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# CONTENTS

## From The Editors

**TheDeer talks to poet-translator Billie Maciunas**

**Abomination**  
by Hannia West

**Getting a Life**  
by Mandy Pannett

**There is Here**  
by Eric Neagu

**Mint and Jasmine**  
by Stef Hall

**Snjótittlingur**  
by Anthony Kane Evans

**Mr. Mack Gets His Bead On**  
by Wanda Morrow-Clevenger

**That Night**  
by Allison Hunter-Frederick

**Baby Blues**  
by Sharon Goldberg

**Hetty Heads Out**  
by Robert Priestley

**Mall Story**  
by Gypsy Martin

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## From The Editors

*For sale. Baby shoes. Never worn.*  
-- attributed to Ernest Hemingway

TheDeer asked for flash fiction and lots of it dropped into the mail box. Only a select few were chosen, though, to appear in Issue 4.

In order to tell a story in 750 words or less, an author's got to sweat over nearly every single curve of every single letter. There needs to be a beginning, a middle and an end (not necessarily in that order, of course) and not a lot of characters. Put four or more people into a 750-word story and the reader will be lost in nano seconds. Repeat words like 'the' or 'and' or 'then' too many times and the author's lost some powerful word room.

We all know that in this crazy world of ours, there's never enough time for anything. Flash fiction keeps growing in popularity for exactly that reason. It's short and, done well, can make a reader rise up (albeit momentarily) from their daily grind slouch.

The authors featured in this issue aim to pull you in, wake you up, and make you think ... if only for a flash.

Enjoy.

from  
Doug Pugh  
Donna Gagnon Pugh  
Henge Hog

## **TheDeer talks to poet-translator Billie Maciunas**

Billie lives in Orlando, Florida, near Sea World. She has never been to Disney World and has no plans for doing so. She has two dogs who are her spirit guides and whom, she says, have shown her the benefits of having a roof, regular meals, and companionship. Billie is counting reasons for moving to Brooklyn and has come up with about 20 so far. Her late husband, George Maciunas, is the founder of Fluxus, an international art scene, soon to be a living movie.



**'Billie & George in Black and White Piece, 1978.'**  
photo by Hollis Melton

**I would like to ask you a few questions, if that's okay? I'm a curious (and odd deer). I'm rather intrigued because you often work on translations of poetry into English. Now while that sounds a fairly straight forward proposition, given all the nuances that poets put into their work, I imagine it's very much tougher than it sounds.**

**Do you read lots of poems, and just pick out what you consider the best? Does a publisher guide you with their requirements? Or do you work your way through a book, one at a time?**

Many of the translations grew out of my college studies at Brown University (beginning at age 34), where I majored in languages and literature. The translations of Catullus and Horace come from a Latin class; the translations of Cecelia Miereles come from a translation class.

The Florbela Espanca poems, however, come from my having lived in Portugal for two years. I heard her poems set to Fado music and fell in love with the sound. Later, at Brown, I studied Portuguese and Brazilian literature and began to read her poems. The first ones I translated were published in Gavéa Brown, their literary journal. After more than 30 years I revised these a little and began to translate more of her work. I am still in love with her after all these years.

**I read quite widely (as deer go), and I've been somewhat blown away by several of your translations of poetry. You have a knack for finding phrases that are just right. I imagine that to do so you possibly try to 'play' the character of the poet, imagine them setting the scene or environment. Is that the way you do it?**

I wrote a master's thesis on Florbela while at UNC-Chapel Hill. Her life touched me personally. She was the illegitimate child of a housemaid and a nondescript father who didn't acknowledge her until after her death. In the 1920s and 1930s in Catholic Portugal, she married three times and had an abortion. Her only brother, also illegitimate, died in his 20s in a plane accident, plunging into the Tagus River alone. Florbela died of an overdose of sleeping pills when she was 33. Her poems come from her grief, and not least, from going unheard her whole life by poets she loved who did not take women seriously as writers. Beyond the personal attachment to her, I use a Portuguese dictionary, an etymological dictionary, a Latin-Portuguese dictionary, and a thesaurus to try to get the most meaning out of her words.

