



March/
April
2021

West Knox County Senior Center The *Scene*

Knox County Recognized Holidays: April 2nd for Good Friday.

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Announcing Sudden Fiction Competition

In January we announced our Flash Fiction Competition. We're hoping this will become a new annual tradition at West Knox County Senior Center. The stories that were submitted start on page 12 of this edition of *the Scene*. As a reader we're requesting you be the judge. Read through the entries and let us know which one was your favorite.

As spring approaches we now offer our Sudden Fiction Competition. Sudden Fiction, much like Flash Fiction, is defined as very short stories that evoke a single moment or an idea. Some common characteristic of Sudden Fiction is its brevity, complete plot, and often incorporates a surprise, an unexpected or twist ending with a goal to prompt the reader to think deeply about what the author is conveying.

To learn more about our Sudden Fiction Competition and how you can enter read the announcement on page 7.

Community Outreach Services

Social Worker Outreach

Sara Mary Wallace with CAC Office on Aging continues to be available to answer your questions and assist you with finding resources and services to meet your needs. Sara Mary is a licensed Master Social Worker and Certified Information and Referral Specialist in Aging/Disability. You can also contact her at (865) 546-6262 or by email at: Saramary.Wallace@knoxseniors.org

Veterans Services Outreach

Knox County Veteran Services Office assists Veterans and their dependents in filing applications for: Service Connected Disability Compensation, Improved Pension Program with Housebound Aid and Attendance, Health Benefits Enrollment, Veteran Insurance programs and more. For additional information and to speak with a representative from the Veteran Services Outreach Office call (865) 215-5645 or email at: Veterans@knoxcounty.org

West Knox County Senior Center ~ 239 Jamestowne Blvd., Ste 101 ~ Knoxville, TN 37938

West Knox County Senior Center

Knox County Health Department Has Launched new COVID-19 Vaccine Registration Platform with Wait List

The Knox County Health Department is scheduling appointments for the COVID-19 vaccination. Individuals must meet eligibility requirements to receive the vaccine for the phase in which vaccinations are provided. To schedule an appointment or to check on the status of available appointments, visit the Knox County Health Department website at www.KnoxCounty.org/health or phone the Knox County Health Department Public Information Line at 865-215-5555, or contact your Primary Care Provider for additional information on vaccination availability and eligibility.

March 10th ...Name that Tune

Join Brooke Thurman with Core Insurance Advisors of Knoxville on Zoom for a fun game of Name That Tune on Wednesday, May 10th at 11:00 AM. It's easy to play, just listen to a few seconds of the song and guess the title and the artist who sang it. To obtain your Zoom link to participate email: Robyn.Trostle@knoxcounty.org



March 10th ... Phone-In Legal Advice Clinic for Veterans

This general advice clinic with a variety of issues, including family law, landlord/tenant, bankruptcy, criminal defense, consumer protection, contract disputes, child support, personal injury, among other issues is a free service to Veterans. **Pre-registration is required.** You can pre-register by phoning 865-637-0484 to request clinic intake. Be sure to identify yourself as a veteran so your call will be routed appropriately. At intake, a staff will gather information, including information about the legal issue. This information will be provided to the assigned attorney, who will contact the veteran by telephone on Wednesday, February 10th between the hours of 12:00 PM and 2:00 PM. The Veterans' Legal Advice Clinic is a joint project of the Knoxville Barristers, the Young Lawyers Division of the Knoxville Bar Association (KBA), KBA/Barristers Access to Justice Committees, Legal Aid of East Tennessee, Knox County Public Defender's Community Law Office, the University of Tennessee College of Law, Lincoln Memorial University—Duncan School of Law, and the local VA office.

March 17th ... Good Brain Health and Essential Oils

The brain, like the rest of the body, needs to be kept healthy and active. There are numerous ways to keep the brain engaged learning new language, a new skill, and establishing appropriate rest and sleep patterns. Essential oils are thought to be beneficial in memory function, maintaining your focus, and improving concentration and just one of the small steps to promote a better mood, greater happiness, and good brain health. To learn more about the easy and natural ways to boost your good hormones, or brain chemicals join Richard Molsbee and Deborah Bond on Zoom on Wednesday, March 17th at 11:00 AM. To obtain your Zoom link email: Robyn.Trostle@knoxcounty.org



“If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant.”

Anne Bradstreet



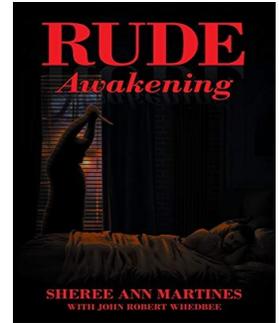
Follow Knox County Senior Services on Facebook

If you're on Facebook you can follow Knox County Senior Services for information on West Knox County Senior Center and the other Senior Centers in Knox County. Just simply Like Knox County Senior Services.

West Knox County Senior Center

March 24th ... Book Talk: Rude Awakening

Visit with Sheree Ann Martines on Wednesday, March 24th at 11:00 AM when she will talk about her book Rude Awakening. Based on a true crime story in Knoxville. Martines writes, ‘The reporters said it was a sexy story—church, money, greed, adultery, blood, and a defenseless child with profound disabilities, and a good man who never saw it coming....’ To obtain the Zoom link to attend this presentation email: Robyn.Trostle@knoxcounty.org



March 31st ... Our Journey Into Self Publishing

Visit with us on Zoom on Wednesday, March 31st 1:00 PM and meet Ron Pressley and Nancy Holder. They have co-authored Blood Brothers: A Family Divided and Blood Brothers II: Reconstruction-Racism-Riots-Ratification. It's the story of a young Irish immigrant and how the American Civil War eventually rips into the fabric of his family. They will talk about their journey into Self-Publishing. To obtain your Zoom link to participate email: Robyn.Trostle@knoxcounty.org

Music For Seniors Free Weekly Programs

Music for Seniors continues their weekly music programs with their free virtual outreach online, and other programs as well. To have their free online programs delivered directly to your email in-box and learn more about how they're engaging people in their programs feel free to visit: www.MusicForSeniors.org.

COVID Utility Relief Effort

Funds for this program are being provided through KUB's TVA Pandemic Relief Credit. Electric services must be provided by KUB (Knoxville Utilities Board) to quality. Funds may be utilized to satisfy electric, gas, water, and wastewater charges. To make application or obtain additional information for CURE (COVID Utility Relief Effort) contact CAC Office on Aging at 865-244-3085 or email: CACintake@knoxcac.org.

View the e-Newsletter On-Line & More

The West Knox County Senior Center e-Newsletter is also available online. It's easy to see and convenient to refer friends and family to view the newsletter as well. Just go to: www.knoxcounty.org/seniors and click on West Knox County Senior Center. While on the website you can also view newsletters from the other Knox County Senior Centers: Carter, Corryton, Halls, Karns, and South Knoxville Senior Center.

“Springtime is the land awakening. The March winds are the morning yawn.”

Lewis Grizzard

Senior Walks for March & April

Town Creek Greenway

Date: Tuesday, March 16th

Time: 2:00 PM

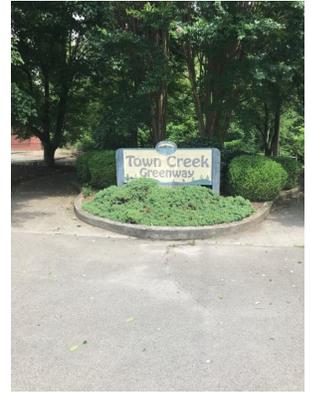
Location: 705 E. Broadway St., Lenoir City, TN 37771

Join Susanne Huff and Scot Bellavia from Knox County Senior Services at **705 E Broadway St, Lenoir City, TN 37771**. We'll walk a paved greenway that is 3 miles out and back. The mileage is marked beginning at 0.0 where we start so you can turn around whenever and still know your total, if you aren't comfortable walking all 3.0 miles. The parking lot is across the street from a Pilot gas station.

If there's interest after the walk, we can take the sidewalk along Broadway Street to **Master Donuts**, just 0.2 miles from the parking lot.

RSVP by emailing SeniorServices@knoxcounty.org or call **865-288-3761**.

