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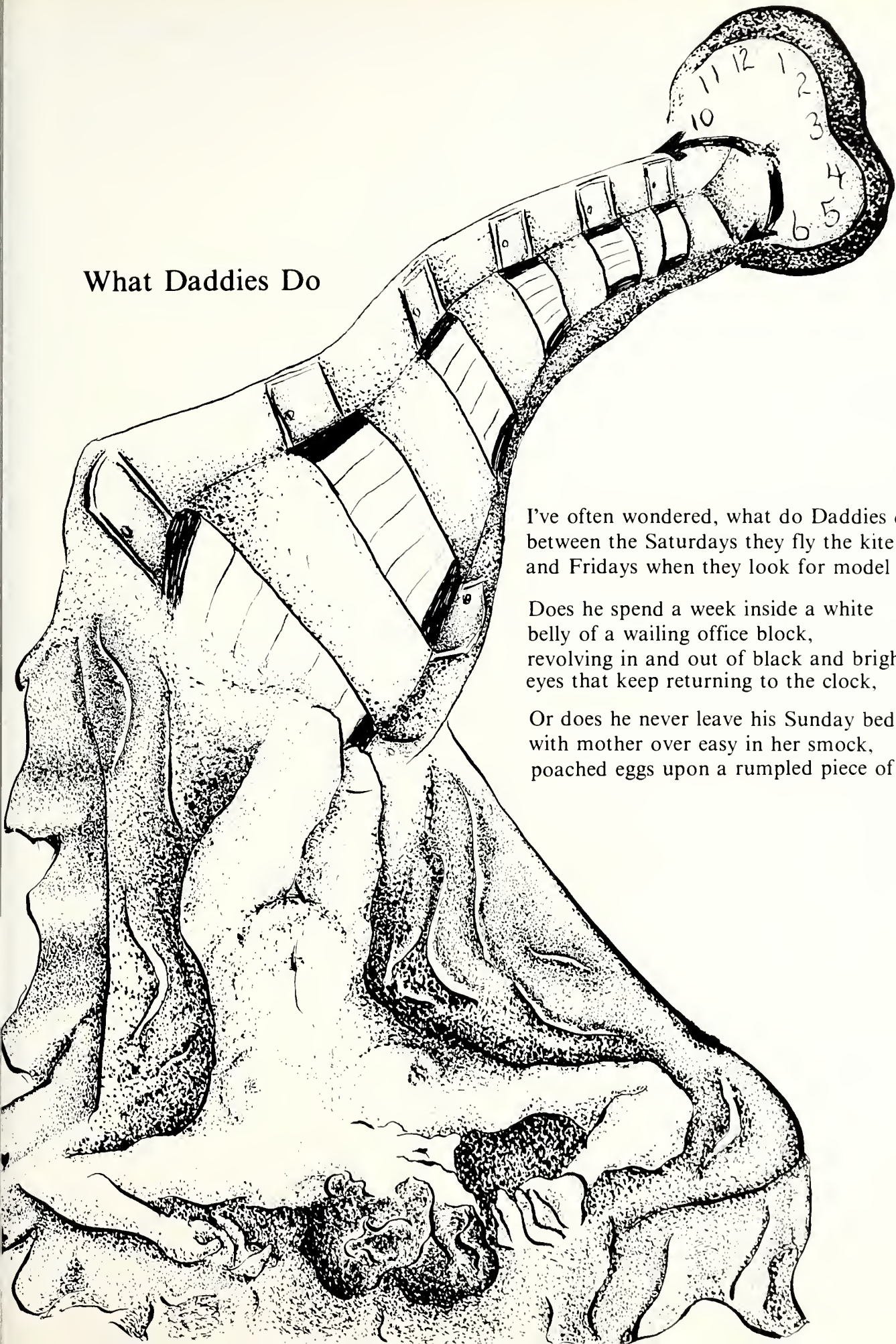


Cover Photograph by Chuck Kraus

BRUNNEN  
FOTOCOPIERUNG  
FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA



## What Daddies Do



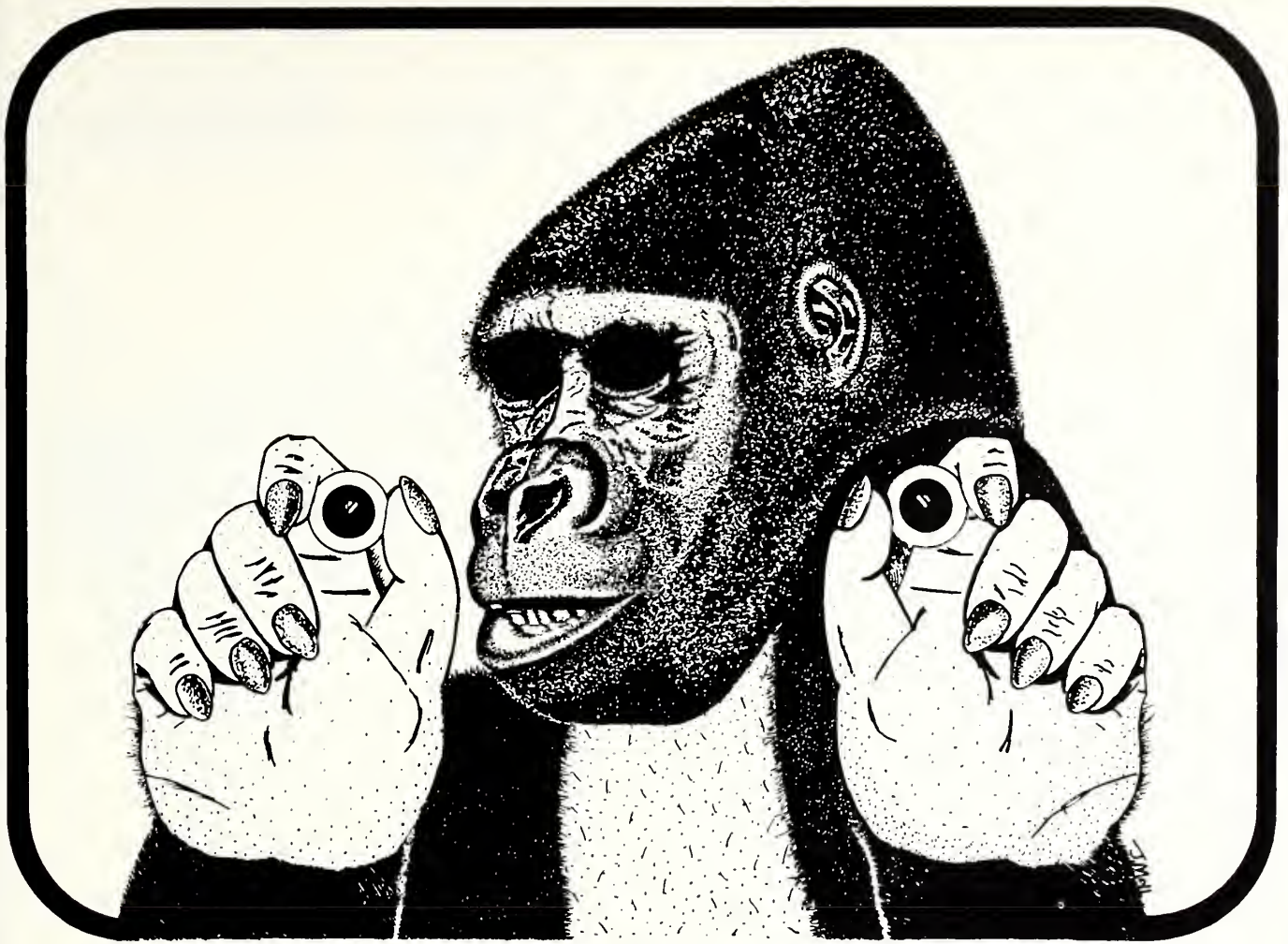
I've often wondered, what do Daddies do  
between the Saturdays they fly the kite  
and Fridays when they look for model glue?

Does he spend a week inside a white  
belly of a wailing office block,  
revolving in and out of black and bright  
eyes that keep returning to the clock,

Or does he never leave his Sunday bed  
with mother over easy in her smock,  
poached eggs upon a rumpled piece of bread.

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## The Vanity Of Monsters

I have sewn on my life  
like stolen grafts of skin,  
organs, limbs,  
creating my selfish monster,  
patiently, piece by piece,  
reaching fingertips scream  
for jagged electricity  
to charge my stuff of life-  
commanding my creature  
to live!

For this me, this thing,  
existing is for now-  
there will be change  
but never a return-  
more bodies to buzzard,  
more bones to brittle,  
crumbling in the sun.  
And buried under clumps  
of oily dirt, only the worm  
in the hollow socket of an eye  
can testify to life.

I am the total of this thievery,  
this furtive attaching  
to make this fiction,  
this fantasy,  
this unadaptable animal  
vainly trying to fit  
in a world of mirrors that lie  
to a world of eyes that see  
the world the way they want it.

**George Kuttner**

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# lingering strains

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Jona Gebhart

The sky is broken, the sea azure,  
The beach deserted save the locals.  
Crabs sauntering sideways, jellyfish blending  
with the sargasso.  
Gulls riding an on-shore breeze.  
An old friend perhaps.

The Casa Maria's finished now.  
Cadillacs line the drive.  
It's "the" place to stay but they've ironed out  
all the cracks in the sidewalk and the  
trees are too evenly placed.  
So mysteriously beautiful when inhabited only  
by ghosts of another day.  
Stirring the imaginings of those who passed her by.

A rag piano dwells in the corner of a local cafe  
filling the air with its tinny notes,  
As we while away steamy afternoons in easy  
conversation and perspiring glasses of  
ice tea.  
A buffer zone for other worlds . . . and the rock  
band that now inhabits Sloppy Joe's.  
Sacrilege, for after all . . . what would Hem say?

Things familiar. Things changed.  
The shutter focuses and the locals nod, "tourist".  
A shady nook discovered . . . marbled table top,  
basket left forgotten, a calico friend naps  
away.  
"Click" A moment captured.  
Haven't I taken this picture already?  
It looks different today. It will always look different.

Lingering summer this.  
Sights and sounds seep through my pores like vapor.  
I sense the sullied tablecloth 'neath my arm as I write.  
I wonder if it'll rain.



Chuck Kraus

# The Words The Words The Words

Dianne Shepard

The words fell from his lips like lemmings and scattered between him and ocean, some clinging to my debris, but most of them bloated corpses by now. I carry a beach bag with nothing in it, and he carries a comb. We are in step, symmetrical on a sidewalk, four legs that never bend, but whirr around like a roulette wheel, stopping on the red or black, but never on a crack. It is noon and I can't find the east. He says it's in the ocean, but I'm not sure. I'm dizzily balanced on the spinning world, waiting for it to tilt and slow. Then my shadow will point east. He is still pointing at the ocean.

There are sails on the horizon, odd shaped pillows tossed on an unmade sea. He says they are teeth tearing at the sky, but I don't see any blood. He says we should sit; I find a spot along the seawall that isn't too green. His hand covers mine, a crab on a clam. My feet offer toes to whatever is hiding in the pitted coral below the water line. The waves are warm. They boil like acid around my raw soles. I am hungry.

I am sitting on the steps with my brother, looking out of eight year eyes. We are waiting for Dolly, the French woman to clean the eels. They are still squirming in the pail, frantically splashing water on the flagstone. It drips, a slimy

waterfall, from stair to stair. I don't feel sorry for them.

I study the puddles and the screen door opens in one of them. She has the knife, and the sound of the fat man laughing in our living room is the only thing behind her. She is wetting her lips and her hair is coming undone, but I am watching the knife, staring at the blinding spot of sun skimming up and down the blade, slicing the retina from my eyes.

"Will it hurt them?" My brother's eyebrows are pulling his freckles to the edge of two gullies above the bridge of his nose. I think he is going to cry and I wait for the freckles to fall in.

"No, they have no nerves," and she picks one up by its indefinite throat. She is right, it hasn't any nerve. It caresses her hands and begs, it panics and fans her face and neck, spotting her with rusty blood. She holds it at arms length, not gingerly, but tightly and my stomach feels funny: I'm sure I'm not sick. It's more like the feeling I get just before the fireworks on the Fourth of July. I have to go to the bathroom.

When I get back, there are three heads in a pile by the welcome mat. A fly walks across one of the eyes and I almost lose it in the pupil. I let the screen door bang, and squat with my fingers pressed just above

the severed heads. I wish I could touch them.

"Why are they still moving?" My brother's face is a pale study in planes and angles; it is off center and frozen except for the mouth that hasn't realized there are no more words coming. There is no answer. Dolly is busy peeling an eel, rolling the skin down the same way she rolls the socks off of my legs at night, only this leg is still dancing, jerking to the sound of my father's organ playing Easter Parade for the fat man and my mother. I wonder how my brother will eat something that won't stay out of his mashed potatoes. I am hungry and I hope my mother has covered the cookies she left cooling on the rack in the kitchen, because I know what will fly in when I open the door.

He is still talking and I have counted all of his teeth three times. His tongue darts in and out through its coral, an eel with no head still squirming, squirming. I am splattered with his words; he has ruined my clothes. I suggest eggroll for lunch and he smiles, the way a man does when he doesn't know you haven't been listening. We walk, fingers hooked, impaled on each other, gleaming and slippery in the heat. Our shadows go before us, pointing the way. I hope he orders something that won't require knives.





**Cathy L.H. Jam Khu**



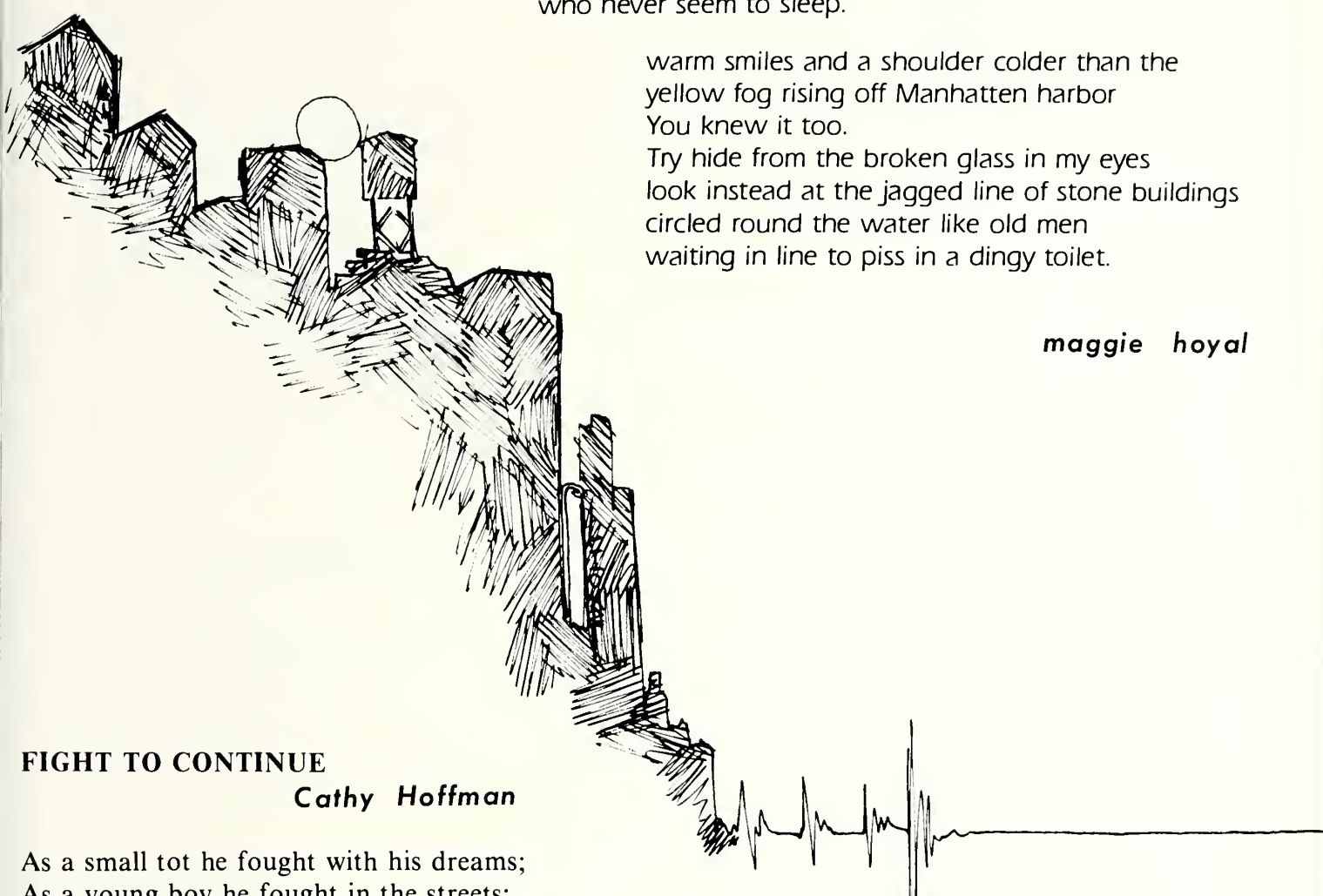
new york

I've known the angled thoughts of survival  
and stolen a bed from a beggar with a smile  
as if I had a hundred places else to go  
than this cold bench-bed and crumpled newspaper pillow.  
I walked dreaming through your sullen streets  
when everyone was sleeping but the whores and old men  
who never seem to sleep.

warm smiles and a shoulder colder than the  
yellow fog rising off Manhattan harbor  
You knew it too.

Try hide from the broken glass in my eyes  
look instead at the jagged line of stone buildings  
circled round the water like old men  
waiting in line to piss in a dingy toilet.

maggie hoyal



## FIGHT TO CONTINUE

*Cathy Hoffman*

As a small tot he fought with his dreams;  
As a young boy he fought in the streets;  
As a young man he fought to survive.  
It seemed as if the fighting never stopped.  
His childhood had slipped by.

As a husband he fought to keep the bills from piling up;  
As a father he fought to better the world.  
It seemed as if the fighting never stopped.  
His middle years were gone.

As a grandfather he fought to watch his grandchildren grow;  
As an old man he fought to see the sun rise;  
In the end he fought with death.  
It seemed as if the fighting never stopped.  
His life was over.

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She didn't wear white. A simple departure from tradition. Her whole life had been the same way. Mom, you look so serious, it's your wedding day, lighten up. After all, if I can smile, you can.

“. . . speak now or forever hold your peace”, the priest droned on.

The chapel was pretty in that rustic sort of way. It's decor — rough and uncomfortable. Split logs set on legs for benches, the altar, crudely built of unfinished wood.

It would all be over soon, as soon as that ring was slipped on her finger.

I knew it was time. This was the moment. I had to set her free.

Rick, the new stepfather's oldest son, had been staring at me since he got into town. Mom had told me to “be nice to him, show him around, keep him occupied.” It was obvious she was playing matchmaker again.

I guess I was the entertainment.

Rick made sure I sat next to him at the wedding dinner. At least he couldn't stare at me sideways, although he tried.

Actually, I was more interested in my new stepsister, Leslie. We had a lot in common. She was earthy, humorous, but better than that — she wasn't looking to get me into bed.

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*'I guess I was the entertainment.'*

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“I'd like to make a toast,” I said, shaking just a little, “to the newly-weds.”

I searched the table of children and well-wishers for a friendly face. There were a few. But my gaze fixed itself on Mom.

“To Tom, who became a husband, a grandfather, and nearly doubled his family all at the same time today — take good care of her . . . and to Mom, who decided after all these years that Women's Liberation wasn't for her — it's about time!”

Everyone chuckled and smiled, the alcohol already dulling their senses. It wasn't that funny.

Well, I did my bit, I verbally acknowledged the union. But why did I feel so alone?

The couple got up to leave, anxious to attend their wedding night, presumably.

“Bye, Mom,” I said, not able to hug her, “write me when you get back from the honeymoon.”

“O.K. honey, have a good flight home,” she answered, squeezing me tight, “have you got the new address and phone number at Tom's?”

“Yeah, Mom, I'll call. Have a great time.”

We just looked at each other. Not much time to talk — there were eight other children to say goodbye to.

There she went. As easy as that. And happy about it too.

"Well, Rick, since you're buying, how 'bout a drink?" I asked. "Look at all this wine and champagne left. Let's finish that off first," he answered. "Dave, John, grab those bottles."

Five of us gathered the leftovers and set them up on a small, round table in the corner of the reception hall. The remains of a celebration.

"Dig in," I said, "let's finish this so I can have some courvosier."

We did. My toes started to tingle. Ah, sweet bliss. It had been a long, hard day of keeping that smile pasted to my face.

I tried to keep the inane conversation going but after awhile everyone wanted to leave. And Rick wanted to get laid.

Why not, I thought, we're all family now. Thoughts of incest danced in my head.

I was pretty drunk. I immediately got involved in the plot of a late-night television movie. Rick was shedding clothes.

"Do we have to have the TV on?" he asked. Poor Rick, all undressed and nowhere to go.

"I think I'll have another drink, call room service," I said.

God he looked a lot like his dad. Even talked like him.

"There is no room service at three in the morning."

Mind click. Flash. You are out of excuses, now, Linda. Screw him and get it over with.

Yes, he deserved a good fuck. At least.

Click. The aggressor awakens. Yes, I'll fuck his brains out. Boy, will I bring this family together.

Lucky, Rick, he caught me at a good time. Here's to you, Mom, my bit for family unity.

Take that, and that. I am the tiger again. Unruly hair. Pleasure, so painful. He has THAT, LOOK. I move so well. He is sickening — his face in frozen ecstasy.

That's it, that's all you get, you poor bastard.

"I could hold you forever," he quietly said in THAT VOICE, "you feel so good."

"We better go home," I answered, "I've got a plane to catch."

"I wonder where the folks are this morning. Wouldn't it be weird if we met them on our way out of the hotel?" I was trying to picture such a meeting. Weird wasn't quite the word.

He was all dressed. Looking sad. He suspected, I guess. He had just had a lucky break, no more.

"You know, you look a lot like your dad. You even sound like him." I wonder if he got it as good as you did last night?

"I'd like to make plans to come visit you sometime," he said.

Rick was hooked. I could tell by the eyes and the whine in his voice. Tom, I'm holding your son hostage. The spitting image of you. The chip off the old block. The son of THE THIEF.

An eye for an eye, a son for a mother.

phil redd



JANUS MOGREN  
PAUL EVANS

# THE MECHANICS OF SEARCHING FOR THE MEMENTO OF FRED ZUCKER

Oct. 2180.

Yeah, that was the year but what was the number? Fred Zucker thought hard.

"Three . . . three. 3049." God, he'd almost forgotten it. He had to do something about that.

"Remember that number," he repeated out loud.

No, that wasn't good enough.

"Write it down!"

Yeah, yeah, write it down.

He didn't mind talking to himself. He was used to it. Why just write the number, why not write the whole bloody story down, he thought. That would give em something to think about and besides he didn't have anything else to do, except take the count each day. They'd stocked him up with log books, most of which he hadn't touched. He'd use one of them, then he'd never have to worry about forgetting.

He sucked on the end of his pen. He could have just taped it. The recorder still worked, he'd dug it out a few weeks ago just to have something to do. Somehow writing it fit.

"Start," he commanded himself, hoping it would help.

Start where? was what he thought.



Today. Today I worked second quadrant again. That's three kilometers Northeast of the base. I know I'm neglecting the other areas but I'll get to that tomorrow. There has to be a full range of samples, Capt. Russ had made that very clear in his last transmission, but I keep finding reasons to come back here again and again. Of course there was more variety in second quadrant, that was one thing, but that wasn't what brought me.

It was easy in the darkness before the first light, when I stepped out of the ship each morning, to tell myself I might get lost again. Owl Head Butte, that's my own private name for the place, was the only landmark within walking distance from base, in fact the only landmark of any kind I've discovered on this flat piece of rock. I found out it wasn't smart to go too far from base. In the very

beginning when I got lost coming back from fourth quadrant and had to camp out over night. It was too damn cold even for me. I worked my right hand a few times just remembering the fear I'd felt when it froze up. I'd got my hand working again, but ever since I made a point of getting back well before night fall. Then it was the damn strangeness of this world. There was no way of talking yourself out of those double moons. It just wasn't earth. You'd think after all these years I'd-a gotten use to it.

It was easy to picture Owl Head Butte with the sun just breaking behind it and ageless walls the color of fire. It could be New Mexico. Somedays I let myself think it was. Didn't do any harm, but I got to watch it. I can't lose my grip, I got to be here when they come.

"If they come," he said out loud and then thought, (No, I can't think like that.)

The count today is 3156.

I dreamed I was back in New Mexico last night. That's where I grew up. I remember we was so poor when I was a kid. My father had been a gentleman farmer until the second great depression of '93. That was the year I was born. Sometimes late at night he used to tell me what it was like. He could talk for hours about how it used to be in the good days before the crash. Then he'd get up sudden and give me a kick, saying, "The year you was born boy, that's when it all went bad. At least I was something, all you'll ever be is a bad news dirt farmer."

He'd end it by kicking me again for punctuation, and stomping off to bed. He never forgave the world for what it did to him. I guess he never forgave me either.

That was why when I turned seventeen I joined the Air Force. I was so damn proud saying that oath. I figured nobody'd be able to call me a farmer again.

I guess I was pretty naive. The guys in the barracks started laughing at me right away. They said I talked funny and started calling me "Zeek," God help me, "Zeek," the

farmer. They use to tell me they were gonna get me a pig to tend so I'd feel right at home. I guess some things just never wash off.

But what could I do? There was nothing to go back to and at least the Air Force gave me enough to eat. I just took it. I smiled, but inside I told myself I'd be better than them, I'd work my fool butt off till I was better than all of them.

I remember when I volunteered for the mission, the guys in the barracks couldn't believe I'd done it. They kept saying "Zeek's gonna be a space cadet". I laughed right along with them 'cause at that point, no matter how much I'd worked, I didn't think I had a chance in hell.

Needless to say, I was shocked when Captain Riter told me that I'd been accepted for the job.

"You've been transferred to the space program, Zucker, "He'd said, "God only knows how you managed to pull it off, but you did."

The count today was 4023.

The next morning they shipped me off to Houston, and sent me in to see General Brecht.

"You're Zouker?", Brecht had said.

"Zucker".

"Zucker, you're not good enough", the general had said.

"Sir?"

"Physically son, you couldn't take it."

"No sir", I'd replied obediently. I hate to admit it even now, but I almost started crying like a damn fool when I heard him say that.

"Zucker, you're a good man, besides that. You follow orders, don't complain and from what I understand, you take a lot of ribbing from the boys in your barracks."

I'd turned red then, to think Brecht knew about that. Christ. But what I'd said was, "They don't mean any harm, sir."

"I know that Zucker, and I know you don't need me to tell you that you do a good job."

"Thank you sir."

"Don't thank me Zucker, this isn't a pep talk!"

"Sorry sir."

"Zucker, shut up."

"I didn't send for you just to shoot you down. You're a good man, but physically unable to handle this, but Zucker, nobody was born fit for this job, nobody."

At this point, I wanted to find a corner to crawl into so I could be alone in my misery. I guess I was angry at Brecht for disappointing me, but somehow I managed to keep it in.

"Do you want this mission?" Brecht said.

"Sir?"

"I said, do you want this mission?"

"But you said—"

"Answer the question, Zucker."

"Yes sir."

"Then sit down, son, let's talk."

I forgot the count yesterday, but it's 4394.

When I got back to my barracks, I got sick, real sick. I knew I couldn't back out now, I'd accepted the mission, I'd committed myself.

"Zucker", Brecht had said, "Your body's no good to us. But your mind, man, your brain Zucker, we can take mind, put it in a mechanical shell that will last almost two hundred years. You'll be our sentinel, our emissary, to anyone or anything that might be out there, Zucker, you'll be our spokesman and an example of what the human race has to offer."

"Mechanical body sir?", I'd asked. I thought, you must be joking, but he wasn't. I couldn't think much at all after that. I just kept asking myself what the hell I'd done.

I found myself saying, "Thank you sir", and shaking hands with him. I'll never forget the smile on his face, the same smile the guys in the barracks wore when they called me "Zeek".

4880 is the count.

The next day I went into the hospital for a battery of tests. A week later they operated.

I swear that I could still feel my body when I woke up. They must have thought I was crazy when they heard me screaming, when I did look down and saw that hideous metal mockery of a human frame,

and realized it wasn't me.

But the funny thing about it was, it wasn't my body I was worried about, what bothered me was my soul. It still bothers me now. Wondering if I was really alive, wondering if I'd died when my heart quit beating.

I remember the doctor walking in and holding up a mirror to my faceplate. Yeah, they left me my face, perserved behind a 3/4 inch glass plate, although I wish they hadn't. Every time I saw it, it reminded me that I had been human, once. That doctor was so proud of himself I wanted to kill him, but I couldn't even move. They had to teach me all over again, like a baby. How to coordinate the fine threads of wire connected to the synapses of my brain, to move their metal wonder.

The one fond memory I have of the whole ordeal is when Brecht came to see me the day after the operation. I guess he was being diplomatic when he offered his hand for me to shake. I crushed it so bad that the doctors had to replace it, with a metal one. I didn't mean to do it, I just forgot my own strength.

They gave me my final orders in the hospital the day I was released.

"Zucker", Brecht said, "we're gonna take you right to the launch site. We can't take the chance on anybody finding out about you. As far as anybody knows, you're just a satellite going off to explore the universe."

"Where am I going?"

"It's the fifth planet in the Kanos system."

"What's the planet called?"

"No name, just 6171."

"Isn't it the Isle of Mark?"

There wasn't any kind of ceremony. Nobody was supposed to know that I was going. Before we got out of the car, Brecht grabbed my claws and looked me in the eyes, one of the few human parts left to me. "Good luck, son" he said, and they took me up.

The count was 5989 today. I got to keep reminding myself to write that in.

That was a hundred and seventy

years ago. It took me fifty-six years to get here. I got the last transmission from earth six years after I arrived, but it wasn't Brecht anymore, they said he'd died. It was somebody called Captain Russ. Captain, I guess the mission had been demoted. Anyway he was the one who told me about the samples they needed back on earth for research. Rock samples. I've been sitting here for a hundred and fourteen years waiting for someone or something to stop so I can deliver my message. They gave me a small metal box before they closed the capsule and left me. Brecht told me that it was to be given to any form of alien life that I might encounter.

It's taken me a long time to figure things out, but today I did, and when I finish this account, I'm gonna open that box and see what's in it, because having spent an entire lifetime here, I think that entitles me to call myself a native.

I started thinking about things and I got out the tapes of the last transmissions. I guess I never really listened to them before. Maybe I didn't want to know.

I flipped it on and heard Capt. Russ's voice.

"What do you do, Zucker? You collect samples. Yes sir, we're counting on you back here, we're depending on you to do a good job, so when the ship arrives everything will be in order."

It wasn't the words that bothered me so much, though the tone of them seemed strange. It was the laughter in the background. The laughter I'd told myself was transmission interference. Now with the sound turned all the way up, there was no mistaking it.

I used to wonder if they worried about me back at Houston Control. I don't think they thought about me at all, just shuffled me aside. Russ probably ran across the file and thought he'd have some fun before they dropped me off at file thirteen, in the paper shredder.

We'll I guess that's all of it. That's as good a place as any to end. Oh, I almost forgot.

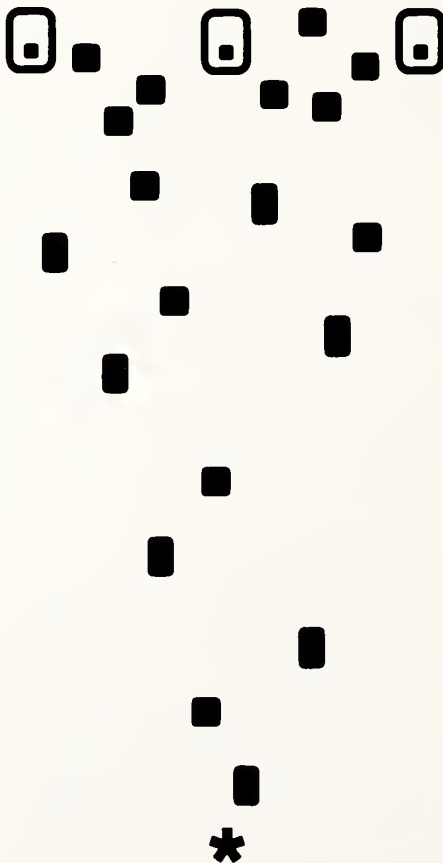
The count today was 7003. 7003 different samples of rock, all collected, tagged and piled in groups behind the ship. So there's your laugh Russ, though you're too dead by now to enjoy it.



