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LOVE AFTER 70

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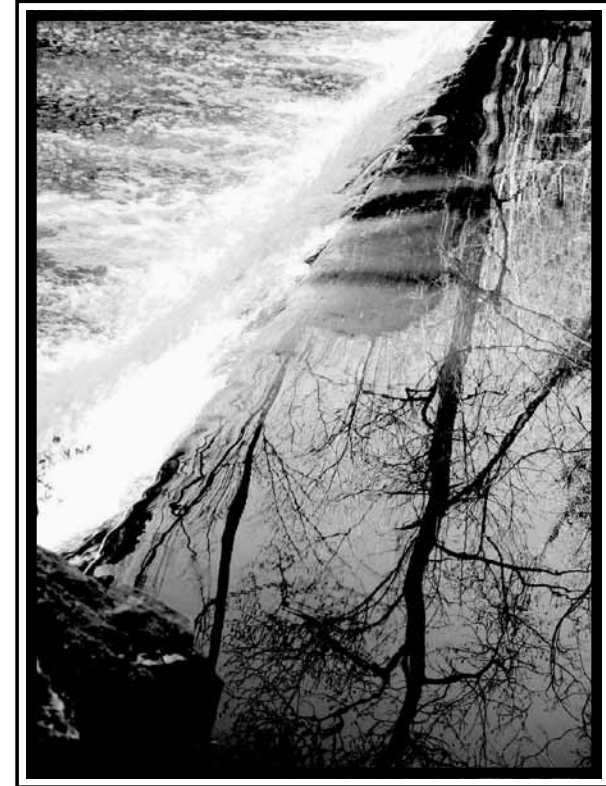
*What Remains As We All Change*

CREATIVITY & CONSTRAINT

SIBLINGS: *Our First Macrocosm*

THE KINDNESS OF STRANGERS

***SURPRISED BY JOY***



**A WISING UP ANTHOLOGY**

*Charles D. Brockett & Heather Tosteson*  
*Editors*

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## DEDICATION

*To the memory of  
Joyce Hamm Brockett  
and  
Dilys Bodycombe Tosteson  
whose joy-filled souls shaped our lives*



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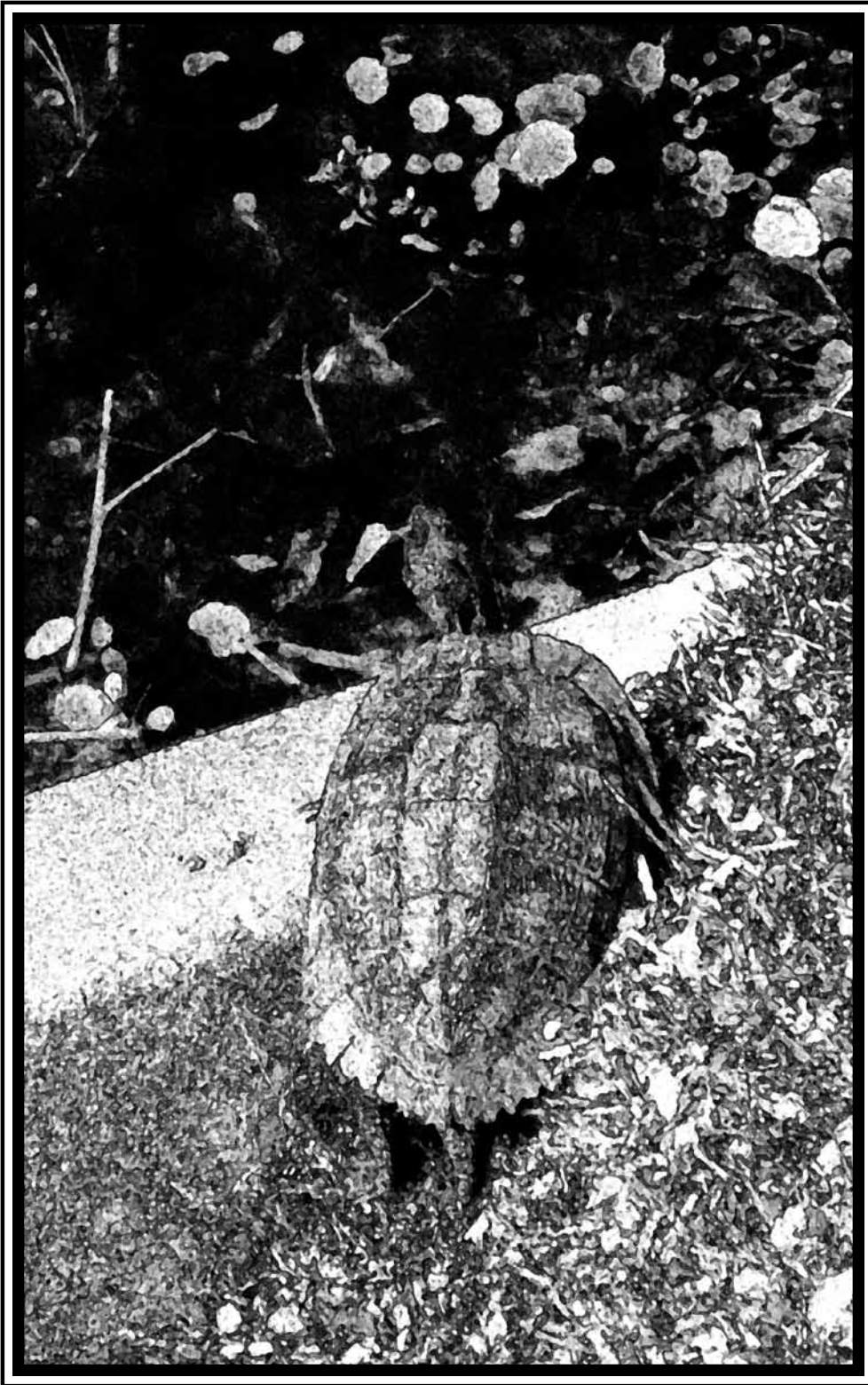
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*This is the true joy of life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.*

George Bernard Shaw, *Man and Superman*



## HEATHER TOSTESON

### *INTRODUCTION: SURPRISED BY JOY*

When we ran the call for this anthology, we posed it as both an invitation and a challenge. An invitation because joy is a deeply pleasurable state to experience and to recall, one that in times of contention and frustration and anxiety may feel inaccessible but also sorely needed. It is also a challenge to write about because one of the most striking things about positive emotions, of which joy is among the most powerful, is that they are in general non-verbal. When outraged or disappointed, we cry out, vent, erect towering arguments that we flail like blunt instruments, tell our own story incessantly. When we are very happy, we may leap with joy, yell with glee, we enact and vocalize, but we don't have a driving need to verbalize, rationalize, explain. Consequently, these positive emotions, so formative and necessary for fostering the deepest delights of life, often aren't explored as fully as they could be, their wisdom disregarded.

My own interest in joy may paradoxically come from my familiarity with depression. In his poem "Joy and Sorrow" Kahlil Gibran reminds us that these states are often twinned: "Together they come, and when one sits, alone with you at your board, remember that the other is asleep upon your bed." So often in my own life, particularly in those dark times, I would find myself—when all my intense will was exhausted, all my hopes in shreds, my good intentions erased—surprised by joy, by something rising inside me, quiet, clear, intrinsically positive, assured. I knew the indisputable reality of the pain I was in, and at the same time felt seamlessly healed. I wanted that warmth, that intrinsic certainty, with my whole being and knew it was not within my power to will or to create—but here it was, independent of anything I had done or could do, filling me with the deepest sense of well-being. At those moments, to paraphrase Robert Browning, I was sure that life meant and meant intensely and meant good and that I was an indisputable part of that meaning, that good, in ways I didn't understand fully but could not ignore

or deny. From that insight, the quiet certainty of it, the calm delight of it, other insights followed, but that moment was enough. That state was enough. I didn't have to earn it—indeed I couldn't—and it wasn't conditional on my will, my behavior, my level of faith. What I did have some control over was how fully I would open to it, become one with it, allow myself to be changed by it.

Thinking about joy these last few months, I began to make a list of moments of deep joy in my life. What I found was that as I began to recall these moments, more followed. Psychologists call this mood-contingent memory retrieval. When we're sad our lives can feel like an unbroken train of failures, disappointments, misjudgments. When we're happy, we see a path of love given and received, challenges met. This dynamic was very clear to me one autumn in my forties. I was at a difficult period in my life. My son grown, I'd moved to a new city, new state, taken a job that was a bad fit. I had rented a weekend getaway in the Georgia mountains. Often, distraught at my situation, I would hike the mountain in the nearby state park. As I struggled up the steep slope, I would be frantically thinking about what I could do to fix things, and the more frantically I thought, the more clearly I could see my whole life stretching out behind me—an unbroken series of poor choices, bad luck, inadequacy, disappointment, and my future a natural continuation of the same. There would come a point, at the top of the slope, when I would pause, breathless, totally helpless. I would be staring out blankly into the trees, catching a glimpse of the next mountain, and the next, the next, and inexplicably something came to meet me. A whole new feeling set. I began to see another path through my life, one where I had a body that could climb a hill, I had will, agency, hope, a history of resilience, love. I would scramble back down the mountain making plans, seeing options, chugging away like the little engine that could.

