

# Stories

*poetry, prose, and personal reflection*

Vol. 7 — April 2022



*Asleep or awake, writing or reading, whatever you do,  
you must never be without the remembrance of God.*

~ Rumi

# Stories

*poetry, prose, and personal reflection*

Publisher

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Front Cover Photograph by Margreet Kuypers

*Stories* is published monthly, on the first day of each month. Submissions are due no later than 10 days prior to the date of publication.

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First-time writers for *Stories* are asked to send a brief (two to three sentence) bio with their submission.

**Because of difficulties with some articles sent in the body of emails, we cannot accept submissions in this format. Please send a word doc attachment.**

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## **Publisher's Ponderings**



Last month, I started this piece by stating how difficult I found it to believe that Covid had been around for 2 years. This month, I am equally incredulous about the fact that I have been publishing this magazine for 6 months! It has been an absolute pleasure putting it together each month, and I am so honoured to be able to provide a platform for writers and poets to showcase their phenomenal work.

My passion, as most of you know, is empowering others by telling their stories and speaking their truth. One of the lessons I've learned, especially over the past two years, is the value and importance of self-expression.

The very first Sharing anthology was published by One Thousand Trees in 2013. On the back cover of that volume is the following quote from Iyanla Vanzant:

**When you stand and share your story in an empowering way,  
your story will heal you and your story will heal somebody else.**

Thank you, to everyone who has submitted poetry, prose or personal reflection pieces since the first issue of Stories was published in October 2021. Thank you, also, to everyone who reads this publication each month, and offers support and encouragement.

*Lisa*







## **Travelling Home**

### **Joan Almond**

In the spring of 2019, I had a dream about moving West. Like a book waiting to be opened, I longed for a new chapter in my life. A week after my dream, an email arrived. A writer's conference was being held in the West.

"What were the chances?" I asked myself. Without hesitating, I booked a flight. "After all," I said out loud, "didn't I have travel points?"

The conference was a breath of fresh air. I'd travelled to the West before, but this was different. This time, it felt like coming home.

In those early days, some thought I was crazy. Why would I want to leave a region I'd called home for forty years? It was hard to explain. I belonged in the West; my heart was sure of it!

Little did I know, in a few short months, the world would be in crisis. With the pandemic, my dreams of going west vanished, like a wisp of smoke blown away by the wind.

Still, with each passing day, it became clear the demographic of my city was changing, the cost of living skyrocketing. Now more than ever, I knew I needed to relocate. My longing to move west greeted me before the sun rose, I thought of little else. *Was I being pushed by something outside myself?* I wondered. *How could I know for sure?*

By the end of June, 2021, I found the courage to take the journey alone. The 'cross-country adventure,' at 60 something, went beyond all my comfort zones!

"I have some questions for you," an older sister told me over the phone. "I'm going to present one, and when you've answered that one, I'll have another one for you."

Being the youngest in a big family comes with challenges. But this was different. For the first time in my life, I had the courage to trust myself.

"Do you have a place to live?" my sister asked.

"Have you become a minimalist?" asked another family member.

Unbeknownst to me, my move west became the 'hot topic' on the family 'hotline.' Meanwhile, I gave notice and began selling my belongings. I was convinced the other details would come together.

Wanting to leave 'the best of me' behind, I donated several pieces of framed photography. I said goodbye to family and friends, and businesses who had been kind to me for many years. I felt sure that I'd remain in touch with some.

August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 was a perfect summer's day. Leaving behind a lifetime of memories, I pulled out of the parking lot. Barely able to see out of the back of my SUV, the magnitude of my journey became real. In that moment, my tears flowed like rain.

Then it hit me, my new chapter had begun! The freedom was exhilarating! I had nothing, and yet everything, all at the same time. Life was my highway.

Several miles down the road, I pulled into a rest stop. "Do you have a place yet?" a new text read.

Sitting beside the calming waters of the lake, the sun's rays covered me in light. "My contacts are working on it," I told my sister. I had no evidence that they were; yet everything in me told me it was going to be okay. Driving on, I recalled a communication I'd had in late July.

"Joan," Heather from the consignment store wrote, "I'm giving you my personal email. A friend of mine is moving back to the West. If you have questions, she might be able to help."

Heather's friend Shawna sent me an email. She gave me the name of her real estate agent, Perry. I sent Perry an email, with a list of the things I hoped for in my new home.

For the next three weeks, the airways remained silent. Like the remote highways I travelled down, the silence echoed around every curve. Then, just before I left the province, I got an email. "Perry lives down the street," Kelly wrote. "He sold us our home. The suite has most of the things on your list. Would you like to have a zoom meeting tonight?"

We met that night online. Kelly and I agreed, I'd come to view the suite on September 6<sup>th</sup>.

For the next five days, I drove over 6,000 km. The trip was exhausting! I persevered, each morning rising with the sun. After 5-10 hours of driving, I stopped, only to do it all over again the next day.

Finally, the afternoon of September 6<sup>th</sup> arrived. Glen and Kelly greeted me on the front porch. Oakley, the family dog, was in Glen's arms. Oakley's floppy ears and big brown eyes were irresistible! Something about their welcome told me I'd come home.

In the viewing of the suite, I realized it had more than I expected, and everything I needed. Tastefully decorated, the unit was newly renovated. Kelly offered to make a gallery of some of my framed photography; there was nothing I treasured more.

I had only enough funds for one night's stay at the hotel. Besides that, I had nothing more than my first month's rent. I breathed a sigh of relief when Kelly offered me the suite for the following day.

As I left, my new landlords encouraged me to take a drive down the avenue. First, I came to an area with trendy shops and unique restaurants. Then without warning, I was surrounded by the scenic landscape of the South Saskatchewan River. If real estate is location, I knew I had found the perfect place!

Back at the hotel, I was exhausted. I ate, took a shower, and got into bed. Once again, just as my journey had begun, I had another dream. In this dream, Kelly gave me a floral Valentine's dress. Filled with countless blessings, I knew the beautiful gown was my new home.



Several months have passed, since my 'grand adventure.' I wrote to my friend Kate today. In my greeting, I included a recent photo of myself. "Joan,

## MONTH IN Review

### Scattered Leaves



a poetry collection  
by  
Jaclyn Abrahams



### BEAUTIFUL DISASTER



Krystal Gray

### Hot off the press in March:

Left: *Scattered Leaves* by Jaclyn Abrahams

Middle: *Pandemic Mamas*, curated by Sabrina Rose (Catallo)

Right: *Beautiful Disaster*, by Krystal Gray

\* \* \*

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## One Thousand Trees ~ Promotional Menu



OMG!” Kate wrote back. “You look amazing! The West seems to agree with you! You look so happy!” I sat back from my computer and smiled.

