



VOICES

Rock
Valley
College

FALL 2005

Fall 2005

Award Winners

Jethro Fisher pg. 24

Began with foil trays of rice and beans,
Nopales and lomo on the counter.
Sat untouched as clear silos
Of fermented grain, distilled, emptied
Into cola and cranberry over ice . . .

David Rebelakpg. 16

The sun shone brightly through the windows. The broad pillars of sunlight warmed the room, but it was a distant warmth—detached and impersonal. On days like these, the old man thought as he fumbled through a musty-smelling chest of manuscripts, the sun is more an annoyance than anything else. He liked this thought, and he allowed the smoothness of its rhythm to flow through his mind the way tiny jets of water sometimes glide between sun-bleached stones. He toyed with the idea of putting the sentence in a story, but, after a moment's consideration, he thought better of it. He was an old man now and he had told what stories he had to tell . . .

Jessica Adrignolapg. 12



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Tree

Pat Johnson



The Bird

Pamela Kinley

The vacuum cleaner crashed into another chair, splintering the wood. "Darn it!" she muttered to herself, "that's it, I'm quitting while I'm ahead." She'd been feeling off balance and jittery and it was affecting everything she had been doing.

As she was winding up the cord to the vacuum she realized her son was crying. She ran to the bedroom, to find her son in the crib, drenched in sweat. It looked like he'd been crying for quite awhile. "How could I have not heard him?" she wondered.

She picked up her son and tried to quiet him down. Turning toward the dresser to get some clean dry clothes, she was alarmed to see a large bird sitting on it. The bird had a dangerous looking beak and razor sharp talons that were hanging slightly over the top of the dresser. It stared at her with its beady eyes reflecting the light in the room.

The child started screaming again. She carefully backed out of the room, not taking her eyes off the bird for a minute, she slammed the door shut. The boy was screaming so hard that he couldn't seem to catch his breath. She carefully checked him over to see if he had been hurt by the bird, but couldn't see anything. He continued to scream as she tried everything that she could think of to quiet him.

She became increasingly concerned with his behavior and decided to take him into town to the walk-in clinic. She went to the kitchen and filled the diaper bag with bottles and food and checked his diaper.

She was too worried about him to give much thought to the bird still in his room. She placed her son in his car seat, and gently padded a blanket around him. He continued to cry with increasing intensity.

She started the car and pulled out of the garage and headed down the mountainside. The walk-in clinic was in a small town about forty minutes away. She loved living in the mountains away from everyone but right now she wished she lived closer to town.

The hum of the tires and the quiet of the car seemed to be soothing the child. She glanced into her rearview mirror to check on him. He was sobbing gently now. His little face was pinched white with red blotches from his screaming.

She drove into town and pulled up to the walk-in clinic. The lights were off and no cars were in the parking lot. She decided to drive over to the gas station to ask if they knew of a doctor that she could take him to see, but the gas station was dark and deserted also.

