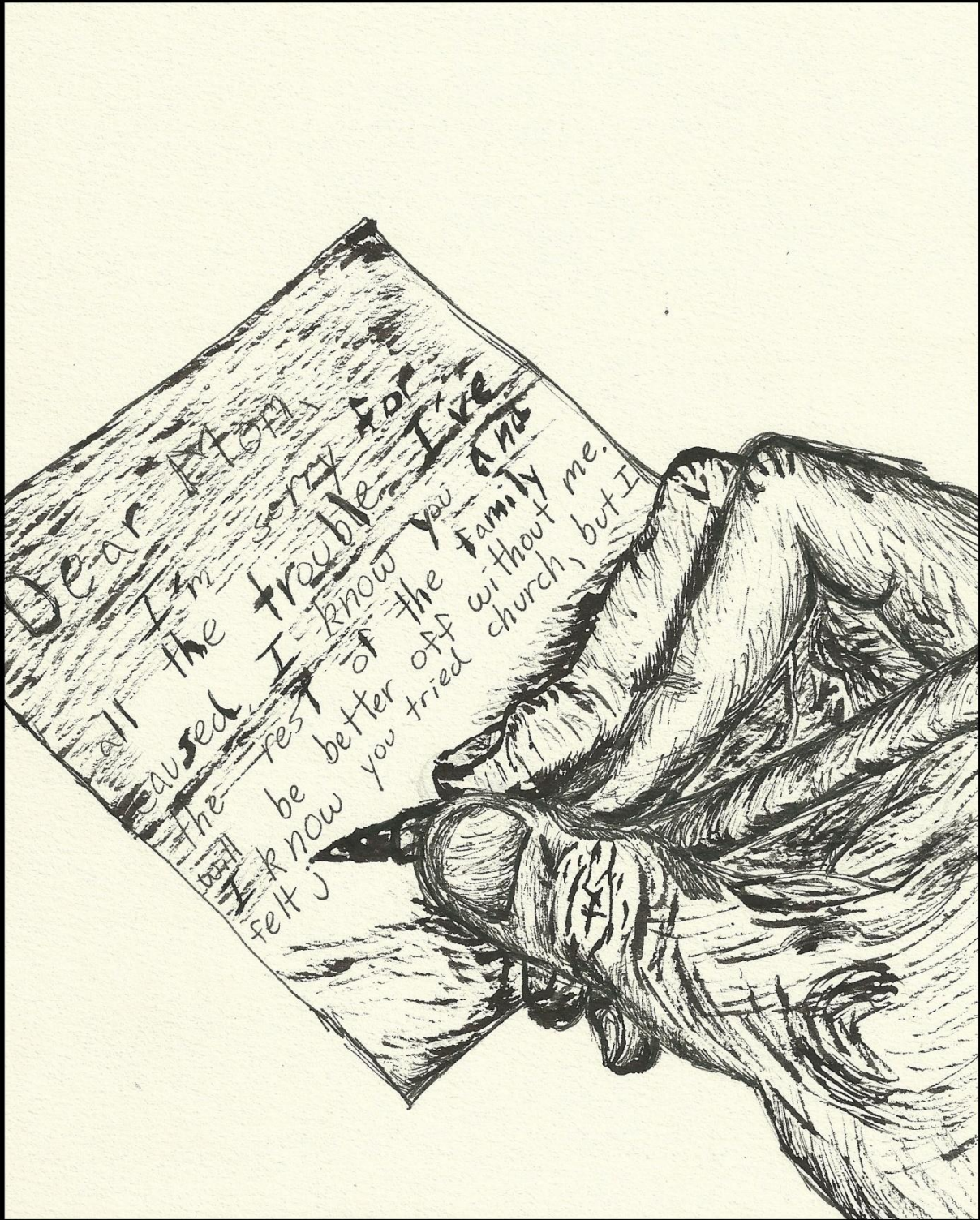

THE EXHIBITIONIST

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After Midnight

vickey malone kennedy

The house is quiet and peaceful except for a symphony of snores in baritones and mezzo-soprano melodies. I'd rather be sitting outside listening to the songs of crickets and nightingales, reading or writing, and drinking iced tea; Long Island of course. But the son-in-law found a wasp nest in an awning this afternoon. He said he'll get something to kill them tomorrow.

Tonight I must stay indoors. I can't afford to disturb the wasp. I'm allergic.

I had a near death experience, from a yellow jacket sting, at the age of nine. So I've spent the last forty some odd years avoiding wasp and bees. I've been stung since then, and I've had some terrible reactions, but nothing as severe as the yellow jacket incident. Still, no sense taking the risk.

