

# ONCOURSE



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# 2016

# OnCourse

## Magazine

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# Iles Du Rhin

Frances McNiff



# The Ancient

Melissa Taylor

I have walked alongside the ancient  
My feet stepped close to her bed  
The chasm outstretched beneath my reach  
Illuminated in orange and red

Silver ribbons glisten and dance  
In the glow of the setting sun  
Veins of life against wrinkles of stone  
Hugging curves along their run

Follicles of green pockmark the land  
Being tousled by the wind  
Millennia of its constant gusts  
Has endlessly raised her skin

Her children take flight on sable wings  
Circling just above her rest  
They call out deep into the void  
And touchdown upon her chest

Tiny souls who are seldom seen  
Tickle her as they dart around  
She sighs with every swell of breeze  
Yet her breath makes not a sound

The sky stretches out above her gaze  
A blanket of changing shades  
As the sun disappears behind her  
The stars and moon come out to play

I bade her good night and turned away  
Yet I stole just one more glance  
I have walked alongside the ancient  
In reverence of her expanse



# Towers in the Clouds-Zion

Terry Cook



# Technology Fast

Richard Ramirez

*“Massage into wet hair after shampooing, paying special attention to ends. Rinse thoroughly. Gentle enough for use on permed or color-treated hair.”*

These are the directions on the label of our Pantene conditioner in the bathroom. The realization that I did not know what to do while sitting on a toilet without my phone came first thing in the morning, and the realizations did not stop.

Before my technology fast, I knew that electronics played a large role in my day-to-day activities. I work a full-time job, support a family, volunteer at the hospital on Sundays, and manage 15 credit hours of courses at Coconino Community College. I use electronics in all aspects of these responsibilities to some degree, and I knew that I would need to plan for my technology fast if I were to make it through successfully. In fact, the plan began several weeks ahead of time. I was going to make the day awesome (despite kicking my wife and daughter from the house because they should not have to suffer like me) and would have no problems at all, because I was planning for it. The worst part of not having electronics is when you expect it and don't have it, right? So I was simply planning to have a measly 24 hours where I did not expect it: midnight Friday to midnight Saturday. If only it were so simple.

Friday night is the usual start of my weekend. Around 8 p.m. before the fast, I put my daughter to bed and went online to read any interesting articles until my brother logged on. On Friday nights, my brother and I play together online - complete with headset to communicate and snacks and drinks to stay nourished. He lives in Ontario, Canada, and this is how we keep in contact, relax a bit, and discuss whatever interesting things we learned the past week. He knew the evening's gaming session would be cut short, so at 11:50 p.m., he was not surprised when I told him that was it for me. Off went the computer, the phone, and the light. The risk of checking too soon was too much. There were no more days left to fast. As I brushed my teeth with a fresh, new toothbrush (my normal toothbrush is a vibrating

electronic one) it dawned on me that I no longer knew what time it was ... nor would I until I checked my phone or computer.

I awoke on Saturday at “I-have-no-idea-o’clock,” but based on the shadows on the bike rack outside it looked to be sometime before 9 a.m. Way too early, so back to bed I went. I couldn’t go back to sleep, however, as I started to think of all the little things I missed in my planning. I went to the bank and got cash so I wouldn’t have to use an ATM. The car had a full tank of gas, and the wife and daughter were out and about. It was just me and the blue, blinking wifi light that silently taunted me. Those were easy. I had already missed that I needed an analog clock or watch. “Oh well, small oversight,” I thought, as I got up out of bed to see if I could make breakfast. As I went to turn on the lights, I discovered another “small oversight.” All the switch plates in our student housing (save the bathrooms, thankfully) are electronically controlled. Well, that sucked. I supposed I would have to make due with natural lighting. Despite these two setbacks, I felt confident that the day would proceed as planned, and I could write a dozen pages on how I conquered my electronic addiction for a day.

In my prior planning, I had brainstormed a litany of things to occupy my time. I had a 32,000-piece puzzle that was three-quarters of the way completed that I planned to spend a few hours on. I had reading I could do. I could study. Those, alone, could take 40 hours, so 24 should be no problem at all. I pondered all this while making a peanut butter sandwich as I was not 100 percent sure if our refrigerator was electronically controlled in some way. I had planned for that, however, so there were no surprises there. It was at this time I had the urge to use the bathroom—without my Samsung smartphone. As I sat there, I refused to think about my early failures and started to read all the labels I could reach. Turned out, I had been putting toothpaste on my brush wrong my entire life. If that was all I learned, so be it, but the experience rejuvenated me and I proudly flipped the single-pole switch down, turning off the light, and making way to my recently built puzzle table.

I have had this puzzle since 2013 and have worked on it off and on as I had time, usually in spurts. We had two foster children placed with us, so I did not work on it while they were with us, but because they were recently reunified with their parents, I opened my boxes and resumed. I love this puzzle. I love figuring out the best, most efficient

way to complete each section. I love the playful artwork it has and the symbolism behind it. From a technical aspect, it has only eight colors, two of which are red and orange - the most difficult for me to do due to my slight color blindness. It is made up of 32 paintings from an artist named Keith Haring. So for the next several degrees of shadow from the bike rack, (I named them 'shadow-degrees'), I was at a special peace as I flipped pieces, separated some colors and began to locate them into place on the 18-foot by 6-foot puzzle.

It wasn't until the shadow from the bike rack outside our window fell at 45 degrees that I felt compelled to change things up. It seemed to be sometime in the evening, and I was getting hungry again.

*“...but the sense that I was missing something suddenly felt like a weight I was bearing.”*

We had purchased some fruit and bagged snacks for me to munch on throughout the day, but I was so engrossed in my puzzle that I only had, maybe, two glasses of water the entire time. I opened a bag of sunflower seeds and began to crack open some seeds when I felt a sudden desire to check the Internet for news. What news could possibly do for me in my predicament, I did not know. Maybe it was partly due to the fact that I am always at the computer when I eat sunflower seeds, but the sense that I was missing something suddenly felt like a weight I was bearing. The fear of missing something then moved from general news to my wife and daughter. I wondered what they were doing. Were they safe? What if they needed to get in touch with me but knew I was disconnected from our tether today? What if they were in trouble? The superficial sense of fear was quickly replaced with a very real fear. I began to try and think of some way to contact them without the use of electronics. Information can only move as fast as a person in an electronic-less world and that was my world on my fast day. The realization was there, but the fear was not subsiding, so I needed to occupy my time again with something, anything really.

