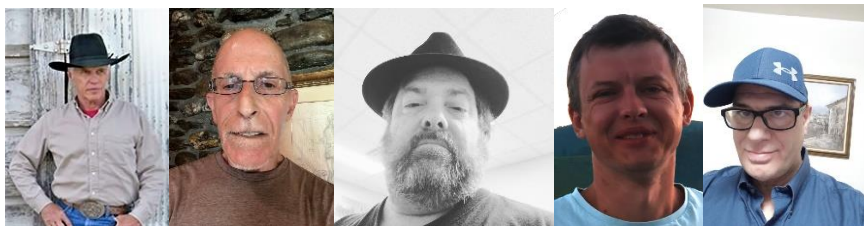




10 BY 10

FLASH FICTION STORIES



**NUMBER 4
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Welcome to Issue #3 of *10By10 Flash Fiction Stories*. Ten more outstanding flash fiction writers are featured, each contributing one story to *10 By 10*. There are humorous stories by Lawrence Kessenich, E. P. Lande and Ken Kapp and bittersweet tales by Elan Barnehama, A. Molotkov, and Jacqueline Freimor. Taras Bereza from Ukraine whose story while seemingly in the past could apply to today's war torn country. Michael Neal Morris presents us with what might be a science fiction or just a dream, but then again perhaps a thought after a traumatic experience. Bruce Hoppe brings a modern day western horse story to these pages while Paul Germano closes out this issue with a husband-wife tale about a dog that may be familiar to many readers.

So, enter these pages and read the ten writers in 10 by 10.

Sincerely,
Zvi A. Sesling
Editor



Lawrence Kessenich

is a fiction writer, poet, playwright, essayist, reviewer, and editor. His first novel, *Cinnamon Girl* was published in 2016. He has also published a few short stories and four books of poetry and won the 2010 Strokestown International Poetry Prize in Ireland. His short plays have been produced in New York, Boston, and in Colorado, where he won the People’s Choice Award in a national drama competition. He has also published essays, one of which was featured on NPR’s “This I Believe” and appears in the anthology *This I Believe: On Love*.

The Night Papa Was a Woman

The Benevento wine shops had hung bunches of bay leaves in their windows on Carnivale, calling the men of our village to taste the new vintage. Papa went, as he always did, and this time was chosen by his friends as the one they’d get drunk. And drunk he got, staggering home an hour before the Carnivale parade that always passed in front of our house.

“I want to be a woman!” he bellowed the moment he got in the door. He shouted for my mother and told her, “I will dress up like a woman and walk in the parade! *You* are a woman—you will help *me* be one!” Trying to stifle her laughter, she escorted him to their bedroom, where she pulled out dress after dress, until she found a red one that satisfied him. He stripped to his

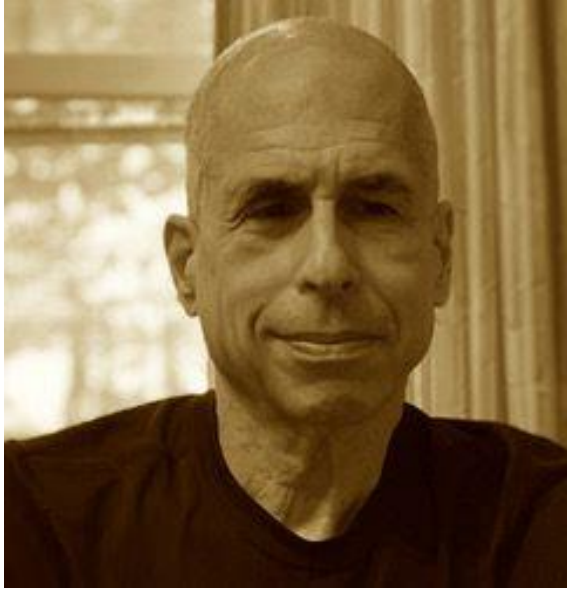
underclothes and she fitted him with one of her bras, stuffing the cups with stockings and underwear.

