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Autum Zoom Event

November 1, 2025

11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Register now for:

"Fall into Flash" with Grant

Faulkner

[CLICK TO REGISTER](#)



Fall into Flash QR Code – Photo capture it and register online in minutes

League of Vermont Writers Autumn Zoom Event "Fall into Flash" with Grant Faulkner



November 1, 2025 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Zoom Presentation – All are Welcome

**Tickets are: Members \$20.00, Students \$20.00,
Non-Members \$30.00**

[Register Here](#)

For event discounts: [JOIN LVW](#).

Grant Faulkner, writer, teacher, producer, podcaster, and author of *The Art of Brevity* will share his expertise on the art of writing and publishing short prose.

All writers—regardless of preferred genre or word count—will benefit from Grant’s extensive knowledge on both the creative and the business side of writing short.

The program will include slides, Q&A, and generative exercises. More on Grant at <https://grantfaulkner.com/>.

Grant Faulkner

is the co-founder of 100 Word Story, the co-host of the Write-minded podcast, and an executive producer on America’s Next Great Author.

He has published three books on writing: *The Art of Brevity: Crafting the Very Short Story*; *Pep Talks for Writers: 52 Insights and Actions to Boost Your Creative Mojo*; and *Brave the Page*, a teen writing guide.

He’s also published *All the Comfort Sin Can Provide*, a collection of short stories, *Fissures*, a collection of 100-word stories, and *Nothing Short of 100: Selected Tales from 100 Word Story*.

His “flash novel,” *Something Out There in the Distance*, a collaboration with the photographer Gail Butensky, is coming out in January, 2026 with the University of New Mexico Press.

His stories have appeared in dozens of literary magazines, including *Tin House*, *The Southwest Review*, and *The Gettysburg Review*, and he has been anthologized in collections such as Norton’s *Flash Fiction America*; *New Micro: Exceptionally Short Fiction*; and in several editions of the annual *Best Small Fictions* and *Best Microfiction* anthologies.

His essays on creativity have been published in *The New York Times*, *Poets & Writers*, *Lit Hub*, *Writer’s Digest*, and *The Writer*. He serves on the National Writing Project Writers Council, Litquake’s board of directors, the Aspen Institute’s Aspen Words’ Creative Council, and Left Margin Lit’s Advisory Board.

He has presented at such events as the Frankfurt Book Fair, the Chicago Humanities Festival, the Associated Writing Programs Conference, Book Expo America, the Oakland Book Festival, the Bay Area Book Festival, the San Francisco Writers Conference, the Commonwealth Club, the Digital Publishing Innovation Summit, *Writers Digest West*, and Litquake.

LVW In the News

LVW in the Barre Montpelier Times Argus

Alyssa Berthiaume and Shawn Anderson had an opportunity to be interviewed by someone who writes for The Barre Montpelier Times Argus after he met Tommy Walz (who is a longtime LVW member and volunteer with our membership).

Peter Cobbs article, “A Place for Vt. Writers to Come Together” was published August 30, 2025.

BARRE — The League of Vermont Writers may be one of the best kept secrets in Vermont — a secret the current leadership in the organization is hoping to end.

LVW, the oldest known statewide writing organization in the state, is a registered nonprofit dedicated to anyone who makes writing a part of their life. Through programming and events, the group aims to inspire and inform writers at all stages to pursue their craft and publish their work.

“The only requirement to join the League of Vermont Writers is a love and passion for writing and a small membership fee, currently only \$45 for the year for an individual. You don’t have to be published to join, and you don’t have to be a Vermont resident,” said Alyssa Berthiaume, president of the group. Berthiaume is the author of “Do Not Write a Book ... Until You Read This Book,” the CEO of The Write Place, Right Time — a business dedicated to helping writers — and winner of several writing awards, including the Gold Award from the Nonfiction Authors Association and the Silver Award from the Independent Publishers of New England.

The League was started in 1929 by Vermont luminaries Dorothy Canfield Fisher and Helen Hartness Flanders, when they helped establish the League of Vermont Writers’ Association, which would later become the League of Vermont Writers. Past members have included well-known writers Chris Bojahljian, Joe Citro, David Huddle and Ellen Bryant Voigt. The group has hosted nationally known authors, including Archer Mayor, Tim Brookes and Katherine Paterson. For the rest of the article, please see:

https://www.timesargus.com/news/local/a-place-for-vt-writers-to-come-together/article_0f99a093-c1d5-4832-af53-fa2e6a97389a.html

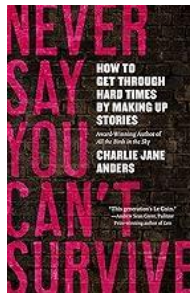
Ongoing Free Zoom Events

Book Group – Hosted by Shawn Anderson

Hello friends and fellow writers,

The next book-group meeting will be **Oct 23, 2025,**

7:00 to 8:30 p.m. (You don’t need to be residing in VT to join). There’s still time to grab a copy of the book and read it. We will be discussing will be *Never Say You Can’t Survive: How to Get Through Hard Times by Making Up Stories* by Charlie Jane Anders.



