

December 2024

FRESH INK



INLAND EMPIRE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Abigail found me. On my patio. During our Holiday party.

“Here,” she said, giving me her phone. “Write it now.”

The President message. I knew I was late getting it done.
What do I want to say?

I want to thank everyone for their creative energies.
Forever grateful for this writing community.

A quick reminder about our annual author’s panel for
January. Let me know if you published anything in 2024.
We want to showcase your book—and your expertise!
What marketing trends can you share with the group?

Until then, Be merry. Be writing. Be planning.
Or be like me this afternoon, and rest!

Write on,
Judy

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue was edited using

Canva

Anything Under the Moon



Seasons greetings reader,

The chaos of the holidays has barely begun. Meeting the members at Judy's holiday party was such a joy. I know the event has already passed, but I don't have the heart to delete the fifth page. Let it be a reminder of the laughs, dishes, and books shared.

Before joining IECWC, writing was something I often did in secret and always did alone. It's been 3 years since I've joined.

The party really made me realize we may not have everything in common, but we all write and I think that's unifying enough.

After all, who else could I compare word processors with, complain about faulty grammar checkers to, and discuss works-in-progress with?

See you all next year!

Ice, spice, and everything nice,
Abigail Handojo



@abigail_handojo

NO 4TH SATURDAY GENERAL MEETING!

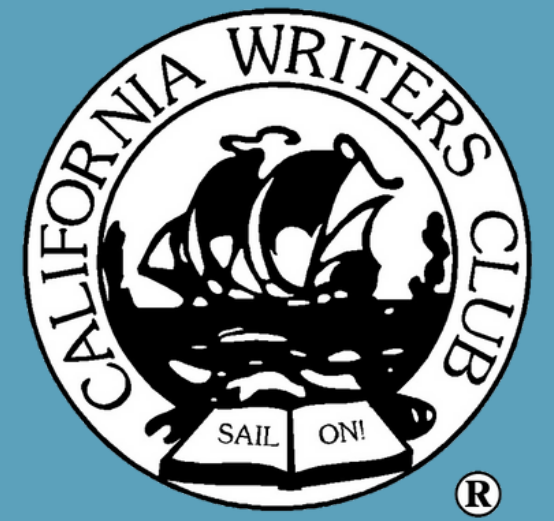
HOLIDAY PARTY

December 8th
12:00 to 3:00 PM

RSVP Judy:
judy.kohnen@gmail.com

We do not have meetings in December, but we will party!

Come to Judy's house on Sunday. Spouses and partners are welcome. Bring a side, a salad, or a dessert. Also, a favorite book to gift. It can be used, it can be one of your own books!



Go to the critique workshop in the morning and party in the afternoon!

CRITIQUE WORKSHOP

December 8th
10 AM

Rather than meet twice in a busy month, we will move the date and location of the second Saturday critique meeting to Sunday 8th.

717 W Twelfth St,
Claremont, CA 91711
RSVP Constance:
cassinelli100@hotmail.com

TO BRING:

- Side, salad, or dessert
- Book to exchange
(used or one of your own)

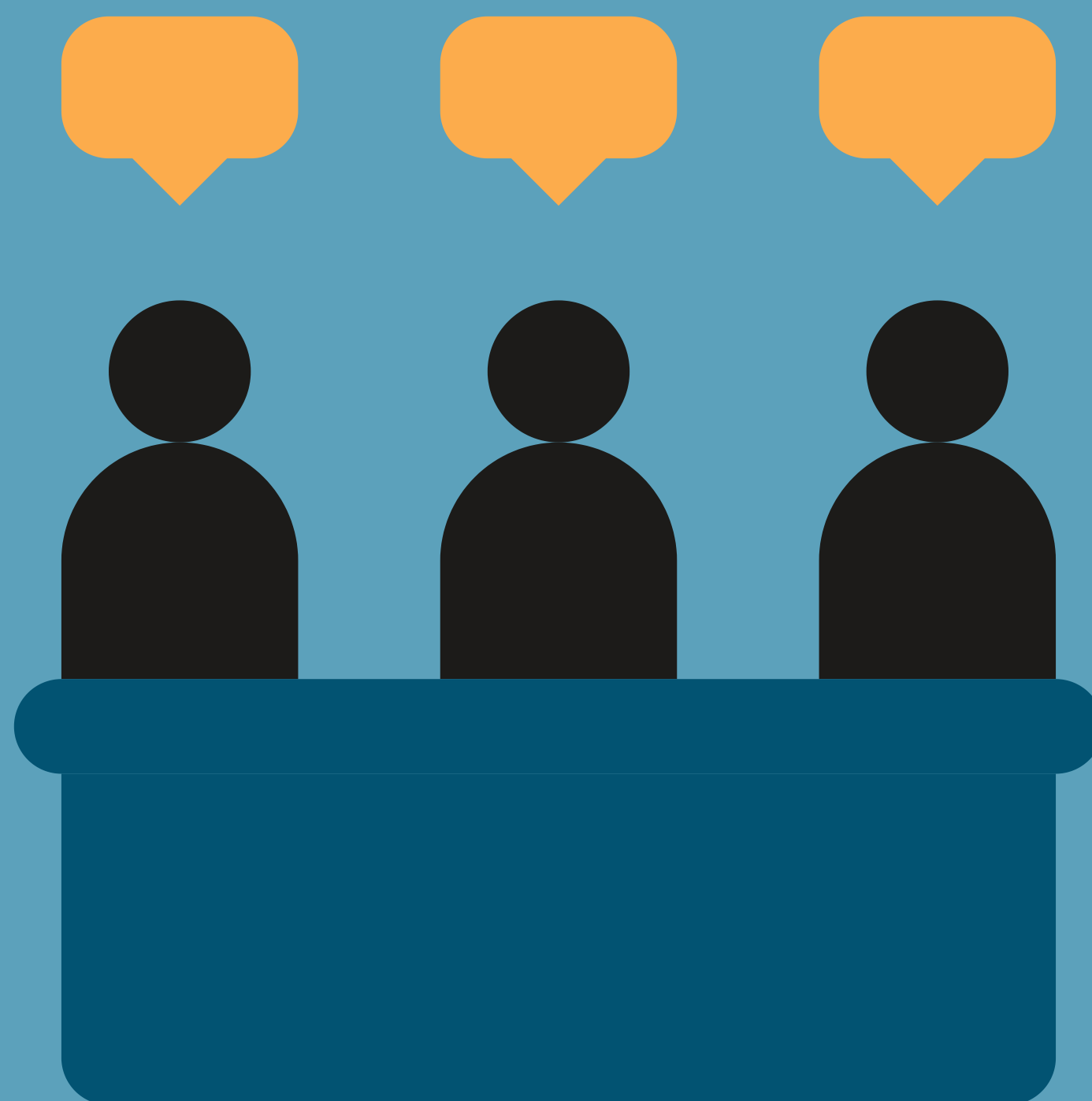


DECEMBER 2024 EVENTS

WHAT'S COMING UP

JANUARY 26, 2025

AUTHORS PANEL



Every year IECWC holds an author panel in January to recognize those who published books the year before. More information to come.

