

1986

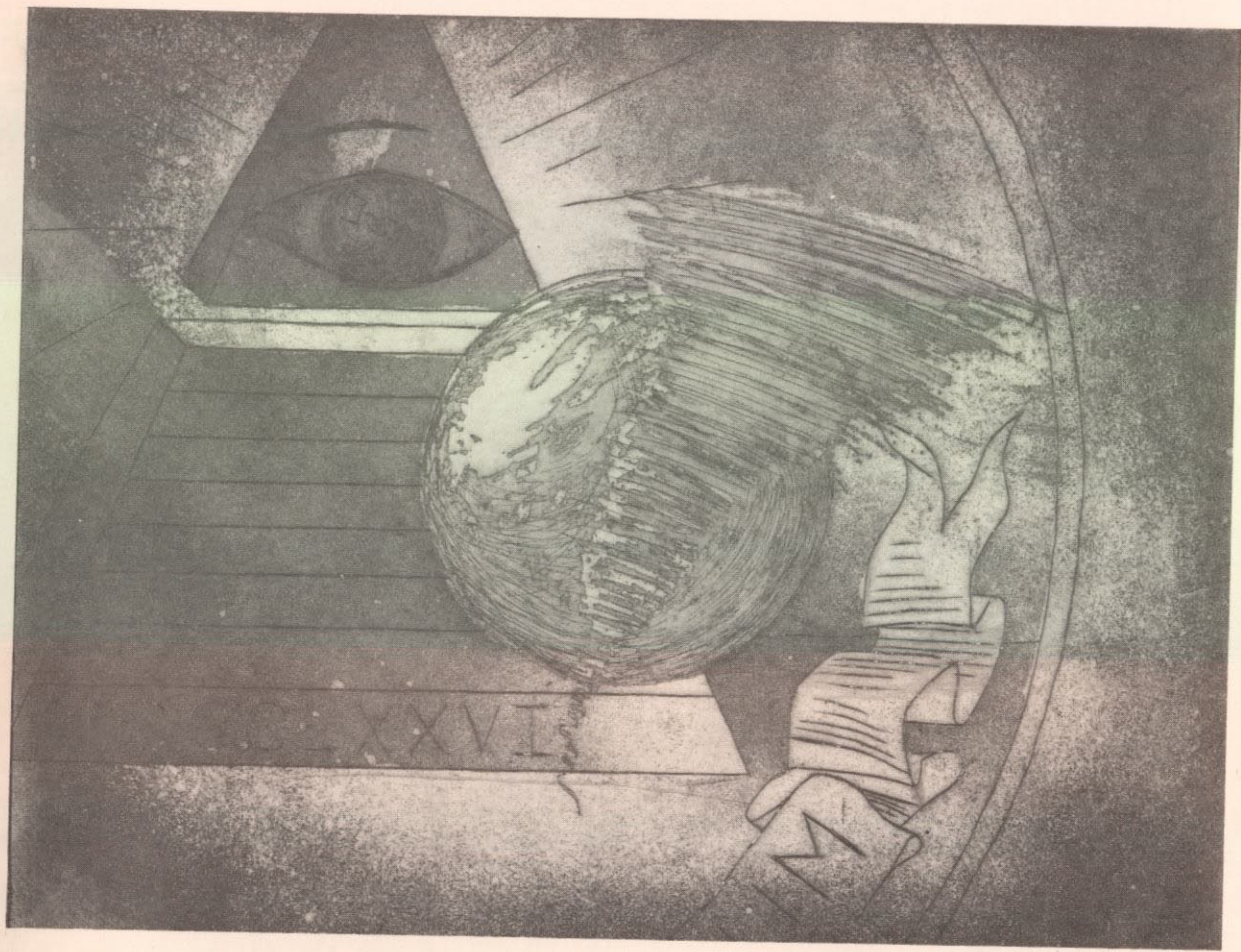
Spectrum, 1986

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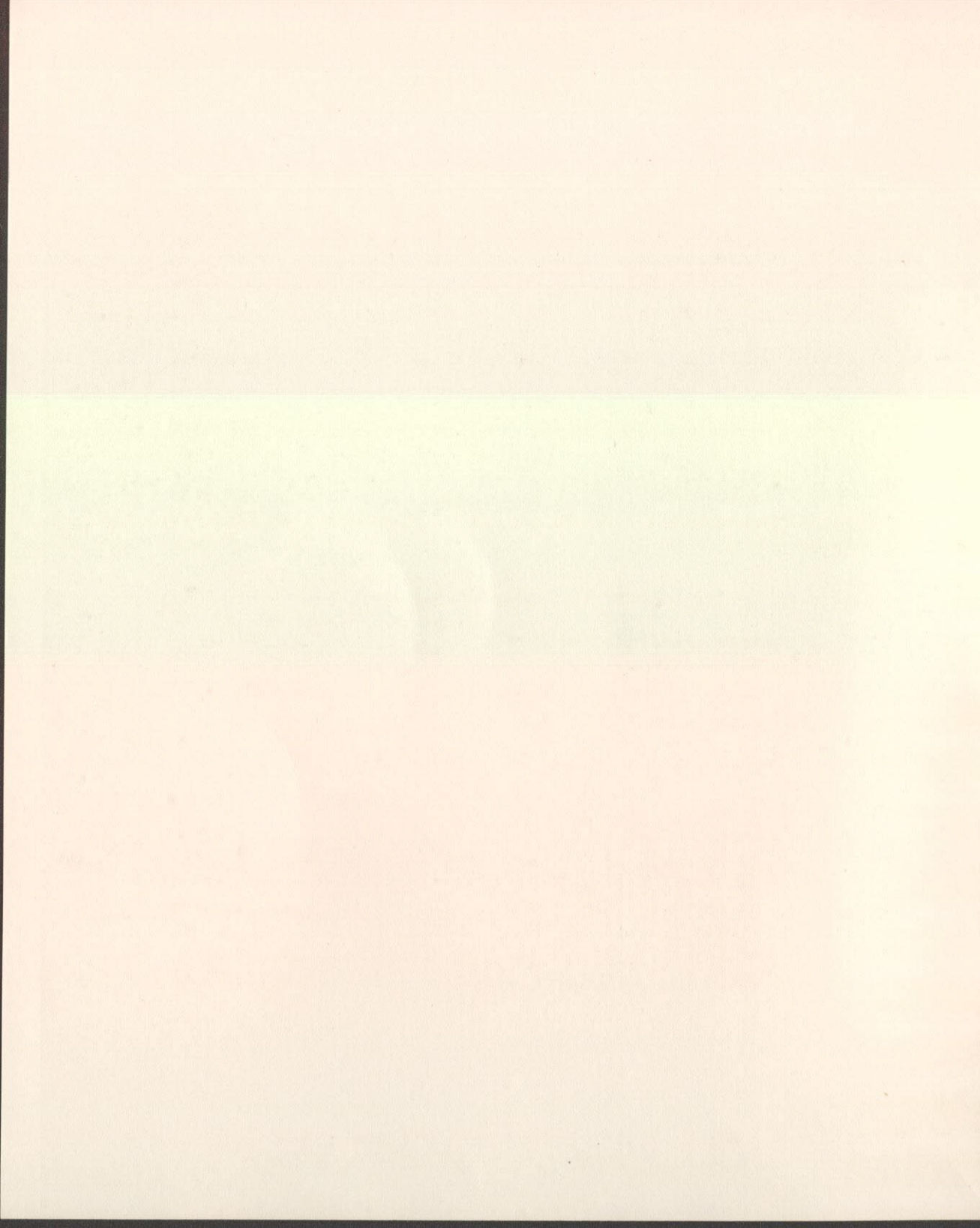
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POINTLESS

Ya know late last night I had a really weird dream,
I put a gun to my head and let go the hammer.
But the chamber was empty as I knew it would be.
But the really weird thing about the dream
Was it was really real, really weird.

I went to local doughnut shop on the main drag
Wanted to buy a jelly-filled all they had was coconut.
So instead I bought a cheeseburger and a coke.
The local cops wanted to buy some dope, I thought
It's so really weird, really real

There was this old lady out walking her dog and sweaters,
The dog looked ready to die a truck came by, bye.
Now the dog's in the street but that old lady keeps on walking.
No one cared the dog was dying in front of their shoes
It was really real, really real.

If you think this poem has an important message
Doesn't really, it's all pointless anyway
Really real, really weird. Wanna doughnut?

Dirk Hartman

Art

"I never could've hoped it would've differed.

IV

"You might accuse me of not triumphing--
Whatever that may mean to you and your friend--
But I can cite a certain 'something'

Of great interest: Yes, I died...
Though I did so to save my family.