*Please wear a mask and
we'll stay physically
distanced throughout the walk.*



Seven Island Birding Park

Date: Tuesday, April 20th

Time: 9:30 AM

Location: 2809 Kelly Ln., Kodak, TN 37764

Join us for a senior walk and birding tour at one of Tennessee's premier birding destinations, Seven Island Birding Park (2809 Kelly Ln., Kodak, TN 37764). Birding expert, Mr. Robert Terrell will be leading our tour. We will meet at 9:30 AM at the parking lot at Seven Islands and begin our walk at 9:45 AM.

Anticipate a four mile walk with some inclines and declines as well as uneven earthen paths through wooded and open terrain. Bring a brown bag lunch and enjoy lunch at the Bluebird Barn, which is located adjacent to the parking entrance. Remember to wear comfortable shoes, bring snacks if desired, and your binoculars! This walk is brought to you by Robyn Trostle, Coordinator at Karns Senior Center and Darrell Gooding, Coordinator at West Knox County Senior Center. To RSVP by calling **865-288-3761** emailing SeniorServices@knoxcounty.org

Bottled Watered Sponsored by Core Insurance Advisors of Knoxville



Please bring a mask to wear if and when we cannot physically distance from others during this walk.

West Knox County Senior Center

SAIL Exercise Classes

Many of you enjoyed the SAIL (Stay Active & Independent for Life) Exercise Program at the Center prior to the pandemic closing. Kat Eldridge continues teaching SAIL. The class is currently being held at the Dean Hill Recreation Center (7400 Deane Hill Dr. NW) on Monday, (10:15-11:15 AM); Wednesday, (12:45 –1:45 PM); and Friday, (10:15-11:15 AM). For additional information email: Kat354@tds.net.

Yang Style Tai Chi with Pat Barbieri

Instructor Pat Barbieri continues to teach Yang Style Tai Chi on Thursdays 1:30—2:45 PM at the Cove at Concord Park. If you would like additional information including directions to this free Tai Chi Yang Style class email Pat at pbarbier.2000@yahoo.com.

Chair Yoga Class on Zoom

Start your week right with some relaxing chair yoga! This thirty minute class is perfect for beginners, seniors, and those with limited mobility and balance concerns. Please dress in comfortable clothing and appropriate footwear. This class will introduce yoga poses that can be done both sitting and standing, basic breath-work, and stress-reduction meditation. This class is taught by local yoga instructor Jennifer Trussell. It is taught most Mondays at 10:00 AM. If you're interested in registering for this class please email: cedarstudios4@gmail.com



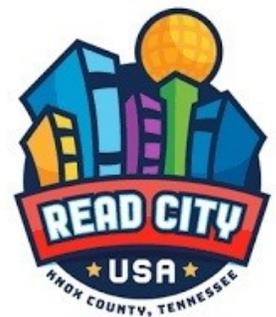
West Knox County Senior Center Library is Available

Although the Center is closed to the public at this time due to the pandemic, we are making the Center's library accessible to you through a list of available books and puzzles. It's simple to participate; find books from the list you would like to read and email Lisa with your choices. You will be notified of their availability. Lisa will work with you to arrange pick-up day and time (providing someone hasn't checked the book out). It's on a first come, first serve basis. You simply drive thru and pick up the books and puzzles, and return them when you're finished. Returned items will be isolated for 72 hours before they're available again. To obtain a listing of books and puzzles from our library email: Lisa.Cooper@knoxcounty.org.



Read City USA Awaits You in 2021

Join Knox County Mayor Glenn Jacobs, Read City USA, and the Knox County Public Library as we read One Million Hours in 2021! #MillionHourExpedition is 1,000,000 hours and it can't be done without you. It's easy to participate, just plan to read twenty minutes per day or more and track your time. For more information on how you can participate go to www.ReadCityUSA.com or visit your local branch of the Knox County Public Library and inquire about Read City USA.



West Knox County Senior Center

Income Tax Assistance Programs



AARP Tax-Aide Program will begin taking appointments over the phone starting February 8th. For information on AARP Tax-Aide please call 865-521-5569.

VITA (Volunteer Income Tax Assistance) is available through CAC Office on Aging. Appointments are required. To schedule your appointment with VITA call 865-244-3086, Monday through Friday 8:00 AM - 4:45 PM.

The Sunshine Line

Wouldn't it be nice to hear another senior's friendly voice on the other end of the phone? A little ray of sunshine for the day! We would like to connect you with another senior from our Knox County Senior Centers to enjoy some neighborly conversation. If you're interested in participating feel free to email Carole with your full name, phone number and the Center you attend. You are welcome to include one or two lines about yourself such as hobbies, interest, past work careers, etc... to act as an "icebreaker" to get the conversation started. Carole will match you with another senior and email you the first name, phone number, and icebreaker info of that senior. Your email to Carole will serve as your authorization to release your phone number and join this program. Phone numbers will be released only to the seniors from our Centers and who have chose to participate in the Sunshine Line. To participate and to obtain additional information email: Carole.Conaway@knoxcounty.org



Interested in Raised Bed Gardening?

By a generous donation from the Farragut and Bearden Rotary Clubs the West Knox County Senior Center has six Raised Garden Beds to enjoy. Raised gardens are easier to access for many individuals. Gardening is a great stress reliever, and affords individuals the opportunity to learn new skills and regain previous skills. It's also just a great way to enjoy and share your enthusiasm with gardening. If you have an interest in raised bed gardening and would like to help plan, plant, and tend the raised beds when we re-open please call the Center at 865-288-7805 and get on our interest list or email: Lisa.Cooper@knoxcounty.org. Hopefully, we'll be playing in the dirt before we know it!

Play Cornhole or Baseball Beanbag

Thanks to a generous donation by the Farragut and Bearden Rotary Clubs we can play Cornhole and Baseball Beanbag at the Senior Center when we re-open and weather permitting. If you would like to play please get on our Cornhole Interest List. You can get on the Interest List by calling the Center or emailing Lisa.Cooper@knoxcounty.org.



THANK YOU



Special Thanks to Farragut and Bearden Rotary Clubs for their generous donation of metal picnic tables, benches, raised garden planters, corn-hole games, and bean-bag baseball game sets made to the West Knox County Senior Center. Their generosity is most appreciated. We look forward to putting these items to good use.

NOW! **Sudden Fiction Competition** NOW!

You're invited to enter the West Knox County Senior Center's Sudden Fiction Competition. Write a fictional story that is 750 words or less. Submit it for review. It must be submitted no later than Monday, March 29th. It will be presented in the May/June 2021 West Knox County Senior Center e-Newsletter. The readers of the e-Newsletter will be invited to vote for their favorite entry. The Reader's Choice will be announced on the Knox County Senior Services Facebook Page along with the authors name. Your submission needs to be sent in either .pdf format or submitted as a hard-copy. To submit your entry email it to Darrell.Gooding@knoxcounty.org or mail it to Sudden Fiction Competition, West Knox County Senior Center, 239 Jamestowne Blvd., Suite 101, Knoxville, TN 37934.

Question: What format do I need to submit my Sudden Fiction entry?

You can submit your entry via email to Darrell.Gooding@knoxcounty.org in .pdf format or mail a hard copy to Sudden Fiction Competition, West Knox County Senior Center, 239 Jamestowne Blvd., Suite 101, Knoxville, TN 37934.

Question: Can I submit more than one piece for consideration?

You can submit up to two entries for the Sudden Fiction Competition. Your submitted work must be previously unpublished and must be original work written by you.

Question: Do I retain the rights to what I write?

Yes, you retain the rights to what you write.



Question: Are there any guidelines for font or spacing?

No, there are no guidelines for font or spacing but please submit a clean and easy to read manuscript.

Question: Is there any certain topic that needs to be addressed in my Sudden Fiction submission?

No, there is no guidelines pertaining to topic—just as long as it's fiction.

Question: What do I need to include with my submission?

Entries must have a cover page with title of the work, author's legal name and pen name (if applicable), entrants mailing address, phone number, email address, and an approximate word count (must be 750 words or less). If you mail a hard-copy you will need to include a self-addressed stamped envelope if you want to the hard-copy returned to you.

Question: Is there a prize or an award?

The Reader's Choice winner will receive a \$30 Gift Certificate to Books-A-Million in Knoxville, their story will be presented in the West Knox County Senior Center's e-Newsletter, and the winner will be announced on the Knox County Senior Services Facebook Page.

