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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear members and subscribers,

2019 was truly an incredible year. One that saw us grow our author list to over 2,000 writers from the globe and our readership increase 100% from 2018.

We are proud of what we've accomplished together as the community that celebrates words and all literary genres in addition to being inclusive to all of those that believe in the power of words.

Spillwords.com is your voice and platform to exhibit your creative soul with the globe. Thank you for your participation and for making our site the wonderful community it has become.

And now we invite you to celebrate the winners of our annual Spillwords Press Awards of the year 2019.

Once again a sincere thank you from our team.

Warm regards,

Editing Team
editor@spillwords.com

AUTHOR OF THE YEAR



GABRIELA M

[SEE HER POSTS](#)

Gabriela M. is a US university professor and author of three novels. Her poetry was published in Spillwords Press, Vita Brevis, Indian Periodical, Gioielli Rubati Poetry (translated in Italian by Flavio Almerighi), Tuck Magazine, KashmirPen, “Heretics, Lovers, and Madmen,” Literary Yard, Proletaria, Free Verse Revolution, and other venues. She was selected “Author of the Month” at Spillwords (April 2019). Her poem “The Breath of Love and Death” was voted “Publication of the Month” at Spillwords (November 2019). Gabriela’s work was included in the following anthologies: America’s Emerging Poets Southeast Region (Z Publishing House, 2018); Florida’s Best Emerging Poets (Z Publishing House, 2019); and Pain & Renewal (Vita Brevis Press, 2020). Her poetry book, *Passion: Love Poems and Other Writings*, will be published by Vita Brevis Press under the pen name Gabriela Marie Milton in Spring 2020. She blogs at shortprose.

Christina Schwarz, the author of the New York Times Bestseller “Drowning Ruth,” on Gabriela’s poetry: “*With lush language and lavish imagery, Gabriela M. evokes a fantastic world ripe with emotion.*”

POETIC
PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR



SILVER LACE CLOAK
BY ANN CHRISTINE TABAKA

[SEE POST](#)

Silver lace spills off her shoulders,
like armor against the storm.

An icy garment to guard her heart
from all who dare enter.

It has fused to her soul
to warn against intrusion.

Encased in its beauty
her mystery is perfect.

No one knows who lives within
that forbidding silver world.

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INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR



AWAKENING

BY IZABELLA T. KOSTKA

[SEE POST](#)

It lights up every dawn
like fog lights,
restarts neurons
disconnected for a night's rest.

I move the eyelash curtains
- shutters that isolate me from the world -
and
load the batteries
with a sip of an espresso.

Even today
I will pay the toll
on the highway of life.

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NON-POETIC PUBLICATION OF THE YEAR



BODIES IN THE BASEMENT

BY M. TAGGART

[SEE POST](#)

It was a crisp, damp, October night. “When we get to the Church I’ll go down first.” Colin was thinking of the moment when both he and Aaron would be standing at the top of the basement stairs peering down into the darkness.

The old stone Church was perched at the top of the largest hill on the prep school’s campus. Colin’s parents were professors at the school and their house was on campus grounds. They’d been waiting for Colin’s parents to fall asleep upstairs. Both boys were comfortable in their sleeping bags on the screened in porch. The lights had been turned out an hour ago and Colin felt it was time to slip into the night.

They unzipped their sleeping bags without noise. Colin gave Aaron an understanding nod of his head. Aaron opened the porch door slowly, so as not to make it squeak. They’d snuck out at night a number of times and both knew the routine.

Once down the porch steps, and into the bushes on the far end of the lawn, they found their beaten down footpath leading to the Church. Crickets were busy sounding off.

“I heard Ben saw the baby in the jar.” Said Aaron.

“He didn’t. He’s just saying he did. Ben would be too afraid to sneak in. He’d never do it. Besides, the doors of the science building are locked at night.”

“They weren’t when we snuck in.”

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“That was different. I knew which window to climb through.” Said Colin.

The moon was large. Its brilliant glow could be seen from beneath each cloud. The grass was soaked with mildew; moisture reached out and touched the boys’ jeans. The smell of dirt from the footpath filled their lungs. Each step bringing them nearer to their true intentions; learning if there was a morgue in the basement of the Church. Rumors swirled endlessly amongst them at school. Some said the Church had a morgue and that it was haunted. Others said the Church didn’t have a morgue and that Sunday school classes were held in the basement. For a brief moment the night sky broke open with moonlight. Colin looked at Aaron and wondered why Aaron was smiling. He could see the dark space between Aaron’s two front teeth.

