

Manuscript



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MANUSCRIPT STAFF

Editor

Ed McGinnis

Assistant Editor

Tim Williams

Society Members

Barbara Campbell
Tania Karpinich
Michele Kopec
Susan Kovaleski

Andita Parker-Lloyd
Deirdre Swinden
Tarah Trivelpiece
Karen Ziagos

Advisor

Bonnie C. Bedford

In addition to publishing this magazine, the Manuscript also sponsors readings and workshops on campus with poets, fiction writers and dramatists. Trips to other performances and conferences to New York, New Jersey and within the state are also sponsored by the Society. Manuscript meetings are held every Thursday at noon, on the third floor of Chase Hall. If you would like to get involved in next year's publication, please feel free to join the weekly meetings.

THE MAN

DEIRDRE SWINDEN

He's there. Every day it's the same. Standing at the station, he waits. I don't know what he's waiting for, but I get the feeling it's never going to come. He's been standing there for at least a year.

His clothes look ten years older than his grandfather. The Derby hat hides a mass of golden locks, just itching to escape from their prison. His face, strong and handsome, never turns from a certain point in the distance. Bright blue eyes peer out at that site above high cheekbones. His straight nose leads to beautifully curved lips and a chiseled chin. Though his ancient clothes hang loose about his body, I can tell he has a perfect build beneath. His jacket and slacks all hold that timeless male suit look, but for some reason they are still hopelessly out of style, out of place in a world where business suits cost over three hundred dollars. But they were perfect for him, and looked perfect on him. I couldn't imagine him dressed any other way. A gold chain droops across to a pocket which holds the attached watch. Every once in a while some brave soul would ask for the time, and he would casually flip the watch open and read the face. 7:18 would always be the answer, and I was sure the watch was broken. But since we were all waiting for the 7:20 train, it didn't really matter. In the winter he would wear a long brown coat, but he never seemed to get cold. When I would pull my own jacket over my ears to keep from freezing, his would still be casually open, flowing in the frigid breeze.

Sometimes I imagined he was staring at me. I'd feel his eyes upon me as I boarded the train, the one he never got on. I would turn to catch him, only to see him still staring at that distant point, and wonder if I were going crazy or if he were just too quick. Strange, when I turned and didn't find him staring at me, I would be dreadfully disappointed. But today was different. Today I saw his head still moving and I was sure he had been watching me.

"Driel, stop staring at that strange man!" my friend warned from beside me. I took a seat near the window to look out at him as we pulled away.

"Jessie, I wasn't staring. I thought he was looking at me that's all. He's not that strange either."

"Oh yeah? Have you ever heard him say anything? Anything at all? And the way he dresses! UGH-LEE! Jeez Driel, if you're gonna drool over a guy, at least make sure he speaks first. Then again, maybe you have something with one that doesn't," she chuckled to herself. I didn't say anything.

The train pulled away from the station. With one last glance at the handsome features, I turned away. But something caught my eye as I turned.

He had smiled.

And he had been looking in a different direction.

He had been looking at me.

"Jessie! Did you see that?" I asked, excited. She glanced around the train.

"What? Who? Where?"

"The man! He smiled! He smiled at me!" I punched her in the arm to land my point.

"Oh Driel!" She sounded just like my mother when she was mad. "The guy has never moved from that spot! He doesn't smile, he doesn't speak, he can't dress for shit and his watch is broken! Give it up woman! Wait 'til we get to work! Jon is gonna love the fact that you got the hots for the bizarre type."

"Jess, don't tell Jon. He'll flip!" Jon is one of my co-workers who's had a crush on me since the first day I started work a little over a year ago. I think I've been invited to dinner 364 times since.

"Why can't you just like him? He's a nice guy, and he even dresses alright. Besides, that means he'll stop whining to me!"

"Nah. I can't go out with a guy like Jon, he's a male slut. Not at all like the man at the station."

"And just how do you know about that man?" Jessie asked in such a condescending manner that I didn't think she deserved an answer. "Well?"

"Well what? Maybe I can just tell he's probably a really wonderful person underneath all those old rags."

"Driel, go take some more drugs."

Returning to my apartment that evening, I found a note in the mail that said a delivery had been left next door. I figured Aunt Em (and that's just who she looked like) would be over in two minutes once she heard the lock slide in my door, so I didn't bother going over. Emily Jackson would sit for hours and talk, about kids, grandkids, nieces, nephews, anyone she knew, anyone she didn't know... and man, could she talk. Sure enough, one minute thirty seconds later, Aunt Em knocked on the door.

"Drieelll! Honey, are you home?" She spied me standing in the kitchen. "Well, I'll be! If you don't get more beautiful every day! No wonder you got handsome men sending you flowers." She held out the flower box to me.

"Thanks," I mumbled, knowing if I said more I would be cut off.

"Honey, he sure was handsome. A gorgeous specimen of hunkhood there! And if he wasn't wearing all the wrong clothes for a man his age! Tell him he needs some jeans to stuff that rump into!"

I turned the card over. A single word rested on the side.

Smile.

And so I did.

The dozen roses scented the air as I released them from the box. And I was still smiling.

"Hold onto that one! He must be rich too!" Aunt Em cried and I grinned. She cackled to herself. "Now sweetie, let

me tell you about the first time my Jake gave me roses..." and she went on for about an hour. But tonight it was just fine by me, to sit and listen and smile the whole night through.

But the next morning he wasn't there. And it was a shock not to see his face, his clothes, leaning against the pole. My heart sank. Jessie sauntered over and glanced around.

"Well, you must've scared him off. Maybe he went out shopping! Hey Drie? Where's your purse?"

"My wha... oh shit, I must've left it on the kitchen table. I'll be back. Try and stall the train for me okay?"

I dashed across the street and as I unlocked the door, the whistle blew and the train pulled up. I rushed inside and glanced at the empty kitchen table.

"Damn!" I muttered and looked around. My purse was nowhere to be found. I ran upstairs and watched the train pull away from the station.

"Well, I can take my time now."

That's when I saw him. He was there. Leaning against the pole, staring right at my apartment, into my apartment, at me. He was holding my purse in his left hand, a single red rose in his right. He smiled. I didn't stop to wonder how he had gotten my purse, but raced back to the other side of the tracks.

"Hi," I said and he smiled.

"Hi." His voice was deep and warm, scratchy, like soft sandpaper.

"You seem to have my purse."

"I'll return it when I learn your name."

"Driel."

"Driel?...hmm...Driel. I like it. I like it all." I smiled shyly as he surrendered my purse. ■

ENGLISH KISSING

I search for sounds
in the soft mine
shaft between my
thighs, and with long
fingers, gently
pluck gems and spill
their glitter on
paper. I roll
thick dew around
teeth and gum, let
my hot tongue soak
in the woody wine.
How can I use
the bloody rust
handed down to me
to describe my
watering mouth?

The rust coating
my mother tongue
is thick. I use
my pencil like a chisel, and
chip at the crust
until it's thin
enough to be
scrubbed. The muscle
strains under wire
brushes and steel
wool, blood and spit
flush out brown specks.
I run my hand
over the pink
stem, it spins a
trail of moistness
in my palm. I
swallow the sounds
resurrected
from the rust and
mine for them with
the other hand.

TRACY YOUELLS

I ask you in.

You take me away instead,
To a place of burning heat,
A place so close to hell I can hear the screams,
Upon those screams we base our rhythm,
You tie me down to dreams I hate to have
They make me scream with fear
But never enough to wake me from our place
In each others lives,
"What do you want from me?"
"How can I deliver that to someone I hardly know?"

I ask you in.

So that you can dominate me
And make me feel the way you want me to be
For I no longer know who I am or want to be

I ask you in.

To pump my soul into the heavenly sky
To make my body scream with the passion I have trapped.
Come make me whole again,
Free to feel what heat and passion,
Can burn my soul and scare my soul.

I ask you in.

TARAH TRIVELPIECE

A STICKY SITUATION

GLEND A RACE

It began as an ordinary day for a first-grader. As I ate my breakfast of milk, toast, and Cheerios, I had no idea this would be the day I would encounter the monster called injustice. To me injustice was a big word for "That's not fair!" Today, it's meaning would become more personal.

After breakfast I hopped onto the bus with my older brother Gary. My brother was in high school and sat near the back of the bus. I would sit closer to the front with the other children going to elementary school. That was the only rule that wasn't written on the yellow paper by the bus driver's seat. Still, I thought that rule was fair— one day I would be in high school and be able to sit near the back of the bus (close to the emergency exit).

Every school bus ride must come to an end. My bus ride ended at Evans Falls Elementary School. There I hopped off the bus and skipped to the schoolroom where my class would sing "*This Land is Your Land*" and recite the Pledge of Allegiance. After those morning exercises, I would walk down to my first class, reading. My teacher was Mrs. Mowry.

That day Mrs. Mowry's classroom was a busy place. The class was divided into two sections of students: those that worked at a faster pace and those that worked at a slower pace. I don't remember what section I was in, but I always tried to do my best.

I eagerly opened a book to read about turtles and giraffes, gingerly turning the pages so as not to ruin any page of the school's book. I loved school, and liked all my teachers, including Mrs. Mowry. She had curly hair and wore nice dresses. She had even come back to us after having a baby. I wanted to do well in her class, I wanted to read well, to write well, and most importantly, to behave well.

While one group was working with Mrs. Mowry on a reading section, our group was to work on an art assignment. Now this was no ordinary art assignment, those were done in art class. This was a "quiet art project" to occupy our group while Mrs. Mowry worked with the other group in reading.

There were quite a few kids in our group who enjoyed talking. Naturally, Mrs. Mowry soon reminded us that this was a quiet assignment. I didn't have to try very hard to be quiet-- I didn't have many friends to talk to. Others had a more difficult time, so again, Mrs. Mowry repeated her request for our group to be quiet. A few minutes later, she was forced to deliver an ultimatum: "The next person whose voice I hear, I'll write their name on the blackboard and they'll have to stay inside for recess."

There was an instant hush across the room. I thought, That's all right, I like to work when it's quiet. I continued working on my art project, cutting out bright pieces of construction paper. I was happy working on my masterpiece until I came to a dilemma: I had no glue! The boy across the desk had it. It would be impolite to reach across the desk. Other children were whispering. I had no other choice...

"Will you please pass the glue?" my lisping Evans Falls first-grader dialect squeaked.

Mrs. Mowry stood up and turned to the blackboard. In beautiful cursive handwriting she wrote *Glenda Race*.

Everybody's eyes turned and looked at me. I couldn't believe it. Did she expect us to talk in sign language? How could I do that if I was never taught? I looked for sympathy from the boy I asked to "please pass the glue," but all I got was the glue. It was very quiet. No one wanted to stay inside for recess with Glenda Race.

Later that day it was time for recess, but not for me. The other boys and girls put away their books and put on their jackets. They all took away the balls, mitts, even my favorite: the baton. Mrs. Mowry was seated at her desk. I quietly sat at my desk and thought.

Why was I the one whose voice was heard and who had to stay inside for recess? Boys like Tommy and Billy stay inside for doing worse things than asking for glue. I'm not bad because I asked for glue, am I? Is she going to call my parents?" In my heart I felt I didn't do anything wrong. "Maybe I should go up and tell her all I did was ask for the glue. No, she won't listen to me. She's busy doing her work. She might even make me stay inside tomorrow for talking now."

I continued sitting in silence. I waited, for the first time in my life, for recess to end. ■

GHOSTS

My 11 year old
Does not get lonely
I asked her this
She told me so
I am her mother.

I do not secrete
Blue milk any longer
My breasts are empty
As well as my uterus,
My vagina.

My daughter taunts me
She dares me to
Shed my wrinkled
Used skin
She dares me

To find new voices
Throw back the curtains
Fling up the window
Scream like a madwoman
Into a blood red sky
Until there are no tell tale signs left
Of the past

To palpate.

KAREN ZIAGOS

OF LIZARDS AND CABBAGE SAUCE

RAYMOND M. JUDGE

Brian scoured and searched the sloping bank behind the trailers that lined the dirt road on which he lived. His grandfather had given him a book on reptiles and amphibians three days before and since then he had been spending all his time turning over rocks in search of salamanders, newts, and centipedes. So far Brian had only found two small salamanders. Nothing special, just the common kind with the gray underside and brown stripe down the back. Brian wasn't too excited with these finds; there were a lot of green and orange lizards in his new book he would rather have. Not much chance of that, unfortunately. Those types of lizards are only found in the southwestern United States. Brian didn't realize that was a long way from Pennsylvania.

