



WRITERSTALK

Volume 29
Number 10
October 2021

Newsletter of the South Bay Writers Club™

OCTOBER SPEAKER

Alejandro Adams

Jamal Khan



October speaker Alejandro Adams

Creating a series for Netflix and other streaming services

In 2017, Jeff Bezos, frustrated that Amazon Studios had yet to produce a household name, issued a mandate: Bring me *Game of Thrones*. His injunction reverberated across Hollywood, clarifying the stakes of peak TV. As legacy cable bleeds subscribers, deep-pocketed disruptors have rushed in. All vie for the streaming throne, and are willing to pay enormous sums to attain it. In 2019, Netflix released more original series than

the entire TV industry did in 2005. This year, Netflix will release seventy original films, averaging more than one per week. Talented writers are more in demand than ever.

At our 11 October meeting, Alejandro Adams will guide us through the process of breaking into Hollywood as a screenwriter. Drawing

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Monday

11 October

7 PM!

SEPTEMBER SPEAKER RECAP

Dan White

Bill Baldwin

Dan White came into town (or at least our Zoom session), promising to show us how to “keep boredom at bay.” Devoted outdoorsman and author of *The Cactus Eaters: How I Lost My Mind- And Almost Found Myself- On the Pacific Crest Trail* (2008, Harper) and *Under the Stars: How America Fell in Love with Camping* (2016, Henry Holt), Dan kept us entertained and taught us something to boot—not bad for a guest speaker.

Whatever your genre—fiction, nonfiction, memoir, interviews—you need to grab your readers’ attention from the get-go, then take it for a breathless ride.

We’re all familiar with cliff-hangers. End every chapter, if not every page, with the reader wondering, “And then what happened?” But that, perhaps, is the easy part.

Can you entertain? Can you keep someone engaged? Can you do this for someone on the other side of the world, whom you’ve never met? If someone from the other side of the world called you on the phone and wanted to tell you a story, what would make you listen?

Christopher Isherwood, author of *Goodbye to Berlin* (2021, New Directions) (whom White men-

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Between the lines

Edie Matthews

President, South Bay Writers



To ZOOM or not to ZOOM

Dear Friends,

Last month we canceled our annual potluck BBQ. This popular tradition began nearly twenty years ago. At the potluck there's no slated speaker and no charge, just members

(nonmembers and spouses welcomed), bringing the most appetizing dishes. The club provided the BBQ chicken, and a variety of beverages. But most enjoyable, in a relaxed atmosphere, there was plenty of time to network and chat with fellow writers.

We hated canceling the BBQ this year, but with the increase of the delta variant, we decided to err on the side of caution.

SBW was tentatively scheduled to return to in-person meetings this month at China Stix. But at this point, we're canceling. As much as I truly miss seeing everyone in person, it's safer to continue on Zoom.

At a recent meeting of CWC presidents on Zoom, I learned that a few other branches are exploring holding hybrid meetings—a combination of Zoom and in-person gatherings. It sounds intriguing; however, it's not an easy alternative. First, it requires quite a lot of extra equipment:

- Camera (prices start at \$999)
- Tripod
- Microphone
- Monitor
- Lighting (optional)
- Sufficient WiFi

Second, we would need one or preferably two volunteers to manage the task. They'd have to arrive early to set up, and someone would have to operate the camera during the speaker's presentation. Of course, first they must learn how to use the equipment.

Another option is to rent the gear or hire someone, but estimated costs run into the thousands. So for now, we'll stick to Zooming.

Our meetings on Zoom have been quite successful. While some other clubs have gone on hiatus, we have been attracting a sizable audience. Our attendance ranges from 40 to 60+, with nearly a hundred at one recent meeting.

I attribute the success to our fantastic board members. Nearly everyone has continued in their position for the past 3½ years. They are a conscientious and dedicated group, and I hope their talent leads to each one having a *New York Times* bestseller.

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California Writers Club South Bay Branch

www.southbaywriters.com

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SBW mission

To educate writers of all levels of expertise in the craft of writing and in the marketing of their work

Join Us!

We have a membership category that fits you. Renewal dues are \$45 for membership through 30 Jun 2021. New member \$65, dual membership \$25, student membership \$20. Contact ingasbwmembership@gmail.com, sign up online at SouthBayWriters.com, or mail your check and application to CWC-South Bay Writers, PO Box 3254, Santa Clara CA 95055

WritersTalk

The monthly newsletter of South Bay Writers, the South Bay Branch of the California Writers Club
newsletter@southbaywriters.com

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Submissions

SBW encourages writers at all levels to submit their creative work, essays, and reportage for publication in *WritersTalk*. Send submissions and proposals to newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Submissions and proposals must be either included in the body of the email or attached as a Word file. Please double-space. No paper submissions or scanned PDFs. Graphics should be high-quality JPGs or PNGs. Submissions will be copyedited, and may be sent back for revision. Managing editor reserves all rights to selection.

Word limits

Member announcements (200 words, see below)
News/Essay/Reportage (please submit proposal by 1st of month; draft due 15th of month)
Opinion/Letters (300 words)
Fiction/Memoir (1000 words)
Poetry (200 words)

Deadline

Submissions open year-round
Issues close 15th of month prior to publication

Member announcements

An announcement is of interest and value to writers, does not provide direct economic benefit to its originator, and is published free of charge

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Change of address

ingasbwmembership@gmail.com

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It's Loreena McKennitt season

Renée J Anderson, Managing Editor



It's around this time of year I always renew my obsession for Canadian musician Loreena McKennitt. If you're familiar with McKennitt's work, there's a chance you're *too* familiar – someone in your life just can't stop playing her music. Maybe that someone is you. If you're not familiar, I invite you to take the plunge.

For me the plunge came in the autumn of 1991, when NPR introduced McKennitt's latest album, *The Visit*, and I heard for the first time a refrain from

what would become one of my most beloved songs:

*I can see the lights in the distance
Trembling in the dark cloak of night.
Candles and lanterns are dancing, dancing
A waltz on All – All Souls Night*

Born in 1957 in Morden, Manitoba, McKennitt was influenced by the likes of Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, and Gordon Lightfoot. She took special interest in Celtic music and lore, mastering the Celtic harp, piano, and accordion. Her sweet soprano voice is lilting, haunting; her music and lyrics reach into the deep, veiled past, straddling history and fantasy. Her performance of Tennyson's *The Lady of Shalott* is one of my Desert-Island Disc keepers.

Loreena McKennitt's music sets a certain *mood*. And it just isn't proper autumn without her. McKennitt's work embodies one of the genres I put on when I work on my fantasy novel. I'm one of those writers who can't write in perfect silence. Music inspires my stories, my words, my characters. Some of my characters demand hard rock, a decided in-your-face mélange of devil-may-care bad-assery and soulful suffering. Others require smart, clipped electronica for that clever advancement of arc.

What about you? Do you need music to write, or do you prefer stony silence? What kinds of music inspire you? When I work on the fantasy novel, I often set my Apple music to random Celtic and Nordic tunes, preferably ones whose lyrics are in another language, or that have no lyrics at all, as words often do prove too much of a distraction. I've now listened to Loreena McKennitt's many albums so often, I can tune out the words of the songs if I need to. But if you take my suggestion and look up her music for the first time, I heartily recommend you listen to the lyrics. You will hear poetry.

This October's issue of *WritersTalk* is packed with autumnal mood, and I want to thank all contributors for making this month truly representative of South Bay Writers. You'll find humor, nostalgia, and a healthy dose of the strange. Let's do it again for December! Like last year, let's hear voices from everyone, an issue filled with December memories and sentiments. But please, please – get your pieces to the newsletter no later than 15 November, and please hold to a 750 word count so that we can fit everyone in.

Relish autumn. Seek out the mood you need to pen your masterpiece. **WT**

WANTED



Holiday memories and imagery
for our December issue
Due 15 Nov

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

View from the Board

Marjorie Johnson



On 08 September, seven of us Zoomed to the SBW Board meeting: President Edie Matthews, VP Jamal Khan, Secretary Marjorie Johnson, Member-at-large/Website/PR Tatyana Grinenko, CWC Central Board/NorCal rep Bill Baldwin, Membership chair

Inga Silva, and Facebook admin, Carolyn Donnell.

As in most months recently, we had merry discussions but entertained no motions. Board reports are distilled in what follows.

Edie Matthews. With heavy hearts, we have canceled the famous SBW potluck BBQ for 2021; the delta variant was just too scary. Also, most of us were not comfortable with resuming in-person meetings in October. Our annual Halloween costume contest will occur at our October meeting, but on Zoom.

Jamal Khan discussed upcoming speakers planned to appear on Zoom; they were not comfortable with in-person meetings either. The following three speakers have been contacted but not confirmed:

- Lyzette Wanzer, MFA: "Keys to successful submissions"
- Lisa Lerner: "Writing children's books"
- Thaisa Frank: "Seven tools for writers."

Trenton Myers reported still-healthy SBW bank accounts.

Renée J Anderson, MRMS, no news. **WritersTalk,** October will be a special Halloween issue; December will be a collection of holiday memories once more. Send submissions in any category to newsletter@southbaywriters.com.

Bill Baldwin, invites you all to read at **Open Mic**, first and third Friday nights. Contact him at WABaldwin@aol.com (no hyphen). Bill also reported on the **CWC Central Board**, who still plan to present the 2021 **Jack London Awards** at a live meeting on Sunday, 17 October, in Oakland. Awardees will be provided a complimentary lunch. The SBW 2021 awardee is Tatyana Grinenko. This meeting will also celebrate **California Writers Week**, which occurs in the third week

of October every year. Read about it at calwriters.org/our-story/California-writers-week.

Carolyn Donnell. As administrator of the SBW Facebook group, Carolyn reports that our website southbaywriters.com is still blocked by Facebook. They are rather crabby and say, "You can't use this URL. This URL (southbaywriters.com) goes against our community standards on spam. To protect people on Facebook from spam, we don't allow content that contains such URLs." No one answers Carolyn's protests.

Tatyana Grinenko, Email. Our Constant Contact list is growing: 501 Contacts total as of 08 Sept. **You can get an SBW meeting invite by contacting Tatyana** (PR@SouthBayWriters.com, no hyphen), who will add your email to her publicity and Constant Contact lists.

Inga Silva reported that SBW has Active, 49; Associate, 41; Life, 1; Supporting, 4; and Student, 2 members. Total members, 97.