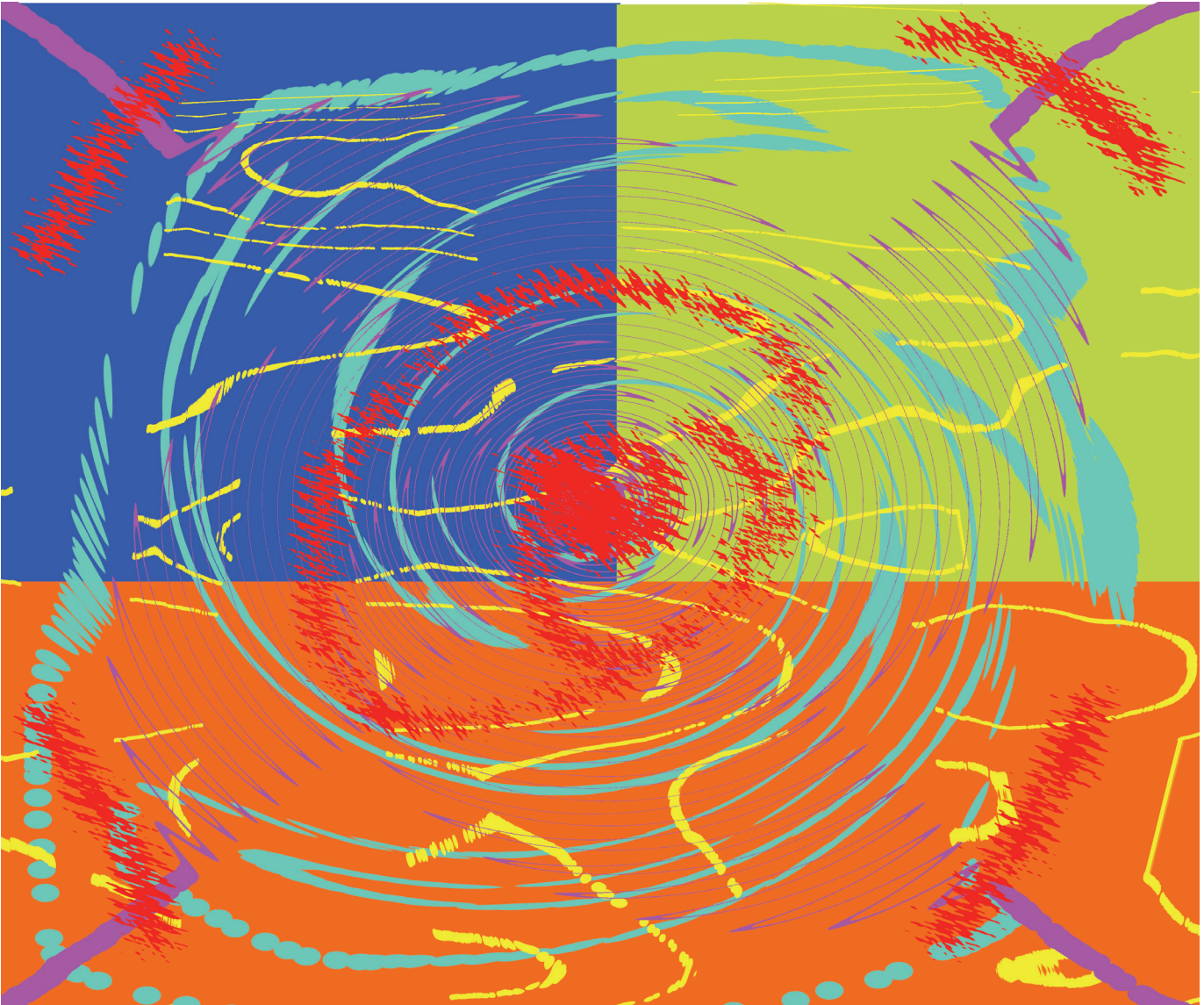
She turned her radio on and heard nothing but static. Not knowing what else to do, she turned her car around and headed back up the mountainside. Her son, who had been quiet for awhile began to scream in earnest as they headed up the mountainside. She pulled the car over, got out, leaving the drivers door open and climbed into the back seat. She scooted closed to him, kissed him gently on his forehead and held him a moment. He became quiet once again. She climbed out of the back seat and got into the driver's seat and started the car. She pulled back onto the road, once again heading up the mountainside.

She looked into her rearview mirror and screamed. The bird was in the car, the same bird that had gotten into the house. The bird stared at her. Shivers ran up and down her body. She quickly looked at her child sitting in the car seat next to the bird. Instead of screaming, the child was quietly staring at the bird, a smile slowly creeping over his face.

While all of this had happened she had still been driving up the mountainside. She was trying to decide what to do when the bird let out an unholy shriek, scaring her so much she slammed on the breaks wrenching the car to the side of the road. She was shaking from head to foot. She checked on her son, he was fine and before she could do anything else, the mountainside began to rumble and shake. Seconds later the road in front of her disappeared as rocks, water and debris rolled in a fury down the mountainside. In shock, she realized how close they had been to being flung into the fury of the landslide. She turned around in her seat to check on her son. He was sleeping peacefully and snoring softly with no telltale signs of the ordeal they had just endured. She sat for a minute, trying to calm her nerves. It wasn't until a few minutes later that she realized that the bird had disappeared.

