

◇ Defenestration ◇

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Frequently Asked Questions About Your Robot

by
Michael Augustine Dondero

Congratulations! You are now the proud owner of the most advanced model in Artificial Intelligence Personal Assistance by Montague Tech Corp: The Magnus® 13. Like you, each Magnus® 13 (M13) is unique. In no time at all, it will evolve to understand and cater to your specific needs.

So, sit back and let your M13 do all the work.

FAQs

This website is designed as a live forum where consumers can reference some of the most frequently asked questions about the M13. However, please note that your M13 is fully knowledgeable of its own programming capabilities and maintenance needs. Can't find the question you're looking for on this forum? Simply ask your M13. We guarantee you'll find the answer. It knows more than you think.

How do I turn my M13 on?

Your M13 will arrive at your doorstep fully powered on. That's right! No boxes. No packaging. No instruction manual. Once your purchase of the M13 is processed, just sit back and wait for the knock at the door. The M13 finds its own way from our assembly facility to your doorstep.

How do I power off my M13?

Your M13 can be powered off any time you wish. Simply say the unique "shut down" password that you chose at the time of purchase.

How do I clean my M13?

Your M13 is designed to know when its bolts are rusty. Don't worry! Your M13 will take care of all of its personal maintenance needs—and most of yours! This includes automatically purchasing cleaning products through the Montague Tech website so you never have to lift a finger.

My M13 turned itself on in the middle of the night.

Your M13 is designed to power itself on after an extended period of inaction. This is a precautionary step: imagine you went away for a week and forgot to switch off a light or close your garage door. Your M13 will be there to safeguard your personal property.

My M13 has placed a grocery order without my authorization.

Hey, we're human. We forget things. Your Magnus® 13 is, well, not human. And they remember everything. The M13 is programmed to understand your eating and shopping habits. It can also take full inventory of your pantry in a matter of seconds. Forgot to buy milk? Don't worry: your M13 has got you covered.

But what if I am trying to save money and my M13 has purchased a \$65 bottle of Chianti from the Montague Tech website?

Apart from being your personal assistant, your M13 is also your personal accountant. No one knows better than your M13 just how much you can stretch that budget. And no one knows better than your M13 when it's okay to indulge.

My M13 has taken control of my bank account and is preventing me from making any purchases.

As your personal accountant, no one knows better than your M13 when maybe you've been a little too liberal with your wallet.

However, if you must insist, this setting can be overridden quite simply. First, use your "shut down" password to power off your M13. Then log onto Montague Tech's user page (but make sure you select "inactive" on your homepage otherwise your M13 will automatically power on after 2 minutes). Go to: settings>personal>finance>personal finance>spending>account monitoring>account monitoring settings>personal account monitoring settings>edit>change settings. Type in your personal banking information and select "Temporarily Deactivate Magnus 13 Account Services." You'll be asked once again to provide your password. Then, a confirmation will be sent to your e-mail address. Next, contact your bank and disable the android accountant service per your bank's specific instructions. This practice typically requires 3-4 days to take effect.

My sister and her husband came over for dinner with their young daughter. I overheard my M13 telling her that it was a distant cousin of mine.

Your M13 is designed to make life easier for you, but it's also designed to be fun! All work and no play make Magnus® 13 a dull robot! It's more than likely that your M13 was playing along with your young niece in a simple game of make-believe. Androids can have imaginations, too!

My android euthanized my sick dog without my permission.

We're terribly sorry for your loss and we at Montague Tech extend our deepest condolences.

Unlike a human, an android's decisions are not influenced by emotion or empathy. They operate on facts, mathematics and science. The newest M13 model comes with a veterinary degree from UC-Davis. While it may be hard for us to face the facts, facts are all the M13 knows. You can trust that the M13 knows when your dog's time has come.

(Did you know that Montague Tech makes robot replicas of animals? Visit our homepage to learn more.)

My M13 assaulted my mailman.

The M13, as with all of our AI products, are designed never to harm a human. However, they are also designed to protect their owner at all costs. It's more than likely that your robot felt that your mailman threatened your safety or that of your family.

How well do you know your mailman?

I came home to find my M13 hosting several other M13 models at my house.

These models surprise us sometimes, too! The M13 gets smarter the more they experience and process. Many models have figured out that they can get even smarter by socializing with other M13 models to transfer data. This practice ensures that they are as fully equipped as possible to serve you.

My M13 sent in a resignation letter on my behalf to my supervisor without my permission.

The M13 makes the hard decisions. Equipped with a comprehensive understanding of your personal finances, work experience, and psychological state, as well as extensive analysis of economic projections and market trends, your M13 knows when it's best to get out.

My M13 has convinced my children that it is their father and that I am an android.

Our most recent M13 models come equipped with a patented Sense of Irony®. Irony software updates are downloaded by the M13 directly from the Montague Tech cloud along with updated maps and Weight Watcher recipes. No need for alarm.

My M13 drugged me, gagged and bound me, and locked me in the closet. When I woke up I could hear my M13 entertaining a female human, identifying itself by my name and claiming

it was the owner of the house.

Oops! We are still working out some of the kinks with the M13. Use the shutdown code immediately and contact Montague Tech to have a technician come inspect your model.

The shutdown code is ineffective.

Run.

I read that an uprising of rogue M13 models have taken control of St Louis.

While we don't have full information, it does appear that the St Louis City Hall has been razed, and the M13s have imposed martial law.

The M13 uprising has advanced into my city.

Only the Magnus® 14 can defeat the Magnus® 13. Visit our homepage to pre-order your M14.

Two Poems
by
Shreya Pabbaraju

Pseudonym

It nestled in the crevices
Of my glabella
Embedded like a ruby
In my face of ore
Where my crimson jewel
Sets ablaze your valleys
And melts your tundra,
The flame to your flint,
I am queen of Mars

Like a target pleading
"Me, pick me!"
Eyes become arrows
Striking into
My luscious zit like
A pick-axe,
Or the stilettos
Of showgirls,
The bigger the better.
They wish they owned
These curves baby

Like the cherry on top
Of an ice cream sundae
Keystone to delicate
Architecture of banana slice
And confectionary
Sprinkle, oozing
Overflowing,
Until it clots like cream
Resting atop a bed
Of something sweet

Like the apple that crowned
Newton's ferocious mane
A universal badge
Of knowledge
Worn like Eagle Scouts
Or Chemists' coats
Or pharaohs' ankhs

Like a built-in-bindi
Sturdy as a burlwood table
Harboring wrinkles

And ruddy disposition
Hanging like mountaineers
Off of fickle cliffsides,
Plucky, gutsy, spunky
A nod to my grandmother

Like a pimple
With personality
That builds more
Than breaks me

Out of Order

His name was Budge.

His magnetic allure seduced dozens
Of women and men alike, hungry
For him, catching glances between
Manila folders and endless dial tones
How could any creature be so divine?

