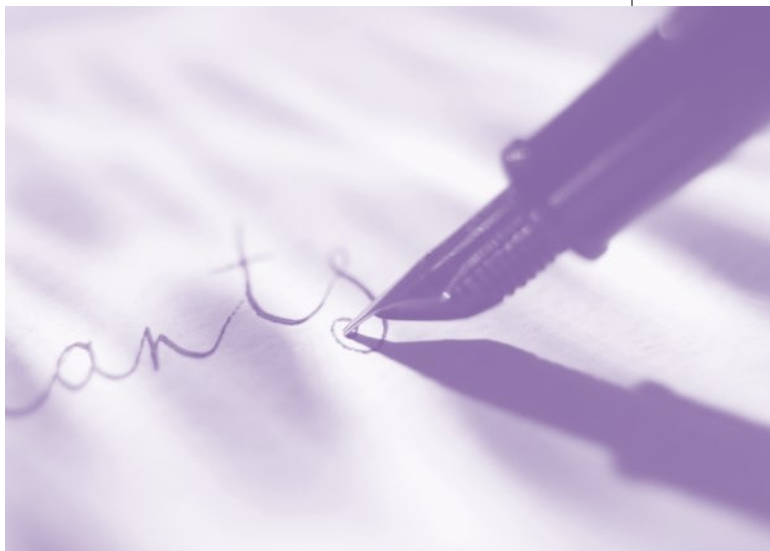


Eastern Illinois Writing Project

Summer Institute 2015



*Creative Writing
Anthology*

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“Yo! Midwest Farmer’s Daughter, You Ain’t No Thug!” by Traci Becker – SI Writing Project

I would have to guess when David Lee Roth said that “Midwest farmer’s daughters make you feel all right” and then wished for them all to be “California Girls” he wasn’t talking about from Compton, CA. I can appreciate the best of nonverbal messages, signs that are a symbol of peace, love, or even hate.

They are each richly steeped in some kind of meaning – even if it is Taylor Swift. But, when my 7th and 8th grade girls before a picture immediately jump into a pose that includes some kind of finger origami, it makes me ponder. Whatz up with those fly chicks? Uh...hmm.

In the 1990s Tupac, Snoop Dogg, Ice Cube, Dr. Dre (NWA) among many other rappers spawned a whole decade of “posers” / “wanna bes” who created the uncoordinated, shuffling teens of low hanging pants, sideways hats, among anything else that made middle class white kids feel like “it was a G Thang” – rebelling against anything you’ve got. What teenager wouldn’t be drawn to sex, drugs, and rock...well rap. Not so different from several decades before, right? Ed Sullivan wouldn’t televise Elvis’s hips, remember? Jim Morrison couldn’t get much “higher.”

Although our parents thought it was just a trend, it was no “one hit wonder,” standing the test of time to be immortalized in parody by Weird Al Yankovich in 2006 – which is of course one indication of American history fame or is it infamy? “White and Nerdy” exemplified the desire of a clearly “unhip” guy wanting to hang with the “gang.” As in any good parody, it completely hyperbolized the stereotypes of the white kid with his Star Wars, D&D, and pocket protector.

So, maybe it is not so crazy that if you are immersed in the music, you become immersed in the perceived culture. But, are the Midwest Farmers daughters in their pine closets with their Beats reminiscing Run DMC trying to be a little “tricky”, doing a little Humpty Hump, texting “you got what I need, but you say he is just a friend,” or getting ready to “Bust a move?”

Contort those fingers and duck up those lips girls – but you don’t really know where it is from which your photography self comes from. It is not like living in the Midwest makes us cultural virgins. But, I think that kids in this area romanticize the gang life like we might romanticize knights and maidens of the medieval times. I mean lets be honest, no one talks about the chamber pots or poor hygiene, right?

So what is authentic? Is it these photographic thugies that are the true projection of our Midwestern girls? These images don’t reflect the girls who sit in my classroom each day. So, I guess I have to ask

...will the real Lady please stand up...PLEASE stand up?