Question: Anything else I need to know before I submit my entry?

Just keep it clean and enjoyable. Remember it will be presented in the West Knox County Senior Center e-Newsletter. Submitted work that is determined questionable and objectionable will not be presented in the e-Newsletter. The deadline to submit your work is Monday, March 29th. Entrants for the competition must be fifty years of age or older. There is no entry fee.

Question: I've never heard of Sudden Fiction where can I learn more?

There are some good sources that explain Sudden Fiction. Your local library probably has some Sudden Fiction that you can reference and also on-line research should provide some good sources of information. You may even have Sudden Fiction at home and not realize it. Sudden Fiction in essence is fictional work of extreme brevity (750 words maximum) that still offers character, and plot development.



Virtual Programs



MONDAY

Line Dancing with Tara and Rebecca

Mondays at 12:00 PM

Shine those boots and join this class for beginners. It's perfect if you're just starting out. Patterns are simple and easy to memorize. Join the fun. To receive your link to participate email Tara at:

Tara.Stirone@knoxcounty.org

SAIL Exercise Class

Stay Active & Independent for Life

Mondays at 1:00 PM

This is an exercise class that focuses on falls prevention. This evidence based program is currently taught in twenty-two counties in Tennessee. Join Terri Geiser on Mondays at 1:00 PM when she teaches SAIL Exercise class on Zoom. To obtain your Zoom link to participate email Terri at:

tdgeiser@comcast.net

TUESDAY

Trivia with Darrell

Tuesdays at 10:00 AM

Join Darrell for a mix of general trivia questions. It's easy to play. Each correct answer is worth one point. It's a game where the points really don't matter but the fun does. To receive your personal Zoom invite email:

Darrell.Gooding@knoxcounty.org

Cooking & Recipes with Tara

Tuesdays at 12:00 PM

Join Tara as she whips up some mouthwatering recipes in this weekly live presentation. The classes are interactive and your questions are welcome. To receive your personal Zoom invite to participate email:

Tara.Stirone@knoxcounty.org

Silver Sneakers Classic

Tuesdays at 12:00 PM

Light Exercise designed to increase muscle strength, range of motion, and improve activities for daily living with instructor Don Parsley

To participate in this Zoom class email Don at:

SpiritoftheDragon01@gmail.com

Flow Yoga

Tuesdays at 1:00 PM

With instructor Mr. Don Parsley. For additional information and to register for this virtual class on Zoom email Don at:

SpiritOfTheDragon01@gmail.com

Silver Sneakers Enerchi

Tuesdays at 2:00 PM

With instructor Mr. Don Parsley. For additional information on this Tai Chi class and to register to participate by Zoom you can email Mr. Parsley at:

SpiritOfTheDragon01@gmail.com

Stability Exercise Class

Tuesdays at 2:45 PM

You're invited to join Don Parsley's low impact, balance, and mobility exercise class. It's open to everyone. Silver Sneakers membership is not required. There is no charge to participate. To receive your Zoom link and to RSVP email

SpiritOfTheDragon01@gmail.com



BINGO!

Tuesdays at 3:00 PM

Join Knox County Senior

Centers Virtual BINGO every Tuesday at 3:00 PM.

Seniors 50+ can RSVP to the following email to receive the Zoom link and bingo card(s) to

play along

Fun is highly encouraged!

SeniorCenters@knoxcounty.org





Virtual Programs



wednesday

What Are You Watching?

Wednesday, March 3rd & 17th at 10:30 AM;
Wednesday, April 7th & 21st at 10:30 AM;
What have you been watching to keep yourself entertained? Do you have a favorite movie, mini series, television series, or special? Share your recommendations and possibly even get some ideas of programs you would like to watch. To participate in this Zoom program email:

Lisa.Cooper@knoxcounty.org

SAIL Exercise Class

Stay Active & Independent for Life
Wednesdays at 11:00 AM

Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL) is an evidenced-based program designed to lower the risk of falling. SAIL was created for mature adults and includes: aerobic activity, balance, strength, and flexibility. All of these exercises can be done standing or seated depending on the needs of the student. To join the Wednesday 11:00 AM class via Zoom email Debbie at:

dr719@hotmail.com

Game Social

Wednesdays at 1:30 PM

Join the Virtual Game Social. During January and February we'll be playing modified versions of Scattergories, Name Five, and more. It's fun and easy to play along. To receive your Zoom link to participate email:

Darrell.Gooding@knoxcounty.org

SAIL Exercise Class

Stay Active & Independent for Life
Wednesdays at 2:00 PM

This evidence based program focusing on falls prevention is currently taught in twenty-two counties in Tennessee. Join Terri Geiser on Mondays at 2:00 PM when she teaches SAIL Exercise class on Zoom. To obtain your Zoom link to participate email Terri at:

tdgeiser@comcast.net

THURSDAY

Jaunts with Janet

Thursdays at 10:00 AM

Starting April 8th join Janet Word, Coordinator at South Knoxville Senior Center, as she visits familiar or maybe even not so familiar places for you to enjoy. Janet will be sure to entertain you and maybe even let you reminisce a little. To receive the Zoom link to participate please email your RSVP to:

Janet.Word@knoxcounty.org

Trivia with Scot

Thursdays at 11:00 AM

Are you ready to put your "Jeopardy" watching to the test? Join Scot from the Karns Senior Center on Zoom for a live competition. You'll be teamed up with others around the County. To participate email Scot at:

Scot.Bellavia@knoxcounty.org

Crafting Classes with Susanne

The following Thursdays at 12:30 PM

March 4th—St Patrick's Day Crafts

Learn how to make your own felt shamrocks and "stain glass" artwork.

March 18th - Sun Catcher Crafts

Have fun making sun catchers out of recycled bottles and mason jar rings.

April 1st - Rust Easter Egg Crafts

Transform traditional plastic Easter eggs into beautiful rustic farmhouse decorations.

April 15th -Soda Bottle Kittle Cat Planters

You won't believe how easy it is to create a cute kitty cat planter from recycled soda bottles.

April 29th -Coffee Filter Roses

Learn how to crate and dye your own paper roses out of coffee filters.

To participate and for additional information email
Susanne.Huff@knoxcounty.org



Virtual Programs



Silver Sneakers Classic

Thursdays at 12:00 PM

Light Exercise designed to increase muscle strength, range of motion, and improve activities for daily living with instructor Don Parsley
To participate in this Zoom class email Don at:
SpiritoftheDragon01@gmail.com

Flow Yoga

Thursdays at 1:00 PM

With instructor Mr. Don Parsley. For additional information and to register for this virtual class email Mr. Parsley at:
SpiritOfTheDragon01@gmail.com

Guitar Jam Thursdays

2:00 PM—3:00 PM

The Thursday Guitar Jam looks forward to the opportunity to entertain you. Whether you're looking to play, sing, or just sit and listen, be sure to join every Thursday from 2:00 PM—3:00 PM for an afternoon of music. For more information and to get your Zoom link email Lindsey at:
Lindsey.Erickson@knoxcounty.org

Silver Sneakers Enerchi

Thursdays at 2:00 PM

With instructor Mr. Don Parsley. For additional information and to register for this class email Mr. Parsley at:
SpiritOfTheDragon01@gmail.com



FRIDAY

Outburst!

Fridays at 11:00 AM

You'll never know what topic will be chosen in Outburst! It's a game where a question is asked and you have to match the pre-selected answers in order to score points for yourself or your team.
To receive your Zoom link to play email
Jill.Green@knoxcounty.org

High Noon Hangman

Fridays at 12:00 PM

Play this old-school favorite word game where the goal is simply to guess the missing letters to reveal the word. Be warned every time you guess a wrong letter the hangman begins to appear piece by piece. This game is hosted by Jill Green and Jessica Sexton.
To receive the Zoom link to participate email
Jill.Green@knoxcounty.org

Silver Sneakers Circuit Exercise Class

Fridays at 1:00 PM

For additional information and to sign up for this Zoom class email Don at:
SpiritOfTheDragon01@gmail.com



Silver Sneakers Flow Yoga Class

Fridays at 2:15 PM

Yoga is a terrific gentle activity for beginners and older adults. Let instructor Don Parsley guide you through this seated Yoga class. You do not have to be a member of Silver Sneakers to participate. To join the class email Don at the email below. He will send you a Zoom link to participate.