My suicide committed amiss, they were robbed.

I ask, 'Where is justice? Where is the jury?
Is there no one who can vouch for my innocence?'"
I, tenderly, "That One, is only He."

Then Virgil returned me to my senses;
We had spoken for too long with the tree.
My kind master and I turned to leave, and to us

Willy offered, "Thank you for coming to see
Me," and he could say no more. The talk was
Over and we decided not to tarry.

After choosing one of many paths,
Virgil directed me along and though he
Continued on the walk, I stopped. There Willy was,

Still in the wood... impatient for eternity?

Faith Baker

FOUR ALCOHOLIC

This fourth double Martini
may tear back up my throat
like a fork from Hell
tomorrow, but today
down it goes.

The first two still make me
king sometimes, but only sometimes.
I remember, though, my first swigs.
The liquid's smooth warmth
would touch me like a woman--spike me
with anticipation and release--
but no more.

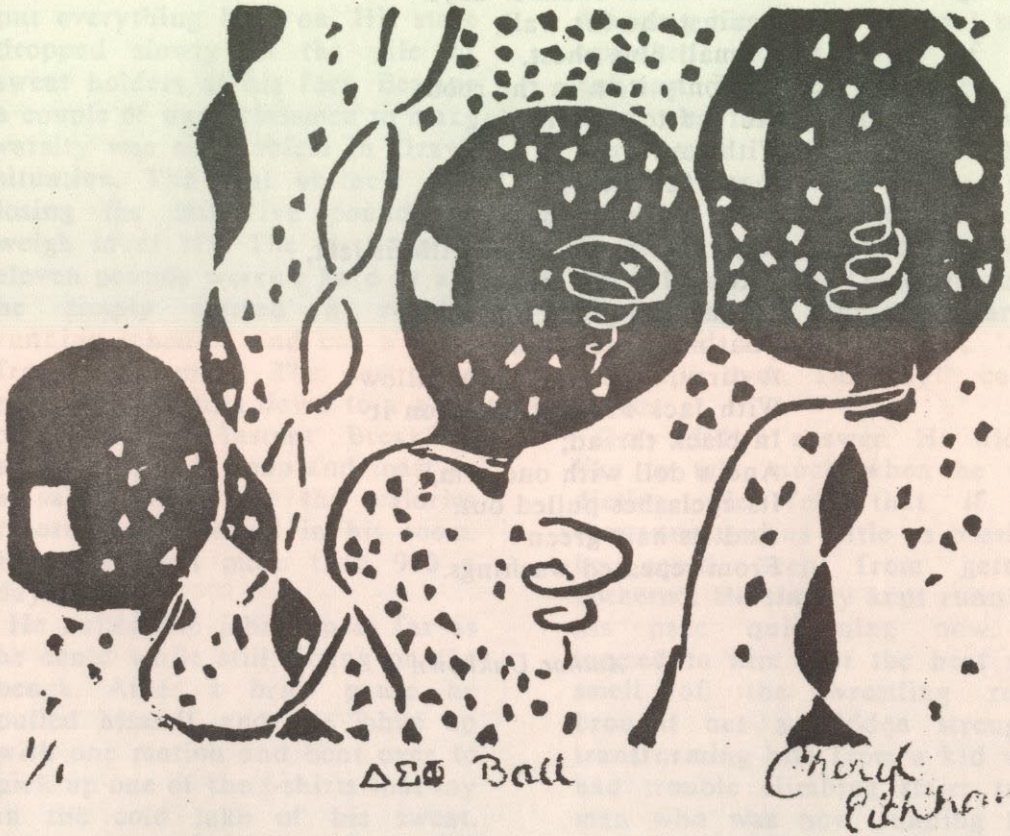
When escape turns into the world reality
and debauchery loses its savor,
each stint on the barstool
is a pitiful enactment of the suicide
I can't quite commit,
each glass a razor wrist gash
from which I will resurrect tomorrow
or the next day--
what drips from the wound is not blood,
but hope, each time I hand myself to
this temptress in a glass,
this tender, loving death in a glass.

