

THE WRITE PLACE

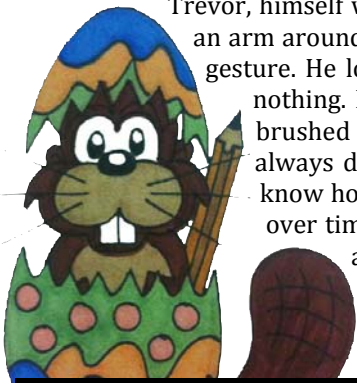
A newspaper dedicated to the Greater Montreal area writing community

NEW
AND
EXCITING!



HOLLOW EARTH by Kate Macdonald

The way out is a long tunnel towards the light, but it doesn't help when you know the light is guiding you out there, into the chill and bluster and snow. I'd rather have stayed home. I'd rather stay in the tunnel, for that matter, waiting for a better plan to come to me. But we move towards the door, silently, sullenly, knowing what awaits us. A blast of wet, cold air, strongest right at the threshold, for maximum shock effect. Imogene has a thin jacket on, corduroy and imitation leather, green and brown, thrift store chic, barely covering her skinny little frame. It fascinates me, this little jacket, because I'm almost paralyzed, cloaked in my black wool leviathan. I'm expecting her to freeze and then shatter, pieces blown into the wind down the street, unrecognizable as human. I can picture it.



Trevor, himself wearing a thin coat that would be inadequate past October for most people, reaches out to put an arm around her, but she has her head down to keep the snow out of her eyes and seems not to notice the gesture. He looks at her and I think he's wondering whether or not to try to reach out again, but he does nothing. I think about trying to reach out to Peter the same way, but it would be too humiliating to be brushed off. He'd scowl at me and ask what I was doing and I'd adopt that chirpy, good-humored tone I always do at such moments, to reassure everyone that he's always cranky, to make them think that I know how to handle it and inside another syringe full of rot would shoot into my system. It's killing me over time, I know. But if it's going to kill me, I would at least like to pretend that I wasn't also humiliated. They don't believe that these things don't hurt, I can see it when they look at me, but they let me pretend, which is what I've become willing to accept.

The wind swirls the snow around, pushing it right into us, into our faces. It sticks to our hair, it slashes at our foreheads. I can feel my face aching from exposure. The five of us - me, Peter, Trevor, Imogene, and Les - what a bereft company we must make. Les trails behind us a few steps, still a little weakened from a bad flu that lingered. I can hear him breathing even over the wind. He was laid up at home with fever so bad, he told us, that he was hallucinating, convinced all of his family and friends had been in the room with him, when he was actually in his apartment by himself.

There's a look of anxiety that runs behind his eyes when he talks about waking up, suddenly lucid and alone in the middle of the night. The power had been knocked out by a storm and his heat was off. He could see clouds above him when

(Continued on page 4)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Pay Your Own Way <i>Editorial by Joseph Richard Mannella</i>	2
Submission Guidelines <i>Publisher</i>	2
The Antique <i>Fiction by Andrea Bassell</i>	3
What Would I Do? <i>Poetry by Sheila Blacker Wolfe</i>	3
John Brown's Hand <i>Fiction by David Reich</i>	6
Tristesse <i>Non-fiction by Muguetta Myers</i>	7
Obligatory Kisses and I-Love-You Punctuation <i>Non-fiction by Mary F. Elliott</i>	8
Maddie's Empty Glass <i>Fiction by Claudia Del Balso</i>	8
Captain Goes Down With The Ship <i>Poetry by Jeff Curphey</i>	9
La Sposa September <i>Poetry by Ilona Martonfi</i>	10
The River of Confusion A Bubble of Love And It Goes On A Working Farmer <i>Poetry by Shai Yassin</i>	11
The Write People <i>Spotlight by Rosalie Avigdor</i>	12

THE YELLOW FLOWER by Muguetta Myers

It was a beautiful spring in France that year. Maman, when she went shopping, always brought home flowers for our table. I loved flowers.

That day she brought back a yellow flower with a black heart. To my five-year-old eyes, it was the most beautiful that Maman had ever brought home.

She gave it to me and told me to have it with me always. In order for me not to lose it, she sewed it on my coat. I was very proud and I pitied the other girls in my class who did not have one.

When I was walking in the streets, I sometimes saw young men looking at me and sneering. I figured out the reason they did so was that they were jealous of my beautiful flower!

Then one day, Maman told me that I could not have the beautiful flower any longer and she took it off my coat.

That happened many years ago.

Today my Yellow Flower rests in my Bible. It has the shape of a six-pointed star - the Star of David - with the word JUIF (Jew) stamped in black at its heart.

PAY YOUR OWN WAY by *Joseph Richard Mannella*

Student demonstrations have become the rule rather than the exception over the last few months in Montreal, protesting against proposed tuition hikes. Perhaps a better understanding of tuition structure is in order.

Starting during childhood and continuing through adolescence, the government subsidizes 100% of a student's tuition, from elementary school right through secondary school. They subsidize the tuition for those students who are too young to work and pay for their own education. When a student graduates from secondary school, they are assumed to have all the education they need to find gainful employment and join the work force.

CEGEPs and Universities provide students with extra, specialized knowledge, allowing them to better their chances of lucrative employment once they enter the work force. As this education is obtained during a period of time where the student is of an age where jobs are generally available to them, the government asks them to start paying a portion of the cost of their education, as this schooling is primarily for their own benefit.

