



UU ORIGINAL VOICES

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Grand Traverse
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A Collection of Our Writings



The Art of War/War of Art

A platoon of poorly organized soldiers. Some are new to service, others older and seasoned. Some tall and thin, others sturdily built. Most from humble backgrounds, a few of respectable lineage. All lay in wait for the Call. And there: it comes! The noise of rummaging, unzipping, moving of material. Compartments open and then, all of my paint brushes spill out onto the dining room table. “Ready, boys?”, I call out to them in a husky voice. No answer, which I take as a yes.

A mug of tea for me. A single cup of water for my troops. Cotton swabs, masking tape and tubes of watercolor hues. I pull out my palette, bearing traces of earlier battles. Olive and brown camo globs of paint across its surface, darkened crimson puddled in the corner. I, as acting Logistics Chief, now turn my thoughts to choosing the best paper for

the impending skirmish. Hot press or cold press? USA cotton or a blend of foreign fibers? Now for a Strategy Briefing. We could approach that bowl of tangerines as a classic Still Life. If things go awry, there could be a conversion to Impressionism. Worst case scenario, we label it Abstract. What if we tackle one piece of fruit at a time? They do not have to be subdued as a unit. If we only take one, that could be sufficient to achieve our goal. When the colors are laid out, we will need to rank our resources. The purples and blues need to stand by. Orange hues will be crucial. Earth tones to the rear.

The first strike will be at 1300 hours, as soon as I finish my peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

The Northwoods Writrix



Basement Studio

Part One

Late fall when the furnace rumbles a bulb dangling in the basement blinks on, sisters Emm and See pause on the stairs to hug then pass.

Octopus of a furnace stretches out each limb to
See, one duct
into a crawl space, another lifts over Mason jars
fruit room dank & dark,
a vent pipe serpentine past coal chute on
above its history charred,
reaches on past the blinking bulb which eyes
ceiling vent.

Appendages, these creak alive with warmth as
See
before a music stand, sharpens knives,
inspects old oboe reeds
while split cane soaks, her music studio
awakens.

Not only hers. Crickets fiddle among jars of
nails,
chirp behind slate shingle stairwell piles of it,
trill in the coal bin hidden by carved wood,
chirruping to the drum
furnace at work, sawdust & residue of ash
fanned to life, crickets
thankful for wool fibers & flies crumb-coated by
scrapings.

Headlamp bent over, shaping cane, trying
to scizz through front teeth in pulses of three
to tantalize a cricket into sync, time shifts
slightly
prances with the scratch-scrapes, dust wavers
then floats off as the pace picks up when See
blows.
Double reed wound tight, pliable enough so
richly burped
then honked hoarse, all barrel sections screwed
& fitted
reed twisted into bell, she ascends a klezmer
scale.

C J Lee February 2021



What is it the cats will know?

In ancient Egypt they were a sacred animal painted on the walls of tombs and sculpted into a giant sphinx.

They know independence, but do they know loyalty? A friend from India says that once we have a relationship with another sentient being we have a responsibility to one another.

Do cats know that? Perhaps so when they wander off to die alone, especially the outside cats. Our suffering is less because we don't see their death come? What is their suffering like as they lie alone under the pines in the back yard and the night unfolds around them. Do they have no fear of death? Do they welcome the isolation and the silence? The cats will know.

Why do the cats thrown away survive until they can find another home? What do they know about their rescue; the rescue which will ease their suffering? Once rescued, are they forever sure they won't be thrown away again? The cats will know.

Strange, silent creatures, cats. A mystery, walking softly through our their lives and ours. But--the cats will know!

New Boarder

He appeared at the back door, meowing and scratching the screen.

“Don’t feed him. He will be here forever”

No food was offered.

He moved to the living room window, meowing and scratching the screen.

“Don’t feed him. He will be here forever.”

We fed him.

He stayed.

Joan Sheard

Chickadee Lover



Oh well Charles thought, what the hell, I guess her name is Aloha. And he tried to form the sound. A-LOW-HA, in his little chickadee mouth.

So the woman and the chickadee spent the next hours repeating

“Charles”

“Aloha”

“Charles”

“Aloha”

He guessed they were talking but he thought how he really needs to find some other chickadees so he can communicate and find out where he was and how to get back home.

To be continued.....

Charles was last seen trying to get to know the funny looking woman who was feeding large birds on the island he had come to rest on after being picked up by a tornado and tossed around in the wind for a week.

He tried hopping up closer to her – without upsetting the bigger birds, who would certainly peck him to death if they wanted to. She kept chit-chatting with him with a pretty constant stream, but he didn’t understand her.

He decided to just say his name over, and over, and over again until maybe she realized he was trying to tell her something.

“Charles, Charles, Charles, Charles” he said.

After about the tenth time, she looked at him and said, “Aloha, aloha, aloha”.