

# The Portal

A Collection of Short Stories and Poems  
by members of the Writer's Group

## **In Celebration of National Poetry Month South Regional / BC Poetry Contest Winners**

---

### **First Place By Eric Ansel**

I watched the portly priest  
Swagger down the sidewalk  
Away from where I stood,  
The back of his head looking  
Like the print of a well-fed thumb.

And I remembered what a  
Middle-aged man with a make-  
Believe beard once told me:  
"Read your contemporaries," he  
Had said, drawing out the  
Syllables in mocking certainty.

Again I searched for my priest,  
Found him, growing smaller  
Down the street, darkly lit under  
An unenthusiastic lamppost; closing  
The distance, I saw my priest  
Had become a hog on duck's  
Feet. He turned, my hard breath  
Noisy, and blew hot animal  
Laughter in my face...

I felt I'd been had, but  
Grunted in response, and the  
Two of us finished out west  
Twenty-sixth street to the river,  
(Pausing only for large meat-trucks)  
Alternately reciting favorite poems  
Of our contemporaries.

And I wondered: through a

Wrong-ended telescope is  
Larger than Life rendered, perhaps,  
Smaller than Death?

### **Second Place Journey of Self-Discovery By Gabrielle Lawson**

I took a walk to clear my mind  
I was upset with the world for a moment in time,  
But that moment's in the past.

On the first stretch of this lengthy path,  
I finally remembered, remembered at last  
What it was I was after.  
I was in search of myself.

I'm a blank slate,  
At the will of my own choice.  
Will I listen quietly,  
Or will I raise my own voice?  
Will I follow another's lead  
Or make the most of me?  
Only time will tell who it is I will be.

I look up from my path and up towards the sun  
light,  
And I feel like a feather inside.  
I think I'll float forever in flight,  
Never turning back  
Because this feels right.

The whistle of the wind is the soundtrack to my  
journey.  
With its melody that floats sweetly yet sadly.

I feel as though I would gladly,  
Melt into the sound if given a chance,  
Become one with the sun  
And never look back.  
The ocean's depth brings me to tears  
Just knowing that I may stay searching for years  
To go that deep within myself

On this journey I forced myself  
To feel with my heart  
And see with my mind.

To think each thought through  
And see more than what I could find  
To see through the holes in other's souls  
Decide what to do before I'm gray and old  
To become who I am and yet still have room to  
grow

To always fight the good fight, even if I stand  
alone.

I believe I've found what truly makes me unique.

This is what I've found on my journey of self-  
discovery.

**Third Place**  
**Invitation to Inhabit your Body Fully**  
**(Welcome Home)**

**By Sheila Klein**

You are invited to come home

Inhabit your body fully

Bring all the broken pieces  
ready to reassemble  
like a tinker toy or  
parts from your old erector set  
It doesn't matter where they're from  
or how frightened you are  
to see them all strewn  
on floors  
tumbled down from shelves  
dusty from disuse  
long ago tossed aside  
There's no sell by date  
Twisted and rusted  
salvation is still possible  
These parts were made to last  
Rebuilding bit by bit  
parts become whole  
Reclaim ugly, dark  
misshaped shards  
They fit too  
Reveal your story  
Let go of shame  
Bring it to the light  
Make it one  
Make it wholly yours



## The Coyote

By Jamie White

Sunlight shone in through the window, lighting up Suzanna Hawk's face as she slowly woke up. She stretched her arms out, a yawn escaping her lips. It had been a long night with a lot of travel. She was part of a traveling circus making its way through the west. As she looked outside the window of her small train car, she noticed the other members of her troupe busily preparing for the night's show. They had finally arrived in Abilene, Kansas, the next stop on their tour. She loved traveling with the show. Although her act never changed, she still never knew exactly what her day was going to be like from one day to the next. There were always new places to explore and people to

meet. Even the best planned acts would have last minute changes that made it fun for her to sit in the audience and watch, no matter how many times she'd seen the performers. She'd been with the show for almost six years now. She had left her home on the Sioux reservation when she was only sixteen years old to join the show and she'd never looked back. She loved everything about it; the travel, the applause, the people.

Suzanna dressed and headed outside to help with the daily chores. There were tents to set up, animals to tend and rehearsals. Her act in particular needed to be carefully planned out. She was known as the Woman Who Can't Be Killed. The visiting crowd was told she had a spirit guide that protected her from being harmed, even when she was shot several times. Firing the gun was the job of her husband, Alan Strongbow. He was very meticulous about his job. He

always checked the blanks closely before putting them in his breast pocket the day of the performance. The gun was always loaded with the blanks after another check just before he went on stage to make sure no real bullets could get in by mistake.

"Morning," Suzanna said, walking up to her husband and kissing him on the cheek.

"Morning. I was afraid you were gonna sleep the day away. There's much work to get done before the show tonight."

"I know. I'm sorry about that.... I don't know what got into me. I was so tired after the show last night I could hardly keep my eyes open. What should I do first?"