I guess it’s true what they say about comfort zones. After all, ‘Chapter One’ of my new book just found its happy ending!



\* \* \*

## **Vimy, September 1980**

***Karen Eckert***

**W**hen I was 24 years old and living in Paris, I got a job as a tour guide at Vimy Ridge for the month of September. I arrived in the city of Arras, a town a few kilometres away, at the end of August to sort out where I would be living. I decided I would stay in the hostel there and bicycle in to work every day which was what other guides had done. But it was very far away -- at least an hour’s ride — and I was nervous about the distance. Months earlier I had been very sick with a lingering bronchitis and I still was not all that strong.

On the morning of my orientation, I decided to take the bus there and then walk through the Maple

Forest (one Maple Tree had been planted for every Canadian soldier who had died at the battle site) to get to the guide’s cabin. The day was sunny and I was determined to be optimistic. I dressed in summery white pants and top and took my special straw hat which I fashionably wore in a style that my fashion-conscious friend had described as “décontracté” (relaxed and off the cuff).

However, as I waited and waited for the bus that took forever to come, it began to rain. My optimism was soon replaced with dejection. My job would consist of taking groups of tourists through tunnels dug by Canadian soldiers during the First World War and I knew these tunnels would be chilling, especially after a long walk in the rain. I feared the return of my bronchitis, which had left such a fearful mark on me. I thought of the bicycle ride every day, the strain of buying and cooking food, and my uncongenial living conditions at the hostel. I resolved to talk to the director and ask him if there was a family I could stay with.

I could not go back to change out of my wet clothing because the hostel was locked during the day, so not caring if I looked silly, I wrapped my feet in plastic bags and got on the bus. At least I could keep part of me dry. There were only three people on the bus, and one of them, a smallish, elderly man, approached me. He had an open kind face. “Mademoiselle,” he said “I do not advise you to go to the tunnels today. The walk there is at least 25 minutes long and you are not dressed properly.” He had heard me ask the bus driver to drop me off at the path’s entrance. Well, I explained to him that I had no choice because I was due to start work that day and meet the director. After a moment’s hesitation, he told me I could come back with him to Vimy village and his son would drive me there. I was unsure what to do, but when the other two passengers nodded their heads encouragingly, I decided to go with him.

He took me to his son’s home, which fronted the main street and behind which spread a small animal farm. I’m sure I looked like an exotic, albino gazelle

standing there dripping wet, with my feet encased in plastic shopping bags. Much to my immense gratitude and relief, the farmer, whom I later learned was called Marcel, and his wife, whose name was Marie-Madeleine (like the sinner, she explained), went into action. They made a fire so my clothes could dry out, gave me a sweater and a pair of slippers, and insisted I eat something. Never will I forget that meal. I was in awe at how beautifully the food was laid out – the tomatoes sliced so thin and fanned out in a careful, almost elegant pattern. Two kinds of meat and salad - - and such crusty bread! In no time, I was in a truck with Marcel on my way to the tunnels, all decked out in boots and a raincoat.

While I had been eating, Marcel's wife had learned of my situation. Before I had left, she had asked me very humbly if I would like to stay with them. She said they had no room upstairs, but if I didn't mind sleeping in the dining room, they could bring down one of their son's beds and set it up. It was old and rickety and the springs weren't good – would I mind terribly? She had an old bike I could use to get to work every morning. "Oui, oui, oui, I would love to!" This was an answer to my prayers!

From that day forward, I felt taken care of and so, so grateful. Every morning I would drink fresh, boiled milk which was mixed in a bowl with coffee. A gigantic loaf of white bread would be blessed with the sign of the cross and served with newly-made butter and jam. Marcel would split the loaf in half and dunk it in an enormous bowl containing a litre of milk. He had the biggest hands I ever saw. Though it was harvest time, and the family worked till 10:30 every night, Marie Madeleine always made sure I had food to take the next day for lunch. Often she would say "Il faut manger, il faut manger" (You have to eat, you have to eat). She made delicious meals and every day I felt stronger and happier.

There was no bathroom in the house, but there was a toilet and shower next to a barn that housed about 12 cows. There were also a few pigs, rabbits, chickens, and dogs and cats. The fields, I understood,

lay nearby. They had two boys around 8 and 11: Jean-Paul ("comme le pape," said Marie-Madeleine) and Dominique. They looked on me as an alien. One morning their little 7-year-old cousin came by to meet "Kareeen." She was so excited and wanted to know if it was true that I mixed coffee and chocolate together in my milk.

Marie-Madeleine and Marcel struck me as a curious couple. He was tall, lean and handsome with a boyish face and a smiling even temperament. She, on the other hand had a longish dour face etched with lines of suffering and intensity. She was forever yelling at the boys as if it was the only way she knew how to handle them and I sometimes felt sorry that they were always being scolded. She was hard-working, extremely devout and though she loved to complain, I did not feel she was truly unhappy.

One evening, I told Marie-Madeleine that if she showed me where the dish soap was, I would do the dishes. She looked a little abashed as she explained to me that they didn't use soap, just hot water, because then they could give the water to the pigs. I told her that made perfect sense to me! More and more I pitched in. I really enjoyed working in the "laiterie." It became my job to fetch the pails of warm milk from the barn, and then pass it through a special sieve which weeded out the dead flies and little bits of straw. Then the milk would either be sold to a drop-in neighbour or passed through a creamer and made into butter.

Marie-Madeleine was shocked that, at 24, I still didn't have a plan for my life. I told her I had considered teaching, but still had not decided. Frankly, I was hoping for a more glamorous career in the creative field to fly into my lap. She kept urging me to be a teacher, and I kept putting her off. Then one Saturday evening I attended mass in the little church down the road. The priest that evening spoke about the nobility and importance of teaching during his homily. Though my French was not very good, I seemed to understand each and every inspiring word he spoke. Something clicked inside of me that night,

a kind of calling, and not long after, I announced to Marie-Madeleine that I now had a plan for my future: I would become a teacher. She was pleased, but concerned that it would involve spending another few months on my own in France.

Marie-Madeleine and Marcel never asked me for money, though I ended up staying there not just for September, but the following June as well. I earned a lot of tips taking tourists down into the tunnels and at the end of both months, I secretly left money for them on top of a dresser. Later, after I had returned to Canada, I sent them a lovely container for their sugar which Marie-Madeleine assured me was never absent from their table. Young as I was, I knew even then that those two months would be two of the most blessed months of my life. And I was right.

