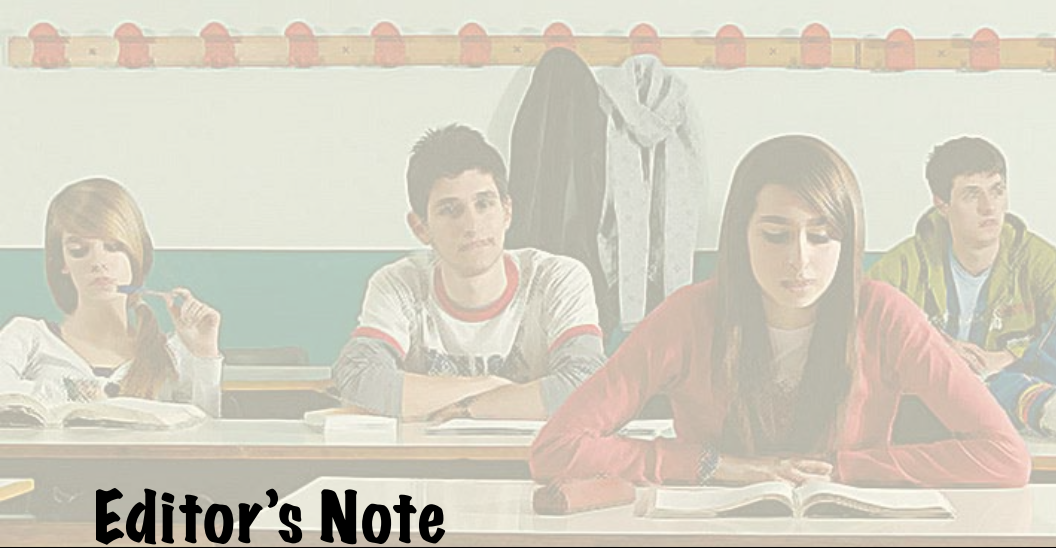


# Writers on writing





## Editor's Note

BY DEAN REA

This fall I return to the classroom to teach two high school writing classes. The question, of course, is whether the students are interested in learning more about spelling, grammar — and writing. Based on more than four decades of teaching experience, I assume the answer is: “I’d rather be texting, tweeting or twiddling with a computer game.”

Fortunately, in this case, the students have been home schooled and are readers. If research and experience are to be believed, writers often are readers, folks who have picked up the pattern of sentence and story structure and are acquainted with how words are spelled.

Rather than bore students with spelling lists and grammar drills, I expect them to write, write, write. I attempt to help students sharpen the tools needed in writing as I critique their work. Fortunately, I will have time to write individual critiques because each class has fewer than 15 students.

Students often dislike writing because it is a creative process that involves risk-taking and may result in a bad grade. Thus, I don't place grades on writing assignments. Rather, I offer suggestions that may help improve their writing and use smiley face stickers and gold stars to encourage students. Of course, a lot of rewriting may be involved, but we're writing, writing, writing.

Those of us who are adults should be encouraged to take risks in our writing. For example, more than two dozen of my elderly peers are writing memoir this year. We're receiving help from kindly editors, and we're learning that we can sharpen our writing skills. Eventually, we expect to be published.

It is heartening to this oldtimer that an increasing number of people are flexing their writing muscles and are sharing the fruit of their labor with readers of *Author's Bazaar*.

The most recent contributor, Joanne Faries, is the author of a poem that appears on page 8. Joanne, who lives in Tex-

as with her husband Ray, has been published in *Doorknobs & Bodypaint*. Her poems have appeared in *Magnapoets* and *Silver Boomer* anthologies. Joanne also is the film critic for the *Little Paper* of San Saba. Look for her humorous memoir, “My Zoo World: If All Dogs Go to Heaven, Then I’m in Trouble,” and a story collection “Wordsplash Flash” on Amazon.

