



The Summerset Review

Winter 2004

The Summerset Review

Winter 2004

Table of Contents



[Editors' Notes](#)

[An Arrangement](#) - a story by **Maura Madigan**

[The Secret Joy of Just One Thing](#) - a story by **Pam Mosher**

[Seeing Red](#) - a story by **Paul Silverman**

[Mrs. Mud and her Basket of Apples](#) - a story by **Troy Morash**

[Contributors' Notes](#)

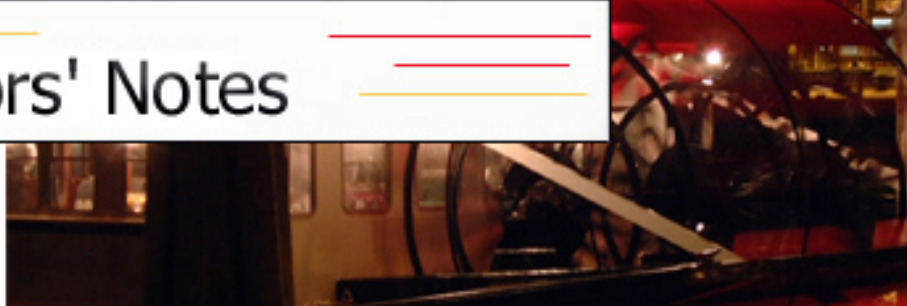
[Guidelines for Submissions](#)

[Previous Issues](#)

Copyright © The Summerset Review 2003. All rights reserved. Republication or redistribution of any material on this web site should not be done without written permission granted by the originator. The Summerset Review is a member of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP).

The Somerset Review

Editors' Notes



You will notice this issue of The Somerset Review has no Interview with an Editor section. This is to let you know that we have not been slacking off. We decided to be a bit bold and brazen in our planning this time, contacting The New Yorker in September.

"Deborah Treisman has been overwhelmed with interview requests, and sadly is going to have to pass on this interview right now," is what we received in reply, from one Field Maloney, Fiction Coordinator, in November.

Don't worry, David Remnick, we are not canceling our long-standing subscription, at least not yet. But we'd like to remind you to remember the little people once in a while.

And now on to bigger and brighter. We are happy to have mention of our little online literary journal in the current issue of Other Voices. Gina Frangello was inspired by the interview we did with her (see our Summer 2003 issue) and elaborated further on the world of contemporary literary fiction. Read about it in OV #39.

We're excited about the stories in our Winter 2004 issue, and hope you find them entertaining as well.

We start with a wedding in Dubai, where Maura Madigan's "An Arrangement" is set. It's a wonderful story involving marriage contracts, both those that are written and those that are not.

And there was this idea I had that I'd finally found someone I could be happy with,' says Pam Mosher's protagonist in her story, "The Secret Joy of Just One Thing." To which a friend in the story responds, 'Another person can't make you happy. You have to make yourself happy.'

Usually there is an association between pregnancy and pickles, or pregnancy and ice cream; some type of craving the expectant mother experiences. In "Seeing Red," by Paul Silverman, you will find a slight twist on who exactly may be wanting that beef Wellington.

Troy Morash takes a character from his previously-published work and gives us a new episode, where we find the ascending and not altogether pleasant Mrs. Mud in her latest predicament, "Mrs. Mud and her Basket of Apples."

Thanks goes out to our contributors and all those who have submitted for consideration in this issue.

Joseph Levens – Editor
Amy Leigh Owen – Assistant Editor
S. Malkah Cohen – Assistant Editor

The Somerset Review, a literary journal of contemporary short stories and essays, is released quarterly on Mar 15, June 15, Sept 15, and Dec 15.

Founded in 2002 and based in New York, the journal is a non-profit, zero-revenue Internet publication devoted to high-quality literary reading, writing, and publishing. We are a member of the Council of Literary Magazines and Presses (CLMP).

The journal is located at <http://www.somersetreview.org>. All correspondence and submissions should be sent to editor@somersetvreview.org. Guidelines and recommended reading are on the site. All material is copyrighted and republication or redistribution should not be done without written permission granted by the originator.

Theme graphics: "Paddleboat" Copyright © The Somerset Review 2003.

The Somerset Review

The Summerset Review



Six pieces jewelry (22K gold) per annum

Three pieces jewelry (precious stones) per annum

Two holidays per annum - at least one outside the Emirates - length to be specified later

Monthly spending allowance of 5000 dirhams, separate from household allotment

Car and driver

One live-out maid after marriage, and one live-in maid per child thereafter

No other marriages shall be entered into while the current union is still valid

Relocation to a villa - with at least one bedroom per family member and appropriate guest quarters - after birth of the second child

Annual wardrobe stipend, separate from monthly spending allowance, of 50,000 dirhams

Option of full- or part-time employment

Alia had added this last item, knowing she would probably never use it. She had no real desire to work, but she wanted to consider every possibility. Once the marriage contract was signed, it was binding. Anything left out was open to interpretation, and the husband's decision would be favored. Alia requested more than she wanted and waited to see if Farouz would bargain.

The arrangement was made through intermediaries, of course. Alia had barely spoken to her future husband before the wedding day. She married him for all the right reasons: it was time; he was clean and fine-featured; he came from one of the best families in Dubai; and he seemed ambivalent. This last reason was the most important. Love was not a factor in arranging Emirati weddings. Alia's dream of being the exception disappeared when her cousin Tariq - whom she loved - was matched with a Sheikh's oldest daughter.

Alia overheard her mother telling an aunt about the wonderful match and hoped it was another Tariq, perhaps a neighbor's son. When she met her Tariq later that day, as planned, he tried to explain but she wouldn't listen. It was for the family, for his father. He said that nothing had to change. "Don't worry," he said. "We can arrange it." They could still meet, but Alia knew she'd never do that. She had given herself to Tariq out of love, thinking it would be made right when they married. But she wouldn't wear the shame of adultery.

It was fruitless to ask Tariq to give up the match since Alia knew he would never disgrace the family. However, disgrace played only a small part in Tariq's decision. He knew he would receive a high ministry position. His family's allowance, generous for a bachelor living at home, wouldn't support a Sheikh's daughter. Tariq didn't possess the necessary skills or ambition to find suitable work on his own. He was kind and charming, but he wasn't serious. Even Alia knew he needed direction.

Since the Sheikh's daughter, Fatma, at twenty-six was older than most brides, certain concessions were made. It would be embarrassing for Fatma's younger sisters to marry before her, and the second youngest was anxious to form a union. The two families agreed on a modest mahr for Tariq to pay. The new law forbidding dowries of more than 35,000 dirhams made this easy to accept. The mahr - which acted as a type of insurance policy for brides should the marriage end - was simply a nod at tradition. If Tariq and Fatma were to divorce, her family could easily support her.

Emirati tradition also dictated that the groom pay for the entire wedding. For the upper crust of Dubai society this could reach 1,000,000 dirhams. The government, to promote austerity, discouraged excessive wedding expenditures. A couple could be fined up to 500,000 dirhams for conspicuous consumption. After learning that some wedding parties involved the slaughter of more than ninety camels, a limit of nine adult camels and twelve baby camels was imposed. Only the wealthiest families could afford camel meat. Of course, these rules would not necessarily apply to a family of power, such as the Sheikh's, but it was a convenient way to save face.

Tariq's family, although well off, was not wealthy by Dubai standards. He wouldn't be able to pay for an extravagant wedding. The Sheikh's desire to marry off his daughter outweighed his desire to promote a privileged image. He used this as an opportunity to set an example. Even the Sheikh would follow the new laws. It would be good for the country, helping to maintain national purity.

In recent years young Emirati men had begun taking foreign brides. Western influences effected some men's idea of beauty, often preferring flashy Europeans or other Arabs to the chaste local girls. Some could not afford the high cost of marrying an Emirati girl, and many were unwilling to begin married life in debt. Some men spent years paying off their wedding loans. Easier to marry a foreigner.

Emirati women, however, were not allowed to marry foreigners. They risked losing their citizenship and their children, should the couple divorce. This discrepancy led to an increased number of spinsters and a decreasing population of nationals.