That 'something' turned out to be a nap. A simple nap. I had not had a nap like that nap in years. That nap was only a few shadow-degrees of bike rack long, but wow! What a difference it made in my state of mind! My fears on the condition of my wife and daughter were completely gone. The fears were replaced with a comforting knowledge that they were most likely having fun at their drumming circle—a treat

on Saturday evening for them. I was enjoying my own treat: the day was nearly over. My 24 hours, despite the very poor start, had gone OK. Most definitely not to any plan I had made, but it was serene. As I twisted the can opener around a can of tuna, I wondered if perhaps I could go one day a week without my phone, or even computer. Had I really won and beat this challenge?

No. Before I finished my sandwich, the blue, blinking wifi light commanded my attention and again taunted me. I began to wonder what time it was. The sun was down and my clock had set. It couldn't be midnight, for sure, but perhaps it was 9 p.m.? My wife was surely on her way home. What time did she say? I think her plan was 10. I could use this information. Patiently, I waited, crayon in hand over a blank piece of paper in case I was compelled to accomplish something. My only goal was staying up until midnight, and not a second longer, and turn on my phone to read the countless articles I missed throughout the day.

At last, the door opened and my daughter turned on the lights. That blasted blue, blinking light was back in the background. Small victories were worthy of celebration. Hugs and kisses went all around. My wife noticed my fidgeting when I left our daughter's room and asked her to turn off the light in her room for me.

"Why?" she asked.

"The only light in this house I can use is in here," I said as I pointed to the bathroom.

The burst of laughter from her lungs startled me. I was almost upset about it, but here my wife thinks it funny that I was not only left to count hours from shadow-degrees, but that I had to do it when the clouds allowed it. Her evening ritual, like mine, is usually spent on the computer catching up with family, responding to emails, planning the next week's events. There I sat in my swivel chair, powerless, staring at my monitor. I could hear every key press and tap of her spacebar; each tap making me more antsy for my own turn. What was I missing? Why could I not do something else? The idea of using the computer to seek information was the only real motivation I had. I wasn't thinking of what I was missing, just that it was missing.

Bedtime for my wife can be anytime between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m., so she was no help in that regard. Nonetheless, she went to bed and off went the lights. Dejected from a day of mostly failures

and unwillingness to risk turning on a computer at 11:55 p.m., I also laid down. As I laid there, at I-have-no-idea-o'clock, I wondered how tomorrow would be different.

No doubt, I would turn on my phone and check my emails, and I would certainly read yesterday's important news. Before I fell asleep, though, I made a plan.

# I am Woman

## Marsha Monestersky



# Detachment

Skye Marzo

there must be something in my  
genetic makeup that makes people  
slippery. Like a cloud clutches color—  
first pink, then a moment later, grey.  
Ineffective. I wish I could miss you the way  
you want me to: a flower that, without water,  
would never wilt.

# Post Mortem

Alexi Stoll



# Sonnet 1

Skye Marzo

In dream, but half-awake, I climbed over  
a mountain range where boulders were pillows,  
tumbling down, but soft – they smelled like clover.  
Blankets became an avalanche that rose  
and fell, crushing me somewhere in the fold.  
By the time light presses against my eyes,  
I'm still. You hold me close against the cold,  
and in that morning stillness I surmise  
that you stayed with me, by my side, for that  
long journey, across tangles deep and sheets  
so cold. I turn so to place my hand flat  
against the roughness of your beard. Kiss meets  
my touch, eyes crack open. You take your time.  
We stay in bed late, weary from our climb.





# Rebolting Development

Malcolm Best

Suicide Rock in all its majesty sits on the heavily forested northern slope of the Strawberry Valley. The bright sunlight strikes the smooth undulating faces that are only broken by deep dark cracks. These cracks split them into multiple facets, which appear astonishingly white to the eye. Many of these faces have names such as: South Face, Sunshine Face, Smooth Soul Wall, Weeping Wall, and the Rebolting Face. As these names imply, they are smooth white-and-gray granite, with small patches of orange rock thrown in for contrast. On closer inspection, there are small cracks, knobs, and ledges spread throughout these seemingly unbroken expanses of rock.

Rebolting Development is a difficult climb rated 5.11a. This does not mean it is the most difficult climb in the area, but the sparseness of protection intensifies the grade by increasing the fear factor exponentially. This climb follows a meandering path for three rope lengths or pitches, up the smooth rock of the Rebolting Face. This climb has always intimidated me because of its sparse protection and the many horror stories recounted of long falls taken on this climb.

My climbing partner, Paul, and I had been climbing progressively harder routes for the past three months each day after work. One day after a hard afternoon of climbing, we sat at the base of the Weeping Wall sipping a Budweiser, as was our ritual. I looked up at the smooth white face of Rebolting Development, and feeling I was climbing well enough to surmount this intimidating climb, I stated, "We should go for it."

Paul craned his neck and looked at the route with a critical eye, stating, "You will have to lead the first two pitches."

I agreed and said, "The crux of the climb would be the second pitch."

During further discussion, I asked Paul if he felt up to leading the third pitch. He readily agreed because this pitch was well within his leading ability. As we finished our beers and packed up and left Suicide that day, our conversation revolved around our chosen climb for the following afternoon.

I arose early and unrested the next morning, having slept

poorly because of choosing such a daunting task like Rebolting Development. I finished work on time that day and made my way to Paul's shop, where we met every afternoon before heading to the crags. Paul was already packed when I arrived. We loaded into his truck and stopped by the liquor store on the way to the trailhead. We listened to music, and strangely enough, there was very little of the good-humored banter that usually accompanied the 10-minute drive to our usual parking spot.

Paul and I donned our packs and made quick work of the 20-minute approach trail. We set our packs down at the base of the

***“I slowly raised my eyes to search the blank face for any flake or imperfection that would become my only purchase during the ascent.”***

climb. I can't recall more than hundred words passing between us since we had left his shop earlier. The day was perfect, the sky was clear blue, the temperature was about 75 degrees, and there was a breeze blowing off the peaks above. The face had also begun to cool in the shade as we prepared for our ascent. We each opened a beer and took a swig. We began counting out quick draws for each bolt, slings for the belays, extra carabiners, and locking carabiners.