Brian turned over a small log covered with slime. He felt there had to be a lizard under that one. Of course there wasn't. Disgusted, Brian turned around a bit too quickly and felt a sharp stab in his stomach. He let out a quick scream, "Indians!" and ran. He didn't get far however, as the body of a four-year-old is not the most graceful in the world. Brian tripped over the very log he had just looked under. He lay there a few moments amid the soggy leaves and dirt, like one of the lizards he had been searching for so diligently. He expected the jabs to continue like they had before, over and over until he screamed and cried in pain. But that didn't happen, not this time. He rose, brushed off his Toughskin jeans, and continued his hunt for the lizards. Of course, he didn't forget to break off the low hanging branch of that pine tree he had just mistaken for an Indian spear.

While Brian hunted his prey on the hill behind the trailer, his mom, Lisa, was watering the flowers she had planted around their small plot. She couldn't help but think about Brian and his new little hobby. The fact that it kept him so busy put her mind at ease. She and Brian's father, Pete, had just moved into the green and white mobile home a few months ago and there were very few children Brian's age he could play with. Oh, there was one little girl, Laura Westmark, eight trailers down the road, but she wasn't allowed to play with Brian anymore. Laura had come home one too many times from having mud fights with him. The fact that she had learned to eat dirt didn't help Brian's case much either. So, inevitably, Brian spent much of his time without the companionship of playmates made of flesh and blood. But Brian did have a lot of imaginary and semi-imaginary friends with whom he could play.

Two of Brian's imaginary playmates were the dreaded Cooper Boys. First-nameless and faceless, these spectres wrought havoc about the trailer whenever Brian played. Some of their more notable escapades included knocking over and eating out of garbage cans, and peeing in poor Brian's pants. Brian didn't seem to mind so much, but Lisa did, and because the Cooper Boys always managed a daring escape, seemingly into thin air, Brian bore the brunt of the usual punishment, banishment to his room without dinner.

Brian felt that this was unfair. After all, the Cooper Boys were the culprits. Lisa would shake her head and ask Brian why she never caught the Cooper Boys. Brian would assume a troubled expression and tell her that the Cooper Boys were Indians, and everyone knew you couldn't capture Indians. "Your father would catch them if I told him," Lisa would say. Brian said he wished she would.

So, Brian was usually sent to his room hungry for crimes he didn't commit. Fortunately, his room wasn't that of the typical four-year-old. Where Brian's bunkbed used to be, was docked a beautiful galleon commanded by the fierce pirate Jerley, and his beautiful wife, Gertrude Dinkle. Brian loved Captain Jerley because he always helped Brian whenever he was in trouble. Captain Jerley needed Brian as a lookout, and Brian loved to climb up in the crow's nest and scan the horizon for lands to plunder and sea monsters to capture. When Brian did see something worth attacking, Captain Jerley ordered him down to the poop-deck to fire the cannons. Brian was a great shot. He never missed, and when the enemy surrendered or the sea serpents were hauled aboard, Captain Jerley sent Brian down to the kitchen to Gertrude, for dinner. Brian always cleaned his plate for Gertrude, but strangely enough, he never got his fill.

Complementing these sundry characters were the Professor from Gilligan's Island and Sergeant Shultz from Stalag 13. Brian and the Professor would spend all day inventing important stuff from the junk drawer in the kitchen and the scraps from Lisa's sewing box. Even though the Professor was the smartest person in the whole world, Brian always had the better invention, since he claimed credit for which ever piece of handiwork seemed to please Lisa the most. Brian always got away with these little thefts because the Professor never said a word and apparently, neither did Brian's conscience.

Brian and Sergeant Shultz, the portly guard, were less constructive when they played together. They raced around the trailer and shot at each other until someone died or something was broken. If someone died it was usually Shultz. This wasn't surprising considering that, just like firing the cannon on Captain Jerley's ship, Brian never missed. He had the deadliest broomstick in all the land. If nobody died and something got broken, it wasn't Brian who did the breaking, nor was it Shultz. It was the Cooper Boys. Brian got punished for it though. The Cooper Boys were Indians, and Indians always escape so they can strike again.

Brian continued his search for more lizards. He already had two salamanders to his credit but wanted enough to fill his Maxwell House coffee can. He had even lined the can with grass and oak leaves for their comfort and pleasure. Brian was positive that if he got enough lizards, the next time he was aboard Captain Jerley's ship, Gertrude would cook them up in cabbage sauce for him. Unless Gertrude made it, Brian hated cabbage sauce. Unlike his mother, she used the

good kind of cabbage. As of yet however, he hadn't found anymore lizards. Just worms, and everyone knows that worms don't go with cabbage sauce.

While Brian was searching the hill, almost at wit's end, his mom, Lisa, was still in her little garden. Rising from pulling weeds from among her geraniums, she noticed two young boys, standing near the red bricks that served as a border between the small yard and the gravel road.

"Can I help you handsome fellows?" Lisa said, though the boys weren't particularly handsome.

"Can Brian play?" the shorter of the two asked without quite looking at her. The other looked at the sky while shading his eyes with his hands, although the sun hadn't shown its face all day, and as far as Lisa could tell, there was nothing in the sky.

"Well, I don't see why not," Lisa said smiling at the boys. She was pleased someone had come to play with Brian, even if these particular boys seemed about two or three years older than him. It worried her constantly that her son had no one to play with and that Brian seemed to be slipping more and more into a fantasy world, especially the one that contained the Cooper Boys. Whenever their name was mentioned, trouble was sure to follow. Brian would blame these imaginary playmates for everything bad that happened, and when he spoke of them he would get a look in his little brown eyes that seemed to border on despair. That expression really upset Lisa, always popping into her head, even when Brian was not around. She just couldn't shake it. An adult's look of fear and despair in the innocent eyes of a four-year-old boy; the thought made her shudder.

She wanted to confide in her husband, Pete, and tell him about her fears over Brian's fantasies. Pete knew nothing about them--Brian never mentioned them around his dad. But Lisa couldn't tell her husband. Pete worked so hard; teaching second and third grades all day and then working at the powder mill till at least ten at night. Weekends too. He had enough to worry about. But it would be better now that someone had finally come to play with Brian. "Brian, there's someone here to see you!" Lisa called, still smiling at the boys.

Brian finished his lizard hunting for the day. Gertrude wouldn't be cooking up any lizard meat in cabbage sauce tonight. Maybe tomorrow, Brian thought as he headed up the hill and through the trees toward home. As he stepped out of the last row of trees he heard his mom calling from the front of the trailer. He broke into a trot, rounded the corner of the trailer, and then stopped dead.

"Brian, this is Paul and Randy. They live in the big yellow house down by Milton Highway. They want to know if you want to play with them. They're going to build a teepee in the woods across the road," Lisa said.

"Oh, uh... I have homework to do now, Mom. Captain Jerley is going to help me with it. I have to go now," Brian replied as he turned and headed toward the door of the trailer.

This was too much for Lisa. "Brian! You get back here this instant, young man! Paul and Randy were nice enough to invite you along and I think you should go. My Lord, what an imagination."

"Yeah Brian, it'll be fun. You know, cowboys and Indians," Paul, the shorter boy, added, smiling and giving his brother Randy a little nudge with his elbow.

"Yeah, c'mon Bri," the taller Randy joined in.

Lisa went to her son and grabbed his hand. "Brian, do me a favor and play with these nice boys. Okay? For me?"

Brian, with downcast eyes and bowed head, mumbled something inaudible to his mother as she guided him toward the two older boys. She walked them through the yard and across the road to the wooded area that stretched the length of the street. There she watched as the three boys stepped into the woods with Brian in the middle. Just as they walked out of sight, she saw her son turn his head and look back at her. There it was again, that look of despair and horror.

"Well, he is just going to have to learn to play with others," Lisa said to herself as she turned away to tend to the rest of her yardwork.

The moment Lisa turned her back on the three boys, Paul and Randy each grabbed one of Brian's arms right above the elbows.

"You're gonna be burned at the stake today, Marshal. You shouldna come into our territory you little swamprat. We're Indian braves out to kill," said Paul, trying to do his best Apache.

"Yeah," agreed his brother Randy, who always went along with the Chief, "You're gonna get it!"

Brian didn't hear a word. Not even when Randy's dirt-filled, uncut fingernails began to cut into his skin. He was in a daze. He didn't know where they were taking him this time, but he did know all about Indians and what they did to their captives. All he thought about was Jerley the noble pirate.

"Tie him to the stake, Randy. I'll go get the spears," ordered Chief Paul. Apparently the Indians had reached their destination with the captive. How far into the woods, Brian had no idea. Only two thoughts raced through his head; how could his mom have done this? Where is Captain Jerley?

Randy finished tying up Brian with the old jumprope as Paul returned with the spears. They weren't the sharpest spears in the world, rather, they looked like gnarled branches taken from the fallen oak tree just twenty yards away. They would do the job though. The Indians would make sure of that.

Paul walked straight up to Brian and gave him a good jab in the arm. "So are you gonna talk, paleface, just like the last time?" Paul demanded.

Brian didn't respond. He lifted his chin from his chest. His teary eyes barely recognized the Indians around him. "Jerley. Jerley, please help me," mumbled Brian.

"Jerley! Jerley!" screamed Randy gleefully behind the shoulder of the Chief.

"Shut up, Randy," Paul said, giving his brother a quick elbow. Turning his attention back to Brian, "We don't give a care about any old Jerley," he said, snapping his fingers beneath Brian's nose without much success. "It's torture time, Marshal."

Then, with a shout from Paul, the two boys began their war dance. The hooting and hollering was too much for

Brian to bear-- he knew the Indians were making death spells in their strange language.

"Jerley!" Brian screamed. An unusually loud scream for such a small boy. It was so loud it even made the savage Indians hesitate in their horrible dance. All they heard though, was the breeze carry away the cry and a faint echo from the distance. Jerley didn't answer. This sent the Indians into a mad frenzy and they began to strike Brian all over the front of his body. As he stood, tied helplessly to the tree, he screamed and cried. Then the blood began to drip from his lip and nose, and Brian started to drift off into another world where the Indians couldn't hurt him. His screams lost their force.

Lisa hummed to herself as she poured water into the old birdbath she had filled with foxglove. How relieved she was to see Brian playing with someone other than the people in his head. Now she could feel at ease and not worry. As she emptied the last drops of water into the foxglove, she heard the screams from the woods. They were faint, distant, but she was sure someone was in trouble. Dropping her watering can, she ran across the road and plunged into the woods.

"Stop it, God damnit!" Lisa shrieked as she rushed into the clearing through the bushes and fell at Brian's feet. Scrambling back up, she untied the rope and he dropped into her arms.

"Jerley didn't come, mom. He didn't come," Brian whispered before he blacked out.

Lifting Brian in her arms, Lisa looked around the clearing. The two boys had fled, escaped. So, sobbing and cursing under her breath, she carried Brian home. On the way back to the trailer, questions raced through her head. Why couldn't Brian get along with the other kids? Why did he live in such a dream world? Why did we ever move here?

Later that evening, Lisa sat on the steps to the trailer waiting for Brian's dad to return from work at the mill. The doctor had left hours ago, saying that other than a few cuts and bruises, and a good scare, Brian would be fine. So she waited, knowing that she must tell Pete everything. Oh, of course about Paul and Randy, but also about all the imaginary friends and the dream world in which they and Brian lived. She hated to burden him. He worked so hard.

She heard footsteps coming up the walk from the road. She rose from the steps and met Pete halfway across the yard.

"Lisa, what are you doing out here?" Pete said when he saw his wife, "Where's Brian? Watching TV.?"

Lisa explained as best she could as she grabbed his arm and guided her husband through the door to the trailer and down the long hall to Brian's room. Outside the bedroom door, Lisa finished her story. Her husband's only response was a quick, cold stare as he quietly turned the knob and peered into the unlit bedroom.

"Brian, pal? You awake, ace?" he whispered.

There was no response from Brian as he lay stretched across the top bunk, nor would there be much of a response thereafter. Brian could only hear Captain Jerley now, and smell Gertrude Dinkle's cabbage sauce cooking. He was safe, sailing away aboard Jerley's beautiful galleon.

Pete paused for a second and closed the door. Turning to his wife, he said, "It's okay, he's sleeping. What's for dinner?" ■

ordering
tomatoes
on a
sticky
day
warmed
& toasted
on
black
shiny
plastic
hot
licking
the
juices that
flow
down
the
cleft
in his chin
falling
to the bed, soaking

staining
dirty cotton
below.

