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Edited and with an Introduction

by JESS WALTER

STEPH CHA, Series Editor



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New York Boston

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*Other Distinguished Mystery and
Suspense of 2021*

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HECTOR ACOSTA is the Edgar Award and Anthony Award–nominated author of the wrestling inspired novella *Hardway*. His short fiction has appeared in *Mystery Tribune*, *Shotgun Honey*, *Thuglit*, and other publications. He resides in Texas with his wife, dog, and, inexplicably, two cats. He's still waiting for The Rock to follow him back on Twitter.

- A lot of my fiction involves wrestling, in some way or another. I'm not only a fan of the sport (and yes, it's a sport), but I'm also fascinated by so many of the aspects which come with it. For a long time I've had this image of a wall covered with masks in my head, but never had the right story to go along with it. When Colin Conway invited me to participate in his *Eviction of Hope* anthology, I had a heck of a time finding an angle until I came across an article about video-game streamers. The article detailed how so many of them had a persona they put on for their audience, and I began to see parallels between them and wrestlers, with their larger-than-life gimmicks. La Chingona—and Veronica—came out of that realization. Her personality, her attempt to persevere even as the odds were stacked against her, came from all the strong women I have been fortunate to know in my life, my mom, my aunts, and my wife. And Trevor was born from all the people who tried to stand in their way.

TRACY CLARK, a native Chicagoan, is the author of the Cass Raines Chicago Mystery series, featuring ex-cop turned PI Cassandra Raines. A multi-nominated Anthony, Lefty, Edgar, and Shamus Award finalist, Tracy is also the 2020 winner of the G. P. Putnam's Sons Sue Grafton Memorial Award and was shortlisted for the Grafton Award again in 2022. She was also nominated for the Edgar Award for Best Short Story for "Lucky Thirteen," which was included in the crime fiction anthology *Midnight Hour*. She is a proud member of Crime Writers of Color, Mystery Writers of America, and

Sisters in Crime and serves on the boards of Bouchercon National and the Midwest Mystery Conference. Her debut novel, *Broken Places*, was recently optioned by Sony Pictures Television. Her latest book, *Runner*, was released in 2021, and her next book, *Hide*, featuring Detective Harriet Foster, will be published in 2022.

- I'm not a short story writer. I consider those writers who can tell a story in five thousand words or less to be geniuses. This is a genius I do *not* possess. So, when Abby Vandiver approached me to ask if I could contribute a short story to a crime fiction anthology she was putting together, my initial response was pure panic . . . then I said yes. I am nothing if not a glutton for punishment. As a diehard pantsier (a writer who flies by the seat of her pants), I had no plan, of course, so I fished around for an idea, a hook, a theme . . . anything. And then it hit me. Perception. Mistakes made at a glance. Turned tables. An old man. A young one. One fatal night. I wrote the story. I made the deadline. I'm still not a short story writer, though. I'm a panic writer, a writer who accepts a challenge, then regrets it until the ideas come. I think "Lucky Thirteen" turned out okay in the end, but, boy, how I sweated over every one of those five thousand words.

S. A. COSBY is a bestselling, award-winning author from southeastern Virginia. His work has appeared in numerous anthologies and magazines. His novel *Blacktop Wasteland* won multiple awards and was on more than a dozen best-of-the-year lists. His novel *Razorblade Tears* was a *New York Times* bestseller.

- "An Ache So Divine" started out as a story about unrequited love, but somewhere along the way it became a story about how hurt people tend to hurt people. In many ways it was a challenging story to write, but in other ways it allowed me to indulge in a bit of nostalgia. I grew up behind a shot house bar and I spent some time as a bouncer, and in both instances I saw broken hearts and broken teeth scattered across the scarred dance floor.