Quebec students pay the lowest tuition for what is arguably the best education available in Canada, an education right up there with any available in North America. The portion of the tuition that is subsidized by the government is covered by taxes they collect from the general public and from companies. The increase in tuition proposed by the government will still leave the students' cost lower than any other educational institution in North America, while transferring some of the cost of that education from the backs of the public to that of the students who are actually benefiting from it. The Quebec public shoulders the highest tax burden in Canada. Perhaps it's time to give them a break and let the students share a larger portion of the responsibility for their future.

In real life, you learn very quickly that, to get ahead, you have to pay your own way.

Submission Guidelines

An eight- to twelve-page B&W news magazine, dedicated to the English-language community of the Greater Montreal Area, will be published every three months. Submissions for entry into the paper will be accepted from any writer, with preference given to those resident in the Greater Montreal Area.

There will be no compensation to the writer for any work that we might publish. All submissions will be reviewed by our team of editors. There is no guarantee that any submission will be accepted for publication, nor that any accepted submission will be published. Submissions can be made a number of ways:

by e-mail : the.write.place@hotmail.com (Subject line: Submission)
 by fax : (514) 383-6683 (with a cover page)
 by snail mail : The Write Place, C/O 9770, boulevard Saint-Laurent, Montreal, Quebec H3L 2N3

Please include, with your submission, your name, an e-mail address where we can contact you, and a short bio that we might include with your story, if it is accepted. If you have a picture, please feel free to include it. If you want your snail mail submission returned, please enclose a SASE with sufficient postage. Any submission you provide should try to stay within a reasonable limit of these word count guidelines:

Short story :	500-2000 words	Postcard story :	250-500 words
Poetry :	3-50 lines	Book reviews :	500-525 words
Articles (by experts in the field) :	500-1000 words	Letters to the Editor	50-250 words
Advertisements:	increments of 1/8 page (contact us for rates)		

THE WRITE PLACE

FOUNDER & PUBLISHER Rosalie Avigdor
MANAGING EDITOR Joseph Richard Mannella
CONSULTANTS Steven Manners
 Michael Hanna-Fein
 Arnold Hanna-Fein
ORIGINAL GRAPHICS Laura Mannella

Web Site:
www.canadianwriterssociety.com/writeplace.html
E-mail: the.write.place@hotmail.com
Snail Mail: The Write Place
 C/O 9770, boul. St-Laurent
 Montréal, Québec, Canada H3L 2N3
Telephone: (514) 707-9396
Fax (514) 383-6683

Volume 1, Issue 3. Copyright © 2012 The Write Place. All rights reserved. The Write Place is published four times annually by Fifth Page Publishing and circulated free-of-charge to a controlled circulation within the Greater Montreal area. The material reproduced in this publication is supplied and published on behalf of contributing writers. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this material, the publisher takes no responsibility for errors or omissions, or for any consequences from reliance on this material. Illustrations used in this publication are supplied by contributing artists and are accepted in the belief that they are the contributing artist's property and that they have the right to use them. The publisher does not accept responsibility for any illustrations improperly supplied or not acknowledged. The opinions of the columnists and writers are their own and are in no way influenced by or representative of the opinions of The Write Place. No material may be reproduced without the permission of the copyright holder. Beaver logo trademark pending.

Send submissions to our e-mail with "Submission" in the subject line. Snail mail will be accepted as well. Please include your name and address in all correspondence. There is no compensation to the writer for any work that may be published. All submissions will be reviewed by our team of editors and we reserve the right to edit all material received. There is no guarantee that any submission will be accepted, nor that any accepted submission will be published in the next issue.

Before publishing an Author's Work, a publishing agreement will be signed by both parties, specifying that the Author grants to the Publisher, and the Publisher accepts from the Author, Primary first serial, one-time rights and license to print and publish the Work in the English language in Canada. In no event shall the Publisher be obligated to publish or cause publication of the Work if, in the Publisher's opinion, the Work violates the common law or statutory copyright, or the rights of privacy, publicity, or any other right of any third party or contains libelous or obscene matter.

THE ANTIQUE by Andrea Bassel

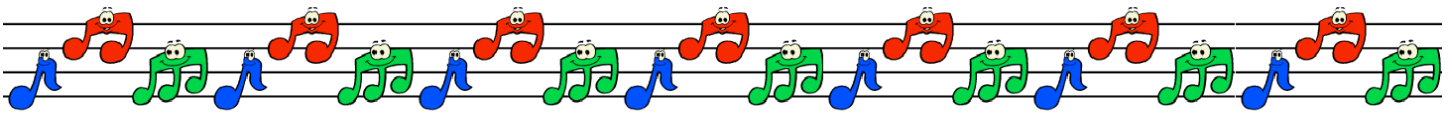
Night had fallen on the countryside. Snow was swirling, dancing around us, curling frivolously around our arms and legs as we stepped out of the car. We had just stopped at a country inn at the onset of a storm. A golden aura emanating from the frosty windows had beckoned with a promise of cozy comfort in an easy chair or a soothing, hot quaff by the fireside. We braced against the wind and trudged over the gentle slope of snow to the front porch.

