



# inscape

vol. XIII Fall 79



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# inscape

vol. XIII Fall 79

morehead state university • morehead, kentucky • department of languages & literature

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# Watching

Brenda Vockery

Flop.

He sat down  
on the rough-boarded steps  
of the apartment building,  
Tucked his legs to his chest,  
clutching right hand to left ankle  
left hand to right ankle  
propped his chin on his knees,  
prepared to spend another day  
just watching.

His worn and faded shirt blew  
unbuttoned and free in the breeze.

His knees showed up white and  
bruised through rips in  
his old jeans.

His form was light:  
brown skin and  
faded bright clothes against  
a grey building with patches  
of peeling pale green.

And slowly he rocked  
rocked  
back and forth  
and back,  
sitting on top  
of the warped and  
creaking  
steps.

# A Meeting with Martina at the Cafe

Greg Loomis

She spoke of voodoo in Haiti--  
night's heat and ravaging insects, greased black  
forms dancing in primal fires; last rites  
for the tourist from Rio--  
as smoke curled from her fingers  
    between her frosted teeth.

She had to say she was weary with erotica  
'de groping on matted sheets, the flopping of sweated  
breasts; farting of trapped air as the clumsy frenetic  
rhythms increased, hot with tropical lust--  
as her lips curled on a glass of vodka  
    in a sneer.

She mentioned the purchase of the emeralds--  
the lame refugee merchant just off the steamer  
who dealt in slavery and trinkets; offered a bargain  
on Malaysians and black Moroccan hashish--  
as her red nails tapped the marble counter  
    in mounting cadence.

A chrome glint smouldered in her eyes  
as she casually surveyed mine...

## Quest

Michelle Creed

Walking down the  
deserted  
sidewalk  
late at night,  
watching my breath  
go  
before me,  
feeling  
cold drizzle  
on my face,  
I can't help  
wondering  
what it would feel like  
to be  
found.

## Editorial Decisions

Brenda Vockery

Editors are funny folks  
Who use all kinds of different strokes  
To scratch all creativity  
To states of sheer oblivity.

AZ US AZ US

# **AZMADIUS**

Jefferson Mehring

MAIDI MAIDI  
AZMADI AZMADI  
MAIDI MAIDI  
AZMADI AZMADI



"If you step on my tail one more time, dummy," I screeched, "I'm going to take your foot off at the hip."

"I'm sorry Orange-ade," my pimply-faced, gangling "Master" answered.

"My name is not Orange-ade. It is Azmadius. Say it."

"Yes sir, Mr. Azmadius."

I think I better explain what a major demon like myself is doing in the body of a flea bitten, ugly, orange cat. It's like this. I kinda fell outta favor with Him (you know who I mean--Lord of Darkness, Prince of Evil, the Infernal Majesty, etc.). Actually it was just a little thing, not really my fault. I thought that it might be a good idea, public relations-wise, to make a personal appearance at one of those amateur black masses (orgies). Anyway, most of the people attending didn't really believe that demons exist. MY appearance scared them so much they all became Jesus freaks.

Figuring that I needed to do something big to get back in the good graces of Him (Lord of Darkness, Prince of Evil, etc.), I decided to try and put one over on the other Him (The Almighty, The Creator, King of Glory, etc.). Lucky for me the perfect opportunity came along in the form of this IDIOT who was studying a book of witchcraft, trying to conjure a demon into his cat. Since he was so inept, I had to help him, but it finally worked out. So my everlasting sorrow. I have nothing against being a cat--I've inhabited several cats--nice, sleek, well-groomed black cats. Not bright orange mongrels.

Now you may ask why I bothered; the soul of this ridiculous specimen of human life can't be that important. This is the most brilliant part of my plan. I'm going to use him as a stepping stone to his uncle. Now get this--this pitiful creature's uncle is none other than Bobby Rye, the Evangelist. I have the chance to pull off the soul snatching of the century, if I can suffer the indignity a little longer.