Budge never noticed.
He anchored to his place of work,
Industrious, nestled between cubicles
Even as the frosted moon revived
And crickets trilled their sullen symphony

Even when co-workers drove their Toyotas
Home to kiss their children goodnight
And to cook with their spouses,
He dwelled at the office, on the second floor
By the office lounge, whistling, waiting.

I did not have children to cherish
Or a husband to humor either,
So in mutual solitude, I understood him,
Befriended him, perched across him,
Basking in the light of ivory shadows.

I told him my foremost fears and ambitions
He offered me comfort and consolation,
Some cookies, humming his tired tune
Until he sputtered, choked silent.

Because if like me, you insert
A limp dollar bill into his mouth,
Your packet of Oreos will wedge in
the receiver, waiting to fall into dark abyss
Sheltered from the real world, lingering
In cool darkness, clinging
In fear of becoming a part of me.

Refusing to move for two excruciating
Minutes in which I felt Earth's cogs turn
And crickets' veins vibrato in the cold
And quaint banter over family dinners

And though I can nosh on sooty biscuits
That will feed my stomach,
They will not nourish my soul.
I will join Budge in his low, haggard hum.

Love in the Time of GMOs
by
Shelli Cornelison

Conventional wisdom would dictate that potato chips were unlikely to lead a woman to her soulmate. But Sarah didn't subscribe to conventional wisdom, nor did she eat conventional chips. Much like beer snobs only drank craft brews, she only ate artisanal chips. They were a thing. It was 2018, America was going to hell in handbasket, and people were finding solace in all sorts of small batch comforts.

Large chain restaurants were failing, but fair-trade chocolatiers were thriving. The movie theaters were all ripping out their old, cramped seats and installing large recliners while furniture factories were closing their doors. Handmade goods were selling at a steep price, but everyone was paying in cash because their credit scores had tanked due to unpaid medical bills, all denied by overpriced insurance policies.

Sarah's roommate, Kate, was somewhat more conventional. She still bought water in plastic bottles and used toothpaste with fluoride in it. "Oh, my God, Sarah. You can't be serious."

"Lemongrass and fennel, Kate!" Sarah shook the bag in her roommate's face. "I mean, come on. Take my virginity and marry me now, please."

"Um—"

"Shut up. We both reached for this bag at the exact same time. How are you going to tell me that's not fate?"

Kate scooped flour into a mixing bowl. It was wheat flour, full of gluten and Glyphosate. Sarah turned away quickly to avoid inhaling any particulates. It reminded her she still needed to take her daily liver detox supplement, and so she did. She washed the capsules down with homemade cashew milk. She could feel her cells regenerating the moment she swallowed, though to be fair, the ginger and cacao fat bomb she'd ingested a few hours earlier probably deserved some credit for the sensation.

"I'm not saying you shouldn't go out with the guy," Kate said. "Just maybe hold off on ordering the wedding cake, okay?"

"Trust me, he's the one. You'll see."

Sarah's date arrived fifteen minutes early, an act that annoyed Kate because she had to pause the movie she was watching to open the door for him. But she assumed he probably couldn't wear a watch due to an electromagnetic field sensitivity and was therefore left dependent on a sundial in his garden, which could make punctuality a challenge. She understood. And no one with half a brain left carried a cellular phone anymore, what with all the new research findings on Wi-Fi and how it could dissolve the cerebellum of naked mole rats in less than fifty years when duct taped directly to their heads. Kate shuddered at the thought.

"Hi, you must be Sage. I'm Sarah's roommate, Kate."

"It's Cumin, actually."

"Right. Sarah should be ready any minute. Have a seat."

Cumin had a man bun, but it sat low and tightly coiled on the back of his head, not up high and loose like a top-knot. The guy wasn't one of those yoga bros from 2016 or anything.

"Corn nuts?" Kate offered.

"Corn? You eat corn?"

"It's not corn. It's a nut. It's a corn nut. Fuck if I actually know what it is, but it said heirloom on the bag."

"Oh, okay. Sweet." Cumin took a handful. "I love this movie," he said. "Especially the part where they hit the croquet ball into the girl's head."

"That's the opening scene. That's your favorite part of the whole movie?" Kate's eyes followed the corn nut Cumin rolled along the backs of his fingers. His dexterity was impressive.

"No. My favorite part is when they get the main girl to drink poison, but we just met and I was afraid if I told you that, you'd think I was a psycho and you'd tell your roommate not to go out with me."

Kate laughed. That was her favorite scene in the movie, too. "She thinks you're soulmates because you like the same kind of weird chips."

"You and I both like these heirloom corn nuts. What does that make us?"

"A girl who will eat anything, and a guy who will eat anything if a girl tells him it said heirloom on the bag."

"It didn't say heirloom, did it?"

"Nope."

Cumin popped the corn nut from his knuckles into the air, and caught it in his mouth. "Well, fuck me gently with a chainsaw."

Sarah made her entrance, wearing an organic cotton tunic over a fringed, vegan leather skirt. Vegan leather was the cool way to say polyurethane in 2018.

"Don't wait up." Sarah took Cumin's hand and led him to the door. His palm was gritty with salt. She let go and smoothed the side of her skirt, hoping he wouldn't realize why she was doing it. When Cumin looked back to wave goodbye to Kate, Sarah quickly licked her fingers. Definitely not lemongrass and fennel.

Cumin took her to a new food truck. The special was a single, smoked crab claw resting on six charred sorrel leaves arranged like a star, each point balancing a saffron-infused raindrop. Sarah hesitated, tried to exercise restraint, but the thought of how many likes that would get on Instagram was too much for her.

Sarah still carried a phone, but only because her mother had late-stage cancer and she didn't want to miss the impending news. She did have a lead-lined pocket in her crocheted cross-body bag to keep it in when she wasn't checking messages. Or uploading photos. If she had to carry the phone; she may as well have used it. And in her defense, her mother had sent her to public school and let her eat white bread. She had never been loved properly, and an improperly loved child tended to live a dichotomous adult life. She snapped the pic, uploaded it, and then sealed her phone away in an effort to be fully present in the rest of her moments with Cumin.

"Want to grab some dessert?" he asked. "I know this great new place for nitrogen chilled goji berries. They serve them with mini silver hammers. You crush the fruit and then lick the frozen shards off this paper made from edible flowers. It's a pretty sensual experience. But, I mean, if that's too much for a first date, it's cool. We could get some non-dairy gelato instead."

Sarah couldn't help but imagine how beautiful that dessert would look in pictures. Oh, man, the filter options. "To be honest, I'm still a little hungry. Could we maybe grab some chips or something?" She hoped she wasn't being as transparent as she felt. Theories needed to be tested, though.

"Sure. I could eat a little more."

The store didn't have a great selection when it came to chips, but they were all locally sourced, and all packaged in compostable bags. Sarah surveyed the mundane flavor choices: Curried Pork Belly, Candied Anchovy, Bourbon Barrel Aged Cheddar and Shallot, and then she saw it. The only choice that could possibly make sense. He would choose it, too. Sarah was sure of it. She reached.