He put the pad down next to him and took survey of the ship. God look at those rocks, he thought laughing, even if the joke was on him. Then he reached for the metal box. He looked down at it and noticed that it was shaking. He was trembling. I must be getting old, he thought. He hesitated for a moment, then quickly broke the seal on the box. Carefully and almost fearfully he lifted the lid . . . a perfectly preserved . . . luminous white lily with dew glistening on its petals.

"A flower!" was all he said.

He sat with the flower cradled carefully in his claw-like hand. Very slowly he took the flower and raised it to his faceplate. Holding the lily in his left hand, he took his right hand and smashed the protective covering. "Well I'll be damned!" he said, "Well I be damned, I can smell it."





J. LOJAL

### *How Candy was brought up in a fine Suburban Area*

### *and what caused her Initial Disillusionment*

There lived in the suburbs of Caucasia, in a stark white split-level house with vivid green flower boxes at all the lower level windows, a young woman on whom nature had bestowed the perfection of gentle manners. Her milky complexion graciously revealed her tenderness of mind and spirit; and, in fact, such sweetness emanated from her very essence that her parents, on first seeing her, agreed in the harmonious manner so common to them, to name her Candy.

Her father was a good man, for he was quite a breadwinner; and though it was sometimes necessary for him to beat his wife into the pacification that gave way to their compatibility, his very presence commanded the respect of the entire neighborhood — for he was the owner of one ivory colored Cadillac with vanilla 'genuine leather' interior and one silver Pinto which was protected from mishap by special arrangement with the Auto Club of America.

Furthermore, Candy was promised her very own vehicle upon completion of her driving course. Her father had subtly suggested she mention this to her friends in the neighborhood so that they might acknowledge his great love for his daughter and that their parents might themselves, then, be stimulated to view his vision of family unity and respond to the whims of their teenagers with similar exhibitions of generosity.

Wishing to exert her individuality, when the time came, Candy chose a lime Camaro with a salmon racing stripe which her peers had helped her locate at a new car lot on the outskirts of Caucasia. After she was graduated (with straight A's) from Barbazonia High School of Modeling, Candy spent the entire summer driving her lime Camaro through the neighborhood. Her neigh-

borhood was the finest in Caucasia being free from blacks, yellows, reds and any housing for persons suffering from mental disorders, or even worse, poverty. The neighborhood was simply charming with its orderly white houses and green window boxes and stately oaks set exactly forty yards apart from one another and all in a row, and yet by early autumn, Candy became bored.

"Mama," she said one day while clearing her throat in precisely that style which had allowed her to attain the highest grade in that particular discipline in her last semester at school, "What shall I do with my life? I know I have the finest life, for you've told me that yourself. I've got the best parents, the best house and surely the best car. We live in the best neighborhood in the best of all possible worlds and I'm so happy to be a small part of it all and yet I'm just a little restless."

Mrs. Demisia shook her head and smiled sympathetically and took her daughter's hand in her own.

"It's time for a talk dear. Listen carefully: You must begin to date, meet men, go to those bars which are frequented by doctors, lawyers, dentists and insurance agents and mingle. Nature will take care of the rest. Remember this — and this is a piece of advice which was passed down from my mother and her mother before her and so on — You always let a man chase you until you catch him. Before you know it you'll marry, purchase only Lennox China, volunteer your services to the charity of your choice, perhaps have a child or two and live the best life you possibly can."

"Oh mama," said Candy, and she gazed off into the distance and as her eye caught the glare from the driveway, a smile of complacency came over her.



The very next evening Candy dressed up in her best french cut jeans and six inch high heels and took off in her lime Camaro. Three miles from town she found a parking place in front of a bar called "Cozy Carmen's" and although this was not the bar her cousin Kelly had been commissioned to direct her to, the loud music attracted Candy so that her sense of adventure temporarily eradicated Kelly's suggestion. She swallowed her gum and walked in.

No sooner had she seated herself at the bar when a tall, blond man headed in her direction, sweeping clouds of smoke away with impatient gestures. He looked very much like a cowboy Candy had seen in a Marlboro ad in Family Circle Magazine and so after a few moments of idle chatter, when Mike asked Candy if she'd like to take a moonlight walk over the rolling hills at City Park, Candy agreed wholeheartedly and off they went in the lime Camaro.

Before long they found themselves sitting at the base of a maple and rambling through the most stimulating of conversations. Soon Candy felt that she was on the threshold of happiness and this thought so excited her that her mind went blank and she could think of nothing else to say.

She saw that Mike too must be feeling this way, for he was sighing and tossing small pebbles onto his shiny new shoes. Suddenly Candy, in her moment of elation, knew what she must do. She recalled a movie she had seen in the auditorium at Barbazonia High: This guy and this girl are on the beach, the girl playfully throws a handful of sand at the guy, she giggles, he gets up, she begins to run, he chases her. Finally he tackles her and they fall down together in great waves of laughter and it all ends with a kiss.

Candy surveyed the situation at hand and immediately solved the problem of 'no sand' by ingeniously pulling up a handful of grass which she quickly hurled into Mike's face. It so happened that Mike was in the middle of a good long yawn and a fair amount of the grass, along with the soil which clung to its roots flew into Mike's mouth. That Candy had quite an aim! Candy giggled and got to her feet. Mike got up and began to chase her.

"Why you stupid . . .," he mumbled, but Candy did not hear him for she was recalling her mother's words and laughing joyously at her ability to follow instructions.

Mike caught her and threw her on the ground. He forced his mouth upon hers and kissed her hard. Next he began to pull at her sweater and before long nature was taking its course. When nature was done, Mike muttered a few obscenities and walked off into the moonless night.

"Will I see you again?" Candy called after him. As the wind was busily rushing through the tops of the trees at City Park, Candy was unable to hear his response. And so she tidied herself as best she could, spit out a blade of grass along with an obscenity or two of her own and found her way back to the lime Camaro.

"If this is the way things are supposed to go, life stinks," she said as she turned the key in the ignition and sought a way in which to sit painlessly.



When she returned, her mother, upon hearing Candy's sobs from beyond the front door, came swiftly down the stairs.

"Did you meet a doctor?" she asked, clasping her hands together as Candy entered. And for the first time Candy realized that she hadn't even inquired as to Marlboro Mike's occupation. He could have been a plumber for all she knew!

A month later Candy came home after one busy afternoon and announced her pregnancy to her parents who were the best parents in the best of all neighborhoods in the best of all possible worlds. As her father jumped to his feet to retrieve the keys to the lime Camaro from Candy's milk-white hand, her mother proceeded to throw dishes at her which was an unfortunate occurrence and one she regretted deeply for the rest of her life, for that particular China pattern was no longer in stock and this realization led to the further realization that she had been deceived when she had made her initial purchase. The old cliché "you get what you pay for" came to mind and thus, all was confusion in the best of all possible homes.

Ozzie Lambiro



## SEED

A fissure in a craggy rock  
a spore in the wind  
melded together  
a particle of life  
looks up  
plants itself firmly  
creeps out from the darkness  
thrusting green and tender  
gathers strength  
and feeds from the sun  
determined now  
grows in power  
slowly uplifting  
shooting forth buds  
oblivious to the world  
around it  
until it is the mightiest of all.

**Lori Crouch**

*Niggah Woman  
Sittin on a log,  
Chantin,  
Chantin,  
ravin, and rantin  
wishin she could  
be herself, and not somebody else.  
If she only knew who she was,  
it would help.*

**Catherine Comer**

## Layers

The surface gave way easily  
to the probing tool  
only a slow moan prefaced  
the sound of aching rape  
Deeper, the noise explodes  
into screaming misery  
Further, demanding,  
each layer puts up it's hopeless fight  
They are digging into the earth again.

***linda mckeown***



# Swing Low

Libby Hagan

Illustrated by Rainey Soloff

Most kids start out being scared of lots of things and then outgrow their fears. I did it backwards. I can remember when the only thing that really gave me the creeps was spiders, but then, about a year ago, I started turning into a real fraidy-cat. I began to worry about death and souls and eternity and all that big stuff that's hard to talk about. Pretty soon, if anybody said, "Boo!" in the dark, I'd just about jump out of my skin. Night was the worst time because that's when your bad thoughts grow into shapes that hover and crowd around the bed until it's hard to breathe.

So that night on Larch Mountain when I got waked up by a bumpy clanging noise out back of the camper, I nearly . . . well, I never had the problem that kept my friend Chrissy from sleeping over, but let's just say I came awful close! The camper was pitch dark. I heard another muffled clang-bang and then nothing. Nobody moved at the other end of the camper, so I knew Mom and Aunt Lolly must be up at the wash house. I thought one of my brothers might be awake up in the wing bunk, but I didn't want to know anything bad about that noise, so I just lay there, shivering and sweating under my blankets and feeling my own breath blow warm across my icy upper lip. That was

the low point of my life so far. I expect I'll have others, because I'm not twelve yet and the women in my family seem to have more low points than most.

I'm writing this down because I want to remember what happened that weekend, but whoever might read this someday won't know my family like I do, so I'd better explain. There's my Mom, who looks like Peter Pan because her hair's just starting to grow again. Her name's Samantha, but hardly anybody ever uses it all — it's usually "Sam" or "Sammalee" or something like that. Then there's my brother Tim, who's seven and Alec's in between and I'm Muffin, except when Dad calls me Miss Muffet on account of the spiders. Mom's Aunt Lolly was with us, too — she's been around a lot this year. Her kids are grown up and she says it's neat to visit where the dogs are bigger than the children. We had our Siberian Husky, Tasha — a real guard dog — and Fig, our big cuddly, arthritic Newfoundland, along for protection. Some protection! After two days of rain, it had turned very cold and Mom thought it would be bad for Fig to sleep on the ground. She howls something awful if she's separated from Tash, so both dogs were locked in the back of the station wagon.

I listened hard again, to the night noises, but I didn't

hear anything except the wind spitting raindrops against the canvas. I was too terrified to go back to sleep, so I pulled the blankets over my head and wished Dad was with us or we had stayed home or something. Mom has this thing about camping every chance she gets, especially after she's been in the hospital for chemotherapy. Dad says it's like a dog going off to lick its wounds, but Mom says it's to get free of the feeling that she's a guinea pig in a laboratory cage. See, a computer decides which drugs to try to kill the killing thing in her glands and then the doctors stand around and watch how she reacts. I overheard that part. I didn't really mean to listen, but I don't think my folks know that I don't sleep as hard as I used to.

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*'Sometimes I think I'm the only one  
who understands how serious  
our problems are'*

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This weekend I'm telling about was Mom's first chance to camp after the winter and nothing was going to stop her. She and Aunt Lolly had discovered this park on a trip they took alone back in September and had managed okay, maybe because they didn't believe anything bad could happen to them when they were together. And if it did, they would probably make jokes about it. That's how they are. Sometimes I think I'm the only one who understands how serious our problems are. Well, that's not exactly true. Dad had worried about them a lot, that first time they went off, because Mom was just out of the hospital again and Aunt Lolly hadn't been camping in thirty years. I never did understand how they got him to let them go. It seemed so crazy, but when they pulled in that Sunday night, Mom got out of the wagon all bright and sparkly like she used to be and Aunt Lolly looked like a clown in Dad's overalls with her hair in two stubby pigtails sticking out from under Dad's camping hat. Dad opened a bottle of wine and the hot dogs and beans I'd fixed turned into a party.

Mom and Aunt Lolly acted like teenagers the whole week after that and I didn't feel as bad as I usually did when Aunt Lolly went home to Florida. All winter they talked long distance about going off to the woods again as soon as it was warm enough, but when Aunt Lolly arrived in the middle of April with her new jeans and hiking boots, Dad's company wanted him to fly to St. Louis. I heard him tell Mom, "I'm sorry as hell, Sam honey, but you know they haven't asked me to go anywhere since . . . Maybe you could get a sitter?"

Things were pretty gloomy around our house for awhile, but then Mom called us kids into her room and got going on this long spiel about how grown up and responsible we were getting. I had just about stopped listening when the boys started bouncing up and down and I realized she had said we could all go — Fig and Tasha, too. "But," she said, "you know how much Aunt Lolly and I were looking forward to peace and solitude. You will be the best behaved children in the

whole wide world and when we say it's grown up time, you will instantly fade into the woodwork!"

Tim is a little smart apple and right away he said, "There isn't any woodwork in the camper," and Mom stuck her little nose right against his little nose until they were both cross-eyed and said, "You know what I mean, Tim-o-thee! Now scoot and get your stuff together. If you forget one thing on your camping lists, on your own heads be it!"

When we were taking our gear out through the kitchen, Aunt Lolly lined us all up and went through the whole song and dance again. I began to think nobody was doing any favors. Then Aunt Lolly shooed Alec and Tim out and looked at me. "Muffin, my gel," she said in her pretend English accent that usually makes me giggle, "it's of the etmost empawtance thet we hev yowah co-eperayshen in this rustic endeavah. Being the eldest is not often aisy . . ." She's right about that. I turned away and went back upstairs to get my book. If I had to be non-existent, I'd better have plenty to read.

So that's how come we were all at this campground the women had talked about like it was some kind of heaven. Which just goes to prove . . . The whole weekend had been one disaster after another, but they kept pretending that messing around under dripping trees in soggy clothes was lots of fun. At least, I think they were pretending, but it's hard to tell with those two.

First thing after we got the camper set up, Fig had stumbled into the lake, taking Alec with her, and then it started to rain and nothing had gotten dry since. Our cookouts got rained out and the rock climbs were still closed and one of the pingpong or shuffleboard stuff was in the pavilion yet. Alec and Tim were happy swinging from the pavilion rafters or fishing in the lake, but there was nothing for me to do but sit around and peel bark off the poles. I would have liked to curl up in my bunk and read, but Mom and Aunt Lolly always claimed to be fixing lunch or "getting organized" and told me to go play with the boys.

It looked to me like they were just drinking coffee and acting silly, but there wasn't anything I could do about it. I finally got my book and went up to the wash house to read. It was dry enough, but full of spiders, so I ended up reading most of the afternoon in the station wagon. The rain sliding down the windows made it a gloomy place to be and sometimes I could hear laughter from the camper, but mostly I was down south with Rhett and Scarlett and could forget what a lousy time I was having.

Aunt Lolly had tried to organize a hike before supper, "to work off the blues", she said, but I think it was to warm us all up. The rain seemed to wash the cold right down inside of everything. All our clothes were so wet, we just squished right on through the puddles. Alec asked Mom if she thought the car would start — it doesn't like rainy weather any more than Fig does — and I had this horrible thought that we might be stuck on that mountain for days. Just then Tasha saw a rabbit and nearly yanked my arms off, lunging on the leash. Tim grabbed hold of me and Tash dragged us both on our behinds through the underbrush. By the time Tash obeyed Mom, Tim didn't have hardly any seat left in his jeans and he was very mad and embarrassed.



We all crowded back into the camper to eat. The place smelled really rotten — wet clothes and pickle juice — and I felt like throwing up. Alec and Tim were the only ones that ate very much. Aunt Lolly made Mom lie down while we cleaned up the table. She started singing, "Whistle While You Work." Now I have to say this about Aunt Lolly's singing. She shouldn't do it. She knows that, but her own family never lets her, so it's our favor to her when she visits us. Her whistling is even worse, but after we had all groaned a couple of times we got to laughing and singing with her. The boys carried the garbage to the can out back of the fireplace on their way to wash up and came back with the news that there were electric heaters going in the wash house and people were hanging jeans and sweaters over the stalls. Mom and Aunt Lolly jumped up like they'd just won a million dollars and made us each take one whole outfit up there and spread it out where it could maybe dry overnight.

It seemed much colder when we came out and the wind was blowing, but the rain had stopped, so we raced the dogs up and down the gravel road while Mom and Aunt Lolly opened all the flaps of the camper and bundled all the damp stuff we weren't wearing into plastic bags and threw them in the car. Then they lit a couple of bayberry candles and the place smelled a whole lot better, but the candles didn't even take the edge off the cold.

Alec and Tim volunteered to haul dry wood from the shelter down the road and I said I'd help so we could have a fire and maybe roast some marshmallows. "It would be fun," I said and the boys were jumping up and down. Aunt Lolly looked hopeful and Mom shivered and looked wistful, but then they stared up at the sky and felt the wind with wet fingers and said we'd better not. I saw the white patches Mom gets under her eyes and knew we shouldn't argue, but it was hard. That's when Mom said to put the dogs in the wagon and then the boys got in their sleeping bags up on the double wing bunk and I made up my bunk and got under the covers. With blankets wrapped over their jackets, Mom and Aunt Lolly sat at their end of the camper drinking coffee while we sang lots of the old songs, and that's the last thing I remembered until that awful noise scared me awake.

It seemed like I had been lying there, thinking and worrying, for an awful long time and I was getting very scared about Mom. I wouldn't even let myself think that noise had anything to do with her or Aunt Lolly. I was so relieved when I finally heard their voices out front by the wagon that I got furious at them both. Why wouldn't Mom stay home where she'd be warm and safe? And Aunt Lolly — she should know better than to let Mom do dumb things like this. I started to relax when Mom tiptoed in and might have gone back to sleep, but when she lit the lantern, Alec suddenly said, "What was that noise?" like he'd just heard it. He said it had sounded like a hub cap falling off, but Mom didn't pay him much attention, so I sat up and agreed with him. Then Alec said, "Is that cocoa?", like he could be talked into having some, but Mom just went right on stirring milk and said we should go back to sleep — it was grown up time. Boy, do I hate to be told that! I lay down and thought of all the times Aunt Lolly had needed my help when Mom was in the hospital and how often Mom had said I was her "good right arm" when I did extra chores for her, but when they had each other, I had to go back to being just one of the children.

Tears were starting to run down inside my nose when I heard Aunt Lolly calling "Sammeee!" from outside. The little hairs on my neck and arms got stiff and Alec bounced up as though he'd been expecting it and said, "Mom, Aunt Lolly's calling you."

Mom just opened the door like it was nothing and we could hear Aunt Lolly say, in a jerky voice, "Don't come out! Just hold the door 'til I get there. And if I holler, slam it quick!"

In about two seconds, she came plunging through the door, looking as white as Mom ever did, slammed it behind her, looked at the silly little bolt and locked it anyway. Everybody was saying, "What? What?" and Mom asked, "Lol! Are you O.K.?" Aunt Lolly just nodded and clambered up on the boys' bunk and shone her flashlight out through the screen.

I guess she didn't see anything, because she slid down onto my bunk and sat there, breathing hard. Mom looked at her and got out the little flask of Southern Comfort and poured some in a paper cup. She lit a cigarette and handed that to Aunt Lolly, too, not even making a face over it. Tim and Alec were hanging out of their sleeping bags and everybody's eyes looked huge and shiny in the lanternlight.

Aunt Lolly took a shuddery breath and said, "Some critter was raiding our garbage can," and we three kids said, "What kind?", "How big?", and "Where is it now?" all at once and together, but Mom shushed us and watched Lolly.

She took another drink out of her cup and scrubbed her knuckles across her forehead and said, "I don't know! When I put the dogs' water dish in through the window, Tasha acted pretty wild, nearly knocked me down, trying to get out. I thought she was just in a snit about being cooped up, so I tried to soothe her, but she wasn't having any, so I held her back and ran the window up. When I turned around with the flash . . . Geez, I nearly had heart failure right then!" The skin on the sides of her jaw wobbled as she took another puff and her hand was shaking, too. She spread her other hand over her face and said from behind it, "I'd make a hell of an eyewitness — I can't say WHAT I saw!"

Tim said, "It was a kitty, a big kitty," but Mom was already saying sharply, "Al, did you boys put the lid down tight on the garbage can after supper?" Alec gave her his "Who, me?" look, and then everybody was talking at once again.

Just then the milk boiled over on the stove and Mom grabbed for it. She stood looking into the pan and then poured some more milk in and started stirring again. "You kids want to join us in a night cap?" When we were all settled with hot mugs to hold on to, Mom said, "Okay now, Lol, we're all calmed down. Try to tell us exactly what you saw."

It was like Mom had taken over and her aunt was the younger one. Aunt Lolly really tried, described the pointy ears and yellow eyes, but all she sounded sure of was that she was scarest when the animal dropped down on all fours behind the can and she didn't know where he was.

Then Tim piped up. "Did he have his mask on?"

Mom and Aunt Lolly both said, "What?"

"Did he have on his Lone Ranger mask?" We all looked at him like he was nuts and he started to get pink around the eyebrows, as if he was going to cry. "The black thing across his face. YOU know! he squeaked at Alec, "like the one we saw down by the lake. A whaddyacallit."

"Coon," said Alec. "A raccoon." And he looked at Aunt Lolly with the beginnings of a smile. "Sometimes they get awful big." He loves Aunt Lolly, but he couldn't keep from laughing.

"Omigod," she said and hid her face in her hands while we all roared. Then she laughed, too, and said, "I can see I've lost all my credibility with this outfit. Hey, but how did YOU know?" She looked at Tim.

"I saw him at the garbage can last night. The moon came out, but you were all asleep and wouldn't talk to me!"

"Well-good-grief-why didn't you say so sooner?" Mom sounded annoyed, even though she was still grinning.

Tim stuck his lip out. "Nobody ever listens to me!"

"He tried," Alec said and put his arm around his brother. "He tried last night and down at the lake and when Aunt Lolly came in. We're always shushing him."

Mom went over and hugged Tim until he was all smiles and then she hugged Alec, too, so he wouldn't feel bad. I didn't feel like hugging anybody. I was ashamed of having been so scared.

I think Aunt Lolly was, too. "I can believe it was just a 'coon up here," she touched her head, "but not here," and she clutched the left side of her chest. "I can admit it now. I thought sure it was a bear."

"What's it feel like to die of heart failure?" Alec asked her.

"What?" she said, although he'd said it plain. "You mean a heart attack? Why?"

"You said you nearly died of heart failure outside. And you're holding yourself like guys on TV just before somebody calls the paramedics. Does it hurt?"

"Oh," she said, taking her hand away real fast. "No, I don't hurt. That's just an expression for when you're so scared . . ." Her voice trailed off.

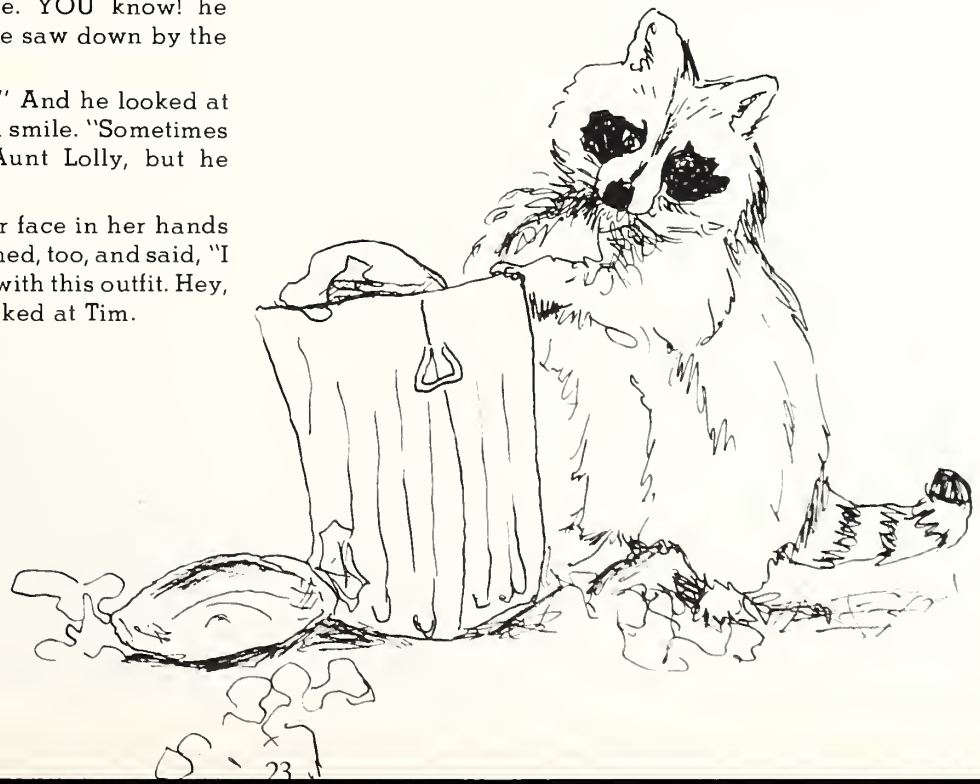
"But does it hurt? Al is persistent. "What does it feel like to die?"

The camper was very quiet. I could hardly breathe.

"Well," Aunt Lolly said slowly, "I'm sure it often hurts, when you have a heart attack, or die in an accident, but I think it's like getting born. You all know how babies are born, right?"

We nodded.

"Well, the poor baby gets squeezed and shoved around a lot. It must hurt him. But then, all of a sudden, he's through and there are all these happy people waiting to welcome him. I think dying is like that."



"Getting born was like that," said Tim. "I had a hard time breathing." I sometimes do believe he does remember.

"But how do you know there will be people there?" Alec asked. "What if there's just nothing and nobody?"

Aunt Lolly looked at Mom and Mom looked back with her face all smooth and calm. It was like they had a big discussion with their eyes. Then Aunt Lolly hugged her knees and looked at us.

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## **'I'll bet you didn't know**

### **I was dead once.'**

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"I can tell you what I saw when I was there," she said. "I'll bet you didn't know that I was dead once, for a little while? Long time ago, before you kids were born. And your mom took care of my kids just like I do with you." She looked away over our heads. "I'd been awful sick — in a lot of pain — and then I was going through a tunnel, like under trees, you know? And I felt marvelous. And there was a field, and light, like late on a summer afternoon, and my Granny was there to meet me. And a young man I'd loved that got killed in the war."

My mouth was so dry, I couldn't have said a word if I'd wanted to and pretty soon her eyes came back to us and she went on, "They said — not said, but let me know — they'd love to have me stay, but it wasn't time yet and we'd meet again some day. It wasn't sad at all. It was just . . . beautiful."

"Did you see God?" Tim wanted to know.

"I'm not sure, Tim, but there was something about that light. Maybe that was God?"

Both Mom and Aunt Lolly looked as if they could see that field, that light, and I could almost see it too, 'til Alec said, "But what comes next? I mean, when you're good and dead — for good?"

Aunt Lolly stretched her arms up to the roof and scrowed her face up like she was thinking hard. "Well, now we're guessing, all of us, but you know what I think? I think the hardest part of dying is leaving folks behind. It's sad to think about not knowing what will happen to them afterwards."

I watched my mom watch Aunt Lolly. The lantern light made Mom look like some painting in a church. Her lips were moving just a little, as if she knew the words to a song someone else was singing. Aunt Lolly scrunched down 'til she was almost sitting on her shoulders. "You all know I'm not a nosey soul myself . . ." and she made her eyes wide and innocent at us from under the rim of Dad's white camping hat, "but I still feel that some of me — some caring part of me — will be free-floating in the atmosphere, will be able to know what happens to the people I love."

You mean, like a ghost?" I could tell Alec didn't like that much.

"No. Oh, no. Like . . . Well, let's see. You know those lightning bugs you caught last summer? You'd never

know they were around unless they shone their lights. I'd be like that. You might feel me thinking of you, loving you, but you wouldn't see me."

Both Tim and I watched Alec think about that. Then he said, "Well, gee, Aunt Lolly, I'd sure miss you if you died, but I'd remember this and not let myself get too sad. And you know what?"

"What, Al?" she said, real soft.

"I'll never squash another lightning bug!"

"Or flies or skeeters," put in Tim, "just in case."

"Or bugs or worms or anything!"

"Fly like a butterfly, sting like a bee," sang Tim and they both started wrestling and bouncing the camper around.

Mom and Aunt Lolly just looked at one another with that smile they have specially for each other. Their eyes don't get excited like men's and women's do — they're just so clear and open, like they're talking in their minds. But they didn't say a word.

My brothers settled down without being told and then everything was quiet. Mom finally took off her shoes and jeans and climbed up to her bunk. Aunt Lolly just sat there, holding her empty cup. Mom must have seen my eyes were still open, 'cause she said, real low, "Muffin, honey?" and I was out of my bunk and up in hers, without even knowing how I got past poor Aunt Lolly, and I was crying so hard I couldn't talk. Mom just held me close against her and she felt soft and relaxed, not all tensed up like she usually is when one of us has a problem. She murmured, "There, Muffin, there, there," until I quieted down.

We just held each other for a minute and then I said, "Mom, did you tell us last year that you might die?"

"Umm, yes, I did. You don't remember?"

"I do now. I guess I just hoped I'd imagined it."

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## **'We're all born and we all die.**

### **It's what's in between that takes figuring out and working at.'**

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"You didn't talk about it with the boys?"

"Once. They didn't seem to remember, either. I guess we didn't want to think about it. Didn't want to know."

She stroked my hair. "You can know without thinking. I do that too."

We were quiet for awhile and then I said, "I guess it's okay for Aunt Lolly — she's pretty old — but weren't you scared?"

She was a long time answering. Then, "Yes, Muffin, I was scared of lots of things — the hospital tests and those treatments, such awful throwing up and my hair falling out and swelling up like a toad . . . but the worst, like Lolly says, was thinking I might have to leave all of you. How do you get a family ready for that?"

I'm not sure she needed an answer, but I said, "You make them self-sufficient."



She leaned away a little, so she could look at me, and said, "Such a big word!"

I said, "I heard you say that to Aunt Lolly when she was doing a job I had forgotten. I looked it up."

She held me tight. "You know, we're all born and we all die. That's plain fact. It's what's in between that takes figuring out and working at. What Lolly and I know — when we're together — is that it doesn't really matter if it rains, or the pickles spill, or the car won't run. We can find something to enjoy in almost anything. When she's not here, I sometimes forget how to do that. It's like . . . well, as if we were in a boat on the ocean. When it's rough, we work together like one person. Other times, we can take turns, let the other run things, with perfect trust. That's why . . . Honey, am I making any sense to you?"

camper door slapped open and shut and I felt the bounce when one of the grown ups went in or out. Up in Mom's bunk, I was out of the way, and I kept my eyes shut and thought about how I felt. I guessed I hadn't had enough sleep, because my head ached and my throat felt gunky. I was dozing off again when Mom said, "Rise and shine, Muffin! Time for a hot shower and warm dry clothes. It's a cold, bright, beautiful day!" I thought of the spiders and stayed where I was, watching everybody bustle in and out. "C'mon, lazy bones! UP, Muffin. We have to think of leaving soon."

I grumbled, "I don't want a shower."

I could tell Mom was trying not to look exasperated, because of the night before. She seemed to be having troubles getting the right expression on her face. Aunt Lolly took the egg pan off the stove and said, "I gotta go anyway. You wouldn't make me go alone, would you?"



Out the window of Mom's bunk I could see the white of Dad's camping hat and the glow of Aunt Lolly's cigarette where she sat by the picnic table, alone in the cold dark. I hadn't even heard her go out. I said to Mom, "How much in-between-time do you think you'll have?"

I could feel her take a deep breath before she said, "Lots more than anybody thought at first. I've beaten so many odds, so far, I think I'll make it all the way. But I couldn't do it without your help — yours and Dad's and the boys' — and Lolly."

I wished she'd said just me. I could still see Aunt Lolly's cigarette and wondered how she felt, being out in the cold, but the next thing I knew, the sun was shining in my eyes. The boys were arguing about their fishing gear and I could smell bacon and coffee. The

When we were out on the road, she said, "Spiders, right?" I nodded and she took my hand. "Come, come, my gel. We'll brave those spiders in their den and have a smashing wash!" Then she started to skip. I didn't, so she had to stop. "Okay," she said, in her regular voice. "You're sore because you've had a rotten weekend. Everybody's got somebody but poor ol' Muffin. You're just stuck in the middle all by yourself."

I felt my face get hot. The way she could read my mind, she didn't need me to say anything.

"I know that feeling," she said. "Everybody does, sometimes. Most people belong more places than they think — to private people clubs. Your family is a club. You let me visit and make me feel at home, but you're a member and I'm not."