The Old Brown Couch

The old brown couch was calling me... It was a dim afternoon and the lazy days of summer were enticing my space. The old brown couch with the deep aroma of coffee kept showing it’s enticing shadow. The lush cushions showed layers of deep comfort waiting to fall upon. As the others walked away in the distance the old brown couch became more and more faint....

That is until the musical notes of the store with the unused instruments wanting to play. Once again the old brown couch appears. Was this a clue, faint or chance? The luscious layers absorbed my thoughts like a spinning top in motion. Temptation pulled me away from reality like a down hill spiral. Round and round my head began to turn until the chimes of the door said to exit....

We strolled slowly down the walk gazing in the fronts of the old and new wanting to show their character. The old brown couch had many facets but none like the appeal from the past. The question to ponder was this a trick or the realization that he was gone....

As time become nearing to the end and we finished our tour, the old brown couch was positioned as before. The loyal manner presented itself to fellow friends as the deep aroma filled the dark room. That old familiar stance played again and again but the day’s journey adjourned as we filled the days of summer air....



Camouflage

Nicole Chambers

It starts with my hair
Why must it be so perfect and straight?

My naked pallet that took me 10 YouTube videos to practice
Is perfectly smoky eyed in 10 different colors

I wonder how long my MAC lipstick will last
Is serving pizza at every waking hour really worth the perfect color?

I put on my Sperry's and head out the door
I wonder why I even wear these anymore

At school I notice my gel manicure needs replaced
Did you know those cost me thirty-five dollars at the best place?

As I come up to my locker the girls are chatting about their latest lover
Will he still love me if I don't wear my Miss Me jeans next hour?

Three o'clock comes around and I head into work
I get to wear my shoes from the Target clearance-at least that's a perk

I chat with my co-workers whose main focus is shifted
"Isn't providing food for my family what really matters?" They feel so conflicted.

They make me think of my life and what will happen next year

Do I define myself only by the clothes that I wear? Now I'm filled with fear.

When can I just be me?
My passion is so much more than just fashion

I can care about so much more than the superficial
How much courage would it take to just be me for one hour?

I wake up the next morning and hop in the shower
Wouldn't defining who are you give you so much power?

It starts with my hair.

My dollar store mascara will have to do for today
I wonder if I can return that twenty-dollar bottle I used yesterday

My ChapStick will last much longer than my MAC
Those Sperry's gave me blisters; I'm done with pretending.

I walk into school picking off my gel-manicure
The girls look at me with judgmental eyes, while I'm filled with so much power.

I walk down the hallway so much more focused on what matters

“Turtle Trail”

by Casey Crowhurst

When finding inspiration for our new curriculum became more taxing than the idea of teaching the material, I started to lose hope. Adopting a film unit has been the crux of our debate in the English department for past year, and me, being the buff I am, volunteered to build the lessons and align them to the standards.

Common Core standards don't usually coincide with the most thought-provoking lesson plan creation, so I set out to find a spot that would illuminate my ideas. I chose a pond. Not any pond, but rather a puddle at the local nature preserve that I frequented once or twice soon after accepting this teaching job five years ago.

Dwelling on the memory of my co-worker ex-girlfriend, I located and sat atop the stump in which we etched that timeless phrase, "Suzanne + Daniel 4 Ever". She was what my father would call a “firecracker”. The thing about firecrackers is they are illegal in many states and have been known to remove meaningful digits from one’s hand. We met after she recommended me for an open position at the high school, and it escalated quickly. Not knowing many people in our new surroundings, we were attracted first as friends, and abruptly as lovers. I resent that part of my past. Besides, I came here to

escape reality and Henry David “Thoreau” these overbearing negative thoughts out of my mind.

Finding peace is difficult with that highway traffic zooming at the outer reaches of this park, I thought as the negativity began to creep once again into my consciousness. Never mind, I have the fortitude to embrace nature, along with the human nature I can't avoid in the distance.

