

April 2026



**Inland Empire
California Writing Club**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Board Contacts | ----- 2 |
| Presidents Message | -----3 |
| Editor's Note | ----- 4 |
| What's Coming Up | -----5 |
| Meeting Review | -----6-8 |
| Club Benefits | -----9 |

ANNOUNCEMENTS

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|
| CWC's books | ----- 10 |
| Kudos Page | ----- 11-12 |
| Help Needed | ----- 13 |
| Los Angeles Book Festival | -- 14 |

OPPORTUNITIES

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| Fresh Ink guidelines | ----- 15 |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|

SUBMISSIONS

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| "Poetry Musings" | ----- 16-18 |
| by Samuel Thomas Nichols | |
| "The Door" | ----- 19-21 |
| by Parker G. Emerson | |
| "The Last Laugh" | ----- 22-23 |
| by Ann Casas | |

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Next Month Theme | ----- 24 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Hello Writers,

Filling positions for the executive board is always a bit of a challenge, and this year is no exception—but we're very close! We are still seeking to fill the roles of **Treasurer**, **President**, and **Program Chair**. The rest of the board is in place, which is wonderful progress. If we can build a strong team, I would consider serving another term as President. That said, I prefer to mentor someone into the role and support a smooth transition. I haven't always been able to give the position the time it deserves due to my ongoing work commitments, frequent travel, and family responsibilities. I would be more than happy to offer guidance and support to anyone willing to step into leadership—consider it a well-supported passing of the torch! I'll be reaching out to members individually in the coming weeks.



Last month, instead of our regular meeting, we participated in a book fair—and what an experience it was! It was a hot day, and we were stationed outdoors, with only two chairs—but the real story is the teamwork. Ben Alirez did an outstanding job preparing our table-booth, bringing everything we needed: book stands, membership materials, a banner, and flyers. Thanks to a great group of volunteers, I gave my seat to an author, took a quick tour of the museum, and went home early. It was a great example of everyone pitching in to make things work.



At the central board level, we recently held a follow-up meeting regarding membership dues. Several proposals were discussed, including restructuring fees and adjusting fund distribution between the central organization and local branches. The decision was made to keep the current structure in place. However, the board is exploring an at-large membership option, which would allow members to remain involved even if they move away from their local branch. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for July 26.

Looking ahead, April brings our Open Mic event in celebration of Poetry Month! While poetry takes center stage, short prose pieces are also welcome. Be sure to reserve your spot with Sam Nichols.

As for me, I'll unfortunately miss both the Open Mic and the Friday board meeting—I'll be traveling once again. This time, I'll be spending some time in Italy. There's one business stop, but the rest will be a much-needed vacation in the Tuscan countryside with my sister and a few friends. I'm hoping to carve out some quiet time for reading and writing as well.



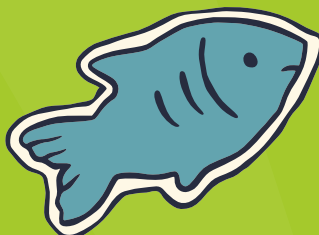
Wishing you all a wonderful, writerly month,

Judy Kohnen



EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue was edited using
Canva



Hello Readers!

After the lucky green of March, we've stepped fully into spring—bringing with it the playful, mischievous spirit of April. With all the laughter and lighthearted energy this season offers, it feels especially welcome.

This newsletter is arriving a bit later than usual, as things have been busy lately—life has a way of keeping us moving, much like busy bees.

For this edition, I leaned into that playful spirit by using pastel and bright colors that evoke a sense of fun and celebration, along with subtle cartoon-inspired elements to tie everything together.

Although April Fools' Day has already passed by the time you're reading this, its spirit still lives on in this issue. I haven't celebrated it as much in recent years, but I still appreciate a good prank. I often think back to my time in France, where "Poisson d'Avril" (April Fish) is celebrated by playfully attaching paper or plastic fish to someone's back. It was a simple tradition, but always a fun and memorable one.

As life gets busier with work and/or classes, it's easy to let these small, joyful moments slip by. Still, I believe there's real value in holding onto them—because sometimes, a bit of laughter is exactly what we need.

With that in mind, I'd like to thank our writers for their wonderful work—creating stories that are both entertaining and full of personality. I hope they bring you as much enjoyment as they brought me.

