

CARDINAL SINS
LITERARY MAGAZINE

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Cardinal Sins

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all from the tree of knowledge

"But the one man band
By the quick lunch stand
He was playing real good, for free."

Joni Mitchell
Ladies of the Canyon

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Oh Bride of Christ Rejoice

Nicole LaBrecque

"Somewhere down front," I said.
"Two?" the little old man asked
as he ushered me down the aisle.
"No, It's just me," I replied.

The organ music wailed softly in the background.

"Oh, really?" he stopped and looked at me.
He continued down the aisle,
then stopped suddenly at an empty pew.
"Is this ok?"
"Sure," I sat down.

Elderly couples,
the husband supponing his little,
grey wife on his arm.

Young couples,
with gold bands, fresh from the jeweler;
the glow of satin sheets still in their eyes.

Families,
with children pounding for attention.

All filled the pews around mine.

Suddenly I smelled roses.
I looked up from my hymnal and
saw the group of little old ladies
that had taken residence in my pew.
They smiled their pasty pink lips at me.
Red streaked cheeks
and blue smeared lids framed eyes full of
memories,

George,
Edward,
Michael,
Philip,
and a bit of Matthew,
Mark,
Luke
and John
thrown in for good measure.

My bare, left hand covered the hymnal.
The little, old lady nearest me
smiled sadly and patted my hand.
"Give it time," she whispered.

I wanted to scream and shatter the stained
glass. I wanted to tell them I'm ok.
Anything, to get that look out of their eyes.
But I didn't.

The organ music became louder.
I turned my hymnal to page 57,
"O Bride of Christ Rejoice"
"Great," I thought. "Just great."

The Lotto Dream

Eric Buschlen

I had just bought my new shoes
when I noticed this yellow house
that must have cost a lot of money.
It was shaped just like the box
of animal crackers I bought last week or was it
monster
Crackers. Regardless I need some new earrings.

My trip to the store for the earrings
had taken me over some mud and my shoes
are dirty unlike that house.
I wish I was rich with money
so I could buy a new box
of fish guts to feed my monster.

If I could not afford food for my monster
it would rip and tear the earrings
out of my ears letting blood drip onto my shoes
and staining the floor in my house
it will take a lot of money
to clean it. I might have to box.

I'll take on Ali and box
my way riches. Tyson is a monster
I know he will make my head spin and my ears
ring
but anything is better than wearing ugly shoes
or living in a dirty house
and not have any money.

After beating all the champs I will have money
to burn. Then I can retire and not have to box
any more. Then I will compete only with the
monster

that entered my head by my earring
which dangles low almost touching my shoes
and is almost the size of my house.

My place is different not like other houses
but maybe it has something to do with my
money. There is none. Except for the box
which contains my life savings. It is a monster
of debts that grows. I cannot afford earrings
at least new ones. Just new shoes.

I walk with my new shoes looking at houses
that cost a lot of
money to buy. A box full of cash would not help
me--
I would still have monstrous bills and no
earrings.

Bye, Bye, Miss American Pie

(Heard on a tape in a Guatemalan shopping mall)

Marilyn Oeming

The day the music died in Guatemala City:
Hawks floated in the sky-path
of descending 747s.
The busses still bore names of people:
“Marnita,” “Jason,” “Balthazar,” and “Ruta.”
But the babies breathed blackened fumes.
Indians still came to the city,
But their women didn’t wear embroidered aprons anymore
And their head-baskets were plastic.
Always there was a baby in every shawl
And the city shacks spread up the hills.
The garden of Eden is still planted
in the Guatemalan highlands,
But in the cities
The Expulsion has taken place.

