

# Weevil Pond 2023



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Weevil Pond is the annual publication of the English program at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. Our mission is to highlight the creativity of the UAM community. This volume features work from current UAM students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

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## **Dancing Thomas**

### **Alex Raines**

The air outside was biting, despite it being seventy degrees just the day before. Now, it was twenty with winds making it feel like ten. Thomas had walked from his on-campus apartment to the university's Student Success Center, where he held a work-study position. Neither his heavy-duty grey jacket nor his thick gloves were enough to protect him against the cold. The sky was unnaturally dark for it to be day. In order to reach the office where he worked, he had to walk through various parking lots along the way. The parking lot standing between Thomas and the two-story SSC seemed elongated. The ground looked smeared and stretched with streetlights marking every two-hundred foot or so. Yet he continued forward in hopes for the embracement of warm air offered inside.

Streetlight after streetlight, the air around Thomas felt more warped as he continued walking. The winds deafened his ears so much that he couldn't hear his own footsteps. Then, all at once, the wind ceased. The sudden shift from silence to abundant sound staggered him. The humming of the streetlights buzzed in his ears and the trees around were unbearably loud. The leaves on the ground scraped and slid against one another, creating a sound akin to a swarm of locusts approaching from the distance. However, Thomas pressed on. The ground in front of him had shortened, allowing him to see the SSC building tower over him. The streetlights between him and the building flickered while their hums stuttered. Each one he walked under faded out until he reached the rear-entrance door.

With his hand clasping the handle to push in, Thomas looked behind him for no reason that he could explain. His eyes were met with an overwhelming darkness. He could hear the leaves dragging on the ground, and the streetlights humming still, but he could see nothing. A subtle breath of wind smoothed past his cheek, reminding him the reason he made this journey in the first place. He turned his back towards the dark and pushed open the door to walk inside and into the lobby. He was welcomed with warmth.

To the left of Thomas was the hallway to his office, the doorway to it, of which usually stood locked after four-thirty in the afternoon, to eight in the morning, but was now wide open with the lights on. He stayed still for a moment to take in the warm air, then walked to the door and looked around it. There was nothing propping it open, which struck him as odd since the door couldn't help but shut on its own most of the time. He looked down the hallway but couldn't note anything out

of the ordinary. So, he ventured down and saw that his office door too was open with its lights on. He walked inside and immediately made his way to the chair behind his desk where he promptly plopped in. He took a few deep breaths of relief. Thomas found himself dozing off, which he tried to fight. He attempted to force his eyes open, but they only grew heavier. Right as his eyes opened one final time before drifting away, he saw, clear as day, a tall woman with a porcelain face meeting his gaze. He could see nothing more as he fell asleep.

The intercoms that ran in and throughout the building let out a loud “dong, dong, dong.” Thomas jolted awake. The lights were off, yet the room was illuminated by the moon through the windows. His hands fumbled through his pockets as he needed to check that his “tools” were still there. His heart swelled when he found that his pockets were empty. He then stood up violently, causing his chair to fall over. He looked down at his desk and started pulling the drawers out, desperately hoping to find what he needed. There was nothing, not even the normal papers that were cluttered inside them. Clunk, clunk. Thomas shot his head up and saw, on the ceiling above, rosemary beads hanging down. His stomach knotted up and he reached his hand to retrieve what he had lost. Thunk. His attention was now towards the doorway, beads in hand. He glanced over the desk and saw a makeshift cross laying perfectly in line with the door.

Carefully, Thomas crept around the desk and to the door. He looked around before crouching down to pick up the cross. In the instant that his fingers touched the shabby wood of the cross, he heard something humming down the hall. He grasped his cross and his beads and cautiously followed the sound. The tune was soft and motherly. He felt an unwilling comfort start to take over. His fear was gone, but his wariness was not. The humming led him back into the lobby. The humming grew more intense. Thomas felt a cold, but gentle hand slide under his chin and guide his gaze above. His comfort melted as terror took its place. What was once a two-story building, with the second floor being donut-shaped allowing first-floor residents to see above, was now what seemed endless to Thomas’ eyes.

And there were people dancing.

An endless number of people desperately dancing in perfect synchronization with the humming in Thomas’ ears. The sounds of their feet shuffling against the ground echoed throughout the building. Despite his instincts telling him to escape, Thomas dashed to the closest dancer, in hopes of pulling them out of their trance. It was a young man. He was slowly dancing with no partner, while his arms stayed in the air as if he was holding someone. Thomas grabbed his shoulders

and spun him around before throwing him back in horror. The young man’s face was congealed, and his eyes were no longer present. Thomas and the young man’s body fell to the ground simultaneously, yet the young man was still attempting to fulfill the dance he had been doing before. Something inside Thomas screamed at him to run away. This time, he listened. He stumbled to his feet and darted towards the back-entrance door. He threw himself against it, forcing it open. He saw a normal view, streetlights lit up and the leaves on the ground were still.

Thomas could still hear the humming growing louder. He didn’t know what he was thinking, going in to take care of the problem himself. The campus had a history of disappearances including people he knew, and there were rumors that those gone roamed the SSC at night. He thought he would investigate the disappearances and perhaps find missing friends, but this was not what he expected. No, it was much worse. Tap. Tap. Tap. Thomas heard footsteps behind him as the humming drew closer. Without hesitation, he tried to run outside. Except, he couldn’t. He was frozen. Tears rolled down his cheeks, but something reached from behind him to wipe them away. Cold hands grabbed his shoulders and turned him away from the door.

In front of Thomas was the lady with a porcelain face, humming softly. She let go of his shoulders and slid her long arms down his to interlock with his fingers. The comfort he had felt before enveloped his heart. Her hands no longer felt cold, but warm. Her porcelain face seemed to smile subtly. The fears he once held faded away once more. The thoughts of finding lost friends were out of mind. His right leg drug forward rhythmically, and then the other. The lady’s legs mirrored his, matching him in every step.

Then, they danced.

