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Aslan of Juda



Elizabeth Savage

Those Among the Wall

By Cynthia Bighorse

I pay a visit to my fallen brothers--
The names engraved one after another.
They lived their lives by the path they were led--
Why was my life spared instead?

So much to think about in a life's length of time
As I read through every line.
I see a name that is familiar to me;
It's my name. How can this be?

I fought for my country but came back alive.
I did survive! I know I survived...
Didn't I?

That day, the grenade fell onto the ground.
I remember now, the body that was never found.
The distant voices I hear from beyond.
I answer back, but they never respond.

Could this be a dream or a forgotten memory?
Whatever the answer may be, I must embrace it gracefully.
Once I stood on the other side of the wall;
I now stand inside amongst them all.

Tough Love

By Melanie Lawrence

On January 14, 2009, the bottom fell out of my world. Just as I began to doze off for a long winter's nap, I awoke to the noise of a loud crash coming from our living room area.

In the living room, our eighteen-year-old son was sprawled across the coffee table. The loud crash that we heard was the sound of the table collapsing under his weight. At first, I thought perhaps he had been hurt or fell due to illness. Then, I realized that he was extremely drunk. My husband attempted to help him get to his feet, but my son fought him. He began using foul language, and he tried to push his dad away. I realized that his girlfriend was standing by the front door, crying, with her hands wrapped around herself as if she were cold. My son continued yelling and screaming, but nothing he said made any sense to us.

"I just want to die. I want to die," he wailed.

The episode that night was not a complete surprise. Rather, it was a culmination of many similar nights. For the past two years, my son had been suffering from mood disorders. He had experienced uncontrollable manic highs. At those times, he was euphoric. He didn't sleep. He couldn't keep still. He didn't focus on school-work or anything else of any importance. He had also experienced lows, times when he was unable to get out of bed, and he just wanted to hide his head under the covers. His dad and I had taken him to psychiatrists, counselors, medical doctors, and other specialists. He seemed to be doing better, and in addition to counseling, he had been put on medication that seemed to level out his mood swings. Life for him had not been easy, and it certainly had not been much easier for his dad or for me. However, it had been manageable. We all had high hopes for the future. When he turned eighteen, the management of his mental illness became unmanageable. He was an adult, and as parents, our choices in finding help for him were limited.

"In the living room, our eighteen-year-old son was sprawled across the coffee table."

At eighteen, by law, he was no longer considered a child. He was dropped from our health insurance plans. If he was ill, I was unable to get doctors or any of his other health care providers to talk to me. As an adult, he was entitled to privacy. Because of his fragile mental state, he refused to provide them with permission to discuss his issues with me. I could no longer schedule appointments; I could not get prescriptions ordered. He stopped taking any medications and refused to see anyone for help. His attitude at that time was I'm fine. As a mother, I was desperate to help him, but I found myself in a position where I no longer could. It was terrifying. My son was ill. Because his mental illness was no longer being managed through counseling and medications, it had taken control of my son. As a result, he had dropped out of school and was now out-of-control in our living room.

Looking around the room, I realized that he had broken other items of furniture. There was a broken liquor bottle on the floor of his bedroom. There were broken dishes and spilled food. It was a mess. He had also smashed his keyboard. He had kicked a hole in his drum set. His dad was still trying to calm him down, and he actually had to bodily tackle him to the ground in an effort to subdue him.

"I realized that if I called the police, they would come and get him."

This was when I made the toughest decision of my life. I called 9-1-1. My son had never been to jail. He was not a bad kid. He was a sick kid. But what else could I do? I realized that if I called the police, they would come and get him. They could get him help via the Guidance Center while he was in jail. So, I reported to the police that I felt my son was in a position where he could harm himself and possibly others. I asked them to come get him. They came pretty quickly. In just a few moments, my son was standing in his boxers, with no shirt on, and his hands were handcuffed behind his back. He had fought with the officers, and he had threatened them. We watched helplessly as they led him outside, still struggling with them, and put him in the back of the police car. As he realized what was happening, and he couldn't get the doors open, he began to scream for us to help him.

“Mom, Dad, please make them let me out,” he pled with us.

I felt like I was in an episode of Cops from television, as I stood in the snow in my bare feet, watching as they took my son away. I looked over at my husband, standing there in pajamas and a camouflage jacket. The tears were streaming down his face.

I had done the only thing that I felt I could do to get my son help. It was a horrible decision to make, and I will never forget the sight of him in the back of that patrol car. I told the police officers about some of his history, and I told them he needed psychiatric help. At this point, control was taken out of my hands. He was taken to jail, and he was put in a suicide room in paper clothes and was watched and evaluated. I could do nothing. It was a helpless time for me, and by the morning after he was taken away, I was at the jail begging them to let him out. This was when the reality of what had happened really hit me. I remember holding my hand up to his against the glass in the visiting area, as we tried to talk over the phones, but both of us were crying too hard to make any sense. The furniture in the visiting area was sparse and unfriendly. The metal folding chair was cold and unforgiving, which is exactly the way I felt about the jail itself. I remember talking to one of the jail officials that day. I told them I had wanted him arrested so that he could get help. I told them he didn't need jail; he needed psychiatric help. One of the officers that I talked with

explained something to me that I found difficult to accept, but I realize that he said a wise thing to me.

*"The metal folding chair
was cold and
unforgiving..."*

He said, “You want him to get help, and now he is here. If we turn around and release him today, nothing will have been accomplished. This wasn't a

twenty-four hour illness developing, and it isn't going to be solved in twenty-four hours either.”

I had reached out to them to provide my son with the help he needed, and now I had to wait while he got it.

It's been almost five years since this night occurred. My son was in jail for ten days. During that time he did see a psychiatrist with The Guidance Center, a local mental health treatment facility. He was put on medication, and after a few days, some of the manic symptoms dissipated. At first, it was a fight with the system as we worked to get him treated as a mentally ill patient and not a criminal. It scared my son to death! He was in jail with people who had done terrible things. These weren't kids at a detention center, but adult men who were being punished. He hid in books, reading several while he was incarcerated. He kept a journal. Finally, he received a court hearing. A wonderful judge worked with us, and rather than receive jail time and a fine, my son was put on a one year probation period. During that time, it was mandated that he had to meet weekly with doctors. He had to take prescribed medications, and he had to undergo urinalysis and blood tests to verify that he was, in fact, doing so. After completing his probationary period, all charges against him were dropped. That year had done its job. My son continued seeking help, and we worked together to insure that he had a support system in place to help him with tough times. He has matured a lot during that time. Today, he is a healthy young man. He's working a full-time job. He has gone on to get his GED, and he is also taking classes at Coconino Community College. He takes medication, sees a counselor and psychiatrist on a regular basis, and is learning to cope with the symptoms of his mental disorder. He is managing it, rather than letting it manage him.

*"The only love I could
give him was
Tough Love."*

However, if I had not acted out of tough love, the story could have been very different. Life is not perfect now, but he could be in a bad place at this time in his life, or it's possible that he might not be here at all.

That night was terrible, but in the end it proved to be the right decision. It has made his life, the life of his dad and mine, and the lives of others that he comes in contact with better. The only love I could give him was Tough Love. Today, I am glad that I did.