*Postscript: Marie-Madeleine and I corresponded intermittently for over 25 years. Like her beautifully-sliced tomatoes, her handwriting was a marvel of care and delicacy. Recently, I located the family on Facebook and found that the farm was now a father and son venture and going strong. Marie-Madeleine had unfortunately died a few years earlier, but I spoke to Marcel and got to thank him.*

\* \* \*

## **My Past, Present and Future** **Colleen Heighington**

**Y**es ... I have been a senior for a few years and yes ... I have more time to daydream, do a hobby, or do absolutely nothing!!

I have noticed that I do enjoy reliving my past ... the good old days!! I came from a family of seven, which includes my wonderful parents, my older brother and three younger sisters. I think of all the great times we had together as a family. I remember the birthday parties, the summer vacations and celebrating the special occasions throughout the year. I especially enjoy the seasons of Easter and Christmas.

I had so much fun at our Easter Egg hunts and at Christmas getting all excited for Santa and all of the gifts he would leave us. Boy ... were we ever spoiled!! The memories of my past mean so much more to me since the passing of my mom and dad. I miss them more each passing year but they stay close to me in my heart. I thank the dear Lord for the beautiful memories that they have left us.

There are days when I think of my present and I am so thankful for each new day. My days are kept busy and I try to keep a schedule. I do a lot of walking which I thoroughly enjoy and know that it helps keep the body fit and helps me with the pain I have associated with fibromyalgia. I am a talker, so I enjoy talking on the phone with family and friends. It is a nice way to stay in touch to keep up with what's new with everyone. Also, I am involved with Hospice and my church, and I feel so honoured to be a part of those communities. Since getting older, I try to do as much as I can and want to live a long happy life just like my dad did. He lived to be 90!

When I think of my future ... I think of Heaven more. Time is passing me by, and it is going very quickly. Every day is truly a blessing and I am very thankful for it. My future is my hope of Heaven, everlasting Life, meeting my Heavenly Father face to face, and being reunited with my loved ones again, forevermore in God's beautiful Kingdom!!

My past, present and future are in God's hands and ... "IT IS WELL WITH MY SOUL"





## **Pandemic** **Jaclyn Abrahams**

Like a flickering flame  
Of a candle,  
Never quite goes out.  
Or the brilliant flash of a falling star  
There's a spring of hope within us all.  
To stir a fire in our hearts  
Determined to not give up or give in.  
Our discovery  
Of newfound vigour to meet each sunrise  
With a zest for life.  
Make the moments count each day,  
Treasure and cherish one another.  
Our haven is our home  
Where we are safe.  
United in spirit together  
"We shall overcome."  
Through barriers we learn from each other  
Everyday heroes,  
A generation resilient  
Adapting with time  
We are the legacy,  
Survivors of this war  
Our world forever changed,  
Lives rearranged.  
Believing  
Our lives have meaning,  
Conquering our fears.  
We shall rise,  
Each day we can succeed  
And continue the fight.

### **Scattered Leaves**



a poetry collection  
by  
Jaclyn Abrahams

*"Pandemic" is one of the poems included in Jaclyn's new book of poetry, just published by One Thousand Trees. Available on Amazon soon!*



## **Pandemic Mamas** **Sabrina Rose (Catallo)**

It was the middle of the night in Autumn 2020 and I was feeding my newborn daughter Athena. As a new mom, even though I took online parenting classes, read many baby books and asked for a lot of advice from friends and family, I expected that there would be many firsts. What I didn't expect was being pregnant and undergoing an emergency c-section during a pandemic!

As I reflected on having had a decent pregnancy, followed by a surprise and stressful c-section, and then incision infection, I looked out the window. I saw tiny lights on in other homes and I wondered if other mamas were going through similar struggles and joys, as I was then. Were they also sleep deprived and up every two hours changing a diaper and breastfeeding or pumping for their little one? Did other mamas feel alone in their small bubble, wishing they had the support of others? Did these mamas feel they were missing out on play dates, baby groups and having visitors to their homes?

I am sure they felt so many emotions and I knew in my heart I wasn't alone. The idea of my first book was born that evening, and I knew there were some very important stories that needed to be told. *Pandemic Mamas: A Collection of Canadian Birth Stories from the Covid-19 Global Crisis* includes over 30 stories of mamas across Canada, each with a story so unique and incredible. If you are interested in pregnancy and birth stories, then this anthology is for

you! While we collectively all experienced struggles and frustrations, we all were grateful for our bundles of joy and found joy and hope through these precarious times. I feel honoured to share these stories through this collection and I hope you, dear reader, enjoy them as much as I do.



*"Pandemic Mamas" was just published by One Thousand Trees, and is now available on Amazon.*

\* \* \*

## **Your Heart** **Francine Houston**

**A**s I contemplate this month's prompt I recognize that I am not alone in the search for meaning and purpose in all that I have observed in my life, over the last 2 years, and most especially the events of the last several months in Europe, and I know that so many are struggling with finding Divine Purpose in all of this. I have also. I KNOW, without question, that moving forward, as the world shifts and changes, and as we RISE that this moment is but a heartbeat. That going forward, as we listen to the vibration that Divine is putting into the core of our

being, that if we listen, to the whispers that Divine puts in our hearts that things will change. I know that if we can listen to that whisper that we shall all rise.

*Listen to the Heart?*

*Listen to the Head?*

*Listen to the chorus of Voices?*

*Listen to the One Small Voice?*

*They all want their say.*

*One above the other, they strive to be heard.*

*The Heart wants its way.*

*The Head*

*sometimes misled by the Chorus of Voices,*

*More easily swayed.*

*The Small, quiet Voice,*

*Like the Heart,*

*It tells the story to the Self/Soul.*

*This is what we want,*

*This is the Way to go,*

*Follow Us, We know the Way,*

*We know the Truth.*

*And then the Head, the Chorus:*

*What do They know?*

*It is safer here.*

*Don't do that, or go that way*

*What makes you think you can?*

*What makes you think you are*

*"good enough"?*

*You'll NEVER be good enough*

*You can't make a living doing that.*

*Next, the Fear: the "What if?"*

*Maybe the Head and the Chorus are right?*

*Why try? I can't succeed at that....*

*Always, the Heart, and Small Voice whispers,*

*Even though they are faint, almost drowned.*

*Here, this is the Way,*

*this is the Way We are meant to be.*

*Letting go and moving in spite of fear*

*to allow the Small Voice/Heart to be strengthened*

*Like a wave, there is no more fear.*

*No more hesitation,  
Yes, you are there  
The Chorus/Head have been heard  
But They are no longer control what must be.*

*The road is open  
The way is clearer  
Follow the Call of the Small Voice/Heart  
And Becoming  
Wake up to be who you truly are.*

\* \* \*

## **Paper Dreams** **Brenda Cassidy**

Rudy's eyes were heavy as he slouched in the back seat. He stared at a dirty spot on his leg and forced himself to reach down and pull up his sock.

