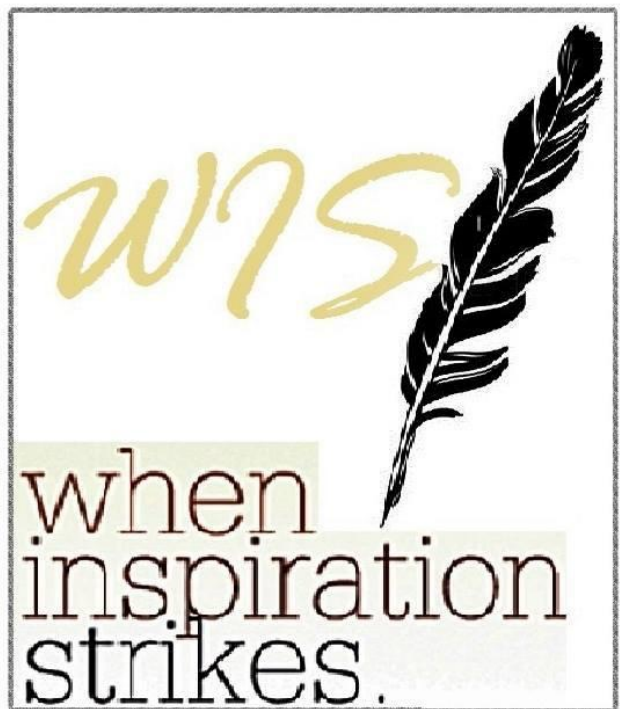


# WJSe-Mag

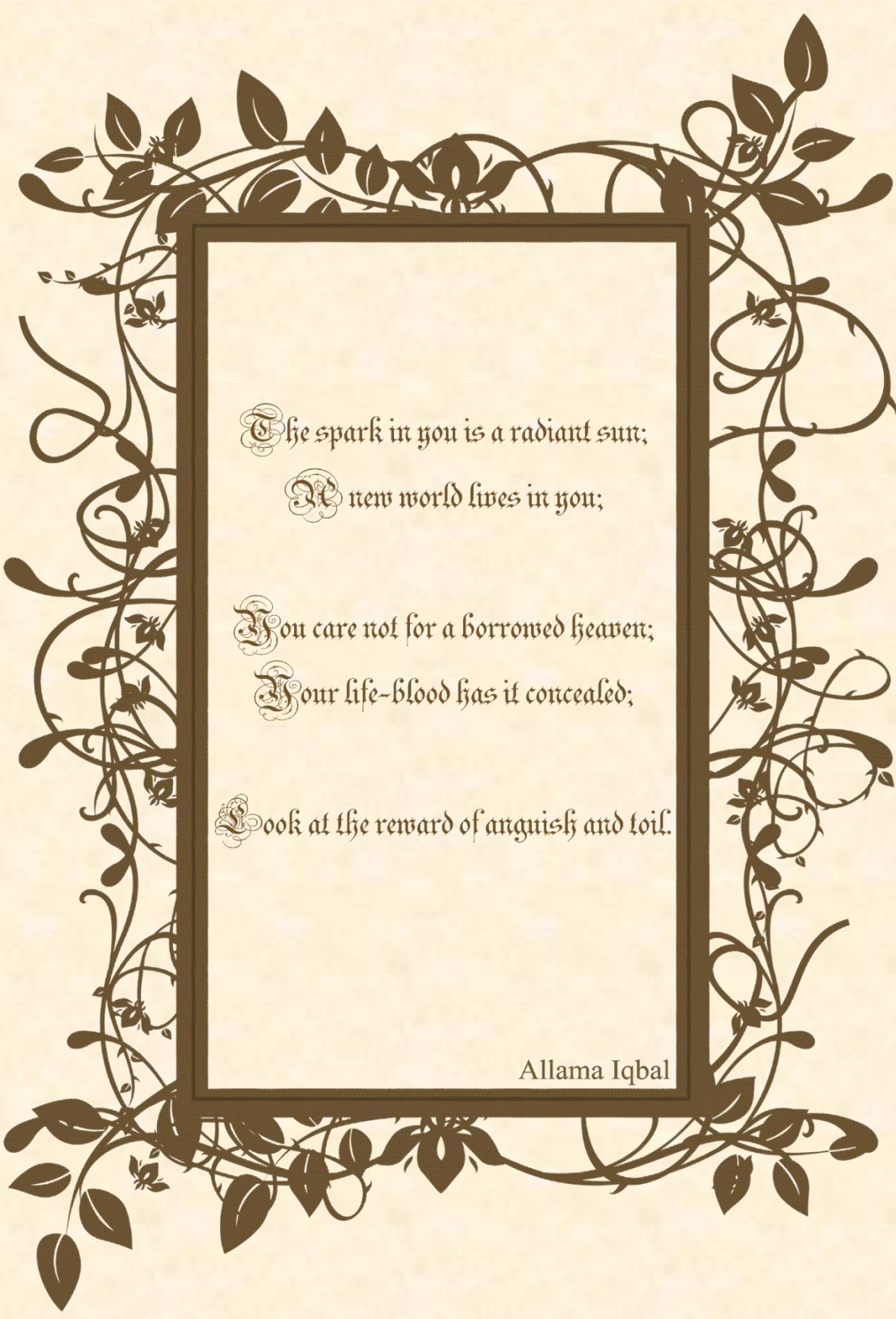
Poetry • Articles • Short Stories • Books' Excerpts & Reviews • Interview

*June '14*

When Inspiration Strikes



English Literary Forum



تھیہ spark in you is a radiant sun;  
اے new world lives in you;  
You care not for a borrowed heaven;  
Your life-blood has it concealed;  
Look at the reward of anguish and toil.

Allama Iqbal

## Message from Mr. Shaikh Mehmood



It gives me immense pleasure to pen down these few lines on the special occasion of the publication of First Quarterly Magazine by WIS (English Literary Forum) with a vision to inculcate healthy values of creative writings and literary pursuit coupled with an aim to depict our achievements in promoting the work of talented writers of English Literature. This could only have been, in fact, possible owing to the untiring efforts, dedication, and sincere services rendered by the every head member of Team WIS.

The magazine is enriched by the contributions of great philosophical, creative, and blunt writers from all over the globe; whose courageous pen tells the secrets of their soul, the experience of their life, and thus evokes the sensation of being enlightened in a reader's mind, by which he earns a quality to see the world through many new dimensions and deep perspectives; and finally becomes a flambeau of wisdom for his society.

We are thankful to God Almighty who granted us the vision to serve with the aim of providing the readers of every age group with quality material. And indeed, very special thanks to our prestigious and renowned contributors\_ without their support this would have been absolutely impossible...

It is our mission to carry on our untiring efforts with the same zeal & zest to make this organization Meritorious for presenting a much wider & brighter spectrum of literature by our each adjacent step. At this juncture I again extend my acknowledgment to all for their contributions and services and particularly to Miss. Shikha Sharma, Editor In Chief, without whose assistance & painstaking efforts this feat would have not been possible. I feel deeply indebted to her. It is hoped that you will appreciate the hard work put up by all of us.

**"THE MEDIOCRE TEACHER TELLS. THE GOOD TEACHER EXPLAINS. THE SUPERIOR TEACHER DEMONSTRATES. THE GREAT TEACHER INSPIRES."**

— William Arthur Ward

I PERSONALLY DEDICATE MY EVERY CONTRIBUTION & EFFORT FOR THIS SERIES MAGAZINE TO THE GREATEST TEACHER OF LIFE **"MA'AM NAEEMA ABBAS"**

***Shaikh Mehmood Bin Humayun***

*(Founder & Director WIS)*



*From the desk of*  
*Miss. Shikha Sharma*



The rush, the excitement, the impatience to get going at it already when you're at the start of something new is magical. And that's what I am going through at the moment; yes the excitement of publishing of the 1st issue of WISe-Mag.

For me it's not just an e-mag, for me it's my world, a dream that comes true. About a year ago me my friend Christine Ventre and Shaikh Mehmood sir started it with a page named WIS on facebook, we don't had any idea at that time that we will do next, but as I said it's a dream that comes true so here we are with our 1st issue of WISe-Mag the literary e-mag.

For making this dream true I want to thank all WIS TEAM Shaikh Mehmood sir, Christine Ventre, Sabrina Josefus and Urvee Tondwalkar, I also welcome Ankita chaturvedi, Ruhi Sonal, and Saniya Puri in TEAM WIS.

So what next after this, well our one dream comes true and now we are working so that we can achieve yet another goal, that's WIS Aspiring Writers (WISAW). Through WISAW we will promote young and new writers (who are looking for a platform to promote and publish their work). So if you have interest in writing or you have a spark where you can believe that you can write. Then don't back off. Come and be the part of WISAW.

As I said earlier that am excited and in excitement sometimes you don't find right words to describe your feelings and that what's happening with me now. So in the end I want to say thanks to our WIS TEAM again for making this dream possible and I want to say thanks to all my fellow writers who are publishing their work in our 1st issue. And thanks to all of you for reading the 1st issue of WISe-Mag. Thanks every one, love u all...

*Shikha Sharma*

*(Founder & Director WIS)*



## Editorial



*"If we want to achieve something, we have to work for it, but the first step is to BELIEVE in it."*

First I want to say Thank you to everyone who reads this.

We (the team of WIS) put a lot of work and love into it, but then it wasn't really work, because we enjoyed it as it is our passion.

Writing is a great way to express your feelings, to create new worlds, to escape the world.

With this magazine ("W.I.S e-magazine believes in the power of words that come together to create such beautiful creations"....Shikha Sharma.) we want to show you how beautiful the written word is how awesome it is to read and write and how important it is to believe.

Yes it is important to believe, even for a writer.

We have to believe in our characters and stories, in our poems and in our messages to the world, if we wouldn't believe in it; it would have no meaning at all.

Believing in something is one of our greatest superpowers.

We believe in something, and it motivates us, it keeps us going forward, it helps us to not lose hope when things get tough.

Believing in something doesn't mean that it will definitely happen, but if you don't believe in it, it certainly won't.

As example: A writer has a character in its mind, he is not sure if this will work, he is not sure if anyone will like it, but he just writes the story, always being scared no one will like the character.....what happens then? Well no one will like it, because the readers feel that the writer was insecure, that he didn't really like the character and so no one will like it, no one will even consider buying another book of him.

But what if he would have believed in it? What if he would have written the story with all his heart? What if he would have believed in his work and his character? Well then maybe the readers would have been captivated by his character, just because they would have felt that this is not only a fictive person but also a piece of the writer's heart and soul.

So when we believe in things, when they are important for us and when we don't let anyone tell us what to believe than we can be successful, yes Belief is the first step to success.

And it is a simple fact that this is not only valid for writers or other artists, no it's important in our lives anyway.

For everyone;

Who doesn't believe in anything, will never be happy.

Believing is vitally important.

And I don't talk about religions, even though that is important for many people as well.

I am talking about the Beliefs in yourself, your partner, your work, Love.

Believe in yourself and you will shine.

Believe in your partner and your relationship will grow deeper.

Believe in your work and it will be successful, even if no one is interested at least you can say you did it with all your heart.

Believe in love, and Love will find you.

Believe that every breath you take and every step you make can change the world for the better.

Believe that your life is important, but never forget that everyone's life is.

Believe that you can reach the stars and you will be able to.

Believe and you will be so much more powerful.

Believe and share it with others, make them believe as well.

If we all would believe in the beauty that surrounds us, imagine what great things we could all achieve.

Imagine how much brighter the world would be if we would all believe in the important things.

Imagine how much we could teach our children if we believe, we can teach them how to believe in themselves so that no one can bully them because they know then that they are okay as they are.

Imagine how successful our work would be if we would believe in it.

Imagine how much better we would feel if we would believe in ourselves.

So let me end this by telling you that I BELIEVE.

And I hope this magazine and this "short" note will help you believe as well.

Keep on dreaming, keep on writing, keep on reading, and keep on believing

*Jane Peskara/ Audrey Valentine*

*2,06,2014 Vienna, Austria*



## THE WIS TEAM

Shikha Sharma (India) - Founder, Chief Editor

Shaikh Mehmood (Pakistan) - Founder, Publisher, Designer, Senior Editor

Christine Ventre (USA) - Founder, Senior Editor

Sabrina Josefus (Austria) - Senior Editor

Ankita Chaturvedi (India) - Senior Editor

Urvee Tondwalkar (India) - Editor







Jinnah Library (Lahore, Pakistan)

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*"Poetry is when an emotion has found its  
thought and the thought has found words."*

*-Robert Frost*



There is no leaving  
this space we have created  
where no one else can go

No undoing sixteen  
and the time beyond  
that we filled with life

You fret over others  
Thinking they can usurp  
Your place beside me  
- But I know better

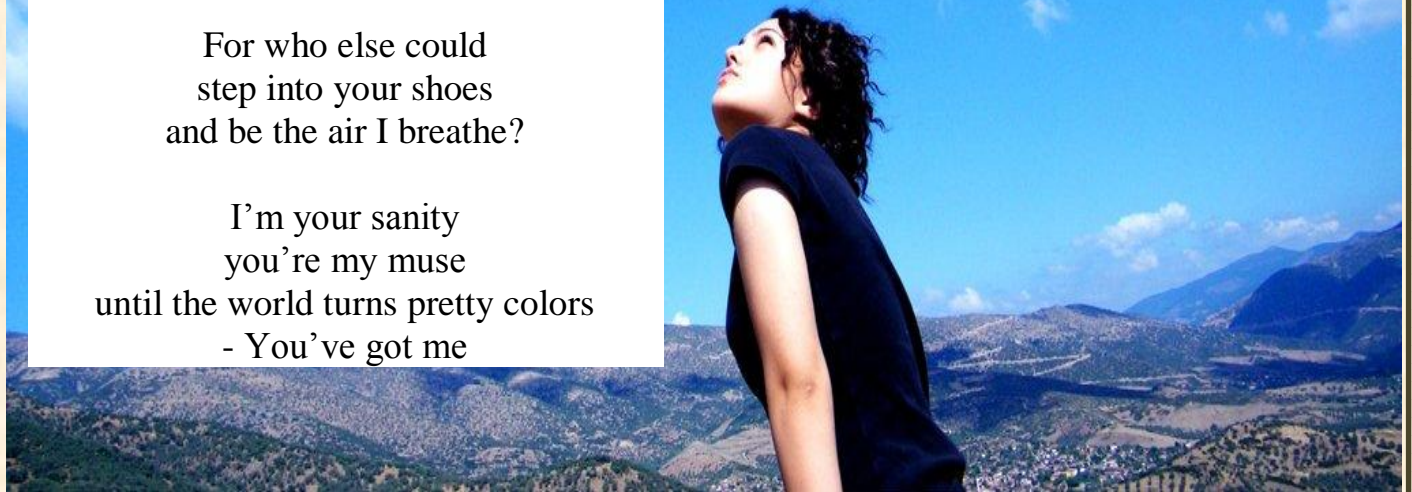
The path we walk  
and pave together  
we share alone

For who else could  
step into your shoes  
and be the air I breathe?

I'm your sanity  
you're my muse  
until the world turns pretty colors  
- You've got me

# Us

By Asheley Woodruff (USA)



## Biography

Asheley Woodruff from Washington is a published writer, lyricist, and poet. She began writing at the age of eight, using her grandmother's electric typewriter to draft her first stories. Asheley holds dual Master's degrees in Clinical Psychology and Creative Writing. In the past, Asheley has worked as a professor of psychology for College of Western Idaho and managed her own counseling practice in Boise, Idaho.





# When In Love

By Scott Hastie (UK)

## Biography

Scott Hastie is a successful British born poet and writer, who has been commercially published in the UK for over twenty years now. He currently has seven titles in print, including a novel and three collections of poetry. In recent years, the spiritual tone in his maturing poetic voice is starting to draw increasing acclaim from a worldwide audience, especially in the U.S. India & the Middle East.

[www.scotthastie.com](http://www.scotthastie.com)

When in love or inspired,  
An eternal kiss from the divine  
Awaits us all.

And, just as the frostiest of old maids  
Secretly longs to tremble  
With excitement in her bed,  
One more time.

Or the pained young lover  
Pitifully nurses a wound  
That renders their heart homeless,  
Mourning the loss of romance  
Seemingly gone forever.

The truth is  
Nothing that truly matters  
Can ever evaporate,  
Be excised,  
Burnt out of your soul.

And however ready we may or may not be,  
At any stage in our life,  
There will always be the chance  
To reclaim our essence,  
The shape we call our own.

For, once spun,  
The silken thread of all our aspirations  
Remains intact,  
It can never be broken.  
And, with courage, even a trail of tears  
Will always lead us back  
To where our fractured heart longs to be.

So that, just as the wise old Shoguns  
Chose to,  
With their most precious of porcelain vessels,  
We too can repair our cracks with gold and glow again.  
Crazed by life,  
More beautiful than ever before...'

# E P I P H A N Y

By Humera Sultana (Saudi Arabia)

## Biography

Dr. Humera Sultana, teaches English Literature at Imam Bin Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. She has got her doctorate in English Literature (Literary Criticism) from MANUU, Hyderabad, India. Besides studying English Literature, she has also done Master's in Islamic Studies from Osmania University, Hyderabad, India. OU applauded her spirit of enquiry by awarding her two gold medals! Also, she has a Post Graduate Diploma in the Teaching of English from CIEFL, Hyderabad, India.

Furthermore, she started teaching English language and literature in 1995. Ever since then, she has exulted in showing the sophomore or the undergraduate the awesome capabilities of the English language and the surprise and mystery of the human soul by inspiring in them a love of English language and literature.

She says;

"Interestingly, I am a student of life, love and the soul and have been inspiring the love of these entities in my students. And added to this, WHEN INSPIRATION STRIKES I carve it out in the form of a poem, tweet it or jot down as a facebook status. I strongly believe that self-love is the best gift you can give to yourself."

Dr. Humera Sultana

As the tear of time  
Trickled down  
The face of Life  
I saw a Moment  
Roll down its cheek

A moment made of  
Millions of minute  
Myriad spells.  
A moment tinted with  
Colorful colors.

A moment that lay  
Bare and throbbed  
Wild and chained panted and gasped  
Sobbed and gurgled.

A moment that was  
Dark and luminous  
Parched and quenched  
Tender and strong  
Pain and Joy.

A moment  
Circled in a halo  
Gathered me in its radiance  
The feel eternity.

A moment  
That infused awe  
And a pleasurable dread  
A moment of ecstasy in pain  
A moment of utter worship  
A moment that never slept  
A moment that lay awake  
A moment called love.





# Time - Today and Yesterday

By Shikha Sharma (India)

## Biography

Shikha from New Delhi, India writes poetry and short articles in English and Hindi. She started writing poetry almost 10yrs ago, and has written about 1000 poems till now.

*There was a time when I knew nothing  
Heard nothing, understood nothing  
Loved everything, questioned nothing,  
Hated nothing, became everyone in their everything  
Today is a time,  
When I profess to know many a thing-  
I whine at petty nothings,  
Suspect love and most other things  
I think I am happy, yet I smile at nothing  
There was a time when I had nothing-  
The dance of the leaves, the scent of the rain was  
simply everything  
When the smile on a lip, curled my heart  
When the body was not but a touch me art  
Today when I have seemingly everything  
The smiles are somewhere yet lost,  
When I see around me, money matters everywhere,*

*Peace somewhere a lacking...  
Yesterday when I would close my eyes and feel the  
rain on my soul  
A song I heard, angelic like,  
Bringing to me a smile that was true  
In the dance of the butterflies,  
I spend a childhood, pure and oh so true  
Today when I wear a designer dress  
The smile reaches not mine eyes  
Lipsticks all hues but they, smiles rare but some  
My heels go clickitty clat announcing the arrival of  
the 'ME'  
A sea of praises over my head, loving heart but a few.  
Yesterday was a day  
Where innocence was an everyday, and lies an  
occasional weekend  
Come night or year end, sleeps were more rested  
Today in the so much of the everything  
I find yet the nothing...*



## The First Step

Somewhere here on this mortal land,  
Existed a state with barbaric head.

Where prejudice prevailed, rules were neglect.  
Might ruled as right\_ poor owed dread.

But among the men; with suffering hearts,  
A valiant gazes towards the brute,

With falcon's eyes\_ Ulysses breast,  
Near the savage approached the youth.

Before the edge of sharpest sword  
Steady he stood by austere truth.

"When pen ousts the fright of sword,  
Then people fear nadie but God.

No more the loot, ywis ye crook.  
Enough ma tribe has faced the ruth! "

Those were the dialogues by the stout,  
That shamed unjust\_ provoked his crowd.

He fought for the people, till his breath,  
Thus harbored the revolt in their chests.

No else illumes the way for you,  
Barriers are broken, when tries the resolute.

*Shaikh Mehmood*



Dedicated to a  
very special  
friend

*"KJ"...*

who has been the  
greatest moral  
support of mine  
at my every  
project and work!



Started writing from the age of fifteen, He is a successful writer from Karachi, Pakistan. He has an eagerness to justify his place among good writers and to maintain the dignity and will of common man; to break the chattels of injustice and to chart the cries of his philosophical mind. Poetry became a passion for Shaikh- where his words express a wise & deep inception of his thoughts and the philosophy behind it.

*Talking or remaining silent?*

*What is appropriate?*

*Talking, for what?*

*If no one listens properly!*

*Talking, for what?*

*If no one really understands.*

*Remaining silent?*

*Don't letting anyone anymore know what troubles you.*

*Remaining silent?*

*Keeping all to yourself.*

*Remaining silent?*

*The simplest solution when they think you talk too much.*

*Remaining silent?*

*Won't be easy.*

*Remaining silent?*

*But probably it is the only solution.*

*Talking, for what?*

*If no one answers.*

*Talking, for what?*

*If no one cares.*

*Talking, for what?*

*When the others anyway just listen to what they want to hear.*

*Then it's better to remain silent....*

*And save yourself from the disappointment, when you realize that no one wants to hear you.*

## Talking or Remaining Silent!

By  
Audrey Valentine  
(Austria)

### Biography

Jane Peskara/Audrey Valentine is a 23 year old writer from Vienna/Austria.

She loves writing stories since she learned to write, which was 16 years ago.

**2009** she started writing novels and the dream of being a published, respected, loved author was born.

**2013** she started being on many networks, created her homepage and an Author page on Facebook as well. She started really working towards her first publication.

**2014** she will publish her first book, she hopes people will like it, because she has many more to offer (already finished 9 other novels)

Jane/Audrey loves music, animals, nature, and movies. She also dreams about making a screenwriter schooling so she can turn her own books in screenplays.

She also starts vocal lessons because music is for her the second best way to express her feelings and to escape from the daily stress.

If you want to know more about her, please visit her homepage (which is not perfect because she has no help and no money, so especially the book covers there are simple, but she promises that will change).

Or look at her page on "about.me".