It's that way for all who crave,
no matter what does us--whether
anger, grief, or another trembling body.
It's the same, no matter what we do
to sink into the momentary death
of becoming what we hate
to justify the self-lashing
of the morning after,
the guilt of a sunrise mirroring
what we are not and cannot hope to be.
Having rid ourselves of all need for greatness,

we are the staring, mumbling
dead, the self-declared martyrs
of creation.

But if you try to hide
the razor surrender and
the Valium sobs, the salty wine of many women
or the vampire touch of many men,
or the orgasm that stabs the pelvis,
but puts the spirit to sleep--
please know that the dead
can sometimes come to life.

Brad Olson



THE BASEMENT

A large, empty room with
Dark cement walls,
Grey,
Where spiders scurry to the corners,
Away from the light
Shed by the one dusty lightbulb
In the center of the ceiling,
To their dark holes.
Dim windows
Clouded with cobwebs,
Cool, damp, musty air,
Even on hot summer days.
Against the far wall,
A small blue chest,
The only item in the room,
Stuffed to overflowing
With toys--
A stuffed giraffe
Made of yellow material,
Its brown mane, what little is left,
Bedraggled and dirty;
A blue and green top
That no longer spins;
A dirty, blue and white pillow
With Jack Frost stitched on it
In black thread;
And a doll with one arm,
Its eyelashes pulled out,
And its hair green
From repeated washings.

Author Unknown

ONE NINETEEN

Darin Weibe

Ozzie sat on the bench, his cold wet long johns pulled up just over his knees. He was hunched over with his mouth unconsciously hanging open, staring at his foe without emotion. The scale scowled back: 120 pounds. He was still over and he would have to put everything back on. His stare dropped slowly to the pile of sweat holders at his feet. Beating a couple of underclassmen to make varsity was no problem in Ozzy's situation. The real obstacle was losing the last five pounds to weigh in at 119. The first ten or eleven pounds weren't hard at all; he simply started a regular running schedule and cut a little from each meal. The last five pounds broke him down to a glass of Carnation Instant Breakfast and a supper of soup and toast or a salad, with all the calories recorded on a chart in his room. He never had more than 900 a day.

He pulled the johns up as far as he could while still sitting on the bench. After a brief pause he pulled himself and the johns up with one motion and bent over to pick up one of the t-shirts that lay in the cold lake of his sweat. After the underclothes came the plastic sweat clothes and two layers of sweat shirts and pants.

In between each layer of clothing he stopped and stared at nothing. No thought, no emotion, he just stared. He didn't even feel the ten minutes go by. He was like some autistic child.

Clad in his sweat armor he trotted back to the wrestling room, dragging his feet so the wet soles squeaked on the tile of the hallway. Practice was over but there were three other guys who were still working off their weight. Coach was there too, wrestling with David, the 185 pounder. Coach looked up from his bout and saw Ozzy watching his feet appear and disappear as he trotted around the mat. "Are you still over, fat boy?" coach asked.

Ozzy didn't answer. He didn't like to talk much when he was dieting. He felt that if he communicated as little as possible he could keep from getting bothered. He simply kept running, his pace quickening now. It seemed to him that the heat and smell of the wrestling room brought out a hidden strength, transforming him from a kid who had trouble climbing stairs to a man who was now running full speed with his head held high and arms pumping with the strength of two men. It's not that Ozzy was a

great wrestler--but he wasn't bad either.

He'd won medals at important tournaments, like the Lincoln Invitational and the Big 8; and he'd won enough matches in front of the home crowd to impress them and to impress Rachel, who was always a member of the audience. He didn't have much time for her during the season thought; she bothered him. Everybody bothered him when he was sucking weight.

"How much you over fatty?" Coach asked, angry that he didn't get an answer the first time.

"One." he answered; trying not to reveal his feelings.

Coach said nothing more.

Seeing Bob lying in the center of the mat Ozzy pounced on him; putting him in a cradle. "If you go down that easy tomorrow you're out of luck, man." he teased. Bob started fighting back and the two wrestled until they were too tired to go on. They lay in the center of the mat, staring blankly at the lights, their chests rising and falling in time with their hearts.