I thought about that. "Like last night?" I said. "You were outside. Alone." We were on the wash house porch and she had her hand on the door, but she stopped and looked down at me.

"Exactly," she said, and grinned and I thought how much she looked like Mom. "Bully for you, my gel."

We went on in and she checked the shower stall and cubicles for spiders. She never stomps on them. They had their job to do, she told me, as she scooted them out the door or dropped them over the divider to the men's side. And all the time, she kept on talking. "Someday you'll have a friend to love like I do your Mom, maybe someone not even born yet. (Where do these long-legged little dickens come from?) But it might not be a close member of your family, like a husband or daughter. Your cousin Jan and I are good friends, but we'll always be mother and daughter first. (Out you go, Spiderman!) It's a different sort of thing, you see, with your mom and me, not the kind you have when you live together every day. It seems to take a lot of being far apart to always be a better person than you really are, when you're together. (All clear in here, love!) I mean, we usually only see each other for something terrible or terrific, so it's never just ordinary. And we don't mean to shut you out. It just — just happens 'cause we pay so much attention to each other. We do let you in, though, sometimes, don't we?"

I did some thinking in the steamy shower stall — about all the things I did belong to that no one else in the family did, like junior high and Girl Scouts and riding class. It didn't seem quite the same, but maybe I wasn't ready for the kind of club that Mom and Aunt Lolly had. I decided not to tell her that no, they never really let me in. One at a time, maybe, but never both together. When I got done in the shower, Aunt Lolly was leaning up against a sink with a spider on the palm of her hand. I got my dry clothes and began to put them on.

"Is it because you and Mom have survived so much that you can hear each other think?"

"What? Oh yeah. Sort of like stereo. But part of that is just good listening."

"More like Sensaround," I said.

She squinted at me over the spider. "That's marvelous, Muffin. Oh, that's good. I like it. Sensaround."

My dry clothes felt warm and good. "It's okay with me if you two have a private survivors' club," I said.

"Surviving's no big deal. It's what you learn, what you gain, while you're doing it. Like, if your Mom hadn't been so sick, I wouldn't know you so well. We couldn't be talking like this now. You've got to look for the good. Sometimes it's all you can do."

I had finished dressing and was watching the spider lift one trembling leg after another. Sunlight from the transom window fell across Aunt Lolly's hand and turned his hairs all copper and gold until he looked like a piece of jewelry. I just barely touched him with my finger and he ran for her thumb.

"Let's help him back to his web," she said. "Poor, scared little thing. Can you climb up on the sink?" I did, and let the spider run from her hand to mine. Then I picked him off and stuck him on the web.

"He looks so lonesome, out there in the middle," I said.

"He'll be okay. Just watch." She touched the web, gently. He trembled for a second and then he started walking, spinning out new web behind him in the sunshine. We watched him for a bit and then I jumped down and we went to help Mom with breakfast.

The campground didn't seem like the same place that morning. When it was time to leave, I didn't want to go. It was my turn to ride in the back seat between Alec and Tim and Aunt Lolly offered to trade places with me.

But I just got right in the middle of the back and grinned and said, "Any decent club has rules. This is O.K."

The boys said "Huh?", but Mom and Aunt Lolly looked over the back of the front seat at me, just exactly the way I knew they would.

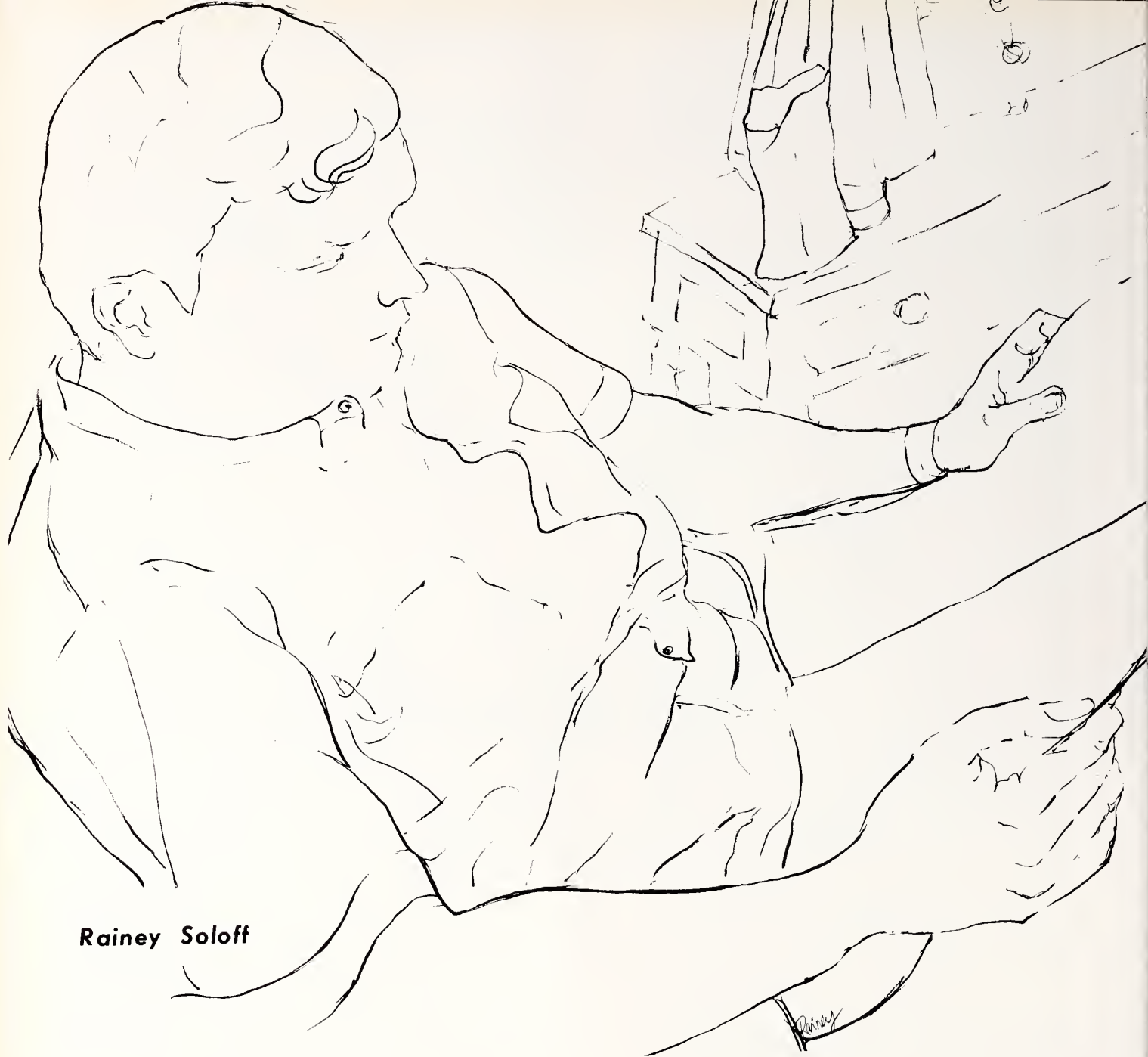
Mom nursed the motor for a couple of minutes and Tim started tickling Alec across me and Fig was slobbering down the back of my neck, but when we finally pulled out onto the road, I started singing, "Swing low, sweet char-i-uh-uht, comin' for to carry me home." We hadn't sung that one in over a year.



### Pete, The Hamster

There are sounds that Pete,  
the hamster makes,  
caged in his trap  
late in the night;  
I'm desperate not to wake,  
while he's desperate  
to escape;  
dreaming out beyond  
his foul and plastic place  
in a world that we create.

George Kuttner



**Rainey Soloff**

poet

about the only thing more ridiculous  
than an old man hunched over an electric typewriter  
misspelling words securely dormant  
in the unkempt dictionary nearby  
with a refrigerator light on dark nights  
and a super bulb on bright days  
cigarettes ashtray coffee and eraser  
when its only a few letters  
and the x key when its a lot  
with a backache, a shot glass of passion  
a spoonful of inspiration larded with esoteric erotica  
full of gas and himself  
is some pompous ass in an office marked editor  
who says this is profound

**Earl Morgan**



Paul Evans

### "The Hunt"

While hunting through my past one day I found  
A secret woods and turned to look around  
To see what special things were hidden there.  
Perhaps I'd glimpse a treasure, something rare.  
And so I searched for beauty, but instead  
I found its sightless corpse, and on the dead  
The leopard, wolf and lion crouched all three  
With cold unblinking eyes and stared at me.

**Shirley Stirnemann**

## I'm sitting in this bar...

I'm sitting in this bar, watching the World Series and drinking my second Heineken when this little girl suddenly appears from I don't know where. I sense someone standing next to me before I really notice her, and then I look at her and she's just standing there staring at me.

"Who are you?" I finally ask her. No one else seems to have noticed her.

"Help me."

"Help you?"

"Please. I need help."

She must have been about 10 years old, and she's wearing some kind of cotton dress that's too big for her. Her face is tired looking and her hair is long and uncombed.

"What's wrong?"

"I need to talk to you. Outside."

"Now?" I say, glancing at the television.

"Yes."

"Listen, I'd like to help you, but right now I'm in the middle of this game. Why don't you sit down and order a coke, and we'll talk during the commercials."

"No, I can't," she says, and her voice is strong, almost authorita-

tive. She stands there looking at me, and I feel kind of uncomfortable, like she's never going to go away.

"Okay," I sigh, getting up. I follow her outside to the parking lot, thinking "Why me?" with every step I take away from the game.

She walks very quickly and stops at my car. It's brand new, a Blue Mercedes, and she sits on it.

"Hey, careful with the shoes, that's my car."

"I know."

"How did you know?"

She shrugs and I don't press it. I lean against the car and turn to her expectantly, ready to offer her whatever wisdom she needs. In a hurry, I hope, already wondering what's happening with the game.

"Okay, so what's wrong?"

"I'm hungry."

"You're hungry?" I say, with relief. Nothing that can't be solved quickly. "You need some money?"

She doesn't say anything, and I figure she's embarrassed. I take out my wallet and hold out a ten dollar bill.

"Here."

She just sits there, looking into the distance.

"Don't be embarrassed, it's okay," I tell her, beginning to get impatient. She turns her head and looks at me. With a shock I see her for the first time. Her face is all bones, protruding cheek bones, sunken in eyes. Sad eyes.

"My family's hungry," she says quietly, and I begin to get this eerie feeling.

"Okay," I say, smiling, trying to lighten the mood, "Here." I take out my wallet and take out a fifty, holding it out to her. "Take this."

She doesn't take it. She just sits there, looking up at the sky.

Damnit, I think, I'm missing the best game of the season. What am I doing out here?

"My father sent me," she says, still looking up.

"Your father? What's the matter, doesn't he work or anything?"

Her face light up, and she smiles for the first time. "Yes, he works. He is always working. He works more than all of the people in the world put together."

"Then why doesn't he feed you if he works so much? Surely he must be able to feed you."

"He did, Bread of life. Living water. But now it's in your hands."

I start to ask her what she's talking about, to tell her that I don't have time to play games, but these words keep going through my mind, words from the Bible.

"Man does not live by bread alone," I suddenly say, the laugh.

"Exactly."

"Well, how much money do you need? I ask, my voice slightly shaking, to my surprise.

"My country is starving."

"Your country?" Oh come on, I think to myself, this is ridiculous. "What country?" I demand.

"Many countries. India, Cambodia . . . many countries." She is whispering now, and barely audible.

"Well, what do you want me to do?" I explode. "You drag me out of a bar in the middle of the night, I'm in the middle of watching a game and I come out here, I try to give you money so you can eat, but you go on and on about starving people. What am I supposed to do?"

She looks at me, and I look away. She looks so emaciated that I can't stand to look at her.

"Look, I know what you're doing. You're playing on my guilt, trying to make me feel guilty, like those magazine things with the starving children looking out at you saying 'feed me'."

"Do you feel guilty?"

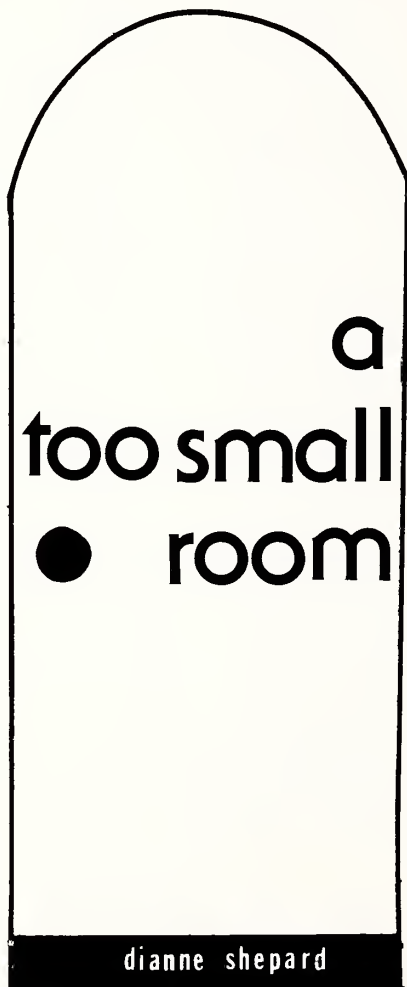
"No! No, I don't. I give money to underdeveloped countries. No, I do not feel in the least bit guilty."

She slides off my car and I think she is crying. "Look," I say more gently, "I can see that you're hungry. Take some money."

"There are people hungrier than I am," she says. "Babies that are shriveled up, children that eat rocks. And mothers who sit and watch their children die and can't do anything to help them. And it's in your hands."

She starts walking away. The money is still laying on the car where I put it. I want to grab her, to force her to take the sixty dollars so I can go back in the bar and finish watching the damn game, but my mind is in shock or something. I just stand there, watching her go. Then she turns around and says, lightly, "Nice car."

Summer O'Hara



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It was a very small room and he was asleep on the cot at one side of it and she was reading at the wrought iron table on the other. She had so much reading to do. Exam time already and she was at least two novels behind. She couldn't concentrate, the book was dull and it didn't help that he was sleeping so close by. She was a fast reader, yet she'd been on one paragraph for ten minutes. The door was open and she looked over the typewriter, out into the frosty night. They were on the second floor and the tops of the palm trees rattled, the tips of their fronds white from brushing against the chalky railing. She got up, meaning to stand for a moment on the porch, to breathe and to put a distance, even a short one, between her and the book and him. But the breeze was too cold and instead she turned toward the stereo and started the tape over. It was an instrumental, by George Benson, and his lacy guitar stitched a melodius applique over her wrinkled brow. There were other wrinkles too, lines and folds that hadn't been there a month ago, perhaps not even a week ago.

She avoided looking at herself in the mirror over the stereo and looked at him instead, stretched out so long and dark against the white spread. They were like brother and sister, only she didn't want it that way and he wanted different things, it seemed, all the time.

A hard, cold breeze blew the pages of her book, still lying open and unfinished on the table. She turned from the mirror and reached under his feet for the green blanket and laid it gently over him, being sure to cover his toes and shoulders. He scowled in his sleep and turned abruptly to the wall, kicking the blanket from his feet and pulling it closer around his shoulders.

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She looked past him to the clock on the nightstand. Nearly nine o'clock. She would let him sleep a few more minutes. The room was so small, with only one door and the walls congested with books. It was only half a step to her chair, the table and the book. She sat down again and began to read, taking sips now and then from the warm glass of white wine on her right.

They had had a good time tonight, sharing dinner with the neighbors, drinking eggnog, teasing each other, even though he had been angry that she had done his washing while he was at work, and even though she had followed him to the beach at dusk when she knew he would rather have been alone. She'd only stayed a minute and he hadn't smiled until she'd already decided that it was a mistake and she should walk home. She'd gone then, walking away as quietly as she came, leaving him alone. It wasn't the same though as leaving him alone from the first. He knew it too and she could hear him following her home, his shoes scuffing and scraping in time with the snapping of her zorries. He was making no effort to catch up, and yet he hadn't stayed behind. She'd made herself believe that he had been planning to leave then all along and pretended not to know that he was behind her. She checked the wash and he checked the mail and they went upstairs separately, her pausing on the stair with the empty washbasket in her hand to watch his shadow as he shuffled through the envelopes.

It was two minutes to nine and she was shocked to discover that she was not only on the wrong page but in the wrong chapter. She got up and sat gently beside him and brushed his arm with the tips of her fingers, whispering as quietly as possible, "Richard, you'll be late for the movie, wake

up now." He said, "What?" thickly in a sleep drugged voice and she repeated herself, taking her fingers away. She couldn't help thinking that if the situation were reversed he would have been standing in the center of the room with his hands on his hips, yelling in his loudest teasing voice, "Susan lets go, what's the story here, you lazy so and so." It was like slamming into a brick wall, waking up that way, but it was his way and she didn't really mind.

She got up and went back to the book, facing the wall away from him, and held it in the air over her head with her elbows on the table and one foot tucked under her leg. He took his coat from the back of her chair and said in a quick voice that filled the tiny room, "You don't mind if I go to the movies do you?" And she felt very warm all over and held the book even higher, careful not to tip her eyes. He moved to the door and the words her mind sent down like falling coconuts were, "Take me with you, please", but her tongue and lips sorted them and trimmed them into a neat and simple "no", delivered with no expression at all.

"Well," he said, "if you're not here when I get back, I'll talk to you later." She said, "OK", and didn't move her eyes from the page as he passed silently out the door. It was alright. He knew she had homework and that she would have gone with him if he had asked and then flunked her exams. She knew it was better this way.

She heard him laughing as he paused for a few words with the neighbors by the pool. She still held her book very high. It was really alright. Really. She knew it shouldn't bother her that he hadn't kissed her on the cheek as he left, but it did and she closed the book. The room was simply much too small.



**Rainey Soloff**

## WESTMINSTER HALL

I'm held in thrall amid the centuries;  
Time knows no boundaries here. Its sweep,  
Capricious as a breeze, drops leaves of history  
About me, 'til I stand eons deep.

This blood red one betokens civil strife  
And rolling heads upon the Tower Green;  
This gold might be the crown, the prize supreme,  
The be-all and the end-all of a queen.

The blackened hammer beams that arch above  
Have sheltered countless councils through the years  
And traitors, schemers, dreamers, transients all,  
Have here heard the judgment of their peers.

A gleam of brass set in the paving stones  
Recalls a Catholic king condemned to die;  
Another conjures candelabrad biers of state  
Where corpses of dead rules used to lie.

High dust motes dance about the wooden saints,  
Whose watching eyes are dulled by layers of grime;  
Today's pollution, too, speeds on the toll that cloaks  
These spectres in receding mists of time.

A whistle shrills and running feet intrude;  
A man from Scotland Yard comes up to say,  
"Please leave. Terrorists may have wired the crypt below."  
The drift of years absorbs another day.

*Libby Hagan*

# Lily of the Valley

Jona Gebhart

The rankle of stale beer crept up from the floor boards as a waning sun penetrated filmed windows and deposited its miniature prisms within. A battered dart board limply hung on the plastered wall squared off with the jukebox that lay in wait for the jingle of loose change. A bar, walnut it was and hardened by use, stretched the length of the room, curving at both ends and adorned by a dulled brass rail. Fred and Marge hovered over their beers in a booth near the entrance, their idle conversation unnoticed by the two other patrons and the ancient barmaid bent on aligning stray chairs with their tables.

"You got soaked."

"Soaked?"

"Took. Hoodwinked. Bam-boozled."

"No I didn't, not really."

"Hell, I could 'av picked up ten for that price."

"Yea, where?"

"Well, ah . . . Wannamakers, or something."

"Well, you go down to Wannamakers then and pick me up ten, make it twelve, and I'll go turn this thing in, OK?"

"Too late."

"Too late?"

"Well, look at it . . . it's soaked. Who'd take it back now?"

They mulled over their beers in silence, Fred running untrimmed fingers through Brylcreamed hair, and Marge twirling a soggy coaster.

"Ya didn't need it anyway."

"I needed it for Aunt Luella. I didn't have time before."

"Ya don't need ta wear them things anymore."

"It shows respect."

"Respect, hell . . ."

"It shows respect, Fred. One should have respect."

"She won't even know for pete sakes!"

"How do you know . . . if you're so smart . . . how do you know? Ever been there?"

"Sure, lots a times!"

"Sometimes I wonder . . ."

"OK, OK . . . so ya bought it. So OK. Just thought ya could'a got it cheaper, that's all."

"We gonna go through this again?"

The approaching evening obscured everything within to all but the most devout attendees. Marge and Fred sat wrapped in their own private worlds, waiting for nothing in particular to happen. A sound, did she hear a sound? A slight movement of the door brought Marge back to the present tense, and she looked up to view what should be some local crony or other. The door opened slowly and revealed nothing. . . nothingsave diminutive fingers gripping the oversized brass handle shaped in the form of a lion's head. Fingers became a hand, hands became an arm, and then a small child, four, surely no more than five, stood holding the door, backlighted by

the strains of the passing day. He donned a two-piece sailor suit, navy, with a white and blue bib collar tapering into a "v" and secured with ribbon ties. Slender tanned legs connected the wee tar to his white socks and high laced shoes. His face, though fragile, was tanned and crowned by blonde curly hair that rose off his head in such a way as to reveal a tanned scalp. How strange, thought Marge, to have a tan scalp. The elfin caught her stare and held it for the longest of moments. Neither moved. What's this litt'l fellow doing in a cotton sailor suit in October . . . on 86th Street? A Florida transplant? Did he say something . . . she couldn't quite catch it.

"What did you say?"

"I just said you could'av gotten it cheaper, that's all."

"Not you, him!" She nodded towards the door. Fred turned and, blinking, stared towards the half opened door. "Did you say something?"

"Ma . . . ma . . . mommy. Da . . . daddy?"

"Your mommy and daddy? Are you looking for your mommy and daddy?" Her query was greeted by two penetrating grey eyes. Marge gave a quick sweep of the bar. "There's no one here." She rose to meet him, a beleaguered sense of maternity rising to the surface, but the little lad stayed his ground, his hand still gripping the oversized door handle.

"Ma . . . mommy?"

Marge stooped down to meet the steady marble eyes. "That's a good little soldier. There's no one here, just us, but we'll find them. Where did you leave them?" The child stared past Marge as though she stood between him and some secret that lay within the darkening room. She placed her oversized hands on his diminutive shoulders and turned him towards her. "Where did you last see your mommy and daddy?" Nothing but silence and the even stare. New approach, she mused. "What's your name, little one? Name, do you have a name?" She noticed now how his eyes focused intently on her mouth, watching every movement. "Name, what's your name?"

Slowly, deliberately, came the answer . . . "B . . . B . . . Billy."

"Well now, that's a fine name, but isn't there more? Don't you have a last name too?" His eyes kept staring at her mouth but he spoke no more. Well, we'll just switch gears again. "Where do you live . . . where's your house? It must be nice and warm there to get so nice and brown." The Seth Thomas ticked on, but the child remained mute.

"For God sakes, Marge, will you sit down!"

"Shut up, can't you tell he's lost! What's your name . . . name?"

The letters rolled on his tongue as though he tasted every syllable.

"B . . . Billy."

"Good, good. Now what's your last name? His eyes never moved from her mouth. "He's lip reading . . . the child's lip reading! He can't hear me!"

"Damn it Marge, your beer's getting warm!"

Marge didn't hear him anymore. "Tan, Billy, where did you get so brown?" She pointed to his bronzed arm and then to her citified blanched skin. "Where do you go to swim?"

"Ta . . . ta . . . Todd's."

"Todd's, well how lovely." Turning to Fred, "Todd's, where's that?"

"What? How the hell should I know."

"Oh what's the matter with you, can't you see he needs help! Where were your mommy and daddy when you last saw them?" He lifted his eyes and stared into Marge's as though to soak up her whole being. Then slowly, he raised his hand, his cherub's hand, and placed it softly on Marge's cheek. She gently held her hand over it and repeated, "Billy, mommy and daddy . . . where?" Slowly he turned his head and looked down the now dimming street. "Down there? They're down there? Come on, take me to mommy and daddy." He seemed to comprehend now and, lowering his hand from her cheek, placed it in her fleshy hand. Marge rose and without a backward glance went out into the street with the elfin child. As they navigated the first block and rounded the corner Marge could hear Fred's heavy footstep not too far behind. She knew then that, for all his gruff talk, he hadn't abandoned them after all. Another block passed in silence when, under the child's gentle lead, they crossed the street and passed before a church. Suddenly the little sunflower stood still as though not sure of his bearings . . . walked a step or two, and halted again.

**'The child was nowhere  
to be seen'**

bearings . . . walked a step or two, and halted again.

"Is this where you lost them?" He heeded not. Marge knelt and placed his hand against her cheek. "Mommy and daddy . . . here?" He returned her gaze but seemed somehow far off. He turned and mounted the granite steps leading to the neglected churchyard. Old Trinity Church, long shrouded amidst the city's highrise cathedrals and canyons. He hesitated a moment and then darted into the churchyard as though playing an invisible game of hide and seek. He passed among the trees and wrought iron benches, frolicking with the leaves and shadows as he

went. Marge hung back at first, not wanting to interrupt his game of tag, but then followed as though privy to his little adventure.

With steadiness of purpose now, he made his way towards the back of the yard, rounded the corner of the church and darted into the shadows. Marge followed, becoming aware of the encroaching evening and suddenly wanting to be somewhere else. She turned the corner and stood in place. Nothing. She was greeted by nothing . . . nothing save the quietness of the evening, the sway of the elms, the smell of damp earth, the distant cry of a city at bay. The fair haired child was nowhere to be seen. But somehow she knew. Without a word, he had taken her into his being, and she knew. She worked her way through the maze of overgrown tombstones and stopped in front of a simple headstone dressed in ivy leaves. Kneeling, she brushed some of the vines aside and strained in the dim light to make out the faded lettering . . .

**In Loving Memory of Our  
BILLY**

**Lost at Sea Rounding Todd's Point  
May, 1934**

How long she stood there she didn't know . . . stood in a silence where she could hear infinity and taste the eons of time. At length she felt Fred's hands placed firmly on her shoulders.

"Come on Marge, lets get outa here."

She stooped down and picked up what seemed to be a delicate white flower struggling through the odds surrounding it. "Lily of the Valley . . . in October?"

"Come on Marge, I know it's all been very upsetting . . . what with the baby and now Aunt Luella."

"Lily of the Valley grows in the spring, doesn't it?"

"I don't know, Marge . . . maybe. Come on, put on your hat . . . your new hat for Aunt Luella."

"It grows in May."

"Let's go home."

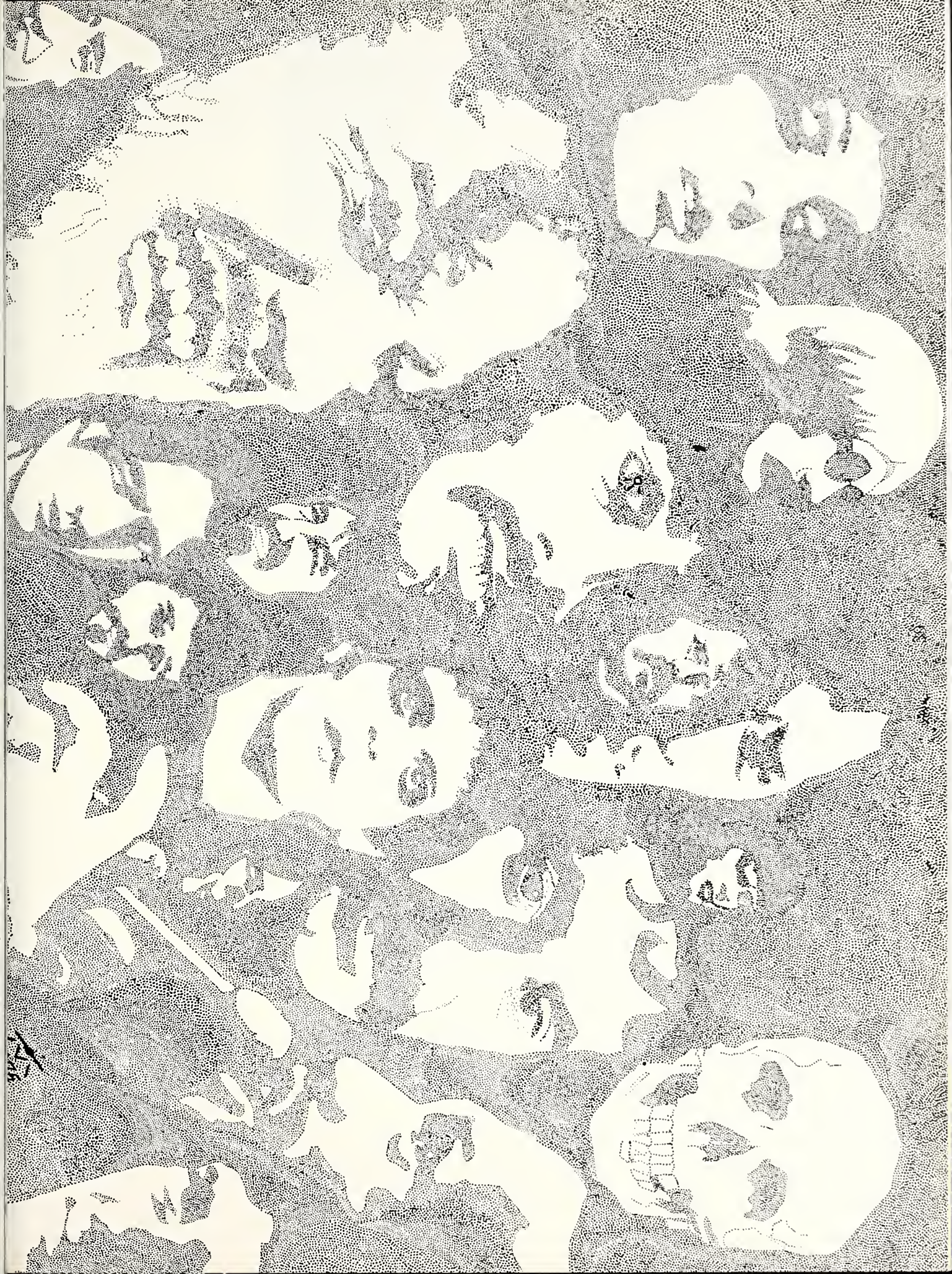
"It grows in May. Lily of the Valley grows in May."

On little feet but surely  
They come.  
Weak-hearted harmless  
But for their multitudes  
They come.  
Vacant-eyed and hungry  
They eat away at my thoughts  
Suck my feelings  
From a hundred tiny cuts  
Until I wish to crush them under my feet.  
Until I tire even of that.  
The little hungry people  
Like ants come upon me  
And I sigh and give in  
To words that are like  
Pointed destruction.  
I turn my lovely words  
To the kill.

*maggie hoyal*

Cocktail Party  
The environment reeks of ambience  
atmosphere pervades  
a close oppressive presence  
presses in the dank milieu  
everything surrounds  
is heavy  
tense  
and pregnant  
My mind  
needs to be walked

*Earl Morgan*



UPON MY MOTHER'S REMARRIAGE

Mama, oh Mama  
The child in me cries out for you  
The adult tears I weep  
Selfishly shed for loss of you.

I will adjust to your new life  
Though the constant protection  
Of you, is gone forever  
You're mine through all objection.

Scared of your new home  
That belongs to another  
And I silently mourn  
The loss of living mother.

For you, I will try to stem  
The rising tides insecurity brings  
And be joyous for your new life  
Pray your feet dance, your heart sings.

Happy I am for you  
New life, new views  
Still I miss the succor  
As the cat loses the cream and meows.

For love, as deep as mine for you  
Will never wither or fade  
Though priorities change  
And new perspectives made.

***linda mckeown***

---

for claire oct/2/75

i brought you into this night  
across a thousand miles  
of pastured rolling country  
to lie frozen in the california sun  
impaled on rent receipts and hunger.

rocking yourself quietly in the corner  
of that big house with the view of monteray bay  
listening to the kittens prowling among  
the empty cartons for food.

you walked the bottoms of your feet raw  
looking for a job on the cement boardwalks  
in poor-fitting shoes  
laughing madly at the wonderland  
of grass green oceans i had brought you to  
i laughed with you  
the tears running freely down our cheeks.





Chuck Kraus

Obscenity  
is  
gathering daisies  
with  
a scythe.

**Earl Morgan**

without my freedom  
i am only another woman  
to be eaten for supper.

