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LETTERS  
FROM HERE TO HEREAFTER  
2021

## FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

The habit of writing a letter has been almost lost due to the only use of text messages, emails and social media.

People do not write to each other anymore, much the less to someone who is not here – alive and in this world.

We lose many possibilities with this restriction. Writing a letter can be a vital tool for clarifying our feelings even to ourselves, not to say to others. The real purpose of a letter can be as diverse as we can possibly imagine - to inform, instruct, entertain, amuse, keep in touch, or even provide documentation and the most loving sentiments.

Letters can also be a way to write down thoughts, ideas, feelings instead of real-time and place events. It can be used from complaints to companies, to a love declaration or opinions on current affairs (letters to newspapers).

Typically, it is easier, and also a healthy way to develop one's own voice. Diarist Anaïs Nin began her first journal entry as a letter to her deranged father as a way to remain connected with him. She never actually sent the letter, but it ended up being the spark for her writing passion. Most people know of the famous Kafka book – Letter to his father, which is also to this day – an unforgettable one.

Some people even choose to write letters to their pets, but in truth, we can write letters to whoever or whatever inspires us. Perhaps the most satisfying aspect of letter writing is the opportunity to communicate exactly what is in our mind.

Please enjoy the reading!

Monica Mastrantonio – author & compiler

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**TATENDA CHARLES MUNYUKI**

**ARTISTS - EFRAIN FUENTES & SILVIA**

## ADRIAN ERNESTO CEPEDA

Dear Mami,

Today is going to be a busy day. Not only am I going to the store, but I need to lavar me ropa. I need to keep my routines up and going. Especially since reading Plath's biography it reminds me of how many years I was depressed and instances when I had thoughts of hurting myself, I am not proud of these thoughts, but back then when I was in my teens and twenties, I was a very sad joven/hombre. It's nothing that you and Papi did. You gave us so much love and security. Sadly, it's how I felt inside about myself. I had the hardest time making friends and it was even harder trying to meet and keep a novia. It took me years to find my own self-confidence. This is why I had to move away. I needed to find something inside of me to ignite a fire to give me self-assuredness and a spark to want to thrive and after moving to many different places and outlasting my depression, I found my calling and home in Los Angeles.

Speaking of destiny. I don't think we ever talked about this. Why I kept leaving home to live on my own. I was very unhappy with myself. I was weak, I was spoiled and one day I realized my destiny was never going to be in Texas. I needed to go explore and live alone. You know what the best part of leaving home and living in a place out of state, coming back home to visit you and la familia. You know that we always got along better from a distance. This is not a bad thing, it's just the truth. I was on a journey. This journey was internal and also continental as it led me to where I needed to be. Think about it, if I had not left Texas, I would not have lived in Chicago, met Laura, moved to California, and eventually met Michelle. I learned that it's these leaps of faith, even the stumbles, the falls, the heartbreaks, and the mistakes that led me to the place and the one I was meant to be with. All the pain, doubt, missteps were all worth it, as this journey made me the poet and published author that I am today. Because of all I experienced, good and bad, now, I appreciate it all. Every day I wake up so thankful, I am here con mi esposa, mi gatico and our li'l apartamento home is in Los Angeles.

You know I always loved watching movies and films set in the City of Angels, today when I saw *Gentefied*, I cried during a scene. You know I have a framed photograph of you, on the table next to my chair in the living room. I need it there, so you are always with me. I can turn to you and it feels like you are with me.

Last night, as we watched *Gentefied*, while looking at your photograph feeling your presence next to me, I cried because I wish you could be here to experience my success. I need you to know, mis éxitos are your successes; I realize now this is what struck me emotionally and why I cried while watching this episode. I needed to verbalize and let it out, to understand why I was so sad for these

past three years. I know you are here with us but I just wanted you to be present so I can embrace you and say Thank You, Mil Gracias, Mami!

Because of the recurring of my sadness, Michelle and I talked about the time we were living in la casa en Summit Creek and I was so depressed that for a moment I pondered suicide. Then the phone rang, and el Aleman called me, and I realized I am not alone, and I forgot about it. You could say Karl saved my life there, just be calling me, wanting to see how I was doing.

Years later when I lived in Chicago after Laura first left me that was one of the worst times, I was so depressed. I recall walking every morning, I was so unhappy. And then when I moved to California to be with her and we broke up, yet again. When I lived in the hatch, the basement room in Pasadena, I was in literal darkness. That was the time I saw a therapist and it helped. Even then I didn't want to believe I had depression. It had to take a pandemic and all the horrible symptoms I experienced to finally admit I was always suffering from anxiety and depression.

Reading Heather Clark's bio on Plath, has really made me ponder where my depression started. I believe that it may have had it's roots in Ann Arbor, being constantly teased for having a stutter. One kid actually made fun of me saying I probably stuttered while I went to the bathroom. Although, the outside environment may have contributed to mi depression, I don't want you to think I blame you or Papi, this is nobody's fault. We had some amazing times in Laredo. I love for all you have done for you us and what you still do for our familia now that you have transitioned. I am just thinking about this for me. No blame. No anger. Just wondering how long have I been suffering with depression? And why was I so afraid to admit it and tell you and Papi about how unhappy I was. This is all on me. Some days I wish I had the strength to admit to you and Papi all the pain I was experiencing inside so much sooner than now.

Speaking of sadness, we never talked about it but when I flew into San Antonio, the night before you died, seeing you on the bed was so traumatizing for me. Seeing you on the bed, you looked like someone had hurt you in the face. I was so upset. What I remember most was the next day, it was as if you were waiting for me to transition. I will never forget it. I was sitting across from you, Mami, watching you, Papi was on the phone and I could tell something was going to happen. I made Papi aware and we all stood there watching. And then the most amazing thing happened. That morning, was an overcast day in San Antonio, and when you died, as your soul transitioned over, the sun came out. It was the most beautiful thing. I read about how this same thing happened to George Harrison's family when he died. This is a rare thing. Looking back, I am so thankful I made it and flew in to be with you Mami. I needed to be there. And somehow, I knew, you felt, I was there. You did not want to transition and die without me there. Thank You for waiting for me.

There was one person, a nurse in the hospice wing of the hospital that was so kind, loving, sweet and nice to you. She was so pendiente and would talk to you. She would massage you and kindly wipe your face. I wrote a poem as an ode to the nurse who took care of you. It will be in our book. I remember when she found out that you had died. The nurse was so sad, she had to leave the room. You always had that affect one people. Everyone loved and still loves you. During the reading I had with Baca and Carlos Carrasco, I thanked him for being so kind to you. I know you liked him, he was the best and so amazing with me during our reading. You would've loved it.

There is so much more that we will talk about. It helps to share all this with you. All these emotions that I've been carrying within my depression and anxiety. Thank You for being there.

I Miss You!



## **ADRIAN ERNESTO CEPEDA**

Adrian is an Angelino Poet who lives with his wife and their adorably spoiled cat Woody Gold in Los Angeles. His poetry has been featured in *Harvard Palabritas*, *Glass Poetry: Poets Resist*, *Cultural Weekly*, *Yes, Poetry*, *Frontier Poetry*, *The Fem*, *poetic diversity*, *Rigorous*, *Luna Luna Magazine*, *The Wild Word*, *The Revolution Relaunch* and *Palette Poetry*.

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ESTADO ESPAÑOL



CORREOS

## A.L. PARADISO

Leena Paradiso

Grid 3-4, 6B

Mars Dome 1

April 20, 2168.

My dearest Leena,

Fifty years ago, no one suspected that Jupiter's moon Io had such a tropical, hollow core. While the first hundred-twenty miles are extremely hot—in the thousands of degrees, they tell us—the hollow core was a surprise. With a diameter of 2264 miles, the extremely fast, steep ride to the cooler, ninety-five degrees, interior is a wild thrill ride in itself! Since it was opened commercially, Disney Corp. bought the rights to the entire cavern and built this amazing theme park called Io, Io, So Off to Io I Go. It's no wonder the locals just call it I go. They sublease concessions that sell moon pies, Mickey-Mouse and among other items, astro-burgers (totally vegan and made from local, hydroponically grown foods.) So, bring your own lunch!

I am so grateful to you for pushing me to come on my own. Despite the high humidity and heat, it is a joy to explore the low gravity rides. The preserved, natural, uncleared clusters of stalagmites and stalactites are overwhelming. Stalactites extend downward for miles! The columns are beautiful, thin spirals. The smallest stalagmites they allow us to touch are coarse, layered, and fragile. They make the oddest high-pitch sounds that echo when they snap. Sorry Disney. Happily, they regrow quickly here. But, I believe the aspect you will love most is the live dragons.

We are privileged to ride five aboard, with the guardian/trainer. She had us introduce ourselves to Kir, her dragon. Imagine my surprise when he greeted us telepathically using our names and told us it was his pleasure to fly us. Isn't that amazing? He's so polite and personable. The dragon's skin is so very warm, it's nearly orgasmic to sit on—well, it would be for you anyway. Ha! Their skin is supple and not armored, yet tough to injure. They smell of warm coconut and lizard hide sweat—a surprisingly pleasant aroma.

When I thought about the pleasant scent of his skin, Kir shocked me by replying in my head. *"I am pleased you enjoy my scent. I must tell you, it comes from the moisturizing oil my rider rubs into me every day. She takes very good care of me. I have told her your comments. No need to speak aloud. Just think my name and I will hear your thoughts. Thank you, rider Joe."* Isn't that amazing, Leena? There was so much I wanted to ask him, but I was afraid of distracting him.

The guardian tells us that there is some dispute that the dragons are indigenous to Io, though some genius bio-engineered their size and telepathic ability. They bond for life with their guardian—just as you and I have, dear. I peeked into a forbidden area for dragons to bond, mate, and clutch. There's also a secret about that space that feels wrong. If not for their relaying comments with their telepathic ability, we could not hear the guardian as her dragon dips, dives, and soars in the high winds. The fright from a rapid, wingtip turn and hard dive puts a dry, metallic taste on our tongues. You'll love it! I'll write again tomorrow with my impressions of Adventure-moon and Tomorrow-moon.

I miss you and I'm so saddened you had to stay behind on Mars to attend that PTA meeting to defend our prankish son and prevent his expulsion. The school is insured, right? Plan on a return trip next year with me, and *not* our six kids.

Love always,

Joe

## **A.L. PARADISO**

Born in Europe, English is his second language, following Italian—then Latin, Pig Latin, French and assorted computer languages and has management experience in petroleum; has been a mechanic, trucker, main frame tech, programmer, instructor and AARP volunteer since 2000.

Currently, he lives in upstate NY with three cats, has shared 140+ published stories with others online (4.96 million views), is in fourteen anthologies, two literary journals, an Arts journal and his own dragon themed chapbook, *Dragon Tales Collection*.

Follow him at [www.tinyurl.com/Paradiso-dragons](http://www.tinyurl.com/Paradiso-dragons) and <https://books2read.com/Paradiso>

الجمهورية العراقية  
REPUBLIC OF IRAQ

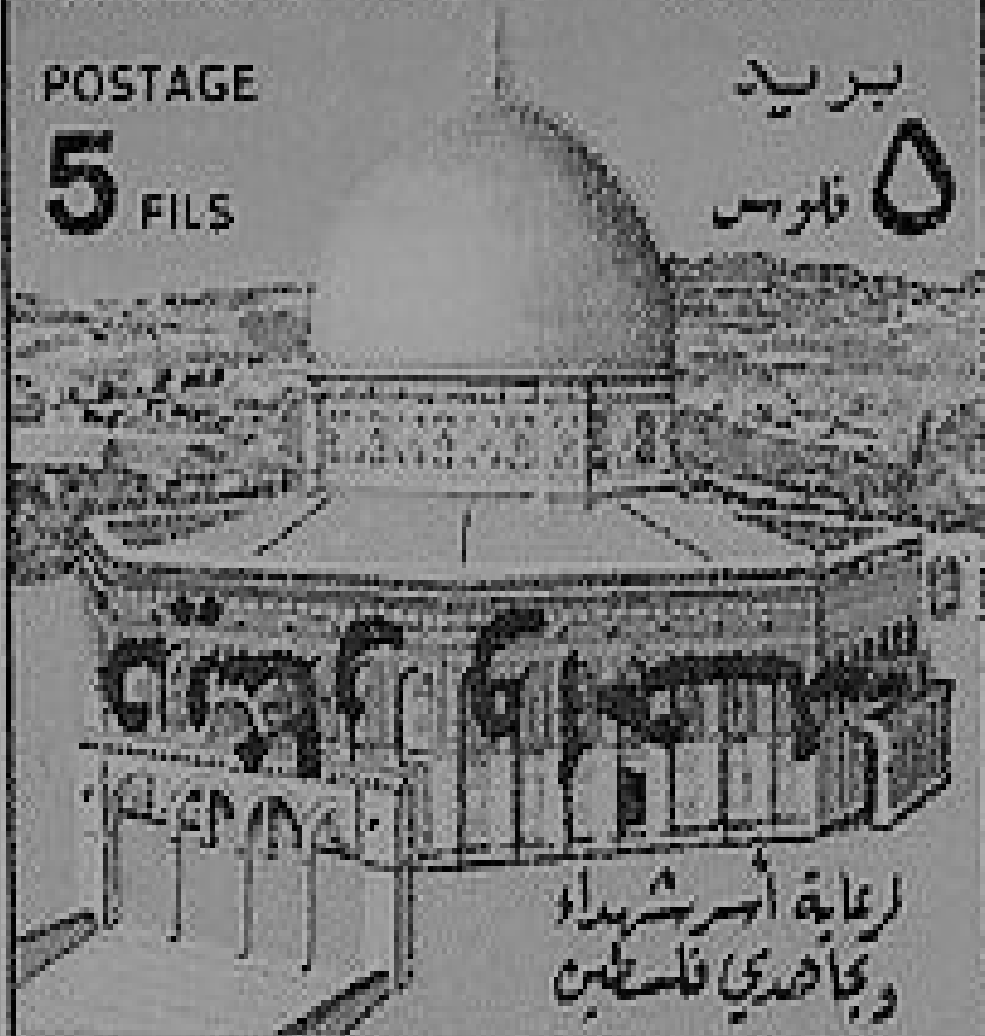
فلسطين  
PALESTINE

POSTAGE

5 FILS

بريد

٥ فلس



رعاية أسر شهداء  
و مجاهدي فلسطين

TO THE WELFARE OF THE FAMILIES OF MARTYRS  
AND FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF PALESTINE

## **ANN PRIVATEER**

Dear Mom,

I wish I could call you on the telephone the way I did so many years ago. In those days, I did not realize your wealth of experience gave you smarts I did not have.

Years later, after you had passed and I was alone because of divorce, someone suggested I take in a foster child. She was 16 and a Dear girl but caring for a teen alone is never easy. At one point I was talking with a friend and considering what to do when I realized that I was 50, the same age that you were when I was 16. That hit me hard. I so wanted to commiserate with you. Now I understood a little about what you must have gone through with me.