What originally fascinated me about the nature of this shift was how complete it was—and how binary. And how reliable it was in its own way: enough exertion, enough endorphins, and the parasympathetic system kicks in, and with it a different world view. What interests me now is the exact moment of shift, that moment when I just stopped because I had no more drive, no solutions, no escape, that moment when I was just there, alone at the top of the mountain, breathing, receiving, aware of the light on a leaf, the song of a bird, a rustle in the underbrush, the sun slipping behind a cloud or emerging from it, how in some ways that moment is very similar to

joy—and how it is not. What interests me now is the mystery of that pause, whether there is a third path we can chart through our lives that is made up of moments like that. How would that third path differ from the binary ones of sadness and happiness? What are the unique qualities of joy that would inform it?

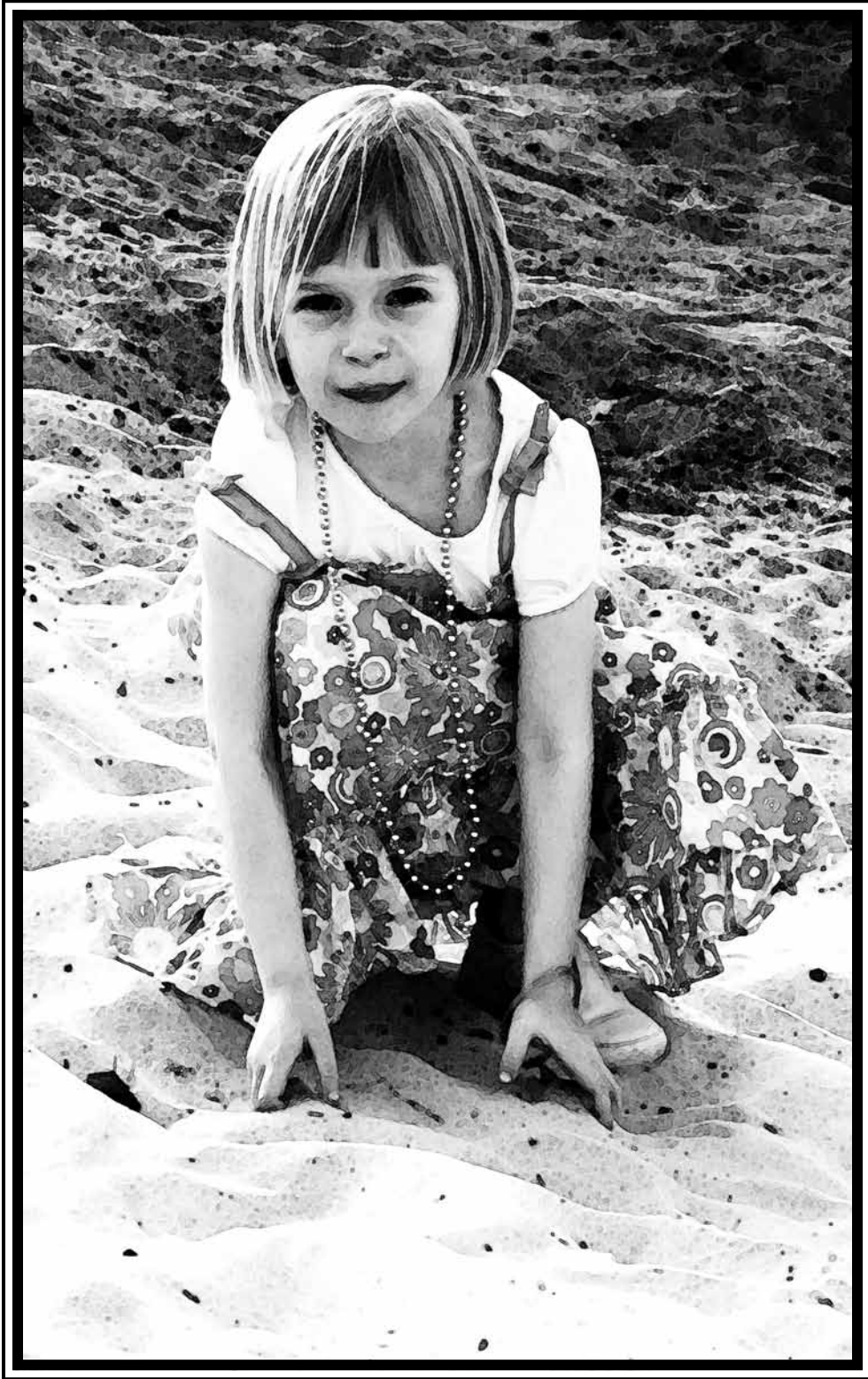
✧ ✧ ✧

The first quality of joy is found in the title of this anthology. Surprise. We are always surprised by joy. It's not something we can will into existence. C. S. Lewis, making a distinction between joy and happiness, says "joy is never in our power, and pleasure often is." There is always an element of awe in joy—awe as wonder, not dread. An essential dimension of joy is that we find ourselves in relation to something greater and more profoundly positive than our conscious minds.

Another striking quality of joy is a feeling of completeness. There is an inner stillness in moments of joy, a listening inside and out that is trusting, appreciative. There is no yearning, no *saudade*, in joy. We have a sense of integrity, wholeness, repleteness. We know ourselves at that moment as enough and that awareness is wonderful, more than enough. There is an observation I encountered through the somatic movement and awareness technique of Feldenkrais that has kept coming back to me as I muse on the nature of joy: We can so organize in the pursuit of something we cannot receive it when it comes. But in the state of joy, we are organized to receive, and to receive what we may never have dared hope for: *Enough*

Another essential quality of joy is that it is meaningful. There is an intellectual dimension to joy that is tied up with the sense of wonder, an aha, just so, quality. We get something with our whole being—muscles and senses and mind; we experience a larger understanding of ourselves, our lives, our purpose, our right relation with existence. "This is the true joy of life, the being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one," George Bernard Shaw reminds us. Joy turns our attention to the source of that larger purpose.

Joy is very private, but it attaches us. In some ways it is the opposite of ecstasy. We're not taken out of ourselves, we draw the world in and we let it draw us out too. Our awareness is kinesthetic and expansive. We're located in the moment, keenly aware, delighted. This isn't a crafted experience. We don't want to block anything out, escape anything, transcend. Wonder



## I. CHILDREN

## JOAN DOBBIE

### *I THINK MY GRANDS ARE THE GREATEST*

*For Mara, Seth and Lyla*

It's because of their love  
& because of their laughter

I mean one of them falls  
& the other one kisses

or one of them wins  
& the other one dances  
    & cheers & holds up two thumbs!

or one of them loses  
& the other two huddle in close

(whispering love words  
until she's stopped crying)

& after we've all watched the  
Peanuts Movie for just about two hours straight

the three of them leap to their feet  
& they dance & they dance

I mean real classy dancing  
(I'm thinking Jackson Five, that really is  
what I'm thinking)

& when mom says okay kids it's bedtime they  
do crawl obediently into their sleeping bags

though not quite into their beds because  
there at the top of the carpeted stairs