An excerpt from a book in process.  
Maggie Hoyal

I remember the train. The thick metal plate ran even with the level of my chin. My mother's hand pulling me up that first step and the steam blasting from under like a dragon's breath. I sat next to my brother and kept looking across at mother's face, her expression of troubled annoyance. I wondered why she didn't feel it, the excitement of the train.

"Mama, the train."

She looked at her watch and said, "Yes, I know the train is always late."

"But mama."

"Quiet down. When you get used to it, the train won't seem like anything, just a train."

\* \* \*

It was a warm Florida night but we stood there in our pajama's shivering in a little line like dominoes. Freddie was first because he was the oldest. Daddy had gone to find the stick. The stick was a piece of pinewood 21 inches long and two and a half, three inches wide. Stick was the only name it ever had.

I was so scared my teeth chattered when I tried to talk.

"You think he'll hit us real hard?" I said.

"Shoot, he can't hit that hard," Freddie said.

"Only hard enough to kill us," Bobbie put in.

"Why he don't hit any harder than a fly shits." Freddie said.

"Freddie!" I cried, my mouth hanging open.

Bobbie started to giggle way down low in his gut. He was holding his stomach and covering his mouth at the same time trying not to laugh out loud.

"No harder then a fly shits!" Bobbie repeated.

That was all it took. We were gone, laughing till tears came in our eyes. Laughing cause we were too scared to do anything else. Laughing just because we knew we shouldn't be. The scarer we got, the harder we laughed.

Then we heard footsteps coming from the next room. Angry thudding sounds. My father's red face appeared in the doorway, and he was swinging Stick at his side.

---

*' Then I heard*

*the crack of wood as*

*the Stick splintered in two pieces. '*

---

"So you think it's funny, do you? We'll just see how funny you think this is. Get over here Freddie."

I plugged my fist into my mouth but I couldn't stop the giggling sound.

"Pull down your pants and bend over the bed."

Freddie had stopped laughing but he didn't look afraid. I heard the smack of the hard board on flesh and went silent. Freddie didn't make a sound. His face had a flat quality now, like he was pressed in upon himself. The only sound was the smack of Stick as it hit. Daddy was getting angrier and I could tell he wouldn't let it go until Freddie cried, and I knew Freddie'd never do that. It seemed like it was going to just go on like that forever. Then I heard the crack of wood as the Stick splintered in two pieces. One part hit the wall over our heads with a bang and made me jump. The other side hit the floor.

Then everything was silent.

\* \* \*

There was a dim light shining just above the sofa on a wooden shelf and mother was reading us stories from the red book. I know it must have been up North on one of our visits to Gramma because Mama never read when Daddy was around, and because of the wood and the winter light as it faded into a later and later hour. My brothers snuggled close to her on either side and I was propped up on the arm. My head moved in and out of the circle of their warmth, as each time the page was turned, I would be drawn in to see the new and wonderous picture. Sometimes I would close my eyes and listen to the sound of the words willing them not to stop. It became hard to hold my head up. I edged off the worn sofa arm into a tiny corner next to my brother and lay my head back, against its softness.

"You can't sit here," Bobbie said as he pushed me, "It's my place."

Mother looked at me as if she were far away looking at another girl in another time. Her eyes were very sad. She moved her hand over my brother's arm.

"There's room for you, Baby," she said and then remembering my brothers she added, "There's room for all of you."

She pulled me beside her and wrapped her arm around my shoulders as she continued reading, her arm resting there as if forgotten.

\* \* \*

We were asleep when it started. It was Mama's voice that woke me up. I had never heard it sound like that, hard and biting.

"It won't work this time." she said.

"Don't you say that." Daddy said.

"I told you Fred, if it happened again I was going to leave you."

"That's your damn English talking."

"It's not right what you do to her!"

I sucked in my breath. What was Mama saying?

"She didn't wake up. She doesn't even have to know it happened," he said.

"For Gods' sake, you promised to stop."

"I will, I will, just say you won't leave me."

"There is something wrong with you, Fred. It's not safe for the children to be . . ."

It was then that he struck her, cutting off the words with a hard slap.

"You're never taking my kids away from me."

I wanted this not to be happening. I got out of bed and walked soundlessly to the door. I tried to stop shaking. When I looked through the cracked opening into the living room I could see Mama holding the side of her face and tears coming down.

He grabbed her arm and dragged her into the bathroom and threw her to the floor.

"No one's ever taking my kids. I'll see 'em dead first."

That was when Mama screamed and I started out the door and halfway into the livingroom. His back was to me but I could see him put his hands around her throat and squeeze. I tried to scream, but the sound wouldn't come out of my throat. When he stood up, Mama was laying in a limp heap upon the bathroom floor. He just stood there looking down at her.

I thought she was dead. He brought his arms up and started rubbing his hands like they were tired. It scared me. I thought any minute he was going to turn onto me, so I ran softly into the bedroom and closed the door back the way it was.

If my brothers were awake, they never said so. I never talked about it to anyone.

\* \* \*

One morning Mama was gone. We kept waiting for her to come home. But when Daddy came in from work that night he brought a lady with him, and he told us Mama was gone for good and this was our new Mama. That night I was alone in my small bed on the far side of the room. My brothers slept in the army bunkbeds that rested against the other wall. The lady that was not our mother had tucked us in and kissed our cheeks. Before the light snapped off I noticed she had wrong-colored hair and afterwards there was only the silence of the house, empty of mother.

I cried quietly at first, not wanting my brothers to hear but then it took over, the crying, and I didn't care anymore. I hoped the darkness would hide me, and the silence. Muffled footsteps came into the room and the light ruined my face, exposed it, swollen-eyed and smeared with tears that wouldn't stop even then.

---

*' I don't remember the day mother  
came back, I only know  
that something ended between us. '*

---

"Are you OK, Honey?" the lady that was not our mother asked.

Freddie pushed himself up on an elbow and brushed the hair out of his eyes.

"Aw, she's just crying about our mother. Don't worry about her. We like you fine."

"Yea, we think you're prettier too," Bobbie stuck in, "and anyway she's just be'en a baby."

"You miss your Mama, Honey, is that it?"

I cut off the woman's words, pushed them away in my mind and kept repeating over and over my brother's words.

"You're a baby, you're a baby."

I knew if I kept thinking on those words I could stop crying. I could push the pain behind the anger and hide it there until the lady was gone and it was safe again in the darkness.

"That's right, see you've stopped crying like a good girl. You go on back to sleep now."

When the light went off I pushed my face hard into the pillow and let the sob come, but this time there was no sound, just the wetness growing in a circle around my face.

I don't remember the day mother came back, I only know that something ended between us.

I came to her only because there was no one else. I was eight years old but I remember, even in that first vision of Granada, walking across the island sand which shone white even in the darkness that was undisturbed by cities. I remember thinking how beautiful the world was. The wind sweeping in from the ocean. I remember thinking nothing ugly could happen here.



It was the first motel built on the island and Dad had been the foreman on the job. Instead of the promised bonus for finishing the job early, we were all guests in the motel.

We were on our way to supper at the motel dining room. It was the first time we had to dress in our best clothes before we could go and eat. Mom and Dad went first, quietly talking, my brothers following behind like two hungry dogs at their heels. I was walking behind the others, not wanting to ruin the beauty, the sounds of the night, with words. I saw the shadow first, as it crossed mine in the white sand. The dark husk of a man before me in the sand, and I jumped. I had been warned about the native men but then I realized it was only Dad.

He began to speak in hushed urgent tones.

"It will be different here," he said.

"What?"

"There won't be anyone to disturb us."

"Oh, don't pretend," he continued, "You know what I'm talking about."

It hit me, what he meant. I had thought it was over. I thought it couldn't happen here. I'd put it off of my mind as if it had never happened at all. Him hanging on my door when I got undressed at night, the backdoor touching whenever Mom was at work. When ever no one was there to go to, to stop him. I couldn't think of anything to say. I felt tired and all the beauty of the island was defeated in that moment. Now it was a dangerous place, isolated and lawless.

"Don't worry. I'll take care of your mother so she'll never know."

But . . .

"Don't worry I'll take care of everything."

He walked away then.

Even if I had thought of anything to say, it was too late.

A few days later when mother was out shopping and the boys were scouting out the island, it began. I heard it in his voice when he called my name. I didn't answer but he knew I was in my room. After calling a second time he became angry and yelled for me to come.

I still didn't move.

He walked into my room but instead of being angry like I thought he would be, he was smiling.

"Take down your pants", he said.

"What'd I do", I said.

He was still smiling like he was in a dream.

"Why?" I answered in a small voice.

He moved toward me.

---

*' He grabbed my arms and  
held them to my sides.  
He didn't notice that I struggled.'*

---

"It's wrong," I said.

"Your damn mother and her Victorian morals, there's no place for them here. I'm not going to let you turn out cold like your mother."

"I'll tell her."

He grabbed my arms and held them to my sides. His hand slipped down between my legs. His voice was soothing then. He didn't notice that I struggled.

I could feel myself against his hand. I wanted to cry but I couldn't. I couldn't do anything. I felt the same as when I tried to jump across a mud flat next to a creek and landed short. I started sinking in and when I pulled at one foot the other went in deeper. That's what it felt like, sinking.

He pulled his hand out of my pants and spit on his fingers and rubbed them together. He didn't even seem aware of me. The sound of his spitting made me sick. Then he put his hand back down my pants and started to say something in that sing song voice he used.

The front screen door slammed and his hand ripped out of my pants like it was burned.

Then he turned on me and whispered harshly, "Don't you say anything to your mother ever. If you do you'll be sorrier then you ever been in your life."

I made the bathroom and locked the door. Something that always made my father angry. He used to tease me mean about it, saying I was a prude, like it was something stupid to be. I pulled my pants down and took soap and water and washed off the spit. When I came out my brothers were there eating sandwiches. The day went on like nothing had ever happened.

At dinner mom said, "You're awfully quiet, you sick?"

I just shook my head and looked down at my plate. She got up and came over to feel my head.

"You don't feel warm, but you'd better get to bed early just the same."

"Don't baby the girl, she's probably just sulking."

"Just the same, Fred, she don't look right. It wouldn't hurt to be careful."

"There's not a damn thing wrong with her."

"Your probably right."

"Damn right, I'm right. You might be a smart little R.N. and gone to college, but you don't know half of nothing."

"I'm sorry, I didn't mean anything."

"Why your mother didn't even know how to cook when I married her. I had to teach her."

"And she sure didn't know anything about being a mother, or a woman for that matter! Still don't know how to be."

"I been trying Fred."

"Well just don't try and tell me I don't know what I'm talking about."

My mother nodded silently and got up to start the dishes.

When dad went off to work the next day, I tried to get my mother alone. Her friends were visiting from the other side of the island, and she made coffee and served little cakes.

I had always been quiet, it was hard for me to talk when other people were around, and I knew that Mom would be annoyed at being disturbed.

"Mom, I have to talk to you," I said.

The other people in the room stopped talking and looked at me.

"Oh, is that your daughter," one woman said, "why she looks just like you."

I remember grimacing.

"What do you want," Mom said.

"I want to talk to you alone."

"Oh, this is silly. Excuse me Marsha, I'll be back in a minute."

When we got in the room she turned to me impatiently, and said, "What's wrong, Maggie, are you sick?"

"No. . ."

When anyone looked upset that was the first thing my mother asked. She always looked disappointed when it wasn't that one thing she knew how to fix.

"Then what is it? You interrupted our guests."

"It's about Dad, he's . . . he's doing things."

"What things!"

"He makes me let him look at me and . . . he touches me."

"Where? Where does he touch you?"

All I could do was look down in embarrassment.

"It's wrong, isn't it?", I said, "it's wrong what he does."

Mother didn't answer.

"Doesn't it say it's wrong to do that in the Bible?"

"Doesn't it?"

"Yes, yes of course it does."

"Will you make him stop?"

I heard the sound of laughter coming from the other room. Mother heard it too. I could hear it in her voice, I could see it in the way her eyes were already darting back and forth toward the door. It was as if my mother was caught and wanted to get away. Back to the safety of polite conversation and meaningless laughter.

"Now listen, I have to go, they will be wondering, but I'll talk to your father and none of this will ever happen again." As she started to leave the room, she turned back, her face directed toward me but not looking at my eyes.

"If it does, you let me know."

I stood alone in the room, staring at the door as it closed after her.

. . .

When I was fourteen my parents were divorced and I went with my father and my brother Bob. We were living at the Flamingo Apartments in South Miami. My brother was gone a lot because he was dating a girl my father didn't like. I didn't hear from my mother though I knew about where it was she lived.

## *mother/father*

Voices woven into my sleep,  
her's the gentler argument  
his the pushing sound  
of drilling nails.

Awaking years later  
to the nightmare of voices  
on either side, driving me  
into my self.

Locked away from  
the sounds of dissidence.

I was going to school and taking care of all the household chores, washing, shopping and cooking. It was awkward because I had so much to do and I was so afraid to make a mistake. My father thought everything should be perfect. I remember I had just brought the groceries in. I walked to the store and carried the two large bags the five blocks back home. I had just set them down on the counter and collapsed into a chair when my father came barging through the door.

"What are you doing on your butt? The groceries aren't even put away."

I jumped up and headed toward the kitchen.

"Hurry up and make dinner, I'm hungry . . . no, fix me a drink first."

There was something about his voice that worried me. It was that old feeling of something crawling up the back of my neck.

"You know those clothes you bought last week?"

The question took me by surprise and I didn't answer right away.

"You know who bought those clothes, me! You just show the little card and think everything is for free. It's not free, I pay for it. And now you have to pay for it."

I hadn't had new clothes in three years and it was Dad who said I couldn't go around looking the way I did.

"I don't want no ragamuffin for a daughter, take the card and plan to spend about a hundred dollars."

By the time I got through the underwear and the bras and a few skirts and blouses, that was it. I was amazed at how fast it went.

"Now you have to pay for it," he said, "that was the deal."

Dad had said I would be happier I had chose him cause he would make me be something, not like mother. She was ruining Freddie by taking him away from discipline, spoiling him.

"He'll be just like all my brothers and sisters, failures. Not one of 'em any good except maybe Arlene, but she's more like a man than a woman should be."

That was the worst thing anyone could be when we were growing up. A failure.

I guess that's some of the reason I went with Dad. It didn't seem like there was a choice. Mom never contradicted him about it and though Dad was strict, nothing ugly had hap-

pened in several years and I thought that was over. Mom and I were always at odds then and the only thing I felt from her besides annoyance was a void. That frightened me even more than Dad did. With Dad, at least I felt it mattered that I existed.

But it was like that. Spaces of years where the molesting seemed like a bad nightmare that had happened once to someone else and then out of nowhere there it was.

"What do you mean, pay for it? I don't have any money. Anyway, you told me to buy the clothes. It was your idea."

"Don't talk stupid, fix me another drink."

I was afraid and confused.

But then Dad sat back and smiled at me like he was proud of me all of a sudden.

"You know I'm going to take you and Bob back with me to Granada. Things could be good there. I'll get my flying license back again, like when I was an officer in the Air Force, and we'll start our own business. Just the real Zauners, Freddie won't get nothing. He don't deserve to be a Zauner."

"And you, why you won't even know yourself. Maggie, you'll be an independent woman, not like your mother. You'll be free. I'm going to teach you how to fly better than any man and just you and me we'll make a damn good business jockeying tourists back and forth between the islands. Bob, he'll do all the paperwork and keep things going right while we fly our heads off."

It sounded like a dream. I thought about how it would be flying all alone sometimes, just me and . . .

"But we have to get this other stuff out of the way first."

"What other stuff?"

"You and me. We have to go through with it and get to the other side. You're getting older now and you know other boys, maybe some of those rich tourists are going to start dating you. You can't keep feeling the way you do about me. I'm your father and when you meet some special boy then you'll find you come to love him like you think you love me now. I know you won't think so now but someday this will just be a memory in the past."

I felt like I was sinking, I leaned myself on the counter and tried to think the thing out.

My God. He thinks I want to . . . Jesus. He thinks it's me that . . .

It was the first time I really realized he was sick. Before, I had just pushed it all out of my mind. Now I had to face it, to face him. I kept thinking I had to trust myself now. I wondered what he would do, if I told him he made me sick.

I thought about it, fucking him. My mind just couldn't keep hold of it. I wondered if I could take that. Then I thought about him. What would it do to him if I told him what I really thought. Would he go crazy? Was he crazy?

The argument wove in and out; first the threat, you owe me, and then what was worse, the pleading. I'm your Father, TRUST ME. Trust me. And then, what if I told him he was insane?

I had to decide.

I was so tired of it drilling at me like a tedious argument that will never, never end. I thought if I do it, maybe then it will be over with for good. He will finally have what he wants and leave me alone.

I thought, "OK, you motherfucker, I'll trust you once."

Maybe I was just tired of fighting, tired of having no one to go to. Tired of wondering who was right. My father had told me Mom already knew everything, and that my brothers knew about it too.



MCFREEBURG  
#1/1/77

**Helen McFreeburg**

When I was twelve Bob had caught me packing to run away and he just laughed at me.

"You run away? You don't have it in you. What do you want to go for anyway?"

I had started to cry. I told him about Dad. What had been going on. He knew what I meant.

"I have to run away Bob."

"No, you don't want to go and do that," he said.

"Dad must know what he's doing, he's our father . . . he knows what's best."

After that I knew there would never be any help from Bob. My father interrupted my thoughts for the millionth time.

"Well . . ."

"Alright, alright, I'll do it. But I have my period now."

Then there was no pretense about teaching me or doing what was good for me.

"When is it going to be over?"

"I don't know." I said sharply.

It was the longest period I ever had, but finally even I knew that it wouldn't work for much longer.

It was in the middle of the afternoon when Dad drew the line.

"Now," he said.

But.

"I don't believe that period shit, if you still have it, show me your pad."

"Listen forget it, I never wanted to do it anyway. You keep pushing it and pushing it.

"See, I knew you were lying.

"I wasn't lying. I had my period."

"I knew it, you said had. See you said I had my period. You can't fool me, I knew you were lying. I was just waiting for you to own up to it yourself."

I was trapped. My period had been over for five days. I was caught in a lie that no matter how inconsequential, seemed to discredit anything I had to say. I couldn't seem to win.

"I know you better than you know yourself, that's why I know what's best for you better than you do or ever will, for that matter."

"Now, he said, take off your clothes."

"In the middle of the day? What about Bob?"

"Bob won't be home till later, he's busy and anyway you don't have to worry about him, hurry up."

I stood there. My toes seemed to try to crawl under the terrazo floor. I was looking at the cold white bed. The room was filled with icy air and while light shifting through the pale green curtains. I wanted to say something. I wanted to say no.

"I don't want to," I said.

"That's over with now. It's been decided." His voice was threatening now, dangerous.

"I have to go."

"Go then but make it short."

My legs were trembling. I looked into the mirror and laughed softly into it, at the lovely creature, the scared girl, staring out at me.

I had never even gone on a date. I looked like I was ready to attend my first party.

"Come on, get done and get out of there."

"Coming," I yelled back.

"Even here he won't leave me alone," I thought bitterly.

I thought of locking the door.

There was no lock.

Damned cheap apartments, they can't even afford privacy for the john door. Can't even lock the door on your father when he's crazy and you're scared.

I thought of Bob. A glint of hope that maybe he would come. At the next moment the door would open and put a stop to the whole miserable thing. Then I laughed again into the mirror. No, no pretending, not now. No, Dad was right, Bob was busy. He wouldn't be back till it was too late to matter.

Then I thought I would break down and the tears stung in my eyes.

"Bob how could you leave me here with this crazy man, who doesn't even know what crazy is."

"I'm coming in there to get you, if you don't get out of there soon."

I started taking off my blouse not wanting to undress in front of him. After all this time my breasts were growing. How I hated them in that moment. My body was late at doing everything. I had thought my breasts would never grow and now the joy of it, of becoming a woman was twisted and stolen from me.

"No!" I screamed, but the words never left my mouth.

I took off my skirt and panties. My belly was brown and smooth. I hadn't put on any lazy fat yet. My clothes fell to the floor. I should fold them, I thought, and then wanted to cry again. They were the new clothes I had just bought. They were carelessly pretty in the tight short style of Miami in the sixties. City of light. Artificial city where the sun never touches the cold irony of its people, drifting from air-conditioned apartments to neon bars.

I touched the cold sheets. His touch was cold too, his sloppy groping gestures hidden under the sheets. The touch of his hanging belly on top of mine. The smell of Old Spice and Canadian Club breathing down on me from his sloppy open mouth. He wasn't drunk. He was never drunk, just undignified. He felt my cunt with his fingers and then like a doctor prescribing a medicine, he said, "we'll just get some baby oil and then it won't hurt at all. You're lucky I am doing this for you the first time and not some punk in the back seat of a car."

I was beyond thinking and feeling then.

I remember the putrid smell of baby oil and the cold wet oil dripping from my thighs. I remember saying over and over to myself it will be over soon, it will be over soon, it will be over. . .

The shock of the searing pain so deep inside me, I knew no one had a right to that. I pulled away, furiously struggling to get free. I screamed. He looked at me with contempt.

"It doesn't hurt that much, I used the baby oil so I know."

It was then that I started screaming.

No, GET OFF ME! GET OFF ME!"

He seemed shocked.

"Take it easy now, well maybe it does hurt the first time a little. OK, calm down, OK."

His body slid across me like a great lumpy slug.

I closed my eyes for a second to squeeze the tears back.

He went to touch me, but I jerked away.

I crawled from the bed, my cunt aching like it had been sliced open. I walked slowly to the bathroom a trickle of blood running in a thin delicate line down my thigh.

### 3-Way Connection

I heard you found your problem in a magazine.  
It explained everything — away.  
You hung your part in it on insanity  
the rest you blamed on mother.  
Nothing left to fear but me.

I won't be silent.





**C  
R  
E  
D  
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S**

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*P'AN KU is financed by the Student Activities Fund of Broward Community College. Opinions expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, faculty or administration.*

June 1980 ©

*Special thanks to Max Hall and Marilyn Harris*

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry, no matter how small, should be recorded to ensure the integrity of the financial statements. This includes not only sales and purchases but also expenses, income, and transfers between accounts.

The second part of the document provides a detailed breakdown of the accounting cycle. It outlines the ten steps involved in the process, from identifying the accounting entity to preparing financial statements. Each step is explained in detail, with examples provided to illustrate the concepts.

The third part of the document focuses on the classification of accounts. It discusses the different types of accounts used in accounting, such as assets, liabilities, equity, revenue, and expense accounts. It explains how these accounts are organized into a chart of accounts and how they are used to record transactions.

The fourth part of the document covers the journalizing process. It describes how transactions are recorded in the general journal and how they are then posted to the ledger. It includes examples of journal entries and explains the importance of debiting and crediting accounts.

The fifth part of the document discusses the trial balance. It explains how a trial balance is prepared and how it is used to verify the accuracy of the accounting records. It also discusses the importance of balancing the books and how to identify and correct errors.

The sixth part of the document covers the preparation of financial statements. It discusses the different types of financial statements, such as the balance sheet, income statement, and statement of cash flows. It explains how these statements are prepared and how they are used to provide information to management and other stakeholders.

The seventh part of the document discusses the closing process. It explains how the temporary accounts (revenue, expense, and dividend accounts) are closed to the permanent accounts (assets, liabilities, and equity accounts) at the end of the accounting period. It includes examples of closing entries and explains the importance of this process.

The eighth part of the document covers the correction of errors. It discusses the different types of errors that can occur in the accounting process and how they are identified and corrected. It includes examples of error corrections and explains the importance of maintaining accurate records.

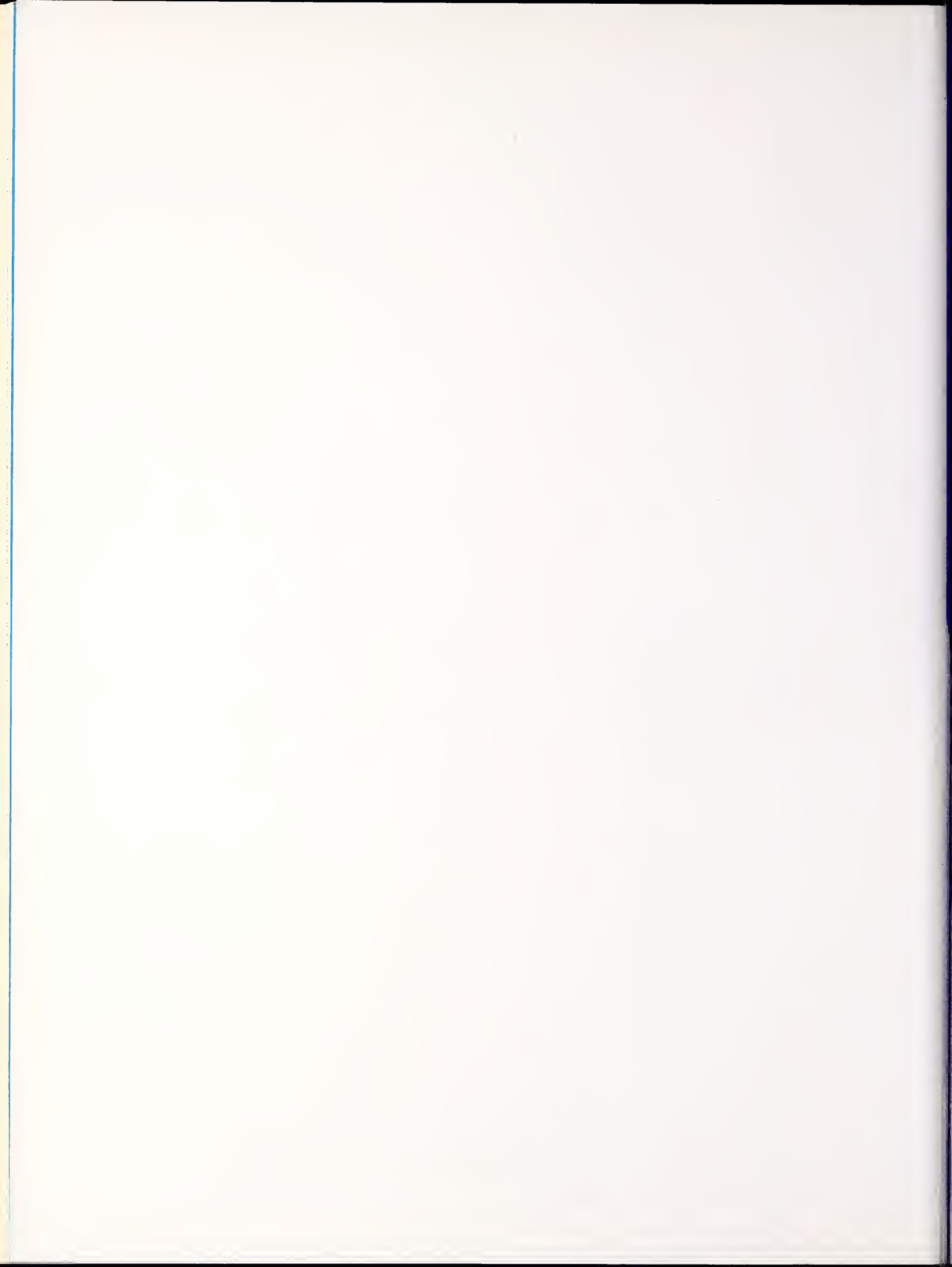
The ninth part of the document discusses the use of accounting software. It explains how accounting software can be used to automate the accounting process and how it can help to improve the accuracy and efficiency of the records. It includes examples of accounting software and explains the benefits of using such software.

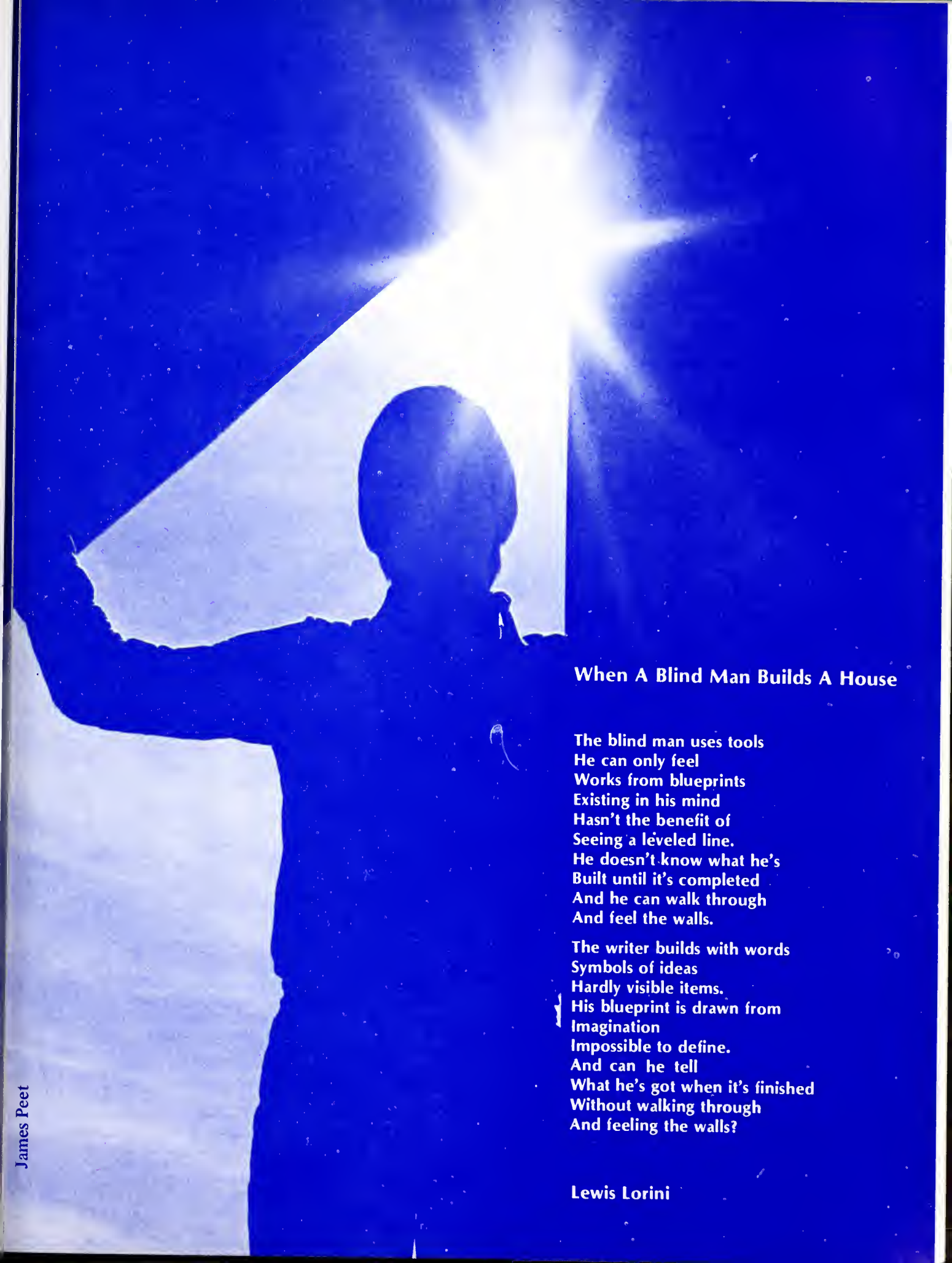
The tenth part of the document covers the final steps of the accounting process. It discusses the importance of reviewing the financial statements and how they are used to make decisions. It also discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records and how they can be used to provide information to management and other stakeholders.



P. A. N

K U





## When A Blind Man Builds A House

The blind man uses tools  
He can only feel  
Works from blueprints  
Existing in his mind  
Hasn't the benefit of  
Seeing a leveled line.  
He doesn't know what he's  
Built until it's completed  
And he can walk through  
And feel the walls.

The writer builds with words  
Symbols of ideas  
Hardly visible items.  
His blueprint is drawn from  
Imagination  
Impossible to define.  
And can he tell  
What he's got when it's finished  
Without walking through  
And feeling the walls?

Lewis Lorini

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SHEILA BALBIER

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P'AN KU is funded by the BCC Student Activity Board. The opinions expressed are those of the individual writers and artists, and do not necessarily reflect those of the faculty, staff, or administration.

*Special thanks* to art instructors Kyra Sullivan, Mont Smith, and Tom Lopez, and to the English and Journalism Departments of all three campuses.