So far there has been only one little snag in my plan. My "Master" won't take me to see his uncle until I do what I promised. Which is to get him a date with Farrah Fawcett (do you understand the mentality I'm dealing with?). I offered to conjure up a succubus that looked like her, but no, he wants the real thing. So I offered to have her possessed and brought here. No. He wants her to come of her own free will. He won't even let me out of the cat to work on it. I could get out myself, but I would have to leave his soul behind.



Anyway, all this leads to where my afternoon nap on a sunny June day is rudely disturbed by this moron mashing my posterior appendage.

"Uh... Mister Azmaduis?" he said nervously.

"Yes?" I answered, prepared for some kinda dumb question.

"I brought you a present."

"A present?" My eyes narrowed in suspicion. "What sort of present?"

"I wouldn't want for you to be picked up as a stray, so I got you a collar." He held up a decrepit leather strap.

"You expect me to wear that?"

"Yeah, here, let me put it on." He approached slowly.

Having sat still for so many indignities by this time, I just stuck my neck out (in more ways than one) for the collar. Too late I noticed the cord attached to it. Before I could react he tied the other end to the stove. I was trapped.

"What in the powers of darkness do you think you are doing?" I shrieked.

"I'm sorry, Orange--Mr. Azmadius, I gotta do this. My uncle's comin' over in a few minutes, and I don't want you to try and doublecross me."

Receiving no answer from me, he left the room. I just stared. If looks could kill--

Actually I would never doublecross anyone, unless I was sure I could get away with it (we demons have to be very careful about our reputations in dealing with humans). But if I could just get out of this embarrassing predicament, I'd show him. The cord appeared to be the weakest link in this trap, so that's where I attacked. I grabbed the cord in my mouth and chewed, and chewed, and and chewed, and chewed. Nothing happened. Scampering across the floor, I jumped onto the stove. Whatever else that boy may be, he was a good boy scout. That knot looked impossible. After clawing at it for a minute I realized how hopeless my situation was. I could conjure up some little demon to assist me, but the embarrassment when word got back to Him (Lord Of Darkness, etc.) would kill me. I was on the verge of giving up.

Just as I was going through my weak spell, the doorbell rang. Voices drifted in from the living room. Bobby Rye had arrived.

Almost in a panic I scanned the room. There had to be something around I could use to cut the cord. Finally I spotted a knife by the sink. I ran toward it, but my collar pulled me back inches from my goal. I've gotta calm down, I thought. There has got to be a logical way outta this. I looked at the jars on top of the stove--Sugar, Coffee, Grease....Grease? I hopped back

to the stove and over to the jars. Knocking the lid off the jar, I looked in. The smell of rancid bacon grease leaped out and choked me. Reluctantly I slid my paw into the jar. I mentally cursed that idiot as I applied the grease around my collar. After jumping back to the floor, I ran around the leg of the stove until the cord caught fast. I backed away and pulled. Seconds later I was free, leaving only a minimum of fur behind.

As I burst into the living room, Rye and the idiot were laughing about something.

"All right," I interrupted. "Bobby Rye, I want to talk to you." Rye just stared. Out of the corner of my eye I saw the nephew grow pale.

"What--who are you?" Rye stuttered.

"I am Azmadius." I tried to look regal (you can only look so regal in a bright orange cat). "A demon in the service of the Lord of Darkness."

"What do you want?" Rye looked confused..

"I have enslaved your nephew's soul, guaranteeing him eternal damnation. But I will release it in exchange for your soul."

Rye exploded with laughter. "You want me to sell my soul?"

"That was the general idea," I confessed, confused by his laughter.

"You're too late," he chuckled. "I sold my soul 10 years ago."

"You what?' The nephew looked as shocked as I was.

"How do you think I got where I am today?" Rye continued.

"But you save souls," I protested.

"I save only those that would have been saved anyway. And I lead others to hell by making them think they can buy their way to heaven, or making them so self-righteous they forget God."

The indignity of it all.



Al Westerman





Al Westerman

# Call Girl

Beverly Madden

Her body is long and black.  
In respect to her nationality.  
Curved in just the right places,  
Molded to perfection.

