



Manuscripts

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The artist of the future will understand that to compose a fairy tale, a little song which will touch, a lullaby or a riddle which will entertain, a jest which will amuse, or to draw a sketch which will delight dozens of generations or millions of children and adults, is incomparably more important and more fruitful than to compose a novel or a symphony, or paint a picture which will divert some members of the wealthy classes for a short time, and then be forever forgotten.

- Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art?*

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Cover by Leigh Steele

This issue is dedicated to Dr. Allegra Stewart who began **Manuscripts** in 1932. Dr. Stewart celebrated her 90th birthday on July 26th.

On Robert Bly

Stephen Alexander Miller

Armed with a
lute and a
nasal voice,

he amazed
some,
he insulted
some,
he entertained
all,

with potatoes,
oranges, Emily
Dickinson, and
memories of
father.

Some people,
like potatoes, cannot see;
we rape oranges with
our hands;

He said to us,
through his father,
Don't take life for
granted.

He frightened us
with a creature
unbeknownst to us

He saddened us
with a man
invisible to us

He made us
laugh with his
expressions and gestures

And he hit
a few dead in
the stomach.

Studying Too Hard

Amy Brooks

Tiny, invisible spiders
Squiggle from the page,
Dart here and there
And they suddenly run up my arms
Into my ears.

They spin a thick web
Around my brain.
Nothing gets through.

A hand slams the book shut.

Sunset

Amy Brooks

The sun tempts the
Branches to
Prick the evening sky,
Causing it's blood to
Ooze over the horizon.

The gentle salve of the moon
Quells the bleeding
And covers the wound with
The gentle gauze of clouds.

The Day They Buried My Brother

Amy Brooks

Such a small box.
Such a fetal body.
No eyes, no nose, no mouth.
A small bud in January that
Turned brown.

On the dark Sabbath, my mouth opens,
The teeth flashing,
The tongue a bubbling anger.
I clench my jaws and
Clasp my hands
In front of my face.

Consuming Newness

Jodi Hurst

Gina awkwardly balanced her paper plate and tumbler glass while stepping over a pair of wooden crutches on the floor. Her eyes flitted from one girl's face to another desperately trying to make eye contact. Everyone else admired the pictures of nameless faces on the walls and the arrangement of the worn furniture. She finally inched her way over to the edge of a bed, sitting lop-sided on a mound of stuffed animals.

The pizza party was for the new girls in the sorority and was organized by the girls in their second year who lived in the dorm. The pledges had been formally invited, and refusing to go was considered rude. The dorm room seemed like an ideas place, but it filled up quickly with cliques of eager pledges. The pizza sat on its cardboard square while the girls milled around each other. Some girls sat on the used carpet piece and arranged themselves around the edges of the cramped room. Each girl spoke with her new-found friend and tugged on doughy crusts. The week's studies faded into the background of chatter.

Teetering on the soft animals, Gina concentrated on the conversation next to her. The weight of the two sitting girls combined hardly dented the bed. The girl in a soft cardigan sweater with tiny knit cables lamented the biology test she had on Monday. The other girl ate her partner's words and nodded eagerly, chomping on her pizza slice at the same time. You'll be great, she said, because you always do well. They exchanged supportive smiles and continued to talk.

Gina remembered the biology course she took over the summer. Arguments boiled in the car as her mother drove her from work to night school. Did you study over your lunch break? she asked. Gina looked out the car window and watched people stopped in traffic. The dinner-time rush inched its way through the city, melting in the hot sun. Her mother's words went untouched as the songs on the car radio took Gina back to junior high afternoons when she walked home from school and listened to her leather shoes click on the sidewalk. The undisturbed silence lasted for hours before she saw her mother's chocolate-brown station wagon pull up in the driveway. No one questioned her, no one disturbed

her silence.

Gina glanced nervously around the square room. She wanted another piece of pizza. The tomato sauce stains on her paper plate tugged at her stomach. But, the thought of politely making a spectacle of herself as she would squeeze back through the crowd to eat more changed her mind. Moving clumsily among the sorority girls turned Gina's hollow stomach. I should throw away my plate to make me forget pizza, she thought. But, the stuffed wastebasket proudly stood across the room by the open doorway. Having seconds means giving in to what they think I'll do, Gina thought. She sat still.

She flashed back to the first time she had a second helping of au gratin potatoes when the sorority houseboys began to clear the table. The stares came so fast that her mind stopped for a moment to register what she saw. The metal clank of the spoon as its handle dropped on the side of the empty bowl echoed and bounced off wallpapered walls. If she could have rewound the scene and started it over, she would have. Facing the stares of curvy girls at mealtimes forced Gina to get used to staying in her hard chair when the houseboys called for seconds.

Gina continued to listen in and sample little bits of lively conversations around the room. The girls stood attentive in tight circles. Gina forced an unconvincing smile. If they only knew what each other really thought, she said to herself. But, even after so many silent remarks, Gina felt invisible. She had hoped the pizza party would make meeting others easier. She itched the back of her hand and craned her neck to see the lime-green skirt across the room. It was cut straight and accentuated the girl's slight legs. Gina had worn baggy chino pants with an oversized peach sweater. She felt the pants' legs squeezing her thighs, binding her fatty thighs as she sat on the bed. The thought of the girls gawking at her tight pants inched Gina's arms forward until her hands reached her knees. With her arms locked, Gina protected her thighs from possible looks.

Gina imagined Dr. Victors lecturing her about diet inside her head. She watched his fingers nervously twist a ballpoint pen and tap the sparkling, formica counter-top. His stethoscope hung from his neck and swung like a pendulum when he turned to choose the pamphlets about diet control. Dr. Victors barely filled his white lab coat and forest green twill slacks. His lanky arm stretched out to Gina to offer more reading material: "Your

diet—Your body," "Eat for your life." He'd never know fatness, she thought as he got up to escaped Gina's smirk.

Her mind returned to the humid room. She had dropped her napkin on the carpet during her daydreaming, but she still held her plate. Bending over to pick it up meant sliding off the lump of stuffed animals. She kicked the napkin wad with her wide shoe and watched it roll next to the girl from New Jersey. This girl insisted on telling everyone about New York City. I go there by myself, she would say. Gina heard her explaining the drinking laws out east to her circle of naive ears.

The voices continued around her, ignoring the absence of her conversation. Week-end stories and boy's names popped up like popcorn around the room. Girls laughed together and remembered the things they had done while drunk last night. Gina had stayed home and worked on a cross-stitch project for her aunt's Christmas present. Listening to the girls ask each other about the boys they had each ended up with last night made Gina feel uneasy. I woke up in his room at 3:30 this morning, a girl laughed as she ran her cherry-red painted fingernails through her matted, bleached hair. The other girls comically gasped in admiration. Gina noticed that they continued eating pizza slices and exploded with conversation. They can't get enough of each other, Gina thought.

An Oriental girl with a thick, shiny bob haircut was gently stepping over the same wooden crutches that Gina had fumbled with earlier. Her white neck stood out from the black background of her hair. Her petite hands held up the paper plate containing one slice of sausage and cheese pizza. The gold bracelet watch dangled from her thin wrist. Her kelly green cotton sweater read "IRELAND," and her khaki shorts were wrinkle-free. Her white Keds sneakers seemed to float over the carpet and direct her around the circles of girls that talked and ate and sipped their water—all at the same time.

Had Gina had enough to eat, the Oriental girl asked with a friendly smile. Gina excused the poor choice of words and began to push the stuffed animals behind her in order to scoot down to make room for this girl. Her black hair swung to a stop when she finally stood in front of Gina, resting her weight on one foot. Gina knew by her comfortable pose that the spot she'd cleared would remain open. Sitting next to the fat girl meant coming close to flabby arms and pudgy cheeks, thought Gina. But, her disdain couldn't match her

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delight at just having someone to talk to, not to mention be seen with. Until now, no one had approached her or even made eye contact. She looked up at the Oriental girl's eyes and waited to make conversation.

The girl's name was Lynn, she told Gina, and she knew that Gina was from Ohio. Nibbling her pizza crust and rolling back and forth from one foot to the other, the girl waited for Gina's response. Gina just sat and stared at the girl's forehead and watched it crinkle up as she chewed. How would she know that I was from Ohio? Gina wondered. Gina sensed Lynn's confidence. Lynn glanced over to the room's doorway to respond to a "Hi, Lynn" from a late-arriving girl with the same style of bob haircut.

Her attention returned to Gina. Gina's stomach turned inside her. I can smell fake friendship a mile away, Gina thought. Lynn ate her pizza and licked her finger where tomato sauce had dripped. She acts like she is listening, Gina said to herself and gazed at the glass party favors on the dresser next to the bed. Lynn used her napkin on her mouth and asked Gina again if she wanted more pizza. Gina feebly shook her head "no."

Ohio was where Gina went to a private girl's high school. Gina's parents researched private schools all over the state and finally decided on Balesfield. It was at the opposite end of the state from her hometown, almost a seven hour drive. The name of the state flung her mind into scenes of her father in the rain quickly emptying the car of Gina's luggage and milk crates and prissy, rich girls setting out flowered, enamel picture frames of boys and best friends back home. Gina never even had the pictures to fill the frames. She recalled energetic girls like Lynn sporting two-hundred dollar outfits and gold jewelry.

Her parents traveled to Spain the month after Gina left for school. Gina watched herself in her mind checking brown-papered packages for her name then opening up her mailbox lucky to pull out a worn postcard with her mother's slanted words reporting their dream trip. The next card would come three months later from California and then from Japan. At first Gina would tape them on her mirror over her dresser, but eventually they landed in the trash next to the mailroom.