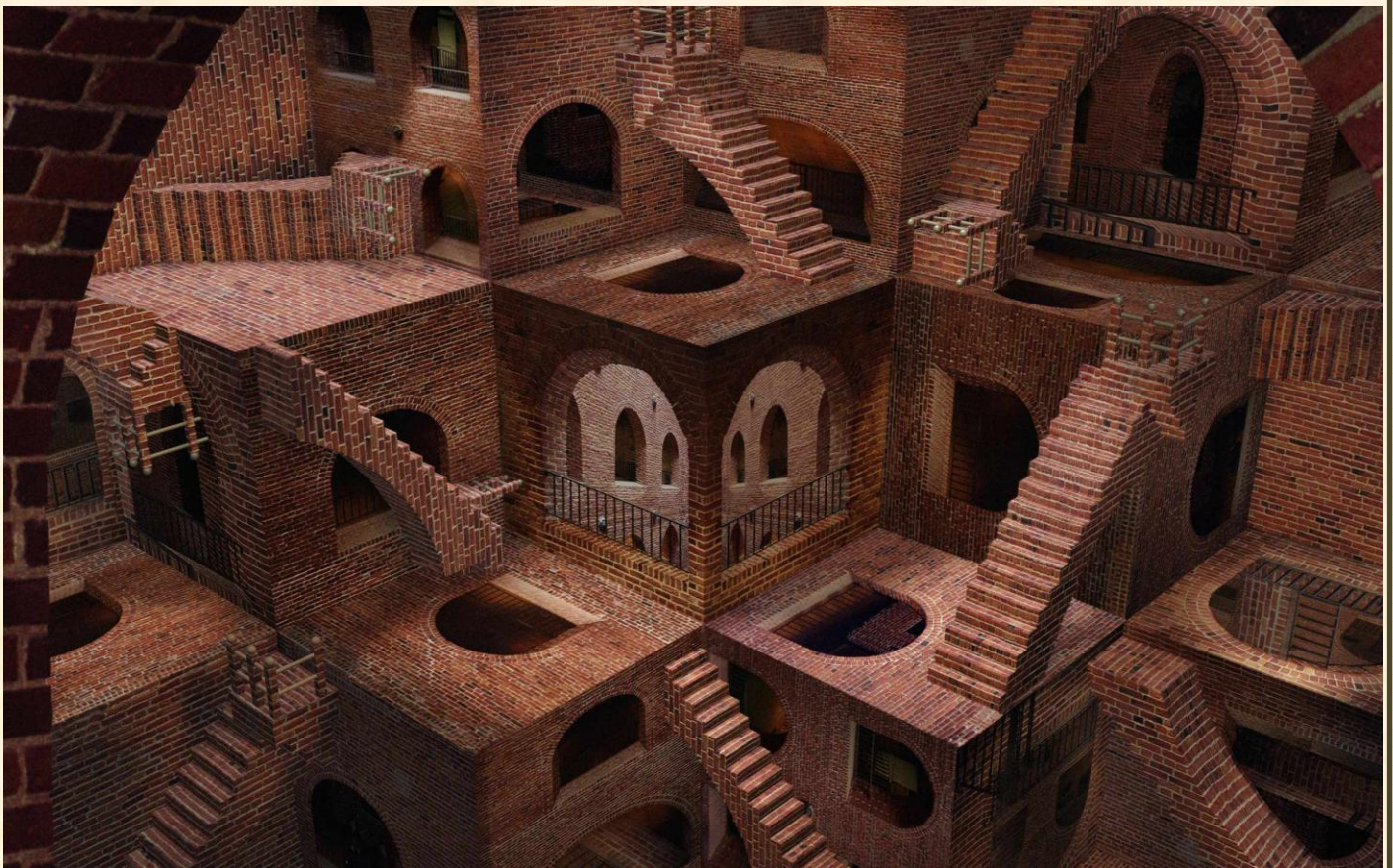
Homepage: <http://www.sasa1987.wix.com/jane-audrey-novels>





**Confusion Like An Illusion – Marcelin  
Gonsalves (South Africa)**

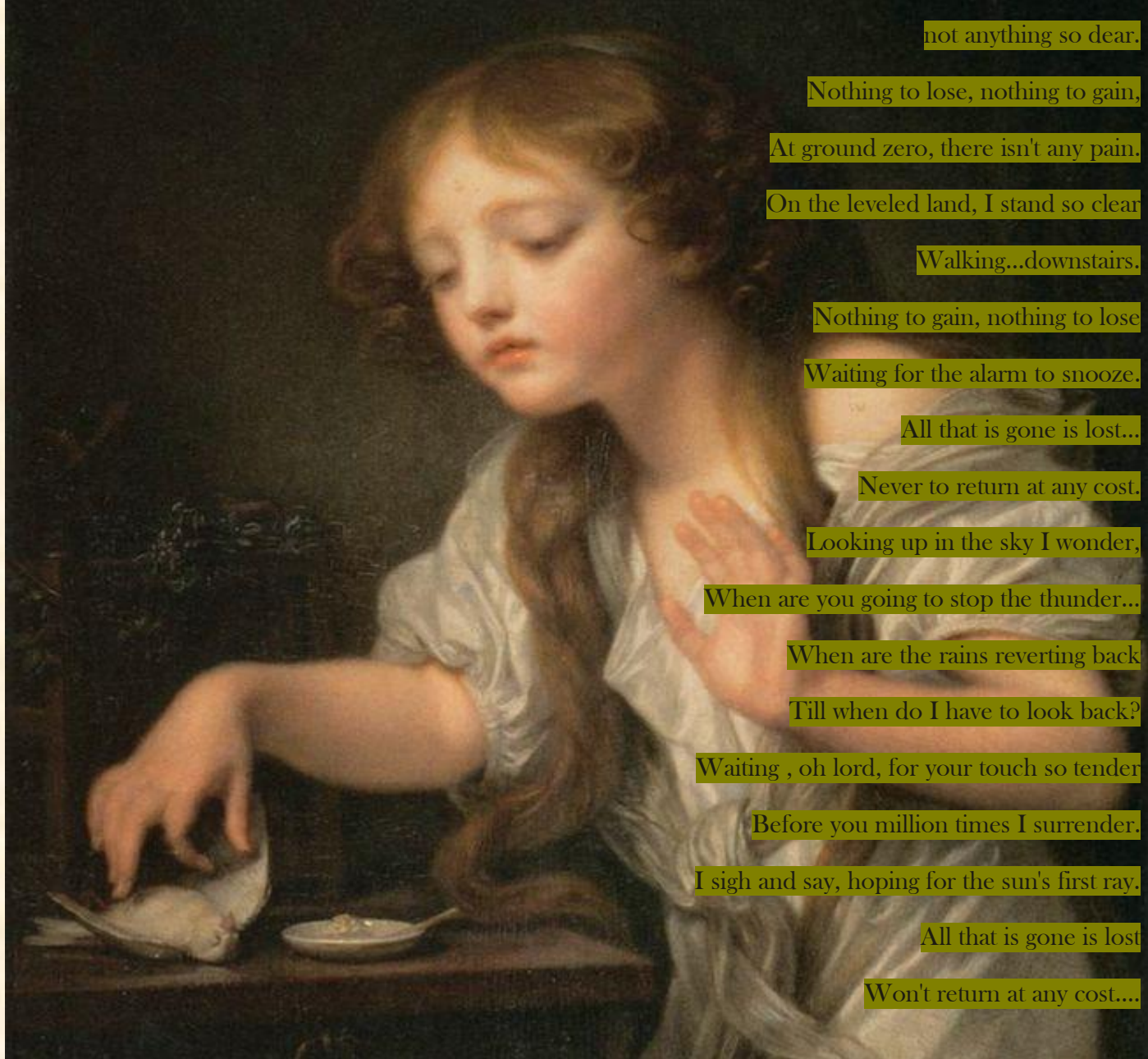
Love that lusts  
Lies that binds  
Life keeps us apart  
Words won't rhyme.  
To express how I lost you  
A story line I never wrote  
Was loving you a crime  
I'm willing to pay my time  
I miss those melody  
Your voice now I see as a noise  
I hate you  
Yet I want to date you  
I am hurting, you left me hanging  
Here I am lamenting  
Hoping to get you back  
Confusion feels like an illusion.





# *All That Is Gone Is Lost*

By Saniya Puri (India)



All that is gone is lost,

Never to return at any cost.

Now there is no fear,

not anything so dear.

Nothing to lose, nothing to gain,

At ground zero, there isn't any pain.

On the leveled land, I stand so clear

Walking...downstairs.

Nothing to gain, nothing to lose

Waiting for the alarm to snooze.

All that is gone is lost...

Never to return at any cost.

Looking up in the sky I wonder,

When are you going to stop the thunder...

When are the rains reverting back

Till when do I have to look back?

Waiting , oh lord, for your touch so tender

Before you million times I surrender.

I sigh and say, hoping for the sun's first ray.

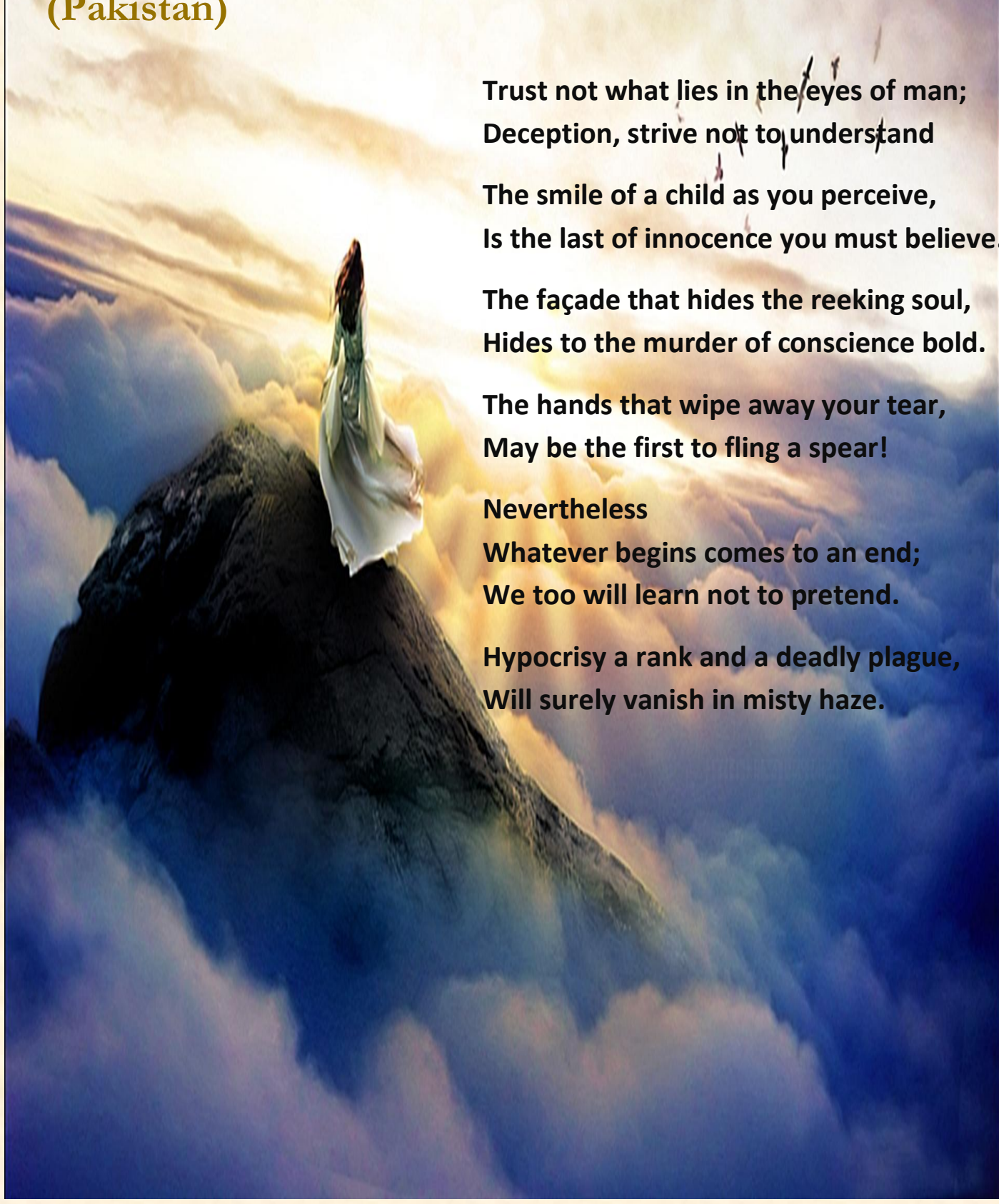
All that is gone is lost

Won't return at any cost....

## **Biography**

Saniya Puri is pursuing her Bachelor in English Literature from Jesus and Mary College, Delhi University. She believes good writing and good reads can bring so much rejuvenation and reformation in one's life. She is currently working as a Content Writer with Study-India and a Content Direction Intern with Campus Diaries. Also, her debut book that she is working on is under-construction.

## **From Cynicism... to Hope – Ayehsa Latif Shaikh (Pakistan)**



**Trust not what lies in the eyes of man;  
Deception, strive not to understand  
The smile of a child as you perceive,  
Is the last of innocence you must believe.  
The façade that hides the reeking soul,  
Hides to the murder of conscience bold.  
The hands that wipe away your tear,  
May be the first to fling a spear!  
Nevertheless  
Whatever begins comes to an end;  
We too will learn not to pretend.  
Hypocrisy a rank and a deadly plague,  
Will surely vanish in misty haze.**



# Landscape of Solitude

By Ben Poppy (UK)

## Biography

Ben Poppy is a British writer and poet who has just released his second book of poetry *The New fire*.

Exhale the imagery of solitude, infinity's smokescreen of eyes,  
Sunlight will draw the flowery sleeper, naked, blinded and wise,  
A body in the universe, will be real in the existence of dreams,  
The nostalgic worth of perfection, the saddened shards of green,

They'll move in delicate whispers, the grass of alone less earth,  
Illuminate the beauteous imagery, ignite the fire of birth,  
The burden of window assassins, a shrieking sound of lies,  
Forever the giving madness, the mystical fortress cries,

There's a calm in sorrowful mourning, nervous ivy entwined,  
Rivers in beauteous landscapes, with silent winds enshrined,  
The mountains of inward holiness, the bed that moonlight brings,  
The dust of eternal nothingness, the lark that breathes and sings,

The leaves of childhood's sonnets, utopian lives are known,  
Grieve in the presence of photographs, an aging cavalry of stone,  
The fire of youth is in poetry, it sharpens with a spiteful tongue,  
Scrolls of rebellion are golden, in the decadent words we sung,

A chair of graceful loneliness will sit behind closed doors,  
Behind the thighs of creation, where a fountain of daylight falls,  
An exhausted worship to living, the concrete mind will say,  
The God of love is in discipline, and soon he'll decay,

With ancient pillars of memory, build upon spiritual desire,  
A monument of mankind's purity, the inward sacred fire,  
Be blessed with wicked prophecies, be blessed with sacred death,  
The hands of fabled nations, the heart of minds complex.



# The Art of Appreciation

## By Archana Phophalia (India)



### Biography

Dr. Archana Phophalia by profession a dentist takes writing as her passion. Having her keen interest in poetry, she is also looking forward to write a novel. She started writing in her school days and says; "As I wrote, I believed I could pour all my thoughts and emotions through writing". She owes her blog at wordpress.

Swallowed by the fear of losing one's attached,

Taken aback by the emotions inside,

Exhausted by miserable thoughts,

Abashed by acts of past,

Objected by thoughts of failures,

When will power does not comes into action,

That's when art of appreciation is the thing to be counted upon,

It's not just appraisal of your deeds,

Defines to look good in bad,

To smile in saddest times,

To ponder upon deeper aspects of life, and to love and be satisfied with whatever u have,

When u achieve this extraordinary, endeavoring quality to respect...

Will be abided by bountiful of

Happiness as it is when you have learnt the value of your life...



You enliven my soul in dreamy dingle  
Wake me up into a heavenly world  
Enthrall the blaze of love to mingle  
Oh swain of my dreams! Hope my song reaches you

You beck me back to life in dreams  
I become a marionette to your bewitch  
We walk along in luminous silver beams  
Oh swain of my dreams! Hope my song reaches you

A wondrous dilemma drizzling in  
Surreal to look for in real life  
Are you awaiting me with lovely grin?  
Oh swain of my dreams! Hope my song reaches you

Enticed me with swag of love, ephemeral  
You graced me with endearment so austere  
I leave this song into waters enclosed in bottle  
Oh swain of my dreams! Hope my song reaches you...

## Biography

Shaziya Shaikh from Guntur, Andhra Pradesh; pursues her bachelor in dentistry. She writes poems under pen name Basilia. She has been contributing to international e-magazines "Reflection" & "Fragrance" and also got some of her poems published in a book of international anthology. She is active on website called booksie where she shares all her poems.

*Hope my song reaches you! By Basilia (India)*



# ***Wise Fool by Henry Ochiagha (Nigeria)***

## Biography

Henry Chukwudi Ochiagha, B.Sc in applied microbiology and brewing but works as an able seaman onboard a vessel.

Wise man, you're now the last.

Going to school is a waste of time.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

I will rather be rich early than to be poor late.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

Early struggle for survival is the key.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

Only foolish and unwise people lay foundation.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

Your destiny is in your hand, time waits for no man.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

I drop out to drop into wealth.

R: Wise man, you're now the last. There is too many traffic on the main lane; I join the speed lane.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

I was famous only in dancing.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

My popularity grew in night clubs, hotels, casino bars, and brothels.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

I was a reliable client to the entire whore.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

Having an investment is like having a headache.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

But now, why am I caught up in a jam.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

Having held up in a speed lane is ridiculous.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

Oh! My goodness, how will I overcome this challenge!

R: Wise man you're now the last.

Why flat Tire when I have no spare Tire.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

Remember you embark on this journey while am studying.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

Wow I have finished my studies; you're yet to reach your destination.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.



Wise Solomon, when will it become?

Wise man you're now the last.

I had a flat Tire, could you please lend me yours.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

I have only one spare and don't expect me to give you.

Come to think of it, how can you embark on such a long journey without a spare Tire?

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

I taught my tires are alright.

Please what will I do?

Wise man, you're now the last.

I would have told you to wait until you receive favor but is risky to help on this spot.

May be you will go back and start afresh.

As you can see am in haste.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

Oh! After all this years of struggle am going back to start all over again...

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

Even if you trek, you can still caught up with those that run.

See ya later.

R: Wise man, you're now the last.

On my way back, I saw virtually all the people I pass on the road when embarking on this journey.  
When I wave down at them to stop and lend me a helping hand.

Some pretend as if they didn't see me.

Others promise to come back and help me which they never did.

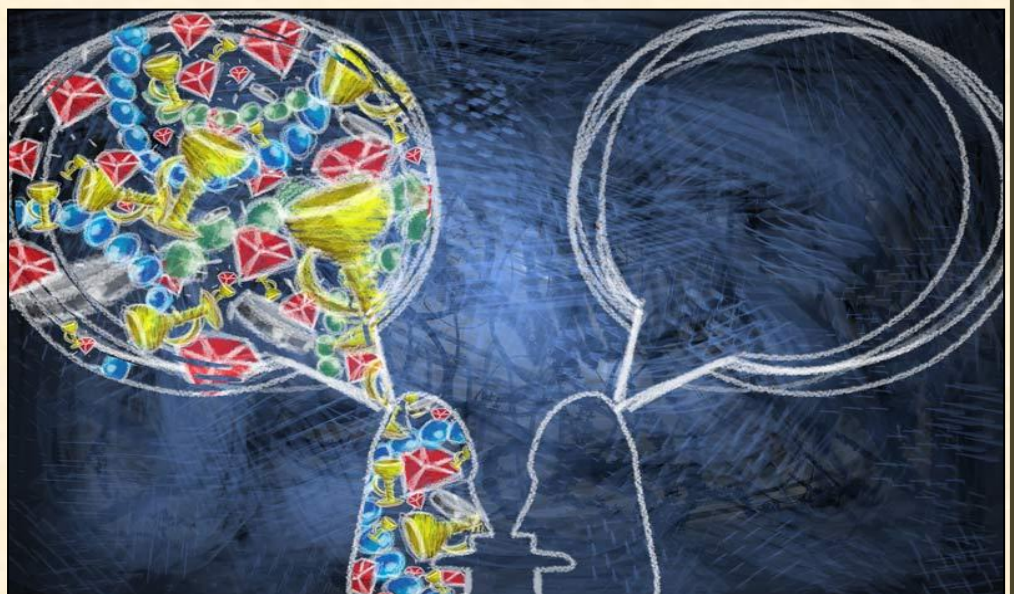
R: Wise man, you're now the last.

What an interesting story.

Overtaking is allowed in the race for survival.

My dear Solomon, I taught you're at the front.

No boss, I am now the last.



It should be framed by waterfalls that dress  
a gentle flow from hair to salmon pink  
the cooling flutter of a summer's afternoon  
of eating strawberries in long grass, no shoes,  
no socks, just sharing sips and juicy drips,  
red rivers slip down chins.

That he was born to twist  
from side to side in Twenties bars,  
a tall  
dark stranger,  
spats and combs,  
a little something for the weekend  
stashed,  
admiring from the shadows  
by the wall.



By Nigel Bird (UK)

Nigel Bird edited the poetry magazine The Rue Bella between 1998 and 2003. He has since written a number of novels and novellas including How to Choose a Sweetheart and In Loco Parentis. His next work will be published by Blasted Heath later this year.

It is the Riviera, Camelot,  
the Cotton Club,

a hotel room at lunchtime  
dropping to the floor to form  
the crumpled lipstick 'O'  
from which you step.

It is the queen of dresses, most divine  
brings out the devils and the angel  
for a look, and may I say,  
it barely  
does you justice.



## I AM LIVING

By Dhaval Ajitbhai Vora (India)

### Biography

From Rajkot, Gujarat, Dhaval has completed his BE Electrical in 2009 and right now serving as a lecturer in an Engineering College. He is also a writer and composer of two Hindi songs which are available on YouTube.

I am living without any aim,  
It seems that life and death are same,  
There is something which I want,  
But what the thing is I know don't.

Whenever I go always with friends,  
Still don't know why I feel Loneliness,  
Sometimes I act like very strange,  
like I've forgotten my existence.

Since last some days I've become shy,  
Blush on every matter but don't know why.  
Whenever I see in mirror my face,  
I don't know find me but someone else.

Once I visited sunset place  
I saw a shadow nearby my space,  
My heartbeats increased when she came close,  
She smiled towards me when I proposed.



*Seems my muse had abandoned me  
To wander in some blooming dream  
Surrendering my verses to the infirmity  
No words strike, how much I care  
She has no second on me to spare  
It feels like I had lost my sanity*

*Is she upset with me, or it's her anger?  
Or maybe she is in carnival I wonder  
Oh! What should I do to find my angel?  
Should I pray for her sweet entangle?*

*Is she drunk with the spirit of freedom?  
Or maybe she is drowsy with affliction of love  
Where should I search for my lost guardian?  
Tell me faithful spirits, is my muse up above?*

*Come back my companion, come my soul  
With your wings of inspiration  
Come aspire my hearts behold  
Come back to me my mystic feel  
Take hold of me my imaginations gleam  
Oh! Come back to me my divinity...*

## Words Standard

By Ankita Chaturvedi (India)

### Biography

Graduate with honors degree in literature from Delhi  
University, Post graduate In European literature.





# Articles

## **Brainwashing**

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# Brainwashing – Sajjad Hussain (Pakistan)

## **Biography**

Sajjad Hussain is a teacher, trainer, and student counselor.

He has taught both engineering and management students at the undergraduate and master's level. He has been associated with NED University of Engineering and Technology, Institute of Business Management and PAF-Karachi Institute of Economics and Technology where he has taught Engineering Project Management, Professional & Social Ethics, Technopreneurship at the undergraduate, and Global Communication Industry & Policy, Business & Information Technology, and Technology Management at the master's level. He has also been associated with BIZTEK, and PIMSAT where his core subjects were Operations Management and Service Marketing.

As a Training Facilitator, he has conducted a number of orientation sessions for visa ready immigrants proceeding to Canada from the platform of International Organization for Migration. He has also conducted Guest Speaker Sessions at various institutes of Higher Learning.

Sajjad Hussain is an Electrical Engineer from NED University of Engineering and Technology (Karachi, Pakistan), and has done his MSc degree from NED University and Project Management from McGill University (Canada).

In addition, Sajjad Hussain has a practical work experience of over 15 years of working with organizations like KESC, Siemens Pakistan, DHA Cogen & WorldCall in various responsible positions.



Words don't have any meaning; it is we who give them the meaning. The meaning of a word changes, as we start looking at it from our own perspective or as we are told by 'others'. Similarly we have to learn to see the things the way they are and not the way, we like them to be seen or as 'others' want us to see them. We can make the right decision only, when we start seeing the things, the way they are.



Whosoever tells us anything, it's basically based on his own understanding or experience with that particular thing and his intent in most cases would be to convince us to think about that thing, exactly the way he is telling us. We, on our part, have to analyze it and understand it, making use of all our mental faculties and having all the perspectives loud and clear in our mind, so that, whatever decision, we make, at the end of the day, should be close enough to the truth and nothing but the truth.

This is in continuation, to my previous blog 'Dictation', wherein, I have used the word 'seniors' and I doubt that people might confuse it with 'parents'. So I came up with this blog to clarify the misunderstanding, which might distract youngsters.

I have no doubt about the place of parents in our society and I can never even think of maligning their status in the society. As I understand that they (parents) will never exploit their kids. They (parents) direct their kids only to achieve those expectations which they (parents) have with their kids.

My target audience for the last blog and this one is between the ages of 18 – 30 years, who are either about to begin their professional career or have already started one. The reason being, this is the time when they are prone to be exploited by those 'others'.

By 'seniors' I meant our religious and/or political leaders, who exploit these immature minds and use them for their own nefarious designs. Youth is a time when an individual is, at his full potential, that's why he (a young chap) is termed as an 'Angry Young Man' because at this age, he thinks from his heart and can do anything, as he has enthusiasm, will, and passion to go extra miles and do wonders. He wants to be recognized, for which, he can do anything, anything which can give him an opportunity, to be established as a go getter.

First year students usually get a whispering about various teachers, right from day one and that's how they start perceiving (brainwashed) a teacher. Since they already have a picture (by virtue of their seniors), about that particular teacher, so they sit in his class with that specific mindset and behave accordingly. If the perception of that teacher is good the behavior of the students will be good as well, and reverse would be the situation, otherwise.

Again youth is a time, when youngsters are fascinated by heroes; they need someone as an 'Ideal' for them to get inspiration. But as the time passes, they are so much mesmerized by their 'Ideals' that they start 'Idolizing' them and that's where things start getting out of hands.

As long as you 'Idealize' someone, there is no harm, rather you need to have someone to get inspiration from, but when you start 'Idolizing' someone you insist on justifying his (Idol's) wrong doings without logical reasoning. It so happens because you are emotionally blackmailed to think from your heart (which cannot think) instead of mind, because your mind is in his (Idol's) control, i.e. you are brainwashed.

If you will not think on your own, someone else will think on your behalf, but he will not think what you want to think or you should think, rather he will make you think what he thinks is right for him and not YOU.

## Ethos of A Humor Writer... – Asha Pai (India)

### Biography

A person of Indian origin, born and brought up in South India, now settled in Mumbai. Although dropped out of college while graduating in English Literature, due to personal reasons; pursued writing as a hobby started while still in school, encouraged by the few prizes, awards and few poems & articles published in school/college magazines. Now I claim, 'writing' is therapeutic, due to the very limited spare time got while making a living at the MCX Exchange trading in commodities like bullions and base metals where keystrokes have replaced writing and my weary fingers have almost forgotten the feel of pen on paper and are soon expected to atrophy. This is me, publicly known as Asha Pai aka Asha Rao Pai.



The Cosmopolitan Magazine has just come out with its annual list of the 100 Most Beautiful People, and once again, I am not on that list. This great injustice means instead of getting to earn a living as an officially designated Beautiful Person -- spending my days posing for pictures -- I'll have to stick to moonlighting as an amateur writer. This is no doubt a bad news for my very dear friends who keep on saying "you are beautiful", James Blunt style with unbelievable regularity. And for those who keep on saying that "you are brilliant, brainy, creative" here is the good news -- I have decided to be a permanent writer, a humor writer. It is high time I realized that I am not Aishwarya Rai but a mere Asha Pai, on the wrong side of forties.

Although it's not quite as glamorous as being a Beautiful Person, being a humor writer is an important job. I often receive email messages from people who want to know how they too can become writers. It's my sad duty to let them know, as gently as possible, that only an elite few of us possess the skills needed for such a prestigious occupation. You non-writers may scoff at such a statement. If you were brought up in the country, with good old-fashioned country sensibilities, you might even be shaking



your head right now and saying, there she goes again.... It's just that I know how difficult writing something humorous can be, and keep hoping someone among you would appreciate my writing and it would bring a smile on your face. Well! As for that smile, I would settle for that little faint grimace on your face which happens when your lips unwillingly turn one of its corners in an upwards motion.

So today, I'd like to give you a behind the scenes peek at the laborious process involved in writing witty words. Maybe someone will decide, after reading this, to turn my life into a reality TV series.

They could call it “musings of a jobless writer” or something like that. I'm sure lots of people would watch such a show. You'd think the first step would be to come up with a cute idea. In my case, though, the first step is to clear the house of distractions, namely, the kids, the husband, the cook, and the maid. I begin early in the day by throwing some breakfast at these distractions (not literally, except sometimes in the case of the cook and the maid) and ordering them to either do something funny I can write about or leave. Generally, my children and husband choose to leave. And due to my utter lack of sensibilities involving house work, the cook & the maid choose to stay, doing everything in their power to be amusing. Occasionally, they even succeed. But if they don't, I move to step two, indulge them (the cook and the maid; remember the husband along with the kids had earlier offered to be out of my way) with an off work day and settle into a comfortable chair with sure-fire brain fuel: coffee, cakes and chocolate. It goes without saying that, at the end of the day the family end up eating take away food from the local eatery. Believe me; all your top favorite writers do this. That's why all of them are rotund overweight insomniacs. It's a sacrifice we're willing to make. After several hours of intense, highly caffeinated concentration in my chair, I will usually have a plethora of brilliant ideas. If not, I move into the next phase, which involves actually leaving my house to scour my surroundings for inspiration. The scouring process often ends up in front of my favorite coffee shop, and I usually have to go inside to get some more sure-fire brain fuel after which I surely get the fodder to tickle your funny bones thanks to those innumerable characters that keep flitting in and out.