The leaders saw intermarriage as a disintegration of national values and unity. To help rectify the problem, a matter of great concern, they established The Marriage Fund. Any Emirati man planning to marry an Emirati woman was given 70,000 dirhams for wedding expenses. There was a 20,000 dirham bonus for marrying an Emirati woman over age thirty.

Since the Sheikh would not allow Tariq to apply for The Marriage Fund, certain marriage expenses - Fatma's gown, some of her wedding jewelry, and the couple's new lavishly furnished villa - became wedding gifts. These details were not public knowledge.

Feigning happiness at Tariq's wedding was unbearable. Alia sat quietly with her mother and sisters while the bride, Fatma, paraded around to each table. Her gown from Arushi, Dubai's most exclusive wedding couturier, revealed an ample bosom and small waist. Since the bride and groom had separate wedding parties, the women could shed their abayas and shailas. Some women still wore their black robes, but kept them open, sharply contrasting the colorful gowns beneath. Sequins, beading, and rhinestones were abundant. One guest's dress - Versace couture, everyone whispered - was adorned by artfully placed peacock feathers. The women,

laden with jewelry and makeup, talked and ate for hours, waiting for the groom's arrival. After this they could go home.

Before Tariq could enter the great ballroom, all of the women - except the bride - covered up. The long black abayas extended to the women's wrists and ankles, as shailas masked elaborate hairdos and jewelry. This covering, a sign of modesty, also served to highlight the bride. She glittered like a diamond set against black velvet. The guests watched as Tariq gilded Fatma with wedding jewelry - thick yellow-gold necklaces and bracelets, ruby and diamond earrings with a matching 4-carat ruby ring, and a gold tiara encrusted with precious stones. Alia thought the effect garish since Fatma had already been sufficiently jeweled.

Unable to watch any longer without screaming, Alia slipped off to the bathroom. Closeted in a stall, she ran the bidet hose to mask her tears. When she finally returned to the party, the new couple had left and the guests were nearly gone.

Alia waited, hoping the marriage wouldn't work, that Tariq would realize he'd made a mistake, that Alia was the one he loved. Alia imagined him breaking the union, saying, "I divorce you." There would be the required attempt at arbitration and the three-month waiting period. After that, if Fatma was not pregnant, the union would be dissolved and Tariq would once again be Alia's. He'd pledge his love, his life to Alia. It could happen, she convinced herself.

Within months of the wedding, however, Fatma was pregnant. Tariq was ecstatic, and Alia's hopes disappeared. The day after she heard the news, Alia accepted a match with Farouz.

Farouz Mohammed Bin Waleed was older than Alia, exactly how old she didn't know. He wasn't particularly attractive, but he appeared well mannered. He also had a good job in the Ministry of Labor. Farouz agreed to all of Alia's demands in the marriage contract. This was promising. Alia liked getting her way.

Alia's mother had discussed the shortage of marriageable men. Farouz might be the best, perhaps the only, choice. To reject him could mean a solitary, childless life for Alia. She wasn't willing to take that risk.



For the first year, little changed for Alia. Farouz's family was ultra-conservative, so she had to wear the veil in addition to her abaya and shaila. Farouz wasn't particularly concerned about other men seeing his wife. He simply followed his family's traditions, never considering change. The one time Alia mentioned the matter, Farouz questioned her fidelity. He would not listen to practical concerns, and Alia conceded.

The veil - a thin piece of black fabric covering her entire face - made it difficult to see. She no longer felt comfortable driving since the veil limited her peripheral vision. This was disappointing because driving had been a source of power. It made her feel strong, independent and in control.

When she went out now, she felt anonymous, almost invisible. Shop clerks seemed embarrassed to serve her and Westerners, especially the women, averted their eyes when they noticed the veil. Alia thought how strange it was to feel so isolated in the middle of crowded City Centre shopping mall. People walked past her without looking at her, like she was part of the architecture.

Eating at restaurants was also challenging. When possible, Farouz liked to sit in a curtained booth, to ensure privacy. For Alia, this eliminated the best part of dining out - people watching. The one benefit, the only one really, of wearing the veil was that she could watch others undetected. She caught bits of conversation and imagined what the strangers' lives were like. However, she couldn't do this in a curtained booth. If she was going to be shut away from the public, Alia thought, she might as well eat at home.

Eating in public, although more enjoyable, had its difficulties. Negotiating food beneath the veil without exposing her face to men took some practice. Alia had rehearsed before a mirror at home for several hours to perfect the new skill. When out, Alia opted for drinks with straws and food eaten with a fork. Sandwiches and soups were out of the question. She would not risk the embarrassment of soiling her veil.

The other change was moving from her family's expansive home into Farouz's 3-bedroom flat. Alia had never lived in a high-rise building and she missed the privacy of a garden. As Farouz had promised, the building was luxurious and the flat well appointed. Indeed it was much more elegant than her family's home. Still, it lacked something that no amount of house plants or flower arrangements could replace.

Even though Alia thought the flat was small, she insisted on maintaining her own bedroom. Farouz was granted access to her room three nights each month during Alia's fertile time. These exchanges were quick, furtive and unproductive. Farouz barely looked at her and kept physical contact to a minimum. So different from Tariq who had reveled in her body. His attentions had made Alia feel sensual and alive. Tariq had been reluctant to let her leave each time, wanting to hold her, smell her, feel her skin against his. Farouz, however, would escape to his room after each visit where Alia could hear him bathing.

The novelty of being a wife quickly disappeared, and Alia longed for a child. She felt powerless and she needed a distraction. She was also tired of hearing her mother and mother-in-law comment on their lack of grandchildren. The looks of disappointment made Alia angry. You're failing in your only duty, they said. Alia began to dread family gatherings. Tariq's wife had already given him two sons and was pregnant again.

Although Alia hated Fatma, she was gracious and overly kind in her presence. She would not let Tariq see her true feelings, to know how much she hurt. Fatma was quiet and plain, but she bore children effortlessly, never losing her trim figure. At family gatherings Fatma's boys were fawned over, but Alia could barely look at them.



"The bugs are back," Alia said as soon as Farouz closed the flat door.

"What?"

"The bugs. I saw three in the hallway and one in the maid's room."

"Did you kill them?" Farouz was looking through his mail, only half-listening.

"Of course. You need to do something about this."

"Have the maid scrub the walls."

"She did that yesterday. It's takes too long and it doesn't help." The flat had been infested by tiny black bugs that clung to the walls. They moved slowly, easily mistaken for specks of dust, unless one looked closely. When Pest Control came to spray, they discovered thousands clinging to the walls near the ceiling. The building manager assured Alia that the bugs posed no threat. They wouldn't bite or show up anywhere but on the walls since they fed on mold growing undetected beneath the paint. His assurances, however, did nothing to comfort Alia. She felt her skin crawl and relentlessly checked the walls, squashing anything that moved with her finger.

The bugs, just the thought of them, made the nausea worse. This was a new development, one that she'd been trying to ignore. It would come upon her suddenly. Certain smells - the neighbors' cooking, the maid's cleanser, even the expensive and familiar oud she had anointed herself with - became unbearable. She knew she couldn't stand another extermination, the sickly sweet chemicals clinging to every inch of the flat.

The maid, who came three times a week, had spent two hours scrubbing the walls, the whole time listening to Alia's complaints. Rashni scrubbed and nodded, knowing that Alia didn't expect conversation. She knew her place, never letting on that she'd heard Alia vomiting in the bathroom.

Alia was disappointed that Rashni couldn't stay on indefinitely. Her contract with the cleaning agency was finished, and she was going home to Pakistan. Alia would miss their conversations.

Since she'd gotten married, Alia felt like she had no one to talk to. Every visit to her mother involved advice on how to get pregnant - have intercourse every day, eat mango and coconut for breakfast, drink chamomile tea with wild honey, and pray fervently to Allah. So Alia visited less frequently. She was tired of feeling like a failure. Her sisters were no better, only concerned with themselves.

"Then have Pest Control spray again," Farouz said.

"No. They've sprayed twice already and the bugs keep coming back. It's disgusting. I can't feel comfortable here."

"I'll talk to Mr. Ahmed." Farouz looked impatient. Alia could tell he was annoyed, but she didn't care. She was the one who spent all day in the flat.