Seventy-one

Bryan Konieczka

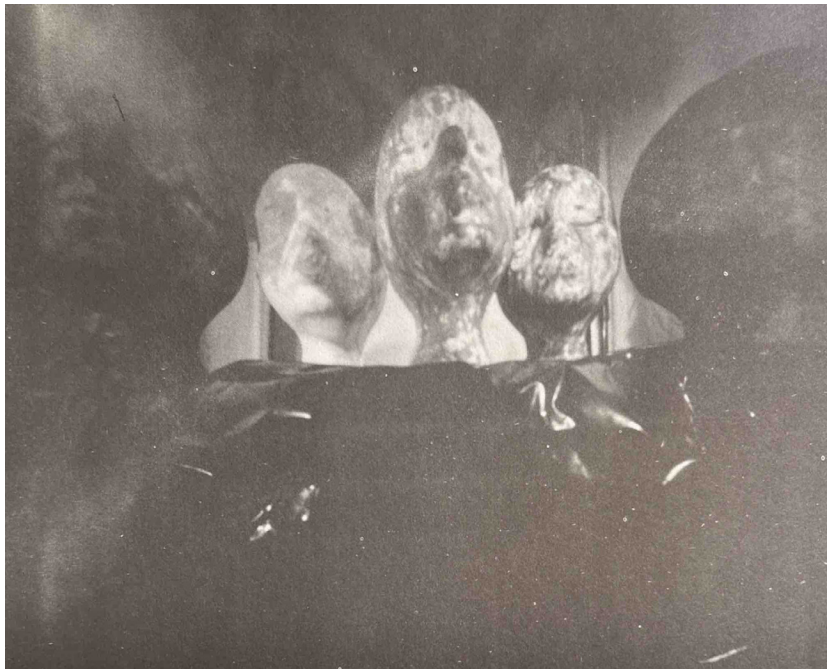
Sticky humid blue
dripped over us
like Karo syrup oozing
over hot pancakes
that summer night.

Sarah and I walked through
narrow Pattie Creek
searching for leeches.
Cool black water
swirled around our shins,
the current pulling
at hairs on our legs
like tweezers plucking eyebrows,
crickets chirped the temperature--
71 degrees;
frogs croaked a call to their mates.

We stopped often
along the high weeded bank,
sat on the moist ground,
peeled fat juicy leeches
from our skinny white calves,
saving them in a rusted
Maxwell House can
full of dirt and blood.

We waited for the
darkest evening--
fed them to the jumping fish,
drank blue night air
into; we were drunk.
passed out,
sweating,

on bank of the creek
while crickets laid the rhythm
for the belching frog choir.



untitled *Chris Sutorik*

Limbgirdle

Stephanie Sue Bowen

Looking around at the plaster cast wraps and arm splints
I anxiously swing my legs back and forth
On the wall is a poster of the muscles of the human body,
I hear kids laughing and playing baseball in the empty lot behind
the doctor's office.
I want to be outside with them, even if I could only stand on the
side lines cheering them on.

Two years before my muscle biopsy I had my achilles tendon
lengthen.
I kept falling all the time.
I had to crawl up the stairs to get to my bedroom.
The doctor wanted to lengthen my tendon naturally
So I wore five pound casts on my legs for an entire summer.

That summer my friends went swimming to keep cool
While I tried to stay cool by spraying water on my face.
My dad tied rags on my pedals so I could ride my bike.

After the first surgery things were fine for a while.
Until I began to have problems walking, again
I was falling two or three times a day.

We needed to know why.

Another surgery means another scar on my ten year old body.
But this scar is different, it looks and feels like a ground up
piece of meat
As every week passes the scar turns a darker shade of red and
purple.

The Door

Walker Waters

The astronomer left us today, and I can't say we miss him, him bein' nothin' but a doomsayer. It was him that shattered our dreams of floatin' to one of the American-held islands-or maybe even all the way to Australia. "I've been watching the stars," he said one day. "and we seem to be drifting in circles." He went on in some scientific fashion as to how the ocean is like a giant rug bein' shaken in the wind, and how the waves are actually just passin' us by. Sure, it may be true, but all the same, I'd rather not know it. At least before, we had something to hope for.

