

The Juggler

by George E. Curran, III

As Chicago's winter winds bit and bellowed, a tattered old man trudged across the expansive Federal Building Plaza. A crumpled brown bag and newspaper clutched to his body, the man moved slowly and deliberately toward a small, granite bench in the middle of the plaza. He walked haltingly, and his thin overcoat violently flapped like the flag above him, but he reached his destination. He slid the newspaper from under his arm and spread it meticulously across the bench--careful of the wind, and sat down. He then placed the sack on his lap, peeled the worn and smudged white gloves from his bony hands, and with great ritual, kneaded his fists and stretched his fingers. Prepared, he drew from the bag three circus colored balls--the first red, the second yellow, the last blue--and with a jerk, sent them careening into the gray sky. The old man watched with detached interest as the blurred balls metamorphosed into arcs, rings and ovals of different sizes, shapes, and heights. Nimble, almost magically, the wrinkled, bluish fingers controlled the balls with mechanical dexterity, sending the spheres into the atmosphere with seemingly little effort or thought as the wind battled for control of the floating balls. Suddenly, the magic dispersed, and the balls fell into the old man's hands and disappeared into the paper sack. The old man struggled to his feet, gathered his newspaper, and once again trekked across the plaza, brown sack in hand, as the blasting wind whipped and tore at his shabby coat.