The SBW Board meets again **Wednesday, 06 Oct, 7 PM** on Zoom, open to any interested club member. Attendance is easy: merely send an email to Pres@SouthBayWriters.com, and Edie will send you a Zoom invitation. Bring us your ideas. **WT**



Painted by Marjorie Johnson

Off the shelf

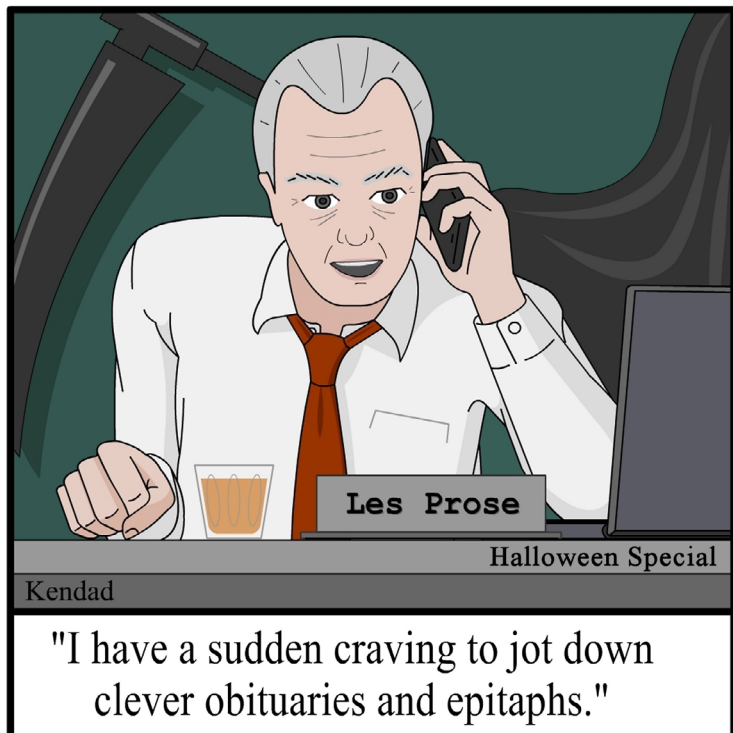
Edie Matthews



*"These masks have inspired my next book – a perfect disguise for a bank robber."
"I agree – you may want to take notes."*

Les Prose Comics

Kendad



CWC 2022 Literary Review

Now open for submission!

*Watch your email and check the state
website for details*

**calwriters.org/
publications/#submit**

Member news

Marjorie Johnson

Just in time for Halloween, **Carolyn Donnell** reported that she received a favorable review for her story, "The Black One," which appeared in an anthology from the CWC-North State Writers branch. The theme was ghost stories. The anthology was titled *Curious Things: A Compilation of Curiously Disturbing & Sometimes Horrifying Stories*. "The Black One" is about a black cat escaping witchcraft persecution in the Middle Ages. Here is the review:

"The Black One is despised by the villagers, accepted only by an old woman. It's an all-too historically accurate tale of life in the Burning Times. Nicely told."

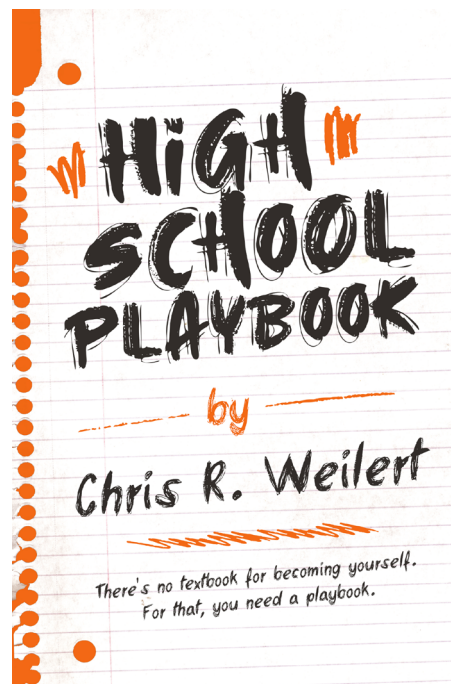
Chris Weilert has released his first book. "Writing this book took me three years because going from a short story writer to a novelist is a quantum leap. It was like taking a college course that never ends. I wanted to write a young adult novel that didn't involve supernatural, magic, werewolves, and all things that flood this market. What better than to write a book about a high school in my hometown of Santa Clara." *High School Playbook* by Chris R. Weilert is available on Amazon and at barnesandnoble.com.

Here is the book announcement:

Think Big, Dream Bigger, Live Larger. At least, that's how Fergus would like to act. Instead, he exists in a world of the cool and the lame. Haves and have-nots. Winners and losers. In other words, high school. Everyone and everything fights to make Fergus smaller, and he fears if he doesn't start stretching now, he'll shrink into himself forever. Just like his father has. Full of fear and potential in equal measure, Fergus just needs a push.

That push comes from an unlikely direction: an old, handmade book of simple cardboard and notebook paper titled *The Final Opus* and written by Fergus's namesake and his father's high school best friend. Part philosophy, survival guide, and self-help book, *The Final Opus* leads Fergus into a larger world. Not content with his voyage of self, Fergus rekindles the friendship between the authors of *The Final Opus*. If Fergus can save his father from the fate of humdrum existence, then nothing can stop either of them. And all they have to do is follow the plan laid out thirty years ago in the *High School Playbook*.

Congratulations, **Chris**. The first book is a major milestone. And thanks for sharing, **Carolyn**; we seldom see such positive reviews. To report your literary triumphs large and small, email me at membernews@southbaywriters.com. **WT**



Two October essays

Chris Weilert

Metaphysical and magical thinking

I hear the word *metaphysical* thrown around now and then, but I have no idea what it means. Here is the definition as *Webster* states: “of or relating to the transcendent or to a reality beyond what is perceptible to the senses.” Sure sounds like a bogus word to me. So, now that I know the meaning, I will look at the person using this obtuse word and know that he or she is either full of baloney, or they don’t know what the answer is. I can see the conversation already —

“I was driving down the freeway the other day, and an animal that I didn’t recognize as being of known species ran along the side of the road, then disappeared into the woods. It was a *metaphysical* experience.”

How are you supposed to respond to this? How come you didn’t use the cell phone you were texting on to snap a picture? Or perhaps it disappeared because it was scared of becoming roadkill.

What is it, a sign of impending doom? Or was it like a Bigfoot sighting? It must be *metaphysical*.

Metaphysical really means: I don’t know the answer. *Metaphysical* is like the term *magical thinking*, another term that should be categorized as malarkey. *Magical thinking* has a definition written as such: “a term used in anthropology and psychology, denoting the fallacious attribution of causal relationships between actions and events, with subtle differences in meaning between the two fields.”

Okay, I am even more confused by “fallacious attribution of casual relationships.” I interpret that as coincidence. Let’s face it, not everything can be explained with some words. If something weird happens and it cannot be explained, all you say is “I don’t know. What the hell was that?”

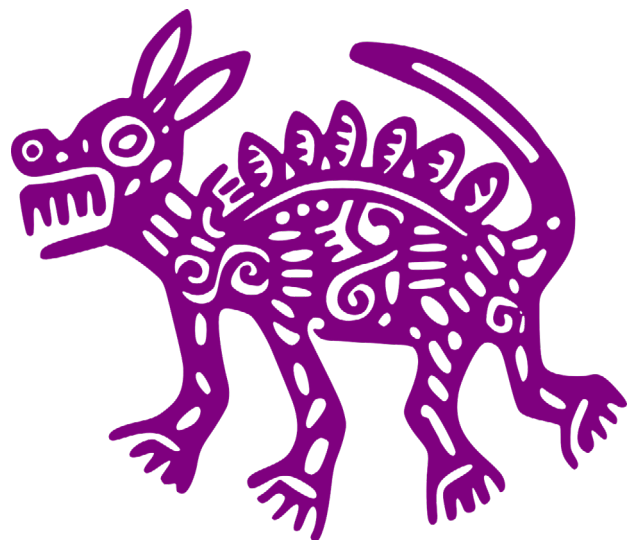
WT

The Extremist

Are’n’t we just thrilled that some nut scaled the Empire State Building with only suction cups on his feet? Not to be outdone by a lady who rowed from Hawaii to Los Angeles on a floatable pool chair. After reading about this sea mariner, I felt so inadequate. What compels a person to do extreme acts of foolishness baffles me. Is the reason to elevate their egos into the stratosphere and get fifteen minutes of television airtime? Maybe they do it because it’s a marketing package that includes a book or a Netflix documentary. I don’t know, but I have to ponder my own attempts at extreme feats.

Sure, you climbed Half Dome with only your bare hands. Not to be outdone by these so-called superhuman efforts, I ate the Burritozilla at Iguana’s restaurant in one sitting. That’s five pounds and eighteen inches of monster burrito. I took the beast down and it just so happened it was Halloween. Now that’s the kind of effort we are all looking for.

WT



Row, row, row your boat: Scary, funny rhymes

Kathy Boyd

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream.
There are many things out there
Which make you want to scream.

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the river.
If you feel an icy draft
It will make you shiver.

Row, row, row your boat
Villains will pursue.
They'll think you're a pumpkin
head
And carve a face on you.

Row, row, row your boat
Through the dark lagoon.
Watch out for the fighting wolves
Where body parts are strewn.

Row, row, row your boat
Gently through the bay.
From the beasties in the deep
You'll want to run away.

Row, row, row your boat
Gently through the pool.
What's that weird shape up ahead?
Oh, it's a creepy ghoul.

Row, row, row your boat
Underneath the falls.
That's not water coming down.
It is really wet eyeballs.

Row, row, row your boat
Down the smooth canal.
What the creatures do to you
Will ruin your morale.

Row, row, row your boat
Down the rainy gutter.
Leaves that look like spooky things
Will set your heart aflutter.

Row, row, row your boat
You thought your bathtub's grand?
Then your toys turn into sharks
That bite off half your hand.

Row, row, row your boat
Gently through the marsh.
If you stop, the welcome there
Will be extremely harsh.

Row, row, row your boat
Through the shallow puddle.
Water bugs get in your hair
And leave you in a muddle.

Row, row, row your boat
Cross the bubbling spring.
Hold your body close to you
Or they'll take everything.

Row, row, row your boat
Watch out for the spiders.
They'll drop beside you on the seat.
I know that they are biters.

Row, row, row your boat
Cross the swimming hole.
Something there will pull you in
And suck away your soul.

Row, row, row your boat
Cross the ocean blue.
Serpents with their slimy claws
Could rip you right in two.

Row, row, row your boat
Past a skeleton.
Hope he doesn't reach for you
Or you will come undone.



Image by Artie Navarre for Pixabay.

