

create | encounter

LIFE MATTERS JOURNAL
ANNUAL CREATIVE ISSUE

SPECIAL EDITION
OCTOBER 2017



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This journal is dedicated to the aborted, the bombed, the executed, the euthanized, the abused, the raped, and all other victims of violence, whether legal or illegal. We have been told by our society and our culture wars that those of us who oppose these acts of violence must be divided. We have been told to take a lukewarm, halfway attitude toward the victims of violence. We have been told to embrace some with love while endorsing the killing of others. We reject that conventional attitude, whether it's called Left or Right, and instead embrace a consistent ethic of life toward all victims of violence. We are Life Matters Journal, and we are here because politics kills.

Disclaimer: The views presented in this journal do not necessarily represent the views of all members, contributors, or donors. This publication exists to present a forum for discussion within the consistent life ethic, to promote discourse, peer review, and dialogue.

Life Matters Journal

OCTOBER 2017

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Create | Encounter

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

When I was interviewing for my internship with Rehumanize International, executive director Aimee Murphy asked me "if you could do anything this summer, any project and have any resource you might need, what would you want to do?" In that moment I had no idea how big I could dream, but I said that although I like their journal, I would love to see more fiction, poetry and art. That is what speaks to me. I had no idea in that moment that idea would snowball and this creative issue would come to exist.

I have always been a fan of the arts. Writing is what helped me survive high school and what continuously helps me along through my daily life. It's what makes me happy and gives me a sense of purpose, because art is so multifunctional and relaxing. All the creative arts help artists express themselves and their love, hope, heartbreak and frustrations, and they can help bring to light issues in a creative way that individuals may ignore otherwise. I see constantly in my University of Pittsburgh fiction writing classes the power of the short story to humanize through characterization, and to bring attention to the less than perfect parts of humanity that do not value every intricate life in this world. Inspirational creative pieces speak volumes on issues that matter greatly, so merging my love of art with the consistent

life ethic just made sense.

Over 90 submissions later and it amazes me how many individuals are so passionate about life and art. Thank you to everyone who submitted a piece: for pouring your heart out and being so courageous by sharing it with us. Thank you to the review board who had no idea what they were getting into when agreeing to review submissions, but spent an abundant amount of time looking, watching, listening, and reviewing each and every piece. Thank you to my work squad for believing in this project and me when stress and anxiety would take over my body and I would be doubtful. I am so grateful for all your help and support. Thank you to my family and friends who have listened to me talk about this project almost nonstop for the last six months and have done everything they could do to help from sending in submissions to telling me they are proud of me. And lastly, thank you so much to all the wonderful individuals who are published in this issue. Your prose, poetry, art, music and videos are crafted so beautifully. They are truly inspirational and speak volumes for the consistent life ethic.



Love,
Maria

Dog

by Adriana Medina

I wasn't sure whether to laugh or cry while he dry-humped my leg
against my will because, I thought,

Who does that?

So when he finished,

and apologized,

saying something about being too affectionate,

and my thoughts surfaced above something like

fight-or-flight,

(only mine were deficient, at best, more like

freeze)

I did both,

laughing at the spot on his taupe khakis,

yelling,

Get the fuck out.

I Wish That...

Original lyrics: Rosemary Geraghty

Original music: Adam Hawley

Performance by

Rosemary Geraghty and Adam Hawley



Gloria

by Anna O'Neil

My hair is getting dry, and a little bit gray, but I dye it red, and you can't tell it isn't natural. I think it probably makes me look younger. The dye stuff doesn't smell good going in, but it isn't too much work just to touch up the roots now and then, and I don't have to do it that often. Anyway, it's the color I have used since Stacey was born, and I wouldn't know how to find another I like. Hannah, my other granddaughter, says I should get highlights in it ("pink ones!"), but then Hannah wants me to wear leopard-print leggings all over town like her mother, and could you imagine me in leggings?

Lizzie dropped the two of them off with me after work. She is taking an extra shift, so for now I watch the girls. We make mac 'n' cheese and watch American Idol, and bicker over who we are going to vote for, and whether the singer with the blonde dreadlocks is the "real deal," and yesterday we made no-bake cookies with peanut butter. I was doing the dishes after I made up the couch and big chair for them to sleep on, and thinking how I should try to get cushions or something from the Goodwill just in case they have to sleep here more often.

It is pretty quiet when they're not around. I go to work and come back late and feed Floppy, and he looks at me mournfully and swims around vaguely, and I go out on the fire escape and have a cigarette and a cup of coffee out there too if it isn't wet or cold, and I look over the housetops and trace the scoop of the telephone wires with my eyes, from pole to pole, and think about how deep they must have to be planted in order to stay up. And then usually I look down at my feet too on the grating, and think about

how high up I am and what would I hold on to if it all crumbled, but that is silly. I know that won't happen, of course. Anyway, I could grab on to the windowsill, I think. And then I tie up my hair and lock the doors and the window too, just in case, and climb into bed.