Not...But Folly

Charlie Johnson



Composition 1

Raymond Schulz



Take Notice

Darcy Breault

Readers are choking on clichés,
Of sparkling sunsets and,
Dreams wrapped in silver linings.
Writers are leaving their lines wide open,
Readers run with them like wild gypsies who have,
No solid home. Words are finding themselves,
Misinterpreted in the critic's imagination,
Not in the image attempted to be portrayed.
It's noticeable when standards are set on one line,
And neglected the next.
Abstract metaphors are covering meaning.
There's not a damn thing to hide.
Everything must be put together with purpose.
There can be no more excuses,
One knows what's expected,
And one knows what good writing is.

Hide nothing-
And be naked against the white paper.

The Offering

Liam Hemming

The inside of the subway flickered like an old film reel as the sunlight cut in and out from between buildings. John, resting his pack on his lap, stared intently at the man sitting across from him, who was tending to a cocoon-like object he had compiled using random bits of yarn and string. The fibrous mosaic delicately conformed to fit the groove of his left cupped palm, while his right hand gracefully punctured and pulled a sewing needle through its surface.

In and out,
in and out.

Unfulfilled desires had settled to the bottoms of his eyes like dead fish, which rotted with the passing of wasted years.

John wondered how long the man had been working on the cocoon.

Had he made others?

How long had he been making them?

The man's fish-filled eyes deployed languid thoughts into the air above him, a mind painfully indifferent to the silly engagements of the body.

As the subway roared on, John noticed how every jolt and jostle of the car would cause the man's grip on the cocoon to tighten. But then the rails would continue humming their songs of safety, and the veins that his worry had roused to the surface would recede back into him.

His face was like a letter from a refugee camp. Anger-inflated words of social amputation writhed within the envelope of his placid expression, the corners of which John's curiosity tugged at like a child. His facial hair hung from him like the withered roots of sunken dreams, which--upon breaching the barrier of his skin--had suffocated in the air of reality and gnarled into twisted, graying locks of defeat.

John suddenly understood.

What the man labored at with such reverence, what balanced in his hand like an offering, wasn't a ball of refuse. It was externalized fragility: his root, his heart, his egg. It was the hugs he had never received and the beatings he had. It was the clicking sounds of the coins in his cup that echoed down the corridors of his pride. It was the product of those wasted years, his secrets stirring within the woven walls.

John, awed and intrigued, sat up in his seat and honed his attention. He stared at the cocoon with anxious expectancy, and awaited the unfolding of frail wings.

Castle

Jessica Adrignola



Ancient Dream

Raymond Schulz



Enfolded

Pamela R. Kinley



Sunset

Pat Johnson



The Long Onerous Life of Ernest Hemingway

David Rebelak

The sun shone brightly through the windows. The broad pillars of sunlight warmed the room, but it was a distant warmth—detached and impersonal. On days like these, the old man thought as he fumbled through a musty-smelling chest of manuscripts, the sun is more an annoyance than anything else. He liked this thought, and he allowed the smoothness of its rhythm to flow through his mind the way tiny jets of water sometimes glide between sun-bleached stones. He toyed with the idea of putting the sentence in a story, but, after a moment's consideration, he thought better of it. He was an old man now and he had told what stories he had to tell. As he sifted through the yellowing and brittle manuscripts, he thought back to when he had begun working on his first novel. In those days, the words had come easily, hell, they had gushed from his mind like a torrent. He remembered Paris and how the air seemed to carry an almost palpable sense of vivacity. He thought fondly of those days, for he had been young and carried inside him a seemingly inexhaustible well of potential. Every morning, he had risen early and worked on that novel and every evening, he and Hadley had made love. But those days had passed and now he was an old man. That great fountain of words that had flowed so violently in his youth had now become stagnant. In his heart, he knew that he would never again compile a cogent sentence. He recognized the irony and savored it, for he himself could not imagine a more ignominious fate for a writer. He had tried writing just a few days before. He had wanted to add an addendum to the work he had recently finished about his youth in Paris. But his Muse, being the fickle bitch she was, had abandoned him and when he looked at what he had written, he saw only an incomprehensible string of broken sentences, platitudes, and non-sequiturs.

