



Klamath Writers' Guild is pleased to present a winning story from our short story competition. The competition covered three different themes: The Teacher, Slavery, and Romance. The following story will fall under at least one of these themes.

Destiny and the Albino Leeches

by Ed Silling

The Rasta Guerrilla Theater Group hadn't started out that way. They started out as the cast of the fall production of *Porgy and Bess*. They had fallen into the habit of smoking on rehearsal breaks and listening to Bob Marley on Lamar's gadget, which had pretty good sound for being so small. The same was true of Lamar, a little guy with a resonant bass voice that filled every crack of the auditorium with, 'Bess, you are my woman now, you are....'

Yes, you *are*, not you *is*. This is the Twenty-First Century, after all, and our edgy director decided not only to lose the dialect but to do the show in whiteface.

I mentioned smoking. Let me clarify. Of course, when you're listening to Bob Marley on the loading dock, you can't smoke Cools or American Spirits. Ekpre had brought his supply of weed and our discussions on the loading dock got pretty philosophical/political and whatnot like the songs we were listening to. Lamar could do a fantastic impression of Marley, exhaling a cloud, throwing back his dreadlocks and, with vague sweeping gestures toward the downtown skyscrapers, sing, 'oba-oba-servin' the hypocrites,' then, turning to us to us, 'you, you have the an-sah,' which in our sweet haze we took as Bob intended—redemption, freedom.

The week before opening we were burning out—less talk, more smoke, just lounging under the caged overhead bulb, watching ganja-fog roll into the chasm between the dock and the dumpster. And out of the silence it came to us all at once, as if our brains were wi-fied in. I could

be wrong, since Ekpre's brand of weed was a real time-bender plus something more, because we all saw and heard the dumpster say, its black lid flapping, 'us been oba-oba-servin the hypocrites, them bankstas, man,' to which we all said, 'Fukin' A, bro!' then went back to *Porgy and Bess*.

At the next break, the amazing thing happened. Destiny (not destiny in the abstract but Destiny Thomas, our director) said, 'I've been thinking—not so much thinking, really, like it just came to me. Sure, *we* have the ansah, but 'we' is everyone in the world, not just us.'

'Hey,' I said, 'we is everyone? Thought we were losing the dialect.'

She stood, eyes closed, head back, swaying, finger pointing to the horizon—"The whole world, one love...."

I saw once a tube of a concert where Bob did the same thing, meaning everyone, everywhere.

'Yeah,' said Richard, 'We have the ansah but there's only ten of us. Btw, what *is* the ansah?'

'I know,' said Ekpre, still gazing to the infinite place where Destiny pointed, 'the spot that's everywhere. The streets. Guerrilla theater.'

'Too many streets,' I said.

Lamar had a flash, but you'd never know, sprawled on the steps, eyes closed, head nodding. 'Screw the streets. We need the spot that's everywhere, where everyone sees.'

We were all flashing now. 'The national news!'

'You Tube!'

Lamar held up his slab phone. '*This* is everywhere! Do a bank and post it.'

'Do?' I said.

'Yeah. On a Friday afternoon, rush hour.'

Our brain hurricane was rolling but it was the dumpster that clinched it with the BIG IDEA. 'Leeches,' it said.

'What?'

'Giant leeches,' it repeated irritably, lid flapping, a junk mattress lifting like a tongue. 'They come from the murky depths. You bleed—they feed.'

'Hey,' said Destiny. 'I saw that cheesy 50s flick, black and white.'

Shitty acting. They did the title in dripping caps—ATTACK OF THE GIANT LEECHES—a couple of high school kids making out by a swamp, get-a-room stuff, when these big black leeches like Michelin men without arms come up behind. The girl opens her eyes too late and screams while her leg goes in its mouth. The guy tries to fight. I guess guys were tough in the 50s. You fags would run away.'

'What you sayin' girl?' said Ekpre. 'I'd slap it with my fanny pack.'

'You mean your fudge pack,' said Lamar.

But evidently neither fudge nor fanny could save them and the maker-outers were sucked dry, just tight skin over skulls and ribs.

The *Porgy and Bess* review came out in the *Post* next day, Headlined, *Sedition at Central*:

'Porgy and Bess' opens Friday at Central Community College. This controversial folk opera depicts the lives of poor blacks in South Carolina. Theater major and director Destiny Thomas is wading right into the controversy with a whiteface version of the work.

Times: *You're doing a whiteface production. Why?*

Destiny: *Not just whiteface, but also minus the demeaning black dialect and relational stereotypes. For instance, not, 'Bess, yo' is my woman now, yo' is...' but 'Bess, you are my significant other now, you are...' Sure, there's too many syllables, but there's too many in Mozart too. And the characters aren't just whiteface, they're pastyface and rich as hell. Trump is in there, Gates, George Will. We wanted Obama, but how the hell do you do that?*

Times: *They tried to do an all-white production in South Africa during apartheid, but the Gershwin heirs wouldn't give permission. Did you get permission?*

Destiny: *Hell no. This is creative. You don't need permission to be creative. That's a contradiction in terms.*

So we morphed into the Rasta Central Street Players, our debut, Washington Domination Bank, 5th and Pike, Friday, 4: p.m. Channel 4 news would be clued in, plus the performance would be documented by smart phones, posted, hopefully go viral. We took it as seriously as

Porgy and squeezed in rehearsals late, after the show.

