

IN THE MARGINS

AV FLASH FICTION CONTEST WINNERS

Dear Readers: This is Artvoice's first foray into the wild world of "flash fiction," or fiction that weaves a tale in 1000 words or less. We hope to continue this contest annually, given the great response from Western New York writers. Forrest Roth, who teaches flash fiction at Just Buffalo Literary Center, was kind enough to judge this fall's contest, which asked writers to use the beloved Central Terminal rail station as their muse. Roth felt that Lou Rera's piece, "For the Birds," did the best job of "using the theme ingredient," and we thank Rera (pictured), an assistant professor in communication at Buffalo State College, for his entry. Look for stories from the two honorable mentions, **Todd Schoepflin** and **Jamie Ann Oakes**, online at www.artvoice.com.

"For the Birds"

by Lou Rera

Hey.
yeah you.
Yo, over here.
No-no, up here.
atta boy.

I've heard you want the truth. No sugarcoat-in'. Straight from the horse's mouth as they say. Anyway, first let me tell ya my feet are killin' me. I've been standing up here all day, like I do every day, but I won't bore you with my griping.

Ok then, back to your question. You want the lowdown on Buffalo's grand old Central Terminal, right? The city opened the doors in '29, the year of the market crash. The place had a big time legacy, fifty years-half a c-note. Granted, most of what I'm tellin' you is

straight from my knuckleheaded ancestors. Don't get me wrong, I mean no disrespect. One look at us and we're immediately stereotyped as a bunch of bird-brains. I'll have you know we're famous for picking out very intricate patterns. I'm digressing, sorry. Just go with the flow. Right? Right.

The place was a real beaut. Shades of real cracker-jack class, Art Deco kind of class. Mosaics, marble and yellow brick mixed with sunlight blasting in from cavernous windows, so bright it could make a bird sing. In those early days, the fedoras and women in their Pert hats seemed to glide across the terminal floor, stopping by the curved lunch counters for cup and a slice. The smells of coffee, peanuts and petroleum wafted up to our perch. We were fat back then, feasting on handouts and discarded food. Enough about us.

People would wait for family or friends to arrive—some went off to other places. The din of the crowd and the long black trains beat with a pulse that made the terminal jive. As the years bled into decades, hats gave way to beehives and Goodman stepped aside for Elvis. The slow decline grew like mold. Times have been tough on this old place. The bricks are chipped and the marble dull. The windows are broken and the tiles, filthy. The glitter and the glow, long gone, scarred by neglect and rust. Sights and sounds reverberate only as echoes of the past from footfalls of the long-dead.

I have heard the mutterings of restoration, of progress. The low note drone of revival and of rebirth. The city's identity is relentlessly tied to its past. Planning the plan, which hangs from a noose—decaying from a lack of movement. Money, oh glorious money, the savior of mismanagement and hard times. The problem is that you can't polish a jewel in a sea of muck.



PHOTO BY ROSE MATTREY

As for me, I stand up here, day after day, a scribe of the past and a soothsayer of the future. I twist my gray pigeon head up under my wings to pluck the tics and fleas that bother me. My brothers flank me left and they flank me right and we speak with a coo that is soft and mournful. We can see everything.

Now, I have only one request to make of you. Please move to the left a bit. I need to let a crap fly, down to the resting place of progress.

LITCITY

12/9

Spin-A-Storytellers. 6:30-7:30pm. *Stories of the Season* workshop for all ages. Central Presbyterian Church, 15 Jewett Pkwy. (833-6408).

Booksigning. 6pm. Author Paul Gromosiak. Borders Express, Boulevard Mall, 702 Alberta Dr, Amherst (833-8820)

Booksigning. 6-8pm. Meet travel author Christine Smyczynski. Waldenbooks, Galleria Mall, Cheektowaga (685-3477).

12/10

Booksigning. 1pm. Frank Thomas Croisdale. - 6pm. Sal Maiorana. Waldenbooks, 3701 McKinley Pkwy. (824-9484).

Booksigning. 1pm. Author John Koerner. Waldenbooks, Galleria Mall, Cheektowaga (685-3477).

Booksigning. 1pm. Author Christine Smyczynski. Barnes & Noble, 7370 Transit Rd, Williamsville (631-4755).

Spoken Word. 8pm. Njozi Promotions presents *A Brother's Perspective - Revisited*. Spoken word concert. Ujima Theatre Co./TheatreLoft, 545 Elmwood Ave (883-0380).

12/11

Children's Writing Workshop. 1-2:30pm. *Poetic Places: A Wall*, with poet and teaching artist Karen Lewis. For kids in grades 1-3. UB Anderson Gallery, Martha Jackson Pl. (829-3754); \$15 (registration required).

12/12

Booksigning. 11am. Carl Burgwardt. Waldenbooks, 3701 McKinley Pkwy. (824-9484).

12/13

Booksigning. 11am. Frank Thomas Croisdale. Waldenbooks, Main Place Mall (852-0806)

12/14

Booksigning. 6pm. Sal Maiorana. Waldenbooks, Galleria Mall, Cheektowaga (685-3477).

12/15

Booksigning. 11am. Author Christina Abt. Waldenbooks, Main Place Mall (852-0806)

Inks Audible: Live Poetry Radio. 3pm. *Earth's Daughters* editors Kastle Brill, Joyce Kessell, and Ryki Zuckerman will read from their work. With host Doug Manson. WHLD 1270 AM.

Great Books Discussion Group. 5:30pm. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, by Mark Twain. Hilbert

College, 5200 South Park Ave., Hamburg (649-7900).

RECURRING EVENTS

Children's Writers & Illustrators Group. 7pm, every third Thursday each month. Borders Books, 2015 Walden Ave., Cheektowaga (685-2844).

EM Tea Coffee Cup Open Mic Poetry Series. 7-9:30pm every Tuesday. EM Tea Coffee Cup Café, 80 Oakgrove Ave. at Hughes St. (884-1444).

Just Buffalo Writers Critique Group. 7pm, meets first and third Wednesday of every month. Open to just buffalo literary center members; call 832-5400 for membership details. Flux Gallery, Market Arcade Arts Centre. (832-5400).

Literally Speaking. 12:10-1pm, the third Tuesday of each month. Lunchtime Book Discussion Group. Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, 1 Lafayette Square (858-8900)

Moonlight Poetry Circle. 9pm, first Friday of each month. Share poetry informally through spoken word, song, music, art, etc. 289 Winspear Ave (upper). All are welcome. More info: (903-2884).

Northside Writers Group. 7pm, first and third Thursday of each month. Ascension Lutheran Church, 4640 Main Street, Amherst. (626-4204).

Send weekly literary event info (name, description, location, date, time, and admission) to: editorial@artvoice.com, subject "In The Margins" or fax to: 881-6682. Listings must be received by the Wednesday before publication for consideration.

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