SpiritOfTheDragon01@gmail.com



Word Search Puzzle

Things Associated with St Patrick's Day



Find the following words:

- Celebrate
- Gaelic
- Shamrock
- Legend
- Lucky
- Tradition
- Gold
- Cobbler
- Green
- Ireland
- Parade
- Emerald Isle
- Snakes
- Leprechaun
- Fiddle
- Shillelagh
- Three Leaf Clover
- Charm
- Rainbow
- March
- Corned Beef
- Cabbage
- Music
- Limerick
- Mischief
- Jig
- Irish
- Pub

R	E	W	J	A	N	Z	A	Q	Y	Q	K	I	J	P	Z	K	N	N
Z	E	R	I	E	N	P	X	X	R	M	M	R	I	D	N	A	U	M
M	D	L	E	M	I	S	C	H	I	E	F	I	G	Z	D	A	D	W
P	R	R	B	E	C	Z	P	P	O	M	M	S	U	O	H	C	O	M
Z	G	A	M	B	I	R	E	L	A	N	D	H	J	C	I	B	U	Z
X	C	Q	H	U	O	B	P	T	E	X	R	T	E	L	N	S	R	O
D	L	O	G	C	A	C	P	P	G	B	R	R	E	I	I	Q	E	C
H	G	A	L	E	L	L	I	H	S	A	P	A	A	C	V	H	S	M
S	H	A	M	R	O	C	K	L	D	E	G	R	J	F	L	U	U	Q
Z	S	J	D	B	H	R	X	I	L	E	T	A	R	B	E	L	E	C
M	V	E	F	L	U	I	T	E	L	S	I	D	L	A	R	E	M	E
Q	A	P	K	S	E	I	S	N	A	K	E	S	K	N	C	B	K	H
Y	U	R	M	A	O	G	I	H	V	D	P	M	J	V	C	C	C	S
B	A	Y	C	N	N	O	E	H	R	A	P	G	T	V	L	A	I	K
P	N	X	G	H	N	S	A	N	R	K	R	F	F	R	U	B	R	F
Y	Z	Z	L	U	M	U	V	A	D	X	C	B	T	B	C	B	E	U
C	A	K	Q	E	Q	S	D	C	O	M	A	M	R	M	K	A	M	G
F	Z	H	Q	I	H	E	B	N	I	L	F	H	E	A	Y	G	I	H
T	H	R	E	E	L	E	A	F	C	L	O	V	E	R	K	E	L	J

You can find the hidden words in the grid by looking Diagonal, Forward, Backward, Up and Down. Circle them or highlight them once you find them.

Special Thanks to Puzzlemaker.DiscoveryEducation.com where you can make your own puzzles for classroom or home use.

May the dreams you hold dearest be those which come true and the kindness you spread keep returning to you.

An Irish Blessing

Flash Fiction Contest

You Be the Judge!

We want to thank you for participating in our Flash Fiction Competition whether you submitted a story or if you plan on reading. The writers have prepared their stories and have submitted them for the competition. You be the judge! Let us know which is your favorite. The Reader's Choice will receive a copy of Robin Wood's Prompt Me: Creative Writing Workbook & Journal and David Galef's Brevity: A Flash Fiction Handbook. In addition, the Reader's Choice will appear in the May/June 2021 edition of the West Knox County Senior Center's eNewsletter and will be announced on the Knox County Senior Services Facebook Page.

There are three ways you can let us know which is your favorite story. You can email Darrell at Darrell.Gooding@Knoxcounty.org or phone in your vote by calling 865-288-7805 or mail a note to Flash Fiction Competition, West Knox County Senior Center, 239 Jamestowne Blvd., Ste 101., Knoxville, TN 37934. We'll need to hear from you by April 5th.

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Abandoned

The robot stood unmoving in the grassy field. A picnic basket hung from one arm and a checkered tablecloth was neatly draped over the other. He had been walking towards a sunny knoll next to a creek when he heard the car doors slam behind him. He stopped and turned and saw the car shudder slightly as its engine started. His big, round, electronic eyes forlornly followed the car as it sped away down the road. His memory banks found no fault with his obeying his owners' commands. If he had been one of the new models with the latest logic circuits, he might have understood what had just happened. And he surely would have grasped why his masters had disabled his wireless app. As it was, you could almost hear his microchips crackling to process the scene.

"Did you see this in the paper, dear?" Kate asked while stirring cream into her coffee at the kitchen table. "Feral Robots Taking Over Neighborhoods."

"No, I didn't read that, but I can believe it," her husband, John, said and reached for another piece of toast.

"Boy, they are becoming such a nuisance," Kate added.

The family robot, Isaac, was busy at the stove frying eggs. "Pardon me, would madam like her eggs over easy as usual?" Isaac inquired.

"That would be perfect, Isaac."

"Fred down at the office lives next to some woods," John continued, "and the bots clamber over the fence at night and plug themselves into his outside outlet to recharge. He has to turn off the beaker for that outlet every night before going to bed. The 'bots won't hurt anyone of course because of the three laws of robotics, but they're worse than gophers. They also try to sneak lubricants and tools from garages to maintain themselves."

"What are people thinking just abandoning their robots in the countryside. I guess they don't like trading in the old robot when buying a new one. They know that the old robot will be disassembled and recycled. Plus, the dealers won't resell it because they want to get the old ones off the market. And if you sell it yourself, you won't get much money, and the buyer is just going to hawk it to some recycler for a few bucks. But the old 'bot is like a family pet, and you hate to see it harmed."



“Oh, your just an old softy, Kate. But no, I agree. We’d have a hard time sending our Isaac to the proverbial ‘glue factory.’ He’s been so useful to us. Makes dinner, does the laundry, cleans house. Is it right to send some semi-intelligent being to oblivion even if its intelligence is only that of a smart dog?”

And he is kind of cute with those big robot eyes, his clumsy gait, and a body that’s sort of like a big balloon animal. I love him, and he keeps me company when you’re playing golf all weekend. He and I have simple conversations, kind of like talking with my nana. Or I’ll read my book while he’s engrossed watching some YouTube machinery video.”

“But let’s be honest. It’s a big problem for people buying a new robot model. You hemorrhage a lot of cash keeping the old one around. It costs a small fortune for the constant downloads, maintenance, new batteries, etc.”

“Yet it would be nice to upgrade to a new model. They can do so much more, although I dread dealing with those salespeople. They always want to up-sell you and then push you into the extended warranty and the body coating even though everyone knows that it’s standard. And when you finally haggle out a price, they pretend like they have to go talk with their boss for approval to give you such a good deal. At least they don’t wear so much plaid these days,” Kate sneered.

“Well, I wouldn’t mind a new model either, especially if it came with a golf tutoring module. I could really use that. Let’s sleep on it for awhile. Wow! Look at the time. I need to head off to work, and I suppose you do too. Friday is always a busy day.”

Kate and John sat down to breakfast the next morning. “It’s nice that Isaac has already put juice on the table and started breakfast,” Kate said. “So then are we still agreed John?”

“Yes, I guess we are,” John said.

“Isaac, would you come here,” Kate said turning towards Isaac. “Would you pack us a picnic basket. We’d like us all to have a nice drive in the country for the day.”



Boxes

Those boxes keep haunting me. I should go through them. I'll get to them later. I didn't want to go through my son's stuff. I don't want to remember that day. But ...

As the policeman stands outside my front door, I sit on the entry steps. 'NO' keeps screaming over and over in my mind.

No time for tears. I have to take care of things. Have to be strong for now.

I should have known. I should have been there for him when it happened. He told me a few days ago about his dream. A dream he said was about him leaving this world. I didn't believe him. Didn't want to believe him.

I was angry that he wouldn't tell me what was going on with him. He wouldn't even tell the doctor. I was angry that he seemed to want to leave this world and I didn't want him to.

Now I am emptying boxes he left behind. 'What if' running through my mind.

He was sick for over three years. So proud that he made it past the two years that was predicted by the doctor.

He looked so healthy that no one could see he was struggling for every breath. He worried about parking in disabled parking because he didn't look sick.

Guess I have to live in this time and get to work on these boxes. I pull out a Snoopy dog from his favorite collection.

