The Music Room

by Perle Besserman

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Until the day Reuben Gelder, CPA, had a heart attack and toppled face down onto the 33rd Street subway platform, his workday routine hadn't changed much. But he had nearly died; his heart was irreparably damaged. Now he would have to retire and, on the doctor's orders, spend the next six months convalescing in his apartment.

Reuben had once played the violin. He had played it so well that a Hungarian named Baer had given him the opportunity to study at a famous conservatory in Budapest. A family man who couldn't afford to take risks (his wife had been expecting their first child at the time), Reuben had declined the offer, but he continued to play the violin for years, until finally, under the pressure of his domestic responsibilities, he'd quit playing and stored the violin away in its case, only reserving for himself the pleasure of collecting music scores.

Over the years, Reuben had collected thousands of scores, some very valuable. When his wife pestered him about selling them, he refused. The remnants of his musical career remained locked in the special cabinets he'd built with his own hands in the postage stamp-sized den he called his "music room."

Reuben's wife, Alice, resented the time he spent alone in the den poring over the frayed yellow and brown scores, some with the conductors' markings still visible between the staff lines and in the margins. It made her furious to think that valuable space in their crowded four-room condo was being wasted on Rueben's hobby. After his heart attack, she stopped badgering him about selling his music scores, but couldn't keep from nagging him about the space he was taking up in the den.

"There's no room for so much junk in here," she would mumble peevishly as she dusted around, over, and under Reuben, who sat gazing intently through a magnifying glass into a blue and white Entemann's box filled with Puccini scores.

One day, Alice stopped mumbling. She stationed herself in front of Reuben.

"I can't take it anymore! I'm going to work," she yelled.

Alice was a big woman with bony hands, purple varicose veins on her legs, and purple lipstick on her thin-lipped mouth. Reuben was drawing a caricature of her: knobby ankles, strawberry blonde-black-at-the-roots hair curling out in a Clairol Home Permanent frizz. He had recently discovered that he possessed a gift for drawing caricatures, which he had decided to keep to himself.

"Why? We no longer have a mortgage and have no trouble paying our maintenance fees," he said.

"It's not the maintenance fees that worry me. Barbara will need money for school next term. Did you forget that colleges cost money?"

"She can go to a city college for free."

"Ugh . . . you make me nauseous . . . it's no use talking."

Alice swatted the air with her feather duster and shuffled off into the kitchen, secure in the knowledge that her new check-out job at the locker room counter of the Jewish Community Center of East Flatbush would pay at least part of her daughter's tuition at Brooklyn College. Her ears were eager to be filled with the happy screams of the bingo winners in the rec room overhead and the slap of young bodies against the water in the pool on the other side of the wall. We need a mature woman like yourself, Mrs. Gelder. The director of the JCC, Mrs. Fox, had taken a shine to Alice from the minute she'd placed her best black patent leather handbag down on the reception counter and announced herself: "Ready to work, starting now."

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Reuben didn't mind when Alice left for work the following Monday morning. It was quiet in the apartment for the first time since he'd regained enough strength to lift his head from the pillow and ask for a little Farina. He could hardly remember a time when Alice's voice was not echoing through the rooms, either pushing the boy, Stevie, outdoors, ordering him around: "Ssh, your father's sleeping," in such a loud voice that he'd have sworn that she did it on purpose to get even with him for not dying, or shouting into the telephone to her sister in Florida that Reuben was as strong as an ox and would probably outlive her and the children both. Once he'd misplaced the remote and asked her three times to switch the TV channel; she called him a parasite and stomped out of the bedroom in a huff. He'd been studying daytime cartoons then, drawing them in secret on a sketch pad his daughter had left after she quit the live figure-drawing class at the JCC, on learning that the models would not be naked but draped in sheets for under-21s.

He didn't mind that Alice had left the house because he was planning to show the drawings to his son. He'd already completed fifteen perfect

reproductions of Donald Duck, Casper the Ghost, and Captain Hook, plus ten early-stage sketches of Batman and Spiderman, to which he had appended his own text, balloon dialogue and all. For his personal pleasure, Reuben was drawing a wild-haired portrait of Beethoven.