"I already did. He's useless. He says they're coming from the vents and the A/C company will

deal with it.”

“So, then it’s settled. Hallas. Let them do their job. No problem.” Farouz brushed past Alia and closed himself in his bedroom. This was normal. Farouz liked solitude, especially at the end of the day.

Alia followed him and knocked gently on his door. When Farouz answered, it was with a look of consternation.

“Yes?”

“I went to the doctor today.” She paused noticing a new mole above Farouz’s left eyebrow. How long had it been there? Alia didn’t know. She rarely looked at him.

“Yes?” Farouz’s tone was always even, carefully controlled.

“I’m pregnant.” Alia said this with no trace of sentiment.

“Fine. Ah, very good.” He looked smug and highly satisfied that his efforts had finally proven fruitful. “Is there anything you, ah, anything you need?”

Alia had anticipated his question and already compiled a list. The most important, most pressing item being, “A live-in maid.”



Preethi, the young Sri Lankan maid, left after one week. Alia came home from shopping to find her gone, her room cleared out. Alia quickly checked the safe and tallied all the valuables, but nothing had been taken. So strange, she thought, why would the maid just leave? Alia called Farouz at work - something she had never done - to tell him. He didn’t sound surprised. He just said he’d look into it and, if necessary, find a new maid. It was never mentioned again.

The next maid, Olive, was hired through a local agency. She came every day to cook and clean. Farouz didn’t like her, but Alia did. Olive was an older Indian woman and a hard worker. She didn’t speak much Arabic, so their conversations were limited, mostly in English. Alia knew it was only a temporary situation since they would need a live-in maid when the baby arrived. Olive lived with her husband and wasn’t interested in changing the arrangement.

Farouz finally found the new maid, an Indonesian woman who looked young enough to be a girl, a few weeks before the baby was born. She apparently came from a highly-recommended and reasonable agency in Jakarta. The visa said Sari was twenty-one, but Alia doubted this. She looked too fresh and innocent. Alia was only twenty-three but felt like an old woman compared to Sari. People age more quickly in the desert. Sari was quiet and respectful. She didn’t look Alia in the eye and barely spoke. When she wasn’t cooking or cleaning, she was in her room.

The maid’s room was the size of a large closet. It was cramped with a mattress and small bureau. Sari ironed her clothes early each morning, before Farouz and Alia rose. Her few articles of clothing wrinkled easily and Sari prided herself on neatness. There was little she could control, so she focused on something she could - her appearance. Sari wasn’t vain. She was the picture of modesty with her shaila always securely covering her hair, her arms and legs hidden beneath trousers and long sleeves. She never wore makeup, perfume or jewelry. Her only indulgence was brushing her long dark hair each evening. The time between prayers and sleeping was devoted to this.

She washed her hair twice a week after everyone was asleep. Alia would not let her use one of the family bathrooms, so Sari had to wash in the guest bathroom with the bidet hose. This had been difficult at first, since there wasn’t any tub or shower, but Sari had worked out an arrangement. She filled the sink with warm water and used a washcloth to soap herself. Then, standing over the floor drain, she rinsed using the bidet hose. It was also tricky to clean herself in the small bathroom without getting her clothes wet, but she got used to it. After bathing, she quickly wiped down the bathroom and dressed. Sari used the same washcloth for both, then hung it carefully to dry. Alia had given her only one towel and washcloth.

Sari was technically working as long as one of the family members was awake. Alia went to bed late and Farouz rose early, so Sari had little time to sleep. After the baby arrived, there was even less.



Alia gave birth to a girl and spent one week in the hospital recovering. Her room was always filled with visitors, so she had little time to rest. She couldn't wait to go home, to spend time with her baby and to sleep. Her homecoming was quiet compared to the days in the hospital, and Alia felt grateful. It was hard to be polite when she was so tired. The effort it took to smile and make small-talk exhausted her.

As soon as Alia walked in the door she handed the baby to Sari, who accepted the bundle tentatively. Alia went to her room and slept for fifteen hours. She woke feeling disoriented but better. When she opened her bedroom door, Sari crept out of the baby's room anxiously, like she had been listening and waiting for this moment.

"What is it, Sari? How is Khulood?"

"Sleeping, Mum." Sari looked nervous, like she wanted to say something but was afraid. She unconsciously twisted the baby blanket in her hand.

"Do you need something?" Alia's energy was fading and she knew she should sit down.

Sari hesitated and glanced quickly at Farouz's bedroom door.

"Well?" Alia followed Sari's glance. She knew that Farouz would be at work and she was glad.

"No, Mum."

"I should eat. Please bring me some hummous, vine leaves and heat up a cheese manakeish. Oh, and some Nescafe." Alia wasn't hungry but she knew she should eat something. Her body was shaking slightly.

"Yes, Mum." Sari went to the kitchen and began preparing the tray.

For a moment Alia thought she saw nervousness, but dismissed it. What could Sari be nervous about? Alia trusted Sari, never imagining the girl had lied about her experience. Since Alia had no idea how to care for Khulood, she relied on the maid's expertise. She looked competent enough. Anyway, how hard could it be to care for a small baby? Khulood slept most of the time, waking briefly to eat. Sari still had ample time to cook and clean.



When Alia felt well enough to leave the flat, Farouz suggested Friday brunch at Shakespeare & Co., a new café near the building. He was impressed by the décor and especially wanted to show her the aviary. For a while, Farouz had been thinking of getting a bird, something exotic, beautiful and quiet. He could not abide a noisy animal. Whenever he mentioned it, Alia tried to discourage him. Birds were dirty and smelly. She thought it would be unhygienic for Khulood.

The weather was cool enough to sit in the outdoor garden. Luckily two tables near the aviary were free. Alia, still sore from the birth, eased herself onto a soft couch while Farouz sat in the armchair across from her. As is the custom, Sari sat at the next table with the baby.

"You're right. This is nice furniture," Alia said. "Where do you think they got it? Pinky's? Marina? It looks more like Marina, the dark wood and carving."

"I don't know, but I'll speak to the manager. This would be good in the garden when we move to a villa," Farouz said.

"Yes. That may be a while, though." As outlined in the marriage contract, they would move to a villa after the birth of their second child. Alia was in no rush to get pregnant again.

"What will you take?"

"Café and some crepes with haloumi," Alia said. She indulged Farouz's desire to order for her.

"As you like. And you?" Farouz half-turned to Sari who was rocking Khulood in the pram.

Alia watched Sari closely, thinking she detected discomfort. Sari did not answer, perhaps not hearing.

"Sari, will you eat something?" Alia had no patience for timid women.

"Anything, Mum. Thank you," Sari said, never lifting her eyes or turning.

"I will choose for you," Farouz said. Alia thought his eyes lingered a bit too long on Sari whose shaila had slackened, exposing a strip of glossy dark hair. Alia wondered for a moment if this indiscretion were intentional.



After a few weeks Farouz began talking earnestly about having another baby, a boy. He was quick to say that he loved Khulood, but Alia could read a sense of failure in his face. She wasn't sure if he blamed her or himself. Alia had also wanted a boy. A woman's life was not easy.

Alia got a letter from her doctor saying that intercourse was prohibited for three months. She would use this if she had to. In the meantime, she ate and slept well, only awakened occasionally by the baby's wails. Sari was usually quick to respond.

One night, however, Khulood kept crying and crying. Alia waited in bed for Sari to quiet the baby. Eventually, Alia took care of it herself. The baby's face was red from crying, and her tiny fists were clenched. She calmed down when Alia rocked her.

Alia marched down the hall to Sari's room and was about to knock loudly when she heard noises. She couldn't place it at first, but it sounded familiar. Breathing and bed springs followed by deep exhalation.

Alia froze, unsure what to do, unable to move. The baby squirmed and began sucking her hand. Alia crept quietly to the kitchen and prepared a bottle. She took Khulood to bed with her and they slept curled together until morning.

Farouz had already gone to work when Alia woke. Sari was scrubbing the kitchen floor when Alia came in with the baby. She put Khulood on a quilt in the living room and returned.

"Sari, I had to feed Khulood last night. You've been neglecting your duties."

"Sorry, Mum," Sari said rising. She had dark circles under her eyes and she looked smaller than usual. She kept twisting the rag in her hands.