[www.wordsplash-joannefaries.blogspot.com](http://www.wordsplash-joannefaries.blogspot.com)

We welcome people with all types of writing skills to join us in publishing this monthly online hobby journal. To quote Ernest Hemmingway: “There’s nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.”

Or, you can sit down at a computer and write, write, write.

Writer’s note:

Why our characters should struggle:

“Everything you want from your life is the opposite of what you should give your characters. Your characters should, more or less, always be having a very bad day. Why? Because that’s how human beings grow.”

—Dan Barden in *Poets & Writers* July 2013  
author of “The Next Right Thing: A Novel”



**By Delores Miller**

April 2012 Russ and I were in the midst of planning a 55th wedding anniversary party, celebrating Russell's 80th birthday, survival of the 2011 tornado that destroyed most of our farm buildings and the 35th year of being on this farm.

All of a sudden, I discovered a Stage III breast cancer that needed immediate care. Biopsy, catheter, chemo, surgery and radiation followed for eight months. We managed to celebrate the party, all without telling anyone how sick I was. Bluffing my way through.

All went well with the treatments. I was sick. Very strong chemo knocked my body to hell and back. Now, Russell says he thought he would find me dead in bed a few times. He took over all the house and yard work. Hair loss, nausea, weight loss, fatigue, chemo brain, loss of memory and all the good stuff.



Now it is summer of 2013, and I must honestly say I am 75 per cent back to my old self. I also celebrated my 75th birthday.

Russell planted a huge garden, brought the harvest and plops it on the kitchen cupboard so I cook, can and freeze. Giving excess away to friends and neighbors whether they want it or not. Summer on the farm, and the hay fields grow, time to cut and bale.

I even hoisted myself on the Oliver 1650 tractor to run the baler. It was not pretty, me grunting up the high tractor, but managed about 1,300 small bales of grass to be sold off the wagon to horse and llama people for \$4 a bale, enough money to pay taxes and insurance.

Riding the Craftsman lawn mower, helping Russ cut the three acres of lawn around the farm. Not the steep ditches, Russ does that. Reading books, novels, fiction and non-

fiction. With the chemo brain forgetfulness, all the books are new to me, and I enjoy rereading them. Manage to go dancing a few times a month, again not pretty but we manage to push ourselves around the crowded floor and eat the big lunch. Weekly church services. Welcoming the children and grandchildren to the farm. Making big meals.

Daily reading newspapers, especially the obituaries, checking which cancer patients finally bit the dust. I am still above the sod for which I am very thankful. Neurophy and bone pain, osteoporosis, side effects of medication for controlling the remaining cancer-ridden lymph nodes.

Life has been good to me. Cancer taught me not to worry. Let events happen, as they will whether or not I can control them.

### **My Prayer**

Remind me, though, Lord  
that there is much in this world  
I do not and cannot control.  
But the most fruitful prayer is  
Not my will, but Thine be done.

**Delores Miller: [millerrussell@att.net](mailto:millerrussell@att.net)**

# BOARDWALK BONANZA

By Joanne Faries

[jlf58@tx.rr.com](mailto:jlf58@tx.rr.com)

Morning bike ride  
tires thumping boardwalk  
watch the tram car, please

beach hours blend  
lunch, snack, dinner  
pizza dough in the air  
italian ice melts  
ice cream cones drip

chewy saltwater taffy  
on the roof of your mouth  
cotton candy sugar buzz  
after a salty pretzel

fight the seagulls  
for your french fries  
funnel cake  
or caramel corn

twilight comes  
calliope music  
midway pier  
arcade bells  
beckon

whooshing coasters  
bumper cars zap  
wacky shack haunted house  
muffling screams

high tide waves lap below  
flip-flops flap  
sandals slap  
amidst the hubbub  
families, teens, lovers  
stroll the boards

sunburned contentment

# The Wreck of the Argo

By Paul King

I wrote an account in 2011 for *Author's Bazaar* about the wreck of the Struan, whose cargo of lumber was strewn for 20 miles along the Oregon Coast in Tillamook County. Some of the cargo was salvaged by my grandfather, father and others to construct nearby homes and farm buildings.