Time to get away from this stump and find a new place to provoke thought. Making a pit stop at the trail directory I read, "Turtle Trail". Now there's an animal I can identify with, I thought to myself while making a decision that, little did I know at the time, would affect my future sanity.

I'm well-versed in the realm of nature considering my hiking resume. Before my father passed, we would select a park and spend a few days in the thick of it. We would attempt to rest through 32 degree nights in Yellowstone and forge ahead during 95 degree days in The Grand Canyon. Struggling up the side of a mountain or slowing before slipping on a moist rock, we were masters of our natural habitat. He had been a podiatrist and instilled his values throughout my childhood by simply being himself. I really do miss him.

Taking tips from my shelled friends of which this trail has been named, I marched ahead slowly and confidently. Eventually, I followed enough signs labeled, "pond" that I had arrived at my own "Walden off the interstate". The forest opened up in the surreal way that only nature tends to do both beautifully and fearfully. Walking ahead onto what looked like a floating dock, only wide enough for one upright person, the water rippled

away and disappeared into the flooded edges of my new Walden.

Noise from the interstate had completely dissipated, and all I could hear aside from my own breathing was a faint crow's caw. Nature in all of its beauty still strikes fear in the most seasoned hiker's heart. Encountering that feeling of helplessness which tends to occur in the middle of a natural landscape abandoned by human existence never tends to go away.

Alas, I had found my point of creativity and inspiration. At the end of the long floating platform bolted down with iron and rust was a bench dedicated to the husband of the former owner of the park. I wondered if she had been a firecracker too, and after looking at the dedication date, reveled in the fact that she and whomever had dedicated this bench have most likely long since passed and become worm's food.

Finding Nemo? Perhaps I could do a unit on Pixar films and short story elements. Look at me, finding inspiration in nature.

After I came up with my one idea, my mind wandered around the mossy puddle before noticing a large informative sign that explained what types of animals I could look forward to meeting in this swampland. Reading the sign, I wasn't too impressed with the lineup: *Muskrats, cranes, chipmunks, beavers, painted turtles*. Thinking to myself, what is with the turtle symbolism? Maybe the Universe is trying to tell me that I am a slow worker, or that I should create a unit based on the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. Yeah, I could compare pizza-eating, crime-fighting nuclear mutations to the crumbling infrastructure of the United States.

“Everyone”, I imagine myself addressing the class, “roads, bridges and tunnels need to be given more attention as our country ages and becomes more susceptible to major incidents due to a lack of upkeep.”

Oh yeah, this definitely meets some Common Core requirement.

I would continue, “Think about the Ninja Turtle films we have been viewing throughout this semester. Where did the Ninja Turtles live?”

“Underground!” One would reply.

“In a sewer.” Another would confidently respond.

“Correct, But *why* is this important to crumbling infrastructure?”

“Because turtles are slow, and this is repeat English?”

I'll never tame my mind. Trying to acclimate myself to the peaceful surroundings again, I spotted a crane across the pond looking at me, almost in fear. It seemed to me that this long-beaked creature knew something I didn't. At this moment I looked around and the sudden rush of fear crept into my chest and down to my legs, and I tried to calm myself. Nature encapsulates the human, and makes him or her feel alone amongst the foliage.

Spreading its majestic wings, the crane took off over the pond and disappeared into the wooded area beyond the edge of the flooded swamp. *Maybe I'm single because I'm not a crane.*

I'm more of a pigeon. A winged rat destined to feed on the leftovers of the successful businesswomen and men of the world.

“*The Birds!*”, I exclaimed aloud, and more birds fluttered from the branches and away into the clouds.

Remembering a try-hard from student teaching that showed me up, I had a plagiaristic epiphany. She may have come up with the best unit plan in our entire practicum class, but I’ll be damned if every cooperating teacher I’ve ever met didn’t utter the phrase, “beg, borrow and steal”. Apparently in the realm of education, theft is not only shrugged off as inconsequential, but encouraged by veterans in the field.

