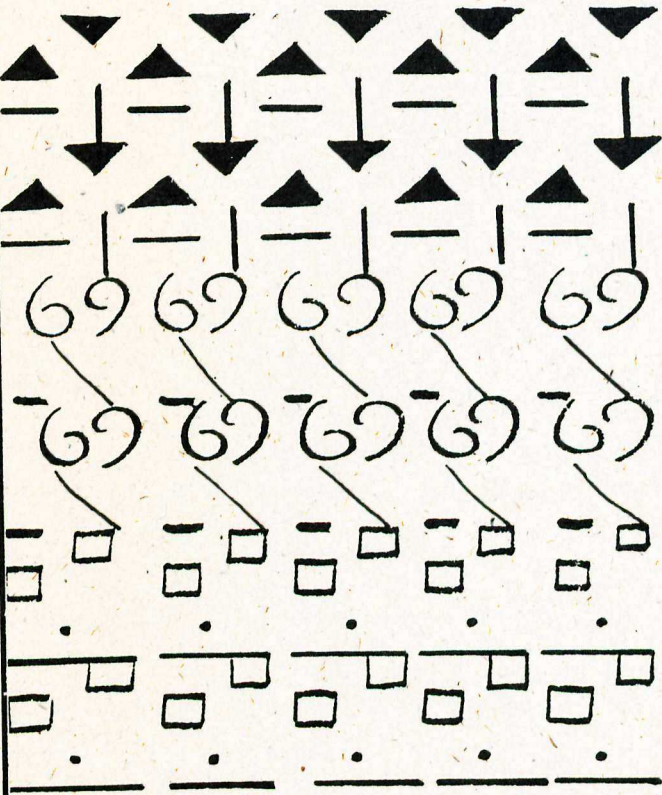
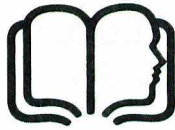


manuscripts





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The editors and staff wish to thank all those responsible for the success of this publication including a special "thank you" to Shirley Daniell for administrative support, Susan Neville for providing an outlet to creativity, and to Rhet Lickliter for the hindsight by which we have foresight.

We also would like to express our gratitude to David Herren for the advice and cooperation, and to the *Collegian* Staff for bearing with us.

IMAGINATION, n. A warehouse of facts,
with poet and liar in joint ownership.

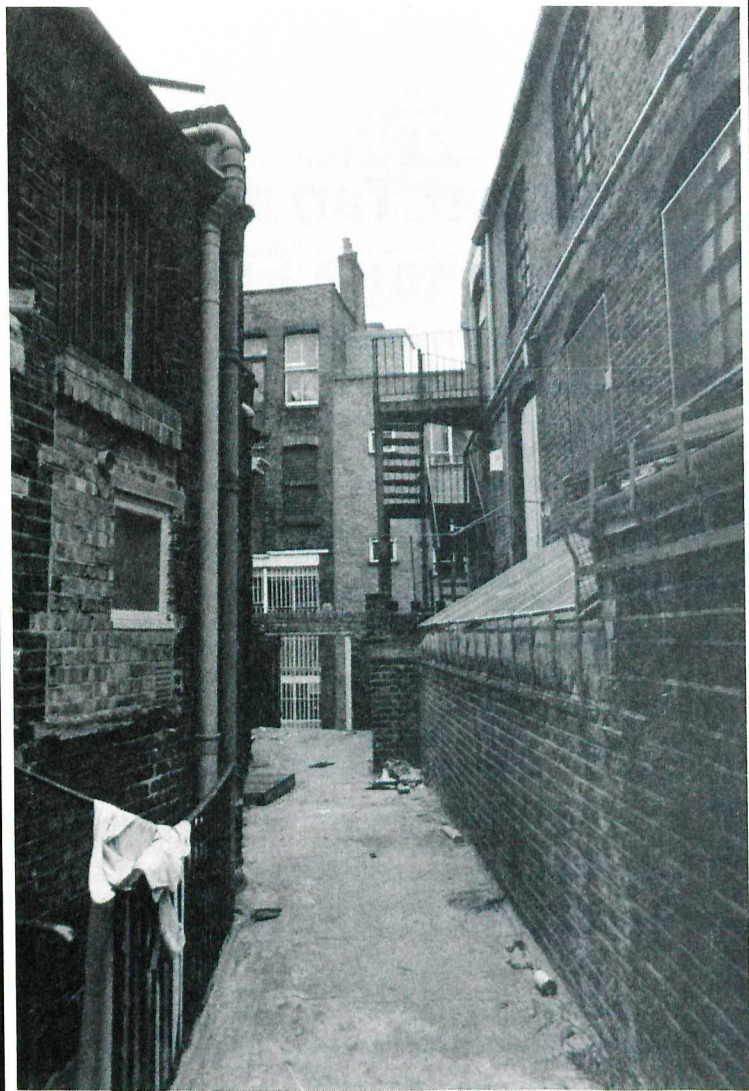
-Ambrose Bierce
The Devil's Dictionary

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The Muse of Bishopsgate

by **Tori Kensington**

Lunar Tan at the Beltane Fires

by Leigh Steele

In the springtime, old toes molt
And the red blood of Pistachios colour
My bedfellow's palms and fingertips
Wart on my heel
From waltzing on toads
I've sold my soul
I know not to who
Strange as it seems
Strangers seem stranger to me
Skin is milked and moons are blue
Moonlighting in the sun isn't good for you

Keep Your Eyes On The Prize

by Kelly Dobbs

She sang while we sat on the front porch swing.

On warm summer evenings, we sat in the swing until the mosquitoes started to bite. We rarely talked. She would sing church hymns to me.

The fading light gave me glimpses of what She must have looked like ages ago. With each "Amazing Grace," the wrinkles faded a little more. With each "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," the gray hair deepened to black.

I leaned against her as the evening wore on to take away the chill of the night air; She pulled me close.

She sang while we sat on the front porch swing during summer afternoons.

We'd sit on the swing and string green beans to the soothing rocking motion. Rocking made the work go easier; I swear the bag of beans never emptied.

I'd try to break as many beans as She did. She always won that race, but never let on that She knew I was trying to beat her; She just quietly kept working.

On these afternoons, She taught me the words to the hymns by repeating the same ones over and over again.

She sang while we sat on the front porch swing, and I thought She was the best singer in the world.

When eyes of blind ones see a-gain
And ears of deaf one's hear a-gain

"For the living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all."

"That's in Ee-clee-zee-ass-tees 9:5, remember it and take comfort in it, because it is the word of Jehovah God the Almighty." Grandma liked to preach during the commercials of the Five O'Clock News, Six O'Clock News, and the Evening News.

I preferred to watch the commercials.

When she had opened the door with Bible in hand, I knew. Required to "work for Jehovah" at least 40 hours a month, she usually chose to "work" on me.

But, tonight I was prepared.

I'd read the *Watchtower* magazine she made Mom mail me, I knew some significant verses I could throw around like a name dropper at a cocktail party,

and I brushed up on The Great Teacher, a book she'd made me read every year since I was six.

Yes, sirree, I was prepared for anything except a discussion on death. She chose death as the evening's topic.

Grandma hummed while I plucked hairs from her chin.

I sat in her lap, and with a pair of tweezers, I pulled the long, gray hairs that grew from the mole on her chin. She said her eyes weren't sharp enough for her to see them, but my young eyes could see the "hair on a fly." I always giggled at that.

It never occurred to me that pulling chin hairs was unusual. It was just one of the things I did with her. One of the things we did.

Grandma hummed while I picked hairs from her chin, even when I gave one a good yank. She never winced.

Only years later, when I started plucking my eyebrows, did I realize I had caused her pain.

Grandma hummed while I plucked hairs from her chin, and I hummed right along with her.

When des - erts blo - som as the rose
And from parched ground fresh wa - ter flows,

"'A name is better than good oil, and the day of death than the day of one's being born.' Someday, the dead will arise, and I'll be with them. I hope my family will be among the blessed; you'll be among the blessed."

"You've been around so long, I don't think you'll ever die."

"I'm not a spring chicken anymore."

"I wish you wouldn't talk about it." Life without her sermons, phone calls, warnings to be careful; that life wouldn't be mine.

"Watcha cookin'?" I don't know why I bother to ask; she always cooked some chicken and dumplings — my mom's favorite.

I did not care for salted dough balls.

The table, too, was as I expected — orange and red tablecloth, bread & butter pickles, cornbread cooling in an iron skillet, glasses filled with chilled lemonade; bowl of potato salad, green onions, and kettle of greasy dumplings. And The Prayer.

"Dear Heavenly Father,

We come before you with bowed heads and humble hearts to give you thanks, praise, honor and glory for life itself.

We ask for your blessing upon this food for the nourishment of our bodies.

We thank you for this rare chance to come before you as family and to share in your blessings.

We love you and praise your name, Jehovah.

In the name of your Son,
 Jesus Christ, The Great Ransomer,
 Amen."

She had that prayer down to a science; not a word ever varied. So much for telling a six-year-old great-granddaughter that prayers should come from the heart and not the head. When I had tried that, silence came from my heart; words came from my head.

Twelve years later, I had my evening prayer down to a science, as well:

"Jehovah God the Almighty,

I thank you for a bed to sleep in, food to eat and a roof over my head.

I thank you for my mother and father, my sisters and brother,
 Grandma, all my friends, all the people on earth and *all* living things.

I beg and ask for your forgiveness for all my sins, and I ask you to help me make fewer mistakes in the future.

I pray that you will protect us through another night and day, and help us to have a good day tomorrow.

I love you dear God.

In the name of your Son,
 Jesus Christ,
 Amen."

She sang loudly in church.

Although She always hummed or sang softly around the house, Grandma enjoyed singing in church. It was her way of pleasing the Lord.

"If God hadn't wanted people to sing," She would say, "He wouldn't have given us lungs."

She sang at home to practice for Sunday. When the time came to open the hymnals, She was the first to "rise in song."

Every Sunday, I patiently waited to hear our song. The congregation didn't sing it very often — maybe, only once or twice a year. But, when they did, I almost beat Grandma standing up.

She sang loudly in church, and some of the brothers and sisters would turn and look.

As I grew older, I noticed the looks when Grandma began to sing. Little kids would point; some would giggle. She just kept right on singing.

I was embarrassed; she seemed unafraid.

One of the elders even asked Sister Sally to sing more quietly.

She sang loudly in church after that, but I almost whispered the words.

When lame ones leap just like the heart,
 When loved ones ne - ver have to part —

Grandma sat quietly pulling boiled shreds of leg meat, wing meat and

thigh meat off the chicken's scrawny bones. Afterwards, she licked the grease from her fingertips.

"The potato salad and cornbread were delicious. You haven't lost your touch."

I managed to choke three balls down and eat a lot of cornbread smothered in chicken juice. Not as bad as I expected.

"Don't you dare wash up. It gives me something to do. Just get on home now before it gets dark." Grandma had visions of me being raped and mutilated as soon as the sun edged over the horizon. She would call Mom twice before I had time to get home.

"I'll call before I go back to school."

"Love ya. Remember, 'Honor thy father and mother and your days shall be prolonged upon earth.'"

"Love you, too."

I bent to kiss her powdered cheek before locking the door. It shut with a satisfying "click." I worried about her accidentally leaving the door unlocked or forgetting to close the sliding-glass door.

She waved from the window as my car pulled away.

I couldn't play the radio in the car.

According to Grandma, the songs they played on the radio were "heathen music." She didn't even approve of Mom's favorite Country and Western songs.

She would reach across me and turn it off, no matter what song or program was playing. She preferred to sit in silence or to talk to Mom about the people passing cars.

I couldn't play the radio in the car, but I usually fell asleep to her soft humming.

Such blessed times you'll realize

If you keep your eyes on the prize.

I sang to the car radio.

When I got my driver's license, I would spend hours just driving through the country, alone.

The car seemed to vibrate with the drum beat. My ears would ache, but my toes and fingers would bounce along with the rhythm.

I sang to the car radio, because no one could hear me.

At stop lights, I would look at the people next to me and keep right on singing. There was a sense of freedom in singing, even though they couldn't hear me.

I held nothing back. My voice would ricochet from window to window, trying to get out.

I sang to the car radio, when I was alone.

When tongues of dumb ones speak again,

When old ones will be young a - gain,

A professor found me in the library one week later. A family emergency, he said. I needed to go to the emergency room at Methodist Hospital. No more information.

Mom was sitting in a hard, rubber waiting room chair. Mascara ran down her face in a muddy stream.

"She's all I have besides you kids. She's all I have."

Grandma.

"She raised me when no one else would. She's all I have." That confirms it. Grandma had taken Mom in after her parents were divorced and raised her like her own child, instead of her granddaughter.

Near hysterics, Mom could tell me nothing, except that she was sorry for getting aggravated; sorry for being impatient, sorry for calling only twice a day; Grandma should never have moved out; she was all alone when it happened, all alone.

She had moved out of our house after seven years, because of the arguments and tension she caused between my parents. It was her own decision, though; Mom had not pushed her out.

"What's wrong? Where is she? Can I see her?"

Mom, still mumbling under her breath and rocking back and forth, motioned toward a nurse going through doors marked "Personnel Only."

She didn't know the words.

Mom whispered in church. She either whispered or mouthed the words to every hymn.

Even standing right next to her, I've never heard her sing.

She didn't know the words, she said, even though she'd been going to the same church for over ten years.

Mom even mouthed the words to "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize," without looking at the hymnal.

Sometimes she would hum.

She said she didn't know the words, and I wondered why.

When earth will yield her rich in - crease

And all good things will nev - er cease.

Mom told me she couldn't sing.

When she was seven, she had to stand up in front of her second-grade class and sing the National Anthem. She began, "My country 'tis of thee," but that's as far as she got.

The rest of the class laughed; she went home to Grandma in tears.

Although Grandma said it didn't matter what the other kids thought, it mattered.

Mom told me she couldn't sing, when I asked her why she never joined us —

why she rarely even hummed.

I was only six when she told me her story, but I remember the tears in her eyes. Her voice broke twice, and she hugged me tight.

Mom told me she couldn't sing, and I felt sorry for the joy she missed.

*When songs of chil - dren fill the air,
When joy and peace are ev - 'ry-where,*

Grandma was lying on an elevated examining table. White lights glared off her white hospital gown and white cheeks, showing the fat veins running through her forehead. A red beep sounded from the machine behind her head.

Breath wheezed through her lips, causing her body to jerk in spasms with the effort.

A stroke.

Gray hair so thin it barely covered her scalp had escaped from the bun she always wore. No lipstick, even the powder was gone.

My hands shook as I straightened her hair. The Alberto VO5 she always said I should use, made the strands easy to replace. I wiped the grease on my jeans, but my fingers remained oily for hours.

Curled up like that she looked like a bundle of discarded rags. Her body only covered about half the table; her toes didn't even reach the edge.

She was cold. Her fingertips were turning blue.

Behind the curtain, a man screamed in pain. I was thankful she was unconscious.

I kissed her forehead and whispered, "I love you. Good-bye, Grandma."
I was afraid to wait to say my good-byes.

I didn't know the words.

I went on a church hayride with my friends, and enjoyed listening to them sing. They sang "Jesus Loves Me," and "I've Been Redeemed."

Each person led a verse, most of which were used over and over again. Every person took a turn, except me. I was afraid to sing religious songs that were not in our hymnal.

I didn't know the words, because I had never heard the songs before. I learned by repetition.

"I've been redeemed (I've been redeemed)

By the blood of the land (By the blood of the land)

I've been redeemed (I've been redeemed)

By the blood of the laaaaaand.

I've been redeemed by the blood of the land,

Filled with the Holy Ghost I am

All my sins are washed away. I've been redeemed.

(I've been redeemed.)"

I didn't even know what the Holy Ghost was, and I'd never been baptized.

I didn't know the words, because they meant nothing to me.

Then, too, you'll see the dead a - rise,
If you keep your eyes on the prize!

An ambulance took her back to our local hospital. Methodist could do nothing for her; she was going to die.

The vigil began.

The Witnesses were there en masse. They hardly left any room near the bed for family to squeeze through.

Mom was right; they had done a lot for her through the years. But, it seemed to me that they had taken away some of the joy, as well.

I remembered not having a Christmas tree when Grandma lived with us. She was afraid a Witness would drive by and see her celebrating a holiday. That was cause enough to be disfellowshipped.

I never believed in Santa Claus, because for us Santa could never exist.

Mom bought presents and made sure we got them near Christmas, because she didn't want us to be different from the other kids. I felt different every time the holiday season rolled around. Strangely enough, at that time of year, I had more in common with the Jewish students than any others. The Witnesses were not very tolerant of Jews.

Carolers were ignored at our house. Even after years of not going to church with Grandma, I still don't know the words to most Christmas carols. I was, however, one of the few nine-year-olds to know every verse of *Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer*, *Frosty the Snowman* and the Who's carol from the *Grinch Who Stole Christmas*.

I watched a lot of television during the holidays.

I remember going door-to-door with them, trying to sell literature for a dime.

"I'd like to talk to you about Jehovah God the Almighty."

"Sorry, not today."

"You people have a hell-of-a-sense of timing."

"Get the fuck out of my yard."