I love you more as years go by,

Your one and only daughter

Ann Privateer

## **ANN PRIVATEER**

Ann is a poet, artist, and photographer. Some of her recent work has appeared in *Third Wednesday* and *Entering* to name a few. Ann grew up in the Midwest and now lives in Northern California.



ПОЧТА СССР

МЕДАЛЬ



„ЗА ПОБЕДУ НАД  
ГЕРМАНИЕЙ в ВЕЛИКОЙ  
ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННОЙ ВОЙНЕ  
1941-1945 г.г.“

30  
КОП

## **BIDISHA CHAKRABORTY**

48, MM Feeder Road

Salt Lake

Calcutta

13/12/2020

Dear Baba,

Twelve long years have passed you left this world. It would be perfect enough to state I was a kid so immature who was hardly aware what death actually meant. These long years have added a new life, vision and perspective within me, your physical absence added desperate mental struggles for the foremost years. These above years were enough struggle with mental issues, financial worries were though stable but received numerous fake mental elevation from brutal relatives. Your sister and their family turned out to be hypocrites but Mom went through all her responsibilities even after so much chaos. Mom is a super woman, as usual highly self-reliant and compassionate. Baba, your death pushed both of us into a new world of complexities and challenges, exposed new faces, lifted veils from fake relationships, discovered that every individual is selfish and only loves material pleasures.

Every day arrived a new term of provocations where there was only lump of solidarity, surrounded with ambiguous mentality devils, brutal hearts with blood sucking motive. We expected a little love and encouragements but all we gathered was neglect and jealousy. The initial four years were not less than hell, your sister-in-laws turned out to witches. Baba I know you don't want me to use such tough words but I must point you out that the love and respect you invested on these morons, they simply don't deserve it which is equal of disrespecting you and that is unacceptable for me. Those brutal hearts have only culminated the essence of material pleasures of the world but these long years infused within me, what actually humanity stands for, what contents in true human heart, what role humanity generates to unite multiple souls.

The essence and knowledge that was bestowed from literature on me, encouraged me to write this letter to you Baba. I believe this from the very fathom of my heart that since you left us undeclared at a sudden notice; your soul remains unrest to meet both of us. Death is unpredictable, I have understood and know this quite sure hatred, violence, and ego has no peace for the self. The language of humanity is love, kindness and patience. You know Baba, our friends and family, they say I absolutely look similar to you, my face contours and characteristics are equivalent as yours. No Baba I am not boasting but feeling proud, it is an amazing happiness for a daughter when she finds similarities with her father and I am sure that you can feel that serene peace within me. These things are never dead; I will leave the world with this Baba. I may not see you, touch you, may not visit to

bookstores or shopping with you but Baba I can feel you literally. Your arrivals into my dreams and those lovely encounters are gorgeous and immensely beautiful, these really can't be expressed in words as they are minimal for revealing. You are physically dead but your soul is eternal, it carries all our past memories and every moment you lived with us.

Therefore, death is physical obscure of the body, we just loose the outfit of flesh but the soul or the authentic 'self' is everlasting and infinite. The soul is the amalgamation of all the memories, love, repressed emotions and fervour of the metaphysical. Since people are ignorant and dipped into mundane pleasures, they conclude death with ending. Death is just the beginning.

Nowadays, I do not tremble, shiver or worried when grief and anxiety knocks my door. With my head held high, I can declare I am strong enough to encounter anything or any situation that threatens normalcy. I am always proud Baba when I introduce myself as the daughter of an Army Officer who served his nation. But for Mom it is still unacceptable that the person like you who did not loose his life in the Kargil War (1999) but a petty train accident ruined everything. This turns out to be pathetic and you are unable to connect anything. Time has healed us; we are no more desperate and has realized only if you submit you actually survive. Death cannot be reversed and we are mortals but what remains immortal and infinite is love, deeds and emotions. Baba I really don't get this why people ruin everything for the cost of volatile. Submission doesn't mean accepting but lowering the volume of ego, it leads to hunger, desires, greed and finally violence that eventually ruins the 'self'.

Standing at the threshold of mine twenty and three, I have realized the above notion. All the wealth of the world are hollow and useless because they cannot buy love and bring back the loved ones to this world. Baba its my earnest request to you please visit my dreams because its the one and only way out to encounter each other. I am only strong and mature for the world but I am exactly the same you left me Baba, this Nature is the witness of my emotions. I really love you Baba and nobody can fill this gap, its mine high assurance. I have nothing to give you but these few lines only for my Baba:

Thy immortal soul, clutches several memoirs,  
Entering through the tunnel of past,  
Thee replenish all crucified bonds,  
Love stands minimal letters for thee  
Blow each barrier to arrive my dream, O! Father

Yours lovingly and forever

Bidisha

## **BIDISHA CHAKRABORTY**

Bidisha is a post-graduated student in English Language and Literature from University of Calcutta. Being a literature student I discovered my inclination and interests into various genres especially if its Romanticism. I wish to pursue my research on John Keats aesthetic ambition and quest for love in my future endeavors.



## BRY WHITE

Dear Joan Vollmer,

Mexico City was your escape route after New York. I write to you through the haze of time, and that split-second poor decision cheap shot of William Tell played so poorly. Do you, do you remember that? You don't remember being laid on the floor, I am sure. Did you feel anything Dear? Were you numb for the day already? You still have a name even though you are anonymous wherever you are. Although, who isn't forgotten, who isn't anonymous at some point in time? You aren't *that* woman. You aren't his, if that is what you are thinking about.

No person knows who you are here. Just a tile on a wall now. A sad little square grave of chipped stone. A lost American, a byline in a book consumed with Burroughs. Thirteen words out of forty thousand the payment for following him in his circles.

We walked down seventy years of Cerrada de Medellin to your apartment. We were presented with an unlocked door for a key and entered ghost-like. We perceived the rooms to be unchanged because they were dingy and stale. A bottle cap on the floor led to our disappointment. We dreamt of finding a shell casing, a gin bottle or an empty bottle of Benzedrine. A chair in the corner, crooked and missing a leg couldn't have been where you sat. The children crying next door couldn't have been yours. You were here a lifetime ago. We found a burnt black spoon, but it couldn't have been yours to hold. Those last days alone, silent, puffy faced and dead. Were they different from the first days of your life we wondered? Was there any wonder, Dear? Ginsburg wrote a poem a few years after you died. He said all that could be said. Yet a hundred versions persist that want to transform you or crucify you. You can't just be. After we walked down the leaning stairs, we needed to drink or smoke. How badly does she want a drink now I muttered. We both agreed that time erases, but not quickly enough for this place. Dear, you were erased while you were alive. Bound by literary ego and poor decisions with demons in your mind for good measure. You died abroad like a soldier killed in battle. Your parents never visited your grave.

Yours Truly,

Two Strangers

**BRY WHITE**

Bry White is a writer living in the woods of Southern Illinois. He writes poetry and is currently working on his second book. In his spare time, he operates a small literary press. He occasionally leaves his house for dog food or people food.

ПОРТО

PORTO

УНІА Д РЕСПУБЛИКАС



НАЦИОНАЛНА ДЕМОНСТРАЦИЯ

НАЦИОНАЛНА ДЕМОНСТРАЦИЯ

УНІА Д РЕСПУБЛИКАС

Д 1.50



## **DR. CHINNADEVI SINGADI**

Dear Medusa,

Gorgon sister, Daughter of Ceto, I know not which world you repose in now; the world above or the world below. For all I know, the Gods who slew you, may still have you chained down in the darkest dungeons of the netherworlds lest you return to be your formidable self again and threaten to bring down the altars of men masquerading as gods and forever quell their power over us the female of the mortals. The shame, disgrace and dishonour they brought upon you through their sordid means and villainous ways were, to say the least, utterly ignominious and despicable.

Eons have passed since you were wronged; since you were stalked, raped, demonized, and ruthlessly decapitated. How you must have felt when Poseidon forced himself upon you and violated your virgin pride! How you must have felt when your divine visage was forever transformed into that of an ugly demon! How you must have felt when you helplessly watched your beautiful hair fall away and creepy snakes crown your head! And how you must have felt when losing your fight with Perseus and shuddering from the warmth of gushing blood as his lethal sword sliced across your priestess neck! How your head and mane of snakes must have hit the ground and rolled across the floor like a ball of flesh and blood, and with bloodshot eyes you clamoured for one last glimpse of your falling torso. I understand, and understand well, that the wound, misery, pain and suffering caused by this physical abuse and violent death has certainly not eased or altered or been forgotten - not by even the size of a speck in the eye - and by all means will never be; neither by you nor by us your mortal sisters from upon the Earth.

You know well that this is not a one-off incident. The highest of Gods and Lords have tread this path: Zeus abducted (in disguise!) and raped Europa; Dushyasana disrobed Draupadi in public after her husbands lost her to him (in a game of dice!); Parashurama axed his mother Renuka to death just to please his father; sage Gautama cursed and transformed his wife Ahalya into a stone wrongly suspecting her of infidelity; Ravana abducted Sita and as though this humiliation wasn't enough, upon return her husband Rama had her walk through fire to prove her chastity(!); Lakshmana subjected Shurpanakha to disgrace and mutilation by slicing off her nose and ears...and so on and so on and so on....The list is endless to say the least.

And sadly, the horrifying practice continues to control the lives of women across the globe to this age, this day, this hour. Men still rape, still mutilate! Women...of all nations...of all colours...of all age groups...continue to be called names, attacked, beaten, abused, tortured, raped, molested, bought, bruised, sold, owned, enslaved, killed, burned...!

Therefore, I write to you, dear Medusa, the fiercest of the female species, I beseech upon you, to escape the underworld and alight upon this earth. Return to us with your visage of vengeance and lend us, your sisters, the lethal power that resides in your eyes to stun the wicked into stone. Come Medusa, come once again, be our guardian, our protectress, lend us your gaze, for the rapes must end. And the vile and wicked men...must freeze forever in stone!

Looking forward to seeing through your eyes...soon!

A mortal sister

From planet Earth

January 2021

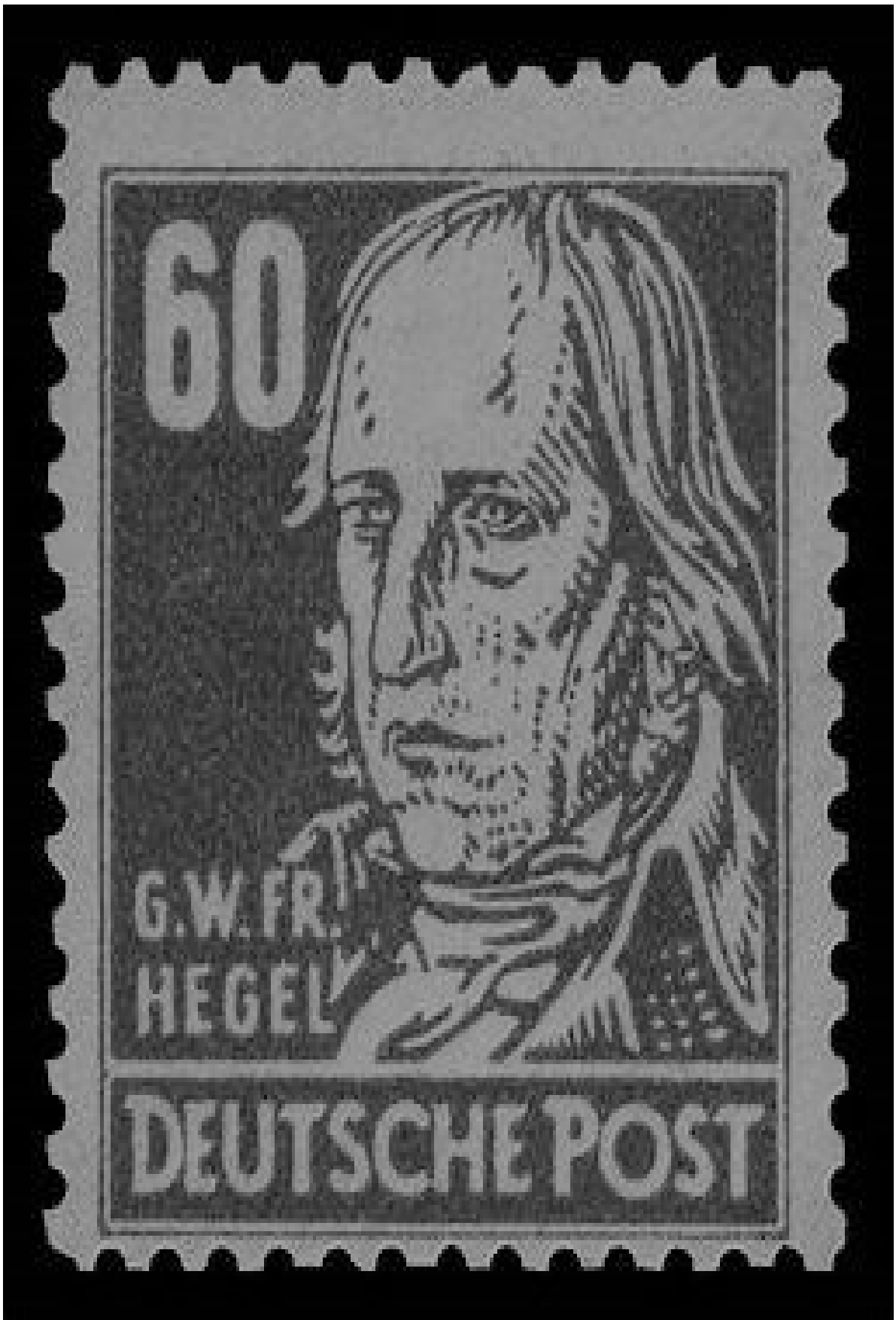
**DR. CHINNADEVI SINGADI**

She is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Indian and World Literatures at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. She teaches and guides research in World Literatures and Women's Studies. She is also a poet and songwriter and her wide range of publications include poems, research articles, travel essays and book reviews as well as a collection of ghazals in a mellifluous blend of Hindi and Urdu titled *Ishq ka Asar: Songs of Love*.

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G. W. FR.  
HEGEL

DEUTSCHE POST



## CHRISTINA LOVIN

A Letter in Response to My Mother's Last Message:

*I don't know why you chose the path you took.*

Dear Mother,

You've been gone for fifteen years, yet I still cry "Mama" sometimes during these long, lonely pandemic days alone. In the depths of night, your face appears: it is the last time I saw you, puzzled at the grown woman sitting at your table, as you shook off the deep sleep of old age and illness. "You're not my Chris," you stated firmly through your ever-resolutely clenched jaw, eventually coming around to some recognition of the fifty years between your dream and the reality of your flesh and blood standing before you.

