

# Art in the A.M. September 2020

*By Members of the Rehoboth Beach Writers Guild*



*Artist: Faith Lord*

## Requiem in D Minor

By Nancy Powichroski Sherman

When the emergency responders declare that homeowners can enter the community, you flash your driver's license and hurry past the shattered Pine Grove Colony sign. You rush down the streets, focused on the road ahead, not on the damage left by the tornado, but your eyes still dart side to side. Scattered roof shingles. Missing outer walls. Broken windows. Felled trees. Images of what will play as late-breaking news.

*Please, God, not my cottage.*

But when you turn the corner, what you see are houses mostly decimated, including yours. The roof gone. Walls collapsed into rubble or leaning like the Tower of Pisa. The driveway covered with splintered sticks and pieces of black-lacquered wood that were once a piano lid, now torn from its housing.

*Mozart.*

Not the composer, but the name your mother gave to the baby grand, the piano on which she taught you scales when you were only four years old, then *etudes*, and eventually concertos.

Through a gaping hole where French doors had been, you see the ravaged piano housing, standing in place, anchored by its weight.

Sheet music, scattered by the tornado, soggy from the rain, is reduced to pulp, turning your mom's ink notations into smears.

A plexiglass frame, lying on the floor, is covered with black strips of shattered piano veneer, crisscrossed like jackstraws.

You can't cry, but you can let go—you must. Honor your loss. Hum the first notes of Mozart's "Requiem in D minor."

## Frustration

By Mary Ellen South

I can't paint  
The energy isn't there  
Where is my creativity  
This damn virus has sucked all the art out of me.

I fling the brushes out across the canvas  
A few have traces of paint holding on  
Frustration is exhausting  
My ruptured ego sees nothing.

But wait, the brushes have settled down  
They've created their own expression  
I'm seduced into what they are showing me  
My anger has resulted in a still life.

## End Game

*By Tom Hoyer*

We live in unsettled, maybe even apocalyptic times. Trusted—or at least long persisting—institutions are suddenly threatened, apparently collapsing all around us. Assumptions we have made about human behavior, certainly about our own exceptional American behavior, begin to unravel on the news, right before our eyes.

The fire in Notre Dame Cathedral in April 2019, was not just a major conflagration. That this shrine could catch fire and almost be ruined, after centuries of existence, is an affront to Western Civilization, a challenge to our faith in our achievements and advancements. If the most famous cathedral in the world could suffer such injuries, what might be next? Fortunately, most of the cathedral's stained glass was saved.

This picture captures the idea of a culture, a cathedral collapsed. The sticks in the frame make me think of the mullions and muntins of windows. I imagine the ruined remains of the glorious stained-glass windows broken, wrenched out of their frames, and heaped ruined on the floor, never again to illuminate and color our view of the interior. The lights have gone out.

We looked at Notre Dame and we thought it was built so solidly that it would last forever. So, we were complacent. we did not take good care of it. There's no one to blame for the fire but ourselves. The more I looked at Faith's painting, the more I found it telling us, "It's later than you think."

## Wee Ones Wisdom

*By Patty Bennett*

I am one of three ladies in Sussex County who portrays Mother Goose for Read Aloud Delaware. Looking at Faith's artwork from that perspective, I saw those brown rods as **sticks**. One children's story and two nursery rhymes come to mind.

We think we have it bad with Covid-19 all around us, but what about that pig with the house made of **sticks**? The big bad wolf huffed and puffed and blew that house down. Poor little piggy had to shack up with his brother in the sturdy brick house.

One nursery rhyme containing **sticks: sticks** and stones can break my bones, but names will never hurt me. Good advice for all the recent recipients of name-calling, like deplorables, racists, socialists and white supremacists.

A lesson from another rhyme, how to keep busy while quarantined. One-two buckle my shoe, three-four shut the door, five-six pick up **sticks**, seven-eight lay them straight, nine-ten the big fat hen. This is particularly meaningful to me because as a kid I was afflicted with allergies. I had to have nose drops every night before bed. My father would sit on the living room floor in a straddle position. I would lay across his knees, my feet up on one side, my head over the other knee. Daddy squeezed the drops into my nose and I couldn't get up until I recited the rhyme.

Whether it's the Three Little Pigs, **Sticks & Stones**, or One-Two Buckle My Shoe, Faith's painting evokes memories from my childhood.

