

## Welcome from the Editor

by Beth L. Virtanen

Welcome to our first edition of *Kippis! Literary Journal*. *Kippis!* is the result of the natural outgrowth of our development of the Finnish North American Literature Association (FinNALA) whose mission it is to promote the creation, dissemination and study of Finnish North America Literature. A lot of work has gone into the planning of *Kippis!* by the members of FinNALA, the contributors to and editorial staff of the *FinNALA Newsletter*, and the new *Kippis!* editorial staff.

This planning began back in 2005 with early drafts of the online annotated bibliography of Finnish North American Literature which is housed on the FinNALA website, at [www.finnala.com](http://www.finnala.com). At that time and because of the initial interest in the work of FinNALA, it seemed that the organization might flourish and find other means of promoting this particular area of North American Literature.

*Kippis!* strives to extend awareness of the literature of descendants of Finnish people and Finnish immigrants in whichever country they may now reside. It does not limit itself, however, to publishing only the literature of Finns outside the confines of Finland. It actively seeks submissions from other ethnic

groups that do not currently reside in their places of origin or in the country from which their families originally migrated. Thus, an individual of Latvian extraction, for example, living and writing in the US, Canada or the UK may choose to and is most welcome to submit to *Kippis!* We believe that our collective voices juxtaposed against one another can contribute to our understanding of our multiethnic lives and experiences.

When the first grant to the Finlandia Foundation National was written, the intent was to reach the broadest audience possible so as to promote Finnish culture in America – one of the Foundation's major objectives. Opening *Kippis!* to the broad sweep of cultures meets that objective and allows *Kippis!* to play a major role in the task of bringing ethnic literature to a broader worldwide audience. We thank the Finlandia Foundation National for their support, and we hope that we will be able to grow into the challenges we face in welcoming a reading and writing public from across the globe.

Welcome to this first edition of *Kippis! Literary Journal*.

## Creative Writing Contest First-Place Winner

### *No Place for a Woman*

by Sirpa Kaukinen

"Bang!" The sound of the last shot was drowned by the steady "chug, chug, chug, , ," of the daily freight train as it sped past the small section house in the vast North American wilderness.

"You're dead!" she said, more to assure herself than the few hens that ran and flew in terrified disarray within the small hen house. She searched the reddish, furry body for signs of life but the fox lay dead, completely free of the mayhem it had caused. Sickened by the bloody sight, she stumbled outside to suck fresh air until the excitement of the past half hour slowly left her. Then, with one work-worn hand pressed against her pregnancy-swollen stomach, she sought for movement. Presently the baby within answered with a kick causing her to laugh with relief "you're all right." She was so used to talking to herself that it no longer surprised her. "Erik can clean up the fox." She tried to remember if she had left the hen house door unlatched and the fox had got in that way but she wasn't sure. She pushed the incident to the back of her mind.

Still clutching the gun in her hand,

she swayed awkwardly up the snowy path leading to the section house. Pausing once she eyed the innocent land which held her in isolation.

"After the baby comes I'll move to town."

She knew her time to be soon.

"I can't come back here but how will I tell Erik?"

She thought about her problems as she returned to her interrupted supper preparations.

Two years in the wilderness had taught her the beginnings of physical survival but often left her afraid and homesick for the old country. Added to that were all the unknowns with the coming baby.

"Don't go out there! It's no place for a woman!" The stationmaster's wife, Ruth Brown had said, when she had climbed into the boxcar with Erik two years ago. She had smiled, not understanding the English words, but repeating them to herself and to Erik, she had asked him later what he thought they meant.

"I know the words but I don't know what she means," was his short reply.

She knew Erik had been lucky in finding steady work as a section man along the railway when unemployment was a way of life for most immigrants in the early thirties. The choice had been hers: to live in town like most women did or to go with him and she had chosen to go with him. It had been enough for the two of them, but the baby would need more.

"How can I bring a baby here?" She surveyed the familiar kitchen more critically than usual. Dominated by an ugly, pot-bellied stove in the middle, the room was small but warm. Heat traveled all the way to the far corners of the two bedrooms on either side, one belonging to her and Erik and the other to the three men who worked with him. They had plenty of wood and coal brought in by the train, enough to keep a good fire in the section house and a small one in the hen house. Crude cupboards on one wall of the kitchen held her dishes and pots while a rough table and four uneven chairs leaned against the other wall. A window let in the afternoon sunlight which cast a yellow square on the worn wooden floor.

She thought about all they had done in the past two years; dug a root vegetable garden; protected it with a primitive fence and a gate. They had fashioned the small hen house from left-over boards and dragged an old heater in it to give some heat for the hens in the winter. She had gone to town on the train and bought a few chicks from a farm near there. After the eggs had started coming

she had baked bread every week. Erik had also built a makeshift sauna from the same boards and she had heated it twice a week to keep everyone clean. Early in the summer she had made twig-brooms for sweeping the floors and paths neat.

But the baby would need more. She found it hard to define what the more was, but more safety and security for sure. There were just too many dangers like the fox and the bear she had seen a few times by the far-off blueberry patch.

"We'll go to town Saturday or Sunday and I'll have to tell Erik tonight that I won't be coming back here anymore," she said to herself.

Then she walked over to her usual place by the window to wait for the handcar that Erik and the men used for work to come into view.

"It's cold today, Anna, it's going to be a really cold night!" Erik commented as he came in and stamped the snow off his boots.

"Damn cold," Bill continued, "even for January!"

"I know it's cold. I've been outside. I shot a fox today!" she started to tell Erik in their own language.

"A fox!" Erik said to her and turned to tell the men in English: "You hear that? She killed a fox!"

She almost regretted having said anything as she realized he added up the fox as one more skill on her side in coping with the wilderness.

"I don't know if it's so good. I think it just proves how wild it is here. How can I bring a baby here, Erik? I think it's better for me and the baby in town."

She carried the pot to the table and started to ladle out the stew, first to Erik, then to Bill, Charlie and Len, leaving herself last.

"But you're doing so well Anna! You've got your garden and the hens and now you can shoot too!" Erik continued while the men ate in silence.

She saw a small fear creeping into his eyes and tempering the tone of his voice.

"And who will cook?"

"I don't care who cooks! You can all start cooking! I miss home and everyone there and it's not safe for the baby."

She lifted the bottom of her apron to wipe the starting tears.

"Well, if that's what you want. I'll take you to town. Saturday we'll go looking for a room. But think about it more."

"No! I can't think about it any more! I want to go Saturday so I can get ready for the baby."

She made her voice calm although she felt agitated inside.

"Saturday then." She could see Erik's eyes becoming sad as he resumed eating.

Bill changed the conversation to work.

"The track is bad. So much snow and ice everywhere, Erik. It's this weather, warm last week and cold as hell now!"

"I know it's like that. We just have to make sure the track is clear and get the snow and ice off. We'll go and clean up the fox, Anna."

She rushed out ahead of him.

"Are you sick?" Erik's anxious eyes scanned her face after she had thrown up her supper.

"No, I just don't feel good. It must be me thinking about the mess with the fox." She straightened herself.

"You okay Anna?" Charlie asked from the open doorway.

"I'm okay." She left most of the English-talking to Erik but now she felt brave enough to reply: "I'm okay. I just think about the fox."

"Well something like that can sure make you sick." Charlie agreed.

"Not the baby?" Erik still demanded.

"Not the baby" she replied curtly. The very thought made her uneasy. It was only evening. The train wouldn't be passing by until the next afternoon. She made her way back into the house while the men went to clean the hen house.

"It's a bit cleaner now," Erik reported on their return.

She kept on washing the dishes and made no reply.

She saw the men return to their room to play cards and to drink a few secret shots of whisky from the bootleg bottle she knew they kept there. Life was lonely for them. Weekdays were spent working near the section house and only Sundays in town with their families. The fact that Erik's life would soon be similar didn't bother her now. Once she had chosen him but things were changing.

It was dark and fiercely cold outside when she made her last trip to the

outhouse. Glad to be back in the warmth of the bedroom she snuggled her body close to Erik's sleeping one and fell into a fitful sleep. In her dream she was back in the old country, back in her own bed with her family preparing for the imminent birth of her baby. Their soothing voices and kind caresses calmed her contractions so that she floated freely from pain to pain until a sorely strong one jolted her back to the new country, back to the little section house, thirty miles from anywhere. Fully awake now she stared at the alarm clock on the steamer trunk.

The next pain came at three-thirty.

"Erik, I can't have the baby here!"

She whispered loudly.

"What? Why are you up?"

"I think the baby is coming!"

"You said about three more weeks?"

"What will we do Erik? I can't wait for the freight train!"

"We'll have to go with the handcar. I'll get Bill. The track is empty for the whole night."

"Well the baby is in a hurry, eh Anna?" She could see Bill's nervous eyes in between his upturned jacket collar and his furry hat.

"Let's get some clothes on!" Erik said to her and "Bill, get blankets!"

A new contraction caught her in its grip. After it was over Erik helped her put her clothes, her parka and her boots on. The threesome hurried outside. He lifted her onto the handcar and she grabbed the stationary steel column in the middle with both hands. Bill put the lit lantern down on the opposite side from her and the men

at both ends started pumping the heavy handcar into motion.

"Come on! Let's go then! Let's go Bill! Let's go!" Erik shouted.

It was hard to see with the lantern light flickering and streaming in the darkness, but she felt the rolling movement of the handcar and the heavy rumble of the wheels along the track. Slowly at first and then with increasing speed they started towards town.

She clenched her chattering teeth together but the pains tore through her now; clutching her completely for a time, then casting her aside only to grab her again at the very moment she dared relax. The cruel cold cut through her clothing and fear of what was coming next kept her constant company. But she didn't scream, not until a sudden gush of water from within wet her stockings, then she cried: "Erik, the baby will die!"

"Anna, we'll get there. It'll soon be morning." Erik's voice sounded breathless and far away.

But she couldn't comprehend his words as the contractions ground away any hope of reaching town in time. She could only hang on with near-frozen hands.

It was early morning when the two men dragged her past the shocked faces of the stationmaster and his wife into their house near the town station.

"Get Dr. Randall! Down the street! You know the house!"

Stationmaster Brown's orders shot Erik out and shortly back with the doctor.

"The poor girl! I said to her, don't go out there! It's no place for a woman!"

Thank goodness you're here Dr. Randall!" Ruth Brown's words were cut short as the door closed behind him.

Anna grasped at the doctor's hands; she grunted and pushed until a final bursting pain released the baby from her body. Then she heard the small cry that cracked the morning air and felt something small and alive being placed next to her before she lost consciousness.

It seemed much later in the day when she woke to find Ruth Brown sitting beside the bed.

"The baby is fine. A big girl! I still can't believe it! You coming on that handcar with the men! Erik is gone to look for a room. I'll bring the baby in."

Anna smiled at the tiny female replica of Erik's face the woman placed beside her. "She looks like Erik. . . ."

"But of course they do. All firstborns look like their Dad! They say women think of the man they love when they expect the first time. God knows you're too busy to bother with that the next times around! As I was saying, you'll like it here in town. Now, I'll take the baby and you go to sleep!"

Erik dropped in to say that he had found a room. "I'll see you on Sunday" left things unfinished between them.

By the weekend several women had been to see her and the baby and she had begun to feel out of place in the Brown's home. It was with relief that she greeted Erik's familiar face on Sunday.

"Erik, I hope you didn't pay for the room?"

"Why? No. She said it'd be okay to pay when you moved in. I didn't have any money. You know the rush we left in. . . ."

She smiled; remembering the night which now seemed far away in the past.