Months later, too sick to travel, I longed to talk to you, Mother. The nursing home nurse held the receiver up to your ear. Upon hearing my voice, I only heard your unintelligible sobs through an attempt to speak. This is a memory too agonizing for me to revisit except on my darkest days. I assured you then of my love, and that I was sick or I would be at your side. I believe you tried to speak once more before the line went dead.

I would never see you alive, nor hear your ragged voice again. However painful those few minutes across a wire five hundred miles between us, what sliced at my heart the most was the dream you'd retold years before, when we were both well and happy: *In my dream*, you said, *I had been ill and near death. Each of the children I had borne visited in turn, but I longed for the youngest. "Where is the baby?" I asked. And then you appeared and I felt whole.*

But this time, I never came. I couldn't. The day you died, I lay near death myself after seven days in hospital. Perhaps your soul passed by my room and stopped the hands of the doctor who suddenly refused a procedure that "would make things worse instead of better." If I believed in souls, perhaps.

I want to say I'm sorry I disappointed you. In life and at your death. Two divorces. No longer religious, yet secure in the knowledge that you prayed daily for the daughter you believed was lost. I understand that I was the lamb of your last hope after a family of lost sheep. Your belief in me kept me from many dangers as a girl. I wanted nothing more than to please you. Throughout my life, I was always watching you. Not the religious woman, but the compassionate person who accepted all people, the strong person who loved when people were unlovable, and person who taught me that I should keep moving forward, one foot in front of the other, regardless. Now, I want you to know I admit this path I have chosen has been hard. I want you to know I have climbed many hills, crossed many turbulent waters to stand where I now stand fifteen years after you left me an orphan. Did you not realize that my strength came from the steel of your spine? From the set of your jaw?

Your daughter,  
Christina

## **CHRISTINA LOVIN**

Christina is the author of *Echo*, *A Stirring in the Dark*, *God of Sparrows*, *Flesh*, *Little Fires*, and *What We Burned for Warmth*. She lives and teaches writing in Kentucky USA.

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REPÚBLICA DE  
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## CHRISTOS VICTOR

### A poem to my future self and those that follow after me cheerios

midsummer's when breakfast  
fills my bowl with ripe peaches  
and blueberries on top of cheerios  
mixed with milk from cows' teat

I'm reflecting as a young woman  
clothes this man too old to bend  
and tie his shoes; my wife picks  
and slices sweet juicy fruit.

I'm penning this morning's ode  
so folks remember the joy  
every breath brings this bard:  
give God thanks; love one another.

Ps 71: 17-18

"Since my youth, God, you have taught me,  
and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds.  
Even when I am old and gray,  
do not forsake me, my God,  
till I declare your power to the next generation,  
your mighty acts to all who are to come."

Soli Deo Gloria!

Christos Victor

## **CHRISTOS VICTOR**

Christos writes meditations ranging from poetic to prose and paints in many media. His focus is on Jesus Christ's atoning work for humanity and hopeful relevance for us today. His name means "Christ's victory revealed in me" from the United States of America.



## DIANE O'NEILL

Dear Antoinette...

Antoinette, I want to call you! I want to hear that you're watching an old black and white on TV, that Toni made pancakes, and could I find you a poinsettia that won't hurt Toni's cats? I even want to hear you tell me not to work too hard.

Ty says that he could tell we were mother and daughter because I'd get that annoyed tone everyone has when talking with their moms.

"Just watch TV--don't do nothing--none of that reading and writing," you'd say.

"But--that's how I have fun," I'd protest. (That's when my voice would get that tone, I guess.)

"I just want you to take care of yourself. Rest," you'd command. Sometimes you'd even add, "I command you," and laugh.

Hm, wonder where Jennie got her bossiness from!

Of course we weren't biologically mom and daughter--you were very Italian, your accent still beautifully strong, just like my grandmother's Irish brogue never disappeared. Still, somehow we adopted each other after Jennie died.

Remember when I'd bring you Irish bread when Jennie was in the coma? We kept hoping--

Later, you'd say, "I lost one daughter, I found another."

Are you with Jennie and Joannie and Andy? The most wonderful treat for you was for someone to drive you to the cemetery so you could be with your kids. You'd call me: "You'll never guess where I've been today. I was with your friend. I was with Jennie," pure happiness in your voice.

Such loss you endured--losing three of your five children.

I have this image of Jennie greeting you--"Ma! I'm over here!" and giving you a tour of heaven much like the one she gave me of the new Comiskey Park, right after it opened. I'll bet she was so excited to show you everything and everybody, like she was so thrilled to introduce me to Minnie Minoso after one game...Was it like that?

On Facebook, I said I was half brokenhearted, half grateful. I posted a bunch of pictures. Did you like them? I love that closeup of you and me laughing, our mouths wide open in merriment.

I posted one of you, Ty, and me at the Museum of Science and Industry, in an old-time car. What a fun day! I'm sure we had ice cream at the ice cream shop. I'll bet you said, "I could die happy."

Funny--the last months, you stopped saying that...

Ty, Kris, and I sent roses to the funeral home--pandemic caution kept us away. They were yellow. Did you like them?

But the night of the wake, sitting here alone, everything hurt so bad. I ordered Ben and Jerry's via Instacart's two-hour delivery, I called a friend, I tried to erase the aching loss...

What do I want to say to you? Thanks--for being a mom to me. For introducing me as your daughter. For those wonderful visits.

Nothing was like those visits. You didn't care how early we arrived or how late we stayed. A four-hour visit felt like eating and running. You'd get up at six to make Ty's meatballs. You'd surprise me with fried zucchini. I'd bake and bring Irish bread. After your amazing mostaccioli or minestrone or pasta fazul, I'd make us coffee and we'd have dessert and talk and talk, the TV on in the background.

Every so often you'd stop, smile, and say, "Aren't we having fun?"

Ah, to be in your kitchen again, reminiscing....

Remember when we visited the Field Museum? You wanted to see the Jackie Onassis exhibit. Ty was twelve, no interest in finery--he escaped to go look at dinosaurs. I'm not a fan of fancy clothes, but such fun to see your joy!

One time, we were in an elevator, you holding onto my arm, and a woman smiled at us. "I wish my mother were still here." You patted my hand, smiling. "She thinks I'm your mother," pleased.

I remember Andy's funeral, touched that you wanted me to sit by you. How your grief burned.

How glad you must be to be with him again...

Ty once said that he thought church should be like a visit to you--feeling perfect comfort and acceptance. Maybe that perfect comfort and acceptance is heaven, too. Thanks for giving us those glimpses.

Love, Diane

**DIANE O'NEILL**

Diane O'Neill is a Chicago writer of poems, essays, and kidlit. Her first picture book, SATURDAY AT THE FOOD PANTRY, will be published by Albert Whitman & Co. in Fall 2021.

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1962

**MAGYAR POSTA**

GÓZON LAJOS



## ELZA OROZCO-TOOPS

A source of Amusement

I answered the phone downstairs. The woman that called talked to me with an American accent, “Elsa, Elsa? This is Carol.”

“Who?” mystified, I frowned and tried to think who Carol was.

“Carol, Robert’s wife.”

My mind immediately went to you, Bob, but it couldn’t be. My mind denied the fact that it *was* Robert’s wife. I told the woman, you are mistaken and hung up. She had called me by my name, so it must have been for me. I almost fainted.

How could it be his wife? I was married to him!

The phone rang again and I got up from the chair I was unconsciously sitting on and let it ring. At the fourth ring, with a dry mouth, I whispered in English, “Yes?”

Carol informed, “Bob wanted me to tell you before he died to tell you he always loved you.”

“How did he die?”

“Heart attack.”

“Thank you.” I hung up.

Bob, I’m not going to tell you how I felt. You know how I felt. I died along side of you. My heart bled for twenty-five years, even though I drank, danced, fucked, smoked fruitlessly because the pain didn’t go away. I never kissed anybody because my kisses were for you. I never loved a soul except my mother and children because all my love was concentrated on your being. Your body was gone but your soul was still with me.

You picked me out of dozens of girls who wanted to be movie stars, gorgeous women without a brain in their head, all ready to fuck you. Why? Because I loved the cha-cha-cha, the Cuban rhythms, the Mexican mariachis? That first night you played the bongos and I bent beside you to praise you, you smiled just like Stephan, your son, does. I swooned, but, of course, I was only twenty years old.

Like a child who craves breast milk, I went into your arms when you took me to your house that night. I never left. It was an exquisite time: learning how to feel your tongue exploring my mouth, feathering your touch on my body, discovering new senses, going mad with love and insatiable desire. I wonder what was wrong with me.

The fire in me was too strong to see reality.

Were you running away from something? Please tell me.

Did you really believe that Robert Jr. was not your son?

You left “to make more money” when Stephan was born, who looks just like your mother’s family, a redhead, with Irish blood. I was shocked when you said you did not want to meet him. You just wanted me to travel alone and see you to prove to some woman that you were married, and then took all my money away and wouldn’t let me leave to go back home and to take care of our three-month old. I had to flee like a pyromaniac from you, still yearning for your love.

After the trip our telephone conversations had a voracious anatomic feeling, aspiring release. Frustrated words of love and desire were emitted with breathless sighs, yet I didn’t recognize the treachery. Your calls became less and less. I only had a vague knowledge of what was to come.

Then Carol’s telephone call came. Afterwards, I was not keen on men, I laughed when they loved me. I became a brave, hard-working, far too solemn, business woman, prepared for any challenge, accessible to any incentive. I succeeded. After twenty-five years I was ready to settle down again, yet, I never forgot you or my love for you. Nevertheless, I was prepared to face another human association.

After death, facing you, I want to know why did you teach me to love when you didn’t love me?

Did you really love me or just used me?

If you loved me, why did you leave me and the children?

Did you love Carol or did you just use her too?

What were your real reasons to be with me?

Why? Why? Why?

It really doesn’t matter now. I’m just curious. Time has healed me. I still see you in my son Stephan---loving, a source of amusement for all, courageous, defiant, but your face is gone now.

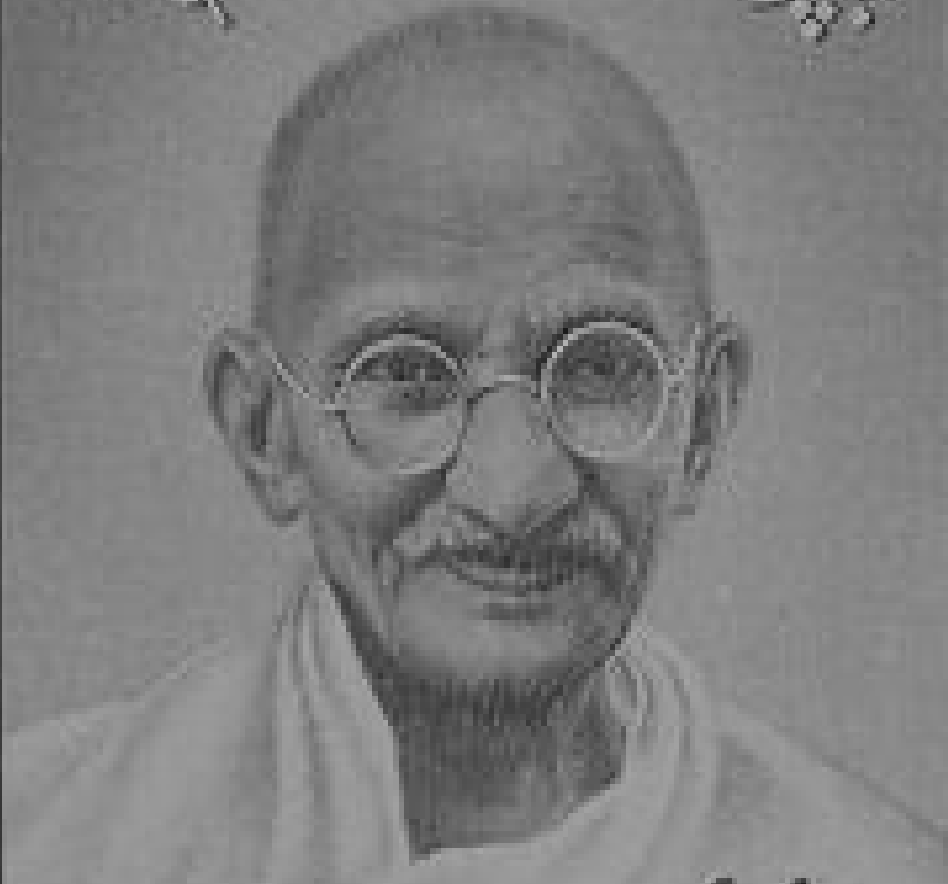
I don’t know if you are waiting for me but, if you are, I want the answers first, then maybe I will acknowledge you.

## **ELSA OROZCO-TOOPS**

Elsa is author of *Source of Amusement in Letters to the Hereafter*. She taught English and Spanish and has been a translator. She worked many years with Dr. Luis Quintanilla, Mexico's Ambassador, in the attempt to pacify the Vietnam War between that country and the United States. She is also an artist working with oils, sumi-e, and ceramics. She lives between San Diego and Rosarito Beach, Mexico.

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INDIA POSTAGE

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## **GUNA MORAN**

Fly

Anything rotting

Titillates the nostrils of the fly

As it hovers over the rotten things

We move away in a hurry

Covering our face

Whenever any little thing happens in the locality

The news reaches a certain class of flies

Just because of the curse of being unable to keep mouths shut

Their secret news gets broadcast widely

Actually house flies are reporters

They allow us to keep away from rotten things

On The Bank Of Sea

By Guna Moran

It is river till it flows

River flowing on

Merged at sea

Sea is the epitaph of river

The sonorous whimpers of the seashore  
Is perhaps  
Silent reverberation of the souls of river  
Lying at peace

GUNA MORAN

*Illness*

Now  
She cooks meals  
I devour

She washes the clothes  
I put on

She is responsible for  
Fetching the children  
To and fro from school

She is responsible for  
Receiving guests and relatives

Marriage and functions  
Meetings and discussions  
Are her responsibility

She moves like a bobbin since waking up  
Till retiring to bed at night

I just gives a call at time

She appears in a whiff

That I fell in love one day

I forget altogether

## **GUNA MORAN**

Guna is a winner of Creator Of Justice Award 2020 by International Human Right Art Festival , is an assamese poet and critic. His poems are published in various international magazines,journals,webzines,blogs,newspapers and anthologies of different countries.He has three published poetry books to his credit.His poems have been translated into more than thirty languages till this date.He lives in Assam , India .





**JAMES O'NEIL**

“J--  
‘I CANNOT LIVE WITH YOU.’  
EMILY D--”

\* \* \*

3 November 2020

My Dearest Friend Miss M--

How thrilled I am to be able to turn over to you these notes.

A traveler clothed in black (I thought a priest or Jehovah's Witness) knocked at the door of my humble condo. He said he wanted to “Give them to the English Professor.” Left in my custody, I had the liberty to dispose of them as I should find fit. You were undoubtedly my “found fit” recipient.