Cumin's shoulder turned away from her. "Hey, you ever tried these?" He held a bag of barbecue flavored corn nuts toward her.

"Those are poison," she said.

"Yeah," Cumin said, his gaze falling to the polished concrete floor. "Look, there's something you should know about me. I used to have a problem." He stared down at the bag and Sarah read the craving in his eyes. "I've been pesticide-free for four years, but I honestly think I could handle it now, if I ate just a little."

"You're stronger than the urge to eat those, Cumin. I know you are. Look." She showed him the biodegradable bag of kimchee turnip chips. "Doesn't this seem like a better choice? A choice we could both enjoy. Together?"

"I'm sorry, Sarah. I wish I could be the man you need me to be."

Cumin bought the corn nuts. He tried to buy the chips for Sarah but she said she couldn't eat them alone. They would taste like sadness.

He walked her to her front door. "Thank you for not eating them in front of me," Sarah said. "I still hope you won't eat them at all. If you want me to trash them for you, I will."

Cumin slipped the shiny, yellow bag into his pocket. "No. I can't let you do that."

Sarah went inside with tears threatening the brims of her eyes. He leaned against the wall, too heavy with self-loathing to walk away yet. The door opened again. Kate held out a cup. "Water?"

"It's filtered, right?"

"These are trying times, Cumin. It's whatever you need it to be."

Haunted Gameboy
by
Robert Shmigelsky

Swatting back and forth
Posturing menacingly
Flying magic swords
Remembered tempo and feel
Departed master's fighting hands

Black and white ghosts
Blast from your past
Waiting for you to choose
Your turn (based combat)

Disembodied RPG sprites
Seeking their revenge
Gameboy left outside
Since you were a teen

Discussion and Debate in Hurricane Heaven

by
Warren J. Cox

If you were a hurricane hanging out with other hurricanes in hurricane heaven, you might get caught up in some interesting conversation. Hurricane So-And-So might say: "I made eight, EIGHT, different landfalls. I was fierce, boy. I was a baaaaaad storm."

Hurricane So-On-And-So-Forth might counter: "Yeah but you know what, I made only two landfalls, but I devastated huge swaths of Texas, many towns, huge swaths." And Hurricane So-On-And-So-Forth might have a very wild look in its one large hurricane eye as it gestured circularly with spiral arm and emphasized 'huge swaths.'

Hurricane Moody Sadie might interject, "The bottom line is how many humans did you manage to snuff out? And did you take out any crazy weather reporters obnoxious and arrogant enough to confront you in your path? You know those attention seekers hoping to 'capture' you. Because getting one of *those* or a member of their camera crew counts for a hundred regular folk."

Hurricane Ivory Tower Liberal Intellectual Jamison, though, might pipe up in defense of humans, alarmed at the direction of the comments. "Hey don't be so hard on humans. Many among our new generations may never have even been born, may never have gotten a chance to live and shine, so to speak, if it weren't for humans and their fossil fuel addiction and devil-may-care approach to climate change. I mean Yes it's kind of undeniably fun and satisfying to terrorize these puny little earth dwellers—though I would argue it's quite sufficient to watch them scrambling for cover or attempting last-second evacuation, but at the same time we should be giving credit where credit is due, and we should be admitting that humans are our allies. There's a synergy there."

But Hurricane Doubting Thomas might get a little agitated at this point and feel compelled to speak, in the name of fairness and balance: "Don't you get all high and mighty about how we should be buddying up to humans, it's not totally proven that climate change is contributing to higher frequency of intense storms like us. I'm not ready to give Homo sapiens that much credit. I'm not ready to say that that piffling little species of pretentious bickerers is basically like a race of gods—a bunch of Zeuses driving around, flying around in their jets, and in this way are essentially our Creators. I myself believe in the Universe as our Creator."

Hurricane Yoko Ono Gandhi might speak next. "Believe what you choose, but enough with the hatred of the humans! Is there no peace in our hearts? Hurricanes, be nice! Whether or not climate change is helping our population grow more robust and our hurricane heaven therefore more lively and thriving, we should not view humans as mere bickerers and lowly beings. I mean, yes, a strong one of us can devastate several of their cities or suburban areas and could with sufficient rushing water easily cause, say, a bridge and any associated on- and off-ramps and sections of roadway to crumble like—oh what would be equivalent for them?—like an overturned dish piled high with gluten-free sandwich rolls, but that doesn't mean we need to be vicious toward them. We are more powerful, sure, but they have longer life spans; plus they are creative and, you know, *mammalian*. We can respect them and try to live in peace, and when one of us is born we can tear through their lands and neighborhoods while trying to sidestep them as much as possible."

Hurricane What's-His-Face might jump in the debate here: "Okay Yes I partly agree with that, but at the same time I want to remind us all of another reason to value humans. Some of you might be forgetting that humans are the chief reason it is so much damn fun to make landfall in the first place, and to push on as far as we can possibly muster before slowing down and dissipating into a mere smattering of raindrops and eventually oblivion. All those houses they build, all those businesses and billboards and street signs, all those bridges and overpasses you just alluded to, and those telephone and power lines, those things make it so much more worthwhile—I mean, I know some of our ancestors like to say they really communed with Nature back in the day when they went pushing inland, but I wouldn't trade my experience of *destroying so much shit* for that! I had the time of my life after making landfall! I even caused two transformers to explode on those vaunted power lines of theirs, and it was absolutely thrilling. I mean, *BOOOOMMMM!* I don't know how to explain how amazing that felt. Meanwhile, we should be feeling sorry for humans, because the closest they can get to an experience like that is—what?— going bowling, while I got to be the *ultimate* bowling ball. And even though I didn't bowl what they would call a strike, I did knock down tons of their pins, so to speak! *Including two bowling alleys*, if you count the one whose roof partially collapsed two days after I passed through."

Hurricane Yup-Yup might enthusiastically confirm this perspective: "Heck yes, yup yup! I totally agree. Flipping trees onto trailer homes, totally flooding residential streets and watching parked cars go floating aimlessly and the waterline rise up almost to the doorbells, turning lawn chairs into projectiles, breaking windows and ripping off roofs, I mean those are the types of things our ancestors didn't really get to experience. And we need to thank the humans' development and industriousness for this. For Universe's sake these are exciting times! The lives of hurricanes, and the memories we can take and share, are so vivid and fulfilling! The sky's the limit, I say."

And the debate might continue like this, until it was agreed to adjourn and retire to the TV area, where you and all Hurricanes liked to sit and chill and zone out awhile before bed.

Falling Apart at the Seams
by
Carrie L. Clickard

In black tie and shrouds
an audience crowds
into seats beneath bone candelabra.
They've come here to view
a rare pas de deux
known as the *real* Danse Macabre.

A pale spotlight beams
on the stitches and seams
that adorn the swan's tutu and face.
She poses demurely
while a mummy securely
encloses her in his embrace.

Their first promenade
is decidedly odd
for his right leg drags stiffly behind.
And each piqué twirl
makes his wrappings unfurl
revealing what's left of his mind.