Suddenly, wild turkeys scattered around us, flinging madly about the trees in a chorus of raucous honks, finally disappearing into the dark woods. We dashed for the porch door and threw ourselves inside, catching our breath. Inside, the room was awash with the sounds of boisterous conversation and live music and the scintillating aroma of baked goods and fresh coffee filled the air. Wrestling out of our coats, hats and mittens, we dropped languidly into the warm, upholstered chairs and relished the inimitable ambience and welcome relief from the elements outside. My eyes were drawn to a large armoire holding chipped, yellowing teacups and old photographs and then to a smaller, delicate cabinet nearby. I crossed the room, knelt down at the cabinet and tugged a knob, opening a door which revealed ten little drawers, hand-carved and stacked one upon the other. Each drawer slid open easily, showing exquisite wooden inlays. The little gem was for sale.

We spent the next hour enjoying good food and coffee and some friendly conversation with the local folk, until it was time to head home. We wended our way through the storm outside, fortified by our visit, and trudged heartily to the car while the wind was still bent on nipping at our heels.

Later it was good to be home. I sat in a chair by the piano, making notes for the next week's lessons. But mostly I rummaged through my music books, trying to sort the choicest ones into ten distinct categories, to place in the ten drawers of my newly acquired music cabinet. What serendipitous fortune had brought together the search for respite from a winter storm and this treasure, that I may have a special place to put the objects of my passion and love.

I slid open the first drawer to put a stack of music in. I felt something, a small wadded piece of paper, which I carefully pulled out and unfolded. It was a torn piece of sheet music, old and crumbly and definitely of the classical genre. What fortune, indeed! All through the week my students enjoyed hearing the story, almost as much as I enjoyed telling it, and we all had a good look at the small sample of written music taped to the top drawer for posterity.

**WHAT WOULD I DO?** by Sheila Blacker Wolfe

With a large sum of inheritance, what would I do
Throw out everything old, buy everything new?

Initially that is what I really thought
Mansions in Europe, new car or a Yacht?

A round-the-world trip planned especially for me
Sounds real exciting - Possibly!

Maids, cooks, and butlers at my beck and call
Or maybe purchase the Bal Harbour mall?

Mingling with the elitist, wearing diamonds and pearls
Operas and ballets, lunch dates with the girls?

All the above are quite tempting indeed
Though it's not what I want or what I really need!

But since I am a staunch Hockey Fan
And my Canadians are failing, I would do what I can!

Purchase the Franchise, non-producers I'd fire
Top coaches and managers would be those I would hire!

The best that money could buy are those I'd call up
And bring back to Montreal our most treasured Stanley Cup!

To get into the playoffs they need a miracle or two
That's where I would come in to try and rescue the crew!

To accomplish this feat we need guys who can score
The likes of Crosby and Ovechkin plus three or four more!

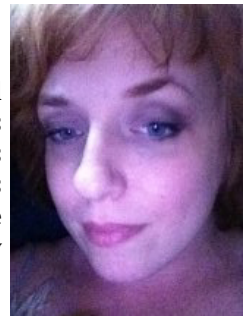
So that is what I'd splurge on if I won the big bucks
Get the top bananas who could handle the pucks!

Now's the time to bear down cause time is fleeting
They have to get serious or they'll be attending GOLF MEETINGS!



(Hollow Earth, continued from page 1)

he exhaled and then, as the congestion in his chest became worse, he watched the clouds grow wispy and insubstantial, becoming thinner no matter how hard he pushed to get air out. He realized that there was no air in him and lay there imagining that his lungs had frozen when the power went off, that he was gradually dying from the inside out, blood growing thick and heavy, icicles forming on the inside of his stomach cavity. He didn't tell the story as a frightening one, he told it as a joke - how funny it was that he had been so out of it. But the fear was in there, peering out at us, begging for help through his muddy eyes.



It seems like a very long walk in the bitter cold, but I know it isn't. It takes us longer than it should because it's difficult to see. The place we are going is on a street with a number of townhouses that cry out for care and the one we turn into is crying more plaintively than the others. These were elegant homes once, but now they lean on each other for support, a mix of rundown housing for peripatetic tenants and homemade storefronts to meet the tenants' immediate needs. The entrance to the place we are heading has a plywood vestibule stuck on the front of it. When we go in, I realize that this is because the door is so decayed that without some sort of protection, the wind would tear right through the interior. The girl sitting at a makeshift desk at the front asks us for our coats, which I surrender against my better judgment. Inside is a sizeable flat, about a third of which has been converted to a sort of performance space. There is a recess in the front, a bay window that would look out on the street if it were not covered in blankets and towels. The recess is ringed by a few colored lights to denote that this is a stage. Facing the stage in what would otherwise be the rest of the living room is a gang of mismatched chairs. There is a sofa at the back of the room, that looks more comfortable, where I want to stretch out and be held, but I know better than to suggest to Peter that he and I sit there. We sit around the middle of the room, next to each other, on separate chairs. Imogene and Trevor sit behind us on the sofa. Les sits off to the side, where he has a better view of the room.

Imogene's friend Veronica is there, which I try not to mind, even when Peter makes a big show of going to greet her. They try to hug, but miss each other in an awkward series of pivots, unable to decide what they want that hug to reveal. She is looking at me, around his back. I face forward, having no one to speak to, and turn the corners of my eyes towards them. I cannot stop myself from looking, from feeling how brightly he shines for her, from observing how theatrically happy he acts, but I try not to incline my head too much towards them. I see him glancing over at me from time to time, making sure I'm watching. If he thinks I'm not looking, his voice gets louder. I feel the pressure of my own discomfort pulling the life out of me, leaving me hollow and shivering and acutely aware of the wind leaking around the doorframe and past the blankets in the windows. I would do anything to be out of this place, except go back out into the cold again.

