

# Musings of Brescia

Fall 2013 Edition

**Editor-in-Chief**

Alicia Moore

**Editor**

Shelly Harder



## Contents

Jessica Jackson

**The Castaway**.....2

Christopher Beaulieu

**Locomotion**.....5

Lisa Kovac

**Liminal Space**.....6

Christina Wiendels

**Do You Remember?**.....10

Jessica Jackson

**Woodland Ascension**.....14

Michelle Wildfong

**Mirage**.....15

## Contact Us

[thewritersofnee@gmail.com](mailto:thewritersofnee@gmail.com)

[musings.bresciablog.com](http://musings.bresciablog.com)

## The Castaway

By Jessica Jackson

The best thing my mother ever did for me was to thrust a scraggly panda in my face. She was determined to buy me something. I was 7 years old and loved yard sales. But today, I stood amongst rows of picnic tables, and felt as though I would rather be at home reading. I stared back at my mother's find unimpressed. She dropped the panda back into the cardboard box, as if to proclaim, "Well, I give up!" She then wandered off towards a table lined with sunglasses and serving trays. I found myself standing alone, shifting my weight from one foot to another. Eventually, I amused myself by picking up the panda bear, rousing him from a nap. I held him up by one gangly, black arm. His marble brown eyes were shiny, expressive and imploring. Brown eyes peering into green eyes. Shrugging, I tucked him underneath my arm. I fished around in my jacket pocket for a quarter.

This bear would find himself tucked underneath my arm for many years to come. After a couple of names, I finally settled on the name "TJ." Aside from my twin sister, TJ was my companion. I remember propping him up on the couch beside me and settling in to watch Saturday morning cartoons. I would snuggle up beside him and slide a Pop-tart out of its wrapper.

It had always occurred to me that TJ could fall apart at any moment. His arms were already feeling a bit loose on that first day we met, when I scooped him out of the cardboard box. I imagined TJ in his previous life. I envisioned a freckly girl swinging him around in games of ring-around-the-rosy. She probably loved his big black nose, just like I did. I was happy to be his new owner and strived to take good care of him. I would inspect his curly fur every so often. Sitting on my bed with one leg dangling, I would discover bare, white patches where black fuzz

was supposed to be. If I continued to run my hands along his fur, my index finger would find least one small hole. I smiled light-heartedly. I did not care if TJ was holey or raggedy. This bear enjoyed life. As I clutched him tightly, I would glance over at one of my mother's porcelain dolls and shudder. The doll stood straight with artificially wavy hair, a perfectly pressed dress, and cold white hands. "What a boring life," I would sigh, before digging into my dresser drawer and searching for my sewing kit.

My mother warned me that TJ was getting older and floppier, so I tried to strike a balance. I would take him everywhere with me only half the time. I vowed to take even better care of him now that he had entered into his golden years. I lined a deep dresser drawer with a blanket and gently laid TJ across its cotton folds. Enticed by the aroma of hamburger cooking on the stove, I slowly shut the drawer and wandered out of my bedroom,

But I missed TJ. I would take every opportunity to pull that drawer open a tiny crack. I would open it just enough to catch a glimpse of his chocolate eyes. Then I would push the drawer shut. Its muffled thud resounded with sadness, with longing for more time. The visitations were too formal, and I missed his companionship.

Eventually, I rationalized my desire to free TJ from his resting spot. I threw open the drawer with a celebratory flourish and yanked him off the matted blanket. I would just be careful with him, that's all. From that day forward, TJ and I were back together. He slept in my bed, tagged along when I had to go to my brother's boy scout events, and cuddled with me during episodes of "Darkwing Duck."

Once again, TJ was the muse for my drawings. Looking back and forth between a blank page and the glossy photograph of a library book, I carefully sketched the outline of a panda bear. The panda was stretched out across a thick, knobby branch. One arm hugged the branch

with natural precision, while the other paw, dripping with golden, gooey honey, was headed for his mouth. I imagined that TJ would be in great company with this cub.

TJ continued to be a constant presence in my life. While resting on my pillow, he silently watched me grow up, his eyes gleaming with curiosity. Today, TJ is just as cuddly, handsome and raggedy as ever. And he still sits on my pillow. Sometimes people come into our lives right when we need them the most. We did not even feel their absence before we met them. We didn't know what we were missing. Sometimes the people that come into our lives are not people at all. They may have been someone else's castaway: an old panda bear buried in a box sitting on someone's front lawn.