JANUARY 2025 EVENT PREVIEW
WHAT'S COMING UP

NOVEMBER 2024 MEETING PROGRAM OVERVIEW

“How to add Depth to your Villain / Antagonist” with Dennis Crosby.

Presentation Review November 23, 2024 by Elisabeth Anghel

Dennis Crosby, the presenter to our club on Nov. 23, 2024, is an award winning author with a diverse professional experience in sales, private investigations and social services. He has a Master Degree in Forensic Psychology and a Master in Fine Arts in Creative Writing. He participated as panelist and moderator in a number of comic-cons featuring pop-culture entertainment.

Dennis Crosby inspiration for his novels and character development is based on his deep knowledge of human nature and life experience applied to a magical, supernatural and mythological background. He introduced the villain /antagonist as a fun and important character in story's plot.

The villain could be driven to extreme behaviors by: jealousy, want of power, vanity, belief that is superior, love lost, recapture the past. In the beginning we do not know the reasons for the evil actions, but later we learn from the story that extreme situations call for extreme actions.

Villains are modeled after human beings, male or female. They have basic needs to exist like food, water, sleep, love, identity, security, sense of achievement, friends and emotional support. If we take away access to some of the necessities of life, we will create a villain. The villain character will become obsessed to recover what is lost. These things could be: love and intimacy, innocence, safety, health, family, sense of self.

In order to achieve victory and recover the loss, the villains are willing to harm others, disregard rules and law, act selfish with no empathy for others, cunning and manipulative. On the other hand, the villains have qualities that help to become successful. They are charismatic, resourceful in avoiding the law and consequences, ambiguous and skilled. They believe are destined to achieve big things and secure help from a mentor. The mentor is a trusted character who will help achieving the goal and villain's transformation at the end of the story.

Dennis concluded the presentation with a list of villain character development as follow:

- Create a hero with moral ambiguity, no remorse, no empathy, no humility
- Give them good family, money, privilege, education, friends, opportunity, ambition, love, wealth
- Take away some of the good things
- Create a character with almost nothing, poor health, food insecurity
- Give the character ambition, intelligence, confidence, charm
- Introduce the villain character gradually to build tension, make the reader interested and sympathetic.
- Get inspiration from real life observation, watch people, take notes and read similar stories.

Dennis Crosby is the author of Cassidy Simmons trilogy *Death's Legacy*, *Death's Debt* and *Death's Despair* and other stories in the horror and supernatural thriller genres.

The presentation was structured, well organized and complemented by computer graphics projected on the board.

Dennis's Website: <https://www.denniskcrosby.com>

MEMBER *Spotlight*

JACKIE

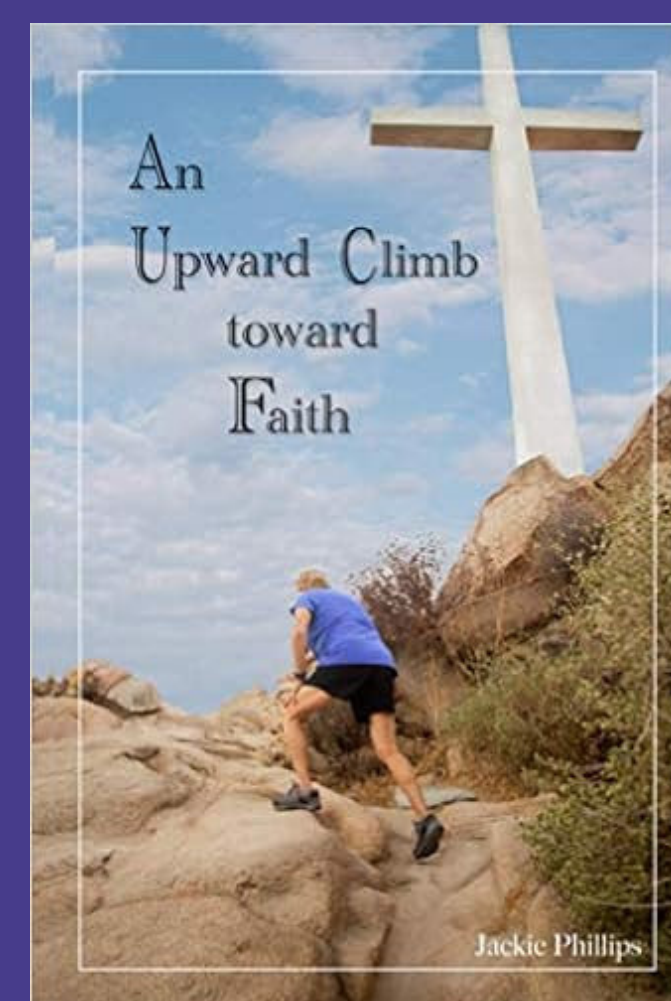


PHILLIPS

Jackie Phillips is an author, speaker, athlete & wellness expert. She is the founder and CEO of Phillips Wellness Enterprises. Formerly she has been a classroom teacher, National Vice President of Sigma Kappa Sorority, and the owner of a California swim school. She holds a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Miami University in Oxford Ohio and a master's degree in health physical education and recreation from Purdue University.

Jackie started attending CWC while working on her book, *An Upward Climb Toward Faith*. She was looking for better visibility to promote her work and presented her book at the CWC author's panel. She is strictly a nonfiction writer, and that has been her sole writing focus. Ms. Phillips reserves her Saturdays for her family and has a full plate, so it is rare for her to make a general meeting or find time for other board activities.

Her top tip is to find a way to be accountable for your writing. Many people plan to write a certain amount a day but for Jackie--when her ideas flow, she keeps at it and does not stop! For this reason, she prefers writing workshops instead of classes. She likes it when a teacher motivates her, right there and then, so she finds the time to write and finish a project.



Ms. Phillips does not have anything in progress right now. However, she keeps her eye open for collaborative books. Collaborative fiction is a form of writing whereby a group of authors share creative input into a story. The goal is to produce the best work by including the ideas and skill sets of multiple writers. Phillips has participated in three collaborative books, the most recent publication in 2024 was titled, "Voices of Peace: A Global Perspective." Jackie enjoys the collaborative process because it is a quick way to get published and she is on the lookout for more of these opportunities, as long as the admission price is not too steep!