*I'm not in the mood for one of those bath lectures, he thought sulkily, pushing his short spikey blond hair back with his hand. I can't wait 'til I'm sixteen. Twelve years old should be old enough to stay home. Wish I was riding one of those mountain bikes right now. Other kids got bikes for passing. All I got was a hamburger and a drink from Shakey Burger. Get a paper route, she says. Yeah, sure. If I don't have a bike, how am I supposed to carry all those papers? They weigh a zillion pounds! I can just hear the guys. Rudy's a weakling! Rudy's a weakling! And people would get mad if I was late with their papers. Yeah, and it would take a zillion years to save for one of those bikes.*

Rudy was on his way to Churchill Park with his family. It had opened recently, just in time for summer holidays, and it was only a couple of miles from Rockford, where they lived.

"Are we here already?" asked Rudy's dark-haired little brother Billy, his head almost hitting the roof as he jumped up and down.

"Look at that beautiful windmill and waterfall," said Mrs. Fernley.

*Big wow, thought Rudy. I knew I should've brought my bike magazines.*

"Open those baby blues, Rudy," Mr. Fernley said over his shoulder as he and Mrs. Fernley got out of the car.

"Ouch! Get off my feet, Billy!" yelled Rudy as Billy scrambled over him. "Geesh, for a kid who's eight, you sure can be a little goober!"

"Never mind, boys," said Mrs. Fernley. "Rudy, you should have worn your other shorts and T-shirt. It's so hot today."

"I like these clothes. Skate rags are cool," Rudy said, referring to his multi-neon-coloured shirt and 3/4 length baggy pants. "Why couldn't I bring my skateboard?" he asked. "I wish Jason could've come." Rudy thought about his red-haired friend and smiled. Jason was out with his dad right now, buying a tent so that Jason and Rudy could have a sleep out that night.

Rudy's mom interrupted his thoughts. "You don't need your skateboard, Rudy. Look around you."

"Oh, well, I guess I could check it out," said Rudy. He didn't plan on sounding too enthused, but his eyes widened and a smile crept across his face. "Far out!" he exclaimed under his breath.

Everything looked as though it were placed on a green velvet carpet. There was a large pond where ducks, geese, and swans seemed to be swimming on glass. Weeping willows stretched their slender and flexible limbs downward over the water. Past the pond was a large animal compound, enclosed by a steel chain-link fence. A separate over-sized cage held some chicken-like birds that Rudy had never seen before. People were allowed to go inside the compound with the animals. Peacocks, roosters, and even deer would



come right up to them. You weren't allowed to feed them though. There were signs posted everywhere.

Rudy ran to catch up with Billy. He was playing on some climbing equipment that resembled a castle. There were a couple of secret doors, and curly slides waited on the other side of them. Rudy noticed something even more interesting.

"Look over there, Billy! Let's check it out!" Rudy yelled excitedly. Billy scrambled off of the climbing equipment, and they proceeded to run over to a climber that was thirty feet high and shaped like a rocket. There was a hole at the bottom, and a ladder leading up to each of the four levels of the rocket. On the top level, there was a look-out point and a pole for sliding back down. Rudy climbed all the way to the top.

"All right!" he yelled. "You can see the whole park from up here!" While Rudy was looking around, he caught sight of a man who was acting strangely over by the animal compound. The man kept stopping and looking over his shoulder. His clothing was ragged, and his fraying straw hat all but covered his face. Rudy watched as the man pulled a package out from under his shirt and stuffed it into a hole at the bottom of one of the trees. The man looked over his shoulder one more time and, after walking right by the rocket as Rudy quietly looked down at him, he then left the compound.

"That's one ugly, strange dude," Rudy said under his breath.

"Rudy, come down for lunch!" yelled Billy from below.

"Hold your horses!" Rudy called down. He couldn't take his eyes off the tree. His imagination started to run wild. *Wow! I wonder what he hid in there. Maybe it's money or some kind of treasure. Or maybe spy secrets! Hey, it might even be enough to buy a bike!*

At lunch, Rudy's cheeks were stuffed as he crammed the food in as fast as he could. Before he could finish, his father announced that they would have to leave earlier than they had planned.

"What?" Rudy managed to swallow his food, and asked, "Can't I just take one more look at the animals?"

"No, I'm sorry," Rudy's dad replied. "Something has come up, and I have to go in to work this afternoon."

"But there was this weird guy. He was hiding something," stammered Rudy.

"Uh huh," said Mr. Fernley. "You mind your own business and help carry some stuff to the car."

Rudy clenched and unclenched his fists all the way home. He had his hand on the door handle as the car pulled into the driveway. His body was one giant spring, coiled and waiting to be released.

"Five, four, three, two, one. Ignition off. "Bye! I'll call from Jason's!" Rudy's words trailed behind him as he bolted down the driveway.

"What's wrong with you?" Jason asked, as Rudy came bounding up the front steps. "You look like you're going to explode."

"Let's go see your tent," said Rudy, huffing and puffing. "I have to tell you something."

Later that evening, after all was set for the sleep out, Rudy checked out the tent window. "The lights are off; let's go for it!" Rudy said, feeling like lightning bolts were surging through his body.

"You'll have to ride my sister's bike," Jason said. "I'd let you ride my new one, but her bike is too small for me." Jason was a lot bigger, but he never teased Rudy about his small size, and Rudy appreciated his friend for that.

"Hey, who cares?" said Rudy. "I'll have my own bike soon."

After he and Jason had reached the park, Rudy led the way past the pond. An ominous black shape loomed out of the water, making a low droning sound. It took Rudy a few seconds to realize that it was only the windmill. He glanced quickly over his shoulder. The weeping willows were transformed into huge swaying blobs, straining to reach them with their tentacles.

Goosebumps crawled and spread up over Rudy's body. His scalp tingled. In the distance, an eerie noise broke the near silence. It seemed to scream, "Heeeelp! Heeeelp!" Rudy stopped near the animal compound.

"What was that weird sound?" Jason asked, looking around as he stopped his bike beside Rudy.

"Ah, it's okay," said Rudy, getting their flashlights out of his backpack. "It's just those weird chicken birds. Come on!" Rudy walked over to the trees and then stopped.

"What's wrong?" asked Jason.

"Well, this is where it should be, but there's no hole at the bottom of this tree." After a few minutes, Rudy had an idea. "I bet if I climbed up in the rocket, I could tell where it is. Come on," Rudy directed.

Once they were up at the top of the rocket, Rudy smiled. "I know where it is now," he said, his adrenaline building more and more.

"What's that over there?" Jason whispered, sounding spooked. "I thought I saw a light."