Affectionately yours,

J--

\* \* \*

10 March 2020

Reader: I recently came upon a packet of papers, sealed away in a dusty shoebox-like container I discovered while I was removing a wall for an addition to my garage.

I have gone through them. Some pages were brittle and crumbled away. Most made little sense to me--and seemed worthless on the yellowing paper. I gave them to a friend to do with whatever.

Leslie C. Guthrie

\* \* \*

4 August 1855

Philadelphia

Emily--

The poems you have sent me delighted and excited me. You make me work--wear me out nearly--by those clashing, violent yoking of images. I like. I like. Your personal experiences come speaking to me: love, death, joy, sadness, immortality, Crucifixion.

I should wish that we would meet--be together again--but, Em, I grow old...I grow old. Travel is becoming more difficult for arthritic me. Your friend always,

J--

29 August

Amherst

J--

I should be so glad to see you, but think it an apparitional pleasure, not to be fulfilled.

Would you aver, then, that my verse is alive? Am I alive? But I do know that "To Ache is human--  
not polite--"  
--Emily

Philadelphia

Em--

Of late, I have not been quite myself. Once I heard somewhere "I've been down so long it looks like up to me." I have not been so down. But the physicality of it all. Nevertheless, I do continue with my medicinals. However, the aches (that you write make me human) and the pains of aging provide restless and poor sleep. And worry. Worries. Hours and hours of worries.

I begin with a pain, a formal feeling. Then a worry. Then a constant ache. Perhaps a heart ache about the worry or the ache. Then I am a constant sorrow, enmeshed within myself.

And so easily I can travel outside myself, to family, towards friends, to community, to citizens, to topics of division within our country. Mostly to lack of civility. . .

Oh, Em, how and why have I allowed myself to reach this level, these depths of self-searching? I do so miss our long-ago evening walks and talks along the lakeside. . .

As ever,

J--

Amherst

J--

...And I, too, miss our lengthy adventures in poetry and civics, of some metaphysic--even those words of pain and age, of being separate, separated.

We tried to answer how not to be afraid of life, of death, remember? "Could you tell me how to grow?" I asked you. "Would you instruct me now?" More? My feelings remain such for you:

If I can stop one Heart from breaking

I shall not live in vain  
If I can ease one Life the aching  
Or cool one Pain

...

I shall not live in vain.

--Emily Dear

Philadelphia

Emily--

My ordinary life--and daily calendar--is chaotic and irregular, fragmentary. You try to heal me with your words: "After great pain, a formal feeling comes" or "This World is not Conclusion." I do thank you for your always great kindness. You are not aware ... you saved my life.

J--

Your Friend--Always

Amherst

J--

I am alive, living--immortal, I am not certain. Perhaps meta-physical. We are apart. I cannot live with you. But remember,

A word is dead

When it is said,

Some say.

I say it just

Begins to live

That day.

I delight in our continued friendship. I am forever sweetened by your words.

Emily D--

The words submitted here for this publication have been personally written by me (except words of poetry of Emily Dickinson). The work is constructed by me alone

James F. O'Neil

2 December 2020

## **JAMES O'NEIL**

Jim is a blogger, writing memoir-ish stories and anecdotes from his life. He lives with his wife (Susan) and cat (Grayson) on the Gulf Coast of Florida. He is retired.

**MONGOLIA**  
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## JEAN HUETS

Dear Scarlett,

I knew you in life. Do you remember me? It hasn't been that long since we saw each other. About two and half years. The last time we were together, you asked me to read "Victoria the Queen" out loud to you. Remember? A big, fat biography. Do you remember who Queen Victoria was? We were about two-thirds through. I wondered, silently to myself, if you would make it to the end of the book. You were in hospice by then. A kind woman from your church gave you a room in her home, to make your last days as comfortable as possible. When the back of your bed was raised, you could look out on a little courtyard where your potted plants were arranged. You'd asked me to bring them from your apartment. It took several trips to carry them to my car. I got cranky about it. So what about the plants? I thought. She's dying! That's what my anger was about. Not getting the plants. The fact that you were dying. Because, so what, the errand.

In fact, thank you for asking for my help, all along. It meant you trusted me, and that's what a real friendship means. Trust. You were open to me about what you were going through, another sign of deep trust. Looking back, though, I think you also left a lot out, left it for me to fill in. I don't know how well I did at that.

We knew each other for years, but it wasn't until after you were diagnosed that I really got to know you. I'd drive you to chemo, a rotation among several of your friends—you had a very dedicated group of friends! We'd joke we were having too much fun, sitting and chatting while poisonous medicine dripped slowly, slowly into your body. We didn't know it wouldn't work, until one failure after another steadily whittled our hopes to nothing.

Going to fetch your plants was sad. You'd made your apartment a cozy place crowded with artworks, many by you, and gewgaws handed down in your family and given by friends. Remember, the coffee table you painted? We could see out the patio door the bird feeders you put there, and the downy woodpecker who often visited. We'd laugh about how a squirrel you named Farrell would steal the bird food. Remember Farrell the squirrel? When I went there alone, it felt very still. Your stuff all in place, as if waiting. Your molecules like dust motes floating in the space. After you died, your estate lawyer brought over an elaborately framed print of Mahakala that you'd earmarked for me. I was really touched, because you had so many other friends, plus two kids, so I didn't expect that. Mahakala, the Tibetan Buddhist protector, rompin' and stompin' in a wreath of flames. Remember, chanting the practice together? We would be just a handful of people, upstairs at the temple, in the room painted yellow and red. I have a fancy that if you remember anything tangible from the life in which I knew you, it would be that room, not because it was more important to you than your Christian church, or whatever other spaces figured in your life, but because of its vivid colors and odd, powerful sacred objects.

You complained about chemo side effects and the pain and illness of the cancer itself, and we'd try to work out ways to make things better. We must have talked about death, too. We covered a lot of



ground philosophically. Do you remember? I don't, strangely. It's as if a veil is drawn over that topic. I do remember questioning you carefully when you decided to quit treatment. Not trying to dissuade you, just working through it, the two of us, or maybe just me, making sure your fatigue didn't overshadow any chance of recovery. You were tired of it, tired of the physical suffering. For me, it was your aspirations, your beautiful education at seminary, your budding career in academia, all sidelined to illness, and then falling with you into death.

Overall, you were cheerful, at least with me. Was it your religious faith that kept your spirits up? Or was it a facade? Somewhere between, maybe; I'd like to think more on the faith side than the facade side. I remember you crying once, but I don't remember why. I hope I comforted you.

This letter, these thoughts, I don't know if they mean anything to you, if you remember any of your life at all, if you can receive words from me or anyone; if you're reborn on earth; if your consciousness inhabits a nonbodily form, or no form at all. Still, I want to say, dear Scarlett, that as long as my memory lasts, I'll remember you.

Love,

Jean

## **JEAN HUETS**

JEAN HUETS' book *With Walt Whitman, Himself* is acclaimed as “a true Whitmanian feast” by scholar Ed Folsom. Her writing is in *Kenyon Review*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *New York Times*, *North American Review*, and *Civil War Monitor*. She co-founded Circling Rivers, which publishes literary nonfiction and poetry. Visit [www.jeanhuets.com](http://www.jeanhuets.com)

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CANADA



POSTES | POSTAGE

## JF GARRARD

### Letter to my First Child

To my first baby...

Or embryo. As I learned in embryology class, you were first formed from the combination of sperm and egg from your father and me. Then you became a zygote, blastocyst and two weeks after conception, an embryo. Lots of things were happening to you over a course of a few weeks: your central nervous system was forming, head, facial features, heart, arms and legs. By the eighth week, you had all the basic organs and parts except for sex organs. Even your knees and elbows were formed although you were only one inch in length!

Around this time your heart stopped. I didn't know. The doctors didn't know.

Your father and I went into the clinic for our first ultrasound at eight weeks to listen to your heartbeat. I laid down onto a metal table covered with scratchy paper and let a technician press her probe hard onto my tummy. She searched for you for a long time. These ladies work quickly and since she took so long, I knew you were gone before anyone else said anything. The technician mumbled that she had to talk to the doctor before she ran out of the room. I told your father that you were dead. He told me not to worry.

I regret to say that I've seen death whisk away a baby before. At the age of sixteen I volunteered at a hospital, with dreams of becoming a coroner. That summer the pathology department didn't have too many dead bodies, but they had a perfectly formed nine-month-old baby for me to assist in dissecting. She had cried at birth and then became silent. The baby looked like the most beautiful doll with long blonde lashes, short curly hair, chubby cheeks with tiny hands and feet complete with translucent nails. I half expected the baby to wake up, but it remained asleep as we documented its existence to try to solve the puzzle of what went wrong. It was the coolest thing I had experienced as a teenager. However, when it came time for me to make a baby, this sleeping doll haunted me as I wonder if any of my babies would become a doll one day as well.

My usual female doctor was on vacation, so a male doctor was required to tell us the bad news. The baby stopped growing, he said simply. While I found him cold and callous, my husband thought he was being kind and logical. We had been trying to conceive for a few years, a process which started with my baby clock suddenly ticking after I finished a MBA. What I learned in embryology and saw in the pathology lab made me anxious about the whole process of creating life. There was something wrong with me, I couldn't get pregnant after we tried for over a year. I started measuring my temperature, then becoming a patient at a fertility clinic which supplied me with pills and needles to inject into my stomach.

When I finally became pregnant, your father and I were deliriously happy. Now after finding out you were gone, I was too stunned to cry.

*What's next?* I asked. *Will you do that D and C thing to take out the baby and clear the uterus?*

*No*, the doctor said, *you have a lot of issues and D and C may aggravate your condition. You'll have a natural miscarriage instead.*

*But how long with that take?* I asked, alarmed at the thought of a tiny corpse in my body.

*It'll take as long as it takes. We'll be fine*, my husband said shakily.

But I wasn't fine. Too much knowledge brought suffering. I knew people that miscarried. It was always a surprise and it was over quickly. The unknown overwhelmed me. I could be in the middle of a meeting or on a bus or eating dinner when a mess could suddenly erupt out of me. Nothing happened for the next few days. For what seemed like an eternity, I waited and waited.

After a week of being frightened, I started planning things to keep myself occupied instead of fretting. I went to Philadelphia with a friend and visited a human anatomy museum. I hadn't cried until that point, but when I saw a wall of placentas and babies in jars, I started crying.

I asked myself everyday why this was happening, especially since we let down our excited parents when we stupidly announced the news as soon as we got the first positive pregnancy test. From school, I know why it happened. Two thirds of fertilized embryos don't make it and it's a miracle that any of us are alive. There was something obviously wrong with you and I will never know what the mistake was.

Eventually after forty five days of waiting, I had mild cramps at night and your body was ejected from mine. This might sound gross, but I did try to search for your body and I couldn't find it. You had disintegrated at that point and I had hoped to see your face even if your eyes were closed. Your father refused to look and ran away. Although I had almost gone mad from waiting, I was glad that you finally came out and we could part ways. Then ten days later, a two inch tube came out while I was at work which scared me. It was the placenta cord, the connection between me and your placenta. That was the final sign of our parting.

It's been eight years since we almost became mother and child. I asked a psychic medium about baby spirits and he said that you were too young to have a spirit inhabit your body, so you were not a conscious being. If that is true, I am glad in a way, for if you were an empty shell, there wasn't much suffering in death. It is hope that hurts me the most and the idea that you almost were. There were two more after you that almost lived as well and my heart broke my even more with them, especially since hope was elevated with a \$20K IVF price tag.

Your father and I gave up having children. Then for some reason, I got pregnant again. I was very scared for nine months, but one child did make it. I wish for another child to accompany them in life, however, I am getting older and not sure if that will happen. My heart hurts for what could have been if you had survived. I cannot help but think that it was my fault. Maybe I should have ate more vitamins or avoided the sushi. *If you had lived, would you be a boy or a girl?* Sometimes in the middle of the night I hear a child crying and I worry that it is you. Your father assures me that I am dreaming, or maybe it's another ghost child crying for their mother.

If you did have a spirit, I hope that you were able to reincarnate into a person and live a good life with a loving family. Even if you didn't have a spirit, I believe everything is recycled in this universe and perhaps in the future, the atoms of my body will meet yours and we will be together one day. I love you so much, though we've never met.

Your almost mother,  
Jeannie

## **JF GARRARD**

JF Garrard is an award-winning speculative fiction writer, editor and publisher. She is the President of Dark Helix Press, serves as the Co-President for the Canadian Authors Association's Toronto Branch, Festival Coordinator for LiterASIAN Toronto, Deputy Editor for Ricepaper Magazine, and Assistant Editor for Amazing Stories. Her portfolio of books and short fiction is listed on [jfgarrard.com](http://jfgarrard.com) and you can find her on Twitter @jfgarrard.

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## **KATHERINE ABRAHAM**

Dear Mummy,

I feel like my heart has shattered into a million pieces. Yes, my heart has been broken yet again. Trust, you always taught me, was a delicate piece of glass. I had not known until this moment what it meant when that trust cracked from the middle. The tears are not drying; I know I promised you, I won't cry. But everytime I think of it, a tiny droplet leaves my eyes.

I wish you were here with me today, only to be reminded, You never knew. You never knew how my heart leapt with joy having found true love; my Cinderella slipper fit, I felt the joy of angels as my heart soared in wonder and deep fulfilling desire. You never knew how my heart once blossomed with hope, only to end in silent agony. I wish you were here to wipe my tear, for now there is none to even faintly hear the quiet whispers of my heart, as it breaks, day after day after day as I told myself when you went away, I'd be strong if only for you as I swore where your coffin lay. I thought with love to finally fill the yawning gaps of my life, I'd be able to live again until the day I met you. I wish you didn't trust me so much, I really wish you didn't. For now my heart is heavy and my spirit willing to finally give up.

Long have I tried to mourn in silence, but now there is within me a piece that stings deep within like the wounds of a stab. I cannot move dear mother, every part of me is numb. My soul has been agonizing too long. I wish, I silently wish for Yesterday once more. May no one ever feel the dull longing of my ever-aching heart.

So I'll cry once again, softly, that none may hear; I'll stand under the shower so that it soaks in all my tears. No mummy, don't weep across the rainbow; for we both are helpless now. And though my inner self is wailing in despair, God is merciful mummy, He will hear your prayer.

I cannot hurt anymore mummy, I deserved to be loved, I did.

Why is it mummy, that every time we love, the burden and the agony of the cross is on the one who loves? I wonder how Jesus bore the cross alone and without a single complaint. Mummy can I ever get a miniscule bit of that strength to bear my cross alone?

Why mummy am I left alone? Was I unfair or unjust? Why then am I torn? They say Kindness begets kindness. Mummy, then shouldn't love beget love? For pure was I in thought and word; pure indeed in spirit. I have neither lied nor have I cheated. Why then mummy must I move on with a heartache that is untreated?