“Look how fast the clouds are moving,” said Colin.

“I like them. They look crazy. Do you think we can get in?” asked Aaron.

“Yes. They don’t lock the Church.”

“Why not? Ain’t they worried someone will steal something?”

“My dad says people never steal from the Church. Besides, sometimes people are there at night praying. I’ve been inside late at night and saw the Priest standing in front of the pipe organ, touching the keys. He was staring

at them and his lips were moving.”

“What was he saying?”

“I don’t know, he looked very serious. I left.”

Looking up the hill at the Church, Aaron approached Colin slowly. “Do you ever feel as though you can run faster in this?”

“In what?”

“In the night. An October night. I feel as though I can run faster than anyone and that nothing can catch me.” Said Aaron.

“Maybe you’ll need to run tonight? What will you do if we find the morgue? I might open one, just to be sure.”

“I’ll open one. I’m not scared. I’d even look at a body if there was one to see.”

“I don’t know about that.” Said Colin.

“We both looked at the baby in the jar.”

“That was different. It was in a jar in the science building.” Colin’s hands felt clammy. He rubbed them on his jeans. He knew Aaron meant it. He’d open and look. The darkness had taken over the trail leading back to his home and he felt an uneasiness in his gut.

“You O.K?” Asked Aaron.

“Yea. I’m alright.”

They walked without talking and covered much of the distance left between themselves and the Church. Grass grew as tall as their shoulders on each side of the path.

Aaron touched the top of the grass with his fingertips. He liked the feeling of the small droplets of water sticking to him. He wondered if they'd find the morgue. He thought about how the bodies would be lying there still and alone.

CHAPTER TWO - DOWN WE GO

Colin stood outside the Church. He raised his hand to the door knob and asked, "Are you sure you want to go in?"

"What? Are you scared?"

"I'm not scared."

"You seem scared. Like when April wanted to kiss you in the hallway at school, outside the library, before Mr. S was able to see."

"Nu-ah, I wasn't scared then either. It's that she's going into seventh grade next year and she'll forget all about me and I don't know."

Aaron pushed past Colin, leaned his forehead against the door and twisted the knob. The Church smelled of old hard wood floors that had been swept and polished constantly. The pews waited patiently for the boys to seat themselves.

The boys had entered silently through a door at the back of the Church. "Did you notice the Church is empty?" Asked Colin in a hushed voice.

The interior of the Church wasn't unlike most in New Eng-

land. Wooden floors, tall ceilings, and beautiful stained glass windows depicting Christ, God and angels. The pipe organ was at the front of the Church, past the line of pews. They walked with ease. Two dim lights were left on at the head of the Church.

Aaron, now standing at the Priest's pulpit, tried to imagine what the Church might feel like when full. Did many people pray? Did they sing?

A floor board popped in the silence, making an odd echo.

"What do you think happens when you die?" Asked Aaron.

"I think we go to Heaven."

"Yea, but, how do you know?"

"It's not that I know, it's that I believe. I have faith."

Aaron left the pulpit, walked down the center aisle, and sat down in a pew. He wondered what faith was and how it worked. Colin was always sure of things, but he wasn't. He knew what he saw.

"Let's open the basement door and see what's to see."

Said Colin.

"Let's." Replied Aaron.

The wooden door leading to the basement was thick and etched with Latin phrases. "What do you think it says?"

Asked Aaron.

"I don't know. Maybe it says keep out?"

"Come on. Are you getting scared? Do you want to back out?"

“I’m not backing out. Let’s go.”

“You said you wanted to go first. Go ahead.”

Colin opened the heavy door. A rush of dank air flew from the basement and through them completely.

“You smell that?” Asked Aaron.

“I couldn’t miss it. That was horrid.”

“You going down first, like you said?”

Colin paused then stepped down. Again, his stomach turned sour. Feeling the inside of the stairwell’s wall, he found a switch. Light sprang from his fingers moment of inspiration, lighting their way to the unforgiven. The boys flung themselves down the stairs without care.

The stairs lead them to an open room with a metal table and a chalk board. ‘Don’t forget to Pray’ was written on the board. On the table were a number of Bibles. The Bibles were spaced out for children to read. The seats were small with wooden backs and metal frames. Aaron imagined the children following along with their catechist, but not reading. Maybe one or two would have a question, but most would look forward to being outside, he thought.

Colin was thumbing through a filing cabinet that was pressed neatly against the wall. On the far side of the room was another door. “See, it’s just a classroom.” Said Colin.

“I guess. I wonder what that door leads too.” Said Aaron, pointing.