We’ll be trying something a little different this time around. The first hour will be an organized discussion about the book with prompts and then the back half hour we will chat and dive into a more specific topic on our current works in progress and/or publishing adventures—a little check in and accountability session.

If you would like to invite friends to join, please ask them to email the League and put “LVW BOOK GROUP” in the subject line, and I will add them to the email list. lvw@leagueofvermontwriters.org

As always, please feel free to come and join the discussion even if you have not read or finished the selected work. We love to get together and talk craft! The meeting link for the Zoom is below, but I’ll send it again with a reminder right before the meeting.

See you soon!

Shawn

[Link for Book Group](#)

Open Mic – Hosted by Gail Wind

Open Mic is held on alternating months with Book Group. Open Mic is odd months: January, March, May, July, September, and November. Book Group is even months: February, April, June, August, October, and December.

The next Open Mic night is on Thursday, November 13th, 2025, 7:00 p.m.

Emails will be sent out encouraging readers after the summer, but if you want to participate, contact Gail Wind at gailinvermont@outlook.com.

Each reader will have 5-6 minutes to introduce themselves and read. A featured writer will have 10 minutes.

We encourage all members to attend. Bring your friends for moral support! Listen to and support these courageous presenters.

When you publish, presenting your work in public is part of advertising your work. This is also a safe space to try out something new on a very warm crowd.

If you are curious about what our open mic nights look like, just join the Zoom and sit back.

You can leave your video blank and just be a “fly on the wall.” You will find it a comfortable, sharing space.

We welcome authors in all genres to share their published and/or unpublished work.

Come, read to us.



LVW Poets' Share

Three Poems by Roderick Bates

In the Ashmolean Museum

The world's oldest violin, *the Messiah*, a Stradivarius from 1716, is at Oxford. It has never been played.

Better it were cracked and glued,
worn by the beards and sweat of men;
better it had birthed sweet sounds,
and broke, and broke, and broke again,

burned for kindling, heat or light;
better it were ash, and mud,
seed and twig and shaking leaf —
than this stick which cannot bud.

In The Ashmolean Museum first appeared in The Dark Horse

Enough Said

For Jack Coleman

Today a publisher said of my poems You need to tersen
'em
Then he pondered, Is that a word? -- I looked, and it isn't,
so I won't — besides, it would only worsen 'em.

Enough Said first appeared in The Asses of Parnassus

Certain Small Things

Certain small things
carry far more than their weight:
The sounds of a Zippo lighter in action,
the ringing click as it opens,
that chunky snap closed,
take me back forty years in an instant,
to a college dorm room in winter,
to Lucky Strikes and Ballantine Ale,
to smoke rising into my squint —

and yesterday the smell of roasting beef
on a street of two-story homes
with wide porches and barns behind
yanked me out of one town
and dropped me in another,
at my grandmother's table,
just in time for Sunday dinner.

Certain Small Things first appeared in Stillwater Review

Poem by George Longenecker

Camping

for Brad

We camped in your backyard
kids who loved being outdoors
at least a few feet away from our parents
neighbors just 25 feet away on either side
trains whistled nearby
on the Boston & Maine Railroad
crows and bluejays called
robins sang at dawn.

You guided us through the arctic,
so many years and birds later
north where sun shone all night
where grizzly bears roamed nearby tundra
golden eagles drifted overhead
white-crowned sparrows whistled
while we floated north
to the Beaufort Sea
a snowy owl perched
on a tussock and watched
how far we'd come on the river
how far we'd come from your backyard.

George Longenecker

[Ed note- Rod and George were presenters at a recent open mic and were very well received.]

Meet the New LVW Intern

Meet Brigid, Our New LVW Intern

Hi there! My name is Brigid Barry and I will be interning with the League of Vermont Writers this semester. Currently, I am a senior at Champlain College with a major in professional writing. I am partially involved in the writing communities at the college; I tutor on Sunday nights as well as hold the title of content editor for our school's news publication, The Crossover. My concentrations are in creative writing and screenwriting with a hope of working in television. The ultimate goal is to eventually write my own television show, something edgy with a comedic value, but the dream is to write for Saturday Night Live. If that fails, possibly journalism or newspaper writing.

My projects with the league are mainly research. I've been looking into different organizations across New England and comparing their programs to the Leagues, while also helping with the little things that help the organization run. So far, I'm having a lot of fun!

I've always been a big creative. Growing up, drawing was my main medium of expression, I had dreams of becoming a cartoonist. I wanted my art to be appreciated in a way that spoke specifically to the viewer. As I grew up, my art started to frustrate me. Nothing looked right, I couldn't figure out the right proportions for a person to look in a certain direction, my landscapes felt childish and underdeveloped. I hated it. I transitioned to writing sometime between middle school and high school. I've always been a story teller, I love making up my own situations and seeing how far they go. Writing suddenly felt like a whole new outlet for me. I was able to communicate my own feelings about the mundane without feeling like I had to say anything out loud. The perfect solution to a very small problem. I was still creating, just a different format.



With this internship, I'm hoping to form a deeper connection with local writers, authors, and publishers, as well as become more familiar with the more technical aspects of writing. This is a new experience for me, as I've never had the opportunity to work with an organization such as this; I'm excited to discover new techniques and styles, and ultimately prepare myself for the real world. I'm looking forward to forming new relationships with everyone involved, and I am hoping to help out in any way I can!