I feel a hand laid gently on my shoulder but no one is there.

"You were there for me when I needed you." Flows through my mind and heart. "You turned me loose when I needed to go. That's all that was necessary."

Poof the Snoopy dog disappears from my hand. A gentle laugh can be heard bouncing around the room.

A big beautiful white feather floats into the empty box. I know he's alright now.



Algunas Cosas: a collage of word pictures

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THE LITTLE BOY WHO LOST HIS FRIEND

One day a little boy went out his house to play with his friends. Then his friends broke up and found another friend. The little boy was very sad. He cried so much that he forgot that he had to go into the house. It started to rain and he needed an umbrella. So he jumped into the car and got an umbrella out.

He went into the house and told his mom all about that he had broken up with his friends. Then his mom asked the neighbors if they could teach him some games to play. And they neighbors said that they would be glad to. And the little by was overjoyed and the neighbors said that they would be glad to teach him new games. The little boy jumped up and down with a big smile and clapped his hand.

A few days later he made some new friends. He told his mom that he had some new friends and that he didn't want to play the games his neighbors taught him anymore. He and his new friends had a great time on sunny days. When it started to rain he went back into the house and watched TV. When he got to be seven years old he made big school friends and was very happy.

Quiet Time

I stood on the cliff of the beach. I watched the sun rise with all its pretty colors shining through the sky, as if beckoning the world to come. Hours passed as the water raved with the tide. If the world could come and see what I saw it would be like heaven on earth. If the world could hear what I could hear as I stood on the cliff they would be amazed, with awe.

I had been up for two hours watching this mazing sight. I walked back to my car thinking I would have to do this more often in my spare time of the morning. I got in to my car, started the engine, and started down the interstate. I passed by thousands of cars blowing horns at each other trying to rush to their destination because of the rush hour. I was more peaceful than this. I had a night shift. It seemed to me that the world around me was a mess. All they would think about was themselves. Well, that had nothing to do with me. I was worried about getting home to see my dog Ruff and feed him.

When my car drove into the driveway of my house my dog jumped with joy to see that I was finally home. My house in Virginia was a two-story house with an attic. It was all I needed. I had learned when I was a child to only keep the bare necessities so I would have room for other pleasures. Right now I had to do my chores before I went to sleep for the night shift. I fed Ruff, prepared my bed and went to sleep. Tomorrow would be another day.



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I am Who I am

I am an average guy who likes Starbursts

I wonder where I could find Sanyika Shakur's book Monster

I hear no imaginary sounds

I see myself driving a brand new sports car

I want ten million dollars

I am an average guy who likes Starbursts

I pretend that I can slam-dunk

I feel that I am floating

I touch plenty of money every day

I worry that I might make a bad grade

I cry when I smell raw onions

I am an average guy who likes Starbursts

I understand that some people are prejudice

I say that Michael Jordan cannot play baseball

I dream of big money and fast cars

I try to remember important things

I hope that the school year goes by fast

I am an average guy who likes StarburstsI am who I am!



Following Genealogy 101 Class, Local Man Believes His Mother to Have Been the Lost Princess Anastasia

Jerry McLeod has been attending Genealogy 101 at Karns Senior Center for a few months now. After weeks of dead ends, he made an unexpected breakthrough.

“Of course, I knew my immediate family. My dad’s side had nothing noteworthy. In fact, I didn’t search past my great-great-grandfather because they all lived where I grew up. I could’ve found the same information in my hometown’s archives. But when I traced Mom back, there were clues of some Russian lineage,” McLeod told reporters.

Being on the other side of the world, the Russia link intrigued him. He found some documents from his mom’s estate in his attic, but they were very confusing. Most of them had been officially redacted, but much of what remained was in Russian. He translated what he could with an online translator. It seemed that his mother was an immigrant from Moscow.

As far as he remembered, she hadn’t ever spoke of this heritage and had no discernable accent—certainly not Russian. If the attic documents and what he’d found online were to be trusted, the late Mrs. McLeod had formulated quite an alibi for herself throughout her life. She had friends and family who attested to her American upbringing. McLeod even had cousins on her side.

So how could he reconcile what he found with what he knew ... or thought he knew?

McLeod continues his search. He found a partially-redacted report online that that told of a surrogacy birthing service the royal family employed. He also learned of a long-standing adoption agency in St. Petersburg. It turned out that this agency had been around since the 1800s and was privately funded by the Romanov family when Nicholas II was emperor.

“Yea, so it’s actually a pretty dark story. Nick’s [Emperor Nicholas II] wife was infertile, but they had to preserve the family line. Representatives of the family visited orphanages across the country to find children that might be suitable for royal life. They also maintained contact with widowed and abandoned pregnant women to see if they’d be willing to sell their babies once they gave birth.”



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Unsurprisingly, the orphanages, even some of the mothers, wanted their children to grow up as royalty. Eventually, the representatives of the family settled on four girls and one boy. The boy and the youngest sister came from a woman whose husband left her when she was pregnant with the boy, whom she named Alexei. The daughter was renamed Anastasia when she moved to the palace. The three older sisters came from separate orphanages in Siberia.

The children were tutored by a monk, Grigori Rasputin, who had initially been hired by the emperor and empress as a faith healer, claiming he could cure her infertility.

McLeod explains, “So anyway, I got to reading more about the family and read about their murder, *alleged* murder, during the Russian Revolution. There was a lot of speculation about what happened to each of them but especially to the one princess, Anastasia. I connected some more dots and bada-bing, bada-boom, Bob’s your uncle! Well, Alexei is my uncle.”

According to McLeod’s research, the princess Anastasia was smuggled out of the country in a cryogenic apparatus created by Rasputin. This preserved her body but wiped her memory. She had some papers attached that were interpreted later by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection as an undocumented immigrant from Russia.

Reporters asked Debbie Russell, Genealogy 101 instructor, what she thought of McLeod’s findings.

“Um...he didn’t really participate in class. He just sat in the back watching conspiracy videos on YouTube.”

At press time, McLeod announced he’d begun a copyright lawsuit against a jewelry company for using his mother and uncle’s nicknames, Alex and Ani.

Sounds too good to be true? It is! Watch a class on fake news at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Co5MbXGZi-g&t=4s>



Soothsayer

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People talked about Maudene Mayacre. They judged her indecorously. She lived south of the Courthouse square. Her house was along an unkept lane that trailed to the old cemetery. It was a lane you'd expect in the country and not necessarily close to the heart of our small town. The house was weathered, covered in a tar paper siding that looked like rough gritty gray stone. It was a place you'd expect Maudene to call home. From here she could hear the Courthouse clock chime, the ringing church bells, the bustle along main street, and sometimes the muffled chatter from the lumber yard. I thought it was the most perfect place to live—it was a part of everything without being a part of anything.

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“She’s no widow,” was said more than once. Everyone knew the story that everyone else repeated; Maudene’s husband left several years ago. The town-folk murmured not that anyone knew anything more of them, or of him, other than he had been Mr. Mayacre, a traveling salesman. They spoke of him in past tense and Maudene remained. They had to have someone to judge as people in small towns do.

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I curiously looked a word up in the library when I was ten. Turning the pages in large volume of Webster’s dictionary I found the word soothsayer. That’s what Maudene was. “She’ll tell your fortune,” Grandma said, “but we don’t go for things like that.” Most town folk had their own mountain superstitions that they felt served their needs just as well. Some of the older kids and adults spoke of Maudene’s old black hat. She would thrust her face into it, shake violently, mumbling, and after moments recovered pull the hat away from her face and enlighten them with revelation. “I touched the hat once,” Gladdice Eldridge whispered in the school yard with an assurance uncommon to her age, “It made me sick and gave me nightmares.” They made it sound frightening just as it sounded invitingly irresistible. I found it all captivating.

This particular summer, I made my way down the sparsely graveled lane surrounded by rambling blackberries, neglected wild roses, and milkweed. Maudene was on the porch snapping beans. She saw me coming but didn’t acknowledge me until I stopped at the opened gate. “What can I help you with?” she asked. I spoke.

“I can’t hear a word you’re saying. Come up here to the porch.”

“This here’s for you,” I said making an offering of my meager savings. “I am here to get my fortune told.”