Behind me, I can hear Imogene talking to some others. These are her friends, after all, and we are here following her lead. A collection of artistically inclined outcasts, some of them performing, others gathered to watch. Imogene is performing, but not on stage. Her voice carries throughout the room, illuminating the modern history of her sex life, the ridiculously complicated things that she has done with Trevor, and with another. The mention of another is expected in this room, because we all know that Trevor is one of two in her exciting life at the moment. The other is away for the weekend. Sometimes, the three of them go out together for effect.

I could turn around and be part of her audience, but it makes me uncomfortable, her vomiting forth of details, parts, accessories, smells. Perhaps it's because I'm prudish and conservative and too uptight to even listen to these sorts of lurid tales, because, in this crowd, that is exactly how I feel. Really, I'm always afraid that somehow Imogene will point the spotlight on others, that she will want them to share their details, if only so that her stories seem that much more risqué by comparison. What would I say if I were to describe my own misadventures? Peter and I hardly touch each other. He likes nothing except the obvious and he doesn't clean his bed sheets as often as I would like. I respond to nothing from him because I know whatever happens, I get nothing. Imogene's stories seem to cross lines of what is physically possible, but she sounds like she's talking about an intense bowel movement rather than an emotional high. I would sound like I was talking about sleep.

A ragged-looking master of ceremonies hops into the designated stage area, announcing that performances are about to begin. Peter dutifully takes his seat next to me. Veronica curls up in a smaller, cushion-laden chair on the other side of him. I try not to react to the way his hand dangles tantalizingly over her leg. I want to try to start a conversation with him, but all day when I've opened my mouth, he's been dying to pick a fight. It started last night, when he got home late. He made a point of telling me that he didn't want me prying into where he'd been, which meant that he wanted me to know I wouldn't be happy about it, twisting the knife in my gut a little more. He'd had an aura of disappointment, like a sour gas, around him. I could see that some plan that had fallen through, perhaps with Veronica, or perhaps with someone new. Whatever it was, I was somehow implicated in it, if only by being there, wondering if he was going to come home or not.

The first act is someone reading poetry, bad, bad poetry, stringing words together, trying childishly to follow a rhythm. I see Les, who has distanced himself from all of us, leaning and whispering to a girl with a pink face next to him. She is cute, cute like a doll, with a perfect little smile. He leans way too close to her to seem casual, probably too close to see her smile turning stiff while he talks. She can smell that hint of desperation on him. Perhaps he's telling her the same story about when

he was sick. She finally gets up to join a friend of hers on stage, since they are the next act up. He reaches to pat her arm and just misses her as she steps aside.

The pink-faced girl and her friend strum guitars and sing self-consciously naive folk songs. Children's songs, really. The twenty or so people in the room catch on and sing along with the choruses, Les more enthusiastically than the others.

I can feel the outside getting in, the cold cutting right through my clothing and getting under my skin. The wind has picked up and, in the portion of window visible above the blankets, I can see snow, a lot more snow, coming down. There is a sudden moment of panic. I could be stuck here. We could be snowed in and be left to entertain each other, forced to endure each other until the storm passes. The storm could trap us in here for hours, and all that is keeping me sane at this moment is the belief that I could stand up and withdraw to my home if only I could convince myself to go out into the cold. Needing camaraderie, I take a look around the room to see if anyone else is watching the storm, getting scared at the idea that they may not be able to leave. People are either looking at the performers or at each other. Imogene leans close to Trevor, pressing her torso against him, the globes of her breasts shifting noticeably, unhindered, beneath her worn cotton shirt. He starts, because she almost presses into his lit cigarette, and pushes her aside to protect her. She simply turns to the other side and starts talking to one of her friends, in a stage whisper that everyone around her can hear. Trevor's so concerned that she might get hurt, but he leaves bruises.

I try to imagine how long it would take me to walk home from here, struggling through the wind and mounting snow by myself. A long haul back home. If I could find a taxi, I could take one. But the issue is not really how I could get home if I left. The issue is what would happen afterwards. Peter sits there next to me, ignoring me, avoiding me, like he does every time we go out. But I've tried leaving without him before, tried walking away entirely. That's when he loves me, with such intensity that I regain my fool's faith.

The next act is another folk singer, a sort of one-man band, with instruments sticking out of him everywhere, half troubadour, half android. The pink-faced girl stands next to the entrance, talking to the girl at the door and pulling on her coat. Les approaches her. She looks a little puzzled, withdraws just a step from him while he talks to her. And then, without waiting for a more welcoming signal, he's writing down his phone number for her, which she accepts with a noncommittal smile. He moves closer, as if to hold or touch her to seal their contract, but she is gone, as quickly as that. He folds his arms over his chest, smiling a little so that everyone understands that he has accomplished something.

The bitterness of the air cuts through me when she opens the door. Outside has become desperate, worse even than when we arrived, which already felt like it was going to do me in. Between acts, I want to talk to someone. I want to talk to Peter for lack of another option, but somehow, this would be breaking a rule. Besides, he is talking with Veronica, leaning low over the side of his chair, so that his face is almost touching hers.