About a month ago, when it was a little warmer, I was out on the fire escape taking my time smoking before supper, because a wind was blowing in that cut the humidity, and it was overcast, and darker than usual, the kind of day where everything smells like itself, only stronger, and you can see the treetops waving before the wind gets all the way to you. Sometimes I can guess how many seconds it will take before I feel it on my face. I was halfway into my smoke when I heard my name, and I stood there letting the thing ash itself out while I tried to understand the rest of what I heard. The song was coming out of the big brick church, St. Jude's, across the street, but it was muddled, and it took me a while to realize it was in some kind of other language, maybe Spanish or French.

*Gloria in excelsis Deo
et in terra pax hominibus bonae
voluntatis*

I jumped the first time I stayed out long enough to hear my name at the end, too, as it was slowing down:

in Gloria Dei Patris, A-a-a-men.

I am always out having my cigarette before supper, and every so often I catch it beginning, so I've heard it a bunch of times now. It's a pretty song. I like to wait until it's over to go inside now. I mean, of course I know they don't mean me, but it makes me feel important, like a whole bunch of strangers are singing about me,

so I pretend it does mean me, but I don't know what to pretend the rest of it means.

I bus to work. Lots of people come and go, but some of them ride every day like I do. There is this one man with fingernails longer than Lizzie's purple manicure, and he always sits in the very front drinking from his old crinkly bottle of water and leaning way over the aisle with his head tilted almost horizontal to the rubber floor to tell the driver about what is on his mind, but even though you get the gist, it's hard to follow. The driver just listens, and sometimes says "Really," or "I know," and the girl with the oversized purple purse across the aisle just rolls her eyes and turns up her music.

Today he is outraged about the way somebody looked at him on the street, or maybe it wasn't a person; it might have been a bird. "You know what I'm sayin'? I don't stand for nothin' like that, but I know what they're all thinking, I got their number, you know what I'm sayin'?" He taps his temple knowingly with a yellowish finger and takes a big gulp of his water, and the driver doesn't turn her head, but she says softly, "I know what you mean."

"Hey, Mom. So would you believe that Freddie pitched a fit right at the end of the shift and made Madison stay late, so I had to get a ride home with Ricky, and he took forever to get going? He was all like, 'Five minutes, Liz,' and then he spends twenty minutes doing I don't know what. I don't even take that long gettin' ready for a date, you know?" She rolls her eyes.

"Hun, not here, smoke out on the fire escape please. You want a Hot Pocket or something? We made macaroni but it's all

gone. There are cookies left on the fridge." Lizzie takes a cookie and turns it over in her hands.

"They behave themselves?"

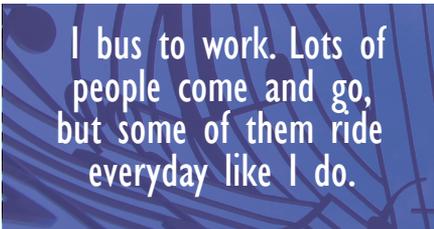
"About usual. Listen, don't wake them up. You sleep here tonight too and they can stay over again, since I don't work till late, and then you don't gotta worry about their lunches tomorrow."

"Yeah, okay."

But Lizzie doesn't go to bed. She plops down in the big chair beside Stacey, who is sleeping with her socks falling off her feet, and one arm flung out over the arm of the chair, unsupported, just hanging there. Liz sits there and picks at a scab on her face, and looks at her daughters, and picks at her nails a bit, and finally gets up to have a smoke. She is out there so long that when she comes back I am in bed, and she wakes me up a little when she gets into bed next to me, since the couch is taken.

"Liz, hon, you're going to be late!" I am tapping on the bathroom door; she doesn't answer. "Lizzie, it's ten past seven!" She doesn't answer. I let her be, and ten minutes later I hear her calling Freddie and saying she's not feeling well and that's she's really really sorry to miss a shift like this last minute, and she promises cross her heart she'll make it up. But when I ask her if she's okay, she says "Fine." and then, "I'm going for a walk."

So me and the girls watch cartoons on the couch all tangled up in Hannah's blankets, and every time the commercials come on, I say "Quick!" And we all scramble to the floor and do five sit ups together and count them out loud, which is important, and when the show comes back on we go back to our Kix. Then I let the girls dress themselves and I have an idea, so we walk down to the lot behind our complex, where some of the last Queen Anne's lace flowers are growing. Stacey screams when she notices the black spot in the middle of each flower, but I squat down to her height and pinky-promise her it isn't a bug. I still take the spot out of each of the flowers



before she will pick them. They turn out to be really hard to pull up. Either the roots come up too, in a big cloud of dust that I can taste, or I yank and pull, and the stem just bends and splits, but doesn't break. I saw at them with my apartment key, and we get a handful. When we go back up, we put drops of food coloring in different cups, and I explain how the flower is going to suck up the colored water right into its tiny white petals, and turn colors. But Hannah is pretty skeptical, because the water really just looks brownish and murky, worse than Floppy's water. We line them up by the kitchen sink window anyway, though, to see what will happen.