Libraries and Bookstores News

A Tale of Two Libraries by Gail Wind

August 29th, the LVW board met at the Waterbury Library for a 'workshop meeting. I took a few moments at the end of the meeting to chat with the librarian on duty, who eagerly shared information with me about the history and legacy of the library. There is a plaque hanging in the library which reads,

"I have devised all my real estate in Waterbury to the Waterbury Public Library association in pursuance of long cherished desire to aid such association in its educational work and there's a tribute to the memory of my wife Francis B. (hall) James ... and I have done this in the hope that eventually the entire premises ... may be so utilized as to promote a higher culture and an increasing intellectual and moral development among the people of Waterbury and adjacent towns for generations to come ... and that the scope of its work may be enriched and enlarged by gifts from other citizens." Henry Janes

Well, I thought that was really wonderful in and of itself, until I started doing a bit of research and ran into a story of two libraries, situated about 15 miles apart geographically, but in history, they were "neighbors down the street."

The second library in this story is Montpelier's Kellogg-Hubbard Library. In the January 19, 2024 article by Lisa Scagliotti, "History repeats as library supporters return a 94-year-old favor," Lisa shares an unforgettable story of the generosity of both libraries in times of need.

"The floods of 2023 were one tragic example as scenes of destruction evoked memories of past disasters like Tropical Storm Irene and even the great flood of 1927. Across Central

Vermont, people instinctively rallied to help others dealing with the aftermath of a disaster yet again.

And as it turns out, one recent gesture of flood-recovery help bears a striking similarity to events that unfolded nearly a century ago.

The story involves two libraries situated about 15 miles apart, but both within close proximity to the Winooski River. It came to light in correspondence between library volunteers in Waterbury and the staff at Montpelier's Kellogg-Hubbard Library.

Last week, Maureen White, president of the Friends of the Waterbury Public Library, sent a letter and a check to Kellogg-Hubbard Library Director Dan Groberg in Montpelier. The capital city's library in July was inundated with flood waters which caused reported damage of more than \$1 million to the Main Street facility, its furnishings and collections, in particular the contents of the building's basement – books set aside for the library's annual book sale fundraiser.

White was sending along a final installment of \$232 to Kellogg-Hubbard, for a grand total of \$1,087.87 raised by the Waterbury group's ongoing book sales from August through December to support the flood-damaged library's recovery.

Waterbury library Director Rachel Muse explained how the volunteer friends group, meeting shortly after the July floods, wanted to take some meaningful action to help the neighboring library with its losses. They saw and heard about the extensive damage documented in news reports and on Kellogg-Hubbard Library's social media accounts online.

The Waterbury group has a "perpetual book sale" fundraiser that includes selections at the library that patrons may purchase along with pop-up booths at events and the summer farmers market. White noted that the group decided to dedicate all of its proceeds from August through December to Kellogg-Hubbard given that its plans for a book sale had washed away.

It wasn't long after that decision was made, White said, that a Waterbury library commissioner doing research made a discovery.

"Coincidentally, a library commissioner came across a news article in a 1929 issue of The Waterbury Record describing how the Kellogg-Hubbard Library donated \$100 to the Waterbury Library after the 1927 flood," White wrote to Groberg. According to the newspaper account, the Waterbury librarian used the funds to purchase six Windsor chairs and two reading lamps to replace items lost in the flood."

The rest of this story and some amazing photos and news clippings can be found at:

<https://www.waterburyroundabout.org/news-archive/88rqlcz7ka186lkpb7cf9slpdacuse>

Writing Challenge of 2025

The responses to the Writing Challenge of 2025 are at the end of this newsletter.

This challenge was open to members and friends of LVW. Write alone or with a partner.

THESE WERE THE PARAMETERS OF THE CHALLENGE:

1. Characters – You must have **One main, two supporting**. (cast of minor characters is optional)
2. Choose the time frame – a few minutes, a day, a week, a year.
3. Specify the historic time period: Now, future, past – up to you.
4. Keep it on this planet. (Next challenge will be 'outer limits'.)
5. **Max word count** 2500 words!

This was the story challenge:

Your main character sees a knothole in the woodwork (you pick where). He/she/they discovers that by pushing a finger into the middle of the knothole, they can enlarge it (as much as they want). What do they find beyond? Write that story.

2025 Activities to Date

Date	Event	Description
1/25/2025	Annual Meeting	Business Meeting and Guest Speaker – Nadia Colburn
1/30/2025	Open Mic	Seven Readers – Cynthia Bogard Featured Reader
2/13/2025	Book Group	The Creative Act, a Way of Being, by Rick Rubin
3/20/2025	Open Mic	Five Readers – Louella Bryant Featured Reader
4/10/2025	Book Group	<i>Worlds Within Words</i> , by Sharon Darrow
4/12/2025	Spring Event	LIVE EVENT! Underhill Town Hall. 5 Panel Discussion and Breakout Sessions, "The Job of the Author to Help a Book Succeed."
5/08/2025	Town Hall	Open discussion of the future of the League
5/22/2025	Open Mic	Seven Readers – Celia Ryker Featured Reader
6/12/2025	Book Group	<i>Before and after the Book Deal: A Writer's Guide to Finishing, Publishing, Promoting, and Surviving Your First Book</i> , by Courtney Maum.
7/10/2025	Open Mic	Six Readers- Nancy Kilgore Featured Reader; 18 in the audience -total at meeting -24!
8/23/2025	Summer Event	Into the Words – 9 teachers, Beautiful Day – Great Fun
8/25/2025	Book Group	<i>1000 Words</i> by Jami Attenberg
9/25/2025	Open Mic	Seven Readers and four extra in the audience – Super!