Once those chores were completed, we sat in silence. I looked off to the east taking in slow deep breaths as I tried to center myself and to quell the fears that rose in me. Paul was sitting to my right quietly smoking a cigarette. He stared off into the distance confronting his own nervousness. Once we finished our beers, we stood to make final preparations for our ascent. After checking each other's knots to make sure we were properly tied in, we shook hands. I turned toward the wall, staring down at my feet, taking slow deliberate breaths trying to push all thoughts of doubt from my mind. I slowly raised my eyes to search the blank face for any flake or imperfection that would become my only purchase during the ascent. I put chalk on my hands to dry the nervous sweat that had accumulated, and taking one last deep breath, I slowly stepped off the ground into the unknown.

Making slow deliberate moves, I progressed ever higher, passing two bolts before having to make several difficult moves far above my protection. Upon reaching the next bolt, my anxiety receded somewhat, and the remainder of the pitch went without incident. Paul climbed as if possessed and soon joined me at the belay. After swapping

positions at the belay, I began the second pitch moving quickly and deftly to the crux of the climb. Then, I faced the most difficult climbing of the ascent, the moves were harder than anything I had done prior. I focused every ounce of my resolve and determination to overcome this crucial and difficult part of the climb. When I reached up to clip in to the bolt protecting these moves, I was stunned to see what I was confronted with.

The bolt protecting this stretch of rock was hanging halfway out, and more alarming, whoever placed the backup bolt had placed it out of my reach. I informed Paul of the situation stating, "I can't stop." So I continued up on tenuous holds and finally when the upper bolt was at my ankle, I was able to reach down and finally clip myself in. Letting out a huge sigh of relief, I continued past two more bolts dispatching the rest of the pitch in a blur of motion. I came to a stop on a small ledge that split the face.

I was afraid to speak as I stood there on the platform belaying my partner. Paul climbed flawlessly, almost effortlessly. He was in such deep concentration that his eyes never left the stone directly in front of him. When he pulled over onto the belay stance and tied himself in, he reached over and shook my hand saying, "That was the best climb I have ever done." I smiled at Paul, as I slowly began handing over the remainder of the rack, which he would need to take us to the top of the climb. One last pitch was all that was left. Paul looked up at the pitch, and shook his head.

"I can't do it man, I'm cooked," Paul said.

I looked at Paul questioningly, and with great trepidation. I had so totally given myself over to completing the first two scary pitches without a fall or misstep that I was also emotionally spent. And now I was being confronted with the most daunting decision in my climbing career. Do I retreat down the route, and, in essence, give up, or do I forge ahead and force myself to take the reins, and complete the task I had set myself?

I stood there stunned and silently contemplated the next pitch, knowing it was well within my capabilities. I looked at Paul. He stood quietly leaning against the wall overjoyed at his performance, but he was also despondent at the position he had placed our team in. My mind raced. Did I have enough left? I had already asked my body for so much. Standing there trying to quiet my mind, I pushed the fear

and self-doubt down deep so that it wouldn't overwhelm me. Realizing my gas tank was empty, I tried to reinvigorate myself. My fear was more about ruining this splendid ascent; it had been flawless thus far. No one had fallen. We had almost fulfilled the challenge we had set before us. I breathed deeply and wrestled with my uncertainty, my fear of failing, and my overwhelming desire to succeed at all costs. To retreat or to move off to either the right or left and leaving this project unfinished was out of the question. I pressed my hands against the rock face feeling the coarseness, the graininess, and something else. There seemed to be an energy flowing from the rock through my hands filling me with the power to continue. I slowly slid my hands back and forth across the face searching out tiny holds that would take me to the summit. Then looking at Paul, I began to move slowly at first, then more surely as I continued toward the summit. I was unwilling to destroy the magic that had been attained on that small ledge.

Before I knew it, I reached the summit, and as I turned to belay my partner over this last stretch of rock, I knew that something deep inside me had changed. When Paul had joined me on the summit, we coiled the ropes, collected all the gear and made our way over to the descent route that overlooks the Strawberry Valley. The sun was going down, bathing the mountains in its orange hue. We sat and enjoyed a beer as we marveled at the accomplishment we had just achieved. After

***“Before I knew it, I reached the summit, and as I turned to belay my partner over this last stretch of rock, I knew that something deep inside me had changed.”***

finishing our beer, we set up the rappel for our descent. Once Paul was down, it was my turn. I joined him on the ledge. We pulled the

rope and coiled it and continued down to where packs sat at the base of the wall.

The friendly joking and banter returned as the stress of the climb receded. We both knew that something special had happened up there on that ledge during the climb. I had never felt so in touch with nature, with myself, or with my partner. It was up on that ledge I discovered I have this burning desire to succeed no matter the cost; I also realized that a friend and a climbing partner can form a bond that transcends those bonds of a usual friendship. It was strange from that day forward. Paul and I no longer needed words to communicate;

it was as if the rope attaching us together like an umbilical cord had created a bond that could never be severed. Standing on that ledge when faced with the uncertainty of finishing the climb or not, I didn't really need to talk. We just continued on, as if Paul knew we would. I can't think of another person I would rather have had by my side on that day than my best friend Paul.

The other part that I learned on that ledge was the drive to push beyond what I believe is my limit. This quality still resonates within me. Throughout the remainder of my life, this desire to succeed will allow me to push through many obstacles. I believe all people possess this ability, but only some of us take it to the extreme.

## Puppy Pause

S.D. Lunday



# Anna and Rocket

Skye Marzo



The shack was neither old nor new. It had been built to house chickens originally, and the musty smell in the shack remained, always there in the background. My dad was always building something on the seven acres of property we owned in northern Pennsylvania. My mom was full of ideas and flavor-of-the-year passions and projects. Seeing as my dad really enjoyed the building and improving of the property, it all worked out.

The shack was raised from the hard-packed dirt on two-by-four risers, serving as foundation support and an attempt to keep the snakes from finding their way in to the nests. It was stained with a deep redwood stain that, over the years, did not weather so well. Harsh winters and heavy rains took their toll on the building, fading the deep color and making it a pastel and blotchy red-grey over time.