ALEX ESPINOZA was born in Tijuana, Mexico, to parents from the state of Michoacán. He graduated from the University of California–Riverside, then went on to earn an M.F.A. from UC Irvine's Program in Writing. His first novel, *Still Water Saints*, was published in 2007, and his second novel, *The Five Acts of Diego León*, in 2013. Alex's work has appeared in several anthologies and journals, including the *Virginia Quarterly Review*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times Sunday Magazine*, and *Lit Hub*, as well as on NPR's *All Things Considered*. His awards include a 2009 Margaret Bridgeman Fellowship in Fiction to the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference, a 2014 Fellowship in Prose from the National Endowment for the Arts, a 2014 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation for *The Five Acts of Diego León*, and a fellowship to MacDowell. His latest book is

Cruising: An Intimate History of a Radical Pastime (2019). Alex teaches at UC Riverside, where he serves as the Tomás Rivera Endowed Chair of Creative Writing.

- I wrote “Detainment” during the height of the Trump administration’s barbaric and inept handling of the influx of migrants from Central America. My social media feeds were full of horrific accounts of families separated at the border and children being held in cages for months. I read an account of a father reunited with his son who claimed the boy was exhibiting aggressive behavior upon his return. He said it was as though his son was returned “wrong.” I thought about the psychological trauma these families must have gone through, and the ways in which inhumane immigration policies negatively shape the lives of migrants for generations to come.

In 1995, JACQUELINE FREIMOR won first prize in the unpublished writers category of Mystery Writers of America’s Fiftieth Anniversary Short Story Competition, and she has been writing ever since. Her stories have been published in *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, *Rock and a Hard Place*, and *Mystery Magazine*, among others, as well as in the e-zine *Blue Murder* and at akashicbooks.com. Her Derringer Award–nominated story “That Which Is True” was reprinted in *The Best Mystery Stories of the Year: 2021*, edited by Lee Child, and the story in this volume, “Here’s to New Friends,” originally appeared in the anthology *When a Stranger Comes to Town*, edited by Michael Koryta. Jacqueline is a music teacher and freelance editor and lives in Westchester County, New York, with her husband, daughter, and annoying Yorkshire Terrier.

- “Here’s to New Friends” was the synthesis of three incidents that have disturbed me for years. The first happened long ago, while I was in graduate school, when I was assaulted in my own apartment; the second happened a quarter of a century later, when a local girl went missing from her college campus and her parents posted flyers all over town that stayed up for months and then years, their edges curling and ink fading until they were unreadable and people had to take them down. The third and most recent was a fight with my then high school–aged daughter when she blithely announced she was going to start jogging in the early mornings on the path by the river near our home—wearing headphones. “Absolutely not,” I said, and when she wouldn’t let it go, I finally yelled, “Listen to me! I know you think you’re a person, but some men think you’re *prey*.” I won that one, if you can call it winning. Anyway. Not long after, while I was researching sexual predators, these three incidents fused themselves into a story I could actually tell.

It’s been eleven years, and the missing college girl is still missing. Her body has never been found.

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TOD GOLDBERG is a *New York Times* bestselling author of over a dozen books, including *The Low Desert*, a Southwest Book of the Year; *Gangsterland*, a finalist for the Hammett Prize; *Gangster Nation*; *The House of Secrets*, which he coauthored with Brad Meltzer; and *Living Dead Girl*, a finalist for the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize. His nonfiction appears regularly in the *Los Angeles Times*, *USA Today*, and *Alta* and has been anthologized in *Best American Essays*. He is the cohost of the popular podcast *Literary Disco*, along with Rider Strong and Julia Pistell, and a professor of creative writing at the University of California–Riverside, where he founded and directs the Low Residency M.F.A. in Creative Writing and Writing for the Performing Arts. Tod lives in Indio, California, with his wife, Wendy Duren, and any number of Cocker Spaniels.

- Nothing in this story is true, except for this: there's a man who dresses up like a clown and hangs out at various bars and restaurants in and around Palm Springs. Like in the story, he's a silent clown, which is disconcerting, but the truly crazy thing—apart from, obviously, *everything*—is that he's been doing it for at least forty years. When I was a kid, for instance, my mom was the society columnist for the local paper and would run into the creepy-ass clown at different events, enough so that they got to know each other a bit. Or as much as one can get to know a silent clown, I suppose. This was in the 1980s. Now here it is 2022 and the clown still makes the rounds—The Nest on Friday nights, Kitchen 86 on Thursday, etc.—and my mom has been dead for over a decade. I'm not saying the clown did it, of course.

