

HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



Ink Spots



The Newsletter of Fremont Area Writers

The "Centennial" Branch of the California Writers Club

Nancy Guarnera – Editor-in-Chief

inkspots@cwc-fremontareawriters.org

Vol. 4 No. 11 December 2025

Visit us at <http://cwc-fremontareawriters.org>



Visual Prompt

Photograph by Terry Tosh



Scott Davidson
FAW President

President's Message

I was wrong last month about that being my final message of the year. A certain editor around here is an over-achiever. FAW takes December off, except for the holiday party Saturday, December 13, at 6 pm. FAW members will get directions. We'll have food, we'll have activities including our now-traditional pub quiz, and we'll have a white elephant gift exchange. Watch your email for details beyond what is in this issue of *Ink Spots*.

December is the time we are out looking for presents for those in our lives. I wondered what CWC icon Jack London would want. So, I asked ChatGPT. It first gave me outdoor gifts, so I specified writing gifts.

Number 1 was:

A Modern Writer's Studio Cabin

A minimalist, prefabricated writing studio — solar-powered, nestled among redwoods — soundproofed and lined with shelves of his favorite authors: Kipling, Nietzsche, Whitman, and Darwin. A place where the only company is silence and the smell of pine.

Number 5 was:

A Custom Anthology: *The Fire Within — The Writings That Shaped Jack London*

A beautifully bound collection of the books that lit his imagination: *Leaves of Grass*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Capital*, *Moby-Dick*, and *The Odyssey*. Each paired with essays and annotations connecting their influence to his own work.

I think ChatGPT must be getting kickbacks from Amazon. I asked about presents for other writers. Then I asked for ones someone could afford. The best was time to write. We writers are lucky. Except for a computer we'd have anyway, writing doesn't cost us a lot. Except time. The gift of time might be the best of all. It might be alone time to give to someone to pursue a hobby. Or it could be time with someone. Or it could be a gift to yourself.

Hope everyone has a great holiday season — see you in the New Year.

Keep writing and thinking,

Scott



Visual Prompt
Artwork by Jo Ann Frisch



Table of Contents

<i>Visual Prompts</i>	1, 2, 7, 11, 20, 23
<i>President's Message</i>	2
<i>A Word from Our Editor</i>	3
<i>FAW Meetings</i>	4 & 5
<i>KUDOS – Members' News</i>	6
<i>FAW & CWC Info</i>	6 - 8
<i>Contests</i>	9 - 11
<i>Notes from the World</i>	12 - 14
<i>Members on Social Media</i>	15
<i>FAW Writers' Corner</i>	16 - 23
<i>FAW Board Members</i>	24
<i>FAW Committee Chairs</i>	25
<i>Quotes on Writing</i>	15 & 19



A Word from Our Editor



Nancy Guarnera
Editor *Ink Spots*

Welcome to our December 2025 issue. We hope you enjoy it! I've been thinking about writing strategies to make your story both a page-turner and unforgettable. Conflict! Recently, I encouraged one of our writers to increase the tension in his story.

As writers, one of the many criticisms we're likely to hear from our critique group, beta-readers, an agent, or an editor is "Ratchet up the tension. There's not enough conflict." It doesn't matter the genre you're writing; it's a common suggestion whether you're writing a thriller, a cozy mystery, science fiction, or a romance. It applies to all of them.

I've noticed over the years that art (books, television, films, etc.) tends to reflect the emotional tenor underlying our cultural ethos. The more divided, or fractured we are as a culture, the more tension we feel, the more we see our angst, anger, fear, and despair in our artistic expression. Art imitates life. It can get downright depressing.

But I'm not convinced that it must be this way. Surely, human beings are clever and creative enough to produce art that uplifts, that helps us see things through a lens of light rather than through a glass darkly. To see things differently, and then perhaps do things differently. If we look back through history, we will see times of both light and dark.

I know this may sound Pollyannaish, and in total opposition to what we as writers are encouraged to do, but what if we could create situations that ratcheted up connection and joy rather than "conflict." Where instead of coming to blows, a "bully" is defeated in a way that helps everyone involved, including the bully, become a better version of themselves...kinder, more thoughtful, more empathetic, more compassionate. And those better versions grew in number to the point where no one chose to long for the days of darkness. Rather, we chose harmony instead of discord.

It seems to me, that children's books are a great place to start with the intention of presenting a creative experience that teaches love, acceptance, inclusion, and celebration. Many of them do, but eventually, we rob our children of their innocence, their joy, and their wonder. Skeptics will say, "But, that's the way the world is. Children need to learn this...if they're going to survive." One could posit that the world "is that way" because we have made it that way. Perhaps through our writing we can change the way the world is, by telling ourselves a different story about the world and ourselves. Certainly, there are books that have changed the way people think and act. If we change the stories we tell our children, and through telling them, change ourselves, we might just change the world for the better.