The Flower Vendor (After Rivera)



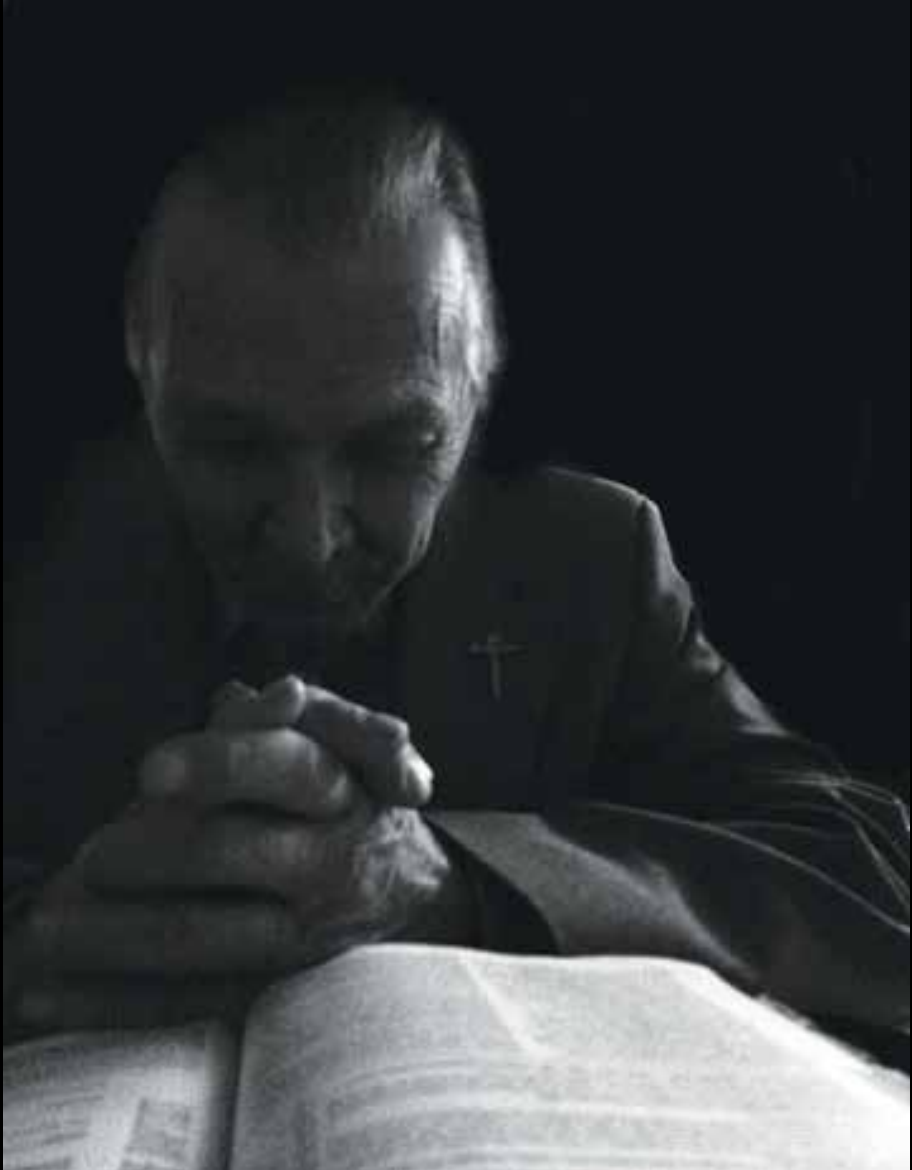
Rebekah Nordstrom

Coyote Blues



Susan Hepler

Etched Names



Jacob Weinberger

Tolls Of War

By Jacob Weinberger

The day of darkness is upon me again--
The darkness of the wall pulling me in.
I scroll down the list
Finding friends.

The day of darkness is upon me again--
The cold, hard stone. The memories within.
Etched names that will never fade,
Etched names that describe no pain.

The day of darkness is upon me again--
The cold, hard stone now holding my hand.
I find my name in the stone;
I'm not disturbed at all.

The day of darkness is upon me again--
Reunited with my brothers hand-in-hand.
Forever together, they don't stand alone.
Never forgotten...the tolls of war.

Demons of War



Eric Justice

If by War

By Sam McClintock

Dear Friends,

I did not come here with the intent to talk about this issue. But I will have you know that neither will I shy from sitting down and engaging in a civil discourse over it. In fact, I will always be willing to discuss any issues no matter how controversial, at any time. You have asked me how I feel about war.

Very well, here are my thoughts on war.

If when you say war, you mean the hungering graves, the cacophony of death, the insatiable beast that shatters peace, backhands sympathetic feelings, shatters families, births turmoil and desolation; if you mean that dark act that brings to ruin great nations, blissful life to blighted existence, and suffering, and despair, and terror, and senseless death, then I am most assuredly against it.

But, if when you say war you mean the courage to stand up for what is just, the strength to fight to protect the defenseless, the forging of safe, sovereign lands, free from the grasps of evil men and women, that allows us to sleep soundly at night, that allows us to speak our minds freely, that enables us to live our lives how we see fit and to make choices not out of a fear of death, but out of a freedom paid for in blood, then yes, I am wholeheartedly for it.

This is my conviction.

I will not back down from it.

I will not negotiate.

Children Playing with Fire

By Melissa Murphy

When I was eight years old, my little brother, Toby, asked me to show him how to light a lighter. I knew it was wrong, but I wanted my brother to look up to me, so I stole my mom's lighter while she was doing dishes. My mom just thought we were playing with our toys.

After I got the lighter, we went upstairs to our room that we shared and shut the door tightly. We went to our bunk beds, and I flicked the lighter. I heard the lighter click, and a flame appeared like the most perfect candle on a birthday cake. Toby's eyes widened with excitement. It made me happy to be his big sister, teaching him something only grown-ups were supposed to know. Almost instantly, though, I felt the heat, hotter than ever before, and the glow from the fire was no longer contained in his eyes. It was everywhere! Much to my surprise, the flame retardant mattress became engulfed with flames. I grabbed Toby and tried to escape, but the doorknob was broken, and we were stuck.

"Whatever you do," Mom always warned us. "Don't shut the door."

The reality of her warning slapped me in the face. I was scared that we weren't going to make it out.

I kept yelling, "Mom! Fire!" But she didn't hear me.

"Mom! Help!"

Just when I was about to give up hope, my mom ran upstairs after smelling the smoke and kicked the door in.

"Get out," she yelled, and grabbed my arm.

I was lucky to make it out, but Toby's foot had gotten stuck on the spring door stopper. Mom left Toby there and insisted that he get help when the firemen arrived. Once they arrived, the firemen rushed to his rescue and removed him from the house. I was already en route to Albany Memorial when they got Toby out, and he was behind me in an ambulance shortly after. Due to my injuries, I was placed in a drug-

induced coma for three weeks.

Toby was not as lucky. He died from breathing the chemicals in the mattress before he even arrived at the hospital.

I spent a whole summer in the Intensive Care Burn Ward, except the last week when they moved me to the regular ICU. When I was taken out of the coma, I discovered that I had a tracheotomy, and I couldn't talk at first. But, I quickly learned that all I had to do was hold my finger over the hole to talk. From that point on, I was afraid to take my finger off the hole.