FLASH

FICTION

CONTEST

She studied me rolling the coins in her hand. “At this point in your life, I dare say you have little care for such things.” She returned the coins. “You’re here to see an old woman and what her life is like.” She walked to the edge of the porch and looked at the garden rows withering in the summer heat. “I wouldn’t mind some help around the place—not much—but a few dollars a week if you help tend the garden and the yard. Is that something you can do?”

I spent a few hours a week at the weathered house on the neglected lane. I worked and paid particular attention when people come for an audience with Maudene Mayacre, soothsayer. I observed closely as she placed the worn black silk hat over her face. She fell into jerking motions, seizures, and inaudible mumblings. When she pulled the hat away she was breathless, exhausted as if returned from a demanding journey. She told them what they came to hear. Some satisfied, some mystified, some unsure what transpired. They left their money on the table. I wanted to try my hand at it, too. My opportunity came one day when a teenage girl came down the lane with a couple of friends following close. With hesitation she approached. Her friends waited aside the lane partially hidden by the brambles. Clearing her throat she made her presence known.

“Can I help you?” I asked trying to make myself look as though I belonged and knew what I was doing. I felt confident. Maudene was behind the house tending apple trees. She’d never know. It didn’t take long and what harm would there be?

“I want my fortune told.” She was impatient.

I retrieved the top hat from inside the door and took my seat in the chair Maudene occupied when doing readings. One deep breath and I pulled the hat tight around my face.

There was darkness inside the hat. Then a flash of light streaked past me. I was pulled toward a distant void. There was more than just the speeding streaks of light, there were other things—everything and nothing. Was I breathing? I wasn't sure. How far had I gone? Miles beyond comprehension? How long was I gone? Maybe seconds, perhaps a measure of time I could never explain. It was frightening. I heard myself yell. It took strength to pull the hat from my face and then found myself where I began—on the porch with the sound of cicadas, the sun hot, the scent of milkweed in the air. The experience left me dizzy and shaken.

“Well!? Am I going to be famous?” she asked.



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“You’re going to be a carnival freak.” I said in a matter-of-fact way.

“A freak!?! I am going to be a magician’s assistant!”

In a huff she was down the steps. Her feet stomping along the lane leaving a whisper of stirred dust behind. She met her friends and continued on their way, arms flailing, sharing her disappointing experience, no doubt.

I was startled when Maudene stepped from inside the house. “I am not sure it’s the right size for you,” she said taking the hat from my lap. “Like most things in life, it’s something you’ve got to grow into.”

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Monday Night

It started out a usual Monday night, the bar was all but empty as I sat in my usual darkened corner booth. The gloom of the night life around me hardly illuminating the looming, glaring shadows that seemed to hang on just as a reminder of the bars inhabitants' bad decisions and cigar smoke. The events of the day ran together without anything of interest to pick out. Hearing her voice, my eyes were drawn to her sitting up at the bar, so close. The echo of her beautiful voice resonating in my ears making it impossible for me to focus on the work I had shuffled in front of me a hundred times already knowing I had abandoned it as fruitless for the evening. Her obviously fake platinum blonde wig sat slightly askew on her head showing one long wavy strand of natural red curly hair underneath shining brightly in contrast of the dank atmosphere. The unremarkable and tired looking man she sat with teased her and pulled at the strand. She laughed her bell-like laugh that rang out across the emptying room appearing at least momentarily to lift the gloom for just a moment before it settled back down as she pulled her blonde bob off. Even still wearing her stage Marilyn Monroe costume and too-done make-up she looked a vision, the dim lighting highlighting her long lashes and gorgeous shoulders. I sat and marveled until I knocked over the now room temperature beer I had ordered hours before, it splashed all down myself and all over the work I had been disregarding. She glanced over and locked eyes with me for just a half a breath before I clumsily mopped up the table the best I could collecting the salvageable papers as best I could. Her date all the while staring lazily at my mistake unmoved by the incident; the bartender scowled and stomped over to me pointing to the door, "Out!" he demanded yanking my empty beer glass away and pulling me up by my now soaking coat.

My work damp and crinkled I scrambled out of his grasp stumbling as I did knocking over a chair and the bartender barked another "OUT!" as I tumbled out the door and made my way home red-faced and dazed remembering her singing from earlier in the night. The enormous green-roofed hotel building materialized before me, foreboding with its gargoyles protecting its many secrets. I could hear the sound of the rolling waves nearby come crashing down on the rocky shore from the storm that had since passed. I walked ineptly down the road my shoes making the brick reverberated down the deserted corridor half humming to myself "Stars shining bright above me"... I looked up from the bleak, rainy dark pathway I was trekking to the dark sky above and saw one twinkling bright star in the sky. The moon was almost completely covered by gray foreboding-looking clouds... "dream a little dream of me"... I yawned. Stumbling as I trudged my path back to my interim home and rummaging for too long in my beer-soaked pockets. I came up empty and grimaced and cursed allowed. Scowling, I turned to make my way back to that pitiful room I knew too well hoping I had lost them in the commotion of my spilled beer. Back up the street, I lumbered on cursing the



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whole way. The moon was completely hidden behind bellowing, pillowy clouds now and the streets were deserted besides the odd vagabond cowering in corners and alleyways. She was still sitting there the man sitting next to her had gone and the bar was almost empty.

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‘No one drinks on Mondays’, I thought to myself as I slightly nodded my head in her direction hoping she’d notice. It was too dark to know for sure but it looked for a second, like she smiled back before turning back to the bartender she was now having a conversation with. This particular bartender never remembered me, but tonight he did. He yelled at me to leave and I grumbled about losing my keys he huffed a sigh of annoyance and I grimaced as I watched their muffled conversation continue. I was curious but too groggy to act on it and slowly trying to fade into the background as to not get the bartenders attention and found my sticky table. I searched in the damp cushions and on the filthy ground beneath and found the keys below the beer-sodded bench and left with one more sideways glance at the would-be Marilyn who was still in deep conversation with the half-wit bartender. I look back to this monumental innocuous night frequently wondering how I couldn’t have realized, how I could’ve not seen that this was the catalyst that would launch me to where I was now. I think back on it longingly wishing to go back and make different decisions but then I wouldn’t have the knowledge I now possess...

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The Train Ride

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It seems like I had been holding this shovel forever, at least all of my life. Spreading this gravel along side the railroad track was a neverending job. If I could only be free like the hobos that I see who gather in the low spot below the tracks. They come and go each time the train makes its daily stop while I am stuck here at this job. The ‘Bos had no job and I watched them every day with envy, plotting the time when I would make my break, and join them. The thoughts of travel, riding the train and seeing new places was more than I could endure.

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I was standing with my shovel on the day of opportunity when this strange feeling came over me and I methodically tried to remove my hand from the shove. It was like an overwhelming power that I had never had before as my hand raised in a greeting motion toward the hobo jungle. One of the men waved back, motioning for me to come over. His name was Ernie and the group was preparing to travel to a warmer climate. Winter was coming on and I was invited to go along. Well, why not? I would never get an opportunity like this again and I agreed with enthusiasm. We were not sure where the train was going but we looked for one going in the right direction.

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I don’t know how long we rode, half the time dozing off and the other times watching the world go by through the open door. After awhile the train started to slow down as the scenery slowly changed from open farm land to houses, factory buildings and railroad facilities. Ernie, being experienced in this sort of travel, warned me to be ready to jump if the train stopped in the railroad yards. Well, slow down and stop it did, and Ernie hopped out. That’s when the train lurched, nearly knocking me off my feet. The car door that we couldn’t close, suddenly jarred free and rolling on its track, slammed shut, trapping me inside this dark prison.

The door was already damaged and it left a large crack along the edge, letting in some light. I looked for Ernie through the crack but the train was moving now and Ernie was nowhere in sight as the countryside was moving too quickly. Trackside objects were flying past the crack in the door was great speed as I tried to get my thoughts together. Where was I heading and how long will I be in this boxcar? Riding the rails was not the thrilling adventure that I had dreamed about when I was shoveling along the tracks. There, I was close to my friends, the hobos. Looking through the crack, I thought I caught a glimpse of Ernie. He had jumped off, what seemed like hours ago. But wait, I just saw him again, and then he was gone. Were my eyes playing tricks on me or was I really seeing Ernie every couple of minutes through the crack in the door opening?