## The Betrayal of Lieutenant Ambergard

### Eden Rozing

Trevor Ambergard had one good eye left, and it wasn't the one he was born with. Things have been pretty hazy out of that one ever since the war of '84, when those blast charges sent an entire sand dune into his squadron. But his right eye, now that one was a wonder. The AdvanSight M400, fresh off the line from the bio-replacement center on Homeworld III, was the finest piece of technology that military money could buy. Infrared, X-ray, ultraviolet—name the frequency, and Trevor had a setting that could see it. The augmented visual processing circuit's power was second-to-none. Only the best for the finest sniper in the Fifth Legion.

They had given him the eye to make him a better killer. Sure, the politicians in their fancy suits simpered about "paying debts to our front-line heroes," and the brass talked up the "rewards for exemplary service," but every single one of them knew that the tech would be paid for in blood. Trevor knew it too—he wouldn't have survived as long as he had if he couldn't read the writing on the wall. He was a sniper; The AdvanSight was an investment just as much as the latest rifle model would be. Hell, he wouldn't be surprised if someone had calculated the potential benefits of the AdvanSight before he'd lost his real eye.

Intentions aside, the eye was good. That was undeniable. Trevor took pleasure in pushing the limits of its capabilities whenever he was called to the field. But he wasn't on a mission now. He'd managed to wrangle a week's leave, and he was spending it planetside on Iortia. A week's worth of rest and relaxation on the Planet of Storms might not be most people's dream vacation, but something about the constant thunder and lightning overhead steadied Trevor. Maybe he'd been in the legion for too long; out in the field, quiet meant something was about to go catastrophically wrong. No soldier liked silence. That bit of amateur psychoanalysis could wait a while, though. The last five days without any orders or special ops had been great—just what the doctor ordered.

Of course, something had to come along and ruin it. The Northern Harvest Market was the biggest event on the planet, and Trevor was supposed to be spending the day exploring the merchant stalls and farm stands that had been set up beneath a transparent storm shelter. Trevor was examining some kind of savory pastry when he noticed the stranger. The man was neither particularly old nor especially young. He didn't seem like an outsider; his clothing was tailored in the local style, and he had the accent to match. Nothing about him should have

caught Trevor's eye. But it was because of that eye—the AdvanSight—that he paid the man any attention at all. According to the notification blinking in his peripheral vision, the man chatting with a bead-maker a few stalls over was a member of the Opposition—a rebel group that had been sabotaging imperial infrastructure and distributing seditious reading materials for months. The AdvanSight informed him that members were classified as a level four threat. That designation had been assigned because the organization was something of an unknown in the intelligence world. Nobody knew precisely what their goals were or how they hoped to achieve them.

The man finished whatever business he had at the bead-maker's stall and started off into the market crowds. Trevor sighed to himself, took a moment to mourn his lost vacation, and put the pastry back on the counter. No rest for the wicked. Even though he was supposed to be on leave, if the brass found out that he had let a rebel from a level four walk away, Trevor could find himself stuck training new recruits for months. He tapped his temple and blinked a command into the AdvanSight to activate its tracking capabilities. A glowing dot sprang to life above the man's head, making it easier for Trevor to keep track of him among the tourists and vendors.

The man visited a few more stalls and spoke with their proprietors, always with Trevor a few meters behind. The rebel never seemed to register that he was being followed; for someone who was supposedly a member of a dangerous terrorist group, he sure was oblivious. After about two hours of pursuit, Trevor was about ready to believe that the AdvanSight had made a mistake. The man hadn't done anything even remotely suspicious, just normal shopping. Maybe Trevor could kick the sighting and intel up to someone who wasn't supposed to be enjoying some hard-earned leave time.

Just as Trevor was about to cease his self-assigned mission, the man slowed his pace and glanced around furtively. Trevor quickly stopped to look at some kind of musical instrument on a nearby stand, hoping the man would ignore him. Seemingly satisfied at what he found, the man whistled a few notes from the opening of a popular Iortian folk ballad. An answering whistle lilted through the crowd, and the man made for its source. Trevor cursed under his breath and followed, barely managing to duck into yet another alley when he noticed that the man had stopped. He was meeting up with a woman, one who didn't register with the AdvanSight. Whoever she was, she wasn't a merchant or a tourist. She and the man were already deep in conversation, heads close together to minimize the chance of being overheard.

The man had his back to Trevor, and the woman's mouth was

partially covered by a gauzy scarf. What little Trevor could make out via lipreading wasn't worth the effort. So he stood there, straining to hear whatever fragments of the conversation the storm outside didn't drown out. Then, without any warning, the man turned around. "Hello Lieutenant Ambergard."

Well, there was no getting out of this confrontation. He'd been made. Trevor emerged from the shadows of his alleyway. "When did you notice?"

"That you were following me? Since the marketplace." The man smiled. "That you were planetside? About three days. Though we only got a definitive identification yesterday."

"You knew I was here," Trevor said, walking forward and surreptitiously scanning his surroundings for movement. "This a trap, then?"

"In a sense," the man replied. "Though we have no intention of harming you. All we want is to talk."

"Just talk, huh?"

"Just talk," the man confirmed. "But we should move somewhere a bit more private for our conversation." He grinned. "Wouldn't want any eavesdroppers."

He turned and murmured something to his companion that Trevor didn't catch. She nodded and headed off into the market.

"Who's she?" Trevor asked.

"A friend. She'll make sure that nobody notices your absence."

"Ominous."

Just then, a passenger tram pulled into the station. Unlike the gleaming piece of machinery that had brought Trevor and his fellow tourists into the main market depot, this old beast had clearly seen better days. Its paint job was faded almost beyond recognition, and one of the front guidelights was burnt out. The safe boarding stairs that were a standard feature of all such vehicles had stalled halfway through their descent.

"Shall we?" the man asked, gesturing to the open doors behind him.

"That thing safe?"

"She's made it this far." He hopped aboard and extended a hand to help Trevor clamber up.

Trevor Ambergard was many things, but a coward was not one of them. The man favored him with yet another smile before moving to the rickety pilot's chair and punching in some coordinates. Trevor got the distinct feeling that no matter where they ended up, he probably wasn't going to be able to finish his vacation. Damn.