Lizzie gets back in the late afternoon, rubbing her eyes and picking up her pack of Marlboro Reds, and putting it down, and picking it up again. Finally she looks up and says, "Mom, I'm quittin'." I say, "Okay, honey, good for you." "I'm just gonna go out now and have my last one, 'kay? My last one." She hurries out to the fire escape with her back to me. "You want any supper, hon?" She doesn't answer me, and she doesn't answer when Hannah tries to show her the flowers, either. Before she shuts the window, though, I hear my song starting.

The next day, Lizzie takes the girls back home, and when I call the day after because Hannah forgot her inhaler, she doesn't pick up. That day is quiet. I hear car doors shutting in the distance, and phones buzzing, but when the phone actually rings, it's a recording selling security systems. Even so, I don't hang up for a good 30 seconds. But there's lots of noise on the bus. Everyone has been talking about it, but the man with the long fingernails is especially worked up because of Hurricane Martha, and keeps shaking his water bottle around to make a hurricane inside and laughing about it too long and too loud,

and saying, "Like that, look, look!" The driver keeps her eyes on the road, but says softly, "I know, I see." The girl with the oversized handbag gets up and moves three seats back and turns up her music.

I stop at the supermarket on the way home to pick up chips and spaghetti-o's and milk in case we lose power, and I get a box of Hostess Cupcakes too, just in case the girls will be over. It makes me a little anxious, not the storm, but the crowd of people inside. There are a lot of mothers. Everybody is looking harassed. There's no milk left. At the check-out line, which is so long it spills over into the aisles, I see a lighter and scented candle (exotic paradise punch) that somebody decided not to buy, stuffed between Vogue and Simple Living on the magazine rack, so I pick that up too. It is good to get out of the store. The air in the parking lot is heavy and humid, and seagulls are picking at wrappers here and there. The sky is big and dark.

At home, two of the Queen Anne's lace are all still white. One of them is dropping its petals all over the counter-top, like dandruff. I drop the bags on the couch, and pick up the phone to tell Lizzie's answering machine that I still have Hannah's inhaler, and also I found the ChapStick she lost, it was in the couch, and that she should tell Hannah that I think her flower is about to turn, and she can come by and get the ChapStick and stuff if she wants, and that I am doing well, just the usual.

The man on the bus with the long fingernails is still speaking, but today I can't understand a word he is saying. His sentences are all smashed together and muddled up like a different language, like that stupid song with my own stupid name in it.

The day after that, I don't even put a can of soup in the microwave. Instead I just go

Instead I just go out
onto the fire escape, and
wait to see if my song
will start, and I wait
as long as I can, but it
doesn't come.

out onto the fire escape, and wait to see if my song will start, and I wait as long as I can, but it doesn't come. I clench my fingers around the rusting iron railing and close my eyes and listen, but nothing. The wind is picking up. I can feel it on me at the same time as I hear it across the parking lot in the big oak trees. I can smell smoke and exhaust, and I don't go in until the sun is looking at me horizontal through the rusty red oak leaves at the end of the lot, and my fingers and shoulders and back are stiff.

Saturday night, Hurricane Martha is suddenly on us, and after work as I pick up the phone to tell Liz's answering machine that if they lose power they can always come and stay with me, she bursts in the door with the girls, hair all frizzy from the wind and rain.

Hey, Mom. It sure is something out there, isn't it?" Liz says, a little winded. I don't ask her where she's been, just smile real big and go to get some dishtowels to dry the girls' hair, and rub down their little blonde heads until they squirm away.

"Did you get any supper?"

"Nope. You got anything?"

There was a line down on 5th and we couldn't get home."

"I saw two police cars!" Stacey tells me.

We all sit down on the living room floor, and I get out some big comforters and I wrap Stacey up "like a bug in a rug," which makes her giggle. But then we hear a big crash outside, and we all sit up straight, and Hannah fights her way out of her blanket to look out the window. We can't see what it was. The tomato soup is warming up in the microwave when we hear a pop and a crack, and the lights go out just like that, even the street light, and the microwave stops. Hannah is grabbing my arm, and Stacey is holding on to my legs so tight I am afraid I'll trip over her.

"Okay, Hannah, Anastasia, we are going to sit back down, and guess what I got for us?" For once, I am prepared. I disentangle

the girls and plop them on the couch, returning with the candle and the lighter. When I set it up on the floor in the middle of us, I can see Hannah's face uncrumple a little bit as the flame grows.

"See? Hey, this is going to be fun. No, Stacey, move your blanket, honey, okay, we don't want a fire."

There is another crack and a crash, and this time we all run to the window, but it has gotten so dark out there. You can see the church windows across the street much dimmer than usual, flickering a little with the candle-light inside. The power must be out there too. There is a huge draft coming from my window, and the windowpane is wet. I can make out the dust on the windowsill magnified by the water droplets.

The next crash is louder than anything

I've ever heard, and Hannah and Stacey are both on me again, and Stacey starts to cry.

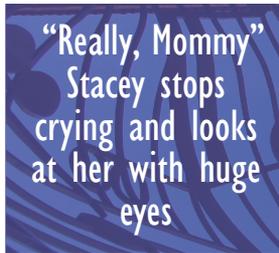
"Aw, honey, it's okay, it's just loud noises, okay? We're going to be fine in here."