After what seemed like an endless ride, the train was slowing down. Then it came to a stop. Then I heard a burst of air from the brake lines as the car was being uncoupled from the train. Where was I? Was somebody going to open the door? Was I supposed to be in here? What if I got caught? For once, I wished I was at my station with my shovel where I was supposed to be. After many long minutes of anxiety, the broken door slide own with a sudden flash of light coming across the center of the car. Looking out, I could see only inside a warehouse-like building as the car was spotted evenly with the open doorway. It was an unusual building and the inside was completely empty. The walls looked like they were made of balsa wood and the floor was strange too. I had to get out of there and I hurried to the nearest door and pushed against it. It wouldn't budge and it seemed to be glued shut.

Where was I? Was it possible that the boxcar ride sent me into another world? A makebelieve world of model railroading? That's crazy! But what about the balsa wood building? I must be trapped in a model world. And what about Ernie and the others? Were they real or just models? I had to get out this medium and get back to reality. Or was this reality? It was starting to come together now. I remember how I saw glimpses of Ernie through the crack in the door. Of course the model train was going around in a circle and I kept passing the same places as the train circled the layout.

From the building I walked up to the track. There was something familiar about this place, like I had been here before at some point in my life. But I never noticed the balsa wood building. Maybe because balsa wood building were the normal thing. I looked around for some kind answer. I looked for Ernie. There were some figures nearby, but none were moving and seemed to be like they were made of plastic. Plastic people? Hah I really been sent into another world? Or had the train ride been the "other world" and I was just retuning to my former life. It was then that I knew I was at the very spot where I had shoveled for so many years. As I stood there with the shovel in my hand, my eyes lined up with the Hobo jungle and the sight of Ernie and other others with no jobs sitting around the campfire. The shovel never felt better in my plastic hands than it did in that moment. I knew that I was back in my element.



One Woman's Trash

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Nancy Beth stumbled as she hauled the roller trash bin down the driveway to the curb. It was cold and dark. She silently cursed the absence of her husband. The had always been his job. She stopped herself before she became angry at him for dying, remembering how he had always done chores with no complaining. Why had she forgotten the trash until so late? She couldn't see very well at night, the way her eyes were these days, with that cataract her doctor wanted to wait to remove. Also, this time of year, skunks came out at night. She could always smell them the next morning in the yard. Sometimes she even smelled them inside the house if they sprayed too near. Nancy had never met up with a skunk face to face in the wild and she never wanted to.

When she got back inside without any wildlife encounters, she washed her hands and dropped onto the couch to catch her breath. Everything seemed to be such an effort lately. She sorely missed Harvey. He had not only taken out the trash, he'd taken over doing the dishes and laundry for the last few years, telling her that she had done it long enough.

There were so many reasons she missed him. Being alone during the time of COVID had been hard. She hadn't had anyone to talk to in the evenings, no one to warm the bed, no one to hug. And she loved him. Things were better now, but she didn't have the energy to do much.

The discards in the trash bin weighted on her mind that night. She had finally, after three years, gone through Harvey's last few things. Months ago, her son had helped her take the wearable clothing to the charity store and the other kids had picked out what they wanted as keepsakes of their father. What was left, besides what she held onto, was worthless. Some worn out shoes, old clothing with holes and torn places, a down vest that had leaked most of the stuffing years ago. Still, she thought about those things sitting out by the curb. And missed him even more.

John shook the leash and Candy came running, ready for her early morning walk.

"Who's a good girl?" he crooned, squatting down and putting his face near hers while he fastened the leash. Candy's tail whipped harder than ever. She knew she was a good girl.



They set out on the usual route, three blocks up the street, then turn around and come back three blocks home. The sun was warm on his head and shoulders and birdsong serenaded them. John felt good. Finally. He would always miss Carol, his deceased wife, but getting Candy, a beagle mix, from the shelter six months ago had been the best idea he'd had in ages. Before Candy, he'd been challenged by learning to cook and clean, all the things Carol had done for him. But he felt years younger and stronger since he'd started walking Candy every day. She was someone to talk to, and to cuddle with on the couch watching TV in the evening. Or during the day, for that matter. His day and nights sometimes ran together since Covid.

When they reached their turning-around point, Candy reversed, but John wanted to stay outdoors and pulled her forward.

"Let's go another block today, girl. Expand our horizons."

She eagerly agreed and surged ahead. Half way up the block, a trash bin teetered precariously over the curb. Candy lunged at it and knocked it over with a clatter.

"That's not good, Candy." John watched the content strew into the street. Before he could rein her in, Candy tore into one of the plastic bags. "No!" he shouted, and pulled her back, but she had a blue vest in her mouth, a down vest, mostly flat and devoid of the filling. Men's clothing scattered from the bag, some items clinging to the vest. He wondered if there had been a divorce at this house.

"What am I going to do with you?" He pried the garment from her teeth and looped her leash around the mailbox on the other side of the driveway, then knelt and started to gather the clothing to stuff it back into the bag. No good. The bag had a huge hole now.

A shadow fell over him and he looked up to see a woman standing over him, shaking her head and smiling.

John jumped up. "I am so sorry. My dog knocked over your trash bin and pulled these things out."

"I know. I saw it from the house." Her smile was radiant. She held a new plastic bag, which he took and filled with the clothing, and a couple of pair of shoes.

When he was finished, he made sure the bin was secure, not threatening to fall off the edge of the curb.



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"I put it out too far," she said. "It was partly my fault. It's hard to see in the dark."

Unable to contain his nosiness, John asked, "Did you husband get a lot of new clothes?"

She shook her head and her lovely face crumpled slightly. "No, I just got around to getting rid of the last of his things. He passed away a few years ago."

"I lost my wife a few years ago, too. It's been hard, hasn't it? I am John"

She nodded.

He liked how easy it was to talk to her. "Can I take you out for coffee? To make up for tipping your trash over?"

She liked that he was kind, and that he had a dog. You could trust dog lovers. But she would go slowly. "Yes, coffee would be nice Thank you. I am Nancy Beth."

"When she learned down to pat Candy's head, the dog licked her hand.

One woman's trash was another man's treasure, John thought.

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Well, It Could Have Happened That Way

Congratulations! All those hours of sitting through lectures, working massive homework sets, knocking out essays, reading arid textbooks—your did read the text didn't you? - finally paid off with a B.S., B.A., M.S., M.A., M.F.A., M.S.N., D.V.M., D.D.S., M.J., J.S.D., Ph.D., OMG., TMI, or whatever degree your institution awarded you. That was your hunting license to pursue new prey—a job. Now, for academic posts, the hunting license is the terminal degree. And so, in 1980, I took my newly issued hunting license and looked to bag a university job. The trail took me to Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Those southern states were undiscovered country to a kid from Smallville, Iowa who had never crossed the Ohio River. During my quest, which I feared could become an inquest if they found out how much I didn't know, I learned of a peculiar southern joke.

I landed in Columbia, South Carolina on a warm, sultry afternoon in June to interview at the University of South Carolina. Outside the boarding gates, I spotted my host, Steve, who was clutching a card with my name in front of him. We greeted each other and walked out of the airport. Instantly, my lungs struggled with the thick, heavy air. But I did enjoy seeing a piece of South Carolina as we drove to my hotel. You don't have to know much geography to know that the growing season starts much earlier there than in Iowa. Corn was already head high but had barely broken the soil back home. My host dropped me at the hotel so that I could rest. Later, he and another faculty, Charlie, picked me up, and we ate dinner at a nice restaurant.

“What route did you fly to get here?” Charlie asked to make conversation while we waited for our food.

“I flew from Des Moines to Atlanta, had an hour layover there, and then flew on to Columbia,” I replied.

“It's no surprise you went through Atlanta. Almost everyone in the southeast must fly through Atlanta. In fact, when I die, I don't know whether I'll go to heaven or hell. All I know is that I change planes in Atlanta.”

I laughed at this novel joke. But I also felt a strange unease without knowing why.

The next interview was in Gainesville, Florida in July. I spent the night in a nice hotel, had my first, and only, breakfast of grits in the morning, and spent the day interviewing. The regular routine for interviewees is to give a talk to the faculty and graduate students, tour the facilities, and meet with several faculty and administrators.