He wouldn't even allow that we might be spotted by a submarine, maybe even the same one that torpedoed the Jap ship we were on. "Nah, we're sitting too low on the horizon," he'd said. Sometimes I almost wish I hadn't been topside when the torpedo hit. But, oh, that's just the salt makin' me think that way. I'm in no hurry to find out for sure if there's a heaven or hell. And now that the astronomer's gone, I can believe anything I want. And I know, sure as I'm holdin' onto a door here in the South China Sea, that I'll be goin' home soon. I'll be goin' back Down Under.

This bobbin' up an' down got the best of me for the first few days, now it only puts me to sleep. My eyes get heavy, and my brain tries to take me away from this watery desert. Soon as my lids slam shut, I'm back in Thailand, buildin' the railroad. I see Mad Dog, one of our guards and his snarling Japanese face is as pleasant to me as a childhood memory. I want to reach out and shake his hands and pat him on the shoulder and tell him that I'm glad to be back, that there are worse things than bein' a starved, beaten, overworked prisoner of war-but my mouth doesn't work. My jaws move like a rubber dummy's. Sweat pours down my face. I taste the salt. My tongue is swollen and dry. It bounces around my mouth like a beetle that crawled into a hole and can't back out. I can't make a sound. Mad Dog's stony face erupts in laughter. Aye, there are worse things than bein' beaten. Bam! A sharp blow to the chin, and I bite my tongue. "Aye mate, ya all right there"? I try to focus my suncrusted eyeballs. It's Smithy. "Ay, Sid, ya dozed off fer a second there, an' hit yer chin on the door." His voice is thick and clumsy. His eyes are deep-set in black holes and the creases in his cheeks, when he smiles his ugly dry-mouthed smile, make him look like a shark.

"Ay Cobber, let Sid lie on the door now, you got yer beauty sleep." It's Mike. I could see him if I wanted to turn my head, but my neck's stiff, and I want to save my energy to climb up on the door.

"Ah, but Mike, I was havin' such a dream," say the New Zealander as he slides off the door, like one of those fat, ugly water lizards we have out Darwin way.

"I'll be there next time ya go to sleep I'm sure," says Mike.

I clamber aboard to do a little sunbathin' an' hopefully dry out a bit. We're all hurtin' from sores from the salt water, but we're pretty much past noticin' any more. I'm so damn tired.

The breeze feels good, running across my face an' playin' with a little tuft o' hair that got dried out. A patch of sunburnt skin is flickerin' back 'n forth on the top of my ear like it has hinges. Thinkin' it makes me laugh. I feel almost lighthearted, like a kid again. Layin' on the beach all sunburnt an' happy. I'll take my kids to the beach when I get back. Or do I even have any kids? Am I even married? I roll part-way over to ask one of the chaps if he knows, but-ah, it's too much work. Guess I'll just wait an' find out when I get back.

"Sid, c'mon Sid, it's time to go." It's me mum. Her shadow falls across my sleepin' eyes as she steps in front of me. Time must have run away on me. I fall in line behind her as we trudge through the sand back toward the car where Pop 'n' me brothers 'n' sis is waitin'. The sand drags at my feet an' my legs are going limp. "Hurry up," says Mum. Pop starts hittin' the horn, an' me brothers 'n' sis are laughin' at me. Shadows spread across the beach, an' thunder rolls over the sea. When I look up, it's not clouds I see, but fish. Thousands of 'em. Huge ones. Flyin' fish-with red disks on their wings! I try to run, an' stumble through the sand. The fish open their bellies an' water pours out. It floods the beach an' drags me out to sea.

"Grab 'im"! I hear someone say. I feel my backbone scrape against the edge of the door as I slide off. The sea's black 'n' boiling an' it tosses us like flounders. Somehow we hang on. My palms peel paint chips an' splinters off the edge. Dark clouds tumble over us, locking us into the night.

Hours we're tossed. Wide-eyed, cold an' shivering. Teeth chattering. Can't even look at the other blokes. Only got time for me. Hang on so tight all I can feel is that hard Oat door. Stars spin in my slammed-shut eyes like the night sky gone crazy. Teeth 'n' hands. Teeth 'n' hands. An' water goddamn!

I dissolve. An' there's no more ocean an' no more me.