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

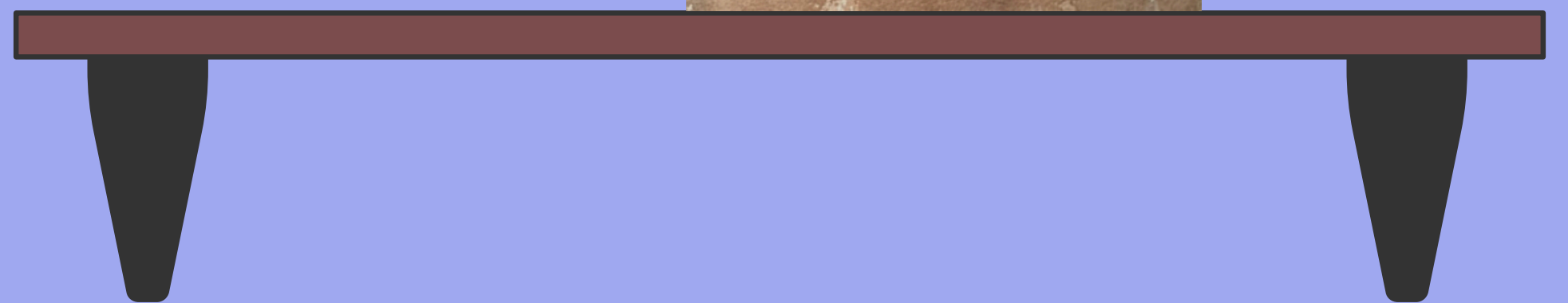
Renewal deadline September 30.
On October 1, CWC shall drop all delinquent members from the rolls. If dropped, you must pay the new \$65 member enrollment fees.

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CWC's Best of the Best: 2024 Literary Review

A collection of poems and stories selected from Branch publications. This 300+ page collection is on sale for **\$15.00** on Amazon. There are stories and poems from 20 of the branches.

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



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

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

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.



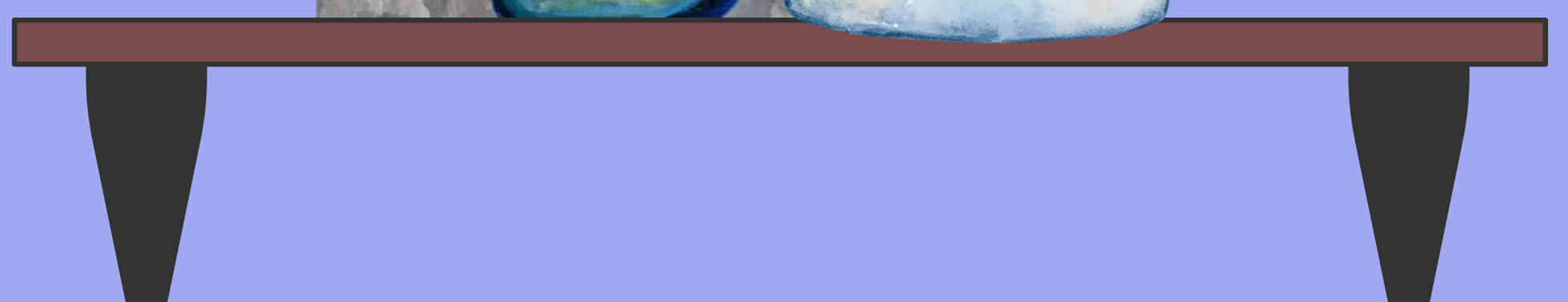
Vision & Verse: A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry

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>



BO
OK
S



Kudos Korner

Congratulations **Abigail Handojo!**

On November 20th she attended the Teen Poet Laureate awards ceremony & reception. Her poem "Train of Thought" can be found in this year's Teen Poet Laureate book.



Visit the Riverside County Office of Education website for a digital PDF copy of the chapbook

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK TO SOCALWRITERSSHOWCASE.COM

- You must be a member in good standing
 - AKA submitted application & paid your dues
- Maximum length of submissions: 500 words
 - You can add 1 link to your website
- Software: Microsoft Word (.docx) file attachment
- No indents, columns, tables or bullet points
- Subject line must read: SUBMISSION FOR SOCAL SHOWCASE
- In Body of email: list (1) your name, (2) your branch name, and (3) title of work
 - Also in the Body, include this permission: "I am submitting this for use on the CWC South website and confirm that I am a member of a Southern branch of the California Writers Club. I further confirm that it is my original work and all rights to its use belong to me. CWC South may use this on its website, archive it for future use on its website or choose to not use it, however the rights I grant are non-exclusive and I retain the right to sell it, allow its publication elsewhere including simultaneously, and all other rights to its use. CWC South is not paying me for its use. CWC South may not sell it or authorize its use outside of the CWC South website without"
- Send email & attachment to the current branch President, Judy Kohnen.
 - She will verify membership and will forward it on to be published.



Visit www.socalwritersshowcase.com to familiarize yourself with the categories of content.

- Short fiction: "flash fiction" – stories with beginning, middle, end
- Memoir: short memoir pieces or vignettes about our past
- A Writer's Life: ideas, humor, tips to keep your writing going
- Craft: "how-to" articles related to writing or marketing your work

Most work is accepted by the Editor if it is of appropriate quality. The site is updated monthly, but there may be a backlog in a category. Once your work appears on the site, it stays on the site for 6 months. After that, your name and the title of your work will appear on the Archive List page by month. You retain the copyright for your submission. Our website copyright notice: Articles or stories appearing on this website submitted by members are copyrighted with all rights reserved by their respective authors. Note that some contests/publishers will consider posting on a website to mean that the piece has been previously published and perhaps ineligible for a contest or future publication, so keep that in mind.

SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY WRITERS BRANCH

Announcing our 2025 Anthology

The San Joaquin Valley Writers branch is pleased to announce the theme for its next anthology, to be published in the fall of 2025: *Beginnings & Endings*.

It is human nature to conceptualize the world consisting of beginnings and endings. This duality permeates almost everything we see, imagine, feel, and hope for. Beginnings and endings can be real and tangible such as birth and death, marriage and divorce, the first and last day of school. They can be metaphorical, perhaps not even visible, such as a thought that blinks into existence only to disappear just as quickly from someone's mind, or a first impression of someone or something that changes over time. Beginnings and endings can be fast, sudden, or they can be slow, gradual. They can be far apart or blend into each other. Maybe a beginning is also an ending and vice versa. Send us your stories, memoirs, essays, or poetry in which a beginning and/or an ending takes center stage or is the background for something else. Show us the human experience through images, dialogue, verse, but no matter what, with beautiful words. And maybe, just maybe, show us a new take on beginnings and endings.



