

the best of

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Cardinal Sins

Iss. 2



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Special thanks to Denise Emery and the Valley Vanguard.

Cardinal Sins

all from the tree of knowledge

"What's madness but nobility of soul
At odds with circumstances?"

--Theodore Raethke

Welcome to the 10th anniversary issue of Cardinal Sins, the student literary journal of Saginaw Valley State University. This joyous occasion celebrates the interesting diversity of those who chose to share their talents in an attempt to give this school a "good read." In the face of cynicism and bigotry, Cardinal Sins demonstrates many students' continuing commitment to the art of civilization. The poems, stories, drawings, and photographs gathered in this and other issues, are testimonies of the human mind's ability to survive a world that is often ugly, barren, and cowardly. Even if only for a moment, when pen touched paper or at the click of a shutter, someone became brave enough to express himself or herself in ways that celebrate a choice to continue living with courage and grace. Look, they say, you are not alone--we have also felt despair, pain, beauty, love, and tremendous happiness. What we have lived is what we have written, photographed, and drawn. Life, after all, is art, It is with immense pleasure that we present the best of many lives. Enjoy, and live well.

POETRY

5	Glass Days	Betsy Kennedy	V. 1, 1. 3
5	Cosmic Journey	Betsy Kennedy	V. 1, 1. 4
6	Sunday Drive	Gary Thompson	V. 1, 1. 5
6	untitled	Marcia Ribble	V. 1, 1. 7
7	untitled	Ruth L. Williams	V. 1, 1. 3
12	Not Often as a Woman	Janis Paul	V. 5, 1. 3
12	My Mind	Janis Paul	V. 2, 1. 2
17	The Bath	Maura Troester	V. 2, 1. 5
17	A Love Song	Don Socha	V. 2, 1. 5
22	Around Green Lake in Seattle	Kate Phillips	V. 2, 1. 4
30	Madwoman's Conflagration	Karen Totten	V. 3, 1. 3
31	Of Blending	Karen Totten	V. 3, 1. 4
34	Amorist's Confession	J. Peter Ingalls	V. 3, 1. 1
35	To My Teacher	J. Peter Ingalls	V. 3, 1. 4
36	Grass	Eric Nisula	V. 4, 1. 1
38	A Small Intrusion	Kristi Edwards	V. 4, 1. 2
44	Wolfman	Jim Vandermoter	V. 5, 1. 1
44	Matte White	Rachel Zamek	V. 5, 1. 3
47	Black Brother	Charles Taylor	V. 5, 1. 2
47	untitled	Beth Medley	V. 5, 1. 3
52	Brown Girl	Diane Sautter	V. 6, 1. 2
55	Changes on a Cloudy Night	Linda Haag-Hipel	V. 7, 1. 1
56	Barbara Ann	Linda Haag-Hipel	V. 6, 1. 4
57	The Garden	Michael Griffor	V. 7, 1. 4
58	Drawing From Memory	Michael Griffor	V. 8, 1. 3
59	Falling Out of the Earth	Michael Griffor	V. 9, 1. 2
69	The Sleep	Jason Lichon	V. 7, 1. 3
75	Bar Fly	Dave Sturm	V. 8, 1. 4
76	Seasons	Elizabeth Dulski	V. 8, 1. 4
77	Sister Sun, Sister Moon	Elizabeth Dulski	V. 8, 1. 3
78	For Maxine	Elizabeth Dulski	V. 9, 1. 4
80	So Much More	Marc Beaudin	V. 8, 1. 2
81	Guilt	Marc Beaudin	V. 8, 1. 3
81	On Nemerov Reading Kizer	Marc Beaudin	V. 8, 1. 3
84	: A Definition	Barbara DeLassus	V. 8, 1. 4
85	A Visit with Sylvia	Earl Hawley	V. 8, 1. 1
87	Rabid Monks	Chris Sprague	V. 9, 1. 2
87	Personal	Anonymous	V. 9, 1. 1
92	Dancer of Men	K.S.	V. 9, 1. 3
93	New Life in Mexico	Mardi Oeming	V. 9, 1. 1
94	Nineveh Waits	John Adamcik	V. 9, 1. 1
94	A Good Cure for Hiccups	John Adamcik	V. 9, 1. 2
95	Mending a Promise	John Adamcik	V. 9, 1. 4

PROSE

8	On Solitude	Thomas Renna	V. 1, 1. 3
9	An Excerpt from <i>Alice in Topology Land</i>	Edward Zimmerman	V. 1, 1. 4
14	Epilepsy	Janis Paul	V. 2, 1. 4
18	Black Coffee	Ken Stroebel	V. 2, 1. 5
24	The Adventure of the Amateur Burglar	Drew Hinderer	V. 2, 1. 1
33	On Certain Funerals	Marvin Prescott	V. 3, 1. 4
50	Ed on Deadline	Jim Slusher	V. 5, 1. 2
54	The Auction	Barbara Lyon-Bailey	V. 6, 1. 1
61	Changes	ley	V. 7, 1. 3
70	Do You Love Me?	Ron Sielinski	V. 7, 1. 1
82	Deals	Greg Armstead	V. 8, 1. 4
88	Birthday Girl	Clair Ludington	V. 9, 1. 1

ILLUSTRATIONS AND PHOTOGRAPHY

cover	untitled	Rachel Zamek	V. 5, 1. 2
4	Faces	Martha C. Yeatman	V. 1, 1. 5
10	Ending	Alissar Najd	V. 2, 1. 4
11	Miss April	Alissar Najd	V. 1, 1. 6
13	untitled	Janis Paul	V. 5, 1. 3
16	American Dreams	Janis Paul	V. 5, 1. 1
23	Thing	David Grunwell	V. 2, 1. 5
32	Flowers	Anonymous	V. 3, 1. 4
35	City Saturday	Lorrie J. Dodge	V. 3, 1. 4
37	untitled	Karen Detgen	V. 4, 1. 1
39	untitled	Lydia Gilmour	V. 4, 1. 2
40	Rocking on the Grand Porch	Michelle Abcare	V. 4, 1. 3
41	Beauty and the Beast	Michelle Abcare	V. 4, 1. 5
42	untitled	Jim Vandermoter	V. 4, 1. 3
43	untitled	Jim Vandermoter	V. 4, 1. 5
45	Eze Breaking Point	Rachel Zamek	V. 4, 1. 4
46	Anne-Kane	Rachel Zamek	V. 4, 1. 2
48	Rag Figure	David Rayfield	V. 5, 1. 4
49	untitled	David Rayfield	V. 5, 1. 4
51	untitled	Steven Trumbull	V. 5, 1. 2
53	untitled	Barbara Lyon-Bailey	V. 7, 1. 4
60	Gates of Hell	ley	V. 7, 1. 6
74	untitled	Matthew Leachman	V. 8, 1. 1
79	When I Grow Up	Elizabeth Russell	V. 8, 1. 1
86	Arm and Leg	Barb Janowicz	V. 9, 1. 5
96	Detroit: An Inside View	Mike Hollenbeck	V. 9, 1. 2



Martha Collins Yeatman

GLASS DAYS

We find ourselves drawn
to the bosom of moon,
the guardian of the pale lie.
We move through perfume and worms.
We reach for language,
only to find such life ropes
falling short.
We breed what we term as gems
and polish each of them
until they reflect us,
until they learn
like us
that impersonation
is necessary for survival.
Together we stare at sunset
like begging gibbons.
"Peanuts please,
so I'll know that these
are fingers."

Each settler in the promised land
locks his fate with fear.
But Moses' lips stay sealed
behind the shadow of the rock
And the Hplocaust still hovers
on these stained glass days
until each ecstatic fragment
disappears.

--Betsy Kennedy

COSMIC JOURNEY

I've just flown to the edge of a star
and back again.
It is lonely writing poems at 3 A.M.
The house frowns.
I cross one leg over for comfort
and stop to hear a hound
gossip with the moon.

--Betsy Kennedy

SUNDAY DRIVE

She eased into death as into an expensive
European sports car, feeling the leather seats
Contoured to the back, the gearshift click like intention,
Shoulder belt firm as a friend, suspension tight as thought.
The motor mumbled bass under the wind's treble.
A death like this deserves to be used, she thought,
To the fullest; so she did, accelerating into the curves,
Looking down embankments at churches and school buses and
Swimming pools a thousand feet below, to towns
Where the sleepy indolent living went about their
Business. The ascent continued to an overlook:
The car parked, she felt the wind envelop her,
The mountain wind, the rare sunshine, the power.

This was her death, although to us it looked exactly like
Any other hospital stay. The nurses moved like ant mechanics,
Attaching tubes here, taking them off there, checking
Her performance against charts, hooking up electronic machines
Jacking up her bed. The last days were sleep. Then we watched
As she tried to climb up over the chrome railing, with the look
Of the winning ticket holder; *Got to drive to the airport*
Yes honey (strapping her in) *we'll take you there*

The car out of the mountains now, nothing but four-lane
All the way to Bakersfield, straight as desire.
The car is made to go a hundred and sixty; she decides
To see what it will do before the end.

-Gary Thompson

eternal
infernial
dissonance
I am looking for a pretty word
that explains
why old ladies
almost eaten by the curtains
stare out of their windows
and old men
bent and bland
sit in shirtsleeves
on their stoops

-Marcia Ribble

ON SOLITUDE

Surely one of the cardinal sins is an inordinate attachment to solitude. The solitary is, after all, unsocial or even antisocial. And the basis of all virtues, as everyone knows, is love, that most social of human qualities. Solitude is therefore a perversion, an unnatural deviation from the norm.

But is it? The distinction between solitude and sociability is in fact artificial, for the two states are symbolic. It is only in withdrawal that a person is most fully himself. It is only in quiet repose that a person meets himself. Love in this sense is not selfish; it is a profound and satisfying experience. Indeed, it is only in this kind of direct confrontation with one's Self can one become aware of who he is. The person is unable or unwilling to encounter his Self flounders in a fantasy world in which the opinions of others control and direct his life. This false kind of "love" is a substitute for one's loss of self-identity. As a result, this kind of person acts not out of self-impulse, but out of a desire to imitate self-images invented by others. Hence the resort to blaring radios, constant conversation, and distractions (including mental ones). But the true lover begins from his authentic self, from which he moves outward to other selves. He is not a slave to a self-perception. The genuine love of another person is impossible without an intimate relationship with one's true self, striped of deluding images contrived by strangers. A stable self gives a person a sense of balance and perspective; it provides a standard by which to separate the real from the phony.

Solitude is thus not merely a physical state, although brief periods of literal withdrawal may be useful to maintain an accurate picture of your inner self. Rather, solitude is essentially a frame of mind, a life-style, a way of looking at things. Solitude is something you carry around with you, wherever you may be. It struggles unceasingly to break out and serve others, and deepens what you have in common with others, namely, the potential to be authentic. The soul in solitude focuses not on itself as in a circle of despair. The true solitary has no reason to hate those who threaten his view of himself, for this view is real. On the contrary, the solitary soul (which knows how to listen) is attuned to the desires of those outside the Self. The one who lacks solitude is homeless, lonely, and unhappy. The love of a discontented person is limited. The solitary--who is impervious to circumstance and misfortune-- sees only people, especially those who lack what he has. The solitary is self-reliant, and in control of his own actions within society. The nonsolitary is a helpless plaything in the hands of others, doomed to dependency, pedantry, complacency, conformity, and the misunderstanding of others' motive.

Anwar Sadat has said that a person is most himself in war and in prison. When these latter crises are absent, it could be added, the creative person strives to retain a sense of integrity in normal times.

Solitude is love. Society without solitude is an aggregate of egotists, a zoo ruled by passion and violence. Solitude with love is the foundation of peace, both individual and communal.

"OYou who love solitude, teach us to be social!"

--Thomas Renna

He tried	She encouraged
He won	She congratulated
He lost	She commiserated
He wept	She comforted
She tried	HE worked
She won	HE worked
She lost	HE worked
She wept	HE worked
She left	He

--Ruth L. Williams

النراية

EXCERPT FROM ALICE IN TOPOLOGY LAND

"But," Inquired Alice, "if we are talking about space then we must be talking about the emptiness between things?"

"Nonsense!" said the caterpillar, puffing on his pipe. "What makes you believe space has anything to do with things? The kind of space I'm talking about has nothing to do with any 'thing'. I'm concerned only with the relationship between areas. 'Things' have nothing to do with it, relatively speaking."

"Well," retorted Alice, "I'm sure I can't imagine what good space might be if it has nothing to do with any thing."

The caterpillar sighed. "My dear child," he said softly, "when you grow older you will realize that nothing is anything until related to something else. Anything in itself is nothing. It is the relationship that is essential."

Alice looked confused. "I'm not sure I understand," she ventured hesitantly. "It seems to me that space is only useful for filling up the distance between things."

The caterpillar bowed his head apologetically. "I'm afraid distance doesn't matter much if you're going in the wrong direction."

Then he nodded wisely, "My experience has always been that the shortest distance is almost never in the right direction. You're almost certain to run into something."

"Aha!" cried Alice. "How can you run into something if your space is not filled with things?" She turned her nose up in triumph.

The caterpillar lifted his paws in exasperation. "Are you blind?" he exclaimed crossly. "One doesn't run into any 'thing', (unless one is truly clumsy) one runs into the relationship of something to one's self, which, of course, is truly something!"

"Next you'll be telling me that 2+2 doesn't equal 4," whined Alice.

"In my space," boasted the caterpillar, "it's sometimes 4, sometimes 2, and sometimes 3."

--Edward Zimmerman

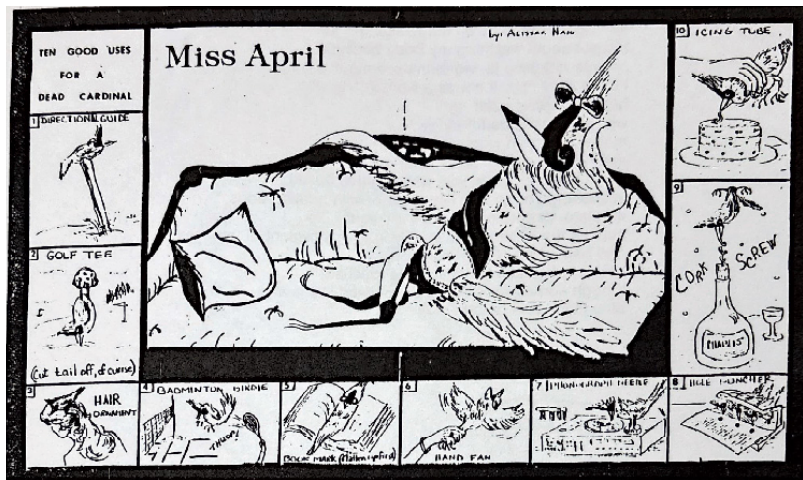
لآبي راقصة
على سطح المياه
مشاعث
لاصلة من الشمس
والغروب ذاب
في تلمية العتمة الآتية.

شعبي في البعيد
مساخ في خيال
عام على الصفة الذهبية
عندما أنت من لا مكان
زجرة الموم المتطلب
المربي المياه
ملفا ما حول وما فوق
الشراع الذي اختفى
في رمشاة الصيون القليلة
مبل ما حل الليل
و ابتدأ المسكون
تارك في أتمه
لآبي من القمر
مشعشعة على
الصفة الفضية...

-- اليسار نجد

Ending

--Alissar Najd



NOT OFTEN AS A WOMAN

I was watching my body move
 in the windows of a factory building
 when it was night and they were reflective.
 A blue Chevette drove by and I was only
 semi-embarrassed but when it came by a second time
 it stopped.

The driver was a yellow haired man
 moving newspapers off the passenger seat.
 I forgot about watching my body because
 he was watching it. He didn't see me in the way I do.
 I think I see myself not as a woman
 but like a white scarf
 with many threads for fringe,
 made of English wool sheared in April
 and not around anyone's neck or hips. Or
 blue china, no glaze, with white figures posed
 in sheets or nude with lap harps or with hunting dogs
 a potato, dirt on the skin and different
 from all the other potatoes only in the placement of the eyes
 and bad spots. Or as many objects
 but not often as a woman to be touched,
 though sometimes I like to be touched like a white scarf or
 blue china or a potato.

-Janis Paul

MY MIND

I close doors
 and open others.
 You'll never see
 every room.

-Janis Paul



EPILEPSY

Grade Bets

We were at Holly's Landing when Mom said I went "all blank." She was so concerned she almost ruined my lobster.

I told Dad I wanted a dinner, a lobster dinner, rather than money. Dad's no good on money bets; the most I could get out of him was a fiver, and I knew it.

The grade bets went on between me and Dad all the time; I always won, but Dad expected that. I guess it gave him the feeling of participation in my grades, my A's.

School

I took seventeen vitamins in the morning and the same again at night. I believed good nutrition plus supplements allowed me to do my best, school included. So when my grades began to drop I was upset. I tried to stay in school as much as I could, but found I was in the office waiting to go home more often, as my "all blank" spells became more noticeable and more complex.

Once, the pain in my head was worsening, but I decided to stay, Mr. Cragg was at the blackboard teaching us how to do some math problems...I was learning nothing. There was a clanging of chimes in a high wind; my head was a playground for whirligigs. I lowered my head to the desk top until it could stand it no longer and ran out. Mr. Cragg followed, shouting, "What's the matter?"

"I don't know."

Good Dog

When the technician asked me if I had had four hours of sleep, as I had been told, I lied and said yes.

Many of the electrodes were already attached to my head with glue. The technician told me that I was lucky; years ago when people had to have E.E.G.'s they shave them bald and insert the electrode under the skin.

He had gentle hands; he pulled the hair away from my ears, attaching an electrode to each one.

Done with the wiring, he handed me the box which connected me, the wires, and the E.E.G. machine together. We walked down a dim colorless hall to a room with a reclining chair.

As I reclined, hooled up to the machine, it began to monitor my waves. The technician was fascinated and a doctor was called in. Looking at the findings, then at me, he said, "Heather, remember the word 'dog.'..." "What did I tell you to remember?"

"Dog."

"Good."

Magic Pen

Mom said I were flying to Mayo. We were sitting together in a section where you have two seats facing two seats. There was a portly little man smoking a stogie in the seat right across from Mother's. I can remember thinking he looked out

of place; he looked so happy that I wondered why he was going to Rochester.

As we began to talk, it was clear he wasn't shy. "This is a magic pen," he said, while holding out what was obviously a magic pen. "I'm giving it to you; it will keep you from pain." I took it with a smile, staring at its gold exterior. He continued, "Don't lose it!"

But it seemed it was already lost; panic ran through me with the twitch of my empty fingers. "The magic pen," I muttered.

Embarrassed, I realized the pen wasn't real; it was a seizure.

The C.A.T. Scan

The inside of a C.A.T. scan machine is like a wash tub set on spin. The technicians set me on a conveyor table that moved me from outside to inside the wash tub while they sat behind a lead door, secure.