Stevie resembled Reuben and sided with him against the two women of the house–"the Amazons," as father and son secretly called them. Barbara was and always would be her mother's child, and Reuben–ashamed as he was to admit it even to himself–was repelled by his daughter. The hair-clogged brushes she left in a wet pool on the bathroom sink, the trail of cheap perfume and sticky sweet hairspray mist that wafted after her through the kitchen, spoiling his dinner. But Stevie . . . Reuben loved Stevie and wished for his son's sake to some day be well enough to lead his scout pack again. Number 224, red badge, white lettering, blue and gold uniform. Pretending they were trekking in the Himalayas, Reuben and his scouts had collected rocks on overnight field trips along the Hudson Palisades. (Reuben had taught the boys the proper pronunciation: *Himalyas*.) And though he was slight and bald and inclined to be sedentary, with the scouts alongside him, packs on their backs, canteens passing between dirt-stained fingers, Reuben imagined himself as much an outdoorsman as any blond, checker-shirted, pipe-smoking dad in an Eddie Bauer catalogue.

But to Reuben's disappointment, Stevie stayed out all day and did not return for dinner. Alice arrived at six-thirty full of talk about the marvels of the JCC–a little world in itself filled with life and fun and real people. She scowled at Reuben over the tuna fish dinner she had hastily tossed up in a plastic bowl.

"If you like it so much why don't you work nights there too?" Reuben said, aware of the twinge in his chest as he swallowed a mercury-laden lump of tuna fish.

"Wise guy."

"No, really. I'm not being sarcastic. I'm well enough to cook for myself; Stevie and I can manage dinner."

"My big shot invalid!" Alice slammed the refrigerator door shut behind her and placed a dish of two-day-old stewed prunes in front of him. "Here. They make you potent."

He hadn't touched her since his heart attack. He bowed his head over his plate and said nothing.

"You know, it's about time you crept out of the house already. Give that room a chance to air out a little maybe." Alice slurped her coffee.

"Where's Stevie?" Reuben asked.

Though he would never tell this to Alice, he had no wish to ever leave the apartment, had promised himself to live out his waning days in the music room, waiting for the mechanism propelling his inefficient heart to stop there, among the soundless vibrations of the masters, which, lying on his back against the crocheted pillows, he alone could hear. Like a failing metronome: tick . . . slower tick . . . ti-i-i-ck . . . then nothing.

"Maybe they'll give you a heart transplant." Alice washed her cup, looking down at the damp newspaper spread across the ridges of the sink to catch the blood of the chicken she'd been koshering with water and salt. "Says here, that Doctor Morris Burke–ha! Probably changed it from Berkowitz –head of the cardiac surgical team of Maimonedes Hospital, has announced to the press that his department is so back-logged that they're only taking on the most desperate cases . . . That's you, boy–a desperate case if there ever was one."

Picturing a new caricature of his wife as a huge clam with violet lips and a frizzy home perm, Reuben grinned.

"What are you laughing at? You think I'm kidding? Look at that guy on *60 Minutes*, quadruple by-pass and still has 'satisfactory sexual relations . . .'"

Reuben felt his heart twitch a second time. "Where's Stevie?" he asked again.

"He's at David's house doing homework. They got a geography project due next week. I let him stay over."

"Oh, do you mean David from the Scouts, the same David?"

"Yeah. You can't tear them apart, those two."

"That's okay . . . David's a nice boy . . . smart, too. His father's a lawyer, right?"

"Rich. They live in Park Slope, in a brownstone. The grandfather made plenty of money on black market during the war."

"Sure, sure . . . David's a nice kid, very polite," Reuben said dreamily.

He was glad she'd joined him in changing the subject. This was the fourth time in two weeks she'd pressured him about sex. The doctor had advised him to "go easy on relations . . . ." At first he'd tormented himself worrying about how hard it must have been for Alice–the massive, sex-starved hulk lying next to him in bed, complaining–about the heat, the cold, the lack of space–about how he never failed to jab his spiky knees into the small of her back, repeating ad nauseam her nightly promise to go to Sears the next day and buy separate twin beds.

Lying immobile, watching his wife prepare for bed, Reuben found it impossible to offer her even a token gesture of affection. He couldn't even get himself to tweak her titty and make her laugh the way he used to. Despite the nightly parade of sheer nightgowns and musky perfumes, Reuben hadn't responded to his wife's attempted seductions. Not that he was impotent. It was just that the hard knot of desire in him had petrified and was waiting to be loosened, but not by Alice. The Amazons had mixed things up. Instead of Barbara's growing to resemble her mother, Alice was becoming more like Barbara. Under his very eyes, his wife was turning into a grotesquely wrinkled version of their seventeen-year-old daughter. For all he knew, he might wake up one morning and find her wearing Barbara's tight leather miniskirt! The thought suddenly filled him with pity.