Printed by Continental Press, Inc.  
4200 Hallandale Beach Blvd.  
Hollywood, Florida 33023

## P'an Ku

Volume 17, Spring 1981  
Broward Community College  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33314

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*Charlie Dibble*



# The Scorpion

I was a few blocks from the hotel to where the single story plant stood and I wanted to walk in the hot summer air. The weather was humid, the sun was shining as usual and I loved to feel it on my skin.

Curious eyes followed me as I walked down the street. My white skin and blonde hair contrasted with the dark skin and dark hair of the natives; their Indian clothes in bright colors added to the scenery; the mountains at a distance, framing the village except for the side that ended at the sea . . . the cobblestone streets, the white-washed cluttered homes . . . the red tile roofs . . . it was a raw beauty almost savage, easy to understand.

Close to the factory I saw a group of children laughing in a circle, looking at something. As I came closer to them, I noticed that their laughter was no longer the carefree laugh of children, but that it was cruel, almost sadistic.

There in the street was a scorpion. The children had sprinkled alcohol around it. With deliberate ceremony, the oldest in the group lit a match and brought it to the alcohol. Immediately there was a ring of fire around the scorpion who, in a swift movement, turned around only to see the infernal wall around him, then as quickly as he could, he raised his tail and stung himself, dying moments later as the fire extinguished itself.

I retreated a few steps, then turned around and ran the small distance that separated me from the factory (colliding with Arthur). He looked at me, startled, and I took his hand and without a word walked back where the dead scorpion lay.

“His own poison killed him,” he said in a monotone.

“It wasn’t fair,” I replied.

Olga Nunez

There it was again — humped over and hovering, with both ends of its fat, vulgar, ballooning semi-circle punching into everything — fouling everything — planting its venom — impregnating everything with its fecund mold — sucking out all the air — bloating its whoring hydra-head — a glutton, feeding indiscriminately off all the little bugs.

Trying to wash cockroach death from her hands, Marcy looked at the torn piece of note paper thumbtacked, like a mounted butterfly specimen, to the square of cork beside the wall phone. Shit. She should never have let him put the stupid thing up there. It was an eyesore, anyway, out of place with all the other bright yellows and greens. It looked like an ugly chunk of brown stain, squared off at the corners. Him and his organization. “Now, if you’ll keep a notepad by the telephone, you can write down the messages and put them up there on the bulletin board. That way, you won’t forget them.”

She reached under the sink for a towel. Screw his organization. She’d never completely forgotten to give him any of his messages. She knew they were important. And she always wrote down the numbers for the calls he had to return. What was wrong with the back of an envelope? He’d have to recopy them, anyway. All he had to do was go through the stack of unimportant mail he always dumped on the counter by the phone. Or ask. When he asked she always remembered. What the hell. Didn’t he think she ever had anything else on her mind? Did he think all she ever had to do when he came home was to rush up to him and tell him which one of those clever, *Better Homes and Gardens* housewives out in one of the newer subdivisions wanted to cover her walls with the same pecky cedar, or have the same custom wall unit built, just like all of the rest of the clever trendsetting housewives? Well, screw him. Screw them all.

She folded the towel carefully



## Sawdust. Sweat and Cockroach Death

  
shirley stirnemann

and hung it back under the sink, listening to the sound of hammering coming from the garage. Then, turning, she glanced down at the dead palmetto bug, and at the newspaper, refolded to the Lifestyle section, lying on the floor beside it. Now, with its wings flattened, the lifeless bug made a Rorschach blotch, dark brown on a field of green and yellow. It should never have crawled out of its hiding place underneath the stack of cedar in the garage — not when it did. It was just a stroke of bad luck that it had tried to run across the shiny vinyl at precisely that instant. At any other time, she would have gone looking for a can of bug spray, and it might have escaped. But at that moment, she was ready to kill it. She would have killed it with her bare hands if she hadn’t been holding the newspaper. She had wanted to hurt something, or someone. She still did. She wanted to get even with that insidious

crawling something that was invading her world, robbing it of its beauty, and leaving only an ugly specter behind.

Going to the utility closet, she took out the broom and dustpan and swept up the dead cockroach, dropping it into the trash can. After replacing the things from the utility closet, she inspected her hands, wondering if she should wash them again. Deciding against it, she picked up the newspaper and folded the face that had killed the cockroach to the inside. The hammering had stopped, and in the silence she could feel the sweat, wet and heavy on her husband’s body, his shirt sticking to his back, as he worked in the close, ill-ventilated garage-turned-workshop beyond the pantry door. She could open the door, turning the pantry into a breeze-way, allowing a cross-ventilation, but the sawdust would blow inside and get all over everything.

Besides, she looked over at the torn piece of paper stuck to the cork; he shouldn't have put it there. He could have waited until she came home to tell her. He didn't have to just scribble it on a piece of paper as though it was just another message, no more important than one of his work orders. It wasn't the kind of thing you stuck up on a bulletin board. He shouldn't have left it there. Not like that.

Taking the newspaper with her, she walked out onto the patio. The day's humidity had collected in the afternoon heat, making the air close and heavy, difficult to breathe. Standing in a pool of diffused sunlight, she gazed out over the canal behind their house. It needed to be sprayed again. The slimy scum of algae lying along its banks was beginning to spread, creeping imperceptibly out toward the middle. Beyond the canal, a row of almost identical houses stretched from east to west as far as she could see. And in the spaces between the houses, the only thing visible was another row of the same houses, walling off the horizon, boxing her in. She raised her eyes, but looking up there was no point of reference, nothing to indicate just how far up she was looking. She tried to narrow her vision, to look through only one of the tiny openings in the screen stretching across the length of the patio. She couldn't do it. The whole screen blurred, becoming invisible except for its darker shading, casting a sickly hue of yellowish green over the entire outside world.

A frond, falling from the palm tree at the corner of the house, dropped noisily onto one of the stepping stones beneath it. She looked down at the newspaper, remembering the impish look in those eyes, the boyish grin, still young in a face that was beginning to age like a fine wood. It wasn't fair. He had been so virile, so daring, perpetuating all those adventure-filled illusions of being able to make *The Great Escape*.

And now, all that had changed. He had been tainted by the mere mention of the deadly mold that had touched him, putting the lie to all the illusions, turning him into an impotent, shrivelled-up specter of what he had been, as inconsequential, now, as some crawling insect. *Papillon*, the butterfly, had metamorphosed into a caterpillar.

The power saw was screaming in the garage, its octaves raising and lowering according to the composition and thickness of the wood being cut apart. Unaccountably, her skin felt suddenly dry, her whole body, all of her, longing, thirsting, for the feel of sweat. She felt an uncontrollable urge to lie naked with her husband on the concrete floor of the garage, rolling in the sawdust, feeling his sweat cover her body, tasting the earthly saltiness, feeling him as his hardness became more real than the concrete beneath them, his flesh and blood, alive, reacting to her flesh and blood, alive.

Going quickly to the pantry door, she opened it, feeling, at once, the slight breeze as it moved across her skin.

He looked up and switched off the power saw. "How long have you been home? I didn't hear you come in."

"Not long. I had to leave the car at the garage."

"For a radiator hose?"

"They didn't have one in stock." He was still waiting. "They sent out for one. They'll call when they get it. In a little while."

He nodded. "Did you see the note?"

"Yes."

He looked past her, in toward the kitchen. "Her husband called. He's flying up there. They've got to operate. It's tomorrow."

"I saw."

Shifting his feet, he turned his head and looked out toward the street. "It must be tough. You two have been friends for a long time. I'm sorry."

He was trying. She knew he was trying. "I know you are."

"Maybe it's not cancer. Maybe

it's something else."

"Maybe."

He looked down at the piece of wood he'd been working on, rubbing his fingers across it. "Do you want me to come in now? I could finish this later."

She looked at the worry reflected in his eyes and at the solemn line of his mouth. The fate of some movie star, or even that of her friend, hadn't put the sadness there. She had.

"No, finish what you're doing. It's a fine piece of wood. It'll be beautiful when you've finished with it."


The hint of a smile returned to his eyes. "You're sure?"

"Oh, yes . . .," and then she hesitated, "but . . . if you finish early enough, could we go out for dinner? Maybe to that little restaurant over on the causeway? You know, the one with the booths way in the back where we went that time on our anniversary?"

A smile covered his face. And with it, the promise of things still to come — lots of things. He hadn't changed. And neither had she, because if she ever changed, he would. But he hadn't changed.

"I won't be long." He winked knowingly at her and switched the power saw back on.

As she watched a flume of sawdust spray out behind the saw, she became acutely aware of the fresh aromatic scent of the wood. The towering evergreen, felled years before, perhaps, seemed at that moment to be nearby, still alive. In the freshness of its evocative scent, present, perhaps, even in the tiniest particle of sawdust, so tiny it could float freely through the patio screening, there still remained something of the original tree. The essence of its beauty still remained.

Folding the newspaper so that it would fit between the hinges, she used it to prop open the pantry door so that it wouldn't blow shut. Later, when she had to sweep up the sawdust, she might regret it, but for now, it seemed the right thing to do — the only thing to do. 

---

Dolores (for my mother)

seven sorrows did your name require  
to purge itself of some unknown hold.  
you served it well  
year for year  
measuring time with painful gasps.

husband, mother, brother,  
and I, another, counted too.  
three more, your own  
making seven.

contract paid, but somehow  
habits of names  
continue on.

do you fearfully listen and wait  
the whisperings of number eight?

*l. mckeown*

Pinkness

all the white lights in the nursery  
were broken up by society's prism  
and issued one color of all the spectrum.  
by virtue of their gender  
the girls were given pink.

pinkness would haunt them all.  
they were dressed in it.  
their rooms were painted with it.  
even their dolls wore it.  
their birthday cakes were laced with it.  
they tied their loveletters in ribbons of it.  
they painted their lips and cheeks with it.

and after they got used to it  
they were ordered to choose  
one of pink's elements.  
the reds became vamps.  
the whites became saints.

they couldn't be both.

## Day After Date Night

so on Sunday I will flush away  
the poisons of Saturday night;  
the feigned interest in his blank-mind opinions,  
the conjured excitement at his schoolboy grope,  
the sweet smile loitering in every actress cell.

on Sunday I will gargle the sour taste  
of Saturday night away.  
fold up the dress of feminine traits I wore  
so as not to frighten this mother-made man,  
store the lacy-silk bait at the back of the dresser drawer,  
cap the expensive-bottle smell that pretended  
to be mine.

on resurrection-Sunday  
the woman will reclaim herself  
and I will come out of hiding.  
ashamed of the retreat.

## Hurry, Freeze

and my hips will lap  
at the shores of you,  
a wave of licking light  
in precisioned passion.

meet me, thirsty,  
at this new crest.  
hurry. freeze.  
for the moment,  
we are brand new  
again

drowning strangers,  
flowing in and out  
of acquaintanceship.

## Lay a Cool Hand on My Head

lay a cool hand on my head  
and out of delirium  
I will  
ride the icy breath  
once more,

the breath that delivers  
a frozen kiss  
to my flame-licked  
cell,

the kiss that frosts  
hell with a kite-filled  
autumn breeze,

the breeze that chills  
rage into an  
exhausted smile.

lay a cool hand on my head  
and let my fevered visions  
shiver with winter  
once more,

then kindly,  
strip me naked and  
bury me in bitter snow  
until I beg for warmth  
of hell and more.

## Farce in Two Photographs

I.

A sepia-toned memory  
(The paper recalls it, not its observer)  
of someone named "Grandfather Karendushak,"  
farming the Kansas heartland, smiling,  
holding the pitchfork,  
and an 1894 box of FULFIL  
("a flavour not found in nature," registered trademark).

II.

1981. Leonard Karends  
models as a typical citizen  
on a leftover Monday evening  
before the light of the TV:

"Tonight's presentation of HUMAN NOVELTIES. . .  
We begin with a group of Negroes  
in whiteface,  
singing 'Yes, We Have No Bananas' in Latin!"

Click, click, click, click. . .  
Leonard wants to care,  
an emotion not prompted by the Apocalypse  
on the 6:30 news, nor their humble hostages,  
nor their Act of goddammed victims  
with thousands of indiscernible souls.

Leonard finds a sexist heroine  
to idolize around Channel 8 —  
" — BULLETIN: BEWARE! There is an enemy somewhere  
who has your name — YOUR name, Leonard Karends — on  
a bulletin . . . BULLETIN . . ."  
(The analysis from the reporters: "Well . . . the  
enemy is either the Communists or the handgun owner.")  
". . . and in other related stories,  
your masturbation materials are airbrushed  
and totally artificial. . .

Click. The picture is killed,  
and Leonard Karends has done his part  
to end the world . . . until tomorrow . . .

. . . at which time he will consume  
the daily bowl of FULFIL  
("a flavour not found in nature," registered trademark,  
from the Conglob Company).

*Stephen Wm. Menke*

Extorting quarters  
on a third grader's morning,  
under an imminent fist  
that would not have been used anyway.

25 cents becomes a late edition newspaper  
about two decades later,  
and the disguised parasite  
sees only what he sees:  
"WANTED: Forceful, aggressive young male  
for prominent position."

He's going to make it. . . .

*Stephen Wm. Menke*

*Ain't no...*

*Dianne Shepard*

Rudy once said: "It's just no educatin' an ignorant conscience," and tely Stubs began to think Rudy was right. He thought, "love isn't what they say it is." He'd seen that a lot of it takes place in a rumpled bed and hat's left usually gets made up.

Stubs was always making things up. Even his friends. Sometimes, when he needed to be lonely, he imagined his friends weren't real. That they had gone away and deserted him, he couldn't bear, so he pretended that he'd only, after all, made them up.

It got confusing. Sometimes he couldn't tell when he was lying. He was increasingly surprised to find himself unslept with at three AM, but frightened that he seldom turned his key in the lock before half two. He worried that someday they would change the locks and with his luck, he couldn't have the stomach for all-night bingo.

In the dark he tried to imagine salvation, but gave up, needing the light of day to rustle up a golden calf from all those white linen canyons and valleys.

He felt estranged. Like Moses, taking two tablets and climbing up again in the morning, destined never to cross the desert or see California; a slave always to scorched hands in a burning bush. . . .

He wondered if his god really needed him.

# photography . . .





**Jamie Koster**



Let Us Now Praise Angels

Let us now praise angels:

Here she comes,  
just a-walkin' down  
the street, singin' . . .

Here she comes,  
just a-walkin' down  
the street, singin' . . .

"Turn your eyes away,  
wave hello."

*(Here she comes,  
just a-walkin' down  
the street, singin' . . .)*

*(Here she comes,  
just a-walkin' down  
the street, singin' . . .)*

She dancing, choking.  
I don't know  
I don't know, girl,  
what's in you?  
Going shadow?  
Go down slow?  
Go back to broken bed?  
Hey, where'd you go?  
She say, "No.  
Shake off the end,  
thinking about it  
just gives me the bends."

She's the receding girl; her love is just a blur.

*I almost strangled on blindness  
I almost lost my hands to  
strangling light.  
And I said to her, "I remember  
when you lost your voice  
in mid-sentence,  
down at Heart-Span Point."*

*(Hallelujah for numb love  
Hallelujah for numb birth  
Hallelujah for a numb kiss  
So you can fall off the  
Edge of the earth)*

She's the receding girl; her love is just a blur.



*Bill Perry*

### Comin' At You Backwards

Every day you know: Forget it.  
You always whisper: Blues.  
Your insides kicked inside out?  
You won't see to turn around.

I'm comin' at you backwards,  
comin' at you backwards,  
it's warm  
and it's crossed swords.

Some shrugging movement?  
Some unheard fugue?

A hard, false road, and perilous grace.

These scorpion days tighten down.

I'm comin' at you backwards,  
comin' at you backwards,  
it's all mixed up,  
it's the soft word.

### Ragged, Turning Wheel

The doors were doin' nothin',  
the windows reflected a match  
that she lit in the dark, holding her breath,  
she was standing the suicide watch.

The highway was dark and empty,  
I drove to keep from sinkin',  
there were dead cars all along the shoulder  
and they waited there for companions.

I'm coming to you  
It's hit and miss  
For the warmth of your kiss  
God-damn,  
my blood, my friend,  
play it back again.

These hearts could beat us senseless,  
and crawl in fear through our sleep,  
these street-lamps could strip us defenseless  
but it's better than hiding deep.

I'm coming to you  
And it's hit and miss  
For the warmth of your kiss  
God-damn  
my blood, my friend,  
play it back again.

*bill perry*

# flies

shirley stirnemann

Flies got in. I knew they would. There's one flying around buzzing back and forth inside my eyes and I don't really hear it but I know it's buzzing and if I really listen close way down past the whapping of the big blades Granny said to keep the screen door closed. She said the flies would get in if we didn't keep the screen door closed and didn't we know where the flies had been before they came inside and what they'd do when they landed on things and Robert Henry was holding the screen door open and waiting for me. I had stopped on the porch steps to tie my shoe and she got him around the neck with her walking stick and he fell down and there was blood coming out of his face, his nose, and she was looking at me like she was the one hurt and like it was all my fault. And there wasn't any cotton stuck into the screen door like Aunt Ellie had in hers and what were we going to use to stop up the blood and I was afraid to get too close. I knew she'd get me too.

I hear him crying or maybe it's me or somebody else and I don't really hear it but I know it's crying and if I really listen close and forget about the whapping of the

chopper blades Robert Henry he'd found the black cat always slept in the barn. He me down there and showed where it was and its insides coming out and it had flies all it and I knew as soon as I saw Man hunched over and tryin hold his insides back the would get in. And then it's g too fast like a freight train goir fast you can't read what's wri on the boxcars and somebc screaming Shoot her! Shoot and I'm thinking I can't do that I hear somebody and I'm pi sure it's me this time begging crying and saying I can't shoo own Granny and I see her c back her arm and I wonder w looks like a walking stick instea a grenade even though I k what it was as soon as I saw bend down and take it out of boy's hand that was lying with side of his face pushing into red runny dirt and I raise the M and aim it and she looks at me she was the one hurt and just w while I pull the trigger but e before I hear the screen door s shut I can feel the flies crawl around inside my head and I kn where they've been and w they're going to do. (R)



Gloria Weir

# A R T

- page 17 colored pencil with ink drawing  
original dimensions 14-5/8"x20-2/8"  
artist Gloria Weir
- page 18 sepia wash over pen and ink  
original art 20"x16"  
artist Isabel Brown
- page 19 silk screen (top)  
original dimensions 11-5/8"x7-3/4"  
artist Joe Reichman  
silk screen (bottom)  
original dimensions 12-1/8"x9-1/9"  
artist Joanne Hauser
- page 20 35mm transparency  
original dimensions (slide)  
artist Bill Scherer



*Isabel Brown*



*Joe Riechman*



*Joanne Hauser*



## The Thin Line

Secure in my world,  
wrapped in my cloak of indifference,  
I braved our first encounter.  
And piece by piece,  
my cloak was reduced to threads,  
blown away by an emerald glance.

In vain  
I grabbed at what  
I felt would keep me intact.  
But just like sand . . .  
my defenses sifted through my fingers,  
leaving me o - p - e - n.

Am I such a traitor to myself,  
or is it that I didn't understand  
the thin,  
very thin line,  
between lovers and strangers?

Deborah Miller

Bill Scherer



# The STEEPING

I. mckeown

The diner was noisy with the clink of scratched waterglasses and rushing plates of specials-of-the-day. It was a shiny-metal trailer diner. Out of the way. Where the truckers meet and the coffee's strong; the food is ample and the jukebox plays country tunes. Cast of characters: in the kitchen, one sweaty cook juggles burgers, homefries, and a non-filtered cigarette. He looks like a large, greasy superman cooking on speed. Elsewhere, two waitresses, one for the counter, one for the ten booths. They are both slim from the break-neck pace of serving it up and clearing it out. Fast but friendly. Born to calloused feet and two-bit tips. There are several assorted regulars; plus one lone girl.

She heard nothing of the meal-mad din. She sat in the far-end booth, coaxing the last few nibbles of corn onto her fork. Sarah ate alone, reading. Paperback in her left hand, fork in her right. Tasting nothing but the words on each page. Currently on her menu: *Monogamy, the Cannibalism of Our Time*, and one Early-Bird Dinner sans the rice.

"Can I get you anything else, hon?" The waitress smiled at Sarah with an I-wish-I-had-the-time-to-talk kind of pity for the lone girl.

"Just some hot tea, please." Sarah put down her book in preparation for the relaxing tea ritual.

For a moment she wondered where she was.

Ah yes, she remembered. I'm in New York. Upstate. Somewhere between Albany and Binghamton. Where the hills and trees remind me there's a God just by their simple, beautiful existence. Somewhere I can feel healthy just walking down a country road. Somewhere I can escape. Somewhere I

can forget myself. And then remember myself . . . the way I want to be remembered.

The waitress brought Sarah a large silver pot of hot water, a heavy china cup and saucer, and one tea bag.

"Here you are, hon, enough for four cups at least." She whisked herself away.

Sarah lit a cigarette and poured her first cup, putting the tea bag in the pot to steep awhile before the next one.

She had plenty of time. And solitude. And it was a good feeling. A free feeling.

Sarah opened her book again. *Chapter 12: Deliver Us From Love*. Amen. She looked out the open window to see if the god-of-the-scenery noticed her prayer. No answer but a nice view.

Across the old highway from the diner was one of those quaint little cottage motels. Ten little cottages all in a row. Like a pullman train going nowhere. It was rooted and well cared for. Hedges and plants trimmed and pruned exactly. Each little cottage was newly painted, each a slightly different color than the next. Each with color-coordinated shutters and roofs. Sarah wondered how the owners survived — there were no guests in sight. Just an old man hunched over a flower bed in front of cottage #7.

She watched him carefully weeding each row of plants. He was so careful, so methodical. His fingers cautiously seeking only weeds, careful not to harm one delicate flower root. Slow and careful. . . .

Sean turned to her, explaining, "It comes from defusing bombs and mines in Nam. That's where I learned patience." He grinned.

He was always so meticulous, pushing Sarah right to her frustra-

tion limit. She had nearly gone crazy watching him make crepes once. Everything done so precisely, so accurately. Crepe mixture blended just right, special pan heated to an exact degree, constant attendance to the shape of each crepe as it cooked. . . . she had wanted to scream. But she didn't. That was just Sean. He did things just right, and he always seemed to cherish whatever he did.

"Ow, shit," Sarah nearly jumped out of the booth. Her cigarette had burned down to her fingers.

She stubbed it out in the big glass ashtray and took a sip of tea, glancing at the book near her cup. Her eyes were drawn to the motel again. The old man was gone. The door of #7 was open. Sarah wondered if there had been a new arrival. Maybe honeymooners stopping on their way to some exotic resort. It would be a nice place, she thought, for a sexy stop-over.

The old man was bringing linen into #7 now. Sarah could see the stack of crisply folded white sheets and towels. She could almost smell their freshness. . . .

Sean was grinning at her again. "Time to change the sheets, babe, never know who'll stop for the night."

They were in #7.

Each night they made love in a different cottage. Each night a little different from the last. Every morning they changed the sheets. They kept a nice place.

Tomorrow morning they'd be in #9. And she'd be looking into Sean's eyes while they changed the sheets. She'd be getting hot and wet between her legs thinking of #9. . . .

"One #9, hold the mayo, side of fries." The waitress broke the spell.

Sarah gulped her tea and poured another cup from the pot. It was just right. She left the tea bag in the silver pot. The stronger-is-better syndrome.

I've got to stop this dreaming shit, she thought, I'll drive myself mad! I told him to go and he's going. That's that. I'll get over it. I always have. I'm on the road I want to be on.

She fumbled for her book, glancing out the window cautiously. She was always testing herself that way.

She looked at the little cottage marked "Office." There was some sort of wooden desk or shelf in front of the window and a child sat atop it gazing out the window back at her. . . .

"Mommy, when is daddy gonna be finished? He said we'd go to the park."

"Sean, something tells me our son is bored. I thought we promised to be exciting, stimulating parents." She giggled.

Sean strode over from his easel in the corner, paintbrush still in hand. They kissed. The brush fell.

"Okay, kiddo, I'm ready for the park, and Mom is coming with us." Sean lifted the boy to his shoulder with one arm and circled Sarah's shoulders with the other. He grinned. She had never felt so good. So good it almost hurt. . . .

"Sorry, lady, didn't mean to knock your arm like that." The truck driver had stolen Sarah's dream with a brush against her shoulder.

"Oh, sure, that's okay, forget it," she mumbled. She was feeling rescued anyway.

"Hey, lady, are you okay?" The truck driver sat down hard in the seat opposite Sarah.

"Really, I'm fine. It was just a tap, nothing hurts." Sarah thought he was being a little ridiculous about the whole thing. Over interest.

"Well, somethin' must hurt, lady, or you wouldn't have them tears running down your cheek." The trucker smiled a prompting tell-me-where-it-hurts smile. Sarah's fingers flew to her face in a shocked search and destroy mission for the

alien tears.

"Oh, really, I guess I was just lost in some thoughts," Sarah said slowly, "you know how us silly women are." Emphasis on the silly.

The trucker smiled and poured Sarah some tea. "Listen, cryin's human, not just for woman. Everybody's been unhappy, but being sad can go away like that," he snapped his fingers, "if you let your mind go of it. The longer you turn it over in your mind, the more tender it gets, kinda like a piece of meat over the flame, you know? It gets more and more tender, and then all of a sudden, if you ain't careful, it's burnt to a crisp. That's what unhappiness'll do to your mind if you keep on cookin' it."

---

"Sarah's fingers flew to her face in a shocked search and destroy mission for the alien tears."

---

Sarah had to smile at the driver's homespun metaphor. A road scholar. Major in philosophy.

"Well, you know, neurotics build dream castles for themselves," Sarah said, "but psychotics actually move in. Maybe I'm trying to decide whether to pack!" Such wit. Sarah laughed as her mind flashed on a huge moving van pulling up to the little motel across the road.

She took a sip of tea, the smell of the strong liquid burning her nostrils like the invitation that had burned her brain that day. The trucker was grinning — a little like. . . .

Heat was creeping into Sarah's veins, inching along every nerve ending. Crashing through the door of every part of her. . . .

Sean was sitting on the balcony in the hot sun, looking straight into her eyes over his conquered New York Times crossword puzzle.

"I want you to get your passport. We can both see China together. We'll leave after the exhibition, when the last canvas is crated up. What do you think?" He grinned at her.

"You know I hate rice, Sean!" Sarah laughed. Sean didn't grin.

"You know, babe, I never thought I'd be happy like this with anyone." He still wasn't grinning.

He was holding her. They flowed in and out of each other gently — then crashing, desperate, cells clutching, sucking, thirsting. . . .

Sarah was fairly panting. Her heart beat wildly; she was throbbing, sweating, everywhere. Juices collecting, muskiness seeping. Pores unleashed. Huge clouds of abandon forming all around her.

She reached for another cup of tea with her right hand, fumbling in her purse for her addressbook with the other. Fighting back the inevitable fight.

She gulped the tea. It was much too strong. Oversteeped.

She looked across the table at the friendly truck driver. He looked confused with all the panic surrounding the booth.

"Where's the telephone?" Sarah could hardly get it out.

She thought maybe she'd tell Sean she had learned to like rice. She'd do it fast. Before she could forget. Before she would remember. Before she finished the book. Before the tea got cold.

The trucker pointed Sarah toward the long-distance phone call. She walked slowly, letting her fingers linger on the back of each booth as she passed. Sarah saw no one. She was too busy in the midst of the battle. Directing both sides. Struggling to mate each check.

She stood before the pay phone. The waitress passed her, her held-high tray brushing past Sarah's line of vision. Sarah focused on the side of rice for special #999. It looked like a dish of boiled maggots.

Sarah hated rice.

Deliver us from rice, amen, she thought, walking away from the phone.



. . . For the Road

Away from the haunting eyes of night,  
I race smoke-spitting wheels toward city lights,

Brake short by a bar where an empty stool  
Waits warm from the jeans of an early fool.

The barkeep from under his drooling yawn,  
Asks a buck for the beer he's drawn.

I toss him coins, he smiles though he sneers,  
And we play our game through eight more beers.

I prod him again: Gimme one for the road.  
He snaps: Jock, you're draggin' an overload;

Gutterballs a mug down the sticky bar,  
I dive to snatch it, but it swings out too far,

Flips over, and bubbles opting to die,  
Conjure your face, your night-haunting eyes.



*margit*

*grasswick*



Of Mice And. . .

With each chanced  
glance at demigods,  
I am obsessed,  
possessed by  
devils, demons, and desire.

Erotic phantoms form,  
filter through  
sieves of mind,  
vapor to blurred desert edges,

searing my psyche with  
subliminal scars  
as deep, and  
displayed as proudly  
as the scarlet  
of Hester's shame.

# s t r a n g e r s

S. CARR

Wayne walked slowly up the drive, tugging at his tie with half-hearted motions. Another long day and not enough men willing to put in extra time. He knew he was pushing himself too hard. He felt it in his body, recognized it in his lined face — fatigue making its inroads.

He stepped on to the porch. The door flew open and Sandra was standing there.

"Hi, Dad. Guess what?"

"Hi, honey. I don't know. What?"

Sandra leaned forward and kissed his cheek as they walked into the house together.

"Well, you remember the guy I told you about, the one who came into the shop?"

"No. . ."

"Oh, Dad. I told you. He was looking for a present for his mother and we got to talking and found out we know some of the same kids. Anyway, he just called a few minutes ago and wants to stop by to meet you. I told him it would be all right to come by tonight."

"I don't know, Sandra," Wayne frowned.

"Come on, Dad, you don't even know him yet."

"That's what I mean."

"But he wants to meet you . . . then you can see for yourself that he's a really neat guy. And besides, I was talking to Janet and she said her boyfriend sort of knows who he is. It's not like I picked him up on the street corner."

Wayne smiled. "All right. I guess he can't be too bad if he wants to meet your parents."

"Thanks, Dad." Sandra danced down the hall to her room.

"Where's your mother?" Wayne called after her.

"There's a note on the fridge."

Wayne pulled off his tie, threw it across a chair on his way to the kitchen. He glanced at the note as he reached for a beer. "Wayne — going to meeting right from school. Be home as soon as I can — Marge."

He stared at Marge's tidy letters hanging lopsided beneath the magnet. The beer can chilled his hand. He lifted it to his lips, swallowed. He could hear Sandra singing with the noise from her radio as he walked to the living room. Slumped in the chair, he closed his eyes. They burned from irritation. God . . . ten-hour days are too damn long . . . I just don't know anymore . . . What was Marge's little homily? There's more to living than being the best. Right as usual, Marge . . . but habits die hard. Plow down the obstacles, get rid of the dead weight. Shoot for success.

The peal of the doorbell jarred him. Sandra came racing from her bedroom and slowed to a sedate walk as she reached the door.

"Hi, Brad. Come on in."

Wayne set his beer on the table and stood up. He studied the tall, slender young man who stood in the doorway, his face in the shadows.

"Dad, this is Brad. . . sounds like a tongue-twister," Sandra giggled. giggled.

Brad stepped forward and extended his arm. "Hello, Mr.

Jenkins."

Wayne grasped his hand. He nodded briefly and looked away from Brad's gaze. He was a little surprised at Brad's cold poise. Not exactly shy boy meeting girl's parents. Peculiar.

Sandra's voice broke in. "Would you like to sit down? How 'bout a Coke?"

Wayne shifted toward Sandra as he moved back. "Yeah, let's get out of the doorway."

Leaning back on the sofa, Wayne looked at Brad and searched his mind for something to say. Sandra chattered nervously, her eyes on Brad, then her father. Brad sat calmly in the chair, a thin smile on his lips while he watched Wayne's discomfort.

"Do you go to school, Brad?" Wayne asked.

"I graduated last spring."

"Oh, I didn't know you were out of high school. Are you working?"

"Yes."

Wayne glanced at the small brass clock on the table next to him. For someone so anxious to meet Sandra's parents, this kid wasn't making much effort.

Sandra squirmed in her seat, picking at her jeans. "Do you have any brothers or sisters?"

Wayne looked up and caught Brad's eyes on him.

"No," Brad said quietly, "I'm an only child. It's just me and my mother."

"Your mom and dad are divorced?"

"No."

Sandra looked embarrassed. "Oh. Your father's. . ."

Brad interrupted her. "My mother and I live in a little apartment not too far from your business, Mr. Jenkins."