The chickens, like so many other 'projects' my mother had, were short lived and fell into the past. That fact took away any urgency for upkeep from my dad. Money was always tight and if the building was not going to get used, well, there was no sense in restraining it, was there?

After the chickens, it was pigeons. We strung up mesh wire, modified the nests and turned it into a pigeon coop. I have no idea why. There was no value in the birds. At least you could eat the chickens and gather eggs. The pigeons were pretty, yes, but they were just another chore with no return or benefit.

I remember going in to feed them one time, forgetting to shut the door outside before I opened the

***“It was like it had determined to be abandoned and not used for anything. It looked progressively drearier as time went by.”***

screen area. Well the pigeons found their way outside. We got most of them back, but some of the prettier ones were gone for good. Needless to say, my mother lost interest in that particular hobby after that.

So it was decided that the kids could use the old coop for a clubhouse after that. At first this was greeted with great excitement, as

we would no longer have to sleep outdoors when we had friends over for sleep-outs. We would have a clubhouse.

My brother and I gathered tools and began to remove the screening and tear out the nesting shelves inside. It was going to be great. We washed the floor, swept, scrubbed walls, pulled inside camp tables and chairs. We were ready.

It became painfully obvious as we attempted our first sleep-out that it was not going to work. The musty smell of chicken and pigeon shit had soaked deeply into the wood and the cloying smell made it unpleasant to breathe. The place had also become infested with spiders, some big and some small. They had hidden during clean up, or we were just typical teen boys and had no clue how to really clean, and at night they were back with a vengeance.

We tried airing it out over a few weekends, but the coop was just too oppressive to get past. It was like it had determined to be abandoned and not used for anything. It looked progressively drearier as time went by. It did not appear that any effort to make it useful was going to take. If buildings had personalities, the coop would be the eyesore of all buildings. It hunched down in the corner of the property, weathered sides making statements about what might have been if it had had a better life.

Is it possible for a building to be accusing? Can a building hold its builder accountable that it did not realize it's potential and that it was a failure in every effort to make it useful and part of the enterprise that made up the family property?

So my mother decided to use it for storage. Not just any kind of storage, though. My mother was a great rummage sale hobbyist back in the '70s. She would travel through the nearby counties and shop. She would always shop for the best quality product, buy it cheap as she could and bring it back as inventory for her own.

She would hold two or three big sales a year and became well known throughout the area as a must-visit rummage sale. She always had unusual and interesting things as well as excellent-quality clothing and other goods. It was another one of her passions and remained with her always; she did not outgrow it.

So she decided to use the coop as a staging area for her discovered treasures and prepare her sale using it as her office/warehouse. The coop slowly filled up, and as the winter crawled by,



it became harder and harder to move around in there. I remember mentioning my concern that the never-dissipating smell of chicken shit would get into the cloths, but my mother said it was my imagination. Me, I still smelled it, I still found the spiders, and I still felt like the coop was accusing us of something, neglect or maybe abuse.

One afternoon, my mother came back from going into town to scout some sales and she was very excited. She had found an Ouija board for some pennies and was putting it into the coop for the next sale. She asked me if I knew what it was. I was, at that point, blissfully unaware of what it was and said so. She said she would show me that night after chores and we would have an adventure.

I always enjoyed spending time with my mom. She had a great sense of humor and told many great stories. Late-night walks in the winter checking trap lines were a good time for me, and it helped us get very close to each other. The thought of an adventure with my mom was pretty cool.

***“It was dark and cold. The sky was clear, but there was almost no moon, so the stars were brilliant and ice-like.”***

I remember we finally left the house around 9 p.m. after all the chores were done to go check out this Ouija thing. It was dark and cold. The sky was clear, but there was almost no moon, so the stars were brilliant and ice-like. We walked down the front yard walk and crossed the dirt road that bisected our property.

I could see the coop hulking in the corner of the clearing on the other side of the road. It’s weathered staining couldn’t be seen, yet somehow, it still seemed to project decay and depression. When we got inside, I was immediately, as always, aware of the musty, heavy smell of the place. There was a chill in the air that went beyond the cold outside, and I was suddenly not so certain about this “adventure” or game my mother was talking about.

My mother unpacked the Ouija board and set it up on a camp table. She explained to me how it worked and what we were going to do. I had watched a lot of monster movies, and I was at an age where I was already convinced that ghosts were real and there were bad things just waiting to get at you if you did stupid things. This was some years before the Exorcist came out, so there was not a lot of awareness about demon Ouija boards and such things that that particular movie

popularized. Even so, I was of the opinion that what we were going to do might not be smart.

I was with my mother, and outside of the looming presence of the coop in the background, there was no reason to be scared. My mother began by lighting some candles, had us put our hands on the disk and she began to ask questions.

It got weird. The wind outside picked up noticeably, the candles flickered, and it seemed to me that the coop came alive. It was like it found its place after all those years. The sideboards started creaking, almost like the building was breathing in and out. There were cracking noises in the roof beams and the coop shuddered as gusts of wind slammed into it.

At the same time, the disk started moving and spelling answers to my mom's questions. I was certain she was not moving it as I could feel a tingle in my fingertips. I was frightened and intrigued at the same time. My mom asked me to ask a question. So I asked, are you alive? I meant the coop, but my mom thought I was speaking to the board. The disk and board trembled and then spelled out, "When you talk to me, yes."

That was enough for me. I asked if we could go back to the house and do this again during the day. I think my mom was spooked too because she said yes. That was not the last time I used the Ouija board. I will say each time became more frightening, but that is a different story and had its own scary end. It was the last time I looked at the coop in a normal manner though.

As we walked back up across the road, I looked back. The coop still lurked in its corner of the yard. Now, however, it looked less forlorn and more like it was throwing a challenge or a dare: "Come back again some night, and we will talk."

In my mind, the smell of chickens and pigeons seeped into my nostrils. Looking on the coop, I remembered the fowl that we raised in its insides, the countless chickens and pigeons we had butchered to feed four teenagers. Perhaps this was the legacy of the coop. Blood, meat and entrails. Death and slaughter, perhaps that essence of sacrifice was what laid the groundwork for the coop to come to life in this manner.