Next was makeup—mascara and rouge and lipstick to match the red dress—then nylon stockings, wig and precarious high heels. He emerged, my somber Papa, looking like a whore in the town square, but he was happy—happier than I'd ever seen him.

My mother's parents, her sister and cousin had gotten wind of what was going on and gathered in front of the house, awaiting the exit that would be his entrance. And then the parade arrived, led by an accordion and tuba and drum, with people dressed as clowns and animals and mythological beings, all shouting and dancing and singing.

And then my Papa emerged, standing as tall as a short man unsure on his heels could stand, red lips parted in drunken song. He melted into the throng, Nana and Grandpa and Mama and Auntie laughing so hard they had to lean against the house.

I laughed, too—not because I thought Papa a fool, but because it was a joy to see him wobbling down the street in nylons and heels, for this one night a happy woman.



Elan Barnehama's

second novel, *Escape Route*, (Running Wild Press, May 2022) is set in New York City during the tumultuous late 1960s and told the son of Holocaust survivors, and NY Mets fan, who becomes obsessed with the Vietnam War and with finding an escape route for his family for when he believes the US will round up and incarcerate its Jews. Barnehama's words have appeared in *Drunk Monkeys*, *Entropy*, *Rough Cut Press*, *Boston Accent*, *Jewish Fiction*, *RedFez*, *HuffPost*, *the New York Journal of Books*, *Public Radio*, and elsewhere. He was a presenter at the 2019 Boston Book Festival, a Writer-In-Residence at Wildacres, NC, and Fairhope Center for the Writing Arts, Fairhope, AL, and the fiction editor at *Forth Magazine LA*. At different times, Elan has taught college writing, worked with at-risk youth, had a gig as a radio news guy, and did a mediocre job as a short-order cook. He is a New Yorker by geography. A Mets fan by default.

Mayo Clinic

When Sal and I stopped laughing, we decided we were starving. Not in that empty cupboard, empty belly, haven't eaten anything in days starving. More that insatiable, singularly focused, pot induced starving.

We turned left out of the schoolyard and wove our way across Queens Boulevard. Traffic was light but steady for a Saturday afternoon. "Wooden Ships" blasted from a car radio as we neared Lansky's Market.

Once inside, we stopped by the Yoohoo display. That was when we realized that neither of us had any money.

Sal was undeterred as he grabbed a Yoohoo off the shelf, twisted the lid and drank. He passed me the bottle and I finished it, resealed the cap and replaced it on the shelf.

“You guys are stoned.” We turned and stared at Ray. We never hung out with him, maybe because he was a senior and had been working at Lansky’s for years.

“Possibly,” Sal laughed.

“You have no idea how wasted you look, do you?”

“Is this a multiple-choice question?” I asked.

“Okay,” Ray said, “Here’s what’s going to happen. You’re going to meet me out back by the trash. I’ll bring snacks. You bring the pot.”

“What if we don’t have any more pot?” Sal said.

“Then just leave the store and keep on walking.”

We made our way to the alley and waited. Finally, Ray appeared with two garbage bags. He tossed one in the dumpster and the other in front of me. Inside looked like the snack aisle. I tore open some twinkies while Sal passed Ray a joint.

By the second joint, Ray became talkative. We learned that his dad died when he was seven and it had just been him and his mom since. She was an ER nurse and Ray liked bringing home steaks and stuff and cooking dinners for her. Food he had taken out with the trash.

“Do you tell your mom how you get your discount?” Sal said.

“She doesn’t ask.” Ray shifted his focus. “There’s a dead mouse,” he said, pointing under the dumpster. “Wait here,” he said, jumping up and heading back into the store.

“Where would we go?” I asked.

“Ray just got interesting,” Sal said.

Ray returned with a jar of mayonnaise. He opened the lid, removed a spoonful, slid the dead mouse onto a piece of cardboard, and slipped it into the mayo, being careful that its face looked up. Then he resealed the lid. Tightly.