"Elisabeth could use some help getting the horses fed and groomed. Why don't you start with that? She's the first act anyway."

Suzanna nodded and walked off to help the horseback rider prepare the animals. For hours, the troupe tended the animals and made last minute preparations to make sure all the tents were ready for the locals before squeezing in a little rehearsal time. Finally, it was time for the show. Suzanna watched the acts from the stands as she always did before joining her husband backstage. As she stepped up to the curtain, sneaking a peak at the audience, she felt the usual rush of adrenaline that hit her right before a performance. It was one thing to sit in the audience and take in the show. It was another thing entirely to look at them from the stage. It made the crowd seem much larger than it really was.

“And now.... The moment you’ve been waiting for. Please give a warm welcome to Miss Suzanna Hawk, the woman who can’t be killed!” The audience

exploded into applause with her husband’s grand introduction.

She stepped out onto the stage, bowing briefly before taking her place on the stage. The lights dimmed and the audience fell into a deafening silence. Her husband stood several feet away from her, readying his weapon, taking aim at her chest. The gun was fired, all six rounds seemed to strike their target. Despite her swaying she never fell. With their act successfully over, she and her husband bowed to the cheering crowd.

As with any other night they took a few moments to talk to some of the townspeople before cleaning up. They knew they were going to be there for another day, so there was no packing to do, at least. They finished their chores quickly, and before she knew it, she and her husband were heading for their train car to get some sleep. Well... she was about to get some sleep anyway. Her husband was too worked up to sleep that night.

Night after night, they did their act and the townsfolk showered his wife with praise and admiration, barely giving credit to the gunman. He felt he should be getting as much adulation, if not more, than her. More pay, as well. Sure, he just fired blanks at her but all she did was pretend to fall back a little. As far as he was concerned they had equal jobs and he was tired of her getting more spoils. He even came up with the mysterious story for their act...all she had done was tell him about some legends among her people. Like many Indian tribes, her people believed in spirit guides and totems. He didn’t. As far as he was concerned, those stories were just make believe, silly superstitions that meant nothing. He laid awake for hours, filled with the resentment that had been building for weeks now. The few times he had brought it up to her (that night included) she had brushed his concerns off. After all, the money all went to the same place. She couldn’t

understand why he was so worried about it. She didn't understand that as the man, he was supposed to be the one with the status and the power. He didn't know what to do about it, but he was tired of always having to play second fiddle. He also was a bit bored of the whole magical spirits nonsense. He knew better than to believe that stuff and was tired of listening to Suzanna and some of the others speak as though they were real. At least it brought the money in. It never ceased to amaze him what people were willing to spend money on.

The next morning, Suzanna was up and dressed early, ready to help with the daily chores. The early night had done wonders for her and she was full of energy that day. Alan was already out there, cleaning his pistol.

"Mornin'," she said, wrapping her arms around him in a hug.

"Mornin'," he replied in a cold tone, pulling back to continue his task.

"Are you alright?" she asked. He seemed a bit off this morning. She wondered if he was still stewing over their argument the night before. It was a familiar one and one she was tired of. She just didn't know how to fix it. It wasn't her fault if people wanted to talk to her more and give her a bigger piece of the profits.

"Yeah, I'm fine," he said. "Just got a lot to get done. Why don't you head on over to the stable and get those horses ready again? They took to you real good yesterday."

Suzanna nodded and walked over to the stables, still not sure that the trouble wasn't over. She figured if she gave him some time to stew on his own, it would all blow over eventually.

Later that night, Alan stood behind the curtain, doing his usual pre-show routine. This time, however, He had an odd sense of dread about him. He wasn't sure where it came from. Maybe he was still feeling a bit worked up from their argument the night before. Whatever the reason, he never wanted to walk onto that stage less than he did that night. Ever the showman, though, he put on the big smile and let the fake enthusiasm enter his voice.

"Evenin' folks!," he greeted the crowd. "It's time again for the act you've been hearin' about. Please give a warm welcome to Miss Suzanna Hawk..."

Suzanna walked out onto the stage and took her normal place. Alan turned to her, pistol in hand. Just as they did every night, the audience became deadly silent, their anticipation and nervousness filling the air. Alan pointed the gun at Suzanna, preparing to fire, anticipating her

fake stumble. As he pulled the trigger, his eyes widened in surprise. Instead of Suzanna's face, he saw a coyote staring back at him. Its eyes flashed and he saw a snarl form as Suzanna fell back. The image lasted only an instant and he shook it off. Must've been his imagination. He blinked, wondering what on earth could've cause him to see that.

As always, Suzanna straightened up, turning to the crowd with a wide smile on her face. To Alan's surprise, she was holding a wooden bullet in her hand. The audience went wild, jumping to their feet and cheering loudly. Suzanna looked down at the wooden plug and back over at Alan, confusion crossing her features. How did she manage to catch it in her hand? Quickly composing herself, she turned to the audience to take her bow, a wide smile crossing her features that never quite reached her eyes. She had had the strangest

feeling come over her. Like she'd been outside of her body looking in for a moment. Several feet away, Alan had a similar look on his face... although he seemed a little more spooked than she did. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the transparent figure of a coyote disappear behind the curtain.