I want to be away from here, away from this squalid den, from the bodies around me. I imagine myself simply standing up, demanding my coat from the pile in the closet and walking out and away, out into the storm, because if I was cold, if my fingers were freezing and sore, if the skin on my legs was burning from the bite of the wind, at least it would mean that I was something, that I had a body to feel. In here, I am nothing. Mindless, disembodied, unknown and unremarkable. I am appalled at my own hesitation, wondering what else could possibly be needed, what would actually motivate me to rise from this seat where I can get neither comfortable nor warm. I wonder what would quell the sense of dread I feel at the thought of walking out of here.

I have a vision of my life, unchanged, twenty years from now, with Peter and children, children borne from boredom and lack of options, running around us in this room, watching us sit, ignoring each other in our better moments, wishing each other dead behind our dulled eyes. It's not going to happen, of course, neither of us wants married life and children anyway. Half the time now, when we're still young, we can't stand the sight of each other. There is no future between us, and yet there always seems to be a present. I am still here and he is still sitting beside me. We are both death-still.

He is no longer talking to Veronica, or talking at all. He is staring ahead, waiting for the next act to begin. I remember when we first started seeing each other, how intertwined we suddenly became, how we went from strangers to filling up every moment of time for the other, filling it with candied sentiment. I try to imagine describing that time to Imogene and having her mistake what I was talking about for a sex act. She would marvel at its intricacy, its serpentine grace. And how would I describe that involvement now? Constricting both of us and petrified over time? His hazel eyes flick towards me at a regular beat, but I know better than to show him that I notice.

I wonder if he remembers our beginning the way I do, a sliver of idyllic time. I wonder if that memory is what makes him howl when I start to leave.

The stage remains empty, although the MC calls out from his seat at the back of the room that more is coming. People are talking, little groups of friends forming, their voices rattling all around me, separate from me.

And not knowing what else to do, I reach out and start to curl my fingers around Peter's.

He snaps his hand away, as if I've burnt him and gives me a brutal scowl. He keeps his eyes on me a long time.

JOHN BROWN'S HAND by David Reich

The class, led by their teacher, Miss Abigail Perkins, shuffled slowly past the museum's exhibits. They paid little attention. The Curator accompanying them was disturbed by their indifference, their preoccupation with trivia and complete lack of interest in relics of their past. The boys poked each other and pulled the girls' hair to evoke delighted squeals. Miss Abigail, abraded by years of fruitless struggles with heedless kids, tried unsuccessfully to hush their whispered snickers and stifled giggles as the Curator explained the historical importance of each display. But twelve-year olds aren't fascinated by faded manuscripts of a state constitution, or a chair that once had held George Washington or a plough pockmarked with two centuries of rust.

They perked up as they passed Jesse James' pistol and learned how many the outlaw had killed. But the procession shivered to a halt before a large, decayed daguerreotype labeled *John Brown*.

The portrait showed a bent, decrepit man, his face seamed with years, squinting at the camera. His patched clothes hung loosely from a shrunken frame that huddled behind a kitchen table, supporting itself on an outstretched arm. But it was his right hand that aroused the group's rapt attention: his fingers were frozen into a hideous claw that appeared to clutch air. It was not pretty.

Deformity always arouses youngsters' morbid curiosity. The kids came to life: "Who was John Brown?" "What happened to his hand?" "Was he born that way?" "And why on Earth would he let it be photographed!"

The Curator had found his audience. "Those are excellent questions, and not many know John Brown's story. But you will after I read it to you from a pamphlet I wrote.

"This is an early photograph of John Brown, a cousin of the renowned 'John Brown' whose body, according to the anthem, '...lies a-moldering in his grave, but his soul goes marching on....' Those words were on the lips of Union soldiers as they fought and died to preserve their country."

The Curator whistled a few bars; some in the group nodded in recognition. He cleared his throat and continued.

"He and his sons died in a premature attempt to abolish slavery and their sacrifice rallied the nation during the Civil War that ended the practice."

"The 'John Brown' of the portrait was a judge. Like his famous cousin, he detested slavery. Its practice, enshrined in law, was well established: slave owners could buy and sell humans torn from their African roots and deported in chains to America. Their families were separated and the fragments auctioned into perpetual servitude. By law, they were owned by their masters."

"If they ran away and were re-captured, they were brutally punished. It was illegal to help them; they weren't humans, they were property."

"Despite the risk many chose to flee. They headed north, hoping to reach Canada. But, as they were easily recognized by their black skin, sympathetic citizens devised what was called an 'underground railway' where runaway slaves could be hidden in safe houses and spirited to freedom. If caught, the fugitives were imprisoned and, by order of a judge, were returned to their masters to face a painful reception."

"Judge John Brown presided over the only court in this district. He was a fine looking man, married, with children, a distinguished jurist with a promising political career. It happened that, within his jurisdiction, a slave was caught and jailed awaiting his deportation. It only required the Judge's signature. The bailiff representing the slave owner identified his slave and demanded that Judge Brown sign the order. It was a tense proceeding. The Judge looked at the document before him. He had no choice. The law was the law. The clerk handed him the pen. Judge Brown said: 'I cannot sign this document. My fingers are unable to hold this pen, or any other.' In truth, his fingers had frozen into the claw you see."

"The paper remained unsigned. The slave found freedom through that 'underground railway', but Judge Brown's career was over. With his crippled hand he sank into poverty and remained an obscure footnote to history. Just before his death he declared: "I was torn between my sworn obedience to uphold the law and my revulsion to returning a human to slavery. I could not reconcile my dilemma, but my hand decided for me: it froze and never wrote another word. My tortured hand served its purpose. I never regretted it. Had I signed that order, my soul would have been deformed."