So instead of sitting outside, drinking in the night air, drinking my Long Island iced tea, and listening to the peaceful sounds of nature, I'm sitting in the living room, drinking, and listening to the awful snoring of a house filled with concerned children and grandchildren. I'm surrounded by loving, caring, sleeping people who have no idea how difficult it is for me to sleep.

Oddly enough I sleep well during the day time. Unfortunately I no longer have that luxury. My daughter insists I get up, and out of the house, by noon, every ... single ... day.

I can't seem to make her understand that I don't need to go on an adventure every day. She thinks it's better for me to get out into the world than sit at home, alone. I try to tell her I didn't get out into the world every day before. Why should I now?

Now that I would be alone; probably in the back yard being stung to death by wasp.

I've never lived alone. I married right out of high school. Had my first child by nineteen, and continued having children into my thirties. I've rarely been alone more than a day or two at a time in my entire adult life.

They don't think I'm safe on my own. I know they worry. I know they mean well. I know they can't possibly understand.

How can I explain to them, without insulting them, or hurting their feelings? All I really want right now, is to be alone. Alone with my thoughts, my memories, and my misery.

I can't sleep.

How could anyone sleep with all this annoying snoring!

Not that it's any quieter outside. The dogs are barking. No doubt they are chasing some phantom across the backyard. How nice it is, out on the patio, at night. Stars play peek-a-boo between swaying leaves and fragrant blossoms flutter softly on gentle breezes.

But I must stay inside surrounded by the smell of decaying floral arrangements.

I down the dregs of my drink and stumble toward the bedroom. I can't bring myself to crawl into that huge, empty bed. How can I ever sleep there again? Alone.

Alone after all these years. Decades. More than a quarter of a century.



The room is too quite: Absent his whispers, his moans, his snores.

His scent lingers: Tobacco, diet soda, his favorite musk cologne.

Alone.

How can I face the world alone? I can't even face my own bedroom alone.

I wobble into the kitchen, pour myself another drink, and stare out the window at his favorite lawn chair. I know there is some reason, I cannot recall, I am not to venture out into the dark tonight. I hear his voice, hauntingly heavy upon the evening breeze, calling to me. And didn't I, so long ago, in my naïve youth, vow to follow wherever he might lead.



Vickey Malone Kennedy is proud to be a dog (a Yard Dog Press author that is). She is a co-founder of Rose Rock wRiters and is actively involved with the Norman Galaxy of Writers, Oklahoma Writers' Federation Inc. (DWFI), and SoonerCon. Vickey is also an editor at 4RV Publishing. She is the winner of the 2011 Darrell Award for Best Mid-South Short Story and the 2011 DWFI Crème de la Crème Award.

Door to Door

lance hawvermale

Two members of Al Qaeda touch
my doorbell. Fisheyeing them,
I weigh my chances with the Mace

my father gave me when I left home.
They wear bone-colored fabric
around their heads, vests with bulging

zippers, and mirror shades. Their
AK-47s have been made in China,
their pipe bombs in a garage.

The notice in the paper said we
should expect such visits, that Islam
was sending missionaries and if

approached we should hold very
still, as they were more afraid of us
than we—they knock loudly, twice.

The Mace is not an option, as I didn't
spring it on the Mormons last week:
the Geneva Convention fairly at work.

If I pretend I'm gone they'll kidnap
my beagle from the backyard, or cut



off somebody's head on TV, or key

my car; I've been schooled in their
tactics if not their motivation. But
I fear letting them in would track up

my carpet, and I do not say that in
jest: carpet is a capital offense when
children die of starvation on dirt floors.

Guilt forestalls confrontation, while
on my mat they grow agitated, checking
the time on their phones. Perhaps I

could offer them cash or my collection
of Hummel figurines, but I fear
they're sick of receiving our stuff,

in fact I think that's why they're here.
I see another pair next door at John's,
and his kids outrageously let them in.

My hand on the chain latch, I stare
through the hole and see only myself
in the silver vastness of their eyes.



Lance published his first two novels under the pseudonym of Erin O'Rourke. He released his third novel, a murder mystery titled *The Tongue Merchant*, under his own name - and he hasn't looked back since. His writing has won over 20 awards. His novel *Fugitive Shoes* was named to the University of Oklahoma's "Books That Inspire" exhibit. Currently an Assistant Professor of English at Ranger College in Texas, USA, Lance teaches film, poetry, and creative writing courses.



