache.

Alas, there was nothing more she could do, and pushing her bulky glasses back onto her face, she went about her closing duties and vowed to show the 'true ending to the story' by writing it in her journal at home.

Picking up the children's books that were strewn across the floor, she figured at one point she'd find one crusted in boogers, one drenched in drool, one covered in bite marks, one with pages ripped out, or perhaps if they were particularly despicable, all four.

She imagined the little devils as whirlwinds of mayhem and runny noses, and if this is how kids were, she wanted none of that. Just the thought of them made her cringe. Ms. Reynolds settled the books in their rightful places, and she shivered when she felt a cold stare that pierced her thick woolen sweater. She spun around, and to her shaken relief, found nothing there.

"Arturo getting ambushed by that thing wasn't even a fair fight." She said and looked around hoping that her imaginary self-imposed debate partner had nothing else to add.

The librarian continued with her work, front-facing books and organizing, methodically making her way to the contemporary authors where she found several Steven King novels either in the wrong spot or on the floor, with one splayed open poking out from under the shelf dog-eared.

The nerve! Ms. Reynolds expected as much from the children, but the adults should know better, “I’ll bet it was that lump, James Mitchell and his group. They don’t have any respect for library property and to have pages dog-eared of all things!” Her huff echoed in the vacant twilight as she replaced the books and smoothing the pages as she picked up the hefty tome.

Finally, she’d finished the section when the corner of her eye caught a shape and found it had only been a misplaced chair in the aisle. Though she would not be caught off guard, she shook most of the imaginary monsters out of her head and completed her inspection of the shelves.

She tidied up the classic section and sorted out the genres. Books of old brought their experience and age with their sweet fragrance of ink and paper. Her eyes were delighted in the cleanliness of the row, if a little dusty, in comparison to the other two isles. The only books out of place were the widely referenced high school curriculum books such as the literature books and the senior literary seminars required reading that contain a wide collection of short stories. While she tended to the classic section, a thud slammed into the floor and the haunt tugged at poor Ms. Reynolds’ spirit.

When she finally won back her soul and caught her breath, she investigated the noise to see what fell. The nice stack of books she had only built up. Her heart sank at the tedium but was relieved to know that her imagination didn’t get the best of her yet.

All that Ms. Reynolds could think of, however, was the fate of her star-crossed lover, and that beast. That cursed beast! With sunken eyes and teeth



that radiated a sickening yellow, whose claws had been stained black with dried blood, and were repainted in the blood of Arturo, its newest victim.

Her imagination stretched further than the writer's description of the beast and thought the creature riddled with plague-infested fleas, and fur forever matted and dyed in all manner of dirt and grime. It seemed to Ms. Reynolds that the beast was the personification of death, pestilence, war, and famine, all four horsemen brought together unto an ancient horror that was formed upon the chaos of man. The Horror's hunger was only apparent from its gaunt face that funneled into a thin ghoulish figure, with long bony appendages, that was only an extension into its chipped and jagged claws. The beast's ribs jutted out from a bare underbelly, with patches of fur ripped free with self-inflicted scratches that tore deep into its own flesh. To Ms. Reynolds, the beast's existence tormented itself as much as it tormented others.

"My poor Arturo." she said with a pained wince, knowing all too well that he wasn't real, though, his death and the time she spent with him were real enough to her.

Echoes of the imagined and horrible figure rose unprompted before her. At first illusory, the horror's image appeared to solidify in the darkest shadows. Even as it crept ever closer, Ms. Reynolds shamed herself that she let it inhibit her work.

Ms. Reynolds told herself it was only her imagination, yet her heart pounded when she smelled a fetid odor, her nose wrinkling in disgust. Was it

here? Impossible! Ms. Reynolds abandoned her post and opted to get back to it in the morning if she'd ever gotten out.

Her body shook, and she was awake, more than any overpriced latte at her favorite coffee shop could make her. With legs like stilts, she hurried across the massive echoing library floor, and paced ever faster into a jog, then finally, a run. Ms. Reynolds felt the ancient horror's presence, she knew it kept pace and stalked ever closer, its hunger insatiable.

Her body ran solely on instinct, as she stumbled towards the door. Soon she could be safe! Her clammy fingers trembled reaching for her car keys in her pocket, only to find unfilled vacancies. Gone! In her purse across the room, with the beast as the final obstacle.

Ms. Reynolds darted toward her purse, taking in her environment, seeing only the ghoulish outline of the horror in every glance. Reaching a terrified grasp for the prized keys, she felt the long, spindly talons grip hard into her shoulder. Ms. Reynolds' excitement gave way, and her heart gave out. All to the confusion of old Mrs. Howards, who returned only to once again remind poor Ms. Reynolds that tomorrow's book club meeting was canceled.





## **Submission to Prairie Ink**

We are a literary annual that welcomes fiction, creative non-fiction, poetry, drama, literary criticism, and graphic narratives.

We serve as a vehicle for emerging writers who attend Barton Community College or reside in one of the seven counties within Barton's service region.

The editor of Prairie Ink encourages submissions from Barton students, alumni, and community members from Barton's seven-county service area: Barton, Pawnee, Rice, Rush, Ellsworth, Russel, Stafford; and from students enrolled at the Barton Fort Riley Campus and Grandview Plaza Outreach location.

To check out submission guidelines or to submit your work, please email the editor at [prairieink@bartonccc.edu](mailto:prairieink@bartonccc.edu).