"Erik. I've been thinking all week. I don't need the room. I'm not staying in town."

"Anna, can you mean that? After that crazy night? We'll learn how to cook and clean. The garden will have to go and I guess we'll eat the hens but I can see it's safer for you and the baby in town!"

She didn't know if she would get the words right, but she started to tell him about the rough, untamed country that kept calling her back.

She wanted to return and grow strong beside Erik and the future to come. Together they would teach their children everything they knew and give them a sure start in life. She would confront them both, the memories of the past and the unknown of the future. That wild ride on the handcar had carried her and her child to a new place of independence and freedom. She understood now that fear would always be there and that life would always be full of danger and insecurity. Once the fear was faced and overcome, however, life would open up with new and rich possibilities.

She didn't really need many words to say what she wanted to tell him: "Erik, the baby needs us both. We have to face the future together. And you're not eating my hens. Not after I saved them from the fox!"

# Creative Writing Contest

## Third-Place Winner

### Three Poems

by Kathryn Benninghoff

#### *Winter War*

Third Place, *Kippis!*  
Creative Writing Contest

You were a Finn in your white snowsuit,  
swirling like smoke among the birches  
on soundless skis.

The Soviets never saw you. Or heard you.

You were a phantom  
curling around one flank and another,  
leaving only a pine scent in your tracks.

You were a Finn on a tank-hunt,  
lobbing alcohol and tar, resin and kerosene  
into the hatches. Broiled Russians, some say.

You held a morphine ampoule in your mouth  
to keep it from freezing in sub-zero  
temperatures  
and to stave off madness.  
You were a Finn in musicality,  
wiring trees and cottages, bridges and  
dunghills  
with a canny ear for crescendo.

You knew that hell is cold, not hot.  
The blood of the wounded froze like grease

in the barrels of Russian guns.

You were a Finn when you sharp-shot,  
downing waves of Ukrainians who crawled  
forward on the bodies of the dead and dying.  
And you were a Finn in your shock,  
when you were treated for the horror  
of killing your neighbor.

However ruthless.

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#### *Grandpa Verner's Skis*

Third Place, *Kippis!*  
Creative Writing Contest

Occasionally, say late on a February  
afternoon, when pink light bends  
around Bear Peak and slices  
through the blinds' open slats,  
illuminating the Finnish skis  
on my wall

Warming the old resin into  
a piney prickle of animation,  
I swear those skis unbolt  
themselves from their studs

and return, like freed convicts,  
to the mountain's fall line.

Ash whispers to spruce, spruce  
to hickory, hickory to birch;  
Verner's skis long to feel the snow's  
cold caress along their grainy  
rifts and ache to flatten their  
hand-carved cambers.

Rooted trees no longer, free  
and immortal, they lose themselves  
in rebellion; no more symbols of  
eco-righteousness or someone's  
idea of interior decor, they simply  
yearn for the headlong descent—

A downwards rush in parallel  
helices. Imagine Gallen-Kallela  
responsive to gravity, yet locating  
pockets of resistance and sweeping  
vertically along a canvas with two  
paintbrushes in his right hand.

There they go, sliding in tandem  
along the declivity in a burst of  
liberation and giggly defiance,  
smelling of nuts and spicy needles.  
No baseball bat or Williamsburg  
chair, these skis. No Christmas tree.

Just a naughty old pair of wooden  
telemarks that like to give themselves  
a whirl on a winter afternoon before  
they skulk home, these co-conspirators,  
and hang again despondently  
while dreaming of snow.

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### *Aino Swims*

"now she drew back, flopped back, was  
lost from the water's surface"

--*The Kalevala*, 5:140-141

I didn't dress for you, old man.  
Not for you these red ribbons  
in my hair. Not for you my beaded  
necklace. Not for you these rings  
on my fingers. Not for you.  
Not for you the roseate flush  
on my maiden's cheeks as I stand  
inside a forest sunshaft. Not for  
you my body, warmed by the  
gathering of birch whisks.

Not for you. I will not slide  
along your aged frame like a  
drop of cool water. I will not  
sleep entangled in your wizard's  
tresses or your shaman's dreams.

Not for me the taste on my lips  
of your sour songs. Not for me  
the scratch of your white  
beard and its lonely smell of  
twigs and beer.

Better the blue-black depths  
of fishy streams. I'll just slip  
down the shore grass here and  
let my ribs sliver into the sharp  
filigree of salmon bones.

Better this torsional movement,  
this raw muscularity, this coral-  
colored flame beneath the surface  
which will singe your fingertips  
and elude you like happiness.

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## *Minerva*

by Mary Caraker

“Charles O’Riley,” he said, extending a plump hand. “Call me Charlie.” The smile that wreathed his round, florid face was patently insincere, and I allowed him only the tips of my fingers.

He appeared unfazed by the rebuff. “And you must be Minerva. Quite the little lady, aren’t you? Can I call you Minnie?”

“No. My name is Minerva.” My tone was as cold as my father’s had been all the times he had had to forestall the otherwise inevitable Minnie Mouse jokes. “I’ll tell Mother you’re here.”

I left him standing, foolishly holding the bouquet of daisies. Mother knew he had arrived, so I didn’t go up to her room. She had sent me to answer the door, purposely leaving me no alternative but to meet him. I had been avoiding it for weeks.

*How could she?* Yes, it had been a year, and granted, she was lonely, but like me she had her memories to sustain her. The fact that the boor with the cheap flowers shared Father’s name was in itself an insult. Though Father, of course, was never “Charlie.” Charles Courtney Pemberton, Ph.D. Head of the Classics Department at the University. Handsome. Distinguished. To even consider replacing him with this—this “good-time Charlie”

was inconceivable! The man had “salesman” written all over him. Proprietor of a hardware store! Hammers and wrenches and paint cans instead of rare books and engravings! Couldn’t she at least have found someone in the same mold as Father?

I excused myself and slipped away, into Father’s study. It had been my one sanctuary this last year. Nothing was changed there—I wouldn’t allow it. I ran my fingers over the scarred top of the antique desk that had been in his family for generations. His pens were still in their tarnished silver holders, his beloved *Cicero* open where he had left it. I only moved it at night when I struggled with my translations. The Latin was difficult without a teacher, but I knew he would want me to continue on my own. Mother thought it was morbid for a fifteen-year-old girl to shut herself up for hours in a dusty room, but it was the one place I felt his presence most strongly.

Mother had gradually made changes in the rest of the house. The heavy purple drapes in the living room had been replaced with flimsy curtains, the faded Bokhara rugs with bright synthetic florals, the walls painted. She even bought a television set. The only traces of Father that remained were in his study. Is it any wonder I fought with Mother to preserve

it?

Our meals had changed as well, with meat appearing several times a week. I, of course, never touched it. Mother sighed at my thinness, but I refused her sugary pastries, too, sharing Father's abstemious tastes.

I am still wearing black. Mother never did wear proper mourning, even at the funeral. She said it was no longer obligatory, but to me it showed a lack of feeling. Of course, I had always been closer than she to Father. "My little scholar," he called me. "My Minerva."

I heard Mother coming down the stairs, and just in time I returned to the living room to sit stiffly opposite Charlie.

Mother entered, smiling. "So, have you two gotten acquainted?" Without waiting for an answer she twirled in her red dress, which was both too low-cut in front and too short. "We're going dancing!"

"Have fun," I muttered as I fled back to the study.

It was no longer a refuge. I

imagined Charlie invading it with his hardware catalogs and invoices and the computer he had promised to teach Mother to use.

She would be miserable. She couldn't see it now, but she was on the verge of a ghastly mistake that only I could prevent.

I waited up for Mother. She stared first in shocked disbelief, then in horror when I told her about the groping hands, the attempted kiss. "It was just before you came down. I wanted to tell you then, but...he was there, and I was so embarrassed."

Mother choked back tears as she attempted to comfort me. "I never would have thought it of him! Not in a million years! I'm so sorry; so terribly sorry."

I could hear her crying far into the night. I knew it wasn't for me, but for herself. I allowed myself no pity or regrets. She would thank me later, when she realized the favor I had done her.

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[www.finlandia.edu](http://www.finlandia.edu)

The English major prepares students to work in positions in writing, editing, grant production; in the arts; and in education, business, government, and social services. It also prepares students for graduate study in English, Writing, Communication, TESOL and English Education.



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# Awakening...

## On the Twenty-Ninth Day

by Don Hagelberg

(For Neil Scott; With Thanks To Karen Batchelor)

I  
“Awakening...”

He wakes and opens his eyes. Blackness oozes in. He makes out a dim light. It is above him and to his right. He tries to sit up. Too hard! Cement is beneath him. His left hand feels along his side: a zipper. He’s in a sleeping bag. He unzips the bag past his left hip and tosses the top to his right.

Cold!

What had happened? Yet another time of not knowing what he had done before.

He needs a drink. He turns over and on hands and knees crawls out of the bag. Where are his shirt and pants? He crawls. He feels a low table: a coffee table. He crawls around it...then a couch.

Sleeping on the couch would have been more comfortable.

Around the couch he bumps into a smaller table. The square of light is a curtained window. He feels the curtains behind the side table.

A lamp? Yes! He balances on his knees. His hand travels up the cord to the switch which he clicks on.

Not my underwear on! These are boxers. Looking at his hand, he sees that his fingernails are clean. Nails, even clipped. He looks at the room. Concrete block walls painted light green. Brown curtains go, somehow, with the green walls. The beige shag rug in the kitchenette finishes off the room.

A hard-backed chair stands next to the couch. His clothes, though? Where? He shakes. He has on someone else’s shorts. He looks at the top of the table. There lays the familiar, metal disk. A pair of strange sandals rest underneath the coffee table.

He stands up and glances behind the couch. Where are his clothes? He looks at the small refrigerator. Would beer be in there? He opens it. Cola drinks. But no beer! He opens the doors of the overhead cabinets. Nothing to drink! Where are his clothes? Where is the booze?

A door to the left of the refrigerator opens. A man with a gray-white long-flowing beard and hair stands in the door frame. He looks like a longer-haired version of the old man in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*.

“I’m glad to see that you’re alive.”  
The man speaks English with a European accent.

He responds, cautiously, “As a favor, Mister, tell me where I am?”

But instead Mister asks, “Do you remember last night? On the bus?”

“The autobus?”

“Yes. You were drunk again...trying to get to town....”

“We’re in town? Are we close to the bridge over the river, Caliente?”

Mister answers, “No, at least I don’t think so. Last night was the third time I’ve seen you drunk on the bus. You know the driver almost didn’t let you get on the bus.”

“That was last night. Where are my clothes today? Now?”

“They’re in the clothes’ dryer, next to the water heater in the back hall.” Mister points at the door. “They should be dry.”

He points at the boxers, “Who owns these?”

“Those are mine. Yours are in the dryer.”

“Who took them off me?”

“I explained about the sleeping bag being clean and you volunteered.”

“Volunteered?”

“You said that you would take a shower.”

He asks, “Did you do sexual things to me?”

Mister responds, “Do things?”

“Did you make a woman out of me?”

“Mister said, “I don’t understand.”

“Did you put yourself into me?”

“Voi, voi, no. I’m not a homosexual.”

He heatedly retorts, “But you would be doing it to ME! I would be the homosexual.”

“I don’t have sex with men. Come to think of it, I haven’t had sex with a woman in a while, either.” Mister laughs.

He walks to the back hall and disappears.

“Sometimes you have to say a prayer with that dryer.”

“I do everything all right,” the voice booms out from the back hall and echoes off the room’s light-green walls.

Mister walks backed into his bedroom and after four or five minutes, reappears, dressed in brown slacks and a sweatshirt.