A nurse came in after I thought I was done and said, "We are going to use a dye on your brain now which will make things clear on the X-rays." She inserted a needle as if she was trying to dig a hole to place it in, saying, "I'm sorry, I hope that didn't hurt. You will soon have a metallic taste in your mouth and feel nauseated." She smiled while turning to leave the room.

The Accident

I could taste the blood on my tongue; looking up from my wheel I could see the whole front of my green car smashed in close to the windshield.

I had been driving down South State Street after having picked up a 3p filter. I wasn't worried at all; it didn't even occur to me to worry about the dizzy spells I had been having I didn't take them as warnings. My medication was working, plus I took vitamins, making me feel fine. Besides, I had just gotten my grades back to standard and couldn't afford to miss school for doctors.

The dizziness only lasted a few seconds and came as little as once a day. But while I was dizzy it was like my head was wrapped in a blanket--an aura of confusion.

Vein

"You're toxic," said the doctor; "didn't you feel any signs?"

"No," I lied.

I had gone in for a blood test the day of my accident. Accustomed to the procedure, I sat in a chair and rolled up my sleeve. Looking toward the lab technician, I saw she was blowing on her nails; she looked up and giggled. She was a student.

Preparing to take my blood, she picked up everything with great care, being careful not to smear her nails. I looked away, as I always do, as she inserted the needle and tried to draw blood. Realizing she didn't hit the vein, she withdrew the needle and giggled. This happened three times.

Overdose

It was such a strange experience ... not a bad one. At first I thought I might have forgotten to take my medication, but as the sound and setting became distorted, I knew I was wrong. But I couldn't figure it out.

I was in a hurry to get to Liz's house where we were going to watch *Gone*

With the Wind, having read the book. I downed my "vitamins," all together with a swig of water. . . without looking. I was getting quite good with pills.

I couldn't raise my head and speech came hard. "Liz, don't call my parents,"

She did.

Insurance

Getting up, I felt shaky, not because I had fallen during my shower but because the dizziness was back and that upset me. I thought I would keep it quiet... for a while. I had studied for a history test for hours, insuring my A. I couldn't miss it.

Downstairs Mother was waiting.

"Good-bye, Mom."

"Have a good..."

"Mom, I had a dizzy spell this morning."

--Janis Paul



THE BATH

The first time I saw mother naked,
she combed her long hair
each brown strand a separate oak branch
from which ravens flew.
Violets grew in the deep shadow
she cast on white tiles.

Steam spiraling from her body
made clouds, thick in the air
where I wanted to hide and bury
myself in whiteness
where no one could see me
tasting the salt of my tears.

--Maura Troester

A LOVE SONG

Mary, gypsy singer girl, rabbit dear.
Baggy coloured pants beggar,
dancer rousing the cobble streets with
clitter-clatter smoke voice and flower smell.
Who is your flashy hatted boy in long coat
clattering bones to your song? Coyote?
Watch out if it is sweet!
Though he is guarded by skunks, he'll boil your spinach
and talk backwards. He'll sit on a doughnut
drinking coffee all morning.
But no big deal, wispy quilt-heart.
We know it takes more than watercolours to draw
your spirit through an eye
and no balloon can match your freedom.

--Don Socha

BLACK COFFEE

The madness began for Professor Turner on a wet night in April about three years ago, although it wasn't outright madness when it first began and, at that time, I didn't even know the Professor.

He called me about a year and a half later, in late October, and I arranged to meet him at his office in Laraby Hall on the campus of Filmor, the state's oldest and smallest university. It was during the week of mid-term break when I arrived, so the place was deserted. Laraby was a large, ancient building with long, wide, arching hallways and heavy wooden doors on all the rooms. The autumn winds rumbled around the roof as my shoes clacked along the floor until I came across the door I was seeking: Dr. Thomas A. Turner, Dept. of Communications.

I knocked once on the thick oak door and it fell open. The man peering out had bulging, dark rimmed eyes, and a face full of lines and hair. He looked sick and frantic, white and thin, and was wearing a rumpled, untucked shirt, dirty pants, and no shoes. It was not the man I'd expected to see. I stepped back in the hall as his phantom-white face loomed forward like a ball stuck on the end of a spring.

"Are you Doctor Barnes?" he asked quietly.

"Yes," I answered, "Who the hell are you?"

He sighed and said, "Come in Doctor Barnes. Step into what's left of the office of what's left of the man whose name you see printed on the door."

I moved in hesitantly, to say the least. The room was a cold little dump with puddles of shredded-up books and papers lying all around, overturned furniture and puddles of broken glass. And the room smelled, more than anything, like coffee. Overpowering all the musty, sweaty scents was the very strong flavor of Taster's Choice. I took my pad out here and began making notes.

"Sit down Doctor Barnes," Turner said, closing the door, "If you can find a place, that is. Sit down and let me tell you my ... story. You must know right now Doctor you are my one last hope. Your fine reputation as a psychotherapist is well known. I'm hoping with my very life that you can help me."

"I'll do what I can," I said, brushing aside an ancient, crusty piuma box and taking a seat.

"I myself once had an admirable reputation," he began. "I wasn't always... like this, like I am now. I've never told anyone what I'm about to tell you, Doctor Barnes, maybe that's been part of the trouble but, you see, I'm not insane, I never have been, I know... I know what's happened to me is real, it's... it's the truth!" He was speaking rapidly and wildly, and he drew his chair up close to mine, to where I could see the flaring single-mindedness in his bulging eyes.

"Begin at the beginning," I said. "And go slowly, remember as much as you can."

"Oh I remember all of it, Doctor, I remember everything from that very first moment I sat down to write the book...."

"The book was to be about TV commercials; I'd done a lengthy study on the subject and was ready to make my conclusions public. I'd watched hundreds of hours of video recordings, the same stinking ads over and over again, from the dancing Lucky Strikes to the Tidy Bowl Man, commercials, commercials, thousands of commercials! Can you imagine such torture, Doctor? It was the most horrid task

I'd ever put myself to, and I'm not sure now why I even started it, how I even got the idea, but, after a while, my head was pounding with those lousy commercials, throbbing with their slogans, ringing with their jingles for God sake !" Turner's eyes got wider and wilder. He jumped up suddenly and began dancing around the debris, singling, -the chicken's got a ceRRRTAIN WessonALITYI...PLOP-PLOP, FIZZ-FIZZ ... MMM MMM good, MMM MMM good, that's what Camp-

"Dr. Turner!" I cried. "Please!"

"Oh. Oh yes, yes," he said catching his breath and sitting back down. "But you can see how it was, you can see what it'd done to me.

"Anyway, after all that torture, I was now determined to write the book. But it was taking me longer than I'd expected, it was more difficult than I'd thought, and I began working very late here at the office to compensate. I soon began slacking off in my other obligations with the school, rushing through my lectures, forgetting student appointments. I started falling asleep at the desk while my poor dog, Burt, slowly starved to death at home. The book was taking over. I was determined to get through it if it meant working round the clock.... And that's when it really all began Doctor. That's when I started drinking ... drinking the ... coffee." Turner leaned back and stared off into space. "It was just a little at first, you know, Just a cupful or two beside the typewriter. My productivity increased. And you know what they say, Doctor Barnes, how a 'spoonful makes a mugful when-'"

"I know," I cried quickly.

"So I began making mugfuls, then jugfuls, then I began drinking it by the pot, I'd have three Mr. Coffees going at once! I'd make it rich and black and thick as mud, the richest most aromatic kinds; it was good to the last drop, the very last drop. I was eating up the soggy grounds right out of the filters with a tablespoon!"

I put my hand over my mouth in a calm, professional manner because I thought I was going to gag.

"Well, it went on like this for some time," Turner continued. "Soon the book was nearly finished and I thought that I felt pretty good, despite the fact that I hadn't slept in about eight days. It was ... April 17th, Doctor Barnes, a Friday and the school was just about ready to close for summer. I decided that evening to give myself a much needed break and go into town for some dinner, and to look up some friends and colleagues I'd been ignoring for so long. It was late ... almost dark ... as the bus headed toward the flickering city lights. A light spring drizzle was coming down and I sat watching the countryside pass through the wavy wet glass of the window by my seat. I turned for just a minute and realized that I was alone. Apart from the driver, I was the only one on that bus. The only one.

"Then, suddenly, something in the seat across the aisle caught my eye. The bus was very nearly dark and I had to squint and lean forward to make out what it was: just a dull, fuzzy patch of white at first, just a small spot that seemed to float there on the surface of my eye.... Slowly it took shape, it became solid, very real mass, and, after a minute or so, I found myself staring at a ... at a ... coffee cup. I reeled back quickly and turned my head once again toward the rainy window. I closed my eyes and told myself there was NOT a coffee cup floating above the seat across the aisle. Then I turned back and found that I was right, there was not a coffee cup floating there.... Now a man was holding it.

"How can I describe my amazement, my terror, as he slowly faded into

sight, materialized out of nowhere just as the cup had? He was an older looking man with a head of slick gray hair. He looked rather distinguished, wearing a light checkered blazer and turtle-neck shirt. And he just sat there with that cup in hand, staring straight at me, staring and...and smiling; he wore the widest, whitest and most hideously pleasant grin you could imagine."

I looked over the description Turner had given me and suddenly it rang the proverbial bells. I looked up. "Dr. Turner," I said, "This man... he sounds a lot like-

"Yes," Turner whispered. "Yes, you're right. I know it's insane, I know it's absurd... but it was. It was... Marcus Welby M.D.!"

There was a long pause.

Finally, I said, "What did you do?"

"Do? What could I do? I turned back to the window and told myself I needed glasses, needed rest, needed to get the hell off that bus! I moved up front and asked the driver to let me off at the stop near my home, as we were fast approaching it.

"I got off quickly, thinking perhaps the half-mile walk and cool evening rain would clear my head. Imagine my shock as I turned, stepping onto the curb, to find this... man, still holding this cup, drifting down the steps directly behind me. I began walking fast. I kept my eyes straight ahead and my feet slapping fast over the wet cement! I moved, moved, moved, non-stop for at least a quarter-mile... then I froze. I stood there. I listened for encroaching footsteps.... There were none. I sighed a little inside, thinking perhaps, hoping very much.... I slowly turned around....

"His grinning face was two feet from my own. I spun and ran! I pounded over the walks until I was right up to my door! I jumbled the keys and burst inside! I slammed the door and turned around and... and there he stood.

Turner paused again and took many deep breaths.

"I could almost handle it for a while," he continued. "I almost got used to his presence, to the staring, even to the grinning. But don't think it was easy! I shudder to remember those horrid first few nights when I'd sit up suddenly in the blackness of my room, praying that the nightmare was over, only to switch on the light and find him still standing there at the foot of the bed... still holding that cup... staring... grinning.

"I had a friend give my finals to my students. I spent the whole horrid summer as a recluse in my home. The book stayed unfinished in my office and my coffee habits continued; I was hooked. And when I returned to Filmore in the fall... HE returned to me; I wasn't the least bit surprised to find that no one else could see him as he dogged my heels up and down every hall, in and out of every room.

"But, as I said, Doctor Barnes, I was almost becoming accustomed. Slowly, regretfully, I was learning to cope.... But things changed. Soon, he wasn't just standing, just staring, just grinning. Soon... he began speaking. One night last December as I stood looking at him as he stood looking at me, I momentarily snapped. 'Why? Why?' I screamed. 'Why don't you stop? Why don't you die?' I swiped a bulb off my Christmas tree and hurled it at him; I wasn't even startled to see it slip right through his body and break against the wall behind him.... But I was startled just a second later. He took a step toward me. Stopped. He threw his head back suddenly, opened his mouth wide and let out a laugh, a fast, melodic ha-ha-ha that chilled me to the bone. He looked at me then and crooned, 'Heeeyyy Tom. Why so tense?' Then he held that cup out toward me. 'Try this,' he said. As he threw his head back and laughed some

more, I ran screaming from the room.

“And that’s the way it’s been Doctor. It never stops, it never ends. The more nervous and angry I become, the more he speaks.... There’s no way out! I’m so convinced that that cup he carries contains some kind of poison; I’m convinced he’s trying to kill me, to weaken me and make me kill myself. The haunting goes on. He even began interrupting my lectures to the point where I could no longer give them; he’d plant himself right in front of the lectern, speaking as I spoke, holding out that cup. And the students, of course, could see nothing ... nothing except this babbling lunatic, up there mumbling curses to himself, sweating, shaking, looking over, around, in every direction but straight ahead. I barely made it through last semester and this one’s been no better. So now I’ve been relieved ... canned. I’m supposed to be out of this office by now.... but I’ve no place to go, Dr. Barnes, no place where he won’t follow me. These papers you see all over are what’s left of the book. The glass piles are shattered Mr. Coffees, relics of my vain attempts to break that cursed habit. I’m at the very end of my rope, Doctor Barnes, I can’t last much longer. I don’t think I can stand to hear him laugh even one more time!”

Professor Turner got up and moved to a small corner of the office. He kicked some books across the floor and stood there defiantly, staring at this empty corner wall. He lifted a finger and began speaking; an unprofessional chill ran along my spine as I watched and listened. “But look here,” Turner said to the wall, “I’ll never give in to you! I’ll never accept your vile offer, your evil liquid! If I go I’ll go my own way, damn it, my own way!”

The professor lowered his head and ran a bony hand through his stringy hair.

Turner nodded his head. “Of course,” he whispered.

“Well Doctor Turner,” I said, rising and heading for the door, “there is one thing that I’m certain of: you *do* have to get out of this office. I’ll be happy to drive you home right now. We can talk some more on the way. You gather up what you need and I’ll go pull my car up front. We’ll start on therapy and treatment right away.

Professor Turner moved not an inch as I spoke. I knew right then that any sort of treatment would be rough; it was apparent that the man had already given up hope.

As I walked back down the wide, rambling hall toward the door, I worked out a plan in my head, some quick way to deal with the apparition. (The coffee withdrawal would take time.) It was obvious that the cup was a symbol of Turner’s fears, frustrations and failures, and that he would have to face up to them in order to overcome. I would suggest that, next time, Turner drink from the cup, or at least take it in his hands.

I was on my way out, fighting the wind for possession of the door, when I heard the scream. I jumped back inside and heaved the door shut.

I began trotting back down the hall....

I heard the gunshot.

I sprinted.

For Professor Thomas Turner, the madness was over. He’d found a cure without my help. His bloodied body lay sprawled with the pages of his abandoned book, the gun still clenched in his fist. I put my hands to my mouth and whispered through my fingers, “Oh my God.” I could feel myself shaking.... Then I heard it.

“Ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha-ha.”

Fast, melodic. It came from behind me.

“Heeeyyyy Jim, why so tense? Try this.”

Terrified, but determined not to fall into Turner’s pitiful plight, I spun around and grabbed the cup. I drank....

It was good. One-hundred percent *real* coffee; I only like *real* coffee.

I smiled along with Marcus Welby, M.D., and suddely I didn’t give a damn about the dead guy on the floor.

--Ken Stroebel
(Thank-you, J. Sheridan LeFanu)

AROUND GREEN LAKE IN SEATTLE

amid bright designer
jogging suits and nike heels
the elderly couple walk the lake

I pass them where a mile and a quarter
is painted in yellow

they are silent
content to be joining hands
and feeling the sun

although their bodies move slowly
their hearts are out of breath
from the years together
of exercising love.

--Kate Phillips



It was a dull, foggy morning in Decemeber of the year 1890 that found me trudging wearily along the already well-worn footpath on Baker Street. The light snow of the night before had already turned into a dun-coloured mud, which caked on my feet and spattered my trousers to the knee. I had been up all night with that bane of the physician's existence, a patient's high fever, which had finally broken only an hour before. Thus, it was that I arrived dirty and exhausted at the door of our rooms to find my friend, Sherlock Holmes, engaged with his breakfast and surrounded by a mound of crumpled papers.

"My dear Watson," said he, "You have been up all night, and in Waterloo, I perceive."

I looked down at my bespeckled legs from which, I doubted not, Holmes had made his deduction, and smiled ruefully.

"It looks like it," I replied.

"There's eggs and ham left," said he, "And here is Mrs. Hudson on the landing with our tea. But what is this?"

Turning round, I observed our door handle to turn slightly. There was a moment's hesitation, and an instant later our door opened slowly, revealing a middle-aged man, well but quietly dressed in a dark formal suit, peering furtively around the sill.

"I beg your pardon," said he, with considerable embarrassment. "I should most certainly have knocked. And during your breakfast as well. I should return at another time." He made to turn round, but Holmes had stepped over, and flung wide the door.

"On the contrary," said he, "Please come in. We were just now expecting our tea. If you will step this way I shall ask Mrs. Hudson to fetch another cup."

"Oh thank you, no," muttered our visitor glancing from Holmes to myself and back again. "However, since I have already disturbed you, perhaps it's as well that I remain."

"You've come to consult with me then?" said Holmes. "Pray take the wicker chair. Ah, Mrs. Hudson, will you fetch two more cups in case our guest should change his mind?"

I excused myself to attend to my clothing, and upon my return I found Holmes and our guest already engaged in discussion. He seemed disturbed, this slightly built, respectable person, and he spoke in sharp jerky outbursts and high pitched tones.

"Ah, Watson," said Holmes. "This is Mr. Geoffrey Sutro, a lawyer, of Harrow, who has brought us what promises to be a most interesting little problem. Do have goodness to continue, Mr. Sutro, as my friend Mr. Watson is my invaluable associate in matters such as yours."

"I am glad to here it," replied our guest, obviously relieved that he had not been indiscreet. "As I was explaining to Mr. Holmes, I am acting on behalf of my client, Mr. Mortimer Maberly, in a concern of some delicacy, and absolute confidence is most necessary." He sighed deeply and continued. "Mr. Maberly, you must understand, is the step-son of Mr. John Alexander, who died six days ago, of consumption, after a lingering illness. Several months earlier, when it had become clear that his

illness was quite serious, Mr. Alexander asked me to draw up his will, as I have been associated with the family for many years.”

“As it fell out, my instructions, though not difficult, were quite extraordinary, as Mr. Alexander’s entire estate was to be given to my client, Mr. Maberly.” He look at us significantly. “It was extraordinary,” he whispered, anticipating my question, “Because Mr. Alexander’s own son, James, was to have been left penniless.”

“His son,” Holmes interjected.

“Yes,” said Sutro. “Quite penniless.”

“Was to have, you said? Then something has intervened?” I asked.

“So one might say,” replied he quizzically. “But perhaps you would care to examine this copy of the will yourself, Mr. Holmes?” Sutro reached inside his frock coat and retrieved a sheaf of papers, handing them to Holmes, who scanned them quickly. Then he passed them to me.

“But according to this document, the disposition of property is to be decided by the courts,” said he.

“Yes,” breathed Sutro leaning forward with agitation. “So read these papers, which I drew from my safe this very morning.”

“The I fail to se ...” I began. Sutro cut me short with a striking glance shot in my direction.