The vessel came ashore Christmas morning 1890 when the Struan, a fully rigged sailing vessel, foundered near Cape Lookout and broke up after the crew was rescued and taken to San Francisco. The farm home built by my father and grandfather exists today as the Sandlake Country Inn, a B & B at Sandlake, Oregon.

Little did my forebears imagine another shipwreck would threaten their lives in the near future.

In late November 1909 the coastal steamer Argo lost its rudder off the mouth of Tillamook Bay, taking five lives. William Clent King and his wife Jennie, my paternal grandparents, were rescued by coast lifesavers propelled in open boats by oars through a boiling surf.

The Argo was one of two coastal steamers carrying up to 20 passengers and freight between Portland and Tillamook Bay via The Willamette and Columbia Rivers and Astoria. Passengers preferred the steamers to a two-day wagon ride over dirt tracks in the coast mountain range with an overnight stop to recuperate from the beating rendered by a tortuous and unimproved road and bumpy wagon.

The Kings had just returned from a journey to the Great Lakes area to visit friends and relatives. Their youngest son Clent fortunately had arrived home safely on an earlier boat.



Tillamook Bay had no jetties in 1909, and its entry channel was notorious for shifting its position with the tides and seasons. Moreover, the lifesaving service, predecessor to the Coast Guard, had been established at the mouth of the bay just one year earlier or the Kings might both have perished.

When the Argo struck a sandbar, Will told Jennie, “We have lost our rudder and must prepare for the water.” Their rescuers had seen the Argo’s predicament from their lookout tower and already were heading through a churning sea toward the endangered steamer.

They took off most of the passengers and crew while a few men, including Will King, remained aboard to operate hand pumps in an attempt to save the Argo. But their effort was futile and they soon had to board the remaining rowboat and flee. When they saw other lifeboats overturning in the surf, they decided not to follow, but to remain outside the surf line until the storm abated.

They were picked up 20 miles northward the next morning near Tillamook Rock off Seaside, cold, wet, and hungry but otherwise in good health.

Meanwhile, Jennie got on a boat with the captain of the station. They moved only a short distance toward shore when the lifeboat overturned, throwing the occupants into

the water. Even with life jackets, some of them drowned, including a pregnant woman and a young girl.

As it overturned, the heavy lifeboat's thwart came down on the captain's left arm. He told Jennie, "If you'll just hang onto the fingers of my broken arm and don't tug too hard, we'll make it through the surf together." Many were the times when they were forced to hold their breath as raging breakers rolled over them and the light of the setting sun grew dim.

After what seemed a century, the captain brought my half-drowned grandmother onto the beach at Twin Rocks where my dad, and other relatives and friends of the passengers awaited with dry clothing, a bonfire, blankets, medical supplies and food.

This tale was told countless times at King family gatherings. Grandfather Will died when I was eight and Jennie died when I was in college following World War II. My grandmother had nightmares about the sea until the waning days of her life. How I wish today I had listened more closely to all their stories and why, in retirement, I write of the happenings in my life and the little I can remember of the lives of my ancestors.

**Paul King: [pabloelcamino@gmail.com](mailto:pabloelcamino@gmail.com)**

# COWPIE REVENGE



**By Louise Fufeld**

The sickly green dress shirt hung dejectedly from Marlow's clenched fist, dripping methodically. He looked up at his mother out of the tops of repentant eyes and said, "I'll never do it again."

"I don't see how you could do that again," his mother replied. She had a point. How Marlow came to sully his Sunday best was an unrepeatable occurrence that could only have happened that fine spring day on that farm in Southern Minnesota.

Marlow and Leroy were partners in mischief. They took the world in through a kaleidoscope of comedy and acted accordingly. Marlow was my mom's cousin, and Leroy was one of her four brothers.

