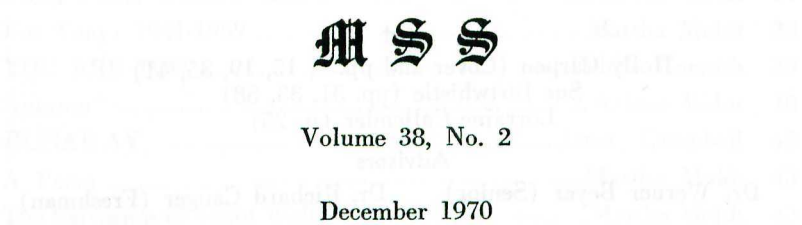


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December 1970

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Butler University

Indianapolis, Indiana

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* Freshman Writing

THAT'S ALL I REMEMBER

by James R. Warren

"Joe! Joe! Are you all right?" It was Kenny, lifting the trailer tongue up and away from me, grabbing my arm, pulling me up. "Gosh, Joey! You've got to get home fast! Run! Come on! Run!"

Run! . . . Run!—it echoed through my head. Blood. I'm bleeding? Maybe just a nose bleed.

"Joe!" It was Kenny again. "You've got to get home. Hurry!"

"Okay, Kenny." We ran fast, one block down the alley.

As we reached the fence behind my house, Kenny jerked open the gate and started yelling. "Mrs. Roberts! Mrs. Roberts! Come quick!"

Half way across the yard I tripped and one of my tennis shoes slipped off. Mom came running out. "I've got to put my shoe back on, Mom."

"Oh my God, Joey! Leave it! Joan! Joan! Call the doctor! Quick!" Mom's face was pale and blank.

"Why a doctor, Mom? What's the matter? Can't you fix everything?"

Mom calmed down. "There's nothing to worry about, Joey, but we've got to get to a doctor. You've got a cut that will need a few stitches. Everything will be all right, Son."

We were already in the house. Mom had grabbed a towel and was pressing it tightly against my cheek and forehead. Joan, my sister, was starting the car outside. Our good old '49 Nash. I felt a little dazed by my mother's hurrying.

Joan was driving; Mom had me held tightly in the back seat. I didn't feel any pain and I didn't see any more blood. What was the matter? Then I noticed that the towel was beginning to feel damp against my skin, down around my chin and neck. It felt warm; it felt good. Blood?

We stopped in front of Dr. Green's clinic. Mom led me quickly through the door and into the waiting room, where there was a whole line of patients sitting patiently. Darn! I'd have to look through all those old *Looks* and *Saturday Evening Posts* while I waited to see Dr. Green. Why are doctors' magazines always months old? I had probably seen every single one the last time I was there. That's how

old they usually were.

The receptionist took one look at me, blanched, got up, and led me straight into a smaller room. I began to worry. Why did she take me before all those other people? I began to sweat. I could smell the antiseptic odor of the air as she had me lie down.

Dr. Green walked in. He stopped right where he was, staring. "Mrs. Roberts, I think we'd better work on him right here. Nurse, give him a tetanus and prepare the table."

The nurse had put a white cloth over my eyes, but I could still get glimpses of the fluorescent lights on the ceiling, or the doctor's hand, or the nurse's white dress, from under the edges.

What? . . . How? . . . I was pulling. On the trailer tongue. Pulling it down to the ground. Kenny did it all the time. It was easy—for Kenny. My back. I was on my back when Kenny came? Charlie . . . John . . . Ron . . . They had been running up the trailer, making a teetertotter out of it. Back and forth. The two wheels and the axle were the balancing point. They ran up; I came down—on my back. Blood. Where did the blood come from? The hitch. Must have hit me. In the nose? Cheek. Forehead. That's why Mom was holding the towel over my face. Kenny? He was up on the basketball rim. Climbing. That's where he came from.

They took the towel away from my eyes and started wrapping my face in gauze, tape, and white bandages. Time? I didn't know how long I'd been there. Long enough.

"Mom . . . Where's Dad?"

"He'll be here soon, Joey. Don't worry. It's after six, and the store will be closed by now. He knows you've been hurt."

I loved Mom of course. It was just that I'd always been closer to Dad. Even though he was usually at work during the day, at some school board or zoning board meeting at night. Time together didn't matter. Respect?—Love?—Certainly a need.

"I wish he was here now, Mom."

"I know, Joey, He will be—*soon!*"

They were through wrapping my face.

"Mom, what happened to me?"

"That's what I was going to ask you, Joey."

I told her what I knew. I kind of lied about one thing though. I told her I was just standing under the trailer; I didn't say that I'd been pulling—in fact, hanging with all my weight—from the trailer

tongue. I don't know if Mom believed everything or not. I figured she would, and even if she didn't, she wouldn't get mad now—not the way it was. And she never did question the facts of my story. I had to tell her the truth myself, years later. I don't know why I ever told her, even then.

"Well, Joey," Mom began. "I heard Kenny yelling. I ran out, and there you were, your face covered with blood. Your right cheek was hanging open as if someone had cut it with a knife. You scared me terribly, Joey. And there was blood all over your forehead, over your right eye. At first I thought the eye was gone, and I almost got sick. But I caught sight of the eye gleaming out through the blood, and I knew then that you'd be all right."

"You were a brave boy, Joey." It was Dr. Green. Doctors always said stupid things like that, but they always made you feel better anyway. Maybe it was the tone of their voices. "I'll have you know that I put fourteen stitches into your cheek and twelve into your forehead, and you never made a sound." No wonder. I hadn't felt any stitches at all. In fact, I couldn't feel anything yet! Everything was numb. "I stitched carefully. I don't think the scars will show badly at all."

Scars? On my face?

"Don't worry, Joey." This was Mom again. "If the scars are too bad, we'll take you to a plastic surgeon. He'll make them disappear."

Worry? Scars would be fine? Nobody else had scars on their faces except gangsters and monsters on television shows. And if anyone thought I would go to another doctor, they could just forget it! But I didn't say anything. I was beginning to feel tired and empty.

I heard Dad's voice outside in the receptionist's room. Mom went out and talked to him. They both came in.

"Well, Joe, how do you feel?"

It was good to see Dad. "All right, I guess."

"I think we'd better get you home."

It was dark by nine o'clock. I was lying on the couch at home. Despite the dullness in my head, I was beginning to piece out a number of sharp pains. In fact, my whole cheek and forehead were beginning to prickle under the bandages. But it didn't hurt. I never did say it hurt. It just tickled; that's all. And I continued to cringe underneath my smile every time my pulse sent a throb of pain rebounding across my face.

Dad had to go to another meeting that night, but this time he asked me if it would be all right. I told him I felt fine. So he went. Mom wanted me to go to bed at ten, but I pretended that I wasn't sleepy, and that I wanted to stay up another hour. She said okay, for this one time. Dad got home at eleven and came over to see me. He sat down beside me, and Mom came over, and she sat down, too. I was happy even though it had been a hard day. I guess I must have fallen asleep, there on the couch. That's all I remember.

Of Carol

by Robert Basile

I remember when I
used to make her smile

Remember?

Do you remember that?

When I would pick her up and
spin her around?

. . . and she would scold (*Oh, Bob!*)

but never quite hold back the smile

She was like a little kid, then.

I think I loved her.

"I like us," I used to say.

"I like us, too."

Poems

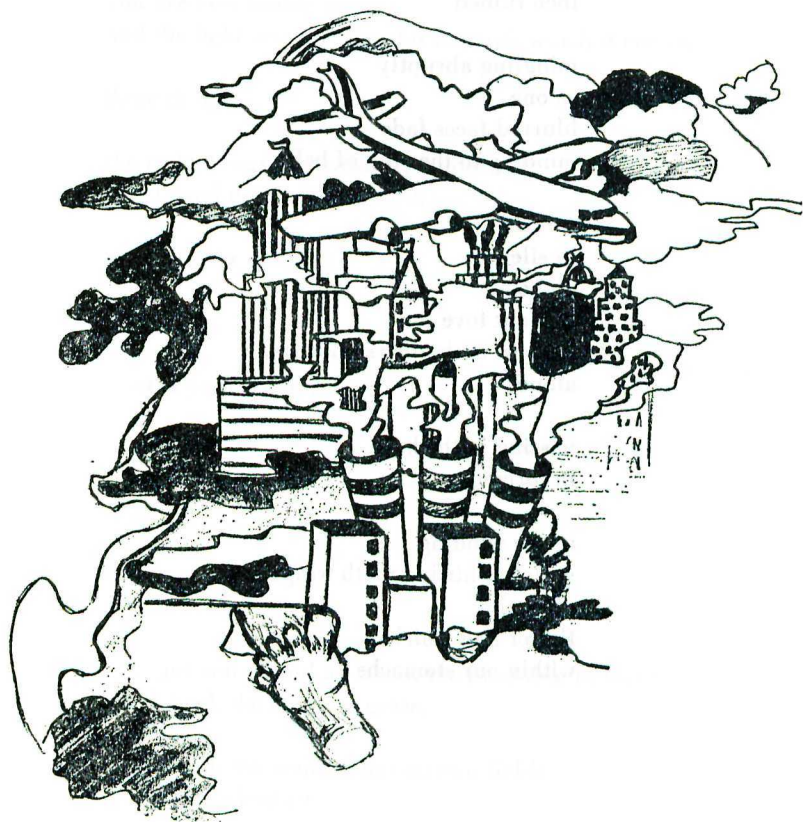
by T. F. Criscimagna

Lacking

child curled in corner alone
and frightenedin Grand Central
tedious luggage is scattered

motherless

starving while city swallows



Facade

passing in the hall
eyes meet

then ruined

mingling abruptly
as one
blurred faces fade
minding to the ring of bells

we pass
in silence
alone
without love
without each others knowledge
alone

passing in the hall
in torment

as the winding
willow whirling moth wings
of doubt
flutter and whirl
within our stomachs

Early Morning

coming out of loneliness, out of darkness at break of day
and finding love,

love where before there was none,

none,
nothing there

as you are now beside me.

you are now beside me,
and the light and the curtains through which it comes,

these things,

the little things are suddenly important,
and I need not ever again ask:

what is your color,

love,

what is your music?