Alfred Hitchcock could be the cornerstone of our unit, and *The Birds* would become the main film of study that students would use to write a style analysis essay for the class. Maybe escaping into nature really does promote creative thought and inspiration, albeit plagiarised inspiration from colleagues of courses past. Quickly, I whipped out my iPhone, opened the Notes app, and furiously hacked away with my thumbs, logging my idea.

At the exact moment when I shuddered at the idea of aligning this unit to the Common Core Standards, I saw what looked like a dinosaur, start to push away water from its geometrical shell and emerge from the flooded, murky swamp. Rising from the bench on the edge of the rusty boat dock, I leaned over the railing in an attempt to capture the beast in its natural habitat with my iPhone camera. Before I could make out exactly what I was photographing, the dock took a slight nudge from something within the depths of the water and my phone slipped out of my hand and deep into the abyss of Small Town Pond.

“Really?” I sarcastically questioned the now personified pond.

Disappearing back into the depths of the water, the ominous black-shelled enigma was, in an instant, gone. Until, making out a small blue glow, I squinted my eyes and the illumination began to grow brighter and I suddenly realized, *is that my phone?*

Describing the events that follow may incite judgment and disbelief, and I agree that perhaps I’m not the most reliable narrator based on my previous intellectual lapses, but trust me.

An ancient terrapin with a shell radius of at least two feet slowly emerged, and in its mouth, tightly snapped between its beak or whatever you call a turtle’s mouth, was my iPhone. “Calling Dad” read clearly across the screen as I pleaded with the reptile to crawl onto the dock and return my phone. Do not assume I’m insane because of this discourse, but I swear the look in that animal’s eyes invited communication, that is until its countenance shifted and an ear-piercing *CRACK* echoed through the forest, and I became phoneless and terrified all at once.

“NOT COOL, TURTLE” I yelled, hoping that would make it feel guilty for this \$500 tragedy I just endured. I had no phone and the turtle went incognito yet again. Since the sun was now behind the trees, and daylight would only last maybe another hour, I turned toward the long narrow dock that led to the trail named after this shelled assassin, and started the journey back to my studio apartment.

Blocking the way to my freedom was what looked like perhaps the beta turtle resting on the dock.

With a hint of annoyance in my voice, I continued to communicate with turtles, “Go on, get out of he--”

Before I could finish reprimanding this reptile, his leader opened the jagged beak of its mouth and sharply crunched down on three of the five biggest toes on my right foot.

“Cowabunga!” I screeched in pain.

Birds fluttered from the branches above.

Blood squirted up my shin as I sprawled out on the ground. Keeping as calm as possible, I glanced left and right, assessing the situation. Noticing that I was now alone, in the woods, immobile, bleeding excessively, panic would have been the dominant emotion if it wasn't for the pain emanating from my absent metatarsals.

THINK. Use that education to come up with a plan, I thought before realizing that I had wasted thousands of hours and dollars on schooling that did not prepare me for the real world. Instead it prepared me to defend my analysis of an American transcendentalist's seasonal cycle motif, not what to do when turtle's attack. Screw Thoreau--he was Emerson's afterbirth.

“I went into the woods because I wished to die deliberately”, would be the perfect first line to my memoir, but I'm not going to survive. Speaking of not surviving, how did I manage to

write all of this down before succumbing to the imminent bleed-out via turtle bite?

Let me explain. Although the newly implemented standards have been the source of much disgust and pain throughout the past 5 years, that day they almost helped save my life.

Digging into my pant pocket I felt the familiar plastic sword: a pen given away at the “Common Core: Engaging Students in the Unengageable” conference from the last time I wore these jeans.

My fingernails dug into the dock while I willed my way to sitting upright before scouring the dark waters for any sight of ripples that would clue me into where the turtles were hiding. Squinting my eyes, I couldn't see or hear anything. Letting out a sigh, I flung my torso back flat upon the dock. I stared up at the dusk sky which was doing that beautiful thing where orange and blue seem to dance with each other until finally black envelopes both colors and the stars shine.

