



ANTIQUES

by Christine Noel

A small sign hung outside on the front porch. "Antiques," it read. Below the sign was an actual guillotine. An old wicker basket even sat at the head of it. Inside the front door and to the right was a small dark room chock full of all kinds of little oddities. Toy soldiers and dolls were jammed on shelves, floor to ceiling. And from the ceiling hung bunches of battered wicker baskets. Up the stairs, which were sure to announce even the quietest of visitors, was a short hallway leading to three small rooms. Each room held an old Victorian bathtub, dozens more wirey baskets, an age old tuba or cello, and a skeleton resting in an open coffin. The doors to these rooms were bolted shut, but a barred window in each door permitted me to see in, or maybe the inside to see out. At the bottom of the stairs hung a large Persian rug. As I pulled back the rug, I was greeted by a gush of hot dry air, and the smell of cats which scattered about my feet. A wrinkled old woman, barely visible among a sea of rugs and baskets draped about the room, sat nearly devoured by the enormity of her old rocking chair. She was within an arms distance of an old wood-burning stove which bellowed the heat from its fiery belly. The extreme temperature quickly drove any unwanted visitors back through the house and out the front door. I turned back once to make sure for myself this place was real, just in time to see the "Antiques" sign fall into the wicker basket at the head of the guillotine.