Destiny and the cast, plus me, the token white faculty adviser, were rainbow, granolas, tree-huggers but with one fatal weakness: football. Yes, we knew all about the corporate-scam-non-taxpaying-concussed NFL, the ripoff owners, sexism, racism, homophobia. But we were addicted, needed our fix and went to The Keg every Sunday afternoon. They say heroin is your worst experience and you can't wait to do it again.

The bar was pretty full. Hard to see when you first go in, except for the florescent beer signs, lotto lights, the manic bright TVs perched on walls. The tables were full but the bartender covered the pool tables with sheets of ply and pulled up some folding chairs.

A guy elbowed in beside Destiny. Kind of thuggish, Andy Garcia-ish, that intense Mediterranean look, a snake tattooed round his wrist. Don't get me wrong. I like Andy Garcia, just not this version of him.

'What are you drinking?' he said, leaning close to her.

There he was, a bar creep, moving in, so obvious. But, hey, he was wearing a team jersey and that's the thing about football, it's like, well, golden retrievers. Instant connection. You're walking Gabriel with his smiling black chops, his great banner of a tail and someone you wouldn't look at comes up and says, 'Beautiful dog. Had one myself. Passed away last year. Can I pet him?' Then you're off and away, old friends. 'They're great with kids, gentle. Only bite you when it's absolutely necessary and there's love in those teeth. Mine would find rocks bigger than his head and carry them all the way home. You're a good boy, aren't you? Never eat cat shit, would you, or lick blood spots off a mattress. You can't beat a golden, well, technically you could, but who would want to?'

Football, booze, retrievers, social lubricant. Maybe he was ok.

Almost kickoff and the bar crowd fixated on the screens, close-ups of bare-chested fans painted blue and green, kids in fright wigs, women in gloves with little pompoms on the fingers, turning their heads to the jumbo-tron, their 15th of a second of fame.

The national anthem, the flyover of the B-1 bomber, like a great black bat, timed to coincide exactly with 'the la-and of the FREE..' the

rest of the line drowned in jet roar and cheering. A flag big enough for God to see unfurled on the field.

You're so used to this stuff you don't normally think about it, but I'd just read a book about the visuals of sports, fire and smoke, rocket's red meat. But the most stunning thing about all the glitz on the field is how fast it disappears—shazam—so the really important stuff can happen, so they can fight that leather bladder up and down the field, so the crowd can trigger false starts.

Lamar caught my cynical leer and said, 'Bro, don't be so hostile. Relax. Just enjoy.'

I hate it when people say 'enjoy,' 'relax,' when I'm grinding with fear. I mean, this is high stakes, good vs. evil, the fate of the cosmos at stake. It's about having a massive coronary, flatline, then 'clear!' bang, and you're beating again, being stabbed in the heart, a mainline rush, suicide, ecstasy. 'Relax?' 'Just enjoy?' What planet is he from?

'Don't be so hostile,' he says? I like being hostile. I *need* to be hostile. We won the coin toss and deferred. Commercial break.

I stop to breathe and look round. America's the great melting pot and The Keg was the pot within a pot. American concentrate—boozing teachers trying not to look guilty, rednecks, bikers with Don Quixote beards, bandanas and Jesus on their leathers. A sweet old couple at a front table, swaddled in blue and green scarves, hawk logos glaring from their stocking caps.

The camera panned the owner's suite, the tight-faced Paul Allen in glasses, high up, behind glass, a football fan, same as us. Worried. Football brother.

'Like football?' said the creep, asking the duh question only so he could lean in on Destiny.

'Yes and no,' she said, drawing away. 'Holy shit! Did you see that catch?'

The bar crowd was yelling and jumping, high-fiving.

'What do you mean, 'yes and no'? Football's America. Love it or leave it.'

'That's kind of black and white don't you think?' she said.

I expected him to give up the conversation, but he apparently had

more up his sleeve than that blurry snake tattoo.

'Oh,' he said, raising a sarcastic Dwane Johnson eyebrow, 'you're conflicted.'

Evidently he'd taken psychology or been remanded to counseling.

'I'd say I'm ambivalent,' she said. 'Touchdown!'

The bar erupted.

'I've been a fan since forever,' she went on, 'inherited from my dad—the old Zorn-Largent days. Damn, they did it, two points!'

Only a few minutes into the first quarter he was already buzzed and aggressive, loving those cracking hard hits that laid players out. 'Kill 'em!' he shouted. She looked at him with a bit of chemistry n her eyes.

I don't like to judge. Actually, I do like to judge—who doesn't? This guy, well, I didn't like him. Not that I was jealous, more protective. We all felt that way. She was our little sister—feisty, confident, creative, a real gift for directing.

She was a picky vegetarian but here she was next to this guy with a burger and fries. He offered her a bite and she was thinking about it. Maybe he was better-looking than he looked. I dunno. I'm a guy. To me he looked shift, thuggish, almost dangerous. But at Destiny's age *almost* dangerous is kind of sexy. Hell, her last boyfriend looked like Charlie Manson without the swastika.

But she'd defended her last boyfriend.

I said, 'Manson wasn't bad-looking when he was younger—intense eyes, looked like Jesus. Hell, girls would kill for him.'