On that sparkling spring Sunday, their families had returned home from church, and the adults were holed up in the dark house drinking coffee and catching up on deadly

boring family news. All the kids escaped into the farmyard and the pastures. As Marlow and Leroy slammed out the kitchen door, Marlow's mom called after them, "Whatever you do, don't ruin your dress clothes."

Marlow and Leroy sauntered out past the back of the barn where they had recently been caught smoking dried weeds. Behind a rusty wheelbarrow, Leroy discovered a decrepit baby buggy that had been put out to pasture. Their eyes glinted. Without a word, Marlow jumped into the buggy, and Leroy began to push it through the grass.

One wheel was bent, and the springs were stiff and rusty. It listed to starboard and bounced like a skiff on choppy seas. But for those boys that glorious day, this was their stalwart and pasture-worthy vessel.

After getting the hang of steering and bumping down a few small hills, they began to look for bigger game. Leroy spotted Henrietta, a young heifer with a daydream look in her eyes, munching on a stalk of wild mustard. Their instinct for the chase aroused, the young *Homo sapiens* aimed the buggy straight at this bovine equivalent of a teenage girl. Henrietta stopped chewing, arched her brows in shock and took off.

The boys bumped and jolted the buggy after the teen ungulate. Marlow clung to the sides of his chariot and tasted

the sweet spring wind. They were champions of the world, masters of the Great Plains.

Then Henrietta got an idea, similar to an idea a teenage girl might have when being chased by 10-year-old boys. Close on the heels of the idea, the improvised weapon presented itself, a freshly deposited cow pie. With the precision of a Russian ballerina, Henrietta pointed a rear hoof at the pile and kicked it back with all her might.

When the fecal matter struck Marlow's face and chest, the shock stunned him momentarily. Leroy didn't realize what had happened at first either and kept pushing the buggy at full force until flecks of dung began flying off Marlow into his face. Then he knew there had been retaliation.

Soon after, stripped to the waist, the boys scrubbed their formerly starched, white shirts. They watched in dismay as the now green substance did not release its grip on the fabric, but rather spread to discolor the entire garment. Their only consolation was that they were rinsing off the odorific effleurage into Henrietta's trough.



# Man of many HATS

**By Barry Schrader** (Barb'd Wire Press)

Some people like to wear bright ties, team jackets or slogan T-shirts. I prefer hats. Company logo caps, sports team caps, cowboy hats and seasonal hats are several favorites.

When giving printing demonstrations on my little Golding Official No. 4, I always wear the bowler, black vest, white shirt and black arm coverlets to show what the well-dressed “turn-of-the-century” printer wore.

When printing at the Alameda County Fair’s museum print shop each summer in Pleasanton, Calif., I often wear the paper pressman’s hat and hand out instruction sheets to kids so they can make their own. The newsprint rolls keep getting narrower so the hats turn out too small for most to wear.

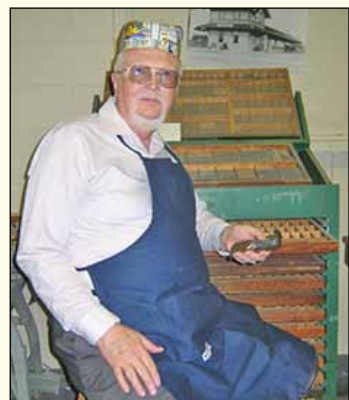
The Amish-style farmer’s hat is a new addition I obtained while on a visit to the historic Oliver Hudson Kelley farm



near Elk River, Minn., in June. He is founder of the National Grange, and because I recently became president of a local Grange, I wanted to look authentic when staffing our booth at the Sycamore (Ill.) Steam Power Show in August.

This year I added a DeKalb Ag winged ear logo cap with the custom embroidered “Schrader” name added where the word “soybeans” used to be. I wore that on our trip to California, shown here on the head of a friendly Yosemite bear who didn’t mind posing for this photo.