He shut the chest and snapped the latches and reached for the wall for support as he rose to his feet. He began walking and his gait was measured and deliberate. He had developed acute arthritis in one of his legs due to a wound he had sustained in the First Great War. His leg began throbbing and he was forced to slow his pace until his feet crept forward in an erratic shuffle. He made his way into the kitchen and to the windowsill above the sink. There, he found a ring of keys and grabbed them and dropped them into the pocket of his robe. As he made his way to the stairs and began his descent into the basement, the smell of mildew and dereliction that all basements share reminded him of the way the air had sometimes smelled on his safaris. That unmistakable odor of sunlight on the plains, of gunpowder and whiskey-stained breath, the wet, sweet smell of blood and putrefaction, and, finally,

the bland, almost imperceptible, scent of death.

He came to an oak-paneled cabinet and withdrew the keys from his pocket. He opened the lock and stood sedately as the cabinet doors creakily opened of their own accord. He stood there for a silent handful of moments, statuesque, his aged brow furrowed in solemn determination. He reached forward then and pulled a twelve-gauge shotgun from its place in the cabinet. He didn't think to close the cabinet and lock it again but he had made sure to grab shells from his ammo box. He held the dense cylinders in his hand and let their lethal weight inform his resolve. He put the shells in his pocket and walked up the stairs, nearly oblivious to the undulating pain in his leg.

By the time he had reached the first-floor foyer his mind was set and so it was with the alacrity of a seasoned hunter that he loaded the shells into his gun. The gun felt good in his hands and he was thankful for its constant fidelity to him. He set the butt of the gun on the floor, the two barrels pointed toward the ceiling like a set of unblinking and impossibly blank eyes. Leaning forward, he placed his forehead on the end of the gun, the muzzle making painless indentations in the slack skin. With his right hand, he followed the length of the barrel until he reached the twin triggers. He stood in that position for just a moment and he did not feel sadness, nor did he feel elation. He was an old man and he was weary. As a child and as a young man he had greatly feared death for its inscrutability and for its permanence. But as he pushed down on the triggers and a deafening constellation of ammunition was sent through his brain, he saw death and he was not afraid and it seemed to him that the world had turned white and he felt himself falling to the ground. So, this is death, he thought resignedly, and the silence that ensued was as good as any affirmation. He did not die as quickly as he hoped he would and as he lay there and waited for death to finish what he could not, he felt very much like a character from one of his stories, for he had written about this moment many times over. As he thought of these things, it felt as though a weight were gradually being lifted from his body and as he saw death skulk ever nearer, he felt more than a little sad that he would never be able to write of his own death because he had finally found the perfect sentence. He thought of how he would end the story of his life and as he thought again of that perfect sentence, he realized he had lost it and it was gone forever. Still, he searched for it and fumbled through the darkness with his hands outstretched and his eyes wide but unseeing. Even though the darkness was absolute, he was not frightened and he summoned all the courage he possessed as he walked into the night, in diligent pursuit of that which had eluded him all his life.

Linear Inequalities

Stan McCord

He didn't look like a total crackpot, but looks can be deceiving, isn't that right?

He was a Professor (emeritus) of Physics from a large State University. After retiring, he'd burrowed his way into our little town and had become friends with the editor of our weekly shopping paper. Amidst the advertisements for local merchants, obituaries and memorial notices, auctions, garage sales and, of course, automobile ads, we actually placed real news stories, particularly if they had a local connection.

"So, Professor, you think the pattern of global warming has nothing at all to do with the depleted ozone layers, or the misuse of fossil fuels?" I asked doubtfully.

"Oh, I think my colleagues are correct in discerning the depletion of the ozone layer is a direct result of our use of fossil fuels, no doubt about that. I do think, however, that our current trend towards global warming is caused by something totally different. Did you know that the Earth is a huge magnet, that there are magnetic fields stretching from pole to pole?"