## **Locomotion**

By Christopher Beaulieu

What time is it?  
It is time,  
But I do not want it.  
I want time separate.  
I want the time we met in Spain.

*Grey matter takes black ink*  
And prints my hollow invitation.

*What does it take*  
To see the light of a train in the fog?  
A hazy golden orb hovering through the gray.  
Memory—an unremitting track of thoughts;  
Meditations migrating over and back.  
Uniform.  
Addictive.

*Take me farther*  
To the mountain's peak, up the funicular  
Of formulaic, intricate fantasies  
Pulled askew along one's cleverness, free from  
The gaze of falling riders  
In the counterbalance car.

*It takes focus, not memory*  
To combat the desire of self-sustained loco motion  
That begs to be beyond the mind and go  
Farther.  
Too far.

*Why can't you take me back*  
To the point of no return once  
Horizontal becomes vertical motion?  
Cables struggle to hoist the weight—  
Before I have time to step off  
The elevator plummets.

## **Liminal Space**

By Lisa Kovac

“Your turn,” called Angie, letting the screen door slam shut as she went briskly through the yard, which would be a landscape of leaves in a few months. As she passed the glass patio table she dropped the booklet she’d been carrying; it landed on top of the sketch Annabella had been working on. Annabella glanced up in accustomed, resigned tolerance and opened her mouth to thank her twin, but Angie had already gone through the gate and up the path at the side of the house, her speed and grace increasing together. Annabella wished, since the half-formed idea for her latest attempt at drawing had run away from her when the booklet had fallen on it, that she could sketch Angie running. She’d never managed it, although she’d had plenty of opportunity. Angie ran at all times and in all seasons. Running was her love, her escape, her gateway to thought, and her coping mechanism. She was always moving. She was always missing things because she never stopped to look at them. But by the same logic, Annabella supposed, she, in her quest to stay still and catch pieces of time and space, was missing all the moments Angie found in motion.

Today wasn’t turning out to be a good sketching day, Annabella decided as she put her just-for-drawing pencil away and brought out her everything-else pencil instead. She’d better have another look at the course calendar booklet, since Angie, who’d neglected to acquire her own copy, wasn’t using this one at the moment but could be counted upon to disfigure it in some ostensibly accidental manner in the near future. She had probably gone running this time to avoid looking at it and to plan how to circumvent it permanently. Annabella inwardly wished her luck but doubted she’d succeed. Her dream of a university course wasn’t likely to materialize this year or any other. Angie wanted courses like Enchantment 1020, Potion-Brewing: Theory

and Practice, and Modern Methods in Conjuring. She wanted to be on a broomstick-racing or long-distance flying team, wanted to go with her literature class to a play where all the special effects were real. Such a program was possible for many people, but not for the daughters of Bridget Radley.

“Magical society doesn’t have any record of you,” their mother had argued countless times in the last year whenever Angie had raised the subject of registering in a magical course of study. “You can’t take mage-restricted courses unless you can prove you are one.”

“Would that be such a bad thing?” had been Angie’s typical counter-argument. “I just show them my wand and explain I went to unmage school with magic lessons after. What’s their problem with that?”

“Mages,” said Mom slowly, “can be very closed-minded. They like to keep to their own kind, so there’s not much room for unusual circumstances. Haven’t we been over this enough?”

They had, as far as Annabella was concerned. They had talked endless circles around the story of Mom’s ostensibly idyllic childhood and her years at Rhyndale Magical high school; of the night she’d been bitten by a werewolf and the subsequent isolation of being thought unclean; of her eventual decision to integrate with the unimages for whom her uncleanness, like all aspects of her other life, could only be a myth; and of the realization that her children, raised among their father’s people and afflicted like their mother, could never fully claim the standing which ought to be theirs through the power she had also bequeathed to them.

“You convinced the unimages you were an unmage,” Angie would point out, having decided that Mom’s closure to the discussion was premature. “Why can’t I do it the other way?”