"What the heck!" Rudy exclaimed, his eyes widening. "It's a flashlight. Probably that guy back for his loot. No way, man! Come on, let's slide down the pole. It's faster." Rudy shot from the rocket like a bullet, with Jason close behind.

"There it is! There's the tree," Rudy said, trying to keep his voice down as he ran up to the tree. He reached inside and felt around. His fingers touched something. He grasped what felt like something rough, and he started to pull it out.

Rudy and Jason yelled in unison as their eyes were blinded by a glaring light.

"I'll take that," a stern voice said. "What are you boys doing here?"

With the light now out of his face, Rudy dared to look up. He took a deep breath and sighed with relief. It was only a park patrol officer. Rudy glanced over at Jason and could read the look on his face. "I know," Rudy said under his breath. "Me and my big ideas."

After the officer had listened to Rudy's explanation, he looked at the burlap wrapped package. "Sorry to disappoint you boys, but there's no treasure here. Just some tainted meat. Someone's been trying to poison the animals."

"Why would anyone want to do that?" Rudy asked, totally shocked since that was the last thing he had expected.

"Some people didn't approve of the park going in here," he answered. "Well, you boys better scoot on home, unless you want a ride back in the truck."

"Heck, no! I mean, no thanks," Rudy said, already on his bike. *We'd appreciate it*, Rudy thought to himself, *but Jason's parents wouldn't!*

For the next couple of days, Rudy moped around. When Billy tried to start a fight, Rudy walked away. When Jason came to call for him, Rudy said he was busy. Then, the next morning, there was a knock at the door. Rudy opened the door and took a step back.

"How are you Rudy?" You remember our little incident the other night?" asked the park patrol officer.

"Oh, uh, sure, that," Rudy said, stuffing his hands deep into his pockets and looking at the floor.

"Well, it seems we've caught our man, thanks to the description you gave me. And there just happens to be a \$1000 reward."

Rudy quickly looked up with bicycle wheels for eyes. He sensed rather than saw his mother coming up behind him, and he knew she'd be giving him that look. Rudy looked at his mom and then back at the officer. He stood there and thought for a moment. "No thanks. You can donate the money to the park. It's a great park. Besides, I'm getting a paper route, so I won't need the money," said Rudy, feeling great for the first time in three days.

"Well, that's very generous of you, Rudy. Your mom must be very proud of you. Maybe I'll see you again, during regular park hours, that is." The officer then turned to leave.

"Wait," said Rudy's mom. "Do you think it would be possible for Rudy to borrow a little of that reward money?" Maybe just enough for a mountain bike? He can pay it back with that paper route he's going to get."

Rudy's face lit up. He was smiling from the tip of his toes to the top of his head. "I'll be the best paperboy anybody ever had! Boy, wait 'til my friends see me. This summer's gonna be great after all! Thanks, Mister! Bye, Mom! I'm going to Jason's!" Rudy yelled over his shoulder as he ran past them out the door. "Love ya, Mom!"



## **Beautiful Disaster** **Krystal Gray**

I was born into a lovely nightmare  
Sadly, my story isn't rare;  
I was trapped in a parachute that took me high & low  
But I learned to go wherever the wind blows  
I've been in the heat of life's fire  
But I chose to be like the smoke and rise higher  
I let my past trauma fall to the wayside  
And I transformed into a beautiful butterfly  
Go on a quest to find that special key  
Because you'll need it to set your soul free  
One day this will lead you to true laughter  
That's why this is a beautiful disaster

**BEAUTIFUL  
DISASTER**



Krystal Gray

*"Beautiful Disaster" is one of the poems included in Krystal's new book of poetry, just published by One Thousand Trees. Available on Amazon soon!*

\* \* \*

## **April Showers Bring Spring Flowers** **Bill Brubacher**

**A**nd what else? Surely, it's a reminder of the immutable laws of nature moving through its perennial cycles.

Spring is one of the few predictable things we can generally look forward to happening naturally, without our interference, like day following night. It will shower its rainbows of colours and sweep sweet perfumes across our life landscape in the wake of bringing countless gardens into full bloom, while rivers reach their embracing banks and flow freely and full



again. A chorus of new song in flight will happily churn the air and charm our ears, and awaken our eyes to the glorious night sky that will glow radiant in jubilant celebration.

How compelling and reassuring, healing and renewing is that to our 'thirsty' soul, especially in such a fearful and uncertain time as this has been for all of us over the last few exhausting years?



Spring reminds us that nothing remains the same and two sides exist to everything. On the one side, we've endured months of bitter gusts of winter winds and blinding storms, and come April, find replaced with the spreading smiling face of a new season unfolding better times ahead. Our spirits are uplifted with longer light, as softer days shift us even farther toward the fulfillment of a hot lazy summer with new enticing memories to be made.

There's a good reason for opposites; otherwise, I believe, we could easily be completely captivated by the narrow view of what's only directly in front of us, rather than the actual changes already waiting for us just a short time ahead. What we think in the moment as total reality can easily be an illusion, a misconception – a trick perception by how we quickly interpret it. What a difference a momentary change in perspective and anticipation can make in how we live our lives and make our choices.

In my life, I can't count how many times, unexpected good things have come out of bad circumstances. This lesson continues to teach me,

even now as I grow older, that believing in change and opposites can make all the difference between what we think is – and what could be. And that difference could be as simple as waiting with a little patience and perseverance for things to change.

Things can change for the better, sometimes on their own accord, and sometimes with just a little belief in one's self and some positive effort on our part. All we need to do is change our perspective for a moment and see the potential miracles that can transform our lives. For example, remember what we are taught when our car is in a skid? We're told to simply change the direction of our eyes and our car will automatically respond to our body by turning the car to move in that new direction to safety. It's amazing, but TRUE! You can prove it at the wheel of your own car – or, far easier in life, by just being aware of how this fundamental 'law' works.

Change your perspective – change your life.

It really is that easy, and only depends on taking a moment to look around and to recognize the options in front of you. Without applying that simple technique, you can be locked into tunnel vision going only in one direction, thinking there's no other way.

Remember the Robert Frost poem "The Road Less Travelled"? If not, I would highly recommend looking it up when you have a moment.

Meanwhile, the change of seasons remains a dramatic and dynamic quarterly reminder to each of us, that *as with nature*, we, too, have the innate power to change. The seeming miracle of spring offers many spectacular and joyful possibilities to witness and enjoy; I invite you to experience the warm spring rain on your skin, the swift gentle winds in your hair and the warming sun on your face.

Feel - the new seeds of life stirring within you. It's quite possible you'll discover an assortment of hidden 'flowers' within your being that you may not have realized were there just waiting for your attention.

May the mystical message and meaning of spring take root in your heart and soul, and flourish abundantly year round! It's possible you know....