For hours on end, Grandma (in her 80's) would walk up and down the streets, putting in her time "witnessing." Her feet and back would ache, but she kept right on, door-to-door.

The elders said age shouldn't interfere with a witness' work. The elders were only in their 40's.

Now, here they were trying to ease the sister's death, when they had done so little to ease her life.

I spent hours rubbing her feet.

The odor of old feet and wrinkled flesh filled the small room where my Grandma slept.

The smell of wrinkled flesh penetrated the walls of Grandma's room; just as the smell of newborn skin fills a nursery. (Enter either with your eyes closed and

you immediately know where you are.)

I'm not talking about the sickroom smell of a person slowly dying. And I'm not talking about the smell of lilac powder or violet perfume. Hers was the smell of tired skin and feet that had worked hard for eighty years.

I spent hours rubbing her feet — pulling off dead skin, buffing away callouses and clipping away corns.

At these times, the smell of old flesh burned the inside of my nose, like the smell of a baby's urine mixed with talcum powder burns.

It wasn't unpleasant; I enjoyed it. I was only seven.

I spent hours rubbing her feet while She sat back in her rocker, softly singing.

When wolves and lambs will feed as one,
When bears and calves bask in the sun,

We spent hours holding her hand, waiting in the corridor for news. There was no hope.

We waited.

"You'd better come in the room now. I think it's time."

Relief swept through me, followed quickly by guilt. I didn't want her to die, but I wanted it to be over with.

Her breath was more ragged and less frequent than it had been in the emergency room. Not even death was going to be easy for her.

"Grandma, please don't leave us. Don't go," my sister was begging desperately, hoping to reach through.

"We're here Mom, we're all here."

Grandma cried out, once, and settled into what appeared to be a natural sleep. The doctor said she had stabilized some; this time it has been a false alarm.

We (great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren) filed back into the corridor, glancing tiredly at the red, foam-rubber chairs. Nothing to do but wait.

Dad went for food and coffee; Mom clung desperately to Grandma's hand. Her tears were dried up for now; she struggled for control.

"I'm here, Mom. I won't leave you alone; I know you don't like to be alone," Mom muttered over and over.

Mom hummed quietly to soothe the sleep of the dying. I didn't hear her until I bent over to offer her a Coke. No one else heard her, including the Brothers sitting on the other side of the bed.

The lights in the hall were so bright, I was beginning to see spots. Even my eyelashes hurt near the base. Rubbing did not help.

I looked horrible, as did the rest of the family. The Witnesses just kept coming in, though, as fresh as daisies. They had it all worked out in shifts. Every time I went to the bathroom, I stumbled across one of them repairing her make-up or getting off the nearby elevator.

I had been at the hospital 12 hours, so far.

One of them even tried to sell me literature down in the lobby. I guess she didn't realize who I was.

I borrowed a hymnal from one of the brothers. I took comfort in the words from familiar hymns, and read them aloud to Grandma.

The verse on the title page read, "Keep getting filled with the spirit, speaking to yourselves with psalms and praises to God and spiritual songs, singing and accompanying yourselves with music in your hearts to Jehovah." — Ephesians 5: 18,19.

That described Grandma; she had music in her heart.

The music was trapped in me.

I loved choir, and was never embarrassed to "sing out," until I found out I couldn't sing.

I had trouble singing the scale, and I had trouble singing alone, and I had trouble hitting the high notes.

The music was trapped in me, because I was unable to sing it the way it should be sung.

My choral director explained that I was flat most of the time.

After years of singing, I was now embarrassed to sing above a whisper.

I remember Mom's story, and realize that my inability to carry a tune was inherited.

Even to me, Grandma was no longer the best singer in the world; she was sharp most of the time.

The music was trapped in me, as it was trapped in Mom.

A mere young boy will lead them all,

And they will heed his child - ish call

This time it wasn't a false alarm.

She passed quietly, her breath softly humming through her lips; one tear accompanying another, trailing from the corner of her eye.

I don't know if she was conscious of anything before she died, but I hope she heard everyone else say, "Good-bye."

I hope she heard me tell her I'd see her in the new kingdom —the prize promised by God. I hope she heard Mom say how grateful she was and how much she'd miss her, despite the arguments.

"I am the resurrection and the life. The man who believes in me will live even though he dies, and every living person who puts his faith in me shall have ever lasting life."

"For the living are conscious that they will die; but as for the dead, they are conscious of nothing at all."

Ecclesiastes 9:5.

I remembered that one. She told me to take comfort in it. Cold comfort.

*When She died, I sang.
The stroke was almost painless, they said. At 85, her time had come. She
had lived a long life.*

I missed her.

*The brother who would be saying the final words at the funeral asked the
family if we wanted anything special. I requested our song; just like he was a
disc jockey asking for a dedication.*

When She died, I sang.

*Most of the church came to the funeral. They said how sorry they were.
Sister Sally would be missed. She was a great contribution to the congregation.*

*Brother Williams read from the Bible, said good-bye and asked the congre-
gation to join him in singing, "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize."*

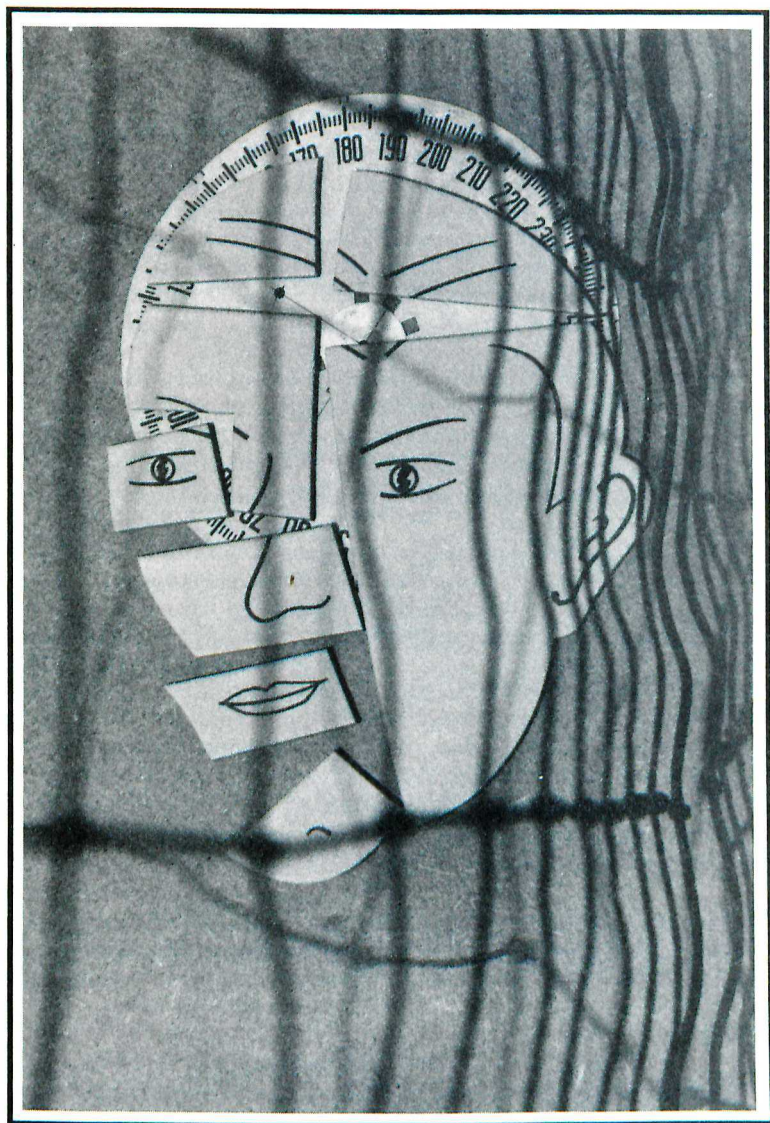
Mom sat quietly throughout the song.

*As they sang, I slowly stood up. Through my tears, and despite the watching
congregation, I sang our song one last time.*

I did not whisper.

When She died, I sang.

*When tears be - long to yes - ter - day,
When fears and pain have passed a - way,
You'll see how God these things sup - plies,
If you keep your eyes on the prize!*



By Charley Adams

-Poem-

by Catherine Mason

There's a
stone
under water

The water
presses
down

Pressing down
upon
my body

My body
makes
the sound

A sound
like the
metal

Metal which
cuts
into the
red

The red that
is
my life

The life
above
the wave

Faith

by Kenny Shepard

I heard the egg crack as Mom split it against the side of the silver skillet. The noise was barely audible over Dad's growlish yawn, but we both heard it. Had Dad and I not been so sleepy, we might've been more surprised by this unusual addition to our breakfast menu; we could count on a hand and a half the mornings we tasted eggs. Mom made a career out of quick and easy breakfasts, and eggs fell into neither category. Double Stuff Oreos, chocolate fudge Pop Tarts, tomatoes with mayonnaise, raisin bars, and orange sherbet had touched our breakfast palate, but eggs? This was truly unusual.

Instantly, Dad and I almost telepathically ran through the calendar in our minds; it was neither of our birthdays or Faith's. The egg mystery was too perplexing to ponder at 7:30 in the morning. Then, as I opened the fridge door to fetch an RC Cola, the light, like a theater spotlight focused on the answer: bare shelves; Mom was blatantly out of everything else but French onion dip, left-over pizza, cola, Kool-Aid- and eggs.

The fridge light, like a neon sign in our dark kitchen, pulled Dad's eyes toward the desolate shelves. "We are out of grapefruit juice?" he asked, the pitch in his voice now much higher than his morning yawns. As the timid words came out, I knew he wished he was eating them for breakfast instead of scrambled eggs — with or without his usual juice.

Quickly, Mom's long pony tail bobbed as her head flipped to face Dad. Like a volcano, a long list of accomplishments erupted as Mom explained all she had done for the week. Grocery shopping and cooking weren't mentioned, but somewhere between the "beauty-shop" and "playing chauffeur," she had proven her worth to us and to herself. At the completion of the monologue she paused, realized her height advantage, drew in a big breath and added: "Not that it's a chore, and not that I don't enjoy helping her, but to add to the list, I've got five days left before Faith-Ann's pageant."

I looked at Dad out of the corner of my eye and awaited his heavy sighs, the usual reaction to Mom's pageant reminders; this time, none came. I guess he had become immune to the idea now. With eleven straight titles in two years of competition, what was one more?

Dad settled for cherry Kool-Aid with his eggs that morning. Unfortunately — the Kool-Aid pitcher was sporting the only grin at the table.

With Dad at the office and me in my room getting ready for school, Mom was in her element. Now it was the time to wake the queen, the little beauty queen, that is. Crossing the threshold of Faith's room was like Dorothy's first step into Oz: from drab to technicolor. Even the beige carpeting in the hallway magically

converted to mauve as Faith's door was opened. A glimpse of mauve, rose, and periwinkle blue was rarely seen as I passed by Faith's next-door room on my way to the bathroom; since her vocal coach had suggested a vaporizer in her room closed. Faith's coach couldn't stress enough the importance of early placement skills; of course, Mom agreed.

A bookcase from the living room now sat in Faith's room overflowing with awards; sparkling inside was a shrine of trophies, crowns, sceptors, and glossy photos. When she won her first pageant at four, the trophy was taller than her, but now that she was a big girl of six, she was learning to hold flowers and a trophy simultaneously with ease. Across from the trophy case, a long ballet barre stretched across the right side of the room. Here, an adjacent mirror covered the entire wall. Although it made the room look bigger, its intended purpose was to help Faith study her line during *plies* and *tendus*. Her ballet instructor said she was too young to go *en pointe* but assured Mom she was a great talent. Her teacher even made her a cassette tape of exercises to do on Tuesdays and Thursdays when the class was off. Mom's cliché philosophy was "twice the practice meant twice the talent."

Faith's canopy bed occupied the far wall between the bookcase and the barre. Here, sheer pink layers of material surrounded her from all possible angles as she slept. Dad wondered if the double bed wasn't too big for such a tiny girl, but Mom convinced him she'd grow into it soon enough. Through the pink netting strewn from the top of the canopy, Faith looked like a china doll carefully placed among the rose and blue pillows for decoration; Mom said she looked like a miniature Sleeping Beauty.

Through the wall that separated our rooms, I heard the usual morning greeting: "Rise and shine, Faith-Ann. Time to face the day." Mom added "Ann" to Faith's name two years ago after she won her first pageant title, "Little Miss America." Mom noticed all the other girls in the finals had two first names: Susan-Beverly Anderson, Laura-Lee Haynes, Katy-Marie Collins. These girls were all top contenders, but even with only one first name Faith had beaten them all on her first try. Two months later, Faith Spencer, "Little Miss America" was Faith-Ann Spencer, "Mid-West Miss."

Mom assured Dad and me no one would check her birth certificate. "Besides," she told us, "I don't think Faith Inez will win many pageants for us." Naming Faith after rich, old Aunt Inez MacAllister before she died was a touching gesture on Mom's part; we realized just how touched Aunt Inez was at the reading of the will. When Faith was born, how was Mom to know she'd be a three-named beauty queen?

Just as Faith's name had been altered for commercial reasons, so was her appearance. Mom highlighted her strawberry hair every couple of months or so, especially before a competition. When Mom applied the bleach for the first time, she accidentally globbed on a huge chunk at the crown of Faith's head; for two months, she had to disguise her obvious faux pas with a braided pony tail or bun whenever Faith went to nursery school or to a lesson. Eventually, though, she learned to paint Faith's hair with the skill of an artist creating a living masterpiece.

At ribbon cuttings, mall exhibitions, or pageants, Mom would apply green to Faith's eyelids and rose to her cheeks. Then, she'd go to work on Faith's freckles, covering the ones around her eyes, accenting the ones on her nose with an eyebrow pencil. At every public appearance and especially for contests, Mom would meticulously go through the ritual of bathing her, painting her, hot rolling her hair, and attaching huge hair bows and a sash from her latest competition. Finally, Faith's most recent crown would be carefully fixed in her hair with combs instantly transforming Faith to Faith-Ann — child royalty.

As I approached the doorway to Oz, I noticed that in her untarnished morning state, my sister really was a pretty little girl. I just wished she would have worn the Mickey Mouse nightshirt I bought her for Christmas instead of those silky pastel nightgowns Mom set out for her. I stood silently in the doorway as Faith mumbled something about school in a cranky voice; then, without missing her cue, Mom chimed in with the desired response. She explained to Faith that she wouldn't be going to school today and how the pageant Saturday meant a special week ahead. "Today," Mom explained, "we've got a fitting at eleven, a permanent at two, and a voice lesson at 4:30. Besides," she reminded, "which would you rather be — a scientist or a star?"

"A star, a star, a star!" Faith screamed, her sophisticated, shiny-pink gown moving as she jumped on her bed. Then, her infectious giggle gave her age away, her rapid-fire vibrato echoing against the makeshift trophy-case.

"I gotta catch my bus," I said, my neck straining to kiss Mom's cheek; she returned my peck with three quick pats on the head.

"Study hard, Theo."

Leaving Oz for academia, I approached the landing and heard Mom add, "There goes the scientist of the family." This time Mom joined Faith as they giggled together.

Scientist, maybe, but Mom knew I had set other career goals for my future. Dad and I talked at length and my junior high and high school curriculum was tentatively mapped out. I loved English and reading. Although I hadn't been to high school yet, I wanted to be a high school English teacher — the higher level the better. Give me a sentence, I'd diagram it; give me a play, I'd analyze it. When I told Mom I wanted to teach when I grew up, she said that was a fine idea and asked me to take out the trash. She tried to be interested, but Poe and past participles weren't up Mom's alley. She knew pageants and powder-puffs much more intimately.

Naturally, most of the time Dad and I were a team — taking turns making up stories before bedtime, seeing the summer drama series every year at Clyde Park, reading the newspaper together on Sunday mornings. Occasionally, though, Mom and I had our moments. She loved to take me shopping every August for new school clothes. She always knew what was best: "Greens and blues," she'd say. "Redheads should always stick to greens and blues. Someday, you'll have to pick out clothes by yourself and if you remember nothing else from me,

remember that."

One rainy morning when Mom's car was flooded, she kept Faith and me home from school. She said she'd educate us herself without books or chalkboards. First Faith and I received media education; Mom and the two of us laid on the couch together like pieces of a puzzle: Faith curled against Mom's belly in a fetal position while I rested my head on Mom's bony hip pillow. Together, we watched the soaps, the game shows, the talk shows, and we napped. When Faith got fidgety, Mom taught us tap on our hardwood living room floor. Mom used to dance in touring shows after high school and gave Faith lessons whenever she was feeling nostalgic. She put on Broadway albums from shows she toured in like 42nd Street and Damn Yankees; she'd always start with the basics, but by the end of the sessions she'd end up doing mad time-steps and trenches in front of the sofa. Faith would join in with the hoopla; her shuffle-ball-changes now flailing as she mimicked her mentor. Mom told Faith she had a big head start with her own resident tap instructor, and she was right. Mom was patient with Faith and had some real talent of her own. Before she married Dad she even made it to the final cut at Radio City Music Hall. As the rain pellets tapped against the living room window to fill in the gaps between Mom's final flaps and brushes, the record and the tap lesson ended.