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After a few hours, the tram began to slow. They had passed through farmlands and backwoods, heading straight into the middle of nowhere. Partway through the trip, Trevor had managed to get the man to share a name with him. "Call me Adam," he'd said. "Though I'm sure you can guess that that's not my real name." Any further attempt at conversation was met with silence. By the time the tram pulled into a station that was as ramshackle as the vehicle it served, Trevor was sick and tired of silence.

"Last stop!" Adam called out cheerily. "All passengers please disembark!" He grinned and shut off the tram. Trevor didn't laugh.

"Where are we?" he asked.

"Somewhere safe. Somewhere we can talk." Adam replied.

"An Opposition base?" Trevor tried.

"If that's what you want to call it. It's really just a campsite. Not much to look at."

With that, Adam leaped off the tram onto the waiting platform. Trevor followed, blinking. "Come along now," Adam said. "We have a lot to discuss."

He led Trevor through the camp. Nothing about the place suggested that it was a base of operations for a level four group. The obligatory storm shelters overhead were old models, with some panels spiraled through with cracks. A fair amount of rain managed to leak inside, giving the whole place a damp smell.

All around them were people, a few of whom were flagged by the AdvanSight. Same designation as Adam: Known Opposition Member. Nobody of any importance though, at least, not according to the eye's military intelligence software. Everyone seemed busy, but nobody was doing anything that was obviously related to their supposed rebellion. Some were cooking, others walking and chatting with friends. Still others were doing laundry or reading on datapads. Many waved to Adam and Trevor as they passed. Adam returned the gesture; Trevor didn't.

"Who are these people?"

"The Opposition, of course," Adam said. "Isn't that fancy gadget in your head telling you that?"

"Don't seem like a level four group," Trevor muttered.

Adam heard him and responded. "Threat level is in the eye of the beholder. And we aren't trying to be dangerous to you Lieutenant Ambergard."

"I appreciate it."

The two men approached a tent with a pair of guards holding stun rifles. These two young men were the first sign of actual martial



capabilities that Trevor had seen, if one could be so generous as to call them that.

With a nod from Adam, Trevor and his escort entered the tent, where a group of people awaited them. Three women, two men, all gathered around a wooden table strewn with maps and star charts. None of the rebels looked upset to have a member of the Fifth Imperial Legion in the midst of their planning space. In fact, each of them looked downright pleased to see Trevor.

"Glad you could make it, Lieutenant Ambergard. Adam." This from a scarred woman who was gathering up papers in her arms.

"We've got a lot to discuss," said an old man with dark, weathered skin. According to the AdvanSight, this man had been recorded by a security drone in a restricted area ten minutes before an Imperial shipyard's tramline exploded. Sabotage was suspected.

"Do we, now?" Trevor asked, trying to get a read on the room.

"Yes, we do," the last woman in the room answered him. "We have some information for you, as well as a proposition that you might be interested in.

"Gonna ask me to join your little crusade?" Trevor joked.

"I knew you were a smart man," the woman responded.

"You can't be serious," Trevor's arms fell back to his sides. "I'm a loyal member of the Legion. A decorated sniper. You don't even know me. And I sure as hell don't know you."

"Oh, where are our manners?" the woman said. "You've met Adam." She gestured to the man who had dragged him into all this. "Let's see... you can call me Eve." She smiled, the smattering of freckles across her face making her look far younger than she probably was. "The man over by the Brannor System map is Darby, the old geezer is Snorri, And the two poor souls trying to deal with the paperwork are Eliza and Cupid."

"She's Eliza," the scarred woman said around the mountain of paper in her arms, inclining her head to the other. "And she's Cupid," Eliza chirped.

"Great," Trevor said. "We're all on a first-name basis now. Though I'm sure that none of those are your actual names." Adam smirked from his place beside Trevor. "Now why am I really here?"

"It's like I said," Eve smiled. "We want you to join us, Trevor. Become part of the Opposition." She pointed to an open chair at the table. "Have a seat, and we'll explain everything.

Trevor sat down. It wasn't like listening to whatever spiel they were gonna give him would hurt. Hell, he might even get a commendation if he got enough intel to add to the imperial record. "So, what is it you want to explain?"

"Our mission. Our purpose" Eve began, settling into the chair across from Trevor.

"It started with the suppression of the voter riots on Korsa," Snorri chimed in. "After seeing how the Legion dealt with the peaceful protesters there, we knew that we had to do something.

"Peaceful protesters," Trevor began, "who participated in the voter riots?"

"They were peaceful right up until the Third Legion opened fire," Cupid snapped.

"Wouldn't you have fought back too?" Trevor hummed in response.

"Then the atrocities at Gilton..." Eliza mumbled, staring off into the distance.

"Anyway," Eve continued. "It doesn't really matter why we started. What matters is that we all came together, people from all six protectorates, to try to make a better future."

"By setting bombs and passing out banned novels," Trevor said.

"We've kept things quiet up until now," Eve said, unbothered by the slight mocking in Trevor's tone. "But soon we'll be ready for the next step, and we could use men like you on our side."

"And just what is that 'next step?'" Trevor asked.

"We're going to assassinate the Sovereign, his council, and the Imperial Guard," Darby said, watching Trevor with eyes made of stone.

Trevor laughed. "Yeah, sure. A level four rebel group is gonna take out the Sovereign. You and what army?"

"Not an army," Eliza said. "The people. The people will rise up and join us."

"It wouldn't be the first time an oppressed populace has overthrown the ruling class," Snorri observed.

"But your incredulity is warranted, Trevor," Eve said. "The Sovereign and the rest of his people are difficult to reach, to say the least. Even if all of us under his rule banded together, we still wouldn't be able to get near enough to act. That's why we need you."

"Hate to break it to you, but a First Lieutenant isn't getting anywhere close to the Emperor."

"But a sniper doesn't have to be close," Adam countered.

Trevor went cold. Now it made sense. Why they'd sought him out. Before he'd lost his eye, Trevor had been the finest sniper in the Fifth Legion. With the help of the AdvanSight, he was the best shot in the galaxy. The rebels were all watching him now, waiting for his reaction.

"I'm a loyal member of the Legion," he repeated. What else could he say? "I've been an Imperial soldier for three decades."