I never went in the coop again after dark.

# León Muerto

Erica Day



# Paved by Slag and Ash

Melissa Taylor

The sun sets early on Jerome. As the late afternoon creeps on, the shadow cast by the aptly named Black Hills blankets the small mining town in dusk. The temperature begins to drop and finds itself in that space between not quite cold enough to need a jacket, and not warm enough to stay in a T-shirt. On the narrow streets, modern and shiny cars wind up and down between old and crumbling buildings. Tourists fill up impromptu parking spaces and leave their cars to step back in time. They enter a past that is, much like the buildings of Jerome themselves, still clinging onto the mountain and refusing to be lost to the sliding of the years. As the early twilight thickens over the town, the visitors begin disappearing from the cracked sidewalks.

I had only been to the town once before – a few months ago on a whim with my father. We didn't stay long. The weather was rough, and we were on a bit of a time crunch. When I made my way there once more, I had a plan. I wanted to immerse myself into the Jerome scene. I wanted to learn at least some of its seemingly infinite secrets and to talk to some of its people. I wanted to feel the soul of the place firsthand, as well as hopefully to learn more about its other kind of spirits.

There are no chain stores or corporate restaurants up in Jerome. Instead, there are local cafes, specialty shops, and art galleries owned and operated by the people who live there. The population is just a little more than 400, and as I learned later, mostly comprised of artists, octogenarians, and members of the LGBT community. I found shops such as a Goth- and steampunk-centric store, a shop filled with kaleidoscopes, and a kitschy tourist gift shop.

Between many of these shops are ruins of old buildings that have long since been abandoned. Between the Ghost Town Tours lobby and a confectionary stood a wall, the windows still framed with a sill, the glass long gone. Looking through the windows, I saw nothing

but brush and trees, all dried up and left to rot. The wall itself was cracked and uneven, as if one bad quake could cause the entire thing to crumble. Many of the buildings are very much like that wall. Jerome is an entire town that can fall under the phrase “abandoned porn,” a term used to describe ruins and empty spaces that are falling into disrepair.

After exploring the town more and grabbing lunch at a local restaurant, I got in my car and decided to check out the historic park. Unfortunately I arrived just a bit too late, as the museum at the end of the road was closing in fifteen minutes. I stayed outside the museum for a while, though, because it offered one hell of a view. It was around 4:40 p.m., and the shadow of the mountain had already stretched out and covered Jerome in gray. I could see every road and every building that clung to the mountainside from that parking lot, many illuminated from within, some dark and empty. A large white “J” gazed out above the town, carved into Cleopatra Hill long ago as a badge of pride, now a reminder that Jerome is indeed still there, and still hanging on.

My final stop in Jerome was later on, while on a ghost tour, and in front of a portion of an old smelting tower. The tour guide began to talk about a theory a few people in Jerome shared. Over the course of the life of the mine, around 30,000 people died, but only around 3,000 graves are known by the city.

These people were often poor or marginalized (or both), and had rather violent deaths. Human bodies burn at around 400 degrees, and the smelters would often be burning at around 3,000 degrees. A very common occurrence that happened was that families would often pay the men working the smelters to dispose of the bodies, as



they could neither afford expensive burials or plots, or wanted to see the bodies of their loved ones mangled and deformed. The theory expressed was that this was a much more common occurrence than what was previously thought.

When copper is smelted all of the impurities and rock swim up to the top, and that is what is poured off of the top of the mine carts that carried the melted-down copper. This type of runoff is what is known as slag. When the bodies burned, the remains would float up to the top within the slag. This slag, once cooled, was then used to pave roads, build walls and buildings, and used in other methods of concrete. If their theory is correct, and if it can be proved that the slag used inside the very roads and walls of Jerome carry the remains of these thousands of people who just seemingly disappeared, then Jerome can be classified as a necropolis. It is why, according to the tour guide, that the town is one of the most haunted places in America. Jerome could very well be haunted down to its foundation.

The tour ended, and I went back to my car to make the journey home. Walking through the streets in the dark, I couldn't help but feel completely surrounded by the ghosts of those who had come to Jerome to seek fortune but only found anguish, violence, and eventually an untimely end. The town, now almost completely empty, seemed even more alive than before. As I drove through the streets and looked at the buildings and ruins one more time, I felt like I could almost see the place as it once was, and simultaneously how it is today. Jerome is called a ghost town because of how it went from a place that once peaked at a population of 15,000 to, due to a myriad of ill-fated incidents, a town that now holds less than 500 people. In my opinion, that classification has never been more appropriate. It is a town built by, on, and for the dead. And for those of us still living, if we could only see the other side of the veil, then Jerome would be just as populated as it was all those years ago.

# Wolves

Jason Oberman



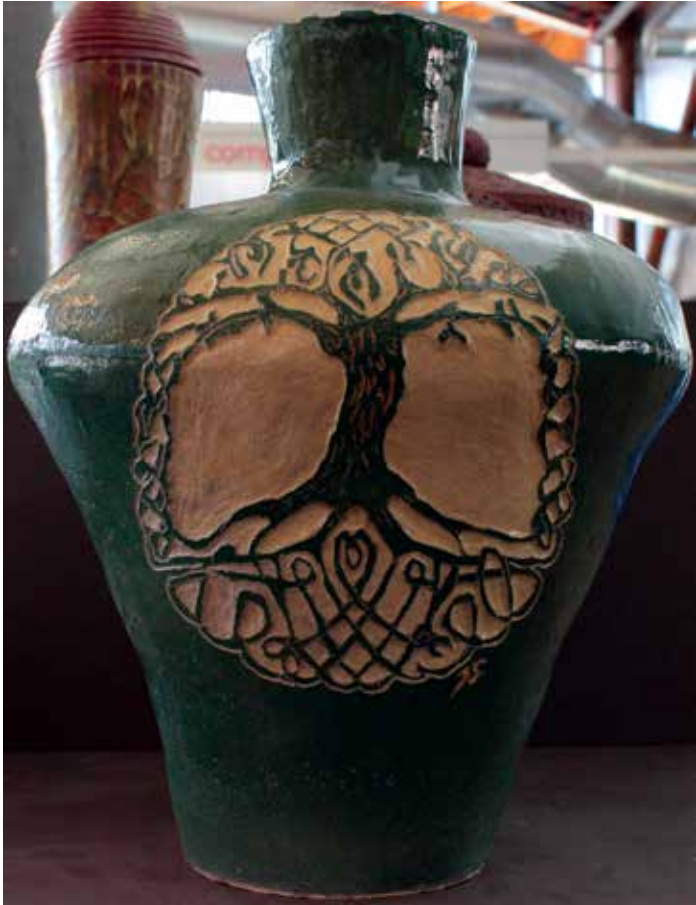
# Carnivale!