"Almost instantly, I felt the heat, hotter than ever before, and the glow from the fire was no longer contained in his eyes."

The doctors constantly told my mom that I would have to spend nine months to a year in the hospital. They also told her that I would need to have the tube in my throat for the rest of my life. One month later, I was released from the hospital without the tube in my throat; the doctors told my mom it was a miracle. (My mom never doubted it for a minute.)

My memory of the incident is patchy; I only know what they told me. Some of the personal challenges I faced were the physical, emotional, and mental healing, as well as the challenges of a new home that was smaller than the one we lived in before the fire. It was excruciating to watch my mother and brother act so sad.

This is my story, and my wish is that sharing it will help prevent anyone else from having this become their story. I know firsthand the dangers of children playing with fire. Always keep your matches and lighters out of reach of children, and talk to your kids about fire safety.

You never know; it could save their lives.

Usagi in the Wind



Michael Vincent

No Longer Plastic

By Heather Mead

Barbie Meets Ken

I used to be plastic. I fit every role that I thought society asked of me, *perfectly*. At eighteen, I decided it was time to grow up and make something of my life. Find and be the American Dream, which is what pretty blonde girls do right? I knew college was out of my reach, I knew I wanted to live comfortably, and I knew I wanted to be a mother. I walked into a friend's church and saw the cookie cutter version of America everywhere. I saw pretty women with their husbands and 2.5 children in tow. Everyone was smiling, everyone was friends, they all looked happy. I wanted to look happy, I wanted to be happy. I was young enough to think there was a real formula for happiness and that I had found it. First step: get married. He was looking for a pretty church girl to marry, and I was looking for a husband to take care of me. I fell in love with the idea of love and marriage. So, I got married. To a man. In a church. In a big white dress, communion and all. True love? No. Better half? Hardly. Soul mates? I did not believe in that.

But now I am real. I have learned that being me is being unique, not measuring myself against what or how others are doing. I have learned life is too messy for formulas and cookie cutters. I discovered the only true path to happiness is by finding yourself and showing that self to the world. Joy comes from contributing to society, intellectual stimulation and surrounding yourself with people who are happy in their own skin. We got divorced, a total surprise to anyone on the outside; from their view, it was perfect. The proverbial American Dream: Dad is a Fireman and Mom keeps herself and the house looking good at all times. The children are polite and adorable. Oh, and there are warm cookies on the counter, help yourself. I just whipped them up.

Life in the Barbie Dream House

I used to think I could only be a housewife. I wasn't smart. Street-smart maybe, but not book smart; I was certainly not someone who could have a career. I needed someone to provide for me. Besides I was created by God to

serve my family, right? I clung to the idea of a God ordained plan for my life. So many days I felt invisible, as though no one knew who I really was. I felt invisible to myself in a lot of ways. I hadn't had the time to find myself before I became something for everyone else in my life. Step two: have some kids. So I quit working to be a full-time wife and mother. I took on being a housewife with vigor. I learned I couldn't control much in life, especially not my demanding husband. What I was quick to learn was that I could keep the peace by being perfect, plastic. Everything he needed. I felt like a movie on fast forward, where you see the actors playing out the scene but it looks comical because of the quick sound. Life looked the way it should but felt surreal and forced.

" I felt cramped, achy and squished into the form I had assumed for myself."

But now I am working towards a college degree, and I am doing it for me.

I broke out of the mold and grew into myself. Do you want to know what happens to pretty blonde girls in college? They let their hair grow out natural because they are too busy studying for dye jobs. They start working hard because they can't bat their eyes to learn pre-calculus. They turn in to "A" students because they see a lot of value in being something real. I was smart after all, smart enough to leave, smart enough to find my own path, smart enough to admit I had made a lot of mistakes.

Barbie Gets Recalled

I used to think I would burn in hell. Being gay was a sin, distancing me from God. I had been told following my feelings would bring pain and anger. I would never find happiness and never find peace. Plus, it was weird; look at the Disney girls if you do not believe me. Princesses wear fluffy pink dresses and marry princes, and they look really happy all the way to ever after.

But now I have embraced being gay. It is not an identity or a problem or anything other than a way to describe where my heart feels most at peace. I am no more defined by my sexuality than I am by being right-handed. Other than the fact that when I write, I instinctively pick up the pencil with my right hand. When I

think of a partner, I think of a woman. I am comfortable in my skin and that is a good feeling.

Forget about Barbie

I used to think it was too late to start over. I made my choices; I was stuck to live them out. My future felt permanent just as plastic holds its ridged form. I busied myself from morning until night, filling the hole in my chest with activity. My one true joy was my children, my one sense of comfort and pride, and I put my focus entirely on them. I would delight in their childhood and give them the best life I could. I would raise them to be braver than I was. I prayed a repeating plea of happiness and peace. I just held onto the hope that you weren't married in heaven because he was mean, and that did not sound like my idea of eternity.

But now I know it is never too late to find your place in the world. I realized one day, how could I hope for my children to be themselves when I would not model it for them? I could no longer carry the weight of the world's expectations. I felt cramped, achy and squished into the form I had assumed for myself. Suddenly, perfection was no longer a security in which I hid. Instead, it became chains that held me and stole color from my life. As I began to ponder the idea of coming out and starting over, the heavy fog in my heart and mind lifted. What started as a fleeting thought became fresh air that I began running toward. I never doubted myself, never regretted leaving, never felt surer of anything in my life.