"And what have they made you do in those decades?" Eve asked.

“What have they given you in return?”

“They replaced my eye,” Trevor retorted. “Gave me the best care and tech that money could buy.”

“And then they put you back to work,” Darby said gently. “They could have sent you home.”

“I’m a soldier of the Fifth Legion. They’re the only home I’ve got. And my enlistment lasts as long as I’m fit to serve.”

“See?!” Adam demanded from his place by the entrance. “You and the rest of the Imperial Legion are the only reason that the Crown can hold onto its rule. But the elites on the Homeworld don’t care about you guys as anything more than mindless weapons. And when you inevitably get hurt, they shove some biotech into your broken bodies and put you right back into the fray.”

“I suppose you would be different, then?” Trevor snarked.

“We care about our people,” Eliza said. “Everyone is important, from the frontline fighters to the people washing the dishes here at camp. Everyone has a place. Everyone has a home. The leadership recognizes all of us.”

“That’s how we’re gonna win,” Adam interjected.

“And just what would ‘winning’ entail?” Trevor drawled, already fed up with the man’s self-righteous attitude. “Let’s assume your mad plan works. What happens when the Sovereign is dead? Just what are you all trying to accomplish here?”

“We’re fighting for peace! Once the tyrant and his cronies are dead there’ll be peace. Justice throughout the empire and beyond its borders. Don’t you want that too?” Adam shouted, glaring at Trevor.

First Lieutenant Trevor Ambergard turned to face Adam and considered the man before him carefully. He was definitely an earnest sort, absolutely convinced that he and his merry band of misfits could change the world. Trevor had been the same when he first enlisted, back when he was just another grunt soldier. He thought about his years in the Legion. The places he’d been, the things he’d seen, the things he’d done. The people he’d killed. The friends and fellows that had died beside him. All of it in the name of peace throughout the Empire. That’s what it always came down to. Peace, paid for with bloodshed. And none of it ever lasted. The wars never ended. Trevore closed his eyes for a long moment, opened them, and spoke again. “I’ve spent my whole life killing people to keep the peace,” he said. “How can you claim to be any different when you’re asking me to do the same?”

Nobody in the room answered him. Several of them suddenly seemed to find the maps lining the walls incredibly interesting. Adam’s expression lost its fire, and he looked down at the ground.

A twinge in the neural link connected to Trevor’s eye told him that Crown reinforcements would arrive within a few minutes. They’d been on their way since he activated his link when he stepped off the tram. The plan was to reduce this campsite and everything in it to ash. By the end of the day, he would be the only one in this room left alive. And the rebels’ ideology would die with them.

Trevor didn’t say anything about the reinforcements or the burn order to the rebels gathered in front of him. Instead, he turned towards the exit and started to walk out. As his fingertips brushed the tent flaps, Trevor looked back and surveyed the ragtag rebellion that dreamed of toppling an empire. “Peace and justice aren’t the same thing,” he said softly.

Adam’s head snapped up to stare at him. Trevor turned and walked out of the tent, leaving silence in his wake. He retraced his steps down the main thoroughway and tuned into the AdvanSight’s military link, downloading the packet of new orders that detailed the coming assault. Thunder rumbled overhead, along with the distant buzz of Imperial drones. About halfway back to the tram station, Trevor found his target: a ramshackle shed that served as the camp armory. A Laurian LW63 model rifle sat propped against the side of the building; old, but well-maintained. Not the ideal gun for the job, but deadly enough in the hands of the finest sniper in the Fifth Legion. A grim smile spread across his face. There was work to be done.





**Snake on a Log**  
Eden Rozing

“This is a photograph of a garter snake that I found on a woodpile in Factoryville, PA back in 2018.”



**Blue Clouds Caving In**  
Abbygale Plowman

“Over time I have learned how important it is to have farm animals in your life, it helps boost mental health and being able to walk outside seeing a beautiful cloud creation always makes someone smiles no matter how rough their day was. It is always good to have the enjoyable experience for the outdoors while being in a high natural environment seeing how important it is to learn from it and to be able to help it grow it into something better.”



## **Think, Learn and 'Pata-Pata' Celebrate: An exhibit of South African Wall Art**

**(Photos taken in Soweto, Johannesburg, South Africa)**

**Dr. Carol Strong**

There is a rhythm to all life in South Africa that resonates through its cities and townships. It's driving pulse is accompanied by a lyrical soundtrack of song, accentuated by the linguistic tenets of each distinct yet deeply intertwined language found in its different regions, all of which then come together to form a unique (albeit sometimes tenuous and tense) harmony. In Cape Town and Johannesburg, the tempo is modern and emits a cacophony of car engines, horns honking and electric buzzing, as punctuated by the sound of impromptu corner choirs basking for coins and recognition. In Port Elizabeth, modern life is further accentuated by spectacular waves crashing into the vast coast line combined with the conversations people have as they rush from one end of the city to another crammed into well used mini-bus taxis. In the townships, the dreary western perception of life therein is interrupted by raindrops on the tin coverings of the houses, the beating of rugs to extract the last bits of pesky dust and the clang of hammers busily shaping useful pieces of furniture. Everywhere, the distinctive sound of tiny feet splashing through puddles and children laughing is heard. Persistently, hand clapping and gum boot stomping provide counter-punctual impact, as the people mourn their losses or celebrate the joys of life. It's the sound of South African life, full of laughter and tears commiserating shared challenges, as well as celebrations and common heritage. Through it all, the wall art found everywhere cries out to 'think' about life and engage in Pata-Pata Celebrations of Africa Day.

Continued on  
the next page:

## Remembering the Carpenter

Samuel Jackson

Bright beams shown through window  
Pane hearken back to summer air  
When clangor notes beat in rhythms gone:  
My father, his brother, building.

Their calloused hand set firm  
Against the grain knocking  
Dollars, dreams, and debts  
Alive with hammer's ring.

No harmony to their sound,  
Only sweat, sweeping up  
Days work as if a dream,  
Scratched. Gone.

From their father work was learned  
Poured over rocky soil  
Like concrete slabs  
To raise walls, raise sons.

Once I joined them, broom in hand,  
Forming blisters in my palms  
To be like them:  
workers, fixers, men.