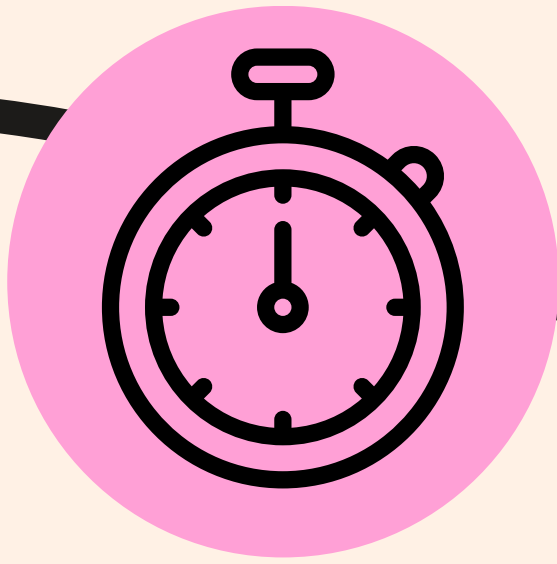
Participation is open to all CWC members in good standing. Submission information and guidelines can be found on our website at www.sjvalleywriters.org/publications or by using the QR code to the right below.



2025 ANTHOLOGY ANNOUNCEMENT

Deadlines

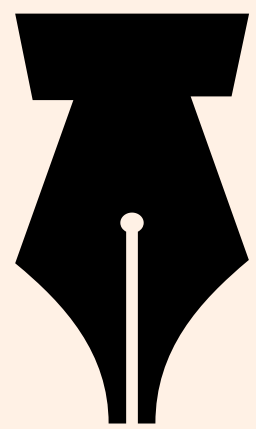
Submissions are due the **15th** of every month
For example:
The deadline for January's issue is December 15th



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

Share with Abigail Handojo at iecwcfreshink@gmail.com
Subject line must read "FRESH INK - month"
Replace "month" with your target month for publication
Check your email periodically for suggestions from the editor

Poetry Musings

SAMUEL THOMAS NICHOLS

Slumber

I once always thought of slumber as such a peaceful event in that, to me, it meant a sleep without the encumbrance of nightmares. Yet, when our children were young, we watched an animated feature called *Little Nemo: Adventures in Slumberland*. In this film, Nemo frees the Nightmare King, which causes great havoc in Slumberland and, although Nemo saves the day at the cost of his own life, the idea of slumber didn't seem quite as peaceful as it had before.

Of course, both my daughters took part in slumber parties in those tween and early teen years. They were fun for them with staying up until the wee hours of the morning telling stories, giggling, and then sleeping into the early afternoon. These were always safe, chaperoned events where nothing ever went awry, but I discovered that a series of slasher movies were made under the franchise of *Slumber Party Massacre*, and suddenly slumber parties didn't seem quite as safe. What was even more surprising was that, just today, I discovered that *slasher poetry* is a real thing. Ugh, who'd have thought? I will not share any of these but if you're curious, you can find many on allpoetry.com.

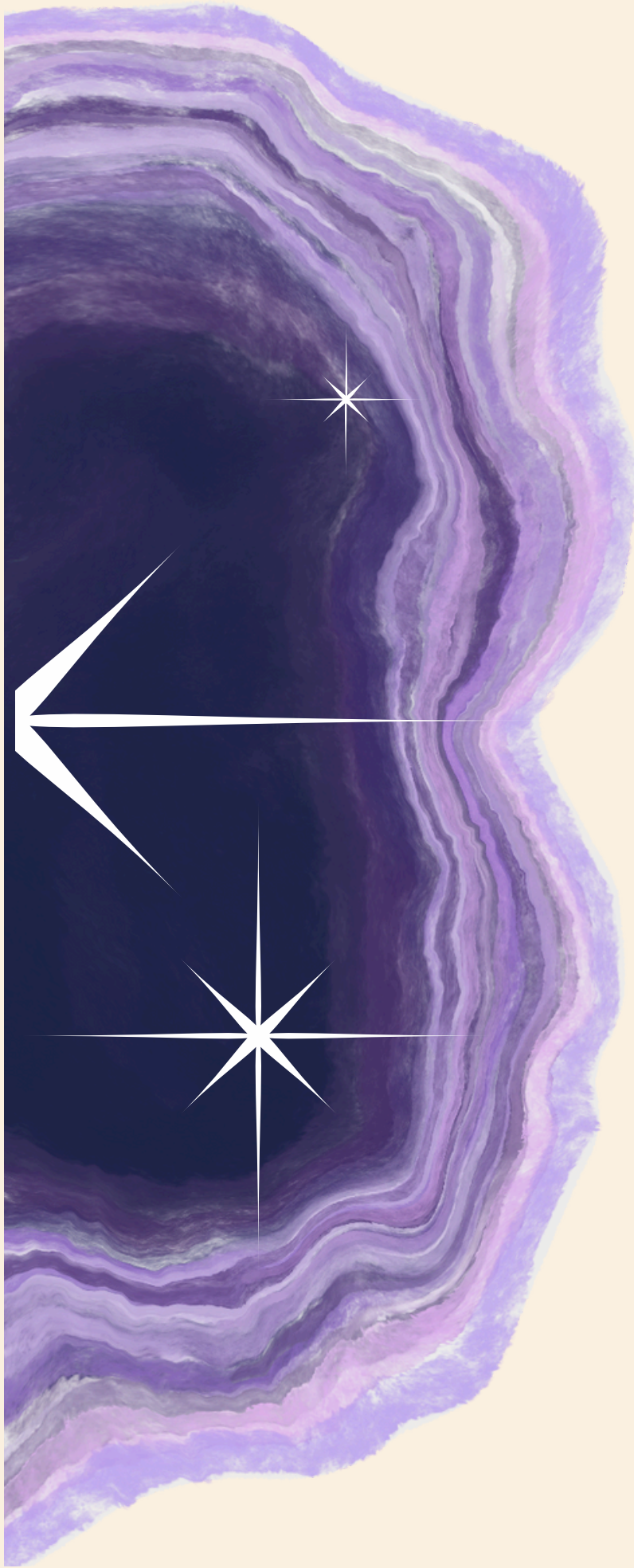
Ah, but this month's theme is Slumber, which is also common in poetry such as the *Slumber Songs* by John McCrae, the author of *In Flanders Fields*. In the first song, which is a bit of a lullaby, he writes:

Sleep, little heart!
There is no place in Slumberland for tears:
Life soon enough will bring its chilling fears
And sorrows that will dim the after years.
Sleep, little heart!



John McCrae's idea of Slumberland is a bit more pleasant than what Little Nemo found and paints reality as the realm of nightmares. After all, this is a WWI poet whose days on the battlefields were the very foundation of nightmares.