SUSAN KOVALESKI

PLUG IN

Plug in. Timothy did.
See him— trippin' on the VR 'scape?
Forget the beginning (he laughs) ignore the end,
There was never any more than there is now,
 than there is now,
 than there is now,
 than there is now.

Plug P-p-plug in Makes ya fast
Hi AI superhiway fast
turbo-info-fast smart-fast
betterfast *fastfast moneyfast*
 Yes (:

\$uccess in circuits lie!

Plug in. Swim the sea...
NN, HBO, MTV; it's out there, in here,
Sweeter than LSD,
Taste the red blue yellow omniscience.
Press your tongue through the glass,
Down the wire Explode into space,
Then, lick back down to earth.
Taste it— like real, salty, bloody life.

Plug
In.

 You'll see God.
Wire me here, wire we here,
In the name of the 'Puter,
The Sum, and the TV Ghost.
The red and black wire snakes
 those are His flowing beard-hairs.
Ones and zeros you can't see
 are His fingers and toes, man.
God's got a demon too—
 with a million swirling square eyes.
He can hypnotize, open your head up
like a dynamite stick,
it's techno-mystical.

So plug in.
You'll see God.

ED MCGINNIS

FLY AWAY

HEIDI VANESSENDELFT

I have always been interested in nature. Growing up in a little town on Long Island, I learned to pay attention to nature because it can teach a lot about life. So every spring since I was in elementary school, I watched the birds building nests in the eaves of our shabby old garage, there was a perfect view from my bedroom window. It all looked so simple and well planned: Mommy bird and Daddy bird go into the garage with sticks, and they come out empty beaked. Then they go in with food, there is a funny chirping, and they come out again— empty beaked; over and over they go in and come out. The chirping changes a little as time passes until a mystical thing happens—two birds go in, but three come out! At first Baby bird looks awfully wobbly, but it will fly away just like Mommy and Daddy bird. Nothing ever seemed to go wrong. I thought, That's easy! Birds have such a carefree life compared to ours.

One morning, before I got up, there was a brouhaha in the dining room. I clamored out of bed, and ran out to see what was going on. I had no idea what had happened but there was certainly tension in the air. My parents were hunched over a shoebox, totally engrossed in what they were doing. Then, I heard a familiar chirping. In science class, I had learned that baby birds can fall out of the nest, but it is best not to interfere. My parents evidently did not feel that way, because there was a baby bird in our dining room! Finally I could raise a real baby bird, after watching from my window for so long. I thought, It certainly won't be difficult; after all I'm in junior high now, and if those birds could do it, so can I... with my mother's help.

After the initial thrill, my mother explained to me that it would be a great responsibility to raise the baby starling. I figured she was exaggerating; if the birds could do it, so could we. I quickly agreed to help with the inconvenient task of feeding the bird every hour. (I did not realize at the time my mother meant every hour, without fail. She did.) I went to school that day, but the only thing on my mind was the bird, my bird. I decided to name him Mortimer.

Hour after hour, day after day, I helped my mother feed Mortimer and keep his Kleenex-nest box clean. We had to prepare a special formula containing wet dog chow, eggs and wheat germ. It was certainly more work than I expected. Every hour I had to microwave a teaspoon of baby bird formula, and using a flattened chopstick "beak," shovel it into that gaping yellow noise-maker. That was a bizarre experience! I had expected a cute little starling tweeting gently as I fed it, in reality Mortimer screeched practically all day and night, and when I fed him, he filled his beak up with mush, then shook his head so it splattered all over me.

Eventually, I got used to the inconvenience and mess, and actually enjoyed the tedious chore of taking care of Mortimer. He changed miraculously, almost overnight, from a homely blob of fluff to a fully feathered starling. When he began flying, my father designed a box with a branch in it, so Mortimer could have more freedom. Now when we fed him, he played hide-and-seek and flew around my parents bedroom. After about three weeks it was time for Mortimer to get familiar with life outside, so my "Mr. Fix-it" father transformed my old treehouse into an aviary. Still, it didn't sink in that soon Mortimer would no longer be a part of the family.

The day I had to release Mortimer inevitably arrived. Saturday morning, my family went outside, I climbed up to the aviary, and opened the screen door. Mortimer stayed perfectly still, perched on the branch, as if to say, "The door is open. Will you please close it so intruders don't come in?" I stood there for what seemed like an eternity, not knowing exactly what to think. Part of me was saying, "Good bird, stay right there and you can always be a part of our family, just like a pet."

But inside I knew it would be best for Mortimer if he lived with the rest of the baby starlings. That was, after all, the reason we raised him: to set him free. Although I did everything possible to prepare Mortimer for life in the wild, I could not prepare myself for the tremendous feeling of emptiness when Mortimer did fly away to join the other wild birds. ■

STILL LIFE

The hand lying on my hip
is made of lead.
Twenty minutes ago
it was flesh and blood: I could feel
my muscles
tingle when it
fell asleep.

The urge to stretch my fingers
and stroke the smooth skin
of my stomach
is almost
irrepressible,
but to interrupt the line
of her gaze
is unthinkable.

Staring at the lashes that curl
around my eyelids, I sink
into my lower
abdomen,
and imagine my fingers
gently twisting the curls
that grow there.

I feel my torso expand, contract,
expand, contract.

Can she
see me breathe?

Can she hear my ankles
sweating under the hot
lights?

I see my skin melt into the air
flowing like motor oil toward her canvas
and hear nothing
but my body
becoming beautiful
in her brush strokes.

TRACY YUELLS

THE DESK

BOB BALLENTINE

I sat in study hall, hating it as usual. Hating it the more because it was a Monday. There sat the usual three-hundred-or-so of us, at our desks, alphabetically row on row, in the old gym/auditorium/study hall of Middle School A. I was tucked away among the M's, where I had always been. Everyone was studying or reading as far as I could tell, which I couldn't understand at all. I thought that, being kids, we should have been "up to something," rebelling in some stupid way. Passing notes and giggling, like on TV. Not that it really mattered—no notes would have been passed to me, no secrets giggled in my ear when the monitors weren't looking.

I didn't "run with the crowd," as my mother, mistress of the euphemism, would tell the neighbors, not being able to bring herself to say the completely negative "unpopular." I was both grateful and humiliated by her sparing my feelings. I don't know what term my father used. I didn't have girlfriends and I didn't get into fights—two important failings in his book. For my part, I shielded him from the knowledge that I was regularly picked on, often by girls.

Giving up on my fellow students, I turned my attention to my desk, to see if it had anything of value to offer me. We each always sat in the exact same area of the gym floor, and until the next class play or awards ceremony, when the desks would be cleared away and re-placed later, we would each have the same desk, sometimes for weeks. I had this particular desk for about a month, but it had been scrubbed clean since yesterday, probably by some kid on detention. "Clean" isn't the right word, though. All the scrubbing had done was spread the ink and graphite out of the grooves worn by the dull tread of generations of pens and pencils without number. The varnish was long departed, the grey water and greyer-smelling soap and bored scrubbing had left the pale desktop like thick driftwood, splintery and drily spongy. If I tried to write—which I rarely did—my penpoint would keep catching through the paper in the grooves of the name of some band or a painstakingly inscribed swear word or a "Blank loves Blank." I'd never written on a desk myself, not because I was a good boy but because I never had a public thing to say. And the desk never had anything of interest to say either—I didn't like the bands and I could never recognize the names of whoever that loved whomever or who sucked.

But this morning I found fresh writing in one corner. In fine blue ink, probably one of those "Accountant Point Bics" (I've always been good at guessing things like that) it said, "I am proud to be English." Why should anyone write this? I wondered. Did he just find out in history class that England had won the last couple of wars? I don't know why I did it, I guess my hatred of study hall had warped me, but underneath I wrote, "Down with England! I am proud to be German! Sieg Heil!" I immediately felt stupid, but not enough to erase it or scribble over it. And if I had I probably would have been caught, and then I would be scrubbing desks that afternoon. So I left it. I'm not really German, anyway. My father's mother

was German; a family legend, she would serve dinner and then go into the bathroom and sit on the closed lid of the toilet seat with her head in her hands, waiting for everyone to finish so she could do the dishes. My father insisted no one had ever seen her eat, yet she outlived her many siblings on either side of the Atlantic, as well as her publicly-fed husband. Actually I'm mostly English, with aristocracy on both sides, and I was rather proud of that myself. But it was too late to write that on the desk. Besides, I was curious to see if this guy would get mad at me. He couldn't know who I was, so I wasn't worried about getting beat up this time.

The next day, underneath what I had written, I found, in the same slender blue hand, "Well, I guess you are a German. That is nice too. I am just proud to be English."

He wasn't mad. I felt awful. Why had I written that? Especially the "Sieg Heil." God. I just wanted to pretend it had never happened, but no—this would eat at me, I knew it. Some things just eat at me forever, and I could tell this would be one of them. Next to what he had written I wrote, "Just kidding. I like England too." It didn't make me feel better, however.

The next day there was no new writing below mine. I was disappointed—this adolescent surreptitious communication was fun, just as TV had promised, even though I had made an ass of myself. Then I noticed a folded piece of paper on the lower shelf. On it was written—in blue ink—"The German." I unfolded it.

Dear German,

Hi. I thought if we were going to write to each other it might be better to do it like this. Let me tell you a little about myself. I am a girl in the eighth grade. I like English and History, and my hobby is collecting spider webs. I am tall for my age, and I have long blond hair.

What about you?

The Englishwoman

It was a girl. I'd gotten a letter from a girl.

And I had said "Sieg Heil" to her.

My reply would have to repair the damage somehow.

Dear Englishwoman,

Hi. [The damn penpoint kept getting stuck in those stupid grooves.] I agree, writing like this is safer. I will tell you about me. I am also in the eighth grade. [I didn't tell her what classes I liked, because there weren't any.] My hobby is making model airplanes. I am a member of the International Plastic Modelers Society. [I hoped this might impress her. I didn't tell her how I looked because I was skinny and stupid looking (perhaps I still am).] I am a boy. [I decided to tell her I was a boy, just to keep things straight. But I couldn't decide whether to say "boy" or "male." I finally decided on "boy": it seemed more honest.] How do you collect spiderwebs? [This hobby of hers was a little disturbing, but I was going to try to be open minded. I wondered whether I should put "signed" or "sincerely" before my name. "Love"

seemed pushy. I decided to follow her example and closed with]

The German

I placed my note where hers had lain. I suddenly felt special. I couldn't exactly say I had a girlfriend, at least not yet, but she was the closest I'd had so far, and it was a start. Perhaps school wasn't so bad after all. I lay in bed that night, imagining our first meeting: somehow I wasn't skinny then, and my hair wasn't the stupid crewcut my parents made me wear (this in the late sixties, for God's sake); the Englishwoman looked like my favorite blond in the "Girls of Scandinavia" pictorial in the *Playboy* I'd stolen from my father's closet and kept hidden among my unbuilt models, and she spoke like Julie Christy. Finally the next day's study hall arrived, and there was a note waiting for me.

Dear German,

Yes, I knew you were a boy already. [How did she know? Maybe I wasn't smart enough for her.] I collect spiderwebs like this: I find a good web, put a piece of cardboard behind it, then spraypaint it with white paint. I let it dry, then carefully cut it down and paste it onto black paper. It is very interesting. Your hobby sounds interesting, too. [I had impressed her.]

By the way, did you see we have a new member?

The Englishwoman

A "new member"? What did that mean? And "member"? Was this a club? I felt around in the desk: inside was another note, addressed to "The Englishwoman and the German."

Hi,

Can I write to you too? I found your notes. I hope you don't mind. My hobby is bowling and I'm in a league. Do you like cars? I have a Dodge Dart. But I don't have a licence yet and it does not run. I am going to fix it up with my brother:

The Pollack

Oh, Christ, I thought, was this a joke? Did the Englishwoman actually believe this idiot? He was obviously making fun of us. Besides, she was mine—I'd found her first. Or maybe she was just humoring him, and her next note would tell him where to go. In my note I told her that I was "not too sure about this 'Pollack,'" to let her know whose side I was on. That night I fantasized about winning my scandinavian Englishwoman away from Ivan in his grimy bowling shirt.

The Englishwoman's note the next day was addressed to "The German and the Pollack." I was gratified to see that I still came first, at least. She said she was glad to have a "new member," and in the same gracious tone she used with me she welcomed the Pollack and said nice things about his hobbies. She even asked him to describe his car. She hardly said anything to me at all, and my note—brief and reserved—was again addressed to her alone. I wasn't going to welcome the Pollack to our "club," and it wasn't a "club" anyway. It hadn't been a club until he came along.