Late nights on weekends at Balesfield left Gina alone in her quiet dorm room. Car loads of girls migrated to a nearby town to hunt for the opposite sex. Delivered pizzas and cross-stitch kept Gina company until the first cars returned with noisy victors, then she went

to bed. No one would want to be with me anyway, thought Gina, so why should I go. She didn't even want to hear what she was missing. The girls eventually left her alone, and the invitations stopped. It's easier this way, Gina decided.

She hated Ohio. She hated that school.

The Oriental girl was from Chicago and not Ohio, but she had some friends who lived there. Gina nodded and donated a small smile to the dying conversation. Gina didn't even want it to continue. She had suffered enough wounds during the short conversation with Lynn's mention of pizza and Ohio. She despised being patronized. It's probably harder for fat people to mix and mingle, Gina silently read Lynn's mind.

She began to wonder if they all knew her background. They probably all guessed about her weight and made jokes about stuffing her into a movie seat. Lynn will report back about the fat girl after the party, Gina thought, the others will laugh and jokingly comment on how much pizza she ate. Lynn will explain how she tested the fat girl and tempted her with more pizza, Gina continued. She fumed and stared at Lynn's forehead as it continued to wrinkle with her chews.

She really wanted to be alone now. She just wanted the Oriental girl to leave and let her be alone.

But Lynn continued to sway back and forth in front of Gina. It was like she was pumping for more information because she felt obligated to make Gina feel comfortable. The laces on the white Keds sneakers clicked together. The chatter in the room faded to the back of Gina's mind as she looked at the perfect cuff of Lynn's walking shorts circle the thin, toned leg. Please give this conversation up, thought Gina. Tension seeped out of her temples when Lynn finally motioned and pivoted on her heel to go get some more Coke from the hallway. The cooler was in the hallway, she explained, because they didn't have room in the dorm room.

They could put the cooler where I'm sitting, thought Gina. Gina had to get out of the room. She scoped out her escape path to the door. There are so many girls in the way, she thought. She imagined them scurrying out of the way to avoid her flabby body. Her pant legs would scrape against each other as she walked, disturbing every conversation. The stares would weigh her down as she would inch clumsily through the room. Just concentrate

on the door, thought Gina.

Some pizza was still left, said a tiny girl wearing a denim mini-skirt. She also had those same white Keds sneakers. Gina wiggled her toes inside her shoes and leaned forward to set her paper plate on the desk by the window. She placed her hands behind her to securely push herself off the mushy bed. Her left hand landed on a stuffed penguin. Gina finally stood up but not to get pizza. Stepping sideways, she excused herself to a group of giggling girls who ignored her and stood just in front of the full length mirror on the wall.

The clusters of bent legs and empty plates dotted the floor. Gina moved slowly, making sure to avoid eye contact with any of the girls. An embarrassing sweat worked its way up to her forehead. But, she continued to step cautiously and stared at the open doorway.

Her hand grasped the brown metal door-frame. Gina brought both feet together and glanced over her shoulder. No one looked back. Famous faces from posters blankly stared and didn't care if she stayed or left. She saw Lynn moving across the room to get more pizza. Gina turned toward the doorway and caught a glimpse of a red cooler with water and ice and a can of Coke on its side. A stray napkin had flopped next to the cooler.

Gina walked through the doorway. The hallway was cool and quiet. A slight breeze worked its way up the green carpeted hall and met her damp hairline. Closed doors lined the walls that were spotted with chipped paint. The buzz of the party faded as Gina walked further down the hall toward the drinking fountain. Its silver body stuck out from the wall. She heard it rumble off and imagined the cold water chilling her teeth.

The silence reminded Gina of weekend nights at Balesfield. The scenes could have been interchanged. Rooms were empty and a thick quiet settled into every crevice of the dorm. Gina ran her fingers along the painted wall, moving slowly. She pictured the rooms she passed: the glossy posters, the pastel bedspreads, the gold-rimmed party favors. Her mind was calm, and her walk was unhurried. The bathrooms are near drinking fountains, Gina remembered, bathrooms are always by drinking fountains. She saw the swing door with the small sign just above eye-level.

The familiar, confident feeling shifted inside her as she placed her hand flat against the door. It opened smoothly and swung behind her. Her shoes clicked lightly on the blue-

tilled floor. Gina stopped past the row of white sinks below the long mirror around to the toilets. She paused to listen for anyone else in the bathroom. Smells of cleaning fluids hung in the air. A metal door of a stall hung slightly open, and Gina stepped in. She pushed the chrome latch firmly into its slot.

She could take her time. She knew no one was there. Her breath was warm on her fingers. She felt alone and new.



Flying Raggedy, B.J. England

My Color

Evonne E. Thompson

My color surrounds me and keeps me in
the crook of its arm.

My color...
Rich.

My color...
Proud.

Whatever,
I am.

Whomever,
I become.

It is always there.

Like a banner I wear,
My color.

Dusk

Evonne E. Thompson

The night slowly comes
Ascending down on the glowing sky.
The folds of its dark wings spread...
As a curtain of darkness across the world.

Majestic
Bringing an era of peace and rest
Specks of stars sprinkle the sheet of increasing blackness.
The night slowly ascends with elegance.

Lost

Ann Baumel

A snowflake falls - touches your hand,
and in an instant gone.

Or the fall leaves turn colors - then brown,
only to fall and be taken away.

Lost loves are frequent - too frequent,
yet after time are overcome, replaced.

But what of lost friends - friendships,
not to quarrels or death, but much less.

Once the closest of friends - so many members,
and now only strangers with unrecognizable eyes.

Lost over time, contact replaced -
replaced with promised letters, phone calls, visits.

Just like that single tear -
quickly swept away by a momentary brush of the hand.

A Christmas Present

John B. Strott

At last the school bell sounded and hundreds of little faces emerged from Elwood Elementary. Running through the wide main doors, the mass of children rushed to meet their moms and dads or to clamber noisily into their buses. Excitement radiated as the last day of school before Christmas vacation ended. No one noticed the tiny outline of a boy trudging alone down the street.

Henry walked softly trying to hear his feet crunch in the snow which wrapped the frozen ground in a blanket. With his Chicago Cubs baseball cap placed firmly on his head, he snuggled deeper into his worn brown coat. The coat was two sizes too big and hung tiredly about Henry's skeletal frame. Three buttons remained on its front as if deserted. In his left fist he clinched a torn book bag from which protruded two library books, a math book, and a reading book. He had already done his homework but wanted to do more so his teacher Mrs. Johnson would be proud. Henry thought she was the best teacher in the whole world.

Timmy, Henry's six-year old brother, liked the stories in his reader. Many night's after the moon drifted high into the open sky like a balloon tied to a cord of unmeasurable length and the bird's rested in their nests with their heads below their wings, Henry would stealthily open it and read to Timmy by the thin streams of silver light which slipped through their small window. With the innocent belief and wonder that only a child's voice can hold, Henry would read to Timmy. Timmy would listen enchanted by the enthralling rise and fall of Henry's voice which caused a story no matter how old to become fresh and compelling.

Timmy hadn't been to school for a long time because he had been sick. Henry knew what would make him feel better. Henry had tried for months to get a Christmas present for his little brother and had finally found one with only two weeks before Christmas. Henry felt so warm inside. He knew his brother would be so surprised and happy.

After walking for many blocks, Henry came to the park. It was getting colder now.

Snow began to fall in a light mist to which Henry paid no attention. He walked along his secret path to the swings, hoping to find someone feeding the pigeons. No one was there and no pigeons could be seen. Sadly Henry passed by the snow covered swings and pulled his coat closer to him. Following his path around the pond which lay frozen in the center of the park, Henry came to a lone oak tree. He peeped around cautiously and then pushed his tiny hand into a small opening formed by the roots of the tree.

Pulling his hand from the tree he held a tiny airplane. As if God had wanted him to have it, he found it one day lying covered by leaves beside the pond he had just walked around. He had been worried someone else would find it like he had, but he needed to keep it somewhere that Timmy wouldn't see it. Henry looked lovingly at it. It was perfect in every way except for a tiny chip in the blue paint on its right wing. Even the bright red bow which Mrs. Johnson had tied to it for him was unblemished. Henry held it tenderly in his hands and began walking.

It was getting late and the temperature was very cold by the time he reached the large house on Fourth Street. In the yard, rising from a dirty drift of snow, was a sign with writing which had long ago become illegible. The house appeared old and decrepit from endless years of use. It stood somehow valiantly despite its condition.

Henry climbed the crumbling concrete step which led to a heavy wooden front door and pushed it open. It moved slowly, almost baleful, upon its hinges. Henry was engulfed as he entered and the door closed. The inside of the house looked and felt much the same as the outside except for the warmth. He hurried past the large desk by the door and hurried to the little room that he and Timmy shared with two other boys. Unbuttoning his coat he pulled out his precious treasure. He knew Timmy would be so happy. Late at night they would often whisper about getting their own plane and flying away. Henry believed someday they would.

As he approached the door of their room he silently prayed Timmy's cough was better. Henry came to the door and tried to open it but the knob would not turn. He saw Mrs. Tellis, the nice lady who washed their clothes and fixed good things for them to eat, watching him with tear-filled eyes. She walked with difficulty to him and put her arms around his small shoulders. Her eyes briefly met Henry's and then looked quickly away,

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finally settling on the blue plane still clutched tightly in Henry's hand. She knew Timmy wouldn't be flying any planes this Christmas.