Sister

I find you in and all about the tumbling beauty:
the bird, the tree, the grass,

and with the scent of hay-strewn fields
and dung-lent air,

with the coming of spring
old memories are again stirred,

and so little sister of mine,
where once a single stone marked the spot,

where have you been to tell me of your travels?

Black and White

Where once I did mimic love all love now mimics me.

Sunlight gone not far from dawn,
I'll wait, my love.

What nonsense! What dream!
I have no love,

no love but the word love—
there's the mockery.

Black and white mocks me
and everything I write is a mockery!

I don't want to be a human Sir,
no, no more a Sir

I love her

sg

Poem

Black and white after color;
a silent parade of terms now flows.

Endless

by Dean F. Landsman

Those of you who have tears to shed
THE TIME IS NOW
so many good people and ideas dead
why? how?

Love itself is a strange thing
maybe it'll die out, like a long fad
reminding you and I and him and her
of things we once had.

The quality of man
the equality of time
the inequality of life
and you and me and him and her
and them.

The "they" who are the opposition
The "they" who run our lives
They keep us from moving forward
They keep us from moving toward
our goals.

The things that hold us down
get me down.

So those of you who have tears to shed
THE TIME IS NOW
as it always has been
as it always will be.....

August Reunion

by EL Williams

GRANNY

It was Friday and I had been washing since seven. The kids were all coming home tomorrow and there would be no time for work then. The clothes were hanging on the line, flapping gently in the wind. I looked out the window and saw the bright white sheets swinging against the green background. So many things to be thankful for, I thought. So many times God's seen fit to bless. Then I thought for a second of Shirley, my little baby. I wondered what it would be like if Shirley came tomorrow. My baby Shirley.

I looked past the sheets flapping in the wind to the children playing on the hill. Always playing, I thought, but they helped me when I needed it. I saw them rolling in the grass, shoving and falling. That John, he was a mean one, though. He had too much energy. I saw him grab Kitty and wrestle her to the ground. Then Mike pointed down the tracks. They all ran from the weeds, Rafe leading. Then they stopped and I saw the bent, old, shadow of a man come walking up to them, one leg dragging behind in the cinders, the other leg flopping rhythmically ahead of it. Well, he's here, I thought. I better set the dishes.

JOHNNY

"You ain't ever gettin' up," I laughed. I had her so she couldn't either. Her arms were pinned down good. "Not til you say you're sorry." And I would have made her, too, except that Mike saw King Wes comin'. You don't see King Wes that often.

He came limping down the tracks, spittin' his tobacco to the side, draggin' that bum leg and gruntin'.

"Old man ain't never washed," I laughed, winking to Rafe. He told me I better never let him hear that but I just slapped my knee and laughed, "Ain't no old man ever gonna get me."

King came up and spit to one side, 'most right on my leg. He reached out a hand and took Kitty's hair in it. "Hello, perty gal," he grunted. She pulled back. I'd of pulled back too. I sure would've, seein's how an old man dirty like him had touched me.

"Hello, you little bastard," he snuffed to me.

"Cain't hear you through your gums," I shot back. King Wes didnt have a tooth in his mouth and he couldn't take no kidding about it. His hand shot out for me but I saw it comin' quick enough to just have it barely graze me. I ran down the hill to tell Granny King was comin'.



RAFE

We were at the table and King was slurping the bean soup. His beard was in the soup and his hands were wet. They held the bowl before his mouth and tipped it to the grey gums. Then he spoke. "Shor nice, Missa Willums, you takin' care o' old King Wes like dis. Folks help a littl', here and dere, but not like 'fore. Nobody care for me no more."

Granny got up and went to the kitchen for more biscuits. King's hands reached for them before she was seated. They were still black, the hands, black from the grit of the railroad tracks. I remembered, up there on the tracks, when he came 'round the bend and I asked if he was going to eat. He said he might cut our heads off and eat us if he had a mind to. "I reckon you won't," I had said. He reached for my shirt and pulled me off the tracks. Then he asked me if I liked tobacco and spat in my face. Mike pulled me up from the tracks and I heard him whisper "bastard" under his voice. "How you gonna eat without no teeth," laughed Johnny, winking.

My knee still hurt from the tracks when King dropped me. I met his eyes for a moment.

"How you comin', toothless?" Johnny snorted. His eyes sparkled while King's went wild.

"John Ely, you get out on the porch right this minute!" Granny yelled. Johnny winked and laughed as he slid out of the chair.

AUGUST, 1966

Night had come. They lay in bed, John and Rafe. On a mattress beside their bed, Mike was already asleep. John kept whispering to Rafe, kept nudging his shoulder. "What'd she say?"

"Nothing," Rafe answered. "just he'd been in prison some twenty years, that's all. Go to sleep."

The door cracked and Granny peeked in.

"You all hush in there. John, you go to sleep, hear?"

She shut the door and all was quiet, save for the chirp of the crickets. She walked down the hall and cracked the door to Kitty's room. Inside the young girl was asleep, her blond, almost white, tresses were spilled across the pillow. Granny passed on and stopped by the desk to pick up a small frame. She held a picture of a little girl in blue jeans. The little girl's head was cocked and she was smiling bashfully. On the back of the photograph, Granny read the inscription, "Shirley, 1945."

She laid the picture on the desk and walked on, out to the porch. She was tired. She leaned against the screen door and locked it. Her eyes turned to the dark, quiet road by the porch. She remembered, how King Wes had walked down the road in the late afternoon. He had left, dragging his bad leg behind the good one, kicking up a cloud of dust with each step. He had his hands deep within his pockets

and his elbows flapped as the wind ruffled his thin shirt, his worn black shirt.

Granny leaned against the door and sighed. Her thin hand moved slowly to her cheek and wiped away the wetness there. Her brows were somewhat pinched, somewhat arched. Her face was taut. She turned and walked slowly down the hall, her bent figure casting a dim but definite shadow. Then she reached out and turned the last light off.

A Tip

to members of the literary profession

by Piet Hein

Those
who can write
have a
lot to
learn from those
bright
enough
not to.

Dialogue

by Martha Moldt

Where are you going, little girl?

Oh out . . . to net the stars!

And I will cluster their sparkle around me

And live there.

Or I'll catch a meteor

And for a short time, free, whirled, and dazzled,

I'll ride the skies!

And what will you do then, young lady?

I'll find myself a romance

Woven of moonlight, mist, and flower fragrance,

And wrap it 'round me.

I'll travel in it

Through all the exotic, strange, and glittering lands

I have ever read about.

Will you stay there, young woman?

No, I'll come home,

Where real people live and my true love waits

Just for me.

And I'll find him,

And we'll live and work and love together;

He and I and our children.

And now that you are older

Have you found happily-ever-after?

With weary feet rooted to the earth,

My meteor in ashes long ago,

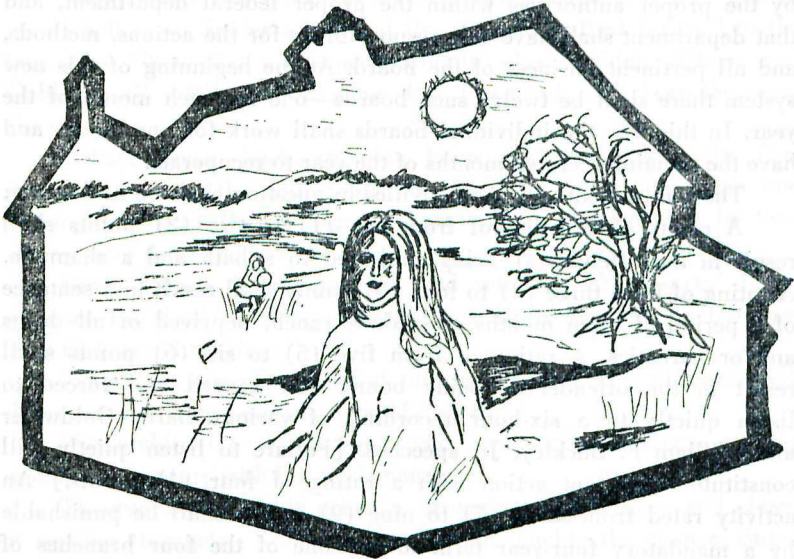
I found that mists dissolve in noonday suns.

My children . . .

They radiate the star-sparkle I once longed for.
 But they are only mine to borrow,
 And my truelove has left me here
 Alone.

Then what have you left, woman?

I have myself.
 Stripped of stars and mists and "truelove"
 I have left to me
 The skeletal structure
 Of my wholeness, my integrity, my self-respect;
 And that is enough to build upon once more.



A Modest Proposal

by Judy Tilton

Considering the facts that there are so many militant students in America and that there is so much widespread disagreement on the matter of how to handle them, be it proposed that a new law be passed with the expressed purpose of handling these misfits of society. Let this law provide proper punishment for all those participants in said militaristic activities. Let the severity of these punishments vary in proportion to the magnitude of the alleged militant activity. Each situation shall be rated in point value ranging from one point to ten points. One point shall be the rating of the most minor offense, and ten points shall be that of the most serious offense. The ratings shall be decided upon by a board composed of six members who shall be stationed in Lincoln, Nebraska; said Lincoln being located in the approximate center of the continental United States.