For 18 years I was the announcer for the Livermore Rodeo Parade and always wore my fancy cowboy (dude’s) outfit complete with 10-gallon hat. I sweated through two straw hats and now have a felt Stetson I use on rare occasions back in Illinois.



The crown was loaned to me during the year (2011) that Kay and I were chosen king and queen to represent the Oak Crest retirement complex in parades and at public events. I added a tuxedo, cape and brass-knobbed cane to look more like royalty. Now that is an ego trip.

Of course, each Christmas season I don my Santa cap, sometimes stuffed with tissue paper so it stands upright, but mostly just limp like in this photo taken with family for our annual Christmas card.

My next addition will be a stovepipe hat in February when I have been asked to dress up like the mayor of Punxsutawney, Penn., and carry around a groundhog puppet at a fundraiser for an area natural history museum.

**Barry Schrader: [barry815@spcglobal.net](mailto:barry815@spcglobal.net)**

# Brazos River Bottoms

By Sheryl L. Nelms

down  
the gully

budded limbs  
of burr oak

ripple in the wind

redbuds fluff  
mauve along  
each twig

below

velveted  
green

grass

sporting  
dandelion puffs

invites me  
to stay

awhile

Sheryl L. Nelms: [slnelms@aol.com](mailto:slnelms@aol.com)





# The Secret Place

**By William L. “Bill” Sullivan**

For Rick and Laura’s third date they joined a Friday night art walk in downtown Eugene. Then they slipped off to dinner at Cafe Zenon, precariously near to Rick’s apartment. Laura toyed with the graham crust of their shared chocolate decadence torte, buying time.

“I read in this magazine,” she began, already wishing she hadn’t admitted it was from a magazine. Somehow that sounded too supermarket-hausfrau. “If you’re going to be

soul mates, you shouldn't have secrets."

"I don't have secrets," Rick said. "Certainly not from you."

Laura looked up at him. She had powerful blue eyes, even without makeup, and she could see him reel. That she still had this effect on men gladdened her more than any compliment he could have offered.

"It's not just about sharing secrets," Laura went on. "It's about secret places."

"Secret places?"

"Everyone has a secret place. Somewhere you retreat when times get tough. A place where you're safe from the troubles of the world. Don't you have a place like that?"

He thought a moment. "I do. But I'm not sure you want to go there. It's not the first thing you'd choose to share, no matter how brave you are."

Now it was Laura's turn to ponder. Would he laugh if she told him about her secret place? He'd think she was living in the past, which wasn't true at all. It was so easy to make the wrong impression.

Suddenly she feared that she had spoiled the evening. Only crumbs remained of the decadent dessert. In another minute Rick would ask for the bill, they would argue over who should pay and she would ride the bus home alone. Then she would be where she began, a 40-year-old Spring-

field mother with two troubling teenagers and a merciless alarm clock. When it jumped up jangling Monday morning, she would put on green scrubs and drive to her job as a CAT scan technician. Some things you cannot change.

“I’d like some decaf,” she said firmly as if she were announcing a decision to join the Marines.

Rick raised a finger to signal a waiter.

“It’s so expensive here,” Laura said, looking down. “Can’t you make us something at your apartment?”

By the time they had climbed the stairs to his garret room on Ferry Street her natural shyness had returned. In movies the actors tore off their clothes before they were even inside the door. Laura found herself unable to take off her coat.

The chill of his bachelor studio didn’t help. Rick had been married twice, but you wouldn’t know it by looking around. The rims and spokes of half-built bicycle wheels cluttered a drafting table in the middle of the living room. Against one wall stood an exercise bicycle with a big toolbox. A couch hunkered against another wall. A brick-and-board bookshelf offered nothing but outdoor guidebooks. When she peered through the kitchen doorway, she saw a counter with empty beer bottles from obscure craft breweries.