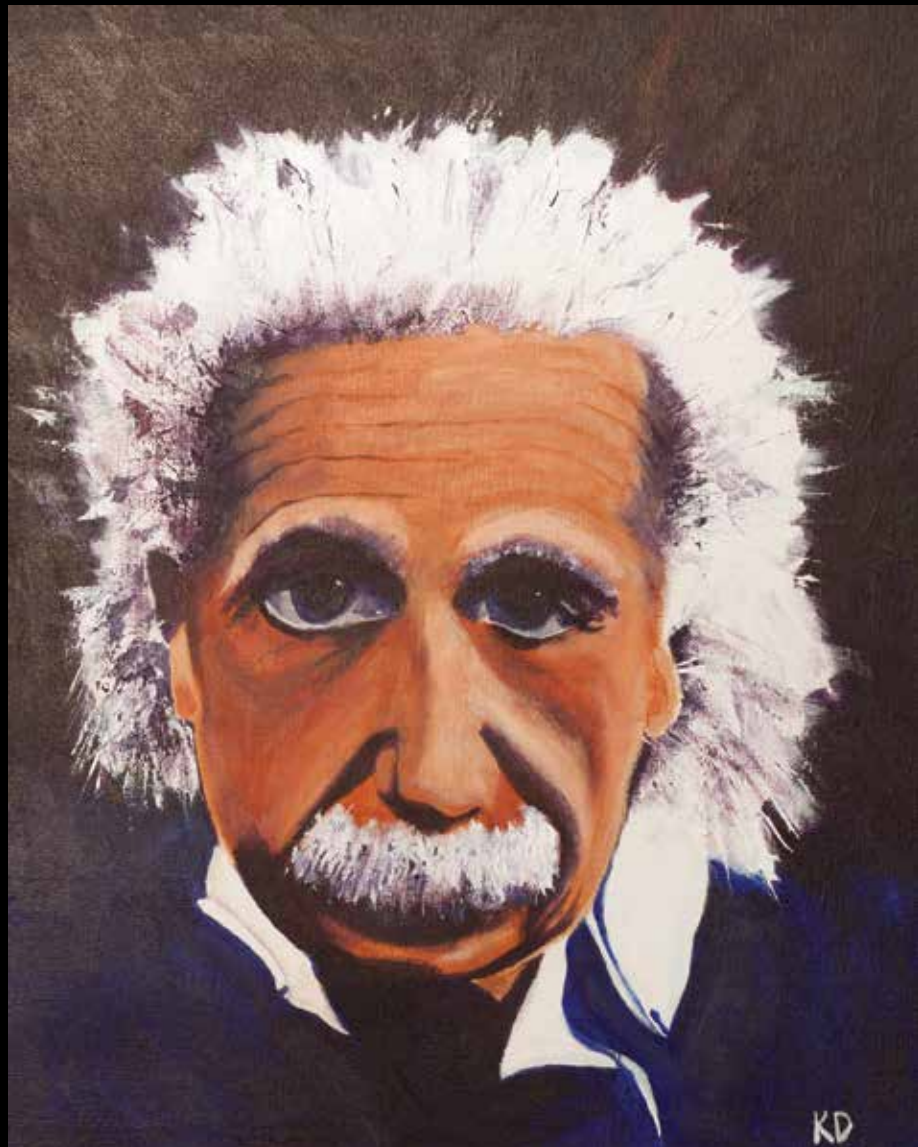
While there are benefits to fitting in and following the plan, following your own path is much more rewarding. I have a few battle scars from the plastic shell I leave in my past, but they are a small price to pay for the lessons I have learned. Plastic is shiny, uniform, and smooth. It is also cold, artificial and easily broken. I choose real, even if real is messy, late, and different. Real is genuine, content, and durable.

Fridjof Nanssen - 1896



Jackie Eliason

Wise Eyes



Kay Doggett

Two Boys and a Bull

By Shelby Dreier

Bonding comes in many flavors, and my brother and I have had our share of the more commonly found types. Yelling, chasing, fighting, and arguing make up the majority, but other times we allied, usually when the activity at hand was destroying something. And rarely, we would team up peacefully, which our mother so annoyingly tried to make happen more often.

My brother, Colby, was born eleven months after I first laid eyes on the world. I obviously don't remember the occasion, but I remember thinking often enough of the tragedy that my mother went through after nine months of pregnancy, and then labor, just to produce him.

He's loud; I'm quiet. He is aggressive, and I am passive. He is ill-tempered, and I am patient. Add in just about any other opposing personality traits, and they would apply to us. One more difference we shared was that I was always a curious and adventurous type. My brother, on the other hand, was more of a stay-at-home kind of boy. Having already discovered every square inch of the four acres that our house sat on in the last twelve years of my life, to include a barn, an old chicken coop, a tool shed that we called the shop, and of course, the old house that we had moved out of a couple of years before, I was yearning to extend my reaches.

I decided on this day that I was going to comb over a stretch of property that was across the street that we knew as McFeeder's, named after the owner of the land. There were a slew of buildings on this land, too, but they were atop the hill in the distance, and little could be made of them other than their grayish hue against the background of a patch of trees. The land and buildings had long since been abandoned as habitable, even by the cattle that used to graze along the hillside, but

a couple of grain silos still occasioned some use by Mr. McFeeder.

I needed a partner for this expedition. I didn't have any of my friends in the immediate vicinity, so pickins were slim, and I really didn't want to bring him...but knowing the dangers of exploring unknown lands, I enlisted my brother's help in this instance. He agreed with surprisingly minimal complaint; we dressed for the occasion in some worn clothes and tennis shoes, bode our mother farewell, and departed.

Our first obstacle was to cross the semi-busy highway that ran in front of our house. The K-12 school was just down the road, so traffic could range from dead calm to stampeding depending on what was going on up there at any given time. We lost many a dog to the eight o' clock school day traffic. What was so appetizing about those cars that was worth dying for, anyway?

"I remember thinking often enough of the tragedy that my mother went through after nine months of pregnancy, and then labor, just to produce him."

My brother and I could have simply crossed the road to get to the base of the hill, but this was an adventure, so we went through "the cave" instead. Along the tree line, just before the road, is a very small pond that feeds a creek that goes for miles. This pond, in turn, is fed by the ditches and runoff from the hills, but most prominently by a drainage tube that goes under the road. The tube was a typical drainage pipe; it was ribbed, about three feet in diameter, about sixty feet long, and was filled with filth and spider webs. It seemed much more alluring back then.

After traversing the cave without coming across any bears or

orcs, thank God, we began to ascend the hill. To avoid trudging through the tall grass, we followed the old gravel trail that wound up the hill, passed the silos to our right, and finally arrived at the assortment of buildings. After discovering no ghosts inside the house, and a lock on the old tool shed, our curiosity drove us further over the hill.

I jumped a small fence between two of the buildings, with my brother in tow, and rounded some tall bushes. The view was amazing, but also distracting, as I came almost face to face with a bull that had been grazing silently on the other side of the brush.

We didn't even know that cattle were kept back here, and the discovery was quite abrupt as this bull and I stared at each other for a moment ending in what seemed an eternity. It then occurred to me that I chose a very bad day to wear a blood red tee-shirt for this exploration mission. The bull must have had the same thought at the same instant, because he began clawing at the ground with his hoofs to get a good grip for his charge.

“Um, Colby...”

“Wha-... Shelby, there's a bull right there!”

“I know that! Ruuun!”

We turned tail and jolted. My brother had a head start on me, which was to my detriment. I was much more practiced in climbing fences than he was, and watching him climb a fence, though usually hilarious, was terrifying now.

I remember turning around and asking myself if I should attempt a dodge? Or perhaps I should yell at it and hope it stops? No, I decided, I think that I will turn back around and provide audience to my brother's clambering and wait for a horn to be violently shoved up my ass.

He finally managed to swing his leg over the top, and then the other leg.

“Finally!”

I jumped onto the fence and climbed just in time for the bull to smack the fence below me. I hung on for dear life as the vibrations of the impact combined with the already present tremors created the most violent fear that I had ever felt.

"...this bull and I stared at each other for a moment ending in what seemed an eternity."