Happy spring!

\* \* \*

## **Bruce Trail, End to End (part 7)**

### ***Clay Williams***

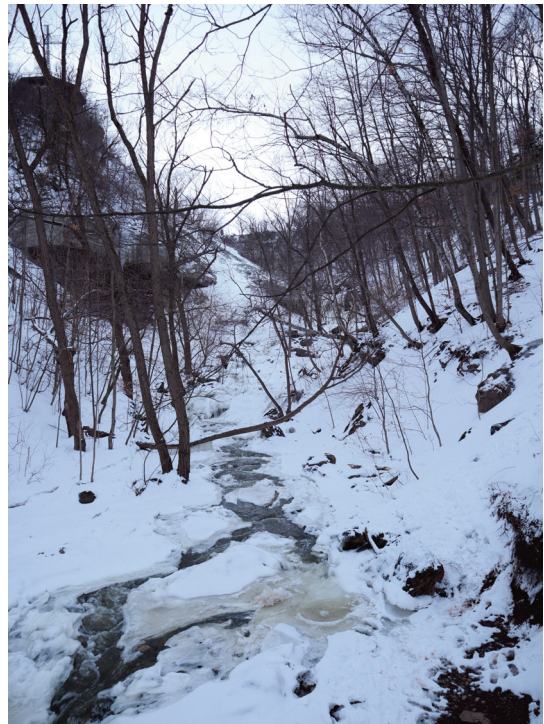
In early June 2021, my good friend Debbie and I decided that we would hike the full length of the Bruce Trail, all 800+ km, by doing day hikes on weekends throughout the coming year. This is the next chapter in our adventures on and off the trail.

On Days 11 through 15 we continued toward Niagara, looping westward and then southward around the top of Hamilton and then eastward through the city toward Beamsville.

Each day that I'm out I'm reminded how much of a blessing it is to be able to be outside, especially right now. The uncertain future caused by the pandemic, all of the resulting civil disobedience, political polarization, the ongoing deterioration of our climate and eventually the war in Ukraine has caused a prolonged state of stress, just a nagging anxiety that lingers around the base of my skull about the next few years of life when I should be looking forward to retirement. When we're out on the trail, we become very focused on staying safe, ensuring we have enough energy and strength to get back to the car. We have occasional short conversations about current affairs but I think we've both decided, without saying it, that we spend enough time with those thoughts and troubles at home, so we keep the mood on the trail positive.

I suppose that for many people the thought of hiking on a trail brings to mind a casual stroll along the paved waterfront path or a longer walk with a picnic lunch along a flat riverside rail trail. The Bruce Trail is

certainly neither of those. Most of the Bruce Trail is simply a marked way through the forest along the edge of the Niagara escarpment, criss-crossing from the top to the bottom of the cliffs and hills as it meanders southward. Every stream that flows down the escarpment has carved a little ravine or a huge valley over the centuries, so each stream crossing means a hike down one side of the valley and up the opposite side.



For most of the trail, grooming is done by the trampling action of people's feet, and where there is little traffic, the trail is less "groomed". In winter, the first hikers after a snowfall have to rely on the white blazes that are on occasional tree trunks and signposts to find the trail. It takes more than a little presence of mind to avoid turning an ankle or slipping down a steep slope while carrying a backpack with the supplies for the day and emergency gear and trying to maintain a reasonable pace.

The way that Deb and I first decided we were going to embark on this adventure was typical of the way each of us decides to run an ultra marathon. We heard stories from friends about their runs and hikes



on the Bruce Trail. We had a little of our own separate experience running and hiking on The Trail and we knew it was roughly 900 km long. We were chatting about it while hiking on our previous “big adventure,” the Maitland Trail, and I think one of us casually said: “Hey, maybe we should hike end-to-end on the Bruce Trail, that would be fun.”

Then the other of us said: “Yeah, let’s do it. We should be able to do it in a year, right?”

I’m not sure which of us said what, but I think we are both enablers. We’ve both been in extreme endurance events, and both know and enjoy the feeling of “victory” that we get after completing a difficult event. We also know the single minded focus that’s required in order to push our bodies near their limits.



One of the results of that focus is the exclusion of all of the other stress and worry in our lives. Considering all that has been going on, and continues to go on so close around all of us, those moments of single minded focus are very precious.

On Day 11, February 20th we hiked from Waterdown to the Dundas Valley Conservation Area. We were joined by Debbie’s friend Kristi. We kept up a really good pace as we cruised by a couple of waterfalls and up and down some long climbs. The trail crossed under Highway 6 in a tunnel. It’s called the swear tunnel because the walls are covered with profanity graffiti.



As we got close to our end point, we were at an intersection of trails and I was sure we had to go straight through, but Debbie said we needed to go left. We talked back and forth for a few minutes, and I was absolutely sure I was right so we went in my direction only to find out that I was dead wrong. I sheepishly turned around and went the way Debbie had said was right. As we were sitting in the car on the way back to our start point, Kristi asked: “Do you guys always fight at the end of a long hike?”

On Day 12, February 26th, we hiked into the City of Hamilton. There were two inches of fresh loose snow on top of a solid layer of ice, making the footing very treacherous. It felt like every step included a small slide in one direction or another, and it was exhausting. Even though we were wearing spikes, the layer of snow would not allow the spikes to bite into the ice, and we just slipped everywhere. There were a lot of downhill sections where we had to carefully



pick each step to avoid falling down the hill. At one point, we both just sat down on the slope and shimmied down to the bottom on our butts.



On Day 13, February 27th we continued eastward through Hamilton toward Grimsby. The snow had packed down to the ice, and the footing was MUCH better than the previous day, we were able to maintain a really good pace. At one point we were within a couple hundred metres of a beautiful geological feature dubbed “The Devil’s Punchbowl”, but we didn’t know how close we were, and missed it. Most of the day was spent trekking along the top of the escarpment, looking toward Lake Ontario.



On Day 14, March 5th, we were in an area with a fair amount of regular foot traffic, so the trail was well packed and in excellent condition. We were able to keep up a good solid pace, and the spring-like temperature of the day kept us comfortably warm. When we reached the end, we had prearranged with our friend Andrea, who lives nearby, to give us a ride back to our car at the start point, but not before stopping in at her place in Grimsby for a dip in her

swim spa. What a great end to a vigorous day of hiking. We were also in a pretty good mood because we had finished the second of the nine Bruce Trail Sections, and would be getting a badge for our efforts. In our case, we did all of the hiking on this section, the Iroquois Section, in winter, so we got the Winter End-to-End badge. (Badge Photo)



Day 15, March 6th was a really warm and windy day. I saw in the weather forecast that the temperature was going to get into the double digits, so I wore very light clothes, and two windbreakers. I thought it was going to be a nice day on easy trails, but the trail conditions were terrible. The snow was very soft, then eventually as the day progressed there was a lot of mud, and it seemed that every second or third step included a sideways slip. The wind was so strong that when we approached the top of the escarpment I was concerned that the wind was going to start blowing trees over onto us. We came to a spot where I could see the road that was our finish point for the day, only a few hundred metres away, but those last few hundred metres were the toughest part of the day, with the deepest snow and slippery little inclines. Once again we were reminded that the Bruce Trail demands respect.