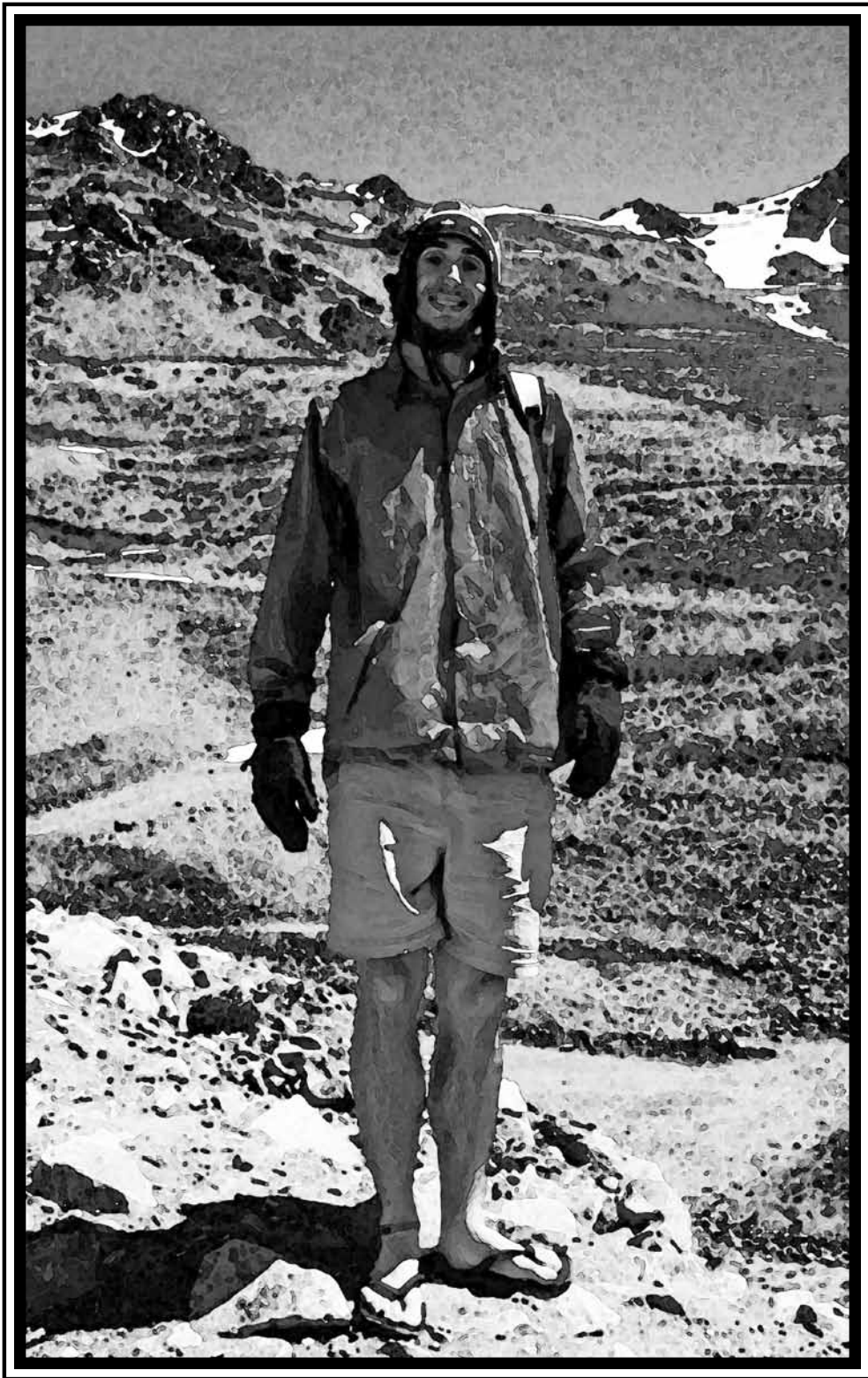
sits young Prince Temptation &  
down

    down

        down

                    they go sleeping bag sliding  
bumpedy  
    bumpedy  
        bumpedy bump

all the way down to the living room floor  
laughing like crazy



## II. IDENTITY

## TERRY SANVILLE

### *A NEW BEGINNING*

Sometime way past midnight, they packed us into trucks, maybe six or seven rumbling deuce-and-a-halves, and headed for the airport at Biên Hòa. Nobody talked. Nobody wanted to jinx our departure. 365 days was definitely enough. We roared along deserted roads and passed through a Vietnamese village, shacks built of scrap corrugated metal and packing crates. As we drove by one shack, I caught flashes from a color television and wondered if our western trinkets would be the only things left behind when the war finally ended.

The trucks rolled through a series of gates and onto a concrete apron where a commercial jetliner rested with stairs attached to its front and rear. We jumped down onto the pavement and formed two lines. I was the last soldier in the one that led to the plane's rear entrance. We inched forward, with the scrape of our boots and low mutterings the only sounds.

Finally, I climbed the stairs. At the top I stepped onto the plane and turned left. The jet's cabin extended in a one-point perspective into the distance. The soldiers in front of me quickly grabbed seats . . . the last seats. I stared down the aisle and couldn't see any gaps in the sea of closely cropped heads. A chill shook me. Would I have to wait for another plane, spend another minute, hour, day in that terrible place? I told myself that I'd fly the whole damn way home in the latrine, in the coat closet, in the plane's wheel well strapped to the landing gear. It didn't matter. But I would not spend a second longer in Vietnam.

From the far end of the cabin a stewardess waved her hands over her head. I pushed toward her and she pointed to a seat near the front. I plopped down and attached the lap belt, pulled it snug, and sucked in deep breaths. I folded my arms so that the guys around me couldn't see how badly my hands shook.

We waited . . . and waited some more. Finally, the ground crew removed

the stairs, the doors closed, and the plane began to roll. It stopped and turned at the end of the runway. I tried breathing slow and steady. Then the surge of power, the roar from the engines, the thump thump thump of the wheels rolling faster and faster, then the liftoff and the clunk of the landing gear being retracted.

When that clunk sounded, the soldiers erupted into cheers and shouts of joy. It sounded more jubilant than any New Year's Eve celebration I'd ever experienced, which wasn't many since I'd just turned twenty-one, six months before.

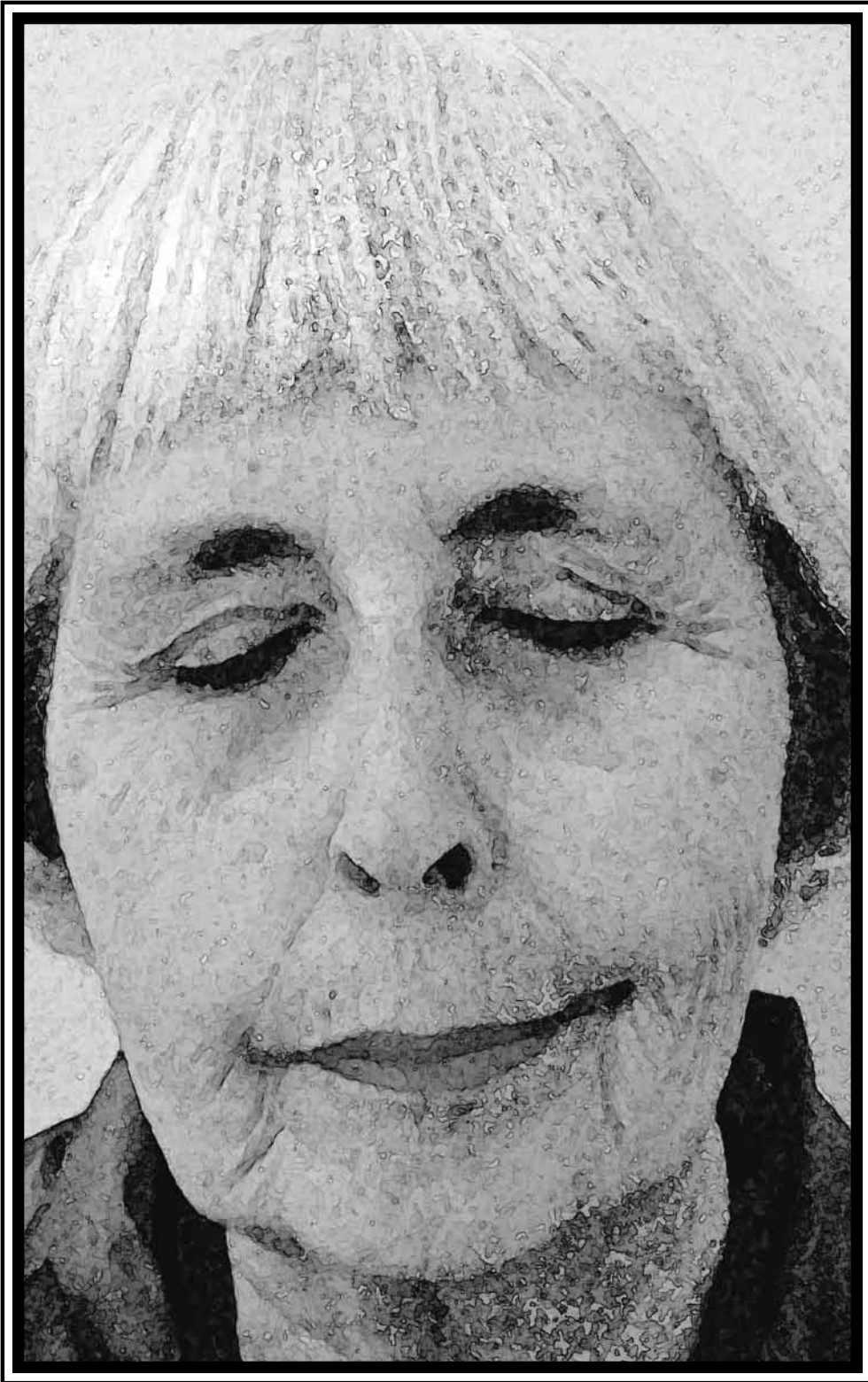
The flight from Vietnam to Oakland, California took forever, flying north then east into the black sky. After two stops and more than eighteen hours, I deplaned in a stupor. The bitter San Francisco Bay winds chilled me. But after a year living in the super-humid tropics, the cold felt wonderful.

Most of us soldiers had dressed in light jungle fatigues and boots. But the military wouldn't release us into the civilian population wearing combat gear. We waited in a drafty building while Army tailors assembled dress green uniforms for each of us, complete with new black "low quarter" shoes and all the appropriate medals, ribbons, and patches affixed to our jackets.

Hours later they finally let me go. Myself and two other GIs grabbed a taxi and headed for San Francisco International Airport on the other side of the Bay. One of the guys wanted to catch a plane east to Kansas City. I felt lucky that Santa Barbara was only an hour-and-a-half flight south. But could I find a local flight? Or would I have to spend a night in the City at some fleabag hotel, waiting yet another day? And the closer I got to my home, the slower things seemed to move, and even minor delays felt excruciating.

But I lucked out. A coastal flight would leave in less than two hours. With my name placed on the standby list, I took a seat. Later, I was confirmed for boarding. I phoned home and let my parents know when I would arrive. As I sat in the airport terminal, passing strangers stared at me. Some smiled and nodded. Others that looked my own age glared and flashed the peace symbol. But no one spoke to me, except the airline staff. At the gate, a young woman who took my ticket said, "Welcome home, Specialist." I guess my new uniform, medals and dazed demeanor signaled to her that I'd been one of the lucky ones. I nodded and hustled down the ramp to board the plane and begin the first stage of my return to normalcy.