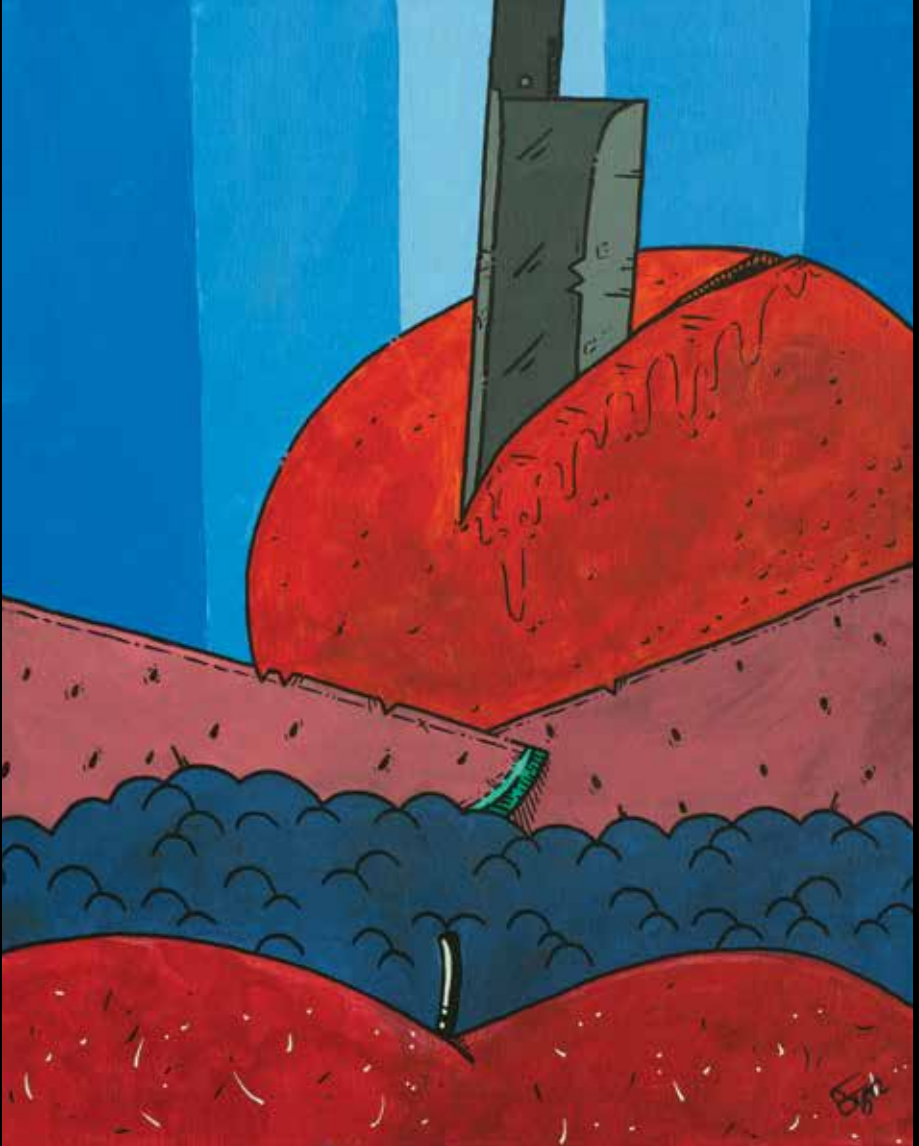
Picture an idiot. Now imagine that idiot has the look of shock on his face, his arms out-stretched in preparation to catch a falling sky, his body and legs moving back and forth in dance like he is standing barefoot on hot coals, and his eyes bolting every which way as if following an especially fast fly. That's what I saw when I regained my bearings and looked down at my brother.

I finished the climb over the fence, jumped down, and looked back at the bull behind the fence to make sure that we were truly safe. We were, with the bull staring at us through the fence, likely wishing he knew how to give us the finger. I turned and looked at Colby, his face flushed red and looking like we both felt, before I was overcome by anger.

“Why haven't I killed you yet?” I asked.

Today, though we still have many differences, even after decades, we are able to talk about this story and laugh. And, though I won't admit it to him, I would do it again. Memories like these are what make brothers what they are. I will also not admit to him that I still have a desire to kill him every time I tell this story.

Fruit and a Knife



Patrick Byrn

Texture



Michael Vincent

Never Expect a Smooth Ride in Life

By Vidal Mendoza

"They mess you up your mom and dad, they don't mean to but they do, they fill you up with the faults they had, and add some extra just for you."

- Philip Larkin

My childhood was a roller coaster ride, and my father was the one working the control booth. I wasn't your typical "daddy's girl" growing up. My father was never home, so I never got the chance to be. In my early years, my father worked while my mother was a housewife. We didn't have much growing up, but it never bothered me. I was always more occupied with my parents. As soon as I was old enough to be aware, I knew my family wasn't quite like the one's I'd seen on TV. My father would leave for work early in the morning, and I would not see him until the next day. During the night, I would wake up to yelling and screaming. It was like an alarm going off every night to let my older brother and I know our father was home. My mother and father fought like cats and dogs, and I had grown so accustomed to it I thought it was normal. My mother did make up for the time my father did not spend with us. She gave us every ounce of time, love, and tenderness she had.

During my grade school years things had gotten worse. The older I got, the more I could comprehend and understand what was going on in our

house. Now, as I look back, I realize I didn't get to have much of a childhood.

"My childhood was a roller coaster ride..."

The older I got, the more my mother relied on my brother and me to be her shoulders to cry on. I'm not sure if she confided in her sisters or my grandparents, but I'm sure they knew what was going on. Her reasons were

that she had no one else. Some nights, when things were really bad, we would spend the night at my grandparent's house. As a kid, I thought it was fun; we were going to Grandma and Grandpa's house for a sleepover. One time my mother went as far as packing our stuff and telling my father she was leaving him. We would stay at my grandparent's house for a few days, but always end up back home. Don't get me wrong, I know my father loved us and never once laid a hand on us. Like this one time, one Christmas morning, my brother and I woke up to find Dad's work truck full of snow. We lived in the valley so it

was my first time seeing actual snow. My father had been on the road early that morning and just kept driving north until he hit some snow. He shoveled up enough snow to fill his truck bed. and hauled it back so we could have snow on Christmas day.

In spring of 1990, our family had a great unexpected surprise: my baby brother was born. Things were great for a while; we had a full-time father. My baby brother was a blessing to me. As soon as my mother brought him home I wanted to be completely involved in his care. No one ever got a chance to hold him when I wasn't in school; I never put him down. I was 10 years old when he was born and my life was forever changed. But quickly, our happy family picked up its bad habits again. I always say that during that time in my life it was as if I was ten going on twenty. I had to mature quite a bit after the birth of my baby brother. I was his babysitter during the summer, and as he got older, we noticed that he was different. At the age of five, he was diagnosed with ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), which caused a whole new level of family drama. My father did not believe in any type of behavior problem that required medications; my mom, on the other hand, wanted to listen to the medical professionals.

*"I'm not sure how old I
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only
weakness."*

A few years later my family received more shocking news. My older brother, at the age of sixteen, was going to be a father. My mother cried a lot, and my father's nights of drinking with his co-workers and not coming home until the early morning increased. I'm not sure how old I was when I realized alcohol wasn't my father's only weakness. His endless days away from home turned into endless nights, and I'd overhear my mother ask him what he was on. I once saw a homeless man, on my first trip to New York City, in Times Square holding a cardboard sign that read: I need money for drugs, booze, and women. My father chose all of the above. I'll never forget the day my father drove by our house with another woman in the passenger seat while my mother and I were unloading groceries. According to him, everything was my mother's fault. He drank because of her nagging and was with other women because he wasn't getting any attention from her. If it wasn't my mother's fault,

it was the way he was brought up. He didn't know how to be a father or a husband; he wasn't shown how.