Surrender

justin hill

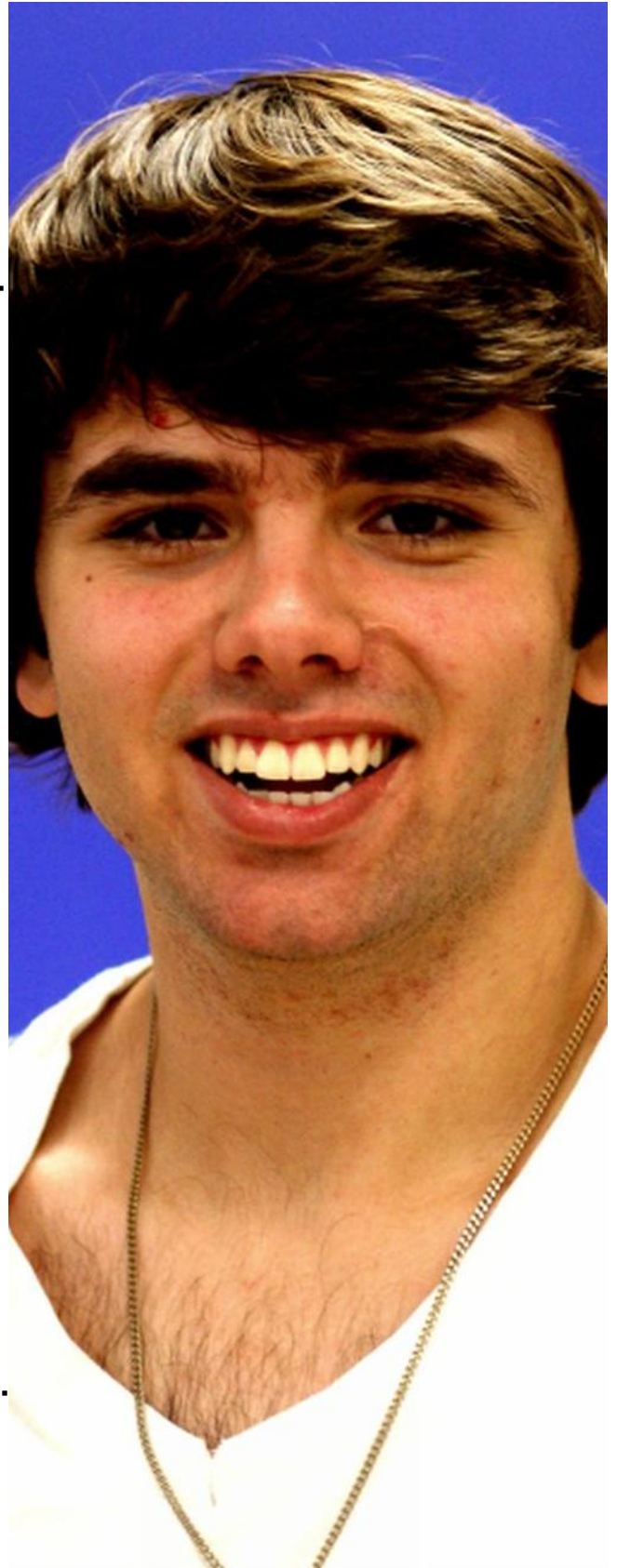
Depression, have I known;
Suicide, have I contemplated;
Thought about: why stay?
Thought about: what difference does it make?
Thought about: just why everything?
Why anything?

Ironic, it seems to me,
That Life can be
Your friend, your accomplice,
And yet is She also
Your antagonist, your adversary.

But, I have determined
Within myself
And, I have resolved,
For myself,
For all that I keep close
and consider tender-hearted,
To be damned to Hell before
I proclaim resignation
and Surrender.



Currently in his senior year of high school, Justin Hill attends the Huckabay Independent School District, which is just outside of Stephenville, Texas, in the United States of America. After graduating as valedictorian, Justin aims to earn a Bachelor of Arts, double-majoring in Sociology and Theatre Arts, at the University of North Texas. He wishes to become a foremost expert on adolescent sociology. In his spare time, he likes to write poetry, paint, and play the guitar; his favorite books are *The Count of Monte Cristo* and *Atlas Shrugged*, both of which he is very passionate about. Justin was also named a 2014 National Merit Commended Student.



Quiet Disquiet

crystal davis

Anxiety is a mental illness that affects over 40 million adults in the United States today. It is the most common mental illness that exists. Many who have been diagnosed, including myself, report that they experienced symptoms for ten or more years before seeking help. These sufferers tend to deteriorate socially, professionally, and personally until they are treated.