They never spoke of that night and Alan comments about phony spirits and magical mumbo jumbo came to an end. It was sort of an unspoken agreement between them, He wasn't entirely sure what had happened that night under the big top, but he figured it was best not to take his chances.

### Tinguindin

By Angela Mary Piraino

There's a town in Mexico  
Beloved to my heart  
When I was a baby  
It gave me a good start

It has remained  
Untouched...  
No wear

Recently  
I visited  
Paid the fare

To once again  
Feel  
That energetic pulse  
Spirit of my people  
Mountains  
Valley  
Church steeple

Even...  
I go away  
I'll return and return  
Another day

Tinguindin  
Can stay in my heart  
Forever!

Until its pulsating veins...Bleed



## The Last Words of Bruno

By DiVitto Kelly

Bruno was on his deathbed. He'd lived a good long life, closing in on eighty-four years old. The Salerno family, from south Philly, gathered around: Mom, dad, son, and daughter. Mom could barely contain herself. She placed her hand on her loved ones' brow, sobbing uncontrollably.

Bruno turned his head towards her. He struggled to lift it up, inching closer, as if to tell her something, maybe for the last time. His mouth opened.

"Oh, my honey bunny," cried Mom.

There was a whimper. The family knew their beloved Bruno, resting on his favorite mustard

yellow leather sofa, was closing in on the pearly gates.

"Speak," said Mom, hoping to hear Bruno's gentle expression for the last time.

He opened his mouth, blinking his dark amber eyes, gazing up. There was a slight utterance, and then . . .

"I have always despised that God-damn phrase, you know that? Honey bunny, my ass!" The whole family gasped. Mom nearly fainted.

"And here's a news flash, you bunch of scrapple brains," growled Bruno. "I have always hated getting my nails manicured like I'm some sort of princess, taking me to that fancy schmancy salon. It's totally embarrassing!"

Mom hit the floor. The kids shrieked. Dad was dumbfounded, dropping his

bottle of Rolling Rock to the floor.

This was so unlike Bruno. He'd never spoken up like that before . . . ever. In fact, he never spoke at all. You see, Bruno was a chocolate brown hued poodle. Smart as a whip, and apparently, now able to converse in perfect Philly lingo.

"Okay, you obnoxious schmucks," barked Bruno. "It's time for this old canine to unload on all of youse." He coughed. Mom finally made it to her feet.

"First off, Mom, or should I just call you . . . sorry kids, can youse both leave the room for a sec? Thanks." The poodle eyed the kids as they leaving.

"Now, where was I? Oh, . . . floozy!" Mrs. Salerno blushed. Bruno turned towards Dad. "Oh, you didn't know about your adulterous wife, did ya?"

"Honey?" stammered Dad.

“He meant nothing,” she uttered.

“Maybe the gardener meant nothin,” chided Bruno, “But the cable guy? And let’s not forget that smarmy dish dude, the Maytag repairman – hold on, I’m missing someone.” He paused.

“My God, lady, you’re worse than a dog in heat, and I should know . . . until you had me fixed and ruined my life forever! And there ain’t no doggie porn for this pup so I’m otta luck!”

Bruno continued. “Now hubby here, well, he picks his spots on his laptop, secretly in his man cave. What a stupid concept, man cave. It’s just a glorified space to get away from your annoying family, am I right, Pops? Yeah baby, I’m livin large watching the Phillies and swilling down shitty beer.”

Bruno appeared to have caught a second wind, spunky, and full of piss and vinegar. Mom and Dad glared at each other. Their eyes narrowed. He asked to

bring the kids back in. They sat down, side by side on the sofa.

The dog hopped up on all fours. “And you annoying kids, always fighting and in each other’s business. Grow the hell up!”

“But I’m only eight years old,” replied the son.

“Yeah, well, you’re still a pain in the ass.” Bruno did a quick scratch behind his ears then continued. “And you, daughter. You are a stinky spoiled brat with an overbite that I could rake leaves with. What are you, thirteen now? Wearing all that makeup, and at such a young age. You don’t want to follow in Mom’s tawdry footsteps, honey, trust me.”

“How long have you been able to, uh . . . talk?” asked Mom, trying to make sense of the situation.

“It just kinda came to me,” said Bruno, giving his frame a good,

healthy stretch. “Actually, you schmoes got me so frustrated over these past years I wanted to scream. Instead, it just came out like your run of the mill bark. But now? As long as I got breath in me, I’m gonna let ‘er rip.”

The dog farted. The family gagged.

Bruno sat down, surveying the family members. “Now, let’s get back to all the annoying things you guys have done to me. Let me count the ways.”

“This is crazy,” uttered Dad.