Can you imagine authoring a book that celebrates consensus, compassion, empathy, joy, and love? A book that becomes so popular, that everyone who reads it stops living in fear and hopelessness, and aspires to be a better angel. Now that's the book I'd like to write! And read...

May you have a happy, healthy holiday season filled with love, peace and joy. *ng*

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

DEADLINE: the 10th of the month prior to publication (December 10th for January's issue - this is negotiable)

Please submit all submissions as attachments • Use a separate email for each type of submission

Send all submissions to: inkspots@cwc-fremontareawriters.org

Make sure your name is on each piece you are submitting, not just in your email

WORD doc(x) 12 pt Cambria for prose & 12 pt Calibri for poetry JPEGs for artwork and photos (300 dpi)

If you'd like the full set of guidelines, email inkspots@cwc-fremontareawriters.org and request it. Thanks!

FAW – December Meetings

Fremont Area Writers
“Fourth Saturday”
General Mtg on Zoom
NO MEETING
IN
DECEMBER

Fremont Area Writers
“Tuesday before 4th Saturday”
Board Meeting on Zoom
NO MEETING
IN
DECEMBER

FAW – December Meetings

Fremont Area Writers
“Second Saturday”

Social Write-In on Zoom

NO MEETING
IN
DECEMBER

Fremont Area Writers
“Fourth Monday”

Writers’ Salon on Zoom

NO MEETING
IN
DECEMBER

KUDOS - *Members' News*

If you have an accomplishment related to your writing, or some other creative aspect of your life, and would like to share it with FAW members in this space, please send it to inkspots@cwc-fremontareawriters.org, or submit it through the **Shout Out for Ink Spots** link at cwc-fremontareawriters.org. Just scroll down the home page until you reach the red **Shout Out** link and click on it. Please do your best to keep it to **100 words or less**. Put **FAW — Shout Out — Your Name** in the Subject field of your email to us. If you don't, your email may get lost in the mail. Thanks!

KUDOS to Evelyn LaTorre, a former Peace Corps volunteer, who can be heard recounting some of her experiences in Peru on the November 23 podcast of Softpower/fulstories (<https://www.softpowerfulstories.org/spfs-bonus-thanksgiving-with-aunt-deb/>). Her voice appears on the last five minutes of this thought-provoking broadcast. SP/FS is an international podcast, professionally produced with music and narration, that discusses the value of foreign aid. **Congratulations, Evelyn!**

FAW & CWC Information

2026 FAW GENERAL MEETINGS TOPICS & SPEAKERS

JANUARY 24TH 2 - 4 PM on ZOOM

**"Lessons Learned from Self-Publishing:
My First Book about the Olympics"**

Myles Garcia — Writer, Olympics historian, Dramatist, FAW Member



**All General Meetings are on the 4TH SATURDAY of the month
(no meetings in July & December).**

To receive a link to zoom meetings, send a request with "ZOOM LINK" in the Subject line to the email below, and you will receive a link the week before the meeting.

scottfrombayside@yahoo.com

PLEASE NOTE: While it's not required... If a topic interests you, consider checking out the speaker's website, if available, before the meeting. There may be gold waiting for you there!

FAW & CWC Information

— PLEASE READ —

FAW Needs You *Help Wanted* FAW Needs You

The following non-elected Board positions need to be filled:

CWC & NorCal Representative(s) Wanted

We are looking for a California Writers Club Representative and a NorCal (Northern California Branches) Representative. Evelyn LaTorre has held both these positions for a number of years and is planning to step down as soon as we've found replacements. For more information about these positions, contact Evelyn at elatorre@aol.com.

You can also contact Scott Davidson at scottfrombayside@yahoo.com.

Hospitality Chair

welcomes, introduces, contacts, & encourages newcomers to join FAW

Service Coordinator

finds & assigns helpers to assist FAW committee heads

Please speak to a Board member if you are interested in one of these positions or in being of service to FAW in some other capacity. Check the last two pages in this issue for contact info.

Visual Prompt



Photograph by nguarnera

FAW & CWC Information

FAW Holiday Party

**Saturday, December 13th
6:00 to 9:00 pm**

**700 Alquire Parkway or 700 Bristol Drive
Hayward, CA 94544**

*If you'd like to assist with decorating earlier in the day,
plan to arrive around 5:30 pm to lend a hand.*

*Bring a side dish, salad or dessert to share that is ready to eat.
Food can be heated in a microwave, or kept warm in a crock pot
or chafing dish, but there's NO stove...so NO cooking!*

Bring your own non-alcoholic beverage to share and enjoy.