'You'd have to be insane,' said Lamichael, 'to slice up people the way he did.'

I nodded. 'Insane or noble. If he was a duke or something 600 years ago, or a Saudi royal, he'd be considered normal.' I could have gone on but I don't like to soapbox.

Destiny had a weakness for beautiful losers. Not that this Manson replacement was that beautiful, but evidently his big neck and soft hair trumped her hate for dead meat, almost. She didn't bite the burger—good thing, it was red-raw—but she ate a fry that had been in bed with it.

I know you can't account for chemistry or whatever, beauty and the beast, Shawn Penn and Robin Wright, Mick and Bianca, John and

Yoko—but that's complex because John was the weird-looking one and Yoko had beauty inside, as you could tell from her *Star-Spangled Banner*, even better than Hendrix once you understand it.

Maybe this guy had a Star-Spangled Banner in him too but I couldn't see it. I could only see his pumped up muscles, tight tee, all Stallone and Pachino, all John Wayne toilet paper, if you've heard the joke.

He was getting round her with his football talk—the pocket, the shotgun, the snap, tight ends, esoteric stuff like that. And before each play he'd shout, 'Go Rus-*sell*!' and after every stop, jumping up and down, 'Legion of BOOOM!'

She looked at him with a shake of her head and a smile. As she said later, 'He was like a big kid, sort of vulnerable. You have to have confidence to be such a moron.'

He asked for her name and number. No good trying to stop her. If I'd said, 'I'd be careful if I were you,' she'd have said, 'well you're *not* me. You're not my dad. Don't try to control me,' plus a few spicy words. So I kept shut. The thing about Destiny is she knows when you're keeping shut—reads your body language even when you don't have any.

'I know what you're thinking,' she hissed like a blow torch into my ear. 'Kiss off. This is my life.' Turning to him, 'I'm Destiny Thomas. You can friend me.'

I didn't like him, none of us did. Lamar said, 'Tats down the arm and pumped-up muscles—he's been in prison. Have you seen the killer bread guy? Napoleon complex.'

'Asshole complex.'

'You guys are so judgmental.'

'For God's sake, you picked him up in a bar.'

'So? You hate him because he's not like you. Well guess what? Nobody's like you. You're all weird.'

'You don't even know what he does, do you? Could be a pimp.'

'I don't care what he does. You gotta give people a chance. You guys are macho-phobic.'

'Hell no. We're all studs.'

'You and the village people.'

'Ouch. Too-shay.'

Turns out I was so wrapped up in Destiny-and-the-beast I forgot to freak out over the game.

Well that's where it stood, but that didn't stop us from doing the leech thing. Our biggest guys, Ekpre, Richard and Lamichael would play the leeches.

'Hey,' said Lamar, 'they should wear monopoly-guy top hats and mustaches.'

Destiny said no. 'The symbolism of leeches is enough. No need to do anything but squirm.'

Lamar pushed it. 'The symbolism? What's the symbolism of *black*, Destiny? Leeches are black. Next you'll be giving us lines like 'yo is' and shit. What if the *Times* shows up? *You're doing Porgy in whiteface and leeches in blackface. A little dissonance there, wouldn't you say?*'

That made her think.

'Ok, we'll do albino leeches.'

We spent a week on wardrobe and soon realized the downside of leech outfits—basically zipped-up sleeping bags. How do you get around without legs, open doors without hands?

Lamar snapped his fingers. 'Appliance dollies, Hannibal Lecter style.'

'Yeah,' we said, 'creepy.'

So dollies it was.

'I think we'd better rent a truck,' said Destiny, 'from where Ekpre works—use the 5-minute loading zone in front of the bank. No point getting towed.'

But Lamar wanted action, 'Let's take over the loan desk and issue toxic mortgages. Oh yeah—no hands. Maybe suck people's necks? Please....'

'It's enough just to be there, believe me. Plus it's not illegal, leeches in a bank.'

'How's it going with Charlie Manson the second?' said Lamichael. She tossed her dreds defiantly. 'We're moving in together.'

'Your place or his?'

'Mine, I guess. He's got some issues with his place.'

'Like what?'

'Pests. His name is Alfonse'

Friday, First Nomination Bank. The security guy tried to stop us but we just barged in and Destiny was right; the sight of albino leeches writhing and twisting got some people screaming, the brighter ones laughed because they got it. Some teller must've freaked and pressed the alarm because in 5 minutes the cops were there, a couple of them anyway, running in with their guns drawn, held at eye-level.

'Throw down your weapons, fuckers!' they shouted. 'Get on the floor, fuckers! Keep your hands where we can see, fuckers!' Of the three commands, the fuckers could only do the-get-on-the- floor.'

Destiny turned to the first cop, 'Take it easy, this is a peaceful action.'

"I don't give a shit. Get down!" gesturing with his gun. It was Alfonse, no flicker of recognition in his face. 'Get down, bitch!'—shoving her.

Richard, partly out of his suit, tried to make a break, sack-hopping toward the exit. But he was no match for a cop with feet. Alfonse's partner cut him off and steered him into the open bank vault . 'Hey!' he called, 'put the fuckers in here.'

