

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.

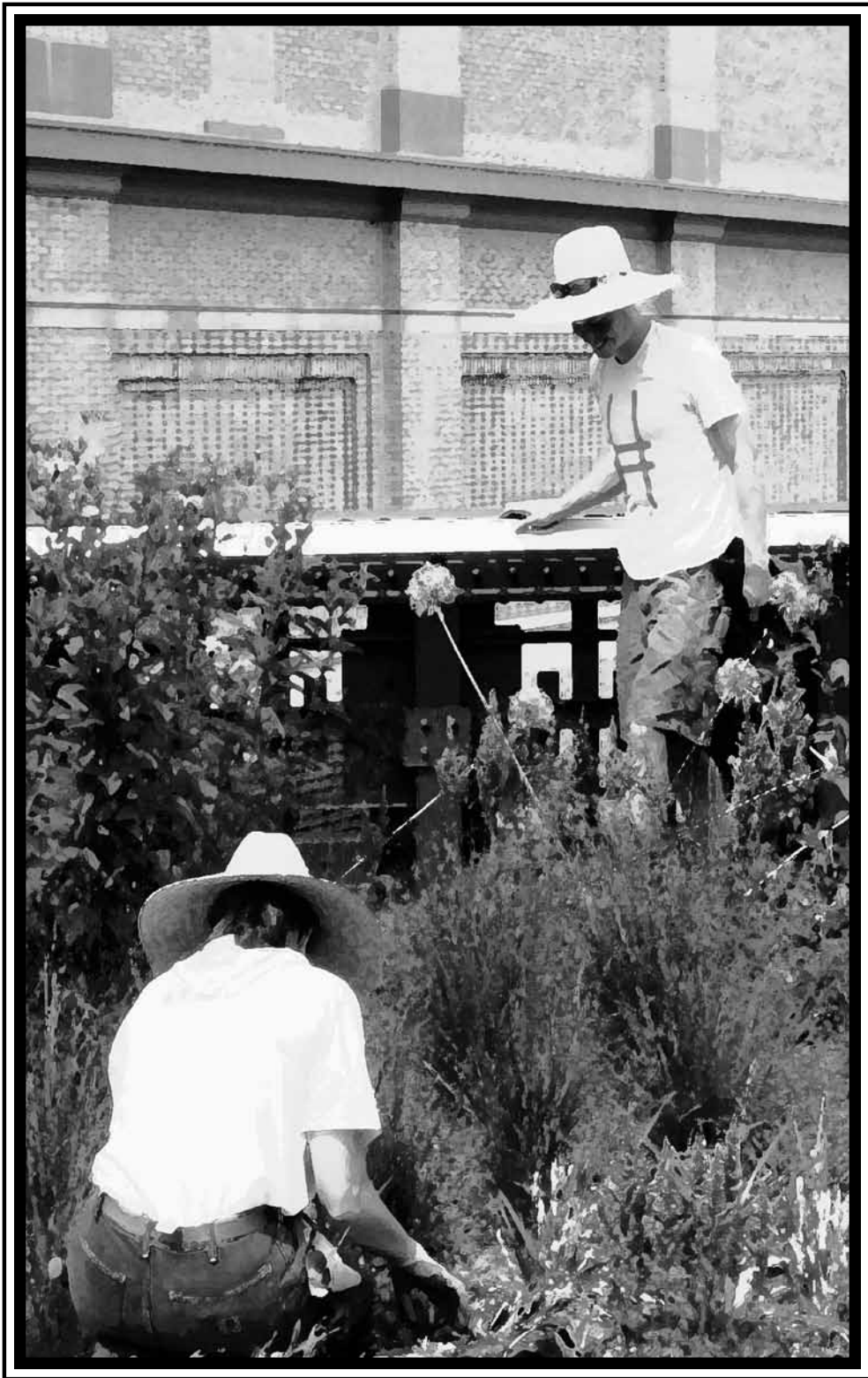
I've been going on shopping sprees. It's something I never let myself do.
Like I've been buying mustard at the Safeway, for a taste test—I'm a
scientist, you know.
All the mustards. And peanut butter, thirteen kinds, and nine kinds of
horseradish.
Why go through life never knowing which is the best?

