

Art in the A.M.
Third Anniversary Part III
By Members of the Rehoboth Beach Writers Guild



Artist: Dennis Young

The Choice

By Joanne Sinsheimer

I was never that young, that thin, or that tall. Otherwise the model and I are two peas in a pod. Maybe, I am a little more pouty-mouthed. And if my hair were that long, many electrified coils would stick straight out. I have never dressed sensually like that either. And drinking red wine makes me sick.

Due to the gentle, warm colors in this picture, I expected a loving or affectionate gaze. Instead, the woman's face expresses both disappointment and resolution about someone or something the viewer can't see.

And I think if this very attractive woman's beauty has not attracted happiness, how did I, lacking both physical beauty and charm, get so lucky? In a long relationship, you hope for compatibility, affection, and most of all, not to be bored to death. And I have all of that. OK, things aren't perfect. We frequently bicker when tired.

People who are very attractive start each day with a leg up. However, very good looks are never enough. Most people can see beyond the mask quickly enough.

From having lived three score and 12 years, I would tell this woman, "Be grateful you're finding out now that the person opening the door is not someone to spend your life with. Follow your instincts. It is better to be disappointed over and over near the beginning, than to realize many years down the road that your high hopes were never fulfilled."

I would like to touch the woman's shoulder and say, "Choose carefully."

Waiting to Zoom

By Judy Catterton

She waits for her Zoom book club to begin. It was hard getting used to Zooming at first: people struggling with the audio; video showing only the top half of heads; everyone speaking at once. She discovered early on that sipping a glass of wine during these meetings was essential. Zoom is not her favorite way to socialize. But since the pandemic, meeting virtually is virtually the only way.

She had always looked forward to book club gatherings held at someone's house—a potluck brunch first, then a discussion. No longer did she have to decide what food to bring or, when she was hosting, if she had enough chairs. Now her decisions center on what the background should be and what lighting minimizes the wrinkles on her face.

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Fifteen minutes till Zoom: She stares out her window trying to imagine the enemy lurking outside. Of course, she knows the virus is too small to see. But even now, months into the pandemic, she still feels an unfathomable disconnect between what she knows and what she sees. The skies are still blue, the clouds still cottony white; the birds still scramble for seeds at her bird feeder. And yet, somewhere an invisible killer lurks.

She tries to imagine a day when she won't need to calculate the risks every time she leaves her house. Is it safe to get her hair cut? Should she cancel her dentist appointment?

Five minutes to Zoom: Better pour another glass of wine.

Distraction: The Chance to Recommit

By Tom Hoyer

The eyes have it.

The woman is erect, settled into the chair, angled to command a clear view through the window. The light, into which she focuses her attention, illuminates her, as well. She's been there for a spell, at least as measured by the wine in the glass. Now she has been interrupted. Her face, long focused beyond the window, has turned towards the source of the interruption, which her eyes assess.

I do not know whether she has been observing a real person or thing or whether she has been simply lost in meditation. I am guessing it is her life that holds her attention. Rita Dove wrote *"The whole sky is yours to write on, blown open to a blank page."* Maybe she is filling her blank page with a lover better than the ones who have presented themselves to her. Or, perhaps, she is imagining details for the plot of a novel she is writing or sifting through words for a poem in progress. I see her as I would see someone who is sitting cross-legged in the sangha or kneeling before the altar.

How to deal with the intrusion? The past or perhaps the future is making a bid for her attention, maybe offering an alternative or advancing a doubt. She is at a familiar crossroads; the same old distractions are being offered once again. Her eyes show she knows the peril. *"Don't fall for it. Dismiss it,"* I think. *"Turn back to the window."*

Mrs. Cara Ann Tinsley (“CAT”)

By Patty Bennett

“CAT” has extremely attractive facial features.

She sits with her body facing the open window,

But she is looking back at the portrait artist painting her picture.

She sits cross-legged, her right leg under her left.

The white filmy drapery, gently lifted by the incoming breeze,

Blows in the direction of her bronze-colored hair.

She is wearing a greenish teal tank top, tightly

Smoothed over her tiny left breast

Her right hand is draped over the caning of the chair’s right arm.

Her left hand is holding a white wine glass filled with a Merlot.

Judging by the length of her thigh (clearly visible through her filmy

Orange and purple skirt) and the size of the sole of her right shoe,

“CAT” is a very tall woman with exceptionally small feet

So why, in this casually elegant, serene setting, is she contemplating

How to kill the man she used to love?

Art in the AM

By Kevin Fidgeon

I recognized the woman in the painting immediately: Pandemic Pam. Dressed to the nines, perfect hair and makeup with no place to go. Sitting on one leg, holding a half glass of red wine, she looked beautiful but forlorn.