For the first time Alia looked at Sari as a person, as a woman, and noticed how lovely she was. Even sleep-worn, with her hair covered, she was a true beauty. Her skin was perfect and her body trim. Much different from Alia's postpartum figure. How had Alia missed this? She felt foolish, and suddenly angry.

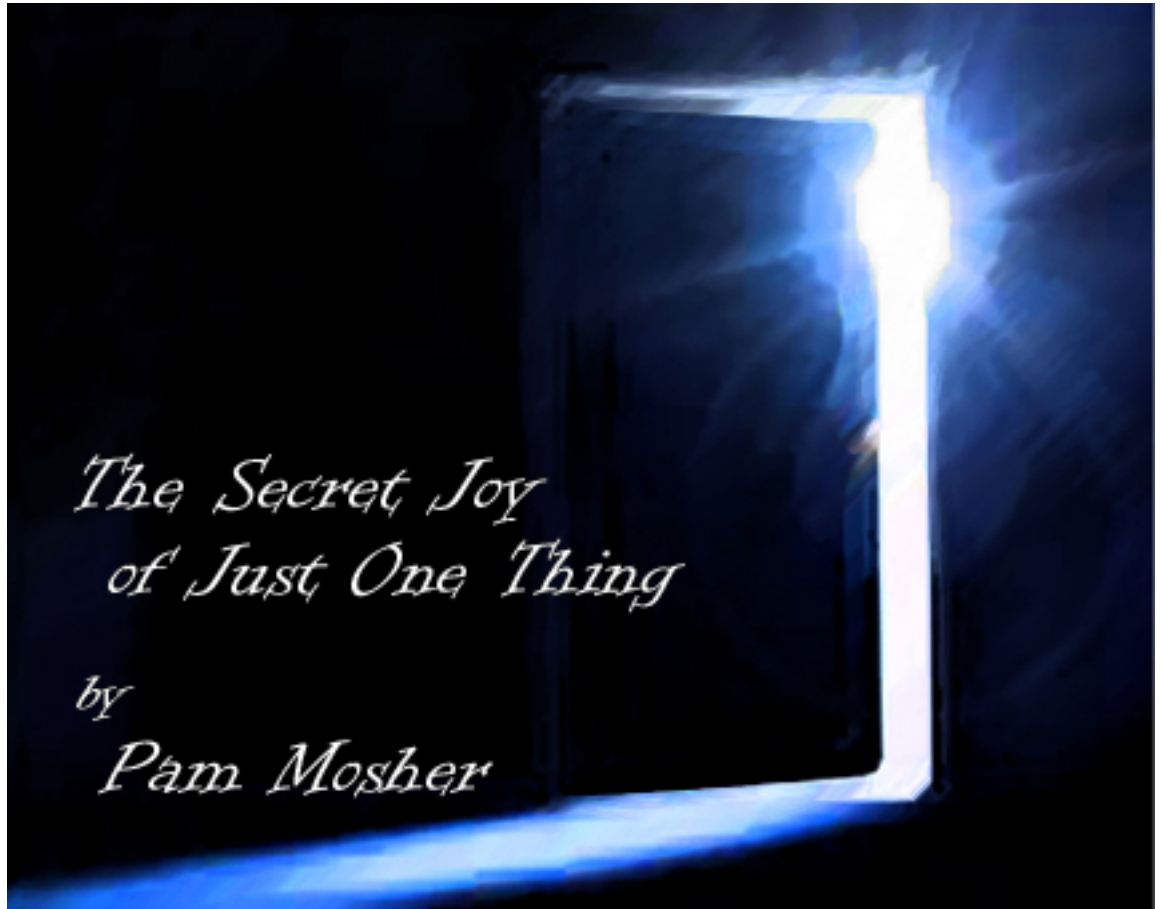
Without warning, Alia slapped Sari in the face leaving a red mark on her cheek. "Don't let it happen again."

Alia's hand stung. She felt equally alive and ashamed. She had never struck another person before, so the feeling was unusual. She felt some of her power, her strength, returning.



Copyright © Maura Madigan. Title graphic: "Wedding" Copyright © The Summerset Review 2003.

The Summerset Review



Whitney wakes, jogs for twenty minutes, showers (using the special buffing cloth and deep cleanser recommended at the salon), and eats a breakfast of sliced strawberries (vitamin C) and Total bran flakes (100% of the daily recommended allowance). She brushes and flosses her teeth. She dresses in light, breathable clothing: linen pants and a blue blouse, the latter of which highlights her eyes. She rides a bus (environmentally friendly) to the University of Colorado, and arrives early.

While she waits for Professor Dugan, she digs from her book bag a prioritized list of items to be accomplished during the day. She stares at the inventory, but cannot read it. Tears blur her vision.

Extracting a pen, she withdraws a small leather-bound notebook. Flipping to a blank page some one-third of the way through, she writes in her careful hand, I've learned that I can turn away. And still, it haunts me.



In the corner booth of Pints Pub, Whitney and Caroline drink beer from silver handled mugs. They are comfortable in sleeveless shirts, hair pulled back in identical blond ponytails. There was a general buzz of commotion when they arrived, shouted hellos from various acquaintances, but that has died down now. Only Caroline appears at ease.

Whitney leans closer to her friend, to be heard over the miscellaneous bar noise: the din of voices, the cracking sound of balls smacking against each other on the pool table. "I'd better

make this my last," she says, referring to the beer gripped in her hand. "I'm already thinking about calling him."

Caroline tilts her head. "Tell me you're kidding."

"I know I shouldn't. I know I should hate him."

"After all he's put you through?" Caroline asks. "I can't believe you're saying this."

"I know," Whitney says, miserably. "I'm weak."

"Yes, you are," Caroline says. She looks appalled.

"He was just so passionate." Whitney toys with the crumpled wet remains of a cocktail napkin. She feels the hot sting of tears, but blinks them back. "And there was this idea I had, that I'd finally found someone I could be happy with."

"Another person can't make you happy," Caroline says. "You have to make yourself happy."

Whitney nods, but she's not sure she agrees. Everyone mouths this, of course. She herself says this from time to time. But is it true? She and all her friends seem happier when they are in love. Even her brother. He went from moody and distant to downright friendly when he was dating Shelly.

She'd like to ask Caroline about an idea she's been toying with, a thesis she calls, "The Secret Joy of Just One Thing." But Caroline, Whitney sees, is disgusted with her, and in no mood to talk about anything.



Whitney's strongest memories of Steven are almost all connected with his bed, where they spent most of their time. It was a beautiful bed, king-size, high off the ground, with soft white cotton sheets and half a dozen pillows. His bedroom was on the top floor of an old Victorian house, and there were windows you could swing open, looking out on a courtyard garden full of roses and peonies. His paintings were everywhere, his books. As their life together continued, her books too began piling around his desk and bed. When they weren't making love they would lay together, arms and legs tangled, listening to music. Or he would read to her in his beautiful deep voice and she would close her eyes, listening to his heartbeat in the spaces between the words.

Open to anything. Oblivious to everything else in the world.



Whitney has returned to school, after a four? six? month hiatus. That's what she calls the time period during which she failed to attend classes and, frankly, rarely left the house.

On campus, she appears the picture of a doctoral student. An academic, like her father (who had to pull a few strings to have her readmitted). She cultivates this image consciously. A mask, or shield, of sorts. She wears thick-framed reading glasses. Her fingers are often smudged from ink and she carries a heavy load of books everywhere. A collection of what was, at one time, illegal to read in this country: James Joyce, Nabokov, D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller. And law books, of course. She is writing her thesis on the feminist response to the evolving law of obscenity.

Beneath her shield, she feels hunger seeping across her skin, spreading like an ink stain.



"I wish I knew the meaning of life," Whitney says. "What is our purpose here?"

"Who knows," Caroline says. She taps her lighter on the tabletop, as though bored by the question.

"It's interesting that no one cares about such things when they are in love," Whitney observes.

Caroline raises an eyebrow but says nothing.

It is Friday night, but neither girl knows the exact time. They are content to be here, be seen, in their usual spot, Pints Pub, full of dark wooden booths, slow moving ceiling fans, and huge windows overlooking the architectural horrors surrounding City Park.