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“Probably another room just like this.” Colin ran toward the door and flung it open.

The room was very dark. Enough light was streaming through the doorway to show a long line of cabinets built into the walls. Colin froze. Aaron, now by Colin’s side, let out a small whistle. “What the hell is that?” Aaron asked while stepping inside. Colin followed and wasn’t completely sure. It was difficult to see, but it seemed as though the room was filled with metal cabinets with handles. The room didn’t have windows. It felt cold and silent.

Aaron crossed the room, felt one of the metal handles and said, “I wonder if this is it? I wonder if there’s a body in here.”

The lights went out. Chaos took over. Each moment was a moment too long. Shuffling feet and grunting took over the room. They were in complete darkness. “Let’s get the hell out of here!” Colin yelled.

Aaron didn’t reply, he was sure he could find his way out. He thought it was like being at the bottom of the ravine at night. He knew there was a way, but he couldn’t always see the path.

Colin felt the room start to spin. He thought he’d found the way out, but was fooled. The air around him felt heavy. Sick to his stomach he doubled over, vomited, and sank to the floor.

“Colin, are you alright? I can’t see a damn thing.”

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“I’m fine. Just dizzy. This darkness got to me. I don’t know where the doorway is.”

“Me neither. But I think I’ll find it soon. If you can, follow me.” Aaron said. He heard feet scuffing toward him. As he felt along the wall, he touched numerous handles, all metal. He knew what they were. He’d lost interest in opening one. The wall was cold and the room smelled rancid. Slowly he moved feeling his way through the darkness. He was sure the doorway was only a short distance from him. He could feel that Colin had found him. He could feel Colin’s hand nearly pushing him from behind. Colin’s hand felt wet with vomit on his back. Give me a minute, he thought. I’ll find the way out.

Creeping along, feeling another metal handle, another line in the cold wall, and then, an open cabinet. Aaron paused, remembering there hadn’t been an open cabinet when they entered the room. “Colin. We need to go.” He strained to hear Colin’s response. He felt a whisper near his ear. The hair on the back of his neck bristled.

“You’re telling me.” Colin replied from the middle of the room. He hadn’t gotten up from where he’d been sick.

“You find the doorway yet?” He asked.

A chilling breeze made its way down Aaron’s neck, then back. Aaron slammed the cabinet shut and rushed forward. “There’s something in here; something touched me.”

“What?” Said Colin, as he scrambled to his feet. He heard

the tension in Aaron’s voice and knew something had happened. He thought he’d heard something close shut near Aaron. “What was that noise?”

Aaron’s mind raced. What had opened the cabinet? What was behind him? “I slammed one shut. Don’t, let’s not talk about it. Let’s get the hell out!” Aaron fumbled his way, as fast as he could, while still feeling the wall.

Finally, a hinge and the doorway. Aaron ran past the table with the Bibles and sprinted up the basement stairs and nearly flew out of the Church. Panting and running he didn’t slow his pace until he was at the bottom of the steep hill, at the edge of the footpath. Colin was behind him. Colin hung on his knees searching for his breath. Both could smell Colin’s sickness.

The sky broke open with moonlight. They could see one another easily.

Colin stopped breathing between his knees and stood up. “What happened?”

“I’m not sure.”

“You said something was in there. What was in there?”

“I don’t know. Something touched my back, I thought it was you.” Aaron turned as if to show Colin, “I felt something wet.” He pulled at his shirt and tried to look while showing his back to Colin.

“Take it off! Take your shirt off!” Colin started pulling at Aaron’s shirt, ripping the shirt up and over Aaron’s head and

chucked to the ground. “There’s something on it.” Colin said. Colin started to kick at the shirt, trying to spread it for Aaron to see.

Aaron picked the shirt up, held it in front of him, and then let it drop back to the ground. “What in the hell is that supposed to mean?” There was an outline of a large wet hand on the back of his shirt. Under the outline was the same message that was written on the basement door.

The boys looked up the hill at the Church. The door they had fled from was closed. “Did you close the door?” Asked Aaron.

“I don’t know.”

The clouds covered the moon. It was terribly dark. They heard the Church door creak open.

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HONORARY AWARD CONTRIBUTOR OF THE YEAR



ROGER TURNER

[SEE HIS POSTS](#)

We’d like to recognize Roger for his many contributions to Spillwords.com since 2017. In this period he’s participated in all Holiday Series and collectively has been published 53 times, and this is all in addition to being an incredible supporter of other writers, both on our site and via social media. He’s a talented writer, encouraging member, and passionate contributor. We thank you and recognize you as the contributor of 2019.

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