JULIET GRAMES is senior vice president and associate publisher at Soho Press, where she curates the critically acclaimed Soho Crime imprint. She is the 2022 recipient of the Mystery Writers of America Ellery Queen Award for her editorial work in the crime fiction genre. Her debut novel, *The Seven or Eight Deaths of Stella Fortuna* (2019), a national and international bestseller, was shortlisted for the New England Book Award and the Connecticut Book Award, received Italy's Premio Cetraro for its contribution to southern Italian literature, and has been translated into nine languages. Her second novel, *The Lost Boy of Santa Chionia*, is forthcoming. Juliet's essays and short fiction have appeared in *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, *Real Simple*, *Parade*, and the *Boston Globe*, among other venues. She lives in New England.

- In New England, where I grew up, springtime is marked by the popping up of crocuses—and tag sales. My mother, a tag sale addict, would stop at every single one we passed, “just to look.” It was while I was sitting in her car in some stranger's driveway waiting for her to finish rummaging through their cast-offs that the question occurred to me: Had tag sale-ing ever driven someone to murder?

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LAUREN GROFF is the author of six books, including *Fates and Furies*, *Florida*, and *Matrix*, all of which were finalists for the National Book Award. Her work has been translated into thirty-five languages. She lives in Gainesville, Florida.

- Some stories live with you for years before they allow you to tell them. This is the case with “The Wind,” which has two sources: someone beloved to me who will remain anonymous, and a drunk stranger in a Philadelphia bar when I was very young, a person who told me a harrowing story that time, memory, many failed attempts to tell the story, and the exigencies of the current moment morphed beyond the original. I wrote this story suffocating from domesticity in the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic, painfully aware that no matter how dark my situation was, I was fortunate to live in peace and plenty and love; that, equally, in the larger world, there were others to whom the world’s sudden domestic tightening meant actual horror and immediate fear for their lives. It was while watching the brave people out in the streets protesting police brutality that summer that the story came together and let me write it the way it wanted to be written.

JAMES D. F. HANNAH is the author of the Henry Malone series; his novel *Behind the Wall of Sleep* won the 2020 Shamus Award for Best Paperback Original. His short fiction has appeared in *Rock and a Hard Place*, *Crossed Genres*, *Shotgun Honey*, *Anthology of Appalachian Writers*, *Trouble No More*, *Under the Thumb: Stories of Police Oppression*, and *Playing Games*, edited by Lawrence Block. When he was younger, he was rightfully mocked for claiming his favorite Billy Joel song was “You’re Only Human.” He’s still attempting to favorite that shame in Louisville, Kentucky.

- When editor Josh Pachter invited me to contribute a story to *Only the Good Die Young*, I couldn’t say no. As a diehard Billy Joel fan (allhailtheBardofLongIsland), the chance to spin one of his tunes into a crime yarn was too good to pass up. That euphoria turned into panic when I tried to pick a song. Rather than choose one of Joel’s myriad hits, I opted instead for a deeper cut. The opening track to his *River of Dreams* album, “No Man’s Land,” was Joel’s last swing at being “an angry young man”—a screed against big business, suburban sprawl, and the changing face of Long Island. After giving the song about 150 listens, I knew the resulting story would be set in 1992 (the year the song was recorded), and it would involve real estate (the film version of *Glengarry Glen Ross* was released that year), the Amy Fisher story (referenced in the song’s lyrics), and that year’s presidential election between Bill Clinton and George H. W. Bush. “No Man’s Land” gave me an opportunity to step away from Appalachia, where my novels are set, and explore an old-school mob tale, as well as to play with two of my favorite fictional themes: Faustian bargains—how far will you go to be the man you thought you were—and murder via sporting goods.