The kids were silent. They concluded their visit in the museum cafeteria, where, over cocoa and cookies, their conversation was unusually subdued, even thoughtful. Apparently they learned something from that visit. Miss Abigail took the Curator aside and thanked him. "My kids can't stop talking about your story," she said. "I'd never heard it; it's something I'll always remember and discuss with my classes."

The Curator lowered his voice. "You never heard it because I made it up. It always attracts my visitors. The 'John Brown' you saw on that wall was a dirt farmer, no relation to his more illustrious namesake. He and his wife, with a few slaves they owned, made a poor living growing cotton on a swampy patch he'd inherited. He was reputed to be mean, bad-tempered and

a cruel master. His evil nature was not improved because he'd been born with a deformed hand, a genetic defect that afflicted generations of male offspring. Impoverished by the war, he lost his farm when his slaves deserted him and John Brown disappeared, leaving only his faded portrait.

"He was never known to have benefitted anyone. Now he lies in an unmarked grave and can't contradict the story that I publicize in my lectures and writings. I credited that old reprobate with more than he ever deserved in life: I connected him to a genuine American hero and made him a symbol of resistance to cruelty and exploitation."

"But it was a lie!" Miss Abigail protested.

"True, it was a lie, but let's keep that between ourselves. Aren't we all inspired by legendary figures? By what we're taught they stand for? Let's stay with our illusions and add John Brown's tortured hand to the list."

Miss Abigail Perkins was not easily put aside. "Young man," she admonished. "A lie is a lie, whatever the excuse. And how can you be so certain of Brown's family secrets?"

"How can I be so certain? Miss Abigail, my name is Brown. My family is from the South. I'm an historian and there's nothing about them I don't know." He pulled up the sleeve of his jacket and exposed his right hand. Miss Abigail looked down at it, horror stricken.

TRISTESSE by Muguette Myers

I was sitting at my desk, listening to the CBC play Chopin's étude, Opus 10, #3, which I have always know as: "TRISTESSE". This piece of music holds a special place in my memory and in my heart.

It was in France at the end of September 1939, after the declaration of war. At that time the government, fearing that Paris would be bombed, evacuated all the school children towards the country.

My school (all girls) was evacuated from Paris with some of the teachers, and I ended up in a small town called "SENS" (famous for its beautiful cathedral) about 125 km South-East of Paris. In my group, there were between 75 and 100 children. Our days there were lived hungry and miserable, in school yards, away from our parents, not knowing what would happen to us or where our parents were.

At night we slept in the school's gymnastic hall, on the floor, on straw mattresses and we were warned not to eat the pieces of blue bread that were placed on the floor, because it was put there to kill the rats.

One evening we had some new arrivals. We went to bed like every other night, crying our eyes out into our mattress. But that night, a miracle happened. Suddenly, when it got dark, a most beautiful voice (belonging to a little girl my age) started singing:

*Tout est fini,
Les fleurs des prés
Se sont fanées,
L'été se meurt...*

which many years later I came to know as "Tristesse" or Chopin's étude #3. That voice soothed us and made us forget where we were. After she was finished, we heard her older sister say: "It's enough Rachel!". As soon as we learned her name, we kept calling out loud: "*Chante encore, Rachel!*" ("Sing it again, Rachel!") and later: "*Encore, Rachel!*" ("Again Rachel!"). Some nights, Rachel had to sing it three or four times. We never seemed to get enough of it.

Several weeks later, my Mother found me and took me away. I never saw Rachel or her sister again. I only know that they were Jewish... like me.

PROUD PRODUCTIONS



Marc Coté
514-482-0146
info@proudproductions.com

GRAPHICS & DESIGN

Mark Oraye **Owner / Operator**

Hot & Cold
hors d'oeuvres
full course
meals
&
Bar Service



Creative food
for
distinguished
tastes,
Free menu
consultations
&
tasting

Tel./ Fx: 514-489-9013

OBLIGATORY KISSES AND I-LOVE-YOU PUNCTUATION *by Mary F. Elliott*

This morning, I was sitting at my desk, audibly frustrated because the computer's document program wasn't working properly. My husband, ready to leave for work, was hovering over me, saying nothing. I could tell he wasn't paying much—if any—attention to what I was saying, but was just waiting for me to shut up so he could get his obligatory goodbye kiss before leaving for work. The look on his face said, "I'm ready for work. Why hang around? Gimme a kiss so I can go!"

I told him I didn't feel like kissing at the moment; I was frustrated with my computer. Besides, I don't like hello and goodbye kisses. I like to kiss when I feel like it, and not kissing when I'm expected to.

He said, "What if something happens to one of us today?" [Guilt trip!]

I asked, "So what you're saying is, if you die in some sort of accident, I'm supposed to feel a whole lot better just because I gave you a goodbye peck this morning?"

He said, "Well, I guess I'm just shallow," to which I replied, "You're task-oriented."

So he went to work, upset and sulking because I hadn't given him a kiss. That afternoon, I phoned him to make sure he wasn't still angry. He wasn't.

But he wanted a kiss when he got home later.