Alfonse dragged Ekpre along the marble floor into the vault. I was trying to look inconspicuous, nonchalant. Maybe they'd think I was a delivery guy with my appliance dolly. I couldn't abandon it. I'd signed for the damn thing. I must have had a sign on me, *GUILTY*, because Alfonse screamed at me—YOU, fucker!—to drag Lamichael into the vault. I always imagined I had some courage, but when a .38 police special is waving at you, well.... But I wasn't a total wimp. 'Hey!' I said, 'watch the language.' Destiny said 'cocksucker' and flipped his hat as she passed him.

The vault had a brass gate just inside, left open for day-to-day business. The other cop went in to cuff Ekpre, whose hands were now free. Alfonse slammed the gate behind us while we waited for backup.

But Friday traffic was heavy and their sirens couldn't change gridlock.

A pulsing alarm sounded. Yellow swatches flashed on the vault walls. Warning shouts from the bank people. A heavy rumble, the hum of electric motors and the big door began to close. The other cop ducked through the gate and slipped out just in time. The thunk of locking rods. Silence.

A sign on the wall read,

WARNING: AUTO-LOCKING VAULT
CANNOT BE OPENED OUTSIDE BUSINESS HOURS

We were alone, just us, a the cast of *Porgy and Bess*, me, and a foul-mouthed cop with a real attitude and a big gun. Richard was wriggling out of his leech suit.

But now he was almost out of his awful shroud and standing up, a head taller than Alfonse and a foot wider.

'Get down, fucker!'

Richard tried to push him away; Alfonse grabbed his fingers with a torquing swing, where if you don't want your arm busted, you go down. He had Richard from behind, pushing his elbow the way god didn't intend, then locking an arm round his throat, Richard gasping, 'I can't breathe.'

Alfonse was pretty good at this, with a knee in Richard's back, bending him back, groping for cuffs. Sure, there was only one cop, but he was buff, ferocious, the lightning rod of the penal system.

Richard was going limp.

'Hey, man,' we said, 'get off him.'

But Destiny acted. She grabbed a lock box and smashed Alfonse in the back of the head. His eyes rolled up and he slumped onto the floor. I thought, *shit, we're all in the slammer now.*

And just when I thought things couldn't get worse, she snapped the cuffs on Alfonse and rolled him into a corner. Tough.

'Couldn't let him kill him, like that cop in Baltimore.'

'Maybe,' I said hopefully, 'Monday morning we could just explain what happened.'

'You're shitting,' said Lamar. 'We're black. He's white.'

'He's not completely white,' said Destiny. 'Got some olive.'

'Doesn't matter,' said Ekpre. 'We're black and he's white no matter what color he is.'

By now Richard and Alfonse were coming to, one sucking air, the other blinking, trying to sit up. He realized he was cuffed. He snarled and cursed, his eyes darting between the poles of hate and fear. Then, apparently realizing that the raging bull routine wasn't going to get him anywhere at the moment, took a few cleansing breaths. 'Listen, you guys—girl—uncuff me. You'll get 10 to 15 or attempted murder of a police officer. Plus kidnapping, maybe life.'

I was impressed by the persuasiveness of his argument. My heart pattered, my knees clacked.

'Uncuff me and I'll say I fell and hit my head.'

Destiny laughed a contemptuous fake laugh. 'I don't think so.'

He cursed again and called her names, sexist, violent, obscene. We knew their thing was over.

She gave him a cold look. 'What's this? Good cop, bad cop? All you got is bad cop, asshole cop.'

She took his gun. He foamed and cursed while she put it in a lock box, then into a safety deposit box on the wall.

Well all this had only taken a few minutes. It was way shy of six o'clock and it was just hitting us that we had a whole weekend to kill.

As you'd expect, Alfonse didn't have a deep stock of obscenities and it only took until about 7 to lose his steam and his 'officer-of-the-loo' attitude. We settled into a kind of truce, by default. We had to cooperate for survival. We had some water bottles and granola bars and stuff. And as the time wore on, we had to shit and piss, the problems they ignore in great literature. I don't think Miss Havisham relieved herself once in 700 pages, which would account for her peevishness. I sympathize too with those students in *Les Misérables* who spent a whole scene drinking and went straight to the barricades.

Well I can tell you that us real people locked in the vault had real urges. And it makes you think of cattlecars to Auschwitz or sanitation in Gaza. At the WTO our Seattle cops zip-tied protestors and left them in

metro buses for 10 hours. High-end public porta-potties.

At least this vault was investor-owned and shitting all over it had a whiff of satisfaction, rich symbolic protest. I wasn't going to tell you about that, but having a lot of time to kill, I will. We're decent people. We didn't just crap on the floor like ferrets. We used the safety deposit boxes, specifically, those lock boxes that go *in* safety deposit boxes. With whatever we could find for wiping—some of it was carbon paper—and that didn't matter so much for the brothers and sister, but Alfonse wound up with smudges all over our asses.

Let me explain. We kept him cuffed. Didn't trust him after his attempted murder of Richard. But out of simple humanity and because we didn't want to smell the load in his pants, Lamar volunteered to do the ass-care. His day job was a home-care giver, so he was used to it. And being an artist to boot, made some remarkable carbon flourishes on Alfonse's cheeks. After the second time, the cop didn't seem to mind so much. A Village lyric popped to mind: 'In the bank vault/ you can put your bowels at ease...'