Her voice is shrill,  
As to awaken those asleep.  
Lips cold to touch,  
Glistening and shiny.

Her attire is of many styles,  
The latest designs and fashions.  
Expensive lady, very expensive,  
Makes her all the more appealing.

She responds to all occasions.  
A soft, gentle touch she prefers.  
She's a receiver, a listener,  
A good news bringer,  
All built into one.

# The Real Thing

Sylvia Wilson

He sat there in a kind of unearned majesty  
mocking my very existence.  
"I've made it to the top,"  
He screamed at me.  
It was no virtue of his own--only a bit of luck.  
Yet, he was right.  
There is no age, no sex, no rank  
Which does not recognize him.  
His emblem, like a coat-of-arms,  
Is more familiar  
Than the Union seal.  
And is registered--a circled "R"--  
Because of others, envious of his fame.  
There's no place in the world he has not been,  
even to the jungles and the swamps.  
'We speak of achievement in terms of man  
But one day, I predict,  
he too will see the moon  
And let the Martians quench their thirst for earth.  
I will not scorn  
For I am one who brought him to his hour.  
I've helped create a scary kind of human element  
that moves and lives and breathes,  
In a can.



# PROJECT: PHOENIX

Dale Horner

Footsteps, echoing steadily in the corridor, approached the ward. The orderlies were early this morning. I looked over the hall--the others appeared to be sleeping. The footsteps stopped. I reached under my pillow and found my ear plugs. I had one in place when I heard the voices of the black men outside the door.

"I still don't see why we gotta get these morons up so early for," the younger voice said.

"I told you, they'll be here early," the older one said quietly.

"Shit, not this early. You know how hard these bodies are to handle when you break routine. I'll bet--"

"Keep it down," the older one interrupted. "You know the rules, they might hear you. All right, you ready?"

I pushed the other plug into place. I feigned sleep as the double doors opened. The long, shrill blast of a whistle penetrated the plugs and vibrated the insides of my body. I got out of bed and slowly walked to the doors. I stood silently and waited for the others to assume their positions behind me.

There was the hum of a stick from the back of the ward. I glanced over my shoulder to see that the young orderly was prodding 4-10 into line. His body was trembling, but his face was expressionless.

The older orderly walked up beside me. I felt him staring at me. I stared at the doors. Had he seen me looking back? If he had, he would take me out of line as they had done 4-10 three weeks ago. 4-10's position had been three behind me. He had made the mistake of showing independence in the mornings. The early hours were dangerous. The drugs from the night before were wearing off. The aides, doctors and even orderlies watched you carefully to detect signs of unnatural and mental development. 4-10 would break line to look out the window and, when stung by the heat stick, he would glare viciously at the much smaller orderlies. One morning, they took him out of line and led him away. He returned a week later with bandages on his head and a blank stare on his face.

Two short blasts of the whistle interrupted my thoughts. I briskly led the bodies out of the room and down the hall. Evidently the orderly wasn't sure if I had actually looked back or was having contractions. Most of us had nervous twitches, especially in the mornings.

At the end of the hall, I ducked under the door sill and led the procession across the creaky tile floor of the Processing Room. I entered the Shower Room. The Shower Room was not actually a room, but a three-foot wide walkway, just long enough for all thirty-two bodies

to stand without physical contact. I walked to the locked door at the far end. The heat bulbs crackled above as they cast a red glow on the nude men.

After about fifteen minutes of intense heat, the red light faded and the white bulbs glowed along the ceiling. Water started to trickle out of the walls, ceiling and floor. With a burst, the room was filled with spray. The clear, warm water turned to white, hot soap. It burned the nose and eyes. Then came the frigid rinse water. The water died down and warm air flowed through the vents.

The door in front of me was unbolted. After two whistle blasts, I led the men into the Processing Room and to the chambers. Thirty-six chamber doors lined the walls of the Processing Room. I looked over the room for Fred. He wasn't there. I led the bodies along each wall. One orderly would stop a body at each door. Aides would then lead him into the chamber and strap him into a chair. After making the trip around the room, the old black orderly pushed me into the last chamber and strapped the chair. He inserted a tube down my throat and the machine proceeded to pour liquid into my stomach.