*If you'd like to participate in the gift exchange,
bring a wrapped gift of \$15 or less.*

*We'll be entertained with a Pub Quiz &
other enjoyable diversions.*

*The focus of this event is to socialize with your
writing community; this is not an opportunity to read,
but rather to get to know each other better.*

*We hope you can attend
and celebrate this annual shared experience with us.*

*To RSVP by December 6th and for questions, please contact
President, Scott Davidson at scottfrombayside@yahoo.com*

\$\$\$ CONTESTS \$\$\$

NARRATIVE MAGAZINE

For general submissions to the magazine:

<https://www.narrativemagazine.com/submit-your-work>

Story of the Week

<https://www.narrativemagazine.com/story-week-guidelines>

Six-Word Stories

<https://www.narrativemagazine.com/sixwords>

Poem of the Week

<https://www.narrativemagazine.com/poem-week-guidelines>

Photography

<https://www.narrativemagazine.com/photography>

Cartoons and Graphic Stories

<https://www.narrativemagazine.com/graphic-art-guidelines>

DEADLINES: Continuous...check your category

TCK Publishing.com

TCK Publishing Mission Statement

“To build a sustainable book publishing company that helps as many authors as possible fulfill their dreams.”

Our mission is to help all our clients earn a full-time income from book royalties.

TCK has various contests throughout the year and accepts submissions of both fiction — all genres and markets — and non-fiction.

FREE classes and webinars

<https://www.tckpublishing.com>

\$\$\$ CONTESTS \$\$\$

**The Wolfe Pack &
Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine**

Proudly Announce

Our Twentieth Annual

Black Orchid Novella Award Contest



Portrait of Nero Wolfe by Kevin I. Gordon

Does your sleuth measure up to this master?

We are looking for original works of fiction in the traditional deductive style exemplified by Rex Stout's Nero Wolfe. Your entry must:

- Contain no overt sex or violence
- Emphasize the ratiocinative skills of the sleuth
- Not include characters from the Nero Wolfe series

First Prize: \$1,000...and publication in Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine*

Entries must be 15,000 to 20,000 words in length, and must be submitted by May 31, 2026. The winner will be announced at The Wolfe Pack's Annual Black Orchid Banquet in New York City on December 5, 2026.

Please visit www.nerowolfe.org for official rules, procedures and guidelines.

For questions, contact Jane K. Cleland, Chair of the BONA contest, at
Jane@janecleland.com.

*If no acceptable candidates are received, AHMM and The Wolfe Pack reserve the right to declare no winner for any given year.

\$\$\$ CONTESTS \$\$\$

Tom Howard / John H. Reid Fiction & Essay Contest

TOTAL PRIZES: \$12,000 1st prize each Story and Essay \$3,500

SUBMISSION PERIOD: October 15, 2025 – May 1, 2026

GENRE: All styles & themes – fiction and nonfiction

SUBMISSION FEE: \$ 25 per submission • unlimited number of entries • Length: 6K words max

SUBMIT TO: winningwriters.com/our-contests/tom-howard-john-h-reid-fiction-essay-contest



WERGLE FLOMP Humor Poetry Contest

DEADLINE: April 1, 2026 (now accepting submissions)

GENRE: Humorous Poetry (published or unpublished)

NO FEE!

PRIZES: \$3,750 in prizes

INFO & SUBMIT TO: winningwriters.com/our-contests/wergle-flomp-humor-poetry-contest-free



Visual Prompt



Photograph by JoAnn Fisch

Notes from the World

**HEAR YE!
HEAR YE!**

**Check out the
Poetry Foundation**

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/poem-of-the-day>

**Register to receive
a free poem each day
& all sorts of other
cool poetry stuff**

AUTHORS PUBLISH

<https://authorspublish.com>
Check here for lists of publishing
opportunities (*Please vet before submitting*):

<https://authorspublish.com/32-flash-fiction-markets/>

<https://authorspublish.com/12-places-that-publish-writing-about-writing-and-publishing/>

<https://authorspublish.com/25-magazines-accepting-creative-nonfiction/>

<https://authorspublish.com/40-specialized-manuscript-publishers-that-accept-direct-submissions/>

... and many more . . . a newsletter
and free webinars on craft....

FREE Online Workshops w/ JANE CLELAND

Award-winning author Jane Cleland offers **FREE** Zoom workshops on the craft of writing for writers of every skill level. Jane takes you behind the curtain and shares her years of experience with writing craft and its many intricacies, as well as the world of traditional publishing, with its agents, editors and publishers...Oh my!

Register in advance at janeCLELAND.com/events. You'll receive a link for the workshop shortly before, and on the day of the event. Don't miss these...register early.

Saturday, Dec 20 from 10:00 to 11:00 AM PT

“Nurturing Your Creative Spirit: Feel Better, Write Better—Listen to the Pros”

Rediscover the joy in your writing practice. Master the art of sustainable creativity.

Saturday, Jan 24 from 10:00 to 11:00 AM PT

“From Investigative Reporter to Best-selling Novelist: w/ Hank Phillipi Ryan ”

Gain powerful tools to elevate your storytelling craft from an award-winning journalist and novelist.

Jane Cleland is an award-winning author who writes both fiction and nonfiction. Her fiction includes the long-running Josie Prescott Antiques Mystery series, published by St. Martin's Minotaur and *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*. Her non-fiction includes the Agatha-Award winning best-sellers, *Mastering Suspense, Structure & Plot* and *Mastering Plot Twists*. She's a Contributing Editor at *Writer's Digest Magazine* and the chair of the Black Orchid Novella Award (BONA). Cleland teaches writing at the university level, and offers free monthly webinars on the craft and business of writing.