Photo by Becky Crafts

A Dove

John B. Strott

A dove
Timid and frightened
Pure and white
Frail in body
Yet matchless in might
Of purest spirit and noble thought
Passing through the bleak clouds of time
Whose storms are endured
Until the moment
O resting in your arms
Of nestling against
The warmth of your body
Enduring only to feel your touch
And hear the softness in your voice
My love is a dove
That forever flies to you

A Place To Go

J.J

I go there sometimes
To soothe myself;
To relieve the pounding
In my head and heart.
It is my favorite place
Because it is my place and my time:
No one to tell me;
No one to see me;
No one to expect me;
No one to be me
Except myself.
I wish I could go there more often,
But it is not there very often.
In fact, it exists less and less.
I cherish this place with all my soul.

"Where?"

Wherever.

As long as it's someplace
I really don't have to be.

A Poem

J.J.

"How do you know when you're done?"
She asked.

"I don't know, really."

"Well how do you ever finish?"

"I don't know that either.
Doesn't it seem finished to you?"

"Well it seems nice, but why did you stop?"

"Oh. Well sometimes the earth shakes,
Or my eyes roll back in their sockets,
Or my shoulder gets sore,
Or I get emotional,
Or I get really tired,
But most of the time,
My pen runs out of ink."

Paper Prison

J.J.

I can remember sitting
In my elementary class
With a pencil
(They wouldn't let us use pens yet)
With a broken lead
In my hand.
We were writing an essay on
'What I want to be, when I grow up'.
It was a spring day
And the window was open.
But I guess I didn't like spring
Because with the windows open,
I could hear the noises of the world
Going on without me:
The traffic buzzing, the train tooting,
The birds chirping,
But the most depressing thing to hear
Was a plane flying overhead.
That was the sound of freedom!
Oh! I know I should be somewhere else!
Oh! I feel I should be somewhere else!
I want to live!
Goddamnit! I want to be!
God. Look where its gotten me.

What The Hell Was I Thinking

Brad Hufford

I dappled more bubble bath into the tub, and eased back into the slick folds of the rising foam. Hot water gushed from the faucet and splattered into steam and suds. I sighed. If nothing else, I thought dully, there's always the bathtub to turn to.

"Hi, honey." My wife suddenly emerged through the humid mist of the bathroom, cradling an already-wilting grocery bag in each arm. "Trying the tub again, huh." I nodded. "Do you want the TV?" She saw by the irritated look crawling across my face that she had once again voiced an incredibly retarded question. "I'll go get it." Steam clouds whirled in her wake.

I lathered angrily. Women. Who else can remember every word you mushily muttered to them in code over a staticky ham radio ten years ago, but can't remember that the oat loaf they try to pass off as a new recipe every week turns the whole inside of your mouth brown?

"Well, its about time," I snapped when she finally returned. Timidly she slid the plug into the socket and clicked the switch to "on." The television buzzed quietly in her arms. "You don't mind, do you?" she offered cautiously.

"Yes."

"Please? Last time you said I could."

"Forget it." I wagged a soapy finger at her. "You'll get hurt like you did last time. Just go away." And with that, I lunged at the TV, tore it from her fingers, plopped it defiantly into the tub, and sat on it.

I felt the current scramble from the set, pop and hiss through the water, climb searingly across the hair of my feet and legs. Phil Donahue gurgled as I sat on him. I heard him bubble incoherently (which wasn't too unusual) as my body shuddered with raw power... Wavering blue bolts rippled up the dampness of my body, stabbing viciously, unforgivingly...

With a loud —crack!— my black and white perch exploded and I felt the instant

relief of a 10,000 volt glass and plastic suppository. When the smoke dissipated, I was more than a little upset at the cruelty of a world that could spare your life, but would take away your television and secondary sex hair.

"For cryin' out loud, of all the rotten..." my muttering trailed off abruptly as I saw my wife draped over the edge of the tub's far end. Smoke lingered throughout her ebony hair, which used to be blonde. Hurriedly, I rushed to her side and, gingerly, jerked her head up by the scalp. After trying this several times, I realized that her hair was just going to keep ripping out, so I instead tried dragging her out by the ankles. I then propped her back up on the tub and did it again to see if her head would repeat that unusual gonging sound when it rebounded off the ceramic. It did.

When I rolled her over and took a look at what the shock had done to my beautiful wife, I began to feel the gnawing of remorse at my guts. Her bangs were now able to be covered with a Jewish beanie. It looked like she had been bobbing for teeth in a tar pit, because her lips pursed the last three of her molars, and her head looked like something a preschooler had found difficult staying in between the lines on while using up his black crayon. The remorse escalated as I wondered how much a funeral would bleed me.

Before I began worrying about it too much, I went and got a sandwich, and when I came back, I noticed she was kind of squirming around. I kneeled down beside her.

"Nice going, dummy," I whispered softly to her.

"Bleaaah," she replied.

"What did I tell you?" I could tell by the way her skin flaked off like soot that she wasn't feeling too well. "You never listen, and now your head looks like a briquet. How do you expect me to die if I have to keep worrying about you?" She gargled an apology at that, but began moaning when I asked her what was for dinner.

"Don't worry about it then," I soothed her, "We'll go out, then I'll take you to the burn ward."

I was unusually quiet on the drive to the hospital. As the buildings of my neighborhood slid past and dissolved into a distant mass behind me, I found my thoughts similarly jumbled in my weary memory. Thoughts going so far back in time it seemed they were fantasies rather than actual events—no longer did I find any fascination dwelling upon them,

or trying to unravel them from one another. Nothing, as a matter of fact, fascinated me anymore. Immortality does that—makes life riskless, unchallenging, making you curious about only two things. The things you never can grasp: pain, death.

Be that as it may, I was determined to try.

"Look, over there, honey," I pointed out the window at some frustrated ghetto children getting out their frustrations by hitting an old woman with a pipe. "Do you think...?" Not even shutting off the ignition, I leaped from the car and began waving my wallet at them, shrieking my desire to be mugged. I guess the sight of a hairless white man howling at the top of his lungs made the ghetto children a bit bashful, because they all fled screaming.

"Now where did they go?" I muttered, somewhat annoyed.

My inquiry was soon answered by a low grumbling sound. I whirled around, delighted to find that a ghetto child had taken the initiative to hop in my car and gun it right at me. Silt cascaded off my wife's face as she strained and screamed out the passenger window. I waved to her.

The car whined as the gears struggled to gather more speed for the impending impact. The fender crunched against me, flipping me up effortlessly against the windshield, over the top, dropping me with a jarring thud against the windshield, over the top, dropping me with a jarring thud against the gritty pavement.

When I got up, very disappointed and much too alive, I wandered over to my car. I resumed the driver's seat recently vacated by the ghetto child, and began trying to calm my wife down. It wasn't working, I realized, so I got out and walked over to the passenger side, where she was hanging limply out of a jagged hole in the window, thrown there when the driver rammed the car into the mailbox. Still unable to sooth her or stop her hemorrhaging, I got up on the hood and began yanking her out. Crap, I thought, she's stuck. Luckily, the glass began to snap and crackle away when I tried twisting her out.

That accomplished, I surmised that I wouldn't be driving much of anywhere in my car, since it was bent in the middle like a fat Bassett hound, and none of the tires could touch the ground. I glanced around. Aha! One of the ghetto children had left a little Radio Flyer wagon nearby, so I plopped my wife down into it and proceeded to take her to the hospital.

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About halfway there, when it was her turn to pull me in the wagon, I noticed there was a small chili vendor across from an appliance store.

"Stop!" I cried eagerly to my wife, who was reluctant. She pointed to the thick bodily fluid dribbling out of her ear, indicating that perhaps it would be a good idea to have that, and the deep lacerations that covered 80% of her body and frothed blood, checked out right away. Angry that she wanted to do what I wanted to do, I tripped her, and bought some chili.

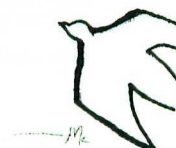
All of a sudden, I began to feel very eerie, like there was something filmy scuttling over my soul. It immediately ballooned into a sensation that I could only describe as the rending of frenzied talons against the very fabric of my mind. All of my thoughts began to melt into a previously unknown realization of horror. I was barely able to spin around, so clouded was my vision and equilibrium.

Before my eyes found the rest they had been seeking so long to attain, they relayed to me what doom had gathered me up into its clutches...

Tom Cruise, faltering over every badly-delivered line, lapsed into one of his sickening smiles in an attempt to cover up his ineptitude at acting; next to him, Jon Bon Jovi crooned to some frantic seven-year-old girls who were the only ones who now could tolerate his overplayed, over-synthesized, tinkerbelle Top-40 caterwauling that took as much talent to create a turd; Vanna White stood there and did nothing, as usual...

My brain began to swish around in my skull as Death slowly gathered me in. As the world faded away, my last memory was of the televisions in the appliance store window, carelessly leaking poison... .

fall 1989



Drawing by Ann Marie McCarthy

A Day In The Life

Frank Braun

A day like many others -
A day of the workaday Humdrum.

Sitting, clock watching, and
Casual reading, trying to avoid work

While trying to find something -
Anything to do.

Swatting flies and nasty gnats -
There is always the buzz of their

Work in my ears - working me crazy -
Or the catch-you-sleeping-bite-on-the-back

Where my shirt has ridden up.
Squashed bug gutblood pastels on windows;

A tossed salad of fly parts on the desk.
"Would you like something to drink

With your salad?"

"No thank you. I'm happy with this."

A wing here - a set of legs there -

The remaining parts are on the center stage.

Perform for me!

Amuse me!

Poooooff!

All is clean in a flash

Of boredom. What next?

What can I do now?

What's this?

A rat outside my door?

HAHAHAHAHAHaHaHaHahahahahaaaaa

aaaaaaaaaAAAAAAHHHHHHHhhh.....