By the time we finished and were headed home in the car, the Burlington Skyway was closed due to high winds and we had to take back roads to get to Hwy 403 to take us home.

\* \* \*

## **Intruders of the Night** **Brenda Cassidy**

Intrusive, unwanted thoughts;  
Your heart races and your stomach tries to keep up.  
Push them down, push them out;  
They are relentless and stubborn and fight to survive,  
There in that secret place in which they hide.

\* \* \*

## **A Little Lightfoot Lie** **Marilyn Helmer**

**T**he phone rang at 7 a.m. “You’re not going to believe this!” Trish screeched in my ear. “You know that sound guy I’ve been dating? He got me two tickets to the Gordon Lightfoot Concert at Massy Hall!”

“Seriously?” I gasped.

“You haven’t heard the best part,” Trish hurried on. “The seats are two rows from the front and that’s not all. I got backstage passes. We are actually going to get to meet Gordon Lightfoot!”

At this point I literally fell into the chair. Trish and I are huge Gordon Lightfoot fans. We’d been to his concerts before but never that close and never with backstage passes.

“It’s a week from tomorrow. Put the date on your calendar with a big red circle around it. I’ll pick you up at 5. Are we going to have a blast!” Click. Trish hung up.

My eyes went to my wall calendar. Next Tuesday I had to take my mom to Toronto to see Dr. Jaydon, an arthritis specialist. Thursday evening I’d promised my sister-in-law Sylvia that I’d look after a booth at her fundraiser for the new hospital. Okay – today was Thursday. A week from tomorrow was Friday. There

was nothing on the calendar for that day. Perfect! I grabbed my red marker and drew a red heart around Friday evening with the initials G.L. in the centre. Over the next three days, my mind was a whirl with thoughts of the concert and meeting Gordon Lightfoot.

On Monday morning the phone rang. It was Dr. Jaydon’s office, calling to ask if they could postpone my mom’s appointment until Tuesday of the following week. I checked my calendar, I had nothing on that day, so I agreed. We’d already waited months for this appointment. Another week wouldn’t hurt.

I was about to make the change on the calendar when the phone rang again. It was Trish. “Marilyn, I’m going to pick you up at 4 o’clock instead of 5 on Thursday. You know what the traffic is like driving into Toronto. And we don’t want to be late for the concert!”

“That’s fine with me timewise,” I said. “But the Gordon Lightfoot concert is Friday evening, not Thursday evening.”

“No, it isn’t,” Trish said. “Our tickets are for Thursday evening. Definitely. I’m looking at them right now. Thursday the 14<sup>th</sup> like I told you.”

“No, when you called me last Thursday, you told me the concert was a week from tomorrow. That makes it this Friday evening.”

“Oh, sorry,” Trish said. “I guess I was so excited I gave you the wrong day. But that’s not a problem, right?”

“It is a problem, Trish. I promised my sister-in-law that I’d look after a booth at her fundraiser for the new hospital on Thursday.”

“You have to fix that,” Trish said. “It’s not like you’re going to get another chance at second row tickets and back stage passes to a Gordon Lightfoot

concert again. Oops, someone's at the door. Gotta go. Just fix this." She hung up.

How? How was I going to fix this? As I picked up the pen to write the new date with my mom's arthritis specialist on the calendar, an idea hit me. A devious idea. I couldn't do it, could I? But I couldn't give up a Gordon Lightfoot concert with backstage passes. Before my guilty conscience completely took over, I called my sister-in-law.

"Sylvia, I'm going to have to back out of helping out on Thursday afternoon," I babbled out the words as quickly as I could. "Remember, I told you about that arthritis specialist in Toronto that my mom finally got an appointment with?"

"Yes, you said your mom's doctor's appointment is on Tuesday," Sylvia jumped in. "That's tomorrow. The hospital fundraiser isn't until Thursday."

"Ah, well, that's the problem. The doctor's office just called." *The truth.* "They want to switch the appointment to Thursday." *The lie.* "Sylvia, we've waited two months to get this appointment and mom's in a lot of pain." *The truth.* "We'd have to wait another six weeks to get an appointment if I don't take the one on Thursday." *A possible lie.*

Silence, then, "Okay, I know you have to do this. I know your mom needs to see the specialist." I heard Sylvia sigh. "Don't worry. Hopefully I'll be able to find someone else to take over."

For the rest of the week, my mood alternated between euphoria and guilt. Thursday evening finally arrived. Despite twinges of guilt, the concert and meeting Gordon Lightfoot in person was everything Trish and I had hoped for.

The next day Sylvia called. "So ... how did you make out with your Mom's appointment?"

"Unh, f-fine," I said.

There was a pause. Then, "I saw you last night. On TV."

"You saw me? On TV? But..."

"When I got home from the fundraiser," Sylvia cut in, "I turned on the news. They mentioned the Gordon Lightfoot concert, about him being a Canadian icon and how he's still so popular after all these years."

I was too stunned to speak.

"Guess you didn't see the TV cameras there, did you? But they saw you, and Trish, in line with all those other lucky fans waiting to meet Gordon Lightfoot."

My heart sank to my toes as the reality of my lie descended on me like a tonne of bricks.

"Sylvia, I am so sorry," I stammered. "I just..."

"Why did you lie?" Sylvia jumped in. "All you had to do was tell me the truth. I would have understood."

"I didn't want to let you down." The words were out of my mouth before I realized how ridiculous they sounded.

"But you did let me down," Sylvia snapped. "You lied to me."

"I am so sorry," I repeated. "Will you ever forgive me?"

A couple of moments of tense silence followed. Then, "Maybe," Sylvia dragged out the word. "They also mentioned on TV that Gordon Lightfoot will be playing in Hamilton next month. A ticket to that concert might go a long way to helping me forgive you."

"Done!" I said, delighted to agree.

"And I'd be even more forgiving if you can get backstage passes," Sylvia added.

"I'll do my best," I promised.

As soon as I got off the phone, I went online and ordered the best tickets available, without a second thought to the price.