Register on Jane's website to receive a Zoom link.

[**https://janeCLELAND.com/events/**](https://janeCLELAND.com/events)

winningwriters.com

contests with big \$\$\$ prizes

Notes from the World

* CONTESTS *

* NEWSLETTERS *

* ETC. *

Writers Weekly. **Free newsletter.** 24-hour short story contest once each quarter. Topic and word length revealed after signing up. Limited to 500 entrants. \$5 entry fee. Also lists some paying markets for fiction and nonfiction. writersweekly.com

Winning Writers. **Free newsletter.** Lists free contests (many age or location restricted) as well as pay-to-enter contests. Lots of poetry contests. winningwriters.com

The Write Life. **Website.** Lists free contests (with a few exceptions.) Includes book, short fiction, essay, and poetry contests. Many contests are very specific, e.g. book by first generation immigrant, book of military fiction. thewritelife.com/writing-contests

Poets & Writers. **Website.** Searchable contest database with filters for cost, genre and deadline. pw.org/grants

Submishmash Weekly. **Free newsletter.** A curated arts newsletter with select publishing opportunities including contests, publications seeking submissions, and artist residencies. Run by the submission platform Submittable.com.

The Writer. **Website and free newsletter.** Listing of mostly pay-to-enter contests. writermag.com/contests

Fan Story. **Paid site.** Seven-day free trial. \$9.95/month or \$69/year. Feedback on writing you post and almost daily contests that can be entered at no additional fee. fanstory.com

Gotham Writers Workshop

— FREE —

The **Gotham Writers Workshop** in New York City has put together the **Inside Writing** series of free talks about writing. Now in its fifth season, the workshops cover a variety of tools necessary to writers in today's world. The format varies from season to season. Best of all, you get to listen and learn from other writers!

Free Talks are archived at:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLIOByuSHCqP7V9mSsoqU5FojJys2LsvYi>

Inside Writing: A recent Special Episode discussed the importance of using "sensitivity readers" as part of your editing process.

Check out these **free** talks on writing!

Call for

Romance Submissions

Belonging Books, an inclusive, feminist publishing house, began accepting submissions in June 2020. Submissions can be of all lengths from and about minorities—people of color, people with disabilities, religious minorities, LBGTQ+ people, etc.—and non-traditional romance.

Mission: diversify and modernize the genre. belongingbooksonline.wordpress.com

FREE Online Workshops
scriptwriters check out
roadmapwriters.com

Notes from the World

Reedsy
Learning
FREE

*Writing Classes,
Webinars and a Blog*

https://blog.reedsy.com/learning/courses/writing/show-dont-tell/?utm_source=mailparrot&utm_campaign=learning_show_don_t_tell

Reedsy has lots of free classes and webinars for writers, as well as many archived blog topics.

Check it out!

FundsforWriters.com

Chosen 101 Best Writing Websites by Writer's Digest for the last 20 years in a row.

One of the web's best experts on grants/fellowships/scholarships/awards/contests for writers.

The subscription is FREE.

Do like 27,000 others and simply go to **FundsforWriters.com** and sign up. We'll keep your contact information private.

Look forward to you joining us!

GENRE WEBSITES

Sisters in Crime sistersincrime.org (*also open to men*)

Mystery Writers of America mysterywriters.org

Romance Writers of America rwa.org

Golden State Romance Writers
goldenstateromancewriters.org
(*open to all genre fiction writers*)

Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers Association
sdfa.org

Inspire Christian Writers inspirewriters.com

Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators
scbwi.org

Women's National Book Association wnba-books.org
(*also open to men*)

Academy of American Poets poets.org

Poetry Society of America poetrysociety.org

National Association of Memoir Writers namw.org

American Society of Journalists and Authors asja.org
(*nonfiction writers*)

CineStory cinestory.org (*screenwriters*)

Scriptwriters Network scriptwritersnetwork.com

Historical Novel Association historicalnovelsociety.org

Horror Writers Association horror.org

fanstory.com

Contests with cash prizes you can enter this week!

Take a look at this site. Lots of interesting contests. Many are very short...not necessarily easy, but as short as a one-line poem, or a 50-word flash fiction story. Some may have deadlines fast approaching, others you'll have time to contemplate.

Fee Site. Seven-day free trial. \$12.95/month or \$155/year. Feedback on writing you post and almost daily contests that can be entered at no additional fee.

FAW Members on Social Media

● **Angelica G. Allen**

Angelica is a Seventh-Day Adventist Christian author of **Millennial Fiction and Poetry** books, genres targeted to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to millennials. These SDA Christian genres were created by the Fremont, Bay Area native, and are defined as having Seventh-Day Adventist symbolism, coded languages, lyrical writing, illustrations, and emotional storytelling in her U.S. Copyright. You can learn more about these books on her website: angelicagabriellaallen.com. Like her author Facebook page [@AngelicaG.Allen](#) and follow her on Instagram: [@AngelicaGAllen](#) where she posts a new poem in her Reels section every Wednesday!