You can get used to anything, I guess. Destiny said that Louis XVI's chamberlain wiped the royal ventilator, so Alfonse should feel honored. But this isn't what I wanted to tell you. What I started out saying was that we found lots of paper, as you'd expect in a bank vault, and pens, though I always carry one for emergencies. You never know when you might have to kill time writing.

And speaking of, come Monday morning we were waiting for the vault to grind open so we could go to the real slammer on felony charges. We waited and waited. Nothing. Then I remembered it was a three-day weekend and you should have seen the looks when I told them, especially Alfonse's. His smug look of *I've got your sorry asses now* changed to deep pissadointment.

I was under a deadline for a short story contest, so I grabbed a Domination Bank and Trust pen and a ream of mortgage documents, those we hadn't used for TP yet. I'd been busting my brain for a story, when suddenly I realized, hell, this is a great story, fantastic characters, a villain, romance, a locked door, social significance, a plot, crisis—everything except an ending.

Somebody once said you have to have your ending figured out first, then write your story into it, so you have a target, bullseye. I imagined a tragic ending, to resonate through history like the Ludlow massacre, the Pequots and the Jesuits of San Salvador.

I didn't think we'd be massacred, even though our group was black except for lucky me, faculty advisor. This is America. They'd never kill us in broad daylight with cameras on.

But I wrote a massacre ending anyway, a Blackadder ending, just to make sure, because I'm usually wrong about stuff.

The door opens ponderously, groaning, hydraulics hissing. I go out first, hands visible—I even drop my pen and kick it away. Cop follows. Then the others. Alfonse shouts, 'They've got my gun!' and hits the floor. The gunfire is like a string of firecrackers, big ones; the bank fills with that tangy powder smell you like so much when you're a kid. Destiny's face evaporates and the others slump like sacks.

Breaking news: Drone kills journalists in Iraq. Protests continue throughout Europe over assassination of Charlie Hebdo staff in Paris. Here at home, no indictment in Domination Bank tragedy.

Hey, I know it's lousy but I plan to revise it. Anyway, Monday in the vault, time stood still. We still had a few granola bars, some brownies and a little water, which we shared like Georgie's oatmeal porridge in the firelight. That's a Bob Marley line. Shared, even with Alfonse.

Richard wasn't a nerd like me. I carried a pen for emergencies. He carried a big doobie, which he lit up and passed round. And soon the vault was a bong chamber, sweet-smelling fog. I remember in church at benediction, they'd have this squat samovar and the priest would swing it, clacking against the chain, smoke puffing out of holes in the lid and smelling so holy, while the altar boy (me) would ring the chimes,

The priest swung it at the audience, perfuming the stink of their sins, like smearing deodorant on unwashed pits. And I must say I felt almost as holy as I did in the foggy vault, in heaven, mellow. Alfonse got mellow too and almost purred when Lamar helped him pee, singing, 'You are the big tree, we are the small ax, come to chop you down.'

Alfonse was uncircumcised. His hose ended with a bulging combustion chamber instead of the Darth Vader helmet that Jewish Jesus had.

Ganja makes you more a lover than a cage-fighter or, in Alfonse's case, a talker without filters, as we found out. Turned me into a talker too and I found myself rambling on about the toilet stall at Seattle U where someone, probably high, wrote, *Make peace, not Thackeray*, and *Why change Dicks in the middle of a screw? Re-elect Nixon in '72*.

Alfonse perked up. 'I don't get that *make peace not thakkery*, shit and who the hell's Nixon? At my middle school we had a great one, *Flush twice; it's a long way to the cafeteria*, har har. The killer was, *For a good blow job call*, and we'd put some bitch's number, like our English teacher. Har har.'

Destiny lost her mellow and started chewing his carbon-smearred butt. 'Why are you such an asshole?'

He started spilling his guts about how his parents split up and his mom's boyfriend would pull his pants down and welt him and if he cried, burn him with cigarettes. 'I still have the scars—look. And I'm getting foreclosed and I've got a wife and kids. They're at my mother-in law's.'

We looked at her. I said, 'See, he's a jerk. We knew it. Told you so.'

She turned her fury on him. 'I don't want to hear this.'

'Hey,' said Lamar, 'Let him talk. He's telling us why he's an asshole.'

He broke down crying. We thought it was bullshit, but Destiny bought it, Her fury subsided and her save-the-world feelings took over. 'Is your mortgage with this bank?'

He nodded, sniffing.

We could see her brain was whirring, processing, which was amazing considering the pollution levels. She drummed her fingers, twisted a dreadlock. 'What's your name and social?'

'Think I'm giving you that? I've got enough problems.'

'Look, your paperwork's probably in this vault...'

'If we haven't used it used it for asswipe,' said Ekpre.

She said, 'They sell off mortgages bundled into collateralized debt obligations.'

'Whoa,' said Lamar, 'she's deep.'

'I read it in *Left Business Observer*,' she said apologetically. 'Thing

is, they sell them off and the buyer flips them to someone else, so when you get your letter saying, *foreclosed, be out by Christmas* you say, show me the proof, how much? Who do I owe?'

She should have said 'whom', but hey....

'So,' she said, 'they'll have to come digging through this vault. Now, name and social. Your real name, not Alfonse. I never bought that for a second.'