Because the frequency of such militant activities results in a very large number of cases, the board shall be dismissed and a new one appointed in its place every month. This will protect the board members from undue stress caused by the great number of decisions necessary. All appointments shall be made by a committee appointed by the proper authorities within the proper federal department, and that department shall have sole responsibility for the actions, methods, and all pertinent business of the board. At the beginning of this new system there shall be twelve such boards—one for each month of the year. In this way the individual boards shall work for one month and have the remaining eleven months of the year to recuperate.

The punishments for the activities in question shall be as follows:

A crime of a rating of from one (1) to two (2) points shall result in the offender(s) being subjected to a bath and a shampoo. A rating of from three (3) to four (4) points shall result in a sentence of a period of three months on a dude ranch, deprived of all drugs and/or narcotics. A rating of from five (5) to six (6) points shall result in the offender(s) being bound and gagged and forced to listen quietly to a six-hour recording of various Barry Goldwater and William F. Buckley, Jr. speeches. [Failure to listen quietly will constitute a militant action with a rating of four (4) points.] An activity rated from seven (7) to nine (9) points shall be punishable by a mandatory four-year term in any one of the four branches of

the Armed Forces. A rating of ten (10) points shall constitute a capital crime punishable by the administering of a lethal dose of lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) or a life sentence of hard labor on the staff of William F. Buckley Jr.'s *National Review*.

This system of evaluation and punishment of militants will be beneficial because it will prevent the general populace from complaining that the United States are too good for such transgressors. It will also stop all conjecture about what should be done with that particular type of troublemaker.

Cell 22

by David Paul Allen

Big Jim Brace rolled over in bed, rubbed his eyes, and clumsily reached underneath the bunk for the half-completed crossword puzzle he had given up an hour earlier. Then the distant screech of metal against concrete brought him to his senses. He heard the footsteps coming closer—three of them. Mildly curious, he tossed his puzzle aside and waited for the steps to reach his end of the corridor.

Two familiar faces and a strange one appeared in front of his cell.

"Well, looks like I got me a brand new roomie! It's been lonely as all hell since Snider left," said Brace as he walked forward to the iron bars. "Now *that* was some graduatin' class, Snider, Wilson, and Goldberg all gettin' out the same day. The block ain't been the same since."

"Okay, Brace. Back up. You know the rules," said the first guard, unlocking the cell door. "No need to worry about his one leaving too soon. He's a lifer. If he ever gets paroled, it'll be long after you're dead and gone."

Brace took a few steps back and retorted, "You sayin' I can go once I'm dead? I always thought you fruits were gonna bury me here til I served my time."

"Don't get saucy, or I'll put this young slick in a different cell. Then you won't have anyone to cuddle up to."

"Sonofabitch! I oughta break your neck," growled Brace, making a snapping gesture with his crude hands.

The guard pushed his prisoner through the open door and closed it smiling strangely. "Don't count on ever having the chance, Super

woman." He chuckled with the other guard as the two of them walked away.

Brace muttered heavily under his breath. He then self-consciously stole a glance at the young man. The face revealed nothing other than that the mind behind it was in a different time and a different place.

After a few moments of silence, Brace looked straight at his companion on the opposite bunk and cleared his throat to capture some attention. "What the hell are *you* so solemn for? You'll get used to it. May even get to likin' it. Some do. Some don't. Once you've been in as long and as often as *I* have. . . . What'samatter? Too good to talk to me?" Irritated at being ignored, Brace stood and walked forward, his voice ringing with an authoritative tone. "That's fine for now, 'cause you got some listenin' to do. If you snore, you'll wake up with a fist down your throat. And no bellyachin' all night 'bout how you were framed. I've had enough of that shit to last me a lifetime. When you're assigned to a shop, the boys'll give you a few 'guidelines.' You'll be a lot better off doing as you're told." Even that powerful recitation wrought no change in the void expression of the young prisoner staring at the bars.

"What's your name, anyhow?" enquired Brace after a few minutes. His tone was almost apologetic.

"Sanders. . . . Phil Sanders."

"You always so quiet?"

"I don't know. I suppose I'm still . . . in a sort of shock."

"From what? Isn't this place as fancy as you thought it'd be?" said Brace, gesturing to the gray walls of the cell.

For the first time the quiet youth looked at Brace. "I never thought of it that way. It's just that all this came so fast. Why, just yesterday it seems everything was so perfect." A trace of a smile came to his face as he thought for a moment. "Kathy and I were. . ." But he thought too much. The sound of her name threw him into unrestrained sobbing. He covered his contorted face with his slender, sensitive hands.

"My God," blurted Brace I sure don't need another bleedin' heart around here." But Brace had second thoughts and even felt guilty for one of the few times in his life. "Ah, hell! Don't mind *me*, Kid. If it'll help any, tell me about it. Time is what I've got plenty of."

Sanders lifted his reddened face and spoke in a tremor. "I'm sorry that I did that. I'll have to adjust, I guess." Then he lay down

on his bunk and threw an arm across his eyes.

"Dammit! You're the worst person for clammin' up that I've ever seen. Don't ya know how to take advantage of a good list'ner?"

"I'd really prefer just to be left alone," replied Sanders, moving nothing but his lips.

Several hours passed in uneasy silence. Then Brace sat up and energetically yelled, "Hey, Kid! Do ya remember readin' in the papers about the bank jobs in all those littler jerk-water towns down South? Happened about six years ago. . ." Once again Brace noticed he was being ignored by his sleeping cell-mate and stopped short his bragging.

Footsteps again. The two guards walked past on their rounds and turned out the lights for the night, except for a few dim bulbs burning in the corridor.

Brace walked over to the opposite bunk and sat down on the edge of it. Staring at the handsome figure of Sanders, he whispered to himself, "Some do. Some don't." He gently unbuttoned Sanders' shirt and spread his trembling hands across the young man's pale white chest.

"Kathy?" Sanders moaned in his dream.

Brace, his eyes lighting up with eager anticipation, pulled Phil up and embraced him.

"God! What in the name of Christ are you doing!" exclaimed Sanders as his dream exploded.

"Shut your mouth! D'ya want the whole block to wake up? I swear, Kid, one of these days you'll be beggin' me."

"You perverted old bastard! You're sick! Everybody's just sick!"

"Mark my word," said Brace smugly.

The morning light revealed a twisted body on the floor of cell 22. The familiar guard stood yawning and studied it for a few minutes from the corridor. He casually walked to his station where he addressed another guard.

"What did I tell ya? We got a dead one in 22."

"By God! Didn't think it could happen so soon. It's Brace, isn't it?"

"Right."

"Strangled?"

"Looks like a broken neck. Sanders was sleeping like a baby."

"Three in a row now! You sure know how to call 'em."

POEMS

Mary Claire Pleiss

1

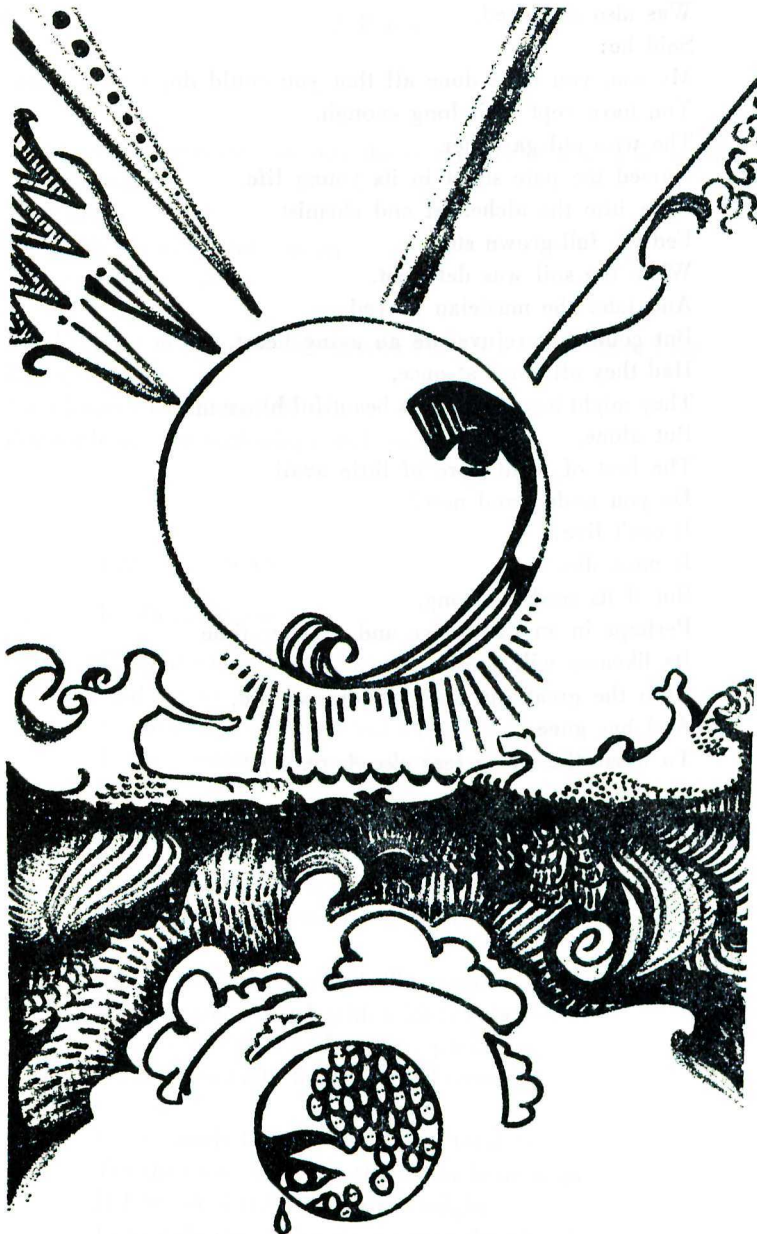
In the beginning no one,
Of those who noticed,
Spoke of the change.
Since they could not describe it very well,
They preferred to avoid misunderstanding.
Thinking about it was awful enough.