But I look over at Lizzie, and first I think it's the shadows from the candle, and then I

realize that there is mascara smeared all down her face. She is sitting on the floor with her knees at her chin and holding her two hands over her stomach, and I understand. Lizzie sees my expression and makes a small strangled noise, but Stacey is still crying, and I hold her and my mind is a hurricane of the wheezing choking sounds of Hannah's first bad asthma attack when I didn't think that the ambulance could possibly make it to us on time, let alone all the way back to the hospital, too. I can taste the cloud of parking-lot dust on my tongue. I have let go of Stacey, and Lizzie leans forward to take her two hands, saying, "Hey, girl, hey, don't worry. Hannah, come here too, I got something to—I got a surprise for you."

They just look at her.

"I'm gonna have a baby!" she says,



falsely cheery. She pauses; they haven't reacted. "You know what that means?"

I hear my song carried through the crack in the window, on the draft:

Gloria in excelsis Deo

"Really, Mommy?" Stacey stops crying and looks at her with huge eyes.

et in terra pax hominibus

"What does that mean?" Hannah suddenly asks.

"That I'm a big sister!" Stacey pipes up. No, I know what that means, silly, what does that mean?"

She has nodded toward the window, and is looking at me.

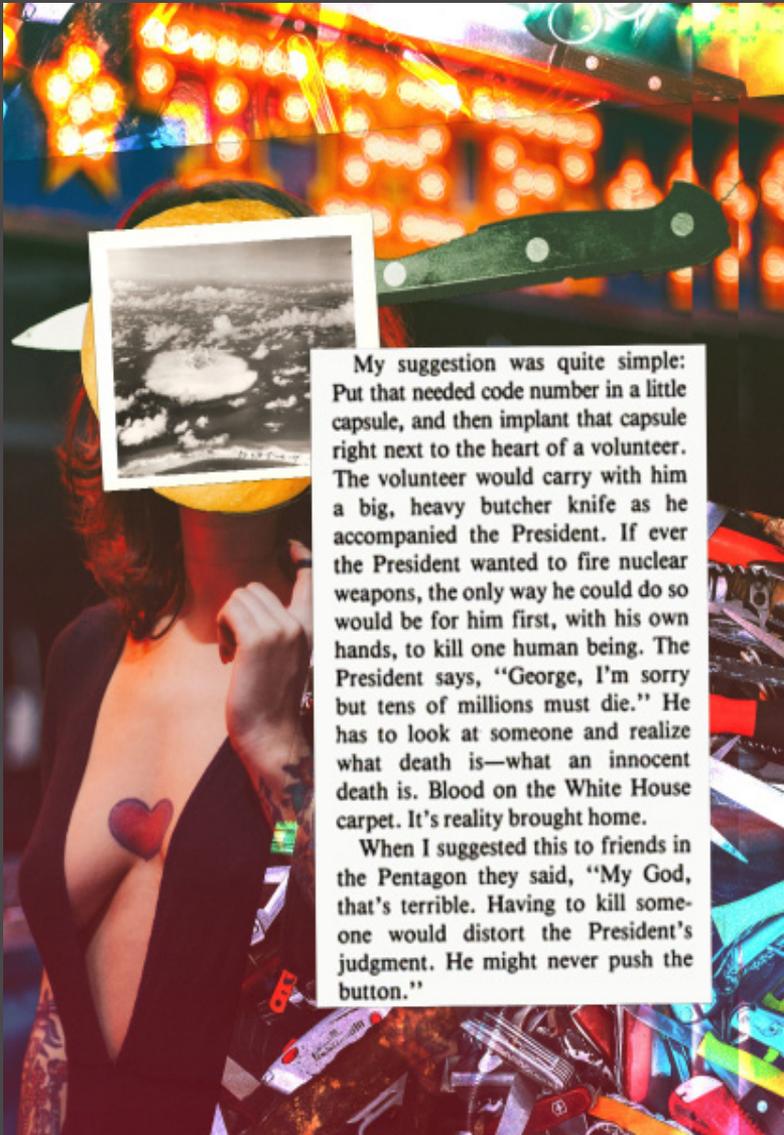
I start to say that I'm not sure, but all at once the power comes back on. The fan is picking up speed and the microwave is humming and Floppy's filter sputters and spits to life, and Lizzie's charging cell phone chirps, and we all cheer and when my eyes adjust to the light, I catch a flash of color in the corner of my vision and see that the Queen Anne's Lace we'd forgotten about on the sill has turned scarlet.

"Jeezus!" Lizzie exclaims, blinking in the light. But Hannah is still looking to me.

"It means everything is going to be fine, sweetie."



Pro-life Popart by Margaret Golonka



My suggestion was quite simple: Put that needed code number in a little capsule, and then implant that capsule right next to the heart of a volunteer. The volunteer would carry with him a big, heavy butcher knife as he accompanied the President. If ever the President wanted to fire nuclear weapons, the only way he could do so would be for him first, with his own hands, to kill one human being. The President says, "George, I'm sorry but tens of millions must die." He has to look at someone and realize what death is—what an innocent death is. Blood on the White House carpet. It's reality brought home.