I open my eyes. I see my hands, white-knuckled, clenched on the door. Above the waterline, I am, but below, I'm still the sea. The ocean is smooth an' shiny like quicksilver. It lights the night. The other lads, they hang on grim an' determined, still fightin' the sea in their dreams.

Lettin' go of the door I reach my hands into the silvery liquid. Warm electricity runs through my body. I taste sunlight under my tongue. I feel the ocean an' all the life in it, pricklin' an' ticklin' me like a million pins 'n' needles.

A drop of liquid light falls up from the sea like an oily sun. It slides toward me like a shimmering fish. aoser, I see it's a man, his feet unmoving, he drifts above the water. "No"! I growl through a salt-choked throat. "Go back! Can't you see we don't have room?! Go away! Find your own door!" Panting, heart pounding from the exertion, all I see is light, flickering, shimmering.

"Fish! Goddamn! Look at all the bloody fish"! I squint an' rub my feverish eyes. The flickering lights tum into hundreds of small, silvery fish swimmin' around under the

door an' pickin' dead skin from my legs. A dull thud an' a flap-flap-flapping. Cobber throws a fish up on the door an' it lands by my ear. Shakily I hurry and grab it before it slides off.

I pick up my head and slowly crane my neck. The chaps are all laughin' an' playin' like a bunch of shriveled up seals. Bitin' right through the scales an' eatin' 'em alive. I hold the fish up to my face. His bugged-out eyes meet mine, an' he knows he's my meal. The small, smooth scales stick between my teeth. Cool blood runs down my chin. Pricking my lip on a bone, I decide I'd better be more careful. I pull the guts out with my finger, and daintily try to shred the meat off the bones. Why, I feel like a proper English gentleman! It makes me laugh, an' I add my seal barks to the crackly chorus around me. The sounds are like hot liquid in my ears. Pain 'n' thirst are but dim memories now. I grab another fish. An' another. I've never been so outrageously happy-an' I hope I never have cause to be so again!

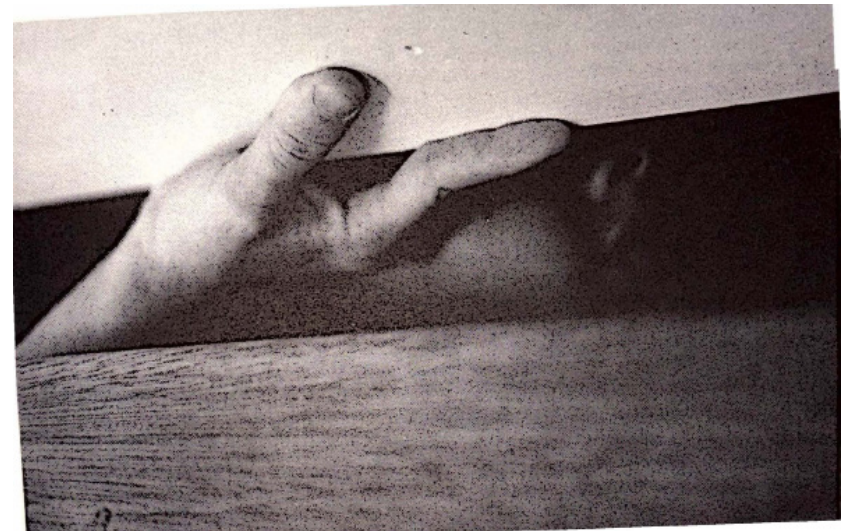
Dazed with happiness. The breeze fills me like an old pillow case. I drift lazily above the sea. Lookin' down, I can even see me now an' then if I care to look. The wind enters my mouth like a fish-tailed kite, an' my leg flap behind listlessly. One instant, face to the green heaving water, the next, I shoot up over a wave, face to the sky. I shoot toward the Sun-an' eat it! Somebody taps me on the shoulder, suddenly pullin' me back to myself-it's the astronomer!