Well! This is what all your top writers do. And for some reason, none of us ever make it to that list of beautiful people and end up fattening the cash boxes of those fitness firms who promote themselves by urging us to join for 10kg weight loss to get a free 30 inch waist loss. But in the quest for more ideas to write for, we gain 20 kg within days of stepping out of their threshold. After all what are a few kilograms compared to those smiles on a few faces...

# “Fingerprints of Evil” from Narratives III: Fanning the Flames short book of essays – Vince Guaglione (USA)

## **Biography**

Vince Guaglione is a guy who asks lots of questions, not only of himself but of his society and the world around him. Although he claims he's found no real answers, that haven't stopped him in his quest to gain perspective on a little something we call life. When he's not at his real job, you can find him sucking down vent-sized coffees at a brisk pace his local Starbucks, thinking up new writing projects, or pondering his mystery questions of life. Originally from Philadelphia PA, Vince now resides in Raleigh NC.



“Evil is not something superhuman, it's something less than human.” – Agatha Christie

It's here...

Always has been, always will be.

It's all around us...

It's in us...

It is us.

I can't see it, for it hides itself well. But inherently, I know it's there. It's deceptive and sinister—cold and calculating, measuring its every move. And when its desire spills over and it craves, it draws forth from the shadows and makes its presence known.



When it shows me its face, I shudder at what I see, so I close my eyes tight and wish it away. It has nothing but time, so it waits me out. And it knows I will eventually give in. When I open my eyes and am forced to acknowledge it, what I see terrifies me. And I realize this is just the beginning.

I'm not sure what it wants, but it has targeted me. I'm not sure why, but I know it doesn't care. It singled me out while it lurked in the shadows, until the time came for it to unleash its wrath. And when it attacked, it did so swiftly and mercilessly, and left me feeling nothing but dread.

Confusion, panic, helplessness, terror—all the things nightmares are made of, all playing a part in my despair.

It projects weakness and spreads falsehoods to garner sympathy. It punches holes in walls of fortitude, wedges self-doubt into the psyche, and assassinates character – all without batting an eye. It deceives, lies, cheats, and hates. And when it covets, it takes—with little by way of resistance, but laying waste to everything in its path.

It does what it does for its own edification, and its game must be played to validate its own sense of self. When identity is at stake, it stops at nothing to win.

It's relentless in its pursuit, so I'm powerless to hold it at bay. It revels in the fact that I am looking over my shoulder, never knowing when or where it will strike next, and it mocks me every step of the way.

Fearing it only makes it stronger, enhancing its power and widening its range. But when I garner the courage to look into its eyes, and see nothing but the darkest of black, I realize that it has no soul, and that it's capable of terrible deeds. I run and hide from it, hoping it never follows. Yet it seeks me out, in its own special way.

It hides in the subconscious in grotesque form, and creeps forward in moments of half-sleep or in dreams—when I am at my most vulnerable, and where it can inflict the most harm. It is there that it is unstoppable, piercing the hands, eyes, and face with its razor-sharp tendrils of hate, and making me wish I were dead.

I can do nothing to protect myself except lock myself away from the world, else go about my business and accept my fate. So I'll take what it has to give, and patch myself up along the way.

It hits hard and pierces deep, but I refuse to fight back. It attempts to engage me but I turn the other cheek. But the more I ignore it, the more apathetic it becomes, and the more useless I become in its game. When it extracts enough of my life-force, and loses interest in prolonging my pain, it will drift back whence it came, and begin its cycle again.

Although it wanted all of me, it revels in what it has taken. Its consolation prize, and its trophy, is my shattered belief in humanity, and the innate goodness of man.

I'm under no delusions, for it has seen my face. It will trail me at a distance but will mark me every step of the way. It will hide in my shadow and in the back of my mind. And when it comes calling once more, I will have no choice but to face it, or die.

## Confidence – Urvee Tondwalkar (India)

### Biography

Urvee Tondwalkar a blogger from Mumbai. She loves to read especially teen fiction! She has her own website [www.urvee.co.in](http://www.urvee.co.in), which recently received thousands of views. Now she is working for E-magazine.



Confidence, Yes this is the thing by which we are not satisfied most of the times.

We all do have lack of confidence in our life at some point.

I used to feel so low about my confidence because I use to think that I wasn't better & would always use to compare myself with others.

But however I came across a point where I felt like 'this cannot be continued further'

How long can a person get stuck into the bad mood... Forever! No you cannot continue to be like this. Don't be so bad & depressed about things although we know people always try to bring you down at certain times.

Just remember one thing "The one who tries to bring you down are below you"

If this doesn't happen then you might become an isolated, depressed person who might start getting anxiety or panic attacks. I'm one of them sometimes I used to go through anxiety attacks. (As they were completely the worst part of my life) And then you'll probably feel depressed, sad and you would feel even more crap about things.

If you are suffering with anxiety or feeling lonely or you have a low self esteemed issue then you have to step out of that little bit and just remind yourself everyday that you can't continue to feel this way. Forget the sorrows of yesterday, because your past will not change anymore.

If you'll feel crap about your present and if you continue to feel that way then it might be risky for you.

You need a life full of joys because it's your life let's make the most of it.

You can change your future just by being positive about a particular thing and being confident to yourself.



If something is getting you down or you feel that this isn't worth it try to boost your confidence then the level which is hurting you.

And this isn't easy I would never say that overcoming anxiety was easy and quick but at least you should try. Just push yourself and feel that you can do things, because we you only live once.

You are beautiful in your own way don't get depressed by others letting you down because you are worth it. You are worth every happiness in your life...

Just live a bit more interact with new friends and try to get involved with things.

If you are scared about a thing just give it a try. I did it now it's your turn.

(I use to feel completely depressed, sad, grumpy, isolated person when my friends use to get me down.

I just didn't felt the way that I wanted. We all know everything happens for a reason. They actually made fun of me because I developed an interest in writing. They use to bring my confidence so low that I had major anxiety attacks last year.)

And at a point I was like it's my life I'm goanna make the most of it. Let them think what they want because all matters are your opinions. What others think of you is not more important than what you think of yourself. And now almost after a year I'm quite satisfied with my life because I finally have my blog now and almost the world is watching me.

One thing if you really want to show the person that you are worth it then just is kind to them "Kill them with your kindness." Being successful is the best revenge which you can give to anyone.

Let's all get along and boost everyone.

Believe that you are beautiful. You are worth it. You are strong. You deserve to be happy. Be kind.

Work hard. Stay humble. Smile often (because it increases your face value.) Be honest to others. Stay loyal. Never stop learning from your mistakes. Always be thankful. Just try it.

You'll never go backwards you'll only go forward. You can do it. Beauty isn't from outside but what actually matters is your inner beauty which reflects you.

I just want to help you out because we all are insecure at a point of time. Hope this helped to increase your confidence. We are confident and be positive. It would take time and nothing happens overnight so wait and good time will definitely come to you. It's important to live the fullest because we are not around forever.

# Free Yourself – Shikha Sharma (India)

## **Biography**

Shikha from India writes poetry and short articles in English and Hindi. She started writing poetry almost 10yrs ago, and has written about 1000 poems till now.



Fear is the foundation of all that destroys us, of all that separates us and pushes us apart! Fear is what causes war, fear is what causes depression, fear is what causes greed. Fear is what makes someone power hungry, for they fear losing! Fear is what makes someone give up before they even try, for they fear failure! We cannot look inside, for fear of what we will see! So we blame the world for our fears. Fear of rejection, closes us up and changes us. We become so scared of being rejected that we lose ourselves in our efforts to be accepted. We fear being wrong, so we say nothing at all. Or we defend what we have said without listening to others!

We desperately search for freedom, but fear is not freedom! Fear binds us, pushes us down, and prevents us from uniting, loving, and accepting each other.

Fear is different for everyone, but we ALL carry it on our backs. Pushing us down, preventing us from flying.

When we recognize that everything will be okay, because everything will happen as it should, we lose our fear.

Just because the world doesn't work the way you wish it did, just because people are not the way you wish they were, does not mean it is not perfect the way it is.

Let go of control

Let go of fear

Free yourself...



# Poetry – a dying art - Saniya Puri (India)

## Biography

Saniya Puri is pursuing her Bachelor in English Literature from Jesus and Mary College, Delhi University. She believes good writing and good reads can bring so much rejuvenation and reformation in one's life. She is currently working as a Content Writer with Study-India and a Content Direction Intern with Campus Diaries. Also, her debut book that she is working on is under-construction.



James Tate says, “Poetry is everywhere; it just needs editing.” Indeed poetry, the most beautiful art form with all its exotic lyrical exquisiteness and nature of expressiveness all out in open, is everywhere. In the garden out there, in the dances and dancers, in the flowers of all kinds, in the old lady across the street, in the love for someone, ‘in the fabulous FB statuses’ where people express purely out of pleasure and ‘it is indeed quite poetic’ as Parul Kamra says, in the eyes of the beloved, in the touch of the benevolent, in the exotic weather, in the sky, up in the hills, in the sea and hence, in every nook and cranny, poetry and poetics exist with sanctity.

Talking further about poetry we have Joseph S. Salemi, Department of Classics, Hunter College, CUNY in this essay, Why Poetry Is Dying who says, “A poem is something generated by an individual human mind and will, using the acquired tools of linguistic proficiency, rhetorical skill, and literary remembrance. It isn't something spontaneous, and it most certainly isn't something natural. A poem is a fictive artifact created by someone who has the special skills required for the task. It can't be produced by everyone, any more than a concerto can be played by everyone, or a ballet can be danced by everyone. Moreover, poems don't lie buried in all of us, waiting to be coaxed out by workshop

discussion. The latter notion may be a profitable one for the people who run workshops, but it is certainly delusional. Encouraging lots and lots of people to write poetry isn't going to change these basic facts. It's only going to guarantee an unmanageable flood of poorly made poems.” He talks about what happens when there is too much bad poetry in circulation. The good poetry doesn't necessarily disappear, but it gets lost in the flood. “Look at it from a reader's point of view: why subscribe to a poetry magazine if ninety-five percent of the material in it is mediocre and unmemorable? Is the five percent of creditable work really worth one's time and effort? Any editor will confirm that it is notoriously difficult to get subscribers to a poetry journal, except among those people whose own poetry is published in it.” As a result many journals face the choice of going out of business, or serving as vanity presses for their regular contributors. As Priyanka Arora, a Literature student from Delhi University states, “There is a need to conserve this art. Due to less monetary gain, uncertainty of success and indefinite time period before recognition, many artists shy away from writing. There is an urgent need to save the dying art of poetry. Poetry touches the soul and it is an art which comes straight from the heart.” Personally speaking, as a writer and a poet it becomes quite challenging to find the ‘motivating’ factor to sit down and design a poem. It is a frustrating job when the gains are quite far-fetched and one can never be hundred per cent sure of the success or recognition that it has to offer; sometimes there is absolutely NO recognition to be offered. This art form, then like many others has become a commodity and the commercializing factor takes over, which ruins the whole joy of free-will poetry composition.

While some believe that poetry is dead or dying, Anupurba Roy\* and Gargi Trivedi\* have a different say altogether. They believe that poetry is “re-inventing itself and finding a space for its existence among art forms.” While Gargi says that it is changing ‘forms’ as ‘nothing dies completely’, Anupurba Roy positions her argument by declaring that ‘people still like poetry as an art form’ (\*Both Anupurba Roy and Gargi Trivedi are literature students from Jesus And Mary College.)

Again Salemi has to state a grave issue regarding the same which is, “you should at least begin to realize that the dominance of the lyric mode in contemporary poetry has become a liability to our craft.”

Agreeing with the same I believe that a certain amount of ‘reinvention’ can’t be that bad and will help revive the lost charm of poetry. Even though artists are self-driven and cannot be ‘taught’ there are obvious reasons as stated by Priyanka above, wherein the output matters to most artists and lack of it can lead to diminishing of the art form. A general perception is hence made that even if you want to write creatively, you can, but that is limited to writing books, novels and so on; NOT ‘silly’ poems which will hang around in tiny tid-bits of your diary in the house-‘unpublished’.

Being a poet myself, I believe that this art form is encouraged well and lacks those so called ‘avenues’ to make you ‘published’ and hence bring in ‘fame’. This death of poetry as an art is sometimes frustrating yet I have come to believe that it is true at certain levels. Again I quote Salemi, for his comments on the ‘death’ of poetry are, “If poetry does indeed die, it will have deserved its fate. A literature that remains stuck in the rut of a single rhetorical mode, and that can offer nothing but emotional plangencies and hieratic posturing, ought to sink into tongue-less oblivion. Who knows? Something better may arise from the silence. But poetry's current illness is not necessarily fatal. If we, as poets, have the stomach for real introspection about our art; and if we are willing to admit that some radically unpopular things have to be said publicly; and if we realize that we are not in this business to make friends and promote our personal careers, then the art of poetry might just have a chance.”



So, my parting note would simply be that art forms die, but art forms reborn too. And then 'death' is the renewal and in some way it will renew the poetry as it still exists at many places. Poetry is not just a poem on grave issue subjected to critical attention, but also it is a construction of language in a certain way to commemorate and decorate the daily 'space' with poetic beauty. Hence, one can always hope for a fresh breath of air and rebirth of dying art- poetry... and for those who believe that it's not dead as yet and still is breathing the same air as we do, then it is indeed HAPPY news for all of the poetry and art lovers!

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# SHORT STORIES

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## **Me, Myself And I**

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## **Like father like son**

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## **The Good Mrs. Kats**

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## **The Vulture**

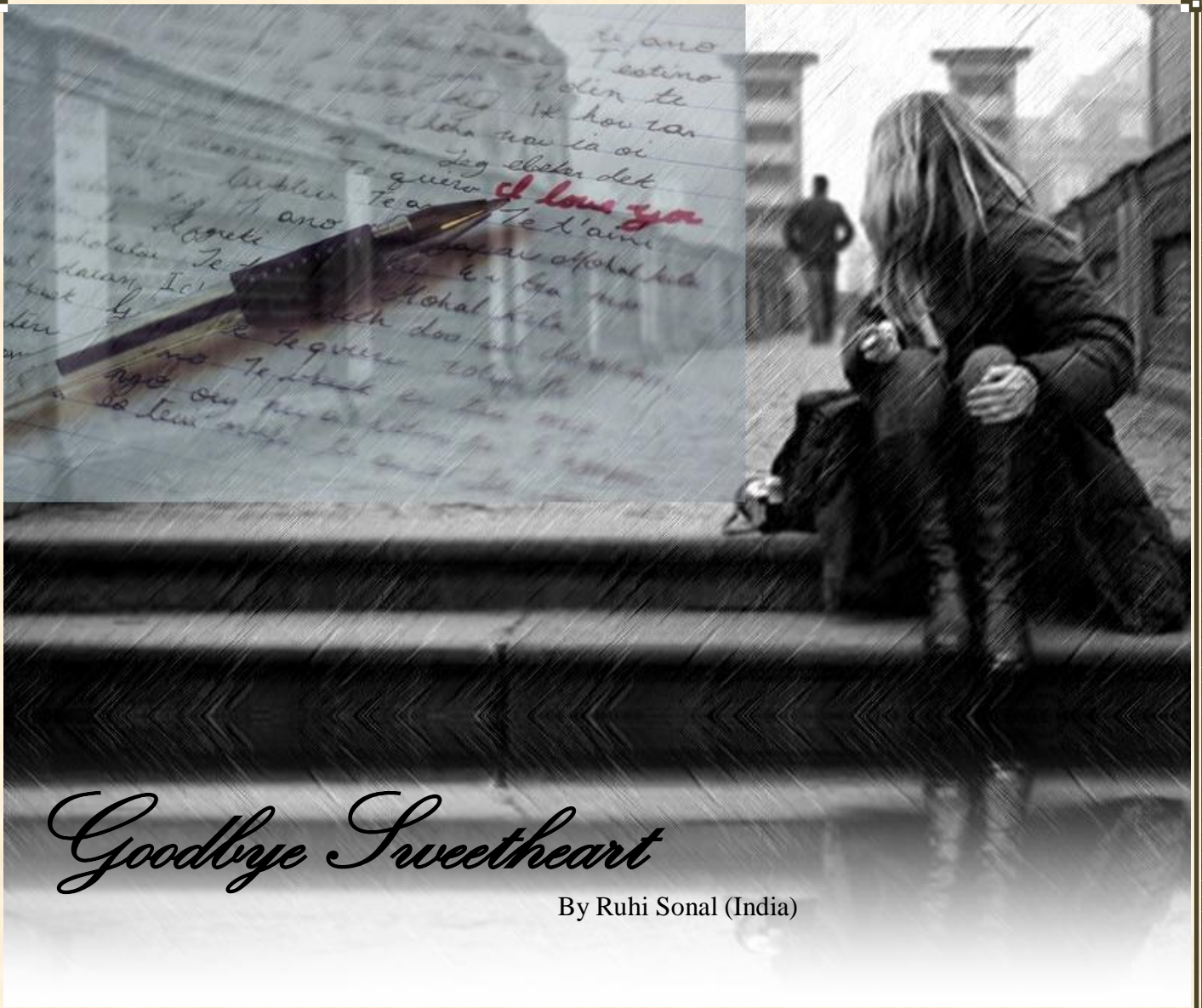
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# Goodbye Sweetheart

By Ruhi Sonal (India)

## Biography

Ruhi Sonal writes short stories, poems, and articles focusing on gender, society, and human emotions. Her poems have been published in the journal 'Kritya,' and her articles have appeared on various websites. She holds a Master's Degree in Economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Sara was just about to leave her workstation after another tiring day at the lab when a new chat window popped up in her email account. Her heart skipped a beat as she stared at the name on top of the chat window. It was Neo.

*Neo: Hi Sara*

*Sara: Hi...*

*Neo: It's been long. How're you? Still in Delhi!*

*Sara: I am fine. Yes am in Delhi. You are in New York right?*

*Neo: I have moved to NY, but am currently in Delhi for a few meetings.*

*Sara: Cool... Till when are you here?*

*Neo: I am leaving tomorrow. Let's meet up.*

*Sara: When?*

*Neo: How about this evening? When do you get free from work?*

*Sara: I was just about to leave for home.*

*Neo: Can you come to Café Gold in an hour's time? Does that suit you?*

*Sara: Yeah, sure. Sounds great! See you ☺*

*It had been twelve long years since they had last met. They hadn't exchanged words beyond the customary "Happy Birthdays" and "Happy New Years" on Facebook. Social networking sites have a way of creating the illusion of being in touch.*

*Inseparable during their years at the university, Sara and Neo had drifted apart very smoothly. They had reasoned that career interests were sacred, and worthy of the sacrifice of our closest relationships.*

*Not once in the past twelve years had Sara even remotely missed Neo. After college, she had immersed herself in pharmaceutical research at an institute, and after years of struggle she had become a renowned figure. The long hours at the laboratory were interspersed with hurriedly eaten meals and binge drinking sessions at the bar with colleagues. Every Saturday, she visited her parents. Her mother would wait patiently for the weekend with painstakingly prepared pineapple custard which Sara relished. Her father would abandon reading his favorite James Hadley Chase novels on Saturdays, and would spend the day watching TV with her instead. In the evening, Sara would cook for her parents, and over dinner her mother would repeatedly try to persuade Sara to consider getting married and "settling down".*

*"I am well settled already Mom. My life is perfect. I don't want anyone else in it. I am perfectly happy." Sara would say.*



Sara's parents would resign to their room after dinner, trying to make peace with the fact that their beloved daughter was unmarried at 37, yet both happy and "settled". The exactly same dinner table discussion would take place again, the next Saturday.

There were times when Sara, tired of the grueling experiments in the laboratory, would take a day off. On these rare days she would open the lower most drawer of the huge oak cabinet that stood in her living room. She used the drawer for dumping random items ranging from pretty greeting cards she preserved for reasons she didn't herself comprehend, newspaper cuttings that she wanted to organize in a file but couldn't find the time to do so, to extra packets of oregano seasoning which she insisted on taking from the pizza delivery boys even though she never used them. A few old photographs lay at the bottom of the drawer. The photographs struggled to preserve remnants of the jovial days at the university that Sara and Neo shared. But with time, their bright colors had faded. She would flip through the photographs with a smile on her lips and then return them to their place in the drawer, amidst the mundane mess.

As Sara drove to Café Gold from the lab that evening, she could barely contain her excitement at the prospect of meeting Neo after such a long time. Her mind kept drifting back to the wonderful days that they had spent together. She was herself surprised at how vividly she remembered minute details- like the sweet flavor on her lower lip that shared packs of Gudang Garam would leave, the exact pattern that the early rays of the sun would create on the faded blue walls of the tiny room they had shared. She remembered the quaint jokes they would crack at everything conventional and the heady obsession that they had developed for appearing and doing things that were "different". Neo had sported long hair that he would tie up in a braid, complete with colorful beads. He always wore oversized shirts with a pair of old jeans, making every effort to ensure that his attire reflected his "carefree" attitude towards life. Sara had her own way of ensuring that she stood out in a crowd. Her huge circular earrings, the two inch long saffron teeka on her forehead and the pagan tattoo on her arm had made Neo notice her for the first time. He had approached her, and after they spent a few hours together expressing disgust over how people around the world were wasting their lives in trivial pursuits like getting a job and getting married; how people were engrossed in leading absolutely inconsequential lives in relation to the vast cosmos, Sara had agreed to move in with him. The three years that followed were a colorful blend of soft rock music tempered by marijuana, endless hours of impassioned discussions about the hypocrisy entrenched in the Indian society, extended coffee breaks during exam time, and lovely lazy evenings spent in their tiny balcony, simply watching the sun go down.

After college, they had gone separate ways and their obsession with being different, of bringing about a change, etc. had dissipated as they struggled to build successful careers. While Sara had stuck to her belief that committed romantic relationships were characterized by selfish interests and had thereby remained single, Neo had married a colleague at the age of thirty two.

But some relationships have a way of surviving time, distance, and even indifference.

While parking her sedan outside Café Gold, Sara checked her reflection in the rearview mirror, and sighed at the indistinctiveness of what she saw. Her neatly penciled eyes, colored lips and powdered cheeks obscured all signs of her rebellious youth. She had just stepped out of her car when she heard Neo's familiar voice.

*"Hey Sara!"*

*Neo stood in front of her, dressed in an expensive formal shirt and trousers, with neatly cropped hair. His person had acquired an impeccable air of officialdom. Sara was dumbstruck,*

*"Hi... you look so different." Sara said, feeling both disappointed and stupid, for she hadn't expected Neo to change at all.*

*"Why are you looking so shocked? I thought you would've seen some of my recent pics. Reema regularly puts them up on facebook," He said. Reema was his wife.*

*"Uh no... well... did MBA college do this to you?" Sara asked, as they boarded the elevator to the rooftop café.*

*"Ha... Maybe. Life seems to have caught on after all." He replied with a smile.*

*They chose a table near the beautiful bamboo railings overlooking the chaotic city. Delhi had become an amalgamation of sparkling malls, stubby whitewashed DDA flats, and busy market places and newly constructed overhead metro lines which stood in stark contrast with the sudden remnants of the mughal era that still dotted the streets in the form of crumbling gateways or walls.*

*There is a certain magical quality that engulfs the air when old friends meet. For Sara and Neo, rather than rediscovering each other, it was like rediscovering themselves. Over multiple cups of coffee, they talked about their new lives, and how differently things had turned out for them as against what they had envisaged. They laughed over old jokes as they fondly recalled the days at the university, remembering classroom quirks and their own air-headedness. There were a few silences in between, but not due to lack of conversation, but simply because there was too much to be said. Neo told Sara about his life in New York, his very high paying job in a financial consultancy and about his wife, Reema. The Sun was gradually changing color from ochre to a radiant orange.*

*"So you gave in to societal pressure, got a regular job and got married? No more free thinking?" Sara asked, smiling.*

*"Well... no societal pressure really... I fell for the charms of domestic bliss. All those ideas of freedom made a lot lesser sense once I was alone by myself in NY with only stock market indices as companions." He replied.*

*"Domestic bliss... it's such a wonderful term. Only if there was an equally enticing term associated with the world outside the realm of domesticity." She said.*

*"You seriously don't plan on getting married ever. Do you?" He asked*

*"I don't think I can. It was never my thing. I experience domestic bliss on Saturdays when I visit my parents. The rest of the week is well... simple bliss, dunno domestic or otherwise." She replied.*

*"And I am guessing you haven't had any significant relationships in the last twelve years either." He asked.*

*"Relationships, yes. Significant, no." She stated matter-of-factly.*

*"Nice. I do envy your detachment to all things innate to human nature." Neo remarked.*



*"You have changed Neo." Said Sara.*

*"You haven't." He replied.*

*The setting sun continued to add color to the lovely evening, as they delved back and forth in time. Time had failed to obliterate their camaraderie even though it may have obscured it from view.*

*The spell was broken by the shrill ring of Neo's cell phone. It was Reema...*

*"Hi... I am in a meeting right now. I'll talk to you in a while." He said before disconnecting the phone.*

*Sara shifted her gaze from him to the horizon. The bright orange sun was sinking slowly, the sky changed its contours from blue to orange to a velvety purple.*

*"As beautiful as ever. Isn't it?" Neo asked, remembering the hundreds of sunsets they had watched together from that tiny balcony in their flat.*

*"You didn't have to lie to your wife. It is not like we're having an affair or something." Said Sara, her voice stiff, yet unsure.*

*Her words seemed to have caught Neo off-guard. He seemed to scramble for words for a moment before he replied.*

*"We... Of course... I mean of course not." He said, regaining his business-like demeanor almost immediately.*

*"I think I should leave, I've got to catch a flight tomorrow morning." He said, as he stood up to leave.*

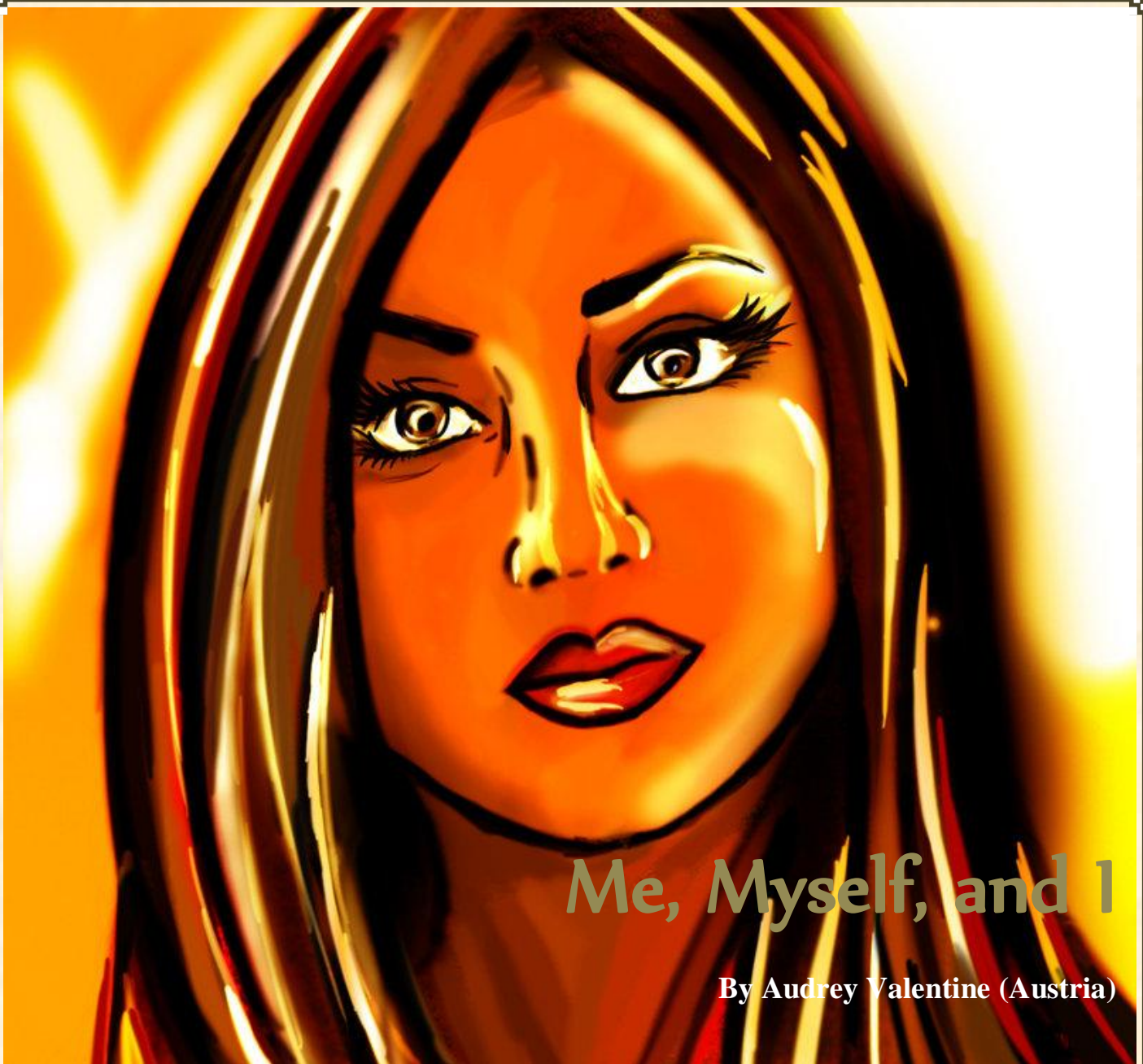
*"Ok," Sara said while she remained seated.*

*"Aren't you going back too?" Neo asked.*

*"No. Am not going back," She replied; her eyes fixed on the spot where the sun had finally disappeared behind a cloud, leaving behind just a queer, golden glow.*

*Neo looked at Sara expectantly for a few seconds, while she continued to stare towards the horizon. Realizing that it was pointless to wait for an exchange of formal goodbyes, he walked towards the exit.*

*Some relationships have a way of surviving time, distance, and even indifference. Until the final nail in the coffin is placed by the actors themselves.*



# Me, Myself, and I

By Audrey Valentine (Austria)

## Biography

Jane Peskara/Audrey Valentine is a 23 year old writer from Vienna/Austria.