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GAR ANTHONY HAYWOOD, a winner of both the Shamus Award and the Anthony Award, is the author of fourteen novels and dozens of short stories. His crime fiction includes the Aaron Gunner Mystery series and the Joe and Dottie Loudermilk Mysteries. His short fiction has been included in the *Best American Mystery and Suspense* series, and *Booklist* has called him “a writer who has always belonged in the upper echelon of American crime fiction.” His most recent novel, *In Things Unseen*, was published in 2021 and would best be described as a thriller for fans of nontraditional Christian fiction.

- In an anthology entitled *Jukes & Tonks*, somebody had to write a story that centered on a jukebox, and I figured it might as well be me. Usually, I have a short story's ending in hand before I even start in, because the ending, for me, is always the point of the exercise. But in this case, I just began writing to see what would develop. What developed was a stolen jukebox that gets dropped from a truck by the knuckleheads who stole it, and once that happened—once I had a broken jukebox on my hands—I suddenly knew what would come next. Because I've been looking for a way to revisit Handy White, the repairer of all ancient things protagonist of my favorite stand-alone, *Cemetery Road*, for years, and this was it. Eureka! A Handy White short story.

LESLIE JONES is a writer from Anchorage, Alaska, whose fiction has appeared in publications such as the *Hopkins Review*, *Southern Review*, and *Narrative*. She has worked as a city magazine editor in China, an English teacher in Taiwan, and a freelance journalist in Texas and New York. Leslie lives in Brooklyn with her family.

- In 2014, I camped on a pot farm in Humboldt County, California, for a magazine assignment. I was fascinated by the extralegal wealth of America's top cannabis-producing region, but also by its family-centric culture: one grower told me how cute it was during harvest when the kiddos showed up to preschool with leaf stuck to their clothes. I drew on those impressions when I started imagining a marital marijuana venture.

The other animator was family history: in the 1980s, my dad held an oil lease with partners at Harriet Point, but nobody found anything. Decades after “ARCO spent \$50 million to dig a dry hole,” he still talks about the time he spent hoping and wishing the exploratory well would produce oil. His yearning is infectious. It makes me feel like we're waiting together, that something might still bubble up. For better or worse, that appetite drives so much American activity, past and present, on both sides of the law—it's good story fodder.

LATOYA JOVENA was born in Prince George's County, Maryland, and simply decided not to leave. She still lives there with her husband and two

daughters. She's most definitely in the middle of a writing project or two. Find her @LaToyaJovena on Twitter or Instagram to say hi.

- "Stingers" actually started as a fantasy story, more specifically my fantasy.

Someone I love very much was robbed at gunpoint in the early evening, in what was considered a safe neighborhood. It was nothing like what happened in the story. An empty wallet and a cell phone were stolen. Mean words were spoken, but no one was touched. The victim in this incident got over it almost immediately.

I didn't. I was enraged. I plotted a plot and planned a plan. Then I wrote it all down as a means of catharsis.

I had written several stories, submitted them everywhere, and been rejected all over the place. Before "Stingers," I'd only had two acceptances. Rejections were friends, and one can never have too many friends. When *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine* decided to publish "Stingers," I was dumbfounded, but grateful. But acceptances weren't friends, just mere acquaintances. So I submitted to *Best American Mystery and Suspense*.

And here I am, living proof that one can find acceptance by looking for friends in all the wrong places.

ELAINE KAGAN is the author of five published novels as well as several pieces for *Los Angeles Magazine*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Kansas City Star*, her hometown paper. Her short stories have appeared in Lawrence Block's collections, and her essays have been published in *The Normal School*. She is working on an anthology of short stories that will accompany a novella about the extraordinary people who make the movies, called "The Picture Business." Elaine worked for many years in film production and still works occasionally as an actress. She lives in Los Angeles.

- Larry Block asked me if I would write a story for his collection called *Collectibles*. My original thought was to do a story about a woman who collects men. Well, that didn't work out.