"If there's a book that you want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it." -Toni Morrison

Our Basic Information

LVW Board:

- President, Alyssa Berthiaume
- Vice President, Shawn Anderson
- Secretary, Tom Carroll
- Treasurer, Gail E. Wind
- Immediate Past President, Caryn Connolly

Board Members at Large:

- Pat Goudy O'Brien- three years
- Jeniah Johnson- two years left

Spread the word:

Do you have a personal website or Facebook page?

→ Tell your friends about the league!

It's easy. Just copy and paste this:

Check out the League of Vermont Writers at

<https://leagueofvermontwriters.org/>

And, here's the link to our [Newsletters](#)

Kudos Korner: Please send information about your recent publication successes, public readings, or any writing awards you might receive to gailinvermont@outlook.com with a subject line Kudos Korner.

Please send submissions in a "press release" format. Write a nice, concise, third-party article that is press ready.

For other League Lines questions, corrections, or contributions:

Please submit these to the editor Gail Wind at:

gailinvermont@outlook.com; subject line re: League Lines 2024.

General questions: contact the League at lvw@leagueofvermontwriters.org

Membership questions: please contact Tommy Walz at twalz@aol.com

Snail mail: League of Vermont Writers, PO Box 3251, Burlington, VT 05408

The League of Vermont Writers, Inc. is a fully approved 501(c) (3) non-profit corporation.
All donations are tax deductible.

Responses to the Writing Challenge of 2025

Bristlecone Pine by George Longenecker

Isaac put his lens to the knothole, as he photographed ridges and hoodoos of red sandstone fading into the distance. Cedar Breaks National Monument had some of the world's oldest bristlecone pines; this one had to be at least 1,500 years old. The trees seemed half-dead, yet they'd survived for centuries. After a dozen photos, he put down his Nikon and peeped through. There was an eye. He'd been so absorbed in his photos that he hadn't heard her come up the trail. She laughed as she peered back at him. She put a finger to the knothole, which expanded ever so slightly, and touched his nose. To his right was a smaller knothole; she poked another finger through.



"I know you!"

"Allie, I didn't know you were here yet."

"This sounded so beautiful in your poem."

"Are you camping too?"

"I sure am."

They'd met each other at Desert Poetry Festival at University of Utah. Their week-long workshop with Denise Duhamel had been worth the trip. They'd gotten to know each other and their poetry. Denise had been exacting and encouraging. Over dinner with the writers, Allie had mentioned she was also going to Cedar Breaks, so seeing her wasn't a total surprise. But through a 1,500-year-old knothole sure was. "I'll have to revise my Cedar Breaks poem after seeing this."

"It was pretty good Isaac."

"Based on photos. Now I see the real thing."

"Heading back?"

"Back to shade and lunch."

She took his hand as they passed more bristlecone pines on the trail. The day was heating up. Her hand was moist.

"Allie, come on over for supper at my campsite."

"Sure, I'll bring some ravioli and a bottle of wine."

They parted to head for their campsites. Isaac knew from the week in their poetry workshop that they lived not far from each other in Pennsylvania. He taught at Slipper Rock U and she taught at Penn State Allegheny. He liked her poetry. Denise Duhamel had been complimentary and helpful to both of them.

About six o'clock Allie returned to Isaac's campsite carrying a duffle with ravioli, tomatoes, lettuce, parmesan cheese, Italian bread and a bottle of Cline red wine.

"Wow, you really meant supper!"

"Gourmet camping. Brought my sleeping bag too. You know, just in case—" Allie laughed.

"We want to relax after supper."

"Exactly"

Issac cooked the ravioli on his MSR camp stove while Allie made a salad. They relaxed in camp chairs and sipped wine.

"Supper's on. Nothing but the best at Cedar Breaks. To you Allie—and your poetry."

"Thanks Issac. I love this. Yummy!"

They ate at the picnic table as the day cooled. A hermit thrush called. After supper they walked over to the visitor center at the trailhead. A marmot sat on a rock overlooking the mesas and hoodoos, catching the last of the sun.

"Too cute," Allie laughed.

"Me or the marmot?"

"Both of you." Allie leaned closer and kissed him.

"I don't think marmot wants a kiss."

"I do." She kissed Issac again.

They spent the night in Isaac's tent.

The next morning Isaac made coffee with his French press. Allie cooked scrambled eggs and pan toast. After breakfast they walked back out the trail before the day heated up. It was only 20 minutes back to the bristlecone pine knothole. He peaked through one way, she the other. He kissed her through the knothole. "I swear it gets larger," Allie said.