Karen Raskin-Young





I  
Am  
Fire  
Uncontained  
I cannot be  
Extinguished  
My thoughts are kindling  
My mind is the flint, my words the tinder  
Given a spark, I will spread my gospel  
My spirit dances and rises with the embers  
Undefinable, unimpeded, uncontrollable, I crackle and burn  
For I am fire, and I can never be extinguished



# Adventures in \_\_\_\_\_ the Mud      Marsha Monestersky

I am a do-gooder, tree hugger. If I can do something to help the planet I will. That's how I ended up on the Navajo Nation. My task was to help the people remain on their Sacred Land. At the time, a land dispute between the Navajo and Hopi tribal government had already forced thousands of Navajo to leave their ancestral homes. But for a Navajo to relocate is to disappear and be gone forever. If they are relocated, the Holy people will not know them. That is how these people live. The land vibrates with their song and prayers. The land and the people are intimately connected. Their soul is planted where they live like a tree.

One of my favorite connections to the Navajo Nation, or the "Rez" as it is commonly called, is navigating the mud. During monsoon, in the winter months, whenever it rains or snows, the mud comes. It always comes. It is said the Navajo Nation has more miles of dirt roads than any other place in the United States. I lived in an area known as Big Mountain, part of Black Mesa, a place that exists without the 'rule of law' or services.

The dirt roads are ungraded and unmaintained. The soil is made out of green and red clay. This clay is the same clay that goes on a potter's wheel and hardens like cement when it dries. I learned to keep a hammer in my car to chip away the hardened clay from my Toyota Tercel's axels.

One November morning, my friend, Samantha (Sam) Whitesinger, came by with her 8-month-old daughter, Corrine. Sam needed to go to Pinon to buy some groceries, a drive of 30 miles each way. So off we went in the rain, the roads muddy, dissolving by the minute.

We navigated for a while in the mud, staying on the road without falling off, until we arrived at Dinnebito wash near where I stayed. The water was flowing, but not too high to cross. Slowly, slowly, we made it to the other side only to find out the mud there was thicker and more difficult to move around in than the mud we just left.

We got stuck. Sam and I left Corrine securely fastened into her car seat, and we set off with our one shovel in search of anything that

we could put under the tires to help us move forward. This is almost impossible because everything sinks in the mud. We gathered branches and bits of sagebrush underneath the tires to gain some traction. Then Sam got in the truck. It lurched forward a bit, only to get stuck again. So, back we went in search of more branches and bits of sagebrush. Sam got back in the truck and started the engine.

It moved forward, and then we fell off the road. Since Sam was more experienced driving in the mud, a practice the Navajo call mud bogging, we decided that I should go outside and run beside the truck to help keep it from falling off the road again. So there I was, running beside the truck with my hands on the driver's side door to help guide it. I ran in thick mud, the kind that is soft and runny like cement that has not yet hardened. But the mud was so thick that my sandals burst. They were left somewhere hidden deep in the mud. I never did find them. I continued to run, now barefoot. What was amazing was that the



mud was so soft. As I ran, I felt torrents of mud from the front tire fly all over me and around me. I felt mud fly into my hair, my mouth. It seemed that I was made of clay. I felt an intense connection to First Man and First Woman who were made of clay, formed in beginning of time according to the Navajo Origin story.

I continued running as I grew to appreciate the driving skill of Sam. I relaxed into the rhythm of the truck as it sometimes followed the road and sometimes spiraled around in the mud making huge donuts. As I slogged, I thought how Sam and my Navajo colleagues were born into this life, a life full of intense challenges and hardship. And the Dine'—the Navajo people—are a match for the mud, which they combat during the monsoons, in the summer, and at their fairs, where they flood a large corral to compete in mud bogging competition. Now, here I was, a tree hugger, working on the Rez, up to my ankles for the first time in the mud, feeling absolutely wonderful, my roots sprouting in Dinetah, Navajo Nation.

# He is Greater than I

Sage Pearce

I believe in more than being alone on earth.

I believe in more a higher power, a deep connection,  
one who guides my heart so carefully.

I believe in more

one who makes the impossible possible,  
my future hopeful, and my present joyful.

Being so simple, just a few words away,  
a little bit of faith can go a long, long way.

I count my blessings and listen for his voice,  
the only one I trust

with my life, heart, and soul.

# The Goblin King

Skye Marzo



# Terrorist Groups Recruiting the Young

## Malcolm Best

On Nov. 14, 2015, the world awoke to news of horrific terrorist attacks that occurred in France, causing 130 deaths and many more injured. The following week, the world listened to an ever-increasing number of questions, which were answered by dignitaries and experts, covering a variety of fields, including terrorism, explosives, counterterrorism, and Islamic extremists, with all the experts trying to ascertain how these attacks happened and by whom. The one question that seems to have eluded everyone's mind is: What causes these young people between the ages of 18 and 40 to become radicalized by extremist groups such as ISIS and then become willing to sacrifice their lives in the pursuit of an ideology that may have not been their own only weeks and months prior to these events?

Why are these young people in the prime of their lives joining these radical organizations, organizations that are bent on the demoralization and destabilization of the world through violence? At this stage of their lives, these young people should be preoccupied in the pursuit of a career, creating a better life, starting a family, and saving for their future or retirement. But more and more of these young individuals are fleeing their middle-class lives in America, England, and Europe, and running headlong into war and possible death.

Look at the number of individuals who took this leap of faith on March 16, 2015. The Guardian in England ran the headline, "Three British teenagers heading to Syria held by counterterrorism police." Two young men, ages 17 and 19, from northwest England, were reported missing by their parents and were stopped at the airport in Turkey and then returned to England in custody. In the same article, there was further evidence that three teenage girls fled their family in East London to join ISIS. These three eventually crossed the border from Turkey to Syria before they could be apprehended.