There had been no straightforward answer to that question. The two of them, so alike in their devotion to opposing tactics, went over the ground again, one a perpetual optimist bent on

the practical application of her ideals, the other defending the satisfaction gained from abandoning the people who had abandoned her. Annabella left them alone to renegotiate their frequently reinstated truce. She wouldn't dismiss a magical course or two if she was given the opportunity, but she wondered whether such a chance would be worth the complications involved in obtaining it. For now, the magical lessons she received, from her aunt and from others who stood on the edges of magical society for reasons of their own, were enough. She was, she thought as she opened the course calendar of her local unmage university, in a position whose uniqueness Mom and Angie had never taken the time to realize. The powers and the skills, the forms of thought and action of two worlds were open to her. While neither way of life took the other seriously, she had both cultures at her fingertips, could interpret each through the lens of the other, and could take from each what she willed. How many other people in the world could say the same?

As she sat and turned the pages of the calendar, she watched the fascinating possibilities of her future flip past. There were courses on literature from the middle ages to the present, in her own language and in other languages that she could learn to speak; courses about the history of this country from its founding until now and the histories of other countries over the border or across the ocean; courses about her own faith, the faiths of others, and how they were both interwoven and in conflict; courses about every aspect of the human mind and of societies and cultures past and present; and courses in the history and making of music, writing, and art.

She could only take five of them. Later, she would only be able to go on in two, or perhaps three, areas of interest, and she could never learn everything there was to know about those disciplines. And that was only the unmage perspective. How much more information was in the magical library? She could have Aunt Carrie look up books on magical history, literature,

art, psychology, religion, and all the other disciplines she had glimpsed but could not now remember. There were endless facts to find out, endless thoughts to think, endless avenues of former thought to follow. If she could follow enough of them, she might at last understand people like her own mother and sister and interpret them for one another. Both cultures could live together in her and each could illuminate the other. If she could use the knowledge of her father's world to learn why her mother's people had cast her out, perhaps later generations with backgrounds and yearnings like her sister's would no longer be deprived of half their heritage.

How she could obtain such extensive expertise under the restraint of five courses per year, how she could use her knowledge after she'd gained it, how she was going to alter an alien culture according to the values of a separate society, she didn't know yet. Perhaps one of these courses would tell her. Perhaps she'd have to look somewhere else for the answer, but she could learn how to look. She would learn how to learn.

Here was Angie coming back over the path and through the gate. Had she been gone for minutes or for hours? Neither of them would be able to tell.

"You getting anything out of that?" Angie asked dubiously.

"Nothing you'd like much," said Annabella. "But there's some stuff in here that could be pretty magical, if we stay still long enough to see it and then chase after it."

## **Do You Remember?**

By Christina Wiendels

A series of intricate snowflakes danced through the cool morning air, twisting and twirling as they descended to the freshly sheeted walkways. The wind tickled my cheeks as it tousled my brown hair. Clutching a large blood-red box under my arm, I trudged through the enveloping snow. My arm hugged the box against my side and a small but hopeful smile turned up my lips.

For a few minutes, all I could hear was the soft crunch of snow breaking beneath the soles of my torn sneakers. I shivered under my jacket even though my response had nothing to do with the cold, or the wind that had suddenly begun to claw at my face. Still, I hastened forward, my tears stilled. Blood pounded in my ears, my heart twisting as I paused before a familiar tall gray building. It was both threatening and imposing. My body was already turning away and urging me to run, to do anything other than stay. Only this was a journey I had to make.

I felt as though I was treading quicksand. The further I went, the lesser the chance I'd ever have of coming back. Somehow I made it to the door, my fingers closing around the brass handle. I stepped inside, my fears disappearing with my shadow, once reflected in the sparkling snow.

Sounds, sights and feelings crowded in around me and set my head whirling. A man brushed past me, his long white coat causing me to stumble back as I struggled to control my vocal chords and speak. My throat was parched though, and my eyes were wide with excitement and horror. By the time I had regained some composure, I was tempted to walk out the way I'd came. Only it was too late for that now. Forcing myself forward, I came to face a young blond girl perched behind a desk. Wetting my lips, I asked her the question that had been sewed into the back of my mind. I imagined stitches along my head popping loose, everything on the inside held wide open. I'd promised myself I would never reveal this part of me: my weakness, distress, and loneliness. I couldn't bear the temptation any longer. I needed the truth.

The girl nodded to a door on the right, her gaze gentle with kindness. I gave her a hesitant smile, which felt dead to me. I turned, my eyes resting on a crimson door. Everything stilled as my frenzied heart killed all other sound. The people seemed to merge together into black shapes. Almost by an invisible thread, my feet carried me forward of their own command. The box under my right arm seemed to burn through my jacket and right to my skin. Thankfully, the door was already open. Stopping short of the gaping hole, I sucked in a breath and made the final step.