For her part, Alice was not the woman to find a lover among the swimmers at the JCC pool or go to a Catskills hotel in borrowed mink to buy herself a weekend gigolo. She would work and suffer and continue to get into bed wearing forty-two-dollar-an-ounce perfume in the hope of arousing her husband. Reuben had been an imaginative lover once (regard Stevie, the belated product of their middle-aged passion), and when she closed her eyes, Alice could slip into her fantasy of herself as a seductress–that is, until Reuben's heart attack put an end to their lovemaking, at which point she resumed the "domineering ways" she claimed to have inherited from her mother. Unwilling to give up what she felt marriage had entitled her to, Alice convinced herself that biding her time was the best way to reignite Reuben's passion. At least that's what she confided to Delia Katz, her closest friend and weekly canasta partner. After all, she'd pulled her husband out of the clutches of that Baer charlatan at the last minute, hadn't she? Prevented Reuben from ruining their lives by running off to play the fiddle–somewhere in Eastern Europe, no less. If she could do that, she could surely save him from impotence.

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Toward the end of March, Doctor Levy paid his promised house call. Alice cornered him on his way out.

"Doctor Levy . . . uh . . . will he be able to . . . to . . . go out for some fresh air soon?"

"Of course, he's doing very well, Mrs. Gelder, better than I expected. You must be taking good care of him."

"The best." Alice grinned, her face pale and expectant, the eyes behind her bi-focals dewy and sad.

"Take him out on a nice warm Sunday afternoon. The weather's starting to let up now, but not for too long. I'd say two blocks back and forth, with some rest in between . . . as long as you don't overdo it." The doctor edged past her into the hallway; he was in the usual hurry.

"Uh, Doctor Levy . . . uh . . . one more thing–"

"Yes, Mrs. Gelder?"

Alice folded herself into the petite, delicate woman living inside her. "Did you say something to him about . . . about having relations?" She spat out the word like a chunk of apple into which she'd bitten and found a worm.

The doctor didn't seem to notice. "I think it's all right now . . . but not too often. The heart's mending itself nicely . . . we wouldn't want to put any extra strain . . ."

"Oh, no! Don't worry. I was just asking. You know all that stuff about heart disease in the newspapers. I was curious, that's all."

Doctor Levy looked at her kindly. In a soft, almost tender voice, he said, "Once or twice in two weeks can't hurt. You be a good girl now." Then he was gone.

On the following Sunday, which began with a warm morning that by noon was bordering on hot, Reuben and Alice walked the two long blocks from their apartment building to the JCC. She had managed to convince him at the very last minute to accompany her to her half-day job by mentioning the swimming meet, and then only because their Stevie had entered as a contestant. The Gelder children had been admitted as honorary members of the Center "with all the rights and privileges pertaining thereto" from the time Alice had started working in the locker room. Barbara, who preferred meeting boys in cars far from the range of her mother's eye, stayed away from the dances held there on Saturday nights. Stevie, on the other hand, enthusiastically threw himself into every activity the Center had to offer: squash, swimming, writing for the JCC Newsletter; he had even enrolled in a seminar on "Israeli Life and Culture," informing his parents that in two years he would be old enough to join the Summer on a Kibbutz Program and was "going no matter what!"

Reuben found walking harder than he had expected; pins and needles traveled up his sleeping legs and he had to stop four times to rest alongside the scarred and dusty hedgerows that marked their route.

"The air is good for you. What's wrong, are you in pain? Here, lean on my arm."

For the fleeting grace of an instant he wanted very much to make love to her again. Then the urge passed, and they made their laborious ascent up the marble staircase fronting the dark brick building.

In the steaming JCC basement, he could hear the clatter of bowling pins in the alley across the hall, the stampeding thud of an aerobics class overhead, and the persistent roar of machinery pumping water into the pool over the shrill screams of the swimmers. He thought that he might faint. He sat down on a padded chair that two barefoot boys in black swim trunks had placed for him at a comfortable distance from the pool. Alice thanked the boys and stationed herself at her husband's side. Despite the noise, only a few youngsters had actually gathered in the pool; most were still in the locker room preparing for the race. Alice noticed that Reuben's shirt was soaked with sweat.