“Quiet, chub rock, you’re spoiling my train of thought,” grumbled Bruno.

“First off, I hate when you ‘accidently’ step on my paws. I ain’t got gorilla feet so when youse stomp all over my petite paws, it flat out hurts like a son of a bitch. Hey, accidents happen, but you guys are the biggest bunch of clumsy morons

in da world. Number two: I am a dog, not a child. It is *extremely* humiliating to wear anything other than my own fur no matter how cold it gets. I am done wearing sweaters or freaking booties when it snows, capeesh? Let's say it together: Bruno is a dog, not a child."

"But you look so cute in your booties," cried Mom.

"What a ditz," replied Bruno.

"Three: I don't like riding in cars, doll face. It makes me seasick. And I especially don't like sitting on your jiggly gut while you hit the drive-thru at Wendy's for the umpteenth time. For Christ sake, how many Baconators can one person consume?"

Dad gleaned over to his wife.

"So much for your diet, dear."

"You should talk, lardy," she chided.

"May I continue, please?" barked Bruno. Mom and Dad nodded.

"You do realize if you ever got into an accident and had to slam on the brakes, guess who's gonna get squashed between you and the airbag? Me!"

"That does make sense," said the daughter.

"Last but not least, I despise going to that high-flatulent Pampered Paws Palace to get my fur trimmed. I know everyone thinks us poodles are nothin but a bunch of froo-froo dogs, but for Christ sake, take me somewhere manly like freaking Super Cuts or somethin. You'll save yourselves some dough and I'll be spared any further humiliation. And getting my nails painted, really? A baby blue bow? I'm a freaking animal, not some wuss pooch!"

He paused. "Oh, and that shitty food you feed me – the one with the fancy name. No mas! I'm a south Philly poodle. You know what I'd like eat? A Philly cheesesteak wit extra wiz

without. That means no freaking onions – they make me gassy."

"Why are you being so mean?" said the daughter. "I mean, we love you."

"Ahh, you wannabees made me run through hoops, literally, for dried up snacks that had as much flavor as cardboard. You guys basically fed me the same shit for ten years straight. Hey Dad, try eating freaking baloney sandwiches for a decade and see how that feels. Oh, never mind, chubs, you'd probably dig that."

"But I treated you like a prince," said Mom, near tears. "I wove you."

"No, more like a princess," doll face. "And wove? What the hell is wove? I'm a smart breed, probably the smartest breed out there. Definitely smarter than your kids. And yet you talk to me like I'm some sort of a nipple noggin. Enough already!"

“But . . .” stammered Mom.

“That coochy-coo bullshit is fine for babies, doll-face, but I’m a dog . . . D-O-G. Say it with me now, all of youse: D-O-G.”

“You know, if you had spoken up before, we coulda made you a star,” uttered Dad, dreaming of dollar signs and guest appearances on all the cable shows. “Now that you’re on your deathbed, we’ll never know.”

“You scamming bastard,” barked Bruno. “Why do ya think I kept my yap shut all these years? So you wouldn’t exploit me, you mound round of rebound. Besides, I’m feelin aces now.”

“You are a real son of a bitch, you know that?” said Dad.

“Takes one to know one, puddy butt.”

The family huddled, whispering to each other. A couple of minutes later, dad picked up the

pillow from behind their formally favorite pet dog

“What do you think you’re doin, Fat Albert?”

“Just fluffing up the pillow for you,” replied Dad, who proceeded to thrust the cushy object on top of the mangy mutt, suffocating Bruno to death.

Mom looked at her husband. The two grasped Bruno’s favorite ratty blanket and covered his lifeless body. They stepped back, remaining silent then cradling each other’s hand. The two children looked at each other, near tears before breaking into a smile.

“You know? Maybe we can all learn from Bruno’s visceral critique and be a better family,” said Dad.

“We second the motion,” said the children.

In a touching move, the family cat, Manny, jumped up onto the old sofa and inched over, careful not to step on his deceased friend’s body. Manny sniffed near the pillow and sat down, giving his fellow pet mate of ten years a moment of silence. He got up, licked his paws then sauntered over to the armrest. The feline perked up, pausing before giving his two-cents worth.

“I always hated that dog, God bless, all of youse.” He sprang from the sofa to the floor and left the room, tail riding high.



## Turkey Time

By CP Bialois/Ed White

Rubbing the back of your neck, you enter the kitchen with a yawn.

“Love you too, hun.” Your wife smiles back as she answers you, causing you to smile in return.

“It’s my special way of telling you. So, what’s for breakfast?”

“Something you cook yourself?” she replies as she hurries about the kitchen. Her apron is covered in flour and other spots that look familiar.

“Gee, thanks a million, babe.” You swat at her, but she sidesteps while not missing a step as she moves from one task to another.

She pauses to smile at you before asking, “So, where’d you put the turkey?”

“The turkey?” The question bounces around in your head for a few seconds, but you can’t figure out what she means.