Mom held each of us tightly as we climbed to the attic to continue our tutoring. Like rookie pirates reaching their fortune, Faith and I followed Mom's tug to the treasure chest. "In here are pictures of me when I was a tapper, Faith. Theo, help me with the lock, honey." Together our knuckles whitened as we pried open the rusty lock. With a final yank the top flew open and out popped a couple of yellowed envelopes with photos, and some dried up flowers, now crusty and brittle. Inside, the chest was overstuffed with photo albums, scrapbooks, some starched dresses, sequined costumes and yearbooks. Like an archaeologist's dig, at each level we found more fascination. Quickly, Mom plunged her hands down to the bottom skipping the top layers of trivia. "Here," she said. "Here's a hat they let me keep from *Anything Goes*." As she placed the silver-chipped chapeau on her head I noted a similar silverish gleam from her green eyes. "One forty-two," she recalled digging farther. "This was my audition number for the Rockettes. We had to fasten these on our leotards so they could tell us apart, Faith. Can you imagine — over a hundred and forty-two of us?!"

Mom continued to the bottom and surfaced for air with the prize in her hand: a cast shot of the summer-stock touring company of Kiss Me Kate. Mom was front and center of the black and white photo with knee popped and wide smile beaming at the camera. Mom's legs were bony and exposed underneath her short, shiny tap skirt; her tight-fitting bodice revealed her curves and cleavage. A high bun was neatly piled on top of Mom's head making her line longer; from the top of her hair to the arch of her character shoe she was every bit a glamour-girl. I continued to dig through the memorabilia as Mom brushed off the dust revealing the rest of the dance corps to Faith.

Underneath a pair of long white gloves I found another photo of Mom in a silver 8x10 frame. I never knew Mom had entered a pageant until that moment.

Mom was standing to the right of a crowned, glowing winner. This black and white photo had been retouched with color and Mom's cheeks and lips matched the red colored roses in her hands. She wore a light blue bathing suit with big straps, matching shoes and a hair bow on the side of her head. She was smiling, but not the same smile as in the other photo. This time her eyes looked distant, dull.

Behind me, Mom continued to relive the touring years with Faith. Quickly, I placed the photo in the trunk, closed the lid, and straddled the top rounded part of the chest, secure that I was literally sitting on Mom's secrets.

Our rainy day off from school was an educational one; Faith learned the shuffle-off-to-Buffalo, and I learned a great deal more.

* * * * *

Saturday, I awoke to find my navy suit staring at me as it hung on the outside knob of my closet door. Obviously, this was what I was wearing to Faith's pageant at Royer Hall — this, and a blue and green checkered tie taking up the excess between my feet and bedposts. Mom had been up since the crack of dawn to ensure everything went as planned.

Downstairs at the kitchen table, a note was placed on top of an old pizza box:

Boys — Reheat this pizza for your brunch.

Wear what I ironed for you. The pageant starts at 2:00. I'll save us seats in front.

Wish us luck! Mom and FA.

Dad and I obeyed and left home at ten after one. We didn't go to all of Faith's pageants, but Mom explained the importance of this particular competition the night before at dinner. If Faith won this one, her twelfth straight title, she'd be a contestant in a cable-televised pageant taped in California. The regional competition would be stiff, Mom told us, but she assured us Faith would win again. For weeks Faith had been rehearsing a new talent number and Mom had taken great efforts in finding a local seamstress who could construct the gown she designed.

At Royer Hall Dad and I spotted Mom instantly. She was standing in the third row and looked great. A new royal blue dress, bold scarf, and dramatic make-up accented her figure and face. Her hair was twisted in a tight knot behind her head; gold dripped from her pink flesh. She waved to Dad and me from across the hall as if we couldn't find her in the crowd. Then, seated in the center of us, she pointed out the television station reporter, cameras, and newspaper feature writer in the front row. Seated five rows back, the judges were in place with clipboards and pens in hand; I recognized nearly all of their stern faces from previous pageants.

Mom became fussy and sweaty as the hall filled with proud parents. "She's got it wrapped up," she told us and herself; then, as the lights dimmed, she turned to me, winked, and hummed a barely audible chorus of "California, Here I Come."

After a dozen or so tap dancers, some baton twirlers, and a clogger, it was Faith's turn for the talent portion. She walked with back straightened, hair stiffened, face painted, and freckles darkened, to her X on the stage. This time, Mom had truly outdone herself. Faith wore a navy rain slicker with white piping around the edges and carried a matching navy and white umbrella; a huge hair bow with white polka dots in a navy sea decorated her hair. When the pianist thumped out the opening chords of "Singin' in the Rain," the audience burst into applause, and as predicted, she was a hit. Naturally, a gracious, rehearsed nod followed her last belled note, and the applause crescendoed over the echo of her final E flat.

At intermission the blackness was gone and so was Mom, helping Faith change for the poise portion of the pageant. The next half of the competition was a parade of three and a half foot statues. Some wore cutesy crinolines. Others wore more sophisticated dresses; all were well-rehearsed and professional.

As the name "Faith-Ann Spencer" was called, Mom's fists tightened. Again, her creative flair impressed me as Faith took the stage. Slowly, like a resistant magnet, Faith glided to her x, her head cocked toward the row of judges. Center stage, she stood in fifth position and pivoted to face upstage, her head straining to look over her shoulder. The back of her pink gown had a small slit in back, so Faith remained facing backwards seconds longer than her competitors. As Dad and I exchanged glances across Mom's line of vision, her eyes remained transfixed, wide, teary.

A sigh of relief escaped from Mom as Faith successfully exited stage left. Then, she leaned back and remained silent until all the contestants regrouped for the announcement of the winners. Faith reappeared like a pink daisy springing up among a floral, pastel bouquet. The thirty-six contestants quickly assembled on risers, their hair-sprayed mini-bouffants sticking together. Faith strategically placed herself in the middle of the organized madness exactly where Mom had told her to stand; this way she could gracefully descend from her peers but not have such a trek that the audience would lose interest. Mom smiled seeing Faith's position, but her body stiffened; her teeth clenched in a forced smile.

Red lights from the cameras illuminated the first row as the tuxedoed emcee approached the podium. When he cleared his throat, Mom's hand squeezed mine. The second runner-up was announced, and it wasn't Faith; it was Laura-Lee Haynes, a girl Faith had beaten six times earlier this year in competition.

"The first runner-up, winner of a five hundred dollar scholarship fund, and a six month modeling contract — is Ellen-Kaye Thomas!" the man said smiling, not caring that his pace was setting the rate of Mom's heartbeat.

"And now," he continued, "winner of a one thousand dollar scholarship fund, one year, renewable modeling contract, and chance to compete in California's national pageant next month — the new 'Miss Junior Mid-West' is Susan Beverly Anderson!"

As the words blared through the sound system, Mom's long painted nails dug deeply into my flesh. The crowd around us cheered as the black-haired baton twirler moved toward her talent trophy and crown. Dad and I stared at Faith to

try to read a reaction as Mom made a quick exit in the blackness. Faith, still in fifth position was applauding, trying not to be distracted by the girl behind her yanking at the pink bow in her hair.

Curtain closed, lights up, Dad and I made a conservative dash for the car anticipating chaos and whining children about to invade the lobby. In the car I took my back seat position, and as usual stared at the pale scalp peeping through Dad's red hair. We sat and busied ourselves with listening to the radio, talking about how pretty Mom and Faith looked, and eventually, watching the families drive from the parking lot. Soon, Dad and I began staring out the back window watching the double doors for the girls' exit. I hoped Faith wasn't too embarrassed or upset and that Mom wasn't having trouble getting her to come to the car. Finally, a set of doors opened, and we caught a glimpse of Faith's pink dress, though her tiny hand was held by Mrs. Hughes, Laura-Lee's mother. When Mrs. Hughes spotted our car, she waved, and Dad hopped out to outstretch his arms to Faith. As quickly as her bony legs would carry her, Faith ran and leaped towards Dad's hands; she giggled wildly in his ear.

"I waited for Jeannie to pick up little Faith-Ann, and then I thought maybe you'd all be waiting out here," Laura-Lee's mother told Dad.

"I'm sure she'll be right along," he assured us all; then he thanked Mrs. Hughes for her trouble.

Inside the car, the three of us waited, laughing and playing peek-a-boo, twenty questions, and tournament patty-cake. When the parking lot lights finally came on I was glad I could finish my book. We all entertained ourselves realizing it might be a long wait until the passenger side was completely filled.

Finally, Dad's voice broke the silence as he summoned me to check on Mom. I knew this wouldn't be a pleasant task, but I was beginning to worry, and Faith would need to eat soon. As I shut the car door, I started my jog to the auditorium and wondered where to search first.

Inside the empty lobby, I heard my own voice echo against the walls. "Mom?" "Mo-om?" With no response, I began my search for the missing mother. First, I opened the heavy doors to the auditorium. With the crack of light I let in from the hallway I scanned the seats, again with no luck. Next, I tried the backstage area where Dad and I had seen mothers running during intermission: still, no Mom. Determined I would not leave the theater an orphan, I walked down an adjacent hallway marked "Restrooms." There, in the darkness, a rectangle of light started me as it flashed from behind the "Ladies" door; as my eyes focused, they spotted Mom's manicured hands slowly pushing from behind.

Silently, Mom approached me as I noticed her features emerging from shadows one by one. First, I saw her wrinkled dress, her scarf hanging limply from her neck. Then, as she came closer, I noticed a wadded tissue in one hand, a mangled program in the other. Finally, as she neared me, I saw her face: stale, but relaxed. Now, Mom's meticulous make-up was striped near her cheekbones, revealing white flesh between red rouge; obviously tears had rolled there during her visit to the ladies' room. Cosmetics had also been washed away from Mom's eyes at a time when she needed to disguise them most; red and swelled, they aged

her rather than pulled focus.

When Mom met me in the corridor, she tossed her soggy tissue in a nearby trash-can and simultaneously stuck her hand to me. Gripping it firmly, she took me with her, silently, slowly towards the illuminated exit sign. "How is she?" she finally asked, breaking the silence.

"She's great; she's laughing; I don't think it bothered her at all," I heard myself telling her, wondering if that was the right thing to say, trying to make everything better.

"Good," she said, squeezing my hand tighter, making me glad I had told her the truth.

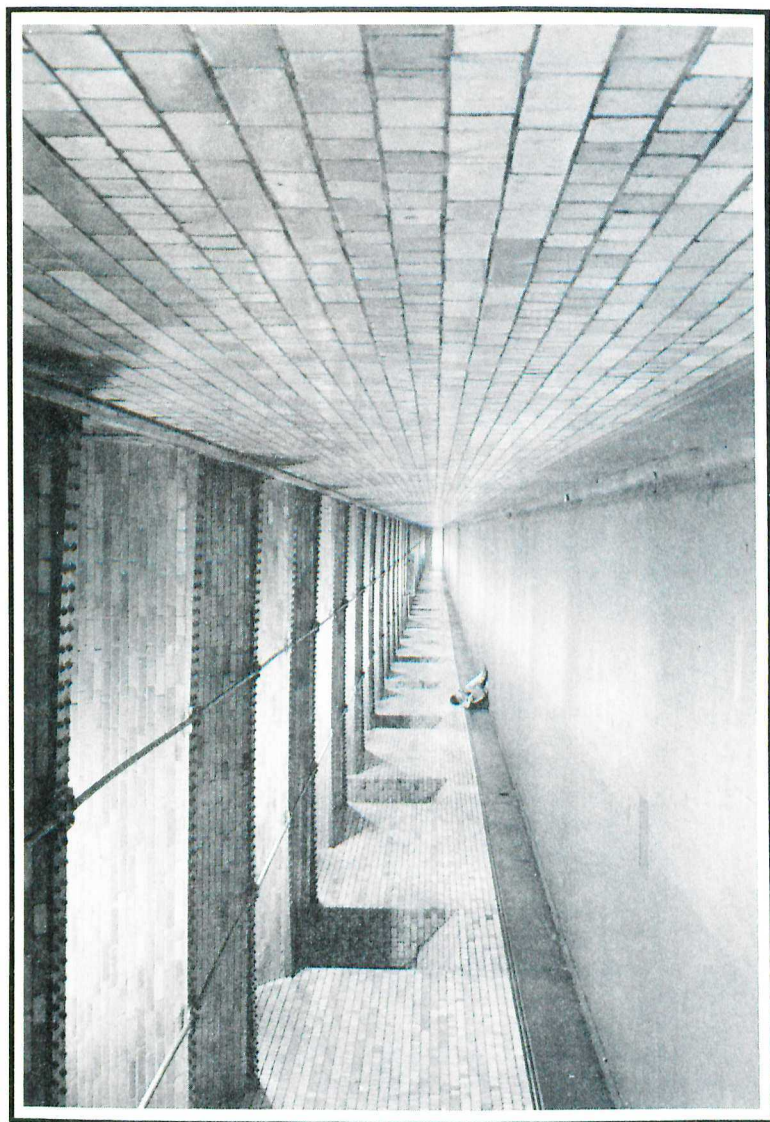
Just before we arrived at the exit, Mom stopped and faced me in the archway. "You know I love you, don't you, Theo?"

"I know," I answered, staring up at her puffiness. "I know you do."

* * * * *

On Sunday morning I smiled when I saw Faith wearing her Mickey Mouse nightshirt to the breakfast table. Dad and Faith and I were starving since Mom's headache the night before resulted in another ordered pizza for dinner. Mom had been to the store early that morning though, and we each were anxious for our unlikely, but hopefully tasty meal. After swear words, caused by burnt fingers, and some clinking of skillets, Mom grinned proudly as she placed some paper-thin pancakes, hard biscuits, and black toast on each of our three plates.

We each returned her hopeful smile; then we nodded in approval and swallowed hard.



2:00 AM
by **Tori Kensington**

Bourgeois Seasons

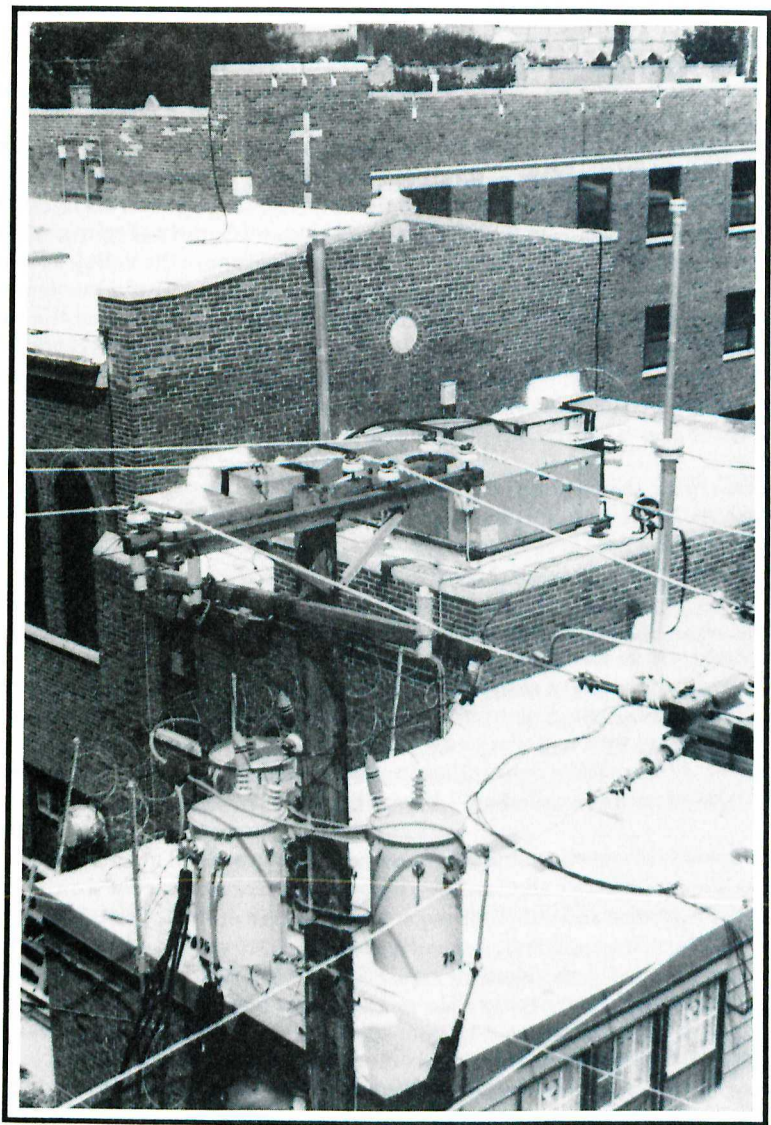
by Leigh Steele

Dark skies
Bare trees
Snow suffocated ground
Buried leaves
Decayed, brown, and gray
dead

Sunlit skies
Blossoming trees
Fresh grass
Open country
Floral pastels
Bright, light, and gray
New beginning
birth

Hot and humid air
Vibrant trees
Green, green, and more green
Branching out everywhere
Soft and fresh
adolescence

Wet and biting air
Dormant trees
Cluttered ground
Buried, burnt, grass
Yellow, orange, rust, red, and brown
Crispy, sleepy
adult
The unwelcoming of death.