● **Cherilyn Chin**

Cherilyn is a professional aquarist and marine biologist. For the past 12 years, she's maintained her award-winning blog, **"Ocean of Hope: Marine Animals Voice Their Wishes on Ocean Conservation Issues,"** and has 8,500 followers on Twitter. She also writes children's fiction and non-fiction books about the ocean. She's a website developer, strategic content copywriter, and digital marketer at **Wordsmith for Wealth.** <https://oceanofofhope.net>; Twitter: [@protectoceans](#); <https://wordsmithforwealth.com>

● **Terry Connolly**

Twice a week Terry posts her own writing ranging from essays, personal stories, poetry and short fiction. On her second blog she posts prompts twice a week, to help get you started. tconnellyswritingposts.com and connellyswritingprompts.com

● **Evelyn LaTorre, EdD**

Evelyn loves to travel and write about her experiences. Besides travel adventures, the blogs on her website share the first chapter of her prize-winning book, *Between Inca Walls*, her adventures in other countries, and her cousin's drowning on the Costa Concordia cruise ship. Her second memoir, *Love in Any Language*, shows how a shotgun wedding turns into a bulletproof marriage. It won a Book Excellence award. You can also find recent recordings of her interviews. Website: <https://www.evelynlatorre.com>.

● **Dave M. Strom**

Check out Dave's creative and tech writing blogs and his videos at: [http://davemstrom.wordpress.com/](http://davemstrom.wordpress.com) <http://davemstrom.weebly.com/> <http://www.youtube.com/user/davstrom>

● **Anita Tosh**

Anita writes YA Christian fiction often with a focus on the "end times." She's recently published her third book, *The Book of Jeremy*. It's now available for sale. Website & Blog: booksbyanita.com
Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/111394698919>
YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCn2Eh1NyNnca6V0pAZNUSRA>

*"You want to be a writer, don't know how or when?
Find a quiet place, use a humble pen."*

— Paul Simon

FREMONT AREA WRITERS' CORNER

On September 27th, the **Fremont Cultural Arts Council** held their **Fall Flash Fiction Contest** at Half Price Books in the Fremont Hub. The public was invited to submit up to three short pieces of 300 words or less for consideration, on the specific topic—*A Friendly Ghost*. The submissions were posted at Half Price Books and then from 10 am to 5 pm customers were encouraged to vote for their top five favorites. Ballots were counted and the winners were announced at 5:30ish. This year, 13 FAW members submitted 22 entries. FAW is a co-sponsor of this community event.

***This page and the following 4 are FAW pieces submitted to the Flash Fiction Contest.
And then...something completely different for the holiday featuring Santa!***

New Year's Ghosts

by Pat Doyne



Every New Year's Eve, I make the same resolutions: lose 10 lbs.; de-clutter; and downsize my library until every book fits on a shelf. Sometimes, when I snag an oatmeal-raisin cookie, I hear a snicker. When I return from a library sale with a bargain bag of mysteries, invisible giggles.

New Year's Eve, I was awakened by a skeletal being made entirely of coat-hangers—wire hangers, wooden hangers, skirt hangers, clips.

"I am the Ghost of Promises Past," it intoned. *"You promised to clear out the closet and not keep what almost fits."*

"But, but..." I sputtered.

"You don't wear half of these clothes anyway," continued the skinny sage. *"Wouldn't you enjoy some extra space now?"* It tottered off into my closet.

Weird!

A few hours later, I felt a nudge. A padded sleeping bag spoke to me, its mouth zipping and unzipping with each word.

"I am the Ghost of Promises Present," it said. *"I come from piles of camping gear in the garage, and I speak for cartons of coffee mugs, shelves of half-used paint, and file cabinets of old receipts. We all want to escape that garage!"*

"So go!" I snapped, not willing to be bullied by a nightmare.

I barely turned over when I was jolted awake by a metallic crash. Next to my bed was a huge, red dumpster.

"I am the Ghost of Promises to Come," it clattered, its lid flapping. *"Someday this house will be in the hands of your daughter-in-law."* I beheld a vision of kids, grandkids, and friends chucking my treasures into the dumpster, making a party of it.

"Okay, I get it," I sighed.

When I awoke, it was New Year's Day. I headed to the kitchen for a cup of coffee and an oatmeal-raisin cookie.



I Knew He Was a Ghost Because...



by Knuti VanHoven



When he paused in front of my full-length mirror, I could see my reflection, right through him.

He crossed to my closet, dropped to his knees, groped around the floor, groaned in frustration, then rifled through my dresser, yanking drawers out, grabbing undies, sweaters and folded trousers, wadding them up, then hurling them against the wall!

I screamed. "Get outa here!"

He froze, turned toward me with a curt bow. "I beg your forgiveness. I didn't mean to wake you."