Wayne sat up straight, his expression puzzled. "Really? I don't think Sandra told me your last name."

"Didn't she? It's Kaczka. My last name is Kaczka."

Wayne reached for his lukewarm beer. "Funny, I used to have a man by that name working for me. It's not a very common name."

"Yeah, it's an uncommon name." Brad's fingers drummed on the arm of the chair. He leaned forward, his eyes pinned on Wayne's face. "This man . . . the one who used to work for you . . . do you know what happened to him?"

Startled, Wayne glanced at Sandra. "How should I know what happened to him? I had to fire him," he shrugged. "He didn't show up for three days straight and never called."

"Maybe there was a reason."

Wayne gripped the beer can, angry. God, what a rude bastard.

"I don't see that it's any of your business," he snapped. "I don't waste my time and money on someone who doesn't take his job seriously."

Wayne drew back as Brad stood up suddenly, spitting out the words. "What do you care? Maybe he couldn't help it . . . does it matter to you, sitting here with all this?" His hand swept the air.

Sandra jumped up. "Brad! My dad's not unfair. . ."

Brad turned, looking at her as though he had forgotten she was in the room. He ran his hand across his forehead. "It's late," he said hoarsely. "I have to . . . I don't want to leave my mother alone very long."

He walked quickly toward the door and opened it before Sandra could move. Wayne sat still, his hands shaking, as Brad turned to stare at him. He opened his mouth to speak, but Brad had already moved into the darkness, leaving the door open behind him.

Sandra looked ready to cry; her voice quavered. "I'm sorry, Dad. He didn't seem weird when we talked before. I don't know what's wrong with him."



Vicki Veroff

"It's okay. Don't worry about it. There're some pretty unstable characters out there." Wayne tried to smile. "Go on to bed. I'm going to wait up for your mother."

As Sandra closed the door to her bedroom, he could hear her crying. He turned out the lights and sprawled on the sofa. What the hell was the matter with that kid? He sighed, leaning his head back against the cushions. Half the world's crazy and I'm defending myself to some lunatic kid.

He willed his body to relax and tried to shake off the ugly scene. On the table, the clock's sticking jabbed

at his mind. Outside the wind rustled the branches. They brushed against the house, a steady tapping. Wayne sat up. Hell, what now? Something knocked softly against the door. Marge? He moved to the door and opened it cautiously.

The moon played with the shadows that danced before the shrubbery and silhouetted a tall, thin statue standing on the porch. A disembodied voice spoke clearly.

"My father killed himself two weeks after you fired him."

Wayne clutched at the door too late. The explosion flashed, louder than the wind.





Surface World

Sharon Daughtery

He said, so I believed  
Gullible they say  
I must confuse naiveté  
with nativity  
They are not of the same nature  
In this searing cold  
fearing world  
of guarded personalities  
polished 'til only  
their reflections can be seen

Quatrain from the Couch

Aaron Shapiro

Who am I, you keep on asking,  
I'll tell you when I'm done unmasking,  
It's just that when I think I'm real,  
I find another mask to peel.

## At Sixteen

Just "Take The A Train" and  
start "Stompin' At The Savoy."  
Joy on a waxed, parquet floor  
Every Friday after school.  
Lindy hop, shag, jitterbug.  
I could really move.  
Whirling, a true dervish,  
Pleated skirt flapping  
Like Monday's wash.  
  
Sweet Asylum, the washroom,  
A melange of urine, sweat,  
And Evening in Paris, during  
"I'm Getting Sentimental Over You."  
No willowy, blue-eyed blondes  
Joined me there.  
They were dancing, slow and close.  
Just once, please God, slow and close.

Shirley Blum

## Soon, Son

When fever raged in his blood,  
Infernal fire scorched the fabric  
Clothing his fragile lace of thought,  
And the light in his eye was dimmed.  
  
Years have gone,  
The shell has grown  
  
A bubbling child inside this shell  
Cries out for early release.  
The child peeks out. . .  
Soon, son, maybe soon.

Gloria Vaden

## Airs Above the Ground

Watching the bareback rider  
Gliding lightly through his hoops  
Up on the Lippizaner's back,  
He turns from the world of sweat,  
Escapes the circle of the track  
To try his own pirouette.  
  
Raising himself up onto tiptoes,  
Trying to stretch his reach  
Up to the clouds  
And pull one down  
To form a windowsill  
On which to lay his folded arms,  
Someday, and rest his chin  
While he soars off into some view  
Beyond this three-ringed hill. . .  
  
He hears the laughter,  
Sees the eyes  
That quickly look away  
As he  
Falls from his wishful thinking pose,  
And brushing the sawdust from his baggy clothes  
Remembers who and what he is.

Shirley Stirnemann

## Desert King

Slivers of fantasy arise,  
striving, seductive.  
Soles trip-trot friction,  
conquered growth.  
Enveloping weather-whipped hands,  
scorching, screams.  
Digested silver sun,  
laughter, tease.  
Cursing unseen sanity demons,  
mirage, mirror, mind.  
Victory again.

*berta faber*

## The Unknown Deed

I don't thank you  
For stealing, what in heart,  
I felt was mine.  
Nor for making me hurdle into  
adulthood instead of entering  
its room with grace.  
I don't thank you for much,  
anymore.  
If, for anything,  
it's an unknown deed you  
never dreamed you did.  
I scream one thank you for opening  
my eyes to a virgin cave  
that drowned me in its need.  
And for that,  
and only that.



## Siren Song of Silver

*(Avaritia Argentum)*

Slinky links, with sinuous slither,  
Slide into a pool of silver.

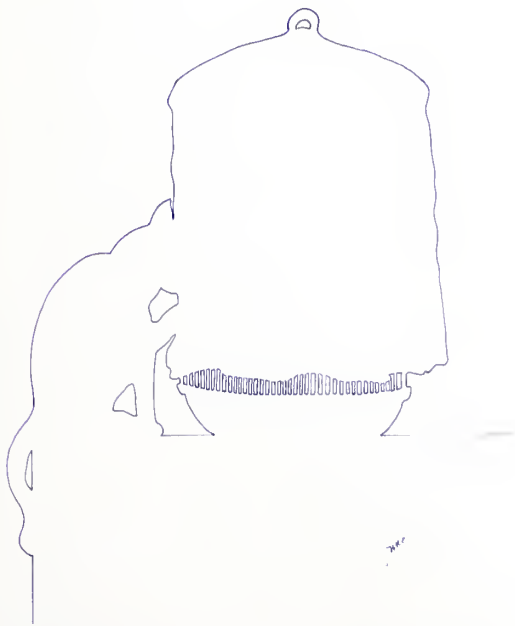
Shivers of starlight, of moonlight,  
Cool;  
Rivers of wealth, diverted by stealth,  
Pool,  
In a pond of silver.

A serpent coils in the sunless depths  
Under the sheen of silver.

Colorless sterling, gleaming, opaque,  
Argentum upon a base core;  
Avarice makes of the pond a lake,  
And the serpent swims to the shore,  
The snake of the sea of silver.

Lemmings that race to the edge of the sea,  
Blind, except to its shimmering lure,  
Face the Moment of Truth, the Fate of the Hunt,  
And drown  
In an ocean of silver.

*Libby Hagan*



*Anne Oakes*

## Plutonian Blue

Silent blue  
The farthest depths  
Of darkest midnight  
Blue.  
Darker than black  
Deeper than fear  
Mysterious  
And strangely fascinating  
Blue.  
And cold  
Hard as the deepest cold  
And glistening  
Like shards of steel  
Broken from far below  
Sub-zero Arctic fields  
And kept  
In deeply hidden caves  
Its penetrating edges honed  
The gleaming shade  
Of razor blades  
Blue.

*Shirley Stirnemann*

## Non-Fiction

I read all the Harlequin  
Boy-meets-girl-and-marries romances  
Flipping through each Mary, Sue, and Ann-filled page  
To find my happy ending  
Charging towards me  
On horseback  
Changing my life's direction with one swift pull on the reins.

With Superman-vision  
My hopes and fears would be revealed to him  
As layer by layer, he peeled loneliness from me  
Onion-like  
Until I stood before him, naked  
Except for his perfect Cinderella-slipper fit.

Once seeded, I read  
The boy-girl union takes root  
Stretching with bean-stalk speed  
Past the clouds  
Each ring celebrating another year together  
Like we would.

I read that life is stranger than fiction  
That fiction is true to life  
And put the book down.

I was ready to be swept off my feet  
Not knocked down,  
The once perfect fit  
Now squeezing my swollen foot  
As I limped away.

When I read about  
Happily-ever-aftering  
I thought it meant together.

*joan pollak*

## Coney Island Heart

Everyone waits to ride the roller coaster  
In their Coney Island-heart;  
Climbing high and higher  
On a no-holds freedom flight  
That tickle-tingles in the stomach  
Till they laugh or cry or scream  
In pleasure  
And fear,  
Anticipating the speeding plunge  
Round a hairpin curve,  
With stomachs suspended  
Where their hearts should be,  
Knowing they are coasting  
Downwards,  
Out of control,  
With one more rise  
Before the final, steeper drop  
And grinding to a halt  
With nothing to show  
But a torn ticket stub.

## Artist's Proof

Like an acid  
Etching the lines of your face  
Into my mind,  
Any chance of your image fading  
Dissolved  
When your voice reached me again,  
Its tone light and vibrant,  
Resonant,  
Pulling me back into  
A red-green flood of emotions  
Which leaves you imprinted  
On my paper-thin skin.  
Imbedded,  
Like the water-mark.  
Leaving me  
Signed and numbered,  
The first in a series.



### **She Wonders**

**Waiting behind the window,  
she wonders  
Why she is sitting while  
He arranges light-splashed fragments  
On a canvas skin  
Stretched taut and white,  
Stretched like all eternity before him,  
framed.**

**Behind the glass she sits  
And strikes a wooden pose.  
Her fingers clench  
Around the flow of time  
Squeeze,  
Until its shadow spreads beneath her,  
Ink-like,  
Fluid.**

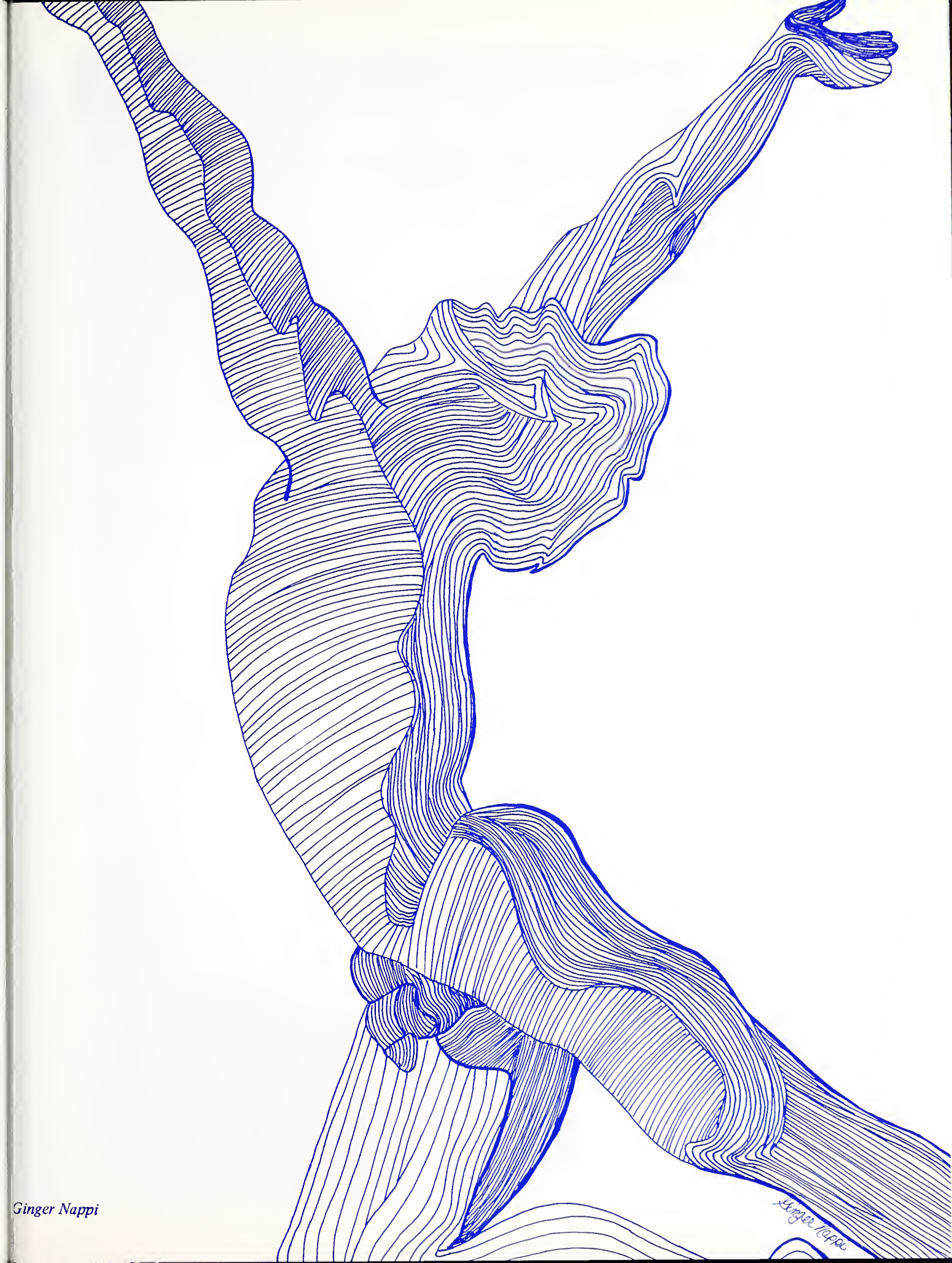
**And his bleeding brushstrokes  
Soak the canvas.**

*Joan Pollak*

Anthropometry: Yves Klein's  
"Leap Into The Void"

I saw your photograph:  
A black and white suspension of time  
And space  
That left me empty  
Of all but wonder.  
Wonder at your nerve,  
Leaping, headfirst,  
Onto unproven ground.  
Did you envision the impact you would make  
Once the shutter closed its eye  
On your swan-like dive?  
Graceful,  
Aesthetic,  
The composition  
A yin/yang balance of light and dark,  
Life and death,  
And you, halfway between the two;  
A human paintbrush  
Ready to splatter, paint-like,  
On the white, pebble-surfaced canvas  
Of the sidewalk,  
To leave the world your monochromatic print  
And call it art,  
An exploration of the void,  
Only not the one in me.  
Yes, Munch called his art his life's blood.  
Said he must suffer to create.  
But they locked him up.  
Even so,  
His reds were only oils.

*Joan Pollak*



Ginger Nappi

Ginger Nappi





## My Dilemma

My parent and I  
Are aging together.  
I, too, need some rest  
Fewer storms to weather.  
How do I love her  
When no love is left  
When the tone of her voice  
Leaves me bereft?

When paranoia sets in  
And self-confidence wanes  
When imagined rejections  
And hurtfulness reigns?  
It's so hard to recall  
The things I held dear  
So far in the past  
Of the yesteryear.

All my efforts to please  
To ease the pain  
Of a gnarled body  
And faltering brain,  
Are met with anger —  
Intense jealousy,  
Because she perceives  
I am younger than she.



*Isabel Brov*



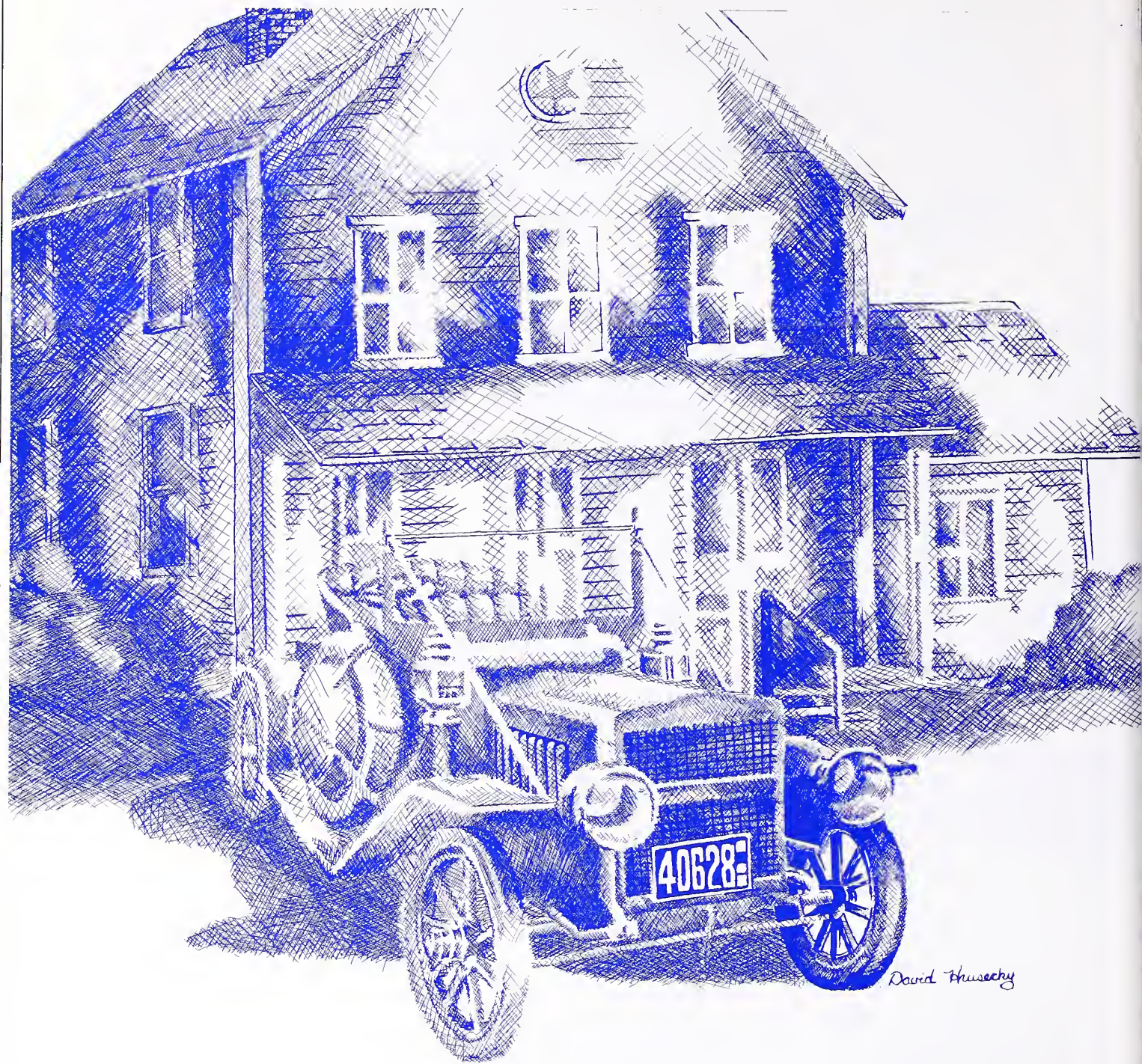


How do I cope  
With screaming and tears,  
The wish to live, yet  
The rage at her years?  
With her failing sight,  
Her shuffling walk,  
The ears that hear falsely,  
The complaining talk?

And while we suffer,  
My mother and I,  
I live in the fear  
That before I die,  
I'll forget how to live  
How to trust a soul.  
How to live in peace.  
I'm afraid to grow old.

*Isabel Brown*

**Evie**



*David Hruscky*

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## WILLOW ROSES

### Could Grow Almost Anywhere

shirley stirnemann

Jenay watched the little cloud of dust rising from the road like a puff of smoke way up ahead of them, up by the house with the big silo. Behind them, the afternoon sun burned hot in an almost cloudless sky and, squinting her eyes, she tried to see just how far she could follow its light. The dust was blocking her view. No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't see past it. Of course, if her mother had stayed on the other road, the one that went around past the Criswells' house, there wouldn't be all this dust. That was the best road to take, anyhow, even if it did take longer to get home on it. Her daddy always took that road.

As she watched, the dust cloud grew bigger and bigger and began to look like a big thick patch of fog. She hoped it would still be there when they got up that far. She could see them driving into it and becoming stranded, just like a fog-bound ship. With the fog sweeping in and surrounding them, and no way to get their bearings, they'd have to wait for a rescue ship with its foghorn and beacon to save them. Maybe her daddy would come.

Once when she had stayed over

at Charlene's house too long, it had got dark too quick and she had stood outside by their gate for a long time wishing someone would come and save her. She and Charlene had both sworn they weren't afraid of the dark anymore, so she couldn't go back inside and admit she was afraid to walk home by herself. As she crouched by the gatepost, her ears could hear all kinds of strange sounds that she had never been able to hear before. And that was when she found out her eyes were too good, too. She could see terrible shapes moving about even in the darkest shadows down in the ditches alongside the road. They were just waiting. When her daddy came whistling down the road with the big beacon of his flashlight, the dark scary shapes and sounds had all run away, leaving only the familiar sounds of a few locusts and tree frogs. He had shined his big light on her face and said, "Hi, tadpole. I thought you might like some company on the way home." That's all he had said. Right then and there she had loved him so much she could hardly stand it. And walking home close beside him, as he swung the big light slowly back and forth to chase away all the dark shadows and any-

thing that might still be hiding in them, she was sure she felt happier inside than anyone in the whole world. She'd even remembered to say her prayers that night before going to bed, even before Mammaw Hornbeak told her to, just so she could thank the Good Lord for giving her such a wonderful father.

She was going to say her prayers more often.

"Why are you so quiet, precious?" She wished her mother wouldn't call her precious.

"Don't you feel good?"

She turned her head toward the open window on her side of the car. "I feel a little sick to my stomach." And even as she said it, she wondered if she shouldn't have made up another excuse, because the next time all of them went for a Sunday drive she might not get to ride in the front seat just so she wouldn't get sick to her stomach.

"Do you want me to stop the car for you?"

The car slowed and she could feel her mother's eyes watching her. "No, I'll be alright if I can just get some fresh air on my face."

Turning her back to her mother, she folded her arms across the top of the door and laid her head

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. . . Wild Roses

could grow almost anywhere

down on them. They were almost to where the dust cloud had been, but it was still just as far up the road as it had been when she had first noticed it. She turned her head toward the back of the car. A cloud of dust was also following them. She watched as it spread out behind them, covering the little pink roses growing wild all along the hedgerow beside the road. Wild roses could grow almost anywhere. They just grew all by themselves. With God's help, of course. But she couldn't help wondering why he had put them on such a dusty old road.

Her mother's dress had pink roses in it. It was the prettiest one she had, and she shouldn't have worn it. She didn't need to wear her best dress just to go into town to pick up some feed, especially since her daddy wasn't even with them. And she still had on some of that lip paint she had put on. She wouldn't have dared to put that on if her daddy had been with them. Well, she would just have to pay for her sins. She wasn't going to tell her that she had forgotten to take it off. Just wait 'til daddy and Mammaw Hornbeak saw it on her. Mammaw Hornbeak wasn't like her mother. She knew all about being good. She said it was evil for women to paint their faces and color their fingernails. She said they would all go to the devil. "Mark my words," she said one

time, "that Janie Reed is a bad one. She's boy-crazy and she'll bring nothing but shame to her poor family." She was ashamed that she and Charlene had ever talked about trying to save up enough money to buy a bottle of that same Flaming Rose nail polish that Janie Reed wore. Her eyes burned now just thinking about it. She was glad she had repented.

She hated that Janie Reed. And her whole family. Mr. Reed wasn't a good, hardworking man like her daddy. Everyone knew that. The whole family wasn't anything but trash. They moved to a different house nearly every year, him and that whole bunch of dirty little kids, and that stuck-up Janie Reed with her painted fingernails. After their other house had burned down (the wrath of God, according to Mammaw Hornbeak), they'd even moved into that old Jenkins place. And hadn't anybody wanted to live in that old house for years. It wasn't much more than just a shack. Like Mammaw Hornbeak said, they'd never amount to anything. Mr. Reed was as shiftless and lazy as they come. "Lordy, I don't know how that poor soul stood it as long as she did," Mammaw said when Mrs. Reed passed on. And he was a womanizer.

How could she, her own mother, have gone into that place and let that man sit down beside

her and put his hand on her and touch her just as if he was daddy?

Jenay leaned her head further out the window so she could watch the tires cutting into the dry, powdery dust. She wished she hadn't asked to go into town with her mother. If she hadn't gone to her daddy and begged him to let her go, lying, telling him she would help with the feedsacks, her mother might have just picked up the feed and come straight on home. Then too, if it hadn't been such a cold spring, the cotton would have been laid by already and her daddy could have gone into town himself. Then her mother could have stayed home with the baby and she wouldn't have put on that lipstick and she wouldn't have gone into the Dinner Bell Cafe.

Mammaw Hornbeak had been right. The Dinner Bell Cafe was a sinful place. Mammaw wouldn't even walk past it when she went into town. She'd cross over the street at the corner and walk down the other side in front of the ice plant and packing house first. It wasn't a fit place for decent women to be around, she said. And when Mammaw Hornbeak saw her mother's painted lips. . .

The car swung slowly around a long curve and the sun, almost directly even with the car's window now, reflected on the shiny chrome. Jenay closed her

eyes against the glare.

\* \* \*

On the way into town, Jenay had sat proudly beside her mama on the front seat. She had been the only one to get to go with her. C.L. was helping her daddy and Roseann was minding the baby. Mammaw Hornbeak, of course, was still at her Saturday morning bible reading circle at Miz Stover's. She'd been glad that her mama had changed out of the overalls she'd been wearing when she came in from the fields at dinner-time. Her mama had even untied her hair and brushed it 'til it was as shiny as new cornsilk. Then she had put on her good dress, the one with the roses, and Jenay was sure she had the prettiest mama in the whole world.

Driving into town, in fact, everything had been perfect. She hadn't paid any mind at all to the dust. Her mama had asked if she didn't think the honeysuckle vines had been especially fragrant this year, and then they talked about the new dresses mama was going to make for her and Roseann from the new feedsacks. She had already decided that she wanted to pick out one with pink roses in it, but she told her mama she'd let her pick it out for her. When they turned onto the main highway, the sun bouncing off of the new asphalt made little water ripples and she thought of the nice cold

glass of water she might get at the drugstore. She would go in and ask Mr. Ledbetter if she could have a cold drink of water, please, and he'd pull back the long, black handle on the shiny chrome water spout and let the cold sparkly water pour slowly down into a little glass with Cocola written on it. Then he'd set it down on the cool, smooth, marble counter top, and she'd climb up on a stool and drink it real slow, so it would last a long time. Mr. Ledbetter had the best tasting water in the whole world. Even the sound the glass made when it was set down on the smooth marble was just right. The water, the glass, the marble counter, they were all part of something too special to even talk about, and looking forward to them, along with everything else, made her feel like it was some kind of holiday.

When they pulled up in front of Horner's Hardware and Feed Store, she hadn't even minded when her mama pulled out the little tube of lipstick and leaned up to the rearview mirror to color her lips. After putting the lipstick back into her pocketbook, she had patted her lips with her fingers and rouged her cheeks with some of the same pink color. Then she had leaned over and kissed Jenay on the lips, leaving a trace of color there, too. Jenay hadn't wiped it off. Since it was such a special

occasion, she was sure it was alright to wear just a little bit.

Mama said they would come back to Horner's for the feed later. First, she said, she thought it would be nice if they went somewhere for a cold-drink. Jenay quickly thought of the drugstore, but before she could picture the cold glass of water again, her mama was saying that she thought it might be nice if they went to the Dinner Bell Cafe. Jenay looked at her. A funny feeling, sort of like the one she always got on the first day of school each year, was beginning to fill up her insides. She looked around at the water bubbling up out of the fountain on the corner. Her daddy had told her not to bother Mr. Ledbetter by asking him for a glass of water when there was plenty in the fountain, but he didn't realize that there was something special about getting a glass of water in the drugstore. If she could have explained it to him, though, she was sure he would have understood. She was certain there was nothing wrong with it, but since she could never explain how she felt about it, she had kept it a secret.

"Come on, precious," her mama winked at her, "let's get in out of this hot sun."

Running her tongue across her lips, she tasted the buttery, honey-sweet pink on them. Then, smoothing her long, dark braids back, she took her mama's hand.

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Wouldn't Charlene just die when she found out she had actually been inside the Dinner Bell Cafe? And just wait 'til she told that Janie Reed.

As they walked down the street past Dr. Walker's office, the new bank, Lehman's ten-cent store, and turned at the drugstore on the corner, she found herself looking at herself in the windows and secretly hoping someone else would see her, too. The Dinner Bell Cafe had curtains more than half way up their windows, so unless somebody was real tall, the only way to see inside was to wait for somebody to open the door. Or go inside like she was going to do.

Her mama opened the door and let her go inside first. She waited for something to happen. A couple of men turned around and looked back over a booth to see who was coming in, but then they turned back around and started talking again. Three more men and a woman were sitting at one of the tables in the middle of the room, but they didn't even look up. She eyed the woman closely, trying to see if she was a painted woman, but she didn't even have on any lipstick. A big, heavysset woman called, "Hi, y'all. Come on in and set down," and kept walking on over to the booth with the bottles she was carrying.

Taking her hand again, her

mama led her to the back, and she slid into the big booth. A fan was turning slowly back and forth on a shelf on the back wall. Her mama sat down across from her.

"What would you like to drink, precious?"

She eyed the little square packages of Cheezes in the glass case, and the narrow cellophane packages of peanuts in the rack on the top of it.

"I don't know, yet. What are you going to have?" She knew her mama would have a Grapette. It was her favorite.

"I think I'll have me a Grapette, but you go on and order anything you like."

A Grapette was too small. A big orange Nehi was nearly twice as big. But she finally decided to ask for a Cocola. They might bring it in one of those little glasses and that would make everything even better. The women brought it in a bottle, though, and it was her mama who said, "If you've got a Cocola glass to pour my daughter's in, I'd sure appreciate it."

"Sure thing, honey," and the big woman brought the glass to the table and poured some of the cold-drink into it for her.

Everything was just perfect. Even though the table was covered with oilcloth instead of marble, it was still fine. Sitting in the booth, she noticed, she was almost as tall as her mama. She lifted the glass and

tasted the sweet cold-drink, enjoying the feel of the fizz as it tickled her nose. Her mama was sipping her Grapette and looking around the room, so she leaned back and watched two colored men standing in the back drinking a bottle of beer. Then she saw Mr. Reed. He had come through the back door just like he was one of the niggers. He glanced quickly around the room, then came straight over to where they were sitting. Her mama didn't even see him until he was standing right beside their table.

"Hello, Maybell." He grinned down at her mama. "Jenay." He only nodded toward her.

Scooting over right away just like she'd been expecting him, her mama smiled back. "Well, Clinton Reed. Imagine seeing you here."

He had beer on his breath. She could smell it all the way across the table. Then he ordered another beer and sat right there at the same table with them drinking it. She waited for her mama to say something, but she didn't even move away when he moved over close to her and put his arm across the back of the booth. She just sat there giggling and acting as silly as that Janie Reed did when she sat in the back of the school bus with Philip Cunningham. Mammaw had been right. Holding the glass to her mouth and trying to decide whether to keep drinking from it

## . . . Wild Roses

### could grow almost anywhere

or not, she raised her eyes just enough to watch the thick, curly black hair showing from the neck of his starched white shirt. She was sure the devil must look just like that when he came up to walk around on the earth. Then lowering her eyes, she saw the back of his dark, hairy hand come sliding across the table. He was pushing a nickel toward her.

"Wouldn't you like something to go with that cold-drink, Jenay?" He cocked his head back, smiling like he was sure she was going to take it.

She looked at her mama. "It's okay, precious. You can even run on down to the drugstore for an ice cream cone if you want to."

She should be telling him that they didn't need any of his money, thank you, and that he should be giving it to his own dirty kids. She should tell him that her own daddy would give her a nickel if she needed one. That's what Mammaw would say. But her mama didn't say anything. She just kept smiling, and Mr. Reed smiled back and let his hand drop down and touch her shoulder.

Trying to get up too fast and set the drink down at the same time, she knocked the glass over and the dark liquid spilling across the shiny oilcloth was already running down onto her mama's good dress as she turned and ran from the dark insides of the Cafe and out into the

bright, hot sunshine. She didn't stop running until she was safe inside the car. Then laying down, she turned her face toward the back of the seat and covered it with her hands.