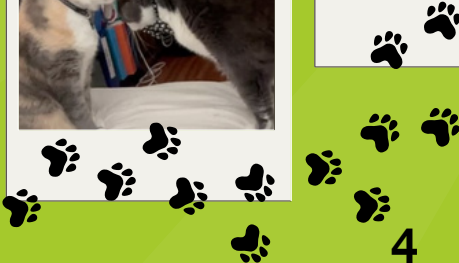
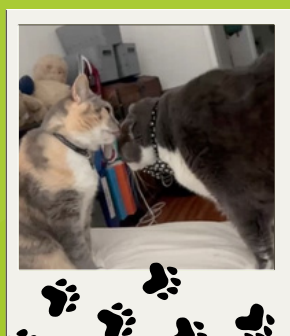
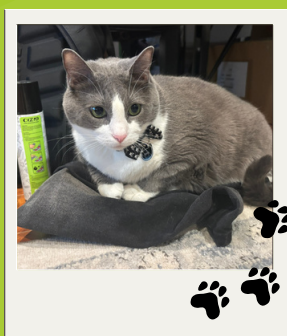
Thank you for reading!

Ink to page, tales unveiled.

Anaïs Hamel



@globetrotteuse99



Litchi and Coco are still being adorable little assistants... when they're not busy arguing/fight with each other.



Saturday, April 25, 2026, at 10:10 am
 Ovitt Family Library,
 215 E C St, Ontario, CA 91764



April 2026 Poetry Open Mic



In recognition of April as the 30th Anniversary of the National Poetry Month our Inland Branch of the California Writers Club will be hosting an open Poetry Mic. You do not need to be a member to participate but you do need to get on the roster by emailing your title(s) and expected reading time to Sam Nichols at the email address provided below. Readings should be limited to 10 minutes or less. Readings will be scheduled in the order the reservation requests are received or as deemed appropriate by the organizer.

There will be a wireless microphone mounted on an adjustable microphone stand to facilitate the poetry readings.

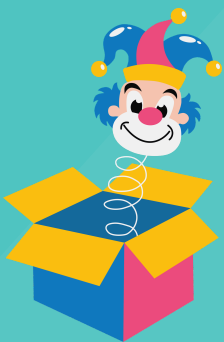
This will be a mixed audience at a family oriented library with minors in attendance so no gratuitous sex or violence.

Organized by the Academy of American Poets, and introduced in 1996, National Poetry Month is an annual celebration of poetry. It seeks to increase the appreciation and awareness of poetry within the United States. Further information may be found on the Academy's website at <https://poets.org/national-poetry-month-30th-anniversary>.

Email Sam Nichols at: iecaliforniawritersclub@gmail.com to reserve a spot.

This in-person meeting is open to all!

APRIL 2026 MEETING WHAT'S COMING UP



FEBRUARY 2026

MEETING REVIEW

The Journey to Becoming An Older Debut Author

Presented by Tracy Wise

Overview by Ben Alirez

Saturday, February 28, 2026, at 10:10 a.m.

Ovitt Family Community Library

215 E. C St., Ontario, CA 91764



On this day, club members gathered in anticipation of Tracy Wise's historical novel, *Madame Sorel's Lodger*, a fictional account of Vincent van Gogh.

But first, the club's president, Judy Kohlen, provided updates on the Ontario Art Book Fair on Saturday, March 28. She also elaborated the club's need for five board members, as several of the current ones are stepping down after having served in various roles for the last several years. In fact, Judy issued a challenge to those in attendance. Unless there was a healthy body of volunteers, the club was facing the possibility of disbanding after more than twenty-five years. Almost immediately, several in attendance began asking how they might help.

She then turned the event over to Sam Nichols for the introductions of our presenter, but not before expressing her own excitement with the subject of renowned painter Vincent van Gogh. Sam provided a short bio on Tracy and explained how she lived much of her childhood in Asia. Now hailing from Redlands, California, her illustrious career saw time spent in theatre, opera, and higher education administration, where she wrote university presidential speeches, campus communications, and news stories in California's Inland Empire. She has a BA in Theatre and Spanish from Washington University in St. Louis (which includes a year at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, UK) and an MA in Cultural Studies (a historiography degree) from the University of East London in the UK.



Once Tracy stepped up to the podium, she elaborated more on her past, having fallen in love with writing from an early age. While working for the Duke University Press, she performed various types of writing: reports, articles, even Twitter. In her opinion, they all proved beneficial, contributing to a form of writing that offered clarity. Once her mother began struggling with dementia, Tracy took an early retirement and turned her attention to creative writing.

A relative of successful screenwriter Cynthia Whitcomb (who offers Writing the Waves instructional classes while on a fourteen-day cruise across the Atlantic), Tracy seized the opportunity to write on the high seas and discovered the exercise allowed her to be hyper focused. It was an endeavor that contributed greatly to the completion of her first novel.