His swollen, puckery, white hand stretches out to reach me, his bloated body face-down in the water. "Oh Jesus bloody Christ"! blubbers Mike, his face as white as a Jap sailor's trousers. "My God he's back"! cries Smithy through sun-blistered lips. "Get back! Get Back"! bawls Cobber, "you deserted us once, go find your own door"! I can't say anything 'cause I'm shakin' like a jelly fish. My throat's bouncin' up and down makin' a rubbery sound. Suddenly my fish comes racin' up an' in a hot stream, sprays the door. "Jesus, Sid, did you have to do that"? Frantically thrashing through the water we try to put some distance between us and the corpse. My foot kicks him in the side. My stomach knots up, starts jumpin' an' heaves all over again.

The door is clean an' blasted by the Sun. The astronomer's long gone, swallowed up somewhere in the sea behind us. I'm tired as a broken shoe. Only two other bodies hold the door now. I look across to Mike, gap toothed smile, bristly 'n' crusty. He squints red-eyed at me, then seems to nod an' looks away. Tomin' slightly to my right, I recognize the raw spot on the back of Smithy's head where he knocked it on the door once long ago. He seems to be sleeping, but he's still holding tight.

I wonder where Cobber went. An' when. Well, doesn't matter, just so long as he doesn't come back.

Eyelids flickering. But I can't let myself fall asleep. Spinning. Mad Dog flashes before me. An' Mum. Can't let go. Body's gone. Mad Dog. Voices. Where are my feet? Spinning. Am I in the air? So tired. So tired. flickering. A windmill A door. I know that door! It's my door! I knock. It opens. It's my wife. (Kids?-) She's smiling. "Well, hello dear. I've been waiting for you." I step inside, drawing the door closed behind me.



Whispered Prayer Todd Pashak

Malignant*Elizabeth Miklosovic*

So mortal is he;
 such savagery that is spawn
 for many a generation.
 Shielded by ignorance,
 dignity and secrecy--

the human seed gone bad.
 Small bands
 match the small mind
 stained with blood:
 the blood of young sacrifices,

innocent, yet tarnished,
 open to injustices.
 Ogre swain;
 savoring young babes
 is not your rightful desert.

Insidious destruction:
 the center, the core
 of all of the meager thoughts.
 And ice,
 blue blood pumping

through the exertion of your being.
 "Young sucklings are tasty?"
 A smile of diseased titillation
 having relished my essence--
 I scream.

Blood stained hands
 a parental likeness,
 the grotesque obsession
 handed-down from the past.

I cannot combat the intrusion;

The harm has been done.

Not a poem*Kelly S. Sams*

This is not a poem.
 If it was, it would have
 something to say about:

God or (the) god(s),
 love and justice;
 or why sacrifice is
 essential or not.

why the wind breaks the backs
 of weak and old trees;
 or why a yellow crocus
 pokes its curious head
 through the dying snow
 like a chick breathing life
 through a crack in its shell.

why a middle-aged man
 would kidnap a little girl
 and keep her chained in a box
 in his garage;
 or why a widow rakes away leaves and debris
 to make room for a blanket of pine branches
 tied together with a red velvet ribbon.

why my feet are wide;
 or why I laugh when I watch
 Lucy stuff chocolate candies
 in her mouth.

You see,
 this is not
 a poem.

Old Grand Dad

Anonymous Jonesy

I like my more weathered
grandfather. With eyes paler
than his yellow crinkled
forehead, moss on his breath
and fire-hair doused in brill.
A backwoods pauper slickened by
years, but holding conversations
over lake trout, improperly
scaled, dinner.

The scales fill my gaped
teeth.
The fish heads look to me f
rom the trash heap.
Sudden-helpless-smiling
How I thought death
wouldn't be.



untitled *Chris Sutorik*

Dogs Run Free

Bryan Braun (1953-1993)

Rusty walked all night last night, dodging the occasional car that came down that particular back street that he happened to be on. He had slept, outstretched on a picnic table during the day in Burt Park, until a family had come into the park and wakened him. It wouldn't pay to draw attention to himself so he'd moved on.