So what do people collect? Stamps? Baseball hats? Red shoes? Nothing appealed. And then it occurred to me that practically everyone you know has a collection of boxes filled with holiday stuff—cardboard boxes labeled in bold black ink: tangled lights for the Christmas tree, flags for the Fourth of July and Memorial Day, pink and blue straw baskets for Easter . . . you name a holiday and they have a box for it, probably stacked in their garage. Or stuffed in an upstairs closet with Aunt Margaret's winter coats. And envisioning these lovely people and their collections of boxes was the beginning of the story "God Bless America."

DENNIS LEHANE is the author of thirteen novels, including *Mystic River* and *Shutter Island*. His fourteenth novel, *Small Mercies*, will be published in

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2023. *Black Bird*, a limited TV series he wrote and produced, can be found on Apple TV+. He lives in Los Angeles with his family.

- When I was a kid, my mother forced me to take piano lessons with a nun whose office was in Harvard Square. The lessons didn't take, but the wandering I would do around Harvard Square before and after the lessons made a huge impression on me. There were twenty bookstores within a square mile in the area back then, and I would wander from one to the next, not just shopping for books but soaking up the atmosphere, which felt, in many cases, like London (or how I imagined London at eleven years old). Antiquarian and somewhat antiquated, very much out of time. I felt in touch with a much older Cambridge and, by extension, a much older Boston. So when I sat down to write this story, I was paying tribute to that world, which has, in the years since, been rolled up and stashed away on a high shelf.

KRISTEN LEPIONKA, the author of the Roxane Weary Mystery series, has won the Shamus and Goldie Awards and been nominated for the Anthony and Macavity Awards. She grew up mostly in her local public library, where she could be found with a big stack of adult mysteries before she was out of middle school. She is a cofounder of the feminist podcast *Unlikeable Female Characters*, and lives in Columbus, Ohio, with her partner and two cats.

- I'll tell anyone who asks that writing a short story is so much harder than writing a novel. As a writer, I tend to revel in backstory and character development, for which there is plenty of space in a novel. You have to be so much more concise in a short story, and this poses an interesting challenge. I like to play with multiple points of view in a short story, setting two people on a collision course with each other, as this seems to be an effective way to jump in and get down to business. The wider the gap between these two people's lives, the better. In "Remediation," I wanted to explore gentrification in the Olde Town East neighborhood of Columbus (where my novels are also set) through the perspectives of someone who seems to have everything and someone who seems to have nothing. But before I got to that point, I had a humbling experience during the copyediting process on one of my books when I learned that I'd mistakenly thought "restaurant" was a word for my entire life, when it's actually "restaurateur"—no *n*. From then on I found myself wanting to correct anyone else who said or wrote the word incorrectly, though I managed to refrain from being such an insufferable know-it-all. It got me thinking about the type of person who wouldn't hesitate to be an insufferable know-it-all on this particular point. Although the "restaurateur" line is a minor element of the story, it somehow set the stage in my mind for the rest of the story.

MEGAN PILLOW is a graduate of the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop in fiction and holds a Ph.D. in English from the University of Ken-

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tucky. She is project manager for the writer Roxane Gay and coeditor of *The Audacity*, Dr. Gay's newsletter. Her work has appeared, or is forthcoming, in *Electric Literature*, *Guernica*, *The Believer*, *TriQuarterly*, and *Gay Magazine*, among other publications, and has been featured in *Longreads*. Megan's stories have been featured on the *Wigleaf* Top 50 Longlist, an essay was honored as a notable essay of 2018 in *The Best American Essays 2019*, and a story honored as a distinguished story of 2019 in *The Best American Short Stories 2020*. More information about her can be found at www.meganpillow.com or on Twitter at @megpillow. Megan lives in Louisville, Kentucky, with her two children.

