

up on the viewscreen. The mother bends closer to stare at the name.

As she straightens up, she notes the tracking device is intensifying in sound, frequency, and proximity of location. Could the second lottery sacrifice be one of her numerous neighbors? What luck! She wouldn't have to go far.

A hesitant knock sounds on her door. Her tracking device now pounds faster than her own heartbeats did when she determined she was pregnant. She peers again at the screen, puzzled to see her reflection show her own headband glowing.

She opens the door to a short woman holding a howling tracking device and also wearing a glowing headband.

"My pregnancy test turned blue this morning," the short woman says.

They both pull out blades.

Scott Brian Blanke is a retired Mayo Clinic surgeon, and a member of both Mississippi Valley Writers Group and La Crosse Area Writers Group. Scott has published several flash fiction, a short horror story, and a travel story with photographs.

Paper Hearts

by Adrianna McCollum, Madison

Her husband
left her years ago
and even though she
cut out pretty pink paper
hearts for her
students
every year on
Valentine's Day,
she had given
up on
love.

Adrianna McCollum is a new Wisconsinite and a proud member of the Wisconsin Writers Association. She is a published writer of poetry, fantasy fiction, and memoir essays.

Failure to Coexist

by S. Acevedo, Milwaukee

You get some cats, thinking they'll get
along with the others.
You introduce them the right way, you take
your time.

They're curious about each other,
the new ones, smaller, lighter, more
delicate underfoot.

They're girls, tiny compared to the boys,
adorable, sweet sisters to keep each other
company as the boys have.

But they're distrustful.

They hiss.

They growl.

Their chase turns into a swat, swats turn
into brawls,
the boys' home is theirs no more.

Fearfully, the boys hide.

They slink, they lose territory, they lose
confidence in their own spaces.

Humans struggle to make it work,
co-playing, bribing treats, calming scents,
every known method, hoping to make
friends.

They fail, the newcomers fail, fate fails,
peace fails.

Hearts will be broken.

No one wins when it's time to re-home.

But, NO,

all will eventually be better.

Everyone deserves to live peaceably.

And in the aftermath, the introspection:
peaceful co-existence should be easier
within all species,
no matter their histories.

Silvia Acevedo is an award-winning children's book author and co-founder of Fantasy Art Workshop's Illustration Intensive. She's worked in New York publishing at Scholastic, Inkluded Academy, and literary agency Writers House, and previously led the Wisconsin chapter of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.