I wish that you were here today, the only one who knew my pain, the only one who never doubted that all that I have in my heart was never for self-gain. The tears roll down, a purgatorial cleansing to

a lifelong trial I have been assigned to. No mummy, I will not tell Jesus, Dear God, why me? If I have to question Him, then there will be no difference between the heathen and me.

So pray for me earnestly tonight, mummy. I am scared and alone. Never have I felt fear as I do now. Ask Jesus to help me, ask Him to light the lamp that must secure my path. I now mourn the death of love and finally have I begun to understand that God has taken everything away from me, my mother, my love, a part of my life and shown me the true meaning of loss.

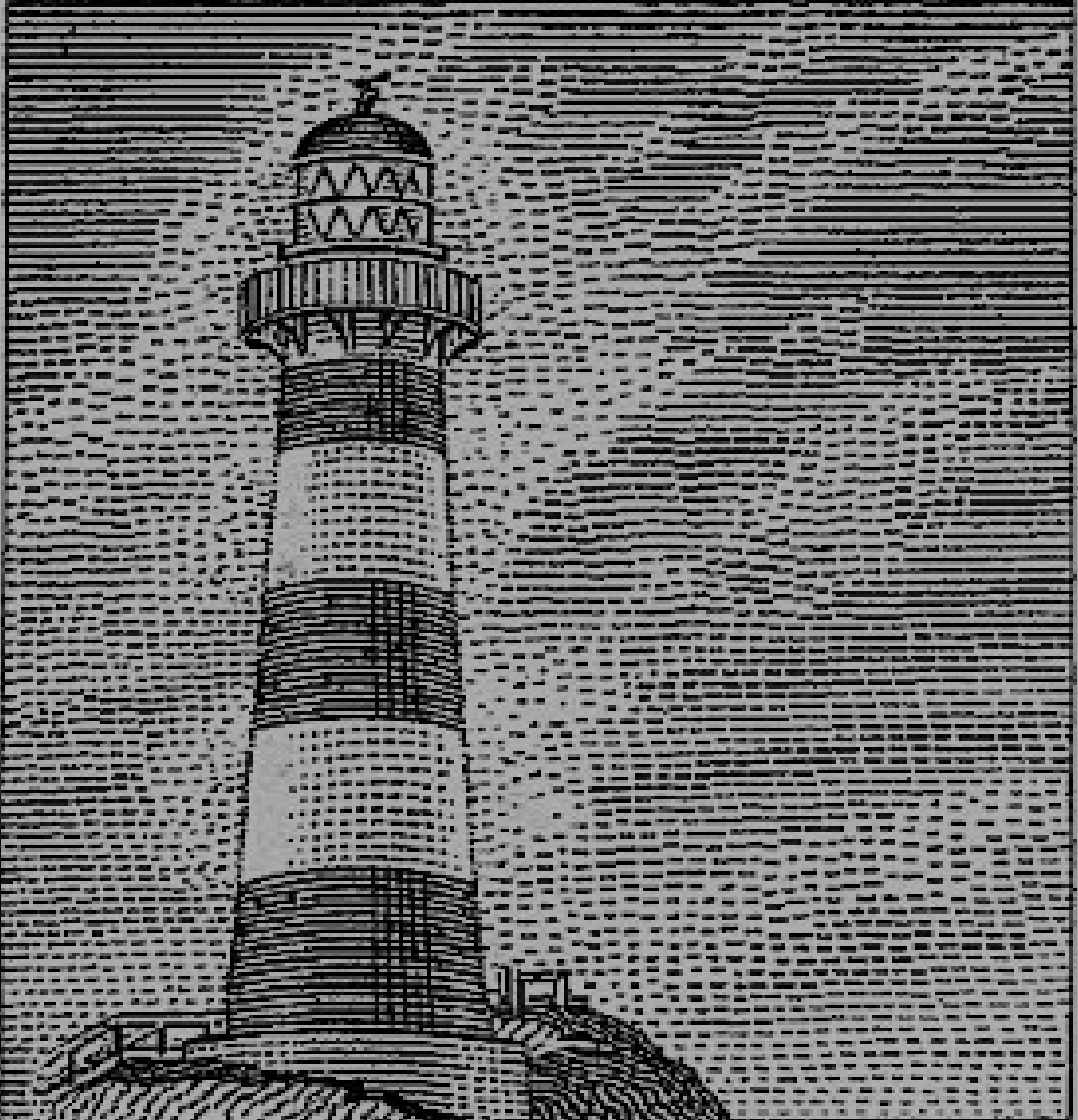
Love you Mummy, and I Miss you more than ever before.

Baby K

## **KATHERINE ABRAHAM**

Katherine Abraham is the Author of Yesterday Once More, Silenced by Love and Some Days are Forever. An Adventist, Katherine is a teacher by profession, who has studied Law, Literature and Journalism. She writes poetry and prose for various online publications as well as International Anthologies. She is also the host for a New International Podcast Series entitled, Chasing Hope. Her fourth novel "Every Sunset Has a Story" is now with the publishers. Her first work of non-fiction on the History of Christianity in India, is currently underway.

**NZ GOVERNMENT LIFE  
INSURANCE OFFICE**



**CAPE CAMPBELL**

**2 1/2 POSTAGE**

## **KELLI J GAVIN**

Mom,

You are loved.

You are missed.

You are spoken of often.

I rejoice that you are no longer in pain.

Yet your absence is felt daily.

Your grandchildren share stories of you with anyone that will listen.

I wish I could hold your hand.

Maybe we could speak even one more time.

I would tell you about how tall Zach is and how spirited Lily has become.

I will tell you that I love my husband even more after 25 years of marriage.

I would share a soup, sandwich and salad combo with you anywhere you like.

How I want to walk with you and sit in the sun and watch the kids swim.

While these things may not be possible, I will write about you.

I will sing the songs you loved.

I will share stories of growing up with the best mom there ever was.

I will always treasure you.

I will always remember that you taught me everything I know.

About being a mom, a wife, a woman.

I will love fiercely.

I will hug often.

And I will always remember you.

Thank you mom.

Just thank you.

Always,

Kelli

My mom once asked if I thought she had done a good job being a mom to Angela and I. I was a

bit shocked that she was even asking, because this wasn't how our mom usually spoke. She was confident without being full of herself, and always knew what she contributed was needed, wanted and desired. But when she asked me this question, I knew what she needed. She needed the affirmation and confirmation that only a daughter could provide.

I have written many short stories about my mom. I was actually editing 5 of them this week that will be included in my next book. The stories speak of strength, kindness and encouragement. They attest to her ability to always help when she could and how she wasn't afraid to tell you what she really thought. They also speak of strained relationships and the restoration that came not a moment too soon.

My entire life, my mom loved my sister and I. She was fierce in her love, and didn't ever know when she needed to take a step back. When we were teens and she struggled to parent us, Angela and I sometimes felt smothered. She was parenting, disciplining, guiding and not giving up on us. What felt like smothering was actually love. It was her loving-kindness on display. It took Angela and I a few years, and a whole lot of growing up to realize it.

So when my mom asked me if I thought she had done a good job being a mom to Angela and I, I may have paused, but I knew the answer. Without a doubt, I knew.

I told her how much I admired her. How she was always so good at helping me with my school work even when she couldn't help me at all. How she encouraged me to take chances and to believe that I could accomplish my goals even when I didn't have a clue what she was talking about. I told her of how I loved the way she loved people when they didn't show love in return and how she was so intentional in her friendships. I told her that she was not only an excellent mom who showed me how to love others, but she also modeled what it looked like to chase after the Lord. She showed me that the chasing was most important.

I remember she smiled at me and breathed in deeply. "Well then, my work here is done."

Her life was not a long one, only 67 years. I had the eternal pleasure of having her in my life for 37 of those years. And I now know that if I can teach my children even half of the things that she taught and modeled for me, my work here will be done.

## **KELLI J GAVIN OF CARVER**

Kelli is a Minnesota Writer, Editor, Blogger and Professional Organizer. Her work can be found with Clarendon House Publishing, Sweetycat Press, The Ugly Writers, Sweatpants & Coffee, Zombie Pirates Publishing, Setu, Cut 19, Passionate Chic, Otherwise Engaged, Flora Fiction, Love What Matters, Printed Words and Southwest Media among others. Kelli's first two books were released in 2019 ("I Regret Nothing- A Collection of Poetry and Prose" and "My Name is Zach- A Teenage Perspective on Autism"). She has also co-authored 18 anthology books. With two more books to be released in 2021, she is also working on a collection of fiction short stories.

Her blog can be found at [www.kellijgavin.blogspot.com](http://www.kellijgavin.blogspot.com) .

@KellijGavin on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook





## KYMBA NIJUCK

Dear Gypsies,

My earliest memories are of the 1964 World's Fair in NYC. I remember being picked up of my stroller and handed to someone I think it was to the woman pretending to be my mother. I can see the parallel lines of the chrome wires that formed the footboard and my white maryjane shoes. I was about a year old and we were going on the Small World ride. I still love the sickeningly treacle song. It's a world of laughter. It's a world of tears. There's truth in those words. I don't think I could understand it then but I do now.

The sensation of being on the boat that went through the tunnels where we saw the puppet children dressed in costumes of many lands is still fresh in my mind. It must of been my first time on a boat. Unless I was on a boat when I was with you. I don't know. I just don't have any memories of my time with you. Were you Sea Gypsies? Is that even a thing? I have flashes of bright colors. I recognize certain prints as familiar. There are refrains of a melody that I think I know from someplace I know not where. I think these might be memories of my times with you but I cannot be sure.

I hope you don't mind me calling you Gypsies. I don't mean any disrespect. It's just how I have always thought of you and always will. I know that it's not politically correct now and I don't wish to offend.

One of my first crushes on a girl was when I was about 10. She was a classmate and lived in the garden apartment where I lived with the pretend mother. She self identified as a Gypsy as did her family. She had the longest, blackest hair. I sat with her at the kitchen table as her grandmother combed through it with chicken fat. Do you still do that? Just curious.

## **KYMBA NIJUCK**

KYMBA NIJUCK is an Artist, writer, miscellaneous creator.  
Believer in magic of various types.



KOLODZKOSER

F. SCHNIBER

## LAVERN SPENCER MCCARTHY

He Loves Me Still...

He sends me roses for our special day.  
They grow from vines he planted long ago.  
Although he closed his eyes and slipped away,  
he loves me still and always lets me know.

They grow from vines he planted long ago,  
a balm against my sorrow in the night.  
He loves me still and always lets me know  
he watches from above where all is bright.

A balm against my sorrow in the night,  
those crimson blossoms always bring me cheer.  
He watches from above where all is bright.  
Somehow they make it seem that he is near.

Those crimson blossoms always bring me cheer.  
They light my way when darkness hides the sky.  
Somehow they make it seem that he is near.  
I cherish them until they fade and die.

They light my way when darkness hides the sky.  
When autumn comes, I know they must depart.  
I cherish them until they fade and die.  
He sends a gift to soothe my aching heart.

When autumn comes, I know they must depart.

Although he closed his eyes and slipped away,  
he sends a gift to soothe my aching heart.  
He sends me roses for our special day.

**LAVERN SPENCER MCCARTHY**

LAVERN SPENCER MCCARTHY has written and published eight books, four books of poetry and four books of short stories. She is a life member of Poetry Society Of Texas.

EDUCATION

LA FORCE

STRENGTH THROUGH

PAR L'EDUCATION



POSTES **CANADA** POSTAGE

**LINDA M. CRATE**

Dear Uncle Jimmy,

It's been twenty years since you left us, but I still miss you. I understand that you were fighting a battle against your demons that, and that you probably couldn't see the sense of holding on. I don't blame you for what you did because I know depression is hard and heavy. You don't always feel motivated, you feel guilty for what you couldn't accomplish, and you sometimes push people away because you feel like you're a burden or that your life doesn't have purpose.

Yet I feel guilt because it was your death that made me realize that I didn't want to die. It made me realize I just wanted to dig out all this anger and pain out of me.

I'm sorry that you felt so poorly. I wish there was something I could have done to make you feel more loved.

Sometimes I still read the last letter you sent me, and I still have the last gift you gave me: the book and audio recording of *The Nutcracker*. I have always wanted to see the Broadway production of that book ever since—I think because it would remind me of you, partly, and partly because I always wanted to be brave like Marie.

I think if you could've held on just a bit longer, you may have been able to find homes for your paintings by selling them online. You were talented, you just hadn't found the right people yet. I always thought that maybe one day you could teach me how to paint. I wish I would've asked you before you passed.

I guess I just assumed there would always be time to do it later.

But I'm following your advice and going after my dreams. You were right about work feeling like a prison. I guess we artistic souls just want to break free of the corporate dirge that is America. If I could write all day and get paid for it, I would.

I cannot wait until I leave this town. I absolutely hate it here.



Mum doesn't seem to realize how bad this town is, she tries to encourage me that things aren't as bad as they seem. But the people here are really aggravating, and no one is meaner than anyone I've met in Pennsylvania.

I wish I could get out of this state.

There are mean and bad people everywhere, I know, but I truly loved living in Maine. I made some friends up there.

Fell in love with someone there that I shouldn't have, too, but I learned my lesson. I have more value and worth than he could ever acknowledge, and it's his loss not mine.

There's a part of me that thinks I would like to go to California, but my one friend living there told me not to come. She complains about the gas prices, and says she misses Seattle.

Maybe it's a universal thing to not feel home in your home state, I don't know. I think the only place that will feel like home is a place I cannot go, but a place I've always dreamed of. But Maine was full of trees, ravens, and friendship.

I feel best when I am alone, though. So I get your need for solitude. Sometimes it is most lonely being around others especially when you're a misfit like us. I hope that your soul is finally at peace because I know you couldn't find this on Earth.

Love Always,

Linda

**LINDA M. CRATE**

LINDA M. CRATE's works have appeared in numerous anthologies both online and in print. She is a three time best of the net nominee and two-time push cart nominee.

ПОЧТА СССР

МЕДАЛЬ



„ЗА ПОБЕДУ НАД  
ГЕРМАНИЕЙ В ВЕЛИКОЙ  
ОТЕЧЕСТВЕННОЙ ВОЙНЕ  
1941-1945 г.г.“

30  
КОП

## MARGARETH STEWART

Dear Luci-Fer,

I wish this finds you well and in good health. We are fine around here, trying to beat climate change, not sure, if you are playing your part on it but I do believe it is the product of our own actions anyway.

I will not blame you for the pandemics – but to tell you the truth, you can walk freely in the streets because we are all in lockdown. Yes, every single one in their own cell seems like a nightmare, but hopefully, it shall pass, too.

There is one first thing that has intrigued me all the way around and here, and I must definitely ask you - especially because this is for this special anthology that I never thought I would end. Chaotic world, slavery work, and I cannot travel as much as I love so everyone dealing with boredom and surviving - we are all among friends and colleagues here in this anthology, but I have read here and there that the most famous writers conquered success because they had sold their souls to you.