“Quiet Disquiet” is an intimately constructed-reality fine art series that expresses, through an intense visual style, how difficult it was for me to find happiness and accept my illness. I explore this through tableau portrait photography using subjects digitally composited into miniature, constructed dollhouse scenes. Utilizing this method supports the mental state I am expressing through this dream-like imagery by creating a scene that is uncomfortable, almost life-like, and claustrophobic.























Crystal Davis is an artist from Fort Worth, Texas, in the United States who works primarily in photography and also has an interest and has worked in other traditional art mediums such as painting, drawing and graphic design. She has exhibited locally in the NOISE! Art Exhibition at the Frisco Art Gallery where she placed 3rd for Best in Show. Other exhibits include the White Space Gallery of Dallas, Texas, and a solo exhibit at the Fort Worth Community Arts Center. She is also an honor student working toward a Master's degree in Photography through the Academy of Art University. She is a member of the Student Photographers Society, National Technical Honor's Society, Kappa Pi and the TAC (Texas Artists Coalition).



Visiting the Alzheimer's Patient

robert ferrier

He never knows my name...

First impressions queued,
Then consigned to riddle.

We're tablemates in the lunchroom,

Each Monday a buffet
Of blank stares.

When I feed him,

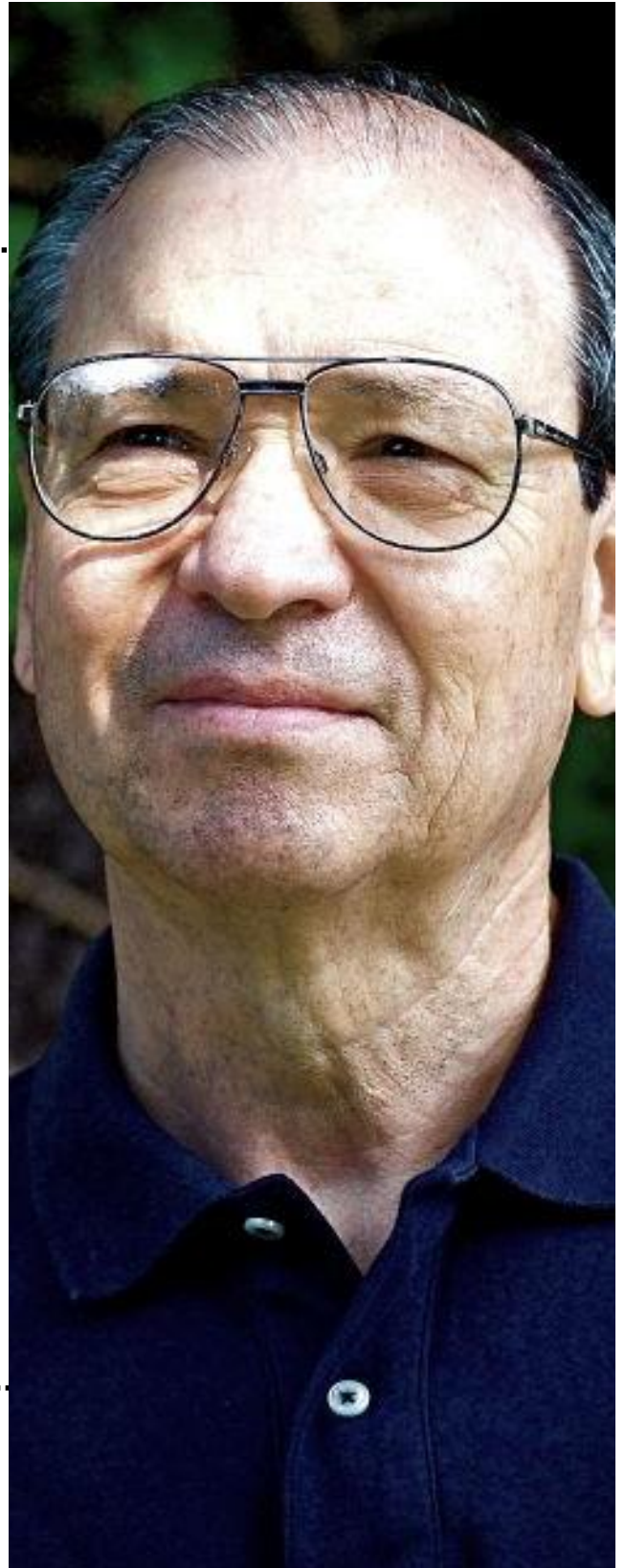
Others there smile at the irony.
I'm not on his menu.