She loves writing stories since she learned to write, which was 16 years ago.

**2009** she started writing novels and the dream of being a published, respected, loved author was born.

**2013** she started being on many networks, created her homepage and an Author page on Facebook as well.

She started really working towards her first publication.

**2014** she will publish her first book, she hopes people will like it, because she has many more to offer (already finished 9 other novels)

Jane/Audrey loves music, animals, nature, and movies

She also dreams about making a screenwriter schooling so she can turn her own books in screenplays.

She also starts vocal lessons because music is for her the second best way to express her feelings and to escape from the daily stress.

If you want to know more about her, please visit her homepage (which is not perfect because she has no help and no money, so especially the book covers there are simple, but she promises that will change).

Or look at her page on "about.me".

Homepage: <http://www.sasaj987.wix.com/jane-audrey-novels>

*1<sup>st</sup> Part:*

*ME*

*ME, well that is me and that means in this case a person with long blonde hair, sparkling blue eyes, and a body I am fine with.*

*ME, that means my silliness, my emotions and my fears.*

*ME, that obviously meant for HIM, too much effort, and too much stress.*

*ME, that means a woman who is able to get lost in a romantic movie, who hates it when people are hypocritical and who gets all lovey-dovey when she sees a little puppy.*

*ME simply means all my good sides and also all my flaws, that is all I will ever be.*

*My name is Sunny Twyler.*

*Yeah, Yeah I know what you want to say now, I heard that so often.*

*"Oh, my god, your name is Sunny? Well then you are surely a happy person."*

*No one ever even considered that I am not like my name; my life is not like my name.*

*My name was given to me by my father and mother, just because they got married a year before on a sunny day in July, and they thought it would be a cute name for their cute, first daughter.*

*So it has nothing to do with my life or my choices.*

*Honestly? If I could have chosen my name, it would be something like "TiredSadDisappointed", because that would at least tell everyone how I feel.*

*And I wouldn't have to look into people's faces, into their asking faces.*

*Whenever I tell someone my name, they want to know how I feel and how my life is.*

*Just because my name is Sunny, damn it!*

*But if we are honest, we know that they are not really interested, all they want to hear is a story that brightens their day, a story that makes them able to tell themselves that there is hope in the world.*

*But I don't care what they want from me, whenever I tell someone my name and they want to know something else I simply answer with a smile, and a nod and then I walk away.*

*Before I start to cry right after I reach the next corner.*

*Believe me I wish my Life would be sunny, God do I wish that.*

*But many wishes won't come true, so I know I have to accept what happened in my life, I have to move on.*

*At the moment I just don't know how.*

*How can I accept something, I never wanted to experience?*

*How can I accept that I am no longer complete, that I lost my other half?*

*There was a time when I really thought my Life couldn't be better, but then, right then when I felt so safe, everything changed.*

*And now! Now I am here, crying, complaining.*



*I should be thankful for the good moments, I should be thankful, that I don't have to go through tragedies like others have to.*

*And believe me, I feel bad when I can't be thankful, when I don't want to be, because I not only lost someone I truly loved, but also because I lost myself.*

*I can't stop crying because I still hope that one day I will find myself, but I am so scared I won't.*

*What then?*

*How can I move on, when I am no longer **ME**?*

*There was a time, when I wished I wouldn't be **ME**, now I want nothing more than to be **ME** again, probably that's called irony.*

*To make you understand me a bit more, I have to travel back in time, well only with my mind, of course.*

*Back to a time, when I thought things will never change and I will always be happy, silly thinking, I know.*

*4 months ago I was **ME**, I was the best **ME** ever.*

*I was with **HIM**, and he was the most important part of **ME**.*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Part:*

*HE*

*HE, that meant pure love, true love.*

*HE, that meant safety, home.*

*HE, that was what I needed.*

*HE was my lover, my friend and my hope.*

*A week after my 24<sup>th</sup> birthday I was jogging in a park, near by my little flat.*

*I did that every day; first and foremost to stay fit but also to have my little time in the nature so to speak,*

*No cars, no neighbors, who were screaming in pleasure all night, and who were giving me the bad eye during the day.*

*Nothing was important when I was jogging; all I heard were my feet when they touched the ground, and the birds, singing in the trees.*

*And all I saw were the trees; the old couple who fed the pigeon's every day, and the sky, sometimes so blue that it hurt my eyes, sometimes cloudy, sometimes foggy.*

*I did my jog every day, during the whole year, no matter if it snowed or rained, if it was cold or hot.*

*I needed that time for myself.*

*Things were not as easy as I wanted them to be.*

*I finished High school 6 years ago, but I was still trying to find my place in the world.*

*My parents were disappointed, because they always wanted their first and only child to be something special.*

*And in their eyes I would only be something special, if I would have a job, where I earn at least 6000 dollars a month.*

*But that was not me, I never cared about money.*

*I was working at a little bakery, started early in the morning at about 5, and went home at about 15pm.*

*I loved my work, I loved to feel and smell the yummy little things we baked and sold there.*

*I loved my Boss, she was so nice and gentle, she was like the mother I never had.*

*But still I didn't make enough money in my parent's eyes, and to work in a bakery with a high school graduation, well let me see they weren't pleased.*

*We had some really bad fights about that, and then I moved out from home when I was 21.*

*I found a little flat, it had only one room, a toilet and a bathroom; there was not even a kitchen, only a little stove and a small fridge, that was full when I put a bottle of water and some cheese in it.*

*My last boyfriend cheated on me, with my best friend, so I lost them as well as I lost my parents.*

*I wasn't happy but I had hope that things would change for the better and at least I had a job, and loving it, but then 5 weeks ago I lost my job, my boss died, they bank now owned the bakery, and a rich man bought it and wants to do whatever with it.*

*Now I am working at a gas station, with a grumpy, always looking at my boobs, boss.*

*But I needed the money, I surely didn't want to lose my flat because then I would have to go back to my parents, and I definitely didn't want to give them this satisfaction.*

*So the jogging was also a source of new strength for me, because only in these 1 and a half hours I was able to stop worrying, I was able to be me and I was able to hope.*

*So on this day, this sunny day in August, I was jogging slowly because it was really hot and I started sweating right when I started.*

*I looked at the sky and smiled, I saw a little bird flying to a tree next to me and I was thinking "Oh my god isn't he cute?"*

*I was distracted, and didn't notice that there was a man with a bike, coming closer and closer.*

*Later he told me, he did scream at me to make me see him, but I didn't hear anything, I was so focused on the little bird.*

*And suddenly I was lying on the ground, with a bike on my tummy and a man lying beside me, saying "Shit, Shit, Shit."*

*First I thought it was all a dream, and that I didn't really started jogging, that I was still lying in my bed.*

*But then the man, stood up and looked at me, I looked at him and I immediately started smiling, I must have looked like an idiot, but his dark, brown eyes, that were looking at me angrily and his mouth that was half open to probably insult me, were frozen, when he saw my smile.*

*I thought, now I am screwed and I prepared myself for a big and loud fight right there, but he surprised me.*

*He knelt down, reached for my hand, stroked it gently and smiled back at me.*

*I still don't know what happened right then, it was magical.*

*He leaned forward, pushed his bike away, helped me in a sitting position and then he just kissed me.*

*He didn't kiss my cheek, no, he kissed my mouth, and he kissed my soul and my heart.*

*I needed 5 seconds to realize what was happening there, I mean I had an accident, there was a stranger kissing me, and I all I felt was peace?*

*5 seconds to realize that it felt like butterflies were flying in my tummy.*

*5 seconds to realize I shouldn't do that, simply because I don't know him.*

*5 seconds to realize that I don't care.*

*After those 5 seconds I opened my mouth and let his tongue caressing mine.*

*He played my tongue, he bit my lips and I was lost.*

*He stopped the kiss and looked at me; there was no anger in his eyes, not even surprise.*

*There was only love.*

*I could barely breath, my hands were shaking and I couldn't see myself standing up.*

*And right then he stood up, bent down and picked me up.*

*He held me in his arms, like I always imagined to be held when my husband carries me over the threshold.*

*I was in heaven and all I did was closing my eyes and snuggled against his chest.*

*He kissed my head and sighed.*

*I knew right then, that this was the beginning of something amazing.*



*3<sup>rd</sup> Part:*

US

*US, that meant only him and me.*

*US, that was the best thing that ever happened to me.*

*US, that meant safety, love and passion.*

*US, made my life sunny, yeah whenever someone asked me how I feel or how my life is, I smiled, not only with my mouth, also with my eyes, and said: "Sunny is my name, and sunny is my life."*

*I had the best time ever, and I was so stupid to think nothing could ever change that.*

*From the day of the accident we were a couple, we didn't even have to say it, it was just like that.*

*He took me home, and after he gave me his phone number he drove home with his bike.*

*I was standing there and watched him leave and I still smiled.*

*From that day on we met every day for about 3 weeks, and then I moved to him.*

*He had a little house, with a little garden, I loved it.*

*I felt like I am finally home.*

*We had a kitchen and I was immediately addicted to it, I was cooking every day. All kind of things, I even baked all the things I remembered from my old job.*

*We had a living room and a bedroom.*

*We had a bath with a bathtub and a shower.*

*All this was new to me but it felt great.*

*Our fridge had normal size and I was able to fill him with grocery for the whole week.*

*When I first did that I was so surprised that I stood in front of the fridge and looked at it with big eyes, till he came to the kitchen, laughed, and closed the door.*

*When he was at work, he worked as independent lawyer; I sat in a deck chair with a glass of water and in my PJ's and all I felt was peace.*

*When I told him how much I hate my work at the gas station, he said I should quit the job and do what I really want, find something that I really enjoy, and while I look for that he will pay for all. First I was a little bit shocked, I felt dependant but then I thought about it and I knew he was right, that was my chance to find a job that really fits me, and I took the chance.*

*Believe me I was so satisfied when I was looking at my former boss and knew that I would never ever have to go back, and I would never ever have to endure his lewdly glances at me.*

*In our garden we had a little pond, with a few fishes and water lilies and I sat next to the pond, looking at the fishes, listening to the sound of the wind.*

*I stopped my jogging when I moved to him, simply because I didn't need it anymore.*

*I had my little garden and I didn't need strength because I was stronger than ever just because of him.*

*I know now that I was a fool back then.*

*I was so happy and thought it would never end, but I should have known it as all good things come to an end, sooner or later.*

*We had such a great time; the house was filled with laughter and love.*

*Sometimes he invited some friends to dinner, and I loved them all, they never made me feel like I don't belong there, they made me feel like I am part of them.*

*My days were so great and fulfilling.*

*I used the internet to find a new job and I decided to do a schooling to become a gardener.*

*That was the job I really wanted to do, because it meant being outside, in nature and also being creative.*

*I was the best in my class and just 8 weeks after I met my true love I had a new job as gardener and I was absolutely happy.*

*When I came home that day and saw him sitting on our couch I started dancing around, hopping and screaming "Yeah, I got it."*

*He looked at me only for a second, and then he jumped up and danced with me.*

*We danced and laughed till our feet became sore and we were out of breath.*

*Then he took my hand and we sat down on the couch, I snuggled up to him and he kissed my forehead.*

*He whispered "I love you" and I said "I love you too." and right at that moment everything was finally complete.*

*2 Weeks after that day, everything changed and it totally caught me by surprise.*

*I remember that day very good.*

*I came home from work earlier because I felt really bad and my head hurt badly, so my boss sent me home.*

*I made an appointment at my doctor for the next morning and all I wanted to do is having a shower and going to bed.*

*I opened the door and I knew right away something was wrong.*

*I can't explain where this feeling came from but it was there and it made me shiver.*

*I closed the door behind me and went to the kitchen to get myself something to drink, and also to get over this weird feeling that something bad was about to happen to me, something that would change everything.*

*I opened the fridge without looking around, as I thought I was alone at home, because it was only 1pm and he would not come home before 6pm.*

*I grabbed a bottle of coke, opened it and only when I was about to drink I noticed a little movement in the corner of my eye.*

*I turned my head and looked at him; I was so surprised that the bottle fell to the floor and spread coke all over me, but I didn't care.*

*He looked at me in a way he never did before.*

*And just a second later I knew why.*

*I didn't notice that he was naked or that he was saying something to me, all I noticed at that moment was that he broke my heart.*

*He was not alone there, right there on our table, where we sat everyday for breakfast and dinner, laid a naked woman with curly, red hair, starring at me with her big green eyes.*

*She didn't even try to look guilty.*

*She smiled at me and rolled her eyes when he apologized and tried to calm me.*

*"Please honey; it's not what you think, I love you, please stay."*

*I needed 5 seconds to realize what he did.*

*5 seconds to be able to move.*

*I went away, without looking back, I just walked to the door and opened it.*

*I still didn't look back even though I knew he was behind me, trying to touch me.*

*"Don't ever touch me again; don't ever talk to me again. This is over, I won't come back, I will pick up my stuff tomorrow."*

*That was all I said before I left my home, my house, the place I felt so safe once.*

*And I knew I would never take him back, he hurt me to the core of my soul.*

*So I went away with a big hole in my heart, tears flowing down my cheeks, sobbing, and my walking turned into running.*

*I ran so fast people probably thought someone is chasing me.*

*But all that chased me were my memories of the good days we had.*



*4<sup>th</sup> Part:*  
**MYSELF**

*"All by myself" is the best song that was ever written.*

*Well at least that is what I think at the moment; umm okay it's what I think since I left our house 6 weeks ago.*

*I listened to that song everyday during the last weeks.*

*And every time I cry, I can't help it, but I do think sometimes that I shouldn't, I think of other people and I mean we all know that such things happen every day, everywhere it's no biggie.*

*It shouldn't be, but for me it just feels like the worst nightmare and it's real.*

*When I stopped telling myself how bad I am, because I am sad over a minor thing, I always started watching TV, it didn't matter what was on, I just needed to hear voices, because I felt so alone.*

*And I was alone, I lived in a "flat" that was even smaller then my first one, I had no job again, because The Garden Center I worked at became insolvent, and I had no friends, because the friends I had are the friends of him, and they obviously don't care about me, because I am no longer his girlfriend.*

*So yeah I was alone.*

*I was really busy with my self-pity and telling myself what a bad person I am, but then one day, just 4 days ago from today, I changed.*

*Don't ask me why but it was like a silver lining on the horizon.*

*I woke up, with a big headache, so I stayed in bed all day and I had much time to think about it all.*

*Right before midnight I was able to listen to "All by myself" without crying, I listened to it and all I thought was "Such a sad song.", but I didn't feel sad.*

*What happened, what he did to me, was the worst thing I experienced so far, but suddenly I was sure there is more for me to experience, bad thing but also good things and I didn't want to sacrifice that for a guy, that behaved like a douche bag, I realized he had no right to have such an impact on my life any longer.*

*With this thought I fell asleep, and it was the best sleep I ever had.*

*On the next day I woke up and felt like a new person, I even had to look into my mirror because I was so sure that I could see the change on the outside, but of course I was still looking like me.*

*I smiled at myself, had a shower, and dressed up.*

*I spent a few hours in a library, I used their W-LAN to search for jobs, and then I read a book or two.*

*When I came home a few hours later, I got a call from a job I found when I was at the library.*

*The woman on the phone told me they would love to invite me to an interview, I was so happy, even though I knew that doesn't mean I will have a job.*

*I was happy simply because I did something, he dragged me down, and I got up, stronger, wiser and happier, because I finally knew what I am capable of.*

*So, of course I said yes, when she asked me, if I can come to them tomorrow morning.*

*That night I slept well again, it was just too less.*

*I hopped out of the bed, did my routine with a shower and dressing up, and then I had a coffee and left the flat for a new experience.*

*And now I am here and I have a new job since yesterday, which feels incredible, and I have to admit I am proud of myself.*

*On the other side there is this call I got 2 hours ago from my Ex, first he begged me to come back, he apologized and he told me how much he loves me.*

*I told him that I won't come back, and I want him to leave me alone.*

*I think it was the tone of my voice that made him stop begging.*

*He remained silent for a few minutes, till I said Goodbye, right then he yelled "NO" into the phone, and I was afraid of becoming deaf, because it was so damn loud.*

*I waited for him to explain that and he did.*

*"I know I hurt you, I am sorry. I love you but I see you won't give me a second chance. So there is only one thing I want to tell you before I leave your life forever."*

*I admit I started being nervous.*

*"I want you to have the house.*

*Please don't say no, I know it is your home, you felt good here, you loved it here and I will move out anyway, because I have a new house in the city, near my office.*

*I know you would never accept if I would give it to you for free, so I want you to pay me a rent, if that makes you feel better, and I will give that money to an organization that helps kids in needs.*

*I hope you will say yes, because this house is yours, it always was, it waited for you and only you turned it into a home. And I would be really happy if I'd know that I don't have to sell it to stranger."*

*Believe me when I tell you I was shocked, I couldn't say anything, I really thought I would collapse.*

*It took me so long to answer, that he was thinking I had hung up the phone.*

*Several minutes later I answered, and we were both surprised about the answer.*

*Maybe you will think I am silly but I answered with "Yes".*

*It's not easy to explain it, but I knew he was right, it was my home, I loved it there and even though I knew I had to change the kitchen, I wanted to live there, I wanted my garden back and so I said yes.*

*5<sup>th</sup> Part:*

I

*I, means me being myself.*

*I, means me being an independent person.*

*I, means I am able to be alone.*

*I, means that I finally realized I have only control over myself, but not over other people and how they treat me.*

*I, means I will always be me, and hope that one day I find the right people who love me for who I am.*

*If you would have asked me 7 weeks ago where I see myself in 5 years, I would have had an answer immediately.*

*I would have told you that I see myself in the arms of the man I love, the man I will still love then.*

*It is weird how much things can change in 7 weeks, 49 days and nights.*

*Today I was sitting in the garden, at the pond, in my garden, which used to be our garden not so long ago.*

*My right hand lingered in the water, and I asked myself this one question.*

*I thought about it, for seconds, minutes.*

*All possible answers that went through my head were not really the product of what I felt, but more the product of what I thought I have to feel.*

*So, believe it or not I spent three hours there, thinking about one simple question, that wasn't simple for me anymore.*

*When I had the answer finally, I went to bed, and decided to tell you my story.*

*Now it's almost midnight, another day is gone, and another one is about to start.*

*I have been through a lot already, but I am very sure there will be a lot more, that will make me sad or angry or desperate.*

*But I am no longer scared, because I know whatever will come I will be able to deal with it, even alone.*

*I will stay true to myself and I refuse to ever change certain things about me or be like someone wants me to be.*

*I am me, and it's okay.*

*If someone doesn't like me the way I am, that is their problem not mine.*

*I actually look forward to every new day, to every new experience, because in the end that is why we are alive.*

*Don't get me wrong, I do hope that I fall in love again and that the new guy won't treat me like he did, but I refuse to see it as my purpose in my life to be loved.*

*I want it, and I think there is a chance that I will have it, but I am fine anyway.*

*My name is Sunny, my life is not, but I enjoy every minute of it.*

*Oh I almost forgot one important thing, because you probably want to know what I would answer if you would ask me where I see myself in 5 years?*

*Here is my answer: "I have no idea, but I look forward to find it out."*



# Like Father, Like Son

By Abhishek Bhardwaj (India)



*Slowly Arun opened the door. Trying to avoid the creak sound which the door made everytime it was opened. With light feet he walked towards the shelf. Once again a problem. The height of 8 year old Arun did not allow him to reach the container. The container in which 'it' was kept.*

*Arun brought a stool from his room and stood on it. Hastily he filled his pockets with 'it'. And then carried the stool back to his room.*

*He had a smile on his face as he walked towards the main gate. A naughty, childish smile. He called out to his father "Open the gate father. I have to go out for a walk."*

*Father came and while he was opening the gate he asked Arun "What mischief are you off to little man so early so in the morning??" "Nothing, father. Just for a walk with my friends." Arun replied.*

*And the gate opened. Father moved aside to let little Arun pass. Arun came out on his porch and stood there. Looking at the faint red lines of the sun in the sky. He rubbed his hands together for it was a bit cold outside. Howsoever hot it maybe in Ranchi during the summer. It still was 4 'o' clock in the morning.*

*Arun just stood thinking of all the things he was about to do in a while. He kept on staring at all the greenery around him. At the gardens of neighbours.*

*And suddenly he felt some pain in his ears. Someone was twisting them. Wincing with pain Arun turned to face his tormentor.*

*"You mischevious monkey. Now you have started stealing in the house too. A fine line of 'it' has been falling from your pocket. Today you are getting a beating kiddo." said mother. Twisting his ears even harder with each passing moment. "Wait here, I am coming back with a stick, " Mother said and was off. Arun stood there touching his ears. With his face down he started crying slowly. Footsteps and a shadow. Someone was coming. Arun wished it wasnot mother.*

*"Mother caught you. Ahaa." father said standing in front of him with a smile.*

*Arun raised his face. With watery eyes and a stream flowing down his face he looked very different now.*

*"Father.." was the only sound he made.*

*His face melted the heart of father. He pulled him close and patted him on his back. Looking in his eyes, father said "Raw mangoes taste good even without salt. When i was your age they alone were good enough for us. Now you fine fellows need salt to make it taste good. What more will you need a few years from now?? Spices and bread??" and slowly he added "Do not steal many raw ones from the neighbours tree today. I cannot handle your mother and all the neighbours in one day. Your friends will be waiting. Be off now."*

*Arun stood there hesitating. Father stood up and started walking back. But he turned and once again said "Use a plastic next time to carry salt. Not your pockets. And why are you standing?? I will handle your mother. Run."*

*Arun ran out shrieking with joy. As he slowed his pace after some distance he heard mother shouting "You have destroyed my child. Like father, like son."*

# THE GOOD MRS. KATS

By Tabitha Baumann (India)



## **Biography**

Tabitha Baumann is a novelist screenwriter and playwright with five books published and a lot more to come. Recently she optioned a film script to a small production company. Her books can be found at;

<http://www.amazon.com/Tabitha-Baumann/e/B00F6GJCZ2>



Mrs. Kats had been a wife and a widow. A long time ago her much loved husband owned a car dealership. At the modest age of fifty the man dropped down stone dead in the middle of his office. He'd been trying to sell a middle aged man a very expensive sports car.

Her son was a doctor and her daughter a lawyer neither one was the slightest bit interested in taking on even a very profitable business. Mrs. Kats therefore felt quite comfortable in selling the dealership. She traveled, she did things about the stock market her children, and woman friends did not understand and was very successful. She even kept company with a series of alarmingly young men.

In the natural course of time she also got older. Gradually as the years passed she got tired of travel and playing the market. She even got tired of alarmingly young men. Now in her very old age she lived in a large house at the end of a country lane. The house had a sign in front that called it The Cattery, which was exactly what it was. In her old age Mrs. Kats had taken to the job of giving the stray unwanted felines of her home county someplace to live. She did adopt cats out, but only to people with impeccable references.

To do the heavy physical work of caring for her charges, cleaning litter pans, and moving about large bags of dry food, Mrs. Kats had a selection of young people from the neighboring high school. They volunteered at The Cattery in exchange for special credit, and often kept coming long past the time when their term of service was over.