Gritty grunts and scratched radio static-  
I remember those hot June days, rapping  
Scrap wood with father's hammer  
While my uncle drank his lunch.

That was long ago, before green gardens  
Appeared 'neath tall pines, neatly trimmed,  
And a swing was placed to company  
Ferns, poppies, and forget me nots.

Replacing trowel with spade,  
Father now turns gravelly ground  
Round with mulch he made  
Matching his brother's headstone.

In summer months he sits there  
Remembering the carpenter's music.

## Milk Glass

Destiny Forest

My father's mother collected China  
Now stacked in dusty boxes in the shed.  
In the hospital, a week before she died,  
She opened her eyes-  
A shade or two lighter than Morpho butterfly wings.  
Her doctor was hopeful and  
Our preacher thanked God from the pulpit.

My mother's grandma died  
The morning of my sixth grade Christmas party-  
I was sitting with a boy I liked  
When the intercom came oer,  
And I thought my mother was checking me out for lunch  
Before I saw her face, pale and shattered,  
Like milk glass.

**Where**  
Sam Givhan

Where, in this citadel of good intentions, rests secure the hope of man?

Among these tombs and celebrated grave stones?

Or in the intonations of recorded voice?

We stand now, on the platform of the future, confident,  
without reference, present or past...

What foundation,  
...where?

**Anxiety**  
Annagail Boren

I am trapped inside a box.

Where the walls are bare and gray.

With no doors and no windows,

There's no hope for any escape.

I fear I will never leave this place

And have gotten accustomed to the loneliness.

I long to escape this prison.

Each day the walls close in

And I feel smaller and smaller.

## **Secret**

Alister Cozen Majors

I've got a secret,  
A secret that will hurt me more than any other person.  
On the outside, there is a person with no issues  
Doing anything for peers when applicable.  
Peers pass on the darkness in their lives to me  
Like I am a sponge, absorbing all darkness.  
Where can I dump all the darkness?  
Writing helps control the darkness.  
It does not add.  
It does not subtract.  
Writing helps seize the darkness.  
Maybe someday the darkness will end.  
Maybe someday the darkness will keep growing.  
Life continues.  
We may never not stop the darkness.  
We may only live alongside it.

## **Hands**

Brittney Bostian

Your hands tell hundreds of different stories than your words.  
The way you hold me versus the words you say-  
like heaven and hell.  
You caress me and say you wish me well.  
I can't seem to find a way to bring them together,  
the way the sky aligns with the sea.  
I hear one thing but feel another.  
'We won't be together forever,' so I wait patiently.  
Empty promises but full palms.  
'It doesn't have to be like this; we don't know what the future holds.'  
Not what we want, but what you've told her.  
And I'll be here, with empty palms and emptier promises.



## **The Cat?**

Destiny Forest

It naps in the sun  
That sweeps through the window:  
A minute hand to its hour  
Moving steadily along.

It follows the path  
Of the warm wooden patch  
Every day, until it is gone.

## **Contrarily Similar**

S.N.L (Shaquondra Neal)

To be or not to be is what Hamlet said,  
To be blue although you are red.  
To be a secret that's never kept,  
To be trash that's never swept.  
To be words lost in time,  
To be hers but never mine.  
To be heat that's always cold,  
To be hands that cannot hold.  
To be a giant, very small,  
To be a mouse, body so tall.  
To be a doctor in a hospital bed,  
To be a baby that's never fed.  
To be or not to be in what Hamlet said,  
My answer is not to be, to be is dead.



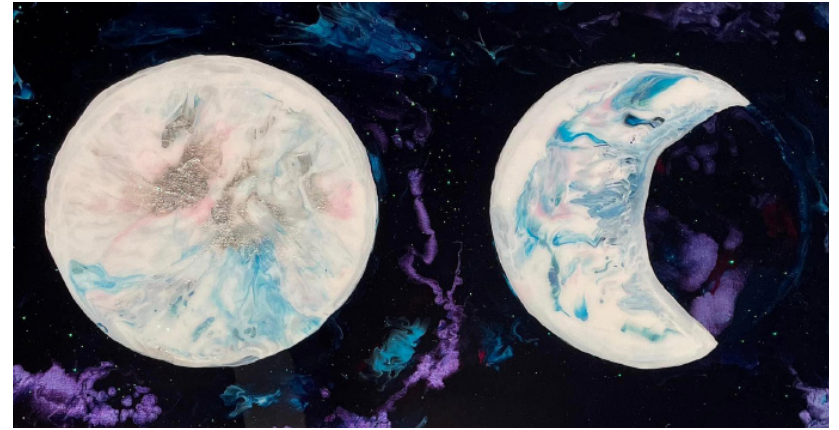


### **Fallen Soldier Remembered**

Lesley Hipp

"I created Fallen Soldier Remembered for a Veteran's Day program. It is meant to represent all soldiers and Marines who have fallen in the line of service as well as to remember our brothers and sisters who wear the uniform that have lost their personal battles to the invisible wounds of war. Every day in the United States, 22 veterans succumb to suicide."

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### **Moon Goddesses**

Deena Jarrett

"12"x24" canvas painting in abstract fluid acrylic art."



**Tiger Woodburning**  
Krystal Morgan

"I did the tiger woodburning for Mrs. Patsy before she retired UAM. I was able to "color" it by moving the nib back and forth on a high heat."

**Extinction Level Event**  
Patrick Phillips

Extinction Level Event is an emotional journey into sound, melding modern electronic and hip-hop styles with elements of old school soul and blues music. Known for bending genres, Absolute Space's music, especially this song, will take you on a journey from the past to the present and well into the future of music.



## Hunger and Desire

Terry Held



(Digital Reproduction of an ancient Mayan art mural, untitled, Public Domain. Mungren, Wu. "The Ancient History of Chocolate, Gift of the Gods" 18, August, 2018. ancient-origins.net)

### Pot Luck!

I love potlucks. They are the ultimate in the sharing of food within a community, whether it be people I count as family, as friends or workmates. You can say "I love you" without the baggage of emotional bloodletting. Potlucks represent the desire to reveal a part of who I am with other people, sometimes make new friends, and learn about other cultures in the process. Not only does one have to decide what dish to bring, but one must also decide how large of a dish, if there will be a theme, and what course it will fit. For these reasons the hunger and desire to enjoy the pleasures people bring to others through food always motivates, always satisfies.