It should not be curious
That the children discovered it specifically.
They were playing in the morning,
As usual,
When the first stopped his play,
Arose,
And looked about him.
One by one the others also
Gazed thoughtfully round.
Looking aloft they quietly searched.
One of the littlest pointed to the sky,
And as one
All of the faces swung skyward.
The air was warm,
There were soft clouds,
And light was everywhere.

There was no sun.

2

One of the children
Had watched a flower growing all summer.
His name was Pukka,
And he despaired exceedingly when its three snowy petals
Browned and wrinkled.
His father, Afflatus,



Was also saddened.
Said he:
My son, you have done all that you could do,
You have kept vigil long enough.
The wise old gardener
Nursed the pale shoot in its young life.
After him the alchemist and chemist
Fed the full-grown stem
When the soil was deficient.
And later the musician played,
But could not rejuvenate an aging heart.
Had they all come at once,
They might have saved this beautiful blossom.
But alone,
The best of them were of little avail.
Do you understand now?
It can't live;
It must die.
But if its seed is strong,
Perhaps in another place and a better time
Its likeness will grow.
Even the great sun knew before we did,
And has gone
To warm the living seas elsewhere.

A Poem

by Martha Moldt

Death, it has been said, is only the emergence of a soul from its
chrysalis.

How lovely

To break out of a fetid cocoon

Into a world of color.

But I think I must break this cocoon and fly a little before I die.

It may be

That heaven would be hell

For souls arrived with wings still crumpled.

FASCINATION

by Randy Moser

When the blackness of night settles round

And touches the earth without a sound,

I'm drawn to darkness like a moth to light.

There's nothing compares to the fascinating night.

The moon glides glimmering over cotton clouds,

Casting grotesque figures incased in shrouds;

A caressing breeze erases the heat of day.

The night is a blanket under which I stay.

The croaking frog sounds like music to me;

Distant sirens shriek with a hint of tragedy;

A sharpness of ear adds to my pleasures,

Making the night the best of all treasures.

Long, lonely light of day I must tolerate

Till the moon kisses earth and the hour is late.

If I be asked for my greatest delight

I can only say: "There's *peace* in the night."

TRUTH

by Arlene Vidor

Quite long ago
I saw the light
And stayed awake
Both day and night.
Observed I close
And looked within.
I never dwelt long
On my sin.
Removed was I
From others' woes
And proud to say
I held no foes.
Above attachment
I did rise.
To soundly judge
I severed ties.
Interpret did I
What was seen.
In introspect
What did it mean?
Anxiety
To meet with sooth
Together pieced
Together truth.
And now that I knew
What was real,
Relate how I
To others feel.
And knowing truth
I did condone
That it had left me
Quite alone.

IN PROFUNDIS

by Karlis E. Rusa

When you're on one side of the house it's summer and afternoon
but as soon as you walk around it to the other side it's autumn and
night and a dim light at the door and people one by one saying good-
bye and drifting off on their dragons

So you keep wishing you were back in the other place again
playing the magical hide-and-seek there among your silent friends
whom you never really see and who are present only in this particular
dream

Yes you wish you were back in the summery afternoon place
where the sun is behind the chimney but you cannot return for you
must stand shivering in the darkness which increases when someone
turns out that last light

And dry leaves float down all about you noiselessly like brown
snowflakes and on them are seated tiny elves certainly sent from the
heavens

No salvation from these

They disappear upon reaching the ground and all you hear is a
very faint tinkling laughter far far off over the hills and you cannot
follow

Now you shall stand there in the dark perhaps for ever and you
do not even see the house any longer for you are lost lost lost and
sleeping off your soul's pain and memories of the gentle summer
that may never have existed but as a lesser pain

Dead Blues

by Bonnie Britton

Apple Pie

Moistened eye

Mama's sigh

Pack him off to war.

Viet Cong

Gunfire's song

Isn't long

Ship his body home.

Flag Triangled

Star spangled

Sobs strangled

Gleaming bugles cry.

Peace found

Below ground

No sound

Under quiet skies.



The Stoning

by Jody Neff

She smiled at each of them—
Her heart was glad
To love each little one
And smooth his cares;
They laughed and played about
Her full, bright skirts;
With cheerful faces they ran
The meadows wide.
Then, all at once,
They left her quite alone,
Save one who did
Remind her with a stone!

A Poem

by Martha Moldt

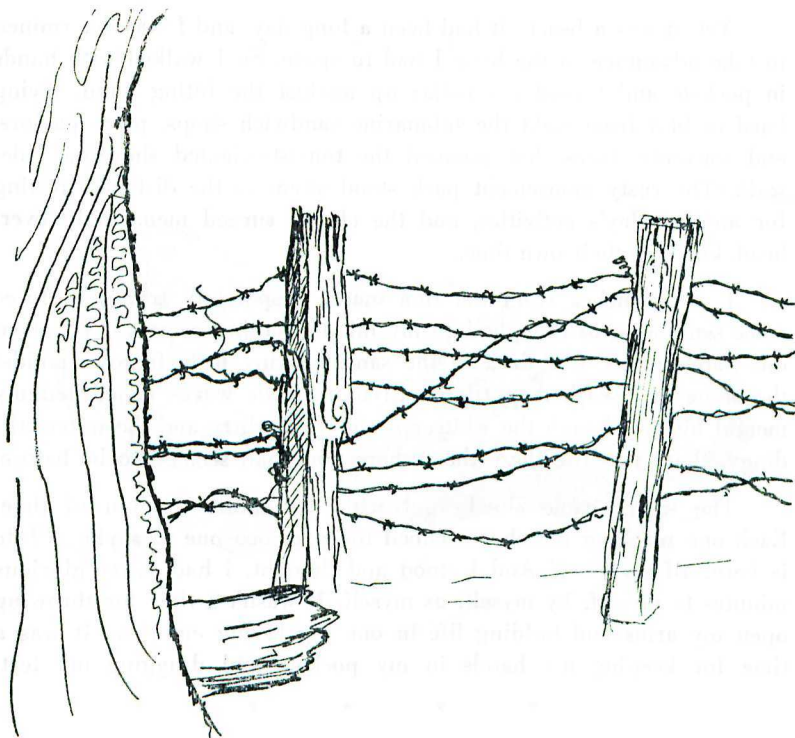
Of all of God's created beauty
That we behold on earth,
The zenith is
That we love;
And that in loving we give
Even the palest reflection
Of the essence
Of the source
Of all of the created beauty
That we behold on earth.

Where Thoughts Dwell: an Anthology

(Excerpts from Cindy Schamel, Jo Anne Stokes, Ray Prible, and Leslie Van Koughnett, respectively)

Behind my house there was a field. It was not quite an empty field; it was filled with all forms of life. There were flowers and weeds and trees in addition to rabbits and field mice and quail. When I was smaller, the field was a horse pasture. I can remember standing by the fence for hours with sugar cubes in hand trying to lure the horses to my side of the field. The field was my backdrop for make-believe. My friends and I would play that we were pioneers carving a path through the wilderness. In the winter when it snowed, we tracked rabbits. The only time I ever caught up with one, I think I was just as frightened as he, and I ran just as fast in my direction as he did in his.

* * * *



I had been looking for an isolated place—just a few trees overlooking a pale and graceful beach. I had been looking for a place “custom-made” for thinking, where you were guaranteed a period of thoughtful creativity, or your time and effort would be cheerfully refunded.

What I found was something quite different. There were no trees, the sand was a dismal brown, and the shore was a mass of jagged stones and broken seashells. My promising, though imaginary signs were nowhere to be found. In hope, I looked out to the sea and found no immediate solace there. The whitecaps were dirty off-white, and the water was dingy gray and ironically lifeless. Even the twigs and seaweed that had washed onto the shore failed to suggest the presence of some ancient mystery, only the muck of this generation. I half-convincing myself that I would never accomplish any *real* thinking there.

Yet, it was a beach, it had been a long day, and I was determined to take advantage of the hour I had to spare. So I walked with hands in pockets and turned my collar up against the biting wind, trying hard to blot from sight the submarine sandwich shops, pizza parlors, and souvenir stores that jammed the tourist-oriented shoreline sidewalk. The rusty amusement park stood silent in the distance, resting for another day's activities, and the clouds surged menacingly overhead, knowing their own time.

I stood inches from the tide mark, desperately trying to force some semblance of thought into my mind. Nothing came. So I walked on, watching my feet drag in the sand, leaving little furrows amidst the stone and seashell, until the rhythm of the waves penetrated my mental block. Though the whitecaps were still dirty and the water still dingy, there was life there then where none had seemed to be before.

The waves came slowly but with the subtle wisdom of time. Each one reaching the shore echoed the previous one in saying, “Life is here; life is now.” And I stood and thought. I had thirty glorious minutes to myself, by myself, as myself. It wasn't a time for throwing open my arms and holding life in one big loving embrace. It was a time for keeping my hands in my pockets and dragging my feet.

* * * *

The nippy summer morning woke me early, and I dressed quickly and went outside. The newly risen sun had not yet dried the dew on the pier and grass, which glittered in the young sunlight. Tightly gripping my fishing pole and bait, I stepped into the old rotting green rowboat. The early morning ripples gently lapped the bottom of the boat, and on the beach, fingers of small waves reached for the pebbles buried high in the sand. Soapy-white sea foam quietly washed stones lying on the shore. I slowly rowed to my "fishing hole" and dropped anchor. I was alone. All the houses were still sleeping. While a light fog yet covered the valley and lake, a fish jumped, breaking the morning's silence. Sitting with my line and bobber in the calm waters, I waited—waited for the fish to bite. But none did. A motor-boat putt-putted afar, showing not all the world was asleep. It began to rain. Small needles of mist pierced the smooth surface of the lake, sounding like thousands of lighted matches hissing as they were dropped into the water. It rained, I fished, and I thought.