**Do you work in several languages? I've read most of your Portuguese translations. Did you learn the language in Portugal itself? I tend to find that doing that actually adds to an understanding of the culture behind the words, picking up colloquial phrases and the like.**

I mostly work in Portuguese, and just Florbela these days. But I have worked in German and Latin also. I began learning Portuguese in Portugal from 1979 to 1981. This was important for getting the knack of the beautiful sibilant sounds of continental Portuguese. But I really "learned" it at Brown, UNC-Chapel Hill, and later in Brazil. I use quotation marks because I am not a fluent speaker and can translate only poetry -- nothing else that I know of.

**And do you translate a poem then put it away for a while (rather like many poets do with their own works) then review it later? Or have some back up reader(s)? Or even just get it done and call it good?**

I get it done with many revisions, then get some feedback from backup readers -- such as other poets like yourself and also the heads of the Portuguese Brazilian studies departments at Brown and UNC-Chapel Hill. Then I put it away for a long long time. Over the years, I may change a word or two.

**Do you find that the works and phrases you translate have an impact on your own work? Does it perhaps influence phrases or maybe even lend itself to a blurring of the languages?**

I have written a poem or two inspired by Florbela. Here is one:

RETURNING IS BEWILDERED MOTION

I hear the lofty geese over  
the hollow hole, ghosts seeking  
reedy comfort in a sometime home.

I have no body to feel the acid kiss  
rooting me in transparent fire,  
Womanly as Christ I touch the surface

of the mire. A lily opens  
suffused in light. She floats in  
the mist, indifferent...

This is based on “Nocturne” in which Florbela compares her soul to a water lily floating in the moonlight. I see the water lily also as a symbol of Woman. Florbela’s use of it, for me, makes her a modern poet, because she is aware of the divided self as Woman, a part of nature that doesn’t talk, and a woman, who talks. She was also strongly influenced by the French symbolists.

**Not only do you translate, Billie, but I'm told that you are quite a good poet yourself (do NOT deny it, we have witnesses!). Have you any lofty goals for own work?**

I don’t have any lofty goals for my own poetry, oddly, perhaps. I don’t like to call myself a poet or an artist. These are terms that for me imply that a person gives their whole life and soul to the pursuit of poetry or art. I did try to be a Poet once, but I found the degradation, living hand to mouth and not having a stable place to live, too hard. I don’t mind being known as a translator -- it’s more down-to-earth. Some of my poems, though, will be published at the end of a forthcoming book on my life with the artist, George Maciunas, this fall (*The Eve of Fluxus*).

**You were part of a huge NY arts movement in your earlier days (Fluxhouse Co-operative, alongside George Maciunas). Did that involve poetry, maybe even in collusion with other media? Can you tell us a bit more about the movement and what happened to it? Where is it now?**

I wasn’t a part of the Fluxhouse Co-operative, which was only one of George’s accomplishments. Not many people know that the Fluxhouse Co-operative was actually the

root of what became known as Soho. George renovated warehouses that weren't zoned for residence, and he paid for it with the loss of an eye and hounding by the NY attorney general. That is part of the story in *The Eve of Fluxus*. George's better-known accomplishment was the founding of Fluxus, the avant-garde art movement of the 1960s. It lives on, but for me, since George's death in 1978, the soul has gone out of it. What remains now can only be called post-Fluxus; but it is still very important means of dealing with the all-consuming global capitalism that we are faced with now.

**Many thanks for indulging me, Billie.**

It's my pleasure!!

**Now you wouldn't happen to have seen a good grazing spot on your way here would you? Maybe with some cutesy Portuguese deer around? No? Oh well ...**

# **Abomination**

by Hannia West

I open the burning door to pull out the abomination that's concocted itself within. It oozes and hisses at me as I lay it down for observation.

How could I have created such a thing? I didn't even know I had it in me. This type of evil was only allowed by the devil himself. Not me. Not me.

Its insides erode into itself as its guts spill all over the table. It bubbles and slumps at one side.

"Mum," I cry. "I think it's gonna eat me."

I hear her footsteps across the sitting room's carpet. She opens the kitchen door with a smile and places a hand on my shoulder.

"Don't worry, dear," she says. "Maybe next time."

I cross my arms with a humph. Almost 18 years old, and I still can't even bake a cake!

## Getting a Life

by Mandy Pannett

No message. Well, what does she expect? A text from Afghanistan? As if it could possibly say *Fine. Alive. No enemy. Home soon.*

Evie shuts the phone with a snap. Opens it again in case a text has sprung up in a second. Puts the phone on her desk.

