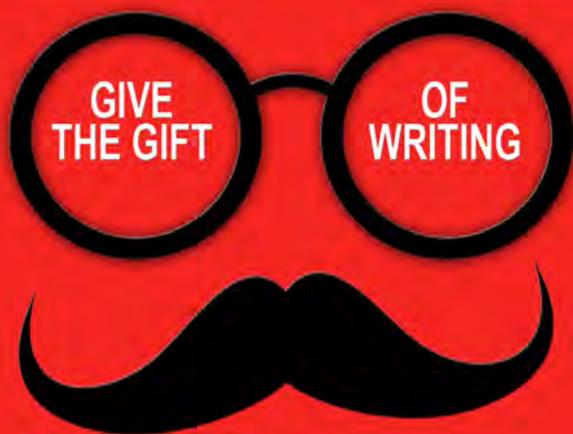


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“How I hate those who are dedicated  
to producing conformity.”

— William S. Burroughs

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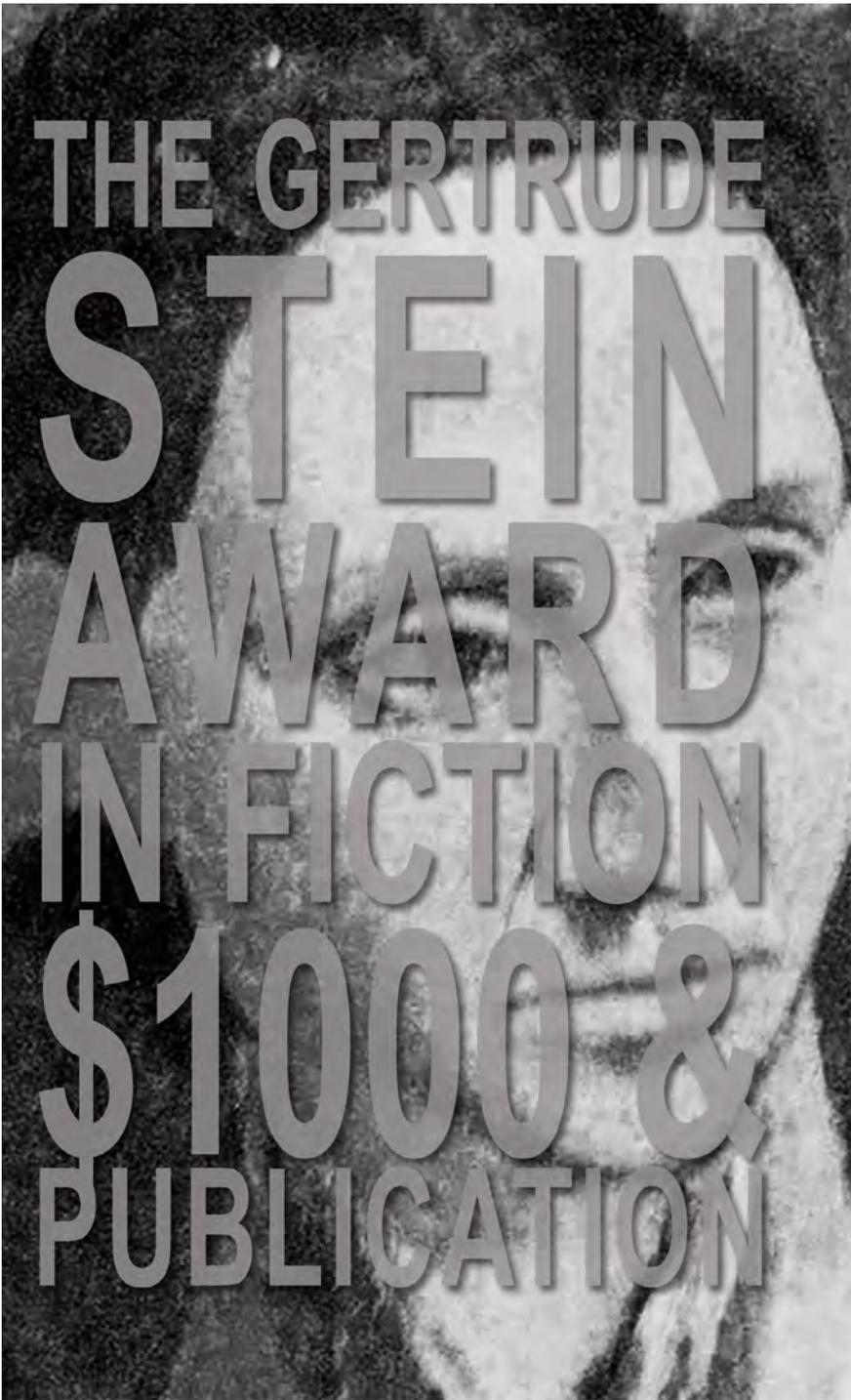


