

## HAUNTS

*Janie Ross Coulter*

They live in the giant stone chimney. I've never seen even one of them. They aren't supposed to be there. Or maybe they are.

Powerful, horror-esque swooping noises and hungry chatterings shower my space in sudden spurts.

They spooked me at first, of course. And then there was a growing fondness.

You're not allowed to kill them. Of course I wouldn't. But I had to figure it out.

I come here seeking solace. It's never here. They are.

They only stay a while at a time, intruding vibrantly on the so-called peace.

They sing like children. I want to. I used to.

But I lost everything. Including my C above high C. Loss can kill.

But you cannot kill them.

They are my uninvited chorus. My chorale. My morale.

And now - listen! - they are ready. There they go, roaring and soaring into their new-birthered freedom to join the infinity of sky.

I am still here. Ready to be operatic.

Ready to lose loss.

## I LOST HER

*Laurence S. Williams*

I'll see her tomorrow. Except tomorrow never came for her. We used to laugh when Dad answered the question "How are you?" by saying, "Great. I woke up today." Now I understand. Now they are both gone.

Being the oldest sister in a family of seven is no easy task. She was the rock between all hard places. She ran interference and ran it well. If not for her I would have floundered in a sea of despair.

Our relationship ebbed and flowed with our own problems. We lost each other when the darkness spread to her brain. Shame and guilt haunt me for thinking she could act irrationally without a deadly reason. But I found her again only to lose her again.

I keep her name in my contacts and want to press it to see if she answers. I believe she can hear me because I hear her. She always knew the right thing to say. To lose someone you love wrenches your heart and the tears cascade like a thunder storm. But isn't that the beautiful irony of it? If I never had her, I would not have had her to lose.

## LOST

*Yukyan Lam*

I can close my eyes, still my breath, and dig into the deepest recesses of my mind. But no matter how hard I try, my earliest childhood memory only goes back to when I was seven years old. The scene plays in color, like one from an old VCR tape. I am kneeling on the carpet, watching my baby sister skip circles around the room—until finally she skips up to me and I catch her, my arms and face against the fuzz of her hand-me-down pajamas. But I am seven years old.

They say that your personality is forged before the age of five. If that is true, it means I don't remember what created me into the person that I was, the precursor to who I am today. Then what lens do I have for viewing the person staring back in the mirror? What frame do I use to complete this puzzle—to understand why I do the things that I do—to know the fuels of my fears, my loves, my hates? In forgetting who I was, I may have lost the reason for why I am.

## TRIGGER

*Mhairi James*

The cardinal had been shadowboxing its reflection every three minutes sunup to sundown for 96 days. I tried covering the windows; shiny objects, hawk silhouettes, pinwheels. I tried talking to the madness in its eyes as it pelted the pane.

At dinner it hit the kitchen window hard. I screamed my umpteenth scream. My husband, eating, ignored it.

"It's time. Where's the gun hidden?" I asked.

"Up there." He pointed to the crawlspace above us.

He's obsessed with shooting squirrels. I like his anger aimed outside.

"With my wedding dress?"

"Yeah, no one looks up there."

"Get it down!"

"You don't know how to shoot a gun."

"There's a first for everything." I said.

Outside I spoke to the bird, "If you want to be set free this is your moment."

It flew into the branches of an oak, a red speck barely visible 30 feet up.

The cardinal's clear whistle cut the air.

Rifle butt cupped in my shoulder, I took aim, squeezed the trigger.

POP!

Silence.

It's dead.

I'm wild and alive. "There must be something else to kill, squirrels, deer, raccoons?" I said looking around the property...then at my husband.

He disappeared the gun fast.

## OBIT SNIPPETS

*Vincent Bell*

Among her further accomplishments were being a longtime single parent, sportswoman, painter, competitive crossword enthusiast, house renovator, pet lover, and avid reader ...

"Bagsy"...is considered the grandfather of the plastic grocery sack...Great-Grandmother, Teacher, Dancer, Embroiderer ...and smart classy lady...who now brings our beloved Bopo's vacation to an end...He spent 35 years in museum merchandising... but decided instead to become a fashion designer...during the "swinging sixties"...her varied careers included Psychologist; Trainer for the Federal government; many years as a television writer and editor;...His quiet and selfless service ...including many overnight shifts with a suicide prevention hotline...always SHARP! ... and seek more information before expressing an opinion as fact...have all benefited from her kind-hearted instructions to speak correctly.... he had to join the International Typographers Union...Unique, superbright, free spirit, creative; bilingual, ambitious, crusader/political activist, devoted cat lover, Francophile, major foodie, and most of all, courageous...He gained a place at Cambridge University... to be allowed to run the machines he, himself, owned... Pollster; author of the screenplay and published online...book...

1/25/00 – 8/12/13 Forever in our hearts.

*Suzanne Schatzle*

How did I lose it? where did it go? why did I need it? .....When I was in my early twenties, I felt like I was losing my mind VERY prematurely. I felt like the future Alzheimer's patient I'm most likely to be (based on genetics, stress and a general need to reach negative milestones which I assume will still hold true for me when I'm 70 plus), but anyway, I was constantly frustrated as I was constantly losing things. Where did my tape recorder go? I mean it's as big as a squashed shoe box, and how else am I supposed to check out the one recording I made and press play and say "God is that REALLY my voice? That doesn't sound like me!" (side note the idea of you not sounding like you or me not sounding like me is an impossibility no?)...and where in God's name is the only shirt I own that makes me look and feel like I'm the 4<sup>th</sup> Charlie's Angel? ....and then...the ball rolled and I looked under my plotting sister's bed to retrieve it, and THAT IS WHERE I LOST IT! Bitch was stealin my shit! .....Yet I left them there...

[-revealingly yours, Clementine]