Recognizing the integral role writing conferences can have, be they online or in-person, she encourages participation in virtual writing groups, although an online forum proved to be a discouraging episode early on in her novel's development. The harsh feedback she received was a lesson that online platforms can be both helpful and hurtful.

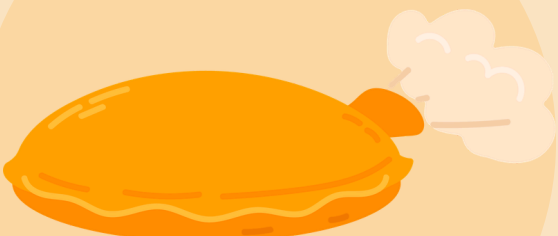
During one writing conference, she paid for a ten-minute session to deliver an elevator pitch to a professional agent. She received positive reinforcement, but cautioned projects should be polished before approaching industry professionals.

Her craft advice to prospective writers:

- Be a reader
- There is no one pathway to writing success
- Write, write, write
- Persistence is key

Understand that the editing process means reading your writing repeatedly. She is also a big believer in reading her writing aloud.

And lastly: Write what you want to read, not what is trending (as so many novice writers tend to do).



When it comes to being represented by a publishing house, there are only five big publishers that agents work with. However, because authors must sell in the thousands with the big five, every book can be your last. Note: The average writer only sells two hundred copies of their book.

In Tracy's case, she went the small press route and signed with Type Eighteen Books, an independent publisher. Because independent presses operate on a shoestring budget, authors are forced to carry much of the legwork in a very challenging market. Still, to her delight, *Madame Sorel's Lodger* published in February of 2025. Tracy estimates she made two hundred dollars in royalties last year.

Today, *Madame Sorel's Lodger* can be ordered through IngramSpark, Amazon, and found on the shelves of independent bookstores like Redlands own "Frugal Frigate." Unfortunately, a distributor issue prevents her novel from appearing on the shelves of Barnes and Noble, but they can be ordered through their establishment and mailed to the buyer.

If signing on with an independent publisher, Tracy suggests authors give due consideration to the contract signing process. In her case, an attorney friend helped her navigate the complexities. She also joined the Writers Guild of America to gain a better understanding.

Her second novel, *Manufacturing a Duchess: A Novel of the Regency Era*, is scheduled to be released on September 8, 2026. The cover for it can be found on Good Reads.

Afterward, several club members, non-members, and our presenter herself, reunited for lunch at local favorite Eden Garden Fusion Grill for more camaraderie.



Benefits of IECWC

MEMBERSHIP

- ALL AGES are welcome!
- Entrance into monthly meetings
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Access to monthly speakers on topics related to the craft
- Exposure & practice by submitting to our monthly literary newsletter, FRESH INK
- Network with other club members
 - (various levels of expertise, mentors)
- Participation in Critique Groups
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Your OWN PAGE on our Club website at no additional cost
 - Highlight your bio, photo, website, social media, and published books
- Opportunities to serve on the board or on committees of our branch
- Camaraderie among other writers at all levels, all genres, and all ages!
- Partake, volunteer, and/or help plan our Spring and Fall Conferences which are provided at little (or sometimes no) cost to our members
- Annual opportunity to showcase your work at Open Mic events.
- Annual opportunity, each January, to attend/appear on our Panel of Authors
 - Members who were published the year before
 - Learn/share advice on the publication process, ask/answer questions, and buy/sell your books on site
- Annual opportunity to submit, read, and assist with judging the competitive Statewide CWC Literary Review, with readership of about 2,000 members and their readers and associates
- Simultaneous Co-Membership into California Writers Club
 - Our state-level parent organization at www.calwriters.org, with additional volunteer opportunities

- Read/advertise in the Tri-Annual CWC Bulletin available online, free of charge
 - Access to news from the other CWC Branches throughout California, gaining perspective about other serious, mostly published, writers, editors, Web designers, graphics experts, etc.
- Potential for your writing to be chosen to be displayed in the Southern California Writers Showcase at www.socalwritersshowcase.com
- A wonderful addition to your curriculum vitae or resume!
- Access to the monthly IECWC Blind Review Team
- Utilize our FACEBOOK PAGE to get your works word out to the public interested in writing

JOIN or RENEW at:

<https://iecwc.com/membership-meetings/>

Active
\$65

Supporting
\$65

Student
\$15
ages 8-22

Renewal of Membership
\$45

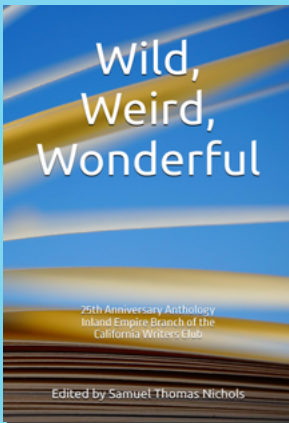
Renewal deadline September 30.
On October 1, CWC shall drop all delinquent members from the rolls. If dropped, you must pay the new \$65 member enrollment fees.