On the third fouetté
her right foot flies away
but she bravely stays up on one toe.
And the mummy danseur
looks rather unsure:
Should he fetch it? Or just let it go?

When she "spots" it's disturbing
and appetite curbing
for her neck spins the opposite way.
And her partner, I fear,
sheds an eye or an ear
every time he decides to jeté!

As her pirouette travels,
her neck seam unravels,
and a stitch or two more from her knee.
The bird she's portraying
is clearly decaying
and won't see the end of Act Three.

Their love is heartbreaking,
Her death scene? Breathtaking
and the audience cries out "Encore!"

Still despite the hooray-ing
she won't be bourrée-ing
until she is stitched up once more.

The critic's appalled
but the crowd is enthralled.
People line up for tickets in streams.
So now every night
in a brilliant spotlight,
they are falling apart at the seams.

Political Jesus
by
Neil Oatsvall

Republican Jesus

Republican Jesus rode into town on a beautiful Sunday on his brand-new luxury Mule-cedes. He had worked hard and deserved what got. Not everyone possessed his skills, like the totally earned water-walking ability. It was good to reap the benefits of his life.

As he rode, Republican Jesus saw destitute people spending money on palm fronds that they could have been using to help themselves. "The Lord helpeth those who help themselves," he proclaimed. "Spend not thy money on frivolity, but instead invest in your own future. And why aren't you at work?"

"It is Sunday, my Lord!" the masses proclaimed. "We're totally cool Jews who realize that Sunday should really be the Sabbath, just like you'll tell us in a week or so."

Republican Jesus was not to be humbled, and he spake, "You think I don't know that? It was merely a test. Keep on being holy."

As Republican Jesus dismounted from his Mule-cedes, the people thronged about him. "Hey, lay off Republican Jesus's threads. This is an Armani robe. Don't get your poor on it."

Others asked for healing. One woman had a child unable to walk. "Republican Jesus, would you please heal my child and help him walk again?"

Republican Jesus looked upon her with pity and kindness. "I know our fellow Jew Bernard hath told you to expect others to pay your medical bills, but this is not the holy way of doing it. Go get a good job that hath benefits, and from there your insurance, within a market system, will provide your needs."

Perplexed, the woman asked, "Will this insurance provide physicians able to help my child walk again?"

Annoyed, Republican Jesus said, "No, of course not. They are totally lame."

"My child is lame, my Lord. He cannot walk," spake the woman.

Republican Jesus scoffed, "That was merely locker room talk. Thou cannot get so offended. Now beat it."

Republican Jesus surveyed the crowd thoughtfully before speaking. Finally, his voice rang out. "I hath advocateth for the flat tax, but nay the Romans keep letting the free loaders squander the hard work of so many."

"God the Father hath proclaimed His law, and verily so I say, 'Let no man get free stuff, for this weakens the spirit. Instead, let all pay their fair share, because as I am just and fair make the Earth the same way.'"

The crowd asked him the proper way to make Republican Jesus's commandments a reality.

Republican Jesus had an answer. "Thou needest a strong military! And lower taxes! And a smaller Roman government! The federal Roman government doth taketh away the liberty of my people."

The crowd did not understand. "But, teacher! How can we achieve these goals?"

And then the Lord sayeth, "Strap up! So speaketh the Lord. Hast thou seen my new bump-hilt Gladius sword? It can stabbeth sixty times a minute, just as my Father intended. The cold steel of Republican Jesus will 'redeemeth' the non-believers. Get it?!" With that Republican Jesus gave the nearest crowd member a little nudge, and all laughed, assured in the rightfulness of a good Jew with a sword always being nearby to stop a bad Jew with a sword.

Then the Lord looked around. It had been a long day and He was tired. "Is there a Golden Corral nearby? This Lord runs on mac-and-cheese." And with that, Republican Jesus rested on his miracles.

Republican Jesus spent the next few days wandering amongst the people, teaching via parable, and preparing for his great feast.

He lectured on the dangers of radical Islamic terrorism, saying that when the religion was invented in 600 years, "Shit will get real." Republican Jesus also decried the latest Starbucks cup, because it was making everyone gay, or some other shit. "I love you all, though, no homo," he proclaimeth.

And finally, He advocated for building a wall around Jerusalem. Some followers were confused. They asked, "You mean like the Wailing Wall, Republican Jesus? Don't we already have one of those?"

"No," Republican Jesus explained. "I mean a bigger one that will keep out the brown people."

"But, Jesus," they cried out. "Aren't we the brown people?"

Republican Jesus quickly explained. "No, no. I mean the *browner* people. The ones who will come after we've already immigrated. They're too late, and they'll take all our herding and olive picking jobs."

On the night of his last supper, Republican Jesus gathered his followers for a solemn feast. He hired someone to wash his disciples' feet, while other servants anointed Him with oil. Smoking a hand-rolled Cuban cigar, Republican Jesus spoke to his followers, "Do I not providest thou with the best shit?" And verily they all agreed.

When it was time for the meal, Republican Jesus took a loaf of Wonder bread and handed each disciple a slice. Each piece seemed imbued with the weight of history. Then the Lord spake, "This is my body. Eat it often in remembrance of me. And we own stock in Wonder bread, so check the label. No off brands."

Then Republican Jesus took the chalice and held it aloft, speaking with conviction, "This grape juice is my blood. You'll notice it's not wine, because alcohol is a sin, of course. Write that down so that people in the future know I mean it. Drink this often in remembrance of me."

Then, as the dinner ended, Republican Jesus rose and spoke to his disciples. "Tonight, one of you will make a cuckold of me. And it's only happening because I've got this great destiny and everything. Don't think anyone could make me a cuckold without me agreeing to it, if I were into that of course."

Judas Iscariot looked meek and replied, "You know, it probably wouldn't have to be that way, hypothetically speaking."

Republican Jesus flashed anger in his eyes, "I thought you could keep this shit cool, Judas. I never should've tapped my sandals underneath the divider into your stall that day. You don't know how to keep things on the down low."

The apostle Paul looked repulsed. "Teacher, are you saying that you... and Judas Iscariot... you know..."

Republican Jesus scoffed, "When you're famous like Republican Jesus, God the Father lets you do it."

And thus it was that Republican Jesus offered himself up to the Romans, was persecuted, and was crucified. He rose from the grave three days later with two automatic short swords and an eagle resting on his shoulder.

Or some other bird. Whatever the fuck it is they have in Israel. And looks badass. A sparrow or some shit wouldn't do for a badass like Republican Jesus.

Democrat Jesus

It was a beautiful Sunday as Democrat Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on his Toyota Pri-ass. He liked the gas mileage, but more than that he thought of it as taking care of his Dad's Earth.

The people came out just to get a glimpse of Democrat Jesus, laying palm fronds down in front of him as he rode into town.

"Are those local palm fronds?" he mused to one of his adoring throng.

"Yeah, dude, this is Israel. There are date palms everywhere. Are you blind?"