As usual, the place is jammed. Ladies' Night. Wine and beer, half price. For Ladies.

I suppose, Whitney thinks, that we qualify as Ladies. She sips her wine, a Refreshingly Light Chardonnay. A thought is snaking its way through her mind. She sees its humorous possibilities. But she can't be bothered, frankly, to make a joke to Caroline about it.

She watches a group of rowdy men standing by the bar, comparing them to him, as she always does. But catching herself, she ticks off, in her mind, the following list of reasons why she must not ever call him again:

1. Hopeless philanderer
2. Alarmingly poor personal hygiene (wrinkled shirt seen pulled from hamper and placed on body after sniffing armpit)
3. No job. No prospects to obtain one
4. Often wears no underwear (again, lazy about laundry)
5. Diet consists entirely of foods suitable only for children under age of ten
6. Obsessive personality unhealthy for her own thin hold on reality



"What are you thinking about?" Caroline asks. "Not Steven."

Whitney sips her wine, and considers sharing the list with Caroline. Honestly, she couldn't care less about all but the first and last item. The last item is the source of endless theorizing on her part. But the first, his endless philandering, his flirtatious behavior with her best friends, his actual sleeping with other women just hours after she left his bed so soaked with sated lust that her heart ached, is too painful to think about. She finds herself wanting to surround it with petty complaints.

She asks Caroline the following question: "What makes you - and by you I mean the collective you, I mean 'one' - happy?"

Caroline ponders the question, the smoke from her cigarette curling gracefully above the lit ember. "I've always believed that you take a little bit of satisfaction here," Caroline holds out her hand, and squeezes her fingers in a pinching motion, "say, from work. And then you take a little bit of contentment there . . ." and the fingers of her other hand close in the air, "from your family, your friends, love interests, hobbies." Caroline draws the pinched fingers of her hands together into a little spider kiss. "Add them all up, and together they make you happy."

"That is a singularly unsatisfactory answer," Whitney says.

Caroline makes a face at her. Disgusted again.



It is interesting that, for one who is so openly dismissive of Caroline's formula for happiness, Whitney has modeled much of her life around this very idea. A pinch of this and a dash of that. School, regular outings with friends and family, music, various athletic hobbies. Her research, of course, and reading. A balanced life, is that what it is called? Or is she just scattering her energy everywhere, so thinly that nothing means anything?

Because her soul seems strangely empty.

She knows that her view of reality has been shaken. She has suffered an almost physical blow to her sense of the world. She has never been so drawn in, so passionate about another person that she'd literally abandoned all other aspects of her a-dash-here, a-pinch-there, perfectly balanced life. It's left her questioning. Was it a horrible passion, to be so consumed by just one

thing?

Or wonderful?

Well, never mind. Whitney no longer devotes her energy obsessively to any one person or any one thing. Certainly, she avoids anything that will overwhelm the senses with, say, purely physical pleasure.

Not that Whitney is entirely adverse to physical pleasure. She has a late dinner with Greg, a good-looking man with a practice in intellectual property (medical patents and the like). They return to her place. She presses against him on the couch, and he slowly kisses her, lifting her hair with one hand so that he may mold his palm to her chin, stroke the tender skin at the base of her throat.

Whitney almost cries out at the pleasure of it. Except, of course, that what she really wants to cry out is "Steven."



Whitney and Greg have gone for a hike in the foothills of Boulder. The view is spectacular, and they spot baby deer chewing tender shoots of grass when they park his Volvo. Whitney barely notices, however, though she pasted a smile of enthusiasm on her lips. She was thinking of the last time she was here, not with Greg, but with The Other One.

Three days ago, he left her a note in her box on campus. Just five words. I miss you. Call me. She has thought of little else for the last seventy-two hours.

She tries, very carefully, never to think his name. There is danger in dwelling on the name of someone who has managed to burrow so deeply inside the marrow of your bones that you wake wanting to press yourself to his ghost, that you spend every unoccupied moment of time dreaming of his fingers cupping your belly.



It's late, almost one o'clock in the morning. Whitney spent the evening with friends at the Starlight Lounge, where she happily drank sapphire martinis from a frosted glass and ate thin strips of raw fish dipped in cilantro and lime. But now she is home alone, her fingers smelling of lime marinade. She gives in to the urge to lift the phone and dial his number, her hand cupped over the mouthpiece so he cannot hear her breathing. She listens to the hollow ringing, and then the phone is answered, and that deep voice is entering her ear, familiar as the feel of her own teeth against her tongue.

"Who is this?" he asks, when she does not respond to his 'hello.' "Whitney, is that you?"

She gasps and almost slams down the phone, except she is vibrating with a thrill that her name came immediately to his mind.

"Whitney," he says, and there is a distinct tone of laughter in his voice. "Hang up the phone, come over here, and let me make love to you."

She doesn't respond, but she clutches the pillow between her legs, pressing her body into the soft down.

"Whitney," he says again. "Baby, I know it's you. I know it took a lot to call. Let me make you happy. Make us both happy."

Tears drop against her hand, still covering the mouthpiece of the phone so that he can't hear her. She hangs up, realizing that if she did not, she would speak to him, and inevitably, soon be rushing over.

As long as he wants me, she thinks, I will want him too.

When she stands to flip off the bedroom lights, her limbs are heavy. As though her arms and legs are weighted by disgust. Not at him, she realizes. Rather, at how weak she has become.



Whitney is near the fountain on campus, shoes off, toes digging into grass, reading a particularly graphic, delightfully obscene passage in *Naked Lunch* when she looks up to see Steven standing over her.

"God, Steven," she says. She slams the book shut as though she were caught doing something shameful, rather than research.

"Another dirty book, Whitney?" he asks with a smirk. "Wouldn't you rather have the real thing?"

For a moment, she's not sure what to say. The grass world beneath her tilts and whirls, the blue sky threatens to crash into her.

Finally, she manages. "Excuse me. I'm late for a meeting."

She stands, makes a show of slipping on her shoes with her back to him, gathering her books. She is, in fact, so dizzy that she fears her legs might buckle beneath her.

A hand comes out to steady her elbow, and she looks up into his blue eyes. She finds no smirk at her obvious anxiety and discomposure, but rather a gentle curiosity, the type of look one might give a small panicky animal that is senselessly beating itself against a wall trying to escape, when it could simply fly by you or run off in another direction.

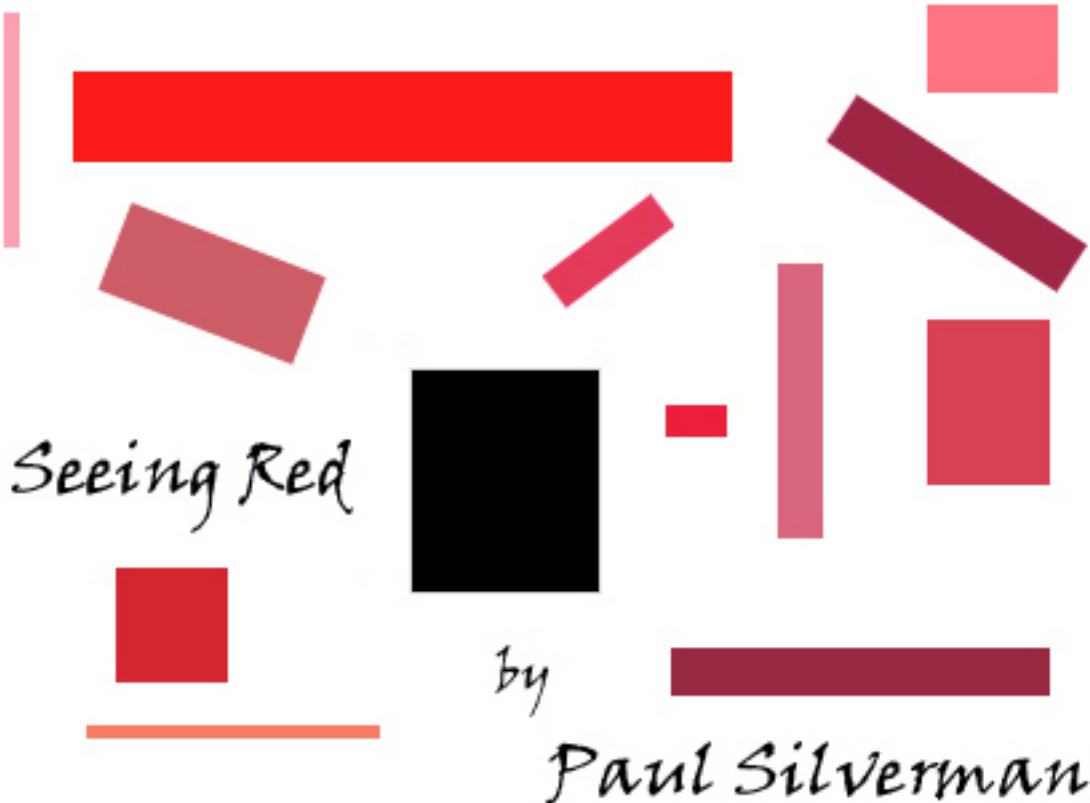
He steps back, drops his hand. With a shrug, he walks away.