Another WWI poet, Siegfried Sassoon, penned his *Slumber-Song*, which was a deviation from his typical poetry exploring the horrors of the war. His *Slumber-Song* evokes a peaceful, almost dreamy experience. This sonnet, from his book *Picture-Show*, is in the public domain, so here it is in its entirety:

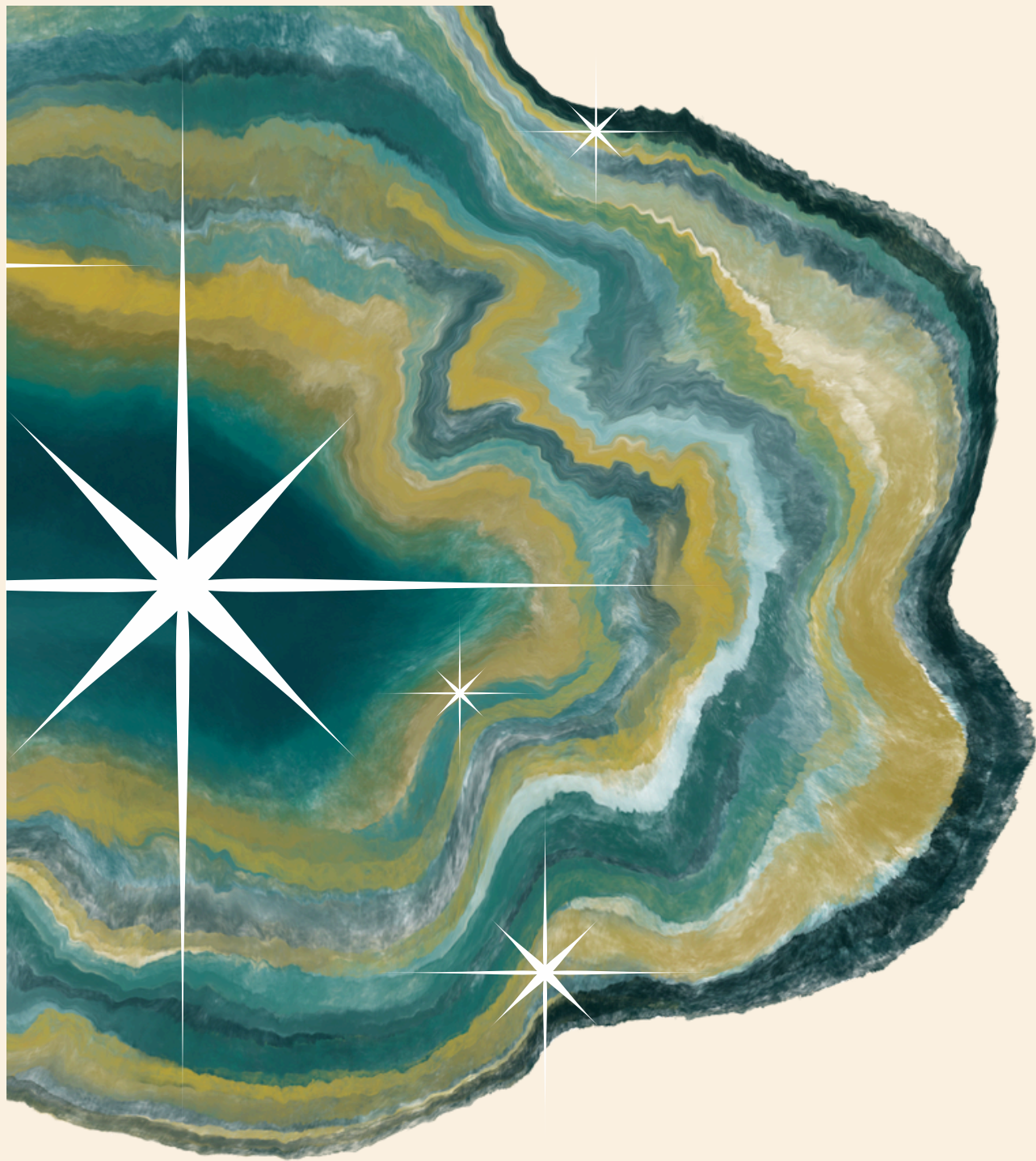


Sleep; and my song shall build about your bed
A Paradise of dimness. You shall feel
The folding of tired wings; and peace will dwell
Throned in your silence: and one hour shall hold
Summer, and midnight, and immensity
Lulled to forgetfulness. For, where you dream,
The stately gloom of foliage shall embower
Your slumbering thought with tapestries of blue.
And there shall be no memory of the sky,
Nor sunlight with its cruelty of swords.
But, to your soul that sinks from deep to deep
Through drowned and glimmering colour, Time shall be
Only slow rhythmic swaying; and your breath;
And roses in the darkness; and my love.

The German poet, Rainer Maria Rilke, also penned a *Slumber Song*, whose themes are of loss and intimacy in anticipation of what might be. Although his German language original is in the public domain, the English translation by Albert Ernest Fleming is not. You may read the translation here: <https://allpoetry.com/Slumber-Song>. Here is the first verse:

Some day, if I should ever lose you,
will you be able then to go to sleep
without me softly whispering above you
like night air stirring in the linden tree?