**Row, row, row your boat
Try to cross the lake.
Monsters living under there
Will make your body shake.**

**Row, row, row your boat
In water from a flood.
Why's that water deep, deep red?
Oh no, it's really blood!**

**Row, row, row your boat
Gently past the ghost.
With nothing but a shapeless sheet,
He'll scare you the most.**

**Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the creek.
Pranksters left and pranksters
right
Will join to make you shriek.**

**Row, row, row your boat
Gently through the swamp.
Just beware when monsters pass
Or on you they will stomp.**

**Row, row, row your boat
Gently through the moat.
Giants try to keep you out.
They grab you by the throat.**

**Row, row, row your boat
On the stormy sea.
You get sick and try to say,
"Oh please, just let me be."**

**Row, row, row your boat
Gently cross the pond.
You'd better hope the witches there
Don't have a magic wand.**

**Row, row, row your boat
Toward the river banks.
Slugs are waiting at the edge
To try out all their pranks.**

**Row, row, row your boat
Slipping through the slough.
Creepy crawly little bugs
Will turn your skin to goo.**

**Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the drain.
That's the end of my ideas.
Make up your own refrain.**

WT

Halloween pods—true crime and real haunted houses!

Sometimes we just need to hear great stories to inspire our own writing—or for no reason at all except to soothe, or *chill*, that rapt, eager inner child in all of us. All three of these podcasts trade in storytelling, and each one takes its own variation on the oldest form of literature: oral tradition. *This American Life* has been telling us stories since 1995; dive in anywhere, but the 27 October 2006 episode will set your blood to racing (link provided). *My Favorite Murder* combines humor and heart with grisly tales of true crime. *S-Town* is a serial, so start with episode 1 and then see if you are able to stop.

The logo for 'This American Life' features a red square background. On the right side, there is a white icon of a speech bubble with three horizontal lines inside. To the left of this icon, the words 'This American Life' are written in a white, serif font, stacked vertically.

This American Life, 27 Oct 2006. And the Call Was Coming from the Basement: For the week leading up to Halloween, scary stories that are all true. Kidnappings, zombie raccoons, haunted houses—real haunted houses!—and things that go "EEEEK!!!" in the night. Plus, a story by David Sedaris, in which he walks among the dead.
thisamericanlife.org/319/and-the-call-was-coming-from-the-basement

My Favorite Murder. Lifelong fans of true crime stories, Karen Kilgariff and Georgia Hardstark tell each other their favorite tales of murder and hear hometown crime stories from friends and fans. This one is a long-time favorite!

S-Town is a podcast hosted by Brian Reed from Serial Productions, a *New York Times* company. The story follows a man named John who despises his Alabama town and decides to do something about it. He asks Brian to investigate the son of a wealthy family who's allegedly been bragging that he got away with murder. But when someone else ends up dead, the search for the truth leads to a nasty feud, a hunt for hidden treasure, and an unearthing of the mysteries of one man's life.

WT

Local and virtual conferences

Pacific Coast Children's Writers Novel Workshop & Retreat, Santa Cruz, CA (virtual) 08–10 & 22–24 Oct

For adults and teens, features "Whole Novel Workshop: Envision and Edit Your Story with the Pros." Virtual events will feature one agent and editor at each workshop. Writers enroll in one session for the full range of activities, but may attend faculty's full-novel critique sessions on the other weekend (if they have read and/or critiqued a novel being discussed on that date). \$145, \$95 (student discount). childrenswritersworkshop.com

CWC–Tri-Valley Writers Conference (in person)

Pleasanton, CA, 16 Oct

A full-day event on the art and business of writing. It will feature three tracks: craft, marketing, & self-publishing and *New York Times* bestselling author Rhys Bowen as the keynote speaker. trivalleywriters.org/conferences/tri-valley-writers-conference-2021/

The Power of Words Conference (virtual), 28–31 Oct

This intimate, 4-day virtual conference celebrates and champions the use of spoken, written, and sung word to effect change, \$200–\$248.

tlanetwork.org/conference

News you can use

Litquake 2021 schedule is live



San Francisco's very own literary and book festival **Litquake** runs 07-23 October, and the official schedule of events has been posted, featuring many free and nearly free events for wordsmiths and book lovers of all stripes.

Opening with the Masked Ball on 07 Oct (ticketed) to kick things off, you can attend free events such as KidQuake, The Capote Tapes, and Europe in Turmoil: Historical Fiction from World War II.

And don't forget **Lit Crawl**, 23 October, like trick-or-treating for great writing.

litquake.org



NaNoWriMo

November is National Novel Writing Month

Are you ready for this annual challenge?

First, create a profile:

- Go to **NaNoWriMo.org** and click "sign-up" to

create your profile and connect with like-minded NaNoWriMo writers throughout the month.

- Once you've selected a username and password, you will receive an email that will enable you to confirm your account. Remember to check your spam folder!

- Click on the link in the email and sign in.

If you choose to participate in NaNoWriMo, *WritersTalk* would love to hear from you. Let us know how it's going—or how it went!

newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Second round of the #Mini1000, 2-7 October



Jami Attenberg

Jami Attenberg, *New York Times* best-selling author of *All this Could Be Yours*, *All Grown Up*, and the forthcoming *I Came All This Way to Meet You*, has begun a sensation with her #1000wordsofsummer writing challenge. For two weeks, those accepting the challenge to write a minimum of 1000 words per day received daily encouragement from Jami and other talented

authors in their inboxes. A mini spinoff, the #Mini1000 ran in August. Now she's prompting us again, with a second round of the #Mini1000, which will run 02-07 October. For a sample of what's involved, have a look from the summer archive:

1000wordsofsummer.substack.com/p/day-1-1000wordsofsummer-2021

On your newsstands now The Summer 2021 CWC Bulletin



files.ctctusercontent.com/04ee4852701/5dddf8ca2-28bf-4b44-aab8-740fe2b08176.pdf?rdr=true

Costume Contest

COME AS YOU
"ARE"

The tradition continues, even though we cannot meet in person.

Prizes!

Join South Bay Writers at our monthly meeting 11 October, and add mood and festive cheer by coming in costume. (Waist-up is plenty!)

The Tommyknockers

Marjorie Johnson

Dorothy and I, thirteen-year-old wannabe writers, scribbled ghost stories *al fresco*. At an abandoned gold mine, its rusted ore cars left half-full by long-dead miners, we wondered if their ghosts lived there. Had they heard the Tommyknockers, gnomes who warn miners of impending cave-ins?

A week later, we visited a second haunt in rural Nevada County. Along the way, I pointed out a funnel-like hole in the loose soil. “Ever see a doodlebug catch an ant?”

I dropped an ant into the tiny sandpit. It tried to climb out but slipped farther down until the red sand quivered and it disappeared.

Dorothy knelt for closer inspection. “Where’d you learn that?”

“My dad showed me.”

We resumed our walk and stopped in the shade over a pine-needle-filled depression ringed with rocks and rubble. Between bites of sandwich, I said, “That sunken place might be a mine shaft. Miners dug lots of exploratory holes during the Gold Rush.”

“Yeah, yeah. A hundred years ago.” Dorothy threw a rock into the center of the dip. It disappeared without a trace, followed by the clatter of falling pebbles. “What’s so special?”

“Well, it moans. And something knocks, like this.” I rapped on the granite outcropping with a fist-sized rock. “It’s haunted by Tommyknockers.”

“Oh, come on,” she said. “It’s not Halloween.”

“You don’t believe me? I heard it last week.”

“Then you should go down there.” She pitched a pinch of lunch to a squawking blue jay inside the saucer below us. “Find out why it moans.”

“I can’t do that! What if I fell in?” Secretly, I wanted to do just that—go there, not fall in. “My dad would kill me.”

“Then your dad wouldn’t have to kill you, because you’d already be dead.”

We laughed wildly and agreed we had to do it.

When we returned, I wore my oldest pair of jeans. As a precaution, we tied a long cord around a tree and to one of my ankles in case the gravel slid down like in a doodlebug trap. Close to the center of the pit, I dug through matted pine needles that smelled of warm pitch and stuck to my fingers.

Dorothy shaded her eyes with one hand. “What do you see?”

“Nothing, just darkness. Roll down that flashlight.” Lying with my chin over the hole, I lowered the flashlight, attached to a long cord, but when I shifted for a better view, the cord slipped through my fingers. The metallic sound of the case hitting rock echoed. The light illuminated a yellow-gray object.

“A skull! A human skull!”

“You have to go get it,” Dorothy urged.

“No! Not me!” That skull’s smile gave me the creeps. I hauled myself out and untied my ankle.

“We better tell somebody.”

“No! They’ll find Dad’s flashlight. He’ll know I was here.”

“But it might have been a murder,” Dorothy said.

“There’s no body, only bones,” I said.

We decided not to report it, but not telling Dad was as bad as lying, so I finally confessed. “You know your big flashlight, the one with four batteries? Well, I lost it, so I bought you a new one.”

“I thought it looked too shiny,” Dad said. “So, what’s the rest of the story?”

I stared at my cup of cocoa. “I dropped it. Into a mine shaft.”

“What were you doing there?” He slapped down his cup, spilling coffee.

When I mentioned the moaning, Dad said it was the wind. “But I saw a human skull.”

“Well, then,” he said, “The sheriff needs to know.”

On the appointed day, I bumped along beside Dad in his forestry fire truck. At the pine tree, the sheriff’s men lowered a gunnysack for gathering bones—206 of them, according to my high school biology book.

The sheriff wore a khaki uniform like Dad’s, except his had a silver star. “Someone small has to go down there.” He pointed at me.

“Me?” With that skull?

Dad loaned me a long-sleeved shirt to wear with my usual Levi’s and hiking shoes. Swallowing hard, I stepped into a harness, a wide strap between my legs, and sat in it.

“No, shaft’s too narrow,” the sheriff said. “Lower her headfirst.”

I stepped out and stuck my head and left arm through one leg hole, my right arm through the other. They tied my ankles to the cable so my legs wouldn’t flop around. I breathed faster and faster. What if they dropped me?

The cable pulled me up, feet first, and lowered me over the hole. I entered the shaft like bait on a fishing line, a flashlight in my left hand. I could see only what was within the cone of light. I pushed away from the ragged edges of the hole and squeezed past tree-roots in the dark.

A deep bone-shivering moan! A chill ran through my veins. Cool air blew my hair. My heart pounded, my eyeballs felt ready to pop out of my head.

“Dem bones, dem bones, dem . . . dry bones,” I sang to distract myself. “Now hear the word of the Lord.” Knocking! The walls closed in and the skull’s smile broadened.

The cable lowered me until my head hung close enough to kiss the skull. The gunnysack was within reach. I turned my face away from the skull, opened the sack, and loaded Dad’s flashlight. I grappled the floor of the shaft to position myself for packing up bones. When I lifted the skull, pieces fell off its backside. Murdered for sure.

I shuddered.

Dry bones. Like gathering kindling wood while walking on my hands. “Knee bone connected to the thigh bone—” except nothing was connected at all. My head felt full, my eyeballs ached, and my ears rang.

I jerked on the cable, signaling, “I want out of here.” They hauled me up slowly and lowered me onto the mound of gravel. I wobbled to my feet.

I grabbed Dad’s arm and clung, soaking in sunlight and letting the blood drain out of my head. His smug smile said, Dollars to donuts, you won’t do that again.