He, then, walks back into the room in thrift-store pants, in a thrift-store shirt and jacket, holding the boxers by their waist band.

He asks, “Where should I put these?”

“Leave them on top of the washer.”

He disappears again, into the hall but reappears in a moment.

“What about my tennis shoes?”

“They smelled too bad. I gave you an old pair of my sandals. They’re underneath the coffee table.”

“I have to go now. I am sick. I shake.” He walks to the coffee table.

Looking at his wrist watch, Mister says, “Its four o’clock and cold outside. How do you stay alive at the bridge when it’s so cold?”

“You know about under the bridge?”

“You told me about not having money for a place to sleep and because of that; you sleep under the bridge somewhere. You told me...you said it twice, three times. Do you think you could hold-down some food, some breakfast?”

“If you could give me a drink of something, beer, wine, whiskey for the chill and the shaking”...just until the store opens?”

“Last night you said that you’d try not to drink. You said you’d be willing to do things for me...shop, clean and I’d help you to stop drinking. And for your help, you could sleep here, in the front room.”

“I said that?”

“Remember the medallion?”

“Medallion?”

“The round, metal coin I gave you a long time ago?”

“You gave me money to stop drinking? Did I beg?”

“Not money.” Mister walks from the bedroom door to the coffee table.

“This!” Mister pulls the bronze metal disk, the size of a fifty-cent piece, off of the top of the table.

“The disk? You gave me the disk? What is it?” He sits down on the hard backed chair.

“I gave you that medallion, the first time I saw you, drunk, get on the bus. You almost passed out. The driver and I helped you off. She wanted to kick you off much sooner, but didn’t. I put the medallion into your hand and said, ‘Por usted.’ I hope that it is good Spanish. It is about all I know in Spanish.” Mister sits

down on the couch next to the hard backed chair.

He says, “I don’t remember.”

“Maybe it’s true. What you learn when you’re drunk, you can only remember when you’re drunk again?” Mister laughs.

“No laugh from me. I don’t remember. What is this coin anyway?”

“It’s a medallion which they give to people who don’t drink for twenty-four hours. My last one was for twenty-five years.”

“You get paid for not drinking? But I didn’t stop drinking!” He shivers.

“We talked. You told me about coming to the vineyards to make money. You sent for your woman. You started to drink. Finally you couldn’t care for either her or your son. They went back.”

“I talk too much when I’m drunk. What else did I tell?”

“You sang a ‘special’ song to me: ‘Ship of Gold.’ The song you use to hear broadcast on radio from the North when you were a youngster.”

“That song is too sweet. I can’t sing it when I’m sober. It makes me sick.”

“You also told me last night...”

“It’s too sweet.” He shakes.

Mister gets up from the couch and walks to the kitchenette. He opens the tilting hamper. With an aluminum scoop, Mister shovels flour to the sides of the hamper and takes out a whiskey bottle.

“Then you do drink! You haven’t been dry for twenty years!”

“I don’t drink anymore. I keep this for new comers, so that they won’t shake

themselves to death when they try to stop.  
This bottle has about one more shot left.  
Do you mind drinking from a jam-glass?"

"Jam-glass is bueno. Fine."

Mister pours the whiskey into the jam-glass.

"A little more than a shot. I'll get more when you need it. It'll keep the shakes down. New comers think that you have to keep all alcohol away from someone who's drying out. Old timers know that you feed the shakers a little, so they don't die from convulsions. The shakes should go in a while. But you'll have to wait until eight when the store opens for more."

"Use both hands! Don't spill that stuff on the floor!"

"I sang you 'Ship of Gold'? What else?"

"You said that the coyotes got your woman across. Then you bought papers for yourself at a farm. The papers proved that you were in the country before the dead date for the legalization of seasonal farm workers."

"I really was too drunk when I said that. Too macho. Too big mouth. I threw up too much."

"You didn't throw up at all."

He says, "I mean I talked like throw up. No control. I could get sent back if you tell."

Mister responds, "I'm interested in keeping you sober."

"So immigration can arrest me?"

"If I was interested in having you arrested, I would have done that last night."

"Then why?"

"So you'd sober up."

"Yes?"

He sits down in the straight backed chair to the side of the couch next to Mister.

## II

"...On The Twenty Ninth Day"

He can't remember. Yet again. Another day without a memory! He doesn't hear a thing. And with only one more day until the first month's anniversary of sobriety.

He opens his eye-lids. White! Only white! This is what Mister said about a spiritual experience! Others said that the white light was a close-to-death moment. But he didn't feel peaceful? It's difficult to breathe. Why should it be difficult to breathe, if I'm dead?

He crosses his eyes. In the center is a light brown nose. He isn't dead or near death.

He said, "I live!"

"Yes?" Mister said almost as if answering to his own name. "Yes? Mister said leaning over. "It's me."

"I thought that I was having the spiritual experience that Pannenburg had. You know the spiritual experience...because I could only see white. Not the educational experience like Moltmann. And all the time I was simply looking at the white ceiling, the white curtains around the bed. Where am I?"

"You're in Intensive Care...in a hospital. And don't use last names outside the fellowship. Use first names. People can overhear."

He looks at Mister. "You lied to me."

"Lied?" Mister repeats.

"You told me that you were never near the bridge, but I walked through the park yesterday and I walked where I used to drink."

"You said 'bridge' I didn't know that you meant the highway overpass on top of the river. Little John explained this to me."

"Little John?"

"Juanito!" Mister takes the control box and heightens the bed's back so that the two of them speak on level terms.

"Young John! That's Juanito. But I went with Juanito to under the overpass at the river. I saw where your cardboard mattress was. Oh! They kicked and stomped on your hands and feet. You've bled through the bandages a couple of times already.

"But Juanito was in the crowd that beat me up. I remember!"

"You remember. We've been hoping that you'd remember. That's good."

"We hoped?"

"Yes! What do you remember?"

Mister places the control on the bed.

"I remember walking around the park first of all...the way we go to the grocery store. On the way back, I took a short cut through the park. When I got to the barbecue-pit, in-between the path to the bathrooms and the path to the children's sand box, I saw them."

"They were doing the same old things: eating the food and drinking the

beer we got with the money we begged." He hesitates. His eyes open.

"Yes?" Mister says.

"They called me a name and they said to me to give them the beer I was carrying. I carried the shopping bag of yours full; of cola drinks and groceries. Stupid! They don't know the difference between cola drink bottles and beer bottles."

"And they told you to hand the beer over?"

"Yes and Bull was real drunk and yelled at me when I didn't do it. When I wouldn't, he opened his knife and ...I don't remember any more...."

"Juanitio told me what happened."

"But Juanito was yelling at me too. 'Hand over the beer here!' Funny rhyme, In Spanish: 'beer' with 'head?'"

"Bull stabbed you. The twenty-four hour medallion in your chest pocket stopped the blade from cutting your heart. But the knife skipped off the medallion and chipped one of your ribs. Then it went inside. The crazy thing was that it didn't cut any organ. Just chipped your rib and punctured your lung. Juanito says that when you fell, they stomped on you and then rolled you through the blackberry bushes down into the drainage ditch. You hit your head on something or someone kicked you. That is why you have a head bandage. Both your hands got stomped and scratched."

He touches the head-bandage with the bandaged right hand. "Ah!"

"Juanito took your pruning shears after you fell. He was drunk. He ran away like the rest, but kept an eye on you from

the tennis courts. When you didn't climb out of the ditch, he walked back. He climbed down the drainage ditch, stuck the shears back in your holster and then phoned Emergency. The fire department ambulance people had a time lifting you out of the ditch. The crew found the letter from your wife with my address...our address...on it and got in touch with me. Juanito's outside. He said he should have done something..."

"Let him go to hell. You and I, we threw away our women. They swam away on a river of beer. You haven't gotten yours back. Mine waits to curse me. Mine won't come back until she knows that I'm not telling lies. How is there proof for that? My boy was never able to bring friends to our house. Then I couldn't work. Then they were gone. Damn Juanito. Tell him this Mister. I wasn't drunk this time. It wasn't my fault. You tell him that he's a bastard."

Master passes through the break in the curtains which surround the bed and in a few moments returns.

"Juanito won't come in to see you today. He'll ask you again tomorrow. You know, Juanito is staying with us. Right now, he's using your sleeping bag. We'll buy another sleeping bag for you when you're able to come back home. You'll get the couch again. Juanito will get an air mattress. We'll have to buy one tomorrow, maybe.

"Did I have payroll money on me?"

"No money was in your wallet."

"I could have paid you for your loan of money to buy my shears and shears

holster for pruning. Maybe I'll have to find another job? Does my manager know?"

"I phoned. You're all right. He said that you're a good worker when sober. You worked for him before?"

"He fired me for drinking in the vines during pruning. The stupid one only caught me once." He laughs.

A nurse enters holding a clipboard. "Well if it isn't 'ME-nah' 'Aylane.'" It's nice to see you again. Things are different now that you're not the one in Intensive Care." Do you still exercise? You know how important it is for you to exercise that heart muscle of yours."

The nurse tends to her patient..."And HAY-Zeus! I saw you wake up on my monitor, but thought I'd give you a couple of minutes before I dropped in. We were expecting you to be conscious soon."

"I walked all the way to the highway overpass at the river with a friend. Is that far enough to exercise for my heart?" Mister says to the nurse's back.

From the bandaged head comes, "Minna Ellen!" Your name is two girl's names."

"The way you pronounce it, it comes out two girls' names. The way I say it, it comes out the fact that I live."

The nurse checks the drip solution to the patient's left arm. "Things are working out beautifully here. We'll try something solid tonight, 'Custard!'" She leaves.

I thought if you know my name it would frighten you away."

“HAY-zeus! ‘ZEUS,’ the head of the Greek gods!”

“Wrong God, ‘ME-nah’ ‘AY-lane!””

Mister tosses a shiny something onto the bed close to the bandaged head, “Por favor, por usted,” Mister says.

“What’s this?” He picks it up. “This is a thirty-day medallion. That won’t happen until tomorrow!”

“I picked it up for you on the last Friday of the month meeting. Today is the third of February. Tonight will make the eleventh night that you’ve been here. Don’t worry. I’ll go shopping tomorrow for another sleeping bag and an air mattress. Soon you’ll have enough strength to leave.” Mister laughs.

“You know...someday soon I’ll be sailing away in a copper coffin. You’ll have to be ready to take my place,” Mister laughs again.

Mister turns to leave. Over his shoulder he says, “Kippis?”

“Salute!” is the response he says as he crosses his eyes.

--



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## Three Poems

by Ernest Hekkanen

### *Valley of Lost Souls*

They call this mountainous trench  
the Valley of Lost Souls,  
and during the long months of winter,  
when the sun only briefly rises  
above peaks that scrape the sky,  
it is easy to believe that souls  
were once abandoned here.

Only a short while ago,  
upon glancing up from the journal  
where I pen my cinereous thoughts,  
I spied a figure sailing past the window,  
a grey emanation trailing scarves of fog,  
her face as freshly beatific  
as one of those nuns in Gauguin's  
painting,

*The Vision After the Sermon*  
(*Jacob Wrestling with the Angel*).

As she scudded past the twilit pane,  
majestic but diaphanous in her presence,  
she sang something in contralto,  
no words but lots of somber warbling,  
her pale eyes peering into mine,  
as though she hoped to find  
an insight dwelling there.

Maybe she was one of those lost souls  
purported to wander the length  
of this craggy vale confined by stone:  
you know, a ghostly alpine siren of some

kind,  
one who coaxes weary mountaineers  
to step into the beauty of it all.