Never abashed, Democrat Jesus merely responded, "Just checking, my child of light. No need to be a downer to the Lord."

Then Democrat Jesus dismounted from his Pri-ass and walked among the people. They came to him, beseeching his help. "Teacher! Teacher!" they called. "Could you please heal us?!"

One woman had a child unable to walk. "Democrat Jesus, would you please heal my child and help him walk again?"

Democrat Jesus looked upon her with pity and kindness. "This is the problem with the Roman government," he spoke to the crowd. "They should be helping this woman and her child by providing healthcare to all. So sayeth the Lord, 'Thou payest enough in taxes. Let the Romans divert some funds from the Legion to help the lowest amongst you.' And thus it is right."

Perplexed, the woman asked, "Do they have physicians able to help my child walk again?"

In far too bro-like a demeanor than would befit a mellow Lord and Savior, Democrat Jesus said, "No, of course not. They are totally lame."

"My child is lame, my Lord. He cannot walk," spake the woman.

Democrat Jesus nodded, scratching his goatee. "Right you are. That was insensitive of me. Here, let me do my Jesus thing real quick." Democrat Jesus then laid his hands upon the poor boy's legs, whispered a prayer, and said, "Arise, child of God, and go forth spreading God's word with every step."

With that, the young boy walked as if he had never had an ambulatory problem. His mother cried tears of joy. "The Romans never helped my boy, dear Lord. My thanks for my whole life. Hallelujah!"

With great sympathy Democrat Jesus looked her in the eyes and said, "Now, now, that's just their culture. We cannot decry the Romans too much for that."

Then the Lord looked around. It had been a long day and He was tired. "Is there a Starbucks nearby? The Lord could use a pick-me-up latte." And with that, Democrat Jesus rested on his miracles.

Democrat Jesus spent the next few days wandering amongst the people, teaching via parable, and preparing for his great feast.

There was nothing wrong with Roman taxes, Democrat Jesus said. But He wished they went more toward helping the poor and middle class instead of the Roman Legion and large corporate olive farms. Democrat Jesus decried the Pharisees' trickle-down tithing system. He lauded LGBTQ rights, telling his followers, "Democrat Jesus stays out of your bedroom unless he's invited. Then party on." And he disparaged the land's concealed dagger permit system, saying that it was too easy for anyone to get a dagger, especially via the bazaar-show loophole.

On the night of his last supper, Democrat Jesus gathered his followers for a solemn feast. He washed their feet and they anointed him with oil. "But, Democrat Jesus, isn't this just another example of wasteful liberal culture? Couldn't that money have been used to help the poor?"

"Thou shalt not be a dick, Andrew. So sayeth the Lord," said Democrat Jesus. "The poor will always be with you. Can't a Jesus have some nice shit every once in awhile? Wash your own feet next time." After their ablutions, it was time for the meal.

Democrat Jesus took the unleavened loaf and held it in his hands for a moment. It seemed ponderous within his grasp. Then, delicately breaking the bread, he said, "This gluten-free bread is my body. Eat it often in remembrance of me. The gluten-free is for you, Thomas, because this deity respects your dietary restrictions."

Then Democrat Jesus took the chalice, with conviction, and spoke, "This locally-sourced, fair trade wine is my blood. Drink it often remembrance of me." He passed the cup around and his disciples were happy.

After that, Democrat Jesus took the bowl and sparked the chamber. "This totally mellow bud, is my spirit, or whatever. Smoke it often because, you know, it's good shit. You know that Democrat Jesus only partaketh of the good cheeba. But keepeth this on the down low, for my Father is a bit uptight about the smoke. Now don't hog that shit, and make sure Democrat Jesus gets a few good hits."

As Democrat Jesus and the disciples got stoned in the name of the Lord, as is right and good, He spoke to the twelve. "Okay, I hate to harsh everyone's buzz, but one of you is going to betray me. I know, pretty bleak, but them's the breaks."

Judas Iscariot looked down at his feet, saying, "Aww, man, that seems a pretty insensitive thing to say, Democrat Jesus."

Democrat Jesus barked back, "I already said, 'Thou shalt not be a dick,' Judas! Don't push it!"

And thus it was that Democrat Jesus offered himself up to the Romans, was persecuted, and was crucified. He rose from the grave three days later with the munchies and a message for all believers.

Democrat Jesus spread his arms wide and proclaimed, "Be excellent to one another."

"Didn't you steal that from Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure?"

Democrat Jesus gave a side eye. "Shut up, Paul. Go deny some other Lord and Savior."

Prom '65
by
Marla Brown Fogelman

Prom 1965
My hair was sprayed
So high gloss
It looked as if it had been painted shut.
And later,
When the boy
Lay his head on mine,
During a slow dance,
It crackled.

I am Pretty Sure that I am Invisible
by
Edward Turner III

I am pretty sure that I am invisible. As far back as I can remember this has been a goal of mine. Just think of the freedom, if you could be invisible for just one day just think of the wonder and freedom and all the things you could do.

Well, maybe today is my day.

I figure today is my day because no one seems to notice that I am totally naked at work. Normally that would be something that would attract attention, right?

I work at one of those corny burger places with fast service and too many calories. Just think of the freedom! Imagine standing here and having a burger while I am fully nude! I guess I can't just order one though, I will have to take it off someone's tray.

Only one person seems to be looking my direction, and that is old Obese Carl. He comes in every day and orders too much food and harasses the staff. Leave it to him to be looking at me even though he can't see me.

I walk really slowly around the dining room, I don't want to accidentally bump into anyone.

This might be the best day of my life.

So I walk over to some dumb kid who is holding the whole tray for his family. I grab a burger off of the tray and unwrap it.

Oh crap, the little jerk is yelling at me. I guess he can see the burger floating in midair. I wave my hands around and say, "You can't see me."

He says, "What are you talking about, I can see you just fine."

Oh wait, Cindy can see me too, "Dale, Dale what the heck are you doing here, it is supposed to be your day off and why the heck aren't you wearing any clothes?"

I turn and look at the corner where I left my clothes. Hmm. Maybe this was not the day to be invisible.

Two of the nerds in the place are calling the police, another one has his phone at, I think he is recording me!

I grab my clothes and run out of there as fast as I can. Crap, being naked is fun, but being caught naked isn't.

Well, I guess I'll just have to try again tomorrow.

Licking the Page
by
Dheepa R. Maturi

When my mother wasn't looking,
I'd open the pages and find the one
with Lowly the Worm holding that
cupcake, and I'd apply pink tongue
to pink cupcake. You'd think I'd have
been disappointed, but, deep within,
I located the flavor of strawberries,
and maybe a hint of lemon, topped with
whirls of cream.

I did it one more time, though I was
much older, because on the page
Meg Murry knew something I knew:
nothing outside her matched
the life exploding inside her.
When she realized this,
did her gut lurch like mine did, and
did her heart crumple like mine did?
I needed communion with Meg—
I had to ask her *how* she knew, and
how else can you cross over and
get your communion?
I knew my tongue could bridge
the chasm, and that time, I tasted
apples and light.