When I suggested this to friends in the Pentagon they said, "My God, that's terrible. Having to kill someone would distort the President's judgment. He might never push the button."

Nuclear by Maria Oswald

The Ex-Abortionists

by Alexandra Moldeveau

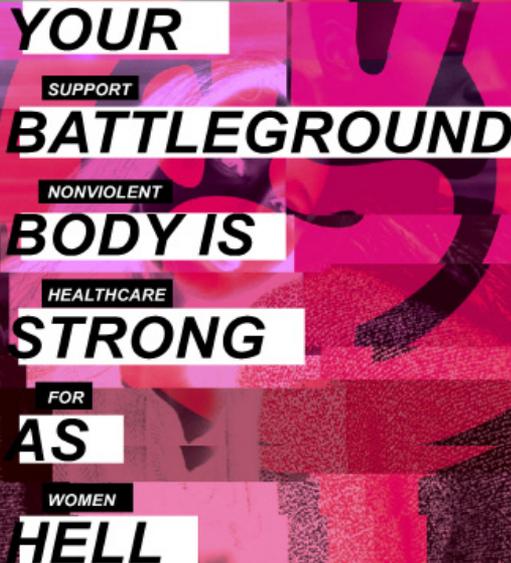
hands could work all day – no blisters and no pain
fingers were clasping and unclasping
went completely limp

we walked in the laboratory every day
heard a skull being crushed
saw the precise ways identifiable parts are
reassembled
each morning staring into the darkness
carrying a baby down a corridor

just couldn't look at them any more

all the empty swings on a
playground where in the end death was the winner

*This is a "found poem" created by selecting and mixing words from the article
"The Ex-Abortionists: Why They Quit" by Mary Meehan, published at <http://www.humanlifereview.com/the-ex-abortionists-why-they-quit/>*



YOUR
SUPPORT
BATTLEGROUND
NONVIOLENT
BODY IS
HEALTHCARE
STRONG
FOR
AS
WOMEN
HELL

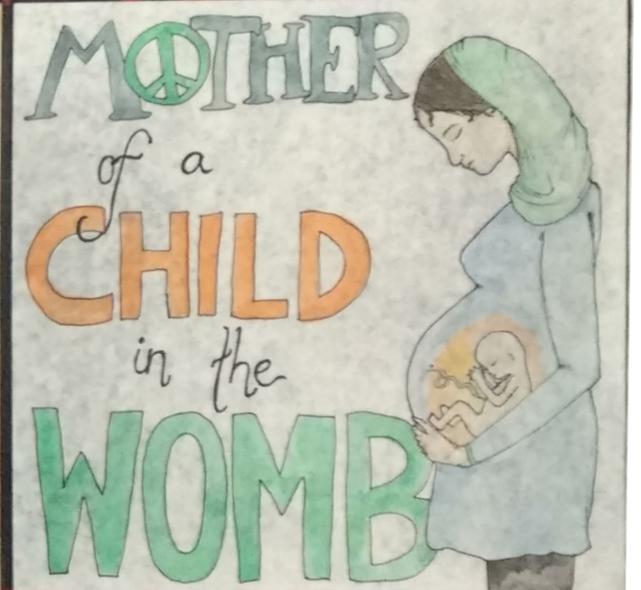
Battleground by Maria Oswald

Potential Energy

by Aimee Murphy



CELL this → energy



ARE YOU MY M

At The Yalu River

by Qi-Ang Meng

The Yalu River is cold.
I can imagine the rumbling
despite standing away
from a bush of rape flowers that shining
like gold.
The head of it lies in those limpid valleys; the tail
of it goes to that vague ocean.

The wind of the Yalu River is cold,
the passengers of which are swarms
of insects; I wonder if
the flagging-leave-like souls feed themselves
by taking human blood.
I just flick at it
when one lands on my limb,
letting water inrush occupy
its nasal cavity, the fallen leaves be retaken by roots,
and the wreckage perish in the mud.

The water of the Yalu River is cold,
for I see
the woman on the other side
scrubbing some tatters, her hands reddened;
2 or 3 juveniles wander
in the reeds, catching those insects
with sweep nets because in summer,
no other feedstuffs remain for chickens, yet the guards come
with pontoons soon after;
A caesious Jiefang truck brakes
in front of a gray school—CHI,
while the kids on it
cheer together—the Praise to the sun;
A sallow thin girl washing her hair
kneeling by a broken basin, she looks up;
I feel that the glance even
colder
though six hundred meters away.

The bridge above the Yalu River is cold.
At the dawn of Harvest moon
many decades ago 260 thousand Chinese youths
encouraged by a bugle call
gapped here
for defeating liberty.
After hearing this story
the waterweed must whisper me
that he once saw some skeletons and corpses
drifting down the river water
till the ocean, the dead ocean
that I would pass
each time I go back home.