My high school years flew by like waking up from a really bad dream. I couldn't wait to graduate and get out of the house. My family had grown bigger, which was nice. My older brother, his girlfriend, and my new nephew were now living with us. I became an aunt at the age of fifteen. Despite the growth of our household, my parents' fighting got worse. I lost count of how many times my mother threw out all my father's clothes on the front lawn for the whole neighborhood to see. He'd leave for a couple of days and when he would come back, my mother would always let him back in. We moved in and out of my grandparent's house countless times; by then, I was just going through the motions. I threw myself into my schoolwork, friends, and part-time job. I was always the "super" responsible one. I didn't want to add to my mother's already abundant list of worries. During this time, my hatred toward my father had spread like a wildfire. I felt that he was the fire starter of all our little fires that were running wildly out of control. My father not being there for my big brother resulted in him making bad decisions. He was too harsh on disciplining my baby brother, and I was constantly getting in the middle. He thought that by spanking my baby brother, his behavior would get better. To him, there was no such thing as ADHD; it was something teachers made up because they didn't want to work too hard. My mother, no matter what my father threw at her, still stood by his side. My hatred toward my father had grown so much that I couldn't even be in the same room as him.

It wasn't until I became an adult and left home that I was able to forgive my father. You see, my father was abused by his own father as a child, and his mother did nothing to prevent it. His reasons for not being a good father or husband were because he wasn't shown how to be. Looking back, I now realize why they call alcohol "truth serum." My mother, older brother, and I could recite some of my father's childhood experiences like a well-known fairytale. My grandpa used to tie my father to a tree for hours when he would misbehave. I believe my father has ADHD and has had it since he was a child. My baby brother inherited it along with his short temper. Back then, there was no such thing as ADHD. In our culture, the male is the breadwinner, the wife keeps the house in order, and the father keeps the kids in line. The male must carry what we call the "machismo" (male dominance) trait. I never got to know my father's siblings, my aunts and uncle, or my grandfather very well. I think

it brought up too many painful memories for him to be around them. He once told me a story of how my grandfather shaved his two sister's hair when they got older so they wouldn't have boyfriends.

I'm a firm believer that you are in control of your own destiny. You decide what kind of person you want to be, and you should learn from other's mistakes. My father ran away from home and had been living on the streets since the age of thirteen. He has been through and seen a lot. I don't see it as an excuse but can now empathize. "Forgiving is more for the forgiver than the one you are forgiving." That mantra is what helped me heal emotionally. When I forgave my father, it was like swallowing a big lump in my throat and finally releasing the big knot in my stomach.

Today, my father and I are quite close; he is a completely different man. He would give the shirt off his back to his children and grandchildren if we needed it. My father has come a long way. My mother and my father are no longer married; they divorced a few years after I left home. Even though they are divorced, they have become the best of friends. I always joke with them and say that getting divorced was the best thing that ever happened to them. My father is now sober and drug free. I can't imagine my life without him.

*"My grandpa used to tie
my father to a tree
for hours."*

The way we are raised affects us for the rest of our lives. Our parents are our first teachers. At the age of nineteen I was diagnosed with depression and anxiety. I think everything finally took a toll on me. To this date, I still need to take my medication to prevent bad days. Luckily, I learned from both the mistakes, as well as the good values my parents instilled in us. My husband and I have been happily married for 11 years and have two beautiful children. I have no regrets and no desires to change the past. I would not be the person I am today if it weren't for the hardships I had to face along the way..

Night Watch



Jason Oberman

The Moon



Jason Oberman

Flora, Fauna, -- Merry Weather?

By Karen Raskin-Young

When Ted Humphries brought his children to the beach early that April, it didn't seem like such a bad idea. True, the day was cold and crisp, but they weren't planning to swim. Chad and Kayla were buttoned into sweaters and armed with a collection of pails and shovels because this was a day to build sandcastles. While they were absorbed in seaside architecture, Ted immersed himself in a business art project that had been giving him trouble. Therefore, no one noticed that the weather began to change.

The sky had become more overcast, and a rising wind shook the leaves and twisted the branches of trees now bending double between the concrete parking lot and the strand. The coastline, growing wider or narrower with the ocean's movement, had sported gentle waves whose frothy, white bubbles sparkled as they caressed the sand.

*"To be in that suddenly
angry water was to
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evil spirits..."*

Now the waves were more insistent, pouring forth armies of foam, sucking back anything in their path – even tiny white crabs, skittering desperately to burrow into their underground homes.

The beige sand still squished underfoot, but there were more tiny pebbles poking through the fine grains to mar its smooth surface. To the left, a tumbledown wooden dock with barnacles clinging to its inky wet underbelly still wended its jagged way out, only now the more-energetic surf had claimed another of its rotted railings. The uneven shoreline curved away on the right to a distant lighthouse on a spit of land. In rocky outcrops, seawater reflecting the moody color of approaching storm clouds had filled shallow pools, harboring an assortment of tiny minnows, purple urchins, and swaying

pink sea anemones. Now, with the tide scraping outward, the emptied basins formed graveyards for dead fish and the remains of contorted, colorless, plant shapes.

The cold sea's horizon was only a shade lighter than the charcoal clouds, but the water displayed more varied grays. Earlier, the surface's wide expanse had resembled a glassy mirror with delicate, pale rows of foamy ruffles. Now waves reared up in huge, shining cliffs of bluish-silver water until they crested, then plunged down in rushing sprays flinging splayed black and ochre fronds of seaweed. Howling, eerie calls of high-flying gulls accompanied the thunderous crashing in a rhythm without end. To be in that suddenly angry water was to be pummeled, pushed, pulled, as if stirred up by evil spirits, slammed into the shore, nearly broken, swallowed up in an experience at once freezing, lacerating, and awesome in the truest sense. It would challenge even someone who was alert, battle-ready, dedicated to his purpose, someone prepared to handle the rush and tumble of a fierce and surly opponent and not be wrecked by the brutal encounter. And how could it be that Ted Humphries was that someone?

There, amid the formerly friendly, three-pronged tracks of sandpipers and glistening shells of purple mussels, white sea scallops, gray sand dollars, and orange whelks, Ted Humphries' children had carefully erected a complicated sandcastle of wandering rooms and impossible turrets with crenellated edges. And there, in a thoughtless moment, Ted had stepped away, telephoning his partner to tell him know he'd successfully solved the problem, so the project would be ready for their customer. It was only a moment, but when he turned back he found a changed landscape. On the stretch of shore before

"Now the waves were more insistent, pouring forth armies of foam, sucking back anything in their path — even tiny white crabs, skittering desperately to burrow into their underground homes."

him, he saw no one and heard no human voices. The only signs of any recent life were the melting sandcastle, grains intermingling with the outbound sea, and the jagged remains of orange and lime-green sand pails. Where were his children? Frantically, he scanned the coast, then finally spotted the small, flailing heads and arms of his son and daughter in the retreating water.

In that moment, he was no longer Ted Humphries, middle-sized graphic artist and ordinary father of two. In that moment, he became Ted Humphries, fierce protector, preparing to face the battle of his life. Ripping off his shoes and jacket, he ran to the water's edge. Gathering breath and strength and steeled by his resolve not to lose his children, he dove urgently into the heart of the overwhelming foe. He didn't hesitate for a second, not even when the wall of freezing, thrashing water closed over him.