"How are you feeling?"

"Fine, fine."

"I can stay only a few more minutes; then I have to take over the towel concession from Fanny. Will you be all right?"

Other parents and friends, differentiated also by their street clothes from the swimmers, were gathering in little knots around the pool.

"Sure. I feel fine. Do you see Stevie?"

Alice scanned the pool. "No, not yet. He's probably still fooling around in the locker room. You know how long it takes him to get ready."

Reuben was pleased that his son, like himself, was slow and methodical, not frantic like the boys who were splashing up such a fuss in the pool, wasting precious energy before the race.

"Isn't that the boy . . . his friend, David?"

"Where?" Alice had removed her steamed-over bifocals and was leaning forward, wrinkling the bridge of her nose in a far-sighted attempt to see where he was pointing.

"There, in the yellow suit. That's him." Reuben clutched the arms of the chair and pushed his body to the edge with more energy than Alice had seen him exert for months.

"David! Hey, David boy!" Reuben yelled.

A small, well-built eleven-year-old boy approached them, shaking drops of water from his dark thatch of hair.

"Hi, Mr. Gelder. How you feeling?" called the boy in a sweet, high-pitched voice.

"How come we don't see you at our house anymore?" Reuben saw the stiff little knob bulging under the tight yellow satin between the boy's thighs and looked away, turning his gaze upward and smiling into the splendid youthful face of health.

"Stevie says you were too sick . . . that we'd make too much noise, so we been playin' at my house. Anyway, we have a porch, an' a basement–" the boy interrupted himself, his clear hazel eyes fluttering closed as he realized he was bragging.

"That's okay, son. You're right, I was sick, but I'm fine now. You come around some time and I'll show you a terrific collection I have at home . . . a contract signed by the real George Washington in his own handwriting . . . things like that."

"Gee, thanks Mr. Gelder. Maybe I will."

Alice looked down into her husband's face. She hadn't seen him so free, so talkative since he'd taken ill; he hadn't uttered half as many words to her in all that time, not nearly half as many as he'd just spoken to this rich little snot-nose kid. Was he playing up to him because of his father's money, or what? What could Reuben possibly have in mind, inviting the boy to see his personal, too holy collection that even she hadn't been allowed to touch all these years?

"How's next Tuesday, after school?" she heard Reuben ask above the din of the gathering swimmers taking their lanes in the pool.

"I'll try . . . thanks, thanks a lot, Mr. Gelder. Hope you get well soon. I gotta run now. Whistle'll be starting in a minute. There's Stevie, over there, coming out of the shower room now." The boy ran off in a streak of gold.

A pudgy man in a sweatsuit and track shoes emerged from behind a green door marked Staff Only. He pulled a whistle out of his pocket and blew an ear-shattering series of trills, then motioned for the boys to move behind the designated race markers at the edge of the water. Reuben gazed down at the aquamarine circles lapping against the sides of the pool, awaiting the slam of young bellies. He saw Stevie in his blue trunks with the red and white lifesaving patch on one side, waving to him, and remembered the first summer, the time he'd taken the boy to Jacob Riis Park and thrust him into the waves, watching him bob up and down in his white rubber donut. He remembered how the boy had demanded to be set free: "No donut, Daddy, Stevie swim plain . . ." his twig-like arms jutting out of Reuben's grasp, flailing wildly, his little chest heaving as he swallowed salt water and spat it up again with each desperate surge forward into the open sea.

The pudgy man blew a long piercing note on his whistle and the hard bodies of the boys hit the water like a thunderclap.

Just as she was about to leave, Alice saw her husband slump forward in his chair. His body twitched and his partially hidden face went slack, like the last time he'd made love to her, pulling out and releasing the final gush of his passion onto her belly.

"Reuben, Reuben! Are you all right?" she screamed above the cheers of the crowd and the pounding bodies of the swimmers against the water.

"I'm . . I'm not so good. Let's go outside. It's . . . it's too hot."

As she helped her husband out of the chair, Alice noticed that his pants were wet in front.

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"It's a slight relapse, nothing to worry about, Mrs. Gelder." Doctor Levy, it seemed, was always either inching his large body and bulky black bag out of her doorway or filling out prescriptions not fully covered by Reuben's insurance that cost her nearly half a week's pay from the JCC.