## **Acknowledgements**

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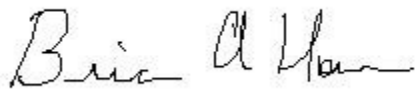
# Message from the Dean

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This magazine began as a way to celebrate the life of Mary Barrows, an English Instructor at Barton Community College, who passed away suddenly in the summer of 2009. Mary was recognized as Distinguished Instructor in 1997 and was recognized as an Outstanding Instructor nearly every year of her career. She was so beloved by her students, former students and colleagues. This magazine is a testament to her and her love of literature and creative writing.

We are now in our 11th annual publication of Prairie Ink Literary Magazine. I want to thank the people that submitted pieces for this publication, the leadership of Scott McDonald and the Prairie Ink Committee, Scott Beahm, Diane Engle, our Public Relations team and our graphic designer Sasha Bingaman. I also appreciate the past leadership of Prairie Ink with Jaime Abel and Teresa Johnson.

Enjoy!



Brian Howe  
Dean of Academics  
Barton Community College  
620-792-9254



# Barton's Mission and Vision

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## Vision

Barton Community College will be a leading educational institution, recognized for being innovative and having outstanding people, programs and services.

## Mission

The Mission of Barton Community College is to provide quality educational opportunities that are accessible, affordable, continuously improving and student focused. Barton is driven to provide an educational system that is learning-centered, innovative, meets workforce needs, strengthens communities, and meets the needs of a diverse population.

We will seek to achieve our mission through eight ENDS and four Core Priorities (Values) that define our commitment to excellence in education.

## ENDS

1. Essential Skills
2. Work Preparedness
3. Academic Advancement
4. "Barton Experience"
5. Regional Workforce Needs
6. Barton Services and Regional Locations
7. Strategic Plan
8. Contingency Planning

## Core Priorities (Values)

Drive Student Success  
Cultivate Community Engagement  
Optimize Employee Experience  
Emphasize Institutional Effectiveness



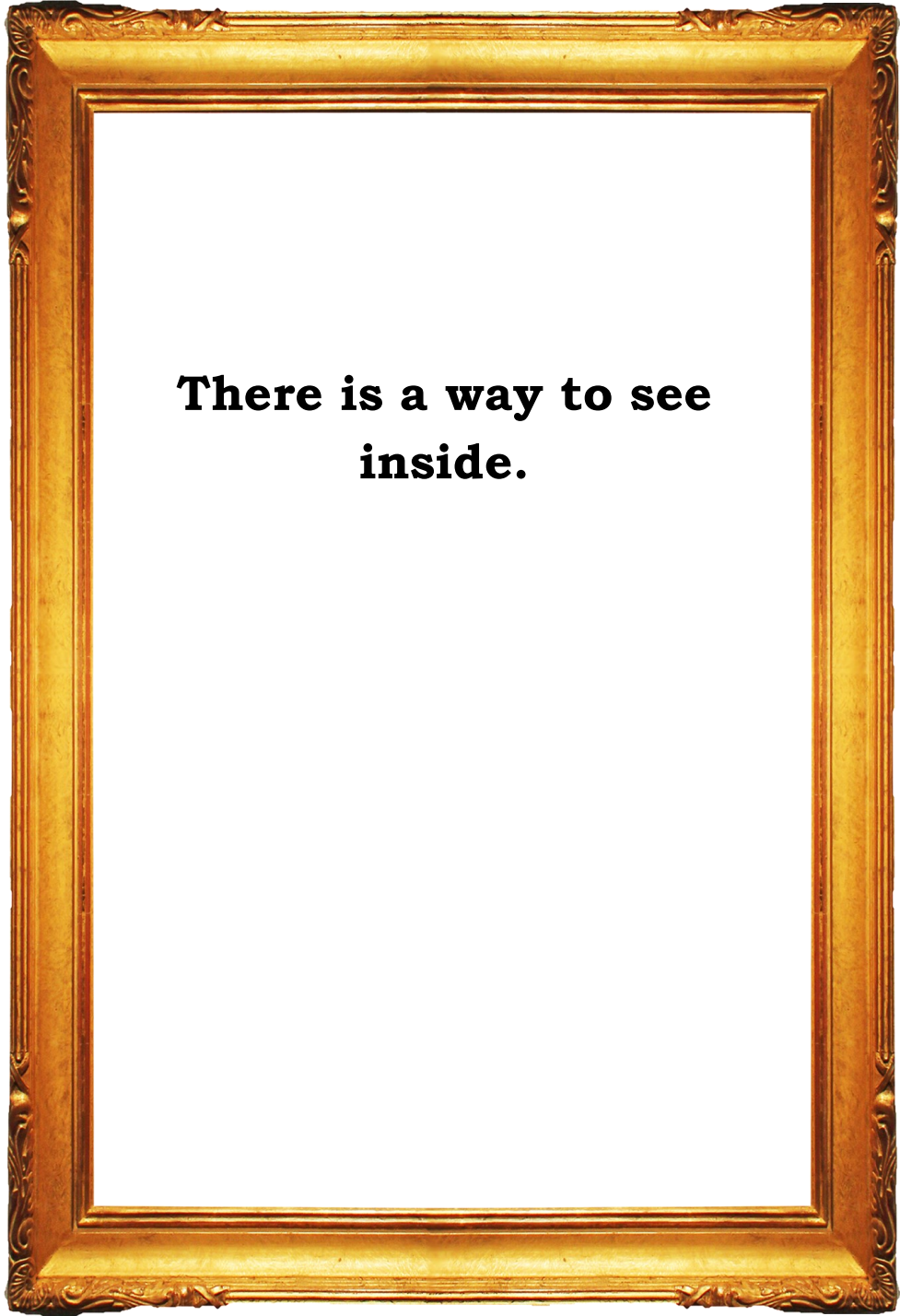
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\*Visit [GPA.bartonccc.edu](http://GPA.bartonccc.edu)  
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inside.**