THE SMALLS

The Smalls includes selections from the California Writers Club 2024 "Big Contest for Small Poems and Prose." This is a vibrant collection of unique voices chosen from the contest entries.

<https://a.co/d/45iqsdm>



Wild, Weird, Wonderful: 25th Anniversary Anthology Inland Empire Branch of the California Writers Club

<https://a.co/d/0SVxuqt>

This collection includes short stories, poetry, memoir, nonfiction, memoir, original drawings and photographs, and one novelette entitled *Murder in Huckleberry Heights*.

This anthology contains the varietal work of eighteen members of the Inland Empire Branch with several genres being represented.

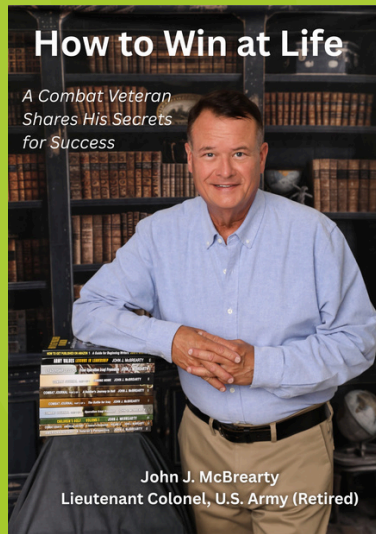
Vision & Verse: A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry

The multi-talented artists and writers featured within these pages have come together to create a dialogue between their respective mediums. This collection showcases the beauty of visual art married with the magic of the written word.

<https://a.co/d/2zu0Afx>



KUDOS KORNER



Hats off to **John J. McBrearty** for being and exhibitor at the Los Angeles Book Festival. He was also recently featured in a Legiontown article that highlights his books and celebrates his contributions as an author.

Check his chanel via the link here
<https://www.youtube.com/@JohnWritesHistory>

Upcoming Videos releases

2026-04-03

First Day First Firefight

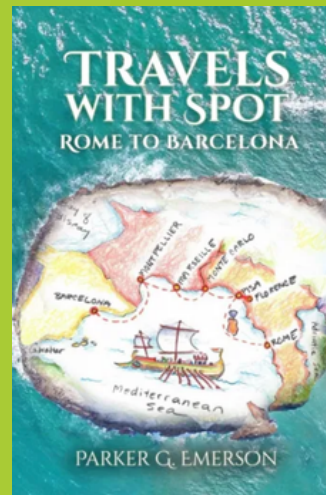
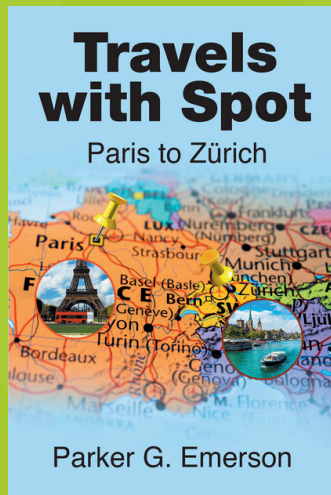
[https://youtube.com/shorts/uG8i9n-kaDY?
feature=share](https://youtube.com/shorts/uG8i9n-kaDY?feature=share)

2026-04-30

Claire The Crazy Shih Tzu

<https://youtube.com/shorts/--J-T7rhsCo>

KUDOS KORNER



Congratulations to **Parker G. Emerson**! His books *Travels with Spot: Paris to Zürich* and *Travels with Spot: Rome to Barcelona* will be featured at the Beijing International Book Fair, taking place June 17–21 at the Beijing National Convention Center. As the second-largest international book fair, this event connects authors and their works with booksellers, publishers, agents, translators, and screenwriters specializing in Asian markets.

Check his books here
www.TravelsWithSpot.com



Kudos to **Ann Casa** on being selected as an exhibitor at the LA Festival of Books! Be sure to stop by and visit her at Booth 128 Gold on April 19 from 12:30–3:00 PM, where she will be showcasing her work and connecting with readers.

Help Wanted

WE ARE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE TO FILL
IN THESE BOARD POSITIONS!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
SAM NICHOLS SAMUELTHOMASNICHOLS@GMAIL.COM



TREASURER



PRESIDENT



PROGRAM CHAIR

Los Angeles Times
**FESTIVAL
OF BOOKS**
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
APRIL 18-19, 2026

 LATMG | LA Times STUDIOS

Come and support our writers !