The warmest spot in his cave was the refrigerator, where magnets supported crayon drawings signed with endearing clumsiness by Evan, his 5-year-old son. The boy also grinned from half a dozen soccer team photos. But even this domestic collage left Laura uneasy. Several of the photos featured a beautiful blond woman with her hands on the boy and her brown eyes on Rick. Suddenly Laura wanted out. She looked toward the door, her escape route blocked by more than just an exercise bicycle.

“I know what you’re thinking,” Rick said. He walked into the kitchen and turned on a coffee machine.

“You do?”

“You’re wondering why a guy who bicycles so much has an exercise machine in his living room.”

This was so far from her thoughts that she blinked. What did she really know about Rick? A mutual friend at a party had introduced them where a local guidebook author was showing travel videos. Rick was single and



had a steady job in a bike shop. They had agreed to take a Saturday bike ride together to prowl the antique shops of Coburg. On that trip they had laughed at retro Barbies, shared an Oakshire IPA in their sweaty Lycra bike clothes and it had been fun. They had parted with a lovely little kiss. But in retrospect, they had learned little about each other outside of the mandatory scorecard of exes and children. Laura had one ex and two kids. For Rick, the tally was two and one. Judging from his apartment, she could guess why he had trouble staying married.

“Things aren’t what they seem,” Rick said.

“No?”

“No.” Rick walked to the exercise bicycle and opened the toolbox mounted on the handlebars. Inside were several dozen glass bowls, nested inside each other on their sides, arranged by size. Together they looked like a gigantic glass pine cone — or maybe an insulator for a power station.

“What is it?” she asked, afraid that the device might be dangerous, or that he might be bonkers, or both.

“A glass harmonica. Benjamin Franklin invented them. I could....” The coffee maker interrupted from the kitchen with an orgasmic gasp and a long, steamy sigh.

“Do you like Irish coffee?” Rick asked. He went back to the kitchen and took two glass mugs from a cabinet.

“Yes, but...” Laura pointed to the glass contraption. “You play music with a bicycle?”

He laughed, pouring a finger of Bailey’s into each mug. “All the bicycle does is turn the glass bells. To play you have to touch them with your fingers.”

“A glass harmonica,” she repeated. “How did you get it?”

Rick poured a layer of cream onto the Irish coffees. “The story starts when my first wife died.”

“I thought you were divorced.”

“From Katherine? No.” He gave her a mug of coffee. Then he lifted his own cup, took a sip and licked a mustache of cream from his upper lip. “Katherine thought she had beaten her cancer before we got married. Still, that’s why we didn’t have children. She struggled 12 years, and then — well, then that was it.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I wanted a fresh start, but all I knew was bicycling. So, I decided to bicycle somewhere crazy. I’d follow the longest river in North America from its start to its end.”

Laura was still standing in the kitchen with her coat on, but the spiked coffee and the story had reduced her urge to run. “You biked the Mississippi?”

“Actually I started at Yellowstone, which is longer than just following the main Mississippi stem. But yeah, I ended

up in New Orleans. I dreamed I'd find my new beginning at the end of the river."

"What did you find?"

"My second wife, Rita." Rick frowned. Laura swirled her coffee.

"I thought you were going to tell me about a glass harmonica."

"I am. You see, as soon as Evan was born, Rita stopped noticing that I exist. It turned out that she'd already reconnected with her old high school boyfriend. Anyway, when she finally demanded a divorce, I decided to go bicycle the Danube."

"Another very long river."

"Too long. I only had enough vacation time to do the German-speaking part. I started in the Black Forest, rode down through Ulm and ended up in Vienna, imagining I'd find my pot of gold there."

"Another wife?" Laura hadn't wanted this to sound so brutal. By way of apology she took off her coat.

Rick finished his coffee. "I didn't find anything at first. Nobody would talk to me. I went to museums. Finally I heard a demonstration of a glass harmonica and thought, that's it. I'll make one of those."

Laura went back to the living room for a closer look at

the array of nesting glass bowls. If he had really built this instrument, he must have learned a lot about glassblowing. “How does it work?”