* * * *



Out back of the house, past a wooden gate hung with bricks, down a much-used path, I can walk to the white barn. The cattle huddle near the barn door, watching their breaths float over their heads and gather in low white clouds. They stomp and low when I walk among them, and their bull glares and shakes his head. The barn is warm with the smell of livestock, alive with the sounds of small scurrying animals. Overhead, up a wooden ladder, is the hay mow, filled with this year's hay, last year's kittens, and eternal doves. Alfalfa always smells richer on a rainy day. Below there was once a chicken coop, but three years ago a fox and a raccoon, working together and splitting the profit, disposed of the entire flock. On the other side of the pasture is a huge wreck of an elm tree. It has been all but defeated by lightning and cattle and is an etching against the heavy sky. Farther away, across fields of November, are the homes of others, white frame houses guarded by tractors and Cadillacs. I cannot walk to these places—they are too far from me.

Past the front of the house the one-lane road stretches its concrete as far as my eye can see. In one direction the road passes a small country church that everyone attends and always has, on to end, miles away, at the site of the former Christmas house that once had Santa Clauses in all the windows and no electricity. In the other direction the road heads straight as a grey shining arrow past a burned out green house where hoboes live, past a crawdad creek, to an abrupt halt at a Butler silo. If I do not follow the road either way, I cross it to the ditch where the red fox lives. Past the ditch, over the now-bare field, through the hedge apple grove, and across a frog creek, lies the railroad track with its twice-daily freight train. The train comes at dawn and goes at dusk, controlled by a smiling engineer-god dressed in blue stripes and waving hands. Sometimes he stops at the elevator across from the church, more often, he just toots his whistle. The elevator smells like corn flakes.

If I do not want to walk anywhere, I can go to the children's pasture, a fenced-in place where cattle and grown-ups are not allowed. It is filled with leafless pear trees, dried milkweed pods, and one bare apple tree. Once, when it was summer, I spent all my hours in that tree, racing up and down with my cousins, hunting for robin nests, eating wormy, half-red apples, watching the road for my grandfather, and listening to the wind. If I do not feel like walking, I will not.

From a Bus Window

by Martha Moldt

February's so muted . . .
Sepia tones that dull the bright green of rooftops.
No explosive swirl of ice and snow here.
Even the sunshine seems watered down.
The pencilled shadows of wooded hillsides
Are soft, flaccid, carelessly draped down the slope.
The concrete bridges take on the color of February.
They seem to have grown out of the indifferent land,
Natural, rooted, not of man's making.

And we?
We hurtle through
Hour after hour;
Swallowing up the miles
Of sepia February;
Feeding on the landscape
Like a starving thing.

Where are the people?
Alone under their green roofs.
Safe inside sterile projectiles.
Safe from the rending bleakness
Of flat February cornfields.
Don't touch . . . DON'T TOUCH!

Spring is touching fingers.
If you don't want to know
The warm blood of red,
The drowning pain of bright blue,
Sear of yellow, chill of green,
Stay in February.
Sepia is safe—it goes nowhere.
And for God's sake
Don't touch each other.

For Tony: 1941-1969

by Martha Moldt

My life

Has suddenly loomed up

Into a cliff.

And all the long years ahead

Pour over it

In a bottomless torrent.

I had thought

To travel them with you

And share

All the rapids and

The still pools of beauty

Contained therein.

But you shot past me

Downstream,

To uncharted seas.

Beloved and once-alive,

Where are you now?

And are you bereft

Of such beauties

As I am free to absorb

On this late-summer night?

Can God wrap you

In soft breeze;

Sing your soul to soaring

With the music of crickets?

Can summer stars

In velvet sky,

Or orange-paper

Crescent moon

Reach

Into your phantasmic

Existence?

Can I send you all
These beloved commonplaces
Through my thoughts?
Or must you be content
With grander glories?

YOU ARE TOO

by Debbie Corwith

You told me
Once
That I was blind,
And
Knowing what you meant
I opened my eyes
To feast themselves
Upon your being
Catching as catch can
A here and there
Of you
Without a why or where
Of you.
Now I'm just a knowledgeable
Fool
With enough light
To blind even
A wise
wise
man.

Autumn

by Arlene Vidor

Autumn

it is

the time of year when

rust colored leaves

Fall

is an amber haze

of chestnut-smelling

flame and fallen hazelnuts

and biting air

half remnant of winter

is sucked up into my nostrils

and fills my head quickly

spreading to capture

every inch of my body-

this bronze-brisk season

of tranquility soaks the earth

with mellow browns

fiery orange, rust, red, purple.

Please stop

for one moment

and behold

the mildly-miraculous beauty

of this day.



RUNAWAY

Janet Campbell

A complacency dripped off the edge of the earth.

Another one fell in Asia.

Not just a soldier, but a boy who ran away from home.

His home: an earthy rat trap for sickness, scum and indifference.

His family: a dominating whore who brings home myriads of "uncles"
from bisexual doormats to sadists;
brothers and sisters—sluts at twelve,
Pushers and Speed Freaks at adolescence,
larcenists growing into killers over crap games.

Security: a walk into a raunchy dead end, rat infested alley— just to
be alone.

A home, a family and a place to go.

He was Living Death, so he escaped through the draft and lied about
his age and his abilities.

His dark skin now rubbed and contrasted with White comrades—
some were comrades, some were stabbing thorns.

Just a kid, a boy, and nobody knew it, for he fought, hungered and
craved like a Man, like a Soldier.

But really he had just been born—born from Death on a battlefield,
escaping his home.

Then this boy, this man or whoever, fell to the ground

And his face sank into a rice paddy—not into the bowels of a slum.

And he died living.

A Poem
by Martha Moldt

Listen . . . God?
All this business
Of gold streets,
Silver linings,
And eternal
Unadulterated joy
Doesn't really
Sound all that great.

If you wouldn't
Mind,
I'd rather have the chance
To sing, and learn, and
Be astonished
Forever.

The Salvation of Elliot Walker

by Martha Moldt

The day was bright and mild for mid-autumn. Sunshine poured in warm mellow sheets over the grey city, its light flowing through the branches of a maple tree set in four square feet of dirt at the edge of a sidewalk in one of the westside slum areas. The maple's half-green, half-gold leaves glowed in the sunlight in a semblance of stained glass, and they danced and shimmered on the limbs in the autumn breeze, until the facets and depths of light and shadow made the maple seem alive with leaping yellow flames, like a huge topaz.

The boy shuffling along the dirty, rough pavement under the tree did not seem to notice this display. His shoulders, under a light jacket, were hunched against the wind, and the late afternoon sun did not appear to warm him at all. He lugged several school books

under his left arm, his right hand jammed tensely into his pants pocket. His eyes were focused on his scuffed shoes that he scraped, kicked, and dragged sullenly along the pavement.

The concrete beneath his gaze turned to brick as he moved slowly up the dingy steps of the crumbling brownstone apartment where he lived with his grandmother.

"Ell-ii-Et!" Gran's harsh voice cut across the stale air of the kitchen. "Elliot, that yo'?" The strident tones dipped in pitch, then rose sharply to hang quivering in the air like an exposed nerve. "Y'all come out heah right now!" Elliot hunched inside his jacket, but it gave him no more protection from the raw-voiced demand than it had against the wind.

He stood a moment, eyes glazed and dreamy, while his school books slipped to the floor. His grandmother's voice slid higher, the impatience in it became sharper, more cutting. Elliot put a hand to his head as if it hurt, stepped over his fallen books, and made his way to the "front room," where his grandmother was washing windows.

Five nights a week, Gran made part of her living by cleaning executive offices in the gleaming glass and steel headquarters of a nationally known firm of industrial design. Gran enjoyed her night job immensely. Her senses reveled in the claret and sapphire emblazoned carpets, the softness of indirect lighting, and above all, the thick rich silence of the place. She came home rested and renewed. To Elliot, the mornings were good times, cradled in his grandmother's unhurried warmth and hot starchy breakfasts, accompanied by her thin high-pitched crooning as she moved about the creaky floor of the old kitchen.

Three days a week, Gran "did for" private homes in the wealthier parts of the city, in addition to her full-time night job. To other week days she labored to keep her own home as presentable as the constant accumulation of soot and filth in the immediate slum area allowed. By mid-afternoon of most days she was exhausted and quarrelsome. Today, as Elliot entered the front room which served as a parlor as well as Gran's bedroom, she was scouring the windows. As usual, the grime did not come off completely, but left a smeary grey, swirled layer of greasy industrial soot behind on the cleaned part of the pane.

As Gran's high thin voice bombarded him, Elliot stood quietly . . . watching her broad back and thick upper arms move in a weary, automatically rhythmic pattern.

"Elliot, yo' got homework?" she demanded.

"Yes'm," he answered absently . . . watching the pattern of grease and soot that followed the wash rag's circles.

"Well yo' betteh sit yo'self down an' do it, but fust I gotta' chore fer yo' t'run fo' me."

"Yes'm"

"Y'all run ovah Mist' Clements sto' an' tell him Ah needs some grits. Yo' tell Ah'll pay him Thursday when Ah gets ovah theah mahself. Ah'll pay him then fo' shoah."

"Yes'm." . . . watching the street outside the window with its passing people threaded through the the left-behind strings of grey and grime.

"If they's greens left from Satiddy, yo' get some o' them, too, y'heah? . . . Elliot, you *heah* me?"

"Yes'm."