Freedom is cold.
Riverside residents rumor that
the gunfire
at midnight overwhelms the surging river.
Those are the sentry
towers every 500 steps—bunkers, searchlight,
holes in the barbed wire,
Berlin wall in soft bricks.
Tongue-in-cheek ones are not always lucky:
they did conquer the freedom
but plan to swim heading the wrong direction.

I raise my palm
to shade the sharp sunlight. After all,
Helios never worries a bug that bites his shoulder.

A boy no more than 10
pop his head out from the shadow of a dour rock,
the blind zone of towers,
mouthing me:
“Give me bread.”
His expression spills limpidity as if an emerald pearl
flicks in the mist,
since when
my visceral sentences could hardly
rewarm themselves.

Megan's Spring

by Rachel Serbicki

Megan's Spring was written as a reflection on the choices the elderly and the vulnerable may feel pressured into making. I wanted to show how a person who is so full of life, despite her advancing years, could feel as though all her choices are taken from her by people who don't even know her. I hoped to demonstrate how words could seem almost reasonable to Megan even as people sought to take her life from her.

“10 o'clock. Have you considered meditating yet today?” a voice chimed softly in the background. The garden clung to its last vestiges of cool and quiet for the morning. Megan always tried to finish breakfast early so she could come out and sit before the swarms of others descended, disturbing the birds and scattering the flower petals. She stroked her knitting with a gnarled hand and sighed deeply, looking up at the sunlight filtering through the branches from the glass dome above. She wanted to go out again; they'd let her a few birthdays ago, but it was deemed too much of a risk now. At her age she might catch an infection. She picked up her knitting and hummed a birthday tune to herself. Maybe James would visit from off planet. He occasionally got leave still. Her hand twinged at her knitting and she winced, stopping to massage it.

“We've detected some pain, would you like relief?” her medical bracelet asked her.

“No,” Megan sighed. If they kept stabbing her with needles she'd be nothing but a bag of holes. She smirked at the mental image and picked up her knitting again. It was going to be a present for her great granddaughter. James thought they were naming it after her. The oldest resident on the planet. They should have a parade for her birthday. Megan smirked again. They better let her get her hair done first.

An aide arrived in clean-pressed blue

scrubs. “Megan? I've come to fetch you. Your case manager would like to see you.”

“Now?” Megan blinked at her knitting. “Oh well, I guess.” She tucked her knitting into the pocket on her walker and pushed hard on the bench. The aide slid to her side and lifted her with a hand under her arm. Megan clutched at the walker and swayed but remained standing.

“Take your time,” the aide said, waiting with one hand under her arm and the other behind her back.

“I got time,” Megan cackled. She started to push her walker down the petal-dusted path.

“They're beautiful this time of year,” the aide offered.

“My favorite time of the year.” Megan took a deep breath, inhaling the fragrance of the blossoms.

“You just like your birthday.” The aide squeezed her arm with a smile.

“Best time of the year?”

“Anyone coming in to see you?”

“Oh sure, James and his wife at least. They always come every year.”

“Right, and then little Eliza too.”

“And Sam came the year before.” Megan nodded as the doors slid open and a rush of even more canned air hit her face. The smell of inside was colder somehow, made her wrinkle her nose and pull her cardigan tighter around her shoulders. “Did they say why they wanted to see me?”

“Come on, that's way above my pay

grade," the aide chuckled.

Megan frowned; what was her name? She'd seen her often enough. She'd helped her to breakfast just that morning. Hannah? Sarah? No, it was something else.

Her face brightened as she saw a familiar form being pushed down the hall in a hover chair. "Clark!" she called.

His stooped form lifted its head as best he could and he waved a veiny hand. He was younger than her by a decade or two, and his roguish blue eyes never failed to sparkle.

"Hello, beautiful." He winked.

"Going to the garden?"

"Can't miss the blossoms. Though I feel as though the most beautiful one has just left."

Megan blushed and grinned. "You old dog. Get out of here. I don't want to talk to you."

They pushed him past, but he turned in the chair. "Are you coming back?"

"I'll just be a minute," she responded as she pushed her walker squeakily down the hall.

She paused, panting for breath.

"Do you need some time?" the aide asked.

"Just, just a second."

The aide pushed the walker's seat down and Megan turned to sit. "Not as young as I used to be." She grinned and licked her lips. "But you won't see them pushing me around in one of those chairs. Not I."

The aide knelt next to her. "Maybe you should. Therapy has some concerns about your balance lately."

"I'm fine." Megan waved a hand. "That's what I have the walker for."

"It won't stop you from going over backwards," the aide pointed out.

Megan blinked and squinted at her face. A couple decades ago they all wore name tags. Whatever happened to the name tags? Not like she could see it without her glasses on anyway. But still.

They sat in silence for a moment longer but Megan heaved a sigh. "Well I'm not getting any younger." She slid off the seat and, turning around, shuffled off down the hall.

The case manager's office was brightly lit and festooned with an absurd number of houseplants that crowded in around the main table.