This was on a Friday, which meant I had a whole

weekend of wondering what the hell was going on, and I wasn't looking forward to it. My fantasy for that night starred a Scandinavian brunette.

On Monday, though, there was no note waiting for me inside the desk. I found a piece of torn notebook paper on the shelf, containing a few delicate but illegible loops and swirls in the Englishwoman's fine blue hand. I reached in with both hands and pulled out every scrap I could find. One of the monitors was watching me with the intensity of a prison guard who has heard a twig snap near the fence, but I didn't care. The Englishwoman's note was ripped to shreds— not one word intact. And mingled in were jagged fragments of another note—the Pollack's. Some bastard had found us out and was ruining it all just for the stupid fun of it. I shook with helpless rage. I wrote a note to the Englishwoman telling her it was no longer safe for us, that we'd have to find another place to hide our notes. But the desk was empty the next day, too, and the day after that, and every day for the rest of the year. ■

DID YA EVER TINK

Did ya ever tink of wat it be like six feet under?
darkness all around you,
total and complete silence all the time.

Did ya ever tink wat it be like to be hit by a train?
seeing that big metal machine headed straight for you,
is it instant death or do you feel pain?
arms and legs flying ever-which-way.

Did ya ever tink wat it be like to be in a shipwreck?
waves throwing the cargo around like small toys,
the ship being engulfed by the ocean in front of your own eyes.
would there be sharks?

Did ya ever tink wat it be like to be on fire?
every inch of your skin tightening,
the smell of burnt meat,
flames all around you.

Did ya ever tink wat it be like to fly over the Grand Cannon?
soaring with just the wind holding you up,
at any moment a up draft could knock you off balance,
and plunge to your death.

Enough Questions Billy!! Go To Sleep!!

EILEEN TAMANINI

SNOW!

JASON VAN BEMMEL

As I think about the winters of my childhood, I recall the great joy and anticipation that came with approaching snowfall. This was especially true when the snow was expected to fall on a school day. Nothing could awaken me in the morning like the expectation of snow, no matter how little the amount.

As soon as November came and the weather turned cold, I'd rush home from school and ask my dad when it was going to snow. I'd follow him around the house, bombarding him with questions, "Do you think it's gonna snow? Do ya? It's awfully cold..."

The interrogation would continue for hours with his only response being, "I don't know. I guess we'll have to wait and see."

Then, as I waited for my second favorite thing, dinner, the news came on. I hated the news but I watched it faithfully all winter long. I always asked my dad to call me when the weather came on but he wouldn't hear of it, "If you want to see the weather, you have to watch the news." Dad was such a pain. He didn't understand what it was like to be a kid. What did he know? They probably didn't even have evening news when he was a kid.

The report came in, "Sixty percent chance of snow showers overnight." Well that wrapped it up. There would be snow for sure! I didn't even know what a sixty percent chance was, but I liked it. So the interrogation would begin anew, this time over dinner. "So, it's gonna snow. That means no school tomorrow. That's what the man said. Yup, fifteen feet of snow, that's what I predict. What do think, dad? How much snow are we gonna get? One foot? Two feet?"

"I don't know. I guess we'll have to wait and see."

Before I could even finish my interrogation it was nine o'clock, bedtime. Who could sleep? Who even wanted to? After all, there wasn't gonna be any school. I would toss and turn for hours, thinking of all the snow and the fun I'd have. There would be snowmen, snowforts, snowball fights and more! And there would be icicles, oh, I loved icicles! Exhausted, I would drift off to dream, about snow, of course.

Six o'clock came and I was awake so fast, you'd think it was Christmas morning (my other favorite thing about winter). I didn't need my mom to get me up, I just sat up in bed and ran straight to the window. There was just frost on the ground, but from my window it looked like snow to me. I ran outside with enthusiasm but stopped dead in my tracks. I looked up into the sky. Where was the snow? That weatherman lied, there was no snow. There wasn't fifteen feet, there wasn't even an inch. There was nothing.

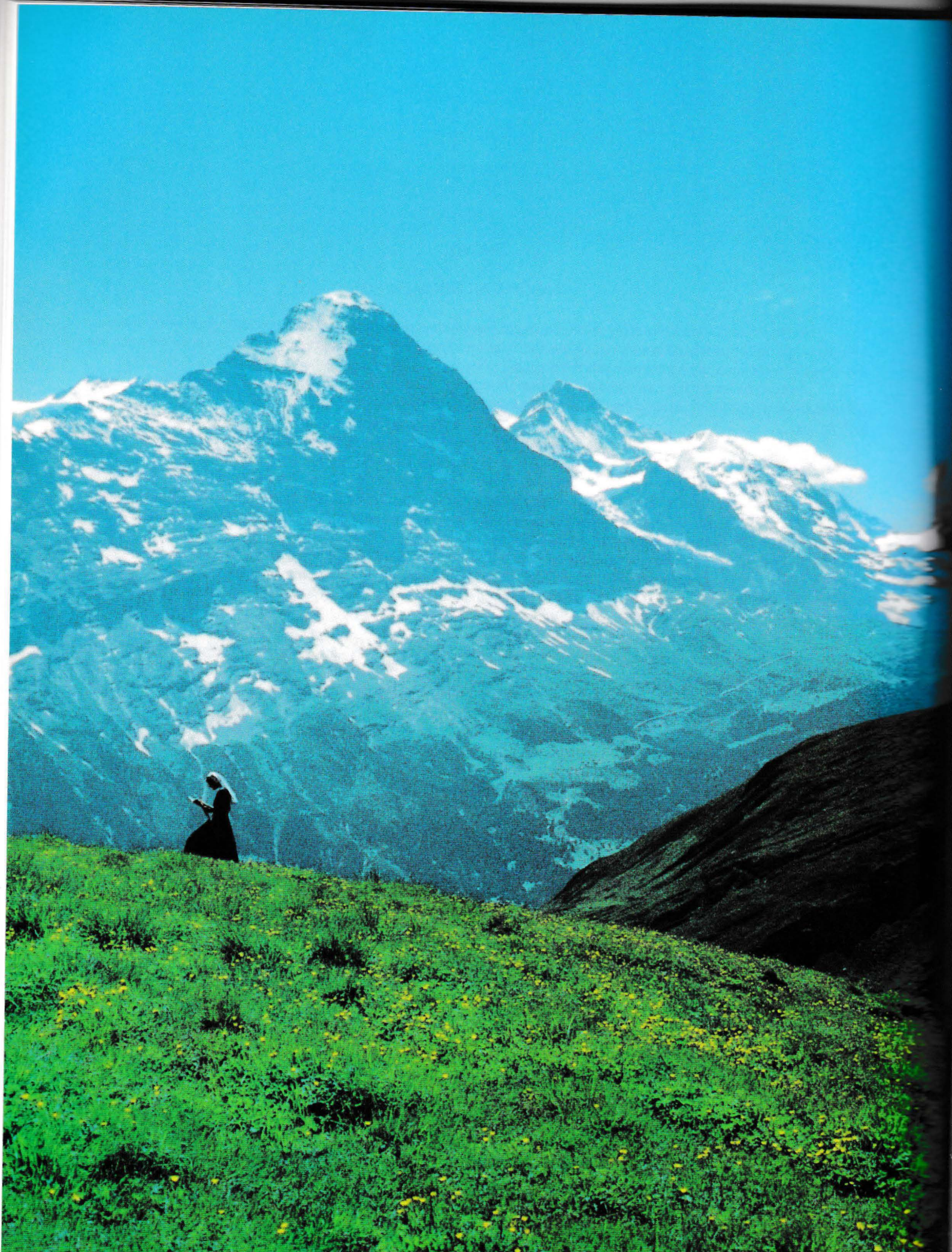
Then the snow prayer began. I would lie on my back and wish for snow. Oh, please, let it snow. Even if it's just an inch, let it snow. Heck, if I could just have one flake land on the ground, I'd be happy. Then I saw it. A snow flake, a nice big one. I stood up to watch it fall. It came down slowly, dancing along the chilling wind. Oh, please let it land. Let it stick, please. Then it landed-- right on my nose-- and it melted.

"Jason! Come inside and get ready for school."

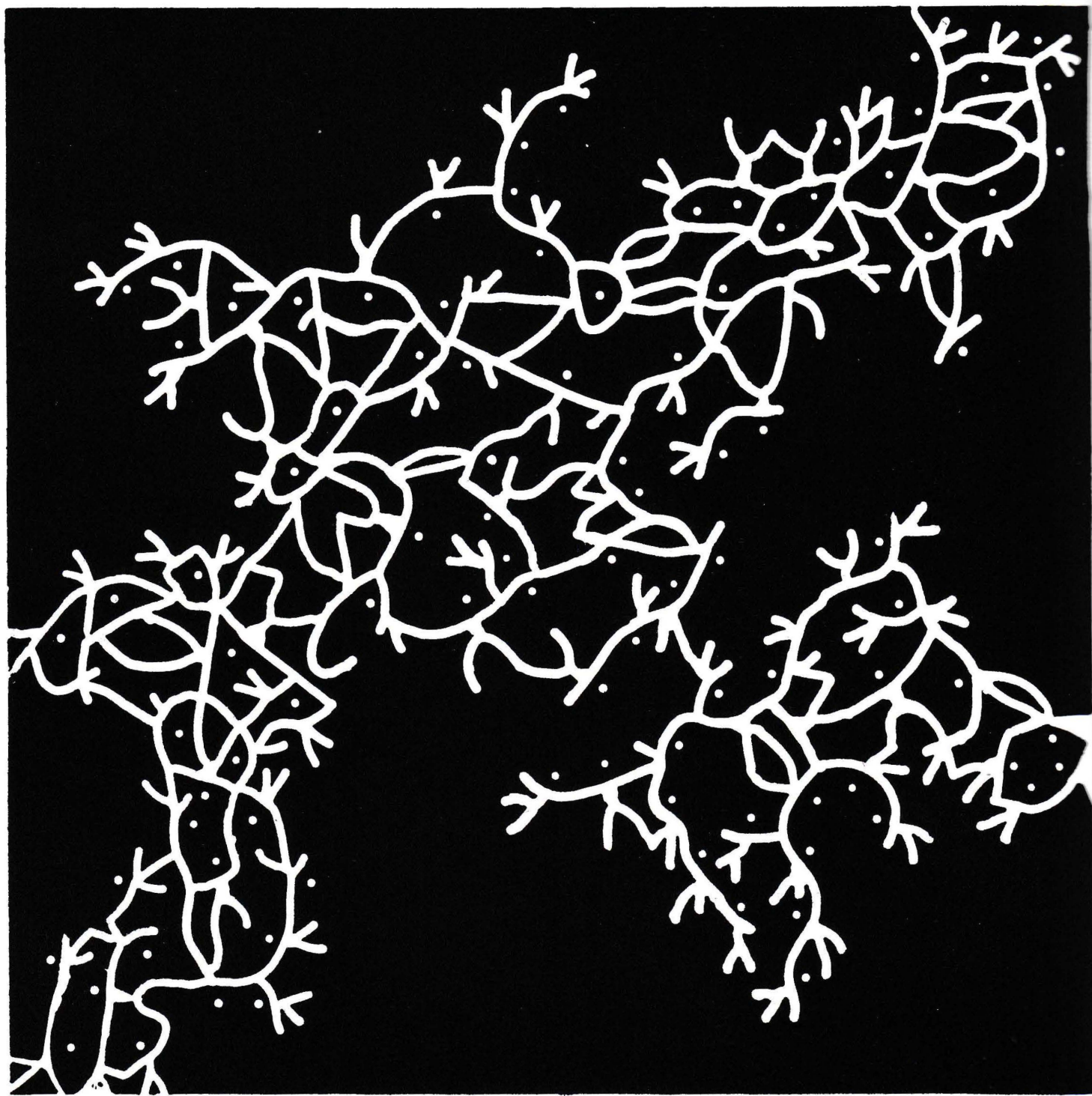
"I'm coming, Mom! I'm coming!"

"Well Jason, does it look like it's going to snow?"