“So these papers read. But that is not what I wrote three months ago, and it is not what Mr. Alexander willed. There is his signature, and there is mine. The document is in my handwriting. But it is not what I wrote.” He leaned back in his chair, sighing. “No doubt you think me mad?” he cried. “But it is true, every word.”

“Your statement is certainly an extraordinary one,” said Holmes. “If I may, I should like to ask a few questions further. Can you tell us first why Alexander senior wished to exclude Alexander junior?”

“I can. But I must again insist upon absolute secrecy, as I have no wish to defend myself for a slander action. James Alexander was rather the black sheep of the family, you see, and profligate and wasteful in his ways. He was,” said Sutro in a conspiratorial tone, “a gambler, who lost heavily at billiards and cards. Time and again his father would stand for his debts, abjuring James to change his evil habits, but to no avail. James was incurable. So, in the end, Mr. Alexander could stand by no longer, and determined in his death to do what he had been unable to do in life, to cure James’ gambling by depriving him of the means with which to continue.” He sighed again most deeply.

“I am sorry,” said Holmes. “I had forgotten that you were a friend of Mr. Alexander’s.”

“Yes, and of Mortimer Maberly’s as well,” said Sutro. “I can not sit idly by and let this injustice, this perversion of Mr. Alexander’s expressed wishes take place. For this,” he pointed at the will before us, “as much as turns the estate over to James Alexander. The courts will find in his favor, of course, for, as Mr. Alexander’s son, he has the better legal claim, though hardly the better moral one. But whence did this come, Mr. Holmes? How did it get into my safe? And where is the original, the will Mr. Alexander and I drew up?”

“Well, Mr. Sutro, we shall return to that in a moment. As I recall, the estate

consists primarily of investments. Can you tell us what they might be worth?”

“At present the market is depressed, but I should think,” he paused, “Oh twelve hundred a year at least.”

“Stakes for which one might try a subtle game,” said Holmes thoughtfully. “You, of course, suspect James Alexander. But now, had you the only copy of the original will? Two copies is the usual practice, is it not?”

“Yes,” replied Sutro. “Mr. Alexander kept one as well in a great oak secretary. He had the key always with him, and it was kept locked at all times.”

“You have, of course, checked the house for the other copy?” asked Holmes.

I have not,” replied Sutro. “Under the circumstances I thought it best to be witnessed by trustworthy public men.”

“Ah,” said Holmes. “That is just as well. Mr. Sutro, we are entirely at your disposal. Unless, Watson, you would rather not?”

“Not at all,” I replied, “I was quite worn out earlier, but I am happy to be of any service.”

“Thank you, gentlemen, thank you,” said Sutro. “It is but a short journey by rail to Harrow. It’s just ten? Very well, we can be there in less than an hour.”

The weather had cleared by the time we arrived at Harrow station, and after a short uncomfortable dog cart ride, we caught sight of the gloomy but imposing house of John Alexander. Upon being admitted by the maid, we were informed that both Mr. Alexander and Mr. Maberly were not at home, and neither could be expected to return before the afternoon.

“That should rather help than hinder our purpose,” said Holmes.

Mr. Sutro led the way into Alexander’s study, where we came upon the massive secretary.

“Have you a key?” asked Holmes.

“No,” replied Sutro. “Mr. Alexander kept the only key on his person. We shall have to prize the lock.”

“It should not be so formidable a task,” said Holmes. “Pray allow me.” He stepped up to the oaken monster, drawing his pocketknife from his trouser pocket, and proceeded to press and pry inside the keyhole muttering to himself. Once, he stared very hard at the area surrounding the keyhole. But at length he inserted the blade at the top of the plate, and with a metallic stick the door came open. Sutro then stepped forward, drawing out a sheaf of papers exactly resembling those he had showed us earlier. Turning them over eagerly he studied the uppermost for a moment. Then, trembling, he began to collapse. I caught him and led him to a chair.

“I had feared as much,” said Holmes. “It is, of course, not the original.”

“No,” gasped Sutro.

I opened Sutro’s collar, and from a carafe on a nearby side board, poured him a glass of water. This he drank, moaning softly to himself all the while. Holmes retrieved the box, replaced the will, returned it to the secretary, and shut the door without trying to lock it. Then he turned to the lawyer and gently placed his hand on his shoulder.

“Watson and I will see that everything is in order, Mr. Sutro,” said he. “Perhaps you should return to your own home?”

“But what shall I do?” cried Sutro. “Whatever shall I do?”

"I assure you that I shall give your problem every possible attention, Mr. Sutro," Holmes replied, "I shall wire you as to our progress. Come along Watson."

"Do you think it is wise to leave him like this?" I asked.

"I am sure the maid will see to him," he replied. "We are better occupied elsewhere."

Holmes was silent during the return trip. I too pondered the matter. As I did so, I began to have misgivings, and, when we had returned to Baker Street, lighted our pipes, and settled into our chairs I ventured to call them to Holmes' attention.

"Holmes," said I, "It strikes me that we may be overlooking an important possibility."

"Oh," said he. "And what is that?"

"We have," I said, "Only Sutro's word that he is acting in this Maberly's interest. Indeed, we have only Sutro's word that there were ever two wills. Might not Sutro be really mad? He was sorely affected with grief at Alexander's death and blamed the son. Mightn't he be making all of this out of thin air?"

Holmes seemed struck by this foray of mine. "Really, Watson, you scintillate today. Yes, that surely is one possibility. But consider. If Sutro was driven mad by grief and blamed James Alexander, why would he invent so fabulous a tale of this to implicate him? Surely it should have been simpler to have tied the father's death to the son. Again, it is my experience that grieving men are not often clever ones. And, Watson, there was the second scratch."

"The second scratch?" I replied.

"Yes. All round the keyhole, which, from the condition of the lacquer I should judge to have been made just prior to Alexander senior's sequestry, probably by young Alexander when he first substituted the forgeries for the original of his father's will."

"Holmes," said I, "Surely we can not know it was young Alexander who made the scratch. It is merely surmise."

"Oh, I grant that it is hardly conclusive, Watson, but taken together it is probable that Sutro is telling the truth." Holmes paused. "Yes, Watson, these are really very deep waters if all that Sutro says is true. I seem to sense in this a master touch, a hand so subtle and ingenious that I doubt James Alexander, the young, consistently losing gambler, could have conceived so perfect a plan. It is quite a pretty little problem."

Holmes hardly stirred all that day, and far into the night the poisonous fumes of his cheap strong shag tobacco crept into my room. Morning found him just as I had left him, save for a mound of ashes and dottles.

"Holmes," said I, "What cheer? Have you solved it?"

"No," said he, "I have not. But I think I see my way clear to establishing the guilt of James Alexander. You will be pleased to know, Watson, that there is a third copy of the original will, and that it is on deposit at the Post Office Bank in Harrow."

"Holmes!" I cried. "Why didn't Sutro know of it?"

"Because I have not yet put it there," replied Holmes. And with that he rose, put on his Makintosh and stepped out the door.

He returned several hours later looking much more his old cheerful self.

"Ah, Watson," said he, "I trust you are prepared for an evening in Harrow?"

"Certainly," I replied, "Though I'm not sure I don't know what I should do

there."

"All in good time," he replied. "I've been sending telegrams and... Ah, here is the reply now."

The door opened after a knock, and our page handed Holmes the telegrams which he read, and tossed over to me. They read:

Informed Alexander. Seemed agitated. Will await result.

Permission received. Will meet at Post Office. Bradstreet.

The remainder of the day seemed interminable, and though I had only dimly begun to perceive what Holmes had in mind, he would not be drawn. That night found us again in Harrow, where we met Inspector Bradstreet, of Scotland Yard, who admitted us into the Harrow Post Office. There, like hunters at a watering pool, we waited while the village church clock struck off the hours. Three had come and gone, and I had all but given up hope when we heard a gentle scrapping, as of a mouse in the woodwork, coming from a window beneath which Inspector Bradstreet lay in hiding. There was a snapping of wood, then silence. At last the window slid open, and someone began to crawl throth. Instantly, Bradstreet clasped his leg, and dragged the intruder into the room, scuffling and struggling.

"Here now," cried Bradstreet, "That's enough of that. Hold fast."

Holmes, meanwhile, had lit a gas jet, and before us stood a sharp figured young man of medium height and athletic build, blinking and staring all round at us with a defiant look on his countenance.

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded.

"Mr. James Alexander I presume," said Holmes.

"And what if I am?" cried the youth, glaring at us in the half-light.

"James Alexander, it is my duty to arrest you for the crime of attempted robbery," said Bradstreet.

"Oh no," cried Holmes. "For conspiracy to defraud, and for forgery as well; isn't that right, Mr. Alexander?"

The youth had turned pale and slunk down to the floor as his situation became clear to him ..

"It wasn't my idea," he muttered. "I didn't do it."

"Very likely it wasn't your idea," said Holmes. "I fancy this describes your situation. Pray correct me if I err. You had debts, did you not? Debts you could not pay. To whom did you owe them?"

"Colonel Moran," he stammered.

"Ah yes," said Holmes thoughtfully. "Colonel Moran. You asked for time.

The Colonel refused. You explained that your father was ill, and that you would soon inherit sufficient money to cover yourself. But then you found that your father had excluded you from his will."

"Yes," gasped the youth.

"And so, for a share in your inheritance, Colonel Moran graciously offered to get that inheritance for you. He provided the forged will, did he not?"

"Yes."

"He even saw to the exchange, in Mr. Sutro's office, isn't that right? And

for what part?"

"Half."

"Half," said Holmes. "How kind of the Colonel. But you came here tonight on your own."

"Yes, Mr. Holmes, yes," sobbed the youth.

"You see," said Holmes in his didactic tone, "How the brush stroke of the master differs from that of the amateur: the dabbler does not know when to stop. There is no third copy of the will."

"No third copy?" cried Alexander. "But Sutro told me ...?"

"What I told him to tell you. You should have trusted Colonel Moran, as he certainly knew that two copies of a will is standard practice. Indeed," Holmes continued, "Had you consulted the Colonel, I daresay he would have bade you calm yourself, since even had there been a third copy of the original, the existence of the two forgeries would have brought the case to the Assizes, which was originally your object in view. I reasoned that with the plum so nearly in your grasp, and having carried out small burglary successfully in the past, you would seize upon this obvious solution. And so you have. Inspector, I believe we have finished."

"Come along then," said Bradstreet to the unfortunate youth. Holmes and I accompanied them to the street and, having bade the Inspector good night, we strode toward the little station at Harrow. Yet despite our success at the Post Office, I could see Holmes was dissatisfied.

"No, Watson," said he, replying to my thoughts, "It has not been a satisfactory case. I have no doubt the original will has been completely destroyed. Under the circumstances, however, I doubt not Sutros' testimony will yield the inheritance to this Maberly."

"Why, what is it then?" asked I.

"We have captured young Alexander," he mused. "But surely his was the lesser crime. He was a mere tool in the hands of Colonel Moran, with whom, I fear, the law will not deal very severely. And yet, I wonder, does the chain even end with the Colonel? You saw the care with which the forgeries were made. Even Sutro was nearly taken in. I should suspect Archie Stamford of Farnham. But what is the connection between Colonel Sebastian Moran, of the Bagatelle Club, and Archie Stamford, the master forger? The connection, Watson. I fear we have but touched the surface of what are very deep waters indeed." Holmes' eyes seemed to be looking far into the future. We stood in silence for some minutes, his head down on his chest, while the veil of darkness seemed close on all sides.

Afterword

When I wrote "The Adventure of the Amateur Burglar," I intended it to be read with several other imitations of late Victorian writers that I had produced for the amusement of some friends. It was read to them in an appropriately English fashion, over port and before a fire, and though I could not enhance my authenticity still more by a Trichinopoly cigar-none were to be had at any local tobacconist's-I wore a tail coat for the occasion. I wish to thank Arthur Conan for many hours of great pleasure and for this use of his characters.

-Drew Hinderer

MADWOMAN'S CONFLAGRATION

it was as though all the sins of the world
were contained in the air, the sunlight
as though nora were placed
beneath a magnifying glass
and all the light intensified
into one pinpoint of pain
that seared into her skin, branding her
smoldering until she began to burn
imploding like an old wooden building
in the heat of the fire
carrying the weight down toward the ground
falling with it
needing the weight to assure the hit-
too terrifying to be merely suspended
between the fire
and cold hard ground.

-Karen Totten

OF BLENDING

in the thick silence
of your office
we both wait

there surfaces a need
no,
desire
to give you things--

poems crafted at 6 a.m.
part dream part residue
from your fingertips on my shoulder

secrets from the red journal
i carry against my breasts
like armor
ink sketches of feelings
no doubt, no ambiguity
in black and white

every time you respond
to some fragment of me
i want to give it to you
immediately

instead, i stare
again at the rug
where the sun makes a
definite line
across which the darkness
is not allowed to go.

whatever was
blends back into your pale
oatmeal couch.

--Karen Totten



ON CERTAIN FUNERALS

Mark Twain, by all accounts, wrote the cardinal rule of funerals: "Thou shalt not criticize the individual in whose honor this entertainment is given." This is especially true when that individual is someone who is leaving you a pile of money and no lost affection.

It is important, therefore, to remember several rules.

1. The event should take place as soon as is efficiently possible. Even though you promise to bury her the moment you return, it is considered impolite to take a short victory cruise before the funeral.

2. Explain to the undertaker that she was explicit in her wishes, (even though you know the contrary to be true) that she be buried as simply as possible.

3. Do not tell the mortician that every nickel you spend came out of your inheritance. One mustn't seem greedy.

4. Phrases such as, "the old bat" should be avoided as much as possible.

5. "If I Were a Rich Man" is an inappropriate funeral tune.

6. No matter how much they protest, make your family wear black, at least to the funeral. Appearances are especially important where great sums of recently inherited money are concerned. Bermuda shorts and printed shirts are out of the question.

7. Have the phrase "IMMEDIATE FAMILY ONLY" inserted into the obituary. That way, if you are enjoying yourself too much, that fact will stay within the family.

If all of this is too much for you, there is another alternative. Put her in a sturdy wooden box near the curb for the sanitation crew to pick up. If the weather is to be balmy and she'll spend more than three days out there, toss in an Air-Wick to keep the neighborhood dogs at bay.

--Marvin Prescott

AMORIST'S CONFESSION

Charmer, charmer, snake, charmer me ...

With subtle soothing tunes
that took years of (real) pain to compose,
I wrap you writhing willing
in manipulating music:

"Cold flattened is my punctured soccer ball brain
lying on the floor, O Mother.
Roll up your sleeves
and pump me up
to Bigger than Life"
(so I can whine shrill spizz
when there are more nails in my skin.)

Reconstructed hero gambler me ...

With playing card promises
I'll build you a house
that topples in the breeze of my departure.

--J. Peter Ingalls

TO MY TEACHER

Writing for you is like putting the fur of a small mammal
into French braids.
Please, like the way the interwoven hairs express new ideas
in rodent fashion
When burrowing into my mind
acorns and other nutty ideas appear unforeseen
from dark recesses
with concision and alacrity.
Teacher, buy some self-love for me --
purchased gradations of ambition and achievement.
It is your place and duty to determine my future.

--J. Peter Ingalls



City Saturday"

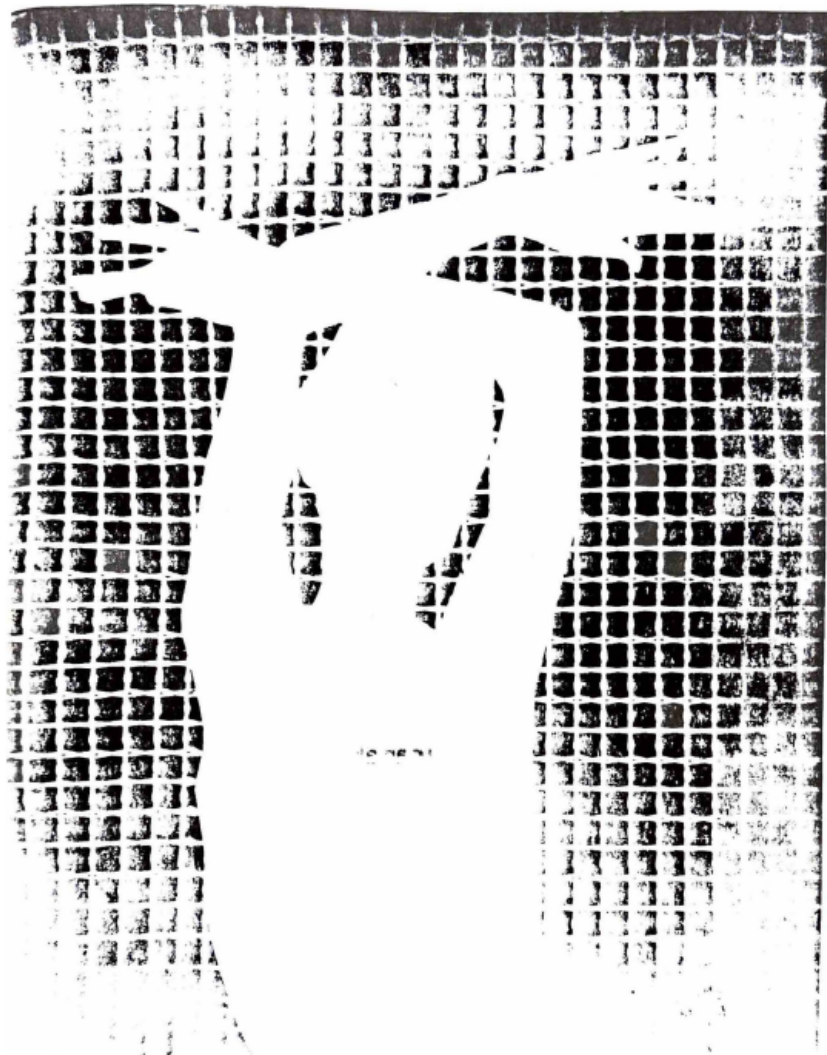
Horrie J. Hodge

GRASS

The Holy Ghost is oxidizing
in a pipe.
I breathe Him in.
He sears my lungs.
A row of clown-faced apostles watches.
They mime me,
they giggle,
and they wait
for the happy admission of faith--
their renewal.
Gently now He seeps into my blood.
God is in me, but He slumbers.
Only now and then turning In His sleep
He heats my skin.
There, on a small couch
are five souls marooned,
squeezed together, yet separated
by seas of desolation,
each one cast ashore
on a golden isle of dreams.
Now, I say,
now it is coming.
My mind slows like a camera
until the quick flickering of half-fast film
dazzles me;
an occasional frame
caught for an instant, still and entire
fascinates me.
They love their malady.
See this, one says.
I know. Cascades of
insane laughter seal
the final human bond.
Earth and sky are closing now.
They meet and crush me in
to a little cell alone.
These humans here do not love me.
They see my weaknesses
and they are laughing.
My consciousness
collects and clots on the common things on
that shade of blue,
on the unusual design of a shoe
(they are still laughing--
they must hear my silly thoughts)
on what I was just thinking or about to
think, or on what I was saying.
What was I saying?