Rick sat on the bicycle and began pedaling. A loop of chain connected to the toolbox made the row of bowls start spinning. The glass rims glistened, wetted by a reservoir of water in the bottom of the box.

When he touched his finger to the rim of a bowl, an unearthly tone swelled across the room. To Laura, it sounded like the singing of an angel from a world beyond the grave. She felt the hairs on the back of her neck stand on end.

“Mozart was so taken with the glass harmonica that he wrote a piece for it,” Rick said. “This one I made up.” When he touched the bowls again, two angels began singing a wordless harmony.

Laura had never heard such intoxicating tones from



glass. Certainly not on those Christmas Eves as a child when her Danish uncle Holger had tuned three crystal goblets by drinking beer from them

until he could play a boozy version of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” on the rims with his thumb. Nor in college, when her roommate’s Hawaiian boyfriend had filled their dorm room with a marijuana haze before rubbing a Tibetan singing bowl into an om-like drone.

She sat on the sofa and closed her eyes, swimming in the melody as if it were a long, exotic river. When the last of the vitreous tones died away, she opened her eyes to find that Rick was sitting beside her on the sofa.

“Amazing music,” she said. “Somehow it explains a lot.”

“I told you my story,” he replied. “Your turn.”

“It’s not much. I’m not musical. I married right out of Thurston High School.”

“And? Come on, tell me about him.”

Laura sighed. “Jerold was a welder who spent a lot of time watching sports on TV. To jinx teams during big football games he’d make me wear a yellow T-shirt inside out, braless.”

Rick nodded.

“Sounds interesting. What went wrong?”

“Well, all the times he said he was at sports bars he was really watching dancers at Wiggles. When I confronted him, he agreed it was time to move out. That left me with Matthew and Wendy. Now Matt’s trying to be a heavy met-

al guitarist. Wendy's a moody 14-year-old who gives me snarky advice about clothes and hair."

"But you listen to her."

Laura smiled. "Is it that obvious?"

"You're a vision. I don't know who is smarter, your daughter or you."

Rick leaned in to kiss her, and to Laura's astonishment, this seemed like a good idea. An hour later, lying beside him in his bedroom, she felt as if she were one of the glass bells, ringing all over. She knew she would have to catch the bus to Springfield, but she wasn't ready to go home quite yet. Rick was a man of many layers. She put her head on his chest.

"I'm feeling brave. Tell me about your secret place."

"It's a lake."

"A lake? Where?"

"When my brother Nicholas and I were kids, our father got a job installing wiring at Army bases in Germany. I learned German. Nick learned to love the military. When we got back to Oregon, Nick graduated from high school and signed up with the Army. Just before he left for boot camp, Nick and I took a backpacking trip to the loneliest place we could imagine. We'd studied a map of the Mt. Washington Wilderness and found a nameless lake. It's in-

sanely remote on a lava island.”

“What’s a lava island?” Laura worried already that she might end up trekking to this insanely remote outpost. She didn’t care much for camping, even at regular car campgrounds.

“A patch of forest that got left in the middle of an old lava flow. To get there we had to scramble two miles through a desert of jagged black rock. But then there was this lake where no one had ever been. No campfire rings, no footprints. A deer with big antlers walked up and stared at us, completely unafraid. We swam naked, set up our tent and watched the stars come out over Mt. Washington.”

She rolled aside to rest her head on the pillow. “Do you and your brother go to this secret lake a lot?”

Rick’s voice was flat. “Nick died later that summer in a helicopter crash.”

“Oh! I wouldn’t have asked if...”

“No, no,” Rick interrupted. “No secrets. That’s what you said, and you’re right. I told you about my secret place. Now you’ve got to tell me about yours.”

Laura squirmed to look at the bedside clock. She swung her legs to the floor. “If I’m not back by midnight, Wendy’s going to turn into a pumpkin.”