So much to do, she thinks, what with the latest newsletters to type, print out, photocopy by the score and distribute to kids who'll probably lose them before they reach the school gates. Either that or they'll hibernate for a month or two in the depths of bags till binned, unread.

As if she cares about the next school fete anyway, with its pleas for tombola gifts and requests for someone to run the Face Painting stall. In Afghanistan they know all about painting the face, how to disguise, camouflage, conceal.

Not much concealed at Sandhurst, she remembers, on the day of the ceremony, the passing out. His excitement quivered the air with his obvious pride in himself, no longer an unhappy misfit who couldn't keep a job for more than a week. How could she resist his 'Mum, I want to do it. I've got to get a life.'

Evie types briskly for five minutes, dates and facts transferring themselves to the keyboard. A quick proof read, robotic but accurate, and the newsletter's done. She allows herself a check of the phone. No new message of course but she sends a text to her daughter: *Heard anything? Too soon, I guess. You OK? I'm fine xxx*

Hit by sudden dread, she switches the computer to internet news, scanning the headlines, the flashes of 'breaking news.' Her hands are shaking as she closes the screen. What with texts and phone calls and now here comes another obsession.

## **There is Here**

By Eric V. Neagu

This is not exactly what you had in mind. You intended to go from here to there. But circumstances have taken you from there to here. Looking around. There is still plenty of here, but not as much there.

So you wake up and decide this is the day to get there. It will mean hard work. Effort. But get there you must! And you do.

However ...

Now that you think you are there, you can't help but notice there is similar to here in so many ways. There is not at all what you expected. Ugly minded people exist there. Someone is arguing in the near distance there. Another someone has commented on your dead mother there. A joke? Sure, she was pretty fat after all. You even laugh, which does nothing for improving the experience of there. And then you realize you are actually really still here.

And here was bad before, but now it seems tighter, smaller, like wrapping you in something unpleasant. Even so, it is somehow geographically gigantic. You feel weak because you know getting there is much harder than you thought. You go for a drink.

A car horn sounds. The dimming street lights blink on and off and then stay lit through the night. A drunk walks from a bus. You fear he will ask you for change. He does not. He does not because you are in the nicest restaurant here has to offer, but the waiter is bad and makes it less nice for you. And then you step out into the night and notice that it has become cold here. You realize you are here until you can get there. You are tired. You go home, which you know is always here.

Another morning comes. You want to leave here and go there for good. Today, however, there seems much further away. The T.V. is on here. The air conditioner is on here. Your wife is naked, but not interested in sex here.

You stay here for now.

## Mint and Jasmine

by Stef Hall

Holly sits before the mirror brushing her hair. One hundred strokes every night before bed. She says it keeps the hair healthy and strong. She sits with her back to David and in the gathering dark he cannot see her face reflected in the mirror. He should have turned on the light, but the distance to the other side of the room seems insurmountable to his half-sleeping mind.

Her skin is golden and the soft downy hairs across the back of her forearm shimmer in the final deep, honeyed notes of sunlight. A good, honest tan borne of hours of hard work in the garden. The dark curls through which the brush moves with a crunchy swishing sound are kissed with blonde. The sun loves her almost as much as he does.

*“We’re not sure why she was down there, or exactly what happened ...”*

The voices from downstairs are distracting. They are trying to be quiet, David knows, but the police chief has the kind of deep, resonating basso voice that booms throughout a building without any effort on his part. David curls onto his side, pulling the cover up over his ear, but he realises he can no longer hear the passage of Holly’s brush, which continues unabated. She has not even noticed.

When she has counted her hundredth stroke, she will pull the loose hairs from the brush and roll them into a ball before throwing them in the wicker rubbish bin beside her dressing table. She will rise in a swish of satin and jasmine, and go to the bathroom to brush her teeth. One hundred strokes there, too. Holly is a creature of habit.

She will come to him, then, smelling of mint and jasmine and the soft, warm scent of her own skin. She smelled of jasmine the day he met her, and he does not recall any occasion when she smelled of anything else. When she curls against him at night and presses her forehead against the line of his jaw like jigsaw pieces slotting together to finish a picture of a perfect sunset, he breathes her in and tries to define the other notes in the arpeggio of her scent. She smells of life and vigour, of laughing uncontrollably in the night, and underlying it all is the moist, rich scent of soil from the garden she loves so much.