“Yeah,” she says, putting a hand on her hip. “You know, the turkey you were supposed to pick up at the store.”

“The store?” You try to swallow the lump that suddenly forms in your throat.

“You did get a turkey, didn’t you?”

You open your mouth to respond, but you can’t look at her after forgetting her birthday the previous week. Your eyes drift to the window and your neighbor’s pet turkey next door. The only thing separating you from not sleeping on the couch is a twelve inch high chicken wire fence.

“Harold...”

You lift your hands to fend off any potential blows. “Now, babe, I’ve got things under control. I left it over at the Jacobsons’ so it wouldn’t get in your way.”

Her eyes narrow, and after a couple of seconds she nods and smiles. “Okay, just be quick about it, would you? I’ve got to get it cooking if you want to eat this afternoon.”

You smile as relief falls from your shoulders. “No problem, babe. Just let me get my pants on and I’ll go get it.”

A few minutes later, you’re making your way across the yard to where you see the Jacobsons’ pet turkey, all nice and plump, standing by the chicken wire watching you.

“That’s right, Gobbler. I’m a friend. You can trust me.” As you draw closer, you pull out the hatchet you’re hiding behind your

back. As you reach out for clucking and have an idea. Your only regret is the hell the wife will give that store clerk for giving you a chicken instead of a turkey.

How's it going?"

Frank Jacobson nods at you and smiles. "Good, you?"

"Not bad. You all ready for Thanksgiving dinner?"

"Yup. Just gotta take ole Gobbler behind the shed and dress him."

"You're... what? I thought he was your pet?"

Frank paused to look at you with disbelief in his eyes. "He is, but I'd rather have him on our table than yours. Tell the missus I said hello."

You watch him as he calls Gobbler over, then smiles at you over his shoulder. You're about to give up when you hear a



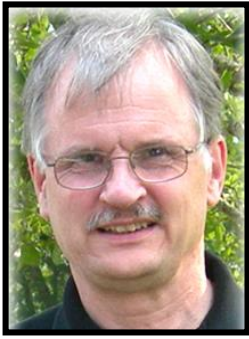
**Bye Bye, Miss American Pie**  
By Meagan Cahuasqui

It beckons and entices him  
with a flaky crust and hot filling  
at its heart.

Out of the oven  
and straight to display  
he only ever sees it once it's gone  
or cold  
and hard as he tries  
he never gets a taste.

One bite  
just one satisfying bite  
of delectable sweetness and  
comfort.  
Is that too freakin' much to ask  
for?!

Everyone else gets to try it  
but he never can  
like Tantalus  
at an all you can eat buffet.



**Dawn Patrol**

By Rick Weber

There was a slight chill in the air as Dave and Bonnie got out of the car. In front of them was the object which awaited them. On its side, the sound of a propane burner being turned on illuminated the inside of what those in the trade called the envelope. It was four stories long. The inside light revealed a multi-color shell. As they took sight of the growing object near their feet, a voice cried out to them, “Dave? Bonnie?” Hearing their names, they turned to a man in a bright red varsity jacket with “Lead Balloon Tours” on the left breast.

“Yes,” Dave responded extending his hand.

“I’m Bill, your pilot. It looks like we’ll be having a great morning for a dawn patrol.”

“I’m sure we will. This is my daughter, Bonnie, whose been after me for a balloon ride.”

“Are you ready, Bonnie?” Bill asked as he looked down at the pint sized passenger.

“Yes,” came her timid response.

“Very well, I’ll go over some safety procedures with you and your Dad before we lift off on our journey.”

As Bill went over the features of his hot air balloon, Dave drifted off in thought as to how he got caught up in going on this hot air balloon ride with Bonnie. He didn’t like going up in passenger airplanes when he had to for business or vacation and did so grudgingly. “Oh, well,” he thought to himself, “In a few hours, it’ll be over. I just have to tough it out until then.”

With the help of some others on the ground, Bonnie and Dave were helped into the gondola or basket. With a hearty tug on a chain overhead, the burner came to life and roared filling the envelope with hot air causing it to rise in the early New Mexico sky.

It was the first week of October and the start of the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, the largest hot air balloon event of its kind in the world. Over seven hundred entries would participate. None of this mattered to Dave. He would have preferred to have both of his feet planted on *terra firma*, but this outing was for Bonnie, not him.

Their balloon was not alone. Others filled the sky. Each having its envelope lit up inside by a propane burner. It was a magnificent sight even though Dave viewed it with trepidation. Bill explained the sights below them to Bonnie as she looked on

in amazement listening to everything their host was saying. Dave managed a smile and also took in Bill's lessons.

"They call this the Albuquerque Box," Bill explained. "The winds are predictable here this time of year. At low levels they push to the south causing us to head towards downtown. At higher levels they blow north which will push us up toward Rio Rancho. So, by adding heat and letting warm air out at the right intervals, we'll be able to stay inside the box. Pretty cool!"