By Charley Adams

Flying

by Chris Rowland

I am a climber, and I know that what I do is not special to anyone but myself, and other climbers who know. I climb because it puts me on the mountain, close to the sky, looking down upon the earth below — I become a part of the mountain and the mountains around it. I hang from the damp, cold granite feeling as large as the rock itself. Sometimes I look down upon the treetops in the valley between the mountains and can imagine flying. Sometimes my hand's hold loosens, but always my stomach wrenches, and I pull myself quickly back against the rock. Breathing heavily, cheek against the cold granite, my body knows it cannot fly. I know others who have flown though.

-The Acolyte-

I came to the mountains five years ago with my family. We drove out in the old white station wagon carrying the coolers, the kids, and Rex, the dog. I miss Rex. My wife did not leave him, though, when she left me.

It happened one day when I went with my partner, Luke, to climb a 5.9 called "Back-breaker" and came back to an empty campsite. I did not blame her for leaving, she and the kids had hung on as long as they could, but it was the end of summer and school was starting soon, so they had to leave.

I stayed and moved in with Luke. He had an extra sleeping bag and enough room in his tent to accommodate me. Neither of us had much money so we would collect aluminum cans and work odd jobs to buy food or replace any worn out equipment. We were the typical climbing bums, which is what people who had jobs, and liked to climb, called us — because they could not do it as often as they liked.

We lived fairly comfortably. If we had any extra cash left after buying food and gear we would invite all the other climbers over for a beer. We would all sit around the campfire and tell climbing stories or laugh at the tourists driving by in their white station wagons. I usually stayed pretty quiet in the beginning, listening, unless someone asked me a question. I was still an acolyte to climbing from everyone else's perspective. The new guys are always treated as if they are going to muck-up (that's my euphemism for "fuck-up") at the cost of their partner's life. Luke knew what he was doing, though; he kept me in line and did not make me do anything he did not think I could do. He had already lost one partner.

Earlier that summer, before I came to the mountains with my family, Luke's first partner had begun soloing, climbing without a partner or protection. It

always happens that way when someone gets really good, and Luke's partner, Matthew, was one of the best. They had done almost all of the most difficult climbs. When there was nothing left Matthew began soloing. He was on "The Crux," a climb he had done a thousand times, when he fell.

The story of Matthew is always the last story of the night at the campfire gatherings. Luke always tells it. He stares into the fire as if it is to be something to be studied, and slowly remembers.

"Matthew didn't fall," says Luke, "He flew off the rock face, arms spread like an eagle's wings, catching the air. His eyes were glazed and distant as if he were staring into another world, and there was a simple smile holding his lips closed. When his body hit the ground it was empty and limp — and I'll never know why." So now we call it flying whenever one of the best falls while soloing.

-Climbing-

Luke and I have been climbing now for five years. We know each others' moves as well as two experienced lovers. I no longer have to tell Luke what I want. When I move away from my protection he gives me slack on the rope and when I get stuck he coaxes me through. Our climbing conversation is succinct.

"Ready to climb?"

Harness, rope, rack — check. "Ready."

"On belay."

"Thanks, love," I say in my fake British accent.

I lead most of the time now, especially on the harder routes. Luke is a fantastic teacher but he seems to stop progressing after a certain point. He reaches his peak at 5.11, after that I lead. At first he was reluctant to let me, but I threatened to find another partner and he gave in.

We climb everything, migrating across the country as the weather changes. We split up and meet each other at the designated location at the designated time. Sometimes I go directly to it and others I take my time, maybe getting a job for a while to pay bus fare if I do not feel like hitchhiking. Always we meet happy to see each other and anxious to begin climbing. Once on one of those trips I went to where I used to live.

-Bare and Empty-

The house was empty. I broke into it and looked for any sign that I had once lived there with my children and wife. I walk through it wondering why they had left. In the boy's room there was nothing, not a scrap of assurance that they had ever been there, not even stray hangers in the closet. Their room no longer held the pungent, juxtaposed smells of youth and clean linen. In the room where my family had sat and watched TV together a window was busted, and the room smelled of urine. There was nothing in this house to remind me of my family. The kitchen had lost all the smells so familiar to family kitchens, and the garage no longer smelled of Rex, the dog. The hall echoed with my footsteps as I walked

from room to room searching for a memory.

I left the house and walked to the backyard, to the oaks where my hammock, also gone, had once hung. There I found a mound of earth with a cross next to it, on which the letters R-E-X in small, infantile script were written. I slid on my back, down an oak to the grass, where I sat staring at the only thing left of my family. An onslaught of memories kept me there for a long time. I returned to the house and wept on the floor of what used to be the bedroom I shared with my wife. It was as bare and empty as the rest of the house.

-Joshua Tree-

The next day I met with Luke in Joshua Tree. I had wanted to reach out and touch him for reassurance but he was anxious to begin climbing.

"Hey, Luke, haven't you ever been close to marriage?"

I cut in on the explanation he always gave before each climb. It was his warm-up. He would, in detail, explain the moves that were used most often on sections of each pitch. "There's a 5.13 move halfway up the second pitch, but if you move to the right a little you can reach a bomber hold and wedge up with your feet, but don't forget to attach to the bolt right before, underneath the overhang. If you don't mind I'll let you lead on the second pitch; I don't know if I can handle it." I usually never listen to his warm-ups, but I never told him to shut up either. They helped him gain confidence for the climb.

"No. Before you came along, though, I climbed with a girl I met in Boulder. She was pretty good, cute too."

"What happened to her?" I stopped walking, and was looking at a couple of climbers, husband and wife, I assumed, who had started up a moderately difficult 5.10 climb called "Widow-maker." I wondered if they knew what they were doing.

"She was a teacher; she had to go back to teaching." He has never known anything but the climb. There was no need to go into detail about my ex-family with him though, he had already heard it, and I had made a decision. He knew I had decided to leave them because of the boredom. I had much more to grow into than my family could offer.

-The Best-

No matter where we climbed the rest of the year we always come back to Eldorado Canyon in August. It was where Luke and I first met, and where Luke lost his first partner. We come back for more reasons than these though. We come back to Eldorado to meet with all the climbers we had known for the past five years. Some of the guys have families now, and do not climb anymore but they still return to see the gang and talk about old times. We all complain about the commercialization of the climbing world, and the sell-out of Chouinard — even though he still makes the best damned climbing equipment in the world.

We talk about the new type of climber that can best be described as punk rock

skate-boarders, or new wave surfers, who walked into a climbing shop by mistake — they were so impressed by the equipment they saw they had to find out how to use it. They are damn good too. These kids are climbing 5.11's by the end of the summer they begin to climb. Climbs have names like "The Radical Wave," or "Skate-Rat." We all get depressed and hence more drunk as we talk about it. It is the changing of the guard that we knew would happen. Yet, we always feel that we do it better than any of the new kids, and I know that I am one of the best.

There is not a new face around that does not know my name. I receive all my equipment free because the climbing companies know the kids watch me. I even had my picture in Outside Magazine with an article about my climbing career. I have climbed everything up to 5.13. There is no such thing as a 5.14.

Around the campfire everyone eventually passed out except Luke and me. We stayed up talking. Luke got a real concerned look on his face. I had never seen him look so matronly before so I figured it must be serious. "What's up partner?"

"I'm worried about you, Paul. You're beginning to act like Matthew before he flew." You never hear Luke say Matthew fell. "I'm getting some serious flashbacks, man, and they are not pleasant."

"Well, you know what they say, acid's the gift that keeps on giving."

"Jesus Christ, Paul! If I hadn't stopped you today you would have done that whole pitch without putting in any protection."

He was talking with his hands moving in a flurry. I could still see the chalk on them which he used to get a better grip. "What good is the damn rope if there isn't anything to hold it?"

"Maybe I don't need a rope anymore." The anger in his eyes caused me to look away.

"If you don't need a rope then you don't need a partner. I'll be damned if I'm going to watch another partner...." His voice trailed off. He got up and walked away.

-The Flight-

The next morning was the beginning of a beautiful, clear day. Walking to the first climb I planned I could hear the familiar sound of other campsites waking up; the muffled talk of people in their tents, and the hiss of camp-stoves heating water for oatmeal and coffee. Occasionally a squirrel would chatter at me as it hid in its tree. Luke was nowhere to be seen this morning so I left camp without him. This was a climb he and I had done a thousand times anyway. I knew it like I knew the back of my hand.

I got to the base of the rock and craned my neck to look at the familiar route up its face. I placed one hand against it. The granite was still cold and damp from the night before. I placed my fingers in the crack, pulled myself toward the rock and began. I had named this rock myself many years ago. It was called "The 13th Disciple." I knew if I ever soloed this would be the first of my climbs.

It was a 5.13 with many variations, but I move up it as if I am merely crawling on the floor. It is so easy. I can not find a new, more difficult route than the ones

I had already done.

I reach the crux of the climb which is an overhang that goes about fifteen feet from the face. I place a fist in the large fissure which I will use to get to the edge of the overhang. Fist over fist into the crack I move along the fissure to the edge. Now all I have to do is reach around the edge to the hand-hold with which I can pull myself up. I hesitate, hanging there, knowing I can do no further climbing without coming across what is already known. I look down into the valley below me. I know this time my stomach will not wrench on me; my fist loosens.

Everyone would like to believe that what they do is special, more so than anything anyone else will do. A long-distance runner wants to believe that only he knows the pleasure of operating at the same frequency the earth emits. Any thief will think he is the only one who will never get caught. Everyone wants to believe in his own immortality.

As I flew I saw Luke below. He was holding out his arms as if he could catch me. On his cheek was the glint of something wet. He would never know.



By Charley Adams

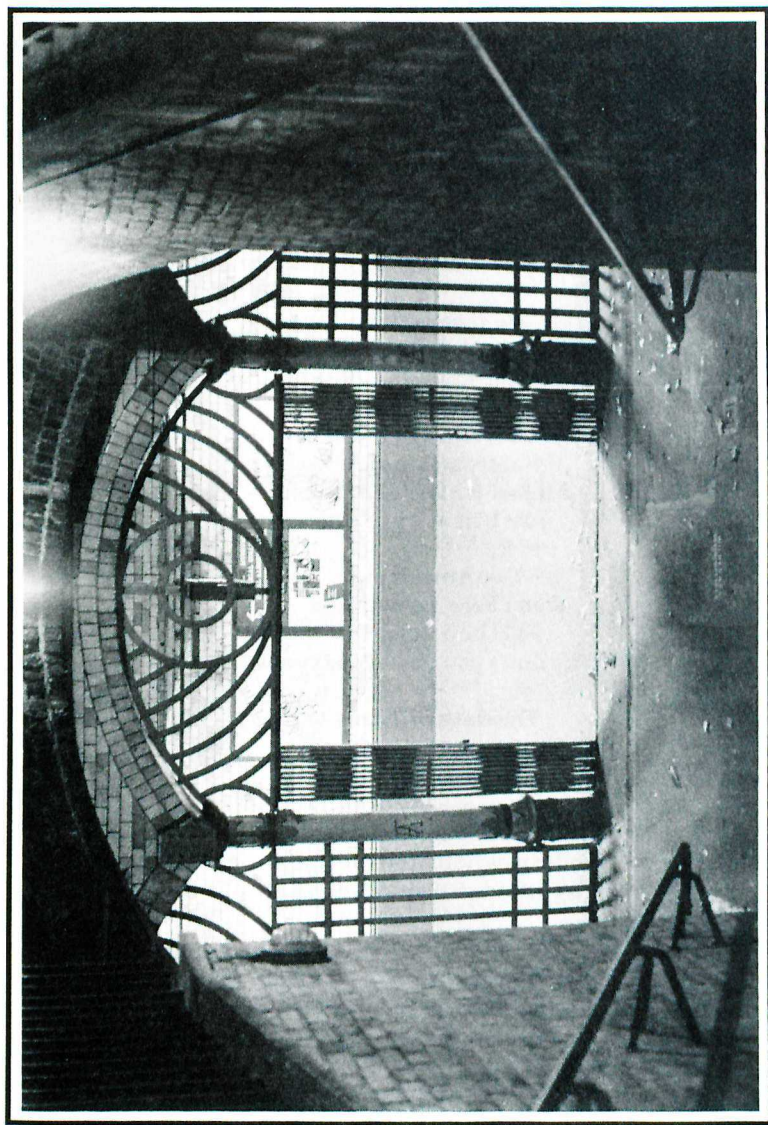
Overhead

by Linda Shay

There was a girl who once lived
overhead. She had a husband and a
stationary bicycle beside her bed.

After dinner, she would pedal,
and create a steady roar.
Sometime after midnight she would
moan and ask for more.

At the time, I had no boyfriend
and her life sounds made me wince,
but she moved with her husband and
her bicycle, and I've had two sweethearts
since.



South Kensington Station
by Tori Kensington

Primordial Spirits of Man

by Chris Rahe

The clash of Titans
Olympic ghosts
That still invade
Their earthly hosts
Breaking through our defenses
Under psychological pretenses
The primordial spirits of man

We always abuse
The same worn out excuse
Failing to see through
A natural ruse
Unseen phantoms
Subtly manipulate
All that we fear and hate
Just blame it on fate

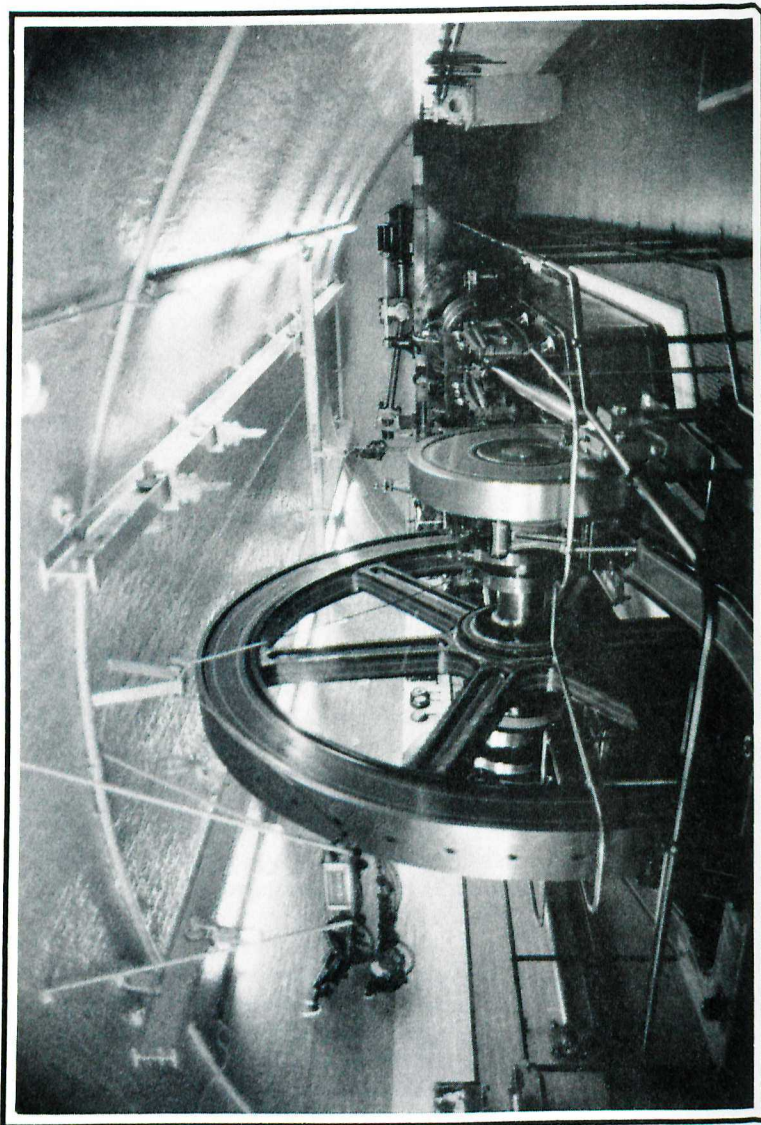
Don't insult me
Don't bore me with lies
Let honesty rule
Why don't you open your eyes

The clash of Titans
Olympic ghosts
That still invade
Their earthly hosts
Breaking through our defenses
Under psychological pretenses
The primordial spirits of man

We take it for granted
What's been mentally planted
Conditioned to be enchanted
By this and that "logy"
Always failing to see
All the powers that be
Working on levels cosmically

Don't insult me
Don't bore me with lies
Let honesty rule
Why don't you open your eyes

And see the primordial spirits of man
these spirits of man
from the dawn of time
spirits of man
somewhat sublime
SPIRITS



Dampf Machine

Absence

by Leigh Steele

Sad

Without the shimmering sheen
Of the silver screen

Because

The white light dims, seized by shadows
Without contrasting colour scheme
Fading creme additive smoothed on
Evil shrouds haunt the Facade Palace
Outside my stony gray flesh

Evan's World

By Kenny Shepard

Evan's white teeth matched the miniature police badge he wore on his t-shirt. He loved playing cops and robbers in his long yard stretching along his mother's driveway. The hot, black top was the perfect place for a chase scene and the ivy crawling along the asphalt made the nastiest of crashes comfortable. Although surrounded by dozens of neighborhood children, Evan was always left to create his own solitary games. Three doors down while the other Campbell Street seven-year-olds now congregated for a kickball game, Evan remained uninvited, at home, in his own circle of imaginary playmates.