*“Will they lay her out someplace nice before they take her to ...”* his mother's voice downstairs breaks and hesitates and David holds his breath, desperate not to hear the next

word, but knowing that he must.

*“The morgue? Yes. David will need to identify her.”*

Holly switches the brush to her other hand and he sees the inside of her wrist, soft and pale in comparison with the back of her arm. It reminds him of the moist wet flesh of the willow branches she stripped to make a climbing frame for her tomato plants. Her coffee-brown hands were quick and nimble with the knife and she intuitively seemed to know the right places.

There was nothing Holly couldn't grow, including David. In her clever hands, overpowered by the scent of jasmine, he had blossomed from an awkward young junior solicitor to full partner in his firm. Knowing that when his day was over he would find her kneeling in the garden with mud smudged up her strong brown arms made it seem that nothing was impossible.

*“Not tonight, surely?”*

*“No, tomorrow morning will be fine.”*

One hundred strokes. She pulls the hair from her brush, rolls it into a ball and throws it into the wicker basket. Rising, she moves towards the door.

“Holly?”

She doesn't turn, and as she approaches the door and her hand reaches for the handle, she shimmers, flickers and fades into a golden-brown shower of mist. David turns again and stares out of the window, hearing the distant sound of running water in the bathroom.

Tomorrow, he will have to rise and face it all.

But for tonight, she could just be in the bathroom.

Smelling of mint and jasmine.

## **Snjótittlingur**

by Anthony Kane Evans

My good friend Paul lives in an older residential section of the city. I looked out through the garden window and saw a snow bunting resting in semi-twilight.

“Paul,” I called over, “there’s a snow bunting in your garden.”

“There’s no such bird around here,” he said.

I looked over at him. Except for excellent clothes there was nothing distinctive about his appearance. I took a deep breath.

“Well, maybe it’s a corn bunting or a chaffinch.”

“We don’t get those either.”

That’s one thing that tires me about Paul: his hard, clear attitudes.

“Can’t you just look out of the window and tell me what it is then?”

He looked but he put a sigh into it.

“Where is it?” he asked.

“On top of the large stone near the cabbage patch.”

But the bird had flown.

“Can I borrow your binoculars?” I asked.

Paul frowned but went into the kitchen where he rummaged around in a cupboard. He pulled out a pair of 10 X 50s. I made for the back door.

“Where are you off to?” he asked, his face unrelieved by humour or intelligence.

“It couldn’t have got far, could it?”

“What?”

“The snow bunting.”

“Didn’t I just tell you ...”

I was out back before he could finish that rather predictable sentence. I wondered what had gotten into my old friend. Would I now have to start calling him Predictable Paul? The thought pained me as we used to talk in such a polished, even sophisticated, manner. He stuck his head around the back door.

“Don’t go out of the garden!” he shouted.

I crept down the path soundlessly - I was wearing my fawn-striped yachting shoes – and found the bird easily enough in the cabbage patch. It was just about to take off.

“Don’t be afraid,” I said, “It’s only me.”

The bird stared at me in silence for about ten seconds.

“Only me who?” it asked.

“Mark Templeton,” I said.

“So, what else is new?”

“I just wondered if you were that bird we humans refer to as the snow bunting?”

“The very same,” it said, “*Plectophenax nivalis* in Latin, though I much prefer the Icelandic name for us, *snjótittlingur*.”

We both had a good laugh at that one. A damp chill was in the air, I could feel it through my clothes. After a bit more small-talk, I returned indoors.

“Was that you laughing out there?” Paul asked.

“Me and the bird,” I said.

He was busy making us an *espresso*. I kept quiet and let him get on with it. It is one of his strengths, making coffee.

“That coffee will kill you,” I eventually said.

“And talking to birds will put you in an early grave.”

“So you saw it?”

“No, I didn’t. But I surmised that you weren’t talking to my cabbage patch otherwise I’d have been on the phone to the Looney Bin.”

“Well, it *was* a snow bunting,” I said.

“Since when have you known anything about birds?” he asked.

“I don’t but I can ask, can’t I?”

“Look, Mark, I know my birds and there is no such thing as a snow bunting around here.”

“When you say ‘my’ birds, do you mean to say that you are something of an expert in the matter of birdology?”