Living Water



Elizabeth Savage

Rodeo Days

By Hilynn Wilson

Horses bucking as hard as they can and not being able to buck Mr. Wilson off is an issue for most stock contractors. Cowboy life came easy when living on a small ranch as a young kid, and jumping onto wild donkeys prepared Mr. Wilson for the life ahead of him as a bareback rider. In the small town of Tuba City, on a dirt road going north is where Mr. Wilson O. Wilson lives. Working on a 1.5 acre land kept my dad busy sun up to sun down. Working long hours at the Black Mesa Mine in Black Mesa, he still found time to build a fence around his lot with an amazing entrance. The entrance to his home is pipes stacked on top of one another that create an upside down football goal; there is a thirty feet height limit to enter into the home. On top of the pipe is a metal sign that says, "The Wilson's," with their brand HKQ underneath the name.

His home is surrounded by a white painted fence made of metal pipes with chicken wire fence wired to them to keep out stray animals. Near his double wide light blue mobile home is his white and red rodeo arena, which was built back in 1996 with the help of his son's. My dad welds enough pens for his livestock and also put in two years of working on extending his arena, welding his arena as big as a football field. It was the finishing touches to something that became a family tradition. Later in the year 1999, my dad put on bull ridings for young men who are involved with the sport of bull riding. The family's bull riding became so popular, stock contractors and bull riders came from far places to participate in the event.

Mr. Wilson is an impatient person, yet he always makes time to talk about his past experiences for teachings to my siblings and me. His way of carrying a conversation turns into two to three hours of him telling stories to my siblings and me that it seems we heard more than once. As his children, we sit through all his lectures and talks to remember what was said and put those wise words to use. His high pitched voice kept

us from falling asleep and it was loud enough that all the words went through one ear and never out the other. My dad's reason of speaking so loud is because of his thirty-six years of working the Drag Line at Black Mesa Mine; the noises from the heavy machinery made him lose his hearing. He then retired in 2004 from Black Mesa Mine and focused on house chores and livestock chores.

For Mr. Wilson, waking up before the sun and praying is a habit. On a cold chilly morning, he got me out of bed and told me to feed the animals. Mr. Wilson was already dressed for the day with his usual wear of a plain white t-shirt, blue Wrangler jeans, tennis shoes and a cap. One time I asked him, "Why do you always wear the same kind of clothes every day?" He replied, "Clothing's shouldn't mean everything. I keep it simple because choosing what to wear takes too long. I'm put on this earth to work hard and make a living. Not to look pretty." As I got done getting myself ready, I opened the front door and felt the cold air hit my face, and I wished I didn't have to go outside. I toughened up and faced the cold by stepping down three steps of stairs and onto the ground that was hard as cement and walked east towards the arena that is twenty feet away from the front doorstep. Walking slowly, I could hear my cow's mooing and my dogs' barking, waiting to be fed. My dad standing with his serious expression, shouted, "Hurry up lady! Don't have all day to wait on you." I hurried over and grabbed three slices of hay and threw it into the cows' feeders, then fed the two dogs, Kish and Oreo.

"Mr. Wilson is an impatient person, yet he always makes time to talk about his past experiences."

I was standing there next to my dad, leaning on the gate, watching the morning sun set and him swinging his highlighter green rope above his head pretending he's about to rope a steer.

I interrupted his swinging session and asked my dad, "Do you miss the good old days of rodeo?"

He replied, "Every moment of every rodeo and every day of riding wild broncs. I sure do miss it all."

His serious face expression didn't change once he started to talk about his young days as a bareback rider. In the distance, I hear the sound of the cows munching on the hay, grinding their teeth together making sure the hay is well grinded down before swallowing. The dogs, Kish and Oreo are running every direction trying to find something to entertain them while they're out of the cage, inside of there sixty yard opening area.

Standing their looking around, my dad continues on talking and says, "Years of running around with other young cowboys, drinking alcohol, and riding wild bronc's were not the best combination. Alcohol is the reason why so many young cowboys get into trouble and don't become world champions. I know because I was one of the cowboys that had talent to become a champion. But I don't regret meeting the people I met and seeing places I've never seen before."

Mr. Wilson seemed to become overwhelmed and he said, "Being a world champ takes practice, discipline, hard work, and faith. When you want something so bad you go for it and know it's what you desire."

"As my dad looked towards the open arena, his eyes filled with tears while he was holding his rope."

As my dad looked towards the open arena, his eyes filled with tears while he was holding his rope. The dogs come to me and I started petting their soft winter coats telling them to sit.

His hand wiping his tears and looking down at the dogs, my dad said, "Becoming a father was a natural instinct because it comes with growing up, especially when a child comes into your world needing you to be there every moment of his/her life. I was a troubled young cowboy traveling from California, Arizona, Utah, and New Mexico going to

rodeos to make extra money. But I worked and rodeoed because I loved it. No one forced me to become a cowboy, but I had the hunger to get on horses that were so wild that getting a clean mark-out was the hardest thing, but having an eight second ride made it the best ride ever. Being a part of the Rodeo Association in California was an experience. And becoming a father made me realize that being a troubled young man wasn't the way I wanted to be. I want to be a role model and a guide for my kids."

I then asked him about the most memorable moment in his rodeo days and how he felt was a question I was dying to hear the answer to. He glanced down at his rope, rubbing the threads of the rope and then said, "The first time I won a buckle instead of money was back on 1989, in Kayenta, Arizona. I looked at the horse I drew and once I saw the horse, the first thing I noticed was the hooves of the horse because they were so big; I didn't want to get bucked off. I went over and picked up the horse's poop and rubbed it in my hands. It sounds gross but I did." He looked at me to see if I was disgusted, but I was waiting to hear more. He continued, "The horse was loaded up into the bucking chute and I got into my rigging and signaled the gate man to open the gate. Once the chute opened, the horse was bucking so hard I didn't seem to notice. It seemed like it came easy to me. Next thing I know, I was awarded a buckle as a Bareback Champion."

My dad had a smile that made me wonder what else was going through his mind, so I asked, "Having health problems and fighting through the hardships of pains and surgery's. What helped or motivated you to get through it?" Mr. Wilson looked down at his tennis shoes, hanging his rope on the gate's edge, and looked at me straight in the eyes. I could see his brown eyes sparkle in the sun light and he replied,

"I went through surgery for my right hand because it became paralyzed and had to have my veins cut and be connected to different veins, so my hand can move again. The reason for that is I broke my wrist a couple of times, but I taped it up and still rode whether I bucked off or rode to eight seconds. It was a bad choice, but I did it anyways."

He was feeling his wrist and opening it and closing it. I could see a bump on his hand making it noticeable that he did have surgery.

He looked away and went on talking.

“Running is another way I got through health problems. I’m a diabetic and I hurt everywhere. Doctors have no cure for me, but running helps. I’m almost seventy-three years old, but I run twenty-two miles every day. I don’t challenge anyone but myself because I’m my own opponent. I run until I sweat, knowing after I’m done running, I’m going to feel refreshed and not hurt anymore. It’s like my own medicine without having a prescription. It makes me feel strong and I feel like I accomplished my goal for the day. That the holy people are keeping me young by helping me get through the long runs. My hair maybe turning gray and white, but on the inside I’m a young man.”