(Ether of silence floods my ear.
Nothing, no one is here.)
From far away
an echo of a voice.
The spell is broken.
Like statues in a mausoleum
we grind to life
(How long had we been like that?)
A young priestess, a comely girl
in jeans and with bare lips
stroking her long black hair
gives the sermon:
Life is -how shall I say? -
Life is dismal.
Long, long, long ago
we learned
to live our lives in limbo
Only love, only love
has meaning.
A baby face
swaddled in a beard
sees how funny a lamp is.
The congregation bathes in communal laughter.
More bread broken -
the last pipe shared.
Salvation breaks new on smiling faces.
Our Host
returns from the mountain
and cries, like the prophet
Good News! Good News!
He circulates
handing towels and soap
To a line of Jews.

-Eric Nisula



untitled
--Karen Detgen

A SMALL INTRUSION

Last night,
Someone tried to break in
my house, for God's sake.

Three feet from the door,
I heard heavy foot steps ...
the door knob turned from side to side ...

I swear I could smell blood,
my own.
I could see the headline -
BRIDGEPORT WOMAN RAPED AND KILLED
Something catchy like that.

Finally,
he went away.

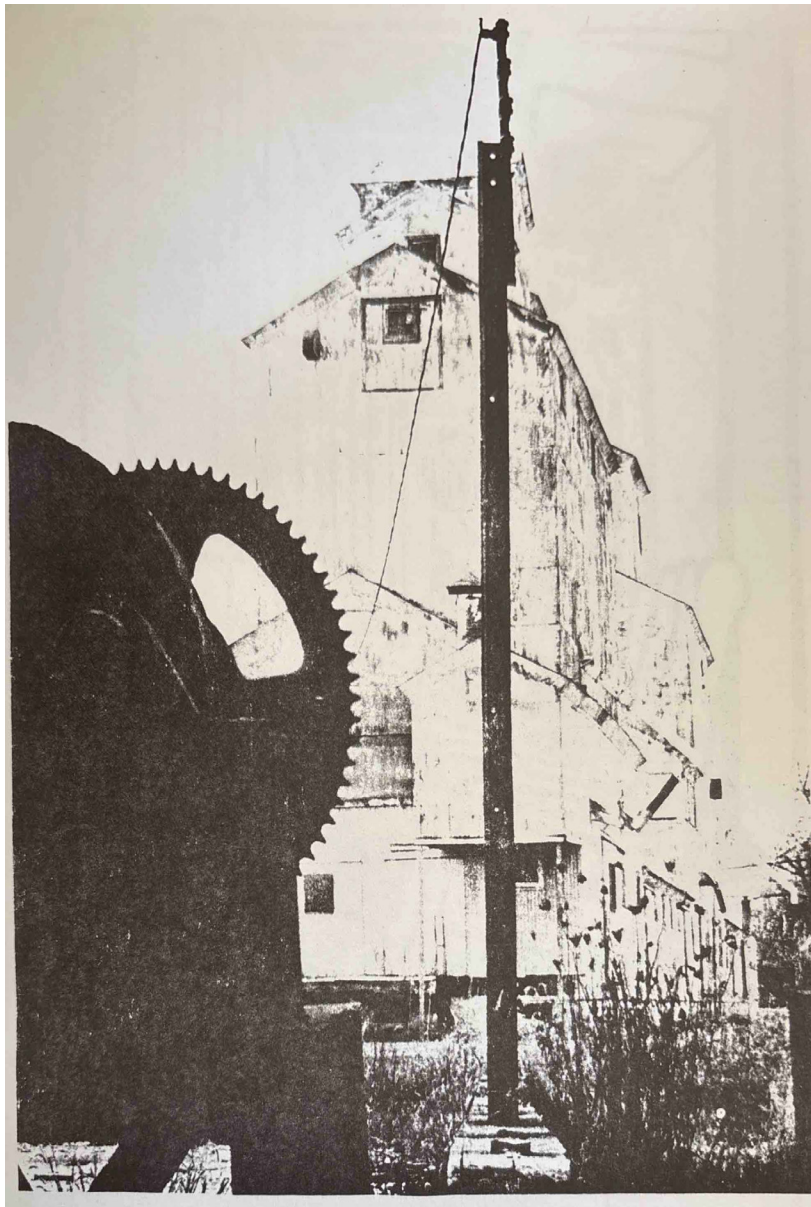
Was he casing the joint?
or just casing my body?

I kept thinking,
What would I do?

I thought about all of the horror
flicks I'd seen.
The survivor was always so
resourceful.
But, they always had a script.

Last, night,
was an actresses nightmare --
"Oh my God, where's my
script?
I forgot my lines!!"

--Kristi Edwards



15 October 1984

Lydia Kilmaur



"Rocking on the Grand Porch" 5/11

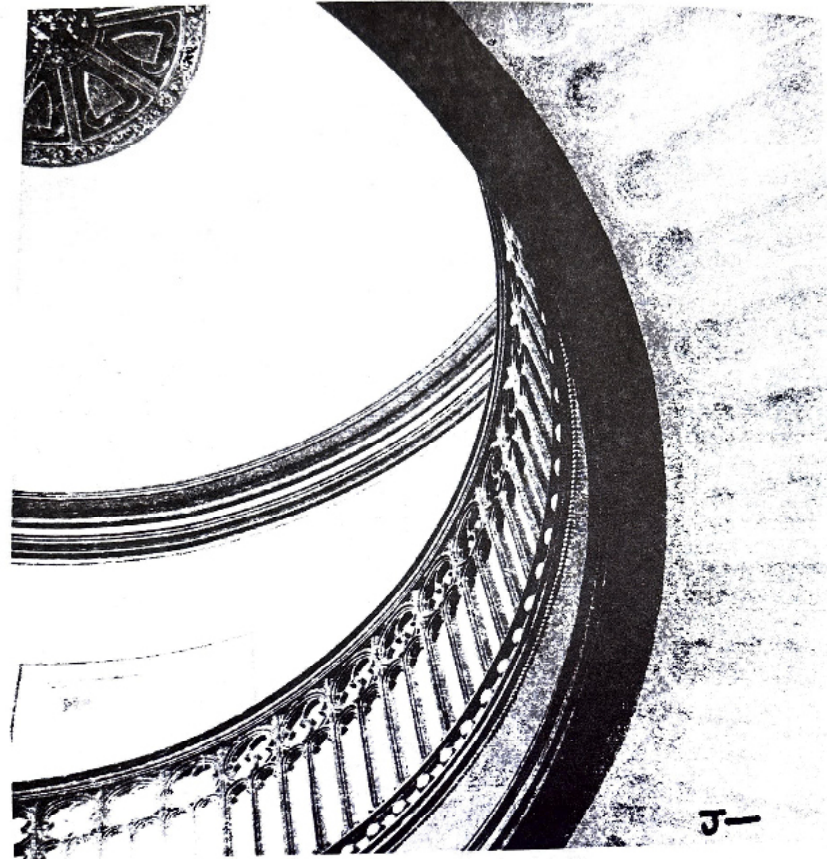
Michelle Abear



"Beauty & the Beast"

3/10

Michelle Abear



untitled

--Jim Vandermoter



untitled
--Jim Vandermoter

WOLFMAN

Wolf looked evil
He wasn't
Big y'know BIG, an outlaw
His eyes, those eyes, wow, they saw to the soul
Sardonic grin, y'know, evil
He did too much LSD
He assembled a imaginary jigsaw on the kitchen floor
His mother freaked
Called the cops
Traverse City Hospital electric shocked him into insanity
He put a shotgun in his mouth
Wolf looked evil
He wasn't

--Jim Vandermoter

MATTE WHITE

I sat within myself,
a vacant space
was my soul,
its atoms I could see through
but not within.
Only when the crisp winds
dropped photos from the wall
could I see the air
and in its havocked motion
I was approached.
You asked where I was.
My head tilted up to meet the question.
Shellacked eyes gazing forward
said I didn't know.
"I wish my soul was matte white
or pale gray,
but it's more like rice paper,
lining my inner body,
wrapping around my every bone,
weaving through my brain.
And if I were to hover my hand just above my stomach
and direct my soul to emerge
I would see
Well, I don't know what I would see, but I hope it will be
matte white
or pale gray."

-Rachel Zamek



Eze Breaking Point 6/13 *Rachel Jamel*

45



Ance-Kane 9/13 *Rachel Jamel*

46

BLACK BROTHER

I was the Black Brother that stood
and raised his fist for
Black power and strife
I was the Black Brother that prayed
for peace but went to Vietnam
and gave his life
I was the Black Brother that was
beaten with a whip until
I could no longer stand
I was the Black Brother that fought
not one or two but ten
I am the Black Brother
not more or less
but the same
as all men

--Charles Keith Taylor

if I lost all memory
and had to start completely over,
maybe I could love you
but not now
were I driving
and saw you lying alongside the road,
injured,
I suppose I would stop and help
I have such respect for life
that as a universally loving human
I must help you, and certainly would,
with great concern
but I as an individually loving human
would want dearly
to drive to a police station and say,
"There's a man lying injured
beside the road back there,
about 300 miles back."

-Beth Medley



Rag Figure

--David Rayfield



untitled
--David Rayfield

ED ON DEADLINE

A most unlikely bulldog stormed down the aisle of desks toward his own seat at the far end of the newsroom. Sure, Ed's stride was resolute and not a little bow-legged, and, yes, his arms did swing with authority in front of him. But there the resemblance ended. Barely five feet, seven inches tall, he had the physique of an apostrophe. A whisper of wind would surely have sent him crashing into the rows of grey steel desks around him--resolute stride or no.

Ed seemed unaware of such a threat, however. Scowling beneath black plastic, horn-rimmed glasses, his 51-year-old eyes glared somewhere far beyond the sideward stares of the reporters he passed. Noisily, he yanked his chair around and lunged into position, his face pressing close enough to the screen to take on an eerie green glow.

Deadline had transformed Ed Schertz into some unforeseeable hybrid of Don Quixote, Dr. Jekyll and Rambo. The Brylcreem had begun to lose its grip, and silver-white clumps of hair sprayed across his frowning forehead. Beneath them, deep-blue veins, bloated near to bursting, stretched all the way to his neck, where they rocketed into a dingy white collar. Loosened at the throat, his navy tie swung like an afterthought across a rumpled short-sleeved shirt and lolled in his polyester lap. Dusty black wing-tips gripped the floor, providing him balance as he poised over the keyboard.

Here was a man with a story to write--and, all those whadyacallem be damned, he was going to write it whether they understood it or not.

"How do they expect me to get the story in by whadyacallem when they keep sending it back, anyway?!" he fumed to himself.

He raised his head above his terminal and began talking to the front page of *The Wall Street Journal*, behind which Harry Lester's face was, as usual, hidden.

"You know," he began.

A corner of *The Journal* gave way to Harry's dull stare.

"You know, these guys, these guys ... aw, forget it," Ed said.

His hands swept up toward the ceiling then resumed flailing at the keyboard.

The Journal swept back across Harry's face, but stayed there only a moment before Harry turned the corner down again to listen politely, if absently, as the tirade started anew.

"You see, the thing is," Ed growled, his voice rising in pitch as the words poured out in rapid-fire succession, "those guys scream and scream for tighter writing, then you cut the guts out of your whadyacallem and return it and they want more details! It's just, it's just ... well, I don't know."

The harangue ended abruptly. Harry's face returned to *The Journal*, and Ed's reattached itself, for the moment, to his computer screen.

Suddenly, Ed jerked the telephone receiver to his ear, started to dial, then slammed down the phone without finishing. He stared at his computer screen. He fidgeted. He whimpered. He glanced at the clock, then pounded again at the keyboard. He stopped abruptly to survey the product of his anxiety.

"Marketing in 1985," he read, "is no longer the simple process of a farmer marketing his beans by gathering them up all at once together and taking them to the market all at the same time, a top marketing analyst said today while stomping the state to call attention to the polite bean farmers losing business to foreign markets."

"By god," Ed snorted aloud, "that ought to be short enough for them. If they don't like that, they can fix it themselves!"

He punched the keys that would send his masterpiece to its peril at their hands.

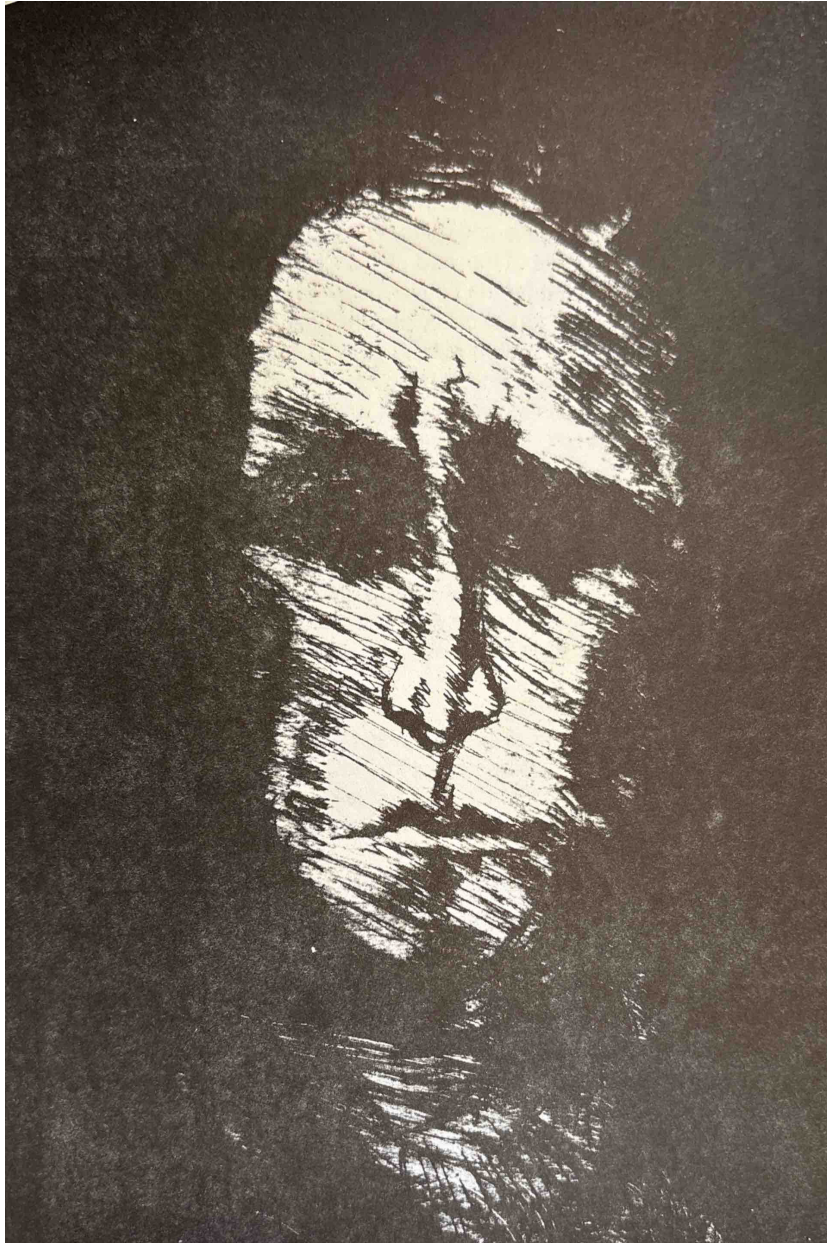
--Jim Slusher



BROWN GIRL

in the shower of the Women's Locker Room
body like a dark tulip
curve of a blossom at her hips and thighs
the pubic corolla curled above her leg stems
long petals of arms infolded
moving in the shower stream
with delicate foot pivots
soaping and stroking
turning around and around
in the small spotlight of water
a flower making
a soft thirsty dance for the rain.

--Diane Sautter



untitled
--Barbara Lyon-Bailey

THE AUCTION

The gray-haired old woman sat on the back porch in a rocking chair. Her hands were quiet, one over the other, in her lap. She wore a loose-fitting purple-flowered house dress with a zipper in the front. The dress was quite long, showing very little of her beige cotton stockings. On her feet she had brown man-style house slippers. The old woman sat very still. The chair did not rock. Only her head moved as she looked at the things around her.

Boxes were everywhere. Some were packed with linen things that she hadn't used for years. Pots and pans in another had been used last week. Other boxes were filled with this and that and nothing in particular. The dining room table was in the middle of the yard. On it all the old woman's china and glassware had been laid out for the convenience of the strangers. Her eyes rested for a moment on the set of china cups that her husband had given her long ago. He had been so excited with his surprise that he had dropped the package, breaking the edge of one of the cups. By the hedge was the cherry desk upon which countless letters had been written, its immaculate finish reflecting the afternoon sun. Books that had filled the shelves of her house were stacked precariously all around the yard. At the old woman's feet lay some old picture frames that had held pictures of her family. Near them was a tin box of handkerchiefs. Their hand-crocheted edges were something she had done to waste away time after her mate had died. There also lay her set of pewter hairbrushes. The bristles were yellowed and her initials were barely legible. Several boxes of her jewelry were there, boxes she opened now and again to be reminded of what had been.

The old woman sat very still in her rocking chair, watching and listening. Now there was much for her to see and hear. The strange people were everywhere - in the house, milling about the back yard, sitting on the steps below her. They complained of the heat and talked to companions of treasures they hoped to buy. All this as if the old woman were not there.

She watched them rummage through the boxes. She heard someone remark about the musty smell of her linens. They opened and closed the drawers of her desk and talked of its lovely condition. They checked the pots and pans closely to see how much use was left in them.

Walking by her, they entered her house. Some of them rested themselves on her couch and some on her chairs. They clambered up the steps, peered into empty closets, and tested the springs of the old woman's ancient bed.

In the kitchen they turned on the burners of her stove to see if the pilot would work. Others slammed the refrigerator door to see if it would slam.

Outside, a fat woman lumbered around the side of the house into the back yard. Big rings of sweat showed under her arms as she spread out a blanket under the tree. The fat woman's children sat down on the blanket each of them opening a brown paper bag. The old woman watched as they ate their lunches under her apple tree.

Two women in pretty summer dresses and sandals ambled around the yard, talking quietly to each other. They walked toward the porch to look at

the things lying there. One of them picked up and opened the old woman's red leather jewel box. She gasped at the sight of the garnet brooch and spoke excitedly of how well it would look on her burgundy suit. Neither of them noticed the old woman shift the position of her hands. She turned her head to look at the ones clustered around the table in the yard. Some picked up plates and studied the markings on the backs. The fat woman was there, running her fingers around the edge of a tea cup. Loudly she explained how a chip made a piece of china less valuable.

A tall man in a wide-brimmed hat strode across the back yard. There was no discernible expression on the old woman's face as the crowd suddenly became quiet. They followed the man to the desk and stopped. He began to chant to them in a strange language. The old woman rocked gently in her chair. The auction had begun.