"What're you doin' in my bedroom!?" I shrieked.

"Looking for my key." he mumbled, apologetically.

"Why would *yer* key be in *my* bedroom?"

"Because I died here." he said cheerfully as though that explained everything, adding, "So logically, my key must be quite nearby."

"Why?"

"Where **else** would it be?" There was an edge of hysteria in his voice now. "Reverend Bright said if I tithed, and volunteered, and studied the bible verses he assigned, then when I died, I'd have earned my very own Key to Heaven. Unfortunately," he reflected sadly, "I didn't think to ask where exactly I'd find it."

"How long ya bin lookin'?"

"Every night since June 18th, 1774."

I gave up. "Okaaay... Mind if I try to go back to sleep?"

"By all means."

"Feel free ta leave," I added hopefully.

He sighed, "Unfortunately, I seem unable to."

"Ya need *yer* key fer that?"

"Apparently so.... But, if I AM stuck here for eternity..."

"Eternity!?" I shrieked.

"Eternity..." he grinned. "Luckily, we two seem *quite* compatible! I've noticed that you even prefer the left-hand side of the bed, while I'll be *quite* happy on the right!"

"My **husband** sleeps on the right."

"I know!" His grin broadened. "But I don't mind sharing!"





One Hundred Dollars?



by JoAnn Frisch



The ancient house stood empty. Kids dared each other to spend the night. "It's haunted," they said.

"Sissy. Scaredy Cat," Butch the bully challenged.

"I am not," Ricky answered. "Not me, you go."

"You're just afraid, you don't really believe in ghosts. Haven't you heard of Casper the Friendly Ghost?"

"That's a myth."

Butch said, "I'll give you a hundred dollars for one night."

"Prove it! Show me the money."

Butch counted out the bills.

"OK, I'll do it. Everyone here is my witness."

The night was dark, wind rattled broken windows, moans gasped, chains clashed, laughter echoed.



"I'm not afraid, I'm not afraid," Ricky whispered, his heart beat fast, legs trembled, hands quivered.

"Hello little boy," a ghost motioned him up the stairs. "Don't be afraid, I'm friendly."

"You don't sound friendly."

"Oh, that's just my reputation to keep people out."

More ghosts peeked from the corners.

"We live here and have fun. Sometimes we play the piano in the parlor, but it needs tuning so it sounds spooky." He laughed. "I don't like that bully calling you names. So, you must keep our secret. Don't tell anyone we're friendly."

"OK, I won't. Thank you for telling me your secret. Can I tell my friends?"

"Do you think they'll keep our secret?"

"I'm sure they will," Ricky said.

The next morning the kids gathered in front of the house. Ricky walked out to their cheers with snow white hair and a big grin. "Ok, pay me Butch."

Butch counted a hundred dollars into Ricky's outstretched hand.

"Alright guys, let's go to the Arcade and play!"





MY NANA'S GHOST



by Nancy Guarnera

I was five when my Nana died. My mother told me she had a broken heart. I didn't understand; I just remember being very sad. Nana had practically raised me. She was kind and funny, and made the best cookies. She was my favorite person.

Momma was very sad, too. After the funeral, she began looking for something. With each passing day she became more frantic. She told me she was looking for Nana's will and the deed to the house.

We had lived with Nana since the day I was born. She had promised Momma that she was leaving everything to her. But Nana's heart attack was sudden and unexpected. She had not told Momma where to find her will or the deed.

Every night after Nana died, before I drifted off to sleep, I could hear Momma crying. One night, I asked my Nana to please tell me where

she had put the papers. Sometime later that night, I woke up. There was a strange swirling glow at the foot of my bed. I rubbed my eyes and stared. It was my Nana, smiling at me.

She didn't say anything, just gestured for me to follow. She drifted into the living room and stopped in front of a painting her grandmother had painted many years ago. My Nana's ghost pointed at the painting. Her light faded and she disappeared, but not before she smiled and blew me a kiss.

The next day, I told my mother about Nana's visit. "You were dreaming, sweetheart." She smiled and hugged me.

I wriggled loose, went to the painting, and tried to take it off the wall. Momma came and helped me. There, taped to the back of the painting were the deed and Nana's will.

*"That's what we
storytellers do.
We restore order
with imagination."*

— Kelly Marcel & Sue Smith

*"I think perhaps
you don't finish
writing a book.
You stop writing it."*

— Benjamin Dreyer

The Farm

She grips my hand as we tiptoe past the door to the little room off the kitchen. As we stand in front of the pantry, we sparkle and steam, like icicles melting in the early morning sun. We move away from the passage leading up from the cellar, from which we've come, located under the rambling farmhouse hidden in the deep woods of Massachusetts. "Shah ..." As we tiptoe our weight does not transmit to the floorboards.

I kiss her.

Brilliant light beckons from orbs floating under the kitchen ceiling. Softer, smaller, golden globes flicker from century old fixtures.