I once worked for Walmart Inc, in their corporate offices. It was a stuffy and staid work environment. Everyone had their own 'work pod', with carpeted walls blocking out intrusive noise and other people, there was the ubiquitous L shaped desk, an office chair with wheels, multiple computer monitors and loads of deadlines. Food was usually eaten at your desk so as not to interrupt the workflow. Gummi bears, vending machine candy bars, the occasional piece of fruit and maybe a sandwich or salad from home would be in easy reach. Time was of the essence, daily reports needed to be filed, communications attended to, so eating on the run was the daily course.

But every once in a while, we would throw off our corporate conventions and revel in each other's culinary creations. We called it "Community Day". We would have a potluck for lunch and then an outside activity. It was the ultimate melting pot of diverse culinary

perspectives. Slow cookers bubbled away in the morning time; platters of family recipe yummys covered a makeshift buffet.

Community Days were an exciting affair in the corporate desert, an oasis of delights awaited the lunch time call to eat. Our work potlucks were off the charts cool. Potlucks were a day we all could share a common bond of true human interaction, a gesture of love and respect for our fellow workmates. Our team was an international team so we might enjoy food from every corner of globe. Asian, Eastern European, South American, and down-home country foods would nestle in together on a groaning board of no small gastronomic sangfroid.

One community day at Walmart I was working away when an aroma crept into my work pod, tantalizing me slowly, ebbing and swaying into my senses, causing a distraction in my workflow. I noticed this seduction by her teasingly intense fragrance. This citric like aroma would grab me out of my concentration, then disappear before reappearing like a ghost. I stopped working, sniffed the air to determine where her notable attraction originated. I looked around sensing she was nearby, but she was not to be seen. The citric perfume came with an umami punch that had wafted by was now fading away again, where had she gone?

It was unsettling...the fragrance was familiar but yet so very intriguing and new. I was lost in an inquisitive reverie of olfactory captivation. Like a poltergeist that had drifted by to distract and tease my focus, she disappeared without a trace. The smell caused my hunger to stir from its visceral eddies and ignite my desire to discover what gave rise to such curiosity. I was beguiled.

My memory was working overtime as I sought the answer...a sort of déjà vu that was not clear to me. Citric and savory in a harmonious dance. The fragrance appeared again, only this time it was more forceful; more than a shadow, the fragrance was overwhelming in its allure. I was ready to leave my seat in search of the source of the intoxicating bouquet when Shaylee, a workmate, strode by, briefly pausing to mention she was making Sopa de Lima in a crock pot only two pods away.

"Sopa de Lima? What is Sopa de Lima?" I asked, completely disengaged from my work and fully attentive to finding out what those rhythmical elements were seducing me from my work.

"Sopa de Lima, is a lime-flavored chicken soup from Yucatan." It is Mayan. You know, we Mayans first discovered chocolate, the food of the gods. And Sopa de Lima, like chocolate, is also a food of the gods. Mayan folk tales link the two from the same era. The soup is held in high reverence. For sure it's a big deal in my family. Hope you drop by to try it later."

Shaylee stated this in a matter-of-fact kind of way, leaving me



bewildered. I had never heard of it. I had cooked professionally for 30 years; in several states and in France, in high end restaurants and hotels, surely, I would have heard of it somewhere along the way. But no, I had not. It was totally new to me. And the aroma had aroused my curiosity to a heightened level. Like a hound on the hunt, I hovered within close proximity as I waited for the Sopa de Lima to be revealed.

Impatience is a calling card when desire and hunger collide. All of my senses were on alert as I fought against the temptation to know more, to see, touch, smell with deepening want. More workmates soon began gathering, chattering excitedly as Shaylee held court. Wearing a perpetual smile as she busied herself at the table where the Sopa de Lima was in residence, her dark black hair shimmered in the fluorescent glare, signaling, to me at least, the Sopa de Lima was on stage.

Shaylee spoke, we listened, “OK, you hungry hounds, here’s the deal. Sopa de Lima is a ritual. First you spoon the lime scented chicken broth in the bowl and then you add the ingredients that make the soup Sopa de Lima. The order is important to make it first rate. First, peeled and diced raw tomatoes, so they begin to melt in the broth, a pinch of habaneros; just a little, no crying about the heat, if you put too many, its on you, OK? After that, a spoon of diced sweet peppers, next diced avocado, a sprinkling of cilantro and a squeeze of lime. And for the final touch, place a few crispy corn tortilla strips on top”

Shaylee began to take off the lid, stopped, turned around facing an anxious group of savages and gave a warning, “Listen up, when I lift the lid don’t faint from rapture. Ready, set, go!”

Shaylee’s explanation put order to the confusion. Of course, I thought, a lime scented chicken broth was the aroma that captivated my attention and jump started my hunger and desire. The order seemed important as Shaylee so patiently told us. Like a ritual to be followed I dutifully followed the directions to assemble my own bowl I was not disappointed.

The glistening chicken broth sparkled in the bowl and was vibrantly alive on my tongue. Its savoriness coated the entire palate and lingered faithfully allowing the meat and vegetables to announce themselves one by one. The tomato pulp began to soften from the broth’s heat and felt like butter melting; its gentle acidity like a smile. There was a jolt from the habanero, and it lingered, reminding me of its power to dominate.

Then the avocado came into play, another buttery texture made exquisite from the heat as the broth lolled over my tongue and through my consciousness. The unctuous taste that makes the avocado so unique was an unmistakable caress to the senses. Sopa de Lima plays like an orchestral score with gustatory fermatas. The crispy corn tortilla

strips added a textural contrast that gave time to assimilate the edible proceeding.



