Hello, I’m Nico Mara-McKay

I have been writing and editing professionally since 2010, and in that time I have copyedited print and online magazines, managed freelancers, assessed pitches, assigned stories, scheduled content, and developed an in-house style guide and lexicon for two magazines.

As an editor, I use my education, experience, and expertise to address copyediting issues like spelling, grammar, and syntax, as well as substantive issues like content, clarity, and flow.

My role as an editor is to help make manuscripts more accessible to readers. This is a collaborative process with the author and publisher. My job is to help the author’s voice ring clear, not to impose my own writing style and preferences, while also adhering to the house style guide and lexicon.
Broken Pencil
down at the black and white checkered tiles below his
running shoes. They were comfortable, but staid. Maybe too comfortable. He’d need a new pair.
He looked confident, this man that stood with his
shoulders leaned back and his hips pushed slightly for-
ward. The first word that came to Lionel’s mind was
broad. It was a strange word to use to describe sexual
 technique, but it seemed fitting. More, More than
 fitting.

Rigol.
Soll.
Rigol.
Proper.

Lionel was positive that this was the way kings of
the past had moved, in an open, yet unhappy, stance. He wished he’d passed that way more often as a young
man. He wondered if he could start now, if it was too
late for him to change everything.

Then there was the quality of the bearded man’s
stream. It sounded thick. Hearty. Masculine. If Lionel
had been a verbal type, he would have had to com-
 ment on it. This man had been his type; he’d been
deadly proud of him. And the silver of water he glimmered in at the base of the man’s urinal wasn’t the least bit yellow.

He probably made a good point to stay hydrated.
Probably, at least foods that were good for his prostate, and
plenty of greens. It seemed as if this man could piss,
would piss, forever. There was no way that he got up
multiple times a night to urinate. No way there were
piss sprinkles left in his underwear after he’d tucked himself back in.

It wasn’t until the man had stopped piss ing, and
shook off, and zipped up, and turned to face Lionel,
that Lionel realized what he’d been paying. He’d been
giving this gentleman he’d been peering between the
man’s arm and the metal divider for too long.
And what he was looking at anything in particular, he
couldn’t have seen that if he’d wanted to. He was just evaluating flow pressures from more than just
an auditory standpoint, just appreciating this man’s
sexual vitality. And that stance was powerful. But
only Lionel’s father would understand that kind of
reasoning. And Lionel’s father was strange by most stan-
dard, and dead by years now. And suddenly he wasn’t
looking under the bearded man’s arm, but at the
bearded man’s chest and face and beard, his eyes con-
tinuing upward. He stopped as the man’s thick eye-
brows arched over his piercing, blue eyes.

But this wasn’t a man. It was a boy with a man’s
height and width, and facial hair, and lead pipes for
arms, and gnarled veins. He couldn’t have been more
than Sheriff’s age. A child really.

He had hoop earrings in both of his ears. Not
big hoops, but small hoops.

What did that mean, exactly?
Lionel couldn’t remember.

Two small hoops. It was code for something that
Lionel didn’t understand.

Then just as quickly as he’d taken this all in, Lionel
shook his head back towards the wall in front of him,
his uncircumcised penis still in his right hand, and this
bearded stranger standing next to him. The man con-
tinued to stare at him. Breathing on him. Lionel knew
how guilty his turning away looked. An innocent man
doesn’t turn away like that, not while using the middle
urinal.

Lionel wanted nothing more than to put his
shriveled penis back in his pants. But he couldn’t,
because first, he had to shake. And a proper shaking
was an embarrassment at his age. He didn’t want the man-
boy to think he was finishing himself off or something.

How many shales were considered masturbation now-
adays? What constituted a shake over a jiggie over a
felony offense? What kind of message was he sending
by shaking, or not looking, at this man right now? Was
it better to say something or remain silent? Didn’t a
greater play footsy with someone in the stall next to
him one? How many earrings did that man have?

Were they big or small? Whatever became of that?
Lionel refused to turn from the wall. His pride
wouldn’t allow it. He willed himself to pass through
the wall and into wherever.

This wasn’t anything like the other positions he’d
recently put himself in. This was uncharted and
unwanted territory. He wished there was some way
to go back in time and choose the remedy over the
bookstore. He felt beads of sweat sprout all over his body. The man-boy next to him shook his head and blew one last, long, slow breath through his nostrils like some dragon on that HBO TV show everybody couldn’t get enough of. The dragon-man-boy brushed his shoulders then turned and slowly walked to the sink; his wallet-chain jangling at his side like a tiny broken shackle. Lionel heard the water running behind him, the gurgling stream being broken by hands, the knish squeezing shut. A paper towel dispenser was torn and was crumpled. The water turned on again. The metal lid of the garbage can stopped hard enough to keep it swinging on its hinge.

Lionel jumped and screamed a polyphonic high pitch scream, rising and falling quickly, becoming a whimpering, sputtering wail as he felt the splash and spray of a wet and crumpled something hit and slop down the back of his head. Felt it slide off. Heard it splash on the baseboard.

