

Anatomy of a Fustercluck

by Stephanie L. Harper



Painting: "Chronicle" by Ruth Bavetta. "Anatomy of a Fustercluck" was written by Stephanie L. Harper for *Rattle's* Ekphrastic Challenge, January 2016, and selected by Timothy Green as the Editor's Choice winner.

It's thanks to scenes like this that I sometimes dread people, particularly the way they flock to orange pylons, fluster in clumps like maimed birds, and hatch out stories, which are always either parboiled in half-truths, or scrambled by hypocrisy.

Take that camera-laden busy-body, for instance, piqued there, barely disguising her hope of spawning a murmuration—donning her intrepidly purple polo, she's the self-declared ruler of the pecking order that's been bred into us for the engendering of our chronicles:

Clearly, she knows how to swaddle her offspring with ample pageantry to ensure the stork's swift delivery of her inchoate prince.

Like Cronus, her Titan predecessor, who swallowed up his own children to thwart the prophecy of his time-driven demise, she's devouring a flood of raw peptides from the sea-thick breeze wafting right past the preoccupied deputy, to sate her enduring appetite for stone-cold lies.

Meanwhile, that blond-haired man in the short shorts and flip-flops, flashing his faux-gold wristwatch, has been hanging this whole time on the cluster's fringe, completely cracked.

If you ask me,
he's as guilty as the day is long.