## Leaving the Shower

*By Robert Fleming*

A man is looking over my shoulder to see what I'm doing. Didn't see any men at the Bates Motel this afternoon, except the desk clerk. What is his name, Norman, no Norm. Such a nice man. A woman? Looks like a dress and grey hair. Probably here to drop off fresh towels. So long since I've had company in a bathroom. So nice! Through the droplets, on the shower curtain, he? she? is holding a wooden handle. The ceiling light reflects on something silver. Probably, cleaning the mirror above the sink. When I was a girl, my sister came into the bathroom, when I was in the shower. *I'm naked*, I said. Sister said, *we're both girls*. The silver is closer to the shower curtain. The ceiling light flickers. What can it be? I'm such a fraidy cat! It's coming through the shower curtain. There's a hand on the handle. Oh no...I can't scream today. Hurry up. I can't wait anymore. I reached for the shower curtain and tore it off its rack. Norman take off that silly dress. You can keep the wig on. Make love to me.

## Bending Without Breaking

*By Kathleen Martens*

I came upon two faded photographs from the 1970s while making use of the empty hours of the 2020 Pandemic. Memories from my journeys I'd forgotten.

While traveling, I'd always taken both my trusty Kodak camera to capture pictures on film for posterity, and my Polaroid to leave behind mementos of the moment.

The Polaroid shot captured a cluster of shy Chinese children dressed snugly in quilted jackets, hats, and mittens. They stood against a background of burgeoning bamboo reaching to the blue, winter sky.

In the second photo, their sparkling, brown eyes reflected first-time-fascination. They watched the flow of liquid colors surface, as their images magically came alive on the shiny paper. Behind them, again, bamboo bending in the breeze.

Those evergreen perennials—that can grow three feet in one day—asserted their way into the background of a thousand exotic photos from my Asian travels. Yet, I have no framed images of shattered, broken or dead bamboo—only upright, jointed plants that could bend with a tsunami’s turbulence only to right themselves again.

Its resilience is renowned. Its ability to propagate nearly anywhere huddled together in verdant community with roots entwined, is legendary. Strong and flexible. Even when hacked down to a mere stump, Bamboo determines its way back to a fuller life again—qualities we all could use during these challenging days.

A cultural symbol around the world of moral integrity, community, loyalty, friendship, resistance, and resilience.

Bamboo—an endless metaphor for our times.

## **Pick Up Sticks**

*By Karen Schneiderman*

You hold them tightly together and then let them all go or they go all by themselves but they can’t scatter too far. Some are whole, some broken. A little broken. The pieces can’t scatter outside the frame in Faith Lord’s picture. In life, our life, our new life, they want to, but can’t. Or shouldn’t.

Faith’s surface looks diaphanous, like cellophane. Fragile but easily torn. Like us. Eight people from four to eighty-four being held together by an uneasy peace or often a single piece. If one piece rolls too far in the wrong direction it can upset the whole picture. Faith must have known that. She had control. I envy her.

Approaching half a year, we’ve settled inside the frame. Every so often someone dares to venture outside—to the grocery, maybe the pharmacy, but every time there’s danger lurking. One wrong move and the whole group will have to start all over. Sometimes there’s crowding...one yearns for solitude, for quiet. An urge for respite. But danger lurks. If you roll too far in one direction the invisible enemy may catch you.

The frame keeps us all safe let’s not venture outside the frame let’s hold close let’s bunch together don’t don’t open your hand don’t let the pieces scatter danger’s lurking please danger’s lurking stay together don’t be tempted it’s our frame. Close the door.

## Branches

*By Rich Parfitt*

The first thing I saw in Faith Lord's painting was a collection of randomly arranged branches. But after taking a step back, the branches quickly morphed into a network of paths. Upon looking even closer, I began to see linear representations of the various career paths I have traveled.

I saw branches forming rectangles for those times a path took me right back to where I started. That happened whenever I changed jobs but found myself in the same militant corporate culture.

I saw branches forming "Ys" for those times a path presented me with a fork and I had to choose which way to go. That happened each time I had to decide between being the mindful person I was or being the mindless soldier the corporation wanted me to be.

I saw branches coming to a dead end stop for those times a path comes to a screeching halt, making it clear it is impossible to go any further. That happened when I realized that changing jobs and playing the role of a trooper, no longer worked.

And finally, I saw branches forming lines that went outside the painting's frame for those times when a path takes us beyond the comfortable boundaries we know. I traveled that path when I decided to exit Corporate America and retire in Delaware.

Now, with a fresh start as a retiree, I have the opportunity to take any number of new paths that a painting may offer.