--

### *Bones that Sing*

This morning my bones sang me awake,  
and instantly, in the space between sleep  
and the world we dream into existence,  
I saw the frail visage of my mother

in her final years, when she resembled,  
in all her angular precision, a prisoner  
released from a death camp in Europe.  
Bones swathed in parchment-thin flesh,

that's all she seemed to be, when I stooped  
to lift her from the floor in the bathroom,  
where she had jackknifed beside the toilet,  
pajamas pulled halfway up to her thighs.

A crushed carcass unable to use either  
arms  
or legs to lever herself, I found it hard to  
believe  
a 61-year-old woman could weigh so little.  
A mere feather, she was, when I lifted her  
body

in arms that trembled from emotional  
exertion.  
Her right eyebrow was bleeding from a

gash

sustained when she had genuflected  
against the baseboard, and now a smile  
writhed like a flame on her lips.

“I’m staying alive for your father’s sake,”  
she told me, her tongue clacking  
like dry grasshopper legs. “He won’t know  
what to do with himself, once I have died.”

In her final years, my mother became an  
altar  
at which my father, an avowed atheist,  
prayed for scientific miracles to occur.  
Parkinson’s was a god with an unholy  
grip.

--

### *Journeys We Must Take*

I.

A single sailboat out on the lake  
grey waves lapping against the red hull  
a bell tinkling high on the mast  
no sail to catch the frozen breeze  
no one seemingly on board  
the boat drifting, twisting slightly,  
trailing a rope in the gentle waves  
mist lifting like an unsteady veil  
revealing the face of the world.

The sight produces a sense of alarm  
as I stand on the shore all alone,  
snow turned to ice under my boots.  
Did the boat break loose from its  
moorings?  
Did the captain fall to a watery death?  
For some reason, the boat reminds me of  
my father  
lying statuesque in a wooden casket  
his large fingers zippered shut at his waist  
his eyes staring one last time  
at a sky so luminous it shrieks.

II.

A single sailboat lulls on the lake,  
a bell ringing high on the mast.  
I can’t urge my feet to move on.  
I simply stand there, in the snow,  
staring at the fire-red hull.  
Across the lake on the distant shore,  
in the tall green of mammoth firs,  
a column of smoke unwinds toward the  
sky  
joining a lengthy scarf of fog  
that snakes perpetually north  
through bluish mountains.

In the last year of his life,  
in the deepest throes of loneliest dementia,  
my father would behave metaphorically.  
In pajamas and trench coat,  
he would insist on being driven  
south to a hospital in Seattle.  
“It’s urgent,” he would say,  
his face cranky with alarm,  
the kind I remembered from my youth  
when the chainsaw refused to start.  
“There’s a little boy who’s badly injured.  
We have to make sure he’s all right.”

One trip around the island of trees  
standing tall in front of the house  
and back into the waiting carport  
was enough to make his alarm cease—  
anyway until the next day,  
when alarm would call him out again.

III.

Sometimes my father would sit in the  
passenger seat,  
ranting, wondering why no one understood  
the urgent need to save the boy  
who had fallen into a mine shaft  
who was floundering at the swimming  
hole  
who had fallen off a cliff  
who had broken his leg in the outback

of sagebrush-strewn Wyoming  
 where he had scampered in bare feet  
 as an optimistic youth.

Out on the lake in the lulling waves  
 the red sailboat continues to drift  
 a rope trailing in the water behind it  
 nobody's hand on the tiller  
 and now,  
 with a spasm descending to my feet  
 my legs take me home again,

completing the circular path  
 I will take tomorrow and the day after that  
 with or without the red sailboat  
 adrift on the lake.

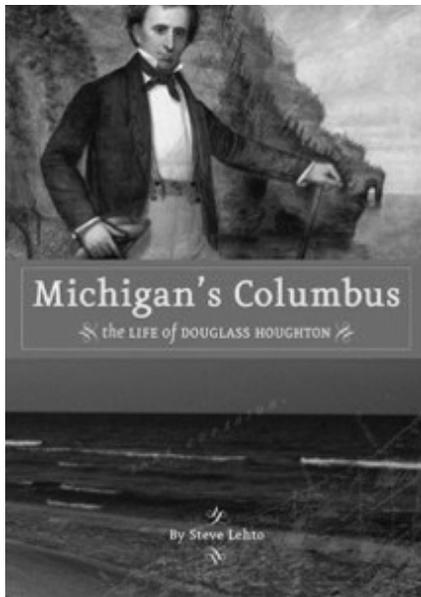
In the last year of his life  
 my father behaved metaphorically.  
 Even in the deepest throes of dementia  
 he understood there was one last journey  
 he had yet to take.

--

## *Michigan's Columbus*

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Steve Lehto is a writer, historian and attorney of Finnish descent. His family has roots in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Lehto obtained a B.A. in history from Oakland University and his J.D. from Southwestern University School of Law in Los Angeles. He is also an adjunct professor at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law in Detroit, where he teaches consumer protection and trial practice. He previously wrote *Bobby Isaac: What Speed Looks Like* and *A Most Unusual Experiment: Chrysler's Turbine Car*, both published by Tarheel Press, LLC. and *Death's Door: The Truth Behind Michigan's Largest Mass Murder*, published by Momentum Books.

## A Poem

by Hazel Lauttamus Birt

### *The Finns in the Valley*

Honorable Mention

*Kippis!* Creative Writing Contest

I need healing.

I'm homesick and ill longing to  
go to my Finns in the Valley.

Poplar trees will line the  
twisting  
country road and white tail deer  
be  
grazing in the fields.

My people will be waiting to hold me.  
Gently they'll tease me in Finnish,  
"If a sauna and coffee won't cure you  
nothing will!"

We'll walk through the woods to see  
the wood smoke rise from the log  
sauna.

Sitting on wooden benches we'll throw  
rainwater on the red hot rocks.

Steam will rise like incense, sweep over and  
warm me through and through,  
enter my pores and purify my being.

Senika will scrub my back with homemade  
soap and pour warm rainwater over  
my head like a purification rite.

Later, we'll share coffee and sauna bread  
and  
talk of cranberries, winter wheat and  
new babies born.

Lingering in the yard, we'll  
hear  
coyotes calling, their voices  
echoing across the valley.

--

## A Poem

by Lisa da Cunha-Koski

### *Old Barns*

Honorable Mention

*Kippis!* Creative Writing Contest

Old barns,  
usually black with some  
gray boards, like gray haired men  
Window panes are lost,  
long ago.  
There's some hay, nearly  
dust  
A barn swallow's nest of mud, lined with  
feathers

The cattle are gone, milk house remains.  
This barn beaten by all kinds  
Of weather, rains—  
Wind, blowing snow  
Rough hewn beams  
composed a skeleton strong  
Can you last? for long?  
Will your stone foundation  
become a gravestone  
without a name?  
Barn, can you remain?  
--

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## Three Poems

by Greg Watson

### *Elocution 101*

Even now you have trouble with certain  
words,  
though not as you did in grammar school  
when you were instructed to clench the  
yellow pencil  
between your teeth, try hard not to bite  
or to drool while enunciating with  
difficulty  
and precision those peculiar sounds and  
syllables  
the plump and rosy speech therapist  
requested.  
*Good, good..* .she would say, *Now again.*  
Your tongue enormous those mornings  
and afternoons, lolling like a manatee  
suddenly expected to do tricks ~ those  
days  
when you were pulled away from class  
because the language which formed  
so perfectly in your mind did not translate,  
because the words so easily constructed  
between  
the lines of cheap yellowish paper did not  
come forth in the saying. Something  
was lost, it seemed, between thought and  
expression, some small star sputtering out,  
falling  
back into the self. Years later you still  
marvel at what has become a lifetime of  
work,  
striving in this quiet and northerly way

to find just the right word to place in front  
of the other, as if nothing had ever been  
named  
and the world as strange and new as it was  
a lifetime ago or more, outside a  
schoolroom window  
flooded with winter light, as if the birds  
you see today were the same birds all  
along,  
giving you one more chance to pronounce  
their wonder: *Cape Glossy Starling,*  
*Savannah*  
*Sparrow, Lucifer Hummingbird.*  
—

### *Washing Her Hair*

It's the way he sometimes  
approaches, casual as a shrug  
or a tune hummed softly  
in the milk-syrup light  
of early morning, his hips  
meeting her at that good, soft  
country of lower back  
as she stands  
in wordless obeisance  
at the kitchen sink,  
eyes still puffy with sleep,  
wetting her hair  
in mild distraction  
to face a day of ordinariness  
and distraction more  
agitated and pressing;

and taking a small dollop  
of shampoo, he begins  
to lather, to gently lather  
her wet tangles of hair,  
small bells of water  
on shoulder and neck  
accepting each light  
one by one, as she smiles  
knowingly, and in this  
way, without words  
or formality, the day begins.

--

*At the Library*

Warm sunlight on caramel-colored wood,  
the long, stately tables scarred  
with the names of lovers and small,  
crooked hearts;

the sleepiness of afternoon dust  
weightless in the air, as homeless men  
converse slump-shouldered  
over cups of black coffee, wool scarves  
and stocking caps in the middle of summer  
beneath bleak fluorescent lights that give  
the skin

a dull and greenish tinge, as if we shared  
the same, uncertain illness.

Yet even the dust seems somehow orderly,  
the disarray of half-read magazines  
not quite random, floorboards aligned  
like yardsticks, the delicately chewed

pencil

tucked just so behind the homely  
schoolgirl's ear,

the one who has been waiting for decades  
for you to arrive, for you to simply  
write her into existence.

--

## Paired Poems in English and Finnish

by Burt Rairama & Sirpa Bagman

### *Queen's Park*

By Burt Rairamo

In solitude I wander through this sylvan grove,  
With pleasing thoughts and pleasant mood.  
I behold these beauteous forms clustered all around,  
And view these fair trees reposing  
In the dead winter's wake.  
Their quietness and beauty impress me,  
And the character of their form and shape  
Visible against the gray January day  
As they spread their naked arms  
To reach up towards the sky.  
What sublime truths and themes  
Must lodge in their lofty veins  
Such that a man can never find.  
I behold these fair and aged trees, silent, still:  
The sturdy oaks, the lofty elms, the silver maples.  
No scene is extraordinary here,  
But pleasing to the quiet eye.  
If a breath of air stirs, I do not feel it;  
There is nothing to rustle in these trees  
With foliage stripped from branches.  
Here silence wants to reign  
But is thwarted by the circumambient drone of civilization.  
I see the abandoned nests of birds  
Entwined in branches of the highest peaks.  
Dun withered autumn leaves lay dead  
Along with fallen branches gathered at your feet.  
I sense in the waning hours approaching dimness  
That you have begun to contemplate the spring:  
The caresses of the warming sun in your dawning day,

The gentle rains to invigorate your feet,  
 The kindly breezes stirring your newborn leaves,  
 The chirp and flutter of the birds,  
 And the black squirrels' boundless revelries.  
 Maybe you will also remember me;  
 This was the first park I cast my eyes upon  
 When as a new immigrant from a distant land  
 I first beheld your sylvan grove,  
 And the first black squirrel, that I ever saw.