The next day was their flight back to Pittsburgh. Serendipitously, they were on the same flight.

"Share a hotel in Salt Lake?" he asked.

"Only to save money of course."

"Of course."

They had breakfast together and returned their rental cars. On the plane they managed to trade seats and sit together. Back in Pittsburgh they each had to get an Uber home.

"Meet soon?" She asked.

"I couldn't imagine not seeing you." They hugged for what seemed like a long time.

“Miss you and miss Utah.”

“Miss you and miss Utah”

“Love to you”

“Love you too.”

Two years later they were settled into their newly-purchased home in Zelienople, PA. It was still winter, but they had another trip to Utah planned for summer. On the knotty pine wall in their office hung two framed, enlarged photos: the marmot and the bristlecone pine knothole.

George Longenecker

The Root Cellar By Melissa Powling Mears

It was late spring, mud season in Vermont. The time of year when half the population were still wearing jackets while the other half had already broken out the shorts, exposing long-covered skin that had waited to lose the heavy layers of winter. Myrah was wearing light joggers and a sweatshirt that said “Dog Mom” on it in red letters with a heart wrapped around it.

The ground was thawed by this time, with the warmth of the longer days providing enough heat to break through the earth. She was outside of her rural secluded home, in the back yard, along the fence, trying to find the tennis ball she had thrown to Charlie, the chocolate labradoodle a few minutes prior. The ball had been swallowed and lost in the overgrown bushes Myrah had neglected to cut back last fall that had spread along the fence, Charlie stood to the side of Myrah, growing impatient as she tried to locate it. Fin, an old Shit-Zu tried to maneuver under her body to see what she was doing and easily made a path for himself between the roots and decayed leaves of last year.

Suddenly, Fin jumped back beneath her and growled, staring straight ahead at the fence. There was no more than a foot of distance between her head and the wood; there was nothing that could be there that Myrah had not already seen, yet he growled and backed up further. She carefully pushed aside dead leaves, a little worried about what might be lurking. Fin edged closer to the fence his nose flaring and heavy sniffing sounds emerged from his tiny frame. He was staring at a small knot in the wood, a slightly darker color brown than the rest of the panel, a small hole at the center seemed to be his target of concern. There was nothing there, no animal sitting there, no bug or worm hanging from the hole.

“What’s the Deal Fin? There is nothing there.” Myrah said as she pointed at the hole. His growl became louder, and he backed into her chest as she looked down at him. Myrah shoved her finger towards the hole to show him nothing was there, she again said “Fin, there is..” but her voiced trailed into silence as her finger touched the open knot in the wood and the space grew bigger, letting a brilliant light emerge. Myrah yanked her hand back, looking at her finger and then the fence, the hole was the same size as it had been, no light- just a knot in the wood again. Myrah looked at Fin, at Charlie and back at the fence. They said nothing, Fin became quiet and Charlie, the ever-fearful dog had backed up tilting her head to the side with wary interest.

Myrah sat back on her haunches, staring at the fence. That could not have happened, she thought, shaking her head slightly. Tentatively and slowly, she stretched her arm towards the knot in the wood, closing all her fingers into her palm except the index finger, which trembled as it closed in on the fence. Like before, as soon as her finger covered over the hole, it widened, the light streaming all around it, seeping from the edges. She stopped, but did not pull her hand back. She stayed there frozen, breath caught in her lungs, not quite sure what to do. “What the...?” She could not finish the sentence let alone a thought, mind racing trying to make sense of this.

Myrah leaned in just a little more and the opening blossomed into a larger hole, her whole hand was in there, but she felt nothing, saw nothing.

“Impossible!” she said as she pulled back again and sat there. She got up and backed away, the bushes swung back into place to cover the area, but she knew it was still there. Holding her hand in front of her, turning it over making sure it was ok. Myrah walked around the fence to the front of the root cellar door. The root cellar

was a long-standing fixture of the property, the three-foot opening made of stone, and a thick wooden door was the only above ground portion giving away the fact that it was there. Myrah opened the door and peered down inside, pitch dark but she heard nothing, saw nothing on the small stairwell or below in the tiny shelf-lined room. Nothing that would explain the light she had seen or an opening from the wall that would lead to the fence.

She checked in on the dogs, who were staring at her, Fin by her side and Charlie a few feet back. Myrah backed up slowly and turned towards the house. Climbing the stairs to the wrap around porch she paused and looked back, it seemed quiet and serene as always. As she opened the screen door, a creak broke the silence, she entered the old farmhouse and the dogs trailed behind her. Walking down the hall, she passed a formal sitting room and then a living room on her way to the utility closet to fetch a flashlight. Leaving the dogs inside she grabbed her phone in case she needed to call someone quickly and headed back out.

The root cellar lit up with a warm glow as she shined the flashlight down the stairs. The lonely wooden shelves, long cleared of supplies, only held dust and cobwebs. She could see the entire cellar; it was small enough to stand in the middle and reach all sides by holding out your arms. She had not gone down there in a while, but there were no other rooms, no secret pathways, or doors that she had seen. She hesitated to step down onto the stairs there without anyone at the top holding the door.