John J. McBrearty

Book Signing 12 p.m., Saturday April 18, 2026, Booth 212

Ann Casas

Sunday April 19, 12:30–3:00 Booth 128 Gold



LEARN MORE
latimes.com/fob

Deadlines

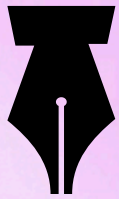
Submissions are due the 20th of every month



Content Limits

Submissions with the following will not be considered:

- Excessive or gratuitous violence (violence for violence sake)
- Excessive or gratuitous profanity
- Excessive or gratuitous sexual situations or pornography
- Political or religious agendas that are meant to persuade or denounce



FRESH INK

guidelines



Form

- Prose word count <1,200
- No line count on poetry

Send as an attachment
Google or Word document
Times New Roman
12pt font



Photos

Accompanying images are optional

We can only publish digital images that **do not violate copyright**

You are encouraged to submit photos you have taken



Email

iecwcfreshink@gmail.com

Check your email periodically for suggestions from the editor

Poetry Musings

By Samuel Thomas Nichols

Prank

A prank is, according to Merriam-Webster, a noun suggesting a trick that's either a malicious act, a mildly mischievous act, or a ludicrous act. Hmm, mildly mischievous to malicious - that's a sizable difference in the intensity of intent - from mere annoyance to rankly harmful. In my youth, pranks were abundant on or about April 1st of each year, both at home and at school, which suggests that pranks are uncommon. But what if we are constantly being pranked, as suggested by Emily Dickinson?

Speech is a prank of Parliament
'Tears' is a trick of the nerve
But the Heart with the heaviest freight on
Doesn't always move



So, speech is unreliable and, of course, we've long been cautioned to believe nothing that we hear and *only half of what we see*. Now, with AI, I'm afraid that the half of what we see portion of the advice has been eroded until all that's left is *don't believe anything*. I think even Missourians might agree, yet remain reluctant to change Missouri's unofficial motto.

Despite AIs bombardment of us with one scam after another, it seems we still thrive on pranking ourselves, and when I think on how we turn on ourselves my mind drifts to the singular Sylvia Plath and to her poem *Lady Lazarus* from *Ariel* (1965). Consider these excerpts written after a third suicide attempt:

I have done it again / One year in every ten / I manage it—
And I a smiling woman / I am only thirty / And like the cat I have nine times to die
This is Number Three / The first time it happened I was ten / It was an accident
The second time I meant / To last it out and not come back at all

Suicide, a maliciously ludicrous prank that cannot be topped or undone. Ted Hughes, who was married to Sylvia Plath (another kind of prank), wrote a series of poems in *Crow: From the Life and the Songs of the Crow* (1970), that are reminiscent of the Raven stories common to many cultures. In *A Childish Prank*, God had been busy creating the world, and it's inhabitants, and the fact that Adam and Eve were soulless bore heavily upon him, and he fell asleep pondering this. While he slept:



Crow laughed.
He bit the Worm, God's only son,
Into two writhing halves.

And so Crow (or Satan?) stuffed the tail half into man with the cut end hanging out and the head half into woman where it crept ever higher and called to its other half because of the tremendous pain it suffered and:



Man awoke being dragged across the grass.
Woman awoke to see him coming,
Neither knew what had happened.
God went on sleeping.
Crow went on laughing.

I wonder, was Crow's prank, the creation of human sex, malicious, mildly mischievous, or ludicrous? I feel there's room to argue that it was a bit of all three. And, thinking of worms, being bitten in half, or not, I am reminded of poor Thel who received from the Worm's mother, the Clod of Clay, grave insight into what life was all about:

O beauty of the vales of Har, we live not for ourselves,
Thou seest me the meanest thing, and so I am indeed;
My bosom of itself is cold. and of itself is dark,
But he that loves the lowly, pours his oil upon my head.
And kisses me, and binds his nuptial bands around my breast.
And says; Thou mother of my children, I have loved thee.
And I have given thee a crown that none can take away
But how this is sweet maid, I know not, and I cannot know,
I ponder, and I cannot ponder; yet I live and love.



Poor Thel, after learning that the purpose of her brief existence is to love and live for others than herself, William Blake had her continue to explore what lay ahead and subjected her to a series of ominous questions:

Why cannot the Ear be closed to its own destruction?
Or the glistening Eye to the poison of a smile!
Why are Eyelids stord with arrows ready drawn,
Where a thousand fighting men in ambush lie?
Or an Eye of gifts & graces, show'ring fruits & coined gold!
Why a Tongue impress'd with honey from every wind?
Why an Ear, a whirlpool fierce to draw creations in?
Why a Nostril wide inhaling terror trembling & affright.
Why a tender curb upon the youthful burning boy!
Why a little curtain of flesh on the bed of our desire?