"I don't know. I guess we'll have to wait and see." ■











DREAMS

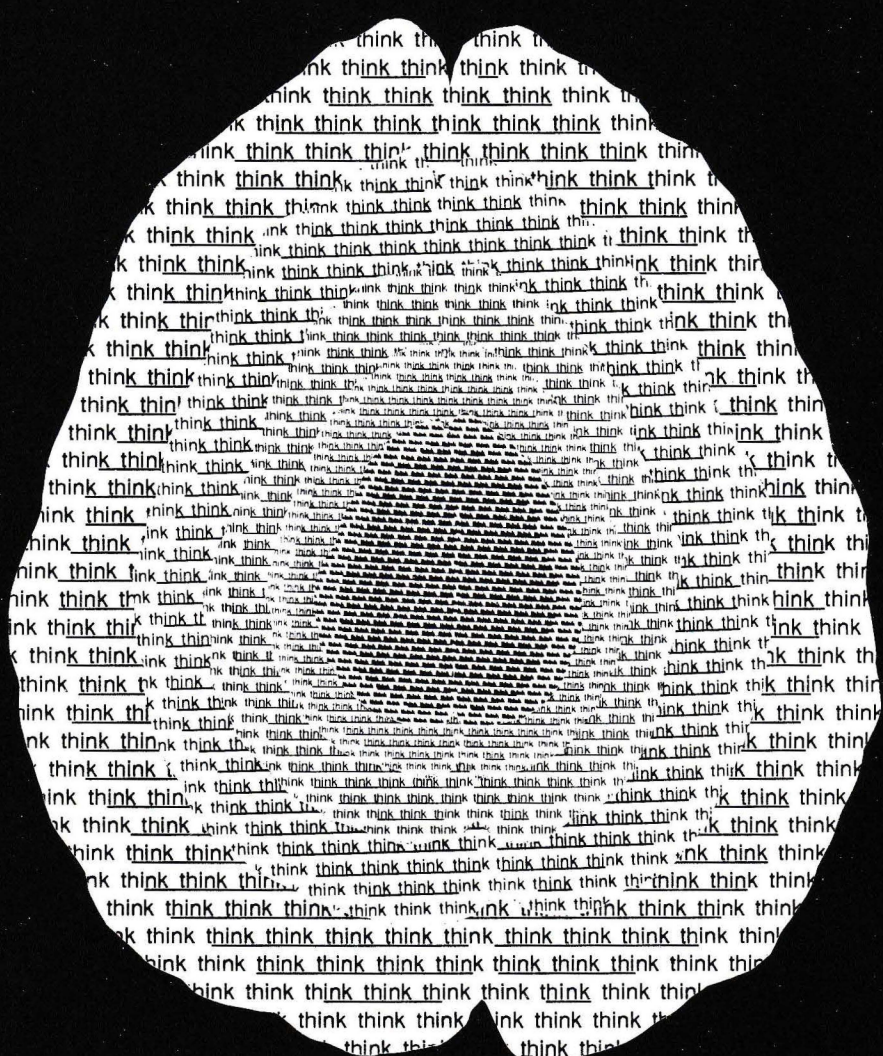
Painted dreams on a broken mirror,
I see not what I want
But what they wish to see.

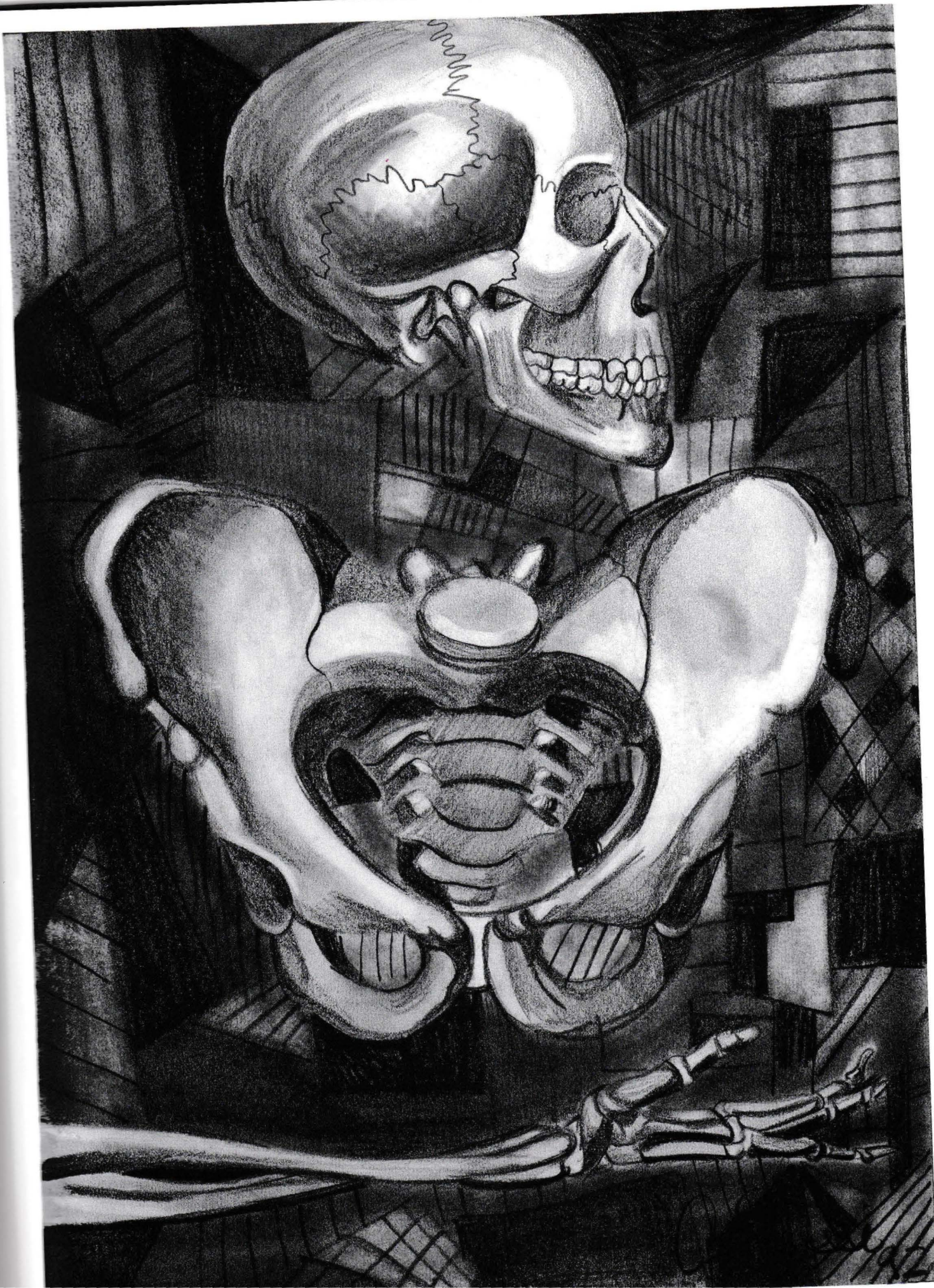
The mirror bent
when I saw what they disliked,
The mirror splintered
when I listened to what they said,
The mirror cracked
when I understood what they believed,
The mirror broke
when I tried to change
what they disliked,
to what they said
they believed.

Why when I ignored it all
was the mirror clear
with painted dreams?

MICHAEL J. EVANS











Megha Jaiswal Madala I - Aankhing

FINNEGAN'S TALE: THE SILVER FLASK AND THE GOLDEN RING

ED MCGINNIS

I tell you I was ne'er so glad to see the old town of Kilarney in all me life! Someone wet me dry lips and I'll relate me story. Come now boys, how can a man speak with such a parched throat?

Well now, that's better! Thank you kindly, stranger. And what might your name be? Well William, you're a true Irishman. Now I'll tell you what happened to me last night when I met--just o'er the hill there, and I swear to you this is true--one o' the wee people.

Quiet now, fellows. Quiet I say! That's enough out o' you. "Kissin' the Blarney Stone" indeed, McGee. And you, O'Neil, there's not been a day I was so weary that I couldn't thrash the likes o' you to Limerick and back. Now if all you gentlemen are done gigglin' like schoolchildren, I'll tell you a story that is true as my name is Sean Finnegan.

'T all began when I left me home o'er the hill there and headed for town last evenin'. You see I haven't been feelin' too well lately and I thought perhaps a little walk would do me soul good, but I went and forgot me lucky whiskey flask so I turned about and ran back. Ran I say because she's a silver beauty that me own dear Shannon gave me some time before we wed. Take a look now, she's engraved-- *To Me One True Love*. Here, d' you see?

Now as I was sayin', I went back to me home, I opened the door, --and I took three steps back because sittin' there, sure as Saint Patrick, on me kitchen chair, swingin' his little feet, was a tiny man.

No higher 'an me kneecap, he was dressed in a fine green suit and his red hair hung in wild curls about his head. But what upset me most, he was holdin' between his two wee hands me own silver flask and the boy was gulpin' down me whiskey like a thirsty dog at his bowl!

"Hey there boy-o, that's me whiskey you're bein' so generous with!" called I, and he started like a frightened deer. He looked at me with the strangest blue eyes any man has e'er had chance to be looked at with and I thought, a leprechaun! And I knew if I could grab the wee buckie I'd have anythin' I could wish for.

Well, guessin' me thoughts he dashed off quick as a rabbit on fire o'er the table and out the window still clutchin' me lucky flask. Not bein' one to let such an opportunity go so easy, I ran outside and chased after him as that leprechaun hopped into the woods.

Now, I know that green forest as well as any man and better 'an most, but I must confess that wee fox soon had me as lost as a duck in a henhouse. But I weren't about to quit followin' that leprechaun while I still had those emerald coattails in me sight, no, not e'en when that strange forest got stranger.

The trees were gettin' bigger and bigger is what I mean! The whole forest seemed to grow as we ran on. Why pretty soon the grass was up to me shoulders and there was mushrooms as tall as me house. As I was noticin' these

mushrooms, the leprechaun scrambled up a little hill and with a look back at me, jumped straight down into a tunnel at the top. Havin' gone s' far, I weren't about to let a wee hole scare me now, so I slid right down after him...

...The reason I've stopped is because ol' Patrick here sees I'm dry but won't fill me glass 'till you give the nod, me boy. You see Patty here has two rules: all donnybrooks go outside and no credit for the drinks. But he's a good man anyhow. Speakin' o' fights, O'Neil, if you don't stop guffawin' durin' me story I'll knock your head so hard your children will get black eyes. O! Thank you again, William! As I said you're a true Irishman and may your mother be blessed for bringin' up such a fine man. And next time you see me runnin' low, just give a nod to Patty there. O, you're a good man.

Now as I was sayin', at the bottom o' this tunnel, I finds a hall cut through the very mother earth. And at one end I see a light and hear music and laughin', so I follow it into a huge room where this here odd party is goin' on.

All manner o' wee people is twirlin' about the place, all sorts o' fairy folk dancin' and singin' in these circlin' spires! I spy o'er here a lovely green sprite doin' a jig, and there some tangle bearded gnomes drink up a frothy ale and slam down the mugs which fill up again by 'emselves! This here cricket, taller 'an me by a head, plays a mad tune on a real fiddle while skippin' about the dancers. Then, as I'm fightin' off a big frog that wants to take me hat and coat, I hear, "Top o' the evenin' to you, Sean Finnegan!"

It's the same leprechaun (now as big as me) that I've been chasin'. The little imp introduces himself as Shenanigan the Leprechaun and then he offers me a swig o' me own whiskey!

I should've been thinkin' now how curious all o' this was, but at the time it seemed not at all odd to be in Fairyland itself. And as I pocketed me lucky flask there, I finds me feet tappin' and I begin swayin' and before I know it, I get picked up by one o' them spinnin' spires o' fairies. Soon I'm dancin' away with this big lass who has these eyes, dark and Irish, and these two enormous... branches growin' right out o' her shoulders! Next I'm spinnin' about with a fairy and she's got butterfly wings flappin' behind her, and I feel so shamrock findin' good that I think nothin' o' givin' this fairy a peck on the cheek.

Then I start hearin' the music, and the fiddle sounds just like it's speakin' to me and I think I can hear it singin', clear as a squeaky barstool, "O, wel-come Sean Fin-ne-gan / He's back a-gain, Fairyland / With his sisters hand in hand / For the world's too full o' weepin' for him to un-der-stand!"

Well now, I start to get scared like, Begora! I've been under a fairy spell! So I break away and run into the hall, but here I go and bump right into this fellow who's as tall as, as from the floor there to the top o' me chair when I hold it up o'er me head like this. Alright, alright now. Calm down there, Patrick me boy, I was just explainin' me story.