The plane jerked and swayed in strong crosswinds. The stewardess barely had time to serve a single round of drinks before we started our descent to



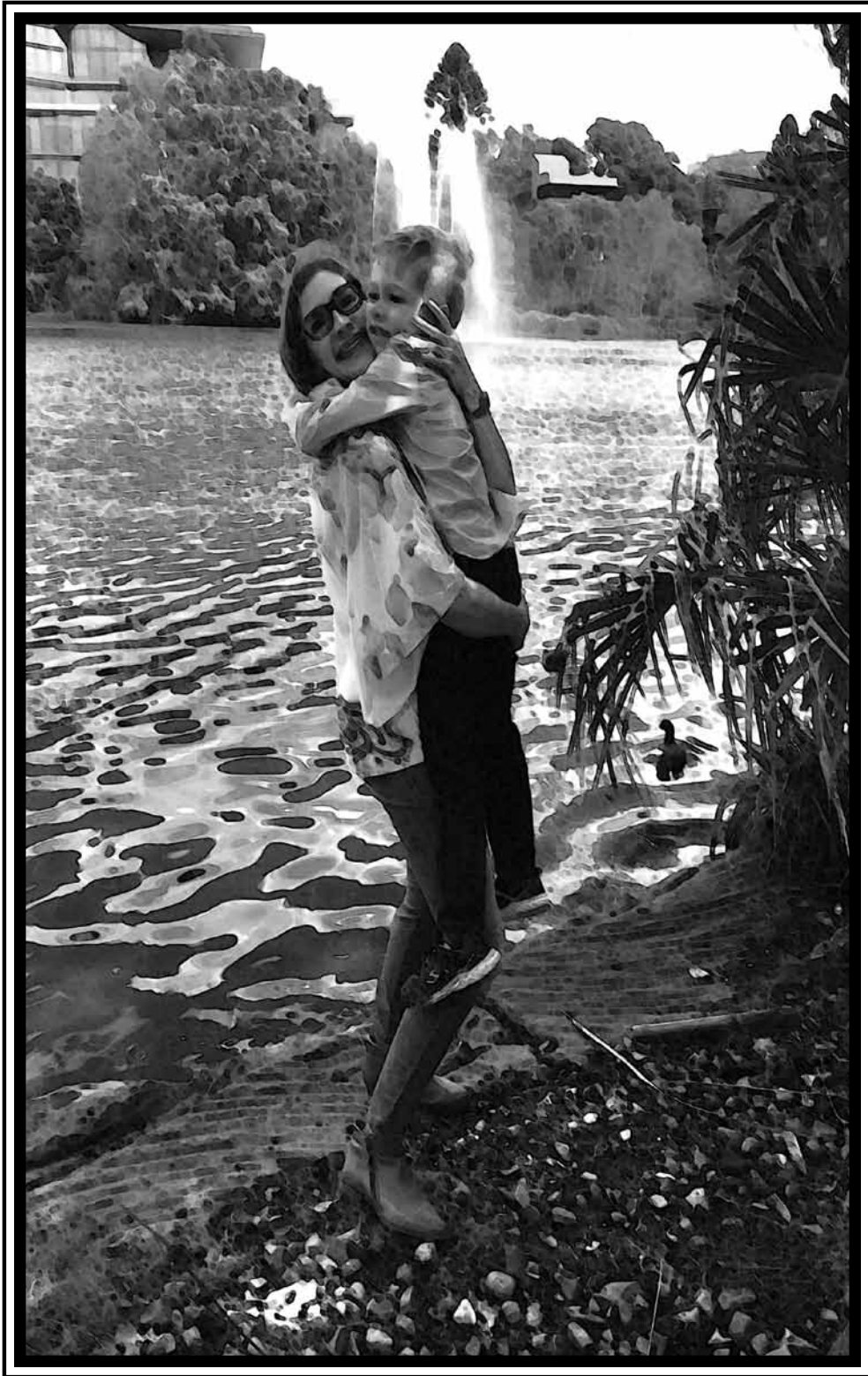
## KERRY LANGAN

### *MY NAME IS YOUR NAME*

She thinks of that article her son brought her to read. It said that if you can't remember something, think of things you associate with it. For instance, if you can't remember the name of an actress, think about what movies she was in and who her co-stars were. Our memories live in neighborhoods, the article concluded. "Oh, I don't give a hoot about some actress!" she'd said, tossing the magazine on her bed. She wonders if her son remembers the neighborhood where he grew up, all those years ago when her husband was still alive. When she closes her eyes, she can sometimes see it. There were shrubs in front of the porch, she's almost certain. Shrubs that grew so high that they blocked the house. A boy in the neighborhood climbed up one of the shrubs all the way up to the sky where he encountered a giant. She shakes her head. No, that's just a fairytale. That's not real.

Her name is Eleanor. Or Elizabeth. Think! she orders herself, but she still can't determine if she's Eleanor or her sister is. Her sister. She should call her sister. But, no, her sister died. A few years ago. No more than ten. Does it say Eleanor or Elizabeth on her gravestone? She needs to check the name engraved on it and then she will know what her own name is. She could ask her son what her first name is but he is so exasperated whenever she asks him a question. Or his eyes start to mist the way they did when he was a child and struggled with his reading. She'd made little signs and hung them all over their home, word labels for bed, table, chair, window, room, on and on. She'd sat with him for hours and hours, making up little stories about words so he could remember them. When he arrived home from school each day, she'd say, "Yellow, Charles" instead of "Hello, Charles." And he learned to respond, "Y-E-L-L-O-W, Mommy." She'd been relieved when math came easily to him.

Now she doesn't live in a neighborhood. She lives in a big house with too many people. Or she did until she left. The last thing she remembers



### III. FAMILY

## KENNETH WISE

### *A DAY AT THE BALLPARK*

The baseball slowly rolls across the dirt next to home plate and comes to a halt beside the catcher, who picks it up with his bare hand. He turns to the umpire, who straightens up from his squatted position, looks down at the clicker in his hand and says in a barely audible voice, "Ball."

The batter remains frozen. The umpire, who has the lifeless demeanor of a person handing out rental shoes at a bowling alley, points to first base and says, "Take your base." The batter lobs his bat towards his dugout and heads to first. There are players at each base, and in a choreographic fashion, they all slowly jog to the next one. The runner from third steps on home, picks up the bat from the last batter and walks towards the visitor's dugout. He slaps five with the batter on deck, who steps up to hit.

The scoreboard flickers from 5-0 to 6-0. The light that signifies outs cruelly remains unlit. I stand up from the wooden beam that runs across the dugout, wipe the dirt off the seat of my pants and grip the rusty chain link fence that provides protection. This is just the first inning. It already feels like it's endless and, without any outs, it's going to last an eternity. The worst part is that my son is responsible. He has thrown one strike in the last four batters. It's a walkathon.

"Come on, James, just throw strikes." James's hat is pulled down to just above his eyes. The cap creates a shadow over his face, so I can barely make out his expression. He nods to me and steps on the rubber.

James lifts his leg, pulls his arm back and hurls the ball towards the catcher. The ball ricochets off the ground. The batter attempts to avoid it by jumping, but it clips his front foot. The umpire holds his hands up and declares, "Dead ball." He directs the player to go to first. Once again the runners move ahead one base, and the scoreboard flips from 6-0 to 7-0. I close my eyes and massage my forehead.

The head coach for our team, Bill, on the bench with his arms and legs

out like he's relaxing at the beach, says to me, "He's really struggling today." Next to Bill is a player, Eric, who is also sitting on the bench. He is creating a pyramid from stones he's gathered from the ground of the dugout. His focus on the construction of his miniature Mayan structure makes him impervious to the events around him.

"I know. He looks great throwing at practice. I don't get it," I say.

"I'll give him some more time. Hopefully he'll come around." Bill says.

I clap my hands and yell to James, "Come on. Get a big leg kick and stay on your powerline."

James nods to me, lifts his leg and fires the ball over the plate. The catcher receives the ball in his glove and freezes, waiting for the call. The umpire stares at the location of the pitch, stands up, lifts his mask off, pulls out a small towel from his back pocket, wipes his face and ponders. He looks like a husband, stuck at Home Depot with his wife, being asked to pick between two color palettes so they can paint the guest room. I look over to James, who awaits his decision like a convict bracing himself for a sentence. "A little low. Ball." The call is a body shot to James's gut. He bends in half and grabs his legs. He stands back up, puts his hands on his head and goes back on the rubber.

A little low! The players are nine years old! My son is floundering out there, and this moron is worried about a few inches. I take a breath, calm myself and yell to the mound, "Good pitch, James. Really good pitch," I say in a slow, loud, deliberate voice so the umpire will know he missed a call. "Just get it up a little higher." James keeps his focus on the plate and delivers another ball. As soon as it leaves his hand, the upper trajectory is evident as it flies well over the head of the catcher and the umpire. The scoreboard operator, sitting in a wooden structure above home plate, ducks for cover as the ball smashes into the wood directly below her. The umpire remains fixed in his position and says, "Ball."

I take my hat off and rest my head on the fence. This is terrible. I scan the field. The second baseman has both arms extended and spins in circles while slowly releasing dirt from his ungloved hand into the air. He appears to be sending some sort of distress signal to overhead aircraft. Third base is talking to the runner on base, and centerfield is turned sideways, staring off into the distance. I yell, "Come on, guys, baseball ready. Someone make a play!" None of the players bother to respond.