The mist swirls, and my grandmother appears, she carries a silver tea set, piled high with many empty cups made of fine Chinese porcelain with flower designs, and a large, now empty, teapot, of the same pattern. A ruffled apron covers her decorative holiday dress. Round wire rimmed glasses frame intensely blue eyes. She wears practical walking shoes.

by Richard E. McCallum

"Hello, Grandma. Smells delicious in here," I say as Sarah moves alongside me.

"Richard? Oh, my. You've surprised me!" Gram places the tray down next to the white ivory cast iron cooking range. Under the burners, bright red energy radiates the Thanksgiving side dishes. Lizzie unbolts the heavy door and the aromas from the roasting nourishment, rise to heaven. She checks the energy source under the broiler and deems it adequate; the annual sacrificial contribution to God, for the blessing received; the Mayflower colony at Plymouth Rock, and peace with the children of the forest.

"Gram, I'd like you to meet Sarah." Elizabeth Delano-McCallum smooths her gray hair back and pins it into the tortoiseshell comb and moves closer. "Just, Sarah, Richard?"

"That's better Dear, what a lovely wisp of beauty." Please join the family and friendly ghost for our annual Thanksgiving celebration.

Visual Prompt



*Artwork
by JoAnn Frisch*

CHRISTMAS CRUMBS

by Stephen M. Yuen

"He's late!" yelled Isaac.

"Maybe he just got delayed," said Poppa.

"Just like the year before," Mama added.

"Wait! Listen to that," little Judy said suddenly.

The little family of mice were huddled in their tiny hole. It was Christmas Eve, and they were waiting for the yearly visit by the hungry stranger. Each year on this night, a stranger from the sky entered the house, left things, and then ate a delicious mound of something sweet leaving crumbs behind. Tonight was the night.

From their hole they could see the larger room beyond. It was dark but they could see the large tree that always occupied the corner of the room this time of year. Next to it sat the large chair with the table on its right.

They heard a rustling above them on the roof. Isaac, the oldest son, whispered to his two brothers and three sisters that this year he would take the risk and gather the special crumbs. Poppa had warned Isaac of the dangers. "You must move as fast as you can," he told Isaac. "Beware of traps and especially of you-know-who!"

The you-know-who was a large and hungry cat that lived in the same house. He was an orange cat named Mylo, and he killed and ate anything that moved. Earlier that year he gotten their neighbor, Hank Mouse, and rumor had it that Mylo had eaten one of the poodles next door. On top of that, he was mean.

"Oh, Isaac," Mama said, "you remember what happened to Hank, are you sure you want to do it this year? I'm so worried!"

Poppa agreed. "Why not wait one more year, son. I'm still fit, and haven't lost my speed."

"Please let me do it this year," Isaac pleaded, "I've been practicing all year running back and forth from here to the kitchen for scraps, and I hate to see Poppa out there in the dark, with his bad back and all. Oh, Mama and Poppa, please give me the chance. Hank was careless, just as Poppa said. He thought he could outrun Mylo and took his time. He thought Mylo was slow and stupid. Me, I have good eyes and faster feet. I respect that fat cat's dangers. I can do it; I know I can."

Then came a rustling from the great place of fire, and down he came. The red stranger had arrived. Isaac and his family huddled together and peeked around the edge of their hole and watched. The large stranger came in, carrying the sack he always had around his shoulder. Slowly, he took brightly decorated packages out of his sack and carefully placed them under the large tree in the corner. Then, when he finished, he went over to the chair and sat down.

(continued on next page)



CHRISTMAS CRUMBS *(continued from previous page)*

His face was covered in a fluffy white beard and his cheeks were red. "He looks friendly," said Pip, Isaac's youngest brother.

"Look!" Poppa whispered in a panic, "Mylo!"

They all saw the large orange giant roll into view. Mylo pranced over to the red stranger, who removed something from his pocket. Poppa, Isaac and the others squinted to see what it was. The stranger placed a very small saucer on the floor. Next to the plate of sweet things that was left for the stranger was a glass of white liquid. He slowly poured some of it into the saucer. "Merry Christmas old fellow," said the stranger.

Mylo began licking the milk as the stranger ate the sweet objects. He nibbled quickly, and as every year, pieces of the objects fell to the floor in great numbers. Then, as if he was in a rush, the stranger looked at the watch that hung from his coat and said "Oh well, got to get moving." He patted Mylo on the head and stood. Slinging the sack around his shoulder, he whispered something that sounded like "Merry Christmas to all," and went to the place of fire and rose upward in a flash.

"Poppa! Now is my chance!" said Isaac. Mylo was occupied with his saucer of the white liquid and watching nothing else. Below the table next to the chair were crumbs of the sweet objects all about the floor.

"Oh, do be careful," said Mama, "I can't look!"

Isaac confidently puffed out his little mouse chest and looked at his family. "Well, no better time than now. Okay, here I go!"

"Be brave and hurry back, son!" said poppa.