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I was in the office of one professor having a delightful talk about the program's goals, etc. when he asked, "how was your flight down here?"

"The flight was good and I'm getting accustomed to the busy Atlanta airport."

"You might not know this," he said with an avuncular tone, "but Atlanta is the busiest airport in the U.S. In fact, when I die, I don't know whether I am going to heaven or hell. All I know is that I'll change planes in Atlanta."

I gave a polite chuckle, and my unease grew.

A week later I flew to Atlanta for another interview. I remember the trip well since it was the first time that I ate shepherd's pie, now one of my favorite dishes. I also remember walking to my host's car at the airport to find it had a dead battery. Later, a faculty was driving me somewhere but backed into a fire hydrant and punched out the taillight—the hydrant escaped injury. And then there was the new dean who was walking me back to my host's building but suddenly realized he didn't know where it was. And finally, a faculty was driving me back to my hotel and got lost on the beltway. But besides that, the interview went well and after a full day the faculty had a get together at the department head's house.

I was enjoying a finger sandwich and glass of wine and looking abandoned when two of the interviewers showed charity and came over to talk with me.

"I enjoyed meeting you today and hope we made a good impression on you," one of them said. "Do you fly back tomorrow?"

"Yes."

"What time does your flight leave?"

"My Delta flight leaves at 11 AM, but I would like to get to the airport early. It's a big airport you know."

"That's because Atlanta is the hub airport for the southeast. We have saying down here. When you die, you may not know whether you're going to heaven or hell, all you know is that you change planes in Atlanta."

I managed a strained grin while my stomach turned over.



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The next interview was at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, with the usual routine.

I met with the department head and he explained several things. My memory is a little foggy on what happened next and others may dispute what I say, but as I was getting up to leave, the department head asked, “how was your flight? Did you fly through Chicago or Atlanta?”

“I flew through Atlanta,” I said warily.

He smiled and began to speak, “well you know ...”

I raised my hand and blurted, “stop! I beg you not to proceed, I stand before you a pitiable creature. Mere three weeks ago, my life was full of hope and optimism. But now, I see only despair. I am a broken soul. If you have any mercy, you will not utter that accursed joke. It has become shrill upon my ears and has ruined me.”

The department head grabbed me by the shoulders and hugged me. He said, “please forgive me. I did not know. I will not sleep well until I have helped someone who has suffered so much. Please, please, accept a position here at the University of Tennessee.”

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Why Me?

It was Friday, and there he was in that empty space, all the way down at the end, just before you turned the corner to

To what? That was the question. No one really knew what to expect after such a crazy year. It all started with that horrible coronavirus, COVID-19. Heavens! What a disaster! Over 350,000 people dead in the US alone, not to mention those all around the world. And don't even talk about the economy—totally a mess! So many people out of work; hungry families waiting in mile-long lines for boxes of food. Kids out of school, people wearing face masks and keeping their distance from each other. Holidays ruined, no sports, no concerts, no dinners out with friends and family. Aaarg !!! It was awful. Awful and lonely.

And they all expected **him** to fix it. That was the worst part. The pressure was unbearable. He knew everyone was waiting for him to arrive and usher in some miraculous change. And it didn't help that they threw that virtual party in his honor last night. What did they expect from him? He never professed himself to be anything more than a simple, upstanding figure. He wasn't a showoff like that character in cubicle 8 who literally turned himself inside out trying to impress people.

He felt so boxed in, with nothing to do. Last year there had been a party with colleagues, friends and family. This year, COVID-19 had stopped everything. He was sad to see all the other spaces looked the same—totally empty. Just numbers on the cubicles. And him-lucky him.

“Why me?” he cried. “Why did I have to be that fateful number 1? New Year’s day. January 1, 2021. Happy New Year! Really?”



The Resting Place

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The young man knocked on the door as a chill heightened by a breeze accompanied nightfall. There was a warm glow from the windows as the lamp light stretched out upon the yard to welcome him home. He could hear footsteps within and the door latch being opened. He was greeted by a matronly figure who wasted no time ushering him into the warmth of the large room. “We got word you were coming,” she said, “I am so sorry we couldn’t meet you at the station. Your Grandpa isn’t here yet and neither are your Uncles.”

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“I didn’t mind the walk, Grandma.” he assured her. “It’s not that far.” He set his duffle on the floor. He was home.

“Oh, let me look at you,” She put her hands on his arms and admiring her Grandson in his olive uniform, “Collier, you’re so handsome. You look so much like your Pa.”

“I missed you,” he said looking at her and then letting his eyes take in the room. It was sparsely furnished and cozy. A stone fireplace was central and although no longer used instead it held a small stove that offered a warming fire. The room reminded him of his Grandmother. There was room but not for things that didn’t matter but here was the necessities that made a house a home. “I missed this room and nothing has changed.”

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“I like it this way, too,” she said with satisfaction. “What can I get you?”

“I would just like to warm myself beside the stove.”

“Already have you a chair pulled close to mine.” she said.

“Who all’s here, Grandma?”

“Just your Aunt Laura, myself, and your brother Daniel.”

“Where is Daniel?”

“He’s out doing chores. He’ll be in shortly. He’s going to be excited to see you. I didn’t tell him you were coming home. I wanted it to be a surprise. If he’s surprised too much he gets so worked up you can’t get a days work out of him.”

“I use to be like that.”

“Yes, you were.” Her eyes sparkled and a faint smile accented her face as she reminisced. “I think Daniel’s more like you than you were yourself at his age.”

Collier got comfortable in the chair and gave a satisfying sigh.

“How are you?” she asked, “How are you, really? Is the war over? Is it even close to being over?”

“It is for me.” he said, “And I am fine. I am just glad to be home.” He stretched his feet out.



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It was his distant gaze that concerned her. “I am sorry I made you think of the war. I know you were wounded. I don’t want you to dwell on those things. Forgive me for asking. You’re home now and you’ve got a life to make for yourself.”

“How’s Alice?” realizing he asked sooner than he probably should have.

She laid her knitting aside, “I am not going to lie to you. Alice has the fever. She’s been sick a few days now.”

“I want to go to her.” he said as his brows gathered in a grimace of anxiety. “You know you can’t. The only thing to do is wait. We’ll know something soon enough.”

“I want to marry her, Grandma.”

“I know you do. You’ve been sweet on each other since you were young and underfoot.” She leaned forward and reassuringly touched his knee, “But I will tell you we don’t know what tomorrow will bring. We’ve got to be thankful for the moment. You’ve been to war you know that better than any of us—even me.”

There was an awkward attempt to settle back into silence when the jingling of a telephone sounded from the other room.

“You got a telephone!?” Collier asked in surprise and slight amusement.

“It was more your Aunt Laura’s idea than mine, but it’s come in handy. I won’t begrudge it none now that I got use to it.” Collier stood as she raised herself from her seat and went to answer the telephone. She was back in a few moments to interrupt Collier’s contemplation.

“That was the Hamby’s.”

“About Alice? Collier asked, “Is she ok?”

“She’s going to be fine. You can see her tomorrow.”

They spent time in front of the fire finding contentment in each others company

Collier stood between a row of pews and looked out the Church window. The glass was wavy giving the outside an appearance he had seen in paintings far from home. It was a day made gray by clouds hanging low and a fine mist fell across the pastures. He watched the men working in the graveyard. He observed the headstones as he had many times before. It was a final resting place for several generations of his family, neighbors, early settlers who carved out a community in these mountains and valleys.



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“Collier?” a voice called from the doorway. He turned to see his beloved Alice. Her radiance reminded him of the coming Spring with her pink ribbons and oval face framed by a straw hat. They embraced.

“How are you?” he asked.

“Better now that you’re home,” she said holding his face in her hands. He appeared more a grown man now than he had when he left for France months earlier.

“I am better now that I can see and touch you.”

“You watching them work?” she asked as her eyes looked out the window.

“They’re digging someone’s grave.” he said.

“Whose?”

“I don’t know.”

Alice stepped closer to the window to view the yard more clearly, “It’s your grave next to Daniel’s”.

“Mine? Where will yours be?” he asked.

“Over by the lilac bush that Momma planted so long ago”.

“I guess that doesn’t matter anymore,” Collier said. He played with the ribbon in her hair.

“No, it doesn’t. Now that you’re home. Now that we’re together.”

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