My face swollen and red, my eyes bulging, I stared at myself in the truck’s side mirror. No way would I tell Dad I had been scared to death, but I didn’t buy his theory about the wind moaning.

Not the wind—Tommyknockers.

WT

Knocker (folklore)

from Wikipedia

The Knocker, Knacker, or Tommyknocker (US) is a mythical, subterranean, gnome-like creature in Cornish and Devon folklore. Its Welsh counterpart is the *coblynau*. It is closely related to the Irish leprechaun, Kentish *kloker*, and the English and Scottish *brownie*. The Cornish described the creature as a little person two feet tall, with a disproportionately large head, long arms, wrinkled skin, and white whiskers. It wears a tiny version of standard miner’s garb and commits random mischief, such as stealing miners’ unattended tools and food.

Cornish miners believed that the diminutive Knockers beckoned them toward finding rich veins of tin. As miners changed from independent, family-owned operators to hired laborers for large industrialized companies, there was an increased concern for safety, reflected in the knockers’ new role. They knocked on the mine walls to warn of impending collapse. Generally considered benevolent, they were also tricksters who would hide tools and extinguish candles.

One interpretation holds that they are mine-spirits, believed to be the ghosts of the Jews who worked the mines in the 11th and 12th centuries; another view is that they are the spirits of those killed in a mine. To show appreciation, and to avoid future peril, the miners cast the last bite of their tasty pasties into the mines for the Knockers.



Brother John

Marty Sorensen

The worst possible scenario. It was the very Hallowed Evening, the night before All Saints, when all Hell broke loose in the chapel. There were devils everywhere. Brother John saw them. He alone.

There were the named ones, the fallen angels. Beelzebub wild-eyed up at the back of the choir loft, hunched over the magnificent American Classic organ with its four manuals and many drawknobs and all those pipes, the flutes, the strings, his stupid tail hanging over the bench. Look at him, jumping up and down on the pedals and yelling and screaming. That ugly fat little diablo, he's hitting the pipes, ruining their harmonic precision. And now, Oh! Look, he's hanging from the magnificent golden trumpets, the very trumpets that shouted out Bach concertos to high heaven. How dare he?

Why aren't all the other Brothers coming? Must he exorcise the chapel all by himself?

Belial, a miserable dark green demon, was surely waiting, horrible and unseen in the deep orange-red aromatic cedar sanctuary closet. In there with all the vestments, the purple for lent, the black for funerals, green for the days after Easter, a super sacred sacrilege.

Satan, one of the great leaders of Hell, the most often heard from, hiding behind the altar, waiting for a chance at a Black Mass to start a satanic cult. Lucifer himself, the original, the master hating angel, scowling up there in the corner, looking down over his minions, with glaring dark red eyes and tendrils of steam coming out his mouth.

And all these little devils, these supernatural supernumeraries running and jumping across the lovely oak pews, shined with ancient French-Polish varnish that creates a translucent display of the grains of the wood.

Look at that! They just leaped across the aisle where all the brides have moved with such grace and elegance in their white dresses. They were desecrating even the ones who hadn't been wearing white.

Brother John raised himself up tall. The demons stomped, screeched, and howled. He shouted, "I'm mad as Hell, and I'm not going to take it any more!" The devils at first cringed at the blasphemy, then shrugged and continued having diabolical fun.

Aha! That's it! Of course! Brother John hurried to the exquisite left nave with its baroque gilded ceiling and opened the side door. Hands shaking, he took out his key and opened the mechanical cabinet.

There he turned up the air conditioning past it's bluest setting to white, and pushed the lever for the fans way beyond total. He went downstairs to the monastery kitchen and removed all the bags of ice from the great stainless steel Perma-King freezer and laid them on the kitchen trolley. Finally, he marched outside to the dry ice container, pulled on his frost gloves, and added three slabs of dry ice to the trolley.

Back he went, this time up the abbey elevator, out into the hall, into the chapel; he opened the bags and began throwing chunks of ice. "Ouch, oh, ah," echoed up to the Michelangelo

ceiling painting (on which the abbot occupied the central place). The little devils started to disappear.

Brother John hurled a slab of dry ice to the altar and yelled, "Begone, Satan!" Satan promptly complied, holding on to his hot rear end as he ran outside. Finally, he got out his trusty slingshot, fabricated in the abbey workshop, and sent large pieces of ice flying furiously up to the organ. With each shot, Beelzebub jumped up but couldn't evade them all and finally had to fly away.

Brother John now twisted his body to face the most evil of them all, Lucifer, who hated down at him,

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flipping his tongue out. The gentle Brother broke off a large chunk of dry ice and held it in his slingshot, but before he could pull it back, Lucifer gave a horrifying deep roar, opened a stained-glass window, and crawled outside.

Now it was peaceful and quiet in the chapel. Brother John slowly and without making a sound, grateful for the celestial silence, fetched a mop and cleaned everything up. He reverently approached the steps up to the altar and kneeled on the first step. He raised his blue eyes up to the Virgin Mary. She smiled gracefully down at him and her beautiful cream and blue robes moved. She stepped down from the pedestal, winked at Brother John, and, nearly floating, walked over to Saint Joseph. When she touched his hand, he gently left his perch and followed her. They walked up and down the aisle as those magnificent trumpets up there blared the opening sounds of Mendelssohn's wedding march from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. As she walked by Brother John she stopped, gave Joseph a knowing look, saying, "Just a sec, Honey," leaned down and whispered, "We never got to do this."

Brother John pinched his arm. It hurt. He was awake. But now strange bird chirps echoed through the chapel. He strained his neck to see the stunning stained-glass window now open, the scene of the wedding at Cana. Birds were flying through. Of course, he saw Saint Francis, smiling so sweetly, accepting what he couldn't change and holding out his hands for the birds to rest on. And, oh no, the pews were covered with splotched coins of white and gray bird droppings. Mary and Joseph had to run for shelter underneath the choir loft.

It was too much. Brother John ran out of the chapel, out of the cloister, into the street. The busy street, but all very normal. He turned back to study the gargoyle on the front of the building, fearful, but it didn't move. Even Paul Revere on his horse in the traffic circle . . . but wait . . . it's not possible! Paul Revere and his horse leaped off the bronze pedestal and galloped along the avenue, scattering cars and people.

Brother John buried his face in his hands. "This can't be. Not out here." He ran swiftly up the steps

and back into the monastery, where rotund Abbot Jerome was standing in the hallway, his head turned a little to the side, patient, smiling, his arms out wide in welcome. The kindly old monk put his arm on Brother John's shoulder and nodded as he moved his glasses back up on his nose and turned his face to him.

"Why don't we go down to the refectory? It's Halloween, and we'll eat some deviled eggs with the whole community, and as usual Brother Boniface has prepared some wonderful devil's food cake. And when we've said Grace at the end of supper, you can go trick-or-treating with the novices."

"Ah yes, of course," Brother John, now resigned, said to himself. He shrugged and sighed. "Better the devil you know."

WT



The reunion package

Kendad

Driving down the highway, Bill spoke to his wife. "It'll be great to see everyone again after twenty-five years."

Startled by a car zooming past, Rebecca blurted, "Watch it, to the right!"

Bill swerved to the left edge of his lane. "Whoa! Where's he going in such a hurry?"

"To his grave, I'd say."

Bill checked the speedometer and said, "How many reunions have we been to?"

"If we make it to this one safely, it will be our fourth." Rebecca flipped her visor down and looked into the mirror. "The first one was our five-year reunion, the second, our tenth." She pulled out her compact and applied more makeup. "The third was twenty-fifth, and now it's our fiftieth."

Bill checked his rearview. "We've been together for a long time."

She smiled. "Childhood sweethearts."

After three more minutes of driving with no conversation, Bill asked, "I forgot the name of the guy who held the second reunion at his house."

"That was Bob Cattleman." Rebecca flipped the visor up and leaned back. "He bought the Highland mansion and wanted to show it off."

Bill chuckled. "I remember him doing the cannonball, soaking everyone around the pool."

"He was a big guy. I wonder if he still owns his car dealerships."

"I think he retired early. I heard his son took over the businesses ten years ago."

She nodded. "He sure had a fancy house."

"Do you remember that same evening? Mike Anderson's new wife Gigi danced totally drunk and topless on the tabletop."

Rebecca presented a twisted smile. "Yeah, you liked that, didn't you?"

Bill sank slightly into his seat and cleared his throat. "They're divorced now. Shelly Brown had an



affair with Mike. Word has it, when he left the motel room in the morning, Gigi had just left from a different room two doors down. There was no denying the cheating for either one of them."

"I can imagine that was odd."

Bill adjusted his GPS to see more of the roadmap. "Speaking of odd, I wonder how the Gould twins are doing?"

"You mean Noel and Leon?" Rebecca shivered at the thought. "They were Goth before it became popular. The dark clothes they wore and that old Victorian house they lived in reminded me of *The Addams Family*."

"More like the Norman Bates' *Psycho* house."

Rebecca took a deep breath. "Either way, they fit the description. I don't remember the twins attending any of the reunions."

"We would have remembered if they did." Bill pointed ahead. "We're here. Hotel on the right."

Bill parked in one of a few remaining spots, and they went inside.

Posted on a sign with three lines. "Welcome, Stonewall High, 50th Reunion." A left arrow indicated, "Conference Hall B."

In front of the open door stood an easel holding a three-by-four-foot whiteboard with high school classmates' photos pasted on it, their names listed below each picture.

Rebecca read the top title. "In Remembrance."

Bill gasped. "It's an obituary panel. There were seven people dead the last time—now it's two-thirds of the class."

She said, "How depressing—there goes all the fun." From the hallway, she glanced into the room. "Looks like no one has shown up yet."

"Of course, there's hardly anyone left."

When Bill stepped forward, the Gould twins abruptly advanced from the room and greeted them in harmony. "Welcome."

Rebecca slapped her hand to her chest. "My goodness, you startled me."

Noel said, "Sorry."

Followed by Leon, "We didn't mean to."

Bill glanced toward the entrance, and said, "Has anyone else shown?"

Leon with a look of—I've got this—motioned Noel to go back into the room.

"Are we early?" Bill asked.

Leon stood up straight with his hands behind—like a butler. "You're on time, but most people our age are not so prompt. I'm sure we'll have a full house soon. Come inside."

When Bill turned to enter, Rebecca tugged his shirtsleeve. "Bill, we have to get the package we brought. I'll need you to help carry it from the car."

He looked puzzled. "Package?"

"Yes, you know—the package."

Bill nodded, "Oh, okay," and turned to Leon. "We won't be long."

While leaving, Rebecca nervously looked back at Leon. Outside, she quickened her pace, and said, "We're not going back. They're freaking me out."

After the couple had left, Noel came out of the conference hall, and asked Leon, "Do you think they'll return?"