Unfortunately, the backstage passes didn't happen. By the time the concert arrived, Trish had broken up with the sound guy. But I made up for it by taking Sylvia out to dinner beforehand at Lorenzo's, the best Italian restaurant in Hamilton, and treating her to a glass of wine at Intermission.

As we drove home afterward, Sylvia said, "Best evening ever, Marilyn. Thanks a bunch."

"You forgive me?" I asked.

"I forgive you," she said. She smiled. "But I hope you've learned your lesson. From now on, tell the truth. No more lies."

I nodded in agreement. Telling lies gets way too complicated, not to mention expensive. And so, for the sake of truth, I have to tell you that this whole story is a little Lightfoot lie.



\* \* \*

**STAY WELL  
STAY HAPPY  
KEEP WRITING!**

**Deadline for submissions for May is  
Friday, April 22.**

**Here's a quote to inspire you ...**

***"As a writer, you try to listen to what others aren't saying ...  
and write about the silence."***

**— N.R. Heart**



## **This Month's Contributors**

### **Jaclyn Abrahams**

Jaclyn has been writing poetry since her teens, about her experiences in life and places she has seen. This volume contains a cross-section of life, the good and not so good, the exciting, the troubling, joyful and rewarding. Jaclyn's hope is that you look at our world from another point of view, and reflect on what is the same for all of us, and what differences we see. Currently, she is a stay-at-home mother of one. She has an interest in vintage and antique household articles, adores many genres of music, and is passionate about art & photography as well as various kinds of crafts, cooking and baking. She has enjoyed travelling wherever she could, pre-covid.

### **Joan Almond**

Joan is a Canadian writer and self-taught photographer. Mentored by Dan Needles and Joe Kertes, she has been encouraged to follow the "heart" in her writing. Most recently, the author's short stories are published in *Our Canada*. A third publication in the October/November edition of the national magazine will show case her Children's writing. A proud supporter of the Canadian Society of Children's Authors, illustrators, and Performers, Joan's great joy is reading Canadian children's literature. Joan is thankful to award-winning author Marilyn Helmer, who encouraged her to submit her story to this anthology. The author extends gratitude to Lisa Browning who first gave her a voice in February of 2019, in the online publication known as *One Thousand Trees*.

### **Bill Brubacher**

Bill is a long-time resident of the Region of Waterloo, a former successful business entrepreneur and an internationally published author of 15 national bestselling books. He is a Certified Bereavement Specialist, and a Certified Conflict Coach/ Elder Mediator, helping seniors and their families through difficult time through Caregivers Oasis, Pathfinder Canada, and Heart and Soul Bereavement for Seniors. Bill has recently authored a new book about his amazing life's journey. His book, *Against the Odds*, is a ten-year testament to his incredible emotional, spiritual and mental tenacity as he fought to reinvent himself after experiencing tremendous loss. His model and message are an inspiration to all who struggle to survive in the face of defeat. His latest book, *The Secret Pond*, is a classic love story fantasy about the shared journey of a young boy and an unusual stranger finding healing from grief and loss at a mystical pond in the midst of an ancient magical forest. For more information about his books go to <https://legacypress.ca/> or contact Bill at [billbrubacher@gmail.com](mailto:billbrubacher@gmail.com).

### **Brenda Cassidy**

Brenda has written two children's books, *Who Needs Little Brothers Anyway?* and *Who Needs Little Sisters Anyway?* In addition to writing for children, she is also interested in writing about her spiritual journey, and hopes to achieve this in the future. In the meantime, Brenda also enjoys writing short poems and her own personal musings.

### **Karen Eckert**

Karen taught English and French for 30 years and is now retired and living in the east end of the beach in Toronto. She has dabbled in various arts over the years and now offers Craft classes to all and sundry. She has written children's stories and is currently working on a bitter-sweet, semi-graphic novel based on journals she kept during her twenties. She has three sons.

### **Colleen Heighington**

Colleen is happily married to a wonderful husband named Ken. They have been blessed with three beautiful children, and four terrific grandsons. She enjoys reading, writing stories and poetry, and she keeps fit by walking 3 to 4 kilometres every day. Her summers are spent at their trailer in Orillia, and she really enjoys the time she spends with family and friends. She has been a volunteer with Hospice Wellington since 2015.

### **Krystal Gray**

Krystal is an aspiring E.C.E and published author. She has been writing stories and poems since childhood as an outlet for her mental health struggles which sparked her desire to become an author in hopes of helping people feel they are not alone in their trials. In May 2018 she achieved this goal by self publishing her first book, *Lovely Nightmare*, which can be purchased on Amazon. She is passionate about mental health and believes everyone deserves help and treatment despite income or social standing. She also strongly believes that no one should suffer alone so she also created an Instagram and tiktok account where she tries to bring light, hope and tips to her followers. You can follow her @the.everyday.warrior on tiktok and @k.r.y.s.t.a.l\_g.r.a.y on Instagram. Her other interests lie in creative venues such as drawing, painting, scrapbooking, photography along with some active pursuits such as swimming and cycling. Krystal is currently working on her second poetry book, *Beautiful Disaster*, which is a continuation of her debut poetry book, *Lovely Nightmare*.

### **Marilyn Helmer**

Marilyn is the award-winning author of many children's books including picture books, early chapters, retold fairy tales, riddle books and novels. Her short stories, poetry and articles have appeared in numerous children's magazines and anthologies in Canada and the United States and her penchant for entering writing contests has resulted in success with short adult fiction as well. Marilyn has just published a collection of her short adult fiction called "Birdsong on a Summer Evening" with One Thousand Trees Publishing. Visit her website at [www.marilynhelmer.com](http://www.marilynhelmer.com).

### **Francine Houston**

Francine is an animal lover, transformational intuitive, and full-time creator. She spends her time writing, doing fibre arts, and supporting individuals in telling their personal stories.

### **Sabrina Rose (Catallo)**

Sabrina is an educator, and taught in South Korea and China for five and a half years. After returning to her hometown of Guelph, Ontario she continued to teach. She lives with her husband Damon, their toddler Athena and two cats, Lexi and Bib. During her maternity leave Sabrina created her business, Magical Modern Mama, which was born from a lifelong passion of magic, healing and divination. When not spending time with her family and friends, Sabrina enjoys most things paranormal, diamond art, traveling, reading, cooking and improving her craft.

### **Clay Williams**

Clay is a 61-year-old Manitoba-born father of two living in Elmira Ontario with his wife of 40 years. He manages the Engineering Department of a manufacturing company in Kitchener and has worked in Northern Ontario, Germany and South Carolina. Clay is an avid distance runner, having run dozens of marathons and longer runs, and creator of the Canal Pursuit for Mental Health, a 785 km run along two of Canada's longest canals as well as The Monarch Ultra, a 4300 km run following the migration path of Monarch Butterflies.