Bonnie smiled and looked up at the sun coming up in the east, a bright start to a magnificent day. The sun warmed the sky around them. Although he was nervous, Dave managed a smile and took pictures of Bonnie as Bill pointed things out to her on the balloon. He was even able to switch over to his video camera at the appropriate intervals.

The sun came up brilliantly over the horizon, and Dave captured Bonnie on the camcorder as she pulled on the propane lever, causing a deafening noise and the balloon to rise up even farther above the northern ridges of the Chihuahuan Desert. Bonnie smiled, lost her shyness, and peppered Bill with a lot of questions.

"How long will we be up?"

"We should be up about an hour."

"How much fuel will we use?"

"We should burn between twenty to thirty gallons of propane."

"How do you steer the balloon?"

"You don't. Balloons are classified as non-steerable aircraft. We're subject to direction of the wind."

"Does that mean we won't land where we took off?" That

question caught Dave off guard and made him a little concerned.

"In general, that's true, but we'll be working the 'Box' I told you about which should bring us back near to where we took off. I have a chase car, in this case my truck, ready to pick us up. Hopefully, we won't be too far off." Dave was relieved to hear that as they came close to downtown and Bill turned on the burner causing them to ascend and move north.

This hot air balloon ride was something Bonnie wanted to do for a long time. She planned it all out, even down to contacting Bill prior to the event. Dave had never seen her so excited. Now the day had come and Dave hoped she would not be disappointed.

Bonnie always liked balloons, even the little ones she got at birthday parties as a toddler.

As Dave looked at her, any misgivings he had about the adventure evaporated. The day belonged to Bonnie.

The view from the gondola was fantastic. “Bill, this gauge says we’re at six thousand feet. Is that right?”

“No, Bonnie, the altimeter is showing how high we are above sea level. Given the altitude of the city, we’re about a thousand feet above ground level.”

Bonnie’s questions kept on coming and Bill answered all of them patiently and completely. Before Dave knew it, their ride was over and Bill had radioed the chase car to pick them up in Rio Rancho. The balloon descended to a smooth landing. Dave helped Bonnie out of the basket, and they assisted the crew with folding up the balloon. On the ride back to their car, they thanked Bill and his team for their hospitality. It had been a perfect day.

A year later, Dave was home alone going through some things when he found the video he shot that day. He played it, and he broke down in tears. He remembered the trip to Albuquerque, the last outing that he and Bonnie had together. It was made possible by the Make a Wish Foundation. Her medical condition deteriorated quickly after the trip. Bonnie did not make it to see Christmas. Dave was grateful for that time they spent together in New Mexico.

### **The Matchmaker?**

By Pierre Bernensky

#### **Part 1:**

“How are we going to pass this class?” Burn asked. “We’ve been failing this math class for the majority of the semester. It’s either we buckle down and concentrate or hope for an act from God.”

Samuel was gawking at the black screen on the computer in front of him, while Burn waited

for his response. After a while Burn looked at him, questioning his state of sensibility. Burn snapped his fingers; hankering for his attention. Burn was fed up; he turned on his computer and shook him back into consciousness.

“What’s wrong with you?” Burn whispered as the teacher started the class.

“I don’t know, man,” Samuel muttered. “I really like Janelle and I want to be with her.”

“Then, make your move!” Burn quietly exclaimed. “We have mo—”

“No!” Samuel bellowed. “We’ve been friends for so long, it’s not that simple.”

Suddenly the room was noiseless; one could hear the class next door on the other side of the partition. The wide eyes of their classmates were fixated on them as the teacher shot them a

glare of disdain. She kicked them out, slamming the door behind them.

“Look what you did,” Burn grumbled.

“Sorry man,” Samuel responded. “It’s just so complicated when you sincerely care for a person and you don’t know if they care the same way you do. I don’t want to ask her out, then get rejected by her because if that happens then I don’t know if I can live.”

Burn did his best to empathize. “I completely understand, but right now we have more important things to worry about. We are failing a class in college.”

“I DON’T CARE,” Samuel said belligerently.

Samuel marched away in frustration, putting his right hand in the air with the peace sign. Now, Burn was all alone in the hallway of building 69 at Broward

South Campus befuddled at the fact that Samuel didn’t care about his grade. He wasn’t accustomed to seeing Samuel like this. He thought about Janelle and tried to pinpoint why Samuel liked her so much. Burn didn’t understand. He thought she was just a regular girl with a cute face and a good personality. Soon, he concluded that Samuel went nuts, falling for girls. Unexpectedly in the middle of his thoughts, his phone rang. He thought it was Samuel calling to apologize, but it was her.

“It’s your fault I got kicked out of class,” he said scornfully.

“Well good morning to you too. Sheeshh, no respect,” Janelle said bluntly. “I need to talk to you, it’s important.”

“I’m sorry, I have no time for manners,” he responded. “When are coming to school?”

“In about two hours,” she replied.