"You git right back now. No dawdlin'—'specially don' pestah t'Revren' Fathah. You be *shoah* an' tell Mist' Clements. . ."

Elliot slipped out the front door. He paused at the top of the steps, drew a deep breath, and surveyed the block carefully, marking its hazards and choosing his path as if the street were mined. There was a cat fight in progress. Farther on, a garbage heap lay spilled into the street (nothing worth going through, it looked like). The usual group of late-adolescent boys hung around on the corner (Ronnie's gang—they belonged to this block, they wouldn't bother him).

In the next block a vacant lot had been converted into a pocket park. The walls of the buildings that enclosed it on three sides had been painted in abstract murals of bright joyous color and tumbling rhythmic shapes. The weedy, junk-filled lot had been paved and equipped with modernistic fiberglass and poured concrete structures designed to be swung from, clambered over, crawled through.—amiable misshapen giants, meant to oblige any whim a child's imagination could demand of them.

Elliot swung like an ape through a jungle of fiberglass rods, and climbed onto the top of a hump-backed blob of a thing, where he perched, king of the hill, while two toddlers giggled their way in and out of the swiss-cheese holes punched in the concrete form under-neath him. He sat blinking in the warm sun and watched the gay streaks of color on the walls swirl and bump against each other as the late

afternoon shadows raced across them.

"Hello, Elliot."

The boy pivoted on his seat and looked directly into a pair of warm hazel eyes. His small brown face opened and crinkled into an elfish grin.

"Hi, Father Brennen!" he crowed joyously. "Hi!"

The priest smiled and extended his hand. "Feel like a walk?" he asked.

He was not tall or commanding, this sturdy grey-haired middle-aged man of the church, but he carried himself like royalty. As they walked, Elliot looked up at his friend. The simplicity of his robe, the austerity and discipline implicit in his gestures and speech belied the warmth that his eyes radiated, and Elliot felt light-footed and expansive.

"What were you doing?" Father asked.

"Well, I was playing like I was in my castle, and the *whole* playground belonged to me." As Elliot continued, face lit up and hands generously augmenting his description, the priest reflected that the boy's speech lacked the broad dialect that he heard from his grandmother—his words were unusually crisp and clear for a slum kid. Why did he persist in this when most local black boys his age already deliberately broadened and slurred their accents to convey toughness, manliness, pride in being black, and to emulate the older boys in the street gangs that patrolled the area?

"If you make like you're in the highest tower of this place, then you c'n see for miles. Ever'thing you see b'longs ta you an' ya c'n do what all you want with it. There ain't nobody gonna tell you want you *gotta* do with your own place."

Father Brennen smiled. "What would you do with it, Elliot?"

The boy's grin grew still wider. "First, I'd come down outta my castle. And I'd jes' walk aroun'." His right hand described a circular path. "Jes' walk aroun' . . . an' like . . . I'd look at all the trees. I'd feed the squirrels, too . . . an' the pigeons . . . they'd be my pigeons. They'd know me. They wouldn' fly away when I got there, they'd stay." Elliot laughed and flung his arms out to scatter a flock of the pesty birds which had settled on the pavement in front of him. "They'd stay 'cause they like me an' 'cause I'm their frien' an' they know that, too."

The two were in front of the local Catholic church by now, and Father Brennen turned to go up the stairs. Elliot, his grandmother's warning notwithstanding, followed the priest into the building with-

out hesitation.

The church interior was cool and dark. Its blackness enfolded Elliot like a hooded cloak. He loved it here. He would often come in and slip into a pew or settle into one of the dark chapel alcoves, and quietly watch the priests and parishioners move softly through the tender darkness, each one (it seemed to Elliot) enveloped in his own personal cloak of velvet reverence. The people would kneel and genuflect, light candles, bow their heads; sometimes they would weep. Later, outside the quiet sanctuary, a patient Father Brennen would try to answer the eager questions that Elliot had stored up from his observations.

Today, instead of entering the sanctuary, the priest suggested that they walk over to his study. Elliot readily agreed, since that place held a special fascination for him. Three years before, Elliot had entered the study for the first time and exclaimed in wonder, "What'cha want all them books for?" Never had he seen such a collection of books for one person's use. Oh, he'd been to the library with his kindergarten class, but those books were for a whole city of people. The volumes in Father Brennen's study belonged to him alone.

"These books are my friends," the priest had explained gravely. "They help me with problems, they keep me company, they tell me things I need to know. . . ." and he elaborated on the value of the written word until Elliot, then in first grade, became wide-eyed with disbelief.

"*Those* things!" he'd snorted. "They don' do all that. I know. I gotta read 'em in school, an' they stupid! They don' do *nuthin* like what you said!"

Father Elliot had grinned. "I'll just make you a bet," he'd said. "I'll bet you they do say those things, and you just give me a chance to prove it. Ok?"

Elliot had nodded, but skeptically.

"You be here next week, this same time," Father continued, "and I'll show you."

The next week, Elliot presented himself at Father Brennen's study door. "Sit down, son," his friend had invited. "I'm going to read to you." And so he did—whenever the boy could catch the priest alone in his study, the man would give half an hour to reading whatever book the two of them were currently exploring. In school, forced to wade through the inane conversations between Dick, Jane, and

Sally, Elliot would let his mind wander back to the church study and the intricate, marvelous worlds of Alice, and Pooh, and King Arthur, until his name was called sharply. The annoyed teacher would wait impatiently while he fumbled to find his place and her comments might even grow sarcastic as he struggled with words he did not think were worth the labor they caused. "Why don' thay read dis here good stuff in th' school?" he asked the priest.

He barely passed first grade, and was required to repeat second. The year that he repeated, Father Brennen took his total education in hand, and turned him over to one of the teaching sisters from the parish parochial school for extra tutoring. She drilled Elliot relentlessly, severely. These sessions replaced some of the story hours that were the delight of Elliot's soul, but he was promoted to third grade at the end of the year.

The sister scolded Father Brennen. "That child," she insisted, "is not worth the time he takes. He is a reluctant and slow learner at best. Why, at times he seems so distant that I could almost think he was in a trance. He is simply wasting your very valuable time!"

Father Brennen smiled at the agitated nun, and turned on his Irish charm. "Sister, I really think the boy has high intelligence, if only we can reach it. He is an unfortunate youngster. His mother bore him at our Saint Elizabeth's and left before she was supposed to, without the boy, and without leaving her name or address. Several days later, a woman who claimed to be his grandmother came for the baby. She's a good woman, but overworked and illiterate Hard shell fundamentalist, too," he added, knowing the good sister's private sore spots well.

"Humph!" said Sister

"I believe his mother is a streetwalker, and very probably a heroin addict. She rarely visits her son."

"Lots of these. . ." muttered Sister, but she had been won over, although Father Brennen knew she would never admit it. So Elliot, now nine years old and in third grade, still came grudgingly twice a week to the church to be drilled lovingly and pitilessly by the stern nun.

On this late autumn afternoon, Elliot stepped into the priest's study and again surveyed the loaded bookshelves that lined the room, floor to ceiling. He was especially hopeful that Father Brennen had asked him here to read. He felt unhappy and distracted today, and needed the escape and relaxation that their story hour together

provided. But the priest sat down at his desk without picking up the copy of *Treasure Island* that they had started the week before. "How's school going?" he asked.

Disappointment and tension rose, dusty and bitter, in Elliot's throat. His fists clenched, his body stiffened, he squeezed his eyes shut, and stood in the center of the study like a small stiff statute for a moment. Then, abruptly, he relaxed all over. Father Brennen caught the small body, limp as a rag doll's, and sat him in a chair.

"I got trouble," the boy mumbled. "Teach' wants I should give a note t' Gran, an' she caint read it anyways, but he say I gotta bring it back an' she gotta sign it so's he know she read it herself. I tried and tried t' read it myself, but it in writtin' an' I caint make that stuff out yit." His dark eyes were suddenly hurt and fierce. "I ain't *done* nuthin! What's he want t' git me in trouble fer? I ain't ben bad anywheres!"

"Do you have the note with you?"

"Naw, it's in my books."

"Would you like me to come home with you and read the note to your Gran?"

"Geez, she'd skin me, sure! I'm not s'pose t' bug you, and I'm s'pose t' go over t' Clement's an' git some grits." The boy looked at the priest pleadingly. She don' know I still come here, Father. Rev'ren' Mac down to Kingdom Mission, he said I go t' Hell if I keep talkin' with you, and him and Gran, they toll me t'stay away from here."

Father Brennen frowned. Gran had been friendly and grateful for his efforts to help Elliot over the past three years, and the priest had been unaware of her change of heart. He sighed. "Tell you what, son," he said slowly. "You go home and get someone to read that note to Gran. I'll talk to your teacher, too, and see if your problem, whatever it is, can't be straightened out." He smiled reassuringly at the small black worried face before him. "That way you'll have two sides going for you, ok?" The boy nodded mutely. "Now, if you've got a chore to run at Clement's, you'd better hop to before he closes."

Elliot nodded again and wiggled off his chair. He trudged to the door, took hold of the handle, and stood there for a moment, thinking. Then he turned and looked at the priest. "I ain't goin' t' no Hell," he said, "not for talkin' t' you Father. You the only real frien' I got, an' Rev'ren' Mac, he crazy anyhow. The things he say in church—man,

they *crazy*! He don' know what he say. He don' know *nuthin'*! . . . You still let me come, won' ya? You still my frien'?"

"I'll always be your friend, Elliot." The Father put his hand on the boy's shoulder. "You can come here any time."

It was suppertime when Elliot slipped cautiously in the back door of his home. His school books had been picked up and lay neatly stacked on the kitchen table. His Grandmother was busying herself at the outdated, temperamental stove.