"You worried?" Bob asked.

"Nah, I should be a quarter under now. I'll have a couple ounces of burger and some milk tonight. I'll make it."

"No, I mean are you worried about Gretzker?"

"Who?" Ozzy replied. Whenever he went up against a tough, well-known wrestler, he acted as if

he'd never heard of him. "Doesn't that guy play basketball?"

Bob laughed. "Right. If he hears you said that he'll launch you worse than last time."

Randy Gretzker was good. Real good. He'd been State Champion at 119 pounds for the past two years. He didn't look that tough. He was a good two inches shorter than Ozzy, who was no tower himself. However, it had been said by Ozzy, that when Gretzker stepped onto the mat he grew four inches and sprouted thick, greasy hair on his neck and shoulders.

Ozzy had met him the year before in front of the home crowd. Everyone that he liked to impress was there: Mom, Rachel, and his closest buddies. As he walked onto the mat his friends in the top row began chanting "AH-ZEE! AH-ZEE! AH-ZEE!" slowly and clearly. Soon all of the high school kids were joining in the chant. He really wished they hadn't started the silly thing in the first place. They all knew who he was up against, but they kept chanting and cheering like Romans as the Christians met the starved lions in the arena.

"They want to see me get hurt. They want me to bleed!" he panicked.

His ears buzzed and his stomach knotted. Not because of his sucking weight, he'd already defeated that foe. The smell, sweat, and excitement of the match had given him his new

strength. He felt sick out of simple fear.

"This guy's a state champion!" he said to himself. "What have I got to lose? Why should I be scared of this creep? Because he can hurt you that's why. Well, I've never worried about that before..." His thoughts raced around like a madman's.

Later, all that Ozzy recalled from that match were about ten seconds of the second period and the last moment when the referee signaled the pin.

Those ten seconds in the second period were ten seconds that would remain a permanent fixture in his memory. Gretzker had had control of the match from the beginning. (Which was quite all right with Ozzy--after all, that was to be expected from a state champion.) They were in a neutral sparring position when it happened. Gretzker grabbed Ozzy tight by the arms, so tight that he could feel the greasy chest hair. With an unintelligible grunt he sent Ozzy sailing through the air. It was a controlled sail, for Gretzker kept his hold. Ozzy remembered well landing flat on the top of his head, feet pointing straight up in the air, much to the silent amazement of the crowd. He never heard anything during his matches; he would watch Coach as if he understood his frantic instructions and then go on wrestling. This time there was nothing to hear. Everyone just sat

and stared as if they could see better with their mouths opened that wide.

For the daze he was in--and it was quite a daze, for afterwards he would do and say some embarrassing things which he would not recall--he remembered these few seconds vividly.

He shot straight up and found himself staring directly at his mother who always sat on the first row of bleachers. She was a comic book picture of horror with her body leaned back and her mouth and eyes competing to see which could open the widest.

"My son!" she must have been thinking. "My poor baby!"

After staring her down for what seemed quite a long time he turned to the referee thinking the match would be stopped since he was out of bounds and, he suspected, somewhat injured. Instead, out of the corner of his eye, he saw Gretzker charging after him with his arms swinging about madly.

* * * * *

In consideration of that earlier confrontation with Gretzker, Ozzy set a specific goal for himself. he was going to be realistic. His goal was not to get pinned this time.

Bob realized what Ozzy was up against. He was the only person who really supported his goal.

"Balls to the wall man. That's all it'll take. I know the fish won't stick you."

The others thought that this was a weak and even silly goal. Mike the 112 pounder told him, "You'll never get anywhere with that attitude. You've got to want to win." Mike was good. All you had to do was ask him. Even Coach was upset, "Why don't you just beat him?" he asked.

His father disliked it the most. He wasn't angry because of the seemingly lax goal Ozzy had set for himself, but for what he was doing to himself to achieve it. William didn't like wrestling, or any sport for that matter. What he disliked the most was the dieting.

William was a "meat and taters man." He wasn't any taller than Ozzy, but he was built like a twenty-year-old Olympian from throwing sides of beef around at the Bridgeport Lockers for ten hours a day.

"You walk around here like a pale chicken! A kid your age shouldn't be so scrawny. did you get him to the doctor yet, woman?" "William, I..."

"I know he's given himself diabetes with that damn diet! Doesn't eat nothin' but soup every night. Then he sits in his room for the whole evening, and we don't hear a peep from him. It's not right! He's going to fall over and die sometime!

"Now you tell me you're doing this to fight a kid you can't beat. Geez."

"I told you before Dad, it's a match not a fight."

"Don't you get smart with me, boy!" William snapped.

Ozzy started his defense. "I feel fine Dad. I've got no problems with schoolwork. I get all my chores done. Whaddaya want from me?"

"I'll tell you what.."

Ozzy interrupted, "You always tell me, 'Do it your best or don't do it at all.' You're always telling me that! I'm not the best wrestler in the state, but I'm my best. Sucking weight is part of doing my best. Geez, I got one thing I'm good at and you tell me..."

"It stinks!" William finished.

With that Ozzy went to his room where he could lie in the dark.

He chewed tobacco while watching TV there. The tobacco kept a taste in his mouth so he wouldn't think about food. He also figured he could lose a quarter of a pound by spitting. 'Three's Company' put his mind in a neutral gear so he wouldn't have to think about his father.

To Ozzy, dieting was the best aspect of wrestling. he loved the discipline of regulating everything that went into his body and he loved the feeling of his drained self being reenergized with adrenaline. Ozzy Bialach had control of the scale. Sucking weight was a totally different

competition and he was undefeated.