She watches him go, and a sense of clearness, or certainty, descends on her. He has released her. She is free.



Copyright © Pam Mosher 2003. Title graphic: "Exit Stage Right" Copyright © The Somerset Review 2003.

The Summerset Review



Ever since they started trying, there is this question about breakfast. For the wife it is no problem at all. A bowl of raisin bran, a squirt of skim milk, a swallow of coffee, and it's over and done with and off to work. It's all so automatic the wife doesn't even realize it's happening. Doesn't even realize she's pouring the raisin bran into the bowl. The box is in one hand and the paper in the other. She has her nose in the front page or the editorial page or the classifieds the whole time. The wife doesn't even taste breakfast. She inhales it for fat-free energy and storms away in her Jetta, thinking either boy or girl. She thinks it day or night.

With Erv it's different. It's not just Julialisa who's cutting into Erv's sleep time. It's breakfast. There is this question about breakfast. He begins asking it sometime after dinner the night before. Lately, it's been even earlier than that. What will he have? What will it be? Most of the time he wouldn't choose raisin bran like the wife. But sometimes he did. It depends. Just like trying, it's all about mood, it's all about chemistry, and on top of that it's all very subtle: it's splitting hairs.

There are lots of different cereals on hand. Boxes and boxes. Erv insists on it. On top of the dry, cold stuff there are the oatmeals and wheatenas, the stuff you heat until it bubbles. Each has its own unique flavor property, and Erv couldn't stop thinking about it even if he wanted to. Not many choices on this earth actually make your mouth water. With Erv, all he needs to do is picture a piece of toast. That's it. Then he's off weighing and choosing all the different things he could put on it. Enough choices to fill three hours on the Food Channel.

The breakfast question wakes him up at any hour. Usually it's in the dead of night, around three a.m. He's recently been in a bagel phase, which he finds even tougher than toast. Today is a typical work day and Erv is in front of his open closet, picking out a tie. He closes his eyes and chooses – that's it. His entire selection process took about two-tenths of a second, and he did it with his eyes shut. No hemming, no hawing, no time lost matching the intricacies of the tie to the subtleties of his shirt. He ties his half-Windsor and goes. But there was much tossing and turning, forty-five minutes of it starting at three a.m. - before he came up with the cream

cheese and sliced tomato combo he made for himself this morning. It was worth it, though. The tomatoes were garden fresh. The way the wet red flesh soaked into the cool cream cheese and rubbery bagel dough was incomparable. As he sits in the gridlock creeping to work with the other human bugs he can feel the tangy remains down in his innards, sending echoes of the meal up to the taste buds dotting his tongue. It's a lot more riveting than drive time radio.

He has a twenty-five page PowerPoint presentation due to go out today to the office in London. Erv gets to the office, opens his laptop and pounds it out like a reporter at ringside. He puts in the last bullet point, clicks on Save, then shoots his presentation over the network and across the sea. They'll either love it or they'll hate it. Doesn't matter. Whether they love it or hate it won't trigger any deep yearnings in his abdomen. You can't eat a PowerPoint. And there is this question about lunch.

While the wife's family-planning, Erv sneaks out of the office at 11:30 a.m. to plan lunch. Salad, soup or sandwich – or all three together, why not? He's a walking menu. Every item is burned into his brain. He walks around the park, but he doesn't really see the park. It's somewhere back there, way back, back where the PowerPoint is. He feels his stomach juices flow. The glands in his mouth and throat open and spill liquid like fruit on a tree, like berries on a bush. Erv walks fast – he practically zooms – and soon he's out of breath. He's bigger than he used to be. Especially up on the pectorals. But it's not muscle he's adding. It reminds him of Marshmallow Fluff.

Erv returns from lunch with the bits of sushi still stuck in the crevices of his teeth. On a whim, he made a sudden shift to Japanese. A breeze blew as he was passing a blossoming tree. It made him think of cherry blossoms in Kyoto. The breeze blew him all the way to a sushi bar. It was extraordinary, like riding a giant wave. Walking to his desk, Erv pushes at the sushi bits with his tongue, squeezing out the last jolts of sharp ocean flavor. He can still feel the wasabi fumes swirling inside his upper nasal passages, deliriously trapped inside his forehead.

This is the moment Erv realizes that the use of a bagel is not limited by custom or convention, by anything written or prescribed. He knows that tomorrow morning he will do neither cream cheese nor butter. He may just slice little disks of hot dog, fry them up in a pan and break an egg over them. He may then place this egg and hot dog concoction on his bagel. Incomparable, but then again, he may even go further, he may choose to go with those waving cherry blossoms and fill the bagel with raw, fresh yellowtail or sea urchin. The thought provokes a new Pavlovian gush.

But as he sits down at his desk, Julialisa calls. She has broken down in her Jetta and she's enraged at the Jetta people. She's stuck in a tunnel under the harbor and the fumes are choking her. The traffic is backed up as far as she can see. Erv thinks that's what she's saying, but he can hardly tell. The cell phone cuts in and out, disconnecting on every other word. The wife sounds like she is underwater, so far away she's not even on the planet. Erv holds the phone to his ear, but his mind is envisioning the orange pearls of sea urchin glistening on the bagel. Shimmering like little rubies. He can hear them crunch in his mouth. Erv's wife shouts a half-erased question. She might as well be on the moon. Erv can smell the whole ocean – the salt and the kelp, it's all right in his mouth. Saliva spills out in a fresh torrent. Erv tastes the moment, every shimmering particle of it. He tastes it down to his toes. When it hits you straight in the tongue, nothing tastes like a moment.

But what was the question? The phone cuts out and stays out. The moment lingers, briny and crisp. A Pacific Ocean of a moment. Concentrated in a single drop.

Then the phone rings again and the wife is back. There's light in the tunnel, she says, and she starts in. Ranting about ovulation. Did he avoid soy products today? That was the question. He can hear her loud and clear now. Erv's image of the little pearls of sea urchin instantly changes. The tidbits lose their shimmer, their red-orange sheen. They turn white-gray and flat. Phosphorescent ghost-shapes in an x-ray. Globules swarming under a microscope. In Erv's scent-memory the briny whiff turns medicinal. He thinks doctor, clinic. The thermometer is in play; the lab is on standby; the wife is on an egg hunt and Erv's job is to get his boys swimming. But she has warned him time and again. Stuff like the soy sauce he sloshed on the sushi - not at ovulation time. Bad for the sperm count.

To complicate matters, for the fortieth time the wife brings up the Naughty or Nice party she's going to attend. Everything is targeted for the same night, tonight. Both events. The Girl's Night Out. And Erv's Night In. With Julialisa nothing ever happens in ones. It's always twos. If they score, he knows it will be twins.

At rush hour, Erv leaves work and slugs through the traffic. A near-miss with a Hummer gives him palpitations. He longs to swallow tension as though it were crème brûlée. Instead it sticks in his throat - dry bread without water – and his head pounds.

Down the driveway Erv pulls up his emergency brake. He turns off the car's ignition and tries to turn on his own. He shuts his eyes and recalls the glossy beads of sea urchin. He breathes in and breathes out. You are a wave on the ocean, he tells himself.