This giant turns out to be the very king o' the wee people himself. He tells me his name is King Nuada and he sent Shenanigan the Leprechaun to fetch me back to me home in Fairyland, and here now, he's sad I don't remember who I am.

I say, "I'm Sean Finnegan and I live but three skips from Patrick's Pub in Kilarney."

But King Nuada insists I went and got meself confused and he'll have to relate the story o' the wee people to me so I'll remember who I am.

I'll try and recall how he told it to me... it seems that back in misty Gaelic history, the warm Irish sun and our islands rollin' hills belonged to the wee people alone. But then, from out o' the stormy Celtic seas, men came to take away Ireland for themselves.

The wee folk tried to live in peace with these first Irishmen, but sure enough they found man full up with bad things. I'm speakin' about greed, vanity, war and the like!

So one stormin' Irish night, all the wee people got together and decided to leave the land above to man. Then they all disappeared into their secret tunnels and caves under the earth, but not before swearin' to one day reclaim their green hills from man above.

They been seen so rare after that, most men just as soon think the wee people are a legend, a tale to scare the little ones into behavin'. But o' course now we know different that I've proved so with me eyes. What?! Why there's nothin' wrong with me eyes nor the rest o' me head, O'Neil! But one more crack like that and you'll be starin' at the ceilin'. Now be quiet and let a man speak.

Well, old Nuada explains to me that I, Sean Finnegan, am really a fairy changlin'. That's right, gentlemen, and me true name is Finnbeara the Fairy and I was switched as a wee baby with the human Sean Finnegan.

"Now why," says I, "would that be so?"

He tells me, sure now, it's all part o' our plan to retake upper Erin from the humans... and perhaps a look at one o' me personal fairy articles would remind me failin' memory o' who I am. So out comes this golden ring and he shows me where it has written on it, "Finnbeara and Coleen, Forever." This he says is me magical weddin' band.

But I tell him right out, "I'm married to me own dear Shannon and I won't trade her love for anythin'."

"Listen now", says the King, "Coleen is the most beautiful lass in all me kingdom and me own daughter to boot. And here she's been waitin' all these years for you. You must remember, me boy, this ring. It was me own gift to you on your weddin' day and it holds all sorts o' magic fairy powers."

I tell him, "I still won't trade Shannon for no fairy princess nor fairy powers... but now, I am a wee bit curious about this ring, and I wouldn't mind meetin' Coleen, just to tip me hat, you understand."

"No problem that," says the King. He wishes on the ring and poof! There stands the most amazin' sight me eyes e'er grew wide o'er. A girl, gentlemen, like has not been seen on this earth since Elaine o' Troy. No, wait, that isn't right... even Elaine would pale before this girl with snow hair, lake

eyes, and rose lips. Oh yes, and I notice she's wearin' little else but spider webs. "I'm Coleen!" she sings.

"They tell me I'm Finnbeara," say I, and she bounces o'er and throws her wee arms about me. Me head is spinnin' about so fast that you can't blame me when I reach around and pinch... meself to see if I'm dreamin'.

"I'm startin' to recall me fairy beginin's," say I, "And now how does that ring there work, if you don't mind?"

The old King smiles and shows me that just by wishin' while I hold the ring, I can have anythin' I want. In way o' demonstration, he makes it rain gold coins and green emeralds.

"Fine, fine," say I, "but can you wish for some whiskey? Then we can celebrate me return properly." No sooner was the suggestion out o' me mouth 'an poof! We had a table and chairs and a bottomless bottle o' whiskey.

Well, let me tell you boys, it was a fearsome night as we sat there, me kickin' the gold at me feet, Coleen hangin' off me arm, and the King and me eye to eye, each matchin' the other drink for drink. I can't tell how long we went on like that except to say that I'm still feelin' the effects o' that e'er full bottle as I sit here before you.

"O' Kingie," I say at one point, "If what you say is true, and I was to help us wee people take back ol' Erin, then why might I ask did you have ol' Shenanigan bring me back home to Fairyland?"

He looks at me with his whiskey filled eyes and says, "Me ol' pal Finnbeara, me son, let me admit somethin' to you. You see our little plan here failed but good! I'm afraid that every changlin' we snuck upstairs 'ventually forgets who they really are and begin actin' just as bad as the humans about them. Why just look what happened when we switched the wee ones o' England's Royal family, pure disaster I tell you! So we've given up for now, least 'till we can think o' a new plan. Sorry me boy, I know it's not your fault. By the way Finnbeara, do you know what time 't is? At dawn you'll ne'er be able to return to that vile human life and I want to drink to that hour."

Searchin' me pockets I find me watch next to me lucky silver whiskey flask. "I've got a few minutes yet me wee excellency," I tell him, "but I remember who I am now and I'll be thankin' you to return me weddin' ring."

Well now, as soon as that o'ergrown elf tosses me his gold band o' a gift I laughs, "I'm Sean Finnegan and I can drink the likes o' you under the bar without a hiccup or a sneeze! Ring, I wish I were back lookin' down on me true home o' Kilarney!"

"No Finnbeara! You don't know what you're doin'," squeaks the ol' King as he grabs the ring out o' me hand, "You can ne'er return! Ne'er... ne'er..." he says fadin away into the mist.

Next thin' I know I'm blinkin' me eyes and there's the mornin' sun just beginin' to break up the mist about the homes o' ol' Kilarney. I was so happy I near cried as I stumbled down here to the pub, where I know me true friends be. This is to you William, me good man, now how about drinks all around, e'en to you down there O'Neil!

Wait now! Shh! Did you hear that? Why it sounds

just like a horrible Banshee callin' me name! Hide me, boys,
the wee folk are back for revenge!

O-ho! Look fellows, it weren't a Banshee at all but
me own dear lovely Shannon! Shannon me love, this here's
William (what was your name?), William Yeats and he is the
best Irishman that e'er-- oww! Be careful there me dear, that's
me ear you're grippin' like your last two pence-- oww! Wait
love, I haven't finished me drink. Now I can explain where I
was last night... tell her, William! Shannon, you're the reason
I came back! You be quiet o'er there O'Neil or-- oww! Well,
goodbye gentlemen, I must be leavin' now. I'll see you again
tonight-- oww! But Shannon, wait 'till you hear... ■

ME AND THE GIANT

They said one day you'd appear
Larger than life, unable to fit
Through doorways without a carpenter.

They waited for you in fear,
Hoping you'd never come so they could
Go on sleeping in your night shadow.

But something moves the distance.
The sky in your skin.
They try to run like trees,

To sleep on broken promises,
Day dissolves as they lie on beds
A few nails short of dreaming.

(And I'm the one who watches the giant
Trip over the gas station setting
The whole set on fire in five minutes.)

In the morning I'm bored beyond belief.
That infancy abandoned, burnt-out mansion—
I follow the giant into the hills.

LAWRENCE KOPE

LOSING MY VOICE

We wake to the voices
of nine year old boys in
white robes, forty distilled
melodies, purified

by the vocal chords of
innocent throats. The notes
roll off their tongues like a
basketball off the long

fingers of a boy their
age. Gifted by the dawn,
I see the thin arms and
long fingers curled inside

translucent sleeves. I see
ankles, round as apples,
sloping into hairless
calves, lacking the muscles

of growth. We lie before
them, your hair obscuring
our intertwined limbs. I'm crushed
in your embrace, floating

in the dusty sunlit
song that flows in our ears
and out our thighs. It's hard
to tell where I lost my

voice; my body listens
to you listen to them,
and I feel my soft flesh
cushion you like feathers.

TRACY YOUJELLS

A DANCER SPEAKS

inspired by Emily Dickinson and Martha Graham

LOOK AT ME.

Yes, me.

Let me speak
for once,
moving neither lip
nor tongue.

Let me uncover what
I think
and feel.

Let me reveal
my love
of living
and hate
of limitation
my care
of emotion
and worry
for dispassion
my need
for acceptance
and desire
to escape it
my hope
for freedom
and dream...

Let me make the
ultimate sacrifice
and
cut myself open—

rip my insides out
upon this stage

permitting time and space to
pass
worlds to
collide
and
parallel
to cross
universes

all in one brief
musical interlude.

This is my gift.

Accept it, and

(Judge me not by
my words
as my

ACTIONS

SPEAK

LOUDER, AND)

Let my Movements
guide you through the
whimsical fairy
tale and
brutal
reality that is
my Life.

Amazing how much
tears
sweat
and
blood
it takes to compose

my Letter to the World.

ADRIENNE TINNEY

"DON'T LOOK UP!"

LAURA RHODES

"Don't look up!" That's what they tell you isn't it? I listen. I've heard the stories. "Diane was mugged last week, didn't you hear?" Of course I'd heard it. Everyone had, but that doesn't stop them from telling other people who had heard it too. I'm not sure what the big fuss is about. Last week it was Mark. Next week it will be someone else. Maybe me. "Don't look up!" It doesn't matter, office gossip. I mean, it comes with any job, right? And I really like my job so what does it matter? Damn, forgot the McPherson file! I should go back to get it. Oh well, I can leave it. Brainless McPherson. I'll just tell him that I said I'd have it done by the day after tomorrow. He won't care. I'll just finish it up late tomorrow night. I don't mind working late, besides I really like my job. They always told me I'd be good at it, "Ann you've got a real knack for this." They were right, I've been at it for fifteen years now. I am good. I should get appointed to an upper management position next year. Well, probably not. Mark's in line for the position too. He doesn't have the experience I do, but they say he's really good. I guess I really don't think so, but maybe that's why I haven't made management yet. Maybe I don't recognize the really good stuff. Michelle doesn't like Mark's work either, but she hasn't made it any further than I have. Maybe that's our problem, we don't recognize the good stuff. I'll just have to work harder.

"Evening, miss."

"Good evening."

"We just got the new issue of Better Homes and Gardens. It's got a recipe for a strudel thing my wife loves. Want it?"

"No thank you, just Newsweek."

"Your husband sick?"

"No, I'm not married."

"Ahh, why do ya want to go and ruin your day reading that stuff? I tell ya your kids would love that strudel thing."

"I'll take them both."

I don't have children. I probably should have. Everyone else my age has children, Diane has those two adorable boys, Michelle has a new baby. I don't know if Mark has children, but everyone else does. Well, I guess I don't know about the guys in management. Maybe it's time I started thinking about a family.

Can you believe that, right on the front cover, "Rape." The man at the newsstand was right, this will be depressing. It's on the Yugoslavia situation. Those poor women. I wonder why someone doesn't do something. I guess the situation is very complicated though, that's what everyone says. I know it's not a good idea to police the world. We did do a pretty good job with the Persian Gulf war. That's a different situation though. We were saving oil.

Where is that key? I know it's in here somewhere. This is always the worst part of the day. Someone could come right up behind me while I search in my purse for my key. I could be tomorrow's office gossip. Do you know how many women are raped in New York every day? I read the figure once. It scared me so much I think I forgot it on purpose. I had a friend who was raped in high school, it was date rape though. She didn't press charges. I mean she wasn't exactly a virgin. They would have said that she asked for it. I wonder where she is, I don't think she went to college. She probably got married. I'll bet she has children by now. Maybe I should have tried harder to have a family. It doesn't matter, I work and I really do like my job.

What's on TV tonight? Monday, Murphy Brown. That's one of my favorite shows. Sometimes I wish I could handle my job the way she handles hers. And now with a new baby. Oh well. I do admire the way TV is starting to portray more women in leading roles. It's nice to see that the world is changing. ■

MUSIC IS THE SQUEAK OF TIME'S CHARIOT'S WHEELS

My fifteenth spring, I stumbled upon Bach
By accident, a single fugue heard once
In school; and, feeling a hidden door unlock,
I began to shed my adolescent sense
Of being older than my body's age.
I sensed a thing outside myself, a thing
Much larger than the parents, schools, the cage
In which my hormones paced and moped for wings.
And then I heard Bach's Passacaglia and Fugue
And learned in its relentless, driving lines
That greatness touched us only when we knew
That we were small before art's war with Time.
I shed like an outgrown skin my conceit of age,
And gained a self in the fire of art, Time's rage.