There was no way for him to explain this to those who asked, "Why don't you wrestle at your natural weight?" He ignored them with the satisfaction that he had done his best and defeated the scale.

* * * * *

Ozzy felt every blood vessel open to let the adrenaline pump through. He stared at Gretzker,

who was no doubt expecting another easy pin. In the bleachers everyone had their usual positions: His friends in the top row yelling, "AH-ZEE! AH-ZEE!"; his mother in the bottom row, giving her usual thumbs up; and Rachel sitting with her friends.

His teammates and coach gave him the usual pre-match pep: "Bite his teeth out!" "He's toast man." "Stick 'im Oz!"

Bob's one remark rose above the rest, "Balls to the wall, man."

I'M NOT PROLIFIC NOW

I'm not prolific now.
I'm not here.
What a hard truth to bear-
those paths we choose,
that narrow gate

Scott Erickson

FOR

Your blue-veined hands drip with blood
From the innocent victims slaughtered
In the camps forever cleaned
As bones on the desert floor

You've kept your sad-eyed curs
On a shortened choke-chain
Till you've stifled
Their last, fetid breath

You offered me your grandiose help
With your blade in my chest
The labeled noose around my neck
Refuses my replies

You'd sell your spirit for a royal title
To impress on your peerless soul
The value you hold in thin hands
Unwanted by sane beings

You've no mind to support accord
Doing the dirty work of a witch
Who dresses in white to mask her sooty heart
Heart of black granite

I can see the blood of your victims
Who sacrificed themselves only to alienate you
Dripping in a slowly spreading dye
Staining your sanguinary bullion to uselessness

My bitterness bites the hand that feeds
Poison to my soul
When all I'm trying to do
Is preserve the little remains of sanity

I can feel the cancer of your self-pity
Reaching out to try and choke my freedom
My unfettered chains drag behind your eyes
In loathing fear of something you never understood

I won't hold your swindled coat
While you stone lessers
For committing the crime of learning
And your blue-veined hands drip with their blood

Dirk Hartman



"KILLING FIELDS"--CHAOS IS ORGANIC

A girl child, three years old,
sits on the oxcart and cries, eyes
shut, hands over ears, clamping
out the mortar bursts
of the intruder.

Tomorrow morning she'll lie tangled
in the ox's rope,
a bayonet through
her soft, still chest. One can almost
hear the corpse sob.

And the heart of her killer
will cry her tears now,
the dry, elusive tears of a murderer,
and whoever kills the killer
will weep for them both
with tears that cannot drip down cheeks
but must rather be shot into other breasts.

These are like the thoughts
of a man who burns his house
because the children thirst,
like the whispers in the mind
of a diplomat who shuts the embassy door
because some will perish
anyway.

Brad Olson



'WASTING AU



'WASTING AWAY OUR LAND'

A/P 1/5

W. 26



A LITTLE LIGHT

Tracy Henninger

Her hands wrinkled as she drained water from the sink. Peg gazed out of the window at her young daughter wandering down to the rusty yellow swingset. The girl didn't swing on the swingset often, but this morning she began to swing, pushing off with her feet and pumping her legs, her face contorting as she concentrated on getting higher. They lived in the country. It was hard for a child to live there--so far away from other children. Peg knew this when she would turn into their quarter-mile gravel driveway, her shoulders aching, and see a bright pink spot in one of the trees; as she neared, the spot would begin to take the shape of a dress and finally the shape of a running girl in her rear-view mirror. When the girl got to the house she would begin chattering before Peg had gotten out of the car, "Guess what, Mom?"

"What, hon?"

"Mrs. Briggs says that next week we get to make no-bake cookies and we're going to bring them to the nursing home and give them to the people there, and we even get to keep some for us."

"That's really nice. Would you like to help me cut up some carrots for supper?" And they

would proceed to fix supper, the daughter chattering about school and friends.

After the water finished draining Peg opened the kitchen window and shouted out, "Elise, do you want to go into town with me?"

Elise jumped from her swing and began to trot up the hill, her light hair falling in back of her as her small legs pushed her forward.

The drive into town took about ten minutes. Elise waited patiently in the car as Peg ran into Lloyd's cafe to check the work schedule. Two night shifts this week--her hand went to her head and she asked Gail the cashier if Lloyd was around.

"He's around--probably tending bar in the lounge."

Lloyd was one of those businessmen who couldn't stand to see someone else making money that he could make. When the Pastime tavern had opened up next door Lloyd had noticed that his coffee sales were markedly increasing. Soon he had a crew of workman putting in a wall in his cafe so that he could turn half of it into a lounge and take advantage of the pre-coffee as well as the coffee stage. Peg

walked into the dimly lit lounge. A middle-aged man, the fringes of his hair beginning to turn grey, stood pouring a beer in a mug, a gold nugget on his third finger catching an occasional glint of light.

"Little early for a beer, Lloyd" she quipped.

"It's for Big Moose."

"Moose, I didn't even see you."

"Peggie, how's the little one?"

"Oh, she's waiting out in the car--she's fine."

"Doing good in school?"

"Yes, she is."

Big Moose was called big Moose because he was bigger than the other man in town called Moose. His face was lined with wrinkles--they crinkled from each side of his eyes and ran down his cheeks. The white hairs on his head were combed to hide a shiny spot on top of his head. He was six and one half feet of solid bulk, but his clothes were always too big. He ate every meal at Lloyd's.

Peg sat down at a table and waited until Lloyd had finished serving big Moose. He soon joined her.

"Lloyd, I just looked at the new schedule and I think you made a mistake. You have me down for two night shifts."