“I’m going to return this to the shelf,” Ray said.

“Someone is going to buy it,” I said.

“That’s the point,” Ray said.

“Kind of creepy,” I said.

“And funny,” Ray added.

“I wish I could see the look on whoever opens it and sees the mouse staring up at them,” Ray said. “I wish I could give this jar to every asshole customer who treats me like I’m nobody.” Ray laughed.

My mom shopped here.



A. Molotkov

is a supporter of Ukraine. His poetry collections are “*The Catalog of Broken Things*,” “*Application of Shadows*,” “*Synonyms for Silence*” and “*Future Symptoms*”. His memoir “*A Broken Russia Inside Me*” about growing up in the USSR and making a new life in America is forthcoming from Propertius; he co-edits *The Inflectionist Review*. His collection of ten short stories, *Interventions in Blood*, is part of *Hawaii Review Issue 91*; his prose is represented by Laura Strachan at Strachan Lit. Please visit him at AMolotkov.com

Under the Microscope

The little boy stared suspiciously out of his dark brown eyes.

“Can you tell us what happened?” The police officer was pale, freckled, with a confident thin face.

“I already told everything.” The boy averted his gaze.

“Right. But you didn’t tell *us*.”

The room was a mess of toys, clothes, balls, books. A beige apartment.

“Daddy was acting pretty weird.”

“How weird?”

“Weird.” The boy made eye contact again. “Will he be OK?”

“I don’t know, kid. I’m a cop; I don’t know about those things. What did your dad do that was so weird?”

“He...” There was a long pause. “He wouldn’t come out.”

“Come out?”

The boy just stared.

“From his office.” The mother spoke with a strong accent. “I just got back.” She sat on the floor, her back against the wall.

“How long was he in his office?”

The boy stared blankly, as if the question had made no sense.

“How long was he in his office?”

“I don’t know.”

“Did you try to talk to him?”

“Yes.”

“What did he say?”

“Nothing.” The boy shrugged. “Why wasn't he responding?”

“I don’t know, kid.” The officer jotted something down in his notepad.

“We’ll figure it out. Could you hear anything at all while he was in his office?”

“He was talking, but I couldn’t understand.”

“So he *was* talking?” A puzzled face. “Why couldn’t you understand?”

“He was talking in...like...a different language.”

“Were you scared?”

“No... a little scared.”

“Why were you scared?”

“I didn’t know what was going on because Daddy was not coming out and I didn’t know when Mommy was coming back and I was worried.”

“I see...What did he do then?”

“He ran out.” The boy was avoiding eye contact again. “He didn’t even notice me.”

“Did he look ok to you?”

“No.”

“What was not ok about him?”

“His clothes were all wrong and he was looking strange.”

“How strange?”

The boy shrugged his shoulders.

“Can you hold on one second?” The officer walked out of the kid’s room and joined his partner, who stood by the fireplace in the living room, fiddling with her phone.

“Do you think the father did it?” she asked.

“Probably. It’s hard to say. These immigrant families. You never know what to expect.”

“Exactly.”

“The kid’s testimony is no good.”

“No.”

Back in the small room, the boy tucked himself in his mother’s lap.

“How are you doing, sweetie?” The mother’s eyes were shadows.

“Good.” Uncertainty in the little boy’s voice. “Do you think they’ll find Daddy?”

“Yes. I think they will. I think they will.”



Jacqueline Freimor's

stories have been published in *Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine*, *Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine*, and *Rock and a Hard Place Magazine*, among others, and several are slated for publication later in 2022 in such venues as *Vautrin*, *Black Cat Weekly*, and *Instant Noodles*. One of her stories was selected for *The Best Mystery Stories of the Year: 2021*, edited by Lee Child, and another was selected for *The Best American Mystery & Suspense 2022*, edited by Jess Walter. Jacqueline is a music teacher and freelance editor who lives in Westchester County, New York.