“Some of my best friends happen to be ornithologists - it’s rubbed off on me, that’s all.”

Paul looked pained, as though it hurt him physically to divulge information. He passed me an *espresso*. I looked at it.

“I guess you want me to warm some milk?”

He put some milk into a small saucepan and began to heat it up.

I wandered back into the living room and over to the back window. I caught my feathered friend; he was back up on the big stone.

“Paul, come quickly! And don’t bark or you’ll frighten him off.”

He grudgingly came out of the kitchen and over to my side. I passed him the

binoculars.

“Well?” I queried.

“It’s a snow bunting,” he said.

“What did I tell you?” I said, triumphantly.

The milk boiled over but we managed to save enough for my coffee. We drank in silence, watching the bird. Paul’s mood mellowed slightly. Still, when six o’clock struck he looked at the clock on the mantelpiece.

“I suppose I’d better drive you back.”

During the drive, I looked out of the window and tried to count the loose chippings. At the Red Hill Psychiatric Hospital – where the clutter of life is absent – Jimmy was on duty.

“How are you doing?” he asked.

“Fine,” I said, “I spotted a snow bunting in Paul’s garden.”

Jimmy’s face dropped, I saw him shoot a look at Paul. He stretched his huge arms, bringing heavy muscles into play. There was nothing narcissistic about his actions; his body was designed for function, not display.

“We don’t get snow buntings around these parts,” he said, “You ought to know that by now, Mark.”

## **Mr. Mack Gets His Bead On**

by Wanda Morrow-Clevenger

A less than illustrious R&D career had come down to the frayed wire with little to no juice surging through the circuit. Dean Mack, Mack the Hack around the water cooler, checked the time, brushed lint from his ten-year-old suit – Montgomery Ward’s Executive Line in baby-poop green – then shuffled a handful of papers into a nondescript manila folder. Almost as nondescript as he. An *adios amigo* tacked to the fridge, from his wife of 30 years, concurred: his bright ideas had gone as limp as his dick.

He hadn’t rung the bell since the suit was new. With her or the top bananas in upper management. But before then, when brains trumped buzz words, when Springsteen was irrefutably the boss, he’d seen a little of the glory. Rode the wave for his small part in developing the Scrunchie. His ex had sported a burr, didn’t appreciate the genius, never understood the hubbub. He’d show the chrome-dome his lightbulb hadn’t blown. Somehow, someday, he’d show them all.

With retirement still a couple of years away, and the young bucks clacking antlers, Mack needed to score some prodigious points. He’d pulled out all the stops with this one: studied Letterman; watched *Will & Grace* reruns; took note of current trends in *People Style Watch*. Couldn’t decipher, though, the superiority of Jellies over platform flip-flops. Both looked hideously uncomfortable.

“Good luck, Mr. Mack.” Kandi, his 30-something secretary, gleamed as he plodded off to yet another marketing meeting. A raspberry-pink Scrunchie corralled flowing, blonde locks. “Knock’em dead, sir.”

He paused at the unsolicited encouragement. Kandi: the one perk granted in all his years at the firm. Lovely Kandi with the body and the hair and the Farrah Fawcett smile.

“Thank you, Kandi.” Back straightened and shoulders squared, he patted his folder. “I’ve got a dandy proposal worked up. What’ya say after I nail this sucker to the wall, make my fortune, you and I escape to a tropical island, leave the Gucci coochie-babies and their YouTube behind?”

“Sweet,” cooed from luscious lips. Then, *pow*, there was that smile.

*Sweet indeed.*

Two hours later, jacket slung over forearm, pit stains nearly to his waist, Dean Mack slumped to his office. Another day. Another failure. Kandi’s desk sat vacated, her personal effects suspiciously MIA too. Just as well he didn’t have to face another disappointed female.

The office door quietly closed, shutting out a Bluetooth world he no longer had a bead on. His proposal for glow-in-the-dark, recyclable condoms sailed toward the ceiling. “Fly, fly my pretties.”

Maybe it was time he was put out to pasture. Embraced the inevitable. Relinquished the reins to the xyz-just-bite-me generation. Sighing, he sank into a worn swivel chair, noticing dear Kandi had tidied his desk before leaving. Front and center, a lime-green sticky atop an airline ticket to Aruba read: Right after becoming your secretary, I purchased stock in Scrunchie. I’ve got a dandy proposal for you, Mr. Mack. What’ya say we leave the coochie-babies and their YouTube behind?