As my stomach filled, I thought of how it used to be. After my meal I would be strapped firmly into the chair. My head would be held by a cold metal vise. A man would force liquid down my throat. Through the fog I could barely feel pins penetrating my back. And as people watched from above, heat would pass through my body causing my muscles to grow hard, relax, and grow hard again. This was done for hours. Finally, a man would enter the room. He would hook wires from the machine to my scalp, look into my mouth, and feel different parts of my body. The aide would then take me to the tank. I was placed into the large vat with my head strapped above the water in which my body floated. He would then shut the opening and I would lie in the dark silence for what seemed to be a very long time. It was difficult to determine how long one spent in the isolation. Finally the door was opened and the process of the chair was repeated. After another period in the tank, I would lead the bodies back to the ward for a few hours sleep.

Now, after I was fed, I no longer went through an examination or a workout in the chair. I was either placed immediately in the tank or I would go with Fred.

The young orderly came into the small room and removed the tube from my throat. He was opening the tank when Fred entered carrying a white robe. He and the orderly were evidently arguing. I was tempted to remove a plug but I thought better of it. The orderly slammed the door shut and roughly pulled me from the chair. He pulled the robe down over my head. I had



never fully adjusted to wearing clothes, but it was worth the inconvenience to avoid the darkness of the tank.

Fred took my hand and led me out of the chamber. He was not like the other attendants. He wore his stick on his hip and I had never seen him threaten to use it.

When we got to his office, Fred motioned for me to stop and sit in a chair outside his door in the hall. As he went into the room, I quickly removed the plug from my right ear and placed it in my mouth. I had been removing the plugs for a long time and had never been caught. Most of the staff walked on the left of a body so it was usually the right plug that I removed. For the last five years--since I had been allowed to break the routine of the chair and tank--I had been listening to Fred. I overheard him talking on the phone, to orderlies, and even to me. He didn't seem to care if I could understand or even hear him. As I followed him through his daily routine, he would carry on a one-sided conversation with me. When he didn't come to get me in the mornings, I would spend the time in the tank thinking of the conversations I had overheard. Originally, all the words were confusing but I understood almost everything he said now.

"Come on, Big Fellow, they have a leak on the fourth floor and we've been elected to clean it up," he said as he came out of his office.

I waited for him to motion before I got to my feet.

"And I spent three years in medical school to be a janitor," he grumbled as we got on the elevator.

When we reached the fourth floor, he removed a mop and bucket from the closet. He sang as he mopped. I liked it when he sang. He had nearly finished when a man I had never seen before ran up the hall toward us.

"Lucille has gotten out of C Ward again," he said quickly. "I'll tell you now, that bitch is crazy as hell!"

"Well, I presume that is the reason she was in C Ward originally," Fred said laughingly.

"Yeah, guess so. Come on smart boy--help me find her. She's over here somewheres."

Fred leaned the mop against my stomach as they left. I had an idea. I started to finish cleaning up the water. Fred would surely be surprised to come back and find me as he'd left me, except that the water would be in the bucket. I knew I wouldn't get into trouble. He wouldn't tell anyone. He couldn't be sure someone hadn't taken the mop from me and cleaned up the mess. I was so pleased with the job I was doing.

"Hello cutie!" a small voice said behind me.

I turned, a nauseous feeling churned inside. But there stood, not a doctor or an aide, but a small,

middle-aged woman. She wore a ragged housecoat and blue, fuzzy slippers. Her hair was sticking out from her head in all directions. Hers were the reddest lips I had ever seen. It even discolored the skin around her mouth.

"Boy, you're a big fellow, aren't you?" she said coyly. "Why haven't I seen you around before?"

Because she was so tiny and without a heat stick, I lost my fear of her. She grabbed the bottom of my robe and lifted it over my waist.