Instantly, he felt stupid, knew that he hadn’t been hurt, only scared. Not scared, but humiliated by this bearded dragon-man-boy throwing a wetted paper towel at him. Still, just to make sure he wasn’t hurt, Lionel reached his fingers back to where the holding was taking over. His hand felt wetness too cold to be blood. This was his presence for using the middle stall, for seeking scars near to people on bases, for wanting a hand to accidentally grab his on the throat for going to the grave and telling Ethel all about it.

Lionel stood there now, at the bookstore bathroom’s middle stall, not moving. Wishing the towel had stuck to his head so he could focus on the point of pressure and not the spot of shame.

“What the fuck’s wrong with you, old man?” the dragon-man-boy said. “What the fuck?”

Lionel nodded to himself. He deserved it. He closed his eyes around it and waited for whatever was coming next.

Eventually the door to the bathroom slammed into the rubber grommet on the tile wall and splattered shot again.

Bathrooms are always tiled. Urinals are always porcelain. Grommets are always rubber.

It was a long time before Lionel stopped shaking. A long time before his eyes opened again. But no matter how long he stood there, before rising up, he knew there would be pin sprinkles in his underwear after tucking it.

And that’s when he started to cry.

* * *

Jason Arias lives and works in Portland, OR. His debut short story collection is scheduled to be published by the end of 2018 through Black Bees Books. To read [or listen to more stories by Jason](http://www.jasonariasauthor.com)
SHE POPS A JUICY FRUIT to combat the taste of smoke and the sting of old house settling into her unbrushed teeth. She chews and the tangy juice of spit threatens to fall from the sides of her mouth as she smiles. The sun has only just started to rise, the sky still blue and purple just like the two little bruises that have formed below her belly button, the imprint of Jake's knobby hip bones as he got on top last night with his eyes closed.

After a while, the Juicy Fruit loses its flavor so she spits it out onto the curb. She swings her arms as she walks. She wants a cup of coffee.

The coffee shop has a series of paintings on the wall. In the first, a black stallion is being chased by a pack jack full of cowboys standing up in the back, lassoing out. The second is of the same stallion with a barrette on its head, rearing up, the rope tied to a fence. Another is of the stallion, running free, with nothing but the wind pushing through the long grass in the background.

The fourth is the stallion in a stall, biting at the wooden door. The last is of the stallion on the ground, ropes tied around its legs, binding them together, cowboys all around. She gets her coffee, puts lots of cream and sugar into it.

She knows she is bleeding into the crutch of Jake's prim prom tuxedo as she walks. Yesterday her mother had done her makeup, put her curlers into her hair. Her father had put on a nice shirt and bought a hundred-dollar bottle of champagne for her and Jake. He looked into Jake's eyes and smiled as their glasses clinked. Here's to your special day. Then they all got into Daddy's car and drove to the hotel.

She knows there is no going back from womanhood now, and for that she is glad. She knows that if she doesn't make it back home before six, her dad will wake up and find out and he won't be able to look at her. But she's not going home. Jake's tail fits her perfectly. She sips her coffee out on the sidewalk and
decides her plans for the day. He's going to find a pen and dip her feet in it, he hot and cold at the same time.

She finishes her coffee and steps into a pharmacy, goes to the back, buys a package of Plan B.

All the girls had bought their dresses, the boys only rented their tuxedos. Jake's was a rental, it was due back today, but he is going to have to charge it down if he wants it back. She puts the pills in her backpack and heads toward the park.

Her dress would've been brought by Karen. Her dress was blue. Then she picked a white one in the store but her mother said no so, white is for your wedding day. Her shoes were black and her dress was red, tight.

The class of 2016 sat down for a meal. She sat at a round table beside Jake out of obligation. She watched him, head shoved close to the scalp, and remembered when he'd arrived at her school in grade six. She remembered how he'd gotten a beer in a class and how he'd told everybody that his brother was in the Christian rock band Switchfoot. He'd run around, jumping off the stumps of the trees in the playground they'd cut down in the summer season.

On her other side at the table sat Nicky Malvern. In grade four Nicky didn't want to be called Nicky any more, he told the teachers and the whole class, he was Nick now, even Nicholas would be better. They started talking over their chicken breast and salad. Turns out Nicky was a rock climber, was going to Yellowstone with his club on a summer clinic. He talked about his club, people from all over the city, mostly in their twenties and very cool folks.

Fuck, she thought, as Jake poured half a flask of vodka into his orange soda.

Nicky smiled as he talked about the sunsets on the flank of Mount Washington.

Her mother had given her a half dozen at Christmas, in case she might need to bait the conception of a child. Just in case she might want to eat some cookie dough from the tube. She buys double chocolate chunk and asks the teller to cut the top for her, she does not need a bag.

She can only eat half her cake, checks the rest out. She's skipping a bit as she walks, is lighter now that her cherry has popped. The black jacket of the suit still smells like him. But she knows she's no more as stronger than he, so she starts to run. Sweat pours down her face, her eyes become red and strings it tastes bad.