'Right,' said Ekpre,

Alfonse didn't look like an A student but he got the point. Sigh. 'Ok, I'm Eugenio Maria Guiseppe Giovanni Pacelli, 972-66-6969.'

'Maria?' we squawked.

Yes, his mortgage papers were filed by social.

'How do you want to dispose of it?'

He turned round and bent over. 'Lamar, think I need a safety wipe.'

The caregiver wiped elaborately, crumpled the sheets into a wad, then stuffed them into Richard's leech tail.

Next morning the door opened, clank-rumble-whir, followed by a wave of fresh air. Eugenio Pacelli had his pants on and, apart from stubble, looked very coppish.

Epilogue

We'd missed the opening of *Porgy and Bess* and, almost worse, the Vikings game. But our story went viral beyond expectations. Here, I'll run the video:

Trapped for 72 hours in a Seattle bank vault, cast members of a college production of the controversial folk opera Porgy and Bess drew national attention in their protest against economic injustice. We are joined by student activist and director Destiny Thomas. We are also talking with civil rights lawyer Harry Parch. This is Amy Goodman with Juan Gonzales and this is Democracy Now.

Amy Goodman: Destiny Thomas, what were you aiming to do?

Destiny: Draw attention to the plight of ordinary people being leeched-on by big finance.

Amy: That was the bank protest but you were also intending to perform a whiteface version of *Porgy and Bess*.

Destiny: Yes, the adaptation, you know, we wanted to highlight racial stereotypes. But we got locked in and missed opening night and the next night.

Amy: But your production received so much media attention that the Gershwin heirs have given their blessing. And you're totally sold out. That wasn't your aim?

Destiny: No, we weren't too happy about that because when you have permission it's just not...

Amy: Controversial.

Harry Partch: Let me jump in here, Amy.

Amy: This is Harry Partch, civil rights attorney representing the cast. Can you tell us something about the issues in the trial?

Harry: Well, there was potential trespass and property damage, but the officer who was in there with them testified in their favor, that property wasn't wantonly destroyed. It was a matter of necessity. And technically, it's not a crime to be a leech in a bank. So the judge dismissed it, warning them to be more careful in future. He said there are proper channels for expressing grievances and that dressing as leeches was not one of them, though he had tickets for *Porgy*.



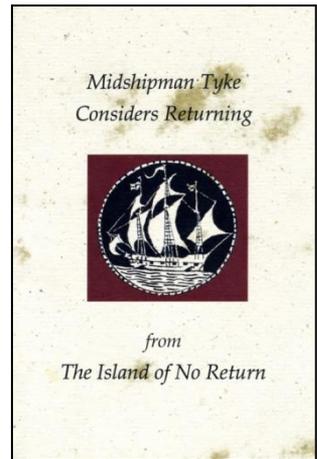
Ed Silling

I was born in England and have lived in Eastern Canada, Seattle, Minnesota, North Dakota and Oregon and this has taken me 72 years to do. I have a doctorate in English Literature and have taught in the Communications Department at Oregon Tech since 1975. I enjoy writing fiction, especially historical farce and other stuff, such as meeting minutes and grocery lists which I always lose. I am married to Darla who uses my manuscripts to swat flies and discipline the dog so I know my work has some practical use. I have been a member of KWG since the turn of the century. And I use far too many first person subject pronouns in my writing, which is a talent, since there's only one.

Ed self-published his first novel, *Midshipman Tyke Considers Returning from the Island of No Return*, hand binding and crafting several different cover designs. (The ship on the cover is Ed's design.) If you are interested in a copy of this book email Ed at:

klamathwritersguild@hotmail.com

If you're interested, be patient. Creating a unique, hand crafted novel takes a little time but it's worth it because the story is filled with mystery and adventure.



Ed, short story Cratchum of the Indies, was published in the March 2016 edition of [Literally Speaking](#).

←—————→

The Klamath Writers' Guild is looking for stories on the state of the United States during this election season.

Our country is in the middle of a change election that includes a mix of candidates that rivals any work of fiction only it is real.

If you have a story you'd like to see featured in Literally Speaking please submit your work of less than 10,000 words to klamathwritersguild@hotmail.com

The Klamath Writers' Guild is pleased to present the following story submitted to Literally Speaking for publication

Hidden Hurt

by Patricia Cane

It's a cold rainy day in early spring and Suzie always takes Jake for his morning walk through the park. Suzie is no spring chicken but she likes to care for herself. Her makeup is always on in the morning before going out for her walks. Her bleached blond long hair is well kept, but never down. She has a perfect figure, slight hip bulge with a tight waist. She is always dressed with feminine cloths, not too revealing but enough to attack a man. Today is cold and rainy so she has on a pink jacket with matching pink rain boots. Suzie looks forward to these walks so she can be with Jake, *I love watching him run freely through the trees, the tall grass he seems so peaceful, so full of life. He likes to sniff at everything and leave his mark wherever he can.*

Jake is a 3-year-old male Australian Sheep dog. He's a fuzzy tan and white dog with no tail. When he walks he always has a wiggle butt, like he's wagging his tail but there's no tail so only the hips move back and forth. Jake runs and jumps. He grabs small tree limbs to carry with him. He acts as if his tree limb is his prize possession, his and only his. He marks his territory everywhere he can but always saves enough for the entire walk.