"My, my--you are a big fellow," she said as she stepped back. "You should come over to C Ward and clean. You could really do some cleaning up over there--what's the matter, don't you talk to girls? I get it, you're the strong, silent type. I like that. You really should come and see me sometime, but watch out for those other women. They're jealous--they want to kill me. Oh my! They're after me! I must go! See you later, doll!"

She quickly slipped out the door.

I had seen some women before, but this was the first one I had heard talk. Her voice was so high and she talked so fast. She confused me. I lowered my robe and was thinking about her when I heard voices at the other end of the hall. I put the plug into my hand. I fingered it nervously and started to put it into place. It squirted through my fingers and rolled onto the floor. I placed the mop head over the plug and stood perfectly still. My back was to them but I could tell that several people were approaching.

"But doctor, what is the function of the cylinders?" one asked.

"Those cylinders, as you refer to them, are sensory deprivation chambers. They prevent the donors from receiving too much stimulation. They also provide rest after the strenuous electrode exercise."

They were nearly to where I was standing. I stared blankly at the mop head.

"What the...!" one of them exclaimed as he pointed to me. "He looks just like an oversized replica of the late--!"

"Precisely," the doctor interrupted, "he would have incorporated this body if not for his terrible accident. Please note the maximum physical development. We at the Phoenix take pride in the advancements we've made in nutrition."

They formed a semi-circle around me. Sweat trickled down my forehead and into my eyes making the mop a blur.

"But what will you do with him now?" a woman's voice asked.

"It is unfortunate, because of the time and effort put into its development, but it will have to be



terminated."

"Is that necessary? Isn't he trainable?"

"You must remember," the doctor said slowly, "that is not a person. It is just a cloned body without a mind."

"When will the first transplants take place, Doctor Hiatt?"

"Three weeks. We will release the story to the public in three months." The doctor started walking away and the others followed.

"It is ironic," he said as they got to the doors, "that we use him as the lead body through the routines."

I felt weak after they'd left. I waited until I was assured they were gone. I bent over to recover the ear plug. Suddenly the doors burst open and there stood Dr. Hiatt, flanked by the two black orderlies. Fred was standing behind them.

"I knew I detected something unnatural about it," the doctor said.

"It's my fault, Doctor," Fred said, "I fitted that plug. I noticed it was loosening. I should have replaced it. Really, he's normal. I'll just return him to his chamber and..."

"No, I don't think so," the doctor said, "I should have watched him--it--closer. I cannot risk contamination this late in the program."

"But he's really..."

"That will be all, Dr. Anderson," the doctor interrupted. "You men take him to the other side of the hospital. Put him in the S. D. Chamber. If anyone asks questions have them contact me. Do not say anything else!"

They grabbed me and pushed me down the corridor. Fred was still talking to the doctor as I left.

In the darkness of the tank, I dreamed of the red-lipped woman. She was running from me, screaming that I was going to kill her. The black orderlies were chasing me. I yelled for her to help, but she would not stop. I was awakened by a burst of light. Fred was peering down into the tank.

"Come on Big Man, get out of there!"

I crawled out of the tank and looked down at him.

"You understand me, don't you?"

I nodded.

"Okay. They feel they must destroy you for the sake of the program. You've disproved their theories." He was whispering as he looked out the door. "I've got to get you out of here. I don't see how we can stop them though. Judging by your profile, some pretty powerful people are involved in this program."

I followed him into the Processing Room. He opened the door of a room I had never been in before. It was



small and filled with brooms, mops and large black barrels. The back wall gleamed with large water pipes and valves.

"I'll go through the chambers and release the bodies from the tanks," he whispered. "When you see me coming back, turn all of these valves open. It should flood the entire Processing Room. We'll try to slip out then."

"I don't think that'll work at all," the black orderly said from the doorway. He grinned and waved his stick as he blocked the exit. I had never seen him smile before. His front teeth were gold.

Fred rushed to the valves and started to turn them rapidly. The orderly leapt at him with his stick glowing white. I tried to yell but nothing came out of my throat. The stick landed on Fred's back. He slumped to the floor, his eyes wide with pain. He trembled in a puddle of urine.