BOB BALLENTINE

YELLOW

YOU stand there so smug and pert,
so darling sticky sweet.
After all the trouble you caused.
Your house pink and lime-green rooms,
so perfect and neat.
Your skin never tans in the summer,
milky white is your theme.
You think and act like you're as wholesome and perfect
as the Almighty Himself.
You married my brother,
spoon-fed him lies,
brainwashed him,
to the extent that he believes he has no family
but *yours*.
Now you're pregnant,
does anyone know?
Yellows and greens are the colors
for the baby's shirts and pants.
I don't see why you can't see
I'm harmless,
just want my brother back.
The perfect picture *you* wanted I guess
the house with the white picket fence,
the dog,
husband and child,
the first chance didn't work, will this one?
Time is running out on *you*,
expiration date is close at hand,
the infamous biological clock will stop.
Your fresh flower smelling yellow kitchen
and perfumed bathroom won't last long.
He may be lazy,
but he is also a part of me.
Share— it doesn't hurt
you might not know that,
since you were an only child!

EILEEN TAMANINI

"HERO"

AMY BRAUN

William Williams lifted his head from the back of the recliner in response to the irritating ring of the portable phone. His cheek and chin were wet with saliva and the TV was buzzing with grey, white and black static. His neck stiff, he slipped his hand inside the collar of his postal uniform to rub his neck as he searched for the phone. Tripping over an empty bag of potato chips, magazines and his second uniform, William scanned the floor hoping to find it before it rang again. Conrad, the dog, had it between his paws. William snatched the headpiece, rubbed it against his leg and held it to his ear.

"Ye-llo..."

There was only the sound of a faint crowd, clanging dishes, and a radio. It had to be Cora. She was at work.

He waited a few seconds and then he boomed, "HELLO!"

"Oh... William... Hi... uh did I uh... wake you up?" She sounded frantic.

He squinted at the digital clock at the end of the long hallway. "Well, yeah... it's 1:30 in the morning."

"I'm sorry." She stopped. He could hear her inhale a cigarette. Her next words blended with the exhale. "It's just that I really need to talk to somebody. Can you come in for a coffee or somethin'?"

"Well I have to work in the morning... Can you tell me over the phone? Is it your mother? Is she okay?"

"Forget it, William. It's really dumb. No, it's not my mother. She's fine. I'm upset about something really dumb. I'll be okay. Just forget I called. I'm sorry."

She hung up. He tossed the phone to the couch. It landed somewhere between the sports and local news sections. Now what was he supposed to do? He hadn't even seen Cora for about a month. Some of her stuff was still in the apartment; her favorite 5-color pen she liked to use to take orders at work, some of the x-rated films they watched together, and the picture of her and Conrad playing in the leaves at Kirby Park. She knew the stuff was still there but they hadn't picked a time for her to come over yet. He stumbled into the kitchen still groggy from a partial night's sleep on the chair. The neon lights above the cabinets sliced at his eyes as he made his way to the sink. He turned on the faucet and stared at the 5-color pen on the windowsill as the water slashed over the dishes and pots and pans and silverware. He dabbed his face with the water and smoothed his hair back. He hated nights when he didn't sleep well, but he didn't feel comfortable in the bed without her soft body next to him. He could see his reflection in the window against the chilly night outside. Damn uniform. He hated putting it on so he hated taking it off.

The phone rang. It was her. He didn't answer because he knew it was her and she was going to tell him not to come and that she was sorry for calling so late. He grabbed the 5-color pen, his dark blue fuzzy-collared coat, and slinked out the door.

A thin layer of frost had formed on the windshield of his Chevy. Good old American car... just like his father always said... buy American. It turned over after two tries and William sat for a few minutes waiting for it to warm up. Buy American. It didn't even seem to be much of a choice really. In the whole damn city there was only one garage that would even inspect a foreign car, and even then it had to be a Honda. This whole damn town was filled with people who were brainwashed. This is where life is good for hard working people. It's a great place to raise kids. It's safe here. This is the only place on earth where people know how to earn a good and honest living. What about all the Europeans who came over expecting a rich life working in the mines? All they found was hard work, horrible working conditions, and even worse living conditions. They never saw the light of day, got paid very little and died unremembered of black lung disease.

All but one man... one of William's ancestors. He was named after him in fact. William Williams of Wales. This man was a hero and William had heard the story over and over. His family was so proud. It was no big deal, really. He saved a bunch of men and some mules from a mine fire in the Plymouth mine. He burned to death. He went back down to get one man's money from the previous week's work, and he never came back to the surface.

Cora worked at a 24-hour Diner on the West side of Wilkes-Barre. She liked to work night shift because she said the strangest people came in at night and they always overtipped. He sat in her section at the counter and looked around. The other waitress Margie or Marge or something like that glanced at him and bounced into the kitchen. Cora came out and walked to him slowly chewing the hair above her ear like she always did when she was nervous. Her eyes were red and puffy; he could tell she had been crying. On the opposite side of the counter she leaned over and placed her forehead in the palm of her hand. William snuck a peak down her blouse. A twinge went through his stomach; he was still turned on by the sight of her smooth chest. He wondered how often men could look down her shirt like that. He touched her chin with his cold fingers and lifted her head.

"Here." He set the 5-color pen down in front of her. "I thought maybe you might want or uh-- need this."

"William. I'm allowed to go... can we go for a ride maybe?"

"Yeah..." He felt for the keys in his pocket. "Where do you want to go?"

"How about the breaker?"

The Ashley breaker was their sacred spot. To most people who lived nearby the massive structure, it was an eyesore. It had not been in operation for over 50 years and it had been left to rot. The breaker sorted the larger pieces of good coal from the tiny chunks that were useless. Teenagers used to sit above the conveyor and pull the bad pieces off the

belt when they went by. It seemed to Cora and William that one evening the whistle blew to end the day, the machines were shut down, and they were never turned on again. Coal was no longer the fuel of choice in America, and Wilkes-Barre no longer one of the most important cities.

Cora and William used to "park" at the base of the breaker when they were dating and they would sneak inside it and have sex in some of the strangest places. He didn't like to go by it anymore; it was such a lonely place. However, with Cora in the car it would be okay.

Uncomfortable, William fussed with the radio as they sat at a red light on Pennsylvania Ave. They didn't say anything until the Chevy was nestled in its spot before the massive structure. The moon was almost full and bright enough to cast light on the conveyors and towers and large steel walls. All of it was shadowed and black and touched with frost.

Cora shook as she used the car's lighter to ignite her cigarette. "I hit a dog." The familiar smell of a menthol newly lit entered his nose and filled his mouth with a desire to smoke too. He resisted. "This is why I am so upset." She habitually flicked the cigarette out the crack of the passenger's window as she stared ahead. "I killed a dog tonight on my way to work."

William reached into her coat pocket and took the almost empty pack of cigarettes. He pressed the lighter in and looked at his wife... ex-wife... wife... a pearl of a tear had escaped and was sliding over her cheek. He touched it. The tear seemed to evaporate as it became part of his skin. There were two things he really hated; he hated to see his wife cry, and he hated to smell stale food from the diner on her skin. She shouldn't have to work so hard. Somehow he felt responsible... but he was never able to save her from either of the two in the five years they had been married.

"Where?"

"In 'The Heights'. I don't think he belonged to anybody because he didn't have a collar and it was 12:30 in the morning. He just ran out in front of me. I tried to stop but I couldn't. He went under the front wheel."

He wanted to hold her, but he knew that he couldn't. It seemed strange. "Do you want the heat on, Cora?"

"No... do you have a tissue?" She wiped her face on the sleeve of her orange raincoat. "All I could think about was Conrad and how much I miss him and how he could just be killed that fast. Is he okay, William?"

"He's fine." William inhaled as he stared out the window across the hood of the car. "He's probably on the couch right now as we speak."

"I just love him so much. You know? I mean I watched him grow from a puppy."

William reached across Cora's legs to open the glove compartment. "Here." He handed her a McDonald's napkin. They sat in silence.

Cora chewed on her top lip and played with the 5-color pen she held in her hand. William spoke softly as he crushed his cigarette in the ashtray amongst the stale gum and other butts, "You didn't mean it, Honey. It was an

accident."

Cora grabbed his arm and rested her head on William's shoulder. She fell asleep. William stayed awake all night watching the shadows and shapes on the Ashley breaker. The fog mixed with pale yellow sunlight and he pulled up out in front of her mother's on Franklin Street. He watched her climb the white wooden steps and pick up the newspaper.

William only had 15 minutes to get to work. ■

PICKPOCKET

The flickering tube
holds my brain
captive
my sightless eyes
pass over the hands
that reach out
tears
slide
down
cold cheeks
forming a layer
of ice
silent screams
go unanswered
frozen assets
do nothing for my complexion.

SUSAN KOVALESKI

BOXING DEVILS

KEITH NICHOLS

After half a bottle of whiskey, the room spins in time with Jim Morrison's voice on the stereo. Through the dim light of the room I can see her smile. I hear her voice down the hall, her footsteps on the stair. I feel a phantom touch on my shoulder. Everywhere I look I see the silver in her eyes.

For so long I kept those thoughts in their boxes and locked those boxes away in an obscure, black corner of my mind. One would escape from time to time, but I would put it back in it's box before it could do any real damage. The devils were always kept in check.

First one container opens and its contents escape, I return it to its place. Then another one opens and then I repeat the cycle. And so it goes, never any harm done, always the little devils captured and confined.

For so long the sight of her caused no pain, hearing her voice sparked no regrets, but seeing the light in her eyes that had once shown for me, shine for another... I can feel my control slipping... for so long they've been silent...

Not now. Now it's different.

The devils are loose, three or four escaping at once. I recapture one only to have two more escape. I've lost control.

Now the devils are raging a full scale assault on my mind, thrashing away at my rational thoughts, tearing my soul apart.

There are too many loose to control, I've kept them bottled up for too long. Nothing to do but let them roam free and hope I will survive with some sanity intact.

All those open boxes... their mad shrieking demons running free through my mind.

All the cells are open...

...let it happen...

...picture it...

Imagine her naked body lying there... recreate each perfect line, every supple curve. Remember each touch, every breathe, the look in her eyes, the sound of her voice, the scent of her hair... picture it... let the devils take control... let the image consume you... see them...

A look of love and passion is in her eyes. A sigh escapes her mouth as he touches her.. a soft moan when he enters her. She holds him close as they fall into rhythm. She runs her hand through his hair, kisses his neck as her breathing becomes heavy. She cries out, pace quickens as she wraps her legs around his back pulling him closer... their breathing becomes rapid... and at last with a scream...

They lie there in each other's arms catching their breath, she kisses him, tells him he's wonderful. After a time, she cuddles close to him to ward off the chill of the blankets.

She turns her head, kisses him goodnight, and says she loves him... him...

IMPACT!!... pain

Him... she loves him...

IMPACT!!... pain

Flesh and bone collide violently with the indifferent red face of a brick wall. The cranium testing its strength against the stone.

IMPACT!!... pain

IMPACT!!... pain

Must silence them. Must stop the image...

IMPACT!!... pain... vision

becomes spotted.

IMPACT!!... pain... a line of blood

runs down my face.

The devils are running wild... no more control... only... only...

IMPACT!!... pain

Darkness...

After a few minutes— or was it hours?— vision returns... blurred. The light adds to the knifing pain that is screaming through my head with each beat of my heart. And with the exquisite pain, the devils are silent...

For now... ■

ANGEL

She is
As cold
As stiff
As frigid
As a mid-January
Winter morn...
Frozen drops
Of condensation
Collect
Around the edges
Of her eyes.

Sparrows
Sing softly
Brightly,
As the wind
Winds its way down
Solitary
Snow encrusted
Footprints,
A path
Ending
At the shoreline
Of the lake.
Centurian
Evergreens
Sway slightly
As the sun rises
Slowly over
Mountains in the east.
As the morning wears on
Shining rays
Tentatively
Melt
The shroud of ice
Surrounding

The body
Of the little girl
Missing
Since the first snowfall.

KAREN ZIAGOS

“AND THE FIFTH ANGEL BLEW HIS TRUMPET.”

(Rev. 9:1)

I watch them fall. Dusty dead sun beams scrape,
across the insane, covered wall. Someone once,
A relative, I think, I don't remember.
Mother, perhaps (the face was familiar).
Told me the date today. But the letters and numbers
clumped and jumbled on the edge of the bed sheet.
I shove them over the side. Onto the floor.
Where they land with a soft thud. By my crumpled, colored skin.

Back again. On the wall.
Smiling faces crawl in the creeping lines that
look like zagging vines there on the wall. Who
drew them there, was it I, and why,
why do they laugh at me those faces there.
Do they hear do they hear, the signal blast, the
turning key, the key that opens the secret gate
where the locusts wait, is that why the faces grin?