Lloyd cleared his throat and looked down at the table, "That isn't a mistake, Peg. I had to let Susie go--I just can't keep all of you girls on right now. I'm not getting enough business. I know

you need the money bad now that Hank isn't around, but no one wanted to take the night shift so I had to be fair to everyone."

Peg nodded, brushing the hair from her forehead. Lloyd looked at her, "See you tomorrow?"

"Six o'clock," Peg said as she stood up, fumbling in her purse for her car keys. She retrieved them and turned for the door. She was almost there when she felt a rough-skinned hand on her shoulder. She turned. The skin around big Moose's watery blue eyes wrinkled as he handed her a little bag of peanuts.

"You give these to Elise for me."

Peg felt the tears coming. She thanked him and tried to adjust her face as she continued out to the car.

Elise was reading her newest Dr. Suess book. She looked up as her mother got into the car. "What's wrong, Mom?"

"I'm kind of frustrated, Pooh Bear," she reached over and stroked

Elise's hair, "but it'll be fine. God hasn't forgotten that we're around."

At 5:45 the next night Peg pulled up into the parking lot beside the cafe, unrolled a sleeping bag and handed Elise a flashlight. She kissed Elise's forehead. "I hate to leave you here like this; if you need anything come in and tell

me. I'm going to get you a Root Beer, "I'll be fine Mom, I think it's fun, and I have my books to read."

Elise's face lit up at the suggestion of a Root Beer. "Can I have Cracker Jacks too?"

"Only a Root Beer." Peg said with slightly raised eyebrows.

After returning promptly with a Root Beer, Peg said, "Here you go. Now don't stay up too late reading your books. Good-night." She kissed the little up-turned cheek.

Inside, Peg pushed through the multitude of tables, serving hamburgers, spaghetti, turkey delight, soup of the day and drinks. Occasionally someone in the lounge would order some food and Peg would bustle in there, catching bits of conversation and laughter.

She could hear Big Moose's boisterous laughter above the rest. He tended to get a bit loquacious after a few beers. His stories of his days as a fisherman would boom above the crowd: the story of how two of his fingers were

torn off. Stories of whales. His ruddy face would fill with delight to share stories about the sea.

"The sea--it's always there whether you like it or not. You can never tell what it's going to do and you can't stop it. Once you see this you live."

He looked a bit confused after this statement, and Peg laughed as she went back into the calm of the cafe.

"It's your break Peg--take it." Gail yelled from the other side of the room.

Peg poured herself a cup of coffee and let her feet relax; the bones in them were pounding with soreness. Moose's words kept drifting in her mind. 'Once you see this you live. You can't tell what the sea is going to do.' That was so true, so true. It was going to do what it wanted regardless of what anyone wanted.

She ran out to the car and peeked in at the sleeping girl. Her book was on the floor. Peg reached over to shut off the flashlight.

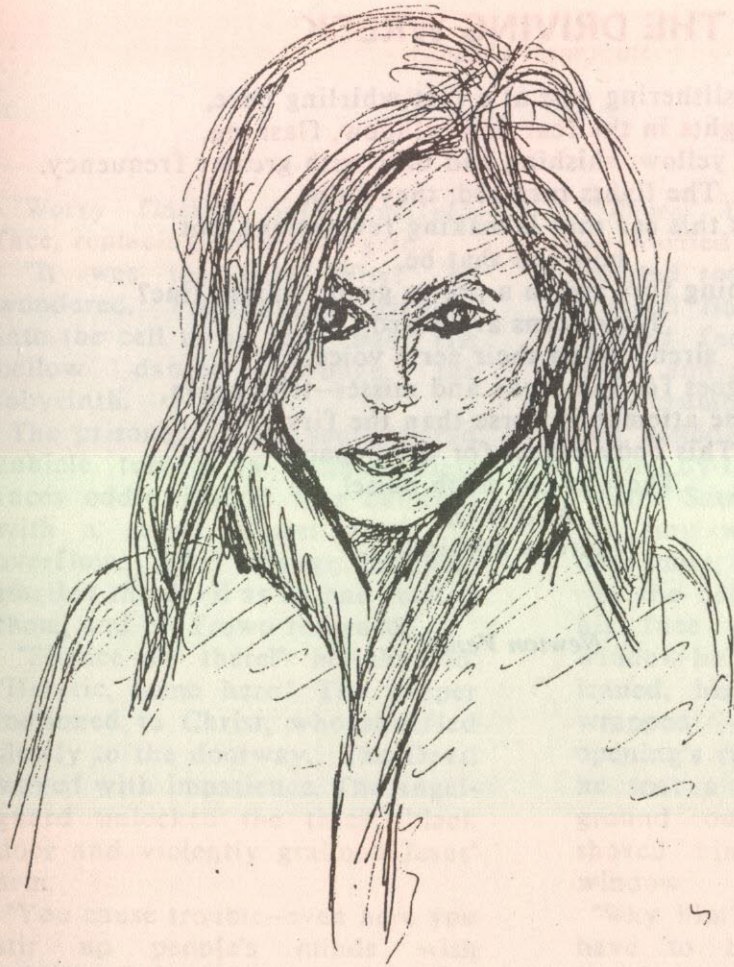
THERE'S A GOODNESS ABOUT PEOPLE

There's a goodness about people
that makes us all works of poetry.
Beneath our scars and fears
that make us people we're not,
it seems as though we're all, very much, similar.
We all long for the same things-
to be loved, accepted and treated with respect,
but because of our fear nobody has the courage to admit it.
That makes our world a bitter-sweet farce,
and a painful place to exist.