Lined up neatly along the drive were blow-up clowns and cartoon villains punch bags. Evan's playmates for the day were perfect, punchable targets for his tiny fist or bicycle tire. After they had been physically punished for their crimes, the inflatable bad guys were hauled off to the dark jail cell conveniently located in Evan's garage. Here, they would serve a life sentence for at least ten minutes before Evan would proclaim them escaped.

Evan's mother, Katy, leaned against the kitchen window watching her son. She giggled, noticing his starch white hair standing on end like a porcupine; then, her eyes watered watching Evan slug an imaginary culprit in the face. As the Joker punching bag bobbed against the ivy, Evan turned to face the window abruptly. The distance between the Joker and Evan's mother was long, but Evan squinted to see her watery eyes. Somehow, he knew she'd be watching; she always seemed to be around when he needed her: for affection, for a hug, or in this case, for a quick round of applause.

Evan saw his mother's hands clap together behind the window. Her round, pale face was framed by stained glass fruit: a red apple, purple grapes, and a bright orange Evan had bought for her birthday last year. As Evan squinted further, he noticed his mother motioning him to come closer. Then, as he obeyed, she held up his favorite Saturday afternoon lunch: peanut butter, apricot jam, and banana sandwich, potato chips, and cherry-cola. Evan could barely see the bread from behind the mountain of rippled chips, but he knew his favorite meal was waiting for him.

Katy arose with the Sunday morning sunshine. Since her husband had moved out two years ago, she had only one breakfast to prepare besides her own. With toast toasting, and orange juice resting on the table, Katy climbed the stairs to awaken her son. She puckered hard and smooched Evan on his white cheek; then, she stayed close to his face. When his eyelids opened, they revealed blue eyes with sleep in the corners. When they focused on Katy's eyes, she knew he

was awake. She quietly whispered, "Breakfast," as if Evan needed a reminder to eat; he was always hungry.

With breakfast gone, Evan dressed for church. He hated to go, but trusted his mother that someday, he'd be happy he'd gone.

Evan's only enjoyment from the service was the "pre-show" activities. As usual, at fifteen minutes before the service began, Katy and Evan strolled hand in hand to the front pew. Here, Evan smelled the sweet fragrance of freshly cut roses. The Church's auxiliary chose the pulpit flower of the day each week, and Evan loved to second-guess them. Unlike other church-goers, Evan's least favorite service was Christmas. Undoubtedly, the auxiliary would chose odorless poinsettias for this annual service. At least on Easter, the women chose bright lilies for the day. They had more aroma than the Christmas flower, but they were big, bright, and had little stems peeking out at Evan's front row seat.

As the robe-clad minister approached the pulpit, organ music played, and the choir from the back of the church began their procession to the altar. As the singers brushed past Evan, he jumped; every week they startled him. Every week Katy clutched his tiny hand harder. A few minutes into the service Katy nudged Evan dozing next to her. When his eyes opened, he tried to pay attention to what Minister Howe was saying; soon, however, his eyes turned to every other direction of the church. He noticed the pastel hats on the old Charton sisters, the new cream colored dress Mrs. Wade was wearing, and the fancy gold-embossed lettering on the bald man's Bible behind him.

After surveying the worshipers, Evan felt his mother squeezing his hand. It was now time for the children to go to their Sunday-school lesson, while Minister Howe gave the weekly sermon. Simultaneously, Katy and Evan's eyes met, and without communicating, they understood each other. Again, Evan's head turned, this time to watch the boys and girls scurrying to the classes. The older children clutched Bibles in their hands, while the younger ones carried colored paper, crayons, and markers. As a red-headed boy about Evan's age passed the front pew, his huge Crayola box of crayons caught Evan's eye. Evan always wondered what all the boys and girls made whenever they brought their supplies with them. Following these Sundays, he was unusually eager to arrive at the church's lobby to see the bulletin board displaying all of their colorful creations.

Now, as his eyes focused on the tiny sharpener on the crayon box headed for the archway, Katy's grip loosened; Evan scooted in closer to his mother.

The week moved in as most others for Katy and Evan Ayers. Katy, up at five a.m. did some morning housework before preparing herself and her son for their prospective days. Soon, Katy would change from mother/cleaner to executive secretary. Her job downtown satisfied her in most every way except salary. She knew she couldn't expect much with only a year of college behind her, but she needed money to raise her son. Evan's father helped financially, but when his legal obligations were finished, he was finished with his family. Katy's husband was never ready to handle the challenges or pressures that came along with Evan, but since he had gone, the twosome had managed to survive. When he left and

moved out of state, he sent checks to Katy with no explanations, no letters, no messages to Evan. When Katy received the first check wrapped coldly in blank, white paper, she became even more determined to be not only mother and playmate for Evan, but now father as well.

This Monday morning, Katy finished some laundry, paid the thirty-dollar electric bill, selected the dinner meat to be thawed from the refrigerator, and hauled some trash out to the curb. Katy had been combining roles for so many months now, she had forgotten what she did every morning when the nuclear family numbered three.

With the morning duties finished, Katy yawned as she went to awaken her son. Opening the white blinds was always the best way to get Evan stirring. With a quick pull of the blinds' string, the morning sunlight would usually cast instant shadows in the boy's room. Katy's housekeeping skills were enough to make any full-time housewife envious, and Evan's white room was a perfect example. Like a hospital room, Evan's surroundings were clean, scrubbed, and white. White walls with a simple teddy-bear papered pattern above the chair-rail held pictures of bears at play. His white sheets and bed cover against the stark window blinds were simple decorating, but fresh and simple. Adding color to the bed were a one-eyed purple and white polka-dot giraffe and a long, yellow snake with bulging black eyes coiled now around Evan's sleeping head. From beneath his white blanket, a tuft of Evan's hair blended into the whiteness of the cover. Then, as Katy's hand released the blinds, his forehead and eyes emerged into the white world surrounding him.

As if he was sacrificing them, Evan moved his friends the snake and one-eyed giraffe to the side of the bed; he outstretched his arms to Katy. Hugging Evan tightly, Katy knew her life, for now, was full. When Evan's eyes focused on Katy's, she remembered for the countless time how dependent he was on her; her decisions structured his life. Not only was Katy Evan's set of parents, but she was his best friend, his rival at foot-races, his only guest at his sixth birthday party last year.

Katy knew Evan's life centered around her and she was beginning to reshape her days with this knowledge. A sigh of relief escaped from Katy whenever she opened an envelope from Evan's father. She always recognized his messy handwriting instantly, and her heart would begin to race. Twice a month, it was the same; her long nails would dig into the envelope as she'd say a quick prayer that the mailing would include only a check — a message from his father would only complicate Katy and Evan's comfortable duet.

With Evan dressed and fed, Katy and he squeezed into her tiny Toyota to begin their Monday morning. On their way to Evan's school, Katy zipped past other neighborhood first-graders at the corner bus stop. Neither Katy nor her son waved to the nameless students assembling near the stop sign; instead, Katy caught Evan's eye and winked at her son.

As always, Katy walked her son to his school's doorway and then greeted his teacher and her other few students. Today, as any other day, Evan gripped his mother's hand with intensity. Then, as he became more comfortable, he slowly

released her hand and headed for the Legos waiting for his creative hand across the room. Halfway to the blocks, Evan changed his course and ran back to Katy; She knelt as Evan kissed her goodbye.

On her way out the door, Katy noticed chipping paint and a dented gutter surrounding Evan's school; with half of her paycheck paying for Evan's education here, she wished the building looked a little more respectable. Still, Katy knew this was one of the only places for her Evan.

As usual, Katy arrived back at the school at 4:50 that afternoon. Katy always checked her watch when pulling into Evan's school; since his school had no bells to signify the end of class, Katy's only knowledge of when to begin looking for her son was her trusted Timex. Almost immediately, she spotted Evan's tiny, red Izod windbreaker turn the corner and pick up speed as he saw the curb-side Toyota. After a hard peck hit Katy's cheek, she pulled away and asked Evan if he wanted to go shopping; his bobbing, white bangs moving with his affirmative nod told Katy to drive to the mall.

Poe's was the favorite store of both members of the Ayers family. Katy liked the selection of professional dresses, and Evan loved the toys: intertwining train sets, dolls with real hair, red and blue soldier statues, and Matchbox cars and trucks of every color of the rainbow. Walking between the toy department aisles, Katy noticed her son's eyes widening, his pace quickening. Then, after every interesting toy had been examined, Katy and Evan took the escalator down to the better dresses. Evan used to be scared of the moving grills, but at the last trip to the mall, Katy taught Evan to coordinate his steps on the moving stairway. Now, Evan pulled his mother's arm to show off his new skill.

In the dress section, Katy rushed. She needed a few new outfits and usually the clearance rack had one or two items she could use. First, though, she checked some tags on other items: a navy dress with a white sailor collar, a black suit with a double-breasted jacket, a red and royal blue plaid skirt ensemble. Then, she hurried to the sales racks; she wanted to get out of the department store soon to get Evan's dinner. Katy grabbed a size nine, red pleated skirt for \$29.99 and decided to try it on at home; now, her thoughts were on feeding Evan's hungry mouth pork chops and a baked potato.

Suddenly, Katy noticed her skirt was in one hand, her purse in the other — Evan was gone. Immediately, she tossed the skirt on a nearby rack and frantically scanned the section. She then began asking sales clerks and shoppers if they had seen her son. Next, she again surveyed the dress department, ran frantically through the adjacent juniors department, and continued. She ran through the accessories area next, then skipped every other step on the escalator to the toys department, and eventually ended up again in the home-base of the better-dresses department.

Katy's heart raced, her palms and arm pits sweated, and her eyes welled with tears. At each stop she asked shoppers if they had seen her son. "A little boy?," she kept repeating. "Red jacket, white pants, and high tops — blond hair?" Each gave a disappointing shake of the head or a quick "sorry." An older woman asked what the boy's name was, but Katy had no time for pointless questions; she

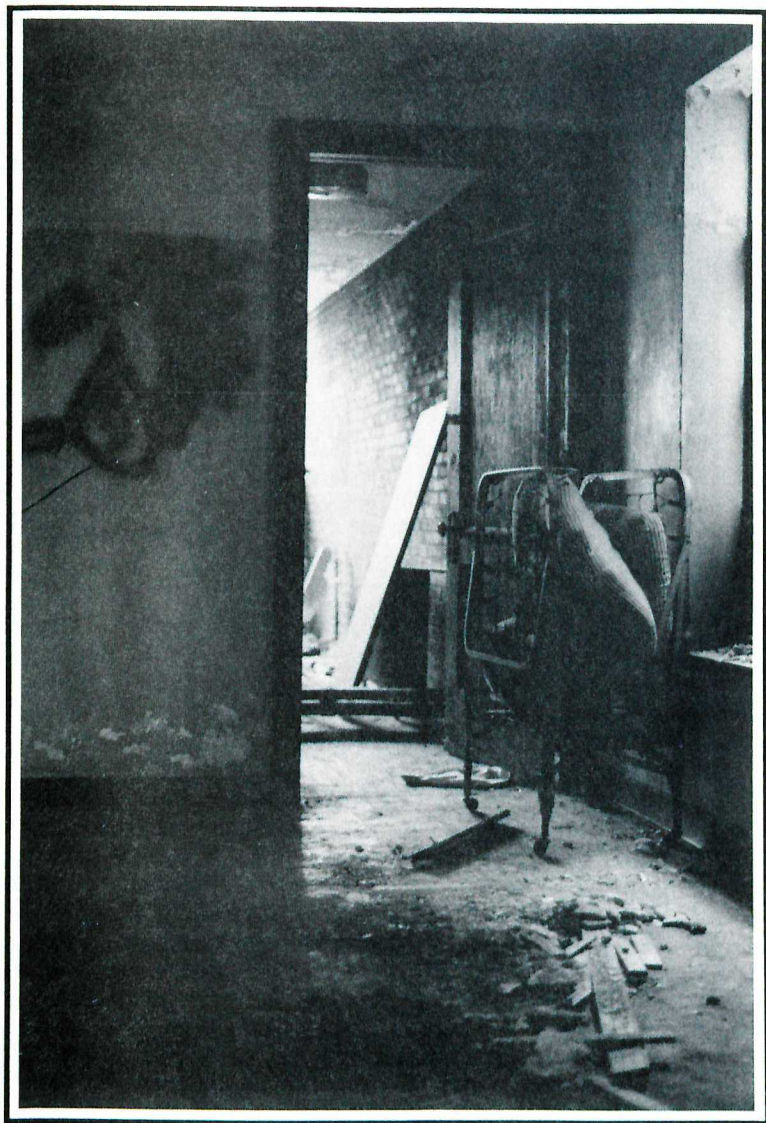
continued her jog, scanning behind tall racks. Finally, Katy found herself in the middle of the better-dresses section alone, crying, helpless. She rummaged her fingers through her hair, turned her head in each direction, and felt the warm tears falling down her cheeks. Fear filled her body; panic overtook her. She made circles around the dress racks where their hands had parted and thought about finding security personnel, anyone who could bring her son back to her.

Katy felt a sudden crash against her leg, and instantly the panic left her body. She whipped her head to see her son, his arms squeezing her leg, his eyes red from crying. She embraced her son harder than she ever had, and he held on tightly. Finally a spectacled saleswoman cleared her throat to get Katy's attention. Katy gratefully looked up from her crouched position and smiled.

"I kept asking his name, but he's a shy one," said the woman whose name tag read "Bernadette."

"Thank you," answered Katy wanting to be rid of her, to be out of the store, wanting only to be home now with her son. Still bent down by Evan, Katy pulled away slightly and looked him squarely in the eye. She tugged her arms loose from his clutch and brought them close to her chest. Using American Sign Language, Katy signed "let's go home?" to her son. He smiled and frantically nodded outstretching his arms again to his mother. She decided that's all she needed to tell her son for now and occupied her hands now scooping up her boy.

Evan's fingers intertwined around Katy's neck until she pushed through Poe's heavy doors. There, outside the store, and in his mother's arms he released his fingers; behind Katy's head, Evan smiled and signed a quick "thank you" to the clouds overhead.

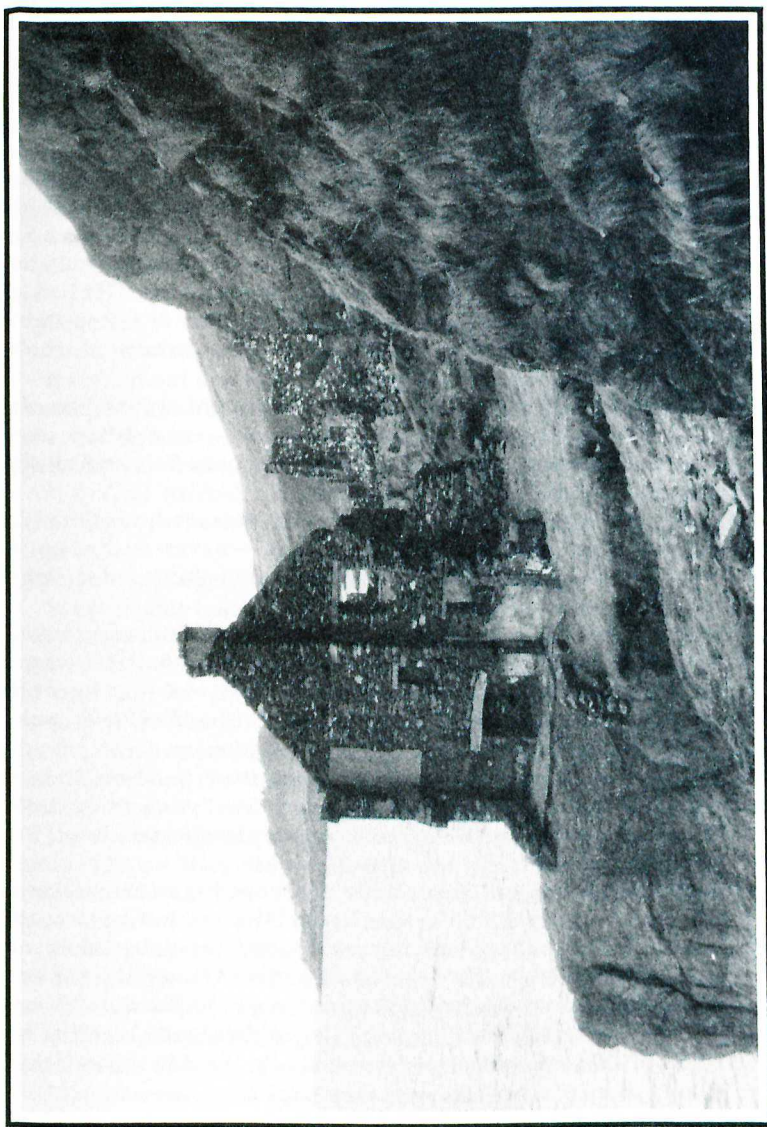


By Charley Adams

Oppression indiscreet

by Rebecca Horne

a nuance of a guided hand
and there are words you spill and you
try to wipe them up before i see
their sticky masses dry on our wooden
floor
and over us you hang those ancient fat purple
grapes
and they stain our white muslin walls
when they drip sickly sweet



By Charley Adams

The Outsiders

by Patrick Bates

Bill Rossetter, "Willie," was a buddy of mine in high school. We called him Willie, not because it was short for William, but because Willie Nelson was his idol. He'd drive around in his '67 Camero, a cigarette casually held between his lips, an American flag-designed bandanna sloppily folded and tied around his forehead, singing song after song of "Willie Nelson's Greatest Hits." He had an awesome stereo in that car. In the summer, he loved to stop at a stop light, windows down, and crank his stereo so loud that every other car around would know he was a Willie Nelson fan.