A few minutes later, her mother opened the door. "What's the matter, precious?"

She pulled the tail of her dress up and wiped her face. "Can we go home, now? I want to go home."

Her mother stopped smiling, and a few minutes later, after Mr. Horner had helped her load up the feedsacks, she got into the car and they were on the way home. She didn't even mention the spilled drink.

\* \* \*

Feeling the car slow down, Jenay opened her eyes as a bunch of dusty jimson weeds brushed against the fender and along the side of the door. They were turning into the lane that led up to their house. The car stopped.

"Look at me, precious." Her mother touched her shoulder and turned her around. "I don't think we ought to tell your daddy about going into the Dinner Bell Cafe today."

"You mean not about Mr. Reed?"

"No, I don't mean about Mr. Reed. I'll tell your daddy I spoke to him at the feed store. I mean about going into the Cafe. If your daddy was to find out we were in there,

he might not ever talk to *either* of us again. Do you understand what I mean?"

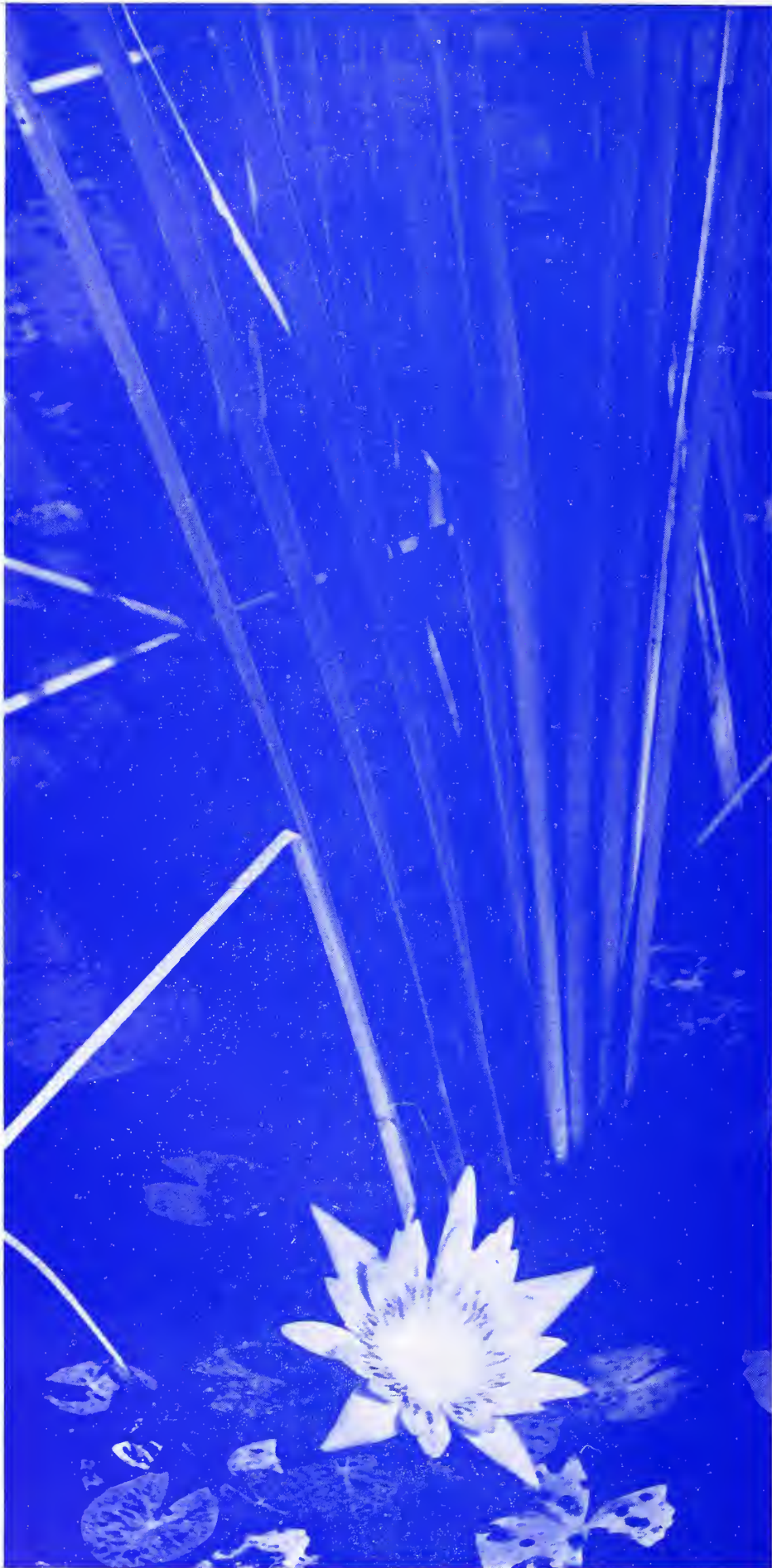
"Yes, ma'am."

"I'm sorry, precious. Maybe I shouldn't have said that, but I was hoping you'd understand. You see, even though your daddy is a good man and a hard worker, sometimes he places too much importance in the farm. Sometimes he forgets that other things are important, too, like dresses with pink roses. And sometimes, he listens to your Mammaw Hornbeak too much. If she was to find out, she'd never let him live it down. Besides," she tugged at one of Jenay's braids and laughed, "she'd make us go to prayer meetings every night if she knew."

Her mother was right, of course. She couldn't ever tell anyone about going to the Cafe, not even Charlene. She'd either have to keep it a secret or lie, and she didn't want to have to lie. Looking away from the trace of stain she had made on her mother's good dress, she silently vowed to make it up to her daddy, though, by never going into the drugstore for a glass of her special water again. Then she noticed the pink roses on one of the big feed sacks in the back seat and remembered her mother's pink lips.

"Mama." She touched her fingertips to her own lips. "You forgot to wipe off the lipstick."





Haiku

Old Mother straighten  
Do not make me realize  
I will soon be old

Hubert Heilman

Candle flame blows out,  
Moth with singed wing safe until  
Matches strike again.

Margit Grasswick

Scarecrow sports farmer's  
Hat and boots. Farmer astride  
Tractor wears out pants.

Margit Grasswick

Amidst silver specks  
A golden scythe (crescent moon)  
Cuts ebony sky

kristin a.a. guagliardo

The ancient cypress  
Exposing arthritic roots  
Boasts longevity

kristin a.a. guagliardo

A quail warmed by feathers  
Walks atop hilly pads seeking food  
Icy wind bends cattails.

Sam Brooks



# Night Fires

Shirley Blum

Something about that child's dress clutched at my heart, started little wheels spinning in my head. It wasn't just the luscious peach color; perhaps the smocking under the collar. Slowly the realization. I had a dress just like that, how many years ago? I couldn't wait to get home. . . find that gargantuan box of pictures. Somehow they never were put into albums as I'd intended over the years. Yes, sure enough, there was the picture. A solemn, skinny little girl, her glasses almost obliterating her face, wearing a beautiful, smocked dress.

The year was 1925. I was to wear that dress to my aunt's house in Baltimore, Thanksgiving Day. I remember being so happy with my new dress. But remembering the rest — well. . .

The village, too small to be called a town, was on the main highway between Baltimore, Maryland, and York, Pennsylvania. Just a crossroad, really. My father owned the general store on one of the four corners of the crossroad.

It never occurred to me to ask why our store was called the "Jew" store, until that Thanksgiving eve. All four of us children had gone to bed early for our trip the next day. Thirty-four miles, a long one, back then. I was asleep, soundly I suppose, when I was awakened by my

father. He didn't turn on the light but shook me and gruffly told me to put on my robe, get my glasses, and come quickly. I could tell by the urgency in his voice I had better obey at once. Even though not fully awake, I did as I was told. My older brother and sister, and my mother carrying the baby, were hustled down the stairs to the first floor. From there to the front of the store where the steps led to the cellar. We were all thoroughly confused, the baby crying, my sister and brother asking questions, my mother shushing, and my father pushing us all along, whispering, "Hurry, hurry." There was only one street light to see by so we moved slowly, but we could still see the fright on our parents' faces. Mamma kept wrinkling her forehead and Poppa's mouth was just a thin line.

Another light, bright and flickering, like a thousand candles all lit at once, shone through the store windows. Closer and closer it came. In a moment I could see that the light was from flames on tall sticks being carried by white-clad figures in identical garments with peaked hats. It was awesome. Worse than Halloween. As they came to the crossroads they stopped and more or less regrouped. Instinctively we hushed, frozen to the spot. We heard one of the figures shout, "This will

teach 'em. We'll show 'em we don't want 'em here." My father, usually a calm man, emitted a low moan, "My God, almost the whole town." He pushed us all together and tried to hold us, touch us, reassure us. He started to pray in Hebrew, "Boruch atoh adenoy." My brother who knew some of the words joined in, "Elohanu melech hoylom." And so we stood, praying and shivering.

The procession resumed. It went past our store and on to the next-door neighbor's little patch of lawn. Amidst jeers and shouts, it burned a gigantic cross, bigger than the one on the church. That was all I saw, for now we were on our way down to the root cellar, where we remained for several hours.

I never did wear that dress with the smocking on Thanksgiving Day. We didn't go. Shortly after, my father sold his store and we moved away. It was many years later that I learned the people next door were judged to have been "LIVING IN SIN," and they, too, moved soon after that incident.

The terror of that night has dimmed. So, too, that time of my childhood. And yet, little girls are still wearing peach colored dresses. Men are still wearing white robes with peaked hats, marching and judging. Then . . . now. Some things never change. (PK)

## To Authors in Search of a Victim

Science writers threaten me,  
My life is one big blight.  
I panic when I read their words,  
Will I make it through the night?

I must not smoke or drink good wine  
Or even imbibe water.  
Both General Foods and Kellogg's, too,  
Are leading me to slaughter.

Sugar intake is slow death  
Saccharin's no answer.  
Flour, poultry, and smoked meats  
Are sure to give me cancer.

Eggs, candy, cheese, and soda pop  
Bring heart disease and gout.  
There's not a single thing I do  
That I'm not warned about.

But now I say they've gone too far —  
They want to turn off sex.  
Each week I read some new attack —  
What will they think of next?

Each study has its followers  
Who believe their every word.  
But soon another book comes out  
And calls it all absurd.

If I ever took the time to write,  
I'd reach the height of fame.  
Panel shows and interviews  
Would clamor for my name.

I give you "twelve" new titles  
Under contract I would write.  
Each has a valid point of view  
That could surely sell on sight.  
"Do Not Bathe — It's Hazardous"  
"Wear Only Pure White Clothes"  
"Brushing Teeth is Dangerous"  
"Never Blow Your Nose"  
"Don't Lie Down While Sleeping"  
"Exercise is Death"  
"Never Stand When You Can Sit"  
"Garlic Cures Bad Breath"  
"Eat But Never Swallow"  
"Regurgitate Each Meal"  
"Children Are Exploiters"  
"Doctors Never Heal"

Need I go on? You see the point.  
I'm sick of books that tease me.  
I've lived the greatest part of life  
Now I do things that please me.

So hooray for sex and apple pie.  
Pizza, I hold dear.  
Instead of buying your damn books,  
I'll buy a case of beer.

I've known so many doctor friends  
Whose words tore me asunder.  
They gave me fear, yet I'm still here,  
While they're all six feet under.

*Al Price*

## Success

I wish I lived in Russia:  
They'd tell me what to write.  
I'd do whatever they wanted,  
I'd give in without a fight.

I'd glorify my comrades  
Just to make my name well-known.  
I'd lie and cheat and pander,  
With no reason to atone.

I'd be buddies with the big shots  
And hang out with the gang.  
And I'd sell my soul for rubles;  
Let my conscience just go hang.

For in Russia I'd be famous!  
With my author's fame I'd gloat.  
And if someone didn't like it,  
We'd cut his bloody throat.

*John L. Vardamis*

When You Said  
It Would Be Better

When you said it would be better  
to sit at the shore  
and await the tide  
I couldn't help wondering  
if I wasn't already  
in above my head

Lost  
in a sea of confusion  
I struggled to break through  
the wall you'd built  
but  
feeling washed out  
it was only inevitable  
that I'd anticipate rejection

As I held on tightly  
to my last breath of freedom  
I remember mentioning  
it was your space  
I worried about

Drowning in self-doubt  
I told you  
I loved you  
and I'm still glad  
I had the strength  
to be with the feeling

Even now  
left alone with the feeling  
I prefer the taste of our memory  
to the thought  
of me  
cooking dinner  
and you  
emptying the trash

Now  
I see  
and I imagine it was a frightful sight  
for you  
seeing me  
caught in the undertow  
and next time  
I'll gladly sit at the shore  
and wait  
for the tide  
to come  
in

*Donna Buffa*

'Tis Only on the East Side of our Nation

Here within the confines  
of the east  
only half this nation  
where I was conceived,  
have I set my hungry  
feet upon the soils  
to explore the naked  
wonders God's achieved.

I was drawn to hills and valleys  
filled with life,  
to the mountains where the streams  
were clear and chilled,  
to the hundred kinds of trees  
and wild flowers  
and the boulders left to  
master in their guild.

I pursued the giant cliffs  
against the sea,  
the coves where man and God  
shared likely dreams,  
and followed frozen shorelines  
and the woods  
to experience the winter's  
wildest screams.

I tasted grapes from vines  
no man had grown  
and smelled the mold of  
leaves upon the earth  
hung from willowed branches  
o'er the lakes  
and touched the chickadees  
upon their birth;

I have stretched my arms  
to reach the reddest apple  
hunched my back to pick  
the wildest berries,  
roamed the lanes to smell  
the sweetest fragrance  
of the peaches and the apples  
and the cherries.

'Tis only on the east side  
of our nation,  
with many miles left  
to yet explore;  
Ah! but time has served  
me well in forty years,  
and I pray the Lord  
will show me forty more!

*Jan Matteson*

Hello, America

Hello, America  
you look like you're feelin' low  
had a bad year?  
oh, two hundred or so —  
yeah, I've read about it.  
war and peace was nothing  
compared to your annals.  
thought we'd lost you in 1980.  
with the riots and the killings  
and the hostages and all.  
How do you stand the pressure?  
I know I'd surely fall.  
What me, I help you stand?  
No — not me — hell, I don't even  
vote.  
yeah, I salute old glory  
and I believe in freedom for all,  
I believe in peace and love  
yeah, and brotherhood, too.  
That's all it takes? Nothing more?  
Oh, right, right. Nothing less!  
I understand you now.  
Oh, America — God bless you.

*Myrna Jury*

Five

Five American gold eagles flew.  
Across a wide blue chasm called Atlantic.  
Five to take the apple pie for Mom.  
All red and white and blue tin soldiers.  
Five with razor hands and lightning feet.  
And belching vengeful flames of righteousness.  
Five fought five fought five good patriots.  
Small armies marching to a harmless war.  
Five who viewed one page of Hemingway.  
Could see the masterpiece quite clearly now.

*John Billera*

## Secret Treasures

Ever so quickly  
time passes  
and all that was  
treasured  
is  
tucked away  
in the mind,  
wood boxes,  
pieces of smiles  
in heart-shaped locket

*Cindy Schaeffer*

## Amboy, California

This tiny hamlet,  
Lost in the vast emptiness  
Of the Mojave desert,  
A few ramshackle houses  
Surrounded by mesquite  
And wind-shaken tumbleweeds.

The main street  
Is the only street.  
There is no movie palace,  
And no supermarket.  
The corner cafe  
Is the center of activity.

The population is only thirty-two,  
There are no children,  
No need for a school.  
The people, senior citizens all,  
Resigned to the isolation and sun,  
Hunt jackrabbits for fun.

*Larry Glazer*

## Who Has Stood

Who has stood ankle deep  
in the crashing surf  
with the luring tug of the  
undertow  
and the crisp smell of  
salt and sand  
watching sandpipers scurry;

watching sandpipers scurry  
to and fro  
with the rising and falling  
waves  
and not wondered how all this  
came to pass?

*Morris Brock*

## Perspective

Since I started college I feel that my  
clock has started to wind up, rather  
than down. I just hope that I can fool  
my body long enough for me to enjoy all  
of this.

*Fred Hornik*

dianne  
shepard

# HOUSECALLING

Mary lived alone, with no child, no lover. She was no climber. It was often said of her that she had both feet planted firmly on the ground — but she thought, there are too many flowers on the wall and all are of the wrong colors; green and orange snowflakes whirling around the range, the sink, and halfway out the door. She knew that if she closed her eyes, some of the flakes would settle around her feet, perhaps stick to her ankles and they would be rotten underneath when she kicked them. Sour and suddenly brown like leaves that have died and fallen and been rained on.

Her life was like that. She was surrounded by whirling pieces of dead minutes, brown raked up flakes of time portioned into day-sized piles that reeked when you kicked them. She knew it was wasted, all of it wasted. She closed her eyes and waited for the clammy limp flowers to lay their hollow veined hands on her feet, to clutch at her toes, to anchor their roots firmly in the nourishing shiny vinyl floor. . . .

Yes, it was often said of her that she had both feet planted firmly on the ground. Only once had someone called her whimsical. She had clung to that for a while, owning it but separated from it; the word a much-needed raindrop hung tenaciously to the other side of a window, and finally, like a tear, it had slipped off.

She opened her eyes and her hands began the ritual of dinner. Her mind would catch them later, overtake them in time to garnish, to create, to make the ritual worth-

while. Until then her mind wandered, exploring, looking for a home, or at least a proper room for the night. She smiled: a Bethlehem, perhaps.

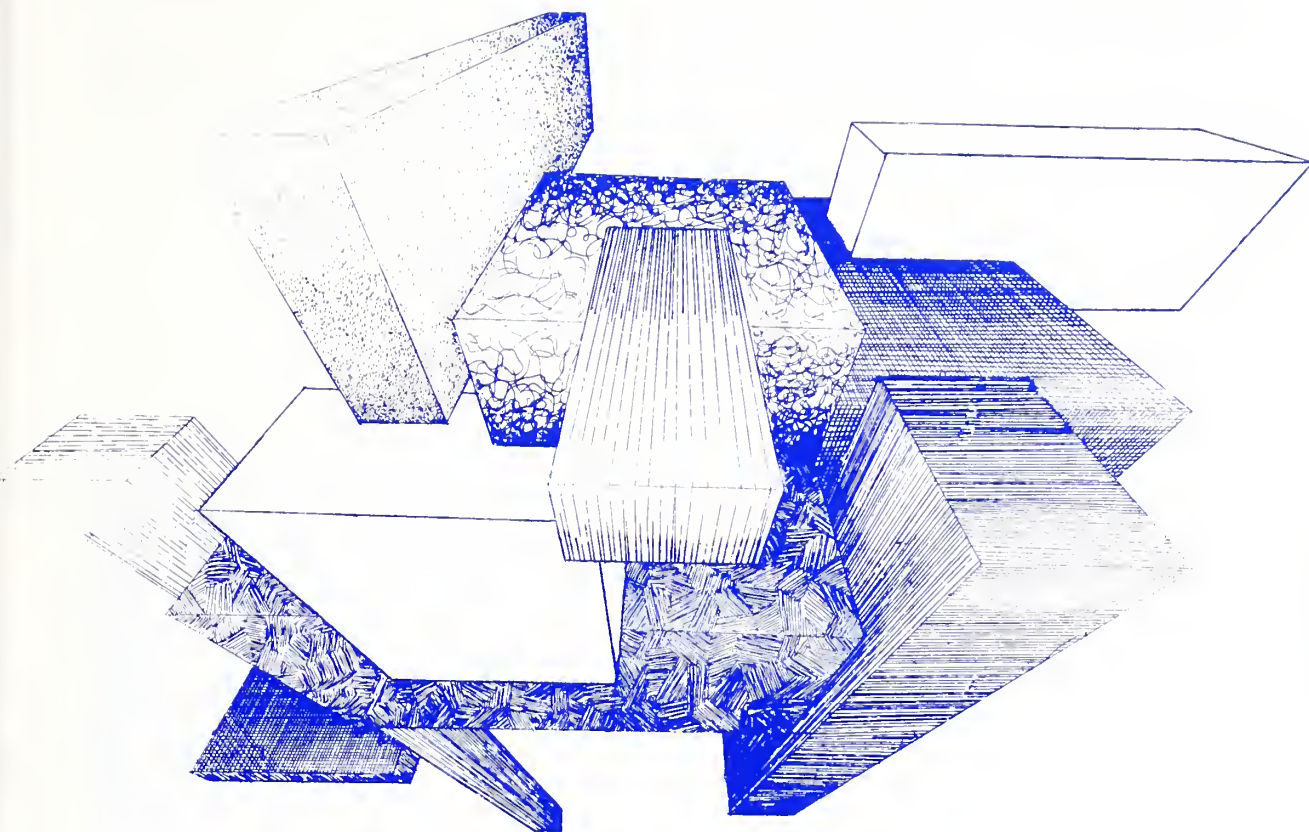
She supposed she was neurotic, but what did *that* mean? Definitions. Amusements for old men in shirtsleeves, she thought. She pictured old and distinguished men packing round orange words neatly into crates marked, DEFINITIONS. It was all so — useless, and yet so useful for forwarding each day to some address back in time.

The potatoes were finished but Mary let them sit for a few more minutes, imagining their eyes becoming glassy, fish-eyed from looking through water and never absorbing any. She watered the plants from her coffee mug, then swallowed some herself. She smiled. Neither she nor they seemed to mind drinking after one another. Plants are wonderful, she thought, as she gouged the first potato's eye and stripped away his skin. "But there are too many flowers on the wall." She was looking up uneasily, "and they are all the wrong colors."

She set the table. Her Aunt Alice was coming to dinner. Aunt Alice was a spinster, a perennial wall-flower, a bi-annual bloomer; that is, she came out twice a year. Mary thought of her as a cold antimacassar that fell softly across her couch and wouldn't melt.

It was nearly eight o'clock; her aunt would, as always, be punctual. This virtue was more the blessing of an undiverted mind than the spirit of a considerate nature. She was a very selective and successful woman, the author of a number of best-selling novels, some of them thoughtful, all of them orderly.

The dinner keeping warm, Mary began to plan their conversation, to order her thoughts. She moved to the sitting room, onto a yarn-cluttered couch and tucked her feet, shoes and all, up under her legs. In her mind, she spoke of things that were important, confronted them, without a dinner or a housecall in between. It always came back to this, this confronting of things that she thought were important. She wrinkled her brow. Important things might be more easily isolated by first thinking of things that were not important. Goals for instance? Again she thought of the old men clamoring for a definition. A carefully marked crate slides down the conveyor. The orange words roll in, disarranging and bruising themselves along the slatted sides. GOAL: anywhere, thing, person, place from which you can admire yourself — ie. mountaintop: theoretical perch



Michael Cavasini

for resting, looking back and admiring the progress. Note: Mountaintops should not be confused with milestones, however — another crate if you please — which are sometimes worthwhile because with them, there is a fifty-fifty chance of creeping dissatisfaction. “The best lack all conviction,” she quoted, “while the worst are full of passionate intensity.”

But what is important if goals and mountaintops are not? Why isn't it enough just to climb? Enough that they are “there”? She thought a moment and put her feet back on the floor, suddenly becoming aware that her planned conversation was a little lopsided. Most —

no, all of Aunt Alice's words were missing, a development not possible in real life. Her eyes rested on a fern, turning brown from its bookshelf near the window; browning perversely, she thought, because it suffered not from too little water, but from too much.

Mary's eyes took in the rest of the little room. Perhaps, she thought, it is most important just to distinguish what you like from what everyone else likes. Not an easy thing to do, so great is the seduction of achievement when others approve. She glanced at a painting of the ocean above her couch and thought that to be able to distinguish is to know the difference between a painting

created for the space above the couch, and a painting created to vacate a spot in the gallery of the mind, a shift to make room for another. It was important, this concept of creating space as opposed to taking up space.

She suspected her Aunt Alice of taking up space, and even though it was very little space indeed, she resented it. Alice was like one of those orange and green flowers on the wall, and Mary longed to rake her up. Instead, she answered the door and while exchanging cordialities, thought how much the streetlight behind Aunt Alice's head looked like a star. In silence they went in to dinner.



shirley stirnemann

Once Upon a Timex  
(or ain't they just hysterical?)

We popped out of a box  
Pandora's — through a lookin' glass.  
Some flyin' east and west and then  
Cuckoo!  
Hello, goodbye. Tick. Tock.

The wizard poked his wand  
Up under mother goose's skirt.  
One dozen eggs came tumbling down  
Shazam!  
They named him humpty d.

We sat him on a wall  
And used him, see — target practice.  
Boy, he made this big yellow stain  
Amen.  
Goldilocks groomed her hair.

We all ate scrambled egg  
And eyed them — she let all them bears.  
Lucky? Sucking goldie's fat tits  
They was.  
She was — a pig. So what?

Black rat got excited  
Copped a bite — whee — ran up the clock.  
Shit. He thought it was a gumdrop  
Ding dong.  
Old tom just sucked his thumb.

Then fat cats came prowling  
See them teeth? How about lamb chops?  
Hey man, don't you play the fiddle?  
Hit it!

Go on boy, pat your feet.  
Once bad wolf fooled with red  
They got him — shot him in the butt.  
Heh! He don't go messin' no more  
Uh uh.  
Just dance 'em round a bit.

They ate the lamb? Oh well  
He was lost. They'll go back to sleep.  
Lullabye . . . better him than us  
Hush now.  
We still got three bags full.

Boogie man he came in  
Zapzapzapping with his popgun.  
He got us all, he did — uh huh  
We gone.  
Snap-crackle-pop. Shh. Boom!



## A Yellow Road

Gliding smoothly  
Down a yellow curving path  
I am surprised  
To find my belly  
Fits so snugly  
In the shallow coiling trail  
Left by the snake.

## The Day of the Lizards

Out of nowhere  
Lizard heads appeared  
Darting sharp eyes and tongues  
Into the placid air  
Caught drowsing on a Sunday afternoon.  
And unaware, even the sun,  
Crouched down behind a cloud,  
Had nodded off.  
With swift killing speed,  
Knifing slick holes into the sleepy day,  
The slaughter ended as quick  
And quiet as it had begun.  
  
And lizards are busy  
Everywhere.



*N. Fronabarger*



*Daryl Miller*

page 53 acrylic painting  
original dimensions 18" x 24"  
artist Nellie Fronabarger

page 54 silk screen (top)  
original dimensions 5-7/8" x 6"  
artist Daryl Miller  
acrylic painting (bottom)  
original dimensions 16" x 20"  
artist Jo Ann Yardley

page 55 colored pencil drawing  
original dimensions 18" x 24"  
artist Nellie Fronabarger

page 56 colored pencil drawing  
original dimensions 18" x 24"  
artist Nellie Fronabarger

A  
R  
T

*Joann Yardley*







## Images of My Italian Grandmother NU NU

She works busily  
in her vegetable garden,  
taking care of her string beans,  
tomatoes,  
peppers,  
cucumbers,  
lettuce,  
and cabbage.  
The vines of grapes,  
white and purple,  
take care of themselves.  
Oh, I can't forget the figs.  
Every winter she bends the branches,  
and covers them with dirt and leaves,  
so they don't freeze.

When the vegetables are ripe and ready,  
she's out in the blazing sun again,  
picking them.

The garden is bare now.  
The multi-colored autumn leaves cover the ground  
It is getting old,  
just like Nu Nu is . . . now 91.  
She was always full of spirit and life,  
and I thought she'd never slow down,  
but with the passing years,  
the summers get hotter,  
the winters get colder,  
And Nu Nu, well, her green thumb is getting worn.

Rene



## *One of "The Gleaners"*

*With her back bent to the sun,  
Brief shadow caught beneath her skirt,  
She gleans in fields already harvested.*

*Old Woman*

*Digging among dry barley chaff  
Long after the master's shadow,  
Brightly hued guidon — mighty vanguard,  
Tall, astride the great black stallion,  
Has dug heavy bootheels  
Into the horse's flanks  
And spurred him on to other fields,  
Leaving no shadow now  
Between her and the sun. .*

*Curving spine*

*Already bent, already fitted  
To this servile stance,  
Humbled by the weight  
Of too many sunless days  
Beneath the greater shadow  
Pressing down upon her breast,  
Prodding her flesh,  
Planting its seeds,  
Until she*

*Like the earth*

*Has yielded  
To the footprint of its heavy boot;  
The rounded contours of her back  
Now, only a repetition  
Of the reaper's mounds  
And the millet stacks beyond —  
And of the distant hills.*

*Shirley Stirnemann*

# THE POWER OF A TRAIN

rose odell

Yes, I'm awake. I hear Bob downstairs in the kitchen, jingling silverware, running water, closing cabinets. Then, metal spoon against ceramic, stirring sugar into coffee. He brings a cup upstairs for me to drink in bed and goes back down to the kitchen to read Russell Baker. I sip the hot liquid slowly.

Then in the distance, I hear the sound of a train. I sit straight up almost instinctively. *Listen to the train.* The sounds of it drifting miles through the early morning air. Over the park, the shopping mall, the blocks and blocks of the housing development. Its steel wheels singing to me. Its bassoon-like horn delivering to me — in a camera flash overture — the melded mosaic of my past.

I remember Dad and I walking Chief, our old German Shepherd. We would stroll down the narrow Philadelphia sidewalk to the weedy field that bordered the train tracks. During the block-length walk from our house, Chief and I would bump hips as we jockeyed for a position next to my father.

Sometimes when we were there, a train would approach and we'd run to the tracks. Standing at the bottom of the rocky slope next to the tracks, we'd wait for the train. I prepared for the train's coming as if for a hurricane. My eyes squeezed shut, my arms clinging like barnacles to my father's long legs, and my whole body tensed in readiness.

The droning hum of the train gradually swelled into a roaring scream. I felt the union of fear and excitement as the clacking wheels sent thunderous, rhythmic blows through my body. The bursts of air rocked my feet. But my father's feet stood firm. Only when the train had passed would I open my eyes and stare trance-like at the cocoons of steam twisting out from under the metal plates.

One summer I discovered that I could play by the train tracks and not be seen from my house. I wasn't allowed there by myself but

I knew I was safe. The crabapple tree in our backyard, with its green leaves and wide branches, blocked any view from the kitchen window. I revelled in my discovery.

I stole a red-plaid blanket from the old oaken trunk in the attic, smuggled it out of the house and down to the tracks. I put the blanket between two large bushes that had grown together to form an alcove. The only way to get to it was from the side facing the tracks, so I was hidden on three sides. This was my fort and I shared it with no one.