Sometimes the answers seem so simple to me,
and yet so far away.
To love instead of hate,
to give instead of take,
God what a difference that would make.
That volitional act seems to be despised however,
and the reasons for which are the reasons for our demise.
Regret will run deep, someday.
What scares me is not that the battle will ever be won,
but that it will never be fought.

A bit of tomorrow today.
And that's where truth will bow every knee.

Scott Erickson



Brian Kelly Fortle

THERE'S A CAR THE DRIVING WRECK

Lines slithering past at a fast whirling pace,
headlights in the rearview window, flashing,
and the snakes of yellow whishing and blur with greater frequency.

The lights turn red; they spin.

No, it is this car that is making revolutions, but
how can that be,

it is just going forward in a pretty good straight line?

Now horns are heard,

sirens sound their eerie voice,

the foot goes for the brake and misses--tries again,

the attempt is worse than the first.

This body braces for the impact.

There is too much noise!

And then

there is nothing.

Newton Vencil

THE DAWN

Cynthia Honeycutt

Worry flashed onto Lucifer's face, replacing his greedy grin.

"It was too easy. Why?" he wondered. Frowning, he glanced into the cell to his left. "Bah!" His bellow danced through the labyrinth.

The prisoners in the soot-covered cubicle turned in response, their faces oddly joyous, like children with a secret almost ready to overflow. This strange behavior startled the devil as he had started them, and his frown returned.

"Silence in there!" he shouted. "Heretic, come here." The keeper motioned to Christ, who shuffled slowly to the doorway. The Devil waved with impatience. The angel-guard unlocked the thick, black door and violently grabbed Jesus' arm.

"You cause trouble--even here you stir up people's minds with rebellion," Satan hissed to Christ. "I will have to isolate you."

The threesome marched hurriedly past rows of dark, uncomfortable-looking cells and through a crumbling archway. The guard kicked a gray pile of rubble, which speckled the bottom of Christ's black frayed robe. Past the archway, smaller rooms lined the two walls, cells reserved for troublemakers.

"There!" The keeper laughed, as he hurtled Jesus into the most isolated room. "Now try to cause trouble! Hah!" He spat on Jesus' scarred feet, spun triumphantly away, and slammed the door hard. Tiny crumbs of dust rained on the cell, dislodged from the gray-black ceiling by the abrupt jolt.

"Hah!" Satan yelled again through the tiny window. Then, smiling once more, he marched away.

In the cell next to Christ, with his face pressed to the small window-hole, a scar-faced man leaned, his blood-stained fingers wrapped tightly around the opening's rusty bars. Eyes glaring, he spat a brown mass onto the ground outside the door and shoved himself away from the window.

"Why him? Damn it, why did it have to be him?" he snarled. Another dark spit-wad splatted on and ran down the cell wall, lightening the black surface.

"No fair!" he screamed, and kicked the door. His footprint remained there, as if to remind him of the problem.

"I can't get away from him," the gray-faced thief mumbled and slumped onto his bed.

At midnight, Darkness was loosed. His evil deeds of searing punishments and demon-filled dreams worked expertly. Moaning

and intermittent crying could be heard throughout Hell's maze. The stench of coagulating blood and rotting flesh floated like strings of fog down the twisting aisles that separated each row of hideous cave-like niches.

The thief lay jerking about on his cell's moldy floor. Satan watched the man's suffering.

"Maybe I should be easier on this one. After all, he did oppose the trouble-maker." After a moment, he turned to the door of Christ's prison and inserted the key. Christ, with effort, rolled over on his dirt-slab bed and silently observed the visitor. His wounds, thorn punctures and nail-holes, bled anew, staining his rough skin and black garments.

"Where is your loving father now, Your Majesty?" he mocked, shoving at the door and glaring with snapping eyes at the captive. "If he is such a caring God, why has he forgotten you?" He paused, then remarked wildly, "No matter. I will take good care of you!"

Cackling madly, he skittered away into the blackness, his bright, fire-colored robe fluttering in the smelly draft. The door, still ajar, shifted in the breeze.

Some time later, the sounds of torture dwindled. Only a few whines emitted from the cells nearest the Prince of darkness. Only one scream, coming from the isolated thief's prison reached the Devil's ears. Suddenly, he realized something was amiss. It was

not time for Darkness to cease his cruelties. Almost three hours remained for punishment.

"What's this?" Lucifer cried. "What is going on?" He jumped from his throne and called into the misty blackness for his guards.

"Why is it so quiet? There is almost no screaming. I want to know why--now!"

The gray-robed angels scattered to the various complexes to see what had caused the silence. Worriedly, they peeked into each room, only to observe quiet, tranquil prisoners staring out at them. Only a few still wriggled on the floors of their cells. The rest sat calmly on their hard beds.

Satan wiped his forehead with his black-gloved hand, and frowned anxiously.

"The heretic--it has to be," he muttered to himself. He raced to Jesus' cell, only to find a locked door and a sleeping prisoner. The thief still thrashed about on the ground of his cubicle. Puzzled, Lucifer wandered away, mumbling, "Somehow...but how...?" Darkness retreated early to his corner of the pit. His punishments had stopped working. Hell began to lighten just a bit and in the dimness, the prisoners sighed, thankful for the small amount of relief that the pale hours provided.

On earth, the night's darkness still remained. Dawn would not appear for several hours. Outside the

tomb in which Jesus' shrouded body had been laid, brambles, thistles, and other weeds began slowly to wither, quivering, it seemed, as they died one by one. Their brown bodies carpeted the meadow beside the sealed cave. Gradually, they became invisible as new grass sprang up in their places. Beautiful flowers, sparkling with morning dew, clothed the pasture. Meanwhile, Sunday dawned in a rainbow of colors. Purples, oranges, and reds painted the sky with marvelous light.