"I'm afraid not. I think Rebecca felt too uncomfortable."

Noel shook his head and lifted his bloody cleaver. "Too bad—their picture as a couple would have been a nice addition to the whiteboard."

WT



Brother Chelsey and the ghost

Geraldine Forté

My wife's father. There was no gift that I could afford to give him that meant anything at all to him. When I tried to talk about my goals, ambitions, and fears, he played me down for the fears, and he did nothing to instill within me the power that he had for himself. Once, I tried to humor him by telling him the story of Brother Chelsey and the time that he thought that his wife was a ghost.

Brother Chelsey's wife, Rochelle, had gone for a 5K run in preparation for a tournament that was coming up, and she only took with her a fanny pack that contained her Georgia driver's license and her cell phone. She was about three miles from home when a woman rode by on a scooter and snatched her fanny pack from her and rode off.

Rochelle did not really worry about it because neither money nor credit cards was in that pack. She just continued on with her run. She would report the theft when she got back home. Plus, she was on a country road, and there was no way to call anyone without that cell phone.

The thief on the scooter eventually collided with a Trailways bus in town and was killed instantly. When the police looked at the fanny pack that she had on her, they retrieved the identification and called Brother Chelsey to report that his wife had been involved in a fatal accident. He needed to come to the morgue to identify her body.

Well, Brother Chelsey was beside himself with grief, and his personal tank was already filled to the brim with Saturday beer. While waiting for his brother to accompany him to the morgue, he fortified himself with a couple more beers and a couple shots of Hennessy. He had showered and dressed himself when he heard a noise in the family room, and when he went to investigate, there was his wife sprawled out on the sofa!

That man screamed so loud that the neighbors came a running. They came just in time to pull Brother Chelsey away from attacking his bewildered wife with a broom.

"She's a ghost! She's a ghost! They already told me that my wife is dead. That there is a ghost! Get thee behind me, Satan! Help! Help! Help!"

During the melee, Brother Chelsey stumbled, fell down, and regurgitated his beer, his morning oatmeal, and whatever else that was hiding in the recesses of his abdomen—all over the neighbor and the carpet.

Yuck! What a mess! The sheriff had to escort that man to the morgue to prove to him that the lady in the family room was his wife, not some satanic apparition.

WT



At evening's approach

Renée J Anderson

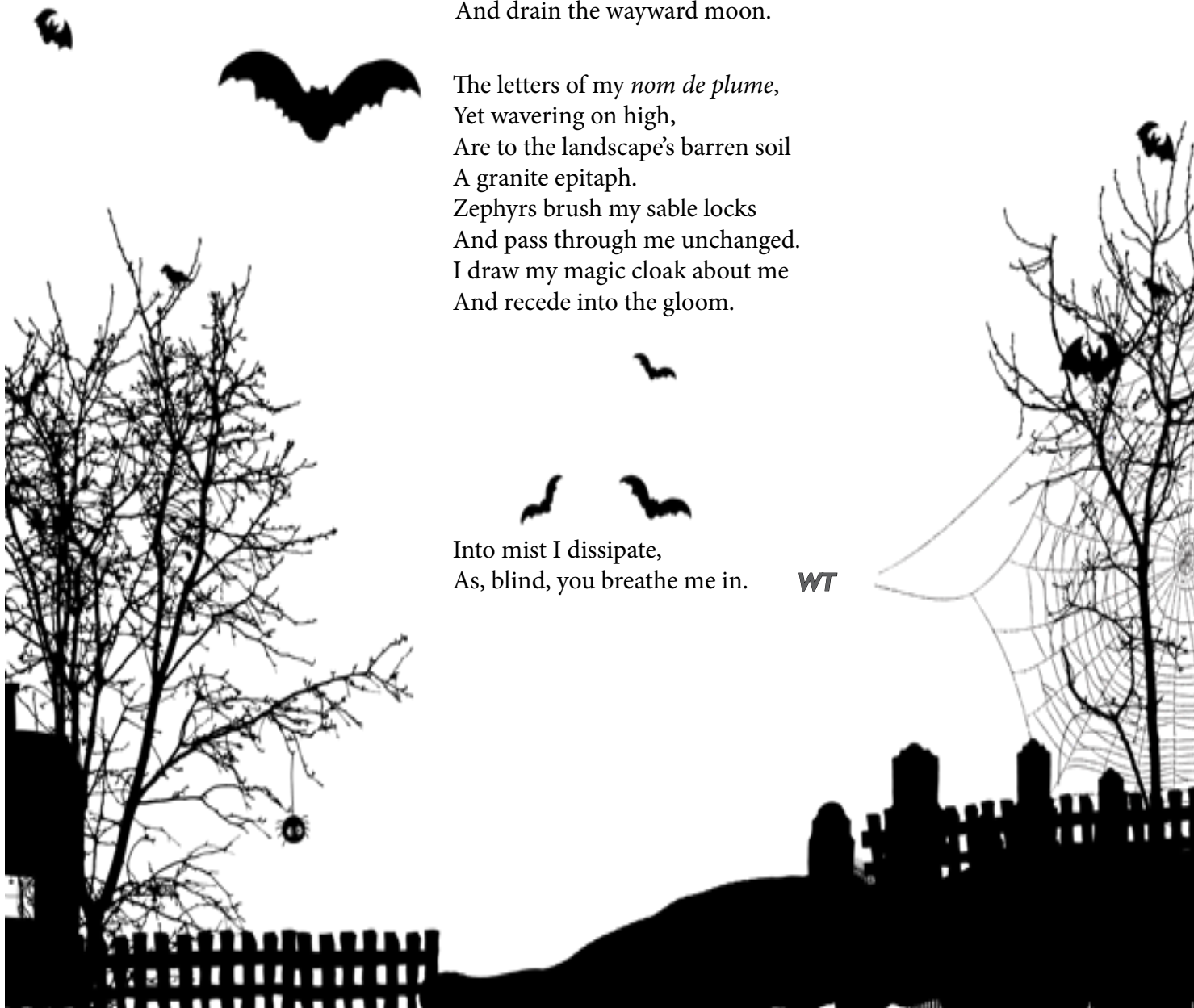
Seeking to amuse myself,
I cross the dusky moor.
A sanguine trail to guide the dogs
Now blackens in my wake.
I scrawl my name across the sky,
Which darkens by the hour,
That all who fear the words of old
Might hear the morbid lore.

What care have I that this, my corpse,
Yet walks the plains abroad?
Perched atop these osseous hips,
I bid my legs to roam.
In search of blood, I ope my lips
And drain the wayward moon.

The letters of my *nom de plume*,
Yet wavering on high,
Are to the landscape's barren soil
A granite epitaph.
Zephyrs brush my sable locks
And pass through me unchanged.
I draw my magic cloak about me
And recede into the gloom.

Into mist I dissipate,
As, blind, you breathe me in.

WT



Chill hours

Kate Russell

We are all familiar with the buds and leaves of spring, the prolific growth of summer, and the harvest of autumn, but fruit and nut trees and shrubs (and strawberries!) are working through winter, as well. Colder winter temperatures are part of these plants' natural lifecycles. In preparation to survive potentially freezing temperatures, they produce a hormone that initiates a state of protective dormancy. It's all about chill hours.

Chill hours are an accumulation of temperatures between 32 and 45°F. Somehow, plants keep track of this information. I have no idea how. But chill hours are so important that stations have been set up across the country to measure them. In this temperature range, the growth-inhibiting hormone responsible for dormancy begins to break down. This allows trees and shrubs to begin producing buds, which will ultimately become the leaves and flowers of spring.

If not enough chill hours are accumulated, flowers and buds will not form properly, which means you might not get any fruit. This can also extend bloom time, making delicate buds and flowers vulnerable to diseases, such as fire blight and brown rot.

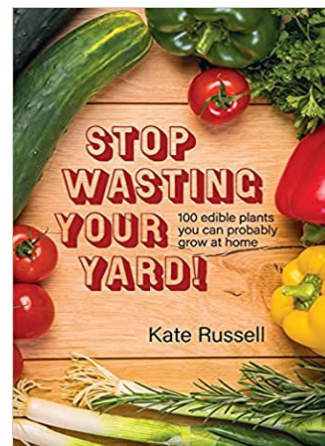
Different species need varying amounts of chill hours. Within each species, each variety has its own needs, as well. This is why learning about plants before you buy them is so important. For example, northern varieties of blueberries have chilling requirements of 800–1000 chilling hours, while southern varieties may only need 150–200 chilling hours. Temperatures above 60°F can reverse chilling accumulations. There are two major models used to calculate chill hours. The Utah model provides chilling hours, while the Dynamic model provides chilling portions. They both take the same basic information into account.

Universities work in conjunction with the USDA to provide

valuable information to farmers and orchardists. You can access this information online and over the phone to find out more about the cumulative chilling hours in your area. Depending on where you live, and how far you are from the nearest recording station, the information will be more or less accurate. Simply call your local Master Gardeners, Department of Agriculture, or university for more information.

Another way you can calculate your chilling hours is to use the *Wundermap* website (www.wunderground.com/wundermap/) to find the recording station closest to you. Just click on the bubble and copy and paste the station number, and then enter that station number on the *Get Chill* website (getchill.net). This site can be slow sometimes, but the information is very good.

Do not trust your local box store to sell you the right one. Do your homework. **WT**



Left: Apples on the tree. Center: Apricot buds. Excerpt published in **Stop Wasting Your Yard: 100 Edible Plants You Can Probably Grow at Home**, by Kate Russell (2021, Solificatio). Reprinted with kind permission.



MEMOIR

Deadly deed

Joan Cabral

Adults don't tell kids everything.
I had no idea what was coming.

Our orchards were one of my favorite places. I got home from school and decided to head into the orchard at the back of our ranch on Homestead Road, my grandfather's orchard. I was happy, skipping along by myself across the big circle driveway, past our big old barn and then the chicken house. I passed the feed house and cut to the left to run into the orchard.

NOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!!!!

I was stopped cold, like a bird into a window.
In front of me lay an eternity of prune trees ripped from the earth, their gnarled roots reaching towards the sky. They were all upside down.
Everything was upside down.
What had happened?

The orchard looked like a graveyard. Black twisted roots, like old people's fingers, clawed the air.
They were all dead.
The green orchard canopy was gone.

I stood in disbelief, frozen in sadness.
The adults did this.
They let this happen.
I wanted to scream to the trees,
"I'm so sorry!"
They had given us their crop every year and this was our thank you?
They were my friends.

I had to get away from the death scene.
I walked home, numb.
And in that numbness I realized that I was not The Adult, I was The Child, and things were going to happen that I had no control over.
Bad things.

Halloween Costume Contest

COME AS YOU "ARE"

The tradition continues, even though we cannot meet in person.

Prizes!