Burn hung up the phone and went into the library, waiting for her to call or text. He dozed off on one of the soft comfy chairs near the window where one could see the squirrels chasing each other. Finally, he was awakened by her phone call. He didn’t pick up the phone; he already knew where she was. He encountered her outside sitting down under the big white tent near parking lot C behind the school.

“Hey,” he said.

“What’s up?” She replied. “We really need to talk.”

“About what?” he questioned with curiosity.

“It’s about Samuel,” she said shyly.

He nodded his head and indicated to her to go on.

“I don’t know how to tell him, but I really like him,” she said softly.

He was at a loss for words, flabbergasted by her burnished eyes gleaming with exhilaration when she spoke those words. He couldn't believe that two people that hung out with one another on a regular basis didn't know if the other liked them back. He didn't know what to say.

"Burn, what should I do?" She asked desperately, hoping that he had the answer.

He wanted to tell her that Samuel liked her too, but he wanted to keep this guessing game going for some odd reason. He thought this situation was comical in a way and wanted to know how long it would take them to realize that the other likes them back.

"Tell him that you need some company," he strongly suggested. "Go watch the movie *Divergent* or *Enemy*. And if you don't want to go to the movies,

then go to Galaxy. Ask him to go anywhere and I promise you he will agree to go with you."

After telling her about what he thought to be a brilliant idea, he winked at her. She took it the wrong way. "Burn, don't wink at me. I don't like you remember."

**Part 2:**

It was March 22, 2014, two days after Janelle last spoke to Burn. She was strongly considering the suggestions of Burn and was contemplating on calling Samuel. She had a major fuss in her mind, doubting if what Burn was implying was true. She believed Burn was trying to tell her that Samuel liked her, but in her mind it was difficult to believe. She laid on her bed, asking herself the same question.

"Does Samuel really like me?"

That question loomed, echoing from numerous directions. It came from the ceiling, walls, and

floor as it bombarded her mind with insurmountable confusion. She felt as if she was devoid of comprehension.

She called Burn, but he didn't pick up the phone call. Then, out of courage she called Samuel.

"Hello," he said.

"Hey Samuel," she hesitated.

"What's up?" He smoothly asked.

"Oh nothing, j-ust needed some company tonight," she said slowly. "I was just wondering if you wanted to go watch a movie together like a date or something."

"YES," he hollered. "Sorry. I'll pick you up at 9. What movie?"

"Cool. I'll be ready. I was thinking about *Divergent* or *Enemy*," she said proudly.

Samuel rolled into the driveway and honked his horn. When she came out with her tight blues on and face gleaming with magnificence, his adrenaline got going. She entered and sat in the passenger seat, smiling at him as if she won a prize. He drove to Aventura, while few words were said.

They arrived at the mall, went up to the third floor where the movie theater was located, purchased their tickets for *Enemy*, and hung around for 10:45 in Johnny Rockets. It was 10:17; they were sitting across from one another and he ordered 20 piece Rocket Wings and two Vanilla Flavor Shakes for both of them. They received their food, but ate in silence. Speaking seemed inevitable as she stared at him, noticing his erratic disposition.

“What’s wrong?” She asked concerning his lack of interaction. “Why are you acting so weird? You’re never like this.”

“I don’t know,” he replied not even making eye contact.

“You sounded excited on the phone, but now we’re here and it seems like you don’t want to be here,” she said trying to provoke him to be more engage.

“I’m sorry,” he apologized. “It’s just that I don’t want to mess up.”

“What do you mean mess up?” She asked. “We always go out together.”

He shook his head as if he was denying what she said. “But you said date.”

“Yea, we always go on dates, though,” she said.

“But I don’t call those dates,” he replied quickly.

She laughed, smiling from cheek to cheek. “Well I do.”

He quickly looked at the time; it flew by like a jet on a mission. It

was now 10:55 and they made their way to the theatre. They arrived outside of theatre 22, and just as they were making their way in, she held his arm back, keeping him from going in.

“I spoke to Burn and he’s the reason we’re here right now,” she said.

“What do you mean?” He asked.

“Before I answer that question, can I ask you something?” She responded.

He nodded his head.

“Do you like me?” She asked, while she examined his demeanor.

He smiled, nodding his head. “Very much.”

“UGHH. Then, why haven’t you ever said anything?” She cried.

He was mute, trying to find words to express his feelings

towards her. He did his best processing words, but he couldn't get the words out in time.

"If you really like me, then kiss me."

He leaned in with lips tightly knitted together, while he closed his eyes. She met him halfway. They were kissing for what seemed to be eternity in their minds, but only 10 seconds in real time. After, they went into the theatre holding hands. They were finally official.

**Part 3:**

It was March 25, 2014, Tuesday morning, and Burn was in math class wondering where Samuel was or where he could be. Class began with the teacher teaching them about how to solve a parabola. Burn was lost, daydreaming about food. Then, his phone buzzed three times. Janelle sending him three messages that seemed more like

paragraphs than text messages to him. He read it, dissecting the words and realizing all her grammar mistakes. A grin appeared on his face, while Samuel made his way in. He took a glance at Samuel and the joy that he displayed was so evident. Samuel sat next to him with a smile that couldn't be broken.