"Another heart attack?"

"Not really, but you'd better keep an eye on him. In these cases it doesn't pay to fool around." The doctor scribbled on his prescription pad, ripped off the page and handed it to her.

"Anything he shouldn't eat?"

"No, just the usual . . . no salt, only white meat chicken or fish, lots of vegetables . . . check the list I gave you if you're in doubt."

Now Doctor Levy was performing the second part of his disappearing act. Gray-faced and exhausted, Alice followed him to the door.

"You look as though you could use a little rest yourself, Mrs. Gelder. Why don't you make that big girl of yours give you a hand?"

"Ah . . . Barbara," she sighed. "Why should she waste her young life like I did? Let her enjoy what time she's got left being a kid." Alice accompanied the doctor out into the carpeted hallway. "Hideous, isn't it?"

"What?" The doctor gave her a quizzical look and pressed the elevator button.

"The carpet . . . those black stripes, like a funeral parlor."

"I never noticed. It's not all that bad." The doctor gave her a little wave and stepped into the elevator.

Succumbing to a childhood impulse, Alice avoided stepping on the stripes of the carpet as she walked back into her apartment. Reuben had fallen asleep over a book on *The Origins of Sound*. She switched her wallet and keys from her everyday tan to her best black patent leather handbag and, closing the door softly behind her, went to Sears to make the final payment on the twin beds she'd ordered.

Fifteen minutes after she'd gone, the doorbell rang. Reuben sprang up out of his dreamless doze with his heart pounding. The bell rang again.

"One minute!" he called hoarsely, needing to spit, for he had slept with his mouth open. "Who is it?"

No answer. Maybe he hadn't called out loudly enough. Pulling the blanket from his knees, he dropped his stiff legs over the side of the sofa and

nearly kicked over a shallow bowl of walnuts on the coffee table.

"I'm coming, I'm coming!" Thankful for the support of the refrigerator and the ironing board in his path, he shuffled to the door.

"Hi, Mister Gelder. I came to see George Washington. Remember?"

"David?" Reuben swallowed air and, intending to laugh, emitted a dry snort. "George Washington? Stevie's not at home . . . he's . . . he's at a troop meeting. How come you–?"

"Oh, I quit the Scouts. Since you left it's gotten boring . . . no hikes anymore . . . nothin' like that. Just a lotta speeches n' lectures n' stuff."

Reuben felt hot, then dizzy. Seeing him about to fall over, the boy held out his hands and braced him.

"Hey, you're not feeling good again. Here, lean on me." The boy smelled the parched, disagreeable odor of the man's breath as he helped him back to the sofa. But he could stand it. After all, Stevie's father had been a lenient Scout leader who knew a lot about a lot of interesting things and he listened when you talked, not like his own father, who was always talking about business to his mother at the dinner table and never came to swimming meets or soccer matches. As long as he didn't have to sit close to Stevie's dad and smell his breath it was okay.

"You promised to show me George Washington's own personal real signature."

Reuben's hands were trembling. "Of course, at the swimming meet, right?"

"Uh huh." The boy's hazel eyes wandered expectantly over Reuben's face.

"Did you win?"

"What?"

"The match . . . did you win the match?"

"You mean the meet."

"Yes, the meet. I got sick and had to leave and forgot to ask Stevie who won."

"No, Ernie Wunderlicht won. His father owns a camp and he trains all year round so he always wins."

Reuben permitted himself to loll in the reckless silence filling the space between the hassock and the sofa. Then he said, "But you came to see my George Washington signature . . . and you probably don't have much time, so . . ."

"I have plenty of time," the boy said eagerly. "Stevie said to meet him here, and my mother said I could stay out till dinner, so it's okay."

With a hurried, almost annoyed gesture, Reuben motioned the boy toward a glass-fronted cupboard stacked with books and papers. "Get me that pile over there, son."

David stood and did as he was told. Reuben tried to keep his eyes away from the boy, tried desperately not to see the heart-stabbing rumpled corduroy pants, tried not to stare at the blue baseball cap with the white felt Yankee emblem. He tried so hard to avoid his gaze from the boy that his heart nearly stopped with the strain. Stevie. Where in God's name was his son?

David handed him the stack of papers.