- I've loved Nancy Drew since I was eleven years old. My aunt, just thirty-seven years old, died that year of breast cancer, and I inherited a collection of about thirty of the mysteries from her. I read every single one. Those books helped me navigate my grief, and they cemented Nancy as one of my guides through difficult times. So when I read *Polygon's* January 2020 announcement that Dynamite Comics would be publishing a comic for Nancy's ninetieth anniversary about her murder, and that The Hardy Boys would be sent to solve it, I got angry. Nancy Drew didn't deserve to get fridged, I thought. And Nancy was better at solving mysteries than The Hardy Boys any day. So I used that anger as the impetus for my story: The Girl Detective reads about her own murder on Twitter, and she decides to tell The Hardy Boys to get lost, because even dead, her detective skills are better than theirs, and even dead, she knows she can do a better job of solving her murder. While I was writing it, however, the story evolved past anger: it became about honoring Nancy's legacy and my aunt's, about coping with my divorce and my own sexual assault, about reckoning with my grief and joy over how to begin a new life as a divorced woman over forty, to force myself alive again. It became one of the best things I've ever written, a story I'm really proud of, and one I hope helps other people navigate difficult times the way the Nancy Drew books helped me.

RAQUEL V. REYES writes the Caribbean Kitchen Mystery series. Her stories celebrate Latina protagonists and Spanglish. She lives in Miami. Find Raquel across social media platforms as @LatinaSleuths.

- The call was for crime stories that happened at midnight. As a Cuban-American, I couldn't resist having a little fun with the translation. Midnight in Spanish is *medianoche*, and it is also the name of a sandwich. Once I had the location and setting, my main characters came quickly. Dee is a character from a PI series I have in a drawer. And Pugi came to me in this sentence. "Pugi was the most *chonga* of the chonga and still chongaling at the old age of twenty-five." Chonga, once an insult, has become a subculture in South Florida. A chonga is a young woman with agency. She fully embraces a hypersexual and "alpha aggressive" persona in speech and dress. I loved the idea of celebrating that sexual hunger.

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DAVID HESKA WANBLI WEIDEN, an enrolled citizen of the Sicangu Lakota Nation, is the author of *Winter Counts*, nominated for an Edgar Award, and a winner of the Anthony, Thriller, Lefty, Barry, Macavity, Spur, High Plains, Electa Quinney, Tillie Olsen, and Crime Fiction Lover Awards. The novel was a *New York Times* Editors' Choice, an Indie Next pick, a main selection of the Book of the Month Club, and it was named a best book of the year by NPR, Amazon, *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal*, the *Guardian*, and other publications. He has short stories in the anthologies *Denver Noir*, *Midnight Hour*, *Never Whistle at Night*, and *The Perfect Crime*, and his nonfiction has appeared in the *New York Times*, *Shenandoah*, and *Writer's Digest*. David received the PEN America Writing for Justice Fellowship and is the recipient of residencies and fellowships from MacDowell, Ucross, Ragdale, and Tin House. He is professor of Native American studies and political science at Metropolitan State University of Denver and lives in Colorado with his family.

- Virgil Wounded Horse, the main character in "Turning Heart," is also the protagonist in my novel *Winter Counts*, and the story takes place after the events in that book. I'd been trying to work out what Virgil would do in the next novel, and this story provided an ideal opportunity to begin sketching out some new obstacles for him. I knew that his goal would be to stop working as a hired vigilante, but that the transition would not be so easy, as is shown in the story. I'd also had a hazy idea that Virgil would help to retrieve a stolen car, but I wasn't clear on the details. Once I started writing it, the story went in a different direction than I'd intended, but I was delighted to bring in some backstory for Virgil regarding his childhood and close friendship with Rob Turning Heart, and how that relationship continues to influence him.

Another topic I wanted to explore was the role of dogs on the reservation. There's a deep and long-standing love for dogs in the Lakota culture, but problems with packs of stray canines have become an issue recently, and several people have been attacked. Virgil has to balance his own affection for dogs with the awareness that Diesel, a former fighting dog, could kill or maim him. It was important to me that Virgil insists Diesel receive veterinary care after the incident.

I'm grateful to Hank Phillippi Ryan for the invitation to contribute a story for the 2021 Bouchercon anthology, *This Time for Sure*. Of course, the Bouchercon conference was canceled because of the pandemic, although the anthology was printed and distributed by Down & Out Books. I'm thrilled that "Turning Heart" will appear in this volume, giving readers another chance to read about Virgil and his world.