After the Funeral

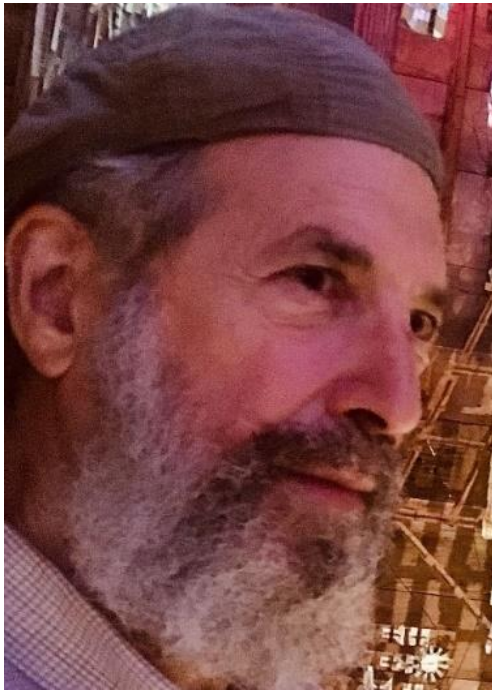
After the funeral, Mrs. Gutman is surprised by the generosity of her neighbors. She herself has not been a good neighbor. She hates Century Village, hates Florida, in fact, with its prehistoric reptiles, its violent sun.

Mrs. Goodstein brings a babka. Mrs. Fink brings pickled herring. Mrs. Stein brings offers of rides to the doctor, to the supermarket, to the movie theater. They pat her hand, these women, and welcome her to the sisterhood of widows. *At least you had a chance to say goodbye*, Mrs. Fink says, and

everyone nods and murmurs, *Yes, yes, it's a mercy, it's a blessing*, while their eyes sweep through the living room, appraising the furniture, the art, the heavy antique silver. Mrs. Gutman gazes through the window at the Cadillac glinting in the driveway. The car has lost none of its power for her, even though her husband is no longer enthroned in it. The windshield winks in the harsh afternoon light.

Such a lovely service! says Mrs. Stein, and again there is consensus, even from Diane. A runaway at fifteen, now married to a periodontist, Diane had flown in from Portland—another surprise—to deliver the eulogy. *My father was a difficult man*, Diane said, *but his bark was worse than his bite*. Mrs. Gutman, who has a better memory for such things, had bowed her head as though she were praying.

After the neighbors trickle out and Diane departs for the airport, Mrs. Gutman remains in the living room, staring out the window and listening to the ticking of the clock. When she is sure she is alone, she changes into slacks and fishes the keys to the Cadillac from his jacket. She is going to the Honda dealership to buy herself a car. No one is ever going to drive her again.



Ken Kapp

was a Professor of Mathematics, a ceramicist, a welder, an IBMer, and yoga teacher. He lives with his wife and beagle in Wisconsin, writing late at night in his man-cave. He enjoys chamber music and mysteries. He's a homebrewer and runs whitewater rivers. Please visit www.kmkbooks.com.

Gin, Dear

It was 4 o'clock. An evening breeze blew in from the ocean two miles away. The jitney left Marley and Kevin off beside the clubhouse and they walked directly to the deck. Marley carried a beach bag. Inside, a small insulated bag muffled the sound of the ice cubes in a large-mouthed thermos. Kevin clutched the official-looking pouch under his arms that contained two decks of playing cards and a thumb-worn scorebook. Mondays and Thursdays the old couple played gin rummy for an hour before going into the clubhouse for dinner when dinners were 10% off.

Marley removed the insulated bag and two plastic glasses from the beach bag. Kevin placed the cards and the 6 x 9 notebook opposite the glasses. He reached for the thermos as he sat down. "It's your turn to deal, dear; it's Thursday."

"I know, Kevin; I'm not dumb. We watch my favorite rerun...Wednesday at 8."