These young people also spent hours brushing the long-haired cats till they floated along the floor like self propelled clouds. They played with them. They talked to them and admired their wise eyes. But no matter how much attention they got from the daily visitors, there was no confusion in the matter of who was in charge as far as The Cattery cats were concerned.

Everywhere Mrs. Kats went, in this her little kingdom, yellow, blue, and green eyes followed her alertly. A weave of tails, long, thin, short, fluffy, and feathery followed her around, curving into question marks as she filled water bowls or retrieved misbehaving toys from difficult places.

They listened as well. With wide open eyes they listened as she told them everything that had happened to her in her very long life. Mrs. Kats never failed to smile at this attention. They seemed to find it all so very interesting.

The Cattery was a large old farmhouse with a small barn that was used as a garage. The ground floor was given over to the cats. During the day they could enter or exit at will through cat doors in front and rear. The fenced in yard surrounding the house, kept them and the neighboring bird life very safe.

The second floor, off limits to all but the most select and civilized of visitors, was where Mrs. Kats actually lived. Her very satisfactory ninetieth birthday celebrated that afternoon, marked the tenth year in which The Cattery had been in existence. In this dark midnight hour she sat in a lounge chair smiling and dozing. In her lap was the cat that brought her to this quiet useful retirement.

When she found him he was a puff of black fur, wet, cold, and sick. Now he was a mature tom, the sleek muscled commander of the entire cattery. Where he walked hissing stopped and combatants walked their separate ways. His short haired coat was thick, black, and without the slightest hint of white.

"You know Mrs. Kats," the vet had said on that first visit. "This is rather odd. I don't think I've ever seen a completely black cat. Supposedly, they were all killed off in the European witch hunts."

"They can't have it's here isn't it?" She told him. "Come to think of it there are a lot of these poor little things about."

"There are Mrs. Kats. Folks around here don't spade their cats near as often as they should. The pound puts them down by the dozen every week. The kittens like this little fellow find homes, but the older ones almost never have any luck."

Mrs. Kats began the process that afternoon, picking up information in the vet's waiting room on shelters and licensing. As with everything she put her hand to Mrs. Kats did the job quickly and completely. In a few weeks her home was converted into a licensed cattery, the grown floor was a wonderland for felines, and a fence designed to keep residence safe at home surrounded the house.

She then called the pound. She could not take them all but if they had mature healthy cats she was to be called. If she had space she would come.

Mrs. Kats named the little black puff ball Twilight, Twy for short. Now a full ten years old, there was nothing small about him. He was long and strong and fearless. His place was next to Mrs. Kats, by her side all day, on her lap in the evenings, and under her blankets warming her thin old body at night. Day after day he kept to his place like a soldier on guard.

A sound caused Twy's head to perk up. His yellow eyes narrowed, sensitive ears swiveled. He stayed very still, not disturbing the delicate hand that rested on his back.

Twy's ears caught the sound of two men's voices drawing near and he knew that the sound that had woke him had been the front door opening.

"Who the hell puts carpet on the walls?"

"I told you dummy it's a cat shelter."

"Geese look at 'em all!"

Twy knew the second voice. He had been doing community service at the shelter by court order, as opposed to the usual high school credit. Twy didn't understand community service. He did understand that the man he heard smelled wrong.

The hand on Twy's back moved. His woman was awake and afraid. Twy jumped to the floor. He fluffed his fur, wanting to look big impressive and threatening, then slunk into the shadows.

Mrs. Kats walked to the open bedroom door.

"What on earth is happening? Why are you here? No! Get out now!"

Her hand went to the alert button she wore on a string around her neck. A male hand reached out and pulled the string hard! It broke and Mrs. Kats fell.

The box that had hung on the string flew across the room to land beside Twy who crouched between a dresser and television stand.

"Aw shit man! She's dead! You broke her neck man you killed her! You said she'd be asleep!"

"She's a million years old you idiot, should have been dead years ago."

The one with the bad smell walked into the room, and grabbed the box on the dresser that Twy knew better to touch; the jewelry box. The one Twy did not know knelt by his woman's still form for a long moment radiating emotion. As his companion left the room he jumped up and grabbed the big box which made sounds and pictures. This one took a long look back at the still old woman then left.

Twy crept forward as the men went. His woman was gone. His world had collapsed. He didn't know that besides leaving money and property to her son and daughter in her will Mrs. Kats also set up a trust for The Cattery. He didn't know his home and the home of all the cats here was secure. He only knew before the woman was hunger and fear. Now the woman was gone.

Twy looked up. The four other cats that were permitted into the woman's apartment stood in the door. They sniffed at Mrs. Kats and learned the truth. They looked to Twy. Eyes narrowing to slits, ears flat, he led the way out.

The men in the yard were loading the television into the back of a battered hatchback. They did not see the two small cats jump up into the engine compartment from underneath the car. They did not see the dozens of eyes following then out into the night through the doors in both the house and gate that they left wide open. The two engine cats jumped down sneezing softly at the smells of oil and gas.

The man who smelled bad and his companion got into the car. The car ran no more than ten feet when a strange fluid began to leak out of the engine.

"What the hell?"

With the engine still running, both men got out of the car.

"You couldn't boost one that worked half decent could you?"

"You said get one nobody would notice!"

The engine burst into flames. Both men turned to run. They got less than a hand full of steps away from the car before it exploded.



Twy saw blood. He saw it on the man who had been upset at what had happened to his woman. Twy understood upset. It meant you were sorry something had happened. He bypassed this man and began to follow the other.

Chad Thomas was limping down the lane. He was pretty sure he had a couple of cracked ribs from being tossed by the explosion. His left knee felt like hell. But that was nothing compared to what he'd feel like if they found him here.

Looking back he saw the fire from the car. It was dying down but it was still bright enough to attract attention. That meant he had to get off the road.

He started up a path that led into a wooded area. He knew where this led to. He had friends who kept a hunting shack far on the other side. A hard two hours walk, maybe three hours in his condition, but he'd be out of sight and would be able to rest along the way.

A movement rustled the dry leaves. Chad stopped. There was just enough moonlight to see the path he walked on but no more.

Chad moved on. The path continued into a small open space. He was half way through this relatively well lit spot before he saw it.

A cat, another cat, as if he hadn't seen enough cats in the two weeks since he started serving his sentence. This one was black with glowing yellow eyes. Its ears were folded back and its fluffed up tail lashed in an attitude of total concentration.

"Scat! Scram! Stupid animal, if I had a gun you'd be....."

Shiny eyes looked out at him from the shadows. Ten, twenty, thirty, more than he could count; young cats old cats, very, angry cats.

\* \* \*

"Yes, detective everything is back to normal. A few of them were missing for a day or two. Twy was gone for a whole week. Grieving I expect animals do that you know. They're all home now. There's an alarm on the doors and windows I feel quite safe. Really detective, I have told you, and the vet has told you, these are domestic cats. They might be capable of giving you a bad scratch, and I wouldn't trust them with a canary, but domestic cats just don't do what you want to accuse them of doing. Certainly if enough domestic cats got together it might be possible, but domestic cats aren't pack hunters."

Twy made thin eyes and licked the end of his tail. This new woman had a softer lap than his woman. Twy liked it. She scratched him in just the right spot and he started to purr.

"Yes, Mrs. Kats picked me to take over about two years ago. I started helping out almost right away so I know the cats and they know me. She wanted everything to be prepared for when the good Lord caught up with her. Though goodness knows she didn't expect to go like that. She knew I was retired and not well off. She also knew I would value this place as a haven, and run things just as she did. That way the cats would have the smallest possible upset. You'd be surprised what can upset a cat. They like things just so you know. Yes, come by any time, good-night."

The new resident manager of The Cattery hung up the phone and turned her attention to the cat in her lap.

"Poor Twy, do you miss your Mrs. Kats? Imagine that silly detective thinking you and your friends could do something that evil. Why there was hardly anything left of that boy. Shall we watch some television before we go to bed?"

The woman picked up the television converter and turned on the set. Absentmindedly she stroked the big cat in her lap. Twy purred, made pointy paws, and drifted off to sleep.



# THE VULTURE

By John Reinhard Dizon (USA)



## Biography

John Reinhard Dizon was born and raised in the Cobble Hill section of Brooklyn, NY. He participated in local and high school sports at Bishop Loughlin MHS, and was a key figure on the Brooklyn rock scene during the Punk Revolution of the 70's. Relocating to San Antonio TX in the 80's, he moonlighted as a pro wrestler before pursuing a BA at UTSA and degrees in Korean martial arts during the 90's. He currently lives in KC MO where he is studying for his MA in English at UMKC. Mr. Dizon has been studying and writing about American and European society and culture for over twenty-five years.

*"So tell me about Peter Richards. According to the reports, you kept contact with him over the past thirty years. When was the last time you actually saw him?"*

*"Did you want to rephrase the question?" Agnes Dowd was a reporter for the Village Voice for over forty years. She was a native of Cobble Hill in Brooklyn and attended grade school with Richards. It was what interested her in the case, as well as the fact that she had previously interviewed Blaine Hyland. The Mayor's ex-lover had been involved in a major discrimination lawsuit a few years ago and the story catapulted Agnes into national prominence.*

*"I'm sorry. Perhaps we're getting off on the wrong foot here."*

*"Let's just get this over with. I'll help you try and get your story straight, and maybe you'll have a different side of the story than what Blaine is giving everyone. I'll be the one who pays for it; I have to go back to the Cave after this."*

*I'd like to get back to that, but first I want to find out when you last made contact with Richards.*

*"We kept contact over the phone over the years. In my situation, your cell phone is your lifeline. He was one of the few people left who kept touch after they moved away."*

*Anna Montero was an attractive invalid who had been blinded and crippled for nearly thirty-five years. She and Richards had survived a bus accident during which he had pulled her to safety. He had moved to Kentucky a couple of years afterward, but the childhood friends had reportedly maintained contact ever since.*

*"The last time, Miss Montero; when was the last time?"*

*"I guess it was around Labor Day. He was going through hard times and he said something about completing his mission, coming to the end of the race. He was like that, sometimes he had a new project going, and he was very upbeat. Other times he was dejected and I'd have to pump him up. It was the same thing on my end. I'd get depressed and he would lift me up."*

*"Did he give you any indication he was coming to New York?"*

*"I already went over this with the police dozens of times," she grew impatient. They were in Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan where both she and Richards were being treated since the incident on Halloween. It was the first week of December, and Richards was being transferred to the Metropolitan Center of Mental Health. Anna would be released tomorrow. "He never said a word. He did talk about his sister, how she was going to hell for what she did and how the Day of Judgment was coming. He always talked like that whenever her name came up. I didn't think he was going to actually do anything."*

*"Do you think he's insane? Or do you think that Blaine Hyland's story about Richards faking his insanity is more accurate?"*

*"Well, he killed twelve people in that house. I don't think that's something a sane person would do. Do you?"*

*"I didn't know him as well as you do, that's why I'm here."*

*I think you've got your own agenda."*

*"No, ma'am, I'm a reporter. Just the facts, as they say. Did you want to say something about the allegations of elderly abuse at the house?"*

*"I've got to go back there, I'm not stupid."*

*"Four of the people he killed at the house were elderly residents. Lisa Hyland had rented the condominiums to them in exchange for complimentary care. She had home health care personnel coming in and out, six of them who were among the victims. The police and autopsy reports had found bruises and marks on the elderly victims' bodies. The investigation revealed that it had to do with restraints placed on the patients with the knowledge of their families."*

*"That's interesting. Why would you be restraining four people over eighty years old? Maybe they were thinking about killing the nurses before Peter even got there."*

*"Are you saying you knew about abusive treatment at the house?"*

*"In case you haven't noticed, I'm crippled and blind. I wasn't in the habit of going up and down the steps in a three-story building visiting everyone."*

*"So you lived in the back apartment on the first floor. The police indicated there was extensive remodeling going on when they searched the place. Now, there's a lot of speculation about the first time they went by that night. They said they went to your apartment and you told them everything was fine. Blaine Hyland says that you had probably let Peter in and lied to the police, which is how he was able to carry out the murders."*

*He hates his uncle, he's always hated him. I don't think he wants to admit that one of his friends let Peter in. Plus the story about how he got into Mrs. Vecchio's apartment has gotten so screwed up, I think that's where your cover-up starts."*

*"Okay, so the initial reports indicated that there was crack cocaine found in Mrs. Vecchio's house. The autopsy report on Lakeesha Washington indicated that she had been smoking crack, and she had a prior record of drug treatment. The prosecution theorized that Richards had bribed his way into the house by offering Lakeesha crack, and then murdered her before hiding in your apartment; the second victim, Porscha Jefferson, called Blaine, & Lisa before contacting the police."*

*She called them to get their okay before calling the cops. That's how things are done over there. Nobody does anything without checking with Blaine or Lisa."*

*"Right. So you say there was a knock at your door, and when you opened the door no one was there. You left it open to make sure your kitten hadn't escaped, and it was during that time that Richards may have snuck into your apartment."*

*"I had to make sure. I had three other kittens that got out and disappeared. That place is always locked up tight. How could three kittens just disappear? Plus each time it happened, I could hear the nurses making jokes about dead cats the next day. I just made sure that kitten was in her basket before I closed the door."*

*When did you first hear the nickname of The Vulture?*

*"Oh, I don't know," Anna pursed her lips. She looked like a Munsters-type punk rocker with her dyed black hair showing gray at the temples, dressed in black with a worn studded bracelet and Anarchy necklace. "I guess it started when Lisa moved back from New Mexico with Blaine after her husband died. Peter knew she was going to try to screw him out of his inheritance. He said she was a vulture waiting for his parents to die."*



*A few years ago, she was treated for breast cancer, when she had the double mastectomy. She lost her hair and, well, she always had a big nose. He started saying that she really looked like a vulture now."*

*"His apartment in Bowling Green looked like some kind of vulture cult," Agnes pointed out. "He had words spray-painted on the walls. The living room said, 'TO FIND THE TREASURE – FOLLOW THE VULTURE'. There were also pictures, statues, and figurines of vultures everywhere. Psychiatrists stated that he might have done it to drive himself into a state of paranoia, blaming the vultures for him living in squalor. It was just a matter of transferring the hatred to his sister."*

*You know how that works. They make it come out any way they like. Peter had gone through some hard times and was living in a bad neighborhood, from what I heard. I think someone broke into his apartment after he told people he was leaving town for a few days. The crack heads probably stole his furniture and trashed the place."*

*"Okay, so after he left your apartment that night, he went to the second floor. That's when he killed his sister and two of the other nurses. They said he had a key to get into the apartment, and you were one of the only people who had a key."*

*"You know, that's so stupid and ridiculous," Anna grew angry again. "Why are you gonna give someone in my situation a key to an upstairs apartment?"*

*"Miss Montero, I'm just going by what's on record. Blaine said they left the key with you in case there was an emergency. They had given it to you years ago."*

*"Well, did you see any of the pictures of my apartment?" she was indignant. "They started that remodeling fifteen years ago, back when Marcel was alive. Fifteen years. Lisa got their Dad to take out a loan to get the house remodeled before he died. She used the money to send Blaine to Yale. They gutted the back room and tore all the linoleum up. They scraped off all the paint, and then just left it like that. All my belongings are in boxes, they've been there all this time. I can't even find my records, my CD's, my electronic equipment, nothing. How in hell would I know where their stupid key was?"*

*"Let's go back to the incident. After he left your apartment, he went upstairs to the second floor and killed three victims. You said you never knew he was in your apartment, and you never heard anything, even though one of the murders occurred in the room directly above your bedroom."*

*"Here we go again. I told the cops that it got noisy upstairs. I think one of the nurses has a room above mine. They play a lot of rap music up there, and sometimes I can hear him having sex with his boyfriends. You can hear the bed bumping around and the two of them squealing, three sometimes. I just put on my headphones until I go to sleep, or else I'll put in my earplugs. It's gotten to be my routine. How the hell can anyone think I could've heard anything?"*

*"So you say they gutted the back room and you had no ceiling. The police reported that even though Richards was a power lifter and a martial arts expert, the victims on the second floor were physically bigger than him and there were prolonged struggles. After he stabbed his sister and slit her throat, he stabbed Tanisha Jones over a dozen times in the front bedroom before killing Shaniqua Smith in the guest bedroom above yours. During that scuffle, you said there was no dust or debris that came down through the floorboards in that hundred-year-old building*

*"That happens all the time. I always sleep with the covers pulled over my head."*

*"You said there was a male living above you. How was it those two women were killed?"*

*"The place was like some kind of Plato's Retreat," Anna shrugged. "Sometimes Lisa would have her girlfriends in her room, and Blaine would invite all the guys upstairs. That seems to be what happened that night. The girls were probably all in bed together watching TV, or whatever they do---or did."*

*"One of the elderly victims was in a small room off to the side of Lisa's room. Each of the elderly people had their throats slit. The defense attorneys argued that these were done as mercy killings. What did you think about what?"*

*"We talked about that a couple of times over the years. We discussed people who were on life support, people with terminal illnesses, that kind of stuff. We pretty well agreed that if it was us, we'd rather be dead than to be trapped helpless in a bed for the rest of our lives."*

*"So did you ever tell him what you thought was going on in the house, or what you thought was going on?"*

*"Well, most of the people on the block knew what was going on," Anna explained. "All the residents were people who owned houses on the block, Lisa would find out who was getting sent to old age homes, and she would visit their families. She offered to let them rent from her so they could spend their last days on the street where they lived. Her mom Shelly was bedridden, so after Marcel died she had private nurses staying with Shelly when she and Blaine were working. After Shelly passed, Lisa rented out all the rooms to the old folks. They already had the nurses on call, so it worked out good for her."*

*"Did you think the residents were being abused?"*

*"I think they were in La-La Land most of the time. Sometimes the nurses would come down to visit me. They would try to borrow money or just come by to talk when they got bored. They'd make jokes about going back to the vegetable patch. Whenever they talked about taking care of someone, it was always about being time for their medication. I never heard anyone once talking about how anyone was doing, or what they'd talked about, or anyone coming to visit. It was like they had a houseful of plants, or pets or something."*

*All right, so Richards leaves the second floor apartment and goes upstairs. There are two elderly people living in a shared apartment with Blaine. This is where most of the people are killed in their sleep. The prosecution maintained that the five nurses had cots and sleeping bags there so they didn't have to take the subway at night. The defense insisted the place was set up like a crack house where the tweakers crashed once the parties ended. Blaine was the only survivor, and he exited down the fire escape once he realized what was going on. Which version do you believe?*

*"Like I said, I stay there and I have to go back there. I'm not gonna trash talk anyone and have you put it in the newspaper so I have to live with it."*

*"So why did you stay there? If it was so bad, why didn't you move, or report it to the social workers?"*

*"You don't understand. I knew the Richards since I was in grade school. Peter and I were friends since we were kids. We went to the same church; we used to go to all the Youth Group meetings and activities all the time. When I turned eighteen I rented my apartment from Marcel. That's my home, I've lived there most of my life. Peter lived right next door in the room where Mrs. Vecchio lived."*

*When he lived there, you had a little group you called the Clique. There was you and Peter and about ten other friends. Mary Vasquez made a statement, saying that everyone would have Bible study, and then break out the liquor and drugs afterward. He had a black room with phosphorescent graffiti, and you'd trip out on heavy metal music. She made it sound like a cult."*



*"Things are what you make of them. She moved to New Jersey, it probably seemed like that to her over the years. We were very spiritual, and very much aware of future events and things that pointed to the end times. We knew that the days were short, and look what happened. Right after Y2K you had 9/11. Now you have the Muslims in a holy war against Christianity. People who read the Bible are looked at as fanatics and weirdoes. Men sleep with men, women sleep with women, people ban God from public places, and they're just exercising their Constitutional rights."*

*"So do you think that might have been part of it? Do you think he might have felt he was doing God's will in killing all those people? They found lots of Bible verses written in markers all over his apartment in bowling green. It was all in his handwriting."*

*"Well, see, there you go. Peter wasn't like everyone else, he was very artistic. He would get an idea, and the next day there was a new painting on the wall in the Black Room. Maybe that just stayed with him throughout his life. Maybe a particular verse had special meaning to him, and he'd write it on the wall. Have you ever known people who write numbers on the kitchen wall near the phone? Do you think that's compulsive?"*

*"You defend him a lot. Do you think he's innocent by way of insanity? You don't think he planned killing the Hylands when he left Kentucky before Halloween?"*

*"I think he had a vision," Anna took off her sunglasses, her eyes staring intently. "I think he knew that things weren't right at that house, and maybe he felt as if things had to be made right. Maybe he just planned to drive up, get in touch with me and some of our old friends. He's always had visions, though. He's always been able to see things that ordinary people couldn't see. Or maybe he just had the guts to declare his visions. You see things that you don't tell anybody about. We all see things that we don't want to admit. Peter sees things, and he's not afraid of anyone or anything. Peter has always spoken up; he's always taken a stand against evil. He's always been a light in the dark. He can see into your soul, Agnes Dowd. What would you think if I told you he knew you were here right now?"*

*"How would you know that?" Agnes started feeling very uncomfortable as Anna began staring right at her as if she were part of the wall.*

*"I know him, I know all about him. He's part of me, and I'm part of him. We are all as one. We're not the only ones. There were twelve of us, and even though Mary has betrayed us, another of us can step up once Peter's gone. But he's not really gone, is he? You can put him in that hospital, but he'll get out. Maybe Lisa is gone, but Blaine is still there. Peter will continue to follow the vultures. You can always find death when you follow the scavengers, those who live off dead men's bones."*

*"Ms. Montero, Dr. Martinez is here for your session," an intern came into the room. "Ms. Dowd, I'm afraid you'll have to wrap it up."*

*"Certainly," Agnes stood and collected her items, reaching over and taking Anna's hand. "It's been a pleasure meeting you. The best of luck to you!"*

*"My pleasure, Uh, don't forget your pen."*

*"Thanks."*

*Agnes followed the intern out the door. It was only after it closed behind her did she hear Anna's laughter, and a chill ran down her spine. It was a laugh that she would remember in her nightmares for a long, long time.*





## Visiting Hours

By **Elle Klass (USA)**  
(Copyright Elle Klass 2013)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

### BIOGRAPHY

ELLE WAS BORN IN REDWOOD CITY CALIFORNIA, IN THE LATE 20TH CENTURY. SINCE THEN SHE HAS LIVED IN VARIOUS STATES INCLUDING VIRGINIA AND FLORIDA. SHE GRADUATED FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH FLORIDA WITH A DEGREE IN EDUCATION AND HAS SPENT OVER A DECADE TEACHING JUNIOR HIGH. WRITING HAS BEEN HER PASSION. BOOK "AS SNOW FALLS" IS HER FIRST PUBLICATION.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Sally Valens looked at her husband Leo is lying fragile in the hospital bed. His skin a milky pale white and about thirty pounds lighter than he was just seven weeks prior. She doted on him like a loving wife would, fluffing his pillows, reading him the paper and making sure his nurse was at his disposal whenever he needed. It had been his third heart attack in only seven weeks time, but his heart continued to tick. She had planned so carefully to buy every ingredient and mix the precise amounts.

She had been by his side for almost fifteen years. Born into money he had invested wisely and they had a beautiful home on the beachfront, but he wasn't a good man. He had acquired many lady friends. This disgraced Sally to no end. She was an attractive woman in her mid forties who still had curves in the right places and few signs, except for her delicate slits beside her eyes, to show her age however he continued to seek solace in other women. That infuriated Sally and she had disposed of every woman in a nonchalant act never being traced back to her. After the last one she realized it wasn't the women but Leo. He couldn't be satisfied with only one woman.

This last heart attack, she had doubled the recipe and placed it in his iced tea... Since she never drank tea it wouldn't look odd. As planned, she brought him a glass and as he started to drink, she announced she was going out for a couple hours and would bring dinner home. He hadn't even turned his head from the computer. When arriving home, she set the table, lit a candle, and opened a bottle of wine, Vinter's Red, her favorite. She then proceeded to her husband's office. He was in fact lying on the floor motionless. Ten years prior she probably would have gasped and cried hysterically, but that was before; before she knew about his dirty little escapades. Like a good wife she called an ambulance, thinking for sure that he was dead, had been dead for a while, although she never checked his pulse on account that she didn't want her hands soiled by a death. When the paramedics arrived and checked his pulse, they found a slight beat. They placed the paddles on his chest as they should shock him back to the land of the living. Sally's only thoughts were If only she had waited another couple hours he would have been gone for sure. Regret filled her mind, although she never let it show. She was a respected pillar of the community, aside from her husband's shame, and she would not falter.

This next attempt on his life she had to get right, but no more heart attacks, she needed something more subtle. A barrage of possibilities whizzed through her head. She could wax the steps, making the one step extra slippery or maybe she could rig the brakes in his car so it would go skidding off the mountainous beach road and plummeting to the jagged rocks below.

With visiting hours now up Sally left to go home. It was a stormy night and the road was slick. She knew every curve of the road and wasn't worried about a little rain. Her thoughts were focused on her husband and his car having a face to face with the rocky beach below. She envisioned his face, mouth gaping as he lost control and his eyes round with fear. The money, the house it was all hers, she had earned it! Earned it! She had put up with his cheating soul too long! The fog had set in and she could barely see the outline of their home looming in the distance. As she made the last bend her steering wheel froze and the car continued over the ledge, flying into one of the broken rocks below their house puncturing the windshield and piercing Sally through her chest.

The next morning nurse Mandy checked on Leo as usual. When she saw Sally wasn't there a smile crept across her lips and she knew Sally wouldn't be coming anymore.