On May 4, 2015, ABC News reported on the Garland Texas gunmen, two who were from Arizona. Both were shot and killed by police while trying to exact carnage at a community center over the display of cartoons depicting the prophet Mohammed. Within the article, one gunman's father insinuated that his son had embarrassed

the family by making bad choices. Further on in the article, the father revealed that his son had been a good kid and had just converted to Islam. This ongoing crisis worldwide is leading some young people to abandon their homes and families to go out and face death for a country they hardly know, for an organization who is manipulating them to do horrible and violent acts to noncombatants.

The Washington Post also posted the headline, “Three American teens recruited online are caught trying to join ISIS.” These teenagers were from Chicago, and they were apprehended on Oct. 4, 2015. They

***On their own, they must navigate the difficulties of international travel, to fight for a cause they have been enticed to embrace by the manipulation of their religious ideals by ISIS***

were all teenage siblings, two brothers and a sister. What makes this astonishing is that the father and oldest son had just returned home from praying at their local mosque prior to the children’s departure. What could have made fighting for ISIS more compelling than staying home with a loving family? In the same article, the FBI stated that propaganda is disseminated in 23 different languages, and 15 young US citizens, five of them women, all of Muslim descent, were arrested at various airports trying to make their way to Syria.

These young individuals secretly left everything they had known in their lives. On their own, they must navigate the difficulties of international travel, to fight for a cause they have been enticed to embrace by the manipulation of their religious ideals by ISIS. Or as stated in a Frontline interview in 2012, “In every country there are young disenfranchised youth, men and women with little hope in life who want to be part of something big that changes the world.” This fact is probably a major reason why some of these teenagers desire to leave home where they are safe, fed, clothed, and educated to wallow in the muck in some Third World country while facing an enemy that could and will probably cost them their lives.

In all these cases, young people were in communication with ISIS through the Internet, which appears to be the largest recruiting mechanism ISIS and other radical groups are using to gain followers. Having seen some of the propaganda videos, I find it hard to understand why young people would want to join an organization that is willing to kill hundreds of noncombatants in the most repulsive



ways possible. On the Internet, there is an AL HAYAT media Center music video released Nov. 12, 2015, by ISIS. This was produced as a warning to Russia, Europe, and the West and contained provocative and inflammatory lyrics such as, “Russia is dying” or “the Kremlin will be ours.” This video depicts beheadings with swords or knives, and the murder of bound and kneeling victims who are shot in the head at point blank range with pistols and AK-47s. Then there are also other images of war and the training to participate in war. All of these images are accompanied by an upbeat tempo with good graphics of horrible events taking place. With the ability to produce high-quality videos such as this that are easily obtained and available over the Internet, it is no wonder that ISIS has become such a powerful recruiter of despondent young people worldwide.

The problems in Syria and many other countries throughout the world leave young people with the idea that there is very little to look forward to in the way of employment, let alone a career that might allow them to begin a relationship leading to a marriage a family and eventual retirement. In a 2012 video by Frontline, it was pointed out that in Iraq, 40 percent of the men and women between 18 and 40 were out of work and took part in demonstrations against the imprisonment of the Iraqi Sunni people by the Shite politicians. Postwar Al Qaeda and Baathist members who became the leaders of ISIS led the protestors. This is not to say that only the Third World countries have this problem of disaffected youth, but look at the number of young people from America, Europe, and Africa that have also left home to join one of these radical Islamic groups.

This ongoing crisis of young people around the world who are willing to leave their homes to fight for terrorist organizations cannot be left up to the anti-terrorists, law enforcement, or other government agencies alone to quell this violence. It needs to be the responsibility of everyone to keep their eyes and ears open, and to understand that terrorist fundamentalist ideology can only be dispelled through religious groups, student organizations, educational centers, and parents who stand up and say that violence will not be tolerated, and that only through peaceful dialogue can true change be achieved worldwide. This also means that if people see or are confronted by individuals who have these radical and violent ideals, they should be honor-bound to report this type of behavior to authorities to counter

any further violence on such a grand scale – like what happened in France.

This crisis will not be averted until the world comes together, realizing that young people need to see a better future before them. By doing so, we make it more difficult for radical Islamist groups to sway young impressionable minds through manipulation to create a generation of monsters to carry out heinous acts against noncombatants. This form of intervention may entail having governments create and offer jobs worldwide for those of the low and middle class. Countries like the United States must not just throw money at the problem

by giving it to foreign governments, but by becoming invested in the young people of this world, by actually helping create jobs and overseeing these jobs for the young people, so that they may survive and

***“This ongoing crisis of young people around the world who are willing to leave their homes to fight for terrorist organizations cannot be left up to the anti-terrorists, law enforcement, or other government agencies alone to quell this violence.”***

create a life for themselves. By doing so, the ability for these radical groups preaching violence as a way of political change will hopefully diminish worldwide. The other advantage of this will be that children will hopefully no longer be running away to join these radical groups because they can see a future that looks better than one offered by the Islamic extremists.

# Royal Tyger

Sarah Westphal





# Waiting for the Train

Skye Marzo



# Get Your Kicks...

S.D. Lunday



# Summer's End

Sarah Adams

Her hair fluttered in the breeze, mimicking the tail of a child's kite. Summer was ending, but no one told that to the temperatures outside. It was a hot day and the AC in my little black Ford had expired long ago. My friend Celine clung to the window. Her hand took jumps and dives in the air while she caught the wind in her hair. My fingertips burned into the steering wheel. Feelings of nostalgia seeped into my skin as I drove Celine to work that day. It made my bones heavy. Every once in a while, I would glance at her as a mother would to a daughter. I took in all her features: golden hair stained with strawberries, pale moon skin, and a face that I had always seen as unchanging. Like a daughter, she'd catch me in the act and was then on high alert.

"What? Why are you looking at me? Stop it."

I laughed before letting on as if I had done nothing wrong. It was far too easy for me not to notice the significant changes in that girl, or in myself, or the fact that our childhoods had passed us by. The school I pulled up to was a small one. It was painted the color of dirt after a light rain. We walked in through the playground first. Swing sets squealed, the slides moaned, and the old elm trees rustled, all welcoming us back.