## **That Night**

by Allison Hunter-Frederick

*Flashing red lights in the black night. Speeding white cars that magnetize spectators.  
Pealing sirens in the slumbering hours. Uniform officers with guns and probing questions....*

These are conjured images from the night I became an adult. I invoke them with a flicker of concentration, the way I replay favorite songs with a push of a button. Crime scenes aren't difficult to imagine. The chilling reality is these could've comprised a genuine memory.

*Name tags for freshmen. Long lines that lead to course sign-up sheets. Rings of giggling girls. Tubs of melting ice-cream preceded by sweet and crunchy toppings ....* How does law enforcement factor into lives of innocent girls on the brink of 18? We congregated to drink pop, blare televisions, and cram for exams. We donned white gloves and long gowns, watched musicals in auditoriums, and danced with escorts. We loaded quarters into washing machines, filled cups with detergent, and took responsibility for our laundry.

But, we also copied papers, battled over boys, and plummeted into debt. Our reactions determined our consequences. There were legal repercussions. One girl became the ward of a mental institution after she turned schizophrenic and pulled a knife on a roommate. There were administrative decisions. A professor lost his position after he slept with numerous students. Rarely did individuals escape retribution. One girl spread a confided secret of child abuse. Her former circle of friends ostracized her.

I met my first literary friend. We embodied Peter and Wendy. We never wanted to grow up. We imagined characters along every trail. We became Tom and Becky, Anne and Gilbert. We explored hollowed rocks, restricted gravel roads.

Just as passionately, we yearned for a courting prince. We rode with an adolescent boy who drove his car on two wheels like the Dukes of Hazard. We viewed movies with a guy and his girlfriend whom he later married, so she could escape her mom. We marveled at an anorexic girl with dates on either arm, while we waited awkwardly on the sidelines.

Shopping thrust us over the edge. Near the end of fourth quarter, we drove to a bustling city. We roamed mall aisles. We pointed out merchandise we coveted. Dolls made our list. We wished to play house, as much as Peter fancied playing pirates. Clothes also made our list. We couldn't deny the Wendy within.

When my friend checked her purchases at the register, she came up \$200 short. She implored me for a loan.

I hesitated. I needed cash for my summer drive home. She extended me her hand. She

gave me her word. I reciprocated with trust.

Payback day came and went. I had to ask her to repay. She alleged she didn't owe me anything. She'd covered costs at movies and diners.

Desperation can lead to illegal actions. A week before semester's end, while dormitory friends assembled in her room, I toyed with her purse. They listed their top ten dream dates. I glided open the zipper. They converted an innocent mad lib about Care Bears into an explicit mad lib about sexual organs. I slid out bills from her parents and pocketed half. Then I sipped pop, as chatter switched to speculation about who would become barefoot and pregnant and who would pursue an executive career.

After midnight, and long after we'd separated to our rooms, pounding brought me pajama-clad into the hallway. My friend stood with the dormitory mother and honor council. Girls everywhere were being wakened and ordered to stand outside their doors. Rooms were being searched for stolen money. I'd already stuffed the money into a letter from home, buried amongst other mail.

Her parents wished to notify the police. They wanted a legal search warrant issued. My friend talked them out of their vengeance. I'm not sure why, except perhaps she suspected me and felt guilty about her own betrayal. Perhaps, she'd less interest in the truth and more interest in preserving our tattered friendship.

After the drama, and at the end of exam week, a pen leaked in my orange pants pocket. I felt like a child sticking her hand into a forbidden cookie jar. I bleached them to strip the color, but further tarnished them. Upon the third rinse, they split in half.

A streak of comprehension ripped through my brain. I'd committed a crime. The police, not my parents, would have meted out consequences. But, I'd been luckier than my irreparable pants. I could alter who I became. That night I became an adult.

## **Baby Blues**

by Sharon Goldberg

We tried to have a baby. I initiated fertility treatments. Not my husband. I endured shots in the butt that bruised and ached. Not my husband. I cried when my follicles were too small to harbor eggs. My husband did not. I suffered mood swings from hormone surges and burst into tears at my office and screamed at my co-workers. My husband remained calm. When my one achieved pregnancy was not viable, I felt despondent. My breasts were swollen for weeks as my body dispelled the failed cells of a life. My husband felt just fine.