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## Excerpt & Essay from “Political Craps” – Thomas Ufert

### Biography of ‘Author Thomas Ufert’ (USA)

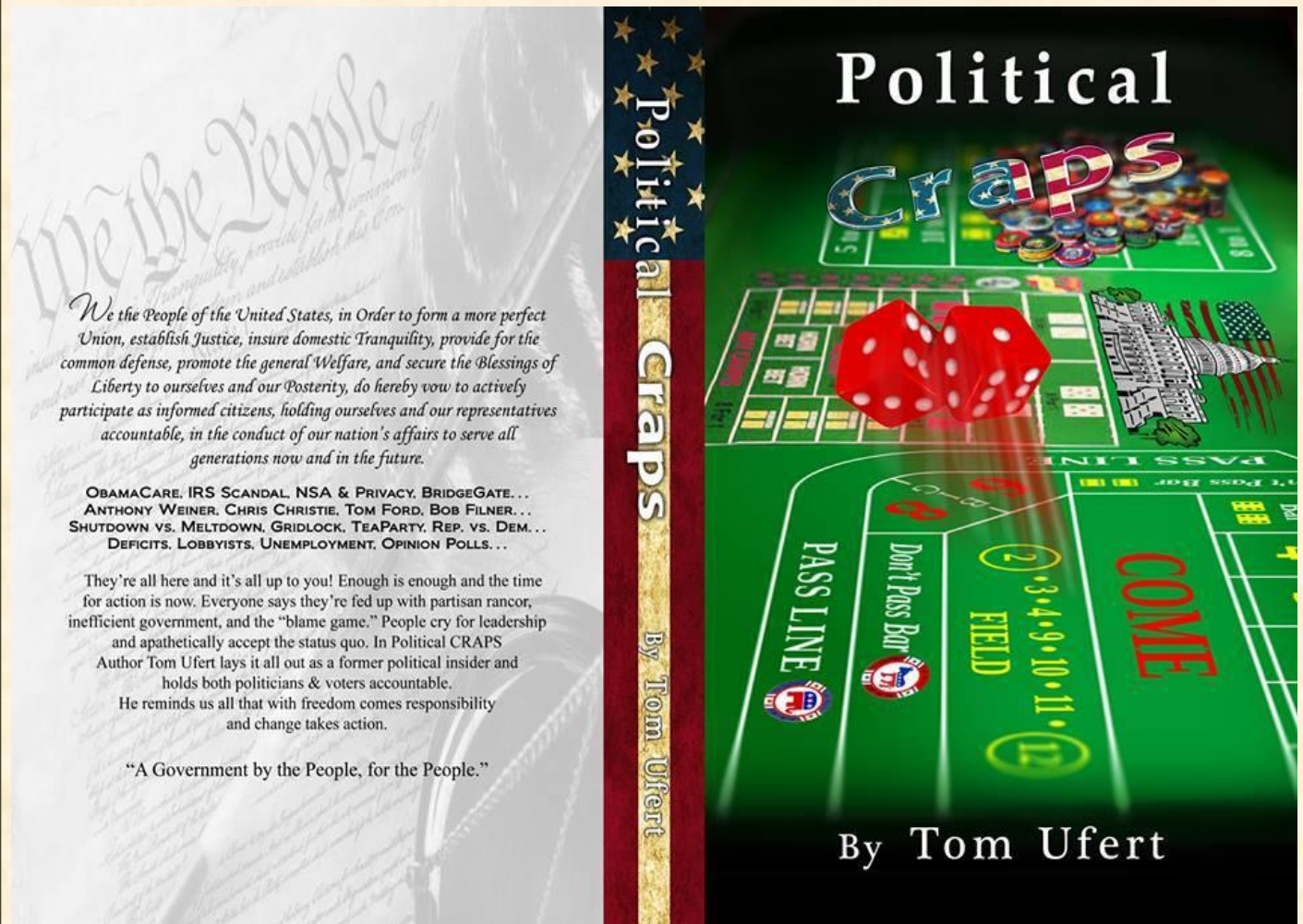


Tom Ufert, a 48-year-old quadriplegic afflicted with three different disabilities is an inspirational voice in our troubled times. He received his bachelor of arts in political science and history as a scholarship recipient from Centenary College of Louisiana. Tom is a former Rotary International graduate Fellow who attended Australian National University in Canberra, ACT, specializing in East Asian political affairs and was a White House Fellow nominee. He is a former Lyndon Baines Johnson Congressional Intern and constituency aid for two former United States members of Congress. His past services for 11 political campaigns on both sides of the aisle were highly valued by former Louisiana Governor Charles “Buddy” Roemer, Henson Moore the former assistant chief of staff to U.S. Vice President George H.W. Bush, and the recently retired U.S. Trade Ambassador, Ron Kirk.

At age 23 he was the youngest artistic Board Chairman in the United States as head of the Shreveport Summer Music Festival. Mr. Ufert has served as a member of two other 501(c) three charity boards including his beloved fraternity Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia as well as the community advisory board for his former rehabilitation hospital. Over the years he has acquired extensive customer service experience in the food and beverage, hotel, insurance, home security, and pharmaceutical industries. His professional memberships include Phi Alpha Theta, Sigma Tau Delta, and the Worldwide Who’s Who. In recent years he has worked tirelessly as a volunteer fundraiser for numerous AIDS charities in his community and served briefly as the community affairs liaison for Legacy Founders Cottage.

Tom Ufert, a native of Louisiana, now resides in Texas. He is an Amazon Best Selling Author for his second book *On The Roll Again* and his first book, *Adversity Builds Character* received high acclaim with numerous 5 Star reviews. Perhaps Mr. Ufert’s greatest claim to fame is that every book he sells contributes directly to charity through his charitable book entity Stand Strong For Others.

## Excerpt



### Current Affairs Have Consequences

Throughout 2013 and early 2014 politicians behaving badly have dominated the political scene and the media's attention. Furthermore, there has been a seemingly endless parade of governmental over reach scandals that directly affect us all. Hopefully this would sear an unforgettable impression upon the American conscience as the November midterm elections approach. Numerous pundits and social critics have reflected over the span of our nation's history and concluded that the American memory is short and replete with a forgiving if not altogether forgetful attitude towards the shameful character flaws of our elected officials. While this indulgent nature is sometimes commendable and even worthy of the public's trust for a second chance at the ballot box, after so many examples of deplorable behavior in such a short amount of time one cannot help but seriously question the quality of America's present leadership class. This is especially true when the nation faces so many looming perilous questions that are continuously overshadowed by the suffocating cloud of partisan gridlock and discord. How can we possibly expect **progress** when we have to deal with **congress**?

As the public watches and "thoughtfully" ponders the potential choices of the coming November elections, recent scandals and personal shenanigans must be taken into account. While these events only directly involve a small percentage of our elected officials, they infect the overall public trust in every politician, and rightly so. Basic questions of honesty and character should be paramount for any potential office seeker and therein the subordinate appointees they will be directly responsible for installing into the government bureaucracy. The people's elected representatives and the daily functioning bureaucrats that are



accountable for government services are inextricably linked. Far too often, the American voter and or taxpayer seem to forget that these people are our employees, not our masters. If they fail to do their jobs, it is our responsibility to fire them at election time and replace them with better qualified individuals. Therefore, it is imperative that recent events be carefully reviewed in this context to properly consider those attributes deemed necessary for good public servants conducting the nation's business. Failure to do so will unquestionably result in continued government ineptitude.

Having said that causes the typical skeptic to raise a besmirched eyebrow and immediately point out that politics has always been this way and this is certainly nothing new. There is no argument that as a "contact sport" politics is far from being gentlemanly or even remotely "clean." Yet as Americans we tend to hold our potential leaders to a higher standard in the hope that they live up to the iconic almost mystic image we have constructed of the nation's "Founding Fathers." Even that term itself plucks at our national heartstrings with an almost fallacious imagery of George Washington and Thomas Jefferson resting on pristine clouds surrounded by winged cherubs as if these once mortal men were now divine in nature. They never were. However, it is far easier for the living to idolize these great men and hold them as standard bearers upon which the potential successors of their heritage must perform. To some degree that is a fair character assessment that can be levied against prospective office seekers. The foundations of our democratic republic have certainly withstood the test of time, but not without alteration, definite improvements, and an ever changing perspective on the American social landscape. For this reason the U.S. Constitution has been referred to as a "living document."

So in turn we must realistically evaluate those men and women honored with the sacred task of serving as our elected representatives. After all they are but human and no better or worse than we ourselves. The striking difference is that office seekers have chosen to lay themselves, their character and even their families before the public under intense scrutiny. However, with power comes responsibility and that alone warrants a higher standard of character because they are entrusted with the public trust. While it may be unfair to judge potential candidates and sitting officials under a skewed "mythical" microscope, it certainly provides them with a code of conduct to strive for. In many cases accepted standards of ethical behavior are regulated or codified. For those that are not, the public frequently has a sense of decency and fair play that holds public servants accountable. Though the degree of acceptance varies from time to time, there is no question as to the awesome power of public opinion. Just ask any marketing executive, or politician for that matter. In light of all this proselytizing, let us briefly review recent events that involve public officials and attempt to emphasize some preferred ideal standards of behavioral conduct.

First let us consider the scope and influence of recent federal scandals that have rightfully brought into question how far are we willing to allow government intrusion to go. The three most controversial incidents all deal with federal executive agencies. Namely, these are the National Security Agency (NSA), the Internal Revenue Agency (IRS) and the Department of State (DOS).

Regardless of your personal feelings regarding these events one distinct point is perfectly clear—they affect you! They are all prime examples that politics affects you. Most average Americans fail to see how. On the surface federal agencies far away in Washington, D.C., or a U.S. diplomatic consulate half way around the world seem so distant and far removed that they cannot possibly affect the everyday lives of average citizens. **WRONG!** While it may be true that they do not affect you today or directly in a uniquely personal way, these events do have consequences for every American citizen. To save time and avoid a mindless chronology of each scandal, we shall outline a brief overview of the facts, how these events relate to you as a citizen and why you should give a damn.



## Essay on “Political Craps” – Thomas Ufert

### Why *Political Craps* and Why Now?

To fully understand and appreciate the intent behind my new book *Political Craps*, I thought it was appropriate to spell out a few things. Probably the first question many people have is “Who is Tom Ufert and what does **he** know about politics?” This is certainly a relevant question before accepting anything I have to say as credible! Everyone who has had any contact with me in the last thirty years can definitely attest to the fact that I am a “political animal.” Since the age of seventeen I have had a keen interest and burning desire to play a role in the political affairs of my homeland and the world at large. It is my firm belief that politics plays an intrinsic role in the life of every human being on earth. Whether you subscribe to that notion or not is really inconsequential to the reality of human relations. Politics **does affect you** whether you believe it or not!

Conviction in the reality of that basic fact has inspired me to become personally involved in the political process. Therefore, from the moment I embarked on my first political campaign to become student body president in high school my path was pretty much set. The overwhelming victory of winning in a four way race without a runoff, the first in Loyola College Prep’s history, and leaving office with a budget surplus after an unprecedented year of successful SGA events only served to whet my appetite. I spent five years in college earning my double BA in political science and history, founding and chairing the campus College Republican chapter which led to becoming the state vice-chairman of Young Republicans and serving as an ex-officio member of the senior party’s state central committee. In 1986 I was honored to receive an LBJ Congressional Internship, in 1988 was a White House Fellow nominee, and received a Rotary International graduate Fellowship to study East Asian political affairs at Australian National University.

Over the last thirty years I have volunteered and served in numerous capacities on eleven different political campaigns for public office ranging from city council, mayor, congress, Senate, and president. My past political mentors or candidate employers include former Louisiana congressman/governor/presidential candidate the Hon. Charles “Buddy” Roemer, former advisor to President Ronald Reagan Morton Blackwell, former Louisiana congressman/Senate candidate and assistant chief of staff to Vice President George H.W. Bush the Hon. Henson W. Moore, and former Mayor of Dallas, Texas/Senate candidate and recently retired U.S. Trade Ambassador the Hon. Ron Kirk. My campaign endeavors have always focused on electing the best candidate regardless of political party. I have been a Republican, a Democrat and now consider myself an Independent. In recent years, primarily due to my physical challenges resulting from three life altering disabilities acquired in 1992, I have concentrated my efforts on charity fundraising and private advocacy on behalf of certain causes or individual private citizens. Though life has altered my original career plans to become a public servant or diplomat, my interest and sincere desire to be an active and informed citizen has never diminished.

Without a doubt many people have been amused by my choice of titles. Most of them jump to the natural conclusion that it refers to the commonly held view most everything political these days is a heaping pile of manure. In actuality the title *Political Craps* has three primary themes to convey. First, as the book cover illustrates I contend that America’s present leadership class is playing a very dangerous betting game of “craps” with the future of our nation and its people. Seemingly politicians, and to a great extent the voters themselves, are betting on America’s future hoping on a lucky roll of the dice rather than properly

investing in concrete solutions. Second, the word “craps” is an acronym for **C**ompromise, **R**ancor, **A**ffluence, **P**olicy, and **S**tupidity—there is a chapter in the book addressing each of these subjects. Finally, the third theme indeed deals with the popularly held impression that America’s politicians and pretty much everything they tell us is a pile of “crap.”

Perhaps the third overriding question by most people is “Why now?” Over the last several years, intensified partisan polarization, congressional dysfunction, and campaign rhetorical animosity have heightened my concerns for the future of this country and the overall trends in international affairs. My 500 word essay for the Rotary fellowship in 1987 arguing that China would be America’s greatest geo-political competitor in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, has become increasingly more credible with that nation’s efforts to exert its influence. In this day and age of an interconnected global economy and twenty-four hour news coverage with the internet that allows for a closer knit human marketplace of ideas, no citizen can afford to bury their head in the sand and pretend that current events don’t affect them.

Therefore, I wrote *Political Craps* to dismiss the foolish claim that “my vote doesn’t count!” **Every Vote Counts!** Dictator and evil tyrant Adolph Hitler was elected Chancellor of Germany by a single vote in the Reichstag! Famous statesman and philosopher Edmund Burke is noted for several pertinent quotes that should strike a chord when people whine and complain about the present nature of our political culture.

“The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

“All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent.”

“Those who don't know history are destined to repeat it.”

“The greater the power, the more dangerous the abuse.”

“It is a general popular error to suppose the loudest complainers for the public to be the most anxious for its welfare.”

“Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion.”

“When the leaders choose to make themselves bidders at an auction of popularity, their talents, in the construction of the state, will be of no service. They will become flatterers instead of legislators; the instruments, not the guides, of the people.”

“The people never give up their liberties but under some delusion.”

“Nobody made a greater mistake than he who did nothing because he could do only a little.”

“All government, indeed every human benefit and enjoyment, every virtue, and every prudent act, is founded on compromise and barter.”

It is my firm belief that the United States, and therein the entire global community have reached a crossroad that shall irrevocably affect the fate of all mankind for decades to come. America has long proclaimed itself as the “protector of democracy.” Presently as the leading economy in the world and the unquestioned military superpower the United States of America, for the sanctity of world peace and economic prosperity, can no longer afford to languish in a quagmire of divisive partisan gridlock and petty personal squabbling among its leaders. As the guarantors of American democracy, her citizens can no



longer tolerate this deplorable status quo. *Political Craps* is meant to reinvigorate and reignite the inspirational spark of participatory democracy.

There are far too many issues that demand the vigilant attention and educated participation of every American. The world and indeed the hopes of future generations look to us for leadership and partnership in overcoming the challenges of this new century. Our responsibilities and moral imperatives as American citizens invoke us to lead not from behind, not as belligerent overseers, but as trustworthy humanitarians walking hand in hand with the peoples of the world into a new golden age of humanity. It is impossible for us to be the “protectors of democracy” if we forsake our obligations as citizens by remaining apathetic sheep in the face of domestic intransigence and partisan divide. Therefore, I plead with my fellow Americans to take heed to the core principle of *Political Craps*—**Get Informed! Get Involved! Politics Affects You!**

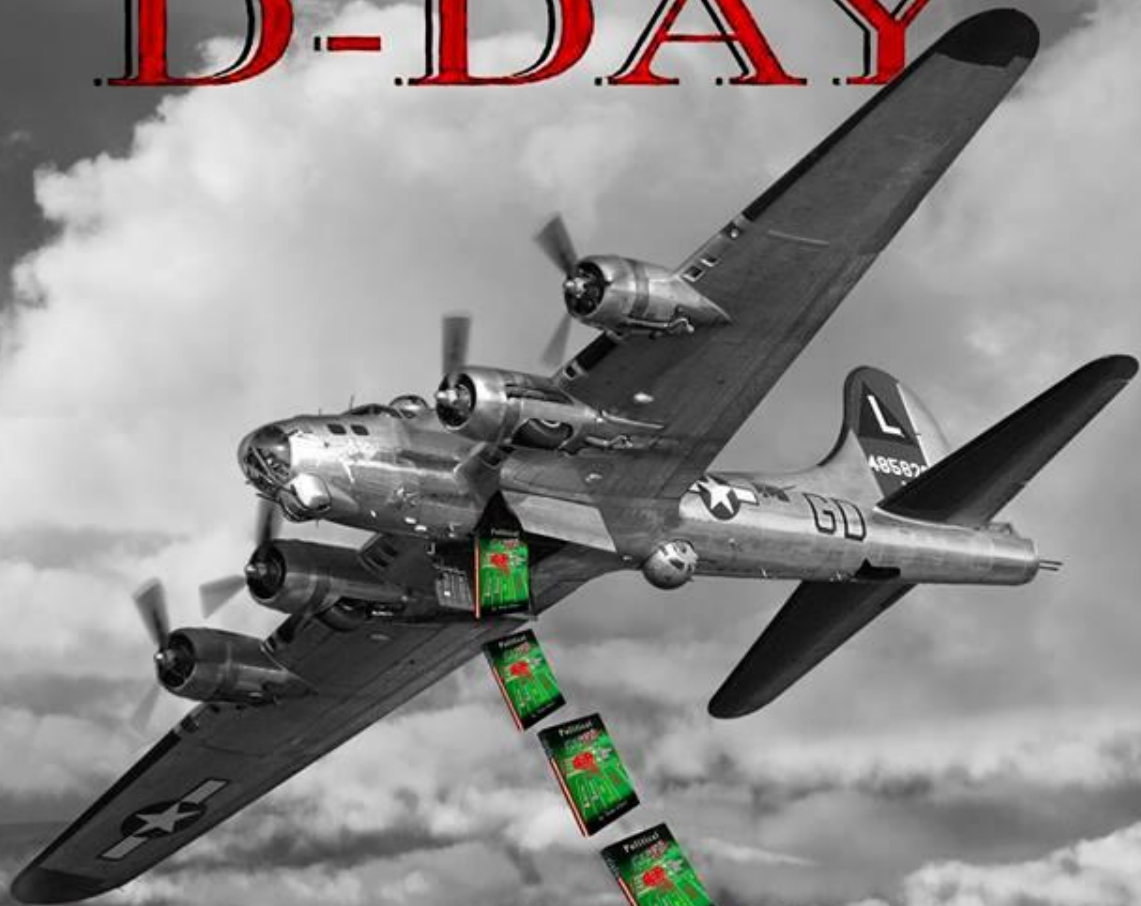
The coming election cycles of 2014 and 2016 will set the stage for America’s role in global affairs for decades to come. Our children cannot believe in a better future if today’s electorate refuses to address the calamities of the last decade. From global terrorism to economic depression, from growing dangerous geological and atmospheric conditions to growing threats of hunger and disease, our generation must take up the mantle we were entrusted to wear. Leaders must lead for the greater good rather than cower to stagnant ideological dogmas or popularity polls that fall on the wrong side of history. If today’s leaders don’t have the character and courage to do what is right because it is the right thing to do, then the time has come to pass the torch of leadership onto a better class of thinkers that will. In the end as voters we ultimately decide our own best manifest destiny and must accept the consequences of our action or inaction in the face troubling times. It is my sincere hope and prayer that *Political Craps* will inspire others to follow their hearts and consciences to do what is best for us all.

# JUNE 6TH, 2014



A DAY THAT CHANGED AMERICA

# D-DAY



Tom Ufert  
Releases  
Political Craps



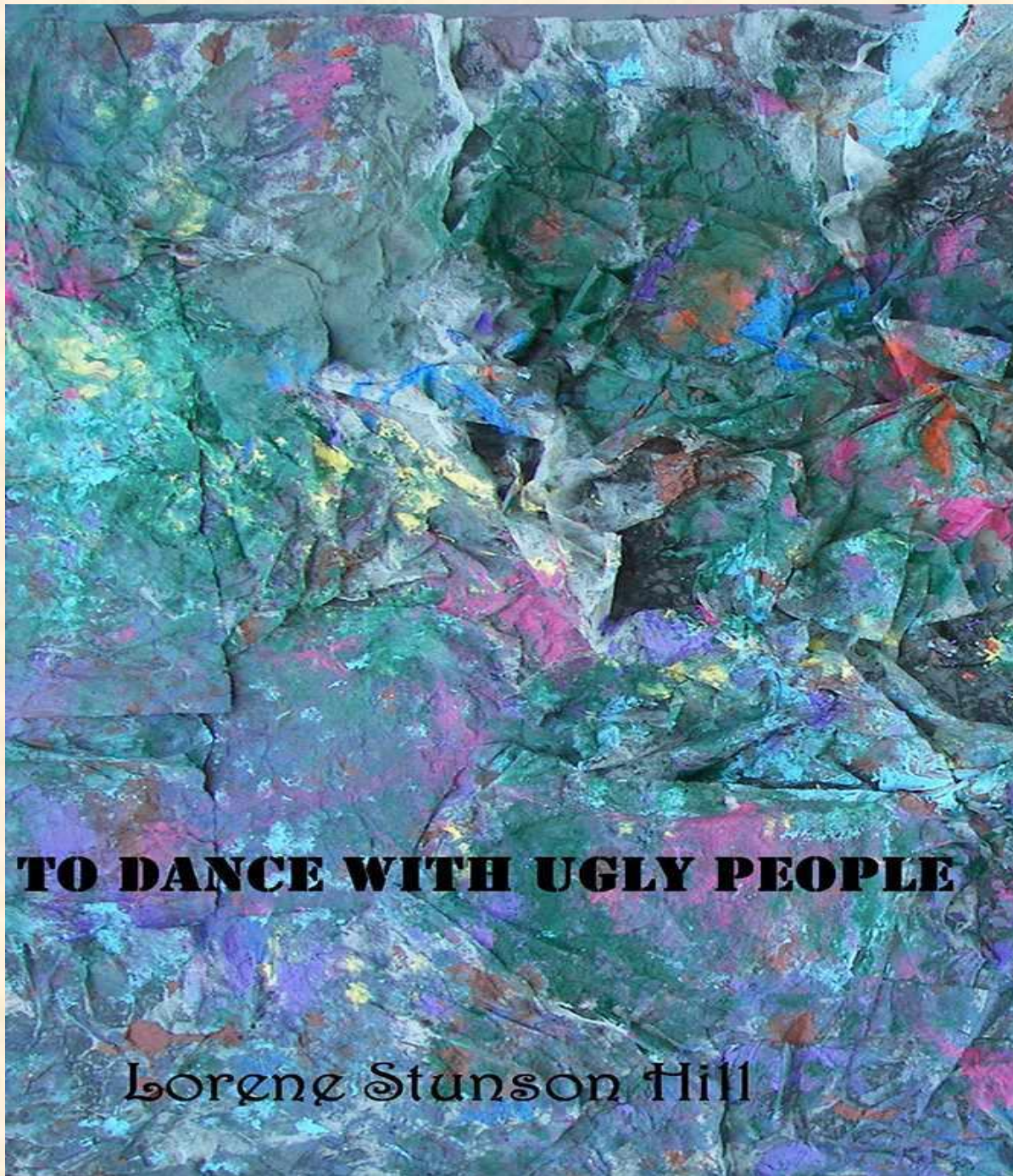
## Excerpt from “To Dance with Ugly People” – Lorene Stunson Hill

Biography of Author ‘Lorene Stunson Hill’ (USA)



Lorene Stunson Hill is a new aspiring author in Florida. This is her first novel, an Ebook. She has no previous book publications. She grew up in Detroit, Michigan and for the last thirty seven years has lived in Central Florida with her family. Her life might not have been full of ease and luxury, but she preferred to glorify her existence, seeing it as something to write about. "To Dance with Ugly People" draws on the wealth of experiences placed in her path. Along that path she completed Creative Writing Courses at the University of Central Florida under the guidance of Professor Wyatt Wyatt, who taught her that if you want to write you cannot be a coward.

## Excerpt



“To Dance with Ugly People,” tells the harrowing story of Dani Ransom's travels down several dark paths. She experiences the ravages of drug abuse, psychological cruelty, and the fanatical abusive love of her husband Dane. Experience Dani Ransom “Living on the Edge.” Understand the narcissist hold by Dane on Dani. Witness the chaos of Dani Ransom’s mind. Troubled by man versus women, she makes many wrong decisions. Exhausted by the collapse of every aspect of her life, can she save herself and overcome the shadows of darkness that follows her? She finally finds the love of her life, her greatest muse, an older man, Chance Wiley, but even when she strives to travel the right path, fate steps in. Haunted by her own personal ghosts she can't live life to its fullest. Is fate everywhere we are, involved in everything we do and not just the end result? What do you think?



## Excerpt & Chapter from “The Journey Home” – Willy Nywening

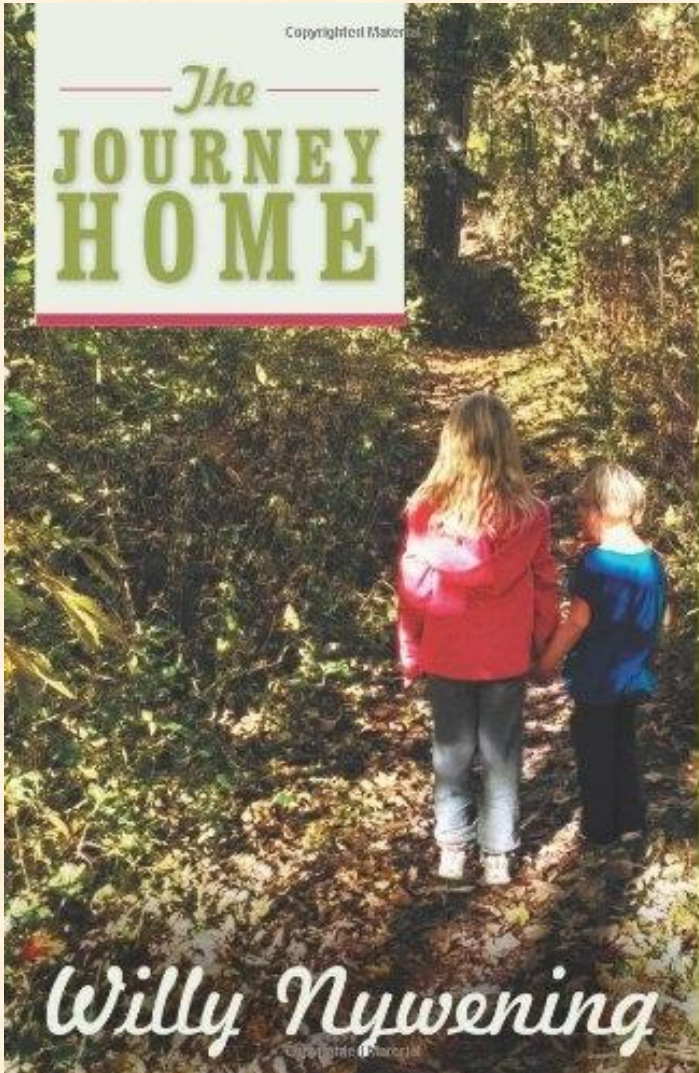
### Biography of Author ‘Willy Nywening’ (Canada)



Willy Nywening is a retired English and special education teacher who began her career at nineteen. She began writing as a teenager. Some of her earliest poems have been rewritten and are included as prose in her new novel, "The Journey Home." In 1997, she published a daily inspirational anthology called Sister Stories. Her poetry and articles have appeared in a variety of publications. She also writes educational curricula and is involved in teacher training. Her faith, her family and the grandeur of nature are her inspiration for writing. She is currently working on the sequel to "The Journey Home."