--

*Queen's Park*

by Sirpa Bagman

Taivallan yksikseni halki tämän metsäisen lehdon,  
 Miellyttävin aatoksen ja hyvällä tuulella.  
 Katselen näitä kauniita muotoja joka puolella,  
 Ja silmäilen näitä paljaita puita lepäämässä  
 Talven kuolon jäljiltä.  
 Puiden hiljaisuus ja kauneus tekevät vaikutuksen minuun,  
 Samoin niiden muotojen ja hahmojen olemus,  
 Jonka voi nähdä harmaata tammikuun päivää vasten  
 Niiden ojennellessa alastomia käsivarsiaan  
 Taivasta kohti kurottautuen.  
 Mitä yleviä totuuksia ja teemoja  
 Asustaakaan niiden uljaissa suonissa,  
 Sellaisia joista ihminen ei milloinkaan voi päästä perille.  
 Katselen näitä paljaita ja iäkkäitä puita, hiljaa, hievahtamatta:  
 Jykeviä tammia, korkeita jalavia, hopeavaahteroita.  
 Maisema täällä ei ole niinkään tavallisuudesta poikkeava,  
 Mutta silti mieluisa levolliselle katseelle.  
 Jos tuulenhenkäys käykin, en tunne sitä;  
 Mikään ei kahisuta näitä puita  
 Joiden oksat on riisuttu lehdistä.  
 Täällä hiljaisuus tahtoisi hallita  
 Mutta ympäröivä sivilisaation surina estää sen.  
 Näen hylättyjä lintujen pesiä  
 Korkeimpien latvojen oksiin kietoutuneina.  
 Harmaanruskeat kuihtuneet syksyn lehdet lojuvat elottomina

Pudonneiden oksien kera jalkojesi juuressa.  
Aistin lähestyvän hämärän tunteina  
Että sinä olet alkanut harkita kevättä:  
Lämmittävän auringon hyväilyjä päivänkoitossasi,  
Hellävaraisia sateita jalkojasi virkistämässä,  
Ystävällisiä tuulahduksia vastasyntyneitä lehtiäsi heiluttelemassa,  
Lintujen sirkutusta ja siipien räpytystä,  
Ja mustaoravien rajatonta juhlintaa.  
Ehkäpä muistat myös minut;  
Tämähän oli ensimmäinen puisto, johon katseeni loin  
Kun uutena siirtolaisena, kaukaisesta maasta tullessa  
Katselin ensi kerran metsälehtoasi,  
Ja ensimmäistä koskaan näkemääni mustaoravaa.

--

Today the sky looks like  
A grey pastel paper  
There has not been any sun for days  
The last autumn rose will not  
Have the strength to open its petals  
I don't think it will open if I bring it inside  
--by Burt Rairamo

Taivas näyttää tänään  
Pastellinharmaalta paperilta  
Aurinkoa ei ole näkynyt päiviin  
Viimeisellä syysruusulla ei ole  
Voimia terälehtiensä avaamiseen  
En usko sen avautuvan vaikka toisin sen  
sisälle  
--by Sirpa Bagman

Today I spotted  
Clusters of red berries on a solitary Rowan  
tree  
And I realized, the summer is leaving us  
again  
--by Burt Rairamo

Tänään huomasin  
Punaisten marjojen ryppäitä yksinäisessä  
pihlajassa  
Ja tajusin, että kesä on jälleen jättämässä  
meidät  
--by Sirpa Bagman

## Three Poems

by Suzanne Matson

### *Birds at Six O'Clock*

Clouds piled on us like sacks of sand;  
they were as dull and sad as  
Mr. Ericson, the music teacher at Lynch Terrace  
Elementary, who never could rope our  
sounds together to make a chord.  
Our clamor wept and screeched and ran  
a three-legged race to the monkey bars  
in the gravel yard.  
The lemon sun sank  
on the solitary girl  
twirling a year and a day  
on the high bar with nothing  
but cement to catch her.  
Later she will take a decade to unwind herself  
note by slow note  
until she plays herself clear  
out of town.  
Listen, darling, to the songs of the birds.  
Even the road is humming  
as a cascade of motorcycles surges ahead of us  
to the border patrol, the fugue state, the vanishing point.

--

From SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS  
(Hostel Satakuntalo)

### *Bomb Threat*

Stay calm and try to calmly lengthen the conversation.  
Ask more precisely where and when  
the bomb will detonate.

Ask for more information about the bomb, what kind it is, its effect and how it is hidden.

Observe during the conversation the age of the person, sex, and level of education; the language, dialect, way of speaking and the tone of voice (dark, shrill, upset).

Ask who or which organization is responsible for the bomb and why.

### *Armed Robbery*

Follow the robber's orders calmly;

don't offer resistance;

don't do anything of your own;

don't take initiative;

don't take risks.

Study the robber unobserved.

Avoid touching things the robber may have touched.

Don't clean up after the robbery

until you get permission.

### *Kidnapping*

Listen to the kidnapper's instructions

and use

your own good judgment.

--

### *Reading Lesson at a Farm*

*Workers' Community School,*

*Woodville, California, 1942*

The child reading "My First Book"

at the Farm Workers' Community School has not

the rapt expression of the illustrated boy on the cover

who pores closely over his text. She has not

the serene composure of Miss Evans,

the teacher who sits beside her

pointing to a line. Despite Miss Evans' expert guidance

delivered from a cool hand, stocking seams  
arrow straight, neckerchief knotted just so  
over her polka-dotted rayon, the child is not  
even looking at the page. Someone has dressed her  
in a clean cotton frock, created ringlets  
and anchored them with barrettes. Someone

has folded the anklets crisply so they do not  
droop. I do not think it was the child  
who folded them, with her distracted  
expression, her eyes that look off above  
the words and into space.  
Where is she, if not at the Community School?  
What is she thinking about, if not  
the important lessons of Her First Book?  
Does she even wonder what is hidden  
in Miss Evans' spruce carryall, sitting on the chair?  
Would she rather be in the fields  
flushing out voles from the long grasses?

Is she impatient for the lyrics of Miss Evans'  
"Second Book of Songs," perched tantalizingly  
on the desk nearby? Or is it just the intrusion  
of the photographer she stares frankly back at,

the outsider with his boxy equipment  
who presumes to document this  
moment of her troubled passage through  
the text, and Miss Evans' delicate,  
irritating rescue of her through the thicket  
of those brushy words?

--

## Three Poems

by Jamie Buehner

### *What Did Words Have That I Didn't?*

I used to  
run up the stairs, still  
greasy from the restaurant  
I worked at as a waitress,  
and sit on my mother's bed  
talking a blue streak—  
no respect for the books, and she  
rarely took her eyes off the page.

She used to close  
the books, close  
her eyes and say  
goodnight to me,  
and I would walk  
the short walk next door to my room  
and write not about but to her.

--

### *Ercan in the Sun and the Rain*

For Ercan Sayici

*I will take you  
to Marmaris,*

you said,  
and you did.

I told you I loved you.  
*Life is  
interesting,*  
you said.

You  
brought me  
*aci badem.*  
I thanked  
God for you.

You  
showed me  
Istanbul.  
I read

Yeats.  
You  
were the beginning

of the story  
I wanted  
to write.

--

*Report in Four Parts*

I.

Her housewife friends made cake for my aunt after her brain surgery, and my aunt ate large pieces at a time, sweet and warm.

I lied awake at night and tried to imagine what it must feel like to be her.

II.

I watched a girl my age put my aunt on all fours and ask her to raise one arm. I saw my aunt's face glisten with sweat as she fell to her side.

III.

A bathroom dispenser instructed readers step-by-step how to lather. From now even simple things in life were more complex.

IV.

By the time the next person realized what was missing, my aunt and I would already be gone.

We would be driving through Georgia, listening to soft rock so quiet it is almost silent, my backpack holding enough soap to wash our hands impossibly clean.

--

## Three Poems

by JoEllyn Belka

### *Exhausted,*

Your body succumbs, as it meets goose  
down.

Meditating and motionless,  
    eyes have the right idea.

Ears don't care for outside forces.

The mind has let go, long ago.

Every feeling part of you, feels  
    Buoyant now, horizontal like a  
gentle story.

Inevitable, senseless murmurs, vibrate  
    from your throat, and  
    a slight drool gravitates to your  
pillow.

It is the sweet spot, as  
    instant calm courses, filling the  
soul.

--

### *It is the almost night.*

Impending heavens are cool and wet and  
certain.

Western skies are decorated by long,  
    strong striations of pink and blue.

Crickets chirp and frogs croak,  
fighting for airspace against robins going  
to bed.

Autumn hangs on clotheslines...

--

### *Salty Mist*

Salty mist rises from the promised bath,  
from its cradling goodness as I  
scoot beneath, displacing depth and steam  
as shooting air massages tensed muscles.  
Gray smoke spirals from burning patchouli  
    and oil of bergamot.

No one can find me here...

The mind slows finally as  
It drifts itself to seldom touched senses,  
Then nothing.

Sweat beads from my head and breast.

My heart thumps within my chest.

Weighted droplets splash below my arms  
    when

fingers knead temples, taking me away.

I rub my raccooned eyes,

weary eyes,

hopeful.

I think yesterdays messes will find their  
    way to the drain

Running slowly into yesterday.

It is better than sex.

But it is only  
when every molecule has turned cold,  
and white fingers, laughably prunish,  
and calluses supple,  
that I shall rise from this heavenly basin.  
I must promise myself more moments like  
    this...

--

## Two Poems

by Ted Jansen

### *Soudan Avenue*

pink late-summer Cosmos  
reach out to me from along the sidewalk  
tall and slender  
her long thin Modigliani neck  
blossoming out of a sea-grey turtleneck  
she reminds me of the solution  
a method to predict failure  
cool nights  
when bodies seek each other  
the chilled winds propitious

the pianist in the apartment below  
has returned from her vacation  
the notes sound bitter  
the taste of a friend's goodbye kiss  
--

### *the passage*

in the concert hall  
the shaman conducts  
Pohjola's Daughter  
Sibelius' symphonic fantasy  
a unified theory  
in which the cosmos consists of  
microscopic vibrating strings  
that sing the wave equations  
and he escorts me  
through the lovi  
the hole symbolizing unity  
into this elegant  
ten-dimensional universe  
with curled-up time  
not a reverie  
but an actual return  
to an instant in the past  
when the integral of the world's despair  
was smaller than a Planck length  
--

## A Poem

by Don Hagelberg

### *Ichthyology* (1)

For My Teacher, Doctor Gustavo Gutierrez (2)

I

A South American coastal village five minutes before a fishing co-operative is founded.

The dust of the streets  
Windlessly catches the air.  
Broken nets stretch unmended.  
Their broken boats are beached  
unattended.

Broken me, broken women  
Sit with their broken children  
Wishfully thinking of fish  
Of which there is naught.

Broken men compound their women.  
The women turn to fracture their children.  
Of fish to break,  
There are whispers,  
But of fish to break with bread,  
There is naught.

Hail boat, full of fish,  
Life is with you.  
Blessed are you among boats.  
Blessed is your bellied catch.  
Only fish, eaten to live,  
Come to us now,  
Or this shall be  
The hour of  
Our death, Amen. (3)

II

The Bear River in Hemingway's  
Michigan. (4)

Trout belong in deep ponds:  
Slow stops on this stream:  
Measures for lengths of line and time  
Hooked on fishing.  
The line's living end,  
The filamental worm  
Insighted by the trout  
Either by smell or wave,  
Is finally nibbled at.

A quick jerk sets the hook.  
A steady reeling in  
Surfaces the fish.  
But without a net  
The blinking trout must  
Somehow be thrown to  
One of the stream's sides.  
But in the mid-air  
Of the mid-toss  
The trophy trout  
Bankrupts off both  
Hook and expectation.

III

Poem as Fish. (5)

You splay  
The caught brain food.  
Now, de-bone the word  
Delicately enough to keep  
Both flesh-halves whole!

(1) Ichthyology: The scientific study of the fish.

(2) Gustavo Gutierrez, the inventor of "Liberation Theology."