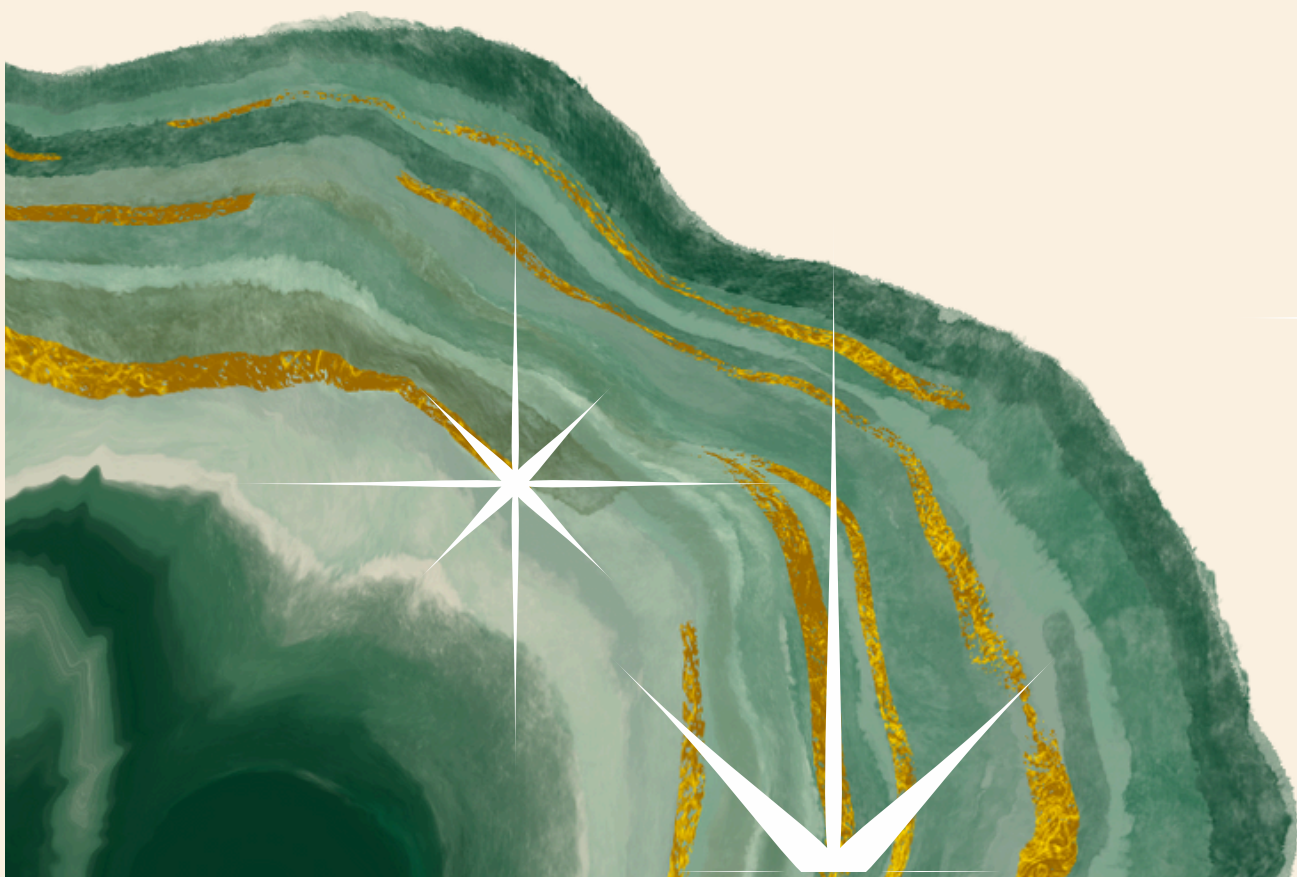
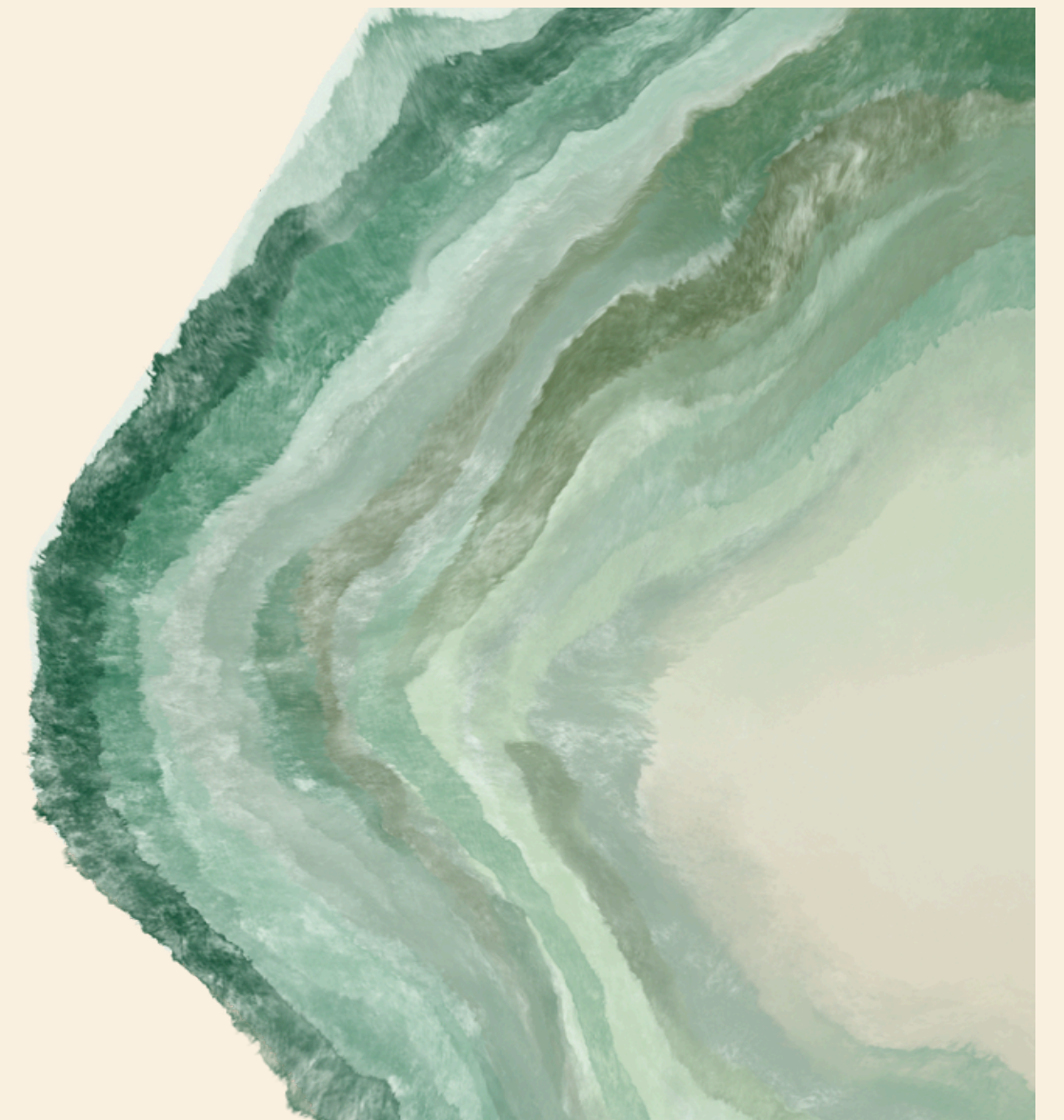


In my own poetry, I've also touched on the theme of slumber several times. In my 2013 poem, *Self Hustle*, whose theme was killing time in dark bars shooting pool, the fourth verse suggests the baleful side of slumber:

Another beer and it's time to go
Slumber inside of another nightmare
Imprisoned by the fear of what was
And what might be even once again
When from this self-hustle of self-doubt
I will once again sally into the unknown
And find what's true and right for me
So I will say on my last day in here

At our September 24, 2016, IECWC meeting, John Brantlinger challenged us to write, based on his prompt, *Meanwhile*. What I wrote was a five-stanza poem whose third verse is:

Meanwhile, the world keeps changing good and bad
But not enough on the side of light
That champions us through holy times
Built from slumbers of stricken sleep



Back in August of 2022, I wrote a fifteen-quatrain poem entitled *Various Thoughts* whose seventh stanza explored the peace of slumber:

There is peace inside of slumber
Wrapped inside of joy and wonder,
As real as life's own realities
Are riddled with hyperboles

When I scanned the Internet dictionaries for definitions of slumber, there were many variations in specifying the quality of sleep, but the one I liked the best was from the RhymeZone website: *a natural and periodic state of rest during which consciousness of the world is suspended*. Sometimes, when I cannot suspend consciousness and slumber, I will put on my earbuds and use my cellphone to listen to either Enya, Eva Cassidy, or Maria Tanase and join Little Nemo for some adventures in Slumberland. So enjoy this holiday season and may all your slumbers be salubrious.