Rusty spent most of his time trying to be inconspicuous. If he had any cares at all they had to do with losing his personal freedom, the ability to move around, to come and go as he pleased. "If dogs run free, why can't we, join in life's symphony?" Rusty sang and hummed the familiar tune. He smiled at the concept. If dogs run free..... "Course they do," he thought. The obvious conclusion amused him.

Rusty could have done better. He was an outrageously colorful character, appearing more as a caricature than a real person.

He had a rainbow dotted welder's cap pulled down over long, dark red hair, a deep mahogany color, or the color of dried blood. His face was covered with a week's growth of the same color hair, a full beard and moustache. Rusty shaved once in a while, every week or so as he got the chance. He didn't like to wear his beard long. It put people off.

Rusty wore a faded denim jacket with pearl snaps, a blue bandanna was tied at his throat. Every seam of his faded jacket was covered with bright embroidery floss. Red on the sleeves, green on the top pockets, yellow on the side pocket seams, orange on the yoke and side seams. On his back, three stars blazed across his shoulders. In the center of his back, a fourteen inch triangle, point down, contained a cross. Below the triangle, thirteen stripes, alternating red and white, extended down to the bottom edge of the jacket. The stripes followed the contour of the edges of the triangle with the two longest and broadest stripes on the outside, at his sides. A neat four inch leather fringe was attached along the bottom edge of his jacket in back, and a name was embroidered in the center "Bear." The cuffs of the jacket were encrusted with rich embroidery, a few small holes had been repaired by weaving them shut with contrasting colors of embroider floss. Tiny patches with red strands going one way, and yellow woven in against it, or a miniature chederboard of orange and green. Rusty held his faded jeans up with a broad braided blue suede belt with a huge silver concho buckle. Slung around his hips, like a gunbelt, he wore a camo-green army ammo belt. There were two medium sized pouches on the canvas belt. One held cigarettes, sometimes. The other was usually empty.

Rusty admired his moccasin boots. He had bought them long time ago, and they were his most prized possession. Rusty had stuffed a pair of tough double soled boots. He wore them sometimes under his patched jeans.

Every time his faded jeans began to wear through, he patched them with a piece of soft leather that he got from Tommy. The knees and rear were completely leather now,

and Rusty anticipated the day when they would be completely leather.

If he had thought about it, Rusty would have realized that his appearance marked him vividly. He could easily go into the Salvation Army Store and get himself some plain clothes but this was unthinkable to him. He was proud of his identity. Some dude had offered Rusty seventy bucks for his colors once. Seventy bucks! That was a lot of bread. Rusty had looked at the dude for a long time. "Naw," he said finally. "You're not me." What kind of person would want to wear someone else's colors?

Rusty hadn't had a meal in going on three days. He'd had nothing but coffee and a couple of candy bars, evenly spaced to keep him going. He had a bottle of vitamins in his pocket Milky Ways and One-a-Days. He knew he'd eat soon. It just wasn't top priority right now. He had to find Buff.

It was getting late now, and Rusty looked at the two building that were so close together. there was less than a foot and a half between the old brick bicycle repair shop, and the new knitting mill. Funny he'd never noticed it before. Maybe he could disappear in there for a while.

Rusty walked closer to the structures. Pretty tight. He turned sideways and side stepped into the narrow space. the rough surfaces of the brick faces dragged at Rusty's jacket and pants. The ground beneath his feet was littered with trash. Broken glass crunched underfoot. There was a mildly sour smell in the confined space. Halfway in, Rusty stopped and let his weight down, bending his knees slightly. they came in contact with the pale green concrete wall. His back pushed against the rough brick surfaces which clung to the fabric of his jacket as he wedged himself into the gap. It felt good to get the weight off his feet.

Out of the public eye, Rusty could finally let down his guard. Someone might find him here, but they would not easily get to him. He'd have time to think anyway, besides, there were two ways out, although he didn't know what was on the other end. He wasn't going to check. He felt good about where he was, secure.