Feeling a bit light-headed, I thought about my father. The irony that he was a foot doctor began to sink in and root as perhaps my last conscious thought as a living human being.

“I can't be defeated by a turtle!” I commented to myself before sitting up one more time. “The irony of dying from a toe bleed out is too much for one man to bear.”

And in an instant I could hear the beta turtle's nails latch onto the far end of metal dock and slowly strut toward my near-corpse. Hearing the *clink...clink...clink...clink* of the nails, I

began to slowly reach into my pocket and balled up my fist around the pen. Locking eyes with this turtle once it was in stabbing distance, I ripped the writing utensil from my jeans, raised my weapon, and thrustured downward in an attempt to impale.

Slinking back into its shell, the turtle thwarted my murder attempt and instead this resulted in me cracking the pen wide open on the dock. Then the turtle shot back out of the shell and went to latch onto my fingers, but I slipped them away and grabbed its head with my other hand and started to violently jerk its it back and forth until the turtle lay limp on the dock and I shot my eyes up to see a volunteer from the nature preserve looking at me in the way you would expect someone to look at another human being after stumbling upon this particular SNAFU.

Before passing out, I squinted and looked into the direction of the pond, and saw a beady eye staring at me, it returned to the abyss, and I lost consciousness.

To Wed, or Not To Wed

Tabitha Eller

As she stared into his deep blue eyes, she realized HE was The One. Jack was the person she wanted to spend the rest of her life with. How could she make him see it? She had done everything possible, short of holding up a sign that said “Hey idiot, I want you to be my husband.” She had dropped subtle hints at supper, “Wow this is nice, don’t you wish it could be like this **EVERY** night... Oh wait, maybe it could.” The hint she dropped on Saturday while doing his laundry went unnoticed as well. “Hey honey, don’t you wish you had someone you could count on to make certain you have clean clothes **EVERY** day?” Even Saturday night’s comment as they were splitting the bill at the restaurant fell off her tongue onto deaf ears. “Jack, wouldn’t it be nice to have **ONE** checking account where both of our money goes? That way we wouldn’t have to waste the **30 seconds** of our lives it takes to decide how much each person owes. We could just use your money..oops... I mean our money..oops... I mean...

This was becoming embarrassing for her. Everyone else in her southern family was married and living a blissful “Leave It To Beaver” life. Her older sister, Anna Belle, married a successful lawyer. They now live with their two kids and Golden Retriever in Atlanta. Every time she visits, she gets an overwhelming urge to vomit. Her younger sister, Mary Belle, recently wed an upcoming golf pro. They now reside in Athens. Mary Belle is feeling her share of pressure as well. The minute the church bells rang in celebration of matrimony, their mother began badgering Mary Belle to give her some grandbabies. Emails were sent daily, phone calls weekly, and visits monthly, all to ensure that little Mary Belle was doing her best to procreate. Maye enjoyed watching Mary Belle defend her actions, hmm.. or lack thereof, because this meant her mother was leaving her alone.

By all accounts, Jack would be the perfect husband. He was only two years from making partner at a major accounting

firm in the recently sprawling city of Atlanta. He was devilishly handsome. Her mother was certain he would turn out beautiful, top of the line babies, and used every opportunity to tell Sally just that. Jack came from a very prominent family that was known for their “old money.” They owned the local golf course and had numerous “connections.” Every year the local cancer society has a bachelor auction to raise funds for research that is performed in Atlanta. Jack has raised the most money for the past two years. Last year a very sultry, forty-five year old, philanthropist purchased him for a meager 7,000 dollars, a bargain by anyone’s standards.

This issue, no ..situation, no ..calamity was beginning to consume her life. Her every waking thought was about marriage, and how to get Jack to bend on one knee, spill his heart and soul to her, confessing that SHE was the only one for him. As the days passed she began to acknowledge an idea that recently took growth in her already over crowded brain. She had become aware of the fact that she was not aware of why SHE so badly wanted to get married. She understood that her mother wanted it so badly for her, and it would be the picture perfect life in the staunch southern society in which she was a part of. However, she never took the time to ask herself what SHE wanted, so she decided to do just that.