Kevin terminated the smile forming in the corners of his mouth as he poured chilled gin in the glasses. He was aware that Marley had struggled to

recall that it was “All in the Family.” *Marley’s becoming more like Edith every day.*

She shuffled and he cut the deck, placing it back in front of his wife of 47 years. They both took healthy swallows from their tumblers.

“Not so hot this evening, I think.” Kevin held his drink up, marveling at how little was left.

“No, the breeze helps. Be fall soon and all the snowbirds will be coming down. Do you think they’ll continue the Specials into November?”

“Nah, it’s the almighty dollar. You going to take that discard or should I draw?”

“Draw, I don’t want it. I dealt myself *dreck* again.”

“Dreck? I should be so lucky. I may have to start taking Metamucil again. And I’ve been drinking lots of water. Maybe we don’t get enough vegetables. Fred tells me he and Ethel have a salad every night.”

Kevin put down a meld.

“Four sevens? Where did that come from so early in the game? I watched you cut, Kevin.”

“You shuffled. Your turn to draw.”

Marley put down the empty tumbler and shook the thermos. “I think we need a bigger thermos.”

Kevin picked up the 10 of spades she had just discarded. It fit nicely between the 9 and Jack he held. He inverted the Jack of Diamonds on the discards, spreading the run next to his first meld. “Gin, Dear!”



Bruce Hoppe

As a journalist he was a multiple winner of The New Mexico Press Association's E.A. Shaffer award for writing. He is the author of two novels *Don't Let All the Pretty Days Get By* and *The Thomas Ladies Club*. His recent work has appeared in the *Sinking City Review*, *The Scarlet Leaf Review* and *The Potato Soup Journal Anthology Best of 2020*. He has taught writing at Colorado State University and New Mexico Highlands University. He has an MFA in Creative Writing from Antioch University-Los Angeles. When not at his writing desk he can usually be found horseback prowling Colorado pastures.

Take aholt

Lanny couldn't remember when it had first happened to him. When he'd first been on one when it took aholt— like this filly was doing now. That transformative instant when the juvenile pony first moves to block the cow on her own. No need to wait for a cue from him. Then the surge of bulging muscle and sinew against his thighs as she waits, hammer cocked in trembling anticipation of the next move. And no matter how many times since that first time, whenever it happened, whenever they first take aholt like that, Lanny always got a lump in his throat. And that was okay with him. Cowboys are aphorists. They're a sentimental lot given to laconic musings. To wit. "A woman's love is like the morning dew. It's just as apt to settle on a horse turd as

it is on a rose.” That was one that a famous author cribbed for inclusion in a novel. But now, as Lanny sat on this little filly and sensed the keenness in her shiver, he didn’t know anymore. Cutting horses. Horses that compete in a man-made contest by, with little direction from the rider, blocking a cow hell bent on returning to the safety of the herd. A mirror image dance of split-second pivots, spins, and dirt spewing sliding stops. What was he doing guiding her down this path to a life as a competitor? Where she would be measured not by her ardent heart but by the amount of money she won for her owners or worse to sate their vanity appetite for “bragging rights.” Just then the filly locked in, sinking down in a coiled squat and Lanny had to melt into the saddle to stay with her. A swish of a tail or a flick of the cow’s ear is all it would take for her to suspect a move and she was ready. That’s how it is once they take aholt like that, Lanny thought. No turning back now. She’s hooked. And he knew that he’d showed her the way to this, and she’d trusted his teachings. And she would accept them with abiding grace



E.P. Lande

was born in Montreal, but has lived most of his life in the south of France and in Vermont, where he now lives with his partner on a 500-acre farm. Previously, he taught at l'Université d'Ottawa where he served as Vice-Dean of his faculty and has owned and managed country inns and free-standing restaurants. Lande's stories have recently appeared in **Bewildering Stories**, **Literally Stories**, **StoryHouse**, and **The Pine Cove Review**.