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.

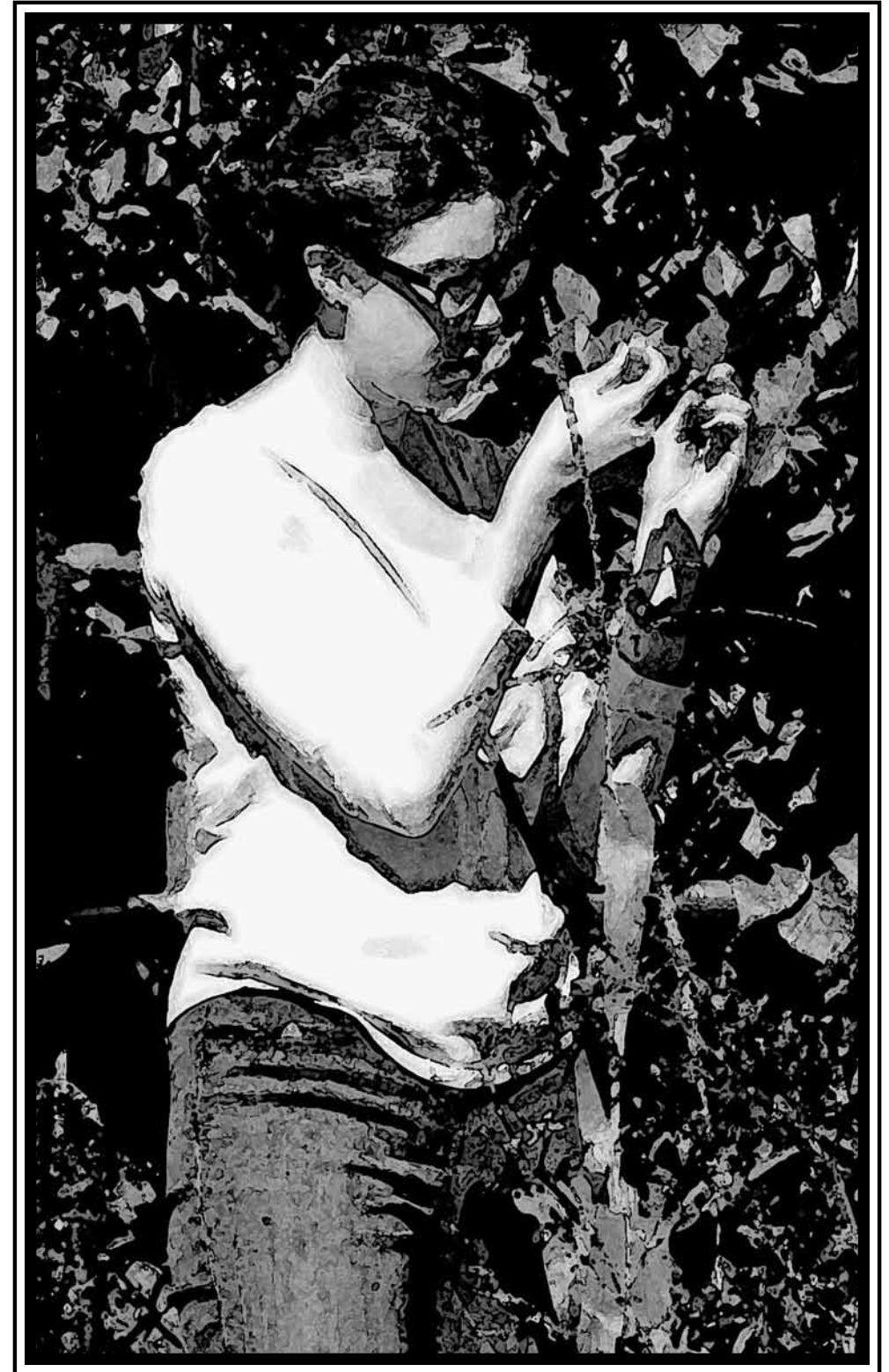
Drink rain, hatless, laughing.

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