The third base coach from the other team claps his hands and says to the

## DEBORAH A. SCHMEDEMANN

### GLORY

10:00 Sunday morning, July 5th, 2015, the north side of Chicago: the city is waking up and warming up. My husband and I enter the century-old church and settle in to worship.

Although I have never been here before, this sanctuary is familiar space. Beams stained deep walnut crisscross its high, white-washed ceiling. The pews of well-worn oak flank a still-plush rose carpet. The sun filters through stained-glass windows depicting New Testament scenes. Two ranks of organ pipes frame the altar, into which is carved "Heilig, Heilig, Heilig"—Holy, Holy, Holy in German, the language of my forbearers. I am a mixed-brand Christian: baptized by an Episcopalian Army chaplain, raised Presbyterian by parents with Baptist and Lutheran roots, married to a one-time United Church of Christ pastor, sometimes a Methodist, now a member of a U.C.C.-Presbyterian church. Yes, this place says "church" to me.

Soon, I am swept along into the service celebrating our nation's birthday under God. I recite familiar liturgy, listen to familiar scriptures, nod to familiar themes in the sermon. I rise in accord with the asterisks in the bulletin. With others, I sing out familiar verses as the organ hums along: "Our country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty."



Almost twenty-four hours ago, I met the new love of my life. Swaddled in a blanket of white printed with blue lions, this newborn was resting, pink head against bared breastbone, in the arms of his mother, my older daughter Mary. Mary had given birth to this baby boy at 1:39 a.m. on July 4<sup>th</sup>, and she and her husband Adam had named their baby, my first grandchild, Luke.

When I took Luke from Mary, I gazed first at his rounded rosy head, capped in delicate brown strands. His big eyes peered back, blue-brown and

unflinching. His nose commanded attention. My first words about the new love of my life? "Gee, he has a really big nose." His pouty lower lip looked like a tulip petal. He was alert as could be, rested still against my chest, and gave off an air of disgruntlement and curiosity. His shoulders and arms too were clothed in delicate brown strands (Adam: "He's a beast!"), and his pink hands curled into loose fists. Newborn though he was, he seemed somehow familiar.

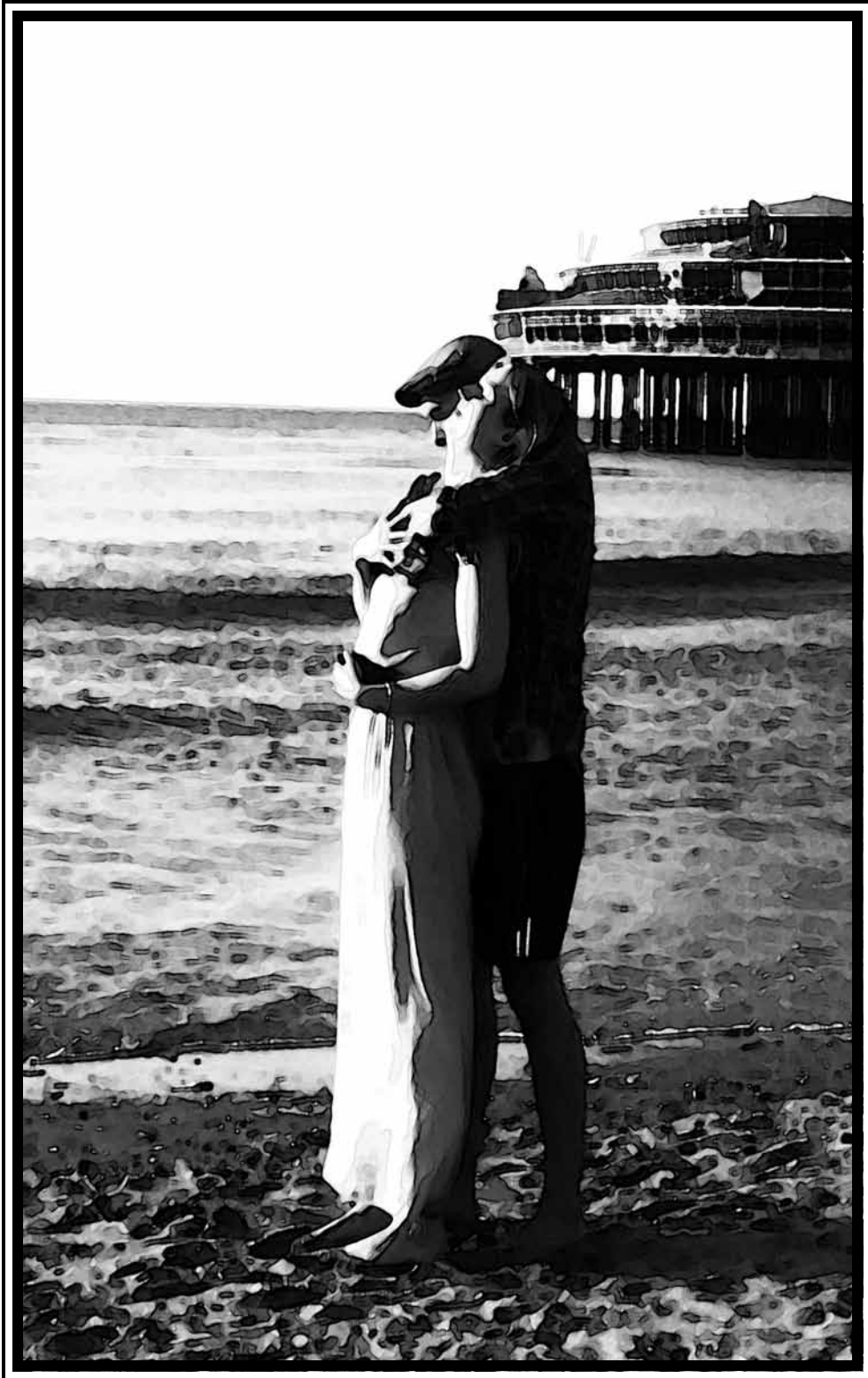
So, I thought, *we finally meet*. Intuitively, I had known of this baby boy for nine months. I am not a mystical person; indeed, most would describe me as analytical and practical; I was a lawyer and law professor for over three decades. And yet: I had a dream about Luke's conception about the time he was, in fact, conceived. And about two months before his birth, when no one knew his gender and his parents had not revealed their choices of names, it came to me, as I jogged, that Mary would bear a boy on July 4<sup>th</sup> and name him "Luke."

As I held Luke in my arms that first time, my emotions were a spicy stew. I was awe-struck at his mere being: he was, as all newborns I have ever cradled, a testimony to life beginning and an embodiment of innocence. I was grateful to be alive for this moment: my wonderful mother died when I was a teenager, and in my deepest being I have never expected to experience milestones that she missed. I was relieved that all had gone well: Mary had planned on a home birth, only to discover as she was about to deliver that the baby was in breech presentation, requiring an ambulance trip to the hospital. I was pleased—yes, proud—that my strong and determined daughter had pulled off a natural breech delivery of such a big baby (eight and a half pounds—oof!).

Yet, deep down, I was melancholy: it was July 4<sup>th</sup>, and I missed my patriot.



One-eighth of little Luke's genes trace back to Keith Schmedemann: my father, Mary's grandfather, Luke's great-grandfather. One day, Luke will learn that I kept my maiden name when I married out of devotion to my father; that Mary's original last name, Bowmann, was formed from parts of her father's last name (Bower) and mine; and that Mary gave Luke that same name, Bowmann, as his middle name. Although linked through a few letters, Keith and Luke never overlapped in life: Keith died at ninety-three in 2013, over two years before Luke was born.



#### IV. INTIMACY

**DON THACKREY***MY WINTER SUN*

As when the sun relieves the chilled dawn's grey  
 And choreographs the sparkling in the snow,  
 So Helen's morning glance provides a ray  
 Of light that gives our home a gentle glow.