Finding a chunk of wood from the side of the building Myrah propped open the door- not that it would have drifted close due to wind but feared what she could not see. It was only 10 or so steps down into the room, you could still see the door from the bottom, so she slowly descended 2, 3, 4 steps and paused. Looking behind her, the late morning sun still shining brightly with the blue sky, the smell of freshly uncovered earth activating its growing capabilities; all looked the same. Ahead of Myrah loomed more of an unknown, she continued down the final few steps and landed on the stone floor. She was not sure if it was the coldness of the room or the eerie feeling that caused the goosebumps that shot up beneath her sweatshirt. She saw nothing that seemed out of place or unusual- just the 100-year-old shelves, stone floor, walls, and dust.

Myrah tentatively touched the walls, feeling for a secret door or pathway, but her fingers only felt the rough edges of stones. She started ascending the stairs, her back still to the door, she kept one hand on the stone wall for balance and let her heel locate the next step before ascending higher as she retreated to the surface of the earth. At the top of the stairs. she paused and flicked the flashlight off, letting her eyes adjust to the darkness; she still saw nothing. The cold air from below breathed on her chest while the warm air from outside blanketed her back, causing an odd sensation of being cold and warm at the same time. Stepping back once more onto the grass she stood there thinking and trying to understand.

Moving back to the bushes she knelt, slightly moving them aside and stared at the knot in the wooden panel. It was just a typical fence panel, about a half inch thick, long ago painted red, but the many years and rugged weather of the northeast had stripped it almost completely back down to its natural state. It was a light brown with varying shades splattered about- several other knot holes littered the panels around this one. She lightly touched one; nothing happened. No widening space, no light. Must have imagined this; did she hit her head earlier while getting wood for the fireplace, she could have easily hit it on the woodshed or the shelf inside.

Coming back to the original hole, she put her finger just above it; nothing happened. Moving it down slowly, as soon as it touched the knot hole, it opened, faster and wider this time with more light, and she could almost see something beyond her hand and the fence. She trembled with fear, wonder and anxiety as her heart kicked up beating in her eardrums. Myrah's body was shaking which caused her to lose balance and fall headfirst into the fence, the hole and into the light.

She did not move, her eyes closed as her face hit the ground, and she lay there. She listened but heard nothing. Then realized she did hear noises; she heard the same noises that were always heard, birds, rustling of leaves in the distance made by animals searching for food in the underbrush. One eye opened seeing grass, brilliant sunlight, and dirt.

Moving her hands beneath her and pushing herself up on her knees slowly to look around. She saw people, a woman and young child; they were planting a garden several feet away but did not seem to see her. They were dressed in the clothing style of the 1800's, the woman in a full length plain linen dress with black shoes; the boy wore pants and a long-sleeved shirt. Rising to her feet as quietly as possible, she wiped the dirt from her joggers and stared at the woman.

Myrah inched closer, wanting to speak, but was afraid. She lived in a rural community, she and her husband owned several acres which included the old farmhouse, root cellar and space to have a small homestead. Unless her husband was planning a colonial reenactment she did not know about, there should be no one here dressed in garb from 200 years ago.

She looked around, the root cellar stood to her right, where it would have been from....what? the other side of the fence? It stood clean and new looking though, not moss covered and slightly leaning as it did moments ago. She turned to face the old farmhouse, the home she had lived in for the last three years stood beautiful, pristine and new before her. It did not have creaky looking boards warping in the sun or peeling paint along the windowsills. It stood beautiful and proud as if the paint had not even dried from being built.

This could not be, she looked between the house, root cellar and the woman in bewilderment. Did she just travel time? Ha, no, that was ridiculous. But what was the explanation?

"Hello?" she called weakly with her voice caught in her throat. No one looked her way, so she edged closer, listening to them and watching, waiting for them to notice.

"Don't forget to place them seeds apart from each other and cover lightly with the soil," The woman said to the young boy.

"Mama, how long before we get to eat the corn?" the young boy replied as he trailed his mom, bending over and gently poking a hole with his finger, inserting a seed, and lightly replacing the dirt, almost a loving gesture. "It takes some time; we put these in now and in a few months with a lot of love and attention, we will be able to harvest our garden and put to use that root cellar your pa made." She smiled while working, using the hoe to dig a small trench and pile around it for the seeds.

"Excuse me, can you hear me? See me?" Myrah whispered, but it felt so loud in her head. Still no response or acknowledgement.

Her fear grew, what was happening? Her head pounded, hands trembled, and she turned back towards the fence, but the picket fence was not there. In its place, there was an old-style post fence, no slab or panels. How was she going to get back? She ran back to the fence area and searched among the grass. She checked the rails, running her hand along them getting splinters but found no openings to disappear into. Coming to the post she felt the wood, poking at it and ultimately shaking it searching for a way to return. She looked behind, the mother and child were now coming towards her, staring at her saying something that she could not hear.

They both were hunched over as they approached, lips moving, brows furrowed but she could not hear them and then the bright light emerged again, and their faces were marred by the rays of light that broke into her vision. They approached reaching out their hands to touch her.