Behind my eyes I hear the locusts come again sudden
And they have always been there, I don't dare
disturb them by swatting at their flying whys that
only makes it hurt more and
here they come LOUDER NOW...

there, they're roaring, their smoking, swirling
black cloud deep in despair black
(woe, know no god could live and allow)
stinging locust now
munch and crunch away a pit, lumped in the pit of my stomach
claw along inside my rib cage claw
clog up in my throat clog
rip up my tongue rip

I want to spit
them out puke them out stop
them somehow please i want to pluckout myeyes
toss them away i want todie i want
Death to pry
out my brain and smash
it against the cracking
plaster and
step on these
creeping.
gray.
locusts.
I...
cry...

My knees to my shoulders drawn
I cry.

ED MCGINNIS

TRIBUTE TO TEEN ANGST

Silver sliver
glints
blinding the pain.
Water pours
steaming away the mirrored images
of the me.
The ugly me—
The not nice me—
Pain fades
as
red droplets
produce rain storm puddles.
"Schtick"—
Skin opens in gashes
flooding the room black.
Tumbling—
Gasping—
Being embraced
invisible fingers caress
my erogenous zones.
Giggling—
I go
dancing with shadows
tasting the aroma
seeing the sounds.
Swirling—
The grand ball begins
eternity
a painter's palette
Mashing—
Filled with undiscovered colors
I'm in control now.
Me—
The artist...

DAVE LE BAHN

HERE AFTER

ERIC RIVIERA

We see excerpts of a life. One scene thrashes into the next with the sizzle of electrical stimuli. There is nothing particularly extraordinary about the life. The montage contains the usual amount of pain, love, hate, pleasure, fear, anguish, hope and suffering. There is, however, a slight undercurrent of tension, which becomes more apparent as the scenes collide with increasing frequency. This crescendo of tension rises, the images blinking faster than perception allows; the chorus of humanity rises in pitch as a perfect counterbalance to the chaos. At the height of the insanity the scene shorts out, shocking us back into silence and blackness.

GREG [Voice Over (We see the scene through this character's "eyes")]:
It's all over ... everything ... and I cannot justify my existence.

The darkness is penetrated by a column of soft, white light. Specks of color come alive and vibrate to the velvety, feminine voice of the Guardian. Her's is the voice of reason and empathy.

GUARDIAN [VO]: We never asked you to do that, Gregory. We'd never ask that of anyone.

GREG [VO]: "We?" The way you use "we" you'd think the afterlife was some sort of corporation.

GUARDIAN [VO]: In many ways we are organized in the same fashion. You see, even the spiritual universe is far from infallible.

GREG [VO]: Isn't there any element of perfection in the universe?

GUARDIAN [VO]: No.

GREG [VO]: Alright. Let's take it from the top ... childhood.

Even as Greg begins his request, the screen flashes images in response. Greg's mother is holding her baby and exploring his eyes. She is experiencing a great moment of love and wonder as she touches her own child for the first time.

GUARDIAN [VO]: Childhood.

GREG [VO]: I remember that moment. Nobody believed me when I told them, but I could close my eyes and remember looking up at my mother--and feel how important she was to me.

The baby starts to fidget a little. He starts to cry.

GREG [VO]: Oh, there I go ... the little waterpump. I used to cry all the time.

GUARDIAN [VO]: That's natural. Babies always cry.

The mother attempts to soothe her son with caresses and kind words.

GREG [VO]: Yeah, but even then ... I don't know ... I always seemed to feel some kind of inherent sadness. Something I could never shake off.
Try a little later.

GUARDIAN [VO]: Three years?

GREG [VO]: Sure.

Greg as a toddler: he is crying.

There, you see? I never stopped!

His parents are there. They are trying to teach him with blocks, toys, and small cards with pictures on them.

GUARDIAN [VO]: You had a slight inclination against learning.

GREG [VO]: Of course I did! It was so useless to me, so urgent to them ... I always became frustrated with confusion.

GUARDIAN [VO]: And then you felt the sadness.

GREG [VO]: Yes. Whenever I became ... overstimulated ... I felt like I couldn't cope, like I didn't belong.

The scene fades back into blackness.

GUARDIAN [VO]: And how do you feel now?

GREG [VO]: Now? I feel peace and all. Revitalized. But even after the fact, I feel like I should be doing something.

GUARDIAN [VO]: You don't have to do anything.

The column of light returns, as do the colors.

GREG [VO]: I know that. But that doesn't mean that I don't want to do something.

GUARDIAN [VO]: That's what makes life so precious. It offers a sense of purpose.

GREG [VO]: But the pain. There was no real connection between pain and life.

The montages move on their own this time, as if Gregory is able to will them through indirect communication. The cuts are made at the highest point of emotional tension. At eleven, he gets a broken arm going mountain climbing. As an adult, he is severely chastised and fired by his boss in front of his peers. At six, he grieves the death of his dog, cradling the lifeless mass to his young chest. As an adult, he stares vaguely into the tombstone of Aaron Harding, his son, dead at the age of six.

GUARDIAN [VO]: Pain is a part of life.

GREG [VO]: It didn't seem that way to me. It seemed--uncalled for. The pleasure too. When I think about it, pain and pleasure had nothing to do with my real life.

GUARDIAN [VO]: Pleasure is a part of life as well.

GREG [VO]: But those moments were smothered by the pain. Towards the end, the pain was the only thing that was real in my life.

The montage halts on a fight between Gregory and his wife. Greg is in his mid-forties.

Oh, shit ... Mary ... we were constantly fighting about everything.

GUARDIAN [VO]: About forty-four percent of all your conversations with her led to an argument.

GREG [VO]: Really! I thought it was more than that.

GUARDIAN [VO]: She loved you very much. You loved each other very much.

GREG [VO]: I know ... I know ... but...

GUARDIAN [VO]: It didn't seem that way.

We hear excerpts of the fight in progress:

GREG: What do you want from me?

MARY: For once, for **once**, I want you to tell me what is wrong with you!

GREG: Why is it me? Why is there always something wrong with me? What about--

GREG [VO]: I could never make her understand. We both wanted to know, and sometimes we came very close to the truth. But I didn't want to blame myself for everything that went wrong.

GUARDIAN [VO]: Not everything was your fault.

GREG: I don't have to justify myself to you! I work my ass off every day! I provide, I feed, I fucking do everything for what's left of my family!

MARY: That's not the point! That's not the point at all.

GREG: Then for the love of God, what--

GREG [VO]: This conversation seems familiar in some important way.

GUARDIAN [VO]: It should. It--

GREG [VO]: It's not just because we were constantly having it ... there's something else...

GREG: Fine! You want me to tell you what's wrong with me? You don't think I have the ability, the fucking common sense to point out my own problems?

(Beat-- Greg's wife is waiting for a response) Greg's eyes are bulging at his wife. He can barely contain his rage.

I can't...

His voice trails off. We are starting to see physical signs of his mental affliction.

GREG [VO]: Oh, shit.

He starts rubbing his arm with his hand, slowly pushing it up to his chest.

Is this what I think it is?

MARY: Gregory, are you all right?

His face is stricken with fear. He seems to make an incredible attempt to mouth the word "no" to her, his eyes communicating the most. Greg's wife screams as he collapses to the floor.

GREG [VO]: No, wait ... Oh shit ... shit, I don't think I'm ready...

GUARDIAN [VO]: We don't have to watch this if you don't want to.

His wife runs from her dying husband to get the phone.

GREG [VO]: Ok, no wait ... wait ... all right ... no, I want to ... yeah, I want to see this.

He starts to convulse. His hand digging into his chest as his face contorts into a rictus.

Oh, Jesus ... the pain.

We look down on him as he stares through us. The wife, now crying in huge, gulping sobs rushes to his side, cradling him to her chest.

I really am dead.

His face becomes bigger as the screen fades very, very slowly to black.

I mean it's really striking home! I'm dead. I'm dead, and I don't want to be.

GUARDIAN [VO]: It's just as hard on her.

The wife looks down on Gregory. She is now sure that this is the last of him she'll ever know. The sound is fading on the scene so we can just barely make out her cries: how sorry she is, how frightened she is--why does he have to leave her?

GREG [VO]: Yeah, but it's just me! I'm dead to the whole world, and I only have myself to face! And I CAN'T JUSTIFY MY EXISTENCE!

The screen is, once again, completely black.

GUARDIAN [VO]: You don't have to.

GREG [VO]: I don't want to be dead.

GUARDIAN [VO]: You don't have to.

The light returns.

GREG[VO]: If I had my life to live over again I'd--

GUARDIAN [VO]: Live it exactly the same.

GREG [VO]: I WANT TO LIVE!

GUARDIAN [VO]: The sadness will return.

GREG [VO]: Why?

GUARDIAN [VO]: If I told you, it would only make things worse. If it makes you feel better, your situation is far from rare.

The chorus of humanity starts up again. As the two talk, the undercurrent gives us the impression that something is beginning to take place.

GREG [VO]: Ok, you're right. I don't want to know. I just want to start over again.

GUARDIAN [VO]: I am content to help you on your way.

The chorus rises in pitch, as furiously as it did in the beginning. The two have to shout over the din.

GREG [VO]: I'm ready! In a lot of ways, this is just as frightening as dying!

GUARDIAN [VO]: It's the same thing! You don't know what to expect!

The chorus reaches its thunderous climax again, propelling the column of light through a bright, screaming, yellow figure, which we assume is the soul of Gregory, into the dark beyond. As the light diminishes from distance, the scream turns into the echo of a baby's cry. We pull back to reveal a large round eye--the soul of Gregory becoming a tiny glint therein. We pull farther back and see the eye belonging to a fetus, now big, now smaller as the screen fades to the image of an actual baby.

We pull farther back and see that the baby is being held by his mother. It's the same mother we saw in the beginning. In fact this is the same scene we saw in the beginning. Gregory starts to cry again. The father enters as we ... Blackout.

GREG'S FATHER [VO]:
He sure does cry a lot.

GREG'S MOTHER [VO]:
That's natural. Babies always cry.

END

11-22-63

Alone
Just three years old
In a hospital ward
New York City.
My legs are blue
Eighteen cribs lined against
Four water stained walls
Prison beds.
Horizontal venetian blinds
Closed dark and dusty
Friday's afternoon brightness
Trying to leak itself in.
A TV blaring
Above my towhead
Green leafy spinach
On my tray uneaten.
The man in a tie on TV
Crying
A motorcade interrupted
By gunshots
A man's head flying
A woman reaching frantically
To catch it.

In my dreams
An angel in white comes
Over and over
Lifting me up
Placing me on
A gurney.

We trundle away.

Opening my eyes
I find myself
Lying supine
Watching
As a man in a mask
Enveloped in light
Holds up

An empty needle
The size of Texas

To draw out the fluid
That resides in my spine.

KAREN ZIAGOS

PHOENIX

The sun

White sands sail

Below the storm-bird,
Clutching four final
Wind worn twigs.

Red-gold wings fold away
On a lone stony crag,
A rock rising unlikely
From shifting sliding dunes.

His ancient silver eyes glint at the Father Ra, the sun.
His raised beak cries out a song,
Its poetry flies to the sky's orb,
To the circle of gathered branches,
Echoing around and around the empty world.

The restive bird-god tucks the last arrangements
Into his nest, settles among dry, sweet smelling
Sticks, spreads each feather wide to the warm air,
And waits, and dreams, and remembers...

When his colors brightly burned
Fresh from the sun,
The Phoenix cocked his royal head
Amused at the spilled sweat of men
Over a pyramid tomb.

Young Phoenix outraced
Playful swift Ibis-
Lungs aching cold-
Speeding over life-crowded Nile
Slicing the air above Grandmother River.

The hot-blooded Phoenix
Set upon a vulture, carrion eater, death dealer,
He tore out its white pulpy muscle
And painted the victory red on the sandy floor,
Painted the victory red in the blue sky.

The quiet Phoenix.
Perched, in the boughs of a great cedar tree.
Felt the cool, desert night,
Heard the small, living things,
And watched the distant stars; move...

Now air is hot and choking and burning.
Dunes waver and swim, nest gives birth to fire,
Bright orange licks of flame
Braid bright orange plumage,
Ignited wings spread stretch desperately,
Fire drowns the regal form.

Sacred Spirit, ghost feathered
Phoenix unleashed
From this smoldering shell,
Flee heavenward,
Enter the sun.

But look back on your journey,
Sacred Spirit
Which silently sails
Over sun white sands.

See the youth shake free of smoky charcoal
Fresh fiery wings burn bright new hues,
His eyes crack open to meet their first light

See! in their deep black reflects;

The Father.

ED MCGINNIS



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