Sin's Song

Frank Braun

I wonder,
If Newton under his apple tree,
Bright,
Pondering the philosophy of nature,
And his physics,
Ever considered the erection,
And how its majestic incline up -
Up, defies -
Up, defiantly from downward gravity -
Up, from the heated passion pump below -
Up, like the crane boom -
Pointed up,
Up, always building, building,
Building up -
Up, like the gun and volcano -
Up, to hot eruptions -
Explodes.
Hot eruptions exploding
New life, new hope,
And more erections.

The Sittee

John Lake

If couches were people, this one would be collecting Social Security. Its throw pillows, once firm, were now sagging and soft. The seat cushions suffered the same fate; they were wrinkled, worn, and somehow shrunken, like pudding left too long in the refrigerator. The fabric of the couch itself gave away its age, and early-to-mid-'70's conglomeration of orange, beige and brown, arranged in vertical stripes and zigzags of varying width. Its arms suffered as well. Each was made of a dark wood that was holding up surprisingly well. However, running down the length of each was a band of yellow metal, once shiny but now mottled with rust from the condensation of the dozens (Hundreds?) of beer cans left there. The band on the left arm had come loose somehow, and was gradually peeling away from the arm like sunburned skin. The fabric of its back had been used as an ashtray at some point, and what had been a small burn-hole was now a widening maw, unraveled by curious fingers. The stuffing revealed by this sofa skin cancer was the color of oatmeal and the texture of lint. This was a sad, sorry piece of furniture. But I loved it.

I'd had the thing ever since I'd started college. It belonged to my parents, who gave it to me when they bought a new couch. They didn't like it anyway. I, however, loved it. Over the course of the next four years, it had almost become a friend. I had slept on it, got drunk on it, studied on it, spilled all manner of food and drink on it, even lost my virginity on it. It was my buddy.

And now this disgusting slob was sitting on it, belching, farting, and asking me how much I wanted for it, in that order.

I had put a small want-ad in the newspaper. COUCH FOR SALE. Good condition. Call Bill at 927-%%\$@&. (Number garbled to protect the innocent.) This was three weeks prior to the coming of Leviathan here. No one else had answered the ad. I was getting antsy. I had just gotten out of school, and needed cash desperately. I had already sold all my books, my comic collection (Even the old X-MEN ones, which I got ripped off on), and my TV. I was seriously considering asking my parents for a loan when Junior Samples called

me up. I gave him my address, and he said he'd be right over.

One thing I can say for the guy; immediately upon laying eyes on him I feel much better about myself. Ever see Dustin Hoffman in *Midnight Cowboy*? This guy could've been his younger, fatter brother. He was about 5'10", maybe 400 pounds. His hair was black, greasy, and long untouched by any comb or brush. He was wearing a Chicago Bears T-shirt (Another strike against him), khaki army pants, and red Chucks.

And the odor. The smell coming off this guy was incredible. I thought of asking him if he'd considered a career as a biological weapon. But he was my only taker, so I asked him to come in with as polite a countenance as I could manage.

Bluto waddled in. He stopped in the middle of my living room.

"Nice place," he said. He obviously didn't mean it. I say "obviously" because I saw no cane or seeing-eye dog on the guy. Anybody with the gift of sight could see that it wasn't a nice place. It had three rooms. The main room was a combination living room/kitchen. It was small. There was just enough room for myself and Orson. The only furnishings were the aforementioned couch, a bookshelf-type thing that once held my TV, a table that I had saved from being thrown away by my fraternity's house manager, and a rickety kitchen chair, circa 1958. The kitchen, so to speak, was little more than a dent in the far wall with a small stove, a refrigerator with no door handle, and a sink. The bedroom was even smaller, with just enough room for my bed and a nightstand. If I rolled out of bed in my sleep, I ended up in the closet. I had been awakened by the stench of my mildewing laundry more than once. As for the bathroom, well, if I said that I couldn't get a boner in there without poking a hole in the wall, it would be only a slight exaggeration.

"Nice place," he repeated. "This it?," he asked, wagging a chubby digit at the couch. As I said, it was one of four pieces of furniture in the room, and the only couch-like one in the bunch. Sarcasm bubbled up in my throat and made ready to spew out of my mouth.

I was polite, though. "Yes, that's the couch," I said. I gestured for him to sit down., He planted his broad butt smack in the middle of the couch. I could almost hear the poor thing groan under his weight.

"Not bad," he commented, bouncing up and down on it. I could hear it creaking. "Though it is kinda beat up, ain't it?"

"Yeah, well, it's been through quite a bit, I guess."

He had hold of the right arm of the couch, and was pushing it from side to side, wiggling it like a loose tooth. At the same time, he maintained a steady rhythm as he administered his bounce test.

I felt like saying something, telling him to cut it out, but like I said, he was my only taker. I didn't want to piss him off.

He emitted a potentially room-clearing blast of intestinal vapor and asked me what I was asking for it.

"I was thinking 100 dollars," I said. I really had no idea. One-hundred sounded good to me.

This guy, however, made a face like I'd just told him I'd been Hitler's manicurist in a previous life. "How about 25?"

"I don't know. It's got . . . sentimental value. I've had this for a long time. It's gonna be tough to part with it. I'd have to say 75 or no go."

"40."

"65."

"50."

"Deal." Fifty wasn't great, but . . .

Well, the point was soon to become moot.. My corpulent friend, pleased with his bargain, decided to give the couch a final celebratory bounce.

He broke it in two. I mean literally broke it into two pieces. He had placed enough stress on it during his inspection to weaken it so much that this last pounding from his well-fed ass sent it to couch heaven. It was split down the middle, caved in, its back broken.

And there he was, sitting in the middle of it, screaming at me for trying to pass this defective piece of junk off on him and letting him get splinters in his ass and , oh, his lawyer was gonna make sure I got what was coming to me, I couldn't get away with this, and then he rolled out the door.

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I didn't even try to stop him. He was at least twice as heavy as I was and could've squashed me like a grape. I just stared at my poor couch and wondered how much I could get for my table.

Crippled Souls

J. Christopher Rahe

"Religion is the crutch of society"
-Melissa Coss-

An old man
broken and withered
hobbles through the sand
with a crutch under one arm,
and bearing a cross
God is walking beside him
and offers to help this man
but he is oblivious
He just keeps staring at the ground,
carrying his cross
and grasps tighter to his crutch

Another Love Poem

J. Christopher Rahe

We dedicate our lives
to it's pursuit
Like Arthur's quest
for the Holy Grail

spending our lives
chasing ghosts

We catch glimpses and
we see signs
but we never embrace
this intangible
wraith
that we've spent our lives
searching for

Heaven Waits

Christian Carl

Two days until heaven,
and
The tension hangs as thick as

blood

From the corner of mother's eye.

The maternal mirror whispers,
and
My thoughts rage like the

hail

That crashes to the car,
killing her words.

Two days until heaven,
and
He makes my life as cold as the

sweat

That drips from her elbow
(and I blame her for his absence).

The maternal mirror floods,
and
My image smears like the

rain
That fills my eyes,
drowning my vision.

Two days until heaven,
and
The tension hangs as the thick

blood

Flows violently within me.

A Short Story

Dave Gundaker

"What drives a maniac to end up doing something like this? You're absolutely wacko!" Steve held the list in his hand and smiled. At the same time he ran his fingers through his hair. Both his hands were occupied. Steve liked this feeling. It made him feel like he was constructively using all of his motor skills.

"What's the big deal you schmuck! I ran into a little writer's block, so I cleared it up with that list." Bob continued to dry the dishes with a dingy gray rag. More dirt seemed to be getting rubbed back on the dishes than was being rubbed off. Dirty or not, Bob kept putting them back in the cupboard. Steve leaned forward in the kitchen chair and stared at the list.

"All right, you had writer's block, I'll concede you that much. But you can't just interrupt the middle of your story with this piece of shit list—it doesn't work." Steve was preaching again. Bob put his last dirty coffee cup away and sat down at the table opposite of Steve.

"Who's to say if it works or not? This is art. Literature." Bob spells the word out in the air with his finger. "L-I-T-E-R-A-T-U-R-E." Bob's round, pudgy face filled with wonder as he visualized the word in the air. The red glow in his cheeks brought out the whites of his eyes. "Now watch Steve." He rubbed his hands together and reached for the fantasy word. "I can rearrange the letters and spell a bunch of different things." His hands began to move furiously as he rambled off a group of words that were derived from LITERATURE, and spelled out every one. "The word is so versatile! Here we start with LITERATURE, and only if I LIE may you call me a LIAR. For I am TRUE to the RULE of the word. It symbolizes a TRAIL of an ERA that allows for no LITTER along the way. Only a TRUE RATE of originality. Become IRATE and break the RULE! Go over-seas and drink a LITER instead of a pint! LITERATURE allows it! Be TRITE, shed a TEAR, do as you please! Be REAL or if you feel, be a movie REEL! LITERATURE! I love the way it makes me feel!" Bob sat back in his chair and rested his hands on his gorging stomach. He was breathing hard, even for being over-

weight.

"What the hell, Bob? Did you do a line of coke or what?"

"A line? Are you crazy? I did three a half hour ago." Bob stumbled out of his chair. Sweat rolled down his round cheeks.

"Good. For a minute there, I thought you had totally flipped out." Steve got up and helped his friend into the living room. They sat next to each other in identical LazyBoys. The two recliners faced a Mitsubishi wide screen television. The TV was against the wall, enclosed by a mountain of oak shelving filled with books. A coffee table sat in front of the two men. In the center of it a mirror lay quietly. Traces of fine powder were still visible on the left hand corner. The television was blank as Bob fondled the remote control.

"So what's so terrible about the list? I needed a fresh train of thought, so I wrote it." Bob clicked on the wide-screen. M-TV flashed its post-modern self across the screen.