At the door, Julialisa meets him with a surprise. A funny Frosty the Snowman doll. It has a carrot for a nose. It also has a carrot for an erection.

"Whoa," says Erv. "He's more ready than I am."

Erv grabs at his necktie, which feels as tight as a tourniquet. He eyes the staircase to the bedroom and thinks of Sisyphus. And then moussaka. If only he could have a Greek salad, at least, it might all go better than last month.

"Easy, baby," she says, shaking the Frosty at him. "You're not on 'til eleven. I got this for Kara's Naughty or Nice Party. He's some doll, no?"

"Some doll," says Erv. What else is there to say?

"You watch – everyone else will bring undies."

"Me watch? How can I watch? This is girls-only, isn't it?"

Erv stands there like a hat rack, looking at Julialisa ogle Frosty's carrot. She winks and says, "Isn't that a hoot?"

Still in the entry to his house, Erv feels out of it; not quite there. It's as if he's making a sales call. He makes himself put his coat in the closet. As soon as he does, the wife takes hers out.

Erv watches Julialisa get ready. He's leary of Kara. To him, Kara means trouble.

"Got to run, hun," says Julialisa. "Kara needs me to help set up. Do not eat tofu."

Erv keeps his sushi lunch a secret and contemplates dinner on his own. This buoys his mood a bit. The possibilities seem endless.

"Wait a minute," he says as she's halfway out the door. "Why Frosty the Snowman? This is still September."

"You don't know girls," she says. "It's never too early to Christmas-shop."

Erv shrugs, granting the point.

"Besides," she says, "it's not like every toy figure comes with a hard-on. You try to find one."

She's gone, out the door with Frosty, and Erv starts to salivate. He has four hours to himself. It's a rare guy who will make himself beef Wellington from scratch. But Erv does. And bake the crust yet keep the meat runny and rare. But Erv does.

At ten he pierces the golden brown crust and plunges into the savory red filet. At ten forty five he's nibbling champagne grapes and licking brie off his fingers.

At eleven Julialisa walks in and shoos him up to the bedroom.

By her calculations, the fertility moment is optimal. Julialisa has her Masters in science and works in the burgeoning field of biotech. In the empirical tradition, she whips out a pen, a notebook and the thermometer and hits the powder room for one last check.

Outside the bathroom door, Erv sits on the bed. He tries to keep silent and practice his meditation. He repeats his mantra, timing it so it rides each breath. He tells himself he is a wave on the ocean; he rolls in and rolls out.

But the muscles aren't buying it. The lungs aren't cooperating. He feels he's drowning, not floating.

Erv grimaces as the wife shrieks with glee at the thermometer reading.

"Get ready," she says, "I'm coming out."

In the ten seconds she takes to prepare her entrance, Erv changes his mantra fifteen times. The wave thing isn't doing it. Nothing's doing it. He's taut as an underwire. As Julialisa sashays out in her new red Naughty or Nice costume, he begins to salivate. It's the color, definitely. The color red. He inhales it, guzzles it. As she does her stripper shimmy in front of his nose, his glands flood his tongue and teeth. They pour out so much juice he's beyond reason, he can't help himself. He wants to take the color red and run with it, run where it's taking him. Out of the bedroom and down to the refrigerator. Down to the rest of the beef Wellington. That's the red he sees, the red he needs. He wouldn't even bother to get a knife and fork. He'd claw away the crust. He'd rip the red meat like a wild dog.



Copyright © Paul Silverman 2003. Title graphic: "Bits and Bites" Copyright © The Somerset Review 2003.

The Somerset Review

The Summerset Review



One day Mrs. Mud decided to visit a part of the world she had never been to before. And while she was at it, she thought it would be clever to buy some apples, as they did not grow on her farm. However, on the way home, while admiring the bright blue sky, Mrs. Mud tripped on a stone and dropped the basket of apples she had just bought.

"Oh dear and just when I thought it was going to be a perfect day," she sighed. She stared at the apples strewn over the road for a moment before moaning, "Now it is totally ruined!"

At that moment a boy was passing by, so she asked him to help her, "Oh please, can you help a helpless old woman?"

"Gladly," the boy said.

"Oh, I need to pick up my apples. Could you run to my old man who lives on the top of that mountain over there? You can't miss it, as we live alone. I myself am unable to bend over, as I am an old woman. Here, take this pencil to defend yourself against some half-eaten ogres, but don't worry - they are alcoholics and if you are a quiet little boy you should be able to slip past them. But take the pencil just in case."

The boy thought for a moment before saying, "Sorry Ma'am, I can't help you if that is what you want. I don't have so much time to run to the top of that mountain and battle ogres. Good luck, though!"

"He doesn't have much time?" snorted Mrs. Mud indignantly once the boy was gone. "What does a small boy like that need with time? Stupid child. I'm an old woman, I have far much less time than he."

As she waited for help, a horse in the field next to the road found one of the apples and ate it. "Oh my God!" stammered the old woman in disbelief. "This is absolute madness. It's an outrage!" A horse was stealing one of her apples right before her eyes, and in broad daylight!

Just then a little girl came along.

"Oh please, you must help a helpless old woman!" the old woman shouted frantically, grabbing the little girl by the shoulders and shaking her violently.

"Certainly," the little girl said very politely.

"I need to put all my apples back into that basket, but that horse in the meadow has already eaten one, that wicked beast," Mrs. Mud clamored with all the speed her breath could afford. Then she stopped suddenly and looked suspiciously at the little girl. "But why didn't you come a few moments earlier? If only you had and picked up the apples then before the horse stole one, then I wouldn't have this problem now! Are you always so late? Never mind, there's no time to waste. Go into that field and kill that greedy horse, my apple should be inside his belly, then go to the top of that mountain and fetch my old man so he can come and pick up the rest of my apples. Oh, and there are some ogres to kill along the way."

The little girl thought for a moment, then said, "I can't do all that, because I am just a little girl," the little girl said proudly. "But good luck, anyway!"

"What? Well what a horrible and lazy child. Is everyone in this part of the world so nasty and lazy?" Mrs. Mud shrieked, flinging her hands towards Heaven; a thick foam was brewing at the bottom of her throat.

After some time Mrs. Mud's dilemma was in all the newspapers, inducing some robbers to come and snatch up the remaining apples. Mrs. Mud shrieked and stamped, clenching her fists and biting her teeth. She even for a moment threatened to kill herself, but the robbers took no notice, as they had become quite proficient at ignoring their victims.

After the robbers had made off with all of Mrs. Mud's apples, Mrs. Mud was no longer as pleasant as she usually is on a Sunday afternoon. She was kicking and screaming, twisting and turning like an itchy dog in the middle of the road, foaming at the mouth, cursing everything within ten meters until by chance a priest strolled up to her. "My child, what calls for such madness?" he asked.

"Oh my God!" she gasped, "Oh my God! What a cruel and merciless world! Oh please, oh please, help a helpless old woman!" the woman begged, crawling on her knees in despair, groping the priest, her hair ruffled up like tumbleweed, her whole body trembling from the injustice she was suffering on this most horrible of days, tears streaming down her eyes in torrents.

"Yes," the noble priest answered calmly. "What is it my child?"

"I need to put my apples in my basket," the old woman wailed as she began to sway, as if ready to fall into a swoon.

The priest looked about but he could see no apples. "I see no apples, my child."

"That's because they've all been stolen, you idiot!" she screamed at the priest. "You are a priest, aren't you? I can tell by your uniform. That means you have special powers, don't you? You could chase after the robbers, couldn't you? You can beat them, thrash them and throw them into hell, can't you? And then you could kill that nasty horse who had the audacity to eat one. I swear! You should be able to find the apple in his vile belly. Then, could you be a nice man and rush to my old man on the top of that mountain so he can come and carry me home? Or maybe you could carry me home yourself? Or maybe you could just go back in time and warn me about that nasty stone there so I wouldn't trip? If you are a real priest, you should be able to do that, shouldn't you? If not, then what's the point of being a priest? Oh, and there is a nasty little boy and a lazy little girl not so far away who refused to help a helpless old woman. They could use a good thrashing too. You must help me, I am begging you!" she shrilled to the heavens.

The priest thought for a moment. Mrs. Mud was grappling his jacket and shirt and it took all the man's strength to get free of her grasp.