I probe the fog,

Ask of here and now.

He answers from there and then,

A sliver of wit only he can see.



Robert Ferrier's poetry has appeared in *Oklahoma Today*, *Möbius*, *The Mid-America Poetry Review*, *Blood and Thunder*, *Broomweed Journal*, *Crosstimbers*, *Westview* and *Metro Library Magazine*. His books, *Rhythms* and *Ambient Light*, each won the Oklahoma Writer's Federation Inc. award for Best Published Book of Poetry. He was a 2007 nominee for Poet Laureate of Oklahoma in the US.

Is It Late Now?

chakri omri

Is it late now?

To wake up and clean one's heart
From old and new feelings of defeat

Is it late now?

To look back one last time at your past
And see what could have been done
But never done and what way
Could have been taken
But not taken.

Is it late now?

To wipe away a few tears and smile
And open your own book of life,
Read an old page and write a new one.

Is it late now?

To listen to the truth of time
And tell it to the pain of place.

Is it late now?



To hone a sword of light
and brandish it against the swords
of darkness.

Is it late now?

To hate hatred and forgive love
for being blind and help it grow
in the secret garden of the mind.

Is it late now?

To meet the pale faces you meet
with a promise of healing
without a word of promise
and work hard to find the way out
without fear of loss,

Is it late now?

To perfume the soil of earth
With seeds of heaven,
Seeds of eternal life,
Seeds of dreams
Waiting to grow,
To sprout,
To bloom,
To thrive,
To come true.



Is it late now?





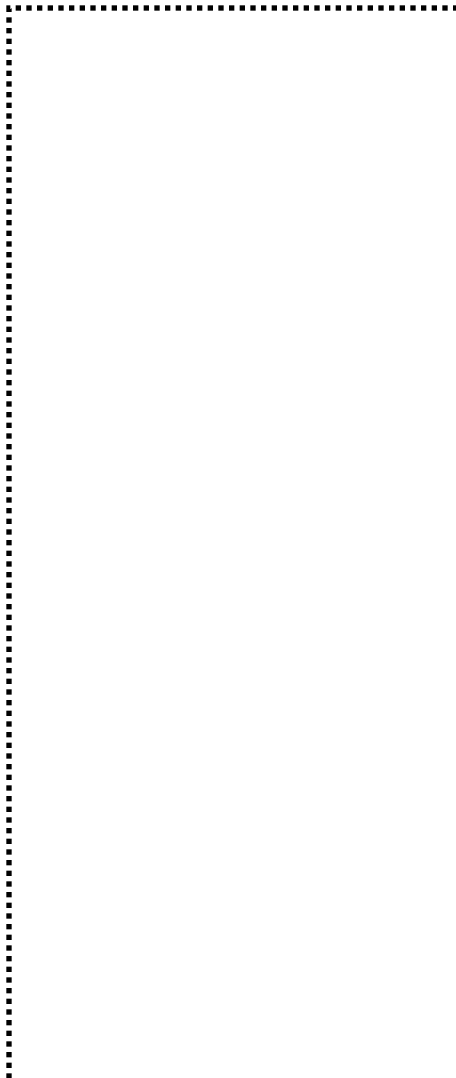
Chokri Omri is an English language teacher, translator, writer, and poet from Tunisia. A number of his poems and articles have been published and translated into Romanian and Spanish in the *Contemporary Literary Horizon Magazine* at the University of Bucharest in Romania.

A Loving Moment

karen ball

The best, most loving moment I ever saw was years ago at a small county fair. There were a few midway rides with a Ferris wheel. I saw an old woman lead an old man up to the Ferris wheel and wait their turn. Both were quite aged, dressed in plain clothes (it was Mennonite country), but wearing bright white, clean tennis shoes. The old woman helped the old man into the Ferris wheel chair, latched the bar for him, and made sure he had a good hold. It was obvious that the old man was blind.

The Ferris wheel began its spin with the old man showing an absolute delight in the feel of motion and height. The old woman stood patiently by the side at the foot of the Ferris wheel until it ran its course. When it finished, she helped him unlatch, step down, and led him off into the fading twilight. I still think of the look of joy on the blind man's face and the contentment on the lady's face as she waited for him—giving him the joy of something he so much loved to do.



Karen is a Texan who currently lives in the state of Missouri in the United States. She is an artist who loves design in all forms. Karen does not believe that there are enough hours in the day to accomplish all she would like to do.



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