BRENDAN WILLIAMS-CHILDS is a fiction writer and zine maker from Wyoming who lives elsewhere. His work has appeared in *Catapult*, *Nat. Brut*,

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the *Colorado Review*, and several Lambda-nominated anthologies. See more at williamschilds.com/fiction.

- I had previously written about the character of Elazig in passing, and I found myself asking, "What would it look like if the serious consequences of this man's work finally reached him in some form?" By pure luck and chance, while I was thinking about it, I stumbled on a photo series of the Lycian rock tombs. Almost all of my fiction is written with two things in mind: the ending and a central image. These two were easily married in "Lycia."

MATTHEW WILSON is a teacher from Portland, Oregon. His stories have appeared in *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine* and *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*. He has been twice shortlisted in the *Best American Mystery and Suspense* series and was once a finalist for a Derringer Award.

- I keep a list of story ideas, and a lot of these are just weird little phrases like "wheelchair fight," "the shoplifting river," and "tree killer." These ideas come from all over—what I'm reading, a memory, something I see out the car window—and they often never go anywhere, while others eventually grow into characters and plots. That is the case with "Thank You for Your Service."

I had written "stolen valor vigilante" on my list after reading about ambush videos of fraudulent veterans. I had also read Sebastian Junger's book *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging* and was thinking about the challenges of returning to civilian life for recent veterans. I knew I wanted to have a wounded Iraq veteran at the center of a story about these topics, but I couldn't quite find a plot. I was stuck for a while until I decided to set the story on the Monterey Bay, a place I knew from my childhood as an army brat, where many retired veterans live in the communities surrounding the now-defunct Fort Ord. From there the voices of those old veterans came out of my memory, and I wrote that first scene set in the VFW. Once I could establish the personal rivalries among the older vets and the contrasting life experiences between them and the more recent and much younger vets, I could see where this thing was going.

I would like to thank Linda Landrigan at *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine* for giving my story a place for readers.

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| A Bad-Hearted Man. <i>Rock and a
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vol. 2 |
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| Dear Seraphina. <i>Audible Original</i> | A Tale of Two Sisters. <i>Murder on the
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| Mile 4. <i>Tough</i> , November | Bar Wall Panda. <i>Collectibles</i> |
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| Means, Motive, and Opportunity.
<i>Bloodroot</i> | Perfect Strangers. <i>When a Stranger
Comes to Town</i> |
| Alafair Burke | Serena Jayne |
| Seat 2C. <i>When a Stranger Comes to
Town</i> | The Six of Me. <i>Rock and a Hard
Place</i> , vol. 1, no. 6, Summer |
| Hilary Davidson | Scott Kikkawa |
| Weed Man. <i>Ellery Queen Mystery
Magazine</i> , September/October | Joe Sukiyaki. <i>A Bag of Dick's</i> |
| O'Neil De Noux | Kari Kilgore |
| Ticking of the Big Clock. <i>Alfred
Hitchcock Mystery Magazine</i> , January/
February | What Breaks a Man. <i>Fiction River</i> ,
no. 36 |
| Will Ejzak | John Lantigua |
| Savages. <i>Pembroke Magazine</i> , no. 53 | Death and the Coyote. <i>Ellery Queen
Mystery Magazine</i> , November/
December |
| Eve Fisher | Ken Linn |
| The Sweet Life. <i>Alfred Hitchcock
Mystery Magazine</i> , July/August | Stray. <i>Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine</i> ,
January/February |
| Jim Fusilli | Mike McClelland |
| Loogy. <i>Alfred Hitchcock Mystery
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Environmental Futures |

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The Mystery of the Mislaid Girls.
Uncharted Mag, August 9

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Leading Ladies. *Justice for All*

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Noir

Frank Zafiro

The Rumor in 411. *The Eviction of*
Hope

Désirée Zamorano

Caperucita Roja. *Chicana/Latina*
Studies, vol. 20, no. 2,
Spring