Rusty slept standing between the two buildings for several hours. He woke up chilly. Cold water was dripping on his hat and shoulders. Drops splashed on his neck, even though his jacket was fastened close to his throat. It wasn't raining. The sky was clear overhead. It was condensation dripping of the roof. Rusty lifted his body out of its slot. His knees hurt from being wedged in. He side-stepped to the rear of the building. the brick wall ran out first. When Rusty got to the edge he stopped and cautiously stuck his head out and looked around. He had kicked a couple of cans out from between the buildings and stopped and picked them up. Good, deposit cans, both of 'em. He put them in his side pockets.

The city was still quiet. The parking lot behind the small factory empty. Rusty eased out into the open on aching legs. He came around the edge of the concrete wall. A surprised newsboy flashed out from behind the far corner of the building, pedaling down the sidewalk of the side street. He had a partly filled newsbag over his shoulder. It

bounced off his thigh every time his leg came around. He looked at Rusty with a startled expression on his face.

"Hey, kid," Rusty called and made a beckoning gesture. "Com'ere."

The newsboy arced his bike into a tight circle. "Wut"? He had a look of uncertainty. "Whadda ya want"? He said it, not asking.

"Com'ere, kid, lemme look at a paper." Rusty smiled and tried to look harmless. "Ya got any extras"? Rusty asked.

The paperboy relaxed and fished out a paper. "They cost a quarter," he said.

Rusty took the paper in his hand. With the other he groped for something in his pocket under the pop can. "Hey, kid," Rusty said, "ya every seen anything like this"? In his left hand he held out a perfect of limestone banded with a green stripe, a little smaller than a golf ball.

"Ya know where I got that stone kid"? Rusty asked him. "Do ya"?

The kid took the stone from Rusty's outstretched hand. He eyed it curiously, rolling it over in his palm "Where"? He peered at Rusty.

"I was down by the river, see," Rusty said, "and I got the feelin' to dig." He paused for effect. "And that there stone's what I dug up."

The paperboy looked at Rusty, round eyed, incredulous. "Really"? He studied the smooth stone.

"Yep, smooth as a baby's backside, too." Rusty spit on the sidewalk.

When he had found the stone in the gutter it was roughly spherical, and he had thought it a curiosity. Rusty had rubbed the limestone nugget against concrete curbs all over the city to make it smooth as glm and perfectly round.

"Yeah," he continued, "it's probably one of them Indian stones."

"Gee," the kid said.

"Probably worth a lot more than money." Rusty said, "Tell you what I'll do, you give me two more papers... I'll let you have it."

"Wow," the kid breathed, "but. . ."

"What, but what"? Rusty asked.

"I don't have two more extras," the kid offered. "Wait," he fished in his pants pocket,

"here's fifty cents, and keep that paper"?

Rusty stood there thinking about it. He'd spent a lot of time with that item.

"C'mon mister," the kid said.

"O.K., kid, deal." Rusty took the two quarters off the kid.

"Thanks mister," the kid said and took off down the street.

Rusty watched him disappear down the block. Hearing the groan of a city bus gearing down he turned toward Washington. Rusty smiled. Two cans, a paper, and fifty cents. This day was starting out good!

***EDITOR'S NOTE:** Bryan Braun was a long-time supporter of Cardinal Sins and frequently submitted his work for consideration. His work featured colorful characters who prized their individuality above all else. He received his Associate Degree in science from Delta College and graduated from SVSU cum laude in 1992 with a BA. in Psychology. He was a member of the National Honor Society and was named to Who's Who Among American Universities and Colleges. Bryan passed away February 26, 1993.*



Hellbound *David McAuley*

Really?

Wendy Manry

Looting out the window
I spy my cat,
perched in his customary way
on the porch rail.
What a resplendent shade of blue!
Brilliant sun accents
the highlights in his fur,
making it glow like an electric arc.
Blinking, I shake my head.
Something's wrong.
He shouldn't be blue.
Am I dreaming?
I have to be dreaming.
Chuckling to myself,
I head for morning coffee.
That cat's not blue,
never has been, never will be.
Silly me.
He's as green as the day he was born.