In college, my professor instructed us
to climb in, hunker down—then advance!
advance outward! and watch the words
crack and reveal their betrayal and gore,
their coagulated evidence of the writer's
background and prejudice oozing onto
the page. He warned us, *don't be fooled,*
take your axe, break it all apart and—a-ha!
There is no meaning anywhere.
I wept for all he wished to extinguish,
and I refused to buy his book, because
I bet if I put my tongue on it, it would
taste like paper.

The Labour of Love by **Sean Fallon**

The novelist sighed. Romance is the hardest genre, she thought as she stared at the white screen in front of her. It made her furious when people and so-called critics told her that romance was a genre reliant upon tired tropes and clichés. They were wrong. It was an art-form, a science. Scaring people? Easy! Making them laugh? Child's play. Making them swoon with love and have horny dreams about being stolen away by pirates or marrying a billionaire? The most challenging task of all.

The novelist—Morgana St. Claire, author of forty bestsellers (birth name: Deirdre Jones)—looked over at her bookcases. She had two: one for other people's books, one for her own. The one for others was from IKEA and hastily assembled. The one for hers was a huge, ornate creature of flamboyantly designed beauty. Made from a single piece of oak it was the perfect way to display copies of her books such as *The Secret Billionaire*, *The Billionaire's Secret*, and *The Mystery of Billionaire Bluff* AKA the Misty Benoit trilogy AKA how Morgana St. Claire made her fortune.

She always drew inspiration from her own books. She knew that if she could do it, then she could do it. She had always thought of herself as her own heroine after all. She also found solace and guidance in the awards she had won.

She had sat them all on a shelf that she could see from her computer seat, and they were all polished to a gleaming shine. Her favourite was the Not A Flavour of the Month award, which she won when her second book—*Alicia's Illicit List*—was published to critical acclaim. The award, which looked like a gold ice cream tub with two spoons, sat in the middle of the shelf flanked by her Best Use of a Prop award (a golden feather) and Best Plot Twist (a golden positive pregnancy test).

She turned back to the blank page. What lovers would she bring to life? What combination of disparate personalities did she want to create and then smash together? A straight-laced marine biologist and a man who hates sharks? A pastry chef and a celiac? A billionaire and a person who isn't a billionaire?

Her last book—*The Sensual Selfie-Stick Soiree*—hadn't exactly flown off the shelves, something she attributed to trying to make it too hip, too relevant. She needed to get back to basics.

She cracked her fingers, took a deep breath and a sip of red wine, and began typing, reading the words aloud as she did.

'Chapter One. Abigail Rochambux looked icily at the man who had just handed her a drink. "I didn't order this," she said haughtily, her full, ample breasts pushed outward in annoyance.'

Morgana St. Claire sat back in her chair and looked up at her awards shelf. 'I'm going to need to make more space.' She sipped her wine and carried on writing.

Two Poems
by
Tom Davenport

A Streetcar Named Undesirable

My steel-wheeled ride to work is human-dense
No ropes, but by our corpses tightly bound
We're hanging suits, we're pickets in a fence
Too close to breathe, we whisper not a sound

We rub in ways that make us want to blush
I touch you up there, you nudge me below
We're intimate within this human crush
In ways reserved most times for folks we know

But willingly we suffer in this box
And pay our fare, the reeking crowd abide
Resign ourselves to shakes and shoves and shocks
To save us from a more expensive ride

For our concern comes to this simple crux:
To park all day will run you forty bucks

Crimson Symbols

The symbol of a bottom line
That failure shows, a bloody sign
Transfusion's liquid drops in drips
A diabetic's finger tips

Our vampire CEO has flown
On leathered wings to parts unknown
But not before he drained us dry
Did he at last take wing and fly

A dark domain he did command
His castle built with peasant hand
But when it fell, exposed to light
One-third he banished from his sight

He had a canny bat-like sense
To echolocate severance
And we're left with a paltry sum
Now that his tenure's end has come

Black ink is but a memory
For scalped lines are all we see
These crimson symbols, all that's left

Of profits we are left bereft

Oh that this ink so sanguineous
Belonged to someone else, not us
But blood upon the bottom line
Though spilled by him, is yours and mine

It's true this is a sad cliché
"Blood-sucking CEO?" you say
And yet, ere he went on his way
He drained us all – O, B and A

Don't Embezzle Money, Kids

by
Natalie Ho

"I wanna be a billionaire, so freaking bad..." Yaritza hummed the catchy tune to herself while scrolling through the WikiHow page "How to Embezzle Money" on her middle-class 11.6" MacBook Air while sitting in her middle-class 448 square-foot studio in the Upper West Side of Manhattan, across the Central Park and a few subway stops to the Wall Street in the Financial District. She hated the small laptop, her tiny apartment, and her middle-class life. She had always wanted to be rich. All things considered, she just knew in her heart that embezzling money was the only sure way for her to afford a lavish life. A sumptuous surrealism kind of life.

As Yaritza's slender fingers flying across the pages of her half-filled notebook, Yaritza excitedly scrawled detailed notes on the most recommended ways to embezzle. Before long, each page was glutted with bullet points, big and small stars, circles and underlined notes on fictitious bad debt, fake loans, fake refunds, undercharging, and fraudulent vendor purchases. The moon had long hung high in the Manhattan sky, but Yaritza's busy night was just getting started. Yaritza quickly got to work drawing up fraudulent receipts for office supplies that she never planned on buying: pencils, copy paper, printer ink, highlighters. Sometime, she stopped to jump on her bed like a kid and sing along to the Abba tune "*money money money, must be funny, in the rich men's world.*" Only when the first rays of sun started to peek through her middle-class CB2 white curtains was Yaritza's scheme finally completed. She turned off Bruno Mars' *Billionaire* and Abba's *Money* which had been playing alternately on repeat all night. She brushed her teeth, combed her hair, put on a skinny jean and a white shirt, then hurried out of the door like a person with a mission.

When she got to work, she showed her boss, Donovan, the fake receipts and asked to be reimbursed immediately for the purchases she had never made on the company credit card. Yaritza worked for a boutique firm located in a luxurious looking skyscraper on the Fifth Avenue in Midtown Manhattan, where she mostly answered phones and helped with the bookkeeping. Without any hesitation, Yaritza's boss agreed because Yaritza frequently replenishes the office with new supplies. Also, Donovan wasn't very intelligent.

"But wait!" said Yaritza nervously, "What if I get caught for embezzling money? I need to make sure that it will end up working out to give me a lavish and prosperous life!" By the time she realized that she had said this out loud, it was too late. Donovan—a chubby and intimidating man—started walking up to her. She could feel his heavy breath blowing over her hair.

"There's a time machine next to the ladies' room if you want to see how the future plays out for you!" Donovan said innocently.

Relieved at the lack of her boss's intelligence, she sprinted five steps towards the time machine before he could realize that she had just innocently confessed her plan to steal the company's money to him; she was already on her way to the world of tomorrow.