- (3) This section of the poem repeats the rhythms of Roman Catholicism's "Hail Mary."
- (4) Hemingway is juxtaposed to the communal spirit of the first section with the sportsman as an individual.
- (5) This last deceptively simple section demands that the reader define the poem's meaning, its hermeneutic.
- 

# *New World Finn*

A Quarterly Journal Exploring Finnish Culture

Published since July, 1999, *New World Finn* is a twenty-eight page non-academic newsprint tabloid about Finns and Finnish emigrants. It is published in the middle of North America and mailed to subscribers. As of August 2008, 52 issues of NWF have been published.



Publisher: nev@bytehead dot com

Editor: gerryhenkel@fastermac dot net

## Two Poems

by Anna Pajunen

### *Welthauptstadt Germania*

*In traditional Japanese Buddhist funerals, it is popular to arrange the memorial days after the funeral according to the days of the Thirteen Buddhas.*

Roman pillars plated with pearl, with marble, with gluey stone,  
Haunt the air with their Gothic  
Scrolls, curls, Van Gogh  
Lions, hunchbacks, all of them.

White envelopes, streets, glitter like an Eden of angels.  
Somewhere in the white cheese soup broccoli flickers. Trees  
Bereave their dew to the wind like virgins. Artemis. Freya,  
Goddess

Ave Marias peek out of the Stadtshalle windows like new neighbors.  
Grand dome in which Thor lives,  
A massive state baptism  
In the name of, in the name of, in the name of...

Whatever is, whatever was.  
Deutschland, my statue, my love. She talks:  
"I built you out of my own rib-bone; I filled you up with my blood.  
Am I not generous?"

I needed  
A world bigger than I could make mine of.  
I needed a massiveness bigger than the massiveness of God.  
I wanted to be a youth in Berlin once more,

Feel the huge weight of the people  
Lifting the sky with its German head.  
A glittering city with glittering precipice  
And Grace, like a queen in her heavy hat

Walking down the stairs in her trailing gown.  
Große Stadt in which God lives,  
Better than God, in which the Mother  
Blooms and blooms and there is no end

To Deutschland, the many eggs  
Cycling their horrors like history,  
That other place, that nation.  
The sun is a mother; she is all smiles for her children.

Faceless as God, she knows no retribution.  
She knows no importance.  
Hugely  
My heart opens,

Unfolding like a Volkish Jericho,  
Unfolding to the tune of the Volkish heart.  
So many trumpets! The Babelian city.  
Twelve Buddhas settle on my grave like old houses.

Twelve, thirteen. Only the baker knows wholeness.  
I would need no God  
If only I could

It has been a day and a night. The Buddhas sink into the ground like cows,  
Still and hushed as mute heretics. Heavy as fatherhood,  
Germany stirs  
And lifts her head to a Volkish Atlantis.

--

*Leticia in the Back with the White Foundation*

She would sit at her table all day long and drink colorful liquids,  
Imagining them medicine, she would swallow sweetness  
And all day bubbles, fizzy mouthfuls  
Would scrape away her insides like the seeds of a pumpkin;  
Blacks clean and soft as a modern kitchen,  
She became cleaner than the sky in a modern movie;

Great hanging sky like a flat blue soda:  
Would you leave your daughters thirsty?

Tonight at the dance the girls are dancing with their fathers  
And the women dance with their sons,  
And all she can do is stare ahead at the yellow light bulb,  
Imagining lemonade and drinking faster.  
Electric blue jacket, electric blue heels, electric orange dress and electric blue lips  
Her mouth opens to let cool beauty in; forgetting the brown heat in her mother's kitchen, she  
says  
"If you are truly beautiful the world is just a thing you use."  
She handles her glass like a deck of cards.

--

## YOUNG PEOPLE • RESPONSIBLE CITIZENSHIP • GLOBAL COMMUNITY

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### 2009 Salolampi Schedule

**Spring Adult Week: May 10 – 16**

**Family Week: June 22 – 27**

**SOIVA Music Camp (ages 9-17): June 15 – 22**

**Two-Week Youth Immersion (ages 11-17): June 29 – July 11**

**Four-Week High School Credit (grades 9-12): June 29 – July 25**

**One-Week Exploration Session (ages 7-12): July 13 – 18**

**Two-Week Youth Immersion (ages 8-13): July 13 – 25**

**One-Week Exploration Session (ages 12-14): July 20 – 25**

**Fall Adult Week: September 12 – 18**

# Kantele

by K. A. Laity

“Oh goodness, look!”

Kirsti drew her attention away from the age-browned hat box before her to see what her sister held up. “What’s that?”

Elina grinned with happy surprise. “It’s a kantele! Oh, wouldn’t it be perfect for little Anni.”

She was in raptures, but that was predictable enough. Everything at the *tori* had been met with the same enthusiasm. Ooh, the pulla! So warm and soft and raisiny, fresh from the oven. Ooh, the little wooden sauna signs! Never mind they didn’t *have* a sauna. Ooh, the blue and white quilts, proudly brandishing Finnish pride. Now she had some new fancy—how much was it going to cost? The little market was becoming expensive; somehow Elina never managed to spend her own money.

Kirsti gave in to the inevitable tide of enthusiasm that oozed from her sister like melted butter, and let herself be pulled to the next table, where a smiling older woman sat regally surveying her wares. “What have you got there?”

It was the elderly woman who answered. Her name tag bore the title “Marja” and she leaned forward with a smile. “A very fine old kantele! Made from birch by my grandfather himself in

Karelia. A finer instrument could not be whittled by Väinämöinen himself!”

Elina chimed in, “Isn’t it just darling? It’s just the right size for Anni’s little hands. Oh, look at the craftsmanship!”

The way she always went on about craftsmanship generally gave people the impression that she was quite knowledgeable herself, although Kirsti could not remember a single craft project her sister had picked up that had not been dropped, unfinished, within a short while. But as she took the little kantele in her hands, Kirsti had to admit it was really lovely. The golden birch was finely worked with loving patience and when she tentatively plucked a string, it rang out like a bell which surprised her. She had expected something more harp-like in its tone.

“It’s the simplest thing to play for any child or adult, even one who feels she knows no music. Each of the five strings is in harmony with the others. You cannot play a wrong tune.”

The woman was being quite persuasive. It was rather late in the day, Kirsti thought, then felt a tad uncharitable. Here was this woman selling off her family treasures. Perhaps she had no one left with whom to share them.

“It’s very charming. But surely you have some grandchildren who would love such an instrument?”

Marja shook her head and held out her hands helplessly. “They care only for videogames. If I could plug it into a computer, well maybe then they would be interested.”

The three women laughed.

The longer Kirsti looked at the little harp, the more she felt inclined to take it. The curl of its tip swirled like icing and the vaguely triangular shape was pleasing. It had been made with care, carved here and there to delight the eye, even a snowflake for the sound hole. She braced herself to ask the price, but Marja offered a very reasonable one. Amidst Elina’s delighted cries, she paid the friendly old woman, who thanked her heartily.

“It is enough to know it goes to a welcoming home,” Marja said with a note of regret in her voice. “Your daughter will find that the instrument itself will teach her how to play. She need only spend time playing to become proficient.”

Kirsti smiled but then frowned. “How will we know how to tune it?”

Marja laughed and took a small scrap of paper. “Here, I write down the notes, very easy: D, E, F#, G, A. You can tune it with any piano. Oh, and not to forget—”

She reached into her apron pocket and fished out a small key that looked like it might fit a windup toy. “This you use on the tuning pegs to get to the right tuning. Here,” and she promptly demonstrated, loosening then tightening

one string to return it to perfect pitch. Then she handed the instrument to Kirsti. “May it bring much magic to your little daughter!”

“Aren’t you glad I made you come along to the tori!”

Elina was triumphantly certain that all thanks were due to her. Kirsti listened to her bubbly conversation all the way home with a practiced ear, allowing most of it to slide off like snow on a sunny March afternoon. But something her sister said caught her attention as they bumped along the country lanes.

“What was that you said about the pikebone?”

“I swear you never listen to a word I say,” Elina pouted, but finding her sister hard-hearted, continued with her explanation. “The first kantele, the first one he made—”

“Who made?”

Elina sighed. “Väinämöinen, of course!”

“He’s the old singer, right?”

“Well, he’s a lot more than that! But he made the first kantele from the jaw of pike.”

Kirsti snorted. “A pike’s jaw? Must have been a tiny instrument.”

“It was a giant pike, you know, as they always are in this kind of origin story. But somehow it got lost—in a battle, I think—so he made a new one from wood and when he played all the animals and all the people gathered round to hear him play. It was magic.”

“It does have a lovely sound,” Kirsti said diplomatically.

She could tell Elina was going to go off on one of her excited travelogues of myth and mystery, which made her glad they were almost to her apartment. Kirsti waved and drove off while her sister continued to chatter on the sidewalk, only half listening to herself. She drove the remaining blocks home with a vague smile on her face, anticipating a pleasant reception from her daughter. Mike would be happy enough with the sweet bread, which had filled the car with the pleasant aroma of cardamom.

"I smell pulla!" Mike called from the kitchen.

"So do I," yelled Anni, who was drawing her latest masterpiece with crayons.

"Put a pot of coffee on and we'll have some, but let's not spoil dinner," Kirsti said as she dropped the bag on the table and gave her husband a quick kiss. "What is for dinner, any way?"

"Lizard head!" Anni offered.

"The little toe of a frog," Mike added.

Kirsti smiled. "Lucky me. I hope we have plenty of chocolate sauce to cover up the flavor." She reached into the other bag and looked at her daughter. "Guess what I have?"

Anni grinned and dropped the purple crayon with which she had been coloring a horse. "A present? For me!"

"If you know the magic word."

"Please!"

Kirsti pulled out the kantele and handed it to her daughter, who looked at it, puzzled, but remembered to murmur, "Thank you, mommie."

"It's called a kantele, Anni. A kind of lap harp from Finland. You play it by plucking the strings." Kirsti demonstrated with a clumsy scale.

Anni clapped her hands together, then tried it herself, laughing with delight at the sound it made. She immediately began to try the strings in different orders, making her own little melodies. Kirsti and Mike exchanged a smile.

"The very first one was made from a giant pike's bone," Kirsti said to the dutifully bent head of her daughter, "by Väinämöinen, the great sage of the Kalevala stories."

"Sage is a spice," Anni said without taking her eyes off the strings.

"A different kind of sage," Mike said laughing, running a finger along the soundboard. "As a rule. What amazing craftsmanship."

Kirsti smiled. From her husband that was a compliment indeed. Never mind measure twice, he measured at least three times and in different weather conditions to account for swelling. "You know, Elina said the same thing."

"For once, we agree."

Anni did not tire of the kantele after dinner, returning to its lively tunes as soon as she had washed her hands. Instead of a bedtime story, she generously offered to play a tune of her own composition for her parents, which she proudly accomplished after several false starts and muttered expressions of "wait, wait, I've got it now." Kirsti drew the line at actually sleeping with the instrument in her bed, so Anni had to content herself

with seeing it sitting on the bureau as she fell asleep, a warm smile still on her lips.

“So, do we have the next Sibelius?” Mike whispered as they pattered down the stairs.

“I can’t believe how she took to it. I guess that woman Marja was right, it really is simple enough to play. Even so, I’ve never seen her so dedicated, not even to her drawings.”

Evidence of the latter devotion still festooned the refrigerator and every spare space on the wall of Mike’s workroom. They had been sure there was a budding Rembrandt in training, if not a Vernon Ward. Anni was awfully fond of ducks for some reason and had drawn flocks of the creatures over the last several weeks. She and Mike had kidded each other that the eyes did indeed follow you around the room, which was a bit unsettling while planing or sanding in the workshop.