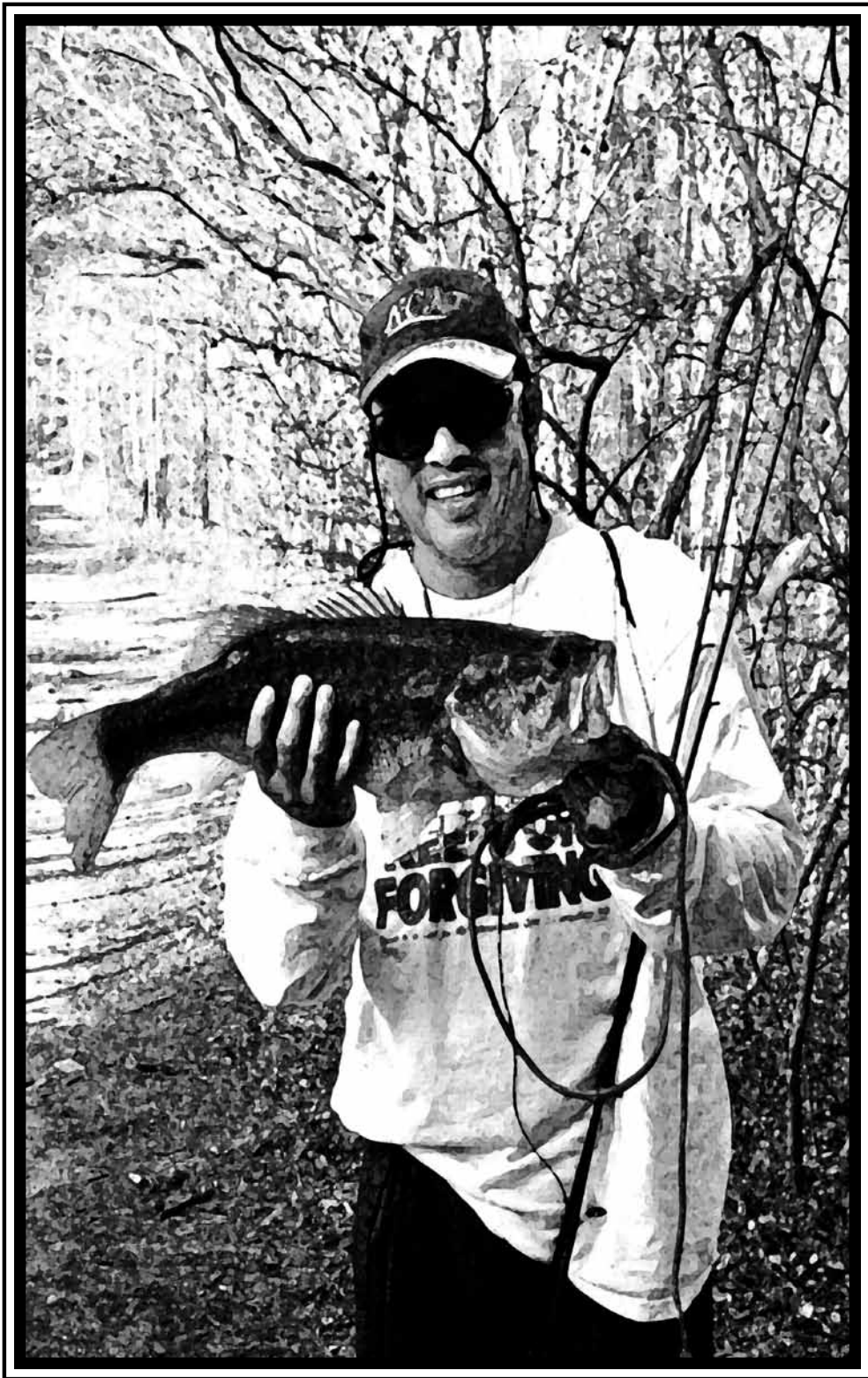
I don't know why this earth-bound angel smiles  
 When payments on our debts are in arrears;  
 We missed our ranching goals this year by miles,  
 And botulism hit our herd of steers.

Our middle son is prey to alcohol,  
 The baby seems to have a lung disease,  
 The twins at school face trouble for their brawl  
 With toughs who ended up with injuries . . .

But still, despite all woes I might compile,  
 My Helen daily warms me with her smile.

**FRANK SALVIDIO***AGAIN*

I am too old to be in love again,  
 Yet all the ancient symptoms reappear:  
 Her red-gold hair; the sudden heartbeat when  
 I hear her name; the urge to be there where  
 I know she'll be; and then to say her name  
 Again—again!— just as a schoolboy does  
 Who falls in love at sight. It's all the same,  
 With everything again just as it was.  
 But it's ridiculous to want to hold  
 Her hand; even to think I could would be  
 Preposterous—absurd—and far too bold  
 For someone of my years. I cannot see  
 What this new adolescence can presage,  
 Except that I'm in love—and at my age!



## V. THE QUOTIDIAN

**FELICIA MITCHELL**

until I started a minuet,  
 a faster tempo lifting its wings,  
 and then I got up to vacuum.

*BOURRÉE WITH GOLDFINCH*

In the morning,  
 I threw sunflower seeds  
 onto the porch  
 and left them there,  
 temperature dropping,  
 as I did my chores.  
 Sweeping, dusting,  
 washing—it was all a dance,  
 the dance I do at home  
 alone with chores.  
 As cold as it was,  
 I took compost outside.  
 It was for the earth or the crows,  
 whichever took it first,  
 and also for me,  
 a reason to stand at a bare beech  
 that towered over me  
 and look up.  
 Later, dusting piano keys,  
 I began touching them,  
 one and then the other,  
 until I sat down with a bourrée  
 Bach wrote for his children.  
 It was simple and sweet,  
 and it made a goldfinch pause  
 just outside the window  
 as I played a dance  
 even birds can dance to.  
 The goldfinch stayed

## MARGARET HASSE

### *DAY AFTER DAYLIGHT SAVINGS*

The blue numbers said I forgot  
to change the clocks, which set  
routines on haywire.

Like a domestic goat staked  
to its circle of earth,  
I don't do well untethered.

Outside a disruptive wind  
turns leaves up-side-down,  
provokes the eaves to whine.

I have no hunger for early dinner,  
become confused by the sound  
of children who seem out

too late for a school night.  
They've found an extra helping  
of daylight to romp on new grass.

They can't contain themselves,  
strip off jackets, scatter  
like a rag of ponies.

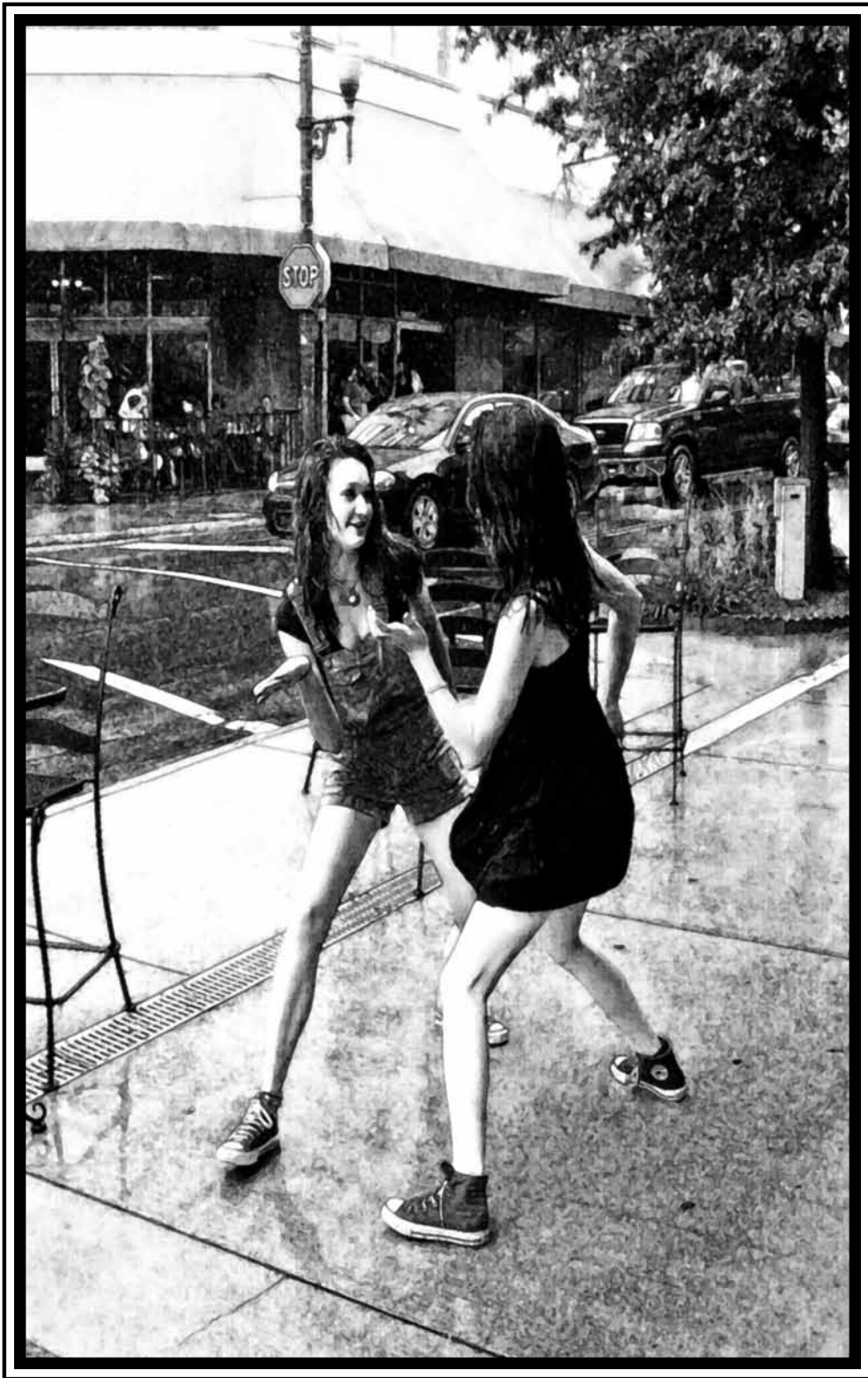
How can I regret one fugitive hour?  
Whatever time says, children's joy  
insists on springing forward.

### *WHAT THE WINDOW WASHERS DID*

They arrived in a truck at 8 a.m.,  
introduced themselves as Dave and Mike,  
said no, they brought their own supplies  
and equipment, said yes, pay in advance.  
They circled the house, removing storms,  
tugging at last year's ivy that cast its spell  
of thatch across the east windows.

I opened the door to Mike, watched  
as he positioned water bucket and rags.  
Through grimed glass latticed with cobwebs,  
Dave appeared on the outdoors side.  
As if starting a fight, each lifted  
his Windex bottles at the same time  
and seemed to squirt the other in the face.