"Well, boy," she said sharply, not turning around, "Yo' sho' took yo' sweet time 'bout gittin' them grits!"

"Ain' got no grits," said the boy sullenly.

Gran turned fuisously, and saw that indeed, he was empty-handed. "What yo' mean yo' ain' got no grits!" Her eyes rolled to heaven, her voice got shrill and high, as she poured out her words in a combination of accusation and prayer for deliverance. "Lord, I sends dis chile fo' a little thing an' he comes home *hours* later an' no grits—no *nuthin'*! Jesus! Ah ain' nevah seed such a boy! He ben dreamin' agin, tha's what! What he think we gorin t' eat now?"

Elliot, his body braced against her verbal onslought, waited for the storm to subside.

"Rev'ren's right! Yo' gorin t' HELL, boy! Cain' get thoo school, cain' even 'membah *one* thing at th' stoah. An think mabe yo' teach' las' yeah, she right! She say yo' stupid . . . STUPID—like a ole mule. Las yeah, I say no—that boy, he jes need some help wid himself, an' he be aw right. But Ah tells yo', Ah *tells* yo' now, Ah think that teach', she right. Ah think maybe yo' is jes plain *stupid*, boy!"

Elliot's eyes blazed. "Mist' Clement, *he* say he cain' give yo' *no* grits 'cause yo' ain' paid *no* money on yo' bill fo' six months an' *he* says yo' ain' gorin' pay none Thursday, neither!"—in his anger, he deliberately mocked the illiteracy of his grandmother's speech. She, taken aback, turned to the pot on the stove to gather her wits. She regretted her outburst, and now tried to modify it by expressing an interest in Elliot's affairs.

"Well, how'd school go fo' yo' t'day?" she asked.

Elliot threw her a wary glance, thinking that perhaps she had found his teacher's note and taken it to a neighbor's to be read, but her broad back was relaxed, and the tone of her voice remained mild and conciliatory.

"We got greens fo' supper, anyhow." she continued, not waiting

for an answer to her question. "Ah cooked 'em wif chittlin' bits so's they'd taste real good." . . . and Elliot, relieved that the subject of school had been dropped, allowed her to coax him into eating a good-sized heap of greens. Later, in the front room, after Gran had gone to her night job, he examined the note again, trying to puzzle out the unfamiliar script letters.

The note read:

Dear Mrs. Walker,

I would like your permission to have Elliot examined by our school doctor. Elliot seems to be a bright boy, but his attention span is poor, and he tends to daydream at unexpected and inappropriate times. I have reason to believe that all or some of his problems with schoolwork may have a medical cause, which, if properly diagnosed and treated, could possibly improve the quality of his working habits.

If you want him to have the examination, would you kindly sign the note and send it back with Elliot.

If you wish to talk with me, I am available in room 29 after school hours.

Sincerely,
Robert Miller

Elliot strained over the letters, tracing them, ignoring the words that were obviously too long for him to comprehend. After a while he sighed and gave up. He took a pencil and marked an X at the bottom of the note as he had seen his grandmother do on previous occasions. Father had promised to help him, he thought. To reassure himself, he struggled to recall the priest's words and smile, but the tight, drawn feeling in the pit of his stomach remained.

"... a possibility of brain damage," explained the boy's teacher to Father Brennen the next afternoon. "Sometimes he seems to slip in and out of a very mild cataleptic state so quickly, that he is hardly aware there has been a break in his conscious perception."

"Yes . . . yes that's possible." Father Brennen's thoughts went back to the limp figure that had slumped in his study chair the day before. "But you say his grandmother signed the note?"

"Well . . ." Bob Miller frowned. "It's signed with an X, but Elliot explained that she'd lost her glasses and had to have it read by a neighbor."

"Nonsense," grinned the priest. "His grandmother's illiterate, the boy just has his pride." He squinted at the note, considering. "Actually, I doubt that she's seen this at all. From what I know of her, I don't think she'd have agreed to it."

"Damn!" exclaimed Miller. "I can't get him to a doctor without his parents' permission." He ran his hand over his afro-styled hair worriedly. "That kid needs help now. It shouldn't be put off."

"Ok. . ." said Father Brennen slowly. "Ok then, we'll do it through the church."

Two weeks later he called Miller. "You were right, Bob. The kid has petit mal. We've got medication for it, the big problem is going to be explaining it to his grandmother. I'm on the outs over there, so I'd like to enlist your aid, if I can. . . . Yes, that's about what I had in mind. . . . Well I think she'll listen to you better anyway since you're Black. . . . Well, how about sending a message home with the boy and say we'll drop by tonight? . . . Good See you then. Thanks."

When Gran admitted them into the apartment that evening, Elliot was nowhere to be seen. She led them into the front room, which had ben cleaned until it all but shone. Father Brennen entered after Bob Miller and stopped. His eyes narrowed, and a slight frown passed over his face, which then took on a bland, yet alert expression, as he seated himself at Gran's invitation.

Sitting on the sofa oposite the door was a tall ascetic-looking negro in his late forties. His face had a severe pinched nose and tightly compressed mouth. His skin was a warm cafe-au-lait tone, smooth and beautiful, but so tightly drawn over the bone structure of his face that it served to emphasize the ramrod stiffness of his spinal column, and the careful formality of his strained, folded hands. His protruding eyes were a bright sensual blue, startlingly out of place, yet the most lively component of all his features. He stared coldly at both the arrivals.

"Fath' Brennen, Mist' Millah, dis heah th' Rev'ren' Mac Donnel' down to Spiritual Healin' Kingdom Mission."—Gran indicated the man on her sofa, who nodded regally in response to the visitors' verbal acknowledgements.

It had been agreed that Bob Miller would explain the situation, and he carefully built up to the facts of Elliot's illness, citing the points he had put in the note that Gran had never read, stressing the

mildness of the problem, stressing that modern medicine could give Elliot a completely normal life, stressing the fact that Father Brennen had offered to cover medical expenses out of his own pocket so that neither Elliot nor Gran would be obligated to the Catholic church.

"Nonsense!" said the Reverend Mac Donald. His resonant bass voice rumbled through the room, leaving a startled silence in its wake. He turned to Gran, who looked at him half apprehensive, half accepting.

"Mrs. Walker," His carefully pronounced, softly persuasive tones were gentle and compassionate as if he were explaining sorrow to a child. "Mrs. Walker, these men want Elliot's soul, not his healthy body. They bring you advice and medication and pretend that they are doing it for kindness only. I warn you! It is a snare for your beloved grandson!" His voice swelled like that of an organ, cutting off Miller's protest, and covering the priest's exclamation of disgust. "Did they ask your permission to do this thing? Have you spoken to the doctors yourself? What will this medicine do? It will confuse the boy's mind! It will drug his brain and bend his willpower to that of the Roman Catholic church! His immortal soul must then burn in Hell! He will be lost to our Lord in heaven! There will be no escape for him! He..."

"JUST ONE MINUTE!"

Gran, who had been caught and held by the Reverend's voice and sternly flashing eyes as if she were a bird and he a snake, started. Shaken out of her near-trance by Father Brennen's enraged bellow, she looked to where he stood, smouldering and braced in anger, his fists clenched at his side, his feet planted stubbornly under him.

"No one's trying to snare anybody," he said firmly. "Elliot is sick—his *body* is sick. The medicine is to help the sickness. It won't do anything to his mind except help him to use it better because he won't have the sickness in it anymore." He turned almost pleadingly to Gran. "Have I ever hurt Elliot, or tried to turn him from you or your religion?" Gran shook her head, her eyes wide and anxious.

"You, sir, are an instrument of the devil! You are both evil in the disguise of goodness!" It was the first time Reverend Mac Donald had condescended to address the two intruders directly. He half chanted his accusations, as if to exorcise these devils who threatened the hold guidance and influence he held over his flock in the name of

the Almighty. He stood up and turned to Gran, towering over her, his blue eyes hypnotic in their intensity and fixation, his voice carefully modulated and calculated to weave a net around her fears and superstitions.

"Mrs. Walker, the Bible tells us, does it not, that it is easier for a camel to thread through the needle's eye than for a man to enter heaven! Strait is the way! Narrow is the path, Mrs. Walker! Your grandson has an affliction, does he not? Praise the Lord! He giveth and He taketh away. He chastiseth—He punisheth those whom He loves. We know He does, do we not, Mrs. Walker?" Gran nodded, close to tears. "Your Grandson is afflicted by *God*—all Praise to Him! He must bear this illness as a banner! The banner of Christ Jesus! Your grandson will triumph in the Lord because of this affliction which he bears in the *name* of Jesus!"

"Amen!" sobbed Gran.

The Reverend held his hands out-stretched over Gran's head in benediction and cried exultantly, "His will be done!" His tense posture relaxed for an instant. His face was beaded with sweat. Father Brennen, disgust written all over his face, started to put on his coat as the Reverend continued softly. "These men mean to be good, Mrs. Walker. They are good men trying to be helpful, but they do not have the *true* religion, and therefore the devil uses them as his tool, and they do not know any better. . ."

"My God, do something!" exclaimed Miller to Father Brennen who was now watching the scene intently, not moving or speaking, his eyes narrow and bitter, his shoulders hunched forward and tense.

"They take the Lord's name in vain!" The Reverend went on as if Miller had not spoken. "They mean well, but they will only lead your boy down the paths of Hell. His body they may cure. . ."

"Let's go," muttered Father Brennen. "We can't do any good this trip—not with this bastard Gabriel here."

Miller rose, and the two men said polite goodbys to Gran, but she only glanced at them with frightened eyes and turned immediately back to the Reverend Mac Donald who continued to intone his doctrine without taking any notice of them whatsoever.

"I don't believe it! I just don't *believe* it!" sputtered Bob Miller, as he and the priest walked down the steps of the brownstone. "I thought that kind of shit went out with the Middle Ages!"