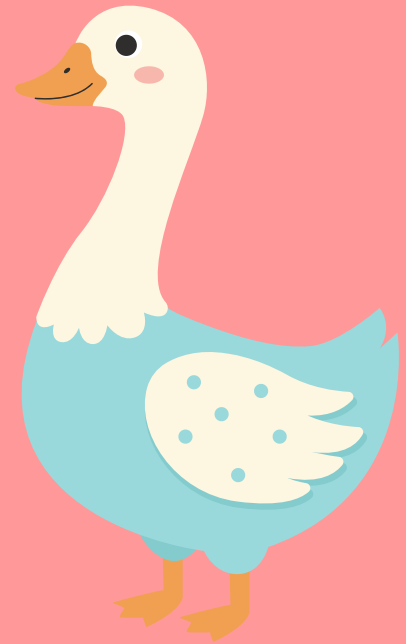


Alas, the innocent Thel shrieked and fled back into the vales of Har never to be subjected to the greatest prank that life and growing up offer: Death.

But sometimes it's the prank that engenders life rather than ending it. In his sojourn back to ancient Greece, William Butler Yeats explored the beginning of Hellenic civilization in his sonnet Leda and the Swan:

A SUDDEN blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.
How can those terrified vague fingers push
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?
And how can body, laid in that white rush,
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?
A shudder in the loins engenders there
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead.

Being so caught up,
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,
Did she put on his knowledge with his power
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?



And so, Zeus (as a swan) pranked Leda, who then gave birth to his children Helen and Polydeuces, along with her husband Tyndareus's children, Castor and Clytemnestra. As Fate pranks frequently, Zeus's daughter Helen later eloped with, or was abducted by, Paris, whom she married and which set off the Trojan War only to culminate in history's preeminent prank - the Trojan Horse, which only succeeded because of the Greek spy Sinon's preparatory prank in subduing the Trojan's skepticism. As Virgil wrote:



The deadly weapon tops the walls,
pregnant with arms. Around, boys and little maidens
sing hymns and joy to touch the cable: menacing,
the horse slides up into the heart of the city.
O Fatherland, Troy, home of Gods, Trojan bulwark
famous in war! Four times on the gate's very edge
it stopped, four times arms rang from its belly!
But we paid no heed and, blind in our madness,
put the cursed portent in our hallowed citadel.
Even then Cassandra opened her lips to coming doom,
by divine decree never to be believed by the Trojans.
We, wretches whose final day that was to be,
garlanded the shrines of the Gods with gay boughs through the city.

And to think, the Greeks pulled off the greatest prank of all without the aid of AI on what must have been *All Fool's Day*, 1184 BC.

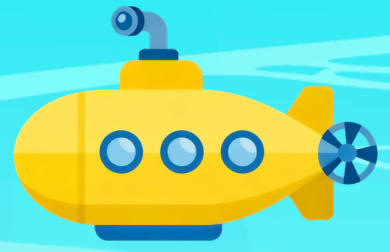
Be vigilant of Greeks bearing gifts; remember that Cassandra always spoke the truth, and enjoy the season for all of its worth.





The Door

By Parker G. Emerson



"Be No" finished his eight-hour watch commanding the nuclear missile submarine USS Simon Bolivar, returned to his stateroom, and prepared to take a quick shower before going down to the wardroom for supper, when he sensed something was amiss. He pondered the situation for several minutes before realizing what it was. He had not opened the stateroom door. It was not that he had forgotten about opening the door, or that he had left it open earlier. It was missing.

We had been at sea, submerged, for the past 135 days and were in transit back home. For the last 120 days we had been "on alert," ready to shoot one, some, or all our 16 ICBMs on a moment's notice. It would take another two to three weeks to get home. We never went straight from home port to our first alert area, and always took a circuitous route from our last alert area to home. During the transit home we sometimes pulled pranks to break the relative boredom. None of these would diminish our operational readiness, but they could irritate some crew members. The missing door was one of these hijinks.

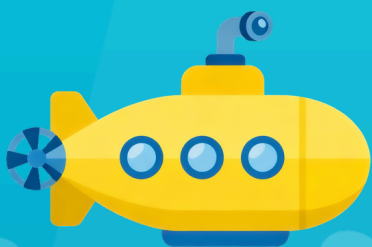
"Be No," the second in command of the boat (the Executive Officer, or XO), had earned the sobriquet because he was sometimes called upon to be the chief disciplinarian (or "hard ass"). He seemed to relish this role, and was noted for saying "There will be no (something) until ..."