--Barbara Lyon-Bailey

CHANGES ON A CLOUDY NIGHT

We were driving under a red and grey smudged moon.
You laughed at my superstition.
You thought it was funny when I said I couldn't stand to see such an evil moon.
Later, you looked up and asked if I felt any better.
The moon was silver again.
I lied. I said I felt much better.
I lied because I was afraid of the moon, now that it had appeared in the car.
It was wrapped across the thin bones of your face.

-Linda Haag-Hipel

BARBARA ANN

You are the woman I thought God didn't create.
You are the woman I quit looking for.
In a quiet, moonlit field of my mind I made love to the stars instead.
I took some salt-dry day dreams and sweaty nights stuffed with people and frustration and turned it all into a roaring glory for myself.
I lit sparklers and stuck them in the ground all around me, then I sat down to wait.
The ground flattened out and began to freeze.
I forgot what I was waiting for.
Some of the sparklers sizzled down to deep in my eyes and burned out my desire. Dazzled, I kept lighting more.
God had pity on me. He sent a woman to me who touches me like heat-lightning.
Sparklers are turning into bonfires and I'm standing in the center of blue and white-hot amazement while the embers warm my heart.

--Linda (Hipel) Haag

THE GARDEN

Hidden somewhere
in the back of the mind
is a garden.
It's a secret place
where we learn
how to become human.
That's where you'll find me
kneeling in memories
pulling flowers
and tending weeds.

The sky here is too big
it presses down
crushing
the innocent
and guilty alike.
A thunderhead
rumbles at me
as it moves from the horizon,
a tumor in blue.

Even if you shout
I won't hear you
I'm not listening.
And even if I do hear
I won't answer
no reason to.
And even if there is a reason
I won't
Why should I?

Pretend I'm with you
because I'm not.
Imagine me as you
wish me to be.
I won't care.
Because I'm not here
to see myself
through your eyes.
I'm alone in my garden
listening to the wind
and in it I hear
my own voice
for the first time.

--Michael Griffor

DRAWING FROM MEMORY

It is a child's view of the world
A rendering done in crayon
In which the sky is too blue
The sand too yellow
And the water too green.
In the distance
A sinister clown's nose
Hovers near the horizon
Softening the hard lines
But casting no shadows.
Standing here alone on the beach
Is more than one soul can bear
So one by one
Seagulls are added.
Caught in midflight
They shout at each other
In sad scratchy voices.
I remember this place
And swimming here years ago
But in memory
I stand alone on the beach
Watching myself swim,
Pushing through the carefully drawn waves.
I flow in perfect form
Stroke after strong stroke
But coming no closer to shore.
A child grabs a blood red crayon
And scribbles his angry mark
On the world.

--Michael Griffor

FALLING OUT OF THE EARTH

There are places on the great plains
where the grasses take over the land
making it their own.

I get out of the car and walk
just a few feet away
becoming lost in the prairie.

Shoulder high the grass
is sharp enough to cut
like the edges of paper.

The horizon lifts up all around
leaving me in what seems
to be a large bowl

with the sky arching overhead
curving down to touch the bowl's rim
closing off the world.

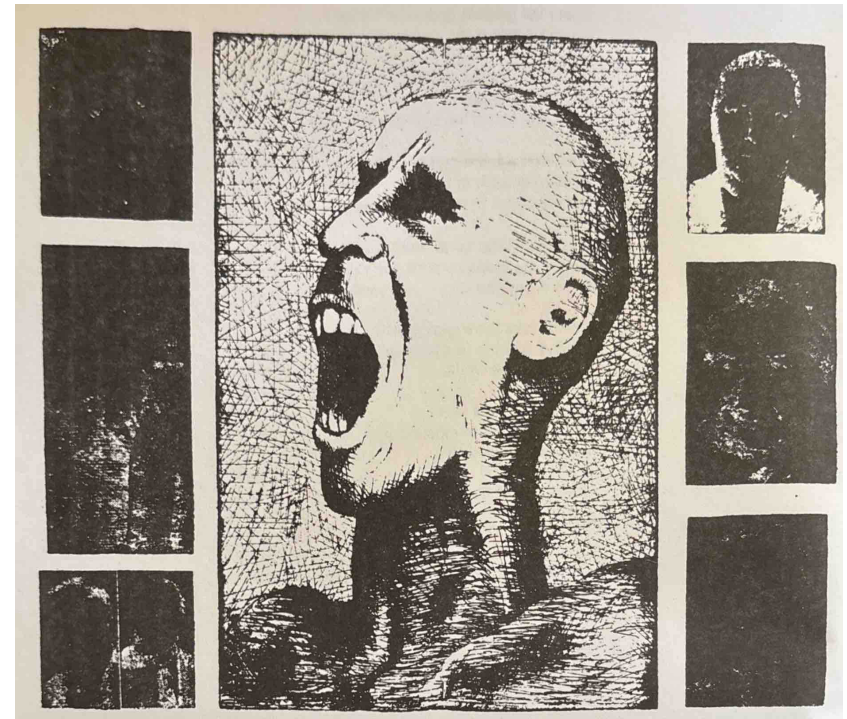
There are voices here
I can hear them wandering
just outside hearing.

Some people from the next town
say the voices are
the grasses singing.

Or maybe they are echoes of
wagon trains or buffalo herds,
things that no longer pass by.

Others say that its just words
thrown off some back porch
scattering in the wind.

-Michael Griffor



Gates of Hell
--Matthew Leachman

CHANGES

Plus ca change

Plus c'est la meme chose

The World Book Encyclopedia has this to say about war: "Wars have always caused great suffering and hardship. Most people hate war...." Tom Anderson was like most people. He hated war.

But what that edition of *The World Book Encyclopedia* forgets to mention about war is that during one, people are supposed to be blood and guts patriots. During a war, invasions and battles are good. War protects us. Our boys are protecting us. During a war people don't hate war, they thank God they're Americans!

During this war Tom's patriotism wasn't acting like it should. Being a priest had nothing to do with it, though. He just felt war was wrong--or at least not right. It was that simple, just a feeling. He certainly never did anything foolish like go to secret meetings or read subversive propaganda. And because what Tom felt was so simple, it hardly ever bothered him. But if other people had known how he felt, it would have caused him all sorts of trouble. During this war draft dodgers, political activists and even casual pacifists were very unpopular people. That was the hard part: not telling anyone--not even the other priests. It was a secret that would've ended his career.

Tom's eyes were what fooled most people; he had the soft grey eyes of a Husky puppy. Simply by looking people in the eyes, Tom was given the warmth and trust that, normally, are only given to "man's best friend." And besides his eyes, he had an honest face, the kind of face that looked like it'd have Norman Rockwell's signature hidden somewhere on the cheek. Tom so desperately wanted people's respect, he did what he could to highlight his innocence: he had the hair style of a man twice his age; he wore the same kind of wire frame glasses as his father; and even though it was no longer required, Tom always wore the customary black.

When the older priests looked at Tom, he wanted them to see a man dressed in the same, conservative fashion of thirty years ago. No doubt, thirty years ago was a magical time--it was a time of morality and dignity. (Ineptitude and skepticism were products of the younger generations.) It was a time when religion still had its place in society, and it was a time when a priest was someone respected. This magical time, Tom knew, was easy for them to remember; it was when they had been young like him. In a way, he was the stone they used to sculpt their memories. And like the plain stone that somehow becomes more beautiful--their innocence somehow became his. So when they looked at him, they saw more than his naked self, they saw an age purified of its faults and evils, an age perfect in its state of nostalgia.

Right now, Tom was with Bishop Algardi. "Tom," the bishop said to him, "say'a da prayer." The bishop was obviously surprised. His old, thick eyebrows were arched like the wings of a cartoon bird in flight. For seven years Tom had listened to the bishop as if his every word were divinely sanctioned, and now, suddenly, the young priest wanted to challenge him. For no real reason it seemed.

Tom needed to explain himself, but "no real reason" is hard to explain to a man like the bishop. Tom frantically searched for something to say, something that would both maintain his image and get him out of saying the prayer. But his mind was like an overloaded electrical circuit. His thoughts kept tripping over themselves.

They ran wildly, jumping without discretion from one side of his brain to the next. Then his stomach took up the rhythm. It jumped around like Tom had swallowed a pair of angry squirrels. His body just wasn't used to this kind of tension. Finally he offered, "This simply isn't the kind of thing I want to say to that boy's family."

The bishop told him, "Dat's not'a good enough." Tom knew it wouldn't be. The bishop had always been a man of absolutes; things were up or down, black or white, good or bad, alpha or omega. A thing you wouldn't have guessed by looking at him. You see, in the last few years his elderly body had taken a less than absolute shape. Wrinkles had collapsed the smooth dignity of his face. Grey, as well, had overtaken the light brown in his hair, and his weight had grown close to two hundred pounds.

Still, Tom felt like a child when he was in the same room as the bishop. It was a feeling the bishop's dark and wooden office intensified. The bishop was sitting behind his desk, shaking his head at Tom's answer. It was the impassive and dominating pose that most upwardly mobile executives would sell their souls for. And the way the sunlight was shining on the bookshelf behind him, he seemed to wear a bright halo of knowledge. For a brief moment Bishop Algardi could've been mistaken for the Socratic ideal of authority.

But then he clicked his dentures into place. Tom's skin crawled. In the same way that some people bite their nails or rub their eyebrows when they talk, Bishop Algardi would unconsciously push his dentures with his thumb. Tom found the habit very peculiar, very noticeable and very annoying. Spittle squirting between Bishop Algardi's gums and false teeth was like someone dragging his fingernails across a chalkboard. But every man has habits, and his dentures was only one of the bishop's. Another was his accent. Always, the bishop spoke with an Italian accent when he wanted to exercise his authority.

Bishop Algardi was using that accent now. He said, "Dis is'a important for one'a simple reason: so much'a publicity has'a gone into his'a funeral. Dat boy is'a da first war hero from 'round'a here. My God'a, people are so caught up'a in'a da war right now, dey're even flying da flags at half'a-mase."

"Sure," Tom said, "but why can't...." Try again, he thought. "I think a religious ceremony would be more appropriate."

"You'a already know why, Tom. Because'a da First Amendment. Everybody's gonna' be listening to'a what'a we have to say about'a his'a death." The bishop was talking about the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. It says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion"

Just before the war started, a group of atheists had protested that the words "In God We Trust" on America's money infringed upon their constitutional rights. They didn't believe in God so they shouldn't have to carry money that said they trusted in him; the Constitution said so. The Supreme Court agreed. The church fought the case fiercely, and in the end, walked away with a lot of bitter feelings. Since then, people treated the church much like they would an old ball player, one who hangs on to his career too long.

When the bishop was silent Tom tried a different approach, "I'd rather talk about Heaven or why God took his life." Tom's voice was precise, sharp, and quick. It seemed metallic, more like a tape recording than his real voice. But he was nervous, and everything seemed unreal-like he wasn't a part of what was happening.

Then the bishop was silent, painfully silent. In that brief moment, Tom

could feel every cell of blood rushing through his body. Millions of tiny red cells echoing through his head with the pressure and urgency of end-of-the day traffic. One by one they pushed through him carrying the energy of his anticipation. Partly to release that tension, and partly to know what the bishop was thinking, he tested, "Bishop?"

In his accent the bishop simply said, "Read'a it."

Tom's energy collapsed on his body. His shoulders sagged, his stomach dropped, and his face fell. Tom had never thought the talk with Bishop Algardi would go so badly. Sure he was nervous, but it should still work-if only because he was trying. Through his disappointment Tom made several other suggestions: I can say it in my own words, I can paraphrase your sermon, I can say it without that prayer, and others. But each time, Bishop Algardi's reply was the same: "Read'a it."

Tom left the office wondering what went wrong. He sat in his car thinking: Why had Bishop Algardi been so resolute? How could he make me look so ridiculous? Does he think I'm anti-American? Out came his pack of cigarettes. Already he felt that he was playing church politics.

He felt bad that he needed to smoke. He'd been planning to give up smoking, but he needed something to take away the ache his adrenaline had left behind. At least he didn't crave a drink. For the last six or seven weeks, he'd been hitting the alcohol pretty hard. It was never much, a drink or two at night-but it had been every night. And sometimes it was three or four. At first it was no big deal, then came the fear, am I addicted? am I an alcoholic? So despite this afternoon's stress, he was going to avoid alcohol. Besides, his bottle of Scotch was empty.

He took a long drag off his cigarette, then started the engine of the old parish car. Grudgingly, he merged with the busy traffic.

The Townhouse was a simple bar, but it had character: it was the oldest building in town. Other than that, the only interesting thing about the bar was that around the turn of the century, it was frequented by a little-known and unpublished poet. His name was Jeffrey Morrow. *The World Book Encyclopedia* has nothing to say about Jeffrey Morrow. That means the most exciting thing about the Townhouse was its character.

The bar was full of character. It hadn't changed much during its hundred years or so. The booths were still massive things, dark wooden seats that curled up and around the patrons. The walls had once been white washed, but through the years posters, beer displays, front pages of newspapers, photographs, hunting trophies, even one of Jeffrey Morrow's poems had all gathered to cover the walls, making the place look like it'd been done by Andy Warhol before he discovered Campbell's soup labels. Tom didn't go to the bar for its atmosphere, though; to him it wasn't important. Usually, he went there to meet a friend and enjoy a little conversation. Tonight he was there for just one drink and to forget how badly this day was going.

The owner of the Townhouse, Mike, was the one getting his drink. He was a heavy-set man who moved a little too slowly for Tom. No matter how busy the Townhouse was, Mike always seemed to plod from one end to the other like a bored-dog.

So while Tom waited for his drink he turned his attention to the people in the bar. Like a kid reading a cereal box in the morning, Tom tried passing the time by watching the other customers. The Townhouse wasn't a bar for back-slapping drinkers or people who wanted to be noticed. If people had drinks in their hands, they

blended with the rest of the bar's trimmings.

In one booth was a man and a woman. Their heads were bowed over the table and their voices were soft and low like a humming fan. It was their apparent secrecy that piqued Tom's curiosity. He imagined they were characters from an Updike novel. An affair in this small town would have been so like Updike. He wondered how Updike would have described them. And what they had to go through to meet. How they chose this time and place. What they told their spouses. Tom imagined the couple trying to hold hands under the table and burning to kiss one another. And beneath these thoughts, Tom could feel a strange sense of envy tunneling its way around.

Across the room two young men were shooting pool. They looked just old enough to be in the bar, and the way they leaned on their cue sticks and the way they held their beer glasses showed how proud they were to be there. It was likely that they were just as drunk on the bar's atmosphere as the alcohol. College students Tom guessed. And they were laughing in a happy, I've-got-life-licked laugh. From such a distance Tom could only guess at their joke: they were probably recalling their professor's half-baked interpretation of *Catcher in the Rye*. Tom envied them too. He couldn't guess why: their youth, their joy, or maybe their companionship. But suddenly, the two looked up and saw him staring at them. He was intruding.

Ashamed at being so obvious, he turned away. And his drink still wasn't ready. So Tom went to pick up the day's paper--anything to be less conspicuous. He knew he could get one. For years there had been a vending machine filled with *The Tri-City Times* nest to the Townhouse's front door.

Tom felt close to *The Times*. Not because it was the only paper in town, but because it had always been a part of his life. His scrap book was filled with clippings from *The Times*: his high school graduation, his ordination, his father's obituary, the war.

Tom pulled the change out of his pocket and poked through it. As he did so, one coin made a "chink" distinct from the others. It was making that unique sound an old coin makes, the sound of an older, purer alloy. He found the coin, a quarter. Washington's profile was worn to nothing more than a silhouette and the notches around its perimeter were almost gone. Although it was almost illegible, the coin still had the "In God We Trust" logo. That meant the coin was from a happier time, a time before this lousy war and all the problems it had brought. Tom looked at the date. At first it seemed strange. that a coin so young could be so worn; it had been minted the same year Tom was born. That was only thirty-five years ago.

He got his paper, and then it sunk in. Thirty-five years. Three and a half decades. Almost half his life.

He needed his drink. Tom went back to the bar where Mike stood holding his drink. "Thanks," Tom said and dropped some money in front of him. When his change was handed back to him, Tom asked, "See this paper, Mike?"

Mike pursed his big lips and nodded.

"You know, the first money I earned was peddling *The Times*." Tom tried to remember what his life was like before this war, before he was troubled by decisions. He took a long drink. "I was fourteen. Papers were still a dime back then. God, I don't know how I ever made any money at it. Sometimes I wonder why I ever did it"

He looked into the glass of liquor. "Maybe it was because it made me feel important. Carrying papers makes a kid feel important, you know. People count on

you. I mean adults, they count on you to have their paper there every day."

He took another drink. "But it makes a kid feel small too. Carrying that big bag door-to-door Sundays were the worst. I must have looked like something out of a comic book lugging all those folded newspapers."

Tom looked up from his drink. He looked at Mike's face and saw the same patient expression that people wore to his church on Sundays. It made Tom feel like he was giving a homily. He ordered another Scotch to shake the feeling. Talking was making him feel better, and he wanted an interested audience.

"I gave it up when I was seventeen," he said when Mike began moving. "I must have been the oldest paperboy ever. But I didn't hit puberty till seventeen. God, that was an awkward time." This last he said to the bartender's back. Mike was facing the huge mirrors that hung over the bar, taking the Scotch from the long line of bottles. "Everyone I knew had already gone through it, so I was all alone. There wasn't anyone I could talk to. Everything was a terrible secret back then: the curly hair, the deep voice, the quick desire. But I was so proud; I wasn't a boy anymore-I was a man."

Mike handed Tom the fresh drink and took away the empty glass.

Again to Mike's back, Tom asked "You know what I did to prove it? I mean that I was a man. This is funny-I mean really funny: I got mail. Every day I'd walk down from my parents' apartment to the mailbox in the lobby. Those four flights of stairs were my daily rite of passage." Mike immersed Tom's dirty glass in a sink of dishwasher. After a few swirls, he pulled the dripping glass out and began wiping it dry. He turned and listened to Tom, screwing a white cloth into the glass's bottom. Tom said, "I proved I was a man every time I received mail. Like my father, and my grandfather, and God knows who else, I was someone important because I was someone with an address, someone receiving man."

"And this is the really funny part: to make sure there would be mail for me, to make sure there would be proof of my manhood, I mailed away for everything: brochures, catalogs, coupons and all sorts of free samples-no matter how useless. I gave my mother more little bottles of fabric softener than she could ever use. All that was important was that I got something in the mail."

Three businessmen came in and stood at the bar. They were dressed in suits, but their ties had been loosened and their jackets removed.

"To climb four flights of stairs with a thick stack of mail made me a feast for all eyes," Tom went on. Sarcasm blotched his memory like graffiti. "I walked up the stairs two at a time for christ's sake. No one would have guessed I was seventeen: I was too skinny and my arms were too long on these really square shoulders. I probably looked more like a puppy that's still growing into its feet, or maybe a half-stuffed, gangling scarecrow. I tried to look important carrying the mail, but it was more like comic book pride." Tom snorted at the image, "More cartoons--funny, isn't it. This freshly shaved chin stuck way out." Tom tried to show Mike just how funny it was by sticking out his chin.