THE GIFTING OF
THOUGHTLESS
THOUGHTFULNESS
By *Constance Cassinelli*



My mother had a chest with four drawers that housed all the unwanted gifts that were bestowed upon her. These were not returnable to department stores. It was also questionable that they could be recycled as gifts that anyone else would cherish. Basically, someone's taste was dumped on her.

There were fragrances (not hers), costume jewelry (she never wore any), scarves that were not silk, and of course several of those thin boxes of traditional handkerchiefs that few people ever use.

There is something about that expression *It's The Thought That Counts* that is absolutely ridiculous. Often, it is absolutely thoughtless and totally inconsiderate to force our taste on others and then expect them to either be grateful for our generosity or lie about it in faux appreciation.

As children, my brother and I did not have the luxury of being able to create a list for Santa Claus like other children. Instead, Mother shopped for fine quality clothing for us. We received the best, but I grew to hate *pink* anything. This fact was never taken into consideration if the garment was a fine quality and featured on the sale table.

I also grew to hate decisions that were made for me and dreaded having to gift anyone else, as I didn't want to put them in a position of dishonesty. Why should they have to suffer to avoid lying while thinking, *Oh, my gosh, what am I going to do with this dreadful thing?*

One year I received a beautiful white, silk organza dress embroidered with *pink* flowers. I wore it to a birthday celebration. All the other kids were dressed in jeans and T-shirts. No one even had anything as nice hanging in their closet. They probably didn't have anything *pink* hanging there either.

I do understand there are loving people who mean well and likely agonize over selecting just the right gift for the appropriate event. But far too often some people feel the need to comply to various social obligations when they might personally prefer to be exempted from the ritual. Instead, they continue to foolishly spend a fortune on this nauseating nonsense.

I remember my one fabulous Christmas. I had just purchased an old house in need of repairs. My mother and future husband gifted me a work bench, sabre saw, and a gift certificate to a lumber yard. I cried so hard for the joy and happiness of *finally* receiving something I actually wanted and needed. Now, I cherish the memory that at last my mother was truly thoughtful in selecting loving gifts for me. I especially celebrate that these beautiful gifts were not *pink*!

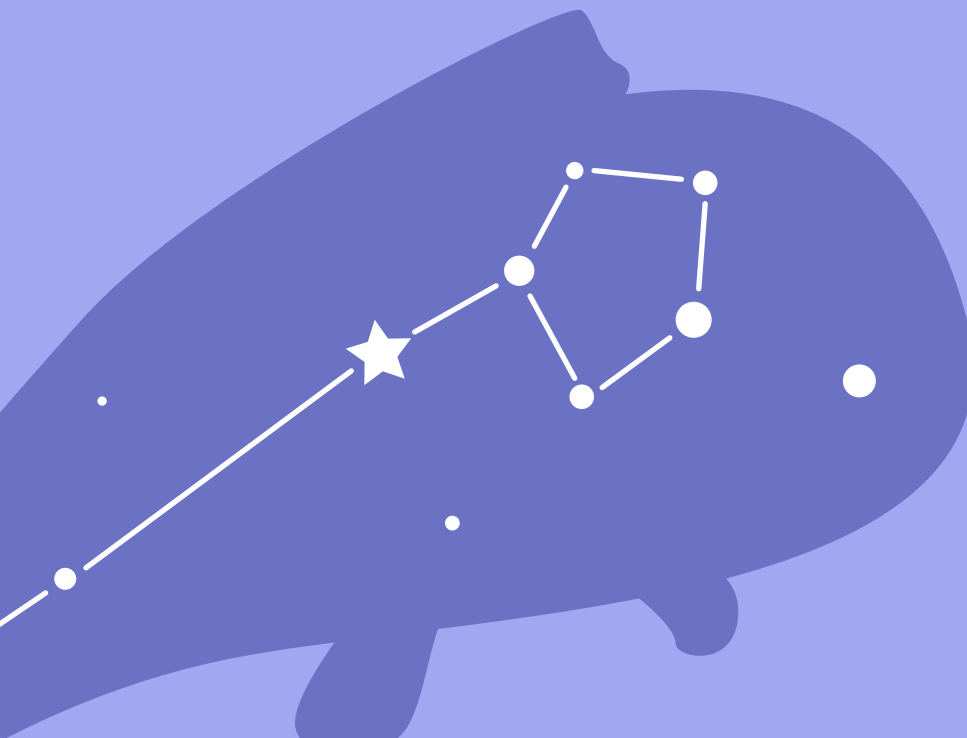


Archived Fresh Ink December 2022



Momentary Reaper of CONSCIOUSNESS


Abigail Elina Handojo



I no longer lie awake
Tired in a way Sleep cannot fix
I just wait for the scarf of cold metal
To wrap up against my neck
One swift swing
And my head rolls
Half-here, half-nowhere

No longer conscious of the bones
Rattling like a windchime in my closet
Skeletons

I am much too young to have
With their baby teeth intact
Chattering words
They don't know how to spell



No longer conscious of the beating
Buried beneath my floorboards
Creaking like a monster under my bed
Kicking like a monster inside of my head
Innocent Desdemona,
It's not that I want my heart to still or to stifle
Just to soften



Shirley Petro
**INFINITE
L & G**

I felt odd upon waking that morning. Something was amiss, off. I was alone and getting that old scared feeling creeping in again. I have been there before—a grim memory indeed, yet it was still fresh. It had made recent deep grooves in my left brain. I shrugged it off with a curious question: “What is my body wanting to do now?”

I sat down to read my email, scanning the print. OMG! Words made no sense to me. I had no cognition. No cognition! My brain was not working. The sign sprung up. My body had jumped on a barreling train, roaring down the track, moving fast.

I called my son. “Adam, get here. I must be having a stroke. Or something.”

I gathered my stuff, my purse, dragged a comb across my head. And waited upon the fresh hell ahead. My son is a beloved one. He truly cares for me. A man of strength, valor and integrity. I could count on him. No words when he opened the door. We both knew the drill. To the Emergency Room we sped.

Not the blinding rush with honking horn. That was the last time. That startling strong heart attack memory, just seven months ago. The chest-gripping intensity drove me to my knees. But that ride holds a tender moment as well. As I was moaning, “I think I am dying,” I saw Adam’s fingers glancing over the radio tabs until he found the classical station. He knew how I rested in that vibe. I do not recall the piece played, but it was indeed a masterpiece and a musical display of his tender concern.