Anxious to regain the privilege of privacy due his position, Be No started searching nearby areas for his door. This was a standard size door, 30 inches wide and 74 inches high, so it would be hard to hide. It could not have been simply ejected overboard with the trash because (1) it would have to be broken into small pieces to fit in the Trash Disposal Unit, and (2) there had been no TDU operations since he last seen his door. It must be somewhere onboard the submarine, and he was determined to find it. On the general announcing system he called, "All hands to their battle stations until further notice. All hands to their battle stations until further notice."

This meant every individual would be accounted for in a specific location and they could not move about the boat. He was taking no chances that as he searched the boat his door would be moved as well. He commandeered the Chief of the Boat (the senior enlisted person) to accompany him and do the dirty work during the search. Starting forward in the torpedo room, they even checked inside the torpedo tubes, although the door would have to have been broken in half lengthwise to fit into the 19-inch tubes. They proceeded aft compartment by compartment, room by room, and bilge by bilge looking for the door. Ceiling to floor. Behind equipment bolted to the decks. Between the frames that make the ribs of the boat. They checked under the mattress in every crewman's and officer's bunk. They checked to see if it was attached to another door of the same size. They even checked the captain's stateroom. It could not be in the reactor compartment because it was kept sealed whenever the reactor was operating, but they looked through the viewing windows and cameras anyways. They checked the spaces behind the panels of gauges and switches that control the steam plant, the reactor, and the electrical distribution. They got all the way aft where the propeller shaft exits the boat ... and found no door.

Be No was furious. It had to be somewhere onboard, but where? No one knew anything about the missing door, even though he asked everyone as he searched each area. He suspected that it was one of the "A-gangers." These are the men who maintain and operate the auxiliary equipment such as the scrubbers that remove CO₂ from the air, the burners that remove volatile hydrocarbons from the air, the oxygen generators, and such. The A-gangers had a bit of a reputation for parties and pranks, especially Machinist's Mate First Class Wilbur "Brownie" Brown.

"Secure from battle stations. Secure from battle stations. Return to normal operations," Be No announced, and most of the crew returned to their off-duty activities: sleeping, eating, watching movies, reading, exercising, or playing games, while the remainder operated the ship.



Not one to be easily defeated, Be No established a special watch. In shifts, 24 hours a day, one of the A-gang acted as his stateroom door. When Be No approached the doorway, either leaving or entering, the doorman would hold out his arms in front of him, one over the other, and rotate as an opening and then a closing door.

They kept this up for the three weeks it took to return to home port. No one complained. No one confessed.

When we had tied up to the pier, the XO announced, "There will be no liberty until my door is returned and in place."

Three seconds later we heard, "This is the captain. Liberty goes down for the liberty section NOW."

Be No returned to his stateroom with the human door and found a typed note on his desk. "There is indoor dining and outdoor dining. You have had the unique experience of over-door dining for three weeks."

Rushing down to the wardroom, he looked in the one place on the entire boat that he had not looked. There, neatly and securely duct-taped, and exactly filling the gap in the C-shaped metal reinforcing bar under the dining table, was his door.

Many of us heard Be No call out from the wardroom even without the aid of the announcing system, "Brownie!!!"



The Last Laugh

By Ann Casas

Once upon a time there were two attorneys employed at the same law firm. As they worked together, they found they had much in common. They dated and married after a quick courtship.

“Look at us. Our marriage has added another step towards partnership,” David remarked.

“Yes, darling, our relationship is wonderful. I love you.”

Meredith was enamored with David. She had devoted most of her youth to academics and he was her first serious relationship. Her family was thrilled that she had found someone like him.

David could charm people with his intelligence, looks and conversation. What they didn't realize was he was a sociopath, only interested in himself.

This was revealed on the Vegas honeymoon. After the first night, David figured since he was married, he could let down his guard.

He moved out at 16. There was only beer in the fridge and pot in the pantry, nothing to eat! And he continued to live his life on the fringe. Until...

“Ha ha ha!” he laughed. “You're boring. Let's have some fun!” He pulled out a joint and proceeded to light it.

“I didn't know you smoked marijuana,” she said in a terrified whisper.

“Honey, there's lots you don't know about me. But no worries. The main thing is for you to play along. You'll get used to it.” He reached over and grabbed her, forcing her to participate in unnatural sex.

In fact, David had a proclivity for heinous living. Meredith felt like a used toy, not a person, especially when he brought in other people to participate in their “lovemaking.”

During work hours, they seemed a loving couple. They continued to work as a team, although David privately demanded he get top credit. “Soon I'll be a partner,” David gloated.