The sight of pale white walls made me cringe, but I turned my head nonetheless. I'll never know how I gained the strength to do so. What I saw shocked me, and yet, my reaction was so different than I had ever imagined it to be.

I was calm. I didn't bolt out of the room or shriek. Maybe I had come to accept the truth long ago without realizing it or possibly it was simply the sheer happiness of discovering that she was alive. I could barely convince myself that she was real. Two feet poked out from under the sheet. But I had to touch her to truly believe. Some part of me only wanted to look. If I dared to touch, she might disappear. I had loved this girl. I still did. She was so beautiful even in the sleep that was stealing her away from me and all the people who loved her. She was the same as I remembered, with soft brown hair curling around her shoulders, curling slightly at the tips; a small face with pale, soft cheeks; and slightly pursed lips. Before I could stop myself, I found the backs of my fingertips against her cheek. My hands were frozen from the winter air and her skin warmed mine with a faint glow of life. I'd wanted to cry for so long, to release my feelings and forget, but now I cried because I was remembering: the way she had stood, poised with confidence; the words she'd spoken like music; the size of her heart which had always seemed too grand for such a petite body.

"I brought you something," I whispered, my hands strangely relaxed as they gripped the heart-shaped box. Her eyes remained closed, her face almost molded into a single expression of emptiness. Only, she was still in there. I had to find a way back home to her. Lifting her left arm, I traced her forefinger over the heart-shaped box. "Rosie, this is for you. It reminds me so much of us . . . Do you remember when we used to buy those sweets from Walker's General Store? I always bought chocolate,

but you always liked those crazy cinnamon hearts that they brought out in February. Remember when you used to dare me to eat the whole box at once?” I asked. She remained still. I kept speaking. “We were just kids then . . . So long ago, but it seems like yesterday.”

I turned her hand over in mine, palm facing upwards. Tracing circles along it, I asked, “Remember when we were going to get married? You wanted kids, but I didn’t. I didn’t want to share you with anyone, but now . . . I know that I would say yes. They would look like you.” I paused, my eyes on her closed ones. Taking a deep, shuddering breath, I added, “I don’t know why I brought this box. I guess I thought the scent would wake you up, that possibly we could just open it and eat together, like old times . . . It was stupid. You were always the stronger one. It shouldn’t be like this. I always stand back and let the world pass me by, but you live every moment without stopping to blink. I wish that it was me instead of you . . . When I first heard you were in a coma, I didn’t believe it. I couldn’t. Not when the night after we’d been discussing marriage. And now I realize that I’ve just wasted a year that we could have been together.” I struggled, choking and stumbling over my words.

Bowing my head, I whispered, “I gave up. I didn’t want to try. You have to know that it was because I was afraid of failing you. I walked away because I was fearful of what had happened to you. It was wrong. I won’t ever leave you now . . . I love you.” I waited as though for some kind of response: the flicker of an eyelash, the twitch of a fingertip. Nothing came. I refused to lie to myself. She would never speak again. It had been too long.

Easing myself onto the bed beside her, I lifted the lid off the candy box to reveal a pile of cinnamon hearts. A ghost of a smile brushed against my lips. I could never quite understand how one object could wrap up so many memories. “Here,” I told her. I placed a small heart into her palm, closing her slender fingers over it. “I’d give anything for you to sit and laugh with me again – even if it was just once. I love you, Rosie, and I will forever. I promise.” There were so many words that I could use, but nothing would be able to express what I felt. She deserved so much. I wanted to give her the world, the stars, the sun and the moon – all of it. Everything there was to give. But more than it all, I wanted to hold her in my arms.

After a few moments of silence, I leaned forward ever so gently, my arms tucking under her. As I approached, her familiar scent tickled my nose, and my fingers stroked her silky hair. “Please, wake, Rosie,” I begged. Tears streamed down my cheeks. She had to come back to me. She had to. My hand cupped her face, my mouth finding hers for a split instant, where I sobbed. My body spasmed against her, my breath ragged. I tilted my head, my mouth just a breath away from her ear. “Wake up, my love.”