Upon arrival at the Kaiser ER, I threw my body into the wheelchair. The weigh-in annoyed me. Was not my day ruined already? Why add a poundage reminder to it? My mind grew blank. I was where I could be helped. That allowed me a drizzle of hope. Overhead I heard the speaker blare: ‘Code Stroke – ER.’ Just a false alarm, I thought. I glanced around, looking for the white coats. The well-manicured young doctor was absent, thankfully. The one who interrogated me at the onset of the last visit. I was flailing in pain when she appeared beside me. Then her questions began: “When did the attack begin?”

“How would I know?” I screamed back. “Time has stopped for me. Because I. AM. DYING. Ask my son.” I stared straight at her eyes, glaring.

I was truly disappointed in her. Why could she not have taken my hand and said, “You are safe now, dear. You are going to be okay.”

Instead she stomped out of my ER cubicle never to be seen again.

But now deep into this episode, I saw those thoughts as not useful. I wanted to wheel myself into the torture cubicle and allow the unknown to unfold as a deep dive into *What Is*. Questions flew past as usual. I took to studying each nurse to distract myself out of a growing panic. One had done a fabulous job with her eye makeup, I noted, and spoke with a slight accent. I could not place it, which frustrated me. Her nursing skills shined as she directed the staff.

I grew restless. I wanted to leave, but uneasiness crept back into my confused mind. My thoughts lingered fuzzy, not mine. Like words floating inside a blurry constellation somewhere attempting to line up stars I once knew. But stars move, slowly. Perhaps they are ordered by another writer somewhere.

Adam left. He works his own business and each hour is money. He would check back, he said. So now I was alone when the bolt hit hard. I moved my mouth to talk. No words! My right arm and leg now buried in cement. They were gone. No feeling, heavy logs. I was gone. My right side was gone.

I screamed a muffled yell. “Arg-eee-oh-eee!” Never had I heard this sound before. It came from a darkened hole where a wounded animal caught in a steel sharp-toothed trap lay howling in agony. I squirmed to the edge of the stretcher. A creeping self-edit of a life-ending scene flashed by. No escape. I screamed like a crazy person must sound. Just knowing that fact doubled the pain. My wide eyes looked around mid-scream.

Where are they? Crickets. No one appeared. Was this a dream? Am I making this up?

At last two nurses rushed in and dragged the insane woman back onto the stretcher.

I yelled, "Help me." They got it. In a flash I knew then to stop trying to talk, and went to prayer. *Keep silence, gather yourself in.* Then the mantra poured forth into my ears. *Infinite love and gratitude, over and over.* My eyes glazed with the chant.

Needles were shoved into both arms. A TV was wheeled in before me. A doctor's face appeared. What the hell? He was the decision maker for my life now. Acting fast to direct a process that would allow my brain only 90 minutes before I lost those parts forever. Options were offered. In a voice that seemed to vibrate with "Relax, you may die," he weighed it out for me. My son returned and began to cry, soothing me and stroking my face and head.

"There is a Clot Buster drug infusion. It will dissolve the clot on your brain." I agreed to it with a shaky nod.

The ambulance was called. Riverside Community Hospital most fortunately provides a specialized Comprehensive Stroke Center for victims like me. Timing will be key from here on. Ninety minutes to restore full function or lose it all, become a cripple, someone feeding and dressing me. That grim scene rolled before me. Slowly from deep, deep inside, I pulled up what looked like my Akashic records. NO! That scene is not in my script for this lifetime, I knew.

The drivers arrived. One wore the demeanor of a high school math teacher. I thought he might be an interesting man to talk to. But since I cannot talk, he is off the hook. The streets of Riverside were tangled with lunch hour traffic. I heard the sirens turn on. I was an emergency to all those cars, perhaps making them late for a lunch date. Outside I could see all the familiar trees and buildings blur by. I wanted them to speed. Now! Faster! Tears stung around my eyelids.

Instinct told me to wipe them away with my dominant hand. They fell unattended. My hand tried its best to take away those tears, but could not. I reminded that beautiful arm now about all the wonder moments. Remember the good times, how you served me. Holding my nipple to my baby's hungry mouth, pinching my pie crust, painting, pounding, loving, writing. Tears again.

I hold that love is the only true healer. I sent love right there to my quiet leg, setting it to remembering the sprinting, the running, the kneeling. You never failed me before. Never.

The stark sunlight hit my moist face like a blinding beam as the ambulance doors flung open. Why are they so calm? My brain is on a timer here!

The doctors were standing there ready for me when I arrived. I saw my hero's face first, the same surgeon who saved me seven months before. He appeared for me again. Oh, happy day. *Infinite love and gratitude*. He morphed into my angel of mercy.

I begged him. "You remember me? Save me, please." Words from inside an old dream.

The CT scan, the kind that simulates peeing all over yourself, radiated my aching brain. I sent it love as I trembled. I had hurt it so much, especially the left side.

"Did you give up from overuse and abuse?"

But I could always think fast—acting as my attachment to this reality, tenuous as it may appear. Nevertheless, the organ sought now to save itself, as if it did not need my help, only my love. The idea wove through: *I want to go on. So I can be a writer, a woman, one who moves freely over the earth.*

I grew still, silent, empty. I felt the probing wire searching for the long offending blood vessel. Traveling through the beauty of convoluted roadways that tucked away the memories and the pain. The sweet areas that remember the fragrance of Vic's roses, the touch of my lover's skin, the sound of my children's and grandchildren's voices. All tucked neatly in the heavy folds. All true. And he dodged them all and found instead the alien clot. The part of me that went renegade, betraying me. But it too fled under his miracle hand. The Endovascular Thrombectomy was a success.


I needed a miracle that day. I got it. Today I can walk, I can talk. I can write. And I do all of that now with *Infinite Love and Gratitude*.

For seventeen years now, November has been the Writer's Digest Poem a Day Chapbook Challenge from Robert Lee Brewer. This year is my fourth year of participation and the November 6th prompt was to write an advice poem. This attempt at an *advice poem* just seemed to flow out of me.

My Advice

Is to live, to love, to work, to play
To use the hours in every day
Produce some memories along the way
And if he asks, then the piper to pay
Keep yourself happy, make someone else gay
Harm none other and suffice as you may
Stay the course, vernal, although you grow gray
Mind your good manners and watch what you say
Stand for your neighbors and do not dismay
Don't believe idle gossip and hearsay
For it's only crude lies that they purvey
And when you can't fix it, just walk away
Do good turns daily and know how they weigh
And stay out of sight of Morgan le Fey

Samuel Thomas Nichols



January's theme is...

NEW BEGINNINGS