

# TRENDING: Gypsy Moth Summer by Patricia Flaherty Pagan



SEARCH



MORE ABOUT US... ▾

PAPERBACK ISSUES

FEATURED CONTENT ▾

SUBSCRIBE ▾

OUR EDITOR

SUBMISSIONS

NEW IN ISSUE #7

## A BOON FROM AN ANGEL BY MATIAS TRAVIESO- DIAZ

Jun 19, 2019 | Fiction, Issue #7



Norman first saw the angel on one of those November nights when the temperature is too low for air conditioning but too high for the heating unit to do any good. Unable to sleep, he rose from his bed, perspiring at that terrible hour, 3 AM, when the light of day is but a distant hope. He sat for a

### ADVERTIS- EMENT:



### WHAT'S NEW?



Scott's  
Last  
Fruit  
cake  
by  
David M.  
Harris

Issue  
#7,  
Poetry



moment, looking at the nightstand clock and debating whether to placate his bladder with a quick trip to the bathroom.

His throat was parched and he felt wide awake. “I’ll make myself some herbal tea, and read a little. Maybe then I will be able to doze off” he thought. He walked over to the kitchen, filled the kettle and turned on the gas. He placed a bag of chamomile tea in his mug and went to the bathroom to relieve himself while the water boiled.

He returned to the bedroom in search of the spy novel that had failed to lull him to sleep. Then he saw the angel.

She/he/it was floating above one of the pineapple-shaped finials of the brass footboard of his bed. It was transparent and shone with an inner light while pulsating with energy. It looked humanoid, but somewhat shorter than a grown man. Its coal-black hair flowed erratically, as if blown by an unseen wind. Its eyes had no whites and were bottomless cauldrons of flame.

Norman cowered, crouching a few steps from the bed.

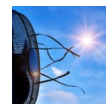
“Do not fear. I mean you no harm. I am just making a courtesy call.” Its voice was clear but lacked sharpness, like a melody played by a golden horn. The sound resonated throughout the chamber and terror amplified it in Norman’s mind.

“What... do... you... want... from... me?”

There was a silence, as if the visitor was considering how to best explain its appearance. “We come before your kind

**untitled**  
**led**  
**by**  
**JR**  
**Vork**

Issue  
#7,  
Poetry



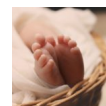
**Heat**  
**Wave**  
**by**  
**Eric**  
**Greinke**

Issue  
#7,  
Poetry



**For**  
**All**  
**Time**  
**by**  
**Psych**  
**he**  
**Török**

Issue  
#7,  
Poetry



**Little**  
**Honey**  
**by**  
**Psych**  
**he**  
**Török**

Issue  
#7,  
Poetry



when we have important news or if one who is ailing summon us.”

“But I have not asked for you.”

“Maybe you do not realize it, but you just did so. Has anything of significance happened to you in the recent past?”

“Well, I was fired from my job with the insurance company a couple of days ago.”

“Was that unexpected?”

“It surely was. I had worked for them for over forty years and had an excellent record, first as agent, and later as manager.”

“Then why did they fire you?”

“They said they needed new blood in my district. I think they felt I was making too much money and they could replace me with someone younger at half the salary.”

“And you feel this was unfair?”

“It was. And it hurts the most because I am now unemployable.”

“So, what do you do with yourself these days?”

“Nothing much.” Norman let out a bitter sigh.

The angel fluttered about, as it readied the next question.

“And how is your personal life?”

“What life?”

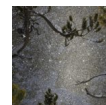
**Supplicants by Elizabeth Spencer Springs**

Issue #7, Poetry



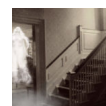
**Mojito by Michael T. Smith**

Issue #7, Poetry



**Apropos of... by Richard Weaver**

Issue #7, Poetry



**A Boon from an Angel by Matias Travieso-Diaz**

Fiction, Issue #7

“Don’t you get any joy from your wife and children?”

“My children have grown up and gone away. They remember me with a card on Father’s Day, if I am lucky.”

“And your wife?”

“My second wife divorced me not long ago and took everything. This ridiculous bed is all that is left of our marriage.”

“You must have hobbies, things to fill your time.”

“I used to play tennis passably well, until my hip gave way and had to be replaced. Now I just barely limp around.”

“Is there anything left that gives you pleasure?”

“No. Food no longer appeals to me. Television is a waste. I used to rent adult movies from the midnight store but those are silly – same people doing the same things the same way, over and over. Boring.”

“You sound weary of life.”

“I guess I am.” Norman sighed again.

There was another silence. At the end, the angel asked:

“If you were to be granted a boon, a gift from heaven, what would you want it to be?”