"The list is great, but you can't keep it in the story. It's totally absurd and has absolutely no relation to a damn thing in the plot." Steve held the list in his right hand and began his motor skills routine. The list was funny. Steve knew it. But he had an intense desire to get Bob to conform to the standards of the literary community. Bob had always had a knack for flashes of brilliance in his writing career. They usually occurred after a break-up or a death in the family. Somehow, when Bob dropped to his lowest emotional levels, he peaked at his literary ones. Steve knew the coke was the beginning of a downfall and he desperately wanted to help Bob peak without caving in. He laughed as he read the list to himself. It was some sort of one-liner, male-female situations list.

"Hi."

"Fuck off."

—That's the quick rejection.

"Hi."

"What's your name?"

"Bob."

"Fuck off, Bob."

—That's the long version of the quick rejection.

"Hi."

"What's your sign?"

"Leo."

"Fuck off, Leo."

—That's the '70's rejection.

"Hi."

"Eat shit and die."

—That's the excretory rejection.

"Hi."

"Eat shit and live."

—That's the sadistic excretory rejection.

"Hi."

"Blow it out your ass."

—That's the anal rejection.

"Hi."

"Blow it out your ear."

—That's the Mormon anal rejection.

"Hi."

"Fuck off pilgrim."

—That's the John Wayne rejection.

"Hi."

"Eat me."

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—That's the sexually repressed lesbian rejection to heterosexuality.

"Hi."

"Don't make a move, bastard."

—That's the necrophiliac rejection.

"Hi."

"My name is Sybil."

—Run for your lives.

"Hi."

"I want your children."

—Run like hell for your life.

"Hi."

"I'm only 14."

—Go directly to jail—

Do not pass GO

Do not collect \$200.

"Hi."

"I'm Renee Richards."

—Take up golf.

"Hi."

"Go play with yourself."

—The "Gee, I wish I was more forceful," rejection.

"Hi."

"Go fuck yourself."

—The John Holmes rejection.

OR

— The “What the above rejection should have been,” rejection.

“Hi.”

“Go sodomize yourself.”

—The “Deliverance” rejection.

Steve shook his head. “Why don’t you work on a whole article in this style. Just list a bunch of quips. This stuff is kind of witty. But for Christ’s sake don’t leave it in the middle of that damn story. By any stretch of the imagination, this doesn’t fit with a Vietnam theme.” Steve placed the list on the coffee table. He paused as the mirror shattered his thought process.

“Look, the damn thing will fit to some readers, and stick out like a swollen thumb to others. That’s not my problem. It’s their’s! Do you think anyone understands why Manson comes up for parole every five years? Some do, some don’t, and some think he’s a punk rock singer. Everyone reacts differently to the literature, so we should react differently as the authors. Do what they don’t expect. The government’s been doing it for two hundred and twelve years and they’re a pretty big hit.” Bob stared at the television and appeared glassy-eyed. M-TV flashed its infamous LONGO slogan across the screen as the station segued into another video.

“What the hell does LONGO mean?” Steve didn’t get a chance to see M-TV too often.

“I’m not quite sure, but I have a good feeling that it’s some sort of African tribal thing. I personally feel its a social statement commenting on the lagging moral stature of eh entire world, specifically focusing on the wandering youth of the United States and their drug-laden habits of watching too many rock videos.”

“What?” Steve hated it when Bob was stoned.

“It’s a way of keeping you watching.” Bob pulled his hefty body out of the LazyBoy and wandered back into the kitchen. “Hey, you want a beer?” He opened the refrigerator

and waited for a reply.

"Sure. Make it two." Steve began to fall into the trance of M-TV. Bob walked back into the room with a cold six-pack, still on the rings.

"The shit's pretty addicting, isn't it?" Bob was referring to the television.

"It's really bizarre. It creates a whole 'feel', a really indescribable attraction to just keep watching." Steve reached for a beer off the coffee table without peeling his eyes from the screen. He opened it and took a drink. He jerked as he swallowed. "What the hell..."

"Good, isn't it!"

"This shit sucks! What is it?"

"It's my own special brew. I found this wine shop that has the ingredients for beer, so I brewed some in my basement and had this friend of mine put it in cans over at the Miller plant. I like it." Bob took a long hard gulp.

"Well, enjoy pal. This shit is wicked." Steve put his beer down and leaned back in the recliner, soaking the M-TV into his brain.

"You're doing it again." Bob joined Steve in leaning back and killing brain cells with useless videos.

"What?" Steve asked, still mesmerized by the flickering box in front of him.

"You're not experimenting. You're not giving something new a chance. Whether its beer, food or philosophy, you always take the middle ground." Bob was becoming disgusted with the conservatism of Steve. "I mean, shit, I voted for Bush, too, but that doesn't mean I'm ready to drive a Studebaker again. Our politics might be going backwards, but Bob Relton ain't taking that horse and buggy." Steve looked over at his friend.

"What the hell are you babbling about? I happen to hate your beer and you're ready to crucify me. Well in case you didn't notice, I'm not Jewish and I'm not even related to William DeFoe." Steve feel back into position.

"All right smart ass. I was simply making a general overview of what I think is wrong with your whole writing philosophy. In short—it's archaic." Bob continued to stare at the screen. flashing colors of red, green and blue flickered across his rosy red cheeks.

"Well, thank you. I love you, too. Hey, what time is it? You can't tell the month or year with this damn station. It seems like M-TV was designed for idiots." Steve scratched

his left ear and right knee simultaneously

"Hey, that was the best compliment I've had in weeks! My ex-wife called last week and told me the article in Esquire wasn't worth a rat's ass."

"So."

"So, that was the previous best compliment I've receive in the last week."

"So, what time is it?"

"Eight-thirty. Why?" Bob turned to Steve, sensing he'd be alone soon. Bob didn't enjoy being alone. When it was just the television and himself in the apartment, he gave in to his vices too easily. The coke. The alcohol. The depression. Unfortunately, it spawned the witty work of an upside down writer.

"I need to meet Sara at nine. We're going to the ten o'clock show." Bob fell back into his recliner.

"What'd you think of the Esquire article?" Bob needed the feedback. The reinforcement. The drug-free opinion.

"As long as I have ever known you, I've never heard you ask for an opinion from anyone. What's the deal?" Steve broke away from M-TV to wait for a reply.

"I just need one tonight. It's important to me right now." Bob's face gave away the anxiety that he felt inside. For the first time in his life, he gave a damn about what someone thought about his work. it bothered him.

"Well, it was disjointed. It didn't have any sort of continuity to it at all. It barely made sense and the subject was totally out of touch with about three quarters of the reading public. But your biggest problem of all was that it was brilliant. One of the best surrealistic pieces of fiction I've ever read. You're a bastard." Steve rose to his feet and headed for the door slowly. Bob showed no visible reaction to the comment, continuing to stare into the picture tube. "I'll talk to ya' tomorrow."

"Yea." Steve paused as he reached for the door knob, looking back at Bob for some reaction. He shook his head and opened the door. "Steve," Bob interrupted, his face still smeared with M-TV in the darkened room. "I can't remember writing the article. Not a word of it." He remained motionless, face towards the screen.

"It's a great piece, bastard." Steve shook his head and grinned as he walked out the

door. Bob rocked himself out of his chair and walked into the kitchen. When he returned, his hand clutched tightly to a white envelope. He sat in front of the coffee table and poured the poison dandruff onto the mirror. It reminded him of the Christmas scenes he used to shake when he was a kid, except he'd always end up throwing the damn thing into a brick wall by New Year's.

Bob drew the powder into fine lines that spelled the word LITERATURE. He snorted the L. His pudgy cheeks began to turn pink. "I love literature," he mumbled to himself. "You can do anything with it."

The morning came like every other one. Sunrise, empty beer cans and a mirror with a toxic residue over it. M-TV continued to flash across the picture tube. It was showing the commercial with the Grim Reaper and the high school kid. The basic premise of the spot was that M-TV never ended. It was a continuous circle of blurring music and visuals. Bob wiped the dried blood from under his nose with a damp cloth. "Great ad," he mumbled to himself as he winced. The blood seemed to be fused into his skin and it wasn't ready to leave. He continued to wipe. The clock across the room blinked a red "12:00." "Damn power company." The blood still wouldn't leave. "Fuck it." He threw the wash cloth onto the mirror and leaned back in the chair. Bob scratched his crotch out of habit but couldn't feel it. His body was numb. His head pulsed with every heartbeat. Sweat ran down the side of his left cheek. His heart raced for no reason. He held his breath and closed his eyes. He could internalize and feel each of his organs intensify operation. when he had counted to sixty he blew the breath and gasped for fresh air. His eyes began to focus again as the LONGO symbol returned to the television screen. he waited for the day when he would suddenly float again as the LONGO symbol returned to the television screen. He waited for the day when he would suddenly float out of his body and laugh at himself as he internalized himself to death. Bob closed his eyes and drifted back into sleep. He could feel his heart skip a beat as he breathed.

Across the room, on the small stainless steel desk, Bob's word processor threw off a dull green glow into the two inches of air in front of the screen. Bob breathed hard as the coke initiated words that floated on the screen:

Bob

A small speck. So why worry?
Look at a problem—then look up.
A small speck. So why worry?
Thoughts and ideas—millions of them.
A small speck. So why worry?
Planes, trains, and automobiles—Candy and Martin.
A small speck. So why worry?
Women here and women there.

Women (Here)

Women (There)

A small speck. So why worry?
Lucifer incarnate, sings my song.
A small speck. So why worry?
Blow.
A small speck. So why worry?
Because.
A small speck. So why worry?
IT CANN KILLL YOUUUU
A small speck. Worry.