But Mike was giving him a smile that looked like it'd come out of his back pocket. At the same time he glanced over to where the businessmen had gathered around a bowl of peanuts. Mike's expression was his I've-got-work-to-do smile. So Tom looked down into his glass, and Mike went over to the men.

Without his audience Tom had nothing to do but listen to what the businessmen were saying. At first it was just bar talk: gas mileage, baseball standings and golf

scores. But after they got their drinks, their conversation soon drifted on to their work, an account whose name they never mentioned. The one doing most of the talking had a thick moustache. He drank his beer in big gulps, and foam kept getting caught on the whiskers.

By then Tom's forehead was beginning to feel warm with Scotch, and his thoughts were just beginning to trip over otherwise easy mental connections. As if to compensate, other ideas started going together for no apparent reason. When the man with the moustache spoke, his voice was bloated with concentration and his throat constricted with intensity. He reminded Tom of Bishop Algardi. While Tom watched him speak, the words seemed to come from his moustache rather than his mouth. Then they were coming from the bowels of America, from a great tradition of whiskers and beer. It was like watching a dead president speak. Tom remembered Algardi's dentures in the same way.

Tom shook the image from his mind and tried to put the day into perspective. It was like taking a Rorschach test. At first it was just a black blotch of events, then slowly everything started to make sense.

There was a reason he had been so stubborn with the bishop, a reason his memories seemed so empty: he was thirty-five years old and he hadn't done anything significant with his life. The dreams he had as a seminarian were beginning to seem out of reach. He remembered wanting to leave his mark on the diocese, wanting to be someone whom people would remember. He didn't want to some day look back at his life and realize he did nothing but play church politics. As a seminarian, this was reasonable, if not expected. But things had changed. Days go by, weeks go by, so do months and years. And then suddenly you're well past thirty and nothing's been accomplished.

Now was the perfect opportunity to prove that he could still do something with his life. Maybe standing up to the bishop was an unconscious effort to live up to his old ideal. He didn't believe in this war, at least he didn't feel comfortable endorsing it. Besides that prayer really did border on sacrilegious.

Yes, he thought, that's it.

Slowly, his self-worth returned. He'd done things like this before: stood firm against peer pressure, said "no" to his parents, and refused to pay for bad service. Compared to this, though, they were candles to a sixty-watt bulb. This challenge had major social and political repercussions. He looked at the people in the bar again. The secretive couple, the laughing students, and the intense businessmen all, no doubt, had their problems. But none of theirs could be as important as his was. Finally, he was more than a weaselly thirty-five-year-old. He was special. Just sitting there was like being on stage for a second encore. In a fit of quixotic heroism Tom felt a problem this big should be worked out alone. So he paid Mike for a fifth of Scotch and left.

With one quick motion, he philosophically spun the cap off the brown bottle. Scotch poured into his glass, the color of rust-tinted water, the color of Nietzsche-stained thought. He took a drink before he replaced the cap. For a moment his eyes closed. Then he reopened the bottle and shook out the last few drops. He held the bottle in the palm of his hand. Perhaps yesterday he would have called the empty bottle "a dead soldier."

Not today. Not now.

He went over to the phone, and dialed the number. Through the lines he heard the phone ringing, then the sound of dentures smacking. It was the bishop. "Tom," he said, "I'm glad you called. I tried to get hold of you earlier, but you weren't home." There was no sign of the old man's accent. "Now I know it's late, but would you like to come over for dinner? Sister Margaret wouldn't cook the roast until it thawed, and it's too big for just the two of us."

But Tom wasn't listening to the bishop; only the sound of his voice came through. Granted, it was pleasant voice, especially without the bad accent. It was the wrinkled voice of a man wizened with age. But, suddenly, it was a wisdom for which Tom held no regard, a wisdom in which he had no interest. The voice aggravated him; the bishop's stale pleasantries were delaying him. Already the phone was slippery in his hand. All evening he'd been preparing to stand up the bishop. He'd rehearsed what he'd say and exactly how he'd put it, his reputation be damned.

The speech was dynamic and effervescent in his mind, but when Tom spoke, only its echo came out. What he said was flat and incomplete, "I can't give your sermon."

The bishop clicked his dentures into place a second time. He said with an obvious patience, "I see. I'm sorry to hear's dat, Tom. Still, you'll'a have to'a read'a it. Dere's no'a oder way."

Tom hung up. This wasn't working. Tom had expected Bishop Algardi to see how important this was to him. He thought the bishop would see it as an important step in Tom's becoming a strong spiritual leader. On reasoning like this, Tom had built himself up to the point where he couldn't accept Algardi's flat denial.

The phone began to ring. As he listened to the first, second, then fifth and ninth rings, Tom knew he hadn't answered the question by hanging up on the bishop. It wasn't going to leave him that easily: should he read the bishop's sermon at the funeral-and especially that prayer? He glanced over the homily. Tom knew for whom the bishop's prayers were really interested. He tried to guess how the boy's family would react. Would they be victims too? Emotional martyrs of the church?

The sermon began nobly enough.

General MacArthur wrote this prayer during World War II:

Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid; one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.

Build me a son whose wishes will not take the place of deeds; a son who will know Thee-and that to know himself is the foundation stone of knowledge.

Lead him, I pray, not in the path of ease and comfort, but under the stress and spur of difficulties and challenge. Here let him learn to stand up in the storm; here let him learn compassion for those who fall.

Build me a son whose heart will be clear, whose goal will be high, a son who will master himself before he seeks to master other men, one who will reach into the future, yet never forget the past.

And after all these things are his, add, I pray, enough of a sense of humor, so that he may always be serious, yet never take himself too serious. Give him humility, so that he may always remember the simplicity of true greatness, the open mind of true wisdom, and the meekness of true strength.

Then I, his father, will dare to whisper, "I have not lived in vain."

MacArthur's prayer is one for this boy's parents. They have not lived in vain The Good Lord built them a son. A son, like MacArthur asks, who did not let his personal desires "take the place of deeds." He served his country when it called him.

The homily continued with talk about establishing justice, insuring domestic tranquility, promoting the general welfare, and securing the blessings of liberty. About heroes and patriots. About Christians. And finally about how all these things were one in the death of a boy.

The phone began ringing again.

Tom was putting off the decision. He began to realize that. He also knew the longer he waited, the more likely his pride and ego would be replaced by his desire to keep the bishop happy.

It was pointless. He'd just say the ... No he wouldn't. That was just giving in to him. Maybe he should take a stand and say his own sermon. Sure, vicious words would fly the next morning, but after a week or two the whole thing would be loose change in their memories.

But if it's so easily forgotten, why fight the bishop? Was this really all that important? What would he be sacrificing?

The smell of his cologne was getting to Tom. He'd been wearing Old Spice for years, but at the moment, it really disgusted him. It was time for another cigarette. And like the burning tobacco, his self-respect drifted slowly away. It circulated through the room, seeped into the furniture, found its way into Tom's clothes; it even stained his flesh. Tomorrow morning he would reek of stale cigarettes and forced humility. Politics, he thought.

--Ron Sielinski

THE SLEEP

Sleep is a series of one-night stands,
You can be late,
But you can never miss an appointment.

Sleep is a seducer.
A drug.

Sleep is the confessor.

Sleep is the prison and the release.
Eyelids are gates,
Locking you out of the world.
Bound, gagged and blindfolded,
You can only wait.

But the mind is grateful.
A chance for repose
Stretch out the bumps
Fill in the potholes,
For a smoother ride tomorrow.

Sleep is the actor.
Sleep only pretends ...
To be asleep.
But the eyes give it away.

--Jason Lichon

DO YOU LOVE ME?

"Do you love me?" her soft feminine voice came from the back of my mind. Every morning she would beg the same question. "I know you love me, and someday you will take me back to America with you." Her lovely dark almond-shaped eyes would search my face for a positive response. Although fifteen years had passed, she still haunted my memory. Twisting the throttle on my Harley, increasing the speed in hopes of outrunning the voice, only failed. "You do love me," she would state, as I would give her a hug before leaving her place on the way back to the air base. I would only laugh and say, "I'll see ya in a little while after work," and off I'd go to fly another mission.

I never thought I could love or care about anything over there. I only wanted to get my tail back home in one piece, to the people I really loved. "You take me home with you when you go," she would keep saying. Damn, she must have been crazy to think I would bring her home with me. I couldn't drag home some slanty-eyed girl--my friends would never speak to me again. I can't believe how foolish she was to believe in me back then. My mind was racing till a sharp curve at sixty miles per hour brought me back to what I was doing. Slowing the bike down, I took it easy the rest of the way to the bar, where my best friend would be waiting.

Finally I arrived at "Killer's--Scooters, Brew, and Cue," the bar. As soon as I got through the heavy glass front door, now darkened by cigarette smoke that had not been cleaned off for at least five years--so it wouldn't clash with the rest of the bar's interior--Tom, known as Killer, began shouting at me from across the place. In his deep heavy voice I heard, "Hey Bones, over here man!" Tom Hale was his real name, but he had acquired the nickname Killer after he amassed eleven confirmed kills in Nam. At six foot two, two hundred and ten pounds, with wide shoulders, narrow hips, and steely dark eyes, he looked like he would kill someone. His words were slurred, he seemed to be half drunk, and it was only seven o'clock in the evening.

"Hey, Killer, what's going on, man?" I shouted back. Getting closer to him, he stood, put his huge arms around me, and gave me a bear hug.

"Man, I'm feeling wasted again," he said after releasing his hold on me. "You ready to go for a ride?"

I figured I'd do him, me, and the motoring public a favor, and stay at the bar for a while. "Na, let's stay and have a few beers. Hey Shannan!" I yelled at the cute little twenty-two-year-old waitress, "bring me a brew."

Killer's bar was certainly a biker's paradise. There were two pool tables at the east end, in an area about twenty feet by twenty-five. It was a good place to play pool, because there was enough room to aim your cue and make a shot without banging into a wall. The west half had about a dozen two-foot square black-topped tables with four red plastic-backed chairs around each of them. There was even a small, fifteen foot square dance floor. Killer would hire rock and roll bands on the weekends for entertainment. In the middle of the whole thing was a circular bar, about twenty-five feet in length. The glasses were stacked on a round corner built in the middle of the bar.

Shannan, with her thirty-three-inch legs wrapped in a pair of tight faded blue jeans, strutted over and set down two tall neck bottles of beer, one for me, one for Tom. With a coy smile, she turned and went about her job of hustling drinks for the other patrons. There were about nine or ten people in the bar; a slow Tuesday

night.

Tom and I sat there for a couple of hours, just drinking beer and talking about some good rides we've gone on together. By nine thirty, business began to pick up, and the place was starting to get on my nerves. The pool balls clacking together, the smell of stale beer, cheap perfume, and the loud laughter of drunks was giving me a headache and making my beer taste flat.

"Hey Bones, look at those two cuties at the bar." Tom was nodding his head at two women sitting at the bar. "I think they're checking us out." Sure enough, Tom was right: they were looking us over. The one on the right looked about twenty-five, five feet six, with long blond hair, long legs, and weighed around one hundred twenty pounds. She was wearing a red halter top and tight jeans. The other gal was short, around five feet tall, slender, with shoulder length black hair. The sight of her, mixed with a half dozen beers, brought back thoughts of Kim, fifteen years and thirteen thousand miles away.

Tom began to hold up his right hand and wave his finger, as someone would motion a child, or dog, to come to him. With this encouragement the girls started over. Tom leaned over and whispered to me, "Say man, ya mind if I take the taller one?"

"Na, take whichever one you want," I responded coldly. Three seconds later the dark-haired girl was putting her ass in the seat next to me, while her blond friend sat down next to Tom. The gal next to me introduced the two to them. "This is my friend Shelly, and I'm Tina."

Tom put his arm around Shelly, and said, "I'm Killer, and this is Bones." Tom and Shelly began to get along as though they had known each other for years.

An hour later, Tom and Shelly were out on the dance floor with the juke box blaring. Tina had told me her entire life story, almost down to her list of Girl Scout merit badges. When her airhead ran out of material about herself, she began to inquire about me. "What's this thing hanging on your leather jacket?" she blurted out with all the tact of a ten-year-old, pressing her finger on a medal I had put on my jacket.

"That's just an RVN service badge," I replied with no enthusiasm.

"What the hell does that mean?" she persisted.

"It's what they gave me for going to Vietnam," I explained.

Tom and Shelly came stumbling back to the table. Both seemed to have had plenty to drink. Tom fell into his seat and pulled Shelly onto his lap. He put his big forearm around her neck, moved her head near his, and stuck his tongue in her left ear. She let out a giggle and twisted her body, in a halfhearted attempt to break away from him.

"Hey Shelly, look at this medal on his jacket," Tina said, pointing at the badge.

"Yea," Tom began proudly, "we're both old war vets, ain't we Bones." I nodded in agreement. I wanted to get off the subject before we both started into old war stories; so it seemed like a good time to go for a ride.

"Hey Killer, let's get out of here and hit the road," I suggested.

"Yea Bones, that's a good idea," Tom said with the excitement of a kid on Easter.

Outside, the July night air was warm. There wasn't a cloud in the sky; so all the stars were out in full bloom. The old Harley fired up on the second kick, and I dropped into the saddle. Tina climbed on behind me. Tom got his bike ready, he and Shelly were packed and raring to go. The two Harleys roared out onto the paved road,

and headed north toward the coast.

At sixty miles per hour, the air was cool. It whistled as it blew through my old black scratched-up crash helmet. Night rides are always my favorites. The road just appears in front of me as my headlight exposes it. It's like riding on a huge long black ribbon that unwinds before me.

Tina put her arms around my waist and gave me as affectionate a squeeze as she could, to let me know I could have her if I wished. I really didn't want her; all I could think of was the soft voice from the past. It began to speak to me again, this time in soft sensual tones. "I love you; and you love me." It was more gentle that I had ever heard it before. "You and me will go to your home when your time comes to leave." The sound of it made my heart ache more than it ever had. You will want to take me back, you'll see." The voice was clear, just as if she were here, whispering in my ear.

The frustration began to build. I twisted the throttle and the Harley leapt in response. Tom's bike began to fall far behind as my speed increased to ninety miles per hour. Tina began yelling in my ear, "Slow this goddamn thing down!" I backed off, knowing it was useless to try to outrun something that was locked inside my head. Seeing a roadside park, I slowed and pulled into the asphalt lot. Tom pulled in next to me.

"Shit Bones! What the hell is your hurry?" Tom shouted over the rumble of his engine. I shut my bike off, swung my right leg over the gas tank and stood next to the machine. Tom shut his off, and he and Shelly both dismounted. I turned to see the faint image of Tina staring at me through the dark.

"Don't do that again, okay? You really had me scared back there," she said, a little shaken.

There were no electric lights in the park; the only light was provided by a three quarter moon that was shining. I could hear the turbulent sound of the water rushing over the rocks in a nearby stream; so I began walking toward it. Tom and Shelly took off in another direction. Tina waited for a few seconds, then came running after me. She ran up behind me, caught my right arm, and swung it like a child on a rope swing. The pain shot from my elbow to remind me of the damage that had been done to it long ago. Tina sensed I had a problem when I grabbed my right elbow with my left hand and began rubbing it, while letting out a short, "goddamn."

"What's the matter with your arm?" she asked.

"I broke it a long time ago," was all I said; but my mind went back to the night it happened.

I could hear the blades of the HH-53 rescue helicopter, beating the air, making that familiar popping sound. It was a dark night, with only a little moonlight to expose the jungle below. At close to a thousand feet off the ground, we had the doors open to let the cool air blow through the ship. The air on the ground was so hot and heavy, it was like sucking in air off the top of a blast furnace. It was always good to get airborne and enjoy cool air for a change.

"What's up Smitty?" I shouted over the noise of the rotor to the five foot five, one hundred fifty pound crew chief we called Mini Sarge.

"Ah man, some tiger pilot got shot down and ended up in Laos; we were elected to go get him," Smitty shouted back. He seemed uneasy; so I pried.

"What's up your ass tonight?" He leaned over so I could hear him better.

"We're going in after a goddamn ARVN," he said in a disgusted tone.

ARVN meant that the pilot was a South Vietnamese, not an American. Smitty went on, "I'm getting to be a short timer; I want to go home like I am. I sure as hell don't want to get wasted over a damn ARVN." I stood up and gave another check to the M-60 machine gun hanging in the doorway. I wanted to make sure it was ready. Nighttime over here made us all nervous. Nighttime belonged to Charlie, the enemy.

Thompson, our pilot and crew commander, hollered back at us, "Get ready ladies and gents, we're going in." The radio beacon from the downed pilot's survival gear had brought us to his position. We were in radio contact with him, and confirmed who he was. Everything checked out, so we began our descent.

We descended until we were right on top of the trees. The prop wash from our rotor sent the trees into a twisting fit, as if there were a violent storm in progress. I yelled at Smitty over the noise, "I hate night missions I'll be glad when we're the hell out of here!"

"Don't shit me boy; you just want to get back to that slope honey you been shackled up with," Smitty yelled, adding a laugh.

Suddenly a few tracer rounds began zipping past the chopper door. The tracers looked like high speed fireflies in the night. Then more tracers started coming in from four or five different places. Charlie was there. I swung the M-60 out the door, pointed it down, and began to return their fire. My tracers were going straight toward the sources of the incoming rounds. The entire ship shook as the M-60 barked out its fury on those below. I could hear Smitty yelling over the intercom, "Damn it Thompson! Get the hell out of here before they zero in on us!"

The next second, I was lying on the chopper floor. My right arm felt like someone had hit it in the funny bone with a ball peen hammer. For a moment I thought Smitty had hit me in the arm with his M-16 rifle, as he tried to get a shot out the door. I looked to see Smitty kneeling over me in the dark cabin. I knew I had been hit by something.

"Shit you little dumb ass! You got yourself hit!" Smitty was yelling at me half scared, and half mad. I looked down to see a hole ripped in the elbow of my flight suit. Blood was running out in a stream onto the floor. It looked black in the dark, as it began to puddle at my side. The wind that had cooled me earlier now began to lift drops of blood from the puddle and splatter them on Smitty and me. Smitty gave me a shot from the medical kit, which soon made everything begin to slow down: the noise of the blades, Smitty yelling at Thompson, even the pain. That was the last thing I remembered before I passed out.

A few days later I was back in the States, recovering in a hospital in Florida. I never got to see Kim. Never got to tell her what had happened.

"Hello! Is anybody in there?" Tina's voice brought me back to the real world. "Are you feeling okay?" she asked coyly.