His black hair was long, touching his shoulders, with slight curls at the ends. He always wore a white t-shirt and the same blue jeans — so old they were practically white. Willie was the shortest of the group, only 5'6", and all the Budweisers he drank were taking their toll on his belly.

Andy Boberschmidt, "Stoner," got his nickname because he listened to heavy-metal, "stoney" music. He wasn't a stoney though — never touched pot in his life. He always wore those black Ozzy Osborne concert t-shirts and straight-leg Levis.

Stoner was the athletic one of the group. He stood 6'2", solid muscle. He was the only white boy in high school who could slam-dunk a basketball. He wasn't on the basketball team though — he never tried out. He was quiet — an introvert — around everybody except his friends. He was the kind of guy that never spoke to anyone, but, after a couple of beers, you couldn't shut him up.

Jack Kenny, "Rodney," was also a buddy of mine. We called him Rodney because he did the best Rodney Dangerfield impersonation I've ever heard. He could also do Jim Ignatowski from TAXI, as well as every teacher in school. But his Rodney was the best and it cracked us up every time.

Rodney was tall and skinny, not very athletic, and the youngest of three boys. His oldest brother was twelve years older than he, and the next brother was ten years older. All of Rodney's clothes were hand-me-downs from his brothers, and the fashions were all out of style. He'd wear bell-bottom Wrangler jeans and button-up shirts with big collars. But he didn't care — maybe he just didn't know any better. Other people called him a nerd, but they didn't know him like we knew him. He always wanted to make other people laugh. It didn't matter if they laughed with him or at him — just as long as they laughed.

I was the fourth person in the group, and we called ourselves the "Outsiders." There was a movie, maybe some of you remember, about a group of greasers who fit in with nobody but other greasers. Well, we didn't fit in with other people either. After all, we weren't jocks, we weren't nerds, we weren't stonies, we

weren't popular — we were just "everybody elses." We were the kind of guys who heard about the great party on Saturday night at so-and-so's two days after the fact — usually in the cafeteria during lunch on Monday. But we didn't care: we had each other, and that's all that mattered.

By the way, they called me "Rudy" after Rudy Valentino, the famous lover/lady-killer of film. But I wasn't a lady killer — none of us were. One night, after we saw a movie, we went to Noble Roman's to hang out. Willie, Stoner, Rodney and I saw these four blondes sitting at a table across the place. They were four of the most gorgeous babes we had ever seen. They had to be from Carmel — the prettiest girls were always from Carmel. We noticed they were looking our way, giggling and pointing. So the guys dared me to go over and ask this one girl her name and number. They promised me a case of beer if I'd do it.

So, what the hell, I did. As I neared the table I swore I had seen this one girl before.

She said, "Pat? Pat Bates? Oh my God!"

"Michelle? Michelle Misner? Oh my God!"

It turned out that this girl, Michelle, was my next-door neighbor when we were kids. We were best friends back then. We'd play for hours in her backyard on her swing set, and we even had our own fort, hidden beneath her pine tree. When she was seven, her family moved away, and I hadn't seen her since.

"My God, Michelle, I can't believe it! You've changed!" That little brown-haired tomboy who used to play tackle football with me now looked like Christie Brinkley.

"You've changed too, Pat."

We ended up talking for twenty minutes, and Willie, Stoner, and Rodney all sat at our table, staring at me in amazement the whole time. When the girls had to leave, Michelle scribbled her phone number on a Noble Roman's napkin and told me to call her. Then she kissed me on the cheek.

As I walked back to our table, man, was I cool. Those guys just stared at me with the dumbest looks on their faces. They couldn't believe what they had just seen. Right then, Stoner said, "Man, just like Rudy Valentino," and from that point on, "Rudy" stuck.

I never told the guys that the reason I stayed at the girls' table so long was because I knew Michelle — hell, that would spoil the whole thing. They really thought I had some kind of charm over women. They were amazed. I was riding high and loving it — and, I got a free case of beer.

That was summer, 1983, we were all 16 and had just finished our sophomore year of high school. We had all the time in the world and nothing to do. Those were the days when we would stay up until one a.m., usually at Stoner's, watching "R" rated skin flicks on late night Cinemax. If we were lucky, somebody's parents would go out of town. That meant only one thing: PARTY!

That summer, we had the party opportunity of a lifetime. Willie's parents left for Daytona Beach for a whole week of fun in the sun. We had a house! An empty house! Man, this was gonna be great.

Willie had other ideas, though. No way could he have us over night after

night; the neighbors would tell his parents. Besides, what if something valuable got broken? Willie's mom collected ceramic owls, and they were everywhere — on the fireplace mantle, on the coffee tables, even on the back of the toilet. Willie was sure something bad was going to happen, so PARTY WEEK at Willie's was cancelled.

But...Willie's parents owned a cabin in New Freedom, Indiana.

"Come on man, let's go there!" Stoner said. "Nobody'll know."

"Yeah, your parents are gone," Rodney said. "We can party at your cabin!"

This was even better than partying at Willie's. Why? Because we didn't have to go home and face our parents after slugging down six beers at Willie's. I don't know about the other guys, but my dad always waited up for me. I'd stumble in, smelling like a brewery, yawn and say, "I'm tired, goin' to bed. See you in the mornin'." It always worked, but he knew what I was up to. Parents aren't naive.

Anyway, we convinced Willie that partying at the cabin would be the ultimate. At first he didn't like the idea, but we convinced him otherwise. We'd have a weekend in the country...beer...no parents...in the summer...man, this was perfect. Nothing could hold us back, except — what do we tell our parents?

Roney, the brain of the group, came up with the most foolproof plan imaginable. "Let's tell them we're going to King's Island. Yeah. We can say we're all spending the night at Willie's on Friday so we can get an early start on Saturday morning. Then, let's tell them we're spending the night at a hotel because it'll be too late to drive home. We'll be home Sunday afternoon. It'll work, man, it'll work."

Thank god for Rodney's mind.

We all told our parents about our "weekend in Cincinnati," and, miraculously, they all consented. They trusted us. So that Friday afternoon, Stoner, Rodney, Willie and I all piled into Willie's green, rusted-out '67 Camero and headed south to New Freedom. All we bothered to pack were sleeping bags, hot dogs, Doritos — and four cases of Budweiser.

Driving to the cabin, all Willie wanted to play was his Willie Nelson tape. He sang right along with that twangy music in his own hickish voice. Songs like "Blue Eyes Cryin' in the Rain" and "Texas Rose" started to get on our nerves.

"Come on, man, let's hear some Ozzie," Stoner said. "I'm sick of this country shit."

"I got this new Rodney Dangerfield tape...."

"Just put it on KISS 99," I pleaded.

"It's my car," Willie laughed, clenching a cigarette in his teeth. "I'll play what I wanna play."

"Do some Rodney — anything to drown out this twangy shit," Stoner protested.

"Rodney! Rodney!" we all chimed in.

"I tell ya', when I was a kid, man was I ugly. My dad used to make me sleep naked in the kitchen to scare off the cockroaches."

Stoner had just taken a sip of his Coke, and laughed so hard the Coke spouted out of his nose.

"Watch it, man, you're messin' up my car!" Willie yelled. "Is there a towel back there?"

"My wife told me she wanted to have sex in the back seat of the car. She asked me if I'd drive. I tell ya', no respect, no respect at all."

Stoner and I laughed so hard we were rolling around on the floor of Willie's car.

"Cool it!" Willie shouted. He was so damned uptight. I guess he wasn't as keen on the idea of partying at his parent's cabin as we were. "We're here anyway."

As we pulled up the dirt road, cornfields were on both sides of us. The stalks hung out over the narrow road and brushed against the car. It was like one of those car washes where they let you stay in the car while it's being washed.

"There's the cabin," Willie said.

Cabin? Man, this was a *house*. A cabin is something Abe Lincoln grew up in — made of logs, with cool wooden floors and smoke curling out of the chimney. Willie's cabin had white aluminum siding, a patio deck with a bar-b-que grill, and all-weather furniture strewn about. There was a full bathroom, kitchen (with a microwave), two bedrooms, and a living room with a color T.V. set.

So much for my idea of roughing it. I had this romantic notion of life in a country cabin — of building a fire and roasting hot dogs; of staring at the stars and listening to the bullfrogs moan; of telling ghost stories so scary you'd piss your pants.

But no. We didn't have to build a campfire — we cooked our hot dogs in the microwave. There weren't any bullfrogs to listen to — there were, however, about 10 zillion mosquitos that lived on the green, slimy, dead-fish smelling pond. There was no need for telling stories about hideous, death-stalking monsters around a campfire — we had a T.V.

It was 7 p.m. on Friday when we had just finished unloading Willie's car. The sun was fading over the horizon, and the sky was a mesh of purple and orange. You never see a sunset like that in the city. It was quiet — no people, no cars, not even an airplane in the sky.

We were all sitting outside on the deck, listening to Ozzy Osborne (it was Stoner's box — he'd play what he wanted), drinking Budweisers and talking about which girls at school we'd sleep with if we could. Willie said, "It's time to sink the Bismark!"

We played this beer drinking game where you'd float a glass in a pitcher of beer, and everybody would pour a little beer in the glass. Whoever sank the glass had to chug the beer without stopping — if you stopped, you had to drink a second glass. It was a stupid game, but it was a quick way to get drunk.

So there we were, drinking and cussing and getting rowdy, listening to heavy metal music so loud we couldn't hear ourselves think. No wonder nobody heard the sheriff's car until its lights were beaming right at us.

"Shit, hide the beer! Hide the beer!" Willie half-whispered, half-screamed.

This man, about 50 years old, walked over to us with a German Shepherd by his side. "Howdy boys. Doin' a little partying, are ya'?"

We were busted. How could we get busted? Shit, it didn't matter how, but we got busted.

"Where's your mommies and daddies?" he asked in a sarcastic, condescending tone.

We were petrified. Nobody wanted to talk. Rodney started to cry. I didn't know what Stoner was feeling—nobody ever knew what Stoner was feeling. I just wished I was home smashing lightning bugs with my whiffle bat.

Willie spoke up, "They're comin' down in the mornin'."

Oh my God, he lied. How could he lie to a cop?

"I think you all better come with me to the station. You're gonna call your parents."

Oh no, no, no, no. This couldn't be happening. They think we're in Cincinnati. We're dead.

At the station, which was nothing like the friendly jail run by Andy Taylor in Mayberry, Stoner was the first to call home. It was 11 p.m. "Dad, you're not gonna believe this, but..."

Rodney was next. He was fighting back tears as he dialed, but nobody answered. "They unplug the phone after 10 p.m. so they can sleep," he explained to an unbelieving sheriff.

"Dad, I'm in some trouble..." I said when I called.

Willie called his older sister and pretended it was his mom.

The wait for our parents was unbelievable. The drive to New Freedom from Indianapolis was only an hour and a half, but it seemed like my dad took three days to get there. And my dad was the first to show up. Rodney rode home with me and my dad—thank god. My dad was silent the whole way home. I'd rather have the silent treatment than the yelling treatment. Willie and Stoner had to wait for Stoner's dad.

I got grounded for the rest of the summer. Hell, I couldn't even go to McDonald's with the guys.

Rodney wasn't punished all that bad. His parents had seen it all before with his two older brothers.

Stoner's dad just laughed and said, "I've done things a lot worse in my day." Stoner got off scott free.

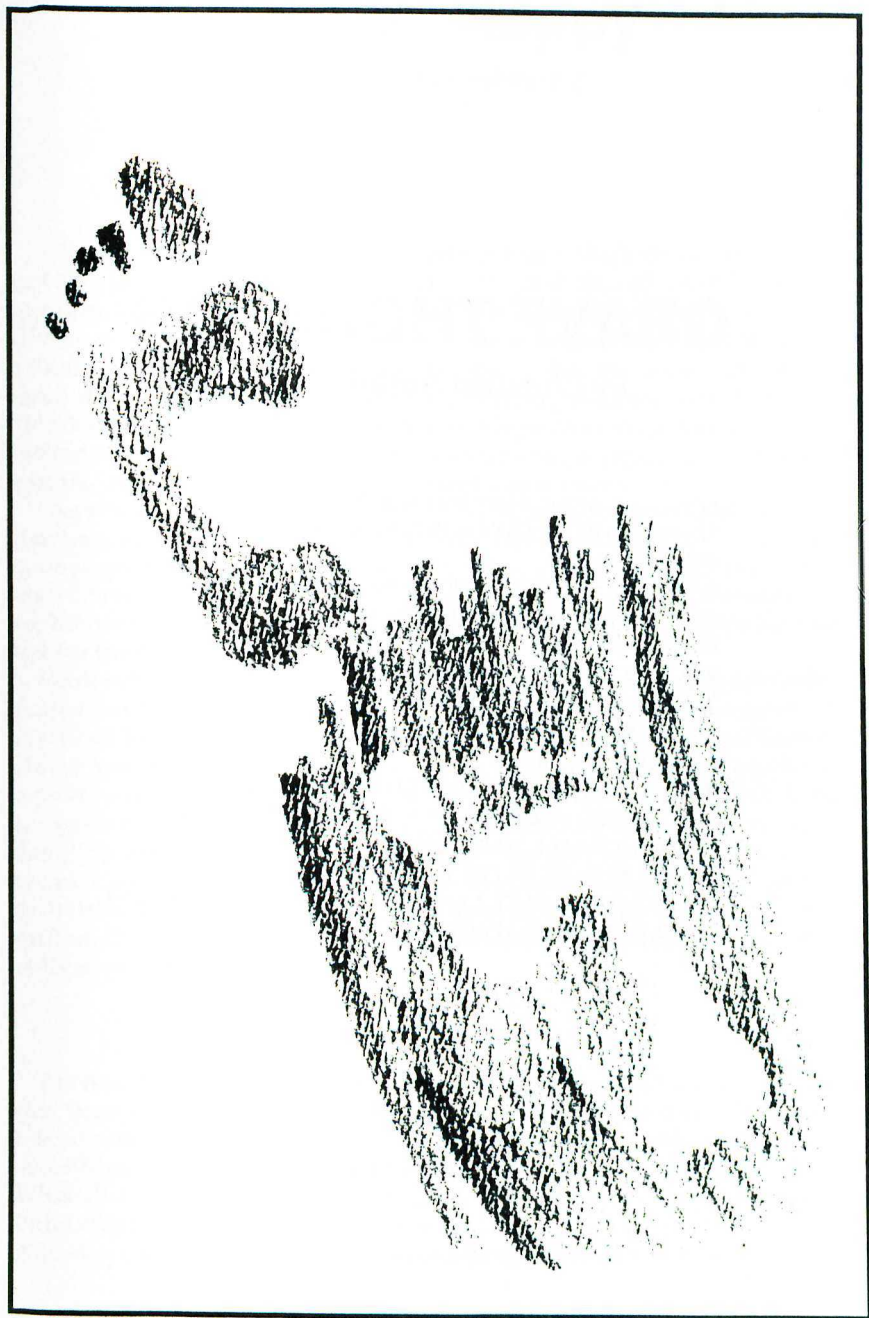
Willie got the worst punishment of all. His dad sold Willie's car—his pride and joy—and said he couldn't own another one until after high school. Man, that was rough. All because we wanted to have a good time.

I rarely see those guys anymore. Willie got a girl pregnant when he was 18; now he's married and has a 2-year-old daughter. He works at a gas station fixing oil gaskets and carburetors. His fingernails are stained black.

Rodney's studying political science at Boston College—he swears he's going to be president one day.

Stoner's in the army.

I'm just living one day at a time, not knowing what tomorrow will bring. Life's funny.



By Greta Nowicki

GRAVE THOUGHTS

by Christian Anthony Carl

IT WOULD BE SO EASY IF IT WASN'T FOR HIM
IT WOULD BE SO EXTRAORDINARY IF I COULD STEP
INTO YOUR LIFE;
WITHOUT ME YOU'LL NEVER BE THE SAME,
BUT YOU'LL NEVER KNOW AND YOU'RE
NOT TO BLAME;
YOUR HEART TELLS YOU WHAT YOU'RE MISSING,
YOU'RE TRAPPED AND I KNOW YOU SEE ME
WHEN YOUR KISSING, HIS FACE, IN MY PLACE,
REPLACING MY LIPS;
WHEN YOU PASSED, I MELTED INTO THE WALL,
YOU SENSED YOUR DESTINY, YOUR LIFE WITHOUT
ME WOULD FALL, HELPLESSLY INTO HIS HANDS;
100 YEARS PAST, IN THE DARK AND MY
PULSE FADING FAST, I KNEW YOU WOULD NEVER CAST,
A SHADOW UPON MY GRAVE.