"Well, yes, I do know that. We studied that way back in grade school." I responded, my mind searching out the stored memories of textbook drawings of the Earth, the American continent prominently displayed, with dotted lines extending from the North Pole, arcing out gracefully to their zenith at the equator, shrinking back as they connected to the South Pole.

"Good. You also know that the Earth doesn't spin in a perfect circle, that it has a distinct 'wobble' as it rotates. Let's say that the North Pole has a positive charge, the South Pole negative. Magnetic energy flows from positive to negative, correct?"

"Ok, I've discovered that since the late 1940's that the positive charge being emitted from the North Pole has increased. The increase was very slow at first, but has nearly tripled over the last few decades. The sun also emits a magnetic charge, a charge that both pushes and pulls at the earth, depending upon the seasons. As the magnetic charge at the North Pole has increased, the amount of push and pull has been altered. The 'wobble' has increased, which in itself is enough to disrupt weather patterns globally. An even more disastrous effect is that the Earth is getting closer to the sun. I calculate that the Earth's orbit has shrunk by nearly three kilometers over the last half century alone.

Life on Earth is a very delicate balance. The over-use of fossil fuels has created the so-called 'green house' effect, and that in itself is a danger to our existence. Combine that with an increase in the wobble as we spin along within an ever-shrinking orbit, and you have all the ingredients for a calamity of unparalleled proportions. All life on Earth is in grave danger, and I fear, the damage is irreversible." He leaned forward, rested his elbows on his knees, and stared at me with unblinking blue eyes.

I challenged his stare with raised eyebrows. "Have you discovered the reason the magnetic field in the Northern Hemisphere has increased?"

"Electricity. Surely you've seen the experiment when copper wire is wound about a nail, electricity is passed through it, so the result is that the nail becomes an electro-magnet? Now, think of thousands and thousands of miles of electrical cables running through the Earth. Think of the millions of miles of high power lines that cross the continents. Think of the radar waves, radio signals, television signals and cell phone signals that are constantly being emitted. Think of the telephone and data cables that lie underneath every street, along every highway. If the electrical current that runs through the coils of wire surrounding that nail is increased, the magnetic field is increased, and the nail has a stronger charge. Well, that's what has happened over the last fifty years or so. The Earth is the nail, all of these cables, wires and emitters are the wire."

"We've altered the magnetic field surrounding the Earth. The wobble will continue to increase, the radius of Earth's orbit will decrease, and the Earth will continue to grow warmer. Not a thing we can do about it. Not a thing."

"Nothing at all, Professor?" I queried.

"Oh, if you consider that the entire planet stop using electricity immediately, we might have a chance to slow the process. Can you imagine that? That Europe, America, Russia and China would switch everything off? Of course, the Southern Hemisphere would have to follow along. No television, no telephones, no internet, no streetlights, no lights at all. We would have to return to the world that existed before the industrial revolution. It's an impossible solution we can't even imagine."

"Well, Professor, that is certainly an interesting theory. I'll write up an article for next week's shopper. I'll fax you a copy, if you like, before we go to press."

He ushered me out the front door, and I tromped down the snowy sidewalk to my car.

I whipped out my cell phone and checked my messages, then called the newspaper's office to inform the editor that I was heading over to the high school to collect the weekly scores from the various athletic coaches.

The red light at the main road stopped me, as usual. The car's radio was playing, my editor was yakking in my ear, yet above it all, or perhaps through it all, I could hear a distinct buzzing sound. As the lights changed, I heard a click, heard a change in the tone of the buzzing. I looked at the streetlights that lined the roads, thought of the communication lines buried alongside. I drove past businesses brightly lit, though it was just past noon. I closed my eyes and imagined thousands of thousands of glowing lines criss-crossing the sky.

I reached over and twisted the knob on the radio.