His voice cracking, Reuben said, "It's in here somewhere. I'll have to look for it a minute. Here . . . have a walnut." He removed a walnut from the bowl and tossed it to the boy, who caught it single-handedly.

"Good catch!"

The boy tried unsuccessfully to crush the walnut in his fist.

"Here, let me see that," Reuben said.

David sat down next to him on the sofa and handed him the walnut. Reuben planted it on the table, raised his fist and came down on it hard. Seeing the shell crumble into pieces, the boy giggled. Reuben picked out the meat from between the shell fragments and scooped it into one hand.

"Here, take it," he said.

David smelled the man's terrible breath again but didn't want to hurt his feelings by moving away, so he remained sitting on the sofa alongside him. Breathing through his mouth, he stared down at the crumbled walnut bits in the man's lined yellow palm. "No thanks. I really hate nuts. Sorry you broke it for nothing."

"That's okay," Reuben made a flip gesture with his shoulders and passed the contents of his palm in a sleight-of-hand rush, making the nuts disappear behind David's ear before transferring them to his own mouth and swiftly swallowing them.

"Just like the Amazing Randy," exclaimed the boy.

In his hurried transfer of the walnut bits, Reuben had neglected to chew them, and a little mound was now lodged in his windpipe, causing him to cough.

"Down . . . the . . . wrong . . . pi-pi-pi," he sputtered

"Hey, let me get you some water." Glad for the excuse to escape, the boy was about to get up from the sofa.

"No . . . here . . . hit me . . . between the shoulders." Reuben gestured toward his back and David noticed for the first time that Mr. Gelder's fingers were long and webbed at the base. He hung back and stared. But fearing that he'd be blamed for letting Stevie's father choke to death, he started slapping Reuben on the back, his hands curling into fists at the man's exhortations to hit him harder. Soon, with tears welling up in his eyes, David found himself furiously punching away at the man's back until, mercifully, the coughing stopped.

Reuben dropped his hand on the boy's knee.

David froze.

Only the sound of Reuben's breath whistling through his nose broke the silence as his hand travelled along the rust-colored corduroy toward the boy's thigh. Rutted with blue veins, like the snake David had once seen crawling up a tree during a hike along the Palisades, the man's hand inched upward until it came to rest inside his crotch.

Suddenly a key rattled in the front door lock. David jumped up from the sofa with a cry and ran to the kitchen to help whoever was fumbling outside, trying to open the door.

"Stevie! Stevie!" It was a caress, a sob.

"David? Hiya . . . you shoulda seen . . . hey, something the matter with you?"

"Stevie! Did you know your dad had George Washington's personal signature? He just showed it to me."

"Aw, so what? Don't have to make such a stink over that. I seen it a million times. Any cake around here?"

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In the den that he had built with his own hands and called his music room, Reuben got up from the sofa, stood on the hassock, and reached up to the high shelf where he had hidden his violin case. It was scruffy and peeling at one end, and the brass catch had long since ceased to function as a lock. He stepped down from the hassock with the case cradled in his arms, lost his balance and fell over backwards onto the sofa among a few remaining walnut shells. After righting himself, he removed the violin and inspected it under the accordion-pleated shade of a nearby floor lamp. It did not surprise him to find that every last string was broken.

Recipient of the Theodore Hoepfner Fiction Award and past writer-in-residence at the Mishkenot Sha'ananim Artists' Colony in Jerusalem, Pushcart Prize-nominee PERLE BESSERMAN was praised by I.B. Singer for the "clarity and feeling for mystic lore" of her writing and by Publishers' Weekly *for its "wisdom [that] points to a universal practice of the heart." Her autobiographical novel* Pilgrimage *was published by Houghton Mifflin, and her short fiction has appeared in* The Southern Humanities Review, AGNI, Transatlantic Review, Nebraska Review, Southerly, *and* Bamboo Ridge, *among others. Her creative non-fiction publications have been recorded and released in both audio and e-book versions and translated into over ten languages. Her most recent book, combining memoir, storytelling, and women's spiritual history, is* A New Zen for Women *(Palgrave Macmillan). She has lectured, toured, taught, and appeared on television, radio, and in two documentary films about her work in the US, Europe, Canada, Australia, Japan, China, and the Middle East. Perle currently divides her time between Melbourne, Australia and Honolulu, Hawaii.*

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