The Devil frowned in worry as an angel reported these odd incidents to him. Fear flickered onto his face, then stubbornness.

"Bring the heretic to me!" he commanded.

An angel-guard ran hastily to do as he was told. He hurried back even quicker to relate the most startling event of all.

"The cell is empty. The door has been split in two!" he cried, cringing before Satan.

"What!" Lucifer screamed. "Find him, quickly. He must be stopped!"

His legion of angels scurried away, searching desperately for the escapee.

Suddenly, a rumbling echoed throughout the pit. "Too late," he whimpered, sinking tiredly onto his knees. With a great burst of noise, the cells began to crumble. Doors sprang open, broken on their hinges. Prisoners flooded the corridors and began running, rejoicing, toward the huge spike-capped gate. Only the hard-hearted huddled in their cells. Their prisons remained locked.

Jesus joined the prisoners beside Hades' entrance. He touched the bars and the entire gate disintegrated before Him. "Glory! Hosanna!" shouted the freed souls as they followed the white-robed Saviour through the destroyed barrier. Praising God, they disappeared beyond the darkness that separates death and life.

Outside the tomb, the stone that had sealed its entrance had been pushed aside. A glowing angel stood beside the opening, awaiting the arrival of a glorious event.

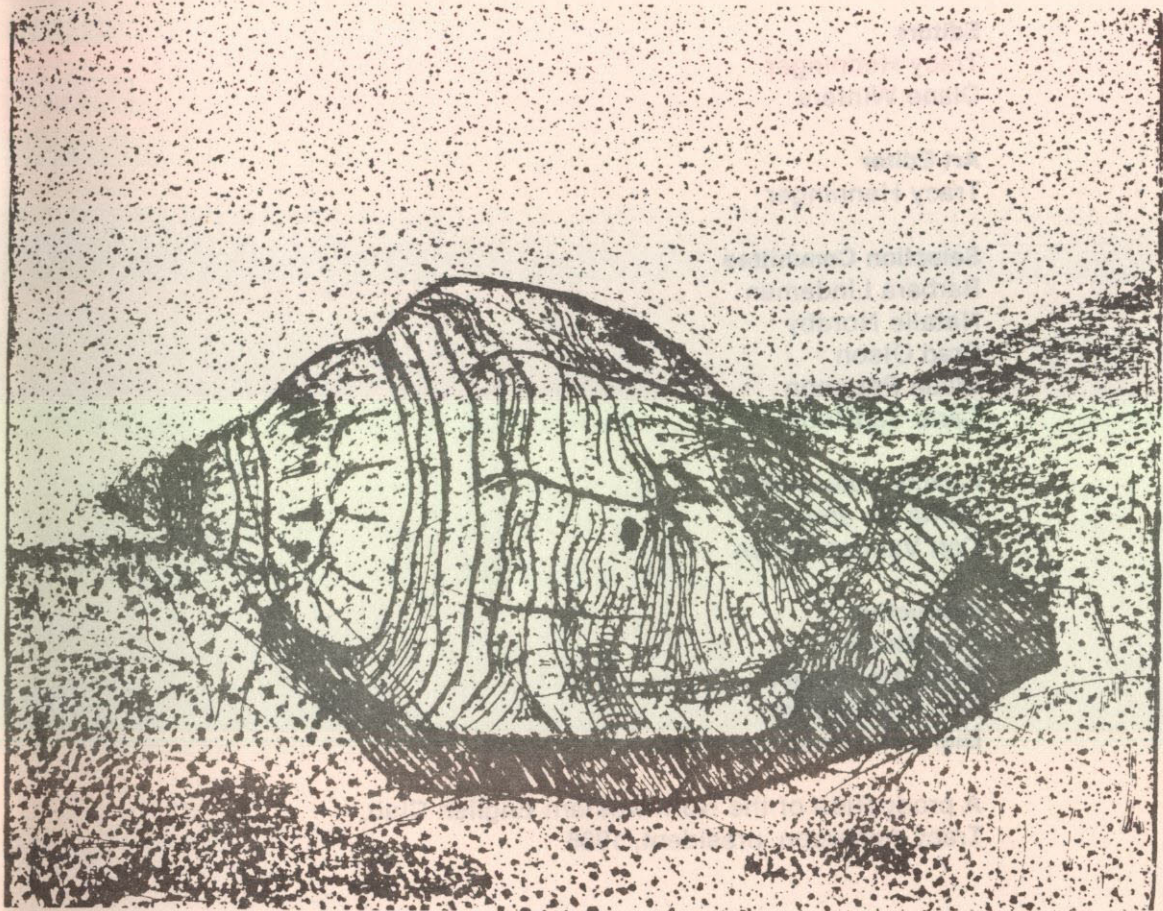
ONE NIGHT ON THE FRONT PORCH

(Or, "A Courtship Recalled")

You struck me like a match
in those first days together,
and I sizzled
for seconds, like the scrape and flare
of phosphor, a flame meant for a moment,
bound to die above the thumb
before reaching the nerves and flesh--
miles before charring lung and ventricle.

Those fires of romance still torch
rarely, Love. Now you are to me
a mug of kerosene swallowed
faithfully with each breakfast,
and your fluid fire smoulders
in the nuclei of my cells
like a peat hill caught fire.
I'm a coal mine atorch, fanned
by our magma as the familiar plates
of our life slide between comfort,
familiarity, and sheer terror.
Keep bringing me back
to this heat banging
in our still-spreading brains
and take me forward
to what we have always known.

Brad Olson



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