Norman did not hesitate. “I would wish to love and be loved, just for once. I have never



**The  
Danc  
e of  
Dece  
ption  
by  
Julia  
Hate  
h**

Issue  
#7,  
Poetry



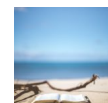
**Brea  
the  
Clos  
e to  
Me  
by  
Lenn  
y  
Carb  
er**

Issue  
#7,  
Poetry



**Mud  
Seas  
on  
by  
Laur  
a  
Rodl  
ey**

Fiction  
, Issue  
#7



**Succ  
ess  
by  
Harr  
is  
Cove  
rley**

Issue  
#7,  
Poetry

experienced true love.”

“That boon is not easily granted. To be loved, you must believe you are worthy of love, must behave in a way that inspires love, and most of all, you must love yourself. Can you accomplish these things?”

“I don’t know. It seems too much bother at this point.”

“You have a lot to do before you are ready for such a gift. I will return in a year and a day to check on you and determine if you then deserve the boon you seek.” And the angel was no longer there.

Norman was too bewildered to react. He even debated whether the vision was true or a nightmare served up by his troubled mind. But every time he was assaulted by doubt, the memory of those crimson eyes reassured him. At last, ten days after the apparition, he began to carry out a plan of action.

First, he bought himself new clothes. Nothing fancy, but comfortable and new looking. He got a fresh haircut and resolved to shave and tidy himself up every day. He joined a spa and started to get himself back in shape. He applied to every insurance company he knew, vying for positions that were beneath his experience and capabilities, and was finally able to land a job investigating and settling claims. All of a sudden, he was busy and would return to his apartment rather tired. He was able to conquer insomnia and sleep through the night for the first time in years.

Everything was falling into place. Everything, that is, except the romantic side of his life. He was not a religious person, but



**Mid  
night  
Sun  
by  
Cami  
lle  
Xin**

Issue  
#7,  
Poetry

joined several church groups catering to widowed or divorced men and women seeking companionship. The people he met at these groups were as needy as he, but considerably less interesting. The women, in particular, were all looking for someone to take care of them, and their efforts to charm bachelors like Norman were so transparent and, under other circumstances, would have come across as charming rather than pitiful.

Norman took himself to singles bars in search of better luck. The women he met there were too young and only interested in boys their same age, or on the prowl for a sugar daddy. After a couple of failed attempts, he gave up on the bar scene also.

Like many before and after him, Norman searched for a companion online. He signed up for sites that offered to match him with the woman of his dreams, and went on dates with females of every description. Most were boring or too flawed to arouse his interest. The best of the prospects was Ursula, a bottle blonde divorcee who was smart, outspoken and willful.

Norman's dating became an unending ping pong match, in which every serve by him was be returned with a smash by Ursula, seeking to score a domination point. Their affair, if it could be called that, lasted only four weeks, at the end of which Ursula walked out, accusing Norman of being a chauvinistic pig. Which of course was true, but was hardly relevant: in his estimation, chauvinistic pigs had as much a right to happiness as anyone else.

The spring was over and his next encounter with the angel was approaching. Norman became increasingly desperate, because try

as he might, he had failed to demonstrate the worthiness for love that would merit the promised boon. Then he was invited to a cookout at the home of one of his bosses, to celebrate Memorial Day and the start of summer. The party, held in the backyard of a suburban estate, was mobbed, and Norman found himself surrounded by strangers who seemed to know each other and chatted amiably while ignoring him.

Norman was getting ready to leave when he backed into a petite, age-appropriate lady who seemed as out of sorts as he. Norman apologized for colliding with her, to which she replied evenly:

“Don’t worry. This place is so crowded that I have been afraid I would be run over by someone. You are just that someone.”

Norman was attracted by the lack of pretense and took a close look at her. She was probably in her late forties, well but not expensively dressed, not particularly pretty but not ugly either. She had a professional, lived-in air and looked at the crowd with undisguised amusement. At once, he liked her a lot.

“It would be much more tolerable if I knew anyone here other than Steve,” he declared. “I work for him but don’t mingle with his friends.”

Her response surprised him. “I came to this party as a favor to his ex-wife, who asked me to keep an eye on their daughter, Ashley, who just turned eighteen and thinks she has license to do as she pleases. You know the type.” She chuckled.

“And, is Ashley behaving?”



“Well, see for yourself. She is on the other side of the pool, getting totally plastered, in the company of frat boys hoping to get in her panties. I don’t know what her mother expected me to do.”

“A heavy responsibility,” he responded with mock gravity. “I suggest we let Nature take its course and try to enjoy ourselves.” He clinked his beer bottle against the glass of Chardonnay she was holding and declared: “I am Norman. Pleased to meet you.”