"Myrah! Myrah are you OK?" The voice grew louder and angrier and it hurt where their fingers dug into her arms. Her eyes flew open- when had she closed them? And she saw her husband Adam standing over her with concern on his face, the phone in his hand.

"She just came to. Yes, yes I am trying to ask her if she is ok." He was speaking to someone on the phone. The phone! Adam! She looked around trying to sit up but was immediately hit with a pounding headache and a quick feel of her head revealed semi dried blood that had streaked down her face.

"Sit tight; the ambulance is coming." Adam helped her sit up.

She looked around, no woman with her son planting corn. The root cellar tilted to the left with moss covered walls. The house behind her in need of paint, some repair and a renewed beauty.

"Are you okay? I got home from the store, and you were laying on the ground here, you must have hit your head badly," he said trying to assess the damage. In the distance she heard the low wail of sirens.

She looked at Adam, back at the house and around the property. "Let's start fixing up the house, repaint it and fix those boards on the porch," she said. "That root cellar needs some cleaning and then we can put it back to use. I want to make her proud."

What's in a name? by Gail Wind

He sat staring at the wood paneled wall across the narrow room where his mother had 'deposited' him when she went in to talk with the minister. She had suggested he bring a book to pass the time and as he headed out of his room he took a slender volume off his book shelf. At 11, his shelves already held the evidence of an impressive

number of hours of solo time. He was small for his age, a bit shy and had not made any good friends at school. He had only been at St. Norbert's for a year and a half and was still sort of 'the new kid.'

They had already gone a short way down the road when he realized it was a book he'd already read twice.

"Can we go back so I can get another?" he asked, looking at the dash clock. It was 10:45.

"I'm sorry Allen; we just don't have time. As it is, I'll be a little bit late; our meeting is for 11:00." But I won't be talking with Reverent Card for very long. I think I know what he is going to say."

"We can't stay in our apartment, can we?"

"Well, honey, you know that the apartment was ours because your dad was the handyman for the rectory and grade school."

Allen sniffed, "Yeah, I know." He looked at his mother and saw she was, once again on the verge of tears.

"Don't worry, Mom; we'll be okay. We've still a bit of summer left. I can get more lawn jobs and you can find a job somewhere." His mother had tried a smile and reached over to squeeze his shoulder.

"Yes, you're right, we'll manage somehow."

He had sounded a lot more reassuring than he felt. Now, with his mother in the closed-door office of the minister, his eyes smarted as he tried his best not to cry. Then, the wall he was looking at seemed, well, odd. He shook his head to clear his eyes, rubbed them with the backs of his hands, and looked again. The paneling in the wall 'shimmered' and the little knot hole near the baseboard looked like it "winked" at him.

He stared at the wall, uncomprehending. "Nah," he told himself. "Just an optical illusion." He opened his book but watched the wall above the top of his book.

He saw it again.

He put the book down on the bench. He walked across the small room and put his sneaker toe in front of the hole. A light from the hole shone on his foot. He bent down and put his index finger against the small space where the knot hole had popped out when the paneling had been installed. His fingertip barely fit in the space, but as he poked it in, the wood around it seemed to give. He wiggled his finger a bit and the hole widened, again, and yet again. He could have slid his whole hand in, had he dared.

He heard voices from behind him. His mother was talking to the minister from the open doorway.

He scooted across the room, slid onto the bench, and opened his book as she rounded the corner.

On the way home, his mother said, "Reverend Card is going to try to help me get a job. He knows I can type, keep accounts and stuff. So, he is going to wait a week to put ads out for a new caretaker."

"Great, mom," Allen said, hoping his words carried more cheer than his tone.

About ten days later, they returned to the rectory. As soon as his mother rounded the corner to the office, he walked over to the wall.

Again, he noticed a bit of light coming through the knot hole. He tried to put his eye to the hole and as he scooted down, he heard laughter – coming through the hole. Puzzled, he got up. Matching windows flanked the wall. He could see out both of them as they were old-fashioned windows that went nearly to the floor. He could tell that there was no outer building.

He'd been in the basement a couple of times with his dad. Spider webs, old lumber, and broken furniture. He remembered a few paint cans and a canvas drop cloth. There had only been one bare bulb in the middle of the ceiling.

He got on his knees and bent down to the hole again. The 'enlargement' had remained. He turned his head to the side and looked in with one eye. It looked like a birthday party! He put both of his index fingers in the hole and stretched them apart. The wood gave as though liquid. Soon the hole was about half as big as the lid of a five-gallon plastic bucket. The hole was a bit misshapen, like the original knot hole.

He slipped the toe of his sneaker in the hole and suddenly felt himself sliding through the hole. He landed with a small thud on clean checkerboard linoleum. Small bright lights adorned the ceiling and side tables. A large table to one side held a birthday cake, cut into serving squares, cookies, small cups with nuts, candies, and mints. There was a round cooler with ice cream in it and several toppings set out beside it for 'serve-yourself' convenience.

A young, brunette-haired lady approached him. "Hello there!" she said with a smile. "Oh, you don't have a plate yet." As she said this, she chose a colorful paper plate, and put a square of cake, a scoop of ice cream and a

handful of candies on it. She handed him the plate and a plastic spoon and said, "There you go!" and turned to take care of another guest.