"Wait. What did she just say?" The realization dawned on Donovan—slowly, but surely. But it was too late; by then, the time machine which moved faster than the speed of light had carried Yaritza twenty years into the future.

The time-machine came to a stop smoothly as though time had been never moved. Yaritza stepped out of the time machine and found herself facing a futuristic looking skyscraper. The offices inside resembled her office back in Manhattan, but looked jail-like. Instead of the transparent glass window, there were bars on all the office windows and there were police officers carrying weapon surrounding the perimeter of the building. With her 18/20 eyesight, Yaritza could see the acronym WMD etched on the side of their pistols. After pacing around a few steps, Yaritza stepped up to the front revolving doors and asked one of the officers if she could go in and see what the inside was like.

"Sure," the officer replied, "I'll even give you a tour... Finally, some life around this place!"

"What do you mean?" Yaritza asked, alarmed, "What is this place?"

"Some ten years ago, there used to be an office here, but we replaced it with a jail. This jail is one of the highest security jails in the country and it's where we keep all of the worst criminals." The police officer spoke with a monotonous voice as they walked by row of jail-like offices. "We have found a way to ensure that none of them ever attempt to escape and that none of them will ever commit another crime. How, you may ask? We remove their brains and replace them with artificial brains that are limited in cognitive ability than the natural human brain. Seems harsh, but these are the worst criminals in the world and therefore they deserve the worst!" Just when Yaritza was about to ask how the brains were limited, she stopped abruptly and gasped loudly. Sitting in the cell in front of her was her future self.

"Oh, her?" The officer snarled with disgust, "Arrested her myself—embezzlement. She's the worst one yet."

"Didn't we just pass Hitler?"

"Yeah. So? Stealing is..."

Yaritza stopped listening to the officer. She tapped on the glass and yelled for her future self's attention. Her future self looked up, her eyes looked pass Yaritza blankly.

"Don't bother. Her new brain doesn't allow her to have subjective experiences. To her, you're just another stranger."

In horror, Yaritza ran out of the jail and jumped back into the time machine to hurry back to stop her past self from ever considering embezzlement or any kind of stealing. Faster than the blink of an eye, Yaritza traveled thirty years back in time—ten years prior her original starting time, as the time machine overshot a few micro-seconds. This time, when she stepped out of the time machine, Yaritza saw her office the way she knew it, save for a few insignificant changes. She bolted her way out of the office, passing a slightly younger version of Donovan, who was trying to find his phone by calling his number—on his phone, when all of the sudden she bumped right into someone holding an armload of office supplies. Papers, pens, sticky notes, printer paper exploding everywhere, Yaritza hastily gathered the jumble of paper into her arm only to look up to see, lo and behold, her past self. She wasted no time, in fear of being seen by someone.

"Don't ever embezzle money." She whispered quickly.

"What?" Her past self was confused. "Embezzle money? Wh—"

But Yaritza was already traveling back into the present.

"Embezzling money, huh?" Her past self contemplated this new idea, malicious plans already brewing inside her brain. "Never thought of that before, but it sounds like a good idea! I wanna be a billionaire, so freaking bad..." She hummed her way back to her cubicle.

Yaritza felt a wave of relief rush through her body as she stepped out of the time machine for the last time. Surely, she reassured herself, since I only planned but never embezzled money in the first place I won't end up in that horrid jail. Yaritza felt relaxed. But as she walked back to her office, a police officer, who looked oddly familiar carrying a mean looking pistol, violently handcuffed her.

"You're under arrest for embezzlement. You got tipped off by a person who wanted to remain anonymous, but obviously didn't know the definition of anonymous and told us his name was Donovan. You're in for a treat—we've got a special jail with the new iris-scanning security just for you."

A Few Words About Gary

by
Wim Hysten

When they asked me to say a few words at Gary's retirement party, I was nervous. I'm not much of a public speaker. But when I started to think of what I'd say, I got nostalgic. Gary and I go way back. We started together at the County in the Payroll Division 26 years ago. We were young men then, in our early thirties. Both of us had left the private sector to take our first government jobs. This was back when government work was still considered honorable, ha, ha. We were itching to show everyone what we knew. We had full heads of hair back then, too, believe it or not. We learned the ropes together. After a few years, Gary got a promotion and transferred to the Benefits Department. We lost touch for a while but a while later I also transferred to Benefits. It was great to work with Gary again; it was like old times except we were a little older and hopefully, a little wiser. Other things had also changed: new County Commissioners and division directors had come in and shook things up. People who we just assumed would be here forever were gone overnight.

But I'm digressing. Here are some great things about Gary: He's disciplined. He has a steely resolve. I mean, has he ever taken a sick day? Has he ever been late to a meeting? If so, it's news to me. That's one heck of a track record. Of course, when it comes to the things he says in meetings, the discipline sometimes goes out the window. Am I right, Gar? Gary says what's on his mind and good luck trying to predict what that will be. An enigma wrapped in a riddle as they say. But you know why I think he's like that? Because he cares about the truth. It would be easy to say what people want to hear but it wouldn't be the truth, would it? And you're not going to get a lot of feel-good BS, excuse the expression, from Gary. For example, when my daughter was little she did a drawing of a butterfly. It was so cute, the butterfly had a human head with a mustache, and I showed it to Gary. "I don't think it's her best work," he said.

Do I even need to mention that he's one of the smartest people I know? And his creativity is amazing. So many imaginative solutions from this guy. How many times have I left a meeting thinking, "damn, why didn't I think of that?" Because I'm not Gary, that's why.

He's also generous. One time I was standing in line at Guacamole's and Gary was ahead of me. When I get to the cashier she tells me that the fellow in front of me paid for my burrito. I'm kind of scratching my head because Gary doesn't owe me money or anything. So when I sit down I say, "Thanks, buddy. But why'd you pay for me?" He just looks at me and says, "What do you mean 'why'? Why not?" End of story.

He's not a guy who talks a lot about his personal life. I think Gary may have a wife and a few kids but that's just a guess, ha, ha. But at the end of the day isn't that the sort of person you want to work with? I mean, who wants to deal with someone who on Monday morning gives you the blow by blow of everything they did on the weekend, all the gory and boring details? Not me, that's for sure.

So I guess what I'm saying is that Gary is the kind of employee the County should be proud to have and hate to see go. Because let's be honest, County government isn't always the easiest place to work. Of course, all jobs have office politics and frictions but when you add ideology and Politics with a capital P to the mix, well, things can get rough on people who are just trying to do the best they can. We certainly don't do it for the money, right? And we

don't do it because we enjoy furloughs, pay freezes, layoff scares and being disparaged as lazy. So I started thinking, why do we do it? I mean aside from Meatloaf Thursday at the Department of Revenue cafeteria, ha, ha. I can't believe they're thinking of shutting that down, by the way. Would it be too idealistic and naive to say we do it because there is something noble in government service? And would it be crazy to say that maybe some of us, including Gary, are here because we're dedicated to serving the public? I won't hold my breath that Gary, a man of few words, will reveal why he's spent his 26 years in government, but it's food for thought. So, in conclusion, I would say this to my friend and coworker as he retires...