I must have fallen asleep in her bed, sprawled out beside her and holding her hand. When I awoke, I found the room much darker than before. Her hand was still in mine. It took me several moments before I realized that *she* was holding my hand. “Rosie?” I asked. Wiggling my fingers, I found my hand trapped in hers. Excitement fluttered through me, my heart thudding. I leaned gently to place my other hand at her heart. The rapid pulse sent my eyes wide with wonder. “Can you hear me?” I felt a slight pressure in my palm. “Open your eyes.” I could feel my body trembling, my heart leaping as if on fire. Her eyes crinkled ever so slightly, the lids opening like delicate petals to invite the first warmth of spring. Large, sparkling, green eyes glanced up at in me in amazement. “Rosie, it’s me.” She smiled. Joy consumed me as I brought her close and kissed her forehead. “Happy Valentine’s Day.”

## Woodland Ascension

By Jessica Jackson

An auburn fox in the distance  
leaps through towering strands of grass;  
he pauses, he notices me  
he play-bows and I run to him.

Together we twirl, we crawl  
we make snow angels in a yellow patch of grass;  
the fox jumps to his feet, and I chase him up a tree:  
gripping knobby branches, scraping our knees  
brushing our hands against a bird's nest—  
we reach the top.

The foxes dollar-sized gaze  
tells me what to do.  
I hurl into the air self-doubt, unkind words, insecurities;  
I watch them spiral downwards, winged sycamore seeds  
I used to call helicopters.  
The fox watches them descend with his ears perked-  
whiskers twitching, he looks at me and says,  
“My dear, you've arrived.”

## Mirage

By Michelle Wildfong

I run my hand along the surface of the rock. It is smooth and cool from the shadow of the huge willow tree. Its branches extend over the grass where the limbs tickle the tips of the lawn and water ripples with each caress of a swaying bough. The water's current creates little splashes against my small island of stone. The droplets land on my emerald tail, which rests in the fresh stream. I watch the river's secrets – the small minnows that dart among the seaweed; the lone lilac petals that walk along the surface; the croaking frogs along the shore; the sunbathing turtles that share my ease.

Tiny, vibrant daffodils speckle the shore with mini, colourful mushrooms. My gaze tracks the beach to the left. I hear pounding before I see the waterfall rapidly tumble out of the mountain. A rainbow appears sparkling through the mist of fallen beads.

My head turns to the mountains which stretch the expanse of the horizon and lead to the hills that roll towards the river. A sparse forest scatters the landscape and hides the castle in the distance on the right. Its tall towers reach over the old trees and into the clouds where the tiers are hidden in white. A cry reverberates through the air, and I spot an eagle soaring from the castle into the unknown.

My hair is pulled as the stems of the willow twist into my strands. The delicate blossoms on the twigs dangle above my head. The sweet aroma of nectar fills my nostrils, and I breathe a heavy sigh. Humming rings in my ears as bees flutter over the lilacs. The insistent bustle lulls me into a trance. I let the warmth of the red sun beat down on my face while I listen to the gold finches chirp, the bees sing, the water splash. A new noise enters this music. Quick, heavy thuds echo in my head. I open my eyes to see a sleek,

white horse trot towards me. It has a black muzzle and a beige mane, but my eyes linger on the horn that protrudes from its forehead. The stallion bends so the tip of his horn grazes my fingertips. The world starts to falter around the edges.

Everything goes blurry.

The gentle male nudges me. I touch his soft lips, and they scrape at my hand in hope of a treat. He is massive. His back is five feet off the ground, and his lean body shows all muscle. Behind him, on the right, I see tall buildings rise as they obscure the sky - grey, rectangular objects that sparkle when the sun blinks.

The golden sun beats down on my face, and my eyes squint as I sit with my legs curled up to one side on a fallen log that is rotting at one end. Moss and mushrooms spread up the sides and fight for territory. Little drops of water splash onto my naked ankles. The stream is alive, flowing at a quick pace, and it displaces the tiny rocks that dot the shoreline. I follow the trail of the water to where I see a big, red stable covering the horizon as clouds roll in on my left. I can hear a tracker backfire and, seconds later, roar to life. Black smoke ascends to join the white, puffy balls and an airplane plays hide and seek.

The large willow tree sways, temporarily covering me with its shadow, and my eyes adjust. Teasingly, the green leaves dance above the water. Birds dart in and out of their protective expanse while they decorate the air with their high trill. Sometimes the small creatures cause a leaf to surrender and float away in seclusion.

I jump down from my perch and take the leather reins in my hand while a tear slips from my eye. The soft thud of the hooves disappears as the wind rushes forward to play with the noise. I steal a glance back and sigh as I continue to walk away from my haven.