With a colored pen in hand, she commenced to make two lists. One stated all of the reasons she thought she would love marriage. The other list contained the downside of “matrimonial bliss.” Once she finished, it was glaringly obvious to her that getting married to anyone was as bad an idea as opening an ice shop in Alaska.

Why I will love marriage	Why I will hate marriage
His money (sad but true)	Cleaning
Lack of loneliness (But I have friends..)	Laundry

Mom will get off my back. (She’ll just move on to something else.)	Mandatory office parties
	Scheduling everything around her husband’s life
	Loss of freedom
	Keeping up appearances
	Having babies
	Cooking breakfast
	Cooking Lunch
	Cooking Supper
	SHARING THE T.V.
	His friends
	Possibility of divorce/humiliation
	Sharing HER stuff
	Asking permission
Having to pretend she likes his family	
Losing her own identity (Mr. Jack Perfect’s wife)	
Waking up to the same face EVERYDAY	

Three hours and two bowls of peanut butter and syrup later, a bad habit she picked up in a very fluffy time in her life, she knew what had to be done. After driving almost an hour to Lawson, Lawson, and Kramer, she walked proudly into Jack's office and ended their relationship, casually mentioning that she despised his brother, and would NEVER share her TV!

Lucas Voudrie

Umpiring T-Ball

If people say that umpiring T-Ball is easy, they are about as right as those saying Donald Trump will be our next President. The common thread between all umpires of having coaches and fans heckle you does extend to T-Ball, as well. Add that to dealing with parents and kids who don't want to be there, and you have a cauldron full of problems. Then if the witches from Macbeth want to cause toil and trouble they will add in a little spice of problems with other umpires. Let me explain how T-Ball operates before I explain how the recipe of trouble is made for T-Ball umpires.

In T-Ball the field is similar to a baseball field except it's smaller and has two lines painted on the infield. The first line is the mark for how far the ball needs to go to be fair. If the ball doesn't cross that line, then it is a foul, and the batter hits again. The second line is the line that players are supposed to be standing behind for player safety. The field umpire is supposed to make sure that the players are behind the line in addition to interacting with the players and calling people out or safe. The home plate umpire is supposed to place the ball on the tee and help the batter hit the ball. Their duties also include removing the tee when a runner is coming home, and if there is a catcher, making sure the catcher is in the right spot. If a play is close, the umpires are instructed to call the player safe, which leads into my next point: fans heckling you.

I have been heckled by fans on a couple of occasions. Admittedly a few times I have yelled back at them as well when I probably should have just ignored them. I have also threatened to throw a coach out for heckling the other umpire. One of the times I got heckled, there were a couple of close plays at first,

and like I have been instructed, I called the player safe. This led to a fan heckling me every single time. Then the first baseman tagged a player with his glove, which would have led to an out, except for the fact he didn't have the ball until after the player was already past him. I called the player safe, and the fan started yelling, so I yelled back that the first baseman didn't have the ball. This promptly shut the fan up, and I didn't get heckled again that game. The coach I threatened to kick out heckled the home plate umpire three times over whether a ball was past the first line or not. I told her if there was a fourth I would kick her out. She restrained her mouth the rest of the game but was giving me a death glare. This led to an issue that affected player safety and gave me more trouble than it was worth.

Another key ingredient in the potion to make a T-Ball umpire's job harder is coaches. The major issue with coaches is player safety. This is especially true when it is hot outside, and they are just being idiots. One week it was over one hundred degrees, and we were giving the coaches the option of playing two full innings instead of three. All the coaches went for it except one coach during the last game of the day on the field I was umpiring on. I wanted to yell at her that she was endangering her players because they could get dehydrated, heat exhaustion, or hit in the face by the ball when they didn't feel like trying or paying attention since it was too hot. It was the coach I threatened to eject that was making my life miserable, though I can't remember if it was before or after I threatened to eject her. That may have factored into her decision to play all three innings. When the coaches are being idiots, they also send catchers to the home plate umpire. If we have a catcher, they have to be standing in the opposite circle from where the batter is hitting. If we have a lefty then we have to move the catcher. It also extends the game since instead of getting the ball myself I have to let the catcher go get it. This causes concerns for my health since multiple times just this summer I had catchers throw a ball as hard as they can at me from less than three feet

away. If I wasn't secretly a ninja I would have been hit in the face several times.