After that we took a break. My husband never suggested we resume the medical experimentation. He made no inquiries into adoption. He did not read “The Adoption Handbook.” He did not draft the letter to young, pregnant, single women touting our virtues as prospective parents. He did not ask to hold the babies of friends or ooh and goo over their tiny fingers and adorable smiles. He never talked about playing baseball or Chutes and Ladders with a son, gazing through a telescope or microscope with a daughter. “I don’t give a damn about carrying on the family name,” he told me. He talked about signing up to be a Big Brother but never did. He was happy as we were, he said. No plants. No animals. No kids. Free.

Years later, when my ovaries were bereft of eggs, when my friends were babysitting their grandchildren, my husband told me our marriage was over. “Nothing to be done,” he said. “I don’t love you anymore. Sorry.” He was interested in exploring other options. He meant other women.

“By the way,” he said, “I might want to have a child.”

“Who are you?” I asked. “Get out.”

I never spoke to him again.

## Hetty Heads Out

by Robert Priestley

‘Senile old trout,’ muttered Hetty, clicking the projector’s button. ‘That’s what they call me. I’ve heard them.’

The slide changer clunked, swapping the buttermilk square on the wall of her room for one exactly the same.

‘She talks to empty pictures,’ they whisper. ‘She’s lost her marbles. Slide film wasn’t even invented in those days, daft old bat.’ Hetty sighed. ‘If only they knew.’

Click, clunk, buttermilk square.

‘Just look at us, Dougie Barwick. It’s not the wedding dress I would have chosen, but Mother did me proud considering there was a war on. And you look so smart in your uniform.’ Hetty pulled a tissue from the frayed cuff of her cardigan and dabbed her eyes. ‘I was so happy then. We had so much to look forward to.’

Click, clunk, buttermilk square.

‘And here you are beside your Spitfire. I wept every time you took off, you know. I blew you kisses, praying you’d be safe, and I smiled until my cheeks ached each time you came back to me. Oh how I wanted each time to be the last, so we could have our honeymoon.’

Click, clunk, buttermilk square.

Tears fell into Hetty’s lap. ‘I still can’t bear to look at this one. It’s the remains of your squadron at the end of the war, and you’re not in it.’

Click, clunk, buttermilk square.

‘Aah, my favourite one of them all. But what’s it doing here? It should have been before the wedding photographs.’ Hetty gave the projector a weak rap with her knuckle. ‘Oh well, not to worry. You were so nervous when you proposed, weren’t you? “Hetty C-Cartright, w-will you-”

‘Come to me, my darling? It’s time for our honeymoon.’

‘Okay Hetty love, the show’s over. It’s time for your supper. Hetty. Hetty? Can, you, hear, me?’

Hetty snuggled into Dougie’s warm embrace and smiled.

## **Mall Story**

by Gypsy Martin

Sheila sighed with pleasure and relief as she opened the door to the mall and was enveloped in a swoosh of cool air. It felt so good to be out of that muggy heat.

It wasn't just the temperature of the mall that provided a sanctuary from the chaos of her life outside the confines of Worthington Square. Nordstrom was a downright haven, its orderly racks of clothes arranged by designer, by color, and by size restoring in Sheila a sense of well-being. She blissfully wandered the aisles to the accompaniment of a tinkling piano.

The tidy rows of shoes on the sale rack were particularly soothing. They'd obviously just been straightened up, probably by some diligent sales clerk who was underpaid but thankful not to go home every night smelling like Panda Express.

As Sheila looked over the rows of shoes, her gaze lingered on a pair of kelly green patent leather flats. *Too young?* she wondered.

"May I help you, ma'am?" asked a well-groomed woman who looked to be about Sheila's age. "Would you like to try something on?"

The shoes would never fit. Sheila had wide feet. Still...

"Sure." *Why not live a little?*

Sheila tried not to stare as the woman headed to the back room to find the shoe's mate. Roger—before he left her—had always chided Sheila for staring at people in public, but she'd had never broken the habit. People were just so interesting.

This woman, for instance: she was so put together, with her pointy-toed black pumps and wool hound's-tooth skirt. Her haircut was really sharp too. Would it be weird to ask her where she'd had it done? Sheila was having a hard time figuring out what was age-appropriate these days. She didn't want to cling pathetically to her youth, but she wasn't ready to start looking like her grandmother yet, either. This woman was so elegant.