Isaac quietly scurried out from the hole and into the wide-open room. Mylo was hunched over his saucer of milk, not paying any attention to the crumbs that were scattered on the floor. Across the room Isaac ran, first to the leg of the nearest chair, then to the space under the table. Mylo paused for a moment. Isaac froze, and hid behind the leg of the table. He sneaked a peek at Mylo, whose ears wiggled for a second while his large cat's head looked this way and that. Then he continued drinking the milk. Isaac quickly, but quietly, began gathering the smaller crumbs. He looked around for something to place them in. He couldn't find anything at first, but then saw a small paper wrapper on the floor. It had probably been dropped by one of the human children. Isaac darted over to it while watching Mylo closely.

Isaac began to fill the wrapper with the crumbs he gathered, and he even tossed in a few of the larger ones. "Poppa will be proud of these!" Isaac whispered to himself. He quickly tied a knot in the wrapper filled with crumbs, and looked back at Mylo. Isaac was shocked to see Mylo looking right at him. Isaac gasped.

"Aha!" Mylo snarled as he showed his fangs, "Trying to sneak by, eh? But you are not round and chubby like the others." Mylo then grinned. "You can be a light snack."

(continued on next page)

CHRISTMAS CRUMBS

(continued from previous page)

Mylo slowly inched toward Isaac while his family watched from their hole. They shivered in terror. Isaac clung to the wrapper and started to back away. His mind raced as he tried to think of a way to escape. He decided to take a big risk. There was no other way.

"Yes," Isaac said to Mylo, "I'm younger and faster! See if you can catch me!" With that, Isaac darted off in the opposite direction towards the giant tree. His family shook with fright. "What is he doing?" Poppa squeaked, "Mylo will corner him!"

Isaac scurried beneath the tree while Mylo ran after him. But the plump cat stopped at the foot of the tree while Isaac disappeared under its branches. Mylo became enraged and his tail wagged back and forth furiously. Isaac peeked from behind a silver ball that hung from a branch while the big cat huffed and dug his nose into the tree. Isaac knew this was his only chance. He held on tight to the wrapper and raced out from under the tree. Mylo swung around and saw the mouse getting away, but the cat's big tail knocked the hanging silver ball off the branch and it fell to the floor with a clank which startled Mylo, who then jumped with fright. By then, Isaac was back at the entrance to the hole.

"Hurry inside, quickly," Poppa said, "before Mylo realizes he's been tricked!"

Mylo saw the mouse disappear into the hole. "Curses!" He hissed, "I'll get you for this someday! No one tricks me! Meeeooow!" Mylo sniffed around the hole, but gave up soon after and sulked away.

Isaac was greeted with hugs and cries of joy from his family. "Oh son," Poppa cried, "I'm so impressed with you, and proud. Wonderful job!" Isaac's siblings all squealed with delight and Mama smiled with relief. As Isaac and his family unfolded the wrapper, all its tasty contents popped out.

"Yay!" They all shouted.

And so, the family of Poppa and Mama Mouse settled down to dine on Isaac's achievement, this year's helping of delicious Christmas crumbs.



Visual Prompt

Photograph by nguarnera

FAW Board Members



SCOTT DAVIDSON
President
scottfrombayside@yahoo.com



TISH DAVIDSON
Vice President
tish_davidson@yahoo.com



PAT DOYNE
Secretary
pat_doyne@yahoo.com



CHERILYN CHIN
Treasurer
cherilyn@ymail.com



BOB GARFINKLE
Founding President

BOARD MEETINGS
Date and Time: On ZOOM at
4 PM the Tuesday before the
Fourth Saturday
FAW General Meeting

JACK LONDON AWARDEES

FREMONT AREA WRITERS

- 2009 Bob Garfinkle
- 2011 Myrla Raymundo
- 2013 Carol Hall
- 2015 Art Carey
- 2017 Shirley Ferrante
- 2019 Jan Small
- 2021 Nancy J Guarnera
- 2023 Scott Davidson
- 2025 Terry Tosh

FAW Chairpeople



CHERILYN CHIN
CWC Advertising
& Promotions



SCOTT DAVIDSON
Zoom Manager
Webmaster



TISH DAVIDSON
Social Write-In Host
Speakers Program & Publicity



BOB GARFINKLE
Historian



NANCY GUARNERA
Ink Spots Editor
inkspots@cwc-fremontareawriters.org



EVELYN LATORRE
NorCal Representative
CWC Representative
elatorre@aol.com



TONY PINO
"Fourth Monday"
Writers' Salon
up.dragonfly@gmail.com



ANITA TOSH
Membership co-chair
nanatosh56@gmail.com



TERRY TOSH
Membership co-chair
Facebook Page
toshmanii@yahoo.com

FAW PURPOSE STATEMENT

Fremont Area Writers educates writers and the public by providing:
Forums for educating members in the craft of writing and marketing their works [and]
Monthly public meetings, workshops, and seminars open to all writers and the general public
to facilitate educating writers of all levels of expertise. (*Article II: PURPOSE Section1: 1.1 and 1.2 FAW Bylaws*)