Suzie likes to take the route through the trees, around the lake and down the dirt bike path. She is very familiar with every little change. The trees changing leaves. In the spring they begin with their buds forming, then small little green leaves start appearing, as time goes by the trees seem to come alive with greenery, nice green leaves blossom from every where. The birds seem to come out from their winter homes and make nests for their future generation. Sometimes immature baby birds can be seen on the ground dead, *maybe they fell out of the nest onto the ground, that's why they died.*

Ground squirrels are starting to appear from their holes. *I envy ground squirrels; their holes seemed so safe; safe from predators, safe from other squirrel's problems, holes just seemed to be safe places.*

During today's walk Suzie notices a new hole. *This looks new and it doesn't look exactly like the squirrel holes, it's a little wider and not very deep, the dirt is all piled up in one spot, not spread around like other holes, maybe someone new is digging a hole. It's spring why now would someone dig a hole, all the other rodents were coming out of their holes?*

Suzie finishes her walk with Jake only to come home again, she walks through the front door. *I almost hate coming in this house while he's here.* Suzie says, "Honey, I'm back."

Dick answers back, "So what, think I care? What took you so long, you know I'm hungry, get my breakfast?"

He's always worries about himself, he never thinks of me. Suzie gets busy fixing Dick's breakfast, *Let's see he likes scrambled eggs with bacon, not too crisp, eggs not to sloppy. He likes his coffee warm, not too hot, his toast has to be just the right color, light brown, and it better not be cold or he'll get really mad.*

"Honey, breakfast is ready," says Suzie.

Dick sits down, and says, "Well aren't you go'in to sit with me?"

Suzie answers, "You know I have to finish these quilts before the class comes."

"Why do you have to teach those stupid women, all they ever do is sit and talk" says Dick.

"Because someone here has to earn a living, why don't you go out and get a job?" says Suzie.

"God damn it, you know I won't give my money to the government. All those assholes want is everyone else's money," responds Dick.

Dick gets up from the table, pushes his chair back and pushes the table forward almost causing it to flip over. He moves over to Suzie, puts his face right up against her nose and says, "Don't you ever again talk about me working or I'll beat you to a pulp, you hear me?"

Dick trudges off to the computer desk to play computer games, like he does everyday.

Suzie begins cleaning up, getting ready for the ladies to come over for their quilting lessons; she can't let anyone see her hurt.

The door bell rings, it's Joyce, and right behind her is Cheryl.

"Hi Suzie, how goes it," says Joyce.

"I'd really like to get rid of that bastard Dick, every time he talks to me he has to yell or threaten me, I'm getting tired of it," says Suzie.

Joyce adds, "yah know Suzie we have had this discussion before, Cheryl has told you, I have told you, and even Dick's sister has told you, Dick is a fool and no good to anyone, even himself, leave him, get out of here, and go somewhere else or he's going to hurt you some day."

Suzie tells Joyce, "I know your right, I just love him, I can't leave him, what would I do without him."

Next morning, Suzie takes Jake and goes for her morning walk. Today she is excited to look for the hole that she found yesterday. She wondered how it changed, or who she might see digging the hole. Like always she and Jake walk through the trees, around the lake and down the bike path, finally coming to the hole. *Wow, the hole is much larger, and the dirt around the hole is getting bigger and bigger.* She bends down and looks down the hole. *I can't see anything just darkness, no rodents.*

She and Jake make it home again, and again Suzie dreads going into the house.

Entering the door, Suzie hears Dick yelling at something in the back bedroom, "God damn it, that stupid dog took my slipper, I'm goin' to kill that bastard dog.

Suzie yells out, "hi, I'm home."

"Who the hell cares, my friends are coming over to play Poker this afternoon, we'll be in the basement, and don't bother us," says Dick.

The phone rings, it's Cheryl, "Hi Suzie, just calling to see how you're doing. How's the ring quilt coming?"

Suzie says, "Well it would be better if I had more time, I'm trying to work as much as possible but taking care of Dick, to keep him from getting angry with me, is taking all my time."

Cheryl tells Suzie, “Please consider leaving him, he’s getting more and more violent, I’m afraid he’s going to hurt you, not just yell, but actually hurt you.”

Suzie responds, “I know, I feel the same way, but I can’t keep the place up myself, and I do love him.”

“What is there to love, he’s terrible to you, he doesn’t love you, you’re digging a hole that you won’t be able to get out of if you don’t do something soon,” adds Cheryl.

That afternoon, Dick and all four of his friends are playing poker. Suzie is hard at work making sandwiches, salads, cookies and drinks for everyone. She goes down to the basement with the lunch, and greets everyone, “I made something for you guys to munch on, here are some sandwiches and salads, cookies and drinks.”

The guys all ooh and ah, “boy that looks really good Suzie, you’re going to make us fat with all that good cookin’.”

Dick looks like he could kill someone, “I told you to never come down here when we’re playing, what didn’t you understand,” shouts Dick. Suzie puts the food down and leaves the room.

The other guys tell Dick to cool it, Suzie was only being nice to us all. Sam gets in Dick’s face and says, “you’re really mean to her, you couldn’t find a better woman if you tried, so stop treating her like trash.”