Now, just between us, is this true? From Dan Brown, to Paulo Coelho and JKR...well, if that is the magical, do you mind telling us the price and everything. There are many impostors I must say, they charge the hell out of writers and they think they are doing the right thing. I am sure you do not have anything to do with that, but just in case, you do not know there might be people disputing your place.

There are so many other issues I have been wondering and self-reflecting, not to say overthinking upon to ask you. They seem well and well off – all of them! Is there anything we do not know of? Creepy things in the contract? In addition, they are from different genres, so I guess there is no predilection for any genre or another, is there?

Moreover, what is the magic to get the attention of all those readers and book sales? Wow, those are astronomic numbers – at least for me – who keep book-promoting, and almost “niente (nada in Italian).” Now, Amazon, got mad at me and practically expelled me from Kindle, they said I abused from book promotions and used more days that I was supposed to. Then, I asked them, “why did you allow, then?” but got no answer. I am sure I will not get it. They sent me the same info again as if I had not understood it. Then, I got nervous and cancelled all books there. Now, I am in Kobo and Google Play, maybe iTunes, perhaps Lulu, too. Anyway, Amazon = never more! If you want something to be done in a boring night, there it is – monopolies.

And if there is a formula to call the attention of the readers, what do you think it would be? Any suggestion for future plots? Well, reality with COVID-119 and global warning has been a nightmare for us all. Do you have any prediction on when this will end?

Just do not tell me that is only hard work, okay, because it is not – it is evident!

Nevertheless, lately, I think I became much freer – I do not care. I write and I try to find different way to get publish – making sure my book is out there – available for people to read it. In addition, I do not care so much about figures anymore.

Furthermore, each of us has a path to follow – all paths diverge from one to another. I am aware I took the less traveled road and that is okay, never mind! (Though I would not refuse any little help from my friends)

Take care & keep safe

Pleased to meet you, yes, I know your name!

Best regards,

Margareth Stewart

## **MARGARETH STEWART**

Margareth Stewart is the pen name of Monica Mastrantonio, visiting professor at the University of York. PhD in Social Psychology. Researcher, Tutor. Compiler of yearly anthology - "Whitmanthology": on Loss and Grief (2016), "Womanthology": writings on women (2016), "The pain that unites us all" (2017), "The Brave & The Afraid" (2018), "Land and Territory", (2019). Her novels are – Open/Pierre's journey after war, Urban poems, Mademoiselle-sur-Seine, Zero chance. The seven sinkers.

@Mastrantonio

Author\_MargarethStewart

## MARIA TOSTI

My dear daughter,

if only you knew how many times, I am close to you...

My love for you is indissoluble and sacred, it lives on beyond death. How can it cease to exist? It continues to flow beyond the limits of space and time. In my dimension everything is more amplified, everything is energy; everything is light and pure love. It is precisely this love that acts as a bridge from my dimension to yours.

You are always my joy, even when for the world you live you think you are not enough. You are my continuity and everything for which I have always faced my earthly battles. Your breath has always been mine, since the day I gave you - life.

No matter how much time has passed since I left you... in truth, I've never done it, I am always beside you. Sometimes I hold your hand, as I did when you were a child, and sometimes I embrace you when you need the most. I am with you when you face life's obstacles and every time you cling to a glimmer of hope, in search of peace and serenity. I wipe away your tears in difficult moments, I caress you and console you with all my motherly love. I cheer you on and encourage you in the challenges you strive for, and I am always ready to rejoice with you when you achieve a good result in the things you do.

Sometimes I appear to you in dreams because only there can I live you and show myself to you in the only way you are allowed.

I am happy that the drop of faith that I have passed on to you and taught you during the life has helped you to understand many things and to go further, with heart and thought.

Live, my joy, and always keep your light burning, so that the shadows will never have the upper hand. Live as your heart suggests and be certain that one day we will meet again and it will be forever.

With all my love,

Mom

## **MARIA TOSTI**

MARIA TOSTI is an emerging Italian poet. Her first publication is a multilingual poetry book “Voci ai confine dell’anima” (Voices to the boundaries of the Soul) published by Thoth Editions. She likes also drawing and photograph. She is a video maker too. Her web site is <https://mariatosti.wixsite.com/mariatosti>





## **MARÍA DEL PILAR CLEMENTE B.**

Dear Miguel Clemente

I know it is unusual to call a father by his first and last name; however, it has been too long since you left. Now, I'm an adult much older than forty-two, your age when the mining accident happened.

I don't want to remember the accident without speaking about how you built your dreams in Spain before becoming an immigrant in Chile

You were a welcome baby in Barcelona city. These times, the blood spilled during the World War I had just dried in Europe. I imagine you as a child, opening your astonished blue eyes in front of the marvelous Montjuic Magic Fountain. Its water's jets, colored lights, and music were some of the 1929 Barcelona Universal Exposition great attractions. I always knew those "singing waters" had illuminated your childhood. In the only trip to Barcelona, we did as a family in 1968, you took Mom, my sister and I to visit Montjuic. I can't forget how excited you were for showing us the fountain at night. The darkness was the best moment to appreciate its magnificent lights. One year after that trip, my grandpa, Pedro Clemente passed away. Nobody imagined you will be next in 1970.

The Exposition's new buildings, pavilions, amphitheater, and plazas were the last sign of prosperity and normality in your city before Spain started a fratricidal war. Four years later, World War II added more suffering to the European people.

How difficult could it be for a child to live surrounded by bombs and destruction?

Aunt Carmen, your only sister (eight years older than you) told me that you had a natural healthy appearance, so you never looked hungry. She also said me, that children had the gift of building an innocent environment. Adults and teenager like her could not escape from reality. When Barcelona turned into a hostile place, your parents decided to go to the Pyrenees Mountains. My grandma, Angeles, wanted to ask for protection in the village where her relatives lived. I think that journey was horrible, so nobody wanted to remember it. I only know your mom Angeles couldn't stand the starvation. She got a lungs illness and died. It sounds crazy, but I wish I have been there to hold you. I see you as a little boy coped with his first deep pain. My sister and I were also very young girls when your mining-work jeep fell into to the Andes Mountains' cliffs.

You grew up in the middle of Europe's reconstruction, but Spain was isolated from progress. Young men like you were looking for better jobs. You had gotten an Electrical technician diploma, were twenty-five years old and a better life desire. One day, Juan José your cousin in law, brought good news: There was an opportunity in Brazil! My grandpa Pedro didn't want his son to leave the birth land. However, since father's love doesn't have limits, he helped you with all the paperwork.

I keep a black and white photo taken days before your departure. It showed you dressed in a Humphrey Bogart style, holding the arms of Carmen and Pedro. Although the three of you were smiling in front of Christopher Columbus monument, your eyes couldn't simulate the sadness of a long separation will coming soon.

I found in Google your Brazilian labor-visa. How young you look! Your ship arrived in Río de Janeiro on the second day of February in plain Carnival. You and Juan José felt welcomed for such a festive spirit. It seemed to have arrived at Paradise, but your destination was not there; it was in Chile.

You told my mother, that when you crossed by train the Andes Mountain, the landscape resembled the Pyrenees. Maybe, your soul returned to Angeles, my grandma. Olga (my mom) and you met in the inn where she moved after arguing with her parents. It wasn't the classic "first sight love". She didn't like you in the beginning because your outgoing Spanish personality contrasted too much with the quiet Chilean way of being.

Asked my mother for marriage meant you to make this South American country your new home. Those times, communications were difficult. Only letters and expensive phone calls barely could keep your ties with Spain. When my sister and I came to this world, you dreamed of traveling to Barcelona. You wanted to hug your beloved father and sister and introduce to them your Chilean family. It took almost thirteen years before reaching that goal. I like to remember the coal-mining town where you and my mom built a life. Actually, on some trips to Chile, I have come back to check the old and empty building of the mine. It's my way to see you again, singing zarzuelas, helping my mother to organize activities, or playing soccer with the neighborhood's boys.

In 1970, you got your second dream: Get a job in a copper mining company. It would be a better salary, we would live in the mountains, near Santiago city. All appeared to be great, then the accident happened.

I never thought I became an immigrant. Now, that I'm living in Virginia, U.S., I understood your Odyssey. Dreams can send us to unexpected paths. We can cry or laugh, but pain and joy are part of the risk. Dear Miguel, thank you for the simple moments you shared with me. Thank you for giving me your roots and skills for building my destiny in other country. You will be in my heart forever.

Your daughter,

María del Pilar

## **MARIA DEL PILAR CLEMENTE B.**

MARIA DEL PILAR CLEMENTE B. was born in Santiago, Chile. She is a Journalist and Master in Political Communication from the University of Chile. She lives in Richmond, Virginia, U.S., where she is a plastic artist under her married name Maria Pilar York.

She worked in broadcasting radios and newspaper in many Chilean cities. In 1994, she won the best journalist award in the Atacama region. She was awarded by several literary prizes, including the Pedro de Oña honor for her novel "Quitapenas Bar" ("No more grief Bar"). She has three books published in Chile: "Personal Stereo and the Star worms," "Urban tribes," and the humoristic essay "Roteques, cuicos, and other fashionable people" about Spanish slang and social stereotypes.

In Virginia, she has been a volunteer in the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. Some of her stories are published in anthologies and colleges' magazines in Hispanic communities of the United States (Virginia, Tennessee, New York, and Florida). She launched in 2018 her book "Don't Forget the James River" about immigrants stories, in the Second Hispanic Book Festival in George Mason University.



## MERCEDES WEBB-PULLMAN

Dear Blessed Praying-with-your-eyes-open Mary,

I have no family left but you. My father, uncles, brothers, all the men in our village, lined up against the town hall wall and machine-gunned. We were forced to watch. They shot old women and babies, sent women and girls to Kiev as servants for German soldiers. Mama wouldn't work, just sat on the floor with her shawl over her face, rocking. They took her to Babi Yar from the barracks.

Now you are my mother, Mary Praying Virgin. When first I came to the city, for my first communion, you looked down from the dome straight into my eyes, through the halo of gold spread around you, and I knew you knew me and loved me.

Every person I've ever known, family and neighbours, they're all dead. Even the village itself is gone. I know you're still there, safe in Saint Sophia's Cathedral, Blessed Virgin Orans, because you are the unbreakable wall. Rus will live as long as you are there. I need your blessing before my journey.

They're sending me to Austria. I'm healthy, I know farm work and I can milk cows so I'll go to a farm, and another Austrian dairy farmer will be freed to join the German army. I'm pregnant and the soldiers don't want me in their barracks any more. I make them feel guilty.

I have a feeling I'll never see Kiev, or Rus, again. Life so far has all been about love and losing it, connections that vanish. I don't trust the world any more. Everything changes, nothing stays the same.

Except you, my new mother, 1,000 years praying with your hands in the air and your eyes wide open, trying to scrape up courage, and faith, before the coming birth. Our people traveled south and stayed for centuries, maybe it's time to turn west again. I know you'll understand why I haven't confessed my sins. My worst is wishing to die. Maybe that's why this new child came, to force me to continue with life.

I sold my body for food and a bed in warm barracks. It was either that or compete for rats in Kiev's starving streets. I'm anything but a virgin. A coward - I didn't try to stop the machine gun. I didn't try hard enough to get Mama up. I lived with the enemy for my own comfort.

I'm sorry to burden you with sins, faults. I write them down and send them to you so I can leave them all behind. So my story stays in the heart of Rus. I will arrive in Austria a slave still, pregnant,

alone but for you, carrying new life.

This child has myriad fathers and will never know one. I ask your blessing on us all. The soldiers could have treated me worse. If the Red Army had won and my family was still be alive, would my brothers have treated the Germans any better? Bless us all, Mother Mary, weak sinners that we are. Holy Mary Mother of God, pray for us now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Do pobachennya, Rus,

Vasha dochka.

\*

**dear Loretta**

seven years ago I separated  
your strands of Mardi Gras beads  
shiny rainbow offerings like  
lines of credit  
looped around the patrician feet  
of your large and very comfortable  
bed  
I saved a green necklace

**dear Beryl**

please remind the Kaumatua  
to bless the big flax below the urupa  
where I placed the cremains of my friend  
Loretta from Las Vegas  
six years ago

I'm moving north and won't be able to  
visit any more  
where the flax booms with tuis

**dear tuis**

guess I won't see you  
around the new  
imported regimented  
vineyards



**MERCEDES WEBB-PULLMAN**

MERCEDES WEBB-PULLMAN lives in Aotearoa New Zealand. Her poems and short stories have been published world-wide.

[www.amazon.com/author/mercedeswebbpullman](http://www.amazon.com/author/mercedeswebbpullman)



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POSTAGE  
REVENUE

4<sup>D</sup>

## OBINNA CHILEKEZI

To My Dad

This looks very strange that almost six years, exactly six year on 10<sup>th</sup> December, there had been void and silence between you and us. I could recall that fateful morning when my phone rang and it was mother from the other end informing me of your passage the other world of no return. My first feeling was why now, for I had thought that your two-day-sickness was not something to worry so much about. And it was, and you had gone. Leaving us with no farewell thee well.

Dad, although you are gone, the sweet memories of your life continue to linger on, especially in my mind. I always recall the memories we share during year endings like this, that you would go beyond your limit to ensure that we, your children and our own children, your grandchildren, are happy during the festive period. With your death, coming to celebrate the Xmas period is no longer as exciting as it used to be when you were alive. I hardly go again for such purpose, although painful as it seems to be.

The other day I recall some of the wise counseling that you gave me when as a growing boy had wanted to behave like the other boys. In the first instance, you had made me to know that I am unique that I am not like the other boys so I should be myself. Most especially that carry myself in a responsible manner.

The other day, I nearly came to tears, as I embark on a journey and from the beginning of the ten hours journey no one had called me to ask where you are and that you must be careful, not minding my age. If it were when you were alive, by the time I had embark on the vehicle you would called to find out the name of the transport company, when we were living the park, the state of the vehicle among other things. Subsequently you would call every hour to find out where we were and if I was comfortable until finally I arrive at the destination. This is no longer the case, O' death what a strong grip you used to hold my dad from communicating with me. What a chain, too strong to behold.

Dad, since you left us, I have not had an early morning prayer on my birthday. This that was a ritual between you and all your children. You would put a call on each of us birthday, wish us happy birthday and pray for us. For the past six years, there had been nothing like that. No one to wake you up and wish you happy birthday and follow it up with a long prayer for me. I really miss such moments, although then I had not valued it as I do now.

Which of the moments can I count which one should I leave. Nevertheless, this is to let you know Dad that I not only miss you but I also love you and cherish your memory.

I do not think it is out of place for me to ask how you are faring at the other end of world. For there is life after, and I know with your good works, life will treat you better where you are now that where you were before your departure. May the good Lord shine the light of love on you while I take solace in the words of the poet, Monica Young in her poem: A Parking Lot in West Houston that *I could see how a bloke might fancy you.*

Like a child's perfect outline in fast-melting snow.