Mother's Secret

Tom R. Lee

Ma, when you died
 you didn't tell me why
 you'd been so protective of me
over the years --

Ma, sis and I
 went through your belongings,
 remembering how you'd told us
 of the death of a child
 in a previous marriage of yours --

Ma, you'd said
 that it was an automobile accident,
 but sis and I found out otherwise –
 it was heart failure –

Ma, we also see
 that you'd aspired to put her in the movies,
 but life then became hectic for her,
 and it all went wrong –

Ma, you know,
 as a child I abnormally loved films --
 making 8mm's in school,
 and you always timidly smiled,
 but encouraged me --

Ma, I understand your fears,
 but I am grown, and strong --
 I'll endure, and make a film
 about a mother who cared --

Ma, you were,
 at heart, show business family --
 and I'll take your spirit back into the movies,
 to set the record straight ...

Corn

Antoin Huynh



Holy Frog

Stacy Gucciardo



Aqua Cosmos

Carole Rittenhouse



Sonya's 31st

Jethro Fisher

Began with foil trays of rice and beans,
Nopales and lomo on the counter.
Sat untouched as clear silos
Of fermented grain, distilled, emptied
Into cola and cranberry over ice.
Thick kegs were debunged, filled pitchers
Distributed and returned, empty.

Sonya's 31st started late, at Lou's.
A squat, shingled ranch among brownstones.
Rumbled and purred close to two o'clock.
In the basement we heard stumbling
Footsteps patterned after the hallway
Above and plucked strings of shattered glass
Emptied the basement, split Benji's temple,
Splashed blood across Sonya's white blouse.

Sonya's 31st, Where four had to hold
Back her swinging arms, invective
Hurled at distant figures under streetlights.
Turning away, she remembered herself.
"Benji, Where's Benji? Diga me, Benji!"
By then, Benji was bleeding in the bathroom,
Bleeding where fifteen grudges would be stitched
Along his temple, etched in bottle green glass.

Sonya's 31st, where some knew so much
They called each other hermanito.
Spoke of and drunk to little brothers
Lost to Cook County prosecutors,
Misremembered slights, their families
Concerned or unconcerned, to cirrhosis.
They drank to forget the daily stings,
The furrows in green grass under engraved stone.

Sonya's 31st, where food and booze
Were forgotten while the story straightened
Into two sagas; an innocent
Struggle, recorded eight times in police
Blotters and then, retold among family
As a grave insult which demanded
Apology or satisfaction.

Paradise

Charlie Johnson



The Engagement

Jen Wyels



After the Storm

Antoin Huynh



America, We Seek to Free Thee

Hannah Kasper

'Tis true that America was never free
It was on black men's backs
Our country has come to be

Tho' current affairs seem different now
We still enslave those considered weakling cows

They feed and eat on someone's dime
Yet in the end they're all milked dry

To our knees!
To our knees!

We have all succumbed
By force we release our meager pay
And all for other's passions of the day

So, will America ever get free?
Let us see to it that America will be.

The Swing

Rachel Premo



Roy

Erin Kirkpatrick



Meet Bug

Hannah Kasper

Meet Bug
An innocent creature
Neither roach nor beetle
Yet life, still the same

Heavens, hard to climb
Earth dances to the same beat
Angels float or do they fly?
Revealing, still more to life

Filled to brim
Echoes, produced by emptiness
Whispers from the wind, "breathe in life"

Undermine authority and suffer
Never changing on the inside
Dealing with life not
Enjoying what was meant to be
Refraining from wisdom to
Seek after heart's desires
Taking away life, but by
Accepting His heart is
Necessary to open the
Door to eternity, simply more than life will ever be.

Dragon

Aaron Spain



Road

Antoin Huynh



Beach

Aaron Roberson

White sand waves motionless with
palm trees swaying
as the wind blows softly across an
endless blue ocean never stopping, but
slowing life around.
People not running only walking
leaving tracks that wash away by
crashing waves calmly sliding up
smooth soft sand telling tales by
showing prints from all life
left on motionless waves of white sand.

Fall 2005

Staff



Front row: Cassandra Quast, Diana Torres, Amy Mackey, Co-Editor Hannah Kasper, Cassandra Pfeifer; Second row: Asst. Professor Molly Sides, Ed Phebus, Liam Hemming, Jeremy Aughenbaugh, Jesus Correa; Back row: Morgan Ekern, Co-Editor Andy Connell; Absent: Heather Morrow
Photo by Erin Kirkpatrick

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