And then there's the matter of the back-and-forth volleying of "I love you." This occurs when one person says, "I love you" and expects the other person to say, "I love you, too" in rapid reply. This can be so uncomfortable, creating tension, especially in a new relationship when the words haven't yet been spoken by either person. If the second person wants to say it, that's fine. But if the first person has the expectation and the second person feels pressured into saying it? Not fine. Even in a long-term relationship, the spontaneity is lost when "I love you" is always followed by "I love you, too." When someone says those important words to me, don't I have the right to simply wallow in them? To feel their weight? To soak up the meaning? Must I always say, "I love you, too" so the other person won't feel slighted?

I-Love-You punctuation is something different. It usually takes place on the phone, squeezed between "Goodbye" and the hang-up click. For example, my husband will say, "I'm leaving work in a few minutes, so I'll see you soon. GoodbyeLoveYou." *click* When "I love you" is said in this manner, I can't sense any thoughtfulness. I don't insist that every "I love you" be uttered on bended knee while gazing longingly into my eyes. I just feel that, when it's tacked onto the end of a sentence, it doesn't seem to carry any more significance than a hiccup or a sneeze. I want "I love you" to be said in a way that shows it was considered, and then conveyed with sincerity.

Epilogue:

A year after I wrote the above, my husband and I separated. On a couple of occasions, he was yelling angrily at me on the phone. Right before hanging up, I heard him say, "GoodbyeLoveYou." I'm pretty sure he didn't realize he'd said it. Old habits die hard. I rest my case.

**MADDIE'S EMPTY GLASS** *by Claudia Del Balso*

After a week of crying, I told myself, "Maddie, snap out it!" How could I have trusted a guy who had changed his name to that of his idol? Everything was a blur except for the slamming of the door and the empty wine glass he'd drunk from. It was still in the same place he'd left it.

Hudson's last words were a hangover that spun in my head. "This is my passion," Hudson sipped, as if to refuel his courage. "You understand, right?" Earlier that evening we'd argued about his trip to L.A. His career was taking off. Unfortunately, our love wasn't.

Like bruises, his smudged fingerprints remained on the empty glass. In the dimly lit room, Hudson raised his glass and toasted, "To new beginnings!" His face glowed in the chiaroscuro of this scene.

This was too familiar. Three years ago, my ex-husband had also followed his career: her name was Kim.

CAPTAIN GOES DOWN WITH THE SHIP *by Jeff Curphey*

A brave captain, his ship docked in the scene behind him.
 His family stands before him with tears in their eyes.
 They're starving, they're weak.
 His voyage will pay for their food,
 The price is they must live without their father and husband for a year.
 If he returns to them at all.
 The seas are treacherous,
 The world is hungry for souls.

His bags are packed, his mind is made up,
 But walking up the plank and climbing aboard is not easy,
 Even though it will mean saving their lives if he goes,
 And every one dying if he stays.
 He has to be a man and do the hard thing,
 Or his little girl will die, his wife would never forgive him.
 She can't even ask him to stay,
 Because she believes in him.
 That doesn't mean she understands why it had to be this way.
 Trust.

He's a hero to everyone except the little girl who can't understand why her father has to leave,
 Why her childhood had to slide by without him,
 Why she's grown up now, and he never returned.
 He let her down.
 She doesn't see that she's only alive now because of him,
 And he made the ultimate sacrifice.
 Yet she holds her grudge,
 His legacy is smeared.
 She hates him for leaving.

If only he could have returned for his little one,
 To tell her one last time his undying love for her,
 To explain why he had to do what he did,
 But he'll never return, not after the ocean swallowed him whole.

One day little girl, you'll understand why he had to go,
 And your love for him will grow and explode out of your chest,
 Because he saved you, whether you knew it or not,
 Your father is your hero.
 Even though all this time you were angry,
 One day you will see

One day, it will be worth it

LA SPOSA by Ilona Martonfi

Long, white silk taffeta dress,

hidden satin box on a closet shelf:
Your wedding, twelve years before.
Pearl diadem glittering with crystals.

White roses bridal bouquet.

Limousines. Rolls Royce.
The video man. A hundred guests.
Accordion, double bass:

Calabrisella mia—

Hava Nagila, the hora wedding dance.

Eldest daughter in long, silk taffeta.
October 8, 1988, your nuptials.

Embossed invitation cards.

You are long divorced.
Two daughters and one son.

Pink slip of paper, doctor's report—
"Scarring sarcoidosis of the lungs.
Grand mal seizures."

Anxiety and cognitive disorder.
Youth Court declaring you:
"An unfit mother!
Visiting rights under supervision."

Red-brick house on avenue Mariette:
A woman living in a foster home
under public curatorship.

Gessoed canvas and oils.
You play the acoustic guitar.

When magnolia blossoms fall.

SEPTEMBER by Ilona Martonfi

A children's swing
raspberry bush, free of fruit
barren strawberries:
hanging in the branches
of a blue spruce, old rusty chain,

grasshoppers buzz in tall dry grass
after 37 days with no rainfall.
Twin Towers crumble in Manhattan.
Newspapers scream the news:

Why didn't you tell me you had cancer?

They took your breast off, Mother
your right breast, you say
drainage tube stitched in place:
"The doctor was a butcher," you say.

A white butterfly floats by
the house stood here,
do you remember, Mother?
The house burned to the ground.
Black charred wood on the empty lot.

Father bought a black and white television:
Saturday night, Ed Sullivan shows.
450 rang Saint-Francois, Blainville,
here I was a teenager
fourteen, when we moved here,
older sister, Erna, married,
emigrated to California with William.