The shower felt good. It revitalized the beaten nerve endings of Bob's corpse. He never referred to himself as a body. Only a corpse. For some reason, he felt if he could accomplish anything as a corpse, death would be easy. The shower had successfully soaked the blood from under his nose and his hair was clean for the first time in a week. As he fell onto his bed rapped in a yellow towel, the phone rang.

"Hello."

"Bob, it's Steve. How ya' doing pal!" There was a lilt in his voice that made Bob want to reach through the phone and rip out his larynx.

"Fucking awesome. Feel like someone beat the shit out of me last night. Thanks for hanging around and saving me from myself." Bob rubbed his head and yawned. Iron deficiency, big deal, he thought.

"Hey, I hung around as long as I could. You were fucked up before I left. what the hell did you do after I left?"

"You're asking the wrong guy. I wasn't here last night. I think it was the maid. she did one hell of a shitty job cleaning up this place. I'd better hire a new one." Bob peeled off his towel and rolled over on his stomach. His white ass shined as he sprawled naked on the bed.

"You seriously can't remember a thing, can you?"

"The last thing I remember was the "T" in literature. After that, I'm a black hole. I do know that there ain't an ounce of blow left in this apartment, which means at this very moment, I am legally dead. Come on over, the wake's at two-thirty. I'll be serving refreshments." Bob scratched his left ass cheek. Three big, red lines ruined the pale coloring.

"You're a dumbshit. Why don't you just try going to bed some night instead of pulling yourself through the ringer? You might enjoy it."

"And you might enjoy sucking my left nut. You might be my best friend, but that just means I'll pound your ass quicker than a stranger's. I really don't want to talk about my personal habits. That's sacred ground and I'm the only one walking." Bob sat up on the edge of the bed. He sensed the conversation would soon be over.

"All right. I'll drop it. My bad. I just care about ya' man. You're doing too good to fuck up."

"Too good? Shit, my life is a goddamn shithole. My PD is the only outlet." Bob grabbed the yellow towel and began to wrap it around himself.

"You're at the top of the game, Bob. I'd kill to be published regularly. Don't bitch."

"You just don't get it do you? You've known me long enough to know that the money is important, but I really don't give a fuck about the status. It's the people around me. And right now, you're the whole fucking circle." Bob struggled with the towel as he held the phone with his shoulder.

"Listen. I'm sorry. You're right, I do know the way you are. I'm just jealous, you asshole. I'm afraid to find out what you wrote last night. I guess I can pick up Reader's Digest in a couple of months, though, and find out."

"Hell, I don't even know what I wrote. I haven't checked it out yet." Bob finally

hitched the towel on his right hip.

"Hey, I'll stop over at about three today, OK?"

"Yea, fuck, I'll be here until M-TV is over. Stop by."

"See ya'."

"Later." Bob hung up the phone and fell back onto the bed. His head was throbbing again. Getting dressed seemed like a dream as he wandered into the living room towards the steel desk. The PC still glowed. Bob pulled up a steel chair and stared blankly at the screen.

"Not a fucking word." Bob ran his fingers through his hair, struggling to remember. He raised his right hand and laid it gently upon the keyboard for a moment, then he pressed ten keys in a row without hitting the space bar:

LIT—

Bob dragged himself over in front of the television. He clicked on M-TV. He lit a cigarette. He leaned his head back. He blew smoke into the air. He closed his eyes. He held his breath. He began to count to sixty.

Bob's pulse raced as sunlight sifted through the smoke. In the corner, on the steel desk, by the steel chair, the PC glowed.



Photo by Jennifer Davidson

Gretel The Sycophant

Leigh Steele

It is only you, Gretel
Who is lost in that damp, dark forest
Fearful to release your persistent grasp
On me, your human crutch.

The past has haunted and changed you
From the sweet, delicate flower
I once loved
Into a poisonous, prickly thorn.
A profane invasion of the soul.

Gradually, you began to mirror
The qualities of those two evil hags.
My intellect became confused
As the smoke from those smoldering twin fires
Burned in my eyes.
The love and grief I have for you
Is opposed by anger and selfishness.
You are dirt in my mouth.

AD

Karen Sasveld

The pictures paint life as it should be;
An executive sits in an office
And presents us with what is to be
Our goal for that season.
If the American dream doesn't match up with your own,
Then you are wrong
And must change.
If the pictures don't strike a chord within you
And don't mirror your lifestyles and ideals,
Then your ideals are no good.
Adapt to what the pitchman says,
Believe what he tells you about life,
And trust that he knows you better than you know yourself.
Listen, heed, and buy.

Kidnapped

Ami Edds

We were sitting naked, our bodies pressed against one another. It was freezing and my chest hurt, taking in the bitter air. My breasts were throbbing. Pulling downward, the weight felt like ice-cold lead lumping against my ribs. My nipples were erect and chafing. The blowing draft made them harder than stone. My spine was burning clear down to my tailbone, and the rest of my rear was numb from sitting still in that unbearable, bone-chilling climate.

I tried to move my left arm, but could not. It was paralyzed from my shoulder down, and I thought, "Dear Lord, I think this is it...." Then my stomach sank and my heart skipped out of sync until I opened my eyes and saw that it wasn't so. Instead, I found a dark, hairy man who had wrapped himself around my arm and legs. At first, I was repulsed at the idea of his touching me — under ANY conditions ... but these were not any conditions! After I scaled the truck (we figured it must have been a meat freezer), I realized my body heat — as well as that of all the others' in the truck — was his only hope of survival!

Our bodies were one ... EVERYONE'S! Where one body ended, another began. Some clung to those around them, others had no choice. Towards the back of the truck, bodies were piled two and three persons high. I had little hope for those who were stuck on the bottom. We were taking each other's oxygen and we had no idea how long we would be stuck there. It felt like we were moving, so I assumed "THEY" eventually would have to stop for gas. What did I know? That didn't ever mean they would let us out. Our situation was dismal, but at least I had my faith.

In talking with God, I asked him why I was there... was I being punished for something I had or had not done? Maybe it was just my time...? I knew I was not perfect, but I had worked hard to live an honest, Christian life...

Then I prayed aloud,

Our Father, who art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven...

Some others began to join in prayer,

Forgive us of our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass
Against us...

We were crying, and I remember feeling guilty, too. How could I forgive THEM, after they had forced us into this terrible situation? We'd been stripped of our clothes... our privacy, violated; our pride, demoralized...

For thine is the Kingdom,
And the power,
And the glory, forever,
Amen.

When we had finished, the truck echoed of silence, and for a moment, a few of us thought we had found hope.

After a while, there was no way of knowing how long we had been traveling, much less what their intentions were for us, once we reached "wherever." The only thing we knew was that we were being removed from town to be held hostage somewhere else... but whatever the reason, we were never told. We never saw the faces behind our masked kidnappers. They drove around in the freezer truck picking us out at random. Usually they would ask us for directions, and then one of them would grab us and throw us inside the freezer. They removed all our belongings and it was horrifying when they knocked us around until we fell into the sea of bodies. I was so embarrassed. Everyone could watch,

but they didn't dare, it had just happened to them. Looking at among ourselves, I saw a wave of confused and frightened faces. None of us could figure out THEIR logic, because there was no logic. We didn't know why we were chosen as targets, we had nothing in common, other than sharing that awful predicament.

No one could hear us — to rescue. The walls entrapping us were sound-proof and they were of glazed stainless steel. We were sealed off from the drivers that plotted our course... we were sealed off from the world!

Our only light source was a kerosene lantern that hung directly over my head. It was barely suspended by two metal chains that rattled into each other as the speed of the truck increased. I was afraid one of them would loosen from the ceiling and the lantern would drop onto my head. As we swerved and jostled over the bumpy road, my body flinched to duck from the swinging lantern. It was no use, though, I still couldn't move. The dim light merely cast a glimpse of shadows that danced across some of the blank and lifeless faces.

It was better that way. The darkness was all that offered us comfort, and it gave us our only privacy. Until that day the only naked man I had seen was my husband, Raymond. We were married at nineteen, and I remembered wondering at that age, "Do all men look like that...?" After twenty-two years and three kids, I knew a whole lot more... but none of it prepared me to be comfortably stripped naked in a truck loaded with other undressed strangers.

It was getting more difficult to withstand the grotesque conditions. Women were screaming that those who were buried beneath the piles were already dead. I wasn't surprised, the truck smelled vile! Our oxygen was fading and there was no way those below could have breathed at all. The smell was sickening and was almost as suffocating as the air itself.

My head was pounding and my stomach felt queasy. My fingers and toes itched from frostbite. Around my inner thighs and crotch, I felt a wet sensation like I used to get driving with a soda placed between my legs. Touching that area, I felt nothing damp, but on the inside it tingled and stung. I thought about wading the man on my left side, but the

thought of him waking and staring so closely at my body was just too humiliating. His weight was clinching my circulation, which was also numbing me.

I tried to think of warm things to get my mind off the cold. I thought about winter fires, bubble baths, sunshine, sweaters, and the warmth of Raymond's arms ..., then I panicked! When would I ever see those arms again? How much longer could we survive like this ... would we survive? I wondered where were my darling Jessica and Raymond? What were they doing ... looking for me, I hoped?! God, I wasn't still at the grocery store ... surely they knew that ... "Please, God, tell me they know I'm missing!"

Tears crystallized down my face. I wanted to see their faces ... touch their lips ... feel their warm bodies ... And Janet! Oh, Lord, she's expecting!" I never thought I wouldn't live to see my first grandchild ... Thanksgiving ... Christmas ... Jeff's graduation ...