"Thank you, man," Samuel simply said.

"No problem," Burn whispered. "Janelle said you and her had a good time."

Samuel smiled, blushing a little. "Yes, we did."

"Okay, can we now focus on school?" Burn asked.

Samuel stretched out his hand and they did their handshake. After Burn turned their attention to the teaching, while Samuel pulled out two tickets and handed it to him. Burn flipped

out, oozing with happiness. The teacher looked at them, pausing, then asking them to leave. They got up and left quietly, closing the door behind them.

"God bless your soul," Burn yelled joyfully.

"Yea, no problem," Samuel replied. "Me and Janelle are going too. Bring a date or something."

"Can't believe you got tickets for the Heat game that are actually good seats," Burn said, while he stared at the tickets in awe.

"Man, don't worry about it," Samuel responded. "You set up the perfect match."

**Be What Changed the World**

By Gabrielle Lawson

You say you're a normal person  
Average as average gets  
Here you stand unaware of what you possess  
Something so special I can't express  
Deep into your center  
What rocks you to the core  
Is the fear that's blinding you  
You don't have to be scared anymore

See through your humble eyes  
Things that can't be described  
Lonely is a sacrifice  
Come out of the shadows  
Reappear from the background  
The spotlight is on you now

Look at me now  
No longer afraid  
It makes me laugh to look back on the old days  
And those days were long and those nights were  
even longer  
Those fights were tough  
But your battles make you stronger  
Your will was weak but now you're willing to seek  
Your place in this world, your cry for peace

You turned water into fire  
With your love and burning desire  
Seeking knowledge from the past  
Searching your mind time after time  
For the answers to the questions of life  
It was no surprise that you realized  
That your purpose was to change lives  
You'll live on forever I know  
Helping the minds of others grow

You walked out through the fire unscathed  
The world raved about your success  
You lay your weapon down  
You are changed now

To every lie worth repeating  
Every invisible person worth seeing  
I want to break through to your heart's truth  
Bring you back to life, see what you can do  
I know what I'm signing up for  
But fear never stopped the greatest of wars  
Join me and together we can be what changed  
the world



**Authors!**

- Theodore Geisel (Mar. 2)**
- Jack Kerouac (Mar. 12)**
- Tennessee Williams (Mar. 26)**
- Robert Frost (Mar. 26)**
- Anne McCaffrey (Apr. 1)**
- Washington Irving (Apr. 3)**
- Maya Angelou (Apr. 4)**
- Thomas Jefferson (Apr. 13)**
- William Shakespeare (Apr. 23)**

**The Writer’s Group meetings are held the first Tuesday of every month in the second floor conference room from 6:00 – 7:30pm.**

**\*Upcoming dates for 2016:**

- May 3, June 7, July 5, Aug 2, Sept 6, Oct 4, Nov 1, Dec 6.**

**The Poetry Club meetings are held the third Tuesday of every month in the second floor conference room from 6:00 – 7:30pm.**

**\*Upcoming dates for 2016:**

- May 17, June 21, July 19, Aug 16, Sept 20, Oct 18, Nov 15, Dec 20.**

From picture books and novels to poetry, stop by and discuss your ideas. Submit your short story or poem to be published in the monthly Portal to Daniel W. Butler at [dabutler@broward.org](mailto:dabutler@broward.org). All communications with the editor and all inquiries concerning this publication should be addressed to: Daniel W. Butler, the Portal Editor

South Regional/BC Library  
7300 Pines Blvd.  
Pembroke Pines, FL. 33024.  
Telephone: 954-201-8896  
[dabutler@broward.org](mailto:dabutler@broward.org)

**The PORTAL** was designed, produced, and edited solely by the instructor and students of the South Regional / Broward College Writer’s Club and Poetry Club for non-profit.

The opinions expressed are those of the members of the Writer’s Group, and does not necessarily represent those of the staff, administrators, or trustees of the Broward County Libraries Division.

**The PORTAL pamphlet is paid for by the Friends of South Regional / Broward College Library and is not to be duplicated or used for commercial purposes.**

**\*All copyrights revert back to the original artist and authors after publication.**

Copyright 2016

**FEEDBACK CORNER**

We want to hear from you! Let us know what you think of our stories. Feel free to email Daniel W. Butler, head of the writer’s group at [dabutler@broward.org](mailto:dabutler@broward.org) or call (954) 201-8896.

**Contributing Authors include:**

**Eric Ansel**

**Pierre Bernensky**

**CP Bialois/Ed White**

<https://cpbialois.wordpress.com/>

**Meagan Cahuasqui**

<http://meagankimberly.tumblr.com/>

**DiVitto Kelly**

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

**Sheila Klein**

**Gabrielle Lawson**

**Angela Mary Piraino**

**Rick Weber**

**Jamie White**

<http://www.jamielwhite.com>

