

## ELEGIAC SONNET II

Nathan W. Harter

Stop! Close those unenchanted eyes  
And listen to the forest as we pass:  
The murmured rubrics of a Druid mass  
Among the twisted branches wend and rise.  
In echoes of a desolate demise,  
Now heaped with fallen timber, moss, and grass.  
But harken to a cruder sing—alas—  
The hoary-headed priest no longer cries.

Where lie the moldering bones among the leaves,  
The hollow breast wherein the forest breathed  
Its elemental chord? My soul bereaves  
The silent cities, buried and unwreathed,  
Revisited when late, autumnal eyes  
A lover hears what he has been bequeathed.

## DEATH TO A FRIEND

Jeff Johnson

In the case of survival, animals must regress to their basic needs and instincts. It was a warm mid-July day in Katmando, a small town at the base of the Green Mountains in Vermont. Walter and Blanch Shrupp were leaving on vacation for Sarasota, Florida. They left behind their two oddly compatible pets, Felix and Ellwanger.

Felix was a stray cat that had become a house pet. He had long fur, which was yellow and white mixed throughout his body. Felix was a large cat with piercing blue eyes, perhaps of a mixed persian breed. He loved to give and receive affection, especially when it came to other animals. Ellwanger was a year and-a-half old hamster. He looked like a golden puff ball because of his ravenous appetite.

The pets were to be taken care of by the Shrupps' neighbor. But their neighbors had not received these instructions. Now Ellwanger and Felix had to stay by themselves for the next week. Normally this situation would not have affected the two pets. They had been the best of friends for over a year. When they were both young and growing up together, they would play day in and day out. While their owners, Walter and Blanch Shrupp, were at work, they would be each other's companion. Felix would often allow Ellwanger to sleep next to him.

The first day of their abandonment Felix helped nudge Ellwanger out of his cage. After the escape from the cage, the two pets scurried off to look out the window. Felix would sit on a table with Ellwanger below him on a window sill. They would spend hours of their day watching other animals play outside. A bird occasionally flew by, which would arouse Felix. After a while this became boring and they would chase each other about the house. They would scamper over chairs, under the couch, and down the stairs; but always in a jovial way so as not to hurt one another. They often stopped for a quick bit to eat or to catch their breath. Felix gobbled up his remaining food from last night's dinner, not realizing that it was the end of his food supply. By midday Felix had rolled up in a ball to sleep and Ellwanger was lying up against his companion's furry belly. Felix woke up and jumped to the floor where he went through his routine of stretching. After cleaning his paws, Felix meandered to the kitchen where he found an empty food dish. He decided to go back to the couch and sleep since his owners had forgotten to feed him. This was the first time the two pets had slept an entire night together.

Waking on the second day, Felix and Ellwanger found that their owners had not yet been home, and indeed this was strange. So far there had not been any conflicts between them and they carried on as the day before. Hunger started to set in by afternoon. Ellwanger's cage was well stocked with food; therefore, he could eat at any time by crawling in and out of his cage. On the other hand, Felix roamed the house trying to find just a morsel of food. By nightfall Felix had become very edgy. This night Felix would not allow Ellwanger to sleep with him.

By the third morning the tension was approaching a peak. Felix had become increasingly irritated by hunger. Ellwanger sensed a change in Felix and he tried to console him. Now Felix's instincts had taken over. He eyed his companion as a source of life. Ellwanger noticed the piercing glare and his love for Felix turned to fear.

Ellwanger's only hope was to get to his cage. Felix was much quicker and he cut Ellwanger off en route to it. This time the chase was for real and not playing as always before. Now Felix had trapped his prey in a corner. Blinded by instinct and a chance for survival, Felix attacked his once loved friend. Following the traumatic event, Felix would never be the same.

## IN PUERO

Frank Werner

I lie on the rug face down, hugging the rug with my outstretched arms. It is rough and warm against my face. Mommy walks into the room. I look at her, and she looks at me for a long time. Her face is sad, and I can see tears in her eyes. Then her face turns angry—she says something, but I can't understand what she is saying. She turns around and walks back into the kitchen.

Over at the window by the door, my sister, Carol, sits in the old armchair. She sits without moving, staring out the window, watching between the blinds. Her feet are tucked under her, and her chin rests on her knees. Her long blonde hair hangs down around her shoulders and legs. The way she is sitting makes her lean so far forward, it seems she will roll out of the chair onto the floor. I turn on my back and watch her. It is funny to watch her sit so still upside down. After a while, it is hard to tell whether she is upside down, or I'm upside down, or whether the whole room is turning over and over. The sunlight from outside comes through the blinds, making shiny bright stripes across Carol's face and hair. I follow the stripes away from her face, out into the air.

The stripes seem to hang in the air above me. I can see little bits of dust whirling about, sparkling in the light. I reach my hands up to grab them, but the little bits of dust go every direction until they have disappeared. Slowly they start to sparkle again. I wait until the stripe seems full of them, then I shake my hands again and watch them scatter once more.

Mommy comes into the room again, and sits down on the sofa. I look at her face; it is sad again. She hugs her chest with her arms. Her