As soon as we were inside the school, I was blasted with the scent of old soap and classic Pine Sol. I stood there for a moment, inhaling the old atmosphere. It was like I was trying to breathe in the memories that I couldn't quite recall. She grabbed my hand and led me to a small classroom. Miniature white shelves with little books and crafts on them were placed neatly about the room. The gray tiled floor glistened. The Pine Sol was much stronger in this room. In the very back an overweight rabbit peered at me from behind his double chins. Near his cage was the only place that didn't smell of Pine Sol. It was a sour rabbit stench with a hint of pee. He wheezed hungrily at me with an unblinking stare.

"I think the children are over feeding him," I said.

She paused slightly assessing my expression. Celine examined him, looking over his buttery body. Her expression was serious.

"Yeah, we're putting him on a diet tomorrow," Celine said.

I'm sure his cholesterol-filled heart began to quicken at the very thought. The sight of the rabbit caused me to tighten my grip on her hand, which made me realize that I still held it. There was something about the interlocking of our fingers that felt familiar. Her lunar skin made mine look tan in comparison.

To the right of the rabbit, little napping mats were nicely stacked. To the left, there was a cluster of tables that barely reached my thighs. There were parts of the room that made me feel childish; the place made me feel like I wanted to start running around and suddenly sit still so that I could paint something.

What eventually held my attention was a book loft in the corner of the room. Both underneath and above it was a tiny library for the children. The structure was dark brown in contrast to the color splatter of books it held.

“Do you remember this?” she asked. “We used to play under here all the time.”

I could almost see us there – young, munchkin versions of ourselves climbing over each other trying to read words we had not yet learned the meaning of. I could almost smell the Play-dough, and the dirt, and sugar cookies. I could see us together again, and the two of us were

***“It was far too easy for me not to notice the significant changes in that girl, or in myself, or the fact that our childhoods had passed us by.”***

much more boisterous than other little girls. We had dirt in our hair and grubs in our hands. I saw us on the slide, the swings, and a little structure that was made to look like a house. I could smell the fresh earth again and feel the grit under my fingernails. When I looked back into her eyes I was nearly overwhelmed by the stark differences.

She was no longer my little friend Celine, but instead a full-grown woman who was now a teacher at the very school where we first met. In that moment, I wanted to embrace the woman I had grown with. I wanted to take in every childish freckle on her suddenly adult face and tell her that I loved them, to say that I loved her. In that moment, I wanted to take her by the hand and make a fortress out of the slide out back, but I didn't. Instead I swallowed the feeling. The love, the sadness and the nostalgia – I swallowed it all up with one gulp of air. We would never be the children we once were. That had



sailed right by us and not once did I ask for it to stop. I wanted to tell her that I loved her. Instead I made a silent goodbye to the loft, to the overweight rabbit, and the scent of Pine Sol. I said goodbye to the old elm trees, the slide and the swings. I said goodbye to her, and returned to the heat outside.

My fingertips burned into the steering wheel. In the distance, a kite flew. It was the end of summer, and in that moment I would have given anything to make it last.

# The Dance

Alexi Stoll



Bright lights

Blinding

Foggy thoughts

Raised questions

Hunting

Searching

For memories

Or regrets

Time lost

Hazy

Pounding

Intrusive

Sudden recollection

Churning stomach

Laughing

Embarrassed smiles

Silence promised

# Pomegranates

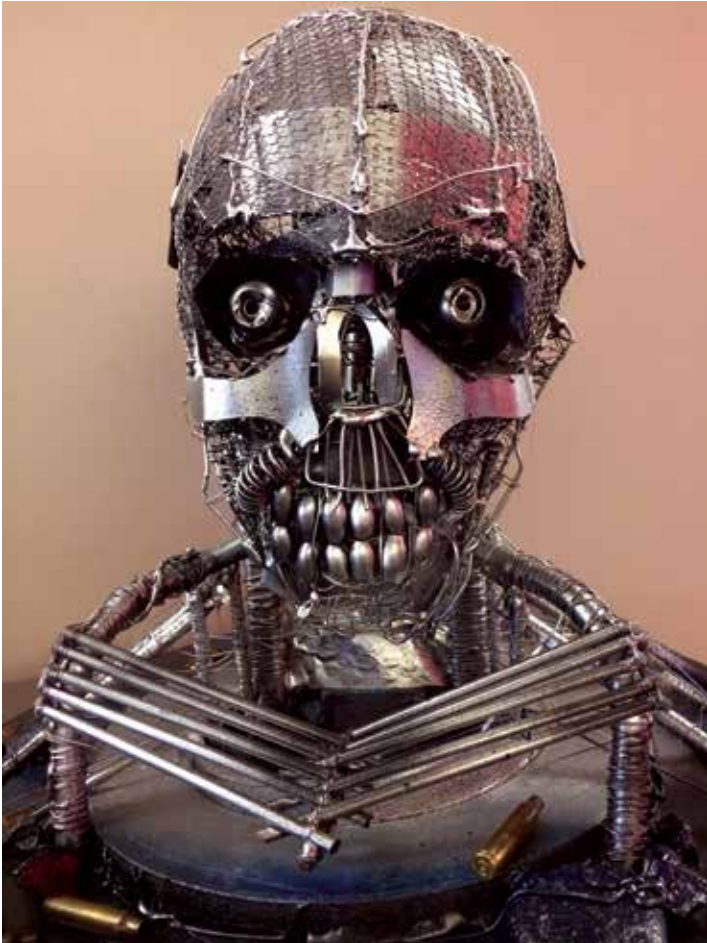
Frances Robbins





# Terminator

Lenford Barton





**Bob Heutmaker**



**Sarah Adams**



**Melissa Taylor**

# ONCOURSE

Our intent for *OnCourse* literary magazine is to foster the breadth of creative expressions across our CCC Community by providing publication opportunities to student writers and artists. *OnCourse* is produced annually by Coconino Community College students enrolled in COM 181 with the guidance of CCC faculty and staff.

For Submission Guidelines and Charitable Contributions, Please visit us at: [oncourse.coconino.edu](http://oncourse.coconino.edu)

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