As the catching incidents have shown, players can be a cause of concern for umpires. It's T-Ball, so you are going to have kids playing in the dirt or picking flowers, since they don't want to be there. This is fine except for if they are playing in the front instead of the outfield. I have on a couple of occasions had to stand right next to a player trying to coax him or her into putting their glove on and pay attention while being prepared to karate chop any ball that would drill the player. I've had players just suddenly dart across the field to talk to their parents, ignoring the fact the game is still going on. I had players try to get into fights with other players which I had to stop since apparently it is my job to also control the players since the coach can't be responsible for them. Players who play machine pitch in addition to T-Ball just add to the danger. They hit the ball harder and throw harder which endangers the other players. There are also kids who think it is funny to mess up multiple times while they are batting or will throw the ball away from you on purpose or will try to hit you with the bat or ball. Like I said, I'm a ninja, so I'm usually able to avoid this, but a female umpire got drilled in the shin by a thrown bat this summer. Parents will usually just laugh when stuff like this happens which is part of the reason why they are the next ingredient.

Parents even if they are sitting behind a fence do have an effect on the game. They will laugh when their kid does something he or she isn't supposed to do which encourages that behavior. They will also heckle the umpire because T-Ball is such a serious game that must be won at any costs. However the worst is when they go into full mama grizzly mode. This could translate into them yelling at you for something or an overreaction that endangers their child like in this example. During that day when it got to one hundred degrees, I had a kid pass out on my field. He was standing in the on deck circle, when he suddenly passed out and hit his head and neck on the

concrete. I was placing the ball on the tee and helping the batter, so I didn't notice it at first. However his mother did, and she came running onto the field. She grabbed him before I could get over there and started swinging him around in his arms. As I mentioned earlier, the player hit his head and neck, so she could have been giving him a serious injury by swinging him around. She then refused to have anybody tend to her child for a full minute until an off duty paramedic got her to let go. I understand she was freaking out and wanted to protect her child so that is perfectly understandable but she shouldn't have been swinging him around.

The last ingredient in the toil and trouble is other umpires. In years past there wasn't any major issue with other umpires. However this year I had a lot more problems with other umpires. The major issue was that if I was umpiring at the plate there were five umpires who wouldn't do anything in the field. It drove me crazy because I had to take care of all their responsibilities as well if they were umpiring with me. I had to help the batter as well as making sure that the players were behind the line and address various other player safety concerns. At the same time that I was making sure everything is ok, those umpires were on their phones or just taking a nap standing up.

As you can see umpiring T-Ball is more complicated that you may think. You have multiple factors that affect how the game goes and how difficult your day is. However for all the toil and trouble, the job is one that I would recommend. It is very enjoyable interacting with the players, and you have form a close bond with the other umpires. You just have to be able to deal with all the factors I mentioned to be able to enjoy the job.

Ashley Wiberg

“No Longer”

She was a Shurley Method, pyramid making, Abraham Lincoln obsessed rural school girl, not yet jaded.

Her time was spent making mud pies
and finding shapes in the turquoise sky around her.

But, she is no longer that lanky, tomboy 6th grade girl.

She became a Hollister wearing common girl, an assimilation of mainstream pop-cultural norms, not yet jaded.

Her time was spent being an athlete and repeating
“let's just be friends,”
“no, really, let's just be friends,”
and he accepted.

But, she is no longer that Homecoming Queen high school girl.

She became a graduated, pool-wading, sit-in-the-bed-of-your truck “cool girl,” not yet jaded.