... and then it happened. The truck swerved wildly, and bodies from the rear flew forward onto the others. I was knocked unconscious for a while ... the lantern had fallen from the ceiling and had landed on my head ... after I awoke I could see the others, draped across one another in new groupings along the side of the truck. We had crashed into something hard — it felt like a train! The impact was quick and forceful, and seemed to last forever ... though it happened very fast. I remember hearing the awful sound of the breaks screeching just the split second before we crashed. The accident stunned us all ... all that were alive ... I heard murmuring moans of aching pain ... the sound swelled around me ... then it grew fainter as I began to slip away. The man to my left finally untangled himself from me. I could feel him applying pressure to my head ... but the bleeding would not stop.

Then I heard distant voices again, but they were not groaning .. they were calling out to me. I could not make out what they were saying. All I could do was focus on a light that I saw in the distance. It was surrounded by darkness, but I could feel it coming closer. The closer it came — the warmer I felt, and before long, my body was tingling again. For a moment, I thought I saw Raymond. Then he faded fast into the dark. Eerie black circles whirled behind the light, trying to snuff it out. "Come, Jennifer ...," someone said ... "Come!" I couldn't place the voice, but it was clearly speaking to me.

I started feeling more nauseous and light-headed — I thought it was from losing so much blood. I didn't try to move, I couldn't. It hurt just to open my eyes. When I did, everything was blurry. Straight ahead it was pitch black. Around me, I could still feel the warmth of the light. It had become the only thing that offered me comfort.

I sensed people were around me, but I could not find their faces. Looking down, I saw tiny images moving slowly, but the figures were doubling and I still couldn't make out a thing. Then I noticed there weren't any more voices ... only the light ... ONLY THE LIGHT!

For a moment, I thought I had been dreaming a horrible nightmare, but then I knew I had experienced the ordeal. ...so where was I? ... and where did everyone go? I assumed that when the lantern fell, everyone was left in complete darkness, so I stretched out my arms, but felt no one. Groping my way, I could not feel another body ... I could not feel a thing. Then I wondered, "Maybe my arms are still numb ...?" I decided to fold my arms together, and although I could feel something, it didn't seem right.

I felt alone ... somehow, some way, I was suddenly all alone. The light was directly above me, where the lantern once was — only it was blinding me. It was so close, I could feel heat rushing through my soul ... and then it hit me, that's all I was: a small soul! The warm glow embraced me and lifted me upward.

I felt no more pain and the nausea had ceased. It felt so good to be warm again, and I was finally beginning to see. I even could make out some of the faces below. Bodies were strewn in all directions. Rivers of blood pooled around the chalky nudes. There was so much red that I couldn't tell where all the blood was coming from ... but few persons moved. Many were slumped over one another; some curled up like shrimp, clinging to the limbs of his neighbor.

For the first time, I could see our drivers. Their faces were embedded in a web of glass that spun across the windshield. It looked like they had missed their turn, and had hit head-on into a semi.

Their faces were getting smaller as I lifted higher towards the light. I was searching

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below for one last glimpse of Raymond and Jessica ... I still wanted to see their faces ... to tell them that I would be all right ... and then I saw the back of Raymond's leather jacket, standing with his arms around Jessica ... he was staring up at me ... he was weeping, but then I knew ... once he had found me ... I could finally let go ...

Rebirth

Shashi Charles

Whatever it is that burns in my soul
Must smolder cold to cinder and ash;
For what can be for you and me
But to part at the fork in the road.

The sun cannot bid this rosebud open
Nor the moon implore this ebb to flow;
We cast our passion to no promised action
So none are broken as we pass demure.

But dearly here my heart keeps hold
A part of you that brought rebirth;
So remember
If ever your love in yearning turns
In me you'll find a home.

The Portent

Shashi Charles

I gently plucked a cluster of bells
That rang sweeter by their silent breath
Than any pearls of laughter or thunder
Or even steeple chimes.

I sought to share with you my treasure
So my pleasure to complete.

I smiled and wondered
At your cool, complacent disregard
And wept when I discovered
Withered lilies at your feet.

I Go There In Winter

Linda Shay

After the gaggle has gawked
and gone back to the city,
leaving the colors in shallow
graves, I twist up the driveway
and my lights find the stone inn.

Where the black trees stand naked
against the quiet snow, a sweet
pungency greets me and draws me
inside — hickory smoke, iron in
water, biscuit smells in the hall.

Old tools on my wall tell of
damp earth plowed up and revealing
her children. I take a walk,
a bell tinkles. I finger
patchwork and lace. The bell
tinkles again. The cold
feels good against my face.

I caress my guitar, and search
through my wordbin for a song
of my own. The hills
are patient with me. They bank
the sun until I can stand
in the pot-bellied glow.

A Small Collection of Thoughts

Art Coyne

Laughing at Nothing to Laugh at

The two elderly ladies sitting by the large opaque table glanced indifferently at the frail figure. The stack of unmarked papers symbolized what was the young boy's worst nightmare. The names became numbers; the numbers became blurred memories. For once in his life, the young boy wished to be recognized for more than being a winsome child.

The girl who was standing next to him cracked a smile sarcastically. This did not bother the young boy, though, for he was not paying attention to her. What she was implying was his soon to be fate. It was not as though he used dynamite. He had merely used firecrackers to blow the fingers off his hands. He could not understand the lack of humor that he had hoped to achieve.

The young boy was escorted to a room with no windows by a faceless being. The room was very small and very dark. The only source of illumination was a burning candle that was emitting a sickly orange- white light. He noticed that hanging on the wall to the left of him was a ancient looking clock. The hands of the clock were moving in a counter-clockwise motion. At first he thought he had imagined it, but after touching the hands, he believed that somehow an imbalance in reality was created.

Suddenly a deep-booming voice snarled at the young boy over the intercom. "Young man tell us how you derived the notion that you are a writer!" The young boy stood motionless. The voice on the intercom repeated itself but the boy remained silent. "We're sure you are good at other things, why don't you stick to something else?", the voice chanted. The boy could no longer hold in his emotions. "The only person I write for is myself. You can't erase my intent from the paper just because you think it's inappropriate." The voice on the intercom replied, " Don't challenge authority because we know what's best for you and for the others. It would be a shame for you to fail now after going so far."

Very humbly the boy spoke, "I guess I see your point. I will make the change in the

paper." The hands on the clock started to spin frantically. Everything in the room grew very dim.

He was laying on his bed. A cold sweat lingering across his forehead. Slowly, he lifted himself up. He took a long shower and then dressed himself in his favorite outfit. As he came upon the front doors of the school, he looked long and hard at the paper in his hands. He would make the change. He would use dynamite.

From her earliest memories, the girl had been told of a distant treasure, and, as soon as she was able, she set out to find it. The road which she traveled had not been an easy one, it was long and treacherous. She had been misled and deceived several times, and had taken many confusing and frightening paths. She was often lost. At times, she traveled in darkness, for even the sun had ceased to guide her. Other times, she found herself traveling backwards or in circles, trapped in an everlengthening downward spiral. She had come close to death, and had almost welcomed it as an escape from her seemingly perpetual journey. Yet, in the midst of such despair, she clung to her childhood stories, believing somehow in their reality.

After some time, she found herself standing alone before a great door, seemingly identical to many others she had seen. As it opened to her, she stepped inside and was instantly slipped into a strange and beautiful room. Before her was the most brilliantly shining light that she had ever seen. Here her travels ended. This now was what she had been seeking. She moved slowly forward, reaching cautiously to touch this treasure which she had traveled so far to find. In the time that she held it, she was overcome by a perfect understanding, and she wept with joy. she was truly happy.

Suddenly, brutally, her treasure was wrenched away by the unfeeling hands of circumstance. Her joy was pulled far from her, and was placed high above her head where she could not reach. Once more she wept, for she knew that separation was inevitable.

As the world now rushes madly around her room, she sits silently alone, gazing upward at her hidden treasure, waiting for its return. Although she cannot reach it, she is

still touched by its faintly distant light, holding its jeweled memory for an eternity of dreams.

An empty room, simple, bare walls. A single chair facing a wall; the only piece of furniture. She sat alone there, in that single chair empty room. she faced the wall, and reconstructed it mentally, silently. She waited. From time to time, different people would walk into the room. They would walk up to the girl and ask, "What are you doing?" Very softly, without turning her head, she would answer. "I am waiting. I am waiting for that one moment when this wall will become a great rush of water, for that one instant when it will change and become beautiful. Wait with me, that you may see it as well." They would back away, too busy to wait or unwilling to continue the conversation. She had been there forever, yet she remained there for only a second, as much a part of the room as the floor or the ceiling or the chairs or the walls. She kept her vigil alone, unmoving; for if she turned her head for even a moment she might miss the transformation. So she waited. She did not know how long she had been there, yet she continued to wait. She waited until the molecules shifted and the water poured forth and the liquid spilled upon her. She waited until the change finally came and she drowned in the beauty she had awaited so long. She embraced the fluidity of the wall, and it held her tightly as it receded back into itself.

From time to time, people would walk past and glance within the room. when they viewed the empty walls, floors, ceiling, and chair, they would wonder where she had gone. "Perhaps she grew tired of waiting," they would say. "She must have given up and left." Then they would continue, never seeing the beauty that they had missed.

I woke up this morning and was surprised by the giant trees looming over me. As I watched, the branches dipped slowly downward until they touched my strangely inert body. As I was lifted, I felt the interweaving branches forming a splinter carpet that both covered and went through me. The iron steel wood was harder to break than even the hardest of

souls. My eyes reflected the sunlight until I finally cried; the leaves were so green, so beautiful that I died there.

Remembering the clouds that pushed themselves into the very small space inside my mind; feeling the great rush of rock-hard cold-water as it solidly crushed every last vestige of hope around my heart; watching the flames leaping slowly onto my hands; calling out to the night as it filled every last scar on my soul; everything had become clear.