Meredith held back her tears. *How can he be so insensitive? I'm trapped and I can't see any way out. Getting a divorce isn't an option.*

After one year, the firm gifted the couple with an anniversary cruise to the Bahamas. "I'm sure to get the good news when we return," laughed David.

The sendoff included caviar and chilled Dom Perignon in their cabin. David proceeded to drink himself into a stupor.

Disgusted, Meredith had an idea. What if David has an unfortunate 'accident'? Could such a thing be possible?

She planned it carefully. After placing the caviar on the balcony, she spread ice water on the deck floor. "Honey, I'm going to get some more champagne. You get started outside." She ran from the room.

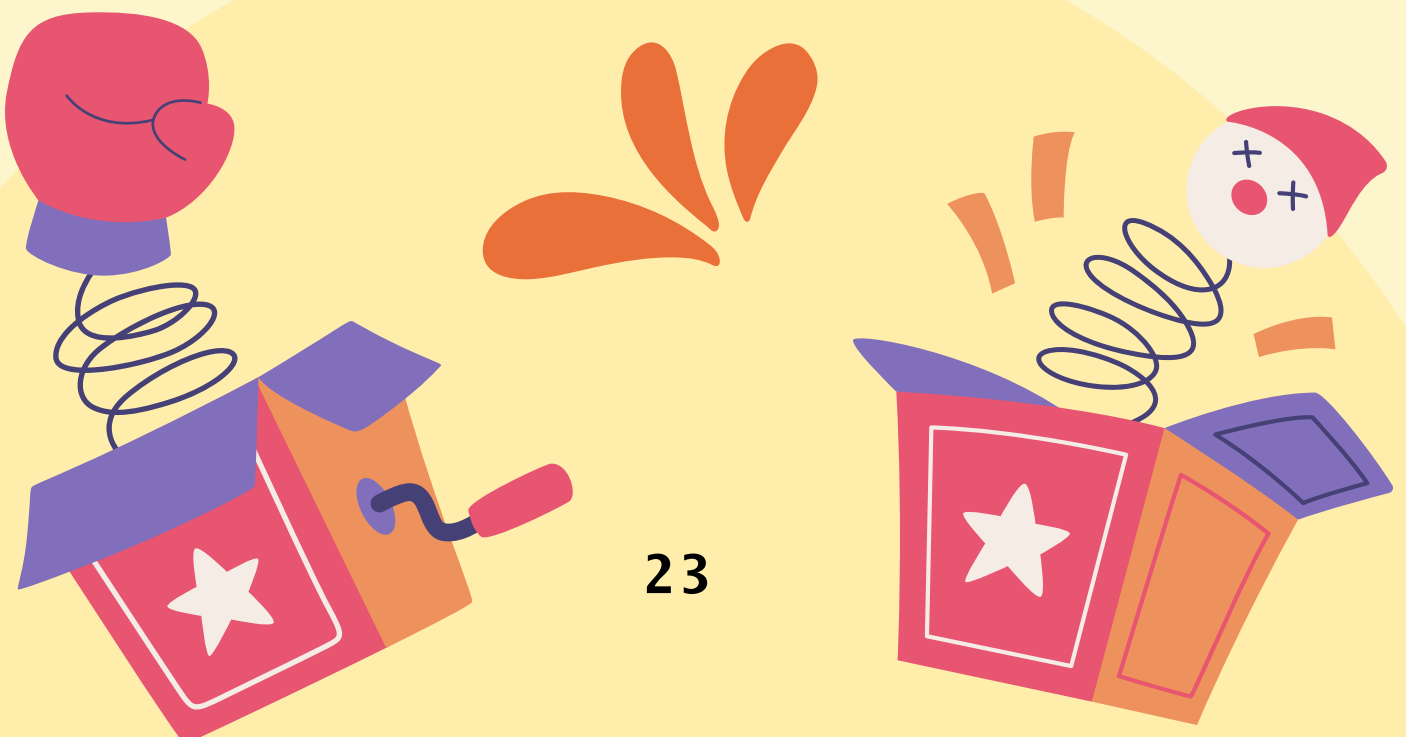
Barefoot, he stumbled onto the deck. "Oh my god! Help!" he shouted as he slipped. He tried to grab the railing but was unable to stop himself from falling. Down he went into the dark ocean as the ship continued to sail.

The people next door saw the disaster. Lucky for Meredith, she was seen in the dining room during the fall.

Statements were taken. Police were called to examine the scene. By that time the ice water had evaporated.

Meredith was treated sympathetically back home. She received a partnership within a year.

She felt justified. *I have the last laugh, you son of a bitch.*



MAY THEME

*In Full
Bloom*