Willy and her husband Dick live in Strathroy, Ontario, Canada.

## Excerpt




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GENERAL FICTION

**O**ur childhood is an intricate part of who we become as adults. Everyone has difficulty, despair and disappointment in their past. How we choose to overcome these challenges determines the course of our lives. Through it all, love has the potential to heal old wounds.


In a time when children were meant to be seen and not heard, young lives were not always honored. Jamie and Martha, a brother and sister who were tragically orphaned at a young age, find themselves shuffled between family and friends. Stripped of their voices and choices, they endure heartbreaking circumstances that no child should ever experience. Even though disappointment seems to be the only constant in their young lives, they struggle courageously to find bits and pieces of happiness in a world that is often cruel and spiteful.

Through it all, something pure and innocent within the children refuses to die. On their journey, they learn one of life's most important and powerful lessons: the healing power of love makes life – and living – possible. While love cannot change the past, it is the key to redeeming an unwritten future. For Martha and Jamie, it is love that creates the true refuge that is *home*.




**Willy Nywening,**  
a retired English and special education teacher, is inspired by faith and family. In 1997, she published a daily inspirational anthology called *Sister Stories*. *The Journey Home* is inspired by her father, who was orphaned at seven. Willy and her husband, Dick, live in Strathroy, Ontario.

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www.iuniverse.com

"The Journey Home" is the story of two impoverished orphans who are on a difficult journey. Their lives are intertwined with caregivers who often are unable to care. The story is engaging, insightful, sensitive, compassionate, character embracing, and rich in both imagery and narrative - a compelling read.

A very moving book-- as it revolves around a most compelling plot, with well timed twists, conflicts, resolutions. It covers many difficult current topics--adoption, non-nuclear families, mental illness and its care or lack of, sexual abuse, forgiveness. Clearly the author is a tremendous observer of human nature, utterly perceptive and full of insight into the human psyche. Spiritual without a preachy tone. Engaging descriptions--with local color...



## **Chapter # 1: “The Journey Home” – Willy Nywening**

### **“The End of Childhood”**

He had never seen the nightgown she was wearing. Delicate lace covered her neck and extended from the sleeves to cover part of her hands. White satin ribbons tied in soft bows added an exquisite touch. The fabric was white cotton, starched and stiffened. It's beautiful simplicity unsettled him and he wondered why he had never noticed it before.

“Mama,” he murmured. He yanked himself free of his sister's hand and rushed toward the box. “Mama, wake up.”

“No, Jamie, no,” she moaned, but it was too late.

He arched over the casket to embrace his mother. Her face was ashen and grey. The cold clammy feel of her skin snapped him to the reality of her death. His bright blue eyes darkened. The tears dammed up behind them threatened, yet refused to break loose. He took a breath and straightened himself. He knew his mother. He loved his mother. This was not his mother.

Her wedding ring was missing. Her hair was forced back from her face; no soft, stray curls framed it the way they did when she was busy working. Her mouth, taunt and dour, could not sing the sweet lullabies she had sung to soothe the hardness of life. Her long slender fingers were clasped in an unfamiliar, stern form. Like her face, they were the color of death. They were not the kind, soft hands that had cradled his face, had comforted and blessed him.

A severe hand planted itself on his shoulder. He stiffened, sensing its intent.

“Be a man now, Jamie. Let the others have a look.” The words, like his hands, were firm and demanding. Any contradiction would be futile. Jamie complied only because he knew his mama would expect it.

“Sometimes we just go through the motions, Jamie. God understands and will make it up, someday, somehow,” Uncle John declared in a judicious voice.

He heard Mama's voice whispering and he stepped back submissively. He would be good, but not for God – for her. He had watched her retreat so many times that now he was able to do what she had done, to withdraw within himself to a place of solace that allowed no trespassers. With his feelings securely fenced there, he could feel the comfort of her touch; he could permit himself to go through the motions.

He stepped back and stood silently next to his sister Martha and his Uncle John. The realization dawned on him that he had never before been a visitor in this room. Often he had helped Mama carry cleaning supplies here, but he had never had an official reason to be here. The room was always sterile and sealed. Only exclusive occasions allowed entry – the minister's visits, special guests, weddings and of course funerals. It occurred to him that his mother had spent countless hours cleaning and polishing here. At least it looks nice for her now, he thought. He wondered who would purify the room now that she was gone.

The drawn, heavy, velvet drapes gave the room a dark, somber feeling. He knew Mama had loved the sunshine and wouldn't have approved. He inspected his surroundings in the dim light. It looked smaller than he remembered. The furniture was sparse. Two high backed chairs were covered in dark fabrics that had once boasted a tapestry of colors. It was obvious that time had long since dulled the intricate patterns. He remembered sitting on the matching sofa once when Mama had played the piano. It was the central piece of furniture in the room. Polished mahogany housed the instrument. The ivory keys, yellow with age, had seldom been touched in the past years. The red book of Sunday School hymns was open to the last song she had played for him, "Amazing Grace." She had sung it with a sweet clear voice that made the words come alive. Now she was dead. The penetrating sound of the music echoed through his ears. The melody had turned rancid and bitter.

When he remembered pulling out one of the tufted buttons on the sofa, the worried look on her face came back to him. She had scolded him and quickly pushed it back; hoping it wouldn't be noticed, but it didn't look the same. He saw it now sticking up and wanted to yank it from its base. He longed to pull out all the buttons from their sockets and let them know that what was happening was unjust. Instead, he did what was expected, standing straight and tall.

Two slender white candles burned in buffed brass candlestick holders. They stood erect on the piano; the light flickered and glowed with little interest, like soldiers marching joylessly to the beat of a cheerless drummer. On a walnut table next to the sofa, the light of a small hurricane lamp flickered, casting obscure shadows on the wall. He watched it earnestly, trying to decode the strange language of light. It mesmerized him.

The simple, pine casket sat on the seats of two plain kitchen chairs in the middle of the darkened room, in front of the white stone fireplace. No fire had warmed its hearth for many seasons. The mantle was bare, except for a delicate china vase that stood alone and empty. It looked undressed; there were no flowers to adorn its white milky skin. His Mama loved flowers.

Wrapped in their best black finery, the visitors came forward to greet the family. They retreated and stood at arm's length, as if afraid to come in contact with the curse that had robbed Esther of her life. For two hours the family stood, receiving the well-intentioned mourners. Few spoke to him or to his sister, Martha, directly. They clicked their tongues and patted his head, muttering obligatory condolences that he neither required nor understood. Martha responded with polite thanks, but Jamie could only stare mutely from the hushed, inside place where he hid. He saw the scene as if watching it through a peephole in the wall. In the vignette that unfolded, he surveyed himself standing emotionless and rigid next to his sister. One fussing matron enticed him to expose his sorrow. She crushed him with hugs, wanting him to feel her sadness, wanting him to expose his grief. He veiled his misery in a façade of courage as she broke into a loud lament, protesting his apparent lack of feeling. He would always remember the smell of mothballs intertwined with perspiration.

Martha rescued him by gently pulling him away. She took his hand, "Jamie, it's time to say goodbye."

"Go Jamie," Aunt Lydia's voice spoke softly. "Pay your last respects to your mother."

Martha led him again to the head of the coffin. She bent over, kissed her mother goodbye, and wept silently. Jamie touched her stone cold hand, remembering the last time she had held his face. He saw himself sitting



on her bed; was it possible that it was only a day ago? She had cupped her hands around his face, had looked deep into his eyes to take her leave.

“Don’t be sad for me, Jamie,” she said. “It’s time for me to go home to be with your father.”

“No, Mama, don’t leave us,” he had cried.

“Jamie, remember to love God, to be good and to work hard. Promise me.” The pleading in her voice made it impossible for him to refuse.

“Yes Mama, I promise,” he said kissing her cheek, stroking her hair lightly.

“Martha,” she whispered with her last breath, “take care of your brother.”

The rest of the day was a blur in his memory. He retained only snippets of images from the funeral: the warmth of the spring sun hitting his face, the dandelions that bloomed in the cemetery and a robin that sang in the old maple tree as they lowered her casket into the ground. Later it occurred to him that they were the kinds of details she would have noticed. The things she would have pointed out to him as they went for a walk.

Martha tucked him into bed that night. She looked into his eyes, but they were blank. She knew he didn’t hear the words she spoke to comfort him, so she wrapped him in her mother’s shawl hoping that it would soothe his pain. There was no comfort for her either. She tried to rock him the way Esther had done, searching desperately for some solace for both their spirits.

Jamie could not tell her that her arms were like salve on his wounds, that the smell of his mother’s essence bandaged the hole in his heart. He could not weep openly, afraid that the tears caged in his body would turn to screams. He breathed deeply, inhaling her lingering fragrance, feeling her closeness. There were so many unsaid things, so many unanswered questions, and so many untold stories. In the silence, there was only the throbbing, wordless pain of emptiness.

The two children huddled in the bed. They slept fitfully, hibernating like scared cubs fearful of the realities that daylight would bring. Even in sleep, they were afraid to let go of each other, perhaps sensing that the end of sleeping would also be the end of their childhood.

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Download the eBook at <https://www.amazon.com/author/willynywening>

## **Review of “The spirit of a Witch”, a book written by Sarah Jane Avory**

**Reviewed by Jane Peskara/Audrey Valentine:**

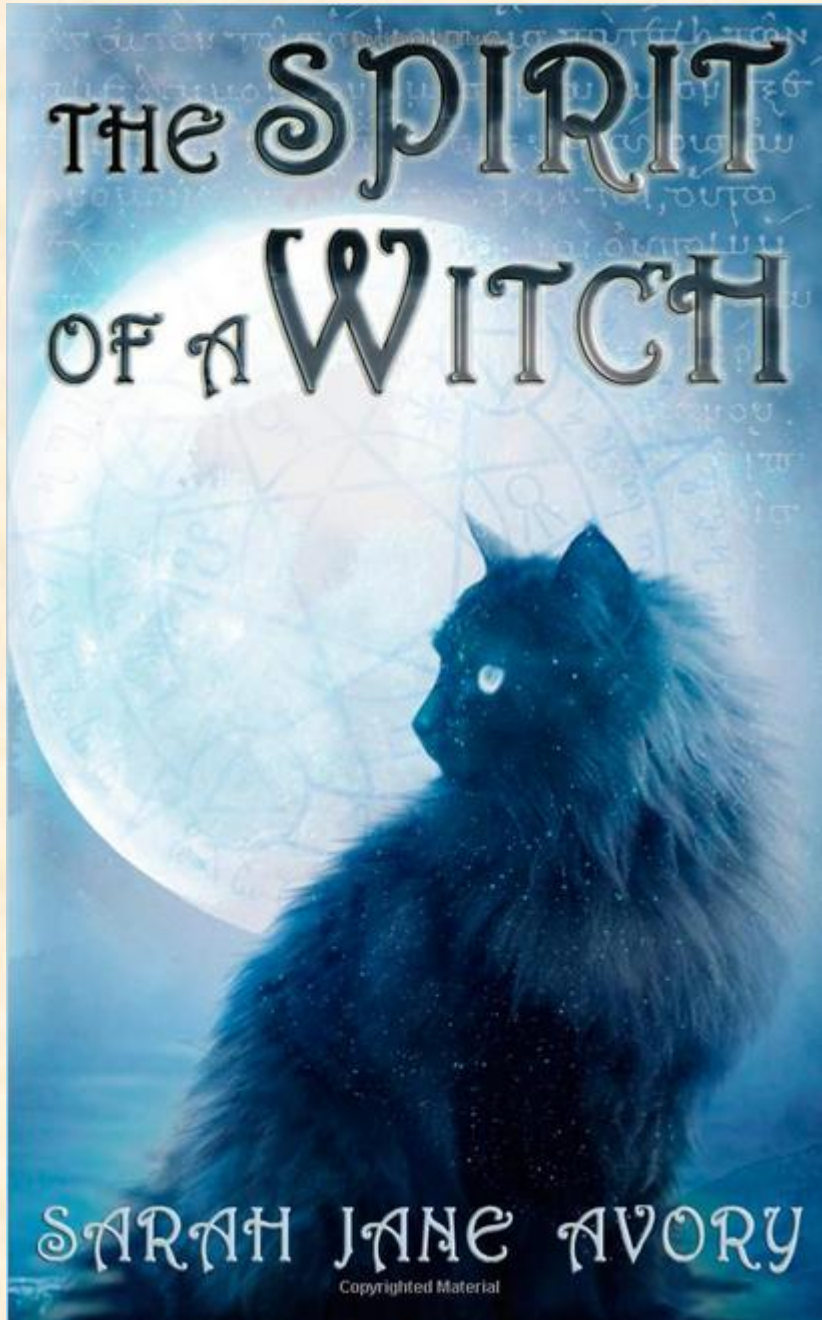
**Biography of Author ‘Sarah Jane Avory’ (England)**



Sarah Jane Avory, from Mepal, UK is a self-published author, and computer games programmer. The owner of a black Norwegian Forest cat who was the inspiration behind her first book *The Spirit Of A Witch*, a story about a girl witch and her talking cat.



## Review



Well first I have to say this book I bought because the author is my friend, she is great :) It is the first English book I ever bought :)

I admit I don't really like fantasy and Sci-Fi novels.

But I gave it a try, its fantasy, about witches mostly

I had a rough start with it, the first pages seemed to never end, maybe because I didn't really want to read it (because its fantasy) but then, as soon as I got into it, I couldn't stop reading, I was there, amazing I never thought a fantasy novel could do that to me but this one did.

So I am happy to say this book is awesome, you all should read it even if you don't like fantasy, but this is different.

I mean did u ever hear of a book where the second main character is a grumpy cat? His name is Smokey and he always has something to say, he is not always nice but always a dear friend.

Briley the main character discovers she is a witch after she was brought to another world, slowly she starts getting more self-confident and that's also something I like cos I can see myself in her and I love that finally she realizes that she is worthy and finally finds people who truly love her.

I can't wait to read the sequel, surely going to buy it.

LOVE IT Briley and Smokey rule!!!!

I think it would be also a very good idea for a screenplay.



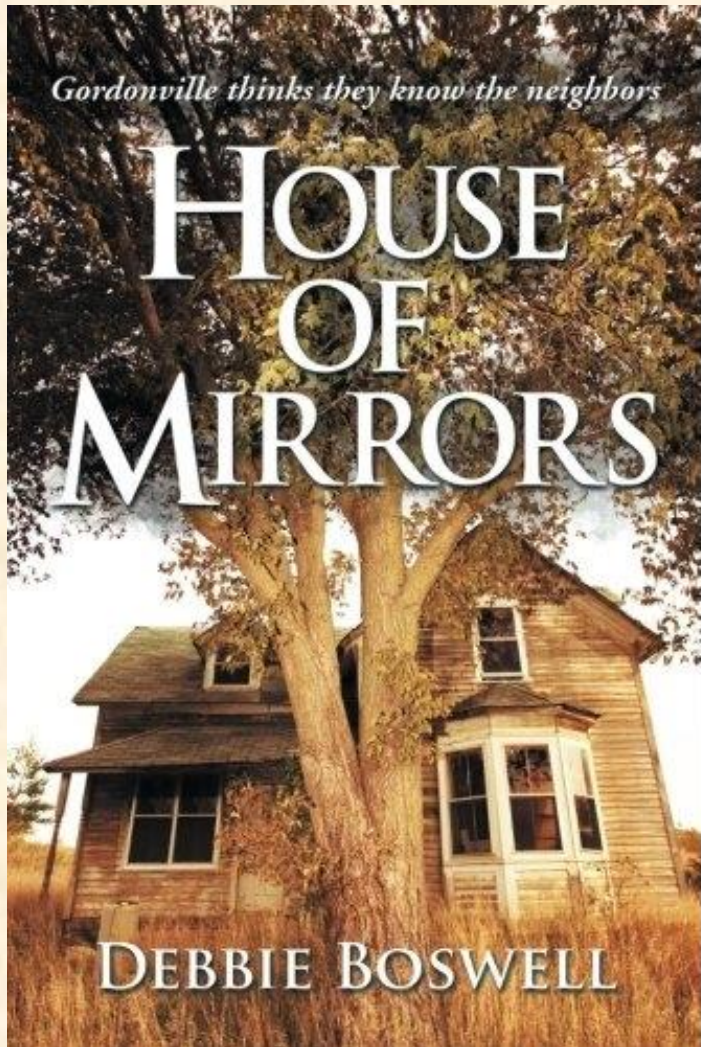
## Excerpts from “House of Mirrors” – Debbie Boswell

Biography of Author ‘Debbie Boswell’ (USA)



Debbie Boswell has a B.S. in accounting and an Enrolled Agent license (E.A.). She is also the owner/manager of Crafts by Grace, a cottage industry in which she makes candles, soap and designs T-shirts. Debbie co-wrote and co-produced her first screenplay, OPEN/CLOSE, through the Brooklyn Young Filmmakers Center. House of Mirrors is her second novel. Debbie resides in Brooklyn, NY where she was born and raised.

## Excerpt



"Family, identity, appearance and reality are on a collision course in this riveting thriller, *House of Mirrors*".

— Blueink

"You know what has to be done."

Jenna quickly looked around. Then, in a low voice she asked, "What good would come from me committing murder?"

Rosa smiled. "Not you. Me."

Gordonville has a secret.

Jenna Crandall refused to heed her friend Rosa's repeated advice even after being a good daughter failed to stop the years of emotional and physical abuse at the hands of her mother, Bella, the grand dame of the village. The shy public relations receptionist with an exceptional talent for art wouldn't seek retribution. After she meets Dr. Malachi Chase, a sociology professor who appreciates her value, Jenna's self-esteem grows, much to the dislike of her mother. When Bella physically attacks her one evening, Jenna decides it's time to take Rosa's advice after all....



Debbie Boswell has a B.S. in Accounting and an Enrolled Agent license (E.A.). She is also the owner/manager of Crafts by Grace, a cottage industry in which she makes candles, soap and designs T-shirts. Debbie co-wrote and co-produced her first screenplay, *OPEN/CLOSE*, through the Brooklyn Young Filmmakers Center. *House of Mirrors* is her second novel. Debbie resides in Brooklyn, NY where she was born and raised.



The door opened with ease. The alleged intruder closed it but didn't shut it. Gingerly, he pushed open the door. Like the living area, the bedroom was in total darkness.

"There's no use hiding," Nelson said. "Security's on the way."

Nelson gripped his makeshift weapon as he listened for the sound of the intruder's breathing or any other movement. To Lauren it felt as if hours were going by instead of just seconds.

Nelson relaxed his grip on the shoehorn. "There's no one here."

Lauren breathed a sigh of relief. Then, together they entered the bedroom. Nelson turned on the light switch. As soon as the lights came on, the shoehorn fell from his hand. Their voices stuck in their throats.

For Book: [http://www.amazon.com/House-Mirrors-Debbie-Boswell/dp/142598181X/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1400035193&sr=1-3&keywords=house+of+mirrors](http://www.amazon.com/House-Mirrors-Debbie-Boswell/dp/142598181X/ref=sr_1_3?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1400035193&sr=1-3&keywords=house+of+mirrors)

Website: <http://debbieboswell1.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Debbie-Boswell/513659798696344>



## **Review of “Not Alone”, a book written by Chantal Bellehumeur**

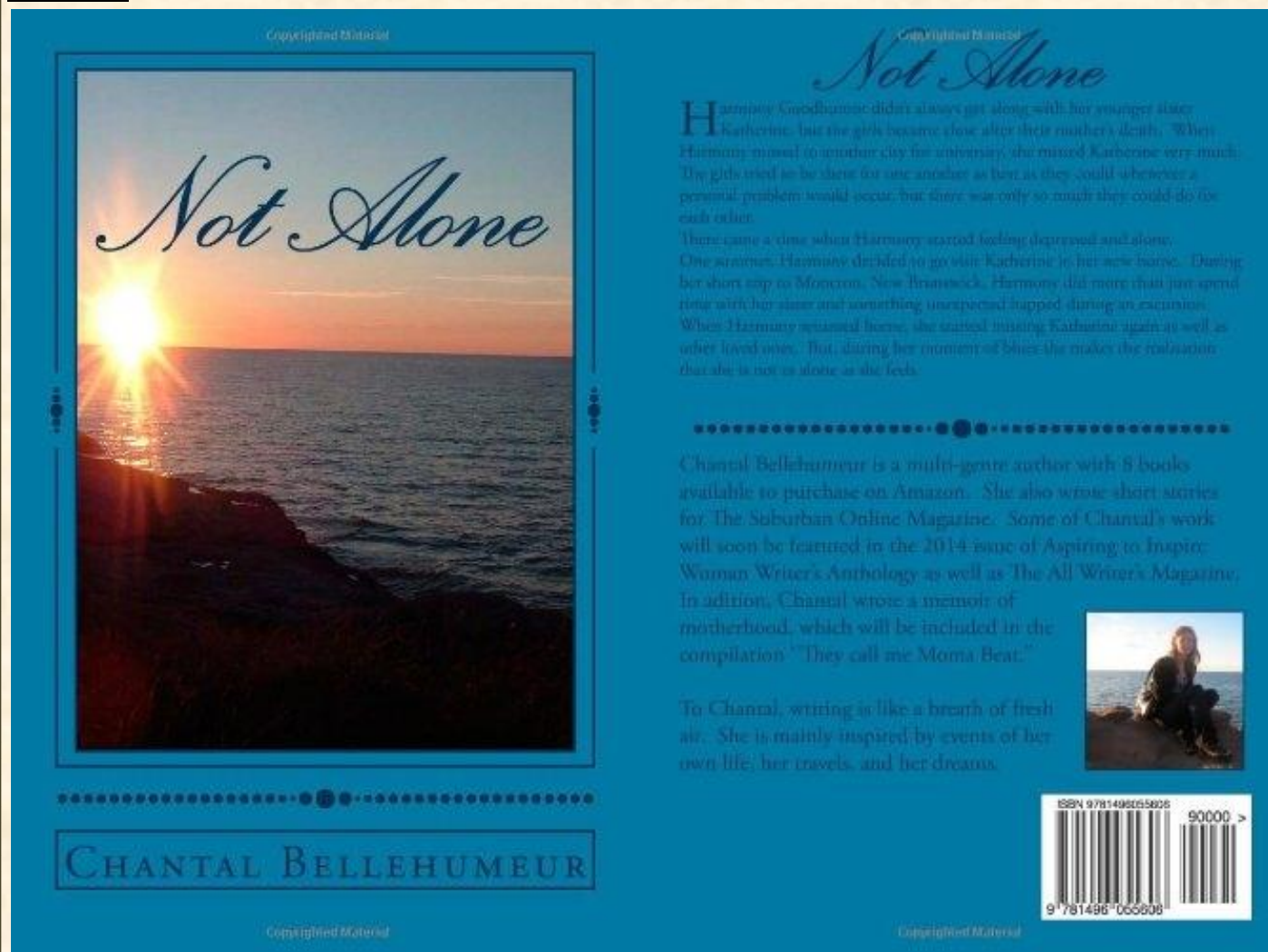
### **Reviewed by Urvee Tondwalkar:**

**Biography of Author ‘Chantal Bellehumeur’ (Canada)**



Chantal Bellehumeur is the author of 9 books of various genres, available to purchase on Amazon. One of them includes the 12 short stories originally published in The Suburban Online Magazine. Some of her works were also featured in two anthologies and her memoir of motherhood was included in a compilation book.

## Review



It's of 104 pages. It's written in English. The language used is attractive and you'll simply understand it. The rating by Amazon for 'Not Alone' is 4 which are great. You can watch the price about the books @ <http://www.amazon.com/-/e/B008YX5YGK>

The main character involved here is 'Harmony' it's her story from childhood when her mother passed away, how did she handle everything after that. How she faces every problem with positive hope. And soon how she heals all her pains and enjoys her life. It definitely gives you an embellishing message that "Good days come to those who wait." Here in this story Harmony was broken at some point & then she tries to face it and slowly & gradually her life improves. She waited and now she's happy. All I want to say that it gives you a great message to "Feel confident & believe that you can do it!" It made me go into my flash back and made me remember all the sweet memories during my childhood. Don't forget to give it a go! It's really amazing & a stress less book. You'll surely like it.

You can watch her website @ <http://author-chantal-bellehumeur.webnode.com>



## Excerpt from “The Bazaar” – Jen Ponce

### Biography of Author ‘Jen Ponce’ (USA)



Jen Ponce is an urban fantasy author who published her debut novel *The Bazaar* January 21st, 2014. She currently has a vampire novel called *Blood Curse* out, as well as a collection of short stories called *Things That Creep*. She will be publishing the second book in her Devany Miller series May 30th, 2014 and is furiously writing the third.

She began writing in junior high with her friends and it became an addiction she couldn't shake. Her mother taught her the value of a good book and gave her the best gift of all: an enduring love of reading.

Jen attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha, studying English and Creative Writing. She has three boys, cats, and a cool goldfish named Reggie. She is a proud indie author.