Are You Happy?

By Sherri Leiberling

Kneeling at the stern of the once yellow canoe, Mark shoved offshore with just two jabs of the short, wooden oar. He eased himself around to a sitting position, barely rocking the shifty little boat, and paddled routinely across the silence, across his father's private lake. Near the middle of the lake Mark flexed a final stroke into the water, then pulled the oar into the canoe. Little droplets raced down the oar's wooden grooves, hurdling the timeworn, knife-etched "Mark loves Ami" and finishing as minuscule puddles on the boat's floor. Mark looked up to the bow of the canoe at Ami's familiar, pretty face and labored over a smile. Ami smiled right back and tossed him the suntan oil.

Another spring had begun just last week; already they had the procedure flawless, monotone. Tanning at the lake alone together was a four-year-old hobby—pastime—habit that Mark and Ami had picked up the spring they'd been high school sophomores, the same spring they'd become sweethearts. Now sophomores at the community college and never once split up, there wasn't much left for them to get used to.

Mark rubbed the cocoa butter smell into his skin as Ami arranged towels and pulled her long hair into a high ponytail, fountain-like atop her head. With practiced balance and a distant concentration the two moved simultaneously, almost synchronized, to their usual tanning spots in the canoe. Laying down, the tops of their blonde heads touching atop a towel-covered cooler and their bottoms at opposite ends on the boat's floor, Mark and Ami stretched their legs out, dangling one on each side of the canoe, all toes tickling the water. The couple seemed to sacrifice themselves to the sun, eyes closed and creamy skin glistening as the boat drifted over the sparkling, little windblown waves. As Mark and Ami drifted, their thoughts did too, to two different consciences that felt a hesitant obligation to be shared.

* * *

I'm hot. It sure is hot. It sure is quiet. We never used to be this quiet... The first time we were out here, maybe, but we were nervous then. After that, we talked constantly. About what? Everything. Out of the blue, Ami'd say something like 'I really don't care for tater tots', and we'd be off talking for hours. When did we get so quiet? It is too quiet. Shouldn't we—the perfect couple—be talking? It's hot. Ami, are you as hot as I am? What a question; scrap that one! Ami, do you want to go to the movies tomorrow. That'd be a strange question, we

go to the movies every Friday. Every Friday. And warm days we lay out here after class, weekend days we spend with our families—one family at a time, weeknights we study together at the library, Saturday it's church, pizza, t.v. We're in a rut. We are. Does Ami notice? Does she mind? I do. Should I say something about it? Ami, do you think we're in a rut? Ami, do you think we're missing out on something being together all the time? Ami, do you ever think about us thinking about taking a break?

"What are you thinking about, Ames?"

Oh, about how bored we always seem with each other anymore. About how much every day seems so much like the day before. About running away, hopping on a bus and just getting out—out of here, out of everything. About transferring to State University. About the way you look: bored; I've gotten used to your handsomeness. About the way Jeff Mendel looked in computer class this morning. About the way he looked at me. About noticing that I didn't really mind if you noticed. About how good it felt that someone else still notices me.

"Oh, nothing."

It took a while for that 'nothing'. Maybe she is thinking about us. Maybe she is thinking about all the time we spend together. Too much. Maybe she is thinking it's time we talked about taking a break. Maybe she's wishing I'd bring it up. Or maybe she's just about to fall asleep and is barely thinking at all.

"You sure?"

If I told Mark what I was really thinking, would he get mad? Would he understand? Would things with us be over? Would I mind that much if they were? I do want out, don't I? If things were over, wouldn't Mark be crushed? Would I really do something like that to him? I couldn't.

"I'm sure."

That was a little faster. She's awake, has to be thinking something. I wonder if she enjoys this anymore. It is nice here on the lake . . . hot, private, . . . but old. Old. Ami, are you ever tired of us? Ami, do you feel trapped? Does having me ever hold you back from doing other things you'd like to do? Are you ever disappointed when you know we have plans together every night of the week? When (when?) we aren't together, are you relieved? Is life how you always dreamed it would be? Are you doing what you really want to?

"Ami, are you happy?"

What did Mark just say? My mind just isn't in this today. Perhaps my heart isn't either. No, my heart is in—I love Mark. That's the problem. I'm too much in. How do I get out.

"What?"

Oh God, why did I ask that? We have nice times, don't we? Sure we do. No

real problems. She feels perfectly fine, dozing as usual. My feeling trapped is like her security. I'm probably worrying her, stirring up trouble.
 "Nothing."

He always says 'nothing'. I guess I do that too. 'Nothing usually means something'. It's something, isn't it? Maybe it really is ...
 "No really, Mark, what did you say?"

Ummm ... I could make something up. What though? I can't think of anything to even talk about. Anything else, that is. If I'm casual, though, she won't suspect anything from me; maybe she'll give me a lead in ...
 "Are you happy?"

Am I happy? Now that's a good question. I mean, things could be better, different. I could get to go out with Jeff and get to know him. Everything not with Mark would seem so new again. I could really transfer to State and meet people without worrying about talking Mark into going with me, without worrying about missing him. I could get out and get to know just me again. Yes, things could be better. Here's my chance—'am I happy'—to make a go for it. Would things be better? Do I need my spurt of freedom more than I need this security? Would Mark wait for me? Would he find someone else in the meantime? Would he want to take the chance to get away from each other for awhile? Would I? I would like to get out for awhile, and he is asking ... I could tell him. How do I even find the words to say all of this? It's just too much for me to deal with. I'm not really unhappy, and things could be worse.
 "Uh-huh, I'm happy."

She is? She is. I knew it. Well, that settles that. I love Ami too much to hurt her, to tell her that I don't feel 'in love' anymore—it's more like trapped in love. I just couldn't ever tell her that. What would she do? If only she felt a little of what I'm feeling ... if she'd just hint at it, I'd take it from there. Oh well, if she's happy, "Good."

I wonder what made Mark ask that in the first place. Do I seem happy, do I seem unhappy? Does he? Not really. Things with him seem to be the same as always. Almost always. Maybe if he were just a little unhappy ... If I could get him to say it, I wouldn't feel so bad. I'd tell him everything.
 "Are you?"

Am I what? What is Ami saying to break open this cage of quietness that is stifling me, a silent closed-in torture? I'm not defenseless. Why do I act that way? Why don't I just say something? Why can't I?
 "What?"

Maybe I should just come right out and say what I'm really thinking. Mark, I

just need out for a little while. Now that would really shake things up a little. A little? Why am I such a chicken? I'd confess if he'd just answer 'no.'

"Are you happy?"

See, I did worry her with my question—now she's asking me. She suspects that I'll say 'no', expects me to say 'yes', doesn't she? Ami, how do I tell you that along with the key to my heart, you're holding the key to my individuality also? Here is my chance, though—'am I happy'—to try and explain how jailed-in I feel. Yet I don't want to upset Ami. Hanging in there isn't anything that I couldn't put up with, is it? Is it? Not as bad as solitary confinement, huh? Besides, what choice do I have? Well . . .

"Yeah, I'm happy."

He is? I'll go ahead and say something anyway. I should, shouldn't I? Of course I should, I can't keep all this in too much longer. It has to get out sometime, and so do I.

"Are you sure?"

"Mmmm-hmmmm, 'course." Sure; hell, why not? Things could be a lot worse than this monotone. And Ami and I can always work on livening things up and unleashing ourselves later, a little at a time. Can't we?—With a little time, a little talking.

"Good . . ." Well, now what? I tried . . . sort of, and there's always tomorrow. Tomorrow, I might not be so scared. Maybe it will just casually slip into conversation.

* * *

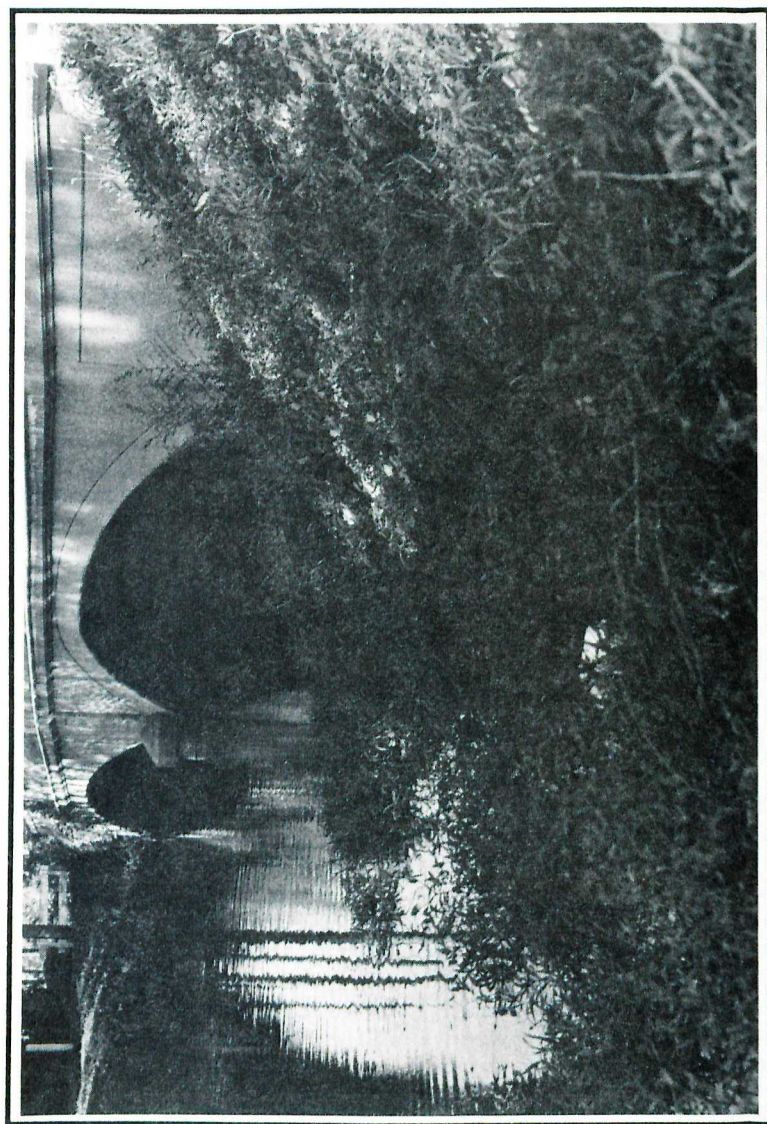
The spring sun shifted unnoticed in the sky, beginning its descent into late afternoon—unnoticed and unheard, its movement like secret thoughts. Mark cringed at the quiet that seemed to be ever louder and Ami neglected her urge to jump up and dare their habitual balance to waver, to capsize the old, yellow canoe. Mark started to tell Ami how strangled he was feeling by the unending strings of silence as she started to tell him how much she was craving an escape of this monotone; their words, jumbled together, were unintelligible. The couple wondered at what it all meant, what the other just said, if to venture to repeat themselves, what to do. Carefully sitting up and turning around in the little boat, Ami looked questioningly at Mark who had rolled onto his stomach, propped up on his elbows.

"What?"

"What?"

Their words overlapped as they continued to drift around the lake in the shifty canoe. Each silently decided that doing nothing was the easiest thing to do, easier than doing anything that they thought would throw the other off balance. Neither wanted to be the first to rock the boat. Mark sighed and stretched up to put a routine kiss on the end of Ami's nose, "I was just asking you what you were thinking..."

"Yeah," Ami said, gently combing his hair with her fingers, "me too."



By Rebecca Horne

Highs

by Lori Ray

One of the hardest things to do in life
Is to understand a high in ones life
How to make it right
How to hold it tight
In a palm
Away from the breeze
In a glass of sunlight.

Surveyor

by Jill Nelson

"What a doll," he thought. In his thin spiral notebook he wrote in blue ink:

10:12 A.
White No Change 1\$
Female Granola Bar 0:28
21 Diet Pepsi 0:05
Slim, Phys. Fit, Rushed

He sat listening to the machines' refrigerators kick on and whirl. Each time someone walked in he took down similar notes. The doll had been in before. Flip, flip, flip. Yesterday, 10:07 A., no change, \$1, granola bar and Diet Pepsi. She came in every day with the same routine. Some days she'd miss, sure; she was probably skipping class. But pretty much like clockwork she'd be there. Last week she even said hi to him. Her voice was patient and childlike, like that of a nursery school teacher, almost a coo. As she turned from the pop machine, she bent to pick up her pink bag, saw his gray eyes look up from his notebook and said, "Hi."

He was mister average: belonged to the middle reading group in elementary school, placed tenth of twenty in the school spelling bee, graduated number fifty out of a hundred from high school. He had never gotten Employee-of-the-Month when he had worked at Hardee's in high school, was never a teacher's pet, and never had art on display in the school showcase. He has an older brother and an older sister, a younger brother and a younger sister. And all of his life he's been watching people. People above him and people below him have always been running about in search of something while he's just stood back and watched them all searching.

He got his first job at a Peter Paul warehouse in Cumberland sorting and boxing candy for shipment. It wasn't a bad job, just one he didn't want to be stuck at for the rest of eternity. His buddy, Carl, heard about a surveyor's job available:

"Opportunity for Advancement
Surveyor
For more information
M. Taylor ext. 7467"

He and Carl applied for the jobs, not knowing more than the sign. To make it short, he got the position and Carl is still boxing candy at 3.75 an hour with two

days paid vacation. He was hired, his supervisor says, because he's alert and quick. "During the rush hours, you have to see who's there, and what they're about, note it, and go on. No time to waste," said his boss.

He can read minds. The brown-headed freshman coed in baggy jeans and long sweaters comes in every day and stares at the candy machine, then buys a Diet Coke. Her sudden switch to Orange Slice he attributes to her nutrition class. The tall, lanky boy who comes in twice a day, never carries a book and buys a Snickers and Milky Way in random order every day: He knows — the boy must hate the school cafeteria food and doesn't need to study since his basketball coach will take care of his problems. And he knows about the doll — she gets up at 8:48, rushes around getting ready till 9:55, drives to school 15 minutes, and rushes in here for something to satisfy both breakfast and lunch.

She walks in Wenesday. He just watches with his soft gray eyes. She says, "Are you in my econ. class?" In her playful voice.

He jumps inside himself. "Oh. No, I'm not."

"I thought you might be."

"Yeah. Where do you live?", he let his curiosity dribble out his mouth like the first drink of a full can of pop and smacked himself inside for being so forward.

Greenlake Apartments," as she dropped her change down the machine's esophagus, "Why?"

"Oh, I was thinking about moving," he pretended, "Just taking a survey."

She turned to pick up her bag and noticed the small space between his front teeth. He watched the back of her skirt widen as she bent down to grab the bag's handles. He wonders why she noticed him. She wonders where her gloves have gone. He thinks of something clever to say. She finds them in her coat pocket, and walks out.

"Strange," he thinks, "She had change today." He inscribes:

	10:01 A.
White	Change
Female	Granola Bar 0:10
21	Diet Pepsi 0:10
Slim, Phys. Fit,	Rushed

His next few entries look like:

10:20 A.
Mid-Eastern Change
Male Doritos 0:32
19
Small, Well Dressed, Studying German

"He's a wild one," he thought.

10:24 A.
White No Change 1\$
Male Peanut M&Ms 0:05
21 Pepsi 0:15
Average Size, Phys. Fit, Cool

"What does 'cool' mean?", he doodled in the margin.

In his spare time, he liked to go to the undergraduate library to look around. The fountain in the center made a wonderful echo off the cold limestone walls and the open atrium made a great three-hundred-and-sixty-degree arena for watching the students as they socialized under the guise of studying. Finals was his favorite time of year. Every single student, except for maybe his basketball player friend, would be there walking and whispering and looking for the table with the best view of the crowd.

The men were as bad as the women when it came to scoping, that is, watching people, especially cute people, in order to catch their attention; the men were just "cooler" about it. The men would come into the library in large groups, all wearing Greek letters and corduroy baseball hats, sweat pants pulled halfway up their collective calves and carrying three ring binders and black pens. The women, on the other hand, weren't quite as organized. They would stagger into the atrium, giggling all the way, in groups of twos and threes, once in a while a four. They wouldn't look like the girls who came into the vending room during the day, these girls would have their collective hair pulled back off their faces in pony tails and French braids. They would be carrying loose leaf paper and three ring binders, some two pocket folders, and blue pens with the blue lids tight on the tops. They wore Greek letters and college sweatshirts with color coordinated sweatpants, and actually they seemed to dress as much as possible like the college men except with lots and lots of makeup and tons and tons of gold jewelry. He

knew why the girls insisted on dressing this way and what they were giggling about.

A smile walked down the long stairway to the fountain. Well, really a whole person, but the first thing anyone would notice about him was this huge, twinkling, shining, almost fluorescent smile. His hair was combed into exact order, and his three ring binder matched his sweats. He was cool, but in a fake kind of way.

On Thursday, 9:00 A., a male student, acne scarred face walked in. He bought peanut M&Ms, but it took him :25 seconds to decide. He chose a Pepsi too, but in :34. "Uncool, but trying," he commented at the bottom of his column. At 9:45, the physics teacher tottered in, bow tie around neck, humming to himself. He bought a Diet Pepsi Free and package of mints. "Uncool and plans to stay that way," he laughed as he watched and wrote.