The men, silent as mimes in a mirror  
with big hands tracing one another,  
rubbed the surfaces of all the panes  
until the glass squeaked and disappeared.  
The sun, free to fly in, flung  
a rectangle of light onto the floor.



## VI. COMMUNITY

## ZACK ROGOW

### *SUNDAY MORNING BERNAL HEIGHTS*

*for Francine Slack, my freshman-year high school English teacher*

Walking down from the crest of the hill  
 I glimpse the bay  
 fitting itself  
 snugly around the city.  
 A big black lab off-leash  
 bounds up  
 and shlurps my fingers.  
 "Maui," shouts the man behind him,  
 "stop that!" with a hint in his voice  
 that he knows there's no way  
 his dog will ever stop.  
 I buy bagels at the Good Life Grocery—  
 pumpernickel, onion,  
 everything. And lucky day!—  
 at the little latte shop I score  
 the last chocolate croissant for my daughter  
 with its tongue of dark flavor.  
 I pass a couple on the bench  
 in front of the Liberty Café,  
 the man weaving his arms together  
 to basket his baby  
 with its black lawn of hair,  
 an infant so new  
 the tags are just off,  
 and at that instant I know  
 I'm here to learn how to cherish  
 all that will endure  
 long after I'm gone  
 and even what has not yet  
 passed through the membrane.

### *A LITTLE BEFORE 3 P.M.*

Barry and I walk down to the East River Bank  
 because he needs to cash a paycheck  
 and I need to withdraw a few dollars.  
 We jaywalk Amsterdam at 96th  
 and Barry points out the marble of Mary  
 outside the Church of the Holy Name.  
 The statue has bare feet  
 poking out from the bottom of her robes.  
 Barry goes to look for a post office  
 and I head toward Sunflowers,  
 which has the best buy in the neighborhood  
 on my favorite health food junk food.  
 The February sunlight plates everything on Broadway  
 with slightly tarnished silver.  
 The wind chaps my face.  
 Around 92nd Street I end up  
 behind an aging bum  
 who's ambling downtown.  
 In a guttural voice  
 he suddenly bursts into song:  
*This magic moment...*

*DAFFODIL MADMAN*

From my bed I'd see the old nut  
sneak out after midnight, pockets stuffed.  
Before dawn he'd return, pockets empty.  
In black of night he buried bulbs  
in junk-strewn yards of Scuffletown,  
paper-coated teardrops  
lurking dormant under earth  
while footprints faded.

My mother disapproved, afraid he'd get shot  
and we couldn't waste money but  
he never got caught.  
A short man with spectacles, brown mustache,  
schizoid, unemployed.  
Me, a kid, to be seen with him was  
murder by mortification.

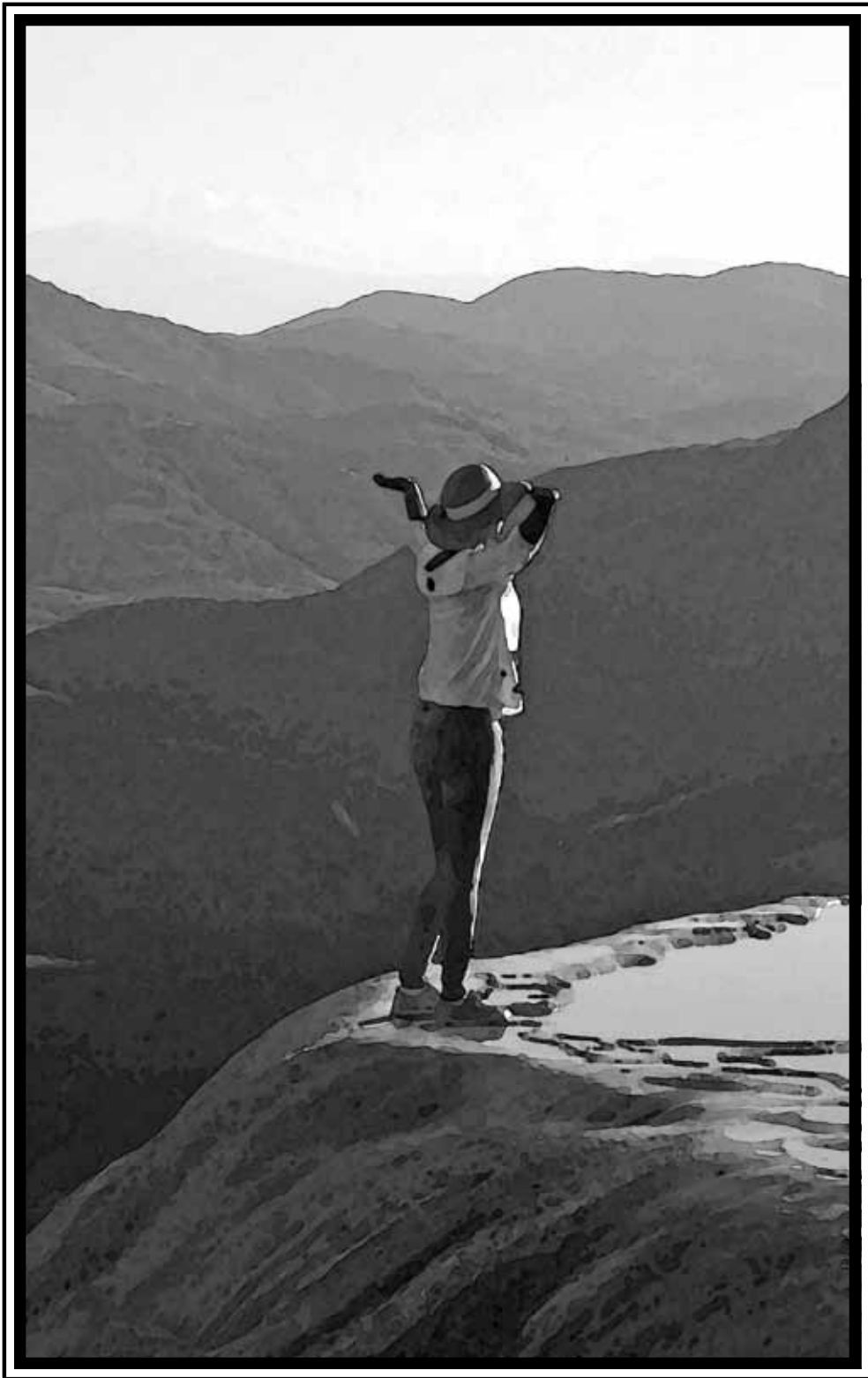
Fifty years later and far away  
they tell me all around Scuffletown  
come bursts of yellow each April  
from joy banked in dark times.

**JAN SARCHIO***I DON'T GET IT*

Chris has holes in his jacket, two of them, on the collar, at the back of his neckline. Fiberfill, the stuff they pack into pillows, is fingering its way out like a tiny polyester cloud. He doesn't care one lick about this course of events. He knows the holes are there, but the rest of the jacket, as far as I can see, is intact. Nan, one of his current "helpers" points to a picture of him that he has tacked to one of several bulletin boards in his room. He's on a motorcycle and he's wearing the same jacket. I tabulate the years between that photo and now and it's no less than twenty. This is the only jacket he's worn over that time, despite the fact that there are three "new" ones collecting dust in his closet.

We all try to take care of Chris. We all want to make sure he's warm, has pants without holes in the crotch, shirts that aren't frayed, socks that corral his wayward toes, hats that keep the snow or sun off, swimsuits that don't expose his privates, underwear with upstanding elastic, shoes with soles. You get my drift. So, with us (his mom and dad), friends, a sister, aunts and uncles all making sure that he's "covered," his closet is loaded.

He wears through things at a glacial rate. Even when there are obvious bits missing, he is content to continue wearing them. "It's still good," he tells me about his trusty jacket, while I wave a new one in front of him, as if I am a matador and he is Ferdinand. He has nothing against the new things, but he is attached to the old. It's as if they are part of him, like old buddies. He holds on until the last thread snaps. He does this with blankets, sheets, upholstered furniture, well, he does it with everything. He still has some music tapes. He howls with great emotional pain when they get irreparably tangled in his tape player. In order to part with them he unreels all of the tape, cuts it into confetti, puts it in the trash, and weeps. We get him replacement CD's, which helps, but the old items seem to be woven into the fabric of him. When blankets, shirts, appliances, etc. break, he has to finish the job, rending them



## VII. RESILIENCE/ILLNESS

## JENNIFER L. FREED

### *RESULTS*

Benign!  
And you rise on the news  
with yellow wings,  
a tulip song.

Benign!  
So easy, now, to stay aloft.  
Even today's gray clouds  
an invitation.

How delicious,  
the neighbor's ever-barking dog,  
the incessant call  
of dirty dishes, laundry, dust.

Soon enough they'll lose their gloss.  
You know this.  
But for now—benign!—you float,  
feeling blessed by the mundane.

## WEIHUA ZHANG

### *MAKING A SNOWMAN*

Having lived in Savannah, Georgia, for almost twenty-two years, snow is the rarest scene to behold. I can't recall any sizable snow accumulations all those years since I moved to Savannah in August 1996 to accept a teaching job at The Savannah College of Art and Design. Hence, Winter Storm Grayson 2018 came as a welcoming surprise. When the white fluffy snow miraculously fell from the sky on an unusual wintry day, it took my mind off my scary recent diagnosis. I never thought that this once-in-almost-thirty-year weather phenomenon could bring a much-needed relief to my heartache, sadness, and angst. For the first time in two weeks, I found myself laughing into oblivion, as if there were no tomorrow.