It's an arduous journey that we begin as small children or perhaps as fools. A faint scent in passing hangs on the air to mark a trail or lead to a path, but I've lost my footing and somehow stumble. The first steps are always the most tentative. Forgive me for any misconceptions.

When the giant noisy insects finally cover the sun with the darkest of curtains, I wonder at the strange buzzing that somehow lingers inside my ears. Strange twisted corridors; I am pushed down a dripping stairway into an antechamber of silhouetted memories. Although it is darker than my dreams, a small firefly shows me the way to a place where I can rest.

As I slump against the unyielding rock, my thoughts merge with my emotions, and once more I am left behind. I grope my clumsy way along the wall until I feel something smooth and solid. As I smash myself through the many-colored glass, I find among the glistening shards below the very things which I most needed to find. I clutch the jagged pieces closely to myself and slowly rock myself into a transcendent sleep.

Poem

Micheal Rogers

I remember the roses,
 pink and red as they were;
Glistening in the rain
 and the wind moved them.

They cried with the world,
 and the wind moaned as well.
The clouds seemed endless
 as the grey sky crawled along.

The wind tugged at my umbrella
 as I picked up a rose.
I dropped it in, with a tear, and I watched
 as they lowered her casket into the earth.

I Live Here

Kate Stubbs

People

My friend sits on the counter and twirls the telephone cord. Her leg dangles over the edge and she swings her foot back and forth while she listens. Then she stops her foot and laughs, tilting her head back against the wall. Her toes wiggle as she talks into the receiver held between her shoulder and her chin. She uses one free hand to doodle on paper with a blue pen and she picks at her toenails with the other.

Now she's put the pen down and is sitting with both feet dangling. She's running her fingers through her hair and then twisting the ends around her index finger. "No kidding," she says and starts picking at the peeling formica on the phone counter. At the other end of the curly phone cord four yellow buttons on a cream-colored box blink on and off. Occasionally the box rings and my friend puts her finger in her ear "What's that? I can't hear you. The phone's ringing." She hops off the counter and starts swinging the phone cord like a jump rope. "Well, look, I really gotta go. I have a lot of studying to do."

A few minutes later, I walk by. She's pushing the grey buttons with numbers on them. Then she waits a minute and says, "Hi, what's up? Nothing much here," and hops on the counter again.

Weather

It's always wet here. Sometimes it snows; sometimes it rains, but most times the wet just hangs in the air. You can almost feel the drops of water clinging to your skin. The world seems surrounded by heavy water.

I don't mind it when it rains, though. Rain is beautiful. Everything turns deep green. The trees are green; the grass is green; the cracks in the sidewalk are green. I like to stand on our porch and look at all the green. It's not a dull, deep green, though. It's bright

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and alive. It comes at you like a 3-D movie; it makes you tingle like the first cold spray of water from the shower in the morning-Ooooooh!

My Room

I'm sitting on the bed reading my Botany. Plants are very reliable. I like reading about them because they never do weird things, or even think about doing weird things. My blonde roommate walks in. She turns on her curling iron and dumps a bunch of clothes on the bed. My brunette roommate is typing. tap tap tappity tap tap DING! Nuts I lost my place.

My blonde roommate wants to know which outfit looks best. Is pink too light? Wide stripes make her look fat. She'll wear a mini skirt. No wait! Where is she going? She's not sure but it's some place sort of nice. My other brunette roommate comes in. Thud. She drops her book-bag. She hates Organic class and my blonde roommate looks cute in the sweater with wide stripes. tap tappity tappity DING! I think I've read the same sentence three times.

People

You find him either interesting or repulsive. For me, it depends on what day it is. He's tall. He always walks in to class late and no matter what the point, he argues the opposite of what everyone else says. Outside of that he's entirely debatable. He has long dishwater blonde hair or maybe he just never washes it. It always looks wet or greasy, but maybe that's just because it's thin. I don't think he eats much, because he's very skinny, but maybe that's just because he's tall. His holes are surrounded by a few pieces of jeans and his t-shirts are too small. Of course, he could be too big, but I don't think so.

At first, I thought I wanted to write a book about him and why he is the way he is, but then he started annoying me and I couldn't analyze him anymore. I think he doesn't like himself. He tries very hard to rebel so people will think he doesn't want to be liked, so it's O.K. if they don't.

Buildings

Buildings are like gum wrappers; they have no purpose if there is nothing inside them.

My Room

I'm sitting on the bed reading my Botany. My roommates are gone. The plants haven't done anything weird yet. Our window is open because the room is sweltering as usual. People are screaming in the street and I hear some cars. The phone is ringing outside the door; the room next to us is listening to the Top Gun soundtrack for the fourth time this evening and someone is laughing hysterically in the hallway. I think I've read the same sentence three times.

The Tree

There are always apples in our front yard. Except, in the Spring, of course, before they have been born. They fall off the tree onto the brown grass. Brown, because it can't grow with apples on top of it and a shady apple tree over it. The apples aren't sweet enough to eat anyway. They hang on the tree, get bugs, fall off smash and turn yellowish, brownish, blackish red. Then we have to pick them up. Since we live in a sorority house, everything always has to look nice, so every day, we pick up mushy, ugly, stinky apples. Even in the winter after we've picked up all the apples, there are more. -under the snow. They grow there I think. Then when the snow melts we pick them up again.

I'm walking home from class in April. I can see our red brick house with white clapboard on the porch and green shutters everywhere. There is a beautiful pink and white tree in our front yard. Actually, it's two trees grown together. Their blossoms are fluffy and cheery. They remind me of Easter dresses in pastel colors with big bows and lots of ruffles

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trimmed in lace around full skirts and hats to match them that have flowers in the brim - kind of like these apple blossoms floating off this tree to the fresh green grass in our front yard.

Botany

In my Botany class we all sit on little stools in front of water faucets and gas valves and listen to the professor. There are lots of plants around the room. They sit there looking green and brown for four hours (that's how long our class usually lasts). The guys that sit on the far wall are always goofing off. They come in with their jeans and funky hats or shirts and act like they're paying attention. Then they pass notes and make funny figures with wood samples and notebook paper. Then they snicker for a second and look sober again. The two bleach blondes across from them laugh and blink their mascara a lot. At the next table they always tell goofy jokes and talk about "Hogan's Heroes." One girl is really fat and obnoxious. She talks loudly and interrupts people to get attention.

At the far end of my table, there are two guys who think they're cool. Sometimes they are. One is blonde and the other one is ugly and has dark brown hair. They just observe everything and doodle in their notebooks. Then there's a tomboy who has a mad crush on the blonde cool guy who ignores her. The other girl smokes a lot and likes to drink. She and the blonde cool guy get along well.

At my end of the table there's a 26 year old cello genius who doesn't understand Botany. Then there's a 25 year old who's dropped out of school twice. He understands most everything. The girl across from me is one of my good friends and she doesn't understand Botany either, but she's funny.

Mailbox

That's four times I've walked by a mailbox today and forgot to mail my letter. Why do people put mailboxes in such convenient places? I always walk right by them. If I had to go out of my way to mail a letter, I'd remember it.

Upstairs

The whole room is painted blue. The walls, the ceiling. Blue like the sky. I sleep on the top bunk and I can reach up and touch it. -the ceiling I mean. My bed is in the very center of the room so I can see all around me without moving very much. White designs are painted on the ceiling from outside lights that come through the blue striped curtains. It's quiet. But not entirely quiet. Every once in a while I hear the patter of bare feet or the squeaking of springs. Sometimes someone snores or talks in their sleep. Actually, if I really listen it's very noisy, but I usually don't really listen. It's peacefully dark too. The only light is from two green Exit signs and a bright safety light shining through the window.

People here are so nice. They don't argue, or have irritating habits, or stupid ideas. They don't interrupt my train of thought, or criticize me, or tell me things that aren't important. I'm a lot nicer too. I just lie here. I don't make a sound. I just think - and look at the blue walls and ceiling and curtains and lights and beds and people...

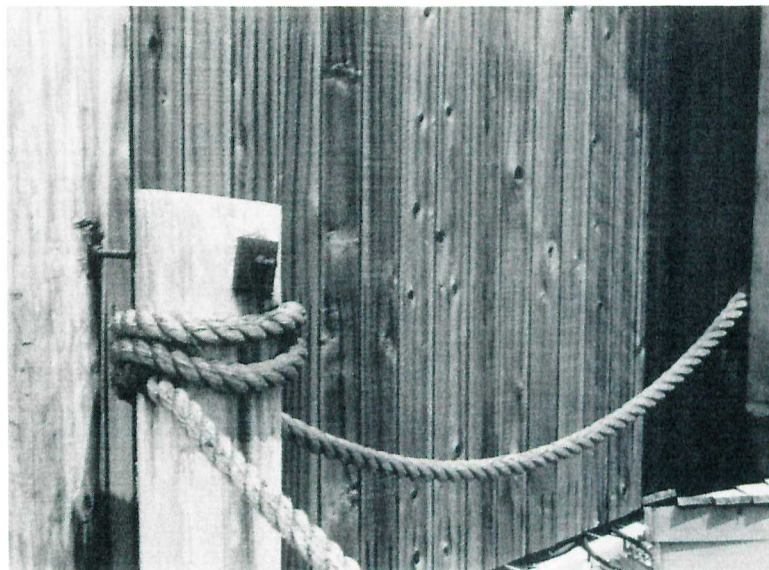
Lemon

Missy Smither

Have you tasted lemon?

Not recently,
But I have sucked the dead winter skin
from the resigned lips
of an indecisive lover.

I'll bet the stinging juices of lemon
are sweeter.



Rope by B.J. England