The white butterfly is coming back.



THE RIVER OF CONFUSION *by Sbai Yassin*

The twitter of birds is heard
 Dawn is here
 a tint of yellow patch
 Widened in the horizon,
 Soon the morning light
 Pulls back the curtain's night

The river of confusion
 Glistens under the bright sun
 Crosses drowsily demolished lands
 Bare forest painted with coal
 And carpeted with sand
 Foggy smoke slides on its face
 Silently it flows
 Expecting a metamorphose
 In its particles or its surrounding

**A BUBBLE OF LOVE** *by Sbai Yassin*

A servant of your love
 I voluntarily made a vow
 To preserve it and never make a bow
 To the harsh living where I used to grow

You brimmed my soul
 With your unshakable warm feelings
 That I stirred and stirred
 And not a ripple on its surface appeared

Hard to divert the feelings
 And leave the precious lost
 In the folds of the past
 And know that it will never be returning

The road is well known where it will end
 Hand in hand we walk with bare feet
 On a ground filled with thorns and beasts
 Inside the bubble of love we don't feel
 Their stings, beats and screams

AND IT GOES ON *by Sbai Yassin*

The river of life flows on
 a leaf floats on
 Knocked to a stone
 Without a moan
 Fondled the blades of the lawn
 And it was not torn
 Scratches were born
 The wind grown
 The leaf brown
 Ahead going through the rounds
 To last till the final round:

The sea

A WORKING FARMER *by Sbai Yassin*

Dig furrows on earth
 Hold the hoe as a third arm
 Commune with its stiffness
 Melt away foolishness

Sweat spring out of flesh
 The scent of earth fresh
 Brown streaks on a cloth
 Is a pride for a farmer

Detached of the self
 Crush down the worries
 With each beat of the hoe
 Sunk in earth then out:
 Loaded with earth

Peace spring out in his soul

he laughs at the others
 With weary eyes
 Though driving shining cars
 And lives in houses with raised walls
 To create peace
 Still their mood ripples heavily
 And buried in the grave

He wonders if they do his job
 Will they keep that mood?

THE WRITE PERSON *by Rosalie Fisher*

The City of Cote-St-Luc has a Scrabble club and its founder, Bernard Gotlieb, is a born and bred Montrealer.

Scrabble has been an addiction for him ever since his uncle, a lawyer and family Scrabble champion, played him when he was just a boy. Having been bitten by the word bug from a young age, he was immediately hooked.

He decided he wanted to start a Scrabble club in Montreal so, his friends being uninterested, he contacted the makers of the game, Selchow & Righter (at the time). Being involved with their own first big tournament back in NYC, they took a while to get back to him. Nonetheless, they were delighted that he wanted to start a club and gave him the coordinates of Joel Wapnick, an expert player just moved to Montreal from Binghamton, NY.

Invited up to Joel's house to play a game or two, he proceeded to be demolished by the more experienced player, who beat him with words he had never heard of before, like 'qaid' and 'jete'. Afterwards, Joel gave him a list of people who subscribed to the monthly Scrabble newsletter, which he used to contact Scrabble lovers and invite them to the first Scrabble meet he was holding at his house.

Being too young to run a Scrabble club (you had to be 21), he had an acquaintance run it for him in the beginning. They found a place to stay at Hingston Hall, on the Loyola Campus of Concordia University, where they stayed for a few years before moving to Rembrandt Park in Cote-St-Luc, eventually settling in Cote-St-Luc, at the Chalet in Trudeau Park.

"We meet every Wednesday evening from 7:00 pm to 11:20 pm. Once a year, the last weekend in May, which is Memorial Day in the USA, we hold 14 games, over a two day period, for our Montreal Scrabble Players Tournament, held in the Chalet in Trudeau Park. Players from all over Canada and the United States attend. Cost is \$60 per person ... prizes and food included."

Bernard has been in a wheelchair since 1982 and has the distinction of being the longest surviving bone marrow transplant patient in Canada. Bernard does all this from the confines of his wheelchair with his 'right hand helper' Sary Karnofsky. He is now in the process of finishing his book about his experiences and survival with the help of The Princess Margaret Hospital in Toronto.

What is most admirable about him is, despite his handicap, he continues to gather people around him, not only for the 31st year of the tournament but for the many weekly games that he has directed over the years, with a smile and a welcome for all who attend.

It was my pleasure to meet Bernard a few years ago and a greater pleasure to do this interview with him. We wish him continued success in his Scrabble mission and in his health as well. The Scrabble Club is fortunate to have such a devoted leader and we in Cote-St-Luc are equally fortunate to have this group as part of our community.

Anyone wanting more information about joining the Scrabble Club or joining the tournament can reach Bernard at bgotlieb@gmail.com or 514-484-0824.



NEXT ISSUE — Deadline for Submissions: **AUGUST 15th, 2012.**

The Summer season is upon us. Take some time to put on your shades, relax beside the pool, sip a margarita and soak up the rays. Get the neighbor's teenager to mow your lawn. Hire a handsome pool man to keep your pool clean and tidy. Play some golf. Shop. Dine. Party. And, through it all, if you do nothing else, remember to WRITE!

We look forward to receiving your SUBMISSIONS . . . short stories, poems, articles, book or movie reviews, letters to the editor. Let's get your name, and your work, out there for the public to enjoy! Be a part of our new and exciting plans!