In a daze, Allen ate the food, watching those around him engaging in party games, balloon contests and ogling the little pile of what must be the presents of the birthday child. A new bat, new sneakers, a computer game and a nerf gun were piled in a chair to one side.

He wandered across the room and found another little boy, sitting alone. He had red hair and freckles.

"Hi, I'm Allen Heart," he said.

"I'm Noel East," the boy replied and looked away. "And no, I wasn't born on Christmas, so don't ask," he added, belligerence in his voice."

"That's good because I wasn't born on Valentine's day."

Noel stared at him, not understanding.

"Allen *Heart*?" Allen said.

Noel looked at him, got it, and laughed. "Good one." He tipped his head to a side table and Allen saw a checker game laid out, ready to play.

Without a word, Allen moved a black checker. Noel moved a red one. They played two games, each winning one.

Someone blew a party favor horn. Suddenly, Allen looked up and said, "Sorry, I gotta go. My mom's waiting."

"Kay, bye." Noel said and looked a bit crestfallen.

Allen walked across the room and saw that there was a step stool below the small hole. He reached up and pulled on the hole and he slid up the wall like he was a fish swimming upstream. He landed on the floor with a final whoosh.

He stood, brushed off his pants and went back to the bench. He picked up his book just as his mother emerged from the pastor's office. Nervously he glanced at the wall opposite. It was just a wall.

"Okay, honey, we can go."

As they drove home, Allen glanced at the dashboard clock. It was 11:25. He stole an occasional glance at his mother. Did she know? Had she set it up? Would she be mad? Would he get to 'go there' again?

When his mom finally looked at him, she simply said, "Reverend Card said we can stay another month, till the new caretaker can take over. Till then, I'll work in the bakery with some of the nuns, and help clean the rectory.

Less than three weeks later, Reverend Card called his mom and asked if she could come back to his office. His mother looked very worried. Allen was very excited. They went in through the side entrance, and his mother went directly to the pastor's office.

Allen went to the wall with the knot hole. He gasped. "No!" The wood paneling had been removed and replaced by modern sheet rock, painted a pale ivory! The knot hole was gone! He put his hands on the wall where the knot hole had been. The paint was cool and not quite dry. "No, no!" he repeated. He finally found a friend and he was 'swallowed up' by carpenters. The world hated him; it wasn't fair.

His mother was back in only a few minutes. She was sort of smiling. They hurried to the car. Once they were buckled in, his mother started the engine, but didn't drive away.

"The best thing has happened," she blurted. "Allen, Reverend Card spoke to Benny, a friend of his who has a deli / bakery shop in Westlake. It is about 30 miles from here. He offered me a job! And there is an apartment above the shop that we can rent. AND he offers delivery. So, I can make extra money doing deliveries, and use the van whenever I need to.

"That's great mom," he said. But then she got very quiet.

"Okay mom, I know there is a 'but' coming. What's the hitch, no kids allowed?" he said grinning. "I have to go to an orphanage, right?"

"Well, no. But, honey, I am afraid it means changing schools again." She looked at him apologetically.

"No biggee, mom. You have to do all the work of getting us there and fixing up a new apartment, and working all week to keep me fed and in the sneakers that I've become accustomed to." He laughed and wiggled his feet, showing off sneakers with holes in the toes. "I think I'll survive a new school." He said it with gusto and convinced his mom. Now if only someone would convince him.

They packed for three days and used Benny's delivery van to move. It only took four trips and everything was in the new apartment by Friday night. Benny had even had it freshly painted for them and two of his nephews helped carry the big stuff up the stairs. Monday, he would start school at St. Ignatius.

His mom made spaghetti with meatballs their first night in their new home. It was his favorite.

That night, as he drifted off to sleep, the curtain waved in the breeze, creating a tiny shaft of light that hit the opposite wall of his room. He dreamed of giant checker boards and birthday cake.

Monday, his mom packed his lunch box with a sandwich, two juices, two deserts, and two bags of chips.

"Just in case you find someone to share with," she said, when he cocked his head in question at the overstuffed lunch box.

At noon, he walked in the line to the cafeteria, got his carton of milk, and looked around for somewhere to sit. It was "new guy syndrome" all over. None of the kids would even look up at him. No one moved over to make room. It seemed they all had built-in friendships and sat in pre-defined groups.

He was nearly to the end of the large room when he spied a young boy with an open checkerboard, laid out for play. He had pale skin and dark hair. There was no one in the seat across from him, and after a moment's hesitation, he sat down.

The boy said, "I'm Leon West."

"Allen Heart," he replied as he began to unload his lunch trove, looking for the sandwich.

"Were you born on Valentine's day, Mr. Heart?"

Allen playfully threw a bag of chips at him. Leon caught them, opened the bag, and slid a few into his mouth.

Without preamble, Allen moved a red checker. Leon moved a black one. Allen moved across the board and said, "King me." He looked up to see Leon reaching in his brown paper lunch bag. His mom had obviously written his name on it in a hurry. Upside down, it read, "noel."

"Want some cookies?" Allen asked. He slid the extra bag of treats across the table.

Maybe the *whole* universe didn't hate him, he thought.



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