“Sorry, my love,” Rick wagged his finger. “First, you have

to tell where your secret place is.” She stepped into her panties, pulled them up and sat back on the bed.

“It’s not a where, it’s a when.”

“A when? How does that work?”

“My favorite place is my 13 birthday.” From his gaze she could tell he was distracted by her lack of a shirt. She picked her bra off the floor.

“When I turned 13, my parents let me take my best friend Pam with us to a beach cabin in Pacific City. It turned out the Anderson brothers from Marcola High School were staying in the cabin next door. Mike and Mark were 15 and 16. Normally they wouldn’t have noticed us. I mean, that was the first summer we could wear two-piece bathing suits with a purpose.”

“You’ve grown up a lot,” Rick said. She shot him a warning glance, clipping her bra strap behind her back.

“The Anderson boys taught us how to ride skim boards on the water as a wave goes out. They built a bonfire for us on the beach, roasted marshmallows, and gave us each our first real kiss.”

Laura felt her face redden as much at the memory of Mark Anderson as at the fact that she was pulling on her pants in Rick’s bedroom. “Anyway, when we got back to the cabin, my parents had a birthday party all set up with

mint chocolate cake and presents. Pam gave me half of a broken-heart charm, engraved 'Best Friends Forever.' Then we stayed up late, playing Ouija by candlelight."

"What did the Ouija board predict?" Rick asked.

"Alluring fates with the Anderson boys." She smiled at him over her shoulder as she buttoned up her blouse. He scooted over on the bed, put his hands on her shoulders and kissed the back of her neck.

"Do you really wish you were 13 again?" The nuzzling tickled, and she laughed.

"There's a lot of my 13th year I wouldn't want to do over. But when things go wrong, I think about how happy I was that day."

"Your secret place is tricky," Rick mused. "I can't go to the past with you. I suppose I could rent us a beach cabin in Pacific City."

"And maybe I could backpack across the lava to your secret lake." She kissed him on the cheek. "But right now I have to go home."

He followed her to the door with a bath towel wrapped around his waist. They agreed to meet at Cafe Yumm for lunch on Wednesday. Then they thanked each other for the evening, kissed again and wished each other sweet dreams.

But their dreams that night were not sweet.

In her dream Laura discovered that the boys in the beach cabin next door were not the Andersons, but rather a 16-year-old Rick and his 18-year-old brother Nick. Gangly and pimply, Rick laughed at Laura's formless swimsuit. Worse, Nick surprised Pam on a path in the dunes and kissed her by force. That night, Pam viciously allowed the Ouija board to predict that Laura would end up marrying Rick. Laura retaliated by having the board say Nick would die in the Army. They both went off to bed in tears.

Alone in his Eugene apartment, Rick dreamed that he was climbing across a lava field. Halfway to his secret lake he found a deflated happy-face balloon. Trash like that could have blown in from Eugene, he told himself. Then he noticed a Budweiser can in the cinders. He heard the



voices long before he reached the lake: six men at a bonfire on the shore. Behind them, hanging from a pole they had spiked between two pines, was the antlered deer.

On Wednesday, when Rick was pedal-

ing along the Willamette River bike path to meet Laura, he was so busy watching the reflections of the water through the cottonwood trees that he missed the turnoff to the cafe. The rush of the river riffles seemed to be playing a counterpoint to the hum of his spinning spokes.

He pulled over on the riverbank and watched the white-water. He would turn back to meet Laura, of course.

But what would happen, he wondered, if he could keep going upstream? Rivers have only one mouth, but they have countless sources. Perhaps he'd been going about his relationships backwards all his life. Perhaps, instead of looking for the right ending, he should have been bicycling against the current, searching for the secret place where the river begins.

When Rick arrived at the cafe, Laura wasn't there. And when she did show up, five minutes later, the look in her face told him it was only to say goodbye.

William L. Sullivan is the author of 17 books. His collection of short stories, "The Oregon Variations" will be published by the Navillus Press in April 2014.

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