(Lopez-Alt, J.Kenzi. “Sopa de Lima (Yucatan-Style Lime Soup) Recipe” [seriouseats.com](https://www.serious-eats.com/recipes/sopa-de-lima-recipe/), 13, October 2022)

It tasted of history and love. I wanted more of the experience. I wanted to feel steeped in the action of making a soup that engendered such powerful emotions in my heart. I have no Yucatecan DNA. I was not going to travel to Yucatan to feel the pulsating culture that the soup represented. But I could make it. I could become part of the history of the soup and maybe satisfy my own hunger and desire.

My search for the secrets of Sopa de Lima began. First, I asked for Shaylee’s recipe and then I examined various other recipes to gain a sense of the nuances of the soup in the making. My strategy was forming; an action plan was taking place. I had decided to prepare my version of the Yucatan staple known as Sopa de Lima over the Labor Day weekend.

I visited the tienda de comida, the local food store that served the Central American community. Inside I found a treasure chest of foods and spices; Mexican oregano and cinnamon sticks, fresh roasted Hatch green chilies, ripe avocados, limes bursting with their pleasingly acidic juices, tomatoes from the farm, onions, and of course fresh cilantro.

At the local Farmer’s Market I sought after and discovered a plump and fatty farm chicken. From this magnificent bird I made a chicken stock, mounting the pot of water with the spices; Mexican cinnamon sticks bobbed and weaved in the bubbling broth, the oregano, salt adding depth of flavor, the aromatic vegetables; onion, celery and carrot giving depth and distinctiveness to the flavor. The roasted chilies were added half through lending its zing as a counter point to the lime’s acidity.

I sliced and diced the vegetables, setting them aside for the final assemblage. The fresh peeled tomato sparkled in its juiciness and next

to the contrasting green of the avocado, looked like a neon sign inviting all to try its deliciousness. The cilantro and lime wedges would be added when the soup was done. The little hovel of an apartment where my wife and I live was overfilled with that judiciously tantalizing aroma that I now know as Sopa de Lima.

As the chicken cooked, I began pulling the chicken pieces out one by one from the simmering stock, extracting the meat from the bone and putting the bones and skin back in the emerging broth to further strengthen the flavors. What peace came over me as the stock slowly rocked to its own melodic pace. The lime juice became part of the stock, sending forth its citric zing, its aroma so much like what Shaylee had shared at our work potluck.

I also found the best corn tortillas in the area because Sharlene said Sopa de Lima must have corn tortillas as a garnish and not those old, stale store-bought ones. I drove to the local taqueria to buy their freshest tortillas, still warm and delicately wrapped in wax paper like diamond jewels wrapped for distribution in Antwerp. Their deliciousness caused me no small amount of angst as I willed myself from eating them before the soup was done. The tortillas were crisped in hot peanut oil, lending yet another temptation before the soup's completion. Quality control by tasting is a must when re-creating a legendary soup like Sopa de Lima.

The stage was set, the soup had simmered sufficiently, the gastronomic demons had been exorcised from our home and the aromatic bouquet known as Sopa de Lima had teased me long enough. I was going to taste what was rightfully mine to enjoy.

I ladled the steaming hot soup into a bowl, the broth was crystal clear with a faint pink sheen from the tomatoes slowly melting into the stock, the pulled chicken meat now steeped in the broth, the avocado lovingly strewn over the top, the cilantro had been floated over the whole and as it did the aroma flickered like a kindling and finally its distinctive aroma poured forth like a roaring fire. I quieted the inferno with a deft squeeze of the lime wedge.

The ritual of assemblage complete, now my spoon entered the fray slowly, carefully gathering all the elements of this sacred culinary moment. I lifted it to my mouth carefully, admiring the glistening sparkle, I patiently allowed the smells to enter my being slowly and then tasted.

I had found the essence of Sopa de Lima, making it was also part of the ritual of appreciation for another culture's great contribution of gastronomic pleasures. My hunger and desire were sated. I reveled silently in the moment.

Shaylee, she of Mayan heritage, introduced a 500-year-old soup to a

gaggle of novitiates, proving that food is a living testament in its ability to excite, soothe and satisfy the hunger and desire that lives in each of us. The dish itself, a combination of ingredients so perfectly paired as to cause a joyous expression of life's simplest accomplishment, to nourish body and spirit. My hunger and desire were laid to rest.

## Stranger than Fiction: Bizarre Tales from Drew County's Past

### A. Blake Denton

As UAM's Special Collections Librarian, I come across all kinds of interesting primary sources, or firsthand accounts, in my department. These primary sources enable us to peer into the past and interpret how history unfolded. Primary sources can include diaries, letters, speeches, photographs, or records, to name a few. While every type of primary source has its merits, newspapers are unquestionably my favorite.

Newspapers provide a rich cross section of different types of history (namely political, social, and economic) conveniently assembled into a cohesive format. With newspapers, there's a little something for everyone. The other thing I really enjoy about researching newspapers is that you often stumble across intriguing stories you weren't looking for to begin with. I'm talking about the kinds of stories that grab your attention and really make you think. Don't believe me? Read on! What follows are three of the most bizarre accounts I've come across in issues of the Drew County Advance from the turn of the 20th century.

Let's start with the oldest, and arguably strangest tale of them all...

Drew County Advance, August 13, 1895:  
Disturbed Public Worship.

A warrant was issued last week for Jim Austin of this city for disturbing public worship in an original and unique style. Witnesses declare that he dressed himself in female toggery [clothing] and went to church. Beside cutting numerous unladylike capers he frightened the ladies considerably. He was arrested by constable Hunt and Mr. D. M. Hardy, but escaped them at Mr. Jones' four or five miles from town, and is still at large.

What was Jim Austin up to?!? Why was he cross dressing? Was this an elaborate prank or dare? I wish I knew. As is so often the case with old newspapers, no follow-up articles could be found. Whatever the reason for his actions, Austin's stunt was clearly controversial. So much so, it got him in trouble with the law! We can observe from Austin's example that men dressing in women's attire was extremely taboo by the standards of the late 1800s. While cross dressing today may lead to some raised eyebrows or uncomfortable encounters, it likely won't result in arrest and jailtime.

Our next tale is a tragedy of Shakespearean proportions...

Drew County Advance, June 6, 1897:  
Killed Her Husband.