Daddy, I don't what else to say to let you know that I have also taking solace on your and this shown in my proclamation in this poem of my that reads:

He who holds my hands

Come, can you see the light of dawn

Another dawn, a new day's born

And I step out, smiles in my pocket

For He holds tomorrow, holds my hand

Come off it, forget the night, and

Forget the worries, the hunger and life's troubles

For He who holds the sky, hold our lives

For we are His people, He our blessed love

(17/10/18, Ikeji-Arakeji) Rest in peace Nze Julius Ukah Chilekezi.

## **OBINNA CHILEKEZI**

OBINNA CHILEKEZI is a Nigerian poet and his works have appeared in journals and anthology. His poems have appeared in newspapers in his country and his latest work is Songs of a Stranger at the Smiling Coast.



## OJO OLUMIDE EMMANUEL

Dear Pat,

i've heard that absence  
is another way to  
celebrate presence &  
then you left.

that moment, my heart twirled  
anticlockwise as if the  
the clock was ever wise  
enough to bring you back, yet you left.

i've heard of what love can do  
but now i know what love can do-  
perhaps, it skews you in a blurry lane of memories  
where you are left to stitch your sore with time.

i watch you transmogrify with the wind  
like the colours of a fading shirt  
& when i leaped to catch you with my eyes  
i'm left in & with a silhouette.

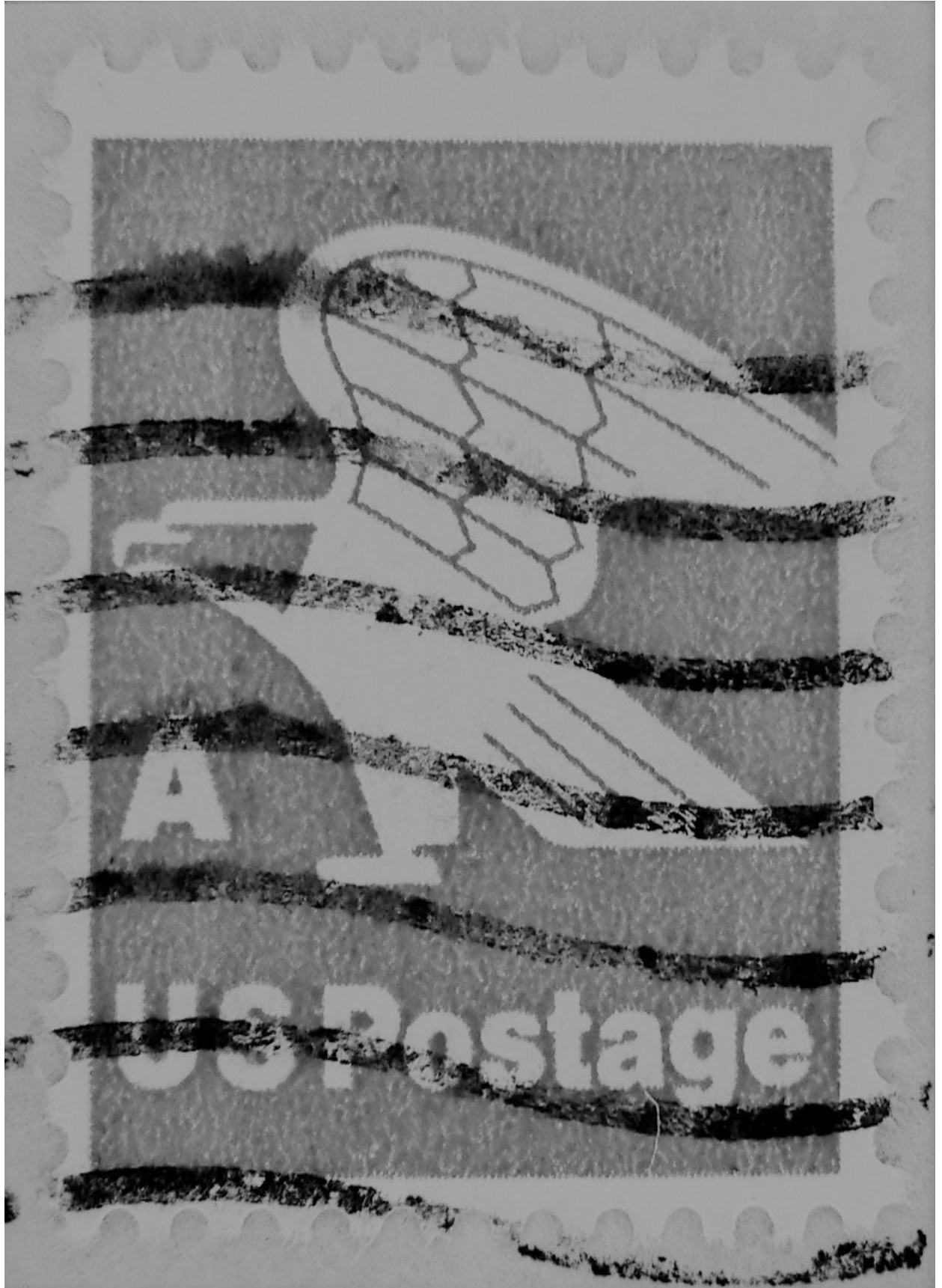
& to be sincere-  
you left with your  
absence and presence.

with grief & love  
josh.

**OJO OLUMIDE EMMANUEL**

OJO OLUMIDE EMMANUEL is a poet and the author of the poetry collection "Supplication for Years in Sands" (Polarsphere Books, 2021). He lives in Nigeria.





## PAPIA GOSH

Dear Man Friday,

The fragrance of my childhood would remain incomplete without a whiff of your earthy aroma. My mother says, you had joined our household as a helping hand, a month before I was born. Maybe the Gentleman up there in the skies sent a companion for the child whose childhood would be scattered amidst the nook and corner of this lonely huge white mansion.

I chose to make my appearance on a dark new moon night on the 20th of May 1966, a year which incidentally coincided with the beginning of the Naxalbari Movement in West Bengal, a peasant uprising spearheaded by Charu Mazumdar, in an attempt to initiate Land Reforms in the country. The dark fertile soil of my state was tainted with the blood of innumerable promising youth who left their education mid-way and jumped into the raging fire of the revolution trying their best to herald in a new era for a fairer world.

I grew up with you in an impregnable fortress amongst open courtyards and a large overgrown garden, oblivious of all the political upheaval around us. The ominous shadows of the blood bath never dappled our existence. If you look surreptitiously into the dark room near the staircase where the sunrays were denied, you could hear peals of laughter dissipating the gloom. There the little 'me' sat on hunches observing the facial movements your toothless jaws made as you tried to munch the chocolate bar I had given you. Peals of sparkling laughter spilled over the brim as you sang, danced and mimicked people on our huge sun-kissed courtyard. You knew the magic of turning my tears into a smile, a way to meltdown my sulking stubborn heart, a patient listener to my endless chatter and sometimes cooing me into a deep slumber.

The overcrowded streets and the small dusty lanes stand a silent witness to the companionship between a little girl who could prattle away for a million years and a dark old man in a white dhoti who listened with amusement to that mindless chatter.

Both of us were regular visitors to the Saturday weekly 'haat' (market) which mushroomed along the sandy banks of the Maurakhi river hemming the southern edge of the small town of Sainthia. Villagers from near and far brought vegetables, fruits and grains on bullock carts and sold them to the eager customers who haggled and hassled over prices.

If anyone asked you who I was, you replied in a heartbeat, "She is my mother and I am her old son." People laughed aloud, and a sense of self-importance firmly gripped my little heart, which was too young to understand the depth of your unfathomable love.

One day you took me to the cattle 'haat'. I stood at the edge of the market linking your rough fingers to my gentle ones gazing in wonder. Scattered amidst a sprinkle of thick leafy trees were herds of oxen, cows, goats and exotic birds. Some milky white rabbits caught my attention. That day, you were my 'father' since you didn't allow me to buy a rabbit. On our way back home, you tried your best to make me smile but my stubborn heart temporarily fractured our friendship.

Sometimes on dark lonely nights I search in vain for a touch of magic to erase those moments when I hurt you with my unkindness. How could I repay your selfless love and kindness, is a question which tortures my heart since you are now a part of eternity. May be in another life we will meet again where I will be your mother.

Yours loving,

Ma

**PAPIA GHOSH**

PAPIA GHOSH is a postgraduate in Economics. She has always been an avid reader with a penchant for penning down her thoughts and experiences through her poems and short stories. At present, she is working as a Senior Instructor at Word Munchers, helping children and adults to pen down their thoughts for the future generation to read.



## REENA KANDOTH

Grandpa's Guest Room

Dear Grandpa,

You had a full journey. In all my 15 years as your granddaughter, I could count on you to dote on me. However, most of all, the guest room was my favorite hangout at your house.

Grandpa, whenever mummy brought me and Cheryl to visit you I always had a fun time in your guest room. I liked playing with the old cigarette lighters that lay around, seeing the sparks as I flicked the rolling switch. I also liked the bed with lumpy cushions surrounded by books and papers. Cheryl and I could play castle and dungeons as we crouched on the bed behind stacks and pretended that the trolls were attacking. Occasionally, a pile would topple to the floor with a cloud of dust rising, triggering a wave of sneezes to erupt. We would hastily pack everything and look all innocent when you came over to inspect the ruckus. Then we would continue, albeit, a little more carefully.

I loved that room. Its mystery and promise of new games. Mummy did not feel the same way.

"I'll get that old man to clear his stuff out today." She would tell us under her breath as she rang the doorbell. When we got older, Cheryl and I would roll our eyes when she said that. "Here we go again," I once whispered to Cheryl. "Nothing changes." Moreover, she was right. You both would go round in circles.

Mummy would take a stack of papers and a trash bag and ask you if they could be thrown away, and your answer was invariably, "I'll look at it later". Mummy would repeat herself and you would ignore her. Why mummy bothered, I did not know. Couldn't she see that you loved your room? Grandma had given up even trying, choosing to ignore its existence. Remember how sometimes grandma would set up soya bean milk and curry puffs in the garden to steer us outside? Alternatively, when the weather was perfect, neither raining nor unbearably hot, she would take us to the playground? This activity was agreeable with mummy. But when we were done, the guest room drew us back like iron bars to a magnet.

On many evenings, you would fiddle about with your gadgets and indulge our questions.

Those gadgets also upset mummy to no end. She could not see that they were your treasures. Numerous TV sets, VCRs, antennae, telephones from previous eras, all these were your toys.

After repairing, I would see you looking at the small cube-like television set with the snowy images and garbled sound.

“Grandpa, the picture is so blurry. Make it clearer!” I once said.

“I’m trying dear. But it’s better than before, don’t you think?” Then you would adjust the knob and sometimes there was improvement and sometimes not. I would shriek with delight when the image became somewhat clear. An agreeable standard in the 1980s, which would not make the cut now.

Now in that beautiful home in heaven, perhaps you are tinkering with yet another 60s era TV set or perhaps you have discovered the thrills of flat-screen and curved TVs with perfect images that need no tinkering.

I see parts of you in me when I look at my bedroom. There are piles along the wall for my hobbies. Jewelry making on one table with the tools, beads, wires and clasps. On the other table, my scrapbooking and book making supplies. It did not take me long to accumulate papers, stickers, brads, buttons and notepads of beautiful paper.

I remember you once said, “Dear, you like my stuff right? Nevertheless, this room was once empty. Remember to always stay on top of things and keep your room clean, I will be watching you. Do as I say, not as I do.” Funny how those words seem the most relevant to me now. At least from my mess, I am reminded of that room.

I take your words to heart. In addition, will try. Fingers crossed.

As we cleared the guest room, whenever I saw pieces of paper that triggered memories, I asked mummy if I could keep them and this time she said yes.

I kept an old photo of you standing next to an old Ford. You looked totally different! Adorable as a ten-year-old. I also found a newer one of yourself and grandma on your wedding day, not at the ceremony, but when everything was over and you were going home. You had so much hair!

Mummy kept some photos and even an old radio for herself. The trash bags we used for the clearing, took a long time to be full. In addition, this was with all of us working together.

Thanks for loving me. Have a good time in the sky. See you in many years' time.

Missing you already.

Love, your first granddaughter.



**REENA KANDOTH**

REENA KANDOTH has contributed to various anthologies including *Writing the City: Fresh Fiction from Singapore Vol. 1 and Vol. 2*, *Whitmanthology: On Loss, Grief*, and *In 99 Words: Stories Librarians Tell*.  
Email at reena.kandoth@hotmail.com.

MALTA



ONE

POSTAGE

## ROXANA NEGUT

Letter to my mother

Dear mother

You taught me everything  
How to laugh, how to smile  
Under the light of a new day  
How to hope and to believe  
In another chance  
And how to pray.

You taught me how to fight  
When everything was lost  
And how to believe  
Even when the chances are  
Low.

Dear mother

You taught me everything  
about life  
all stories about love  
The courage  
To fight  
When everything is lost.  
But you forgot something  
Dear mother  
The most important thing  
You forgot  
To teach, to tell me  
How to live  
Without you.  
In this world.

## **ROXANA NEGUT**

ROXANA NEGUT is a poet, writer, journalist, who was born in 1981 in Bucharest. She studied at the Philosophy and Journalism College and worked as an editor, copywriter, content writer and journalist for various publications. She writes children's literature, poetry but also satirical humorous prose. Has a website called Life as a Lemonade.

She has published poetry, prose and articles in national and international literary magazines.

Volumes published by Lumen.

In 2019, she published the volume of symbolist poetry *Dead people don't want water*, at the Lumen publishing house.

In 2020, published the volume *Shadows of Light*, a poetic manifesto.



## **SAMMY OKE AKOMBI**

Hello Nelson Mandela,

I'm writing this letter on the seventh anniversary of your death. Africa and the world, was at pains to lose someone like you, even though you had spent over ninety years on earth. Your eternally sharp mind was still in high demand by humanity.

One of the legacies you left us is that, power is for the service of humanity and not for self-interest. You decided you would rule South Africa for only one term, during which you wiped out apartheid off the surface of the earth. You kept your promise not to ask for a second term even though your popularity was at its peak. A huge lesson for the power addicts around the world. Unfortunately, it is not learnt even as pools of human blood are spilt across villages and cities around the world. I would have hoped that you stay a little longer so that your mere presence would solve many of the problems the world has plunged itself in. Corrupt practices have continued to reign supreme. They are responsible for the blast in Beirut, where hundreds of people lost their lives and the port left in tatters. They are responsible for the distrust in governance in institutions and countries around the world.

At the beginning of this year, the world has been confronted by a deadly virus. It has been given the name coronavirus and it is being compared to the Spanish flu of 1918, which took away approximately fifty million human lives. I guess you knew about this flu. The coronavirus is destroying humanity like that flu did. The number of infections is already in tens of millions and people are dying like chicken attacked by a flu. I tried to capture the situation in a poem I entitled,

*It's Grim:*

I rise with the sun in all its brilliance and radiance.