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# Wild Things

ANITA FELICELLI

**T**he first day Siena invited them up for chamomile tea, Malik held one of the fragile, downy white hatchlings in his hand. Jenny never wanted to hold them. Siena and Malik gazed at the finches as they hopped on and off the millet spray, their red and orange beaks pecking eagerly, but the finches were something foreign to Jenny.

Siena stands in the apartment doorway now, showing off her belly again, interrupting. Jenny had been writing her latest erotic encounter—a man and woman painting each other in gold and jade green. Stretched out on ivory silk sheets with the trade winds blowing. She hadn't written the ending yet. She barricades the entrance with her body, but Siena scoots past, oblivious. "Sure you guys don't want some finches? When Malik stopped by yesterday, he was playing with the nestlings again." Siena pats her swollen belly and glances at the ginger couch, before sitting down, legs crossed, on the hardwood floor.

"All that warbling might drive us crazy," Jenny says and resigns herself to Malik's plush russet armchair.

"Shane didn't like them much at first either. Thought they were too neurotic, but now we let the adults fly all over the apartment. If you change your mind, they're constantly mating. Eight eggs in this last batch and more of them all the time."

"Can I get you coffee or something?"

"No, no, no. I just had my carrot juice upstairs. The other reason I came down is to see if you and Malik wanted to go camping with us in a couple of weeks."

Siena is a transplant from the other coast. Jenny suspects Siena only pretends to like raw carrot juice and transcendental meditation and psychics. Probably she secretly binges on Oreos like everyone else. "Thanks, but we're city mice."

"Oh, there's no such thing! Camping's for everyone. It'll do us all good to get out of this pollution." Siena slides her alexandrite pendant back and forth along the slim silver chain around her neck, so that it blinks in the afternoon light, first mossy green, then raspberry. She fashions crystal jewelry for a living, wrapping gemstones in silver wire, sometimes adding beads, and she wants to move her miniature business and Shane to the Siskiyous.

After the Fourth of July fireworks in San Francisco, they strolled back to the train station. Siena, stroking her large belly, looked around at the littered streets, the greasy bits of fried calamari, half-eaten hot dogs and fluttering bubble-gum wrappers, abandoned light sticks, and confetti. "Who will clean this?" she asked Jenny, who was unsure of whether Siena intended the question as a kind of polemical opening to an argument or whether she wanted the kind of technical response that involved knowledge of the city sanitation. Nobody answered.

"You see, this is why we need to move back to nature," said Siena, clarifying the intent behind her question. She poked Shane.

He laughed. "I'm an architect, not a forest ranger, Siena."

Siena smiled, and wrapped an arm around her boyfriend's waist, nestling against his chest. Jenny was sure it was an act.

"How about a compromise? I'll take my vacation time next summer. We can travel around America together like outlaws, hopping freights, hitchhiking, walking."

As they boarded the train, Malik whispered to Jenny, "See,