Dick says, “Get the fuck out of my house, I’ll do whatever I need to do with this woman, she needs to know her place around here.”

The next morning Suzie and Jake walk again, Suzie finds the rodent hole, she looks down and this time sees a small rabbit, the rabbit is way down and looks like he or she won’t be able to get out because the hole is getting deeper and deeper. *I think you feel comfortable down there, don’t you, I know how that must feel, but if you don’t do something soon, the dirt will fall in on you and you will be buried.*

Suzie has pity for the small rabbit, but she almost seems she and the rabbit are kindred soles, they both want to feel secure, but the outside world is so daunting, so overwhelming that coming out may be worse

than staying in and buried by the dirt. *I'll come back tomorrow and check on you little rabbit, stay safe.*

When Suzie arrives home, as usual, she always graciously announces her arrival to Dick. “I honey, I’m back from our walk, Jake found the hole again, but he was a good boy and didn’t mark it with his urine.”

Dick walks sternly over to her, looking her directly in her eye, she could smell his bad breath and body odor, and she knew he was not in a good mood. “You know I need my breakfast exactly the same time every morning, why were you late today? This type of disrespect has to stop,” shouts Dick.

Dick grabs her by her shoulders and shakes her whole body. “I’ll teach you who is boss around here.” Dick slaps her face hard, hard enough for her neck to snap sideways, but she doesn’t want him to see her cry or show she’s hurt.

Dick yells at her saying, “How many times do I have to tell you to be home ON TIME?” Then, Dick hits her again, this time with his fist. She falls back, steps on something on the floor, stumbles and falls hard against the brick fireplace hearth. Her head hits the brick and she loses consciousness. Her nose is bleeding and the back of her head is bleeding, Dick sees all the blood, he sees Suzie laying on the floor, maybe dead. He gets scared, tries to think what to do, run. *Oh shit, I’ve got to get out of here, where’s my keys, where’s my keys.*

Jake ran under the sofa when he heard Dick yelling at Suzie, but now that Suzie was on the floor and Dick is gone, Jake comes over to her and starts licking her face, cleaning the blood and trying to arouse her unconscious body. Jake keeps licking, finally Suzie, who is very dazed, she can’t stand up, but she crawls over to the phone on the sofa table near her.

She dials Joyce, Joyce answers, “Hello . . . hello?”

Suzie says with a weak sound, barely able to speak, “I need help, help please.”

Joyce responds, “Suzie, is that you, are you at home?”

Suzie utters, “Yes, help.”

Joyce hangs up the phone and dials 911, she grabs her car keys and drives hurriedly over to Suzie's. It's only about 5 miles but this time it feels like fifty miles. When Joyce arrives, she sees the door ajar as if someone entered or left in a hurry. She immediately turns and sees Suzie on the floor, Jake next to her, and she quickly goes to her side. As Joyce is attending to Suzie she hears the ambulance pull up outside. She runs to the door and lets the attendants in.

The first attendant examines Suzie and says, "We'll have to take her to the hospital, she has had a bad head injury that will need further attention."

After the ambulance leaves Joyce looks around for Dick, *where is he, that bastard, I bet he did this to Suzie*. Joyce cleans up the mess and takes Jake home with her until Suzie is home again..

The next morning Joyce wants to visit Suzie in the hospital but Jake wants to go for his walk. *First things first, that dog always is spoiled, but cute*. "OK Jake, let's go for your walk." Joyce says.

Joyce gets his leash and out the door, the two of them go. Jake knows the trail exactly; all Joyce has to do is hang on to the leash. Jake takes them through the trees, around the lake and down the bike path, but once they get to the bike path Jake gets real excited, he pulls on the leash; Joyce can hardly keep up with Jake's pulling. "Hold on Jake, slow down, where are you taking me in such a hurry?" says Joyce.

Jake stops at the rabbit hole, he puts his head in as far as it can go then begins quickly digging at the hole, he is digging furiously, faster and faster, then suddenly stops and looks inside the hole one last time.

Joyce bends down to the hole to see if she can see anything, she sticks her head in as far as she can, but sees nothing. "Jake, whatever was there is gone now, nothing is left but the dirt," says Joyce.

Authors note: The title "Hidden Hurt" <http://www.hiddenhurt.co.uk> is used in this story for the purpose of fiction and does not assume to take proprietary interest in a copyright or trademark name.

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The Klamath Writers' Guild was founded in 1993, as a nonprofit organization dedicated to foster and promote all forms of the Literary Arts. It supports its members in the craft of writing and shares resources in an effort to help them in their pursuit of attaining publication.

The Guild will sustain an atmosphere and forum that will allow its members to express themselves openly, as samples of their writings are offered for supportive criticism and encouragement.

KWG Meetings: The Klamath County Commissioners have sold the Community Meeting room and we are no longer able to meet at that location as of February 2017. We are currently securing another location for the Guild to hold our meetings and will post information as soon as a site is secured. **This newsletter has been edited to show the changes and meeting dates affected.**

Proposed meeting dates beginning February 2017.

February	13 th	27 th
March	13 th	27 th
April	10 th	24 th
May	8 th	22 nd
June	5 th	19 th
July	10 th	24 th
August	7 th	21 st
September	11 th	25 th
October	16 th	30 th
November	13 th	27 th
December	11 th	18 th