Sisters

"What d'you think you'll do with Grandma's inheritance?" Linda asked her sister. They were preparing dinner for guests that Celine's husband Luke had invited, without thinking that it might be inappropriate considering his wife's grandmother had recently died.

"I haven't thought too much about it, frankly. Can you pass me the flour?" Celine told her.

"I might buy an apartment in Berlin," Linda said, taking the china out of the cupboard.

"Why Berlin? The eggs are on the door of the 'fridge; I need five."

"It's where it's all happening, didn't you know?" Linda told her, handing Celine the eggs. "It's where Hans lives," she added, in an undertone.

“Hans? Who's Hans?” Celine asked, as she began beating the eggs.

“He's my latest.”

“Linda,” Celine stopped beating the eggs and looked at her sister, “don't you think you should take a little time off? Last month it was Henri. The month before it was Gregor. Before Gregor it was Frederick. It's like, every time we speak, we're discussing the United Nations. Have you ever thought of dating a nice American boy?” Adding the flour and a teaspoon of vanilla, Celine began beating the mixture a second time.

“Nice American boys—as you call them—are boring.”

“Are you implying that Luke is boring, because if you are, you're right, but he's good in bed, and you know that that's important. Is the chocolate melted?”

“I like variety.”

“You're like Dad.”

“Except, he marries them,” Linda told her sister.



Michael Neal Morris's

most recent books are [*Based on Imaginary Events*](#) (Faerie Treehouse Press) and [*The Way of Weakness*](#). He posts regularly to the blog [*This Blue Monk*](#) and [makes music](#) as Device Flesh, sacramental, and Clique Bait. He lives with his family just outside the Dallas area, and teaches Composition and Creative Writing at Dallas College's Eastfield campus.

Outside the Harvest

Onboard the ambulance, a paramedic opened Marcus' wallet and removed the identification. He noted that the patient was 71 and an organ donor. Marcus, for his part, lay moaning low on the gurney and dreaming he was lost in a wheat field. At a clearing, a man with a sickle who smelled like his father, all sweat and smoke, nodded to him.

"You here for me?" Marcus asked.

The man looked at him as if Marcus had asked directions to the State Penitentiary, then without reply went to the edge of the field and began cutting down the tall stalks.

He opened his eyes and saw the paramedic tapping his clipboard, swaying when the ambulance changed lanes. The vehicle seemed to be moving too slowly for the pain in his head.

He asked, "Am I dying?"

The paramedic answered, "I don't think so. Those organs are all still yours." He added, "But you should try to take it easy until we get to the hospital."

Marcos thought reclosing his eyes would be the best way to show he was listening. There was no siren, he just then realized, only the beeps of the machine and the clipped voices coming from the paramedic's radio. Lights beat against the outside of his eyelids.

Before he awoke in the hospital room, he was in the field again. The wheat was stacked in neat bundles. The farmer was gone; his scent remained.



Taras Bereza

is a professional lexicographer at 'Apriori Publishers' with [10 published dictionaries](#). I have worked as a contributing freelance writer since 2006 and recently wrote for *Bacopa Literary Review* and *Freedom With Writing*. You are welcome to read my most recent publication [here](#).

A Boy in the Torn Jacket

Having survived a horror of an early morning bombardment, the boy in the torn jacket started seeking his mom first thing in the morning. With no whereabouts of her in the shelter all wrapped up in debris and rubble, Ian continued his own search mission full of faith.

“Where’s my mom,” a howling cry came from the abandoned 9-year-old kid. Removing remains of concrete, brick, and steel, Ian desperately attempted to uncover his mother’s body. The dearest soul would have hugged him tightly now, though there was no hope at all.

I stood and watched the scene in deep despair. The one I thought would have only been possible in war films or on CNN reporting on another calamity. What would I do in Ian’s place, or as one of those who had just lost their dearest and nearest?