Minutes later, it's the church bell that tolls.

It tolls to announce, there's a new death toll.

A human death toll, as a grim virus

stays steadfast in increasing the toll, death toll.

It's grim, grim, the graves are gravely crammed.

The radiance I rose in's been eclipsed by grimness.

How can life be so overwhelmed by sadness.

Family and friends fall in the toll, death toll.

The human toll that swells and only swells.

Foes too fall but they're humans who only add up the toll.

Smiles have drifted away; dark clouds continue to puncture.

Hello Nelson, it is even sadder that people in the frontline, trying to heal victims of the virus and also seeking to combat it, easily fall prey to its deadliness. It brings to mind the case of Dr. James Goodrich whose surgery prowess saved the lives of twins conjoined at the head. His precious life was taken away by COVID-19, the disease caused by the coronavirus. If you had stayed a little longer, your presence and wisdom would have made a great contribution to humanity on how to confront this virus. We have however, lived with it in sadness but we haven't lost our heads yet for there are many, including the President-elect, Joe Biden of the United States of America, who have already been vaccinated with a vaccine that has been the subject of much controversy. It is paradoxical that human beings hardly trust one another in the search for solutions to their own well-being. Even you as a man who fought for justice and peace for humanity was not trusted by all. However, the fact that people like you survived the Spanish flu is a welcome relief that humanity shall have people like you to survive the coronavirus and its COVID-19.

**SAMMY OKE AKOMBI**

SAMMY OKE AKOMBI is a Cameroonian poet and novelist. He is currently working on a novel entitled *A Woman's Broken Wall*. He is an alumnus of IWP at the University of Iowa, USA.





COMPUTING

USA FOREVER

## SHONTAY LUNA

Dear Tina,

November 2020

This is the second letter poem I've written to you. The first was in December of '89 as I accompanied my friend and her family on what was my very first trip to Mexico.

A twenty-year-old black girl who, until that point, rarely left the neighborhood. In a place where I didn't speak the language and garnered stares from everyone as I tread unfamiliar Earth. Blowing off advances from both her brothers. But I didn't tell you that part, I don't remember why. Instead, I wrote about the countryside and the roadside altars. As well as the mountains, that seemed to hide calvary troops. A result of my having seen, quite possibly, one too many Westerns.

I'm no longer that girl and you're no longer here. So much has changed since you've left. I was 33, my girls were 8, 6 and 5. Now they're 26, 24 and twenty-three. Each on her own path, opinionated, unburdened. You'd be proud of them. As well as of me. I've finally found some of the strength I've long admired you for. You'd get a kick now out of the things I dare say to my husband, anyone and myself. For I'm now a fervent lover of bluntness and truth, no matter the cost. Because I keep change handy (smile).

I got a reprimand from your sister some time back because I don't frequently visit your grave. She didn't understand when I said it wasn't necessary. Because you're always with me; in every ray of sunlight and butterfly that dances around me. Every word I write a continuation of the story you never got to finish. I guess it's all in how one looks at things. I still miss you though. That's one thing that will never change.

Your Daughter,

Shontay

## **SHONTAY LUNA**

SHONTAY LUNA is a Chicagoan whose interests include deep dish pizza, insulting Al Capone and staring up at the stars when they decide to show themselves.



## SPONDON GANGULI

Dear Mother,

You left us for your eternal journey five years back. We are all well but your absence is very much prominent in our life till today. I had kept on secret from you these many years on my father's instruction that I want to disclose through this letter.

Sometimes we are left in a dilemma in between the state of agreeing and disagreeing. Sometimes there goes a tug of war between the state of a sound mind and the state of an illusion. I do believe in all what we may call a soul, supernatural element, or ghost. But one incident from my childhood I could not figure out even today in my mid-forties.

It was January 1986, and I was 10 years old. We lived in Singrauli in Madhya Pradesh, India. Our township was 10 kilometres away from the Railway colony. Since it was a hilly region, the road to our township meandered through hills so we cycled along the railway track to save time. Though no regular trains ran over the track except for one in the morning and another in the evening, the empty track waited for the crunching of wheels to break through its loneliness.

Every Sunday, father went to the market to buy vegetables. That week, I was thrilled to go with my father on his bicycle. After purchasing everything, we were returning home.

The winter evening grew dark by 6pm. After a while, my father asked me if it was okay to take the shortcut through the woods. But my father soon realized his mistake as the woods were very dark. So he turned his bicycle to return, when someone crossed us on another bicycle, and a sound echoed "*Mere saath aaaa jaoooo...*" (*Follow me*). Nothing was visible except a white shirt. My father told me to hold on tightly as we followed that man.

Suddenly we found ourselves pushed into a ditch. I just froze in fear. My father asked me about my injuries, but the whole incident was so harrowing that I was dumbfounded. He told me to get up on the bicycle, and was about to start walking towards the main road, when a hand approached his shoulder and pulled him back.

"*Kamba ja rahe ho babu? Udhar khai hai!*" (*Where are you going Sir? There's a deep gorge ahead!*) a broken voice called out. My father suddenly came back to his senses and put me down on the ground. An old man said, "*Mere sath aao, mein apko rasta dikhata hoon*" (*Come this way, I am taking you out from here*). We followed that unclear person like a robot. Since we were numb with fear, I was holding my father's arm tightly. But my father was calm and quiet. Suddenly, that man stopped and told us to move ahead to the highway. From afar, we saw the main road. As we were about to say thank you to that old man, we could not see him anymore.

Dear mother, we owe our lives to that old man who was our saviour. Had it not been for him, we would have fallen into the deep gorge.

Yours loving son,

Spondon (Babi)

## **SPONDON GANGULI**

SPONDON GANGULI teaches Computer Science in a reputed English medium school for the last 15 years but apart from his profession, he loves to read and write poetry. He is a life-long learner with a zest for experimenting and learning new things. He loves to write poems and short stories. Some of his stories and poems have been published in online magazines. He has also published a book on poetry titled 'Forgotten Love Unforgotten Love'.

15 К 1989

ПОЧТА  
СССР

МОСКВА. ПАМЯТНИК  
МИНИНУ И ПОЖАРСКОМУ.

ПОКРОВСКИЙ СОБОР (ХРАМ  
ВАСИЛИЯ БЛАЖЕННОГО).



ПАМЯТНИКИ  
ИСТОРИИ

## SRINJAY CHAKRAVARTI

### A LETTER TO TINTIN

To

Mr Tintin,  
Marlinspike Hall,  
Marlinspike,  
Marlinshire,  
Belgium.

Dear Sir,

I am a writer who lives and works in the Indian city of Calcutta.

I wished to contact you with reference to your scheduled trip to our city.

Your creator Hergé—Georges Remi—left us all suddenly in 1983. It is said that he had planned a story set in Calcutta but was thwarted by leukaemia, which claimed him while he was still shaping Alph-Art. Though this is difficult to confirm now, this cosmopolis with all its absurdities still awaits your first trip.

While talking about the child born of his soul, Hergé had said once: ‘I receive...a lot of mail from India. Here, in the office, are two letters from Calcutta. Now, what can there be in common between a boy in Calcutta and myself?’

The reason is not far to seek. Like countless other middle-class Bengali boys growing up in Calcutta in the 1970s, for me your adventures opened a window to a whole new world outside—a world vibrant with (local) colour and aglow with magical excitement, where truth, justice and beauty inevitably triumph in the end.

Your exploits enable us to return to a perennial collective childhood in a metropolis, which celebrates the joy of living in the midst of grim poverty, squalor and sorrow: Calcutta, the City of Joy.

You remain the evergreen favourite here among all the comic strip heroes and role models of our childhoods. Your stories are read time and time again, with the innocent humour and good clean fun always remaining as fresh as ever. As the perpetually young intrepid boy reporter—always accompanied by your faithful fox terrier, Snowy—you’ve been the guiding light for millions of children in this city for the past few decades.

Since you first appeared amongst us mortals in 1929, you have taken us to a wide variety of exotic locales all over the world. Of course, you’ve been to India as well: twice, in fact. You had spent a



few hours sightseeing in Delhi on your way to Tibet and the Abominable Snowman. Even earlier in your career, you had crashed your plane in the jungles of the princely state of Gaipajama. But you've never been to Calcutta, and we wait for your promised arrival. Some day, some day.

As the globe-trotting boy detective nonpareil, you have battled drug traffickers, gun-runners, slave traders, currency forgers and sundry other gangsters. As any admirer of your books would attest, nothing is impossible for you to achieve.

You have salvaged a meteorite near the North Pole. You have toppled a South American regime in a bloodless putsch. You have captured Al Capone in his Chicago lair. You have hitched a ride in a flying saucer. You have even beaten Neil Armstrong to the Moon by almost 20 years!

We're also quite sure that you escaped from being turned into the museum sculpture that Endaddine Akass hoped to create by pouring liquid polyester on you. The narrative Hergé left in suspended animation when he passed away has tantalised us all since then, and will continue to do so forever. But does your story actually have a conclusion?

For you—we're sure—it would be no big deal to step out of the pages of Hergé's albums straight into the dreary old streets of Calcutta. Accompanied by the irascible Captain Haddock, the temperamental Professor Calculus as well as the bumbling police detectives, Thompson and Thomson.

Who knows, at the bend of some serpentine lane in our city, I might one day run into a snub-nosed blond youth with a vertical quiff, accompanied by a snow-white dog, hot in chase after some gang of crooks or the other...

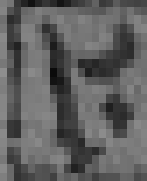
Yours sincerely,

Srinjay Chakravarti

[This letter to Tintin is based on my article published in the editorial page of multiple editions of *The Indian Express* on September 16, 1996, in India. I had revised and expanded the text into an essay in December 2004; it has been republished on Tintinologist.org (formerly The Cult of Tintin: <https://www.tintinologist.org/articles/calcutta.html>).]

## **SRINJAY CHAKRAVARTI**

SRINJAY CHAKRAVARTI is a writer, editor and translator based in Salt Lake City, Calcutta, India. His creative writing has appeared in over 150 publications in 30-odd countries. Website: [www.srinjaychakravarti.com](http://www.srinjaychakravarti.com).



LOCAL-POST



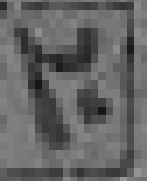
PAISER



KUSTENDJIE & CZERNAWODA.



20 PARAS



## **TATENDA CHARLES MUNYUKI**

12 November 2020

Dear Deceased Covid-19 Victims

What can you do when your loved one is gone? The hurt sinks in, we grieve, fallen, not knowing what to do. I am down, I am broken, the only hope is maybe meeting you again in heaven, or hell, wherever we may meet – if and when I escape earth pain's haven like you did. If that is fate, unworthy I was proven, I pray I will be forgiven for what I did with my life. I pray for your gone souls, being poetic as I can, for sometimes I wish I had more senses to comprehend why this happened.

I try to figure if all was fake, maybe it was a dream I slept in the dark. It started as a joke, a mere fake news campaign, COVID this, Corona that, for many of us to comprehend it's reality.

If it was as real as it now is, I wish I didn't awake, could have dreamt all my life for your sake. Gone too soon, without warning, all your dreams destroyed by a single sneeze.

Hordes of questions and cares I carry, asking you what it is like on the other side. Is it better than what we have here, is this life we live overrated. We all die someday, but you didn't have to die in such a manner so sudden, so vile. No one was safe, many of you lost like the blink of an eye. As I write to you, please listen to these words of mourning. Life has a way of distorting things, I see hundreds of thousands of you leave us lie helpless in the grief of loss.

We remain without you, to deal with these life problems, draining and tiring us. We still make bad choices, which leave us saturated in pools of sadness. Wars carry on, so does hunger and sad things such as racism. It seems like we haven't learnt anything at all, from losing you, that life is short and we should cherish it.

So many dreams and ambitions lost, so much love and futures lost. Where do we go from here I ask, where do we go from here without you? Mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, friends, all gone because of something as unpredictable as a virus that appears like a flu. Forever we call 2020 the year of death. So many lost souls lost in this year. Maybe that 20 and another 20 combined mean something. Maybe one of you left us knowing, to leave us the clueless of what has happened, why so soon.

No more can I write, scribble along and not shed more tears of pain of loss. Twenty tears for the lost souls, twenty cries to cherish their names.

May your souls Rest in Eternal Peace

Yours in sorrow

Charlie

## **TATENDA CHARLES MUNYUKI**

Tatenda is a Zimbabwean writer, publisher, filmmaker and women empowerment advocate. He has written and published over 100 books, some of them award nominees in Zimbabwe.

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## **ARTISTS - EFRAIN FUENTES & SILVIA**

Efrain Fuentes artisan of Zapotec origin from San Martín Tilcajete Ocotlán Oaxaca

Efrain is part of the third generation of woodcarvers.

He began carving wood at the age of seven under the supervision of his father Epifanio Fuentes.

The first piece that I stem was a small angel that to this day still conserves it as a great memory.

In 1993, when Efrain was just 13 years old, he left for the first time to expose his work abroad to Santa Fe, New Mexico. Jackalope was exhibiting with many artists from different countries where he caused admiration for being the youngest artist. He is currently married to Silvia Gómez; an artisan from the same population who decorates the alebrijes that Efrain and his children carve has a family workshop where Efrain, Silvia and their four children collaborate.

Eros Fuentes, Dulce Fuentes, Emmanuel Fuentes and Estrella Fuentes. Each of them has a distinguished way of working with alebrijes since they express their feelings and vision in different ways according to the wood they carve, that is, the shape they find in their trunk to be carved, in the same way in painting they use the elements of the earth as well as different signs which are very representative of our Zapotec culture, the culés are found in temples such as Mitla or Monte Albán.

As artisans we are very grateful for what Mother Nature gives us, we use wood to carve the alebrije but we pay it back by making a plantation on land belonging to our population which takes more than 20 years to others we are choosing to reuse different woods and roots that we find When we go out for a walk through the hills of our town, since for us it represents the roots or trunks of a tree that have already been used but still have a way of continuing to live in the form of alebrije, for this reason we also use copal, walnut, cedar, willow, Sabino, huamúchil as well as zompantele.

To carve an alebrije in copal wood, first we select the right wood, it helps me a lot when the shape of the wood is curved, first the piece is carved one or two days of carving then the wood has to be left to dry naturally, which is the longest process later. We have to polish it with sandpaper then add liquids to preserve the wood and in the future it will not have problems, followed by this step we have to repair the pieces in each of its imperfections, we use a natural resonator that we create with the sawdust dust that It arises when cutting the wood and a little glue after we polish a much thinner sandpaper to give a smooth finish to the piece after this process we begin to put sealant on the piece so that the background that we decide to apply adheres easily.

Finally, the piece goes to the decoration process where we use different brushes, some to shade, others to anchor and another finer to make decorations in the alebrije.

The cat is sample of their work. All rights reserved. Publication authorized in this anthology.





The end