"Hell, no!" exploded Father. "You get an illiterate woman like

that, raised on a religion that's half Bible, half voo-doo, and some self-styled Jeremiah like that bastard in there can play on her like a harp!" He felt a familiar wave of bitter exhaustion flow over him. "There's nothing we could say or do right now to convince her that her boy wouldn't be damned if she let us help him. I've seen it before. I knew we'd had it when we walked in and I saw that type sitting there. As far as he's concerned, we're no more than thieves trying to steal what he considers to be *his* property. He's just protecting his own. You don't waste time or energy on a bastard like that!"

"By God, I never saw anything like it!" wondered Miller. "I still can't believe it!" He thought for a while and added, "Can we still get to the kid?"

"Probably," said the priest heavily. "He sees through that character to begin with and he trusts me. Look, when you see him tomorrow, tell him to stop by my study after school."

But it was Bob Miller, not Elliot, who contacted Brennen the next day. His voice over the phone, sounded worried. "Look, Elliot wasn't in school today. None of the kids knew anything about whether he was sick or what. You think maybe something's up?"

"I don't know," said Father Brennen grimly, "but I'll try and find out. I've got some church members in that neighborhood. I'll see what they can find out."

However, none of his efforts yielded any information about Elliot for the next four days. It was Gran herself who came into his study at the end of that time and gave him his answer.

"Rev'ren' Fathah," she began haltingly, "Ah comes t' beg pardon fer what happen t'other day. Ah needs yo' help." She looked searchingly around the study. "Has yo' seen mah Elliot?"

Father Brennen just sat, his keen piercing eyes looking at Gran and yet through her, his mind trying to race ahead and outguess her stumbling speech.

She pleaded, "O please Fathah, Ah'll give mah boy th' medicine! Ah ain' gorin t' make him live in a sick body! Only jes' tell me, *please* . . . weah Elliot is?"

Brennen felt cold premonition prickle at the base of his skull. "What do you mean . . . 'where he is'?" he asked severely.

"Don' yo' have him? Din' he come heah couple days ago? . . . Ah mean, din' he come to yo'?"

"What happened, Mrs. Walker?"

She dabbed at her eyes with a ragged kleenex. "He theah when y'all come to th'house t'other night. He hidin' in de kitchen an' he hear the whole thing. . . ."

"Yes, go on."

"Well . . . well he . . . he real upset. Say he hate Rev'ren' Mac. Say th' Rev'ren' a phony. Say he ain' gorin listen t'me 'cause th' Rev'ren's got t' me, an' he say he hate me, too." Gran sobbed. Her big raw-boned body shook in rhythmic upheavals.

"Did he say he was coming here?" asked Brennen tensely.

"No suh No suh, he say yo' not his frien' 'cause yo' don' stan' up t' th' Rev'ren' fo' him, an' he throo wid all of us. . . . He say he gorin out t' fin' his mothah. He say . . . he say he know . . . his mothah be glad t' see him. Fathah, An don' know wheah his mothah at. . . . Ain' seen her fo' two—three yeahs. Don' even know if she in dis city any mo'. . . . That boy he ain' gorin' fin' her. She a whoah, Fathah—she navah did care 'bout mah Elliot!"

Gran became incoherent, and Father Brennen got up from behind his desk to come and pat her shoulder awkwardly

"Oh Father—oh God!" she cried. "He roll aroun' an' his eyes, they go all funny an' wild an' he bite his tongue 'til the blood run out Ah thought sure he gorin t' die!"

"Ah calm him down an' Ah wash his po' lil face, he so limp and bloody, an' Ah carry him to his bed t'sleep, an' nex' mornin' he set off fo' school like nothin' evah happen—an' Ah ain' *seen* thet chile since fo' days! . . . Ah thought mebbe he come t' see yo' an' yo' keep him heah."

"No," said Brennen heavily. "No, he's not here." He sat back down and put his head in his hands, leaning his elbows on his desk.

"Oh God," he cried silently. "Why did I leave? Why did I just give up? Why didn't I stay and fight that holy roller bastard on his own ground?"

Gran looked at the crushed man in front of her. "Why was Ah so 'fraid of dis good man?" she thought bitterly. "Why'd Ah have t' go an' bring in de Rev'ren' when Ah knew what he gorin t' do? Dis good man ben helpin' mah boy fo' yeahs an' nevah hurt him. Wheah de devil in his helpin' mah boy? Ain' no devil in dis good man! Jesus f'give me, ain' no devils heah. . . ."

"Mary, mother of grace," prayed the priest, "protect this child, Elliot. Heal the destruction that hate has wrought on him in the name

of thy son. Bring him home safe, oh God. God! Forgive my cowardice. . . .”

The unspoken prayers of the woman and the priest poured into the quiet study and mingled in a silent and useless kyrie. Swelling and filling the room, it spilled out over the threshold into the blood-grey city and the cold autumn twilight.

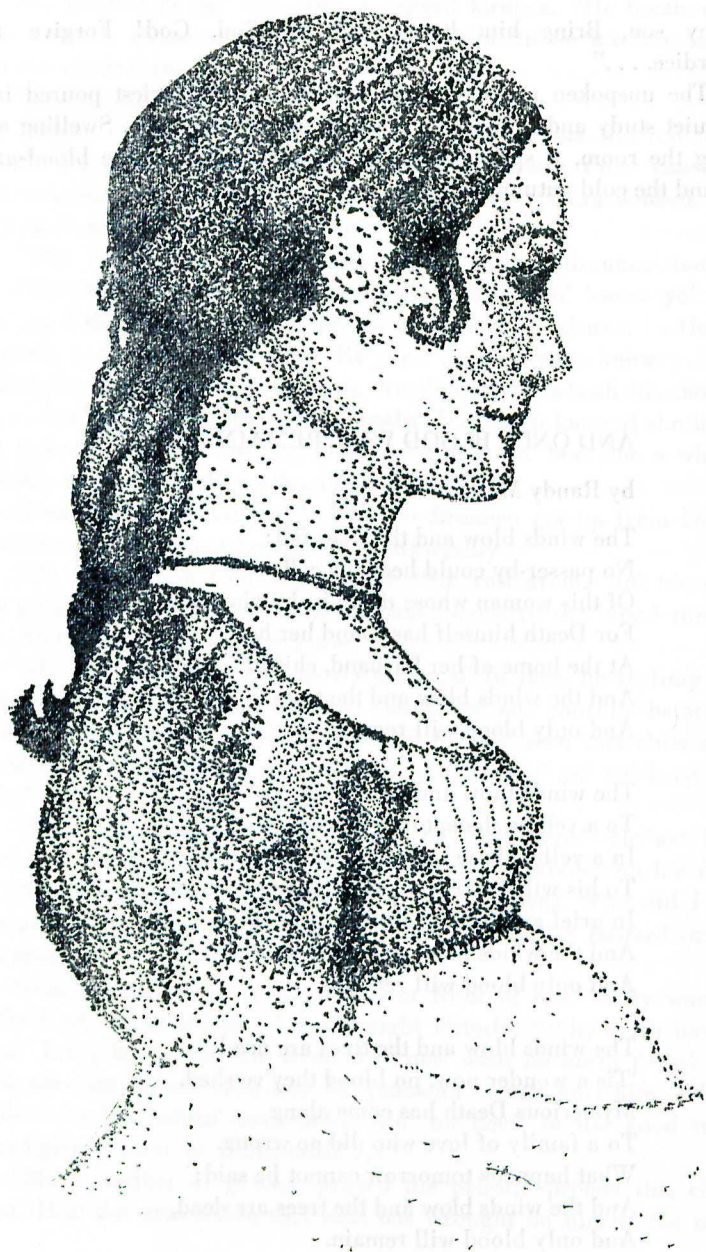
AND ONLY BLOOD WILL REMAIN

by Randy Moser

The winds blow and the trees fall;
No passer-by could hear the call
Of this woman whose death is drawing near.
For Death himself has found her here
At the home of her husband, children—and all;
And the winds blow and the trees fall,
And only blood will remain.

The winds blow and the trees dry;
To a yellow shade turns the sky.
In a yellow haze her man returned
To his wife destroyed, his children burned.
In grief and fear he decided to die;
And the winds blow and the trees dry,
And only blood will remain.

The winds blow and the trees are dead;
‘Tis a wonder now, no blood they’ve shed.
Mysterious Death has come along
To a family of love who did no wrong.
What happens tomorrow cannot be said;
And the winds blow and the trees are dead,
And only blood will remain.



lilacs for karen

by EL Williams

wrapped in a blanket,
soft and wet,
sterilized by the salt
of my hungry tears,
i protect the only remaining piece
that i have left
of you

when the scent of perfume
that you used to wear
carries my mind
but what does one do with the pain of memory
down a river of flesh
and
white skin,
and leaves me aching again
with the thought of you?

a monk from an atheist,
or walk out of reality
into my monastery
half believing that you could make
of doubt.

my cathedral is to the god
of your memory,

the stained-glass sadness
of your child eyes
and the feather soft beauty
of secret breasts
that sent cold chills
tripping up and down
my spine

when i sought redemption
in the trinity of our three times.

i will die an athiest to world religions
and probably live an eternity
without the soft kiss
of your young worship;
but i'll forever chase
 the shadow of your memory
through the chambers of my mind
and beg of god

the right to remember you
eternally.

The Man in the Iron Cage

by Diane Vavul

The man in the iron cage
Sent out for some paint one day
And painted his bars gold.
All the outsiders admired his home
And copied his chamber
With real gold in their suburbs.
Within three weeks
All of America was locked up,
While the caged man's bars
Tarnished, rusted, broke,
And he was free
To stroll around his gigantic zoo.