"Yea, I'm fine," I replied halfheartedly. She moved closer and put her arms around my neck. The playful giggles of Shelly and Tom mingled with the swirling sounds of the water in the stream. Tina raised herself on tiptoes, to swirling sounds of the water in the stream. Tina raised herself on tiptoes, to reach my face, and gave me a kiss. I expected a nice little peck of a kiss, but instead got a lip lock that was rough and hard. She put her lips on mine, and began tossing her head back and forth in a rapid motion. She seemed starved for affection. "Say you love me, and you can have it all," she said in a sensually wicked voice. The hurt and frustration of fifteen years

swelled in my chest, grasping my heart like a strong claw, digging its sharp nails in.

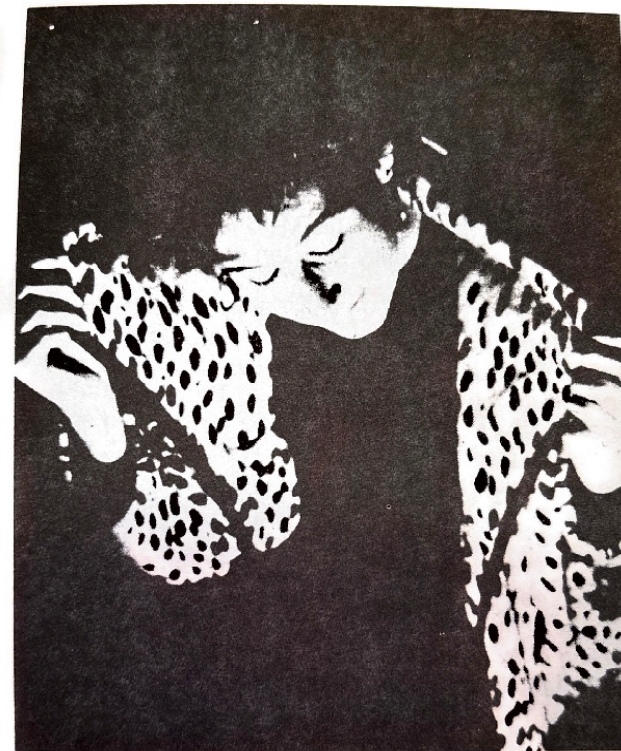
Grabbing each of her arms, I jerked her hands away from my neck and began shaking her violently. "Go to hell!" I yelled at her. "I don't love anything! Not you! Not anyone!"

Tom's voice pierced the dark in response to the commotion: "Hey Bones! Cool off man!" I could hear him approaching from the right. "What'd that bitch do to you?" Standing still I let go of Tina's arms. Frightened, and crying she ran frantically to Shelly. "You all right?" Tom asked, concerned that his oldest friend was going over the edge.

"I don't know man," was all I could say ..

I turned away and walked slowly to the water's edge. "Do you love me?" Kim's voice was haunting my mind again. Looking at the stream, I could see the broken reflection of the moon in the little torrents of water moving around the rocks. The voice came again in a faint, soft, ghostly whisper. "Do you love me?" This time I did not fight the feelings that I wanted to let out long ago, but was too young or stupid to deal with them. With a lump in my throat, and tears welling in my eyes, I replied, "I love you. I've always loved you."

-Greg Armstead



untitled

--Elizabeth Russell

BAR FLY

Girl,
 you have possibilities. reach down my throat
 I slide out between my teeth each kiss more.
 you pull me
 thigh against thigh
 my emotions feel your spine rhythmically taking each step
 wanting I zero in
 mentally magnetized to every move,
 look through the martini glass
drunken insect
 fly about the dance floor,
 glance off walls, part the floor,
 separate the sea I narrow in taking a drink
 the clear liquid slithers smoothly down,
 my eyes on your lips wrapped around a cigarette,
 yellow smoke rolls against your cheek,
 you turn to me as if I were light,
 photosynthesize,
 a green giant deceptively beautiful, **I'm smashed,**
 petal to hand,
 each swallow you feel my heart throb, hip to stem,
 dance lunatic dance,
 heart ripped
 attached to my brain
 my emotions fragmented bits,
 you are so _____ mmmmm
 features ambushed me,
 fooled I slip between your lips,
 sensible disco,
 contemporary rumba,
 up to date classical,
 formal jazz,
 it's strange,
 my body leaves margins,
 the edge,
 my limits are met,
 I go around your body, girl like a fool,

SEASONS

"Out in the open," you said,
 "let's get it all on the table."
 I nodded and you droned on,
 ticking off your list
 of dissatisfactions, easing
 into a pondering
 over possible solutions
 and remedial motions.
 I, meanwhile,
 let my thoughts drift away--
 high up, where yesterday
 the migrating geese flew,
 moving in a great liquid V overhead,
 filling the opaque fall sky
 with their melancholy sounds of leaving--
 then down again,
 like the slow circular descent
 of an autumn leaf:
 I thought of spring,
 of the first plump shoots,
 fragile and green-tipped,
 pushing through
 the warming soil.

And I wondered how long, exactly,
 it had been
 since there was anything between us
 with the tenderness
 of those green shoots,
 or when it all began
 to feel like autumn;
 just a series of private departures
 with the two of us
 like brown leaves,
 curling further and further
 back into ourselves
 "What are you thinking?" you asked,
 and I realized
 you had been sitting,
 silently watching me.
 "Of winter," I answered,
 reaching for your hand.
 "The geese are beginning to leave."

--Elizabeth Dulski

SISTER SUN, SISTER MOON

"They found a tumor on my thyroid," you say,
your voice thready and distant,
thinning over the miles of phone line,
fading under the thrum of fear
that instantly fills my ears.
"It won't be cancer," I answer, briskly,
assuredly. But all at once
your life seems to play out before me
and in an eclipse I see you
in so many familiar poses -
there in your sprawling kitchen,
clanging utensils and pots,
humming happily while you cook,
or sitting at the scarred wood table
reading and drinking tea,
your head bent in solemn concentration--
at sunset, walking in silhouette
up the dirt road past the creek,
your legs athletic and long
under baggy cotton shorts.
But most clearly I see you
wandering your acre of gardens, moving
through great drifts of bloom,
trailed by your retinue
of animal admirers,
two dogs and four cats
in ritualized pursuit -
or stooping to pick a bouquet
and disturbing a small riot of white butterflies
that rise like petals
caught on a gust of wind, dancing
in brief confusion above your head
before fanning idly away.
There, kneeling in the reddish soil
with the sun on your summer-brown arms,
lighting up your shining hair,
you are eternal,
set permanently in relief
against the green Wisconsin hills.
And I realize
that in my life you have been
as fixed a presence as the sun
or the moon,
and at the thought of losing you
the earth seems to whirl away beneath my feet,
and with it all the touchstones of safety
that I have ever known,
so that suddenly I am a frantic child again,
lost in a crowd and calling your name.
"Yes," I say, groping for solid footing,
"everything will be all right."
It has to be. -Elizabeth Dulski

FOR MAXINE
August, 1970 - November 6, 1989

What better way to mark her
than with this white rose?
So in that terrible hour,
in the darkness
and a cold November drizzle
we laid her down--
deep in a sanctum
of fragrant earth.
And over her we planted,
bare-root and doormant,
the rose.
Now, through the long winter
I'll wait-to heal, and
see the summer:
to watch her rise again
in the greening of the rose,
in the purity
of its white blossoms;
each one exquisite,
unblemished
like this love
so wrongly judged
as a lesser thing
than the flawed and frail
human-to-human kind.
In those extended nights
of summer
when moonlit darkness
shrouds the garden in mystery,
when all forms blur,
one into another,
and anything seems possible,
I will strain my eyes
toward any movement
in the shadows
then sit alone in the quiet,
inhaling the scent
of the white rose; heady,
evocative
as a memory

-Elizabeth Dulski



When I Grow Up
--Barb Janowicz

SO MUCH MORE

In the windowed walkway
I watch the reflection's reflection
of the woman
speaking with the lyrical,
vulnerable accent
who counts small change
as she relates her day.

Speaking of her uncle
and the bills that must be paid,
she reveals,
in small subtle doses,
the reality of a life so foreign
that it is delicious
in its simplicity.

--Marc Beaudin

GUILT

The echoes
of the back door
slamming

shake the sprawling
pine

and out drop a dozen
mourning
doves.

As they fall
upward
they flap their pillowed
wings

to slow their descent
and ease the pain of
slamming

against the grey
winter sky.

-Marc Beaudin

ON NEMEROV READING KIZER

He grips the podium like a jack-hammer
and smashes us,
gloriously, into bits of stone.
Straddling the stage,
he lets the machine wail
sending vibrations of rhyme
into the pavement of our minds.
Chewing through the poetry,
he laughs,
as shards of cement
fly into the beaten crowd.

Lifting myself from the rubble
I see *her*,
draped in a chair beside him,
with her head far back
so her face
has disappeared behind her neck,
as though dead;
yet satisfied.

-Marc Beaudin

DEALS

The day dawns dark and a cold rain blackens the streets and the furrowed gardens that wait behind the large homes. It has been a cold May, even for East Point, this small northern town, and frost is still on the minds of the suburban farmers who have not yet planted their annual patches of toma toes, carrots, beans, endive, and assorted herbs. The small plants still grow in their basement hot houses under strange, blue pseudo-suns in hopes that the manufactured light will give them an advantage when they hit the cold East Point soil. It is Monday and there are no weekend sounds now. Yesterday, every tiller in the neighborhood worked, eating at the sandy gray dirt flattened by a deep, harsh winter. Every gardener tilled and furrowed straight lines, readying the soil for this year's crop. But the East Point ground is still too cold for planting and the ersatz agriculturalists will have to wait six days before they can return to their garden oblivions.

He turns in his bed and listens to the ticking of the rain as it hits the child's wagon under the eaves outside his window. "Christ," he moans. Every muscle in his body protests his movements, sore from the hours in his gardendigging, pulling, replenishing, refurbishing, renewing the goddam garden. He is tired, he is sore. And he is hot. He slides his hand along the cold sheets to his wife's body, up over her hips to her round breasts. He is reminded of hills of zucchini and acorn squash. Suddenly, he is only tired and sore.

Slowly, painfully, he pulls himself from his bed and mechanically moves to the bathroom. The pulsating shower soothes his muscles somewhat and he feels slightly better when, later, he gets behind the wheel of the BMW, perhaps the one passion in his otherwise passionless life. He rubs his hand against the smooth, cold leather, almost caressing it. He loves this car--not because of its price, but because it is what his father had willed him, and now his father is gone.

The drive to the campus is not long. On the way he notices how many cars in the neighborhood now boast university decals in their rear windows. The Audi is advertising Cal Tech now, the Mazda sports a decal from Florida, an the WI has added the Harvard seal beneath the worn sign from State. They wear them like badges-as if their owners are mapping for the neighborhood the successes of the family gene pool. No car carries a decal from his school; not even the BMW.

There are only two weeks left in the quarter, so he is not surprised to find four students waiting outside his office when he arrives, students who suddenly realize an urgent need for a passing grade in one of his classes. He is no longer angry that so many of his students care only about The Grade and not the knowledge they have an opportunity to possess. In fact, he is no longer angry about much these days.

He nods pleasantly at the two young men and two young women as he walks into his office. He closes the door, removes his sport coat, then leans back in his chair staring out the window at the construction workers putting up the walls on the new building across campus. For a moment he imagines what it might be like to balance on that unfinished wall three stories up. He smiles as he imagines holding office hours there, his students brought aloft by the crane that carries the I-beams. He is amused at the prospect until he recalls his fear of heights--and his occasional fear of his students.

He waits ten minutes before calling in his first visitors. A young man and woman enter together. A set, he thinks. The stories are generally the same, rarely

creative--too much work, too little time, a variety of dying family members--and the story these two tell is typical. He listens patiently to their pleading, assigns a work load designed to stagger them, haggles the terms a bit, then escorts them to the door where they smile politely at him and walk away, cursing him under their breath.

The second young woman enters his office. She is graduating at the end of quarter and has only attended class once in the past month. He does not recognize her, but this is not unusual. She explains the while she understands graduation-induced apathy is not sufficient reason *not* to complete his assignments, she hopes that he will take that into consideration when he assigns grades. She is standing very close to him and he can feel her breath as she looks up at him to speak. He does not look at her when he prescribes The Major Project. Satisfactory completion of the assignment, he assures her, will raise her failing grade to a *C*. She, on the other hand, suggests that she would satisfactorily complete *him* for a *B*. He carefully considers this counter offer, a rarer but not uncommon exchange, and acquiesces.

The event takes no more than five or six minutes during which time she feigns interest and provides the obligatory heavy breathing while his mind drifts back to the garden ... Maybe he should plant turnips.

When they have finished negotiating, he escorts her to the door. The fourth student is gone. He watches as the young woman walks down the hall and across the lobby toward the business office. She stops at the second door, taps lightly, and enters.

He closes his door and walks to his desk. Office hours are over. Actually, it wasn't an hour; it was only forty minutes. And it wasn't much of an office, either. On his desk is his grade book. As he reaches for it, a commotion outside catches his attention. Glancing up he sees that a crowd has gathered near the nearly completed north wall of the new building. Faintly, in the distance, he hears a siren.

He returns his attention to the grade book, opens it to the class she is in and writes *Incomplete* after her name.

-Clair Ludington
First Place, Fiction

: A DEFINITION

Nothing is as quiet as a winter morning covered in snow. Nothing is as dark as the night. And nothing is as cold as Nothing is funnier than or sadder than Nothing could be as big or as small as Nothing was ever richer or poorer or fatter or thinner or uglier or more beautiful. Nothing is dumber or smarter or greener or redder or bluer. Nothing is sillier.

Nothing is doing something, as in

Mother (to small boy): Whatcha' doin', Sonny?

Small boy (sloshing large

bucket of water into his

newly carpeted room): Nothing, Mommy.

-OR-

On August 7, 1963, "Sticks" Hatchett of Skunk Lick, KY scaled a greased pole to a height of 41 '9". When interviewed, "Sticks" replied, "Shucks, t'warnt nuthin'."

Nothing suffers from the basic limitations of language.

In the beginning there was nothing. And in the end there is only nothing. And in the middle everything will be compared to nothing. But nothing can equal it for nothing is neither greater than nor less than

Nothing is the absence of anything.

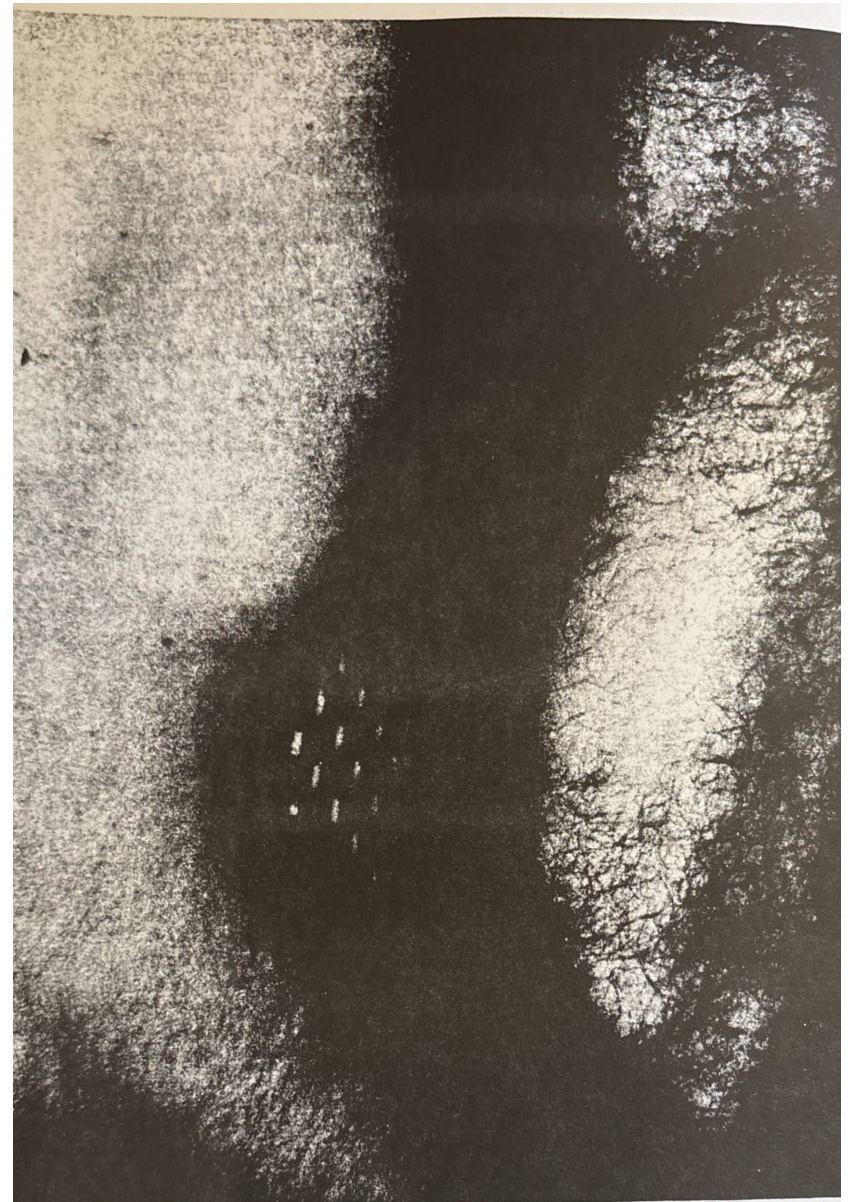
(or is that something?)

--Barbara Delassus

A VISIT WITH SYLVIA

Now, do it right
you'll be fine.
Sylvia said.
Too late at night
I read her work.
She's in my body
tempting with blood,
red rivers. Drift in,
come to momma
live as you should.
Sylvia Plath talks
to me like God
spoke to Joan of Arc.
Sylvia comes late
as I curl fetus-like
in the womb of my bed.
Do the right thing,
she says. I dream
cigarettes, liquor.
They're not quick enough,
she whispers breathless
anticipation shines in
Her voice. Do it the right way.
it is beautiful, easy
the ultimate orgasm.
She is virgin mother,
I am born immaculately,
the NYT blurb
on a book cover,
praising clarity, vision.
Ink for blood
black and shiny.
Sylvia smiles, reaches
out to me with a pale,
Anglo hand. That's right
you're o.k. she coos.
Her voice is too sweet.
The sugar seeps out
attracts hungry ants.
Marching legs recall
St. Patrick's parades.
Childhood floats,
tissue-paper decorated,
into minds eye
happy, soothing.
Sylvia's lips kiss
cooling cheeks,
she invites me in.
I'll never leave
just visit with Sylvia.