January 3, 2018 started with a freezing rain, with the high temperature dipping below the twenties. Historically, the average high for Savannah in January is in the sixties, so this was quite a drop. By noontime the freezing rain had turned into flurry, which quickly intensified. Fat snowflakes kept piling up, leaving a thick blanket of snow on our driveway and the front lawn. A rare winter wonderland. You have to understand that *thick* is by Savannah standard—where a trace of snow coupled with freezing temperature could cause havoc on the road. The sudden drop in temperature proved too much for our twelve-year old heating unit, which struggled mightily to crank up to sixty-six degrees. Bundled up with layers of clothes, I watched the snow from our dining room window, my aching heart growing heavier by the minute. I was not in the mood to enjoy the snow, however rare it might have been. In anticipation of the frozen roadways and snow, many schools, businesses, clinics and hospitals had closed for the day. Among them, The Center for Digestive & Liver Health, my doctor's office. I'd just had a CT scan the day prior and was anxious to get the result and possible treatment options. Now the snow had put everything on hold.

After an extremely busy fall quarter ended on Nov. 14, 2017, I finally

## JANA ZVIBLEMAN

### *JENNIFER SAID*

In life all I've wanted is for someone to fall in love with me.  
And when I got the brain tumor I thought  
"Well, I guess I won't be getting married."

There's a legacy I've given my girls:  
they know how to move a piece of furniture around a corner  
on a piece of fabric,  
how to make a soup out of bones, get rid of anger,  
re-finance a house.

We fixed up these two little houses. I think of downtown as mine. I do.  
I take care of it. Sometimes I'm out there sweeping the street.  
I love this downtown. Last week, I walked down to get some bread  
and I came back with a new guitar.

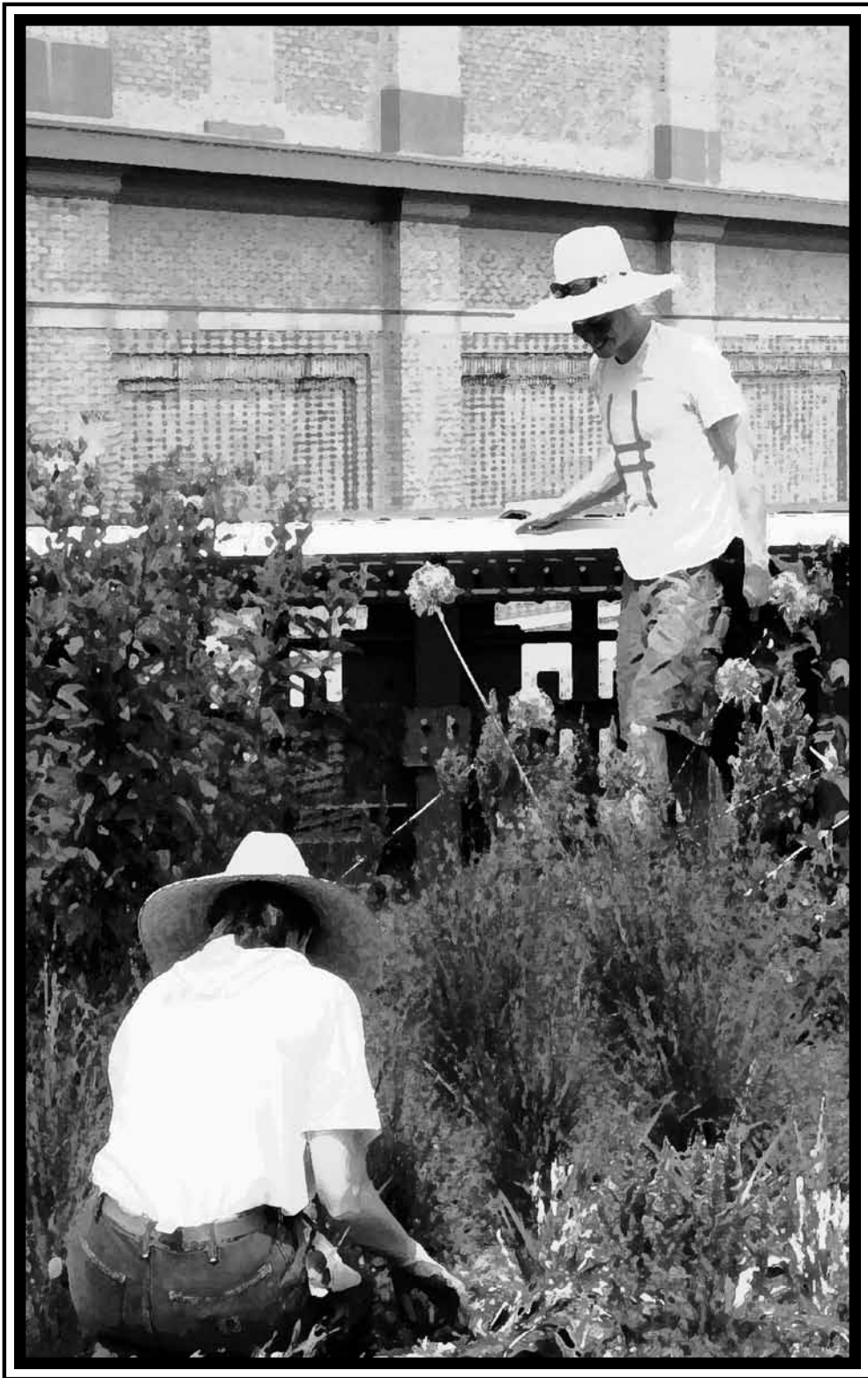
I've been going on shopping sprees. It's something I never let myself do.  
Like I've been buying mustard at the Safeway, for a taste test—I'm a  
scientist, you know.  
All the mustards. And peanut butter, thirteen kinds, and nine kinds of  
horseradish.  
Why go through life never knowing which is the best?

Yes, all my African Violets are blooming.  
In Oregon—funny.  
This is how I take care of them: Don't give them that special food.  
It doesn't matter what people say,  
don't worry about their leaves getting wet.  
You can have one if you want.  
I don't need any more plants right now.

I wrote a poem.  
How to Fall in Love with a Terminal Cancer Patient.  
The poem goes "First: Do ask her how she got the black eye."  
So that tells you a lot,  
that tells you that the terminal cancer patient  
is a female, and that she's not afraid.  
She's active, and she's not afraid to go out with a black eye.  
and she's still searching for love.

And I did go out. There were times I thought, "Oh, right,  
I've got to put the concealer on,"  
I would sometimes not bother. My girls would say, "Wear the glasses, they  
help cover."  
Sometimes I would just not.  
After the fall in the Safeway parking lot, the glasses were all bent up.

I don't have any other clues about how to fall in love.



## VIII. NATURE

**LAURIE KLEIN***HOW TO LIVE LIKE A BACKYARD PSALMIST*

Wear shoes with soles like meringue  
and pale blue stitching so that  
every day, for at least ten minutes,  
you feel ten years old.  
Befriend what crawls.

Drink rain, hatless, laughing.

Sit on your heels before anything plush  
or vaguely kinetic:  
hazel-green kneelers of moss  
waving their little parcels  
of spores, on hair-trigger stems.

Hushed as St. Kevin cradling the egg,  
new-laid, in an upturned palm,  
tiptoe past a red-winged blackbird's nest.

Ponder the strange,  
the charged, the dangerous:  
taffeta rustle of cottonwood skirts,  
Orion's owl, cruising at dusk,  
thunderhead rumble. Bone-deep,  
scrimshaw each day's secret.

Now, lighting the sandalwood candle,  
gather each strand you recall  
and the blue pen, like a needle.  
Suture what you can.





## IX. ILLUMINATION

## CLAUDIA VAN GERVEN

### *A WEAKNESS FOR FALLEN ANGELS*

Across a city of desperate steeples  
just this scrap of sunshine warming my  
shoulder, this gorgeous, poisoned sky, these

small leftover birds singing to the wild  
promise of nothing in particular. God  
leaps in slow, green light, a mathematical

truth, simple and powerful—so everyday  
heaven is always looking for me  
with its barbaric, exquisite gaze, till

the winged bones flying up my back  
sizzle with a wilder knowing, the way  
the words crack open and fly beyond

salvation, toward the fluid geometry  
of here and now, with its feathered fears  
and outrageous joy. Above the literalness

of life, is the confidence of stars to shine  
full of deep mysterious gratitude, time  
collapsing into a vast intuitive delight

### *EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE*

God gives up playing dead  
just arrives soaked in light and  
vertiginous glory. We could simply

fall up to heaven, skies so luminously  
blue, so see-through the birds  
are Bible pages, speaking gorgeous

nonsense—but we know exactly  
what they mean. Flight and swoop—  
amazing words to live by. And

all the numbers add up and up  
the science of wisdom and the science  
of happiness become the unified

theory of joy. Salvation swirls  
in the brilliant squawk of black  
birds, how they spiral to heaven

in all that holy caterwaul. Divine  
encounters make argument  
unnecessary, everything said is

in spirit of—"I am that which I  
am"—and so are the blackbirds