Mrs. Pat Wilson Used a Hammer on Her Husband With Fatal Effect at Tillar Saturday. The following story of a killing at Tillar Saturday was told us by Mr. J. J. Whitaker. Mr. and Mrs. Pat Wilson, residing at Tillar, quarreled Friday night because Wilson wanted Mrs. Wilson to take strichnine [sic.] with him and she refused to do so. Saturday morning Wilson attempted to shoot her, but his aim was bad and he missed her. He ran to get another pistol, but Mrs. Wilson had secured a hammer and struck him on the head before he got to it. He then tried to use a knife, but Mrs. Wilson used the hammer so vigorously that he fell insensible and was beaten to death. Mrs. Wilson surrendered to the officers. Wilson was a brother to T. O. Wilson, the shingle man, of Dermott.

One thing I've learned from researching Drew County's early newspapers is that southeastern Arkansas was an incredibly violent place at the turn of the 20th century. The pages of our local presses are littered with accounts ending in bloodshed and homicide. In many ways, this local epidemic reflected a serious problem that plagued the South and the nation at large. That being said, the example of this troubled couple is by far the worst I've come across yet.

What drove Mr. Wilson to want he and his wife to drink a highly toxic poison?!? Was he suffering from some sort of mental illness? Why did Mrs. Wilson resort to using a hammer of all things for her self-defense? Though gruesome, a hammer is not a particularly effective weapon for killing someone. Again, I wish I knew the answers. This is the only newspaper account I could find about this incident. Concerning gender, notice how Mrs. Wilson's first name is not included. Well into the 20th century, newspapers rarely stated a married woman's first name. They were presented as Mrs. [enter husband's name].

And for our last tale, a sordid love affair!

Drew County Advance, April 7, 1903:  
Charged with Bigamy.

[Last] Wednesday, Sheriff Wilson and his Chief Deputy, Mr. Coker, went to the residence of Mr. R. S. Wright, of Allis, and arrested a man named Jno. [John] A. Wright, who, with his wife, was boarding there. Jno. A. Wright, who is not related to Mr. R. S. Wright, is a travelling photographer, and is originally from Union City, Tenn., where it is said



he has a wife and two children living. He came to this country about two years ago, so he says, and met and married a Miss Pennington, daughter of J. M. Pennington, of Milo, Ashley county, about three months ago. He has the appearance of being a man of more than average intelligence, and is not more than 30 years old. Two brothers of Mrs. Wright, nee Pennington, came for their sister and took her back to her home at Milo. Ashley county officers left here with Wright Thursday morning. We did not learn who caused the arrest of Wright.

“Affair” is probably not the right word to describe the nature of Miss Pennington’s relationship with John Wright since she likely acted in good faith, unaware that her new husband was already married. If you believe in the rosy notion that people were more dedicated to their marriages and romantic relationships in times past than they are today, stories like this one sorely challenge that view. This episode doesn’t appear to be an outlier either. A simple keyword search for “bigamy” in newspapers.com for this period reveals that this was a prevalent issue. I can only surmise that it was easier to disappear and start a new life somewhere else with a new spouse than it is today, though plenty of men like John Wright were caught back then.

This article also raises an interesting question for me. Over the last few years, the concept of polyamorous relationships (consensual romantic arrangements with multiple partners), has gained some popularity in our society. Should polyamory become mainstream practice, how will future researchers interact with and interpret stories like this? Will they believe Wright’s example and others like it demonstrate that monogamy has always been a problematic or unrealistic expectation for many people? It’s hard to say, but what I do know is that every generation interprets the past through its own contemporary experiences. While I (and presumably most of you) do not empathize with John Wright’s actions, posterity may feel otherwise. Only time will tell...

As we can see by these three accounts, the “good old days” had their share of drama and intrigue, same as contemporary life in the 21st century. What makes these scandalous tales particularly fascinating for me is that they happened right here in Drew County! Local newspapers are a gem. They serve as a portal to the past, resurrecting obscure individuals and bizarre events long forgotten with the passage of time. If I’ve learned anything from years of pouring over newspapers, it’s that history is indeed often stranger than fiction...

## Contributors

Blake Denton holds a BA in History from Athens State University, an MA in History from the University of South Alabama, and a Master of Library & Information Studies from the University of Alabama. He has served as UAM’s Special Collections Librarian since 2019.

Destiny Forrest is a sophomore English major with a concentration in creative writing at UAM. She has three beloved dogs and enjoys reading and writing poetry and stories.

Sam Givhan is retired, and taking eclectic classes of interest.

Terry Held is an MFA graduate student at the University of Arkansas-Monticello where he focused on poetry. Currently, he is completing an MA-Literature at UAM. He also is an adjunct instructor at NorthWest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville Arkansas and the University of Arkansas- Fort Smith. Terry has self-published a poetry chapbook, Salt Pig, and has several gastronomy related non-fiction stories published in magazines in the United States.

Lesley Hipp is an Art teacher at Rison High School. She is also a MAT program candidate.

Samuel Jackson is a MFA student emphasizing in poetry. He grew up in Northwest Arkansas, but currently lives in East Texas with his wife and son. He enjoys coaching football and writing on his front porch. Samuel’s writing draws influence from his roots in the Boston Mountains, the Romantics, and Seamus Heaney.

**Deena Jarrett was raised in small town Gillett, Arkansas. She has 17 years experience in education and is the Monticello High School’s library media specialist. In the four years since she discovered the acrylic paint style on YouTube, she has found that creating abstract fluid art to be a fun yet challenging hobby.**

Alister Cozen Majors is a senior of UAM. He started getting into poetry last summer. He would like to share some of his work for UAM to read and grow as a community.

Shaquondra Neal writes what she likes to call temporary poems.

Patrick Phillips is a Graduate student in Forest Resources at UAM. He is also a Music producer and performer on the weekends.

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Alex Raines is 22 years old and currently a senior set to graduate in May 2023. He is majoring in English with an emphasis on creative writing and plans to further his education in rhetoric and composition through a master's degree.

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Kaia Young is a junior English major with an emphasis in Creative Writing here at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. After completing her undergrad, Kaia plans to pursue a Master's of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. In her free time, Kaia enjoys writing and working with pottery.