I smiled so big and said to my dad, “You’re cool, dad. Thanks for making me who I am, and I wanted to share with my classmates that you have a good sense of teaching and good things to say.”

My dad hugged me and we started our day of working outside in the cold, doing chores.

Listening to and answering the questions I asked made my dad feel happy and brought back memories. Mr. Wilson is at the age where he’s not able to remember simple things, and memories are about to be lost. When my dad watches young men rodeo, it is always helpful because he can see himself in their shoes and knows how hard it is to be tough because injuries are sometimes hard to overcome. Riding wild broncs is what he loves and he is never going to forget who he is: a cowboy and a old timer bare back rider from the past.

Worm Demon



Patrick Byrn

How Many Men Marched

By Nate Wessel

How many men marched
Into the thickets of despair
Hands grasping for support
That never found them there?

How many men marched
Drawn only when called
To a bullet through the heart
For a name upon a wall?

Yet here I stand--
Though I deserve not to at all
Observing with sound eyes
My name
On that wall!

To walk away from hell
Is undeserved all around,
Thus my name is sacrilege--
A sin on hallowed grounds.

I beg, strike not my name down from there;

Rather, strike me down instead.
Take a knife to this coward's throat,
Alive, while his brothers are dead,
Take away the Purple Heart,
Take away the Silver Star,
Medals cannot heal the wounds of living
Nor cover mental scars.

How many men marched
Across those jungles filled with fear
Where bullets ripped across our backs
And Agent Orange would sear?

How many men marched
Into those killing fields to die?
And among the men the devil spared
Why choose one so undeserving as I?

Pichachu Peaks Sunset



Rosalie Dobbs

Front Step View

By Kristen Tallis

In the early mornings the indigo sky provides the dime moon and sparkling diamonds the perfect canvas. The shining gems flash across the mosaic of gray, violet and sapphire sky. If it weren't for those stars or the beaming moon, the shapes of the land would only be distinguished by the overlapping shadows. Above would be an endless, frightening black hole, thank goodness for the stars and moon! Stepping out to the east facing door, onto the icy front step my bare feet quickly stand on tip toes. In the distance, the gigantic red bald peaks tower over the silver water well and spinning windmill. Further, in the back ground the wood stacked horse corral stands empty in the dark blue shadows. It seems like the only place and time where the air remains still and as chilly as an arctic igloo. I can't forget to mention it isn't even near winter, this a daily occurrence in the heat of the summer. The cold's sharp touch suddenly shakes the senses and everything can be seen with greater clarity.

The hooting of the early morning owl sends an eerie cry into the valley that makes you turn your head quickly into the blue boulders and trees. In surprise the whites of your eyes show and your hairs stand stiff on end. Sometimes, I believe it hoots only to remind me of the scary stories that kept me in after dark when I was just a child. This sound bounces off the billowing boulders and trees where it seems no other kinds of life are awake. Isolation. However in the weeds, the chubby striped back prairie dogs and cautious clay mice scamper from the green-gray sage and purple ant plant bushes. The animals with primal senses know there is danger somewhere; they are not exactly sure, but it is there. Another cry shrieks out, this time not the vigilant owl, but fierce dark brown hawk who manages to the find its early morning breakfast even in the absence of the morning sun. He triumphantly flies away, head held high and strong.

"The hooting of the early morning owl sends an eerie cry into the valley that makes you turn your head quickly into the blue boulders and trees."

A refreshing clean scent enters my nose streaming into my lungs with

the taste of wet dirt. That smell is absolutely marvelous, why don't they make it an interior fragrance? I would buy it!

Now I've completely shaken the remnants of a restful slumber. In the solid gray dirt the tiny green budding plants dashed upon the frozen ground painted with sparkling dew, also begin to stretch and wake. All around are the mountains and enormous cascading beige rocks zig-zagging to create this valley with its canyon-like ditches and flat sandy terrain. In the darkness, I can see the ghosts of my younger self and cousins curiously wandering the along the dirt roads, ditches and sheep trails. No, it is not a frightening thought, only a rejuvenating and sweet image. It is hard to imagine the miles we walked to and from aunt's house 3 miles away.

One special place under the tree whose arms stretched, north of the front door, my great-grandfather sat calmly and contently. Grandpa always sat in his mustard colored chair in the afternoon smiling with his golden tooth peeking through, as the Black Mesa breeze brushed his high cheeks and bushy, black eye brows. From there he surveyed the land, the herd of sheep, the wobbling toddlers trailing behind his grandkids. Those were the things that gave him pleasure and happiness as they continued to flourish and grow on the land he loved. The place under the tree he could see everything he needed to with his aging eyes. From there he sat contently as he always has been. My grandpa was pleasant in all his doing; singing, blessing, talking, playing, and arguing. Those relationships continue to be acknowledged when the people he knew share stories of him with us. In his 109 years of life, never did he make an enemy or scorn a friend.

This is my favorite memory of him.

This memory is the way I picture him as he lives in the next world watching over us.

This is the memory I visualized during the winter when the spirits come back to visit, and I dream of him.

This is the memory that pops up as I step out onto the front step of his Hogan. It is always a great feeling to be seeing the sight in front of me, almost untouched for as long as I can remember. The change upon this land is that of the turning seasons and other, smaller beings.

In the distance, cedar, pinion, and pine trees covered the mountains painting dark green raging waves of camel back mountains, sloping up and down against the dark violet sky. Evidently the last of the stars twinkle out of sight and the lemon colored sun slowly breaks the boundary of the horizon. The pine trees with their green yellow tipped needles and piñon stuffed pine cones standing strong, commanding, and renewed. The rounded burly cedars also join the mixture of twisting junipers and familiar pines. The mountains lay underneath the cloud of green fog and only at the fringe of the woods do you see its tan skin.

The apparitions of youthful play and creativity stand on the large crescent mounds that annually catch the heavy summer washes that flow from the rocky plateaus. We once swam in those ponds where the water was muddy, cold and questionable. It makes me laugh now remembering how difficult it was to remove the pine needles from our hair and the mud from our bodies. This place I can see from the front step, and happily reflect on that day.

While sun continues to slowly climb the mountain side the dark sky recedes like water draining from a tub. The only influence of any modern mechanics on the land is the metal cylinder well and wind charged water mill that pumps water from the pool twenty feet beneath. Imagine a deep river beneath your feet, raging and roaring silently. The only separation is the dirt you stand on. This area attracts the fuzzy white sheep, wild horses, and meaty cows. They plunge their heads to rehydrate in preparation for sweltering day to come. This, I can also see them from the front step.

Honestly, I cannot introduce myself to anyone without emphasizing the origin of my family and place of my childhood. This is the only place written in my mind and pictured in my heart. This place is engrained in the person I have become today because my footsteps are cemented in the rugged mountains I hiked and the mesas I played on. Just as the sights, sounds, and experiences translate into the feelings I have about work, my education, and friendships. I have learned to continue to work hard, enjoy simplicity and the engagement of family. And that is because that is all you have up there on the mesa, and it is all you need.

Agave V



Jackie Eliason

ONCOURSE

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