Then, the aged man appeared as though from the middle of nowhere. He took Ian’s hand and asked his name. Unnerved and deeply depressed, the kid

would not mutter a word. The senior represented local Social service to collect homeless children after the night's turmoil.

Having lived through the dire straits of the orphanage, I tapped the man on the shoulder and offered to adopt Ian on the spot. A pair of bottle-green eyes that filled with a shock of loss suddenly shone with a beam of hope.

“Are you sure you'd cope?” the man reacted in disbelief.

“Yes, sir, I would,” I cut him short.

Over 20 years now, I have never regretted a lifetime choice that came through a snap decision I had made that wintry morning on the outskirts of the ghost town. Symbolically, Ian replaced us our once-unborn-child. Our ‘diamond in the sky,’ as we tend to call him.



Paul Germano

lives in Syracuse, smack dab in the center of New York State, with his dog April, a strong and charming Pit Bull mix. Germano's fiction has been published in roughly 45 print and online magazines including *Boston Literary Magazine, Bright Flash Literary Review, The Drabble, The Fictional Café, Microfiction Monday Magazine, Sledgehammer Literary Journal, Voices in Italian Americana* and *Word City Literary Journal.* In his nonfiction adventures, Germano has worked as an editor/writer for Le Moyne College, Syracuse University and *The Catholic Sun* and as a freelance writer for *Syracuse New Times, The Post-Standard* and *Stars Magazine.*

A Springer Spaniel Named Jerry

On a sunny day in his screened-in front porch, a Springer Spaniel named Jerry nervously gnaws away at a rawhide chew toy fashioned in the shape of a drum. His Mommy and Daddy are inside the house, arguing again.

Across the street, a young married couple in matching summer attire unload groceries from the trunk of their freshly-waxed Ford. "They're at it again, screaming at the top of their lungs," the young husband says, shaking his head in utter disgust.

“I wish they’d just move,” the young wife grumbles, “they’re ruining the whole neighborhood.”

On the screened-in front porch, where potted geraniums thrive on a table that gets plenty of direct sunlight, Jerry continues to gnaw at his chew toy, his tail completely still.

“Oh no, where the hell did the dog go!” his Mommy screams in a panic. “He was right here and now he’s gone! Jerry! Jerry!! Jerry!!!” The dog’s ears perk up when he hears his name, but he is clearly agitated by the tone of his Mommy’s voice.

“I bet you left the backdoor open!” she yells. “I don’t know what I’d do if something happens to him! If he got loose because of you, I’ll be ...”

“I never leave that backdoor open! Never!” he yells. “And you know damn well where Jerry is! You upset him with that big fat mouth of yours! He always heads for the front porch when you start up with all your yelling!”

“Me! You’re yelling way louder than me!”

“Oh shut the hell up!” he growls at his wife.

“No! You shut the hell up!” she barks back at him.

He knocks over a vase and she shouts, “Look what you did!”

On the screened-in front porch, the dog cringes at the sound of breaking glass, then continues to gnaw on his chew toy. The screen door flings wide open. The dog looks up, eyeing his Daddy. “Hey Jerry buddy, you know Daddy loves you,” he says in a warm voice, easing his lanky-legged self down onto the floor and putting a fatherly arm around the dog.

His wife, following after him, plops herself down on the other side of the dog and fusses with the pleats in her skirt. “Mommy loves you too,” she says, kissing the dog’s forehead.

“I was here first,” he tells his wife, using a forced pleasant tone so that he doesn’t upset the dog.

“Well, I’m here now,” she tells her husband in a tit-for-tat sweet voice of her own. They both pet their Springer Spaniel, all the while gritting their teeth and glaring at each other. When their petting hands collide, he says “oops” and she laughs lightly. “Sorry babe,” she says clearing her throat. “I’m sorry too,” he says in a whisper. They both continue to pet the dog.

Jerry, now far more relaxed, continues to gnaw on his chew toy, his tail wagging in full throttle.