Jake convinced his father to put his credit card down for the hotel room for the after party. When she'd woken up that morning she looked at her little naked butt peeping from under the covers. She took his tie and feders into the bathroom and put them on, leaving him naked but her red dress and high heels. She picked her hair into the mini bun, saw the mini bottle of champagne he'd told her not to take the night before because her dad wouldn't pay for it. Now she can hear it slosh back and forth in her backpack. She arrives at the pond, finds a nice flat rock to sit down on. There are stipes of water where the strips of her backpack were resting on her shoulders. She takes the jacke off and dips it into the cold water, puts it back on with a sigh of relief.
## Compare Revisions of “The structure of our circles: 10 lessons in community building”

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Recently, I did a number of informal surveys and interviews with prominent leaders, volunteers, teachers and organizers, mostly localized in the Ontario region but practicing from a wide variety of modalities. I was rather curious about the way in which leaders operate within our communities and the ways in which the idea of a "clergy" might come about in our very loose and organic groups. In the hopes that I may provide some insight into the future of the community between Witches, I would like to share some of the insights I have gleaned from speaking to these powerful, magical women.

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When we are first starting out in the path, we may connect with a teacher of this path or that, we might take classes and workshops but, often, there is this sense that we are called to learn and there isn’t really one single person who is willing (or able) to lead us. We are left trying to locate allies, to practice when and where we can and to try to build upon our experiences until we have a practice of our own. It is this journey where we begin to build the skills and competencies that will carry us along the way for the rest of our lives. It is in this journey, that we begin to build the networks that will begin to form into our communities.

Related:
Creating your altar: A beginner’s
A vitally important part of our development as practitioners is to delve into our own work. We learn from those around us and are enriched by their work, but in order for communities to truly thrive and grow, we need to be able to bring our own resources to the table. That’s not to say that we...
expect them to carry us. We need to move forward under our own steam. </p>

There may be times when we can't walk on our own, and a beautiful thing about humanity is that we have people who will offer up help to us in our time of need, but as we heal and as we become stronger, we are increasingly expected to not only pull our own weight but to become strong enough to carry others when they falter. The resiliency of a community comes from our ability to be strong for one another in whatever way we are able. I may not ever be able to physically carry another person, but I can shoulder their emotional pain for a time, I can help them through a crisis, or give advice. I develop my resources and put them in service of my loved ones. It is the gift that I offer to the collective, the gift of myself. </p>
Highlights

- More than ten years writing and editing literary and trade publications, online and print magazines, community news, social media marketing, and academic writing
- Demonstrated skill in digital and oral communications, writing, developmental editing, and copy editing; developed in-house style guides for two magazines
- Passionate about community engagement with a desire to learn from and share knowledge with others

Experience

- Copy editor for Broken Pencil Magazine, a quarterly independent arts and culture magazine; identified and corrected errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, layout, author and artist attribution; developed house style guide and lexicon
- Managed a roster of more than 30 freelance writers and reviewers for Spiral Nature Magazine, assessed pitches, assigned stories, substantive and copy editing, content scheduling; developed house style guide and lexicon
- Community news for Dandyhorse, Beaches Life, The Medium, among others
- Literary journalism and criticism for more than a dozen magazines and journals, including Broken Pencil, Quill & Quire, This Magazine, Poetry is Dead
- Literary work published in Carousel Magazine, Vallum, Prairie Fire, and The Antigonish Review, among other journals
**Testimonials**

Nico is a dream to work with. They are intelligent and articulate and their reviews are always thoughtful, nuanced and elegantly written. They also adhere to deadlines and are unafraid to ask for clarification if needed.  

**Alison Lang, Editor, Broken Pencil Magazine**

Nico Mara-McKay has been writing and editing online since before the word blog even existed. Their organizational, editorial and aesthetic senses are complemented by the enduring work ethic that their eloquent writing style has highlighted since the late 1990s. They are a driven, focused and detail-oriented professional that I whole-heartedly recommend for any editorial and writing endeavours.  

**Seamus McKeon, Social Media Marketing Specialist**

There are many today that spend time writing and editing for blogs and online magazines without much proficiency in actual literary and journalism skills. Nico is not one of these people. They have a great breadth of knowledge that translates well, not only in their written work, but also in the passion they exhibit in their social interactions.  

**Michael Szul, Software Engineering Manager**

I’ve been working with Nico for almost a year and have written about 10 reviews and articles for their website *Spiral Nature*. They are a topnotch editor, responsive, creative and professional. Nico’s very easy to work with, too. I look forward to every assignment from Spiral Nature because they make it such a pleasant experience.  

**Susan Starr, Writer**
Working with Nico is a treat: they professionally handle the writing freelancers offer, from pitch to publishing. I couldn’t help but smile and nod in agreement at their suggestions for communicating my ideas on writing Tarot poetry to an audience who may be intimidated by the art of crafting verse. They helped me bring two loves together in a very polished article, and are an asset to writers.

Tabitha Dial, Poet

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