It was the perfect painting to remind me how much I love and miss Art in the AM. Maribeth standing at the back of the room overseeing it all. An orange bucket that tempts me to put \$10 in and take \$20 out. Stuart’s twisted explanation of how he chose a particular song. Lisa giving a warm introduction.

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I like to arrive early, getting the same seat. Good friends who are neither writers nor artists come for the pure entertainment.

The artists who share their work are an eclectic group. They impress me with their passion and the process of how they create. The art covers the whole spectrum of expression.

Art in the AM welcomes first time writers/readers, frequently nervous but brave of spirit sharing their unique stories. There is also a core group of repeat writers like Kathleen who take us to faraway places (and the perils of a Catholic school education) and Patty who treats us to stories of courage with a quiet sense of humor.

At the conclusion of one of my own readings, I asked the audience to join in a howl with me. At the count of three, the entire audience looked up and howled. It felt like one big group hug.

Soon, I hope, Art in the AM will meet again. Pandemic Pam will be gone.

Once again, we will howl, hug each other and help Tom put away folding chairs.

Gabrielle

By Sue Towers

I remember that night we were together. It was the last time I saw her.

There she sat, looking out the window with the wine glass in her hand. The streetlight accentuated her deep, brown eyes, and her beautiful, inviting body. How I wanted her then. I managed to take a photograph of her as she glanced back at me.

Why had I not realized our relationship was ending when I thought everything was good? Her words and her eyes were inviting. But she must have been laughing inside, instead.

We had spent the afternoon at the Met, studying old paintings. I didn't care what we were looking at. I only watched her as she walked, thinking about what we would be doing that evening. We found a small restaurant, dined on pasta and red wine. Oh, how I thought the evening would be a good one.

We got to the room and then she sat down in that chair by the window, and asked for a glass of wine. I ordered a bottle from room service, thinking how nice the rest of the night would be. She smiled, and glanced out the window, as if she were thinking of another place she wanted to be.

What was she thinking? I see clearly now that it wasn't about me.

The Knock

By Justin Stoeckel

The night before had been the worst of all of them. It began at seven. Finally, at a quarter past ten, she had thrown him out. She couldn't believe it as she was doing it. She couldn't believe he was actually going. But he had only left because he wanted to leave. And he only began the fight because he wanted her to be the reason he left. *Good. Go, you louse.* She sipped her wine. Her second. It wasn't even noon. The sun was hot but it felt good on her skin. Being away from him felt good on her skin. She sipped again, feeling pleased with herself. *He can blame me. Fine. It was time b—* The knock severed her thought. Her head snapped to the door. She sat rigidly. Froze. Eying the door. A knock? Yes. A thunderous one. Another wasn't necessary. She could feel him out there. He was back. The second knock came anyway.

Awaiting

By Phil Fretz

I look over my shoulder

It's you I want to see

The daylight is fleeting

I need you here with me

The view from the window is magical

But the moment is fraught.

With the chance of your tenderness

I hope it's not for naught

Without you, the night brings darkness,

And the risk of bleak depression.

But with a touch of your caress

There's nothing I'll protest

I've had my glass of wine

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Spent waiting for you
Come hither, don't tarry
I need you, I do

I'm ready to share the view,
And me, with you

Time to Wine

By Linda Federman

Sometimes I forget to be afraid. I might be vigorously vacuuming, lost in a book, engaged in a conversation with an old friend. But blissful distraction only lasts a moment. Then it's as if a window shade is flung open and the searing light of reality comes flowing back in.

Each anxiety stabs with its own sharp blade. People suffering in hospital beds, dying by the hundreds of thousands; the air itself can kill you. Even the hand sanitizer we use to fight the germs can kill you. The world is burning. Civil society is circling the drain. Red and Blue are at each other's throats. People are out of work, going to bed hungry, losing their homes. The economy is tanking. We are assaulted from all sides. Sometimes it's impossible to even tell who our enemies are.

But oh, that evening glass of wine. Not entirely an escape, but a break. A little mental vacation. The mild numbness, the release of breath held, the unknotting of muscles in the back of the neck. It is reprieve in a bottle, a pause button, a chance to quiet the barrage of terrible noise, terrible news. Like a volume control knob, it dials down the panic.

Benjamin Franklin once wrote that wine is constant proof that God loves us, and loves to see us happy. If God wants us to be happy, maybe he could wave his mighty hand and quell the pandemic, enlighten the ignorant, fill hateful hearts with love.

Until He does, pour me another glass.

open window

By T. M. Hudenburg

glass in hand
half full of red wine
or is that half—empty
turn from the open window

as we enter her view
outside the apartment
a smudge to the casual onlooker
perhaps the fog's just rolled in

a carpet's rich appointment
overstuffed pillows
she's used to waiting now—
once being waited upon

neither common nor no longer regal
those dark eyes take it all in
of what she once had
of what she should never have lost