"I can't possibly do all that you ask, my child, but I'll tell you what; I'll pray for your fledgling soul." And then the priest continued on his journey, understandably shaken by the experience of making Mrs. Mud's acquaintance.

"Humph! A lot of good that will do me in getting my apples back," she yelled after the priest. "How nasty people are! How evil! I'm never coming back to this part of the world ever again. This is the worst day of my entire life," screamed Mrs. Mud, her voice filling the air for miles and with such force that the vibrations are still at this very moment traveling out into deep space.

It was then her husband heard his loving wife's agonizing cries and without a moment's delay rushed down their mountain in a flash, massacring the half-eaten and drunken ogres in the blink of an eye. He whisked his beautiful wife into his arms and carried her all the way back home, kissing her anger-swollen face with every step. Afterwards, Mr. Mud was half inclined to

go back down the mountain to that nasty part of the world and exact total revenge on all those who hurt his wife so cruelly, but dared not leave her side.

It took weeks for Mrs. Mud to recover from the unjust and vicious treatment of the cruel world below, with enough to complain about for at least another eight lifetimes.



Copyright © Troy Morash 2003. Title graphic: "Apples" Copyright © The Summerset Review 2003.

The Summerset Review

The Summerset Review



Maura Madigan

lives in Dubai, United Arab Emirates with her husband and daughters. She has an MFA in Creative Writing from CUNY Brooklyn College and writes fiction, nonfiction and poetry. Her work has appeared in *Blueline*, *The Distillery*, *The Arabia Review*, and *Escape from America Magazine*.

Troy Morash

comes from Canada but has lived and travelled all over the world. He currently lives in Odessa, Ukraine where he teaches English and translates fairy tales. He has had his work published in magazines including *Fables*, *Monkey Bicycle*, *The Rose and Thorn*, *ken*again*, and *PrinsessTarta*. The character of Mrs. Mud originally appeared in the story "The Old Muds" in *Fables*, Spring 2002. His home site is www.geocities.com/troys_tales and he can be reached at troy99m@yahoo.ca.

Pam Mosher

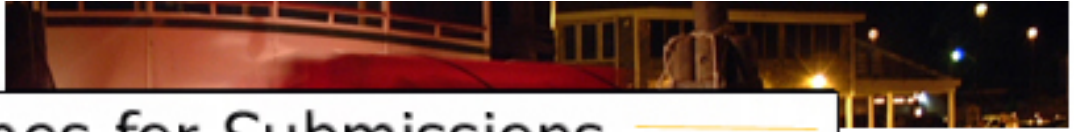
is an attorney and lives in Colorado with her husband. Her work has appeared in *Pindeldyboz*, *Wilmington Blues*, and other publications. She can be contacted at pam_mosher@msn.com.

Paul Silverman

has worked as a sandwich man, olive packer, reporter and advertising creative director. One of his commercials won a Silver Lion at Cannes. His stories have appeared in *South Dakota Review*, *North Atlantic Review*, *In Posse*, *Adirondack Review*, *Paumanok Review*, *Front Page Review*, *Timber Creek Review*, *Byline*, *Branches Quarterly* and other literary publications, both online and print. New work will soon appear in *Oyster Boy Review* and *The Worcester Review*. He is married, has one daughter, and lives on Cape Ann, north of Boston. He can be reached at psilverman@verizon.net.

The Summerset Review

The Sunnset Review



Guidelines for Submissions

Writers are invited to submit contemporary short stories and essays of up to 8,000 words. No sci-fi, horror, graphic erotica, poetry, or subject matter with emphasis on death or loss are likely to be accepted. Fantasy, romance (literary), and overall lighter stories will be given more serious consideration. We enjoy seeing essays that enlighten us in subtle ways.

All submitted work is assumed to be original. Reprints, novel excerpts, and simultaneous submissions are accepted. We read year-round.

Email submissions to editor@summersetreview.org. Please be sure to state whether your piece is fiction or an essay. It is preferable that the submission be an attachment in standard manuscript MS Word format. If you are sending a piece in plain text, please be sure to clearly designate paragraphs, alignment, and italics. Please do not simply give a link on the web where the story appears. All submissions receive replies, usually in less than six weeks.

We do not give previously-published authors any more attention than new writers, and judge submissions objectively on literary merit. Even with this, we prefer a brief note accompanying the submission. We are not sure what we want to read in this note, but would appreciate the extra effort, rather than a blank email with an attachment. We usually comment on material that got further along in the review process. On pieces we accept, we usually suggest minor editorial changes and always confer with the author.

Authors retain all rights to their work, and will see galleys of accepted pieces for review. Unfortunately, contributors cannot be paid for accepted submissions.

To get more of an idea of what we are looking for, writers are asked to read The Sunnset Review or consult our [Recommended Reading](#) list. We also suggest that contributors be familiar with the writing found in better literary publications. Some examples that have inspired us in both content and the manner in which they have handled submissions, based on first-hand experiences, are found [here](#).

The Sunnset Review

The Somerset Review

Author	Title	Source
Aciman, Andre	Cat's Cradle	From the November 3 rd issue of The New Yorker, 1997
Anderson, Dale Gregory	Girl in the Tree, The	From the Spring/Summer issue of Alaska Quarterly Review, 2003
Ashton, Edward	Night Swimmer	Online at The Blue Penny Quarterly, Spring/Summer, 1995
Baggott, Julianna	Five	From Other Voices #28, 1998
Bardi, Abby	My Wild Life	From Quarterly West #41, 1995
Baxter, Charles	Snow	From the collection A Relative Stranger, published in 1990
Borders, Lisa	Temporary Help	From the Spring/Summer issue of Bananafish, 1998
Broyard, Bliss	Mr. Sweetly Indecent	From the Fall issue of Ploughshares, 1997
Burns, Carole	Honour's Daughter	From Other Voices #31, 1999
Cain, Chelsea	Pretty Enough To Be a Showgirl	From the Spring issue of Grand Tour, 1997
Cheever, John	Stories of John Cheever, The	A collection published in 1980
Christopher, Nicholas	Veronica	A novel published in 1996
Crowe, Thomas Rain	Firsts	Online at Oyster Boy Review in January, 1997
Dancoff, Judith	Vermeer's Light	From Alaska Quarterly Review's Intimate Voices, Other Lives, 1997
Dormanen, Sue	Finishing First	From the Summer issue of Lynx Eye, 1998.
Doyle, Larry	Life Without Leann	From an issue of The New Yorker in Fall, 1990
Kennedy, Thomas E.	Kansas City	From Vol 62 No. 4 of New Letters, 1996
McInerney, Jay	Model Behavior	A novel published in 1998
Millhauser, Steven	Enchanted Night	A novella published in 1999
Murakami, Haruki	South of the Border, West of the Sun	A novel published in 1998
Offill, Jenny	Last Things	A novel published in 1999
Salinger, J.D.	For Esme - With Love and Squalor	From the collection Nine Stories published in 1953
Tilghman, Christopher	Way People Run, The	From the September 9 th issue of The New Yorker, 1991

The Sunmerset Review

[Alaska Quarterly Review](#)

[Black Warrior Review](#)

[Hayden's Ferry Review](#)

[Literal Latte](#)

[Other Voices](#)

[Oyster Boy Review](#)

[South Dakota Review](#)

[StoryQuarterly](#)

[The Sun](#)

[Quarterly West](#)

[West Branch](#)

The Summerset Review



Previous Issues

Aline Baggio, Susan H. Case, Zdravka Evtimova, Tony O'Brien, Tom Sheehan, Jennifer Spiegel

Fall 2003

Summer 2003

Linda Boroff, Thomas Brennan, Sue Dormanen, James Francis, Gina Frangello, Gwendolyn Joyce Mintz

Eric Bosse, Sarah Maria Gonzales, M.M.M. Hayes, Janice J. Heiss, Pia Wilson

Spring 2003

Winter 2003

Max Dunbar, Jenny de Groot, Soo J. Hong, Rachel Belinda Kidder, Michael Marisi, Ulf Wolf

Kit Chase, Diane E. Dees, Edison McDaniels, Regina Phelps, Jacob Fawcett

Fall 2002