Join South Bay Writers at our monthly Zoom meeting on 11 October, and add mood and festive cheer by coming in costume.
(Waist-up is plenty!)

11 October

7 pm



*Día de los Muertos, 2019, Mission District, San Francisco.
Photo: R J Anderson*

HOLIDAY MEMORIES

WritersTalk
December issue

Deadline for
submissions

15 Nov

(max 750 words)

newsletter@southbaywriter.com

From *Mind the Gap*, Chapter One

William A Baldwin

Sunday, November 1, 2015

All Saints' Day. *Día de los Muertos*?

At the Humanist Group at church (we're Unitarian Universalists)—and Jay describes how he revived a man 25 years ago while cleaning his body for the coroner. The man had been refusing to eat, refusing to be force-fed. And it was ten years ago last night that I went to visit Sandra, my girlfriend of several years, in Hospice, when she was asleep and looking mostly dead—and the next day she told me that she had been “ready to go,” but that the nurses had “brought her back” against her will. How strange this Halloween-Samhain time can be!

And today we're celebrating *Día de los Muertos* at church.

Watching Inez, who comes from Argentina, tracing the gestures to accompany our hymn “*Fuente de Amor—Spirit of Life*” as the worship service begins.

I've belonged to this church so long. I have so much history here.

This week will be 46 years since Kari killed herself. Forty-six years. Can it really have been so long?

Geoffrey, the character in Malcolm Lowry's novel *Under the Volcano*—Did he not laugh at death? I have been watching the film version with Albert Finney.

“Those who have died have never, ever left.”

Kari, Sandra, our friend Sharon—and my own sister Deborah Ann: all gone. Into the Past. Into Memory. Into Remembrance.

Laughing at death, in all his agony—Geoffrey—*Under the Volcano*. And last night, as I handed out candy, I had an audio version of Kerouac's *Doctor Sax* playing in the music room—all those demons and monsters preceding the rising of Easter, the Eagle's abduction of the Great World Snake.

Alice's mother is over ninety—and sometimes Alice tires of caring for her.

“Death ends a life, but not a relationship,” as Rev. Lindalyn has apparently said.

Yes—as Rev. Nanci reminds me—our cat too has passed beyond the Veil this last year. I held her close as she was “put under.”

Now a musician blows gently into a Peruvian *que-da* and it—like a Japanese *shakuhachi*—calls us into the Stillness here at the service.

Debra is here at the service; so is Liesl. Inez and Debra and Liesl. Those three inspirers of my tango/music fixation. Inez grew up in Argentina, Debra plays the cello, and Liesl dances the tango with her husband.

Mom and Dad both gone these many years—decades! Gone so long! Missed—in part because I could not understand them—nor they me.

And the same for everyone generally. We live almost always separate. We misunderstand, even those closest to us.

I see them here—Rev. Lindalyn and Mary Susan, her partner. She caused me so much disconnection 25 years ago, so much frustration, misunderstanding, and apprehension. I have not quite forgiven her yet. Perhaps I can't, quite. She contributed to the great crisis of my life.



And driving home from church, I wonder: What has happened to Cynthia? What has happened to Marco? Are they okay? Cynthia—another recent love-interest—lives only one block from the church. I tried to meet her one night last month, but she was nowhere to be located, even though she had asked me to drive over. Was she asleep in her apartment? Unconscious? Dead? Who knows? Cynthia seems a bit unstable; I'm afraid to investigate. And I don't know how to locate her aunt—the only relative or friend of hers that I have met.

As for Marco—a wonderful Tejano who used to volunteer at our Pagan Community rituals—he apparently collapsed at church a few weeks back—had trouble breathing. I wasn't there, didn't know—went to visit him in the hospital later, the day before he was to have a heart operation. He'd been homeless in downtown San Jose for several months.

Are they alive or dead, either of them?

WT

Dress-up

Edie Matthews

Since there was never money for costumes, like most kids in my neighborhood, we'd concoct something to wear for Halloween. We'd trick-or-treat for hours, collecting free candy until we were exhausted and porch lights were turned off.

At home, emptying our windfall on the table rejuvenated us. Like kings counting treasure, we'd sample more than we should have and sorted the rest into categories: lollipops, candy corn, gum, penny candy, popcorn balls, an apple or two, and the ever-popular candy bars.

One year, the Saturday before trick-or-treating, my dad took my brothers and me to the celebration

at the Polish Catholic Church. My youngest brother was like unmolded clay in my hands. I convinced him to wear a worn-out woman's dress and lop-sided hat and carry a dilapidated umbrella. Then I smudged his face, turning him into a miniature bum. I thought of wearing the costume myself, but instead opted for an attempt at glamour, donning an ill-fitting silky gown that had come into my possession.

We ran around the church hall with the other kids, and had a grand time. At the end, my brother was a standout and won first prize. **WT**



Khan, Continued from page 1

on his considerable industry experience, Alejandro will cover intermediate and advanced screenwriting practices with a heavy emphasis on developing a series for a streaming service. He will also answer our questions about navigating industry politics, as he describes his journey to working with A-list producers, directors, and screenwriters.

Alejandro Adams is an independent filmmaker-turned-screenwriter. From pitching Jason Spitz [*John Wick* (2014, Lionsgate)] to declining offers from Richard Gere, Alejandro has cultivated the sense of adventure that must accompany any foray into Hollywood. His international sports drama *Shutout* is being produced by Jeff Kirschenbaum [*F9: The Fast Saga* (2021, Universal), *Maleficent: Mistress of Evil* (2019, Walt Disney Pictures), *The Gray Man* (2022, AGBO)], with David Mackenzie [*Hell or High Water* (2016, CBS Films)] attached to direct.

Alejandro has also developed two series with Mark Bomback—whose credits include *Defending Jacob* (2020, Apple Inc) and *War for the Planet of the Apes* (2017, 20th Century Fox)—from pilot to show bible (an industry-standard reference document with essential information about the series). **WT**

Matthews, Continued from page 2

Yet, maybe the end of Zooming is on the horizon. A booster shot is supposed to be available this fall. That should provide the extra protection needed so we can gather safely. I wouldn't be surprised if the COVID-19 booster becomes a yearly routine like the flu shot.

Personally, I've never gotten a flu shot—I don't like shots. However, good sense prevailed—and I quickly got the vaccine while saying Hail Marys—two doses of Moderna, four weeks apart. I had a sore arm with the first injection, and felt under the weather for one day with the second one.

Now it's my hope that if the booster is soon available and enough of us can get it in time (I'll brave it with Hail Marys), a December potluck may be possible. **WT**

South Bay Writers will listen to Alejandro Adams on 11 October, 7 PM, at our regular meeting. This event is free and open to the public. If you would like to receive the Zoom link, please write to PR@SouthBayWriters.com and join our mailing list.

Contests & markets

Carolyn Donnell



👉 **NB: NO VETTING** has been done by South Bay Writers Club. Listings are for information only. Some contests have been around for a long time and the reputation is known, but some are newer. Please read all guidelines carefully before submitting. And please share your experiences, good or bad.

Let us know if you have

any success with any of the contests listed in *WritersTalk*. (Or any other contest for that matter.) Send your writing victories to membernews@southbaywriters.com and any new stories, poems, and articles to newsletter@southbaywriters.com

Check out other CWC branches for their current contests, calls for submission, anthologies, &c. See a list of other CWC branches at calwriters.org/cwcbranches/

Members of our Facebook group—South Bay Writers Club—see contest postings and other notifications on the Facebook group (facebook.com/groups/5486894361).

CONTESTS

Final Draft Big Break Screenwriting Contest. Grand prize winners receive \$10,000 in cash, an iPad, career coaching, meetings with renowned Hollywood screenwriters and literary managers, and more. **Deadlines: 19 Oct / 09 Nov (fees apply).** finaldraft.com/big-break-screenwriting-contest/

The Vincent Brothers Review. Annual short story contest: “Housekeeping,” **deadline 31 Oct.** vincentbrothersreview.org/annual-short-story-contest

WOW! Women on Writing

- **Quarterly Creative Nonfiction Contest.** 200–1000 words, must be a true story. Entry fee \$10, **deadline 31 Oct.**
- **Quarterly Flash Fiction Contest.** Open prompt, 250–750 words, entry fee \$10, **deadline 30 Nov.** wow-womenonwriting.com/contest.php.

Writer’s Digest

- **Poetry Awards.** \$1000 in cash & poem published in *Writer’s Digest* magazine’s July/August 2022 issue and to a worldwide readership on WritersDigest.com, plus a 20-minute consultation with Editor Robert Brewer. **Deadline 01 Nov.** writersdigest.com/writers-digest-competitions/poetry-awards.
- **Short Short Story contest.** 1st place \$3000 and paid trip to the *Writer’s Digest* Annual Conference, including a coveted Pitch Slam slot. 2nd \$1500, 3rd \$500, 4th–10th \$100

CONTESTS, CONTINUED

and all will be published in *Writer’s Digest’s* Sept/Oct 2022 issue, 11th–25th \$50 gift certificate for *Writer’s Digest* gift shop. **Early-bird deadline 15 Nov; regular 15 Dec.**

Winning Writers, Tom Howard/John H. Reid Fiction & Essay Contest. All styles and themes, fiction and nonfiction. **Submission period 15 Oct–30-April.** Total prizes: \$8000. Accepts published and unpublished work. winningwriters.com/our-contests/tom-howard-john-h-reid-fiction-essay-contest

16th Annual Black Orchid Novella Award. 15,000–20,000 words, unpublished only. Entries must be postmarked by **31 May 2022.** Rules and guidelines at nerowolfe.org; write to Jane Cleland with questions: jane@janecland.com.