*I bet she doesn't even have to work,* Sheila thought. *Her husband probably has a great job and she just does this part-time so she doesn't get bored.*

Suddenly Sheila heard a raised voice in the back room. A man's voice.

"I'm sorry, lady, but I've told you this before. It's EMPLOYEES ONLY. YOU CAN'T COME BACK HERE. If I find you in here again, I'm going to have to call the police."

## Author Bios

**Anthony Kane Evans** has had a number of stories published in various magazines, including *London Magazine* (UK), *The Tusculum Review* (US) and *Etchings* (Australia). He's British but currently lives in Copenhagen. When not writing, he makes documentary films on a freelance basis for the Danish Broadcasting Corporation.

**Sharon Goldberg** lives in the Seattle area and previously worked as an advertising copywriter in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Seattle. Her work has appeared in *Under the Sun*, online at *From the Asylum*, and is forthcoming in *The Chaffey Review* and the annual anthology *Tales from the Asylum* (2009). Sharon takes writing, ballroom and belly dancing classes, and is a volunteer with Eastside Domestic Violence Program.

**Stef Hall** is a country girl at heart. Born and raised in Norwich, England, she now resides in London with her musician partner, Paul, and their three bonkers cats. She tries to make up for the bustle of city life by procrastinating, walking slowly, and drinking far too much tea.

Since early 2007, Stef has enjoyed publication of many of her short stories and some of her poetry in various anthologies and magazines, including *Twisted Tongue* and *La Fenetre*. While she still writes short stories, her current focus in her writing is to find a home for her first completed novel while trying to write the second before the characters take over her head entirely.

**Allison Hunter-Frederick** is originally from Newfoundland, but moved to Nebraska for work and love. A part-time Special Education teacher, Allison also writes with support (and editing) of her husband. Their dog, cat, and two guinea pigs serve as her captive audience. From the time she could hold pencil and paper, she has loved to write. This is her first and long overdue attempt to become a fiction writer.

**Gypsy Martin** stays at home with her two young boys, a job she finds only slightly noisier than a previous gig as a receptionist at a siren factory. She lives in the Portland, Oregon metro area and maintains her sanity by blogging at <http://martinseke.blogspot.com/>.

**Wanda Morrow-Clevenger** lives in Illinois with her husband of thirty years, an irritating American Curl cat, and a stray, blind mutt she tragically ran over with her car--his three-legged tenacity an inspiration. When not suffering guilt over the dog incident, she shamelessly brags on her two grown sons and new daughter-in-law. Her work appears in *The Storyteller*; *Nuthouse*; *The Nocturnal Lyric*; *Up the Staircase*; *Flash Fiction Offensive*; and *Leaf Garden*. Maintaining cautious optimism, she is diligently working this year toward doubling her publishing credits.

Any publisher or agent wishing to become her new, best friend may contact her at [wandaclevenger@gmail.com](mailto:wandaclevenger@gmail.com). She sincerely believes a smile is worth a thousand words and happily renders both at every opportunity.

**Eric V. Neagu** lives and works in Chicago, Illinois. His undergraduate degree is from Purdue University in civil engineering, which he uses to work toward revitalizing depressed communities. Eric also has a graduate degree from The University of Chicago, which he mostly uses to give driving directions to Barack Obama's house when people ask. Other work can be found on *The National Ledger*, *Bewildering Stories*, and *Hackwriters*. While not planning his upcoming wedding, he works on his first novel and refining several short stories.

**Mandy Pannett** loves writing in all its forms. She has produced a CD of poetry and original music (*Boy's Story*) and had two poetry collections, *Bee Purple* and *Frost Hollow*, published by Oversteps Books. A new collection (*Allotments in the Orbital*) is due out in November from Searle Publishing. A chapbook of poetry and art work, *The Carver's Mark*, is also in the pipeline.

**Robert Priestley** is a full time gardener, part time football manager and spare time writer of children's novels. His work has appeared hardly anywhere.

**Hannia West** is a 17-year old author who lives in England. If she's not in college or doing coursework, then she's hanging out with friends or working on her novels. She has dreamed of being an author since before she can remember.

## Next Year

Issue Five of TheRightEyedDeer will be published on January 1, 2010.

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**THE END**