"Megan!" The case manager looked up and gave her a tight smile. Her doctor was here, too, and a woman that Megan didn't recognize at all. There was a tension in the air and her doctor was leaning towards the unknown woman with narrowed eyes. The case manager stood and offered her hand.

"Megan, I'm Claire, your case manager, of course you know Dr. Stevens, and this is your family's lawyer, Janice. Come, sit down."

The chair she offered her was a hover chair. Megan curled her lip at it but sat.

"We're here today to talk about your future," Claire started. "And to congratulate you on your past. Your longevity is the stuff of

legends."

Megan smirked. "I know."

"We all want to know your secret." She laughed.

"Sleep well, eat well, and don't drink." Megan had never touched a drop of liquor her whole life.

"Yes, well, your family is very proud of you," Claire said, still smiling, "but they've decided that it's time to let go."

"Let go?" Megan blinked and glanced between them. "Go where?"

"Megan, your family loves you very much, but your current state puts an immense strain on their physical, mental, and emotional well being." Janice leaned across the table towards her, wrinkles snaking their way up her extremely pressed suit. "Not to mention financial."

"My current state?" Megan glanced between them. "I don't understand." She

"They've decided that it's time to let go."

looked over her shoulder for the kindly aide, but the woman was gone.

"You have been here for," Janice looked at her pad, "over a hundred years. That's an awfully long time to not contribute. When your family put you here they were anticipating a shorter stay."

"I can't help it if I stayed this long." Megan felt very small in her seat as it hummed beneath her. "Elderglen is my home. I-I don't have anywhere else to go."

"We understand." Dr. Stevens laid a hand on her arm. "And I think it's important that you understand all your options. You're in excellent health for a woman of your age, and there's absolutely no reason you couldn't remain here for a handful of years more."

Claire looked down at her own pad and flicked through a few pages. "Your finances are still in order, and there is no problem on the part of Elderglen with you maintaining residency."

"But," Janice said, "her family has made a request and it needs to be brought to her attention. Megan has the right to let go if she so chooses. She has the right to know that it is her family's desire that she do so."

"My family? I'd like to talk to James," Megan said. James would know what to do.

"Megan," Dr. Stevens started, but Janice interrupted him.

"Megan, James has been dead for years. You remember him passing, right?"

Megan looked between them as tears filled her eyes. "James is dead? Well, I-" She looked between them. "I'll talk to Sam, then. He's got a good head on his shoulder's; I didn't raise him, raise him to..."

Her voice faded as she saw their expressions.

"Megan," Claire said with a sad smile and a shake of her curls, "they're gone. They passed some years ago."

"What would Eliza do without them though?" Megan's heart beat fast in her chest and she huffed for breath. "What about little Eliza?"

"Eliza grew up, Megan," Claire said. "She grew up and had children of her own and she passed, too."

"It's her descendants that are requesting you pass on," Janice said, pushing a pad across the table to Megan.

"They feel that it's gone on long enough."

Megan glanced down at the pad, but her glasses were still in her room and it kept blurring. She looked up. "They all signed?"

"Many of them," Janice said.

"Even," Megan paused and licked her lips. "Even little Megan?"

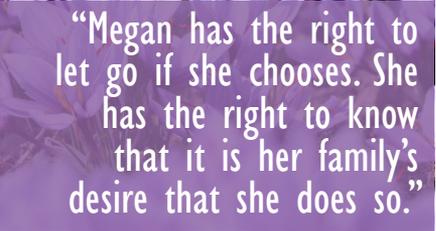
Janice smiled. "There've been a few Megans and yes, some of them signed."

"You have many years ahead of you, Megan. You have time, a life here. If you choose to sign you need to be aware that you're giving up your life." Claire brushed a curl out of her face. "You're a light here at Elderglen, and we all love having you here."

"If you do chose to go, though," Dr. Stevens said as he turned the coffee cup in his long-fingered hands, "it will not be uncomfortable Megan. Just another poke with a needle and you'll fall asleep."

Janice shook her head and sighed. "I'm so sorry, Megan. But you should do the right thing. Don't make the rest of your family suffer any longer than it has to. All you need to do is sign. Make life better for your descendants."

Megan swallowed and glanced around the table. Dr. Stevens wouldn't look at her as he turned the coffee cup, but Claire gave her a smile that didn't quite iron out the wrinkle between her eyebrows. Then she looked at the edge of her knitting poking out of her pocket on the walker. She wouldn't want to make any new little one suffer because of her. Pulling the pad towards her, Megan signed.



"Megan has the right to let go if she chooses. She has the right to know that it is her family's desire that she does so."