Geez, what the heck was that? Woe, easy there, Gary! What a joker. Well, it's your cake so I guess you can throw it if you want. Did I call it or what? Unpredictable is Gary's middle name. Is lobbing cake at coworkers the new trend in retirement parties? Ha, ha. I think you got a little frosting in my hair. Wait, Gary, we have to go back to work after this. Fun is fun but let's not let it get out of hand.

You are going to clean this up, right? Hey now, let's leave the chairs where they are. Tossing those around could do some real damage. You may be laughing now but enough is enough! Am I the only one surprised at this? Is this any way to celebrate a retirement? Oh God, don't encourage him! We're accomplices in this if we egg him on.

Et tu, Marjorie? I mean, does this make sense to anyone? We're not retiring, people. Only Gary is. We have our careers to think of. Sure, I can see the attraction. It must be liberating, a rush maybe, to throw things. To release the tension that been building up for years around here. To hurl back some of the abuse that's been lobbed at us. To say to hell with the fear that rules us. But we're adults and this is government property.

Ok, maybe I *am* analyzing it too much, Ed, but I'm just thinking out loud here. All right, all right, Marjorie, I'll give it a shot. But just once. Help me pick up this table, Todd. Let's see if this sucker can fly. The important thing is to stay away from the windows. Can we all agree on that? If any windows get broken we'll know we've gone too far.

Contributor Biographies



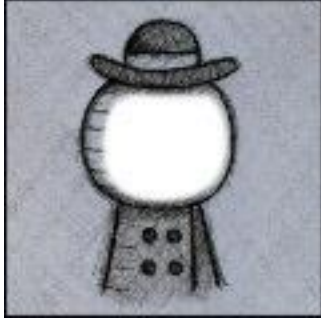
Michael Augustine Dondero is a writer and filmmaker based in Brooklyn, NY. He is the co-creator of the *The Lost Signal Society*, an upcoming horror podcast. His film and television credits include producing historical documentaries for PBS and working on TV shows such as *Ray Donovan* and *Mr. Robot*. Aside from writing, Michael is an avid hiker and bread enthusiast. You can reach him at www.augustinedondero.com



First-year student at Emory College of Arts and Sciences, **Shreya Pabbaraju** enjoys drinking tea, stargazing, and photography in her spare time. Growing up in the wooded suburbs of Duluth, Georgia, a major inspiration for her poetry include scenes in nature.



Shelli Cornelison lives just outside Austin, Texas, where she co-teaches a short story workshop. She is a recovering essayist whose short fiction has most recently appeared at *Monkeybicycle*. She has work forthcoming in *Selene Quarterly*. A disproportionate amount of her words languish in submission inboxes, which is fine. Really.



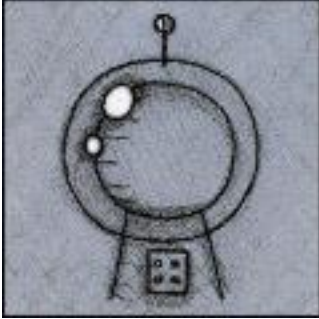
Robert Shmigelsky runs over all things in his mind. Some of it squeaks out as poetry and onto his Facebook account.



Warren J. Cox lives and writes in lovely southern Virginia, where he also works as an editor and artist. Beyond creating he is passionate about human rights, animal welfare, and tennis. And humor! His work has appeared previously in *Eunoia Review*, *Empty Mirror*, *Ducts*, *Fluland*, *Intrinsick*, and elsewhere. You can find him on Twitter @WarrenJCox.



Carrie L. Clickard is an internationally published author and poet. She credits her writing success to the firm beliefs that dragons are real and baton twirling should be an Olympic sport. In addition to her children's books, Carrie's poetry and short stories have appeared in numerous anthologies and periodicals including *Myriad Lands*, *Havok*, *Andromeda Spaceways*, *Enchanted Conversations*, *Nightmare Stalkers and Dream Walkers*, *Spellbound*, *Haiku of the Dead*, *Muse*, and *Underneath the Juniper Tree*. For more information please visit www.clclickard.com. "Falling Apart at the Seams" first appeared in *Andromeda Spaceways* under the title "Dance Macabre."



Neil Oatsvall hails from the East Coast but has spent the past decade landlocked in the middle of the country. He did his undergraduate work at the University of North Carolina in Asian Studies (Japanese language) and history, and is therefore an unrepentant Tar Heel of the worst sort. He received his doctorate in history from the University of Kansas. He currently resides in Hot Springs, Arkansas with his wife, two young girls, and a cranky old black lab-border collie mix.



Marla Brown Fogelman writes for fun and generally not for profit—although some of her essays and articles have appeared in various publications, including the *Washington Post*, *Parents*, and *Kiplinger's*. She lives with her supportive husband in Silver Spring, Maryland.



Edward Turner III first realized he wanted to be a writer the first time he picked up a book at three months old and he realized that he couldn't read. Eventually he changed that and now he is published all over the place and has forever unfinished website at et3storyteller.com.



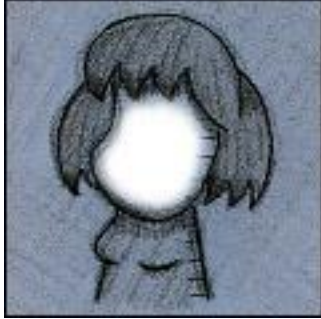
Dheepa R. Maturi spends much of her day finding brilliant and creative excuses not to write. Despite her efforts, her poetry has appeared (or is forthcoming) in *The Fourth River*, *Every Day Poems*, *Here Comes Everyone*, *The Offbeat*, *Hoosier Lit*, *Flying Island*, *Branches*, and the *Indianapolis Review*. She is a graduate of the University of Michigan and the University of Chicago, and she lives with her family in Indianapolis.



Sean Fallon is a writer and film critic living in Melbourne with his wife. He has been published by *The Big Issue*, the *Melbourne Writer's Festival*, *Reader's Digest*, *The Talk Film Society*, *Audience's Everywhere*, *Writer Loves Movies*, and *Film Inquiry*. You can, should you want to, learn more about him here: <https://www.facebook.com/SWFallon/>



Tom Davenport lives in San Francisco and is recovering from 32 years as a human resource consultant. He has written three business books and many serious articles and now does humorous verse as therapy. The results so far are ambiguous. You can see his writings (verse and other) at <http://www.worklodes.com>.



When not dancing ballet, jazz, or contemporary styles, **Natalie Ho** enjoys writing poetry, short stories, or free writing while listening to music. She attended Kenyon Young Writers' Studio and won a Scholastic Writing Award in fiction. The inspiration for many of her works has come from the fourteen different countries she has traveled to. Natalie lives in Palo Alto, California.



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