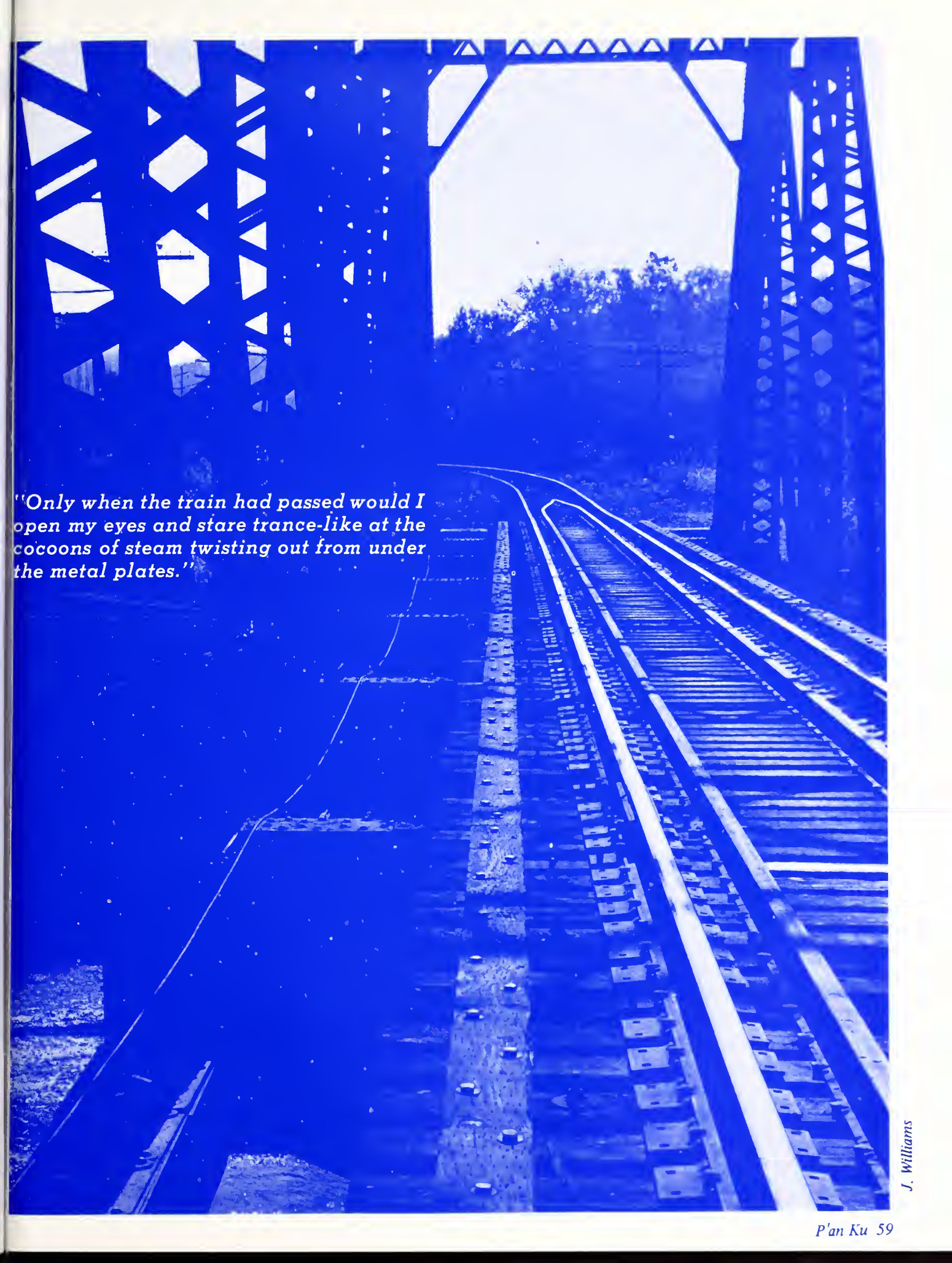
I'd sneak baby food jars filled with Hawaiian Punch down to my fort. There, stretching out on the blanket, I'd sip my punch and watch the trains go by.

Sometimes, with an antler-shaped stick, I'd conduct an orchestra to the beat of a passing train. The blades of grass were my violins; the dandelions, my brass section; the morning glories, my flutes.

At the sound of a train, I would tap my stick on a rock to bring my orchestra to readiness. With the fast passenger trains, I'd grandly conduct the finale to the William Tell Overture. With the longer, slower freight trains, I'd assist Leonard Bernstein with Beethoven's *Für Elise*. My train music and I were definitely a legend waiting to be told.

One day in July, I went down as usual to my fort with a pilfered Nancy Drew book. I found Joe Santini sitting there. Everyone called him "Rhode Island Joe," but not to his face. He was a tough kid from someplace called "The Hill" in Providence. People said that his Dad had to move because he hadn't paid the bolita man. He hung around with the gang from Wissinoming Park, and most kids on the block were nice to him — out of fear.

But I was willing to fight for my fort. I knew Santini was Catholic, and since I had beaten a girl from St. Bart's once, I thought I could beat him, too.

A blue-tinted photograph showing a perspective view of railway tracks crossing a large steel truss bridge. The tracks lead from the foreground into the distance, curving slightly to the right. The bridge's structure is composed of dark, heavy steel beams forming a complex lattice. The background shows a landscape with trees and a clear sky. The overall mood is industrial and atmospheric.

*"Only when the train had passed would I open my eyes and stare trance-like at the cocoons of steam twisting out from under the metal plates."*

I screamed at him, "Get outta here!"

Joe Santini looked up and smiled. He smiled just like a llama I had seen once at the zoo. He said, "You people down here talk funny."

"I talk funny? You're the one who talks funny!"

I don't know how, but we started talking. We found out we both hated Caroline Kennedy because she had her very own horse. And both of us wanted to be rich when we grew up. He didn't like my train music too much or even Nancy Drew, but he did like real music and said he was learning to play the guitar.

By the end of that day we decided to be friends, but still argued about the sharing of the fort.

"Since it's my blanket, you have to bring drinks and snacks."

"All right," he agreed reluctantly.

"And if you tell anyone about the fort, I'll get my big brother to beat you up." I lied. Actually my big brother would've beaten me up if he'd known I was hanging around the tracks. But Joe said okay and we arranged to meet the next day.

We spent almost every sunny day down by the tracks. We told secrets, rang door bells on old Mr. Grakowski, and became blood brothers at high noon with his father's razor. We cut slits in our fingers and shook hands. We were serious.

Some days we stared at the clouds and called out the names of the shapes. Or threw rocks at the water tower and wondered if the whole neighborhood would flood if it broke. We picked crisp insects from glistening spider webs, placed them on the tracks and watched them dance when a train came.

Once, after scorching my finger on the track, I got an idea. We went to Joe's house and I waited while he stole a brown egg from his re-

frigerator. We took it to the tracks to fry.

I washed the track carefully with a soapy sponge and Joe used his shirt to wipe it dry. He cracked the egg over the track. Only the yolk stayed on but we thought that was okay since we didn't like the white part anyway. The yolk never cooked, even though we waited almost an hour. Eventually a train came, the wheels sending tiny shooting streams of yellow-orange, like a spark, into nothingness.

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*"Everyone called him 'Rhode Island Joe,' but not to his face. He was a tough kid from some place called 'The Hills' in Providence."*

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After school started, Joe and I met at the fort every afternoon. I was already there one day when Joe arrived with a long pointer stick. He had stolen it from his school. He said that the pointer would be better for my train music than the crooked stick. I figured that it would be okay to take it since it came from Joe's school and not mine. I tried it out when the next train came, then hid it under the blanket for safekeeping. I conducted every day after school with my new instrument.

On Labor Day there was a party on our street and everyone was still out after dark. Joe and I walked down to the Van Kirk Street train bridge. We climbed up onto the bridge and tossed out toilet paper streamers on the cars below. We had a can of white spray paint and

wrote our names on the black steel bridge. It was hard because we had to write upside down and backwards. We both agreed that mine looked the best, but Joe said it was because I was left handed and wrote practically upside down and backwards anyway.

It was raining one day in September when I heard the sirens near by. Everybody in our neighborhood always came out when the sirens blared. Once I saw a real gunshot wound. So I ran out of my house and down to Van Kirk Street. When I reached the corner, I saw fire engines, police cars and ambulances just by the bridge. A large crowd had gathered. I ran to the end of the block and stood on my toes.

I heard someone say, "It's Joe Santini."

Head first I pushed my way through the crowd. I reached the front and looked up. I saw the ambulance drivers lift Joe Santini's head and shoulders onto a stretcher, while the firemen hosed down the rock bank where his body dripped like a split pizza.

I vomited.

After the funeral, I returned to the fort. I removed the blanket and dug a hole directly underneath. In it I placed the red plaid blanket and the pointer stick, then filled in the hole. Over that I cemented rocks in the dirt to form a cross. Crying, I knelt down and said a Catholic prayer for Joe Santini. I left the fort and never returned.

My father, who now walks a dog named Maggie, tells me the cross remains to this day. And on a recent visit to Philadelphia, I saw that the names are still scrawled across Van Kirk Street train bridge.

It is the power of a train that captures my thoughts this morning, as I dress for work and make rye toast for breakfast. The power of a train is not short lived. There is a goal in that power, an energy that radiates, an ugliness that sours, and a beauty that stuns.

(PK)



## Yearning

Deep in this garden a rose gently unfolds  
Waiting, unchosen, unseen.  
Brilliant of blossom, fragrant of scent,  
A stately and velvety queen.  
One among many can sometimes be lost,  
The beautiful rose is forlorn.  
No one to cherish its gift of delight,  
No room that its glow can adorn.  
Its thorns ever gentle, may sting but not hurt,  
Choose it, don't lose its sweet grace.  
Its season grows short as nature moves on  
And shadows appear on its face.  
Color will fade and petals will curl,  
Then drop like tears amid sighs.  
Not feeling the warmth of your touch or your smile,  
Not knowing your sensitive eyes.

*Al Price*



## Young River Catch Me

Young river catch me dancing; reflect my melody,  
Mimicking life upside down, your smile you splash on me.

You were when life began as you are now while I exist,  
Removed from all complexities that crush me in their fists,

I watch you weave your rhythm through my cold, uncertain toes,  
But soon embrace the harmony of nature's virgin prose.

Pry me free from men's accomplishments  
And fancy with machines  
Protect me from my theories  
In my search for what life means.

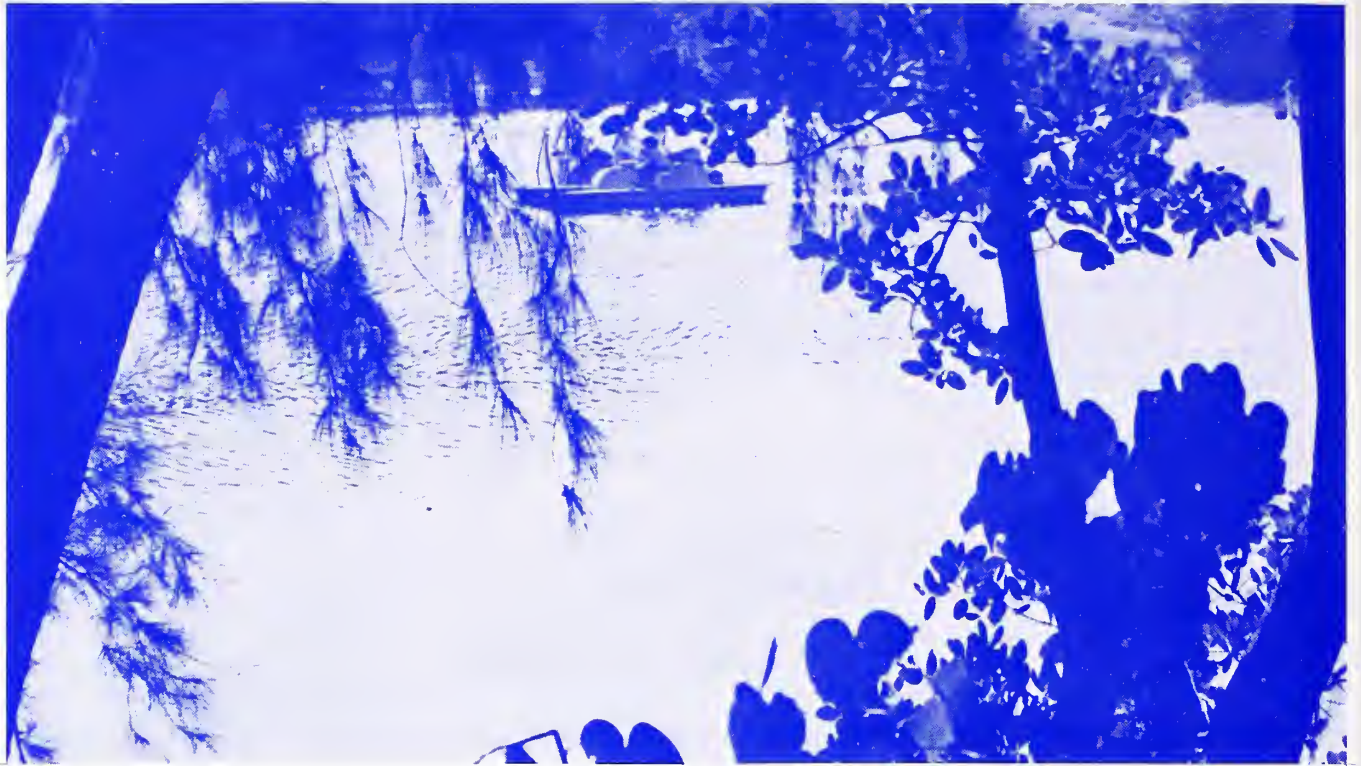
Cool water, cleanse the haughtiness  
Of arrogance and fear  
Clothe me unassumingly  
With humble underwear.

Pour me through infinity, indulge me in your calm  
Ever always as before me, your wisdom rambles on.

Remind me of when miracles were eloquent in rhyme  
Convince me simple symmetry has not passed unto time.

For, I envy from my human bonds  
While you are free to roam  
Though I have limbs to carry me  
I cannot yet go home.

*Camille Pedone*



Vicki Veroff

dianne shepard

The River B<sup>e</sup> n<sup>d</sup> s in Exercise

Calves like f<sup>o</sup>l<sup>d</sup>i<sup>n</sup>g c<sup>h</sup>a<sup>i</sup>r<sup>s</sup> collapsed

s l e e p i n g on the banks

woke terrified at the blast

of our signal horn— —

cat<sup>a</sup>pul<sup>t</sup>ed, pelted out

across the mat green meadow

like drunken gymnasts j<sup>o</sup>s<sup>t</sup>l<sup>i</sup>n<sup>g</sup>

bunching f<sup>o</sup>l<sup>d</sup>i<sup>n</sup>g o<sup>v</sup>e<sup>r</sup>

u<sup>n</sup>d<sup>e</sup>r one another in

their hairy h-a-rl-e-qu-i-n skins.

## Unwell

He is studying the well,  
fathoming her depth,  
dropping dippers in,  
sampling before he drinks.

He's under the impression that  
she's forty fathoms deep.

Between the rocks and moss  
shallow secrets seeping  
clandestine,  
stone to stone  
meet disguised as ripples.

And she,  
wedged under a ledge  
watching, learning well his face.

From her depression she  
mimics his expression and  
thirsty  
drinks him in.

## dianne shepard

### Tied

To forget  
at night, I take you off  
little by little  
starting with buttons,  
ending with watersilk panties  
puddled by the bed.

See the blue  
blue lipped sheets part  
break and cling;  
moving shades, in schools of shark  
I reek of whales.  
Eye-scales, black and white

won't close, I shimmer  
blow  
and moonlight pulls —  
me.

Up around his face  
like heirloom quilts

like clouds, rising  
tied,  
my hands  
washup dead  
in tangled hair and  
I go out, trailing foam.

### (Three Hail Marys) For Unclean Thoughts

Twice now  
I've wanted to remember  
your face  
the lay of your hand  
the feel of your wrist  
bone tossed up  
like excavation  
beside me in bed.

No, more times  
but your face was  
gone twice  
and other faces  
black, white  
eroded like bare  
fields above me; they  
all look alike  
when you plow them under.

## S(q)uattting Barflies

They slink, they blink  
all clotted eyes  
unsettled on their clothing piles.  
Music grates  
the room to shards  
of sound that sliver down  
the strobe-lit legs of tables;  
tables round,  
in humble button fashion  
fasten elbows, chins,  
like stitches to — pink edges.  
Golden beer unravels, coils,  
begins to disappear,

bubbles down necks  
of bobbing Stet-sons  
scattered in the light like corn  
while damp and sunken  
long haired hens  
peck and nibble bits  
of brims and scratch among  
the piles, cock  
their legs, pluck their knees,  
— candle-feathered floor.  
The door, lumpy bits of velvet  
gather up their nits while wits  
their wallets to side pockets

slip on cue  
they shift the wandered  
scrotum, rubbing hands and faces  
settle to  
the laying of  
bets remembered and  
collected squatting whitely  
over omelettes  
in the morning leaving  
shells and other bits  
behind. . . . .

. . . . .  
. . . . .

*Dianne Shepard*

## Party On Q

Lines connected to birds  
Going south?  
Following the roads  
Going to Rome?  
A pattern is evolving  
But is it  
Going somewhere?  
Left without an island  
To dry off  
On  
The fire at a touch of a switch  
Yow! Careful, you're all wet  
Don't make the connection  
My words may shock you  
It's a good day to die, though,  
I often think yesterday was better  
Tomorrow was definitely worse  
It's been a long time  
Too long to wait  
In line for punch  
Save my place  
I'm going for a walk  
Nice of you to join me  
It's lovely out here  
Cobblestone paths  
Fading out in the distance  
Somewhere behind the moon  
Or was it over the rainbow?  
Who's saving my seat?  
My but the woods are dark  
Light a candle, a blue one  
The arrows are flying everywhere  
It's so hard to get hit  
Look — a green robin  
Stealing from that squirrel  
Look up ahead the path  
It just stops  
Now where are we at? I'm lost  
Oh right, nice party  
Wherever did you get that?  
Let's do it again sometime.

*Sam Brooks*

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“You Can Print It in the *Times*”

tall, thin, frizzy, four-eyes  
you're a loner in the lower middle class  
Italian and Hungarian  
living in a Polish slum  
going to Catholic school  
you steal penny candy  
from John and Judy's corner store  
and buy cigarettes with your lunch money  
your mother's divorced  
but she tried to raise you right  
“say please and thank you”  
“don't do anything that you wouldn't want printed  
in the *Times*”  
“be yourself”

proper and polite  
quite pretty now  
i still spend my lunch money on cigarettes  
and every once in a while  
i get the urge  
to steal a peppermint from Howard Johnson's

“Cling Free”

it's a bitch  
when you fall for a man  
in your complex  
    life  
he says  
it's casual  
but  
i always check  
to see if his car's there  
and sometimes  
i find his laundry  
still in the dryer  
after the cycle's ended

Traffic Flirt

I just saw  
the girl of my dreams  
in my rear-view mirror  
(a vision of beauty in a Datsun pick-up).  
I turned left.  
She turned right.  
It was a short-lived love  
but one I will cherish  
for at least another twenty minutes.

*John Gerren*

... more  
photography

**J. Williams**





**Patrick Butcher**

deborah miller

# HOW TIME SLIPS AWAY

The insistent ticking of the tarnished wind-up clock was a mesmerizing sound in the small gray cubicle, and at breakfast hour, practically the only sound to be heard. From where he lay, Stark couldn't see the rain, but he had no difficulty hearing it. The tapping fingers of the rain merged with the ticking of the clock until Stark couldn't tell where one left off and the other began.

Rain, thought Stark, sure, it fits. Perfect weather. Stark sat up and grabbed at a pack of cigarettes lying nearby and in his hurried movements, spilled the entire contents in disarray on the floor. "Damn," he muttered under his breath. After rescuing one, he kicked out a foot sending the others scurrying across the floor like frightened little white mice. Stark leaned back on the small cot that had been his resting place for the past year and a half. Striking a match, he shakily directed the flame to meet the tip of his cigarette, then tossed the match aside with the exasperation of a man at wit's end. Propping himself up on a pillow, Stark leaned back and watched the ghostly smoke spiraling into the air. His attitude of leisure belied the turmoil that wrestled inside him, clawing sharply at his guts.

As Stark lay back, he surveyed his surroundings. The cell's walls, floor, and ceiling all seemed to blend into a continuous slab of gray concrete. The whole room looked as though it had been painted in one long continuous

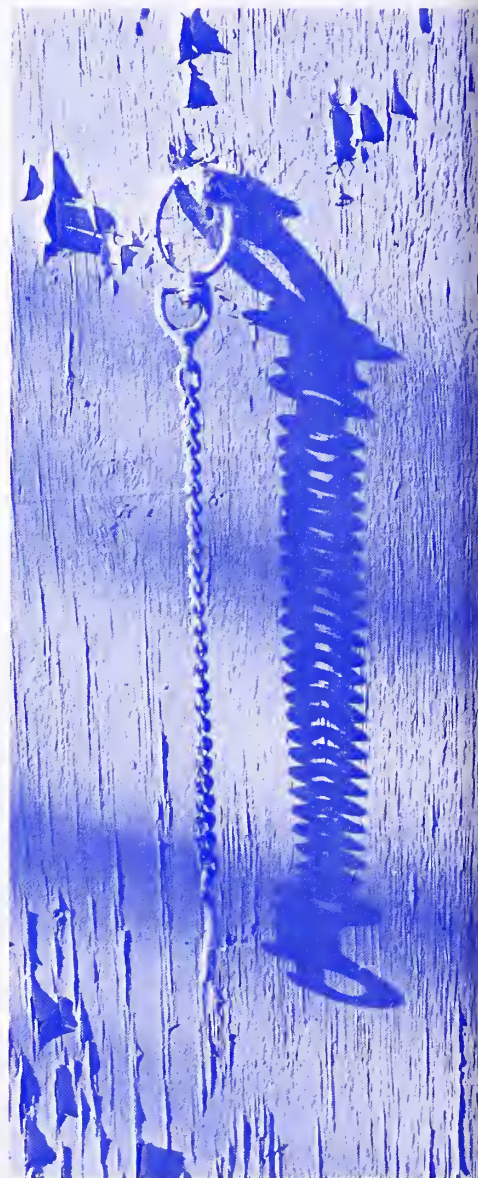
brush stroke. The once white porcelain toilet and sink, rust stained with use, were merely a lighter shade of the same dull gray. The damp coldness of the gray and the rain enveloped Stark's figure like the hand of death. It pervaded his body to its very core.

As if drawn by magnetic force, Stark's eyes scanned the cell until they came to rest on his clock. 8:03 AM.

Fifty-seven minutes, Stark thought, just fifty-seven more hellish minutes. What does a man do in the last fifty-seven minutes of his life? He knew one thing he wouldn't do. He wouldn't break down and whimper. After all, it's what they all expected him to do. No, he wouldn't show any of them his true feelings or that his insides were quivering like jelly. He wouldn't whimper.

Madelyn whimpered . . . and whined. God, how I hate whiners. Madelyn deserved every last thing she got, her and that simpering excuse for a man I found her with. They both deserved it all right.

No, he felt no sense of guilt. Stark told himself he only did what any real man would have done in the same circumstances. Madelyn. His wife for seven years. Not bad years. Few problems and even fewer arguments. To come home in the middle of the day and to find



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her with that creature. Stark hadn't lost control, as his attorney had told the jury at the trial. He had calmly looked the whole scene over, went into the garage, got his 12 gauge shotgun from its black leather case, assembled it with slow, deliberate movements, and loaded it with double-ought buckshot. Then, methodically, and with great care, Stark entered the bedroom and blew both their heads off.

I hope they both burn in hell, Stark thought. Then, chuckling, a thought struck him, Maybe we'll meet again, Madelyn and I. Maybe our business isn't finished yet. 8:07 AM. It's funny, Stark thought, how time seems to drag when you're waiting for something. Only this time is different. Hell, I'll be glad to get out of this scummy cell. A year and a half in this stinking hole called death row. And that attorney . . . I just wish I had the chance to get my hands around his skinny little starch collared throat.

A jangling of keys brought Stark out of his drowsy reverie. A panic pervaded his body making him break out in a thin film of sweat, soaking immediately through his gray, wrinkled prison garb.

Hold on, Stark told himself. Don't break down now. Just one more phase of the process. That's all. Stark forced his eyes towards the cell door. The guard stood there with that look on his face that Stark had come to know so well. He hated that jeering yellowed grin. Behind the guard stood Baker, Stark's attorney.

What in the hell is he doing here, Stark thought. The bastard's probably come to see the show.

"Stark," called Baker apprehensively. Stark heard his attorney's voice coming at him as if from a very long distance. "Stark," Baker called a little louder. "Listen, I have news." Stark finally looked Baker in the face, as Baker continued. "We've done it. We've finally gotten the break we've been waiting for all this time. Listen to me. We've gotten the stay of execution. Just the time we need. I told

you about this loophole I have. I can still get you out of here, but you have to cooperate." Baker's words tumbled over each other as he hurriedly tried to relay his news. What Baker was actually saying suddenly struck Stark like a bolt of lightning.

Play it cool. Don't blow it now, Stark thought. For the first time since the whole trial began, Stark drew a deep breath and saw a faint spark of hope. "Oh yeah," Stark said. "What the hell took you so long? I've been waiting all damn morning for you. I'm not so sure I want your help anyway. Look where your help got me."

"Come on," Baker snapped, "you know better than I who got you in this mess. I'm just trying to get you out of it."

"Alright, alright," Stark said. "What's the gig?"

"Listen. First things first. Today I want you to get your things together, then tonight we'll move you back to the other cells with the rest of the men. That should ease your mind a little. Then we'll have a nice long meeting, you and I. This next trial, Stark, we're not going to lose it. It means a lot to me too, you know. I have an idea, but it needs work. It needs refinement. I'll come to you when I have the whole thing worked out."

Stark inhaled a deep shaky breath, realizing for the first time that there would be others to follow. Stark hung his head and began to laugh. Quietly at first, then the sound grew, until it was a loud, raucous noise that reverberated through the halls, bouncing off the walls like an overinflated basketball. "I was just contemplating the idea of meeting Madelyn soon, and now it looks like we'll have to put off our happy meeting a little longer."

"In the meantime," interrupted Baker, "get control of yourself. Look, it's 11 o'clock now. I'll be back tonight after I see the warden. Get some rest today. Sleep the rest of the day if you want. You look as if you need it." Baker and the guard left, clanging the door

closed behind them.

Stark leaned back once again with a new attitude of a man of leisure. Lighting another cigarette, he glanced at the clock. 11:03 AM. The clock's ticking seemed less insistent now. Drained of all energy, Stark felt the effort of lifting the cigarette to his lips too much to accomplish. Then, taking Baker's advice, he closed his eyes and drifted off into a drugged sleep.

Jangling. Jangling. Stark dazedly tried to place the noise. Coming fully awake, he jumped up abruptly, thinking, I've got to get my stuff together. Hurry. "I'll have my things ready in a minute, Baker. Just taking a nice long snooze like you said. Just give me a couple of minutes, will ya?" Baker didn't reply.

Stark glanced up at Baker and instead found himself looking into the jeering face of the guard, and behind him. . . .

"Where the hell is Baker?" Stark growled. "What's the warden doing here? What in the hell do I need a priest for?" Stark jerked his head around and looked at the clock. 8:27 AM. Stark began to shake his head. Slowly at first, then as the realization struck him, more frantically. Stark's body began to shake uncontrollably, his cheeks flapping from side to side in a macabre little dance. His cool, calculated control was swept away, leaving him open, defenseless as a terrified animal being cornered. Stark's eyes, as he looked again at the waiting trio, were burning coals of despair.

The group entered the room . . . the priest talking in a low soft monotone . . . the warden saying softly, "Come on, Stark, it's time now."

From somewhere off in the distance, Stark could hear a growling noise which raised itself in pitch and intensity until it became a scream. A piercing, shattering wail. Stark reached up to put his hands over his face, his palms encountering his open mouth, and realized that the scream was coming from within himself.



## RHZ Ad Infinitum

you wrap around me like  
a sticky band-aid  
then you quick peel yourself away  
stinging and gone  
you hold me in sleep in  
a half nelson lock  
then in the morning you don't  
ask me to stay  
fire then ice  
pulling pushing  
you make me crazy  
i believe you  
i believe nothing

(ASHES)

i'm shedding my first layer of skin  
piece by piece  
i'm peeling it  
to deaden the piercing sensation  
in my chest

it isn't i you want anymore  
I'M SCREAMING  
running into a pyre of flames  
burnt to the core  
it means THAT MUCH  
and what's worse  
is knowing it won't mean  
anything tomorrow  
(ASHES)

*kim weiss*

You and the Boys

you and the boys  
gotta way of talking  
gotta way of walking  
you got style enough  
to burn up the streets

i follow behind  
clumsy in a man's gait  
trying hard to keep up  
but damn it

i'm a woman

and when i ask you if  
i'm the softest creature  
you ever touched

don't tell me no

if i only look half ordinary  
deny it

for this is no game

i'm a woman

---

kim weiss

The Ice Cube Trays

the ice cube trays  
are always full  
only twice in two years  
have i balanced from  
sink to freezer (freezer to sink)

at twelve cubes a tray  
times four two times  
i have created  
forty-eight cubes per year  
unlike the infinity of frozen squares  
my lover has tended

not until an ankle broken  
found him bedridden  
could i fathom the amounts of water  
he consumed  
(always chilled by ice)  
and come to realize  
why  
the ice cube trays are always  
full

She Is Intense

she is intense      HE LIKES QUIET  
she speaks from her soul's deep well  
HE IS BORED BY THE STACCATO OF WORDS

each word is a flag to her  
with a country of symbols

THE TELEVISION HUM IS A SOOTHING SYMPHONY TO HIM  
HIS REJECTION SUBDUES HER

silent passive anger

HE LIKES QUIET  
while inside her demon muses gnaw  
like tap water dripping in darkness  
she is intense  
feeding on herself  
IN SILENCE

---



**Pier Insight**

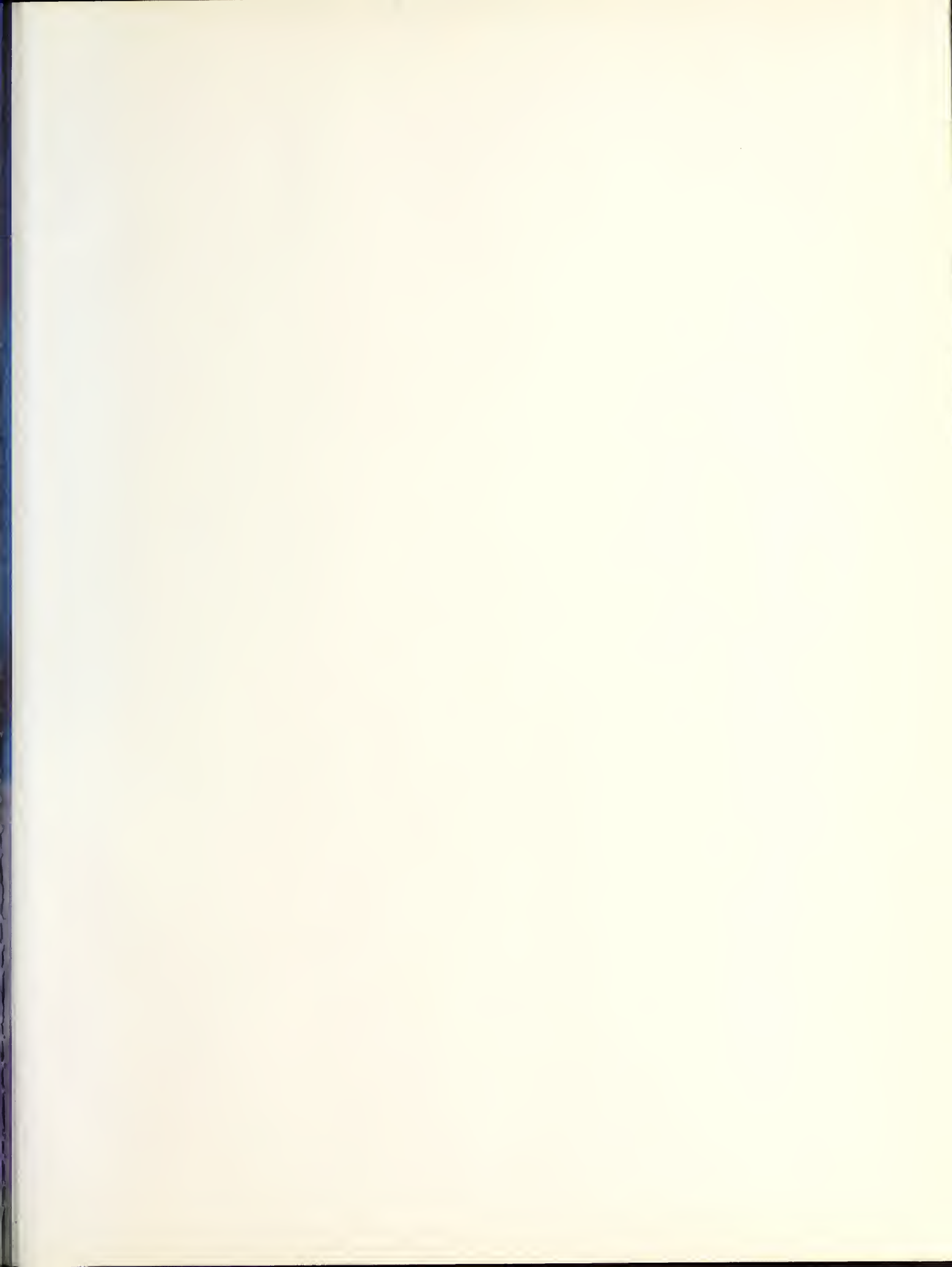
Blue becomes blue  
Endlessly; waves thrash  
Deafening meetings of sand and shore  
and the visions of clarity

The vastness of the ocean engulfs us  
As do life's problems  
Fierce winds wither into breezes  
reaching pier's end  
. . . then what?

**Carol Travis**















BROVA  
FOR L...

1934