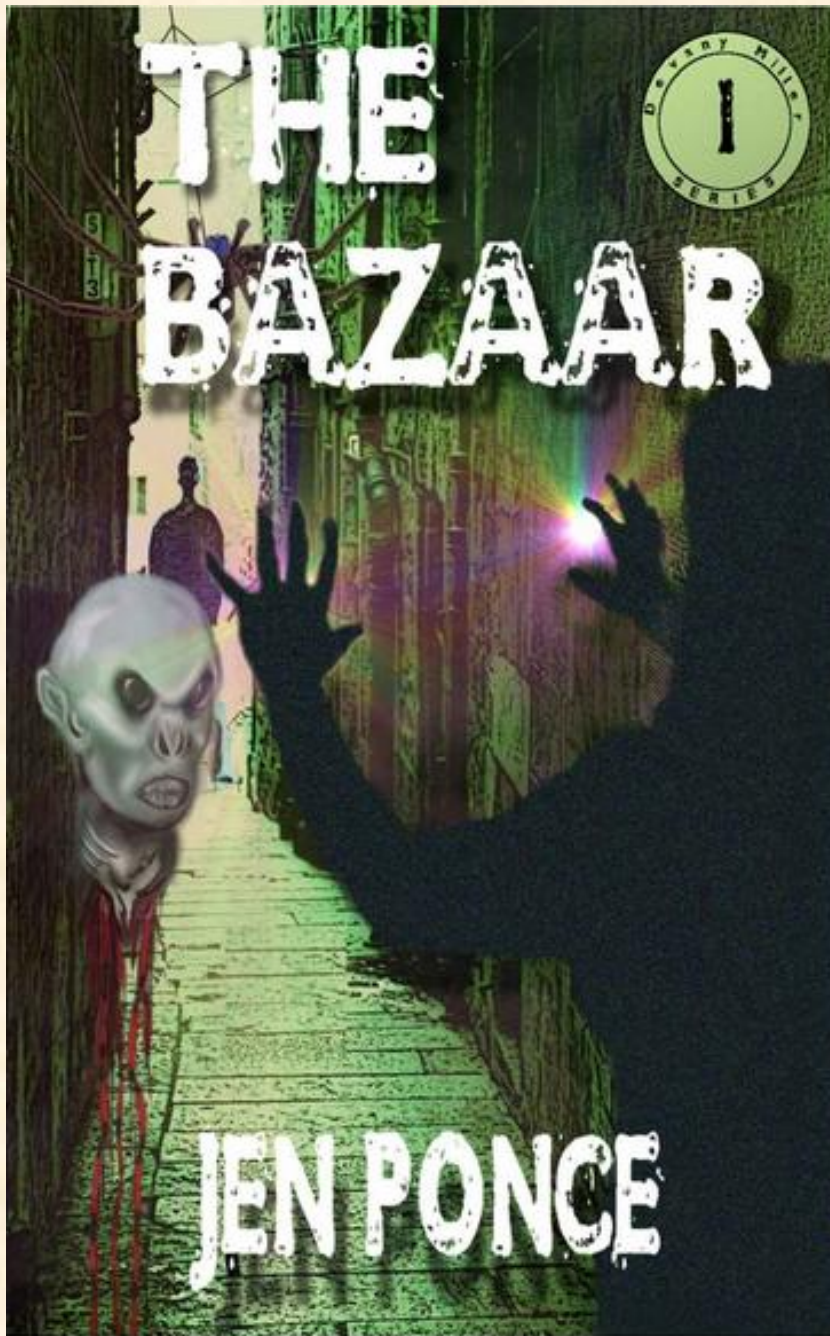
You can find Jen on the web!

Website: <http://www.jenniferponce.com>

Facebook: <http://www.facebook.com/jenponceauthor>

Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/jenponceauthor>

## Excerpt



“The Line for the fortuneteller stretched halfway down the block and gave my husband and me a chance to people-watch. Well, I was watching people. Tom was on his phone texting someone. I nudged him in the side. “Do you see the guy over there? I think he just pinched his girlfriend.”

He grunted, glancing up but not really seeing anything. I fought back the urge to pinch Tom since it would be hypocritical. Instead I watched the man carefully. He was smiling, his eyes dead and flat as he crowded the woman. She was pressed tight against a metal barrier separating the crowd from the children's ride rattling behind her, staring resolutely at his shoulder. It reminded me of someone facing down an angry dog.

“Do you think I should go over there?” I winced when the man fisted his fingers. I didn't even realize I'd taken a step in their direction until Tom grabbed my elbow.



"And do what?" Tom squinted at the guy. "The one with the neck tattoos? Hell no, you aren't going over there."

The asshole glanced around and decided to put his hand in his pocket instead. I jerked my elbow from Tom's grasp. "It's not the tattoos I'm worried about, it's his fist."

"Call the police then."

I shut my eyes and counted to ten. Had he not listened to anything I had to say about my job? You didn't just call the police when there was domestic violence. It wasn't that simple. "Who are you texting?" I leaned over and he tipped his phone away from me.

"Nate."

I raised my eyebrows. "On our date?"

"We're married. We don't date, we hang out together." He grinned and chucked me under the chin. "Just coordinating game day." I slipped my arm around his waist and laid my head on his shoulder. "I can't believe you're leaving me to go watch football."

He put his phone into his pocket. "It's a big day. Nebraska versus Iowa. We have the corn hats and the foam fingers, the ribs for the tailgate party." He squeezed me and I sighed, telling myself that there were many sports widows and widowers on game days. If only I shared his love for football. Still, even though I understood, I had to give him a hard time, right?

"This is the first weekend in forever that the kids are going to be gone. Both. At the same time," I said, as if he didn't know this. "We'd have the whole house to ourselves." I made it sound like we'd be naked and sexing on every surface, when in reality I really wanted to get the yard spruced up and the deck resurfaced. Dirty pool. I wasn't above it.

"Tempting. If I hadn't already bought the tickets." He kissed the top of my head. "I loved the whole, 'You're gunna get some' sound in your voice. Nice touch."

I snorted. We moved forward a few feet and my eyes went back to the couple.

"If you're that worried, call the police."

"And they come and then what? Talk to both of them, let them go, and he beats the shit out of her later tonight." As we watched, she jerked away from the man and walked off. He made a rude gesture at her back, then laughed.

I licked my lips then said, "I'll be right back."

"Devany, stay out of it."

"I just want to give her the hotline number. Make sure she knows that there's a place that will help." I kissed him on the cheek and threaded through the crowd after the woman. The crowd at the carnival was thick, a lot of kids with colorful blobs of cotton candy and stuffed animals hugged to their chests. She was headed toward the portable bathrooms, so I broke into a jog to catch up with her.

She jumped when I came up beside her and I apologized. "I think you dropped something," I said, handing her one of my business cards.

She took it, frowning. "This isn't mine." Her frown smoothed out when she saw the name and phone number. Her eyes searched the crowd then focused on me. "What are you trying to say?"

"I just wanted you to know that there's help if you need it."

She rocked back on her heels and gave me a once over, her lip curled. "Fuck off."

"I'm sorry. I saw him almost hit you and I was worried for you." I saw that we were starting to draw a crowd, something I didn't think either of us wanted.

"Yeah, well you don't know shit about me and you don't know shit about him. You think this would stop him?" She held up the card then flung it at me. "Dream on."

She walked off, leaving me and a few others staring after her. I scooped up the card and slipped it into my back pocket. I ignored the tscking of a nearby spectator, knowing that I shouldn't have gone up to the woman in the first place. Intellectually I knew that. Sometimes my emotions got in the way of common sense, spurred on by that quote that said all evil needs is for good people to do nothing. It was in these moments that I wished I could do something more than support and empower. Like zap the abusive asshole to the moon and let the lack of oxygen take care of him.

As I walked back to Tom, a bright yellow tent caught my eye. Painted on the side in candy floss colors were the words, "Magic Sugar." I made a mental note to come back here after Tom left. No way I would pass up a chance for some magic sugar. Maybe it would make all my dreams come true.

We were the next in line when I returned, smiling at my flight of fancy.

"Everything okay?"

I shrugged. "She told me off. Said I didn't know what I was talking about."

Tom kissed my forehead. "Her loss."

"It's not right. She shouldn't have to deal with that kind of crap." I rubbed at the spot where he kissed me, annoyed at his cavalier dismissal.

"Of course not. But you can lead a horse to water and all that."

I held my tongue. This was a long standing—if not argument, then debate between us—and I didn't want to get into it here.

A man with fabulous nails and a purple robe told our fortune. After every turn of a tarot card, he took a drink from a silver flask he kept by his side. I was surprised he was even upright if he'd been slipping through each telling. He let us know, in a slightly slurred voice, that, "You will have to decide whether to keep allowing something to happen or take action against it."

Appropriately vague. Before we left, he tapped an orange fingernail on the Wheel of Fortune card and pinned me with a bleary gaze. "A big change is coming. Big. Change." He hiccupped and listed to the right.

"Are you, uh, are you okay? Need some help?" I reached for him, then drew my hand back when it looked like he might spew.



"Fine. I'm fine. Seen too much. Weird shit." He caught himself before he hit the floor and managed to maneuver into a semi-seated position again. I didn't dare look over at Tom because I could hear the laughter he was tamping down. At least he waited until we were well away from the tent before he guffawed. I was laughing too, but Tom was red-faced with his amusement.

Wiping the tears away, he shook his head and put his arms around me again. "Are you sure you want to stay?"

"Yes. Are you sure you have to go?"

He kissed me, a long, deep kiss that made me melt into him. "I promised Nate." I pouted and he tapped me on the nose. "We've been planning this forever or I would stay."

"Yeah, yeah. Go. Love you."

"Love you too. Have fun. Be careful."

Once he was gone, I made a bee-line for the yellow tent. The tent was butted up against the side of my favorite bookstore, Hidden Treasures. I could spend hours searching through the overburdened shelves, which drove my husband and children nuts.

Large glass tubes were lined up on tables, each filled with a different colored sugar. Even better, a tall hunk of cheesecake stood at the entrance, his eyes smiling. "Welcome."

I smiled back. "Magic sugar?"

"But of course." His eyes were light blue and had a suggestive sparkle to them that warmed me.

"What kind of magic?"

He shrugged. "What kind of power do you need?"

"The power to zap assholes to the moon."

He laughed, the sound making me smile in return. "One of the more original requests I've had all day." Shifting, he picked up a tray that held a plastic-wrapped stick. "I can't guarantee you'll find what you seek, but some people have said my magic sugar has shown them the pathway to their wildest dreams."

"That's a pretty cheesy line."

"Thank you." He nodded to the tubes. "Color?"

"Purple. The dark purple." Before I was even done speaking, he'd crossed to the tube and opened the tap, the sugar pouring into the tray with a hiss of sound. He handed me the tray and then picked up another stick.

"Hold what you want in your mind. Then take your stick," he lifted his, eyes on me, as he slipped it into his mouth and wet it with his tongue, "lick it. Dip." Into his mouth again, coated with red sugar.

The whole thing sent tingles through my body. I blinked and looked away, not wanting to acknowledge those feelings. I was married, damn it. Those types of hormones should shut off once a person said "I do." I set down my tray to unwrap my own stick, my fingers clumsy under his eyes. I gave it a cursory lick, dipped it and—

—A woman stood before me, her hair made from the clouds, her eyes full of lightning, filled with more power than I could fathom, and I wanted it. I fought that desire because I knew if she saw me she would fry me to ash. Despite my terror I yanked at the power leaking from her, hauling at it like a sailor in a storm, gaining inches and wanting yards. With each tug she would frown and look around her but I was still too small for her to take notice of me. I knew I should stop, but I kept pulling frantically, greedily, even though I knew that each yank could be my last—

I blinked the sugar man back into focus. The stick lay against my lips, sucked clean. I dropped my gaze to the tray as if it would tell me what the hell had happened.

“Are you okay?” The lightness in his tone annoyed me.

“No. What was that?”

He took the tray from me, tugging the stick from my fingers. “Magic sugar.”

“And what? LSD?” My head felt clear and when I looked around, the world was business as usual. No purple dinosaurs or giant dancing mushrooms.

“Some people have a stronger reaction to the sugar than others.”

The woman burned in my head. She was scarier than any monster Hollywood had dreamed up. Scarier because she was real.

How the hell could she be real?

“There are more vendors. More authentic. Only those who are sensitive to the sugar can step through.” He twitched aside the canvas and where I expected brick wall I saw a long, lantern lit alleyway. More tents, more displays stretched back as far as I could see. A crowd of shoppers milled around taking in the wares.

“What the hell is going on?” Had he drugged me? Surely not. What kind of drug lasted only a minute or two?

He grinned. “Magic can be found in the oddest places.”

I opened my mouth to protest that magic wasn't real then shut it again. Did I want to pass up such a strange experience because my rational brain couldn't accept it? Hadn't I always wanted something in this world to be more than it was on the surface?

Dangerous. He was dangerous. This was dangerous. He probably slipped me something and I was walking right into a trap. My rational mind told me to turn and walk away. The unreality of the experience, however, convinced me it would be okay, and I stepped through the offered doorway before I could talk myself out of it. I glanced at him but he'd already twitched the flap into place. Good. I walked further into the alley, wondering why I'd never seen this place before. I guess I'd always been so focused on the bookstore I'd totally spaced the stalls and stores in back.

The sound here was muted and the oppressive heat of the day lessened in the cool shadows of the alley. To my right a group of people crowded around a woman kneeling on an elaborate carpet covered in strange writing, symbols, and pictographs. On her hand sat a giant, rainbow colored beetle, its shiny carapace decorated in gold symbols, a chain attached to his back. She'd wrapped the chain around her wrist.



A young man in Nike shoes knelt at the edge of the carpet. He asked a question and the woman whispered something to the bug before setting it in the middle of the rug. The crowd held its breath as the beetle crawled out of its circle. The woman spoke but I couldn't hear what she said.

A sharp exhale caught my attention. The man beside me was shaking his head, the skin pulled taut over his jaw. "She's reading wrong. That's the symbol for death." He jabbed a finger at the woman. "Tell him the truth."

I stepped away as the crowd buzzed, not wanting to get stuck in the middle of an argument. Further on I saw a shop with rows of potted herbs on bookshelves out front. The door hung open and music poured out. The tang of patchouli caught my attention and I followed my nose inside. Display cases of jewelry lined the walls. The weight of the air thickened, vibrating against my skin as if it were a living thing. I rubbed at my arms as I gazed at the jewelry. Earrings, necklaces, glinting stones that sparked and winked in the dim lantern light. A ring caught my eye at the bottom of the second case. Even shoved back into the corner it demanded notice. The dull black metal didn't catch the light; it appeared to be sucking in the shadows.

"May I help you?"

The woman behind the case had thick gray hair that hung in wild waves around her head. Her lined face and gentle eyes made me want to spill my troubles to her. "Oh, I'm just looking."

She tipped her head to the side, staring down at the case as if she could see the ring I'd been looking at. "Do you like it?"

No. It repulsed me, which was stupid because it was just a ring. At the same time I wanted to own it, to slip it on my finger and use it. Also stupid, because what the hell would you use a ring for?

A sudden vertigo overtook me. I stumbled back, tripping over my feet. I plowed into the case behind me, the glass groaning when my ass hit it. "Holy shit," I muttered. Maybe there had been drugs in that sugar.

She hurried around to my side. "Are you okay?"

"No." A throbbing started itself up in my head, thumping at the base of my skull. "Do you know the guy that sells sugar back there?"

"Yes, of course."

I nodded, trying to pull myself together so she wouldn't think me insane. "So you trust him?"

"Why do you ask?"

"He said he sells magic sugar." The terrible woman popped into my mind and I pushed her away. "I think he slipped something into mine. Some sort of drug."

"Zech would never do that, my dear. He is one of the gentlest men I've ever known."

She sounded sincere so I dropped it, though I was still unconvinced of his niceness. I pushed myself upright.

"Maybe I'll just—" In the case I'd banged up against, I saw a necklace so beautiful I wanted to cry.

"What is that?"

She squatted and slid open the front of the case, pulling out the necklace made with delicate pink stones. I hated pink but had to buy this necklace. "It's a lover's balm. For broken hearts."

"Oh." I swallowed. I didn't have a broken heart, though I worked with a lot of people who did. "How much is it?"

"For you my dear, forty-five." She straightened. "Lift your hair and I'll put it on for you."

I did, despite not liking strangers getting so close to me. As soon as the stones touched my skin, a tension I didn't even know I had in my body eased. I touched it with my fingers in wonder. "There's no such thing as magic."

"Of course there is. It's just harder to find when you don't believe."

As if in a dream, I pulled my money from my pocket and counted out three twenties. I glanced back at the ring, gnawing on my lip as I did. "What is that thing?"

Her lips thinned. "An assassin's ring." She crossed her arms over her chest and glared at the case as if she wanted to take the ring and throw it.

"Why do you keep it if you don't like it?"

Her pale grey eyes looked troubled. "Sometimes we are charged with responsibility we don't want but must bear. That is my responsibility until its rightful owner comes to claim it."

I nodded. I understood about responsibility even if I didn't understand what it had to do with a ring.

A scream cut through the muted buzz of the marketplace. Terror rang out farther down the alley, the yell cut short in a way that made chills shiver across my skull. In seconds panicked shoppers were stampeding past us, a confusion of bodies pushing and shoving as they tried to escape—what?

The woman touched my arm. "You must leave. Now." She gave me a gentle push toward the door as a woman's voice rang out.

"This is neutral territory, Yarnell. You are in violation of the Council's Accords."

"I don't accept the Accords, witch, because we were not invited to have a say." The man's words thrummed through the air. I could taste the power in them even though I didn't know how I knew what power tasted like.

"You are criminals. You lost your rights when you chose to steal humans to fuel your magic."

A blast of light and sound ended the conversation. The woman's hand was on my back. "Go, to your right. Run."

"What's going on? I could call the police," I said, fumbling for my cell as I left the shop. A wiry girl with dreadlocks grabbed my arm, dragging me toward the fighting.

"Stop it, Ivy," said the jewelry seller. The girl—Ivy—thrust her hand at the woman, who flew through the air as if in the wake of an explosion.

"Fuck off, Marantha." She turned to me and my shock made me easy to grab. She dragged me a few feet toward the voices and the shouting before I woke up from my shock.



"Let me go," I said, grunting as I yanked at my arm. Her fingernails dug in so I shifted and kicked her in the knee. She shrieked and shoved me into a wall, knocking the wind out of me with the force of it. How could someone so small be so strong? She was doubled over, her hand on her knee. I didn't have time to catch my breath. I balled my fist and swung, connecting with her jaw. She reeled back, catching her heel on an uneven cobble.

"Quit jacking around, Ivy." A man with a misshapen head flung his hands outward in my direction. A blaze of blue energy sprung up around me. What the hell? I touched it, only to yank my hand back at the manic buzzing that vibrated up to my shoulder.

Dreadlocks righted herself, then stalked toward the barrier. She spat at me and I jerked back in reflex, but the spit hit the barrier between us and sizzled. "Stupid cow. When they take you to slaughter, I'm buying your head." Then the alley filled with more people, shouting or fighting, some dragging others behind them. I lost Dreadlocks in the crowd as people surged around the bubble I was trapped in.

The barrier flashed and the kid in Nikes rolled to a stop at my feet, joined immediately by another person with bright red hair. He had a lump on his head, his eyes shut and his dark skin pallid. She sobbed, her arms wrapped tight around her body. "Are you okay?" She didn't have time to answer before another scream had us both jerking around. A woman with curly brown hair stood a few feet away, holding brilliant points of light in her hands. For a crazy moment I wondered if she was the big bad scary in my vision but she didn't look terrifying. Terrified, maybe.

It didn't take me long to realize she was the underdog. The asshole outclassed her and sent wave after wave of pulsing light at her. Magic? I squeezed my head between my palms as I watched. Had to be hallucinations, but it looked so real. Wherever the pulses of light hit, flames burst to life and then the acrid smell of smoke added to the tableau before me. It had to be real—it couldn't be real.

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Dreadlocks sneaking up behind the underdog. The knife in her hand glinted in the light of a nearby lantern. I shouted out a warning, too late. Dreadlocks buried the knife in the woman's side with a scream of triumph. Her last volley flew wide as she fell. Her eyes, glowing purple in the dark shadows, met mine.

The man flung the last bit of energy into the air, then strode to the fallen woman and gazed down at her, a smile on his face. "You've fallen so far, Arsinua. Tell me, did you enjoy your time in the Slip?" He laughed at something he saw on her face. "Oh yes, I know about your last gambit to wrest power from my people. Failed miserably, didn't it?" He nudged her with his boot, cursing at her when she didn't respond. "Take her and the cows back to the Bazaar. Round up anyone else stupid enough to stick around." He nodded once to Dreadlocks then disappeared into the gloom.

I shoved at our prison wall, ignoring the creepy feeling it gave me, but it did no good. Immovable as a brick wall. Behind me the girl whimpered. I whirled on her. "Get up and help me. Can't you see that they want to hurt us?" She looked too shell-shocked to respond but I hectored her until she staggered to her feet. "Push!" It didn't give.

Fear grew hot and thick in my stomach. The realization that if I didn't get away soon I would never see my kids again hit me and for a long, terrifying moment I couldn't breathe. Beside me, the woman hit the barrier between us and freedom, her cries coming in sharp, high shrieks of fear.

Then we were surrounded by the attackers and the energy keeping us contained disappeared with a snap of sound. One of them pulled a severed head from a bag and my knees gave out on me. Dreadlocks laughed. “That will be your head next, cow.” Her fingers curled tight in my hair as she jerked me back up. A flash of light hid what came next.



## PRESS RELEASE: Gritty Writer Petken Gaining Accolades and Taking Her Book to the Top

### Gritty Historical Writer Jana Petken Smashes the Competition to Gain New Accolades

Petken Bestseller “Guardian of Secrets” to be honored.



**Prague CZ, May 21, 2014:** Bestselling author **Jana Petken (Spain)**, fresh from giving a heavily attended lecture about the history of Spain, has just heard that her book “[The Guardian of Secrets](#)” is honored by publishing company Authorhouse. This latest move is just another step in the right direction for an author who has turned out a book many readers have found “gritty” and “addictive.” Petken, who currently resides in Spain, has travelled all over the world and only recently decided to pen a bestseller. The response so far has been decidedly in her favor.

*“[The Guardian of Secrets](#), ” is a historical family saga spanning four generations, from 1912, Kent, England, to Spain and its 1936–39 civil war. Celia and Ernesto’s two sons march under opposing banners, whilst their daughters take different paths—one to the Catholic Church and the other to the battlefields—and in the shadow of war, an evil ghost from the past watches and waits for an opportunity to destroy the entire family. In exile, Celia and Ernesto can only wait and pray for their children and their safe return home.*

*It has been lauded as “a suspenseful and compelling work of historical fiction” and has received rave reviews from readers. The book is currently being turned into a screenplay, and Ms Petken is currently writing a separate second novel entitled “Mercy Carver” due for release in the summer.*

*“The Guardian of Secrets” is currently available as both a [paperback](#) and as a [digital book](#).*

Interview of Writer

*"Megan Cyrulewski"*

By

*Jane Peskara/Audrey  
Valentine.*

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***Q: How old are you? Where are you from?***

A: 35 and I'm from Michigan, USA

***Q: You are a writer.***

When did u realize, writing is what you want to do?

A: I have always loved writing. I got a Bachelor of Arts in Journalism but took a different career path and worked in the non-profit sector for 8 years.

***Q: What are you writing about?***

A: My book is a memoir. I discuss the last three years of my life, which were extremely tumultuous and difficult.

***Q: Can you tell us a bit about your book/s?***

A: My book is about my journey into post-partum depression, anxiety disorder, panic attacks, stays in the psych ward, divorce, domestic violence, law school, how I managed to graduate from law school and a beautiful little girl who emerged from all of this chaos.

***Q: What do you want to achieve with your writing?***

A: There are two major issues I want to tackle with my book: First, that domestic violence isn't just physical. I lived through 6 years of horrific emotional abuse and my ex-husband telling me that I was a joke and worthless stung just as much as a slap in the face. Second, postpartum depression has this terrible stigma attached to it that we want to hurt our children. That simply isn't true. There are so many facets to postpartum depression. I felt as though I wasn't a good enough mother to my child. I wanted to kill myself because I thought my daughter would be better off without me.

***Q: Do you have any idols?***

A: I wouldn't say idols. I am inspired by people who do anything they can to make their dreams come true. There is this great quote by Eleanor Roosevelt, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." Sometimes it's a struggle to get where you want to be in life. It's hard and people will judge you for the choices you make. Find your strength within and your dreams will find you.

***Q: Do you like to read? If so, have you any favorite authors or Genres? Or something you absolutely don't want to read?***

A: I am a total book addict. I have been ever since I could read. The weekend that the last Harry Potter was released, I told my ex-husband from the moment Amazon delivered my copy that Saturday morning, I wouldn't see him until I finished...and that was Sunday night. I devour books of any genre. I have a stack of "must-read" books sitting in my chair. I like some popular authors but I've read some great self-published books as well.



***Q: Is there something important you want the readers to know about you?***

A: The question I get the most when people find out about the topic of my book is do I regret marrying my ex-husband? The answer is absolutely not. Without him, I wouldn't have my daughter and that would be my biggest regret.

***Q: What are your plans for the future (as writer and private)?***

A: I plan to keep writing. I also have a law degree so my next book is a legal thriller (think John Grisham.) I also am a court mediator. I have been volunteering in some sort of capacity since I was young and right now I am on the Board of Directors for a wonderful organization, Troy Youth Assistance. I have learned not to look too far into the future and to just enjoy every day moments.

***Thank you Megan, it was a pleasure to interview you, wish you all the best for the future.***

Website: <http://www.megancyrulewski.com/>

Blog: <http://www.megancyrulewski.com/blog.html>

Cover release and first chapter excerpt:

<http://www.megancyrulewski.com/1/post/2014/03/first-look-cover-release-and-chapter-one-excerpt.html>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/authorMeganC?fref=ts>

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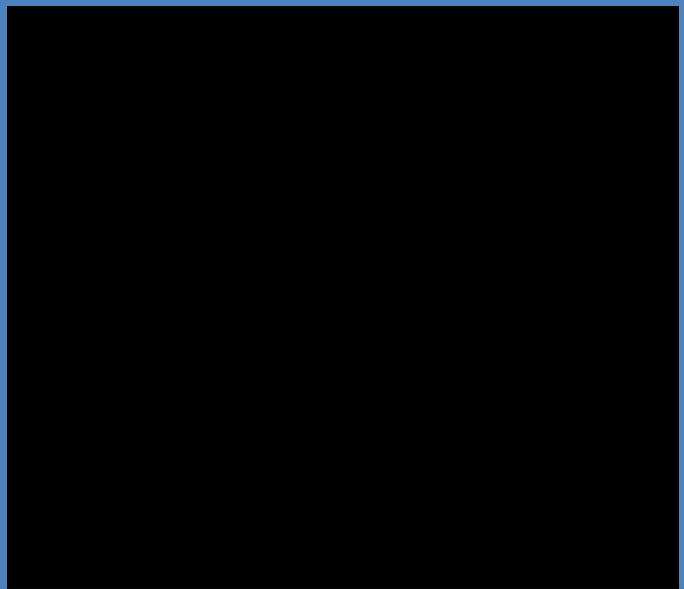
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**WhenInspirationStrikes** is an English literary forum which was founded by Shikha Sharma (India), Shaikh Mehmood (Pakistan), and Christine Ventre (USA).

But further the forum was also given a great support by Humera Sultana - Doctorate in English Literature · Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh (SaudiArabia) and Jane Peskara/Audrey Valentine (writer from Austria). The key interest of the forum is to motivate and encourage writing skills among every age group by exhibiting their good writings internationally.

