

# Monopoly

by Connie Wanek

We used to play, long before we bought real houses.  
A roll of the dice could send a girl to jail.  
The money was pink, blue, gold as well as green,  
and we could own a whole railroad  
or speculate in hotels where others dreaded staying:  
the cost was extortionary.

At last one person would own everything,  
every teaspoon in the dining car, every spike  
driven into the planks by immigrants,  
every crooked mayor.  
But then, with only the clothes on our backs,  
we ran outside, laughing.

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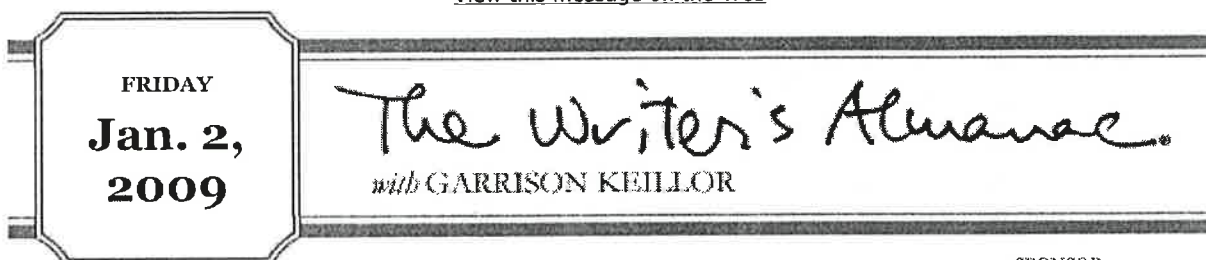
## John Stoffel - The Writer's Almanac for January 2, 2009

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*4 is good.*

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### Denmark, Kangaroo, Orange

by [Kevin Griffith](#)

Pick a number from one to ten. Okay, now multiply that number by nine. You will have a two-digit number. Add those two digits. Now subtract five from that number. Take that number and find its corresponding letter in the alphabet (1=A, 2=B, etc.). Now think of a country that begins with that letter. Now name an animal that begins with the last letter of the country. Finally, name a fruit that begins with the last letter of that animal.

"Denmark, Kangaroo, Orange" by Kevin Griffith, from *Denmark, Kangaroo, Orange*. © Pearl Editions, 2007. Reprinted with permission. ([buy now](#))

**It's the birthday** of the science fiction writer **Isaac Asimov**, ([books by this author](#)) born in Petrovichi, Russia (1920). His family immigrated to the United States when he was three years old, and his parents opened a candy shop in Brooklyn. He spent most of his time working in the family store, and he was fascinated by the shop's newspaper stand, which sold the latest issues of popular magazines. When his father finally relented and let him read pulp fiction, Asimov started reading science fiction obsessively.

He started writing science fiction as well. He published his first story when he was 18, and published 30 more stories in the next three years.

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## **The Meaning of Life**

by Nancy Fitzgerald

There is a moment just before  
a dog vomits when its stomach  
heaves dry, pumping what's deep  
inside the belly to the mouth.

If you are fast you can grab  
her by the collar and shove her  
out the door, avoid the slimy bile,  
hunks of half chewed food  
from landing on the floor.

You must be quick, decisive,  
controlled, and if you miss  
the cue and the dog erupts  
en route, you must forgive  
her quickly and give yourself  
to scrubbing up the mess.

Most of what I have learned  
in life leads back to this.