9:50, she came in early. "Hi," she gasped for air.

"How are you?" he answered.

"Oh, my gosh — the machine's out of change." She began to panic.

"You had change yesterday," he replied. "Yeah, but I did laundry yesterday afternoon. Damn it." She grabbed for her bag.

"Here, I have 95 cents," he offered.

"I only have a dollar. But thanks."

"No, take it. You can pay me back later," knowing he had a dollar's change all the time.

"What did you say your name is?"

"Darrin. Here," and he handed her 95 cents. She shoved it down and bought a Diet Pepsi and a Reese Cup. "What about the Granola?" He preempted and began to turn pink.

"I have a feeling I'm going to need something stronger today," she winked, "will you be here tomorrow so I can pay you back?"

"I don't know," he pretended, "Probably."

At 2:00 the brown-haired freshman coed walked in wearing a pair of army green parachute pants and a long sweater with a turtle neck. She had a preoccupied look on her face and cradled her nutrition book in her arm.

He wrote quickly:

2:00 P.

White

Female

19

Preoccupied, Trendy, Good Looking

She stared at the candy machine for a minute then turned to the pop machine. He added:

	2:00 P.	
	White	
Female		Nothing 1:15
	19	
Preoccupied, Trendy, Good Looking		

She looked at the cold machine with its glowing eye for a couple of seconds and started to cry. He stared at the back of her sweater and then at the floor. Just then, she punched Orange Slice as if it were someone's face and she was knocking its teeth out. He added:

	2:00 P.	
	White	
Female		Nothing 1:15
19		Orange Slice
Preoccupied, Trendy, Good Looking, Crying		

She picked up the pop and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand.

By the time it was 5:00 he had her figured out. She was obviously worried about her classes, finals coming up and all and she probably had an assignment due in nutrition that afternoon that she hadn't finished. Her book didn't look like it had been opened all semester and she never carried a notebook. She was one of those girls in the library who would walk in with some friends, join some other friends and sit all night watching the men walk by. She was a socialite and a typically shallow post-adolescent female, he noted in his subconscious.

Monday morning, 10:10 A., the doll ran in, grabbed her pop out of the machine, and ran back out. "Oh, well," he thought. He wrote:

	10:10 A.	
White		No Change \$1
Female		Granola Bar 0:02
21		Diet Pepsi 0:03
Slim, Phys. Fit, Rushed		

She had rushed in and out like this last Friday too, not speaking to him and not seeming to be concerned about his money. Not that he minded, he thought, the fact that she walked into his room was payment enough, although he did enjoy listening to her speak.

During finals, things not only picked up in the library but in the vending machine room too. He noted in his journal, among the many rushed and stressed people who didn't seem to have time to eat proper meals, an oriental exchange student who bought three Mountain Dews and a bag of BBQ chips, a flower child displaced from the sixties buying 7-Up and a Moonpie and an elderly woman with a text about the Philosophy of Aristotle who bought Twinkies and a Dr. Pepper. He glanced up, Tuesday afternoon, as a pregnant girl walked in wearing a silky looking print dress. She was just barely pregnant, enough so that he had to look twice to see whether or not she was just getting fat around the middle. She stared at the candy machine for a while and decided on a Granola and then bought an Orange Slice. He looked at her face and saw the brown-haired coed.

He went home and tossed the ball into the basket above his garage. He had been wrong. How could he have misjudged her? He had been watching her come in for months. He'd even seen her in the library and in the bookstore one day. It just couldn't be. What about the tall guy who bought all those candy bars.... Maybe he couldn't afford food or books.... Maybe the cool guy was homosexual.... Maybe that smile was sincere..... Maybe the physics teacher listens to Bob Dylan. Maybe he had even misjudged his doll....

Wednesday morning the doll came through in a canyon-washed denim top. He always wondered about women who wore denim shirts. She turned after her pop dropped out. "Hi. Haven't seen you in her for a while," she cooed.

"Yeah, I've been pretty busy lately." He tilted his head a little sideways as he looked at her, knowing that he had been there every day.

"Here's your money I owe you," she held out a dollar between her long painted fingers. "You were such a lifesaver that day."

"I only gave you 95 cents," he corrected her and thought about asking if those were real nails.

"Consider it interest," she smiled. "Hey, thanks again," she noticed the freckles across his broad nose and the curls of sandy hair around his ears.

"No problem," he caught the gleam off her bracelet and wondered how women get panty hose on.

8:59 SUNDAY NIGHT

by Dan Hays

Here comes that feeling again,
The feeling that I call friend.
It's so strong I just can't fight,
I need to get away, go away tonight.

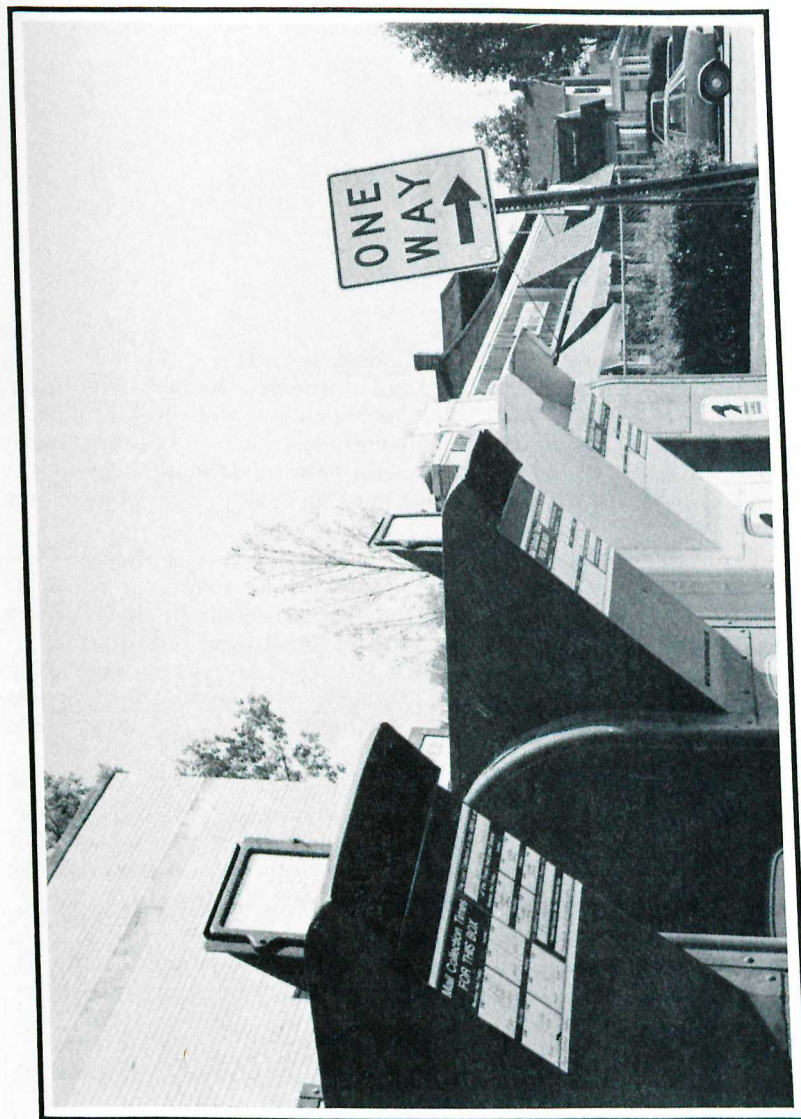
My soul aches with pain,
My mind can't take it again,
No one can understand my depression,
No one can feel my sheer desperation

Go away, go away with me tonight,
Help me survive this lonely thing called life.
I'm trapped, trapped in reality,
Go away, go away with me.

Looking up high into the sky,
The stars are so cold as they pass me by.
No one can save me from this state of bliss,
This wonderfully terrible thing called loneliness.

As the night goes on I begin to see,
This is how my life will always be.
No matter where or how far, I know,
This feeling will follow me wherever I go.

Go away, go away from me tonight,
Leave me alone, alone with my life.
I'm crying, crying inside,
Go away, go away, I'm dying tonight.



Stamped and Metered
by Tori Kensington

1332 North Illinois

by Tori Kensington

My gait grates against the norm. Now mobile, my now noble gift from the Veteran's Administration's ability to formulate forms, makes me able to carry my clothes to the laundromat alone, unaided and unwheeled. Rehabilitated at last, my mobility shows my agility: to make leather sinews and chromium bones articulate the bandage flesh toned polyurethane hide to caper and dance as a rusty wind-up toy soldier: not like a Fred Astaire, but like those we avoid seeing as they walk, wishing rather, that they would return to the chair and be wheeled, not wheeling with swaying pelvises defying gravity and the terrazzo.

Now the toe of my right shoe points straight ahead, and seems afraid to reach the floor before my heel, as if the ghost of the would-be occupant remembers the shock of separation, and was afraid of the lonely flight across the sky of Penom Phen, so gallantly streaming, purple-hearted by a carnivorous claymore.

Brilliant it is at night, as it stands alone: a fray of sinuous straps at the hip showing more grace by itself than when it is attached to me who pilots it. It pilots me, rather. It walks me away from dances with pretty women, swimming pools, escalators and the society my doctor assured me I could rejoin.

The standardized flesh color mocks the other, and I like Gloucester must stumble with the truth. There is no Edgar or daemon to help me with my self-pitying fall. And if I see the laundromat linoleum come dashing towards me, like the truth of my strapped on sickroom as it fails in the illusion of locomotion, I'll meet it again with palms outstretched, without an ass or salvation.



Warwickshire Shower
by Tori Kensington

Wild World

Katherine Barrett

Wild World

I am on a moving train bound for somewhere - I don't care. It starts and rocks and up and down and wrecks, but never stops. Cat Stevens plays "Baby it's a Wild World" over and over on my Sony Walkman as I in my worn out jeans and navy Tivoli Gardens sweatshirt look out the windows at a blur: a lush, green countryside; miniature, doll-like houses; cows, the aqua colored sky, - a blur. I guard my belongings.

Belongings

My worn out jeans and navy Tivoli Gardens sweatshirt, two Head Edge tennis racquets, a silver bracelet, a backpack with a few Toblerone chocolate bars, and Vantage regulars, tampons, lipstick, an extra bra, an unused diary, a coffee stained picture of you on my futon, a lucky marble. I guard - they don't move. The train moves but never stops.

Stop

Loving me so tenderly. Making me feel safe from the world when I am wrapped in your arms. Taking care of me. Scaring me by letting me let go. I'm someone I don't know. Being funny and I laugh. Allowing me, like no other person does, to be a child again. Loving me.

Me

I'm being followed by a moon shadow and I don't know who I am. A bundle of emotions tied up in a cotton t-shirt ready at any moment to burst into tears, laughter, fear, anger, joy, love. And colors. I am black and pink. And red and black. I'm brown and bronze and black. And I am music.

Music

I can't keep it in, I can't keep it in I gotta let it out, I...haven't got time for

the pain, no I haven't got time time time is on my side yes it calls to me...to be where little cable cars climb half way to the starry starry night...paint your pallet blue and grey...honey can I put on your clothes...because they feel like home home on the range where the deer and the cantalope play play me a melody a sweet sweet melody for you and me to take my breath away to the Copa Copacabanna banana take my heart to heart to heart.

Heart

Thump. Thump. Thump-thump. Skwish. Skwish. Crack. Thump-thump-thump. Creak. Crack. Thump-thump-thump.- Blood.

Blood

Inside. Outside. All around the round side. Its easy to see from the outside. Blue and purple and burgundy. Smells sweet on the outside. Gushing out. Nothing stops it. I do not. Blood blood blood. Without it I am dead.

Dead

I am on a moving train being chased by a wild man on an orange and yellow polka dotted giraffe. A death train. It never stops to let me breath. I sit next to an aquarium filled with old toothbrushes. An unshaved dead man on my other side in an old pin striped tuxedo tells me how his son-of-a-bitch son-in-law shot him at his daughter's wedding because he had begun to cry. I offer him a toothbrush and he cries. I offer him a Vantage - we smoke.

Smoke

Beautiful cloud white smoke is pumped in and out of our lungs. Everything is beautiful - you can make the sun shine... It begins to form heavenly halos above our heads as we talk about what it is like to be angels. I ask the young man - dead- next to me if he would like a halo to save him from hell.

Hell

Normally used in phrases of exclamation: Oh hell!! What the hell do you think you're doing?!! Why don't you go to hell!! Otherwise...it doesn't exist. There is only earth, Heaven and sex.

Sex

On a moving train bound for wherever you wish. On the marble stairs inside the art museum next to the priceless Monets. On a king size, mahogany framed demonstration bed at an open furniture store. At the circus in the monkey cage. Under the pool table while the King and his subjects are playing 8 ball. On the wings of a 747 on its way through a snow storm to the Virgin Islands. Wherever wherever wherever you wish my little princess.

Princess

I am your creation alone.

Me

I am on the Peace train-come on, come on- bound for destination. I in my worn out jeans and navy Tivoli Gardens sweatshirt and you in the same. We pull out a Vantage and hold tight to our toothbrushes. The man in the tuxedo flies by on his wings tipped with gold.

Impossible Truth

by Dan Hays

There's no way out
When there's no way in,
Said the man with a grin.

An impossible truth,
Neither right nor wrong,
The way things go—life moves along.

Dreams come true but dreams aren't real,
Images of some other place,
Make the world much harder to face.

Reality is just a state of mind,
In the darkness reality is mine.
Images pass through my head,
Dreams are reality instead.

A tree stands in a field,
Black and oblivious,
Like the years before us.

On the ceiling out the window,
Purple, blue, and orange show through,
But I can only see blue.

Tricks played in my mind,
The sun shines bright in the middle of the night,
Look again, there is no light.

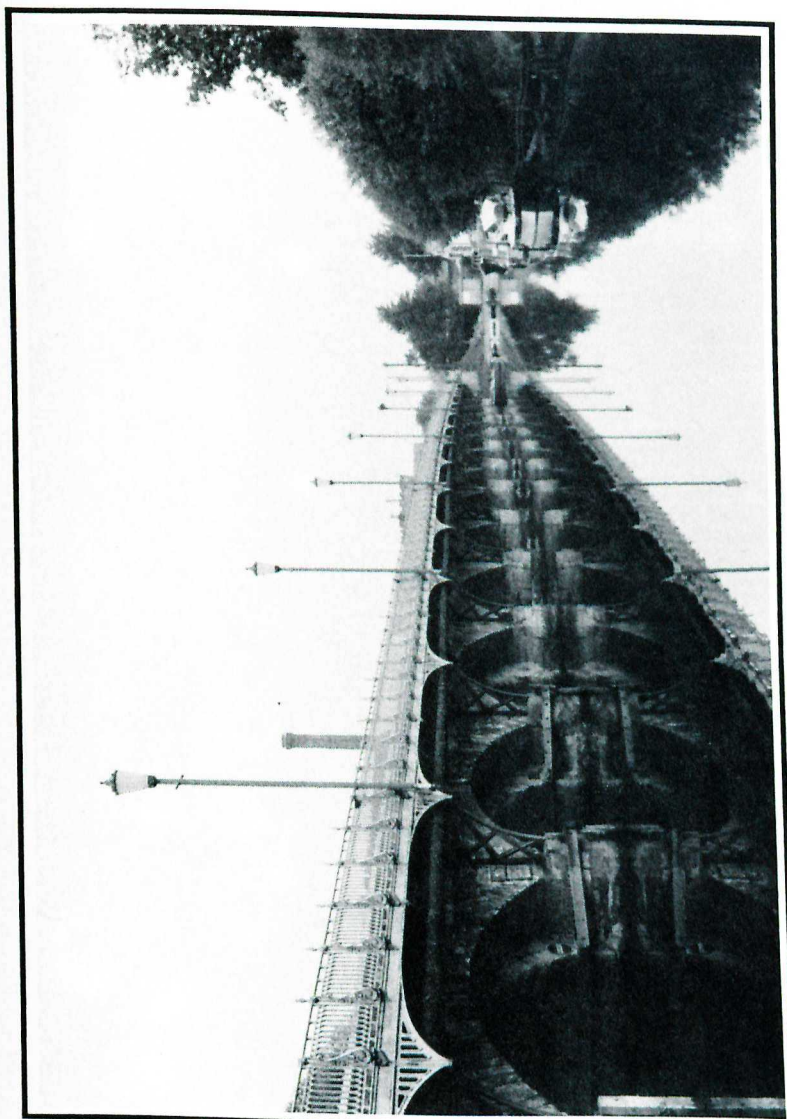
Reality is just a state of mind,
A state that's hard to find.
Images pass through my head,
Reality evolves in my bed.

Tatting

by Linda Shay

During the night, or perhaps by
morning light,
a free-flowing bobbin
spun mightily midst the trees,
tatting their branches with
a most delicate lace,
edging the borders
of the right-of-way,
tacking a collar round
the bend of the road.

Fine thread was used
of spun white gold.
That shuttle did weave
a garland to the winter,
Edwardian lace on a dress
of white lawn,
a most suitable trim
for a christening dress.
I fall to my knees
before the baby is blessed.



Stratford
by Tori Kensington