The Missouri Review Miller Audio Prize. Genres: audio recordings of prose, poetry, documentary, and humor. One \$1000 prize for the winner in each category. **Open for entries year-round.** missourireview.com/contests/audio-contest/

Pain Poem Prize. A poem to wed lyrical verse to wit and levity, poetry to playfulness, as a purposeful remedy for the dis-ease of our mortal human condition. Wit and self-effacing humor are a must! \$1000 prize given each quarter to the best witty and humorous poem as curated by our panel. painpoemprize.com/

LOCAL & CWC

Catamaran Literary Reader. Santa Cruz print quarterly. “West Coast themes. Writers and artists from everywhere.” Fiction, poetry, creative nonfiction, fine art. Submissions year-round with quarterly production cycle. catamaranliteraryreader.com

CWC–Fremont Area Writers. Lists many resources on their page, such as contest announcements, publications seeking submissions, freelance jobs, resources for screenwriters, genre organizations, and more. cwc-fremontareawriters.org/resources-writers

CWC–North State Writers is planning a fourth anthology. The last one accepted all CWC members. Keep an eye out: northstatewriters.com/nsw-anthologies.html

MWA NorCal Chapter. Mystery Writers of America, the country’s oldest organization of professional mystery writers. Events, podcasts, blog. mwanorcal.org

CWC–Redwood Writers hosts several writing contests each year. Some of them welcome other CWC branch members. Keep track of current requests at redwoodwriters.org/contests/

Women’s Natl Book Assn–San Francisco. Events, lecture series, Pitch-o-Rama, Effie Lee Morris writing contest & more. wnba-sfchapter.org

MARKETS ACCEPTING SUBMISSIONS

Chicken Soup For The Soul has ongoing publications.
chickensoup.com/story-submissions/story-guidelines

Kosmos. Journal for global transformation. Essays, poetry. Editorial preference given to members; membership is free.
kosmosjournal.org/contribute-to-kosmos-quarterly/

The Lumiere Review. Accepts poems and prose, encouraging emerging writers, BIPOC, LGBTQIA, and disabled. No fees.
lumiere-review.com/

Second Chance Lit. Submissions must have been previously rejected. No payment, but will promote. Max 1000 words.
secondchancelit.com/submit

Sequestrum: Literature & Art. A competitive, paying market that publishes high-quality short fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and visual arts. Usually previously unpublished—any print or online format. But **reprints accepted until 15 Dec** for “Theme: Reprints.”
sequestrum.org/theme-reprints

Tillism **طليسم: Magical Words from Around the World.** Seeking submissions of personal posts for this blog. Posts should be inspired by literature, connected to a personal memory, and contain at least one word from a language other than English.
tillism.com/submissions/

The Vincent Brothers Review Submissions in fiction, non-fiction and poetry. Pays a minimum \$25 per accepted item. **Issue 25 submissions call, themed “Ghosts” (ends 31 May)**
vincentbrothersreview.org/submissions/

West Trade Review. Reading periods 01 Apr–01 Aug & 15 Aug–15 Dec. Original and unpublished fiction, poetry, and photography by new and established writers & artists. SBW’s Kelly Harrison is an associate editor.
westtradereview.com/submissionguidelines.html

FOR POETS

Academy of American Poets. List: “American Poets Prizes.”
poets.org/academy-american-poets/american-poets-prizes

Everywriter. Article, “The best poetry prizes”
everywritersresource.com/best-poetry-prizes

Glass Lyre Press, LLC. “*Pirene’s Fountain: A Journal of Poetry.*” Submit 3–5 unpublished poems. Reading period thru 30 June. They nominate for the Pushcart Prize and award the Liakoura Poetry Prize with a certificate and \$100.
glasslyrepress.com/pf.html

The Literary Nest. Online publication for poetry and visual arts. Accepted poetry appears on blog; issues released quarterly.
theliterarynest.org

Palette Poetry No fee, contributors receive \$50. Monthly contests, open submissions
palettetpoetry.com/submit/

FOR POETS, CONTINUED

Poetry. Please send only one submission at a time per category, and wait until you hear back from us before uploading another submission. Unpublished work only.
poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/submit

Poetry Pacific. Literary eZine, 2 issues per year, Spring and Fall. Published and unpublished welcome as long as you still have the rights.
poetrypacific.blogspot.com

Poetry Society of America. The nation’s oldest poetry organization, founded in 1910. Celebrating its 110th anniversary.
poetrysociety.org

Poets & Writers. Lists contests and deadlines.
pw.org/content/upcoming_contest_deadlines

Rattle. “If a poem is accessible, interesting, moving, and memorable, if it makes you laugh or cry, then it’s the kind of poem that rattles around inside you for years, and it’s our kind of poem.” Subscribe and receive a new poem in you email every morning.
rattle.com/submissions/guidelines/

Thimble Literary Magazine. Quarterly. Primarily a poetry journal but invites submissions on related topics such as artwork, stories, and interviews. “When selecting your poems or prose, please ask yourself, did writing this poem help me create shelter?”
thimblelitmag.com/submissions

Trish Hopkinson. “A Selfish Poet.” Blog with lists of markets for poets.
trishhopkinson.com
Facebook group, “No fee calls for poems”
facebook.com/groups/860877037424122

Up the Staircase Quarterly. Poetry & art. No previously published poetry, but previously published artwork OK.
upthestaircase.org/submit

Writing Matters. Article, “34 Publishers of Poetry Books & Chapbooks”
randallssanctuary.wordpress.com/2020/08/11/publishers-of-poetry-books-chapbooks/

Facebook groups for poets

- California Poets
- Cupertino Poet Laureate
- How Writers Write Poetry Community Group
- Los Gatos Poet Laureate
- Natl Poetry Month poem-a-day challenge
- No Fee Calls for Poems
- Poetry Center–San José—PCSJ
- Rattle
- Santa Clara County Poet Laureate
- SF Creative Writing Inst drop-in poetry workshops
- Willow Glen Poetry Project

GENERAL RESOURCES (* = Internet and FB)

Association of Writers & Writing Programs. AWP sponsors six contests, and also provides an extensive listing of literary grants, awards, and publication opportunities available from organizations and publishers throughout North America.
awpwriter.org/contests/overview

Authors Publish.* Subscription magazine for writers, with lists of publishers accepting no-fee submissions for fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.
authorspublish.com

Electric Lit. Article, “Free or cheap resources for emerging writers.” electricliterature.com/free-or-cheap-resources-for-emerging-writers

Fanstory. Requires a subscription (paid), but they do have many activities including contests and and other activities. fanstory.com/contestsall.jsp

Freedom with Writing.* Subscribe to our newsletter and we’ll send you reviews of freelance writing companies, assignments, and the best articles we can produce. Everything is free and delivered via email.
freedomwithwriting.com

Funds for Writers. Up-to-date listing of contests, submissions, grants. Free weekly newsletter.
fundsforwriters.com/contests

Jerry Jenkins blog. Guide to writing contests and other resources. jerryjenkins.com/writing-contests/

Hidden River™ Arts. Independent literary, visual, and performing arts organization based in Philadelphia dedicated to the service, support and celebration of all artists. Book awards deadlines and guidelines, news, celebrations, and publications
hiddenriverarts.wordpress.com

NewPages. News, information, guides to literary magazines, independent publishers, creative writing programs, alternative periodicals, calls for submission, indie bookstores, writing contests, and more. Contests:
newpages.com/classifieds/writing-contests

Poets & Writers. Contest blogs: pw.org/grants, pw.org/blogs/prize_reporter; List of 1200+ literary magazines (filterable): pw.org/literary_magazines

ProWritingAid Writer’s Community FB group for writers to connect and help each other become better writers
facebook.com/groups/ProWritingAidCommunity

Publishing ... and Other Forms of Insanity Article, “185 Literary Magazines Accepting Reprints”

GENERAL RESOURCES, *CONTINUED*

publishedtodeath.blogspot.com/2016/01/163-literary-magazines-accepting.html

Reedsy: The Best Writing Contests Blog spot with filterable and searchable listing of current competitions
blog.reedsy.com/writing-contests

The Write Life* “Tools, Courses & Resources for Writers.” thewritelife.com/tools-for-writers/
“39 Free Writing Contests: Legitimate competitions with Cash Prizes.” thewritelife.com/writing-contests

The Writer Upcoming contests, articles, resources, and you can subscribe to the newsletter.
writermag.com/contests

Writer’s Relief. Keep track of ongoing contests at writersrelief.com/featured-listings-contests-journals-calls-for-submissions/

Writers Post No Fee Call for Submissions Facebook group: “Help yourself and other writers”
facebook.com/groups/58414389316

WT



Send your writing victories to
membernews@southbaywriters.com

September meeting

Baldwin, *Continued from page 1*

tioned in his talk) would ask, “Why are you telling me this?” Why should your readers care? And White would add: “And why should your readers care now? You want me to buy your book? Why? And why now? Why shouldn’t I just shrug you off?”

You need an answer.

Amuse them, surprise them, startle them, scare them. Give them a reason to care! Make them care about you—and the story. Make this story personal—for both them and you.

As you begin spinning details into your writing, be selective. Include only details that evoke richness and depth. Don’t flood your readers with pointless description. Go for what evokes a strong emotional response.

Avoid dull routine. Vary your sentence structures and styles. Alternate direct quotes with paraphrasings (especially important for interviews, but remember this in fiction dialogue as well).

Go for the Charge—the Electric Charge! What gets you excited? What fascinates you? You are in charge here—you don’t have to be boring. Toss the dull stuff!

Suggested exercise: Taking five minutes each, write three scenes where something is at stake. Write them, then hide them. After three or four days fish them out and take another look. Do the scenes have something in common? Could they all fit into a larger story? What story?

Dan spoke extensively on the writer’s “voice,” which he defined as “the sound of your writ-

ing in a reader’s ear.” He praised writers such as Samantha Irby and Joan Didion. While Samantha Irby can be called “the Master of the Rant,” Joan Didion is the opposite: cool and collected. They both have developed a unique voice—and both of them are marvelous.

As you write, try evoking your different voices and let them play and interact with one another. Let the possibilities come forth! Your voices have to learn to interact and play off one another. You need to draw forth the voices that will work for you.

Consider how different aspects of your personality might interact to create startling, captivating situations. Take something traumatic in your life...then find the “nugget of absurdity” that you could wrap an unforgettable story around!

Learn to not be afraid of your-



self, or shy about yourself, or dismissive of yourself. A strong narrative voice requires coming to terms with your own personality. “You” the writer and “you” the narrator have to get comfortable with one another, like an actor getting comfortable with the part they are playing.

On this topic, White recommended a paper by Phillip Lo-

pate, “On the Necessity of Turning Oneself into a Character,” available at

106purdue2011.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/lopate-yourself-as-character.pdf

Can you turn yourself into a character on a page? Can you guess how people will react to this “you” who is now a character? Consider this: people who know you will react differently than people who don’t know you. How do you feel about your character? How will they?

Can you describe five things that are unique to you? How do you feel about this unique person? How will someone else? Can you square your own impression with theirs? Aren’t they both valid? Think about that. This will help you to establish some distance from your character. You should not be defensive about your character.

Then consider your readers. Whom are you talking to, and where? Are you in a bar? A courtroom? At a TED talk?

Can you feel the tension smoldering between you and your character and your readers? Will your readers pay attention to your character—and you? Will they become invested in what happens? What will keep them engaged, amused, or challenged?

Remember: Not defensive! Faults and flaws add depth to a character, make them ever more interesting and intriguing. Don’t resist flaws—become curious about them—and yourself. Own up to your faults!

And remember that journalistic cliché: “If it bleeds, it leads.”