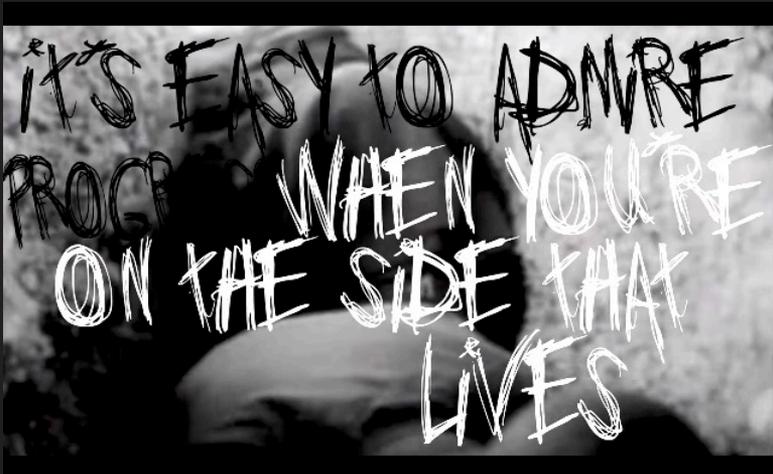
Flower



Submitted by Micah Rose Emerson



The New World



Written and performed by Kevin Heider



Hemlock

by Francis Ittenbach

Give me bile,
throat-cast to scald the tongue,
the lips, the esophagus,
the peach skin of my eyelids
closed to the images from
the stories my father
read from the newspaper of
the tragedy of Socrates
written in statistical hemlock

It comes up from my stomach
and into the world through
a cracked-clay mouth with
speech like desert rain,
the whips cracking against my skull

This is the art of dying in electrical impulses

The vision of my body
dripping with chocolate
in a black and white film,
the knife wound clear to see

I am cancer clacking
its claws along the shore

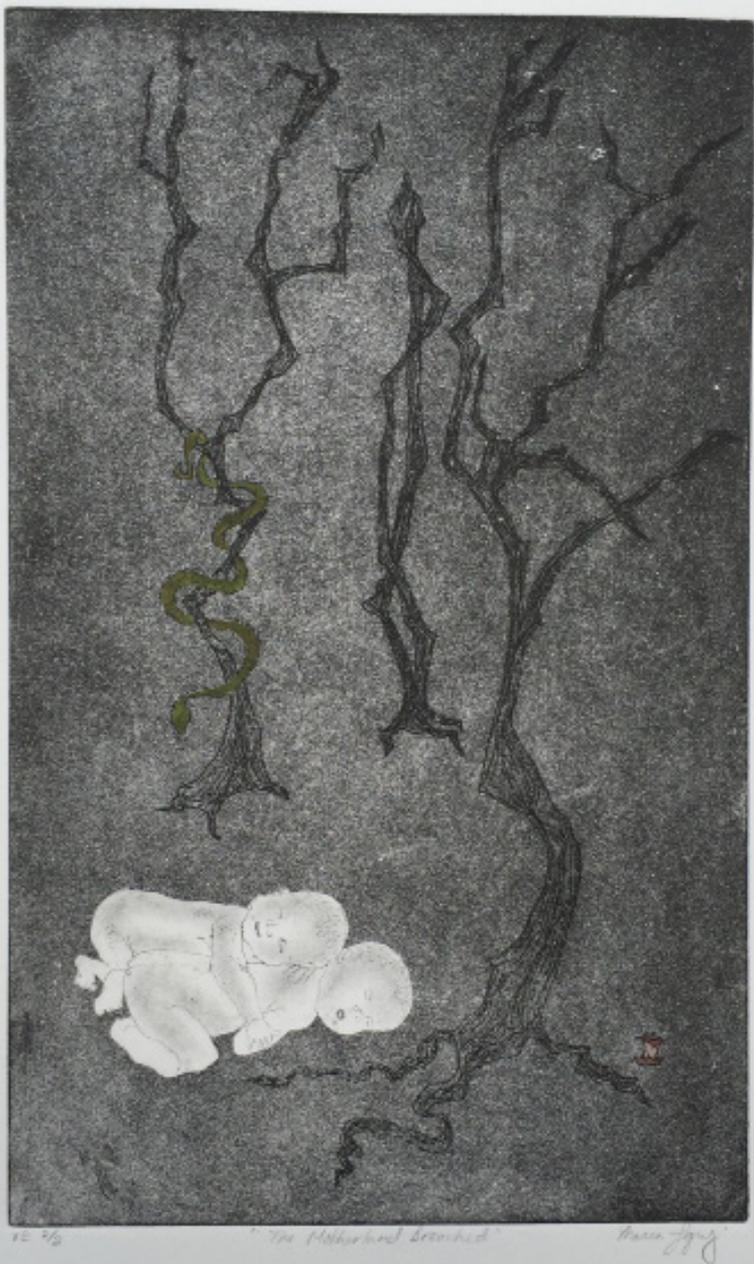
So pierce my tongue and
slip a desperate hope through
the slot to drag me along
the foothills and up to the summit

Feel free to leave me
to crawl the final thousand
yards on my own;
I assure you, I can make it.



Part 1: Motherhood by Maria Ignelzi

Part 2: Motherhood, Breached by Maria Ignelzi



1E 1/2

The Motherhood Breached

Maria Ignelzi



V 2/2

"The Motherland Butchered"

Maria Ignelzi

Part 3: Motherhood, Butchered by Maria Ignelzi

Front Cover: Broken Potential
Back Cover: Extravagant Gift
by Cindy Howard