“It really worked like magic,” Mike said.

Kirsti wondered at the repetition of that word. Such an odd word to hear so many times in one day. Must be the effect of the kantele, she thought. Maybe there was a little bit of the enchantment from the old myths alive in its strings after all.

The next morning she was not as surprised to find Anni carrying the small harp to the breakfast table, although she was convinced to stop playing long enough to have some pulla with her juice. Once her dishes were put away in the dishwasher and her hands scrupulously washed—her father told her dirty hands would make the strings rust and break—Anni took the kantele in hand and ran

outside to plant herself under the apple tree to play.

“Maybe we have the next Mozart,” Mike said wrapping his arms around Kirsti’s shoulders and kissing her cheek. “I’m off to be this year’s cabinetry sensation. What’s the schedule for you?”

Kirsti sighed. “I think it’s laundry time.”

When the load of towels was ready to dry the sun was brightly shining, so Kirsti took the basket outside to hang on the line. The pleasant days had lasted much further into September than anyone had predicted—weather professionals included—and it seemed a shame not to take advantage of this last leisurely Indian summer. Besides, she would be able to hear Anni’s playing, which was sure to be lovely.

Kirst was puzzled at first to not see her daughter anywhere, but then she heard low voices by the garden. Must be Patti or Selma from next door, but when she came around the hedges there was only Anni. She was sitting on the arbor bench, her head turned as if she were speaking to someone next to her. “Anni?” Kirsti called out.

“Hello, mommie! Look what I learned to play.” Anni bent her head down and with studied concentration slowly plucked out a little tune that was instantly familiar. Kirsti knew it was on the CD of Kalevala runos Elina had admired at another tori, but she couldn’t recall which song it was. Her moment of confusion evaporated with sudden pride. Anni could play a tune by ear! It was certainly more than she could do herself. Elina sang like

a lark, but Kirsti couldn't carry a tune with monogrammed luggage, as her father always said. Anni looked up with an infectious grin as Kirsti walked over to sit beside her. "Did you like it, mommie?"

"It was wonderful. Can you play it again?"

"Yes, of course. Listen!"

At once she set to playing again and Kirsti marveled at the quick study. It really was quite like—there, the word wanted to rise up once more. Kirsti frowned and thought about having heard two voices when she came out with the laundry. She must have been mistaken, that's all there was to it. The tinkling tones of the strings soon soothed her spirit once more and she grinned delightedly as her daughter played in the late summer sun. It made the chore of laundry go much more quickly.

"Have you seen what a genius my daughter is?" Kirsti said to Mike when he issued forth from his workshop, sawdust in his hair.

"What's for lunch?" Mike asked, going to the fridge for some lemonade. "Is there any of that smoked ham left?"

"Aren't you going to ask why my daughter's such a genius?" Kirsti said to his backside as he rummaged in the meat drawer.

He emerged once more, ham handed. "I already know *my* daughter's a genius. Why wouldn't she be?"

"Do you know she's already learned a tune or two by heart—playing them by ear, that is."

Mike chortled. "She is a genius, what with two tone deaf parents. Must

have skipped a generation. Where's the good mustard?"

Kirsti reached into the door of the fridge before it swung closed and grabbed the jar. "Here. Now aren't you pleased?"

"Yes, dear," he said with a quick kiss. "Thank you for the mustard."

"No, I mean about Anni being able to play so quickly."

Mike slathered a good bit of the mustard on a slab of pumpernickel. "Didn't the old woman say it was very easy to play? Maybe we shouldn't get our hopes up for a second Mozart. After all, it's only got five notes."

Kirsti closed the mustard jar, her hands moving absently, automatically. "It's not that. It's just..."

She felt silly mentioning the strange sensation of hearing a second voice conversing with Anni outside. It was probably just the acoustics. Sounds often echoed around in strange ways, right? Mike was looking at her expectantly, waiting for her to finish her sentence. "I'm just pleased. That she can pick things up by ear."

"Me too, hon."

Mike bestowed another kiss and took his sandwich back to his woodworking. Kirsti stood in the kitchen for a few minutes, arms crossed. The CD, she finally thought. Where was it? She headed to the front room, where a jumble of CDs filled one shelf. After pawing through a bunch of 80s hair bands and bemoaning Mike's bad taste in music for the umpteenth time, she found it.

*Kantele Treasures*: it, too, had been a tori purchase some two or three

years ago. Elina had admired it greatly and as usual, was more than willing to get Kirsti to spend money on something. Though she hadn't listened to it in some months, Kirsti enjoyed it whenever she happened upon it in the pile of CDs. The soothing tones of the instruments were always a welcome balm. She had forgotten that the little five string was the same kind of harp as the big concert kanteles featured on most of the tracks of the album and pictured on the back of the package. She flipped it over and found a fanciful looking painting of an old man in a skullcap playing a kantele on a rock, surrounded by maidens. She looked at the liner notes. Of course, it was old Väinämöinen himself. Kirsti examined the bearded figure closely. "I guess you can get a bevy of maidens at any age if you know magic," she muttered to no one in particular.

The first song was the one she had heard Anni play, she was certain of it even before she put the disc into the player. "Vaka vanha Väinämöinen," sure enough. Kirsti recognized the simple tune even as it grew into variations and harmonies with the more complicated harps and arrangements. Anni must have heard the song, too, and remembered. Remarkable what children pick up from the environment.

She almost told Mike that night about her worries, but the thoughts sounded silly to her own ears. Some kind of mysterious ability, after all, was pretty slim—imagined voices even more anorexic. Why not just be enchanted with her daughter's skill and leave it at that?

The next day, however, her concerns returned. Kirsti was walking down the hall and thought she heard a few notes on the kantele. The problem was that Anni was in day school. Kirsti poked her head in Anni's room and saw the kantele where her daughter had left it on the center of her neatly made bed. She walked over and picked it up, imagining myriad detective stories where the inspector would pronounce a gun still warm to the touch and know the suspect was nearby. The strings, though, were cool to the touch. In addition to the carving on the soundboard, the snowflake motif continued around the sides of the instrument. The warm honey tone of the pine was clearly marked by age although the strings were a shiny new silver. Kirsti plucked the middle string and the tone lingered in the air seemingly endlessly. She laid the kantele back on the bed. "You're being very silly," she told herself.

When Anni got home she went straight to the kantele and began to play. Kirsti recognized the strains of "Vaka vanha Väinämöinen" immediately, but soon realized that her daughter was picking out another tune somewhat haltingly.

"What's that song, honey?" Kirsti said, poking her head around the door to her daughter's room. Out of the corner of her eye, she could have sworn she saw a figure melt away from sight, but there was nothing there but a few plush animals and Anni's bookbag. Even if there were someone, where could they go? Into her closet? There was no one there but her daughter, head bent over the instrument

with serious concentration as she hesitatingly plucked a series of notes. "What's the song, honey?" Kirsti repeated.

Anni looked up. "I don't know its name, but I hear it in my head." She returned her gaze back to the strings and patiently repeated the sequence. It wasn't quite right, but it was getting there. "I can't hear it now, mommie," Anni said after a few minutes of trying.

"Play the other one, sweetie. I know the name of that. It's called 'Vaka vanha Väinämöinen.' We have it on a CD. Do you remember that one?"

Kirsti became aware of staring at her daughter a little too intently, but the girl didn't seem to notice. She was still concentrating on the kantele and slowly the notes to the familiar runo tune came forth once again. After Anni played the simple song through a couple of times, she suddenly began to sing.

In Finnish, Kirsti realized with sudden anxiety. Finnish! She herself knew at most a few dozen words, most of them from the usual bunch of polite phrases: *kiitos paljon*, *hyvää ilta*, or *kippis*. Yet Anni sang along confidently even as she twanged the strings somewhat less than expertly, although with growing facility. A part of Kirsti's mind said, it was the CD, that's all. She remembered the words from hearing it and retained them subconsciously. It was a calming thought that allowed her to dismiss the preternatural ability her daughter had with this instrument.

Until she remembered that the whole disc had been instrumentals.

That was what made Kirsti try to talk to Mike about the incident later. He was usually understanding about her vague discontents, but that night he was distracted. Maybe, Kirsti just had to admit, maybe it was because her story was simply ludicrous. "But doesn't it seem odd?" she asked finally, willing him to be as worried as she had been.

"Kids retain things in totally illogical ways," Mike insisted, yawning noisily and snuggling down decisively. "You could be paying beaucoup bucks for language training and not getting results that good. Relax, honey."

But the next day her fears revived. Anni was out in the garden again, playing away. This time Kirsti was more watchful. When she heard what seemed to be voices from the hedges where Anni sat, Kirsti stole up as quietly as she could and peeked through the branches.

There he was, leaning over Anni, humming along with her playing. Kirsti finally understood what people meant by seeing red, because her vision filled with a furious crimson. What was he doing with her daughter?! With an effort, she restrained herself from immediately rushing toward them—would he fade into the bushes?—stopping to study the interloper carefully. Although he matched the picture on the CD in general strokes, the real Väinämöinen looked both much older and much more intimidating. While the romantic painting made him look like a jolly grandfather, there was an air of roguish knowing that gave her an unpleasant jolt. From the top of his skull cap to his curly birch shoes, he was a

walking anachronism. But he was real. She could hear him, she could see him—and so could Anni.

"Who's your friend?" she asked Anni, stepping forward. Kirsti tried to make her voice sound as natural as possible, burying her panic by a sheer force of will. The old man glanced up at her, cool as trout stream.

"Hello, Kirsti," he said as if they had been friends since the world began. "Your daughter is very talented. A natural, you might say."

There was a twinkle in his eye that meant to reassure, but Kirsti was not at all pleased with the old man. She was beginning to suspect that he would not be easy to get rid of any time soon.

"Oh, don't be so modest. You certainly seemed to have helped along that natural talent," Kirsti said, keeping her eye on her daughter who was playing yet, head bent as she concentrated on plucking the strings.

"It is my joy to mentor the young," the wise old shaman said. "A young girl needs so much guidance."

"That's what she has parents for," Kirsti said, flushing a little, unable to contain her irritation any longer. "Those who love her know what's best."

"Ah, but the wisdom of the ages is on my side," the eternal sage countered. "There is so much I can teach her."

"I can make you go away." The words felt hollow in her mouth, however, and the old man just smiled smugly.

"You cannot keep her away from me," Väinämöinen said. There was a

friendly tone to the words, a smile still resting on his lips, but Kirsti felt a chill.

Whatever was at work here she was powerless to stop. Say it, she told herself, feeling numb. Magic, it's magic—it's not happy fairies and godmothers magic, but it was magic. Anni was looking up now, her brow furrowed to show her puzzlement. Her eyes darted back and forth from her mother to her new friend.

"Play a little more, sweetie," Kirsti said, uncertain what to do, but certain that panicking her daughter would serve no purpose. Anni dutifully bent her head over the strings and began to pluck away a lively tune. Kirsti sighed and closed her eyes, and when she opened them again he was gone.

That night Kirsti lay awake while Mike snorted next to her, murmuring about measuring shingles that didn't seem to fit. Her head seemed too full of things. What to do, what to do? She had to protect her child, that was clear—but what was she protecting her from? An old man in a funny hat with a strangely magical ability to appear and disappear at will, and to make her daughter something of a prodigy on this ancient instrument. Kirsti sat up, hugging her knees. This was not acceptable. She had thought of telling Mike, but how could she explain something that she could hardly believe herself. What was there to do? She had nothing.