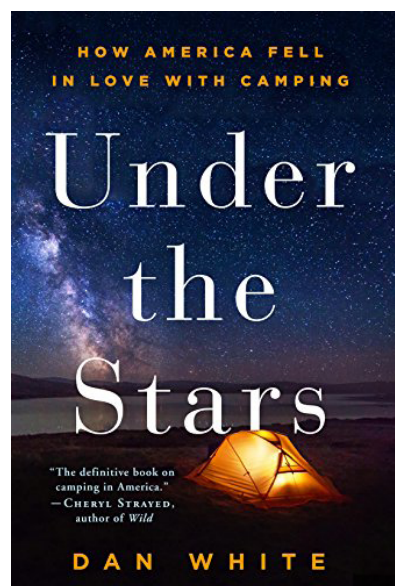
Suggested exercise (actually suggested by one of our attendees!): Write about six places you’ve been kicked out of!

Don’t be afraid of flashbacks—Use them for exposition in whatever is not an active scene.

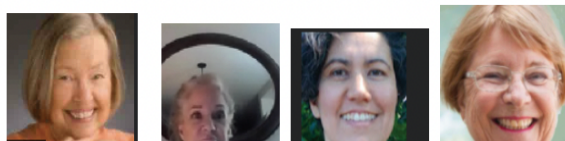
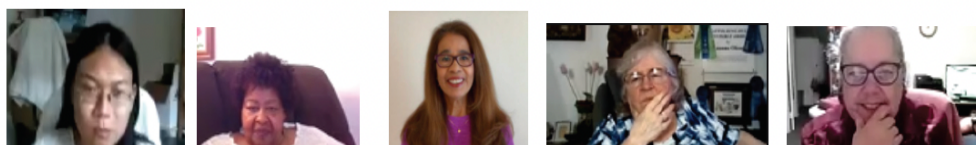
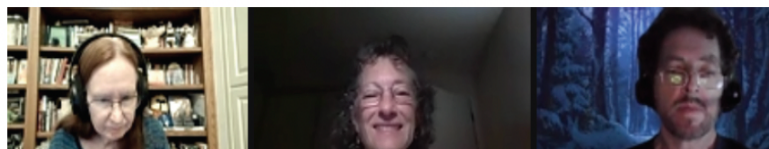
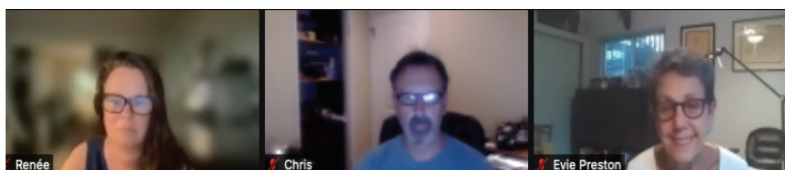
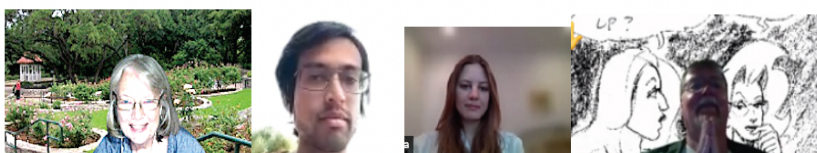
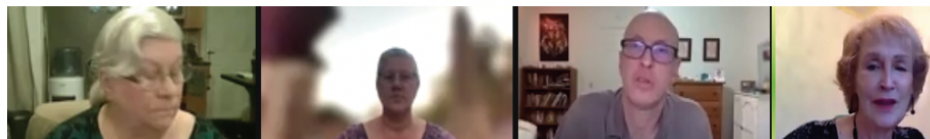
Of course, you have to know just how long to extend them. Know when to stop.

Finally, Dan recommended several books: *A Blistered Kind of Love* by Angela and Duffy Ballard (2003, Mountaineers) and *The Yellow House: A Memoir* by Sarah M. Broom (2019, Grove); as well as writers Kelly Corrigan, Lena Dunham, Jeanette Walls, Gerald Durrell, Angela Davis, Tobias Wolff, and Molly Bloom.

A thoroughly enjoyable evening, thank you, Dan! **WT**



Dan White’s latest book, *Under the Stars: How America Fell in Love with Camping* (2016, Henry Holt).



Fifty attendees listened in on 13 Sept to hear the presentation from guest speaker Dan White. Screensaps thanks to Carolyn Donnell.

CWC events in October

02 OCT: CWC-Orange County

Jasmin Iolani Hakes, "We Are What Happens to Us." Sat, 02 Oct, 10:45 AM via Zoom. Join the mailing list in advance: calwritersorangecounty.org (no hyphen)

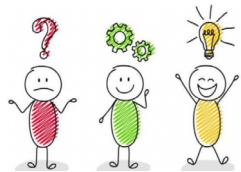


02 OCT: CWC-San Fernando

Dr. Seth Wagerman, explaining "Using Psychology to Master Character Development." Why fill out lengthy character sheets when you can build a resonant character using real psychology? You don't want to miss this. Sat, 02 Oct, 2 PM. **Free via Zoom.** Request invite from VP Monte Swann: cwcsfvhost@gmail.com.

09 OCT: CWC-Berkeley

Cascade flows, singalong, picnic, readings & poet laureate celebration. Festivities begin at noon, Woodminster Cascade, Joaquin Miller Park. **Free, BYOPicnic.** More details: cwc-berkeley.org/writer-in-residence-kristen-caven/



09 OCT: CWC-Fremont

Social Write-In on Zoom. Short impromptu

writing followed by social time, the more the merrier! You'll receive a Zoom invitation from Scott Davidson the day before the event. For more info: scottfrombayside@yahoo.com.

09 OCT: CWC-Long Beach

Dr Seth Wagerman, will present "Using Psychology to Master Character Development." Free via Zoom. Write to info@calwriterslongbeach.org for link.

09 OCT: CWC-Mt Diablo

WORKSHOP: CS Lakin, "Emotional Mastery." **Hybrid:** \$45 **in-person** (incl buffet lunch), \$35 **Zoom.** Sat, 09 Oct, 09:30 AM. cwcmtdiablo.org/current-cwc-mt-diablo-meeting/



13 OCT: CWC-Napa

Napa Valley Writers will host *New York Times* bestselling author Anne Perry, "Building Your Story's Outline," in conversation with local treasure Victoria Zackheim. Wed, 13 Oct, 7 PM, \$5+PayPal fee. Register here: napavalleywriters.online/meetings/

16 OCT: CWC-Redwood

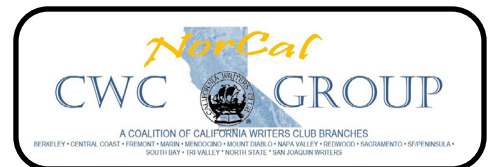
"A Tour of Redwood Writers Groups & Offerings" Sat, 16 Sep, 1 PM, Finley Center. \$5 for CWC members. Register here: redwoodwriters.org/meetings/

16 OCT: Tri-Valley



17 OCT: CWC-Mendocino

Ekphrasis readings. Sun, 17 Oct, 3 PM. Request invitation by emailing WritersMendocinoCoast@Gmail.com.



Facebook discussion group



Join our Facebook group South Bay Writers Club Group admin Carolyn Donnell

19 OCT: CWC-Central Coast

Booktoberfest! Juice n' Java, 599 Lighthouse Ave, Pacific Grove, doors open at 5:30. **Free.** Seven of our members will be readers. Each reader will be allotted approximately 8 minutes of reading time.

23 OCT: CWC-Fremont

Joan Gelfand will be discussing the craft of writing. Sat, 23 Oct, 2 pm. Request Zoom link from Scott Davidson: scottfrombayside@yahoo.com.

27 OCT: CWC-Marin

Mary Buckham will speak on "Primal Branding." This isn't your standard font and color choice branding talk. Wed, 27 Oct, 6 PM. \$5. cwcmarin.com/october

16 OCT: CWC-Sacramento

"Finding the raw and real story within nonfiction" with Scott Thomas Anderson, veteran award-winning journalist & producer. Sat, 16 Oct, 1 PM. **Free.** For Zoom link, stop by cwcsacramentowriters.org.

16 OCT: CWC-Writers of Kern

Featured speaker science writer Mika McKinnon. Sat, 16 Oct, **Virtual.** writersofkern.com

27 OCT: CWC-Marin

Mary Buckham will speak on "Primal Branding." This isn't your standard font and color choice branding talk. Here's your chance to uplevel your branding. Wed, 27 Oct, 6 PM. \$5. RSVP here: cwcmarin.com/rsvp-for-september-meeting/

WT

OCTOBER 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4 VALLEY WRITERS	5	6 SBW BOARD MTG 7 PM	7 NAVRATI BEGINS	8	9
10 INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY ⇒	11 VALLEY WRITERS SBW MEETING 7 PM	12	13	14	15 WRITERS TALK ISSUE CLOSES VIJAYADASHAMI	16
17 CWC CENTRAL BOARD MEETING	18 VALLEY WRITERS	19 MILAD AN-NABI	20 BLOOD MOON 	21 BACK TO THE FUTURE DAY	22	23
24 UNITED NATIONS DAY	25 VALLEY WRITERS	26	27	28	29	30
31 SAMHAIN HALLOWEEN	1	2	3	4	5	6

Ongoing events

Critique groups

Valley Writers, Mondays 2-4 PM
via Zoom. Email Marjorie Johnson
marjohnson@mac.com

Evening Zoom writing group

Small supportive group of experienced writers has room for more. We meet **2nd & 4th Tuesdays, 7-8:30 PM**. Focused on short stories and novels. If you're interested, please contact Karen Sundback at sundback@gmail.com

Morgan Hill writers group

We're a critique circle based in Morgan Hill, with members from all over. Long and short narrative, any genre. **Mondays, 5 PM**. Contact

Vanessa MacLaren-Wray for Zoom login details
cometarytales@gmail.com

SBW regular meetings

2nd Mondays, 7 PM. Watch your email for Zoom login details

SBW Board meetings

Wednesday before regular SBW meeting, 7 PM. Contact pres@southbaywriters.com

Open mic

1st & 3rd Friday nights. Contact Bill Baldwin (408) 730-9622
WABaldwin@aol.com

Know of a regularly occurring event for writers? Email us! newsletter@southbaywriters.com

VOLUNTEER BETA READERS

SOUGHT. Jan Fitzenz has completed a draft of his novel, *Finding Fitzpatrick*. A devastated Bostonian writer who has lost it all finds adventure in Ireland writing for a sports magazine. 66,000 words. **jac@drjac.com**

Ads in CWC's *The Bulletin* Bob Isbill (760) 221-6367

The Bulletin accepts writing-related advertising from businesses, CWC members, and individuals who wish to reach our target market at reasonable prices.

See **calwriters.org** for details.



California Writers Club

South Bay Branch
PO Box 3254
Santa Clara CA 95055

southbaywriters.com

MAIL TO

Address Correction Requested

**South Bay Writers
October 2021 meeting
Monday | 11 October | 7 PM**

Alejandro Adams

Costume Contest
Details inside!



To all who give us
another breath,
another day,
another life saved,
thank you.

covid19.ca.gov