-Earl Hawley



RABID MONKS

if you must learn a lesson learn it fatally
or you mistake the final answer as a reply
the reply is misleading unless related to the question
and the question seeks truth but finds I'm high

resolutions are assumptions with longer sleeves
coat is made of aluminum foil
they match pants tailored for half-cockedness
and they'll never come clean except I'm high

yes no yes no an undecided stream never flows
the sea dries up and I can see
dead eyes of fish accusing me
they say "hey, kiss your neighbor's ass,
you'll be up to your neck in prison sex
shoot him while he's looking at you
bang his wife next" ... i'm high

i'd like to conquer a third world nation
feed it my arms and legs
allow myself a finger left ... up to my neck in prison sex
shot them while they were looking at me
banged their wives next

yes no yes no until the ball comes down i won't throw
it from the ground i'll throw it down
it can't be caught ... i'm not around

and they say "hey, you're no longer welcome
up to your neck in prison sex
he's looking at you, shoot him
there's his wife, bang her" ... I'm high next

-Chris Sprague

PERSONAL

7/19 Southbound IRT
You: Blonde, delicate, sensuous, reading Kafka
me: Obese, Balding, bad teeth, eating McDonalds.
Our eyes met for one second.
I throwup in a blind panic.
You spat on me as you left the car.
I must see you again.

-Anonymous

BIRTHDAY GIRL

Norm O'Connor stepped into the square of light which shone past the counter, skimmed across the rustic, roughly hewn kitchen table, slid lazily over the polished floorboards and came finally to rest under his aching feet, which sported a pair of worn, faded work boots, still dusty from the walk into town. His ruddy, sun-toughened face was now sensitive as he squinted into the unusually-hot-for-April morning sun, and his face looked in the harsh rays suddenly older than his 76 years. His sparkling blue eyes grew pale and wide as dark circles crept in around them. His lanky six-foot frame sank as his shoulders and spine stooped forward, the small of his back gently pushing the bedroom door shut with a barely audible click.

The small brunette girl before him sat indian-style on the kitchen floor, barefoot, crisp, and clean in her white cotton sundress, glowing with delight over her new rag doll. She was pretty, fair complected with a sprinkling of freckles and faintly flushed cheeks. As she rocked and sang in the sunlight, long sleek hair tossing to and fro, she was unaware of her grandfather's entrance or his wide, dull eyes fixed upon nothing.

"Peart," his throaty, peculiar voice softly called.

Her quick green eyes glinted quizzically behind her dark, feathered lashes as she faced the hunched figure propped against the door, not understanding his vacancy and fatigue. "Is she awake yet? Is it time?" The child sat glistening in the morning light with her sleeping doll, bursting with excitement yet patiently waiting for an answer.

When she got none, she dauntlessly stretched on tip-toe and tried in vain to reach the fresh, crackling brown paper package tied neatly with red yarn, which Norm had just minutes ago set gingerly in the center of the table and which Pearl had helped carry from town.

After several attempts, she swung her elfin face over one bare, out-stretched freckled shoulder, spread her wide eyes hopefully and smiled.

"Now?"

Norm's pallid eyes met hers and slowly his gaze was broken. She watched the stony shield fall from his face, his deep wrinkles shedding, dropping off like the curled shavings from some carefree whittler. His ashen face gradually assumed a pink tint, the apples of his cheeks dimpled and cherry red, as the corners of his mouth pushed them high. His periwinkle eyes twinkled happily once again, and his thick shock of wavy, snow white hair gleamed. He straightened up pertly with the boundless energy of a twenty year old and the mischievous smile of a child. The grandpa Pearl knew was back. She smiled knowingly and pointed to the table as he said, "Not yet, dear." His face lit up. "Remember our plan--breakfast in bed, first!"

With this he sprang nimble to the cupboards, and like a flash gathered everything he needed for his famous omelet, including Florida oranges for his wife's favorite-fresh squeezed orange juice.

The small child eagerly soaked up her grandpa's enthusiasm. She ran and skipped underfoot, doll swinging from one hand as the other tugged at Norm's tattered denim overalls.

"Let me crack the eggs! Please!" she pleaded.

Pearl felt the strong, gentle hands in the crooks of her arms as she was lifted effortlessly and placed at her grandfather's bony hip and over the spattering griddle.

She grasped the cool smoothness of the fresh eggs almost too big for her tiny hands. She felt one slipping and shrieked joyfully when Norm snatched the egg in the nick of time and scolded it with a wagging finger, "Hey! Get back here! Just for that, we're going to crack you!" He winked at Pearl and together they laughed as they cracked the eggs (bad one first), and sprinkled on grated cheese, Canadian ham, onions, and peppers. The little girl loved to watch Norm flip them. Soon the omelettes were done, leaving the kitchen soothing, spicy, and warm. Norm admired his golden brown work of art as he set Pearl softly on the floor.

"Perfect," he said, his face shining with accomplishment.

Pearl knew what came next and climbed onto Norm's lap when he sat down at the kitchen table. The huge, ripe oranges collided with each other and bumped clumsily across the knobby wood on the table with one short leg. Norm grabbed them before they could roll over the flat package in the center and planted them firmly by the juicer. Pearl watched the old man's hands in front of her, shrinking back against his bony chest as he sliced with the large shiny knife she was not allowed to touch. She saw the orange halves fall wobbling from each side of the blade and the little streams of juice running zigzag toward her along the scarred surface. Strong citrus juice vapor rose to sting her eyes and her nose.

Norm cut with the quickness and agility of a surgeon, but the little girl was uneasy seeing his finger so close to the edge. She sat stiff and drew her rag doll tight, hiding her eyes in the scratchy yarn hair, and burying her nose in the soft cloth body smelling of spring. "Careful, Grandpa!" she said, her voice muffled.

"Now, that all right," he smiled. "I'm all done now, see?" Setting the knife aside, Norm placed a dripping orange half in front of Pearl. "Remember how to squeeze?" he asked.

The small girl dropped her doll in the excitement. It landed face down against the short table leg, with one stuffed foot in the patch of sunlight which had been slowly moving, unnoticed, across the floor as they worked, growing smaller as it neared the window. She grabbed the juicy orange at once and with both hands plunged in onto the juicer, twisting happily with all her might. Of course she remembered how. Juicing was the best part.

When Norm placed his hand over hers, Pearl refused his help. "I can do it myself," she announced. "I know you can," he laughed, somewhat surprised. Pearl was content to squeeze alone, working diligently as sticky pulp crept up her bare arms to her elbows. She listened to Norm fix a plate for his wife, and heard him say "I'm giving Grandma her omelet before it gets cold," but she never took her eyes from her job. This was going to be her present to Grandma. She wanted the juice to be perfect.

Several minutes and oranges later, the juicer was almost full, and Pearl was triumphant. Her little arms skin dried tight and grubby, ached as she carefully poured the juice into the special glass Norm had left on the table, the one with the tiny roses on the side, because her grandmother's name was Rosie.

Her job was done and she was aware once again of the sounds of the house, as she heard silverware clinking behind the bedroom door. She heard low, happy chatter and remembered about her grandfather taking the omelet to her grandma. She picked up her doll and pattered across the floor towards Norm's melodic, floating voice-sometimes high, sometimes low-but always soft. She couldn't wait to tell him the juice was ready, and to see her grandmother's face when they would bring it in.

Norm didn't notice Pearl slip through the door he had left slightly ajar. She

stood in the doorway and saw him sitting on the bed, his back facing her and leaning toward his wife, his hand holding a fork which rested on her stomach. She heard him say, "I know you're tired, but try to eat a little. I made this specially for you," his voice calm and patient. Pearl sucked all the juice coated fingers on one hand, hugged her doll, and started toward the bed. She pulled Norm's pant leg, restless and wondering what was taking so long. "Grandpa, I'm done," she said.

He glanced down and said, eyes twinkling, "You are? That's my good girl!" When he didn't pick her up, Pearl asked, "Can I see Grandma?"

"Of course you can," Norm answered. As Pearl felt herself being lifted, he added, "She's not feeling well today, so you must be quiet. Okay?"

"Okay," she agreed and was placed on the bed next to him.

Pearl first noticed Rosie's brown eyes and felt something hot rush up her spine. They were wide, glazed, and fixed upon the little girl, who screamed. Her grandmother's jaw was relaxed, open mouth littered with pieces of egg and chopped ham, which rolled off her chin onto her floral nightgown, resting at the fold of ruffle around her neck. Her soft gray hair, long braid pulled over one shoulder like a rope, framed the taught skin of a stone face drained of color. Norm dutifully wiped the food away with a cloth and got another forkful ready, not hearing or comprehending his granddaughter's distress.

Pearl screamed again, desperately searching her grandfather's face for some sign of recognition. "What's wrong with Grandma?!" she cried.

She saw Norm's eyes snap like blue coals and trembled, hiding her face as deeply as she could into her doll, and biting down on her pink, prunish fingers.

"Nothing's wrong!" His face flushed hot and furious with lips tightly pressed, brows drawn together into a single line and hovering over his small snapping eyes, narrow and barely visible.

When he saw the terrified little girl with her huge frozen eyes brimming with tears, Norm's face suddenly brightened. He leaned and whispered in Pearl's ear. "I'll get her present now. Want to help?"

Pearl remained motionless except for the parade of tears, streaming single file down each freckled cheek.

Norm left and reappeared again with the familiar brown, flat package, one edge dark with juice from the table. "Surprise!" he cheered, setting the package in Rosie's lap and chatting excitedly to his wife. "You'll perk up when you see this!"

His grin widened and he winked at Pearl with wild, ecstatic eyes. Pearl heard the crackle, then the swish of material as Norm carefully slid the new dress out. It looked just as it had in the store-pink calico with a lace collar and cuffs. Pearl remembered picking it out early that morning and how proud she had been when Norm told her it was the prettiest in the store, and oh, what good taste she had. The small girl hid her face in her doll as she now heard him say, "Wait 'till you try it on!" and refused to watch him happily proceeding to dress her grandmother.

Norm sat smoking in the dark staring at the cold chocolate birthday cake on the kitchen table, where he and it both had been since after breakfast. The thin, weak tendrils of smoke dangled over his head like a low floating cobweb. Taking his lighter, he lit the single candle.

Pearl secretly watched from in-between the hinge of her bedroom door after being roused by the smell of wax. She stood shivering as drafts blew around her bare feet, crawled under her pajamas and up her legs, and watched the effect of the little

flame on the room. She saw the long, dark shapes dance across the floor in a slow jittery tempo. They were black, wide, and ominous, with only a sliver of light sandwiched between them. She peeked at Norm sitting at the kitchen table. She saw his eyes and backed quickly away, her heart thumping loud and fast. Did he see her? She peeked again and realized he was looking at the candle, not at her. It flickered under his chin and his face shone ghostly white. Pearl could see his filmy eyes that were bright red around the edges. His pupils were huge and void, with a miniature candle crackling orange in each.

Just as Pearl was beginning to tire of pressing her cheek against the cold, jabbing door hinge, she noticed her grandfather's eyes had begun to change. She saw him blink, and as he did, a tear dropped from each eye. They were the single biggest tears she had ever seen, and she watched, fascinated, in anticipation of seeing another pair, but none came.

Then Norm slowly reached into his overall bib pocket and took out a necklace. Pearl didn't remember him buying it with the dress in town. It had a cross in the middle, and she could see the silver flashing behind the candle. He rose from the table and walked, solemn and stiff-legged, to the bedroom, not bothering to shut the door behind him.

Pearl stole into the kitchen, now flooded with blue moonlight from the bedroom window, and crept stealthily as a cat to the bedroom door. She saw the dark blue silhouettes of her grandparent as Norm stood by the side of the bed, silent. She saw the silver flash again and watched him place the necklace delicately around Rosie's neck, cross glowing pale and bright. His gentle hands Pearl saw closing the lids over the sunken eyes, and as the little girl watched her grandmother's blue corpse sleep leerily in the moonlight, all her tiny hairs stood on end.

She glanced fearfully at Norm and saw something glistening on his face. Pairs and pairs of his amazing jumbo tears dropped onto Rosie's face, ear tear illuminating still more the shiny, snickering expression which had Pearl frozen with terror.

After some time, when Norm's crying had finally stopped, he wiped his face dry with his sleeve, drew a deep breath, and signed a tremulous, haunting sigh which echoed through the night among the rafters.

Standing dazed in the doorway, Pearl watched Norm climb into bed, mumbling as if in his sleep to Rosie. She heard him say, "Well Rose, it's been a long day. Goodnight birthday girl." Then a surprised chuckle. "Your feet are like ice," he said, teeth chattering.

Pearl's teeth chattered simultaneously, the drafts growing stronger and colder, and as she shivered she saw a black cloud pass over the moon. Her grandparents could no longer be seen. The kitchen grew darker and swarming shadows surrounded her, jeering and taunting. The little girl ran for her life, and as she plunged deep under her warm bedcovers with her doll, the draft flew from the smoothly polished floorboards to the roughly hewn table, caressing and slowly smothering the stale forgotten birthday cake. The lone candle flickered and went out.

-Lisa Straney

DANCER OF MEN

I am a Dancer of men
Feel my power?
No
Are you sure?
Yes, you want to possess me.
I know
Always

I am a Dancer of men
an obsession
too great to refuse
too powerful to control

Encased in willowy legs
satiny hips
full breasts
pouting lips
unobtainable eyes
I will dance
My dance
with you

A black widow
weaving
a sensual web
Hear my moans
of practiced pleasure
Practiced
Perfected
for me.

Does it make you feel
manly,
powerful,
in control?

Don't you want to give me
anything
as long,
until,
that feeling ends.

It will end
I promise

I am a dancer of men
not one
not two
not you
exclusively.

You feel what I make
You feel
You do what I make
You do.
But, you wouldn't have it another way?
Would you?

Ring around the wifey
pocket full of money
ashes
ashes
You fall down.

Did you skin your knees?
I'm sorry
Honest

I am a dancer of men
I must say good-bye
another partner awaits
He doesn't yet know why.

--K.S.

NEW LIFE IN MEXICO

Baha'u'llah, cradle me
in your indigenous rebozo;
warp and woof, spun of verses
from sacred spools.
Shelter me, I have risked new birth.
Keening joy, crushed roses,
Essence of sacrifice.

-Mardy Oeming

NINEVEH WAITS

"Out of the belly of hell cried I,
And thou heardest my voice."
Book of Jonah

Three empty beer cans, a pyramid,
sitting atop the table
on which I rest my feet;
A newspaper clipping,
with promises of careers
that might afford life's novelties,
lies beneath an ashtray
containing remnants
of innocent vice;
A clock on the wall, with its
temporal implications of
lost opportunity;
All remain silent
as I stare into
that domain of confusion
which is my mind.

--John Adamcik

A GOOD CURE FOR HICCUPS

Someone told me that the universe
is expanding, but it's going to shrink,
and that in a few billion years
the sun will swell
to a massive red
sphere of chaos,
then implode
and did I know
that when Einstein was dying
he actually realized what all this meant
and tried to tell the attending nurse
-in German,
but she spoke only English
so of course we'll never know
what the hell he saw,
and what did I think of abortion,
nuclear power,
Aids,
drugs,
the homeless,
and did I always
talk to myself
like this?

--John Adamcik

MENDING A PROMISE

Gulf water
falls
toward home in the distance

clinging to green
electric filth

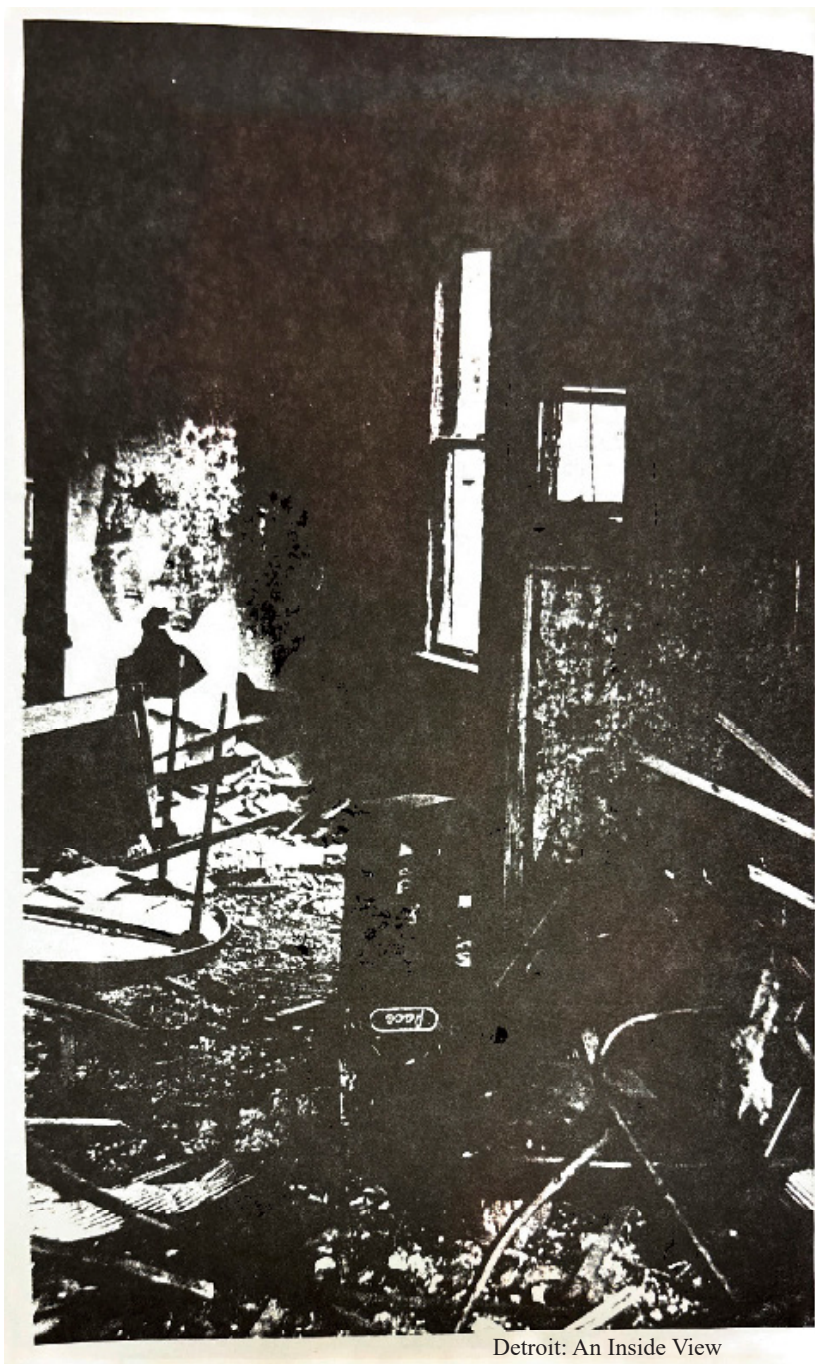
there I am -- on the waves:
sticky with salt
reflecting between
twin rainbow shards
and the distorted shadows
of tropical strife

(the no-name storm killed much).

leathery men
on the pier
skin mullet
and speak of red tide

and children dance
on cinnamon sand.

--John Adamcik



Detroit: An Inside View

--Elizabeth Bourcier

Cardinal Sins is the student-run literary/arts magazine of Saginaw Valley State University. It accepts poetry, short fiction (10 page maximum), essay, two-dimensional art, and black and white photography. Works by student, faculty, staff and alumni are eligible for publication. Submissions can be dropped off at the office of Evening Services. We are always looking for new editors.