No, that wasn't entirely true. Kirsti threw back the covers and hopped out of bed. Where was it? She went over to the bookshelf and scanned the titles. There!

The thick book's gilded cover was a little dusty, but she knew it immediately. Her mother had given her this copy of *The Kalevala* when she and Mike had married, fearful that Kirsti would somehow lose her heritage once she was joined to someone who wasn't a Finn. She had barely cracked it open during their ten years together.

Kirsti flipped to the table of contents. She looked for the first chapter with his name in it, "Väinämöinen's Promise." Scanning the lines of poetry she was surprised to find the wise old sage crying, lost and far from home. This was the man who frightened her? Why was he weeping? She turned the pages and then saw his speech about regretting that he had ever left home, how stranger could not heal the heart like those at home. Ah, this was where he promised the Sampo to Louhi, witch of the North, because she said she could get him back home. Oh, and her daughter, too—oh wait, that was to Ilmarinen who actually forged the Sampo. But wasn't there another young woman, promised to Väinämöinen?

Aino! That was it. Kirsti found the runo with her name and read the words swiftly. Rather than marry the ancient one, the maiden threw herself into the waves. Her blood flowed into the waters, her flesh became fish, her ribs driftwood on the water's shore. And what did her suitor do? Wise old Väinämöinen, the eternal sage? He wept. Again he wept! Kirsti marveled. She remembered other stories, tales of his great accomplishments, but these accounts of his failures filled her

with a renewed hope, though she wasn't quite sure why.

Kirsti certainly didn't want her daughter throwing herself into a lake to get away from the old man. But he sure didn't seem to have much luck with women. Kirsti felt a smile tug at the corners of her mouth. She wasn't sure what his disappointments added up to, but they seemed to tip a balance in her favor. Putting the book back in its place on the shelf, Kirsti turned to crawl back into bed beside Mike, who mumbled something about veneer and returned to snoring.

In the morning, Kirsti kept quietly watchful. While Anni ran around playing with her horses, all was serene. After a mid-morning snack, however, Anni wandered down to her room and picked up the kantele to play. Kirsti forced herself to listen to the sweet music for a few minutes before sneaking down the corridor. At first, she heard nothing but the bell-like tones resounding through the quiet house. Then Anni's soft voice began to sing, quickly joined by the baritone of her friend. Kirsti squelched an urge to lunge protectively forward. The two voices blended together well. How easy to be bound by the magic of their harmony.

Taking a deep breath, Kirsti rounded the corner. Anni did not look up, but Väinämöinen did. His look was slightly roguish, as if caught doing something naughty, though not actually sorry to be found out. They sat together on the little bed, surrounded by the dolls, the bears and the baby seal. Anni's legs drummed the side of the bed gently in time as she played. Kirsti crossed to the purple

ottoman that served as Anni's chair and sat herself down to listen. Golden hair framed her daughter's face, her mouth a small frown of concentration, eyes locked onto her busy fingers as they produced a more complicated piece. With a start, Kirsti realized that Väinämöinen had produced a kantele from somewhere and was strumming softly in accompaniment. The two instruments sang together with the sweetness of the cuckoo's call.

When the song finished, Kirsti laughed and clapped for the two musicians. Anni grinned and the old man looked up with something approaching a smile. The craggy face crinkled a little to make way for the expression. His eyes were a crisp robin's egg blue, bluer than the faded cap on his head. How ancient he was, Kirsti thought. No, he was outside time. Fear crept back into her heart, but Kirsti refused to let it take root. She couldn't do anything about him, but there was someone who could.

"Let's play the cuckoo song," Anni said, tapping the strings lightly.

"No, let us play the new moon song. Your mother will like that." Väinämöinen smiled over at Anni, but the girl did not smile back.

"Cuckoo song," she repeated. "I want to play the cuckoo song." Anni struck the first notes and continued on. Eventually, the old man bent his head and followed the tune with his fingers. Kirsti watched his face. He hid any annoyance he might have felt, but his expression was so carefully neutral that she thought he had

to be irked. It brought a swift smile to her lips, which she tried just as quickly to disguise. Elementals, immortals—they had one disadvantage: they didn't change and grow like human beings. Väinämöinen would always be the same, always the eternal sage.

And he would always be unlucky with women.

"*Kylä vuotti uutta kuuta* now?" the old man asked, taking up a querulous tone.

Anni nodded and smiled at her mother. "You like this one, mommie?"

Kirsti nodded. "I love to hear you play, my sweet."

Väinämöinen looked up at her, his smile gone. He seemed uncertain now. "It's a beautiful song."

"Yes," Kirsti agreed. "All about the village welcoming the new bride with the new moon. A happy story, love and marriage. I hope it doesn't make you cry." She grinned at him. "Go on, you two, play."

Anni bent over her instrument and the plaintive notes rang out. Kirsti closed her eyes and let the music flow over her skin. Her daughter was no one's fool. There was no doubt about that. Kirsti was hardly surprised when she opened her eyes at the end of the tune to see that Väinämöinen had disappeared and her daughter did not even seem to notice.

"Play me another song, Anni," Kirsti coaxed and her child complied with an old runo tune that echoed across the room and the ages.

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## About Our Contributors

**Sirpa Bagman** is a graduate student at the University of Helsinki. She is majoring in English Philology, and her minors include Communications, Translation Studies, Semitic Languages and Cultures, and North American Studies. She spent an exchange year at the University of Toronto in 2006-2007, and that's where she got to know Burt Rairamo, whose beautiful poems she has been happy to translate into Finnish.

**JoEllyn Belka** lives with her husband Mike, along with their tribe of Saint Bernards in the Baraboo Bluffs of Wisconsin. Growing up a farm girl, she was instilled with the ideal of working hard. When she is not cutting hair or writing, JoEllyn enjoys gardening, growing tomatoes from seed, cooking, rummaging through flea markets and attending Packer games. If time permits, drinking a cold beer as the sun sets in not out of the question.

Born in 1930 in the Finnish settlement of New Finland, Saskatchewan, **Hazel Lauttamus Birt** is fluent in the Finnish language. She is a writer-illustrator and published several books based on her Finnish heritage illustrated with prize winning woodcut prints. Twice she has been to Finland to visit her extended family there and to study Finnish folklore and mythology. She has presented papers on Finnish settlements in Canada to FUSAC at various universities. A member of the Finnish Club in Winnipeg she is producing a series of stories and poems illustrated with her woodcut prints.

**Kathryn Benninghoff** is an English teacher and tennis coach who is a proud descendant of Finns on her mother's side. She relishes the natural world and enjoys the rugged, mountainous terrain of Colorado. She lives in Boulder with her husband.

**Jamie Lynn Buehner** was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, in 1978. She has an undergraduate degree in writing from Winona State University and is currently working on a Master of Fine Arts in Liberal Studies at Hamline University. She has recently had poems published or accepted for publication in *The Texas Observer*, *Sleet Magazine*, *The Talking Stick—Vol. 16*, *Oranges & Sardines*, and *SNReview*.

**Mary Lumijarvi Caraker** is the granddaughter of Finnish immigrants who settled near Astoria, Oregon. She is the author of eight published novels, including "Women of the Kalevala", and her short fiction has appeared in a number of periodicals. She lives in San Francisco.

**Lisa da Cunha-Koski** earned her BS from SUNY, Geneseo, in 1955 and subsequently an MA in Bio-Anthropology from the University of Indiana at Bloomington. She has attended

summer sessions at Cornell University, served as NFS Scholar at SUNY, Plattsburg, and at the University of Cincinnati, and worked toward her PhD in Sociology at Fordham University. She taught at high schools in New York, Puerto Rico, and Argentina and at SUNY, Geneseo, and Finger Lakes Community College of Canandaigua, New York. She has published three books of poetry; *Among the Byways*, *Watchful Spirit*, and recently a chapbook, *Nature's Balm in Troubled Times*. Presently, she is serving as President of the Finger Lakes Finns.

Massachusetts' born, **Don Hagelberg** has lived in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1947. He joined the Social Justice movement, boycotting movie theatres' segregated seating, and served 1964-1965 in federal prison for draft-refusal. He attended universities and colleges in California and has published in *New World Finn*, *Vintage Voices*, *Poetalk* and other venues. He found authenticity in poetry and created "Live Poets," a weekly radio-program. He has celebrated his 27th year in recovery from dual-diagnosis.

**Ernest Hekkanen** is Editor-in-Chief of *The New Orphic Review* and co-curator of the home-based *New Orphic Gallery*. In addition to that, he is a poet, short story writer, novelist, essayist, playwright, anthologist, reviewer and publisher. He has published thirty-nine books. The latest include *Of a Fire Beyond the Hills* (a finalist for the George Ryga Award, 2008), *Shadows on a Cave Wall*, *Kafka: The Master of Yesno* and *The Life of Bartholomew G.*

**Faye Hirvi** is a poet and song writer. She lives in Toivola, Michigan, near Agate Beach, with her husband Alden and children, Daniel, Megan, and Bobby. Her work has been published in *Treasured Poems of American* (1995), *Ebbing Tide* (1996), *Poetic Voices of America* (1996), *Poetry Gems* (2000), and *A Treasure of Great Poems* (2000). With family and friends, she loves exploring nature and enjoys the beach. Of writing, she says poetry is the music from her soul.

**Ted Jansen** was born in Heerlen, Holland. His father was Dutch, his mother from Nunnanlahti, Karelia, Finland. He earned his Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Mechanical Engineering from Michigan Technological University. He worked as a research engineer in the United States, and as an instructor in Mechanical Engineering at Ryerson University, Toronto. He is now retired. Ted is the author of a textbook on solar engineering technology, and contributed to a poetry anthology.

**Sirpa Kaukinen** was born in Finland and immigrated to Canada in her teens. She was educated in both countries and received her Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from York University in Canada. Her career has centered on writing and producing small publications. She won her first short-story contest at the age of eleven; her stories have been published in both English and Finnish and have appeared in books, magazines and newspapers.

**K. A. Laity** is the author of *Pelzmantel: A Medieval Tale* as well as other stories and essays, including *Unikirja* (Aino Press 2009), a collection of short stories based on the Kalevala, Kanteletar, and other Finnish myths and legends, for which she won the 2005 Eureka Short Story Fellowship and a 2006 Finlandia Foundation grant. Dr. Laity teaches medieval literature, film and popular culture at the College of Saint Rose. See her website: [www.kalaity.com](http://www.kalaity.com).

**Suzanne Matson**, a professor of English at Boston College, has published two volumes of poetry and three novels. Her complete bio can be found at <[www.suzannematson.com](http://www.suzannematson.com)>.

**Anna Pajunen** lives in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin, and has been writing since second grade. She is a senior at Wisconsin Lutheran High School. Anna has been published a couple times before and has won a scholarship with her poetry. She intends to major in English in college.

Born in Vyborg and raised in Tampere, Finland, **Burt Rairamo** received a Gas Engineering Technology Diploma from Ryerson Institute of Technology. He served as Vice President and General Manager of Liquid Carbonic, Inc. In 2004, he earned his degree in Finnish Studies from the University of Toronto and is a founding member and past president of Finnish Studies Alumni Association of University of Toronto, and a member of the board of Canadian Friends of Finland Education Foundation. His creative work is included in *Connecting Souls* (2000) and *All Hearts Have Feelings* (2004).

**Greg Watson** lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota. His poems have appeared in numerous literary journals, including *The Seattle Review*, *Tulane Review*, and *Poetry East*, as well as Garrison Keillor's *Writer's Almanac* radio program. His most recent collections are *Pale Light from a Distant Room*, *Things You Will Never See Again*, and *The Distance Between Two Hands*, all published by March Street Press.