Her time was spent sitting around
crackling campfires and giving you
warm rum, sweet kisses.

But, she is no longer that summer lovin' girl.

She became an avid reader, feminist thinker, not yet jaded.

Her time was spent writing & writing

and learning to consider thoughts and ideas bigger than herself.

But, afraid, she paused.

To become: the 6th grade country girl, oblivious, fun-loving high school girl, homesick college girl that you always expected. She became contemptuous and jaded.

But, she is no longer blinded by seeking that typical-college-marriage-house-dog- kids-twenty-something American Dream.

She is no longer *that* girl.

She is a scar wearing,
stretch-mark bearing,
passionately learning,
not afraid of loving adult.
She is *her* version of happy. She is finally herself.

The Widow in the Window

By: Kayla Wilhelm

She set down the wine bottle and brushed the residue from her lips. She had been sitting in that exact spot for over an hour. Her feet were almost numb. At that point she couldn't tell if it was from the wine or the position she was sitting in. She never used to put her feet up on the coffee table before, but now it was going to be "half his" as they say in divorce. She didn't even care if it was her half. She didn't want it. She could even saw it in half and give him "his half" for all she cared.

This was the first night she had without the baby since the night he left. She was determined that tonight she would sulk. She would allow herself to think about what went wrong and drink copious amounts until she could then sleep peacefully. But that was it she thought. No more wasting time on someone who cared so little for her that he would commit the most treacherous mistake one could make in marriage. Adultery.

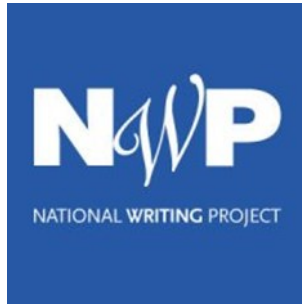
The room was dark except for a little light coming from the kitchen. She had been lulled into a sort of depressing calm by the darkness. Just as she had resigned herself to the idea of sleep, she noticed a light turn on in the apartment across the alley. Sarah, she had named her, in the other apartment walked into her bedroom. Followed behind her was a man.

Determined to see what Sarah was up to, she quickly got off the couch. Or at least it seemed quick to her. She stumbled to the bookcase and grabbed her binoculars. The man Sarah was with looked nothing like her previous boyfriend. At closer examination, he was shorter, stalker version of her old boyfriend. Maybe she felt comfort in the sort of familiar she thought. She wondered if it would be like that for her. Would she date someone who resembled her ex? Probably not. Sarah probably chose someone similar because she had missed him. He died. He did not cheat.

Sarah laughed and leaned in closer to the man. How happy she is. Sarah and the man kissed. He looked like a Tom she decided. Then their actions suggested they were moving towards intimacy.

She put down her binoculars. She could not pin point how she felt. Was she happy for her or was she angry with her? She had watched, unnoticed, as Sarah and her prior boyfriend fell in love. She watched their breakfast on the rooftop. She watched as they constantly had sex, and she wished they had bought curtains. She watched as their appearances changed. She watched as he moved less and less from the bed they shared. She watched as Sarah caressed his head as he lay dying. She watched as they came for his body. She watched as Sarah cried sitting naked on the window seal. She watched as she slowly began to heal. She watched as she did yoga with a friend in the living room. She watched as she smiled at the television. She watched as she began to leave the apartment for more than work.

Happy for her. That is what she decided. Sarah had found a way to move on. Wouldn't he want this for her? This new man may not be the one she married or even saw again, but it was a step for her. Often she had wondered why she had a glimpse from her apartment window of a life she was not really apart of. It had brought her sadness to watch this epic love story play out across the alley. But now she knew why. If Sarah, a young, vibrant woman, could move on from what would have been to many others the end, she could. It took Sarah over a year, and it might take her that long. But she was determined to move forward. She got up and threw the empty wine bottle in the trash. She had sulked and that was the end of that.



We believe:
**“The best teachers of writing
are writers themselves.”**

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