

Fragile Bread

One writer's humble homage to Gertrude Stein

An acrid smell hits first. A jarring, jostling, jolt. At home alone my nose picks up the odd aroma. Sharp and foul. I scowl.

Dedication at my work station. I must resist distraction to gain satisfaction from my current exercise. This exercise to utilize, like certain spices, literary devices, to better tone and hone my writing style with alliteration, repetition and a well-timed rhyme to set a certain rhythm to my work. My work is to write, to get it right, so I ignore this early morning warning of some distant senseless scent. I'm too busy for a tizzy.

Domestic partner out of the house, leaves no one to grouse to, no friend to send on an investigation of this odd olfactory sensation. I need this morning moment to work at forming words, unhurried, unworried about the whirling world beyond my desk. Words I craft should fill a need, should feed readers hungry for recognition, a spark of ignition into action. I offer in my meager monthly column but a fraction of reparations long overdue for lack of reflection of queer lives, dear lives, too long ignored by the hordes.

Distracted from my task, I ask, why the acrid air? The brain a sleepy question mark gropes drowsy dark synapses, as time elapses, to draw meaning from the odd aroma. What the hell? What's that smell?

Yes, yes, the brain confesses, a memory of buttered toast. Toaster oven set on high to melt cold pats upon my morning bread. Bread too fragile to withstand hard yellow squares too stiff to spread. Spread on bread placed in oven to soften, to relax, to be rendered spreadable. Edible. Placed and left, as I undeftly struggle with my task.

Acrid scent now brings me elsewhere. Into the kitchen where smoke is in the air. The brain, this moment sane enough to grab a hot pad first. A burn would only make worse this error. This error of timing, of judgment, of home economics. Nothing comic. Judgment out the window. Like so much smoke.

Smoke clouds billow past the window sill. Bright orange flames leap out of the toaster oven door. It's a fire. Fire! Flames leap higher.

Put it out! No one to shout to. I huff then thrust one strong gust. My breath only a fan to the flames. Danger no longer ignored, I reach toward the socket to unplug the cord. Flames oddly soft against my arm. No harm. The same as that game finger-through-the-candle-flame. Unplug. Some relief. But brief.

Now, what? An activist must act. Face the fact that I need water. Water sitting pretty in the Brita pitcher from last night's dinner might not be enough. Tough. Splash. Then crack.

Hot glass bursts, hurls black shards, scatters hot wet blackened charred bits. The water sizzles. Then sits. That's it. The fire is out. Doused. Two black slabs now soaked, forlorn, lie there exposed, in charcoal repose.

When crafting prose, I suppose I should follow my nose.

Award-winning writer Sally Sheklow has plied her craft in Eugene Weekly since 1999.



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Gather at the Eugene Public Library, Walk to Federal Bldg, 7th and Pearl, for a 12:30 Demonstration with music & dance.
Followed by a walk to the public forum at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, 13th & Pearl.

2-5 pm: Public Forum - St Mary's Episcopal Church

Speakers:

⊗ Leah Bolger, Co-coordinator
Campaign to Keep Oregon's Guard in Oregon
⊗ Anita Weiss,
U of O International Studies Program

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⊗ Afghanistan - Pakistan
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⊗ and more.

5:30-7 pm: Community Celebration at COZMIC Pizza, 8th & Charnelton

⊗ Presented by **Take Back America Coalition** info: CALC, 485-1755, calcdev@efn.org ⊗

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