“And I am Claire,” she acknowledged. “Please to meet *you*.”

From that point on, the cookout became much less of a waste. Norman and Claire got along famously and soon were giving each other sanitized versions of their life histories. Claire was an interior decorator who had married a self-involved pro golfer and divorced him after a while. She had lived by herself for the last twenty odd years and spent her time working and pursuing her passions – gardening, reading Victorian novels (and watching the BBC adaptations on PBS), and playing the recorder, at which she was proficient enough to give concerts as a member of local Renaissance and Baroque music ensembles.

They left the cookout after an hour or two of pleasant chatting. They exchanged telephone and e-mail information, and Norman vowed to call her so they could get together for coffee or a drink. When Norman returned to his bachelor pad, he found it more barren and unwelcoming than ever.

Events followed in quick succession. By the Fourth of July, Norman had moved in with



Claire and the couple started to discuss a more permanent arrangement. Then disaster struck. Claire began complaining of not feeling well and suffered from poor appetite, back pain, fatigue and nausea. After a series of tests and hospital stays, she was finally diagnosed with advanced pancreatic cancer, the fastest and most lethal form of the disease. Norman saw Claire wither away as the cancer spread to other organs.

The inevitable conclusion came as October ended: the neighborhood children who pounded on the door of his apartment on Halloween night got no response, for Norman was at Claire's home, where a hospice team was providing care and comfort to the terminally ill patient. The end came on the morning of November 2nd. Norman and Claire's romance had lasted barely four months.

The night the angel returned, Norman was in his apartment, which was in great disarray. His mourning suit lay crumpled on an armchair, the white shirt and narrow black tie forgotten on the floor. Norman had never felt so exhausted in his life, yet was unable to sleep as he sporadically convulsed with grief. He lay naked in bed, reliving the joys and indescribable pains of the last few months. Finally, he forced himself up and walked over to the kitchen to fix himself a cup of herbal tea, although he was certain that all the tea in the world would not help him that night. He lay in bed for a few seconds, waiting for the water to boil, and then he saw the angel again.

He had almost forgotten about the apparition. Too much had happened since their first meeting, and he was not sure he

had accomplished what was needed to satisfy the angel's demands.

"Greetings," rang the mellow words of the angel. "How has it been with you since last we met?"

Norman felt too weak to pour out the anger he felt, and instead replied in a low hiss: "I did all that you asked. I tried to make myself worthy of love and, by God, I succeeded. Yes, I succeeded only too well. I behaved as if I were worthy of love, and found such love for the first and only time in my life. I finally gained true love and it was snatched from me right away. So, it was all for nothing. Go away."

"But I promised you a boon and you have made yourself worthy of it. Have you not?"

Reluctantly, Norman nodded in assent.

"Then, are you ready to receive your gift?"

"I have known love and experienced its loss. I need no boons from you."

"But you do. That feeling you experienced for another human is certainly an aspect of love, but not the greatest. You have yet to learn to surrender yourself to your beloved and have the two become one, not just for a moment, but for all eternity. Look at me, do you feel love for me?"

"For you? I have never thought about it. You are not real, and in any case, you are not human. I fear you and am in awe of you, but that is not love by any means."

"Perhaps. May I kiss you?"

“You may, but your kiss will give me no pleasure. All pleasure left me when Claire died.”

“We shall see.”

Norman found himself being embraced by an insubstantial body that touched him very faintly, the caress of a summer breeze. His lips made contact with something that felt both soft and very cold, like a mouthful of snow. He closed his eyes to better savor the intimacy. His nostrils inhaled a subtle perfume that filled his lungs with bliss and left him yearning for more. All his body was suffused with the essence of this being that was bestowing upon him the greatest gift a human can receive, a taste of immortality.

“You never told me your name. What shall I call you, now that we have become one with each other?”

“Humans have called me many names. The most common one is Azrael, the angel of Death” said the angel, and kissed Norman again, and entered his body more fully.

The silence of the night was broken by the insistent whistle of the tea kettle, which went on for a long, long time, and which Norman never heard.

SHARE:  

[< PREVIOUS](#)

[NEXT >](#)

The Dance of Deception by  
Julia Hatch

Apropos of... by Richard  
Weaver

RELATED POSTS



**Unsweetened**  
by  
**Linda Sacco**

June 19, 2019



**Dueling**  
**Lawnmowers**  
by  
**Duane Anderson**

June 19, 2019



**Mud Season**  
by  
**Laura Rodley**

June 19, 2019



**Anniversary**  
**Flowers**  
by  
**Robert Rickelman**

June 19, 2019

©2012 Dual Coast Magazine

[Our Editor](#) | [Helpdesk](#) | [Privacy and Cookies](#)