The orderly turned towards me. I grabbed the stick and pinned him against the wall with the stick against his throat. The skin on my hands smoldered. He kicked and then was still. The valves turned red when I opened them. I opened them all. My body shook as I thought of bodies drowning in the darkness.

And then they came. I was stung again and again. Finally the pain stopped. When I awoke I was bound on a table. Dr. Hiatt was flashing a light into my eyes.

"Well, I feel I must thank you," he said, "since you can evidently understand me. You saved us the chore of terminating the first colony. Because of you we will now develop the others in total isolation from the fetal life on."

I was confused. Others?

"Yes," he said with a smile, "there are others in various stages of development. The success of the program has been delayed, but our success is inevitable."

The attendants rolled me down the hall while the doctor followed.

"Take him to the anesthesiologist as soon as Dr. Anderson's lobotomy has been completed."

## Betrayal

Sylvia Wilson

She goes to meditate  
                                perhaps to pray.  
Bows before the altar  
                                whispers "Hail."  
She thinks  
                                she is alone.  
He slips in  
Through a side door,  
                                left unlocked.  
In the temple of The Virgin,  
She  
                                is not.

## Sunday Afternoon

Eddie Baldrige

On top of the highest hill in this county  
You can stand just so and see the lake.  
Where I stand I can see my friend  
Seventeen years old and  
Under the influence of a drug so powerful  
Veterinarians use it regularly  
To put suffering horses out of their misery.  
Two semesters ago another friend  
Fell off the same rock  
While doing the same drug  
Now he's part of this big machine  
In some New York hospital.  
A guy named Joe is sitting on the  
Hood of a car with me  
And we're watching our buddy  
Stumble and climb, one hundred feet up  
From rock  
To rock  
To rock



Al Westerman





Al Westerman

**TO MY  
A DIM  
RESUR-  
RECTION**

**(So Pale;  
So Sick)**

David Anderson

---

# IGNORANCE,

---

I was happily above the world in a tree having a good time when my father found me. He was crying and horribly opposed, laughing hysterically. He sickly whimpered, "Do you know that while you were out here your mother died?" He was apparently ashamed of me for being ignorant of it and being so selfishly carefree and was trying to make me feel guilty. He nervously composed, "But come, I want you to see her."

We walked to the house and in the dim bedroom she greeted me with a weak and loving sad smile that made me feel limp. She smiled, "Hello David, I died."

"What do you mean you died? Why are you here?" I cried in confused amazement and terror.

She removed her sheets and revealed some very rudimentary legs that at first appeared to be amputated, one longer than the other. Her skin had a very strange soft spongy and almost pocked texture, particularly on her hideous little legs. She smiled sadly and was almost tearfully cheerful with expectation of new life. "I died," she explained in the strange dim light, to my terror, "but I had a new...new type of medical operation. My body was given to cannibals to eat and I am their digestive result."

I impatiently asked why her legs were so short. They were similar to the arms of thalidomide babies.

"They will grow," she said. "It will just take a while."

Suddenly a bizarre feeling of relieved assurance filled me. Everyone felt it. But apparently the presence of the soft new flesh was too much for my father. He wanted to start all over and make her new again. Gasping and fainting, I watched him eat her again, starting at the upper middle chest, easily tearing away the tender new skin from the bones, almost eating it as if it were a smooth creamy pie. Searingly painful screams from my mother filled the room with an anesthetizing liquid sound that would have sent ordinary people into their eternal madness. But we all faithfully knew that she would be freshly born like delicate new Easter lilies in the dim dim bedroom.

---



# Midnight Serenade

Sylvia Wilson

Static bits of popcorn in the air  
    crackle like the logs on winter fire,  
Or snap like grease that's heating on the stove.  
Distant in the night--  
Telling of the band that soon will play  
    with drums and woodwind and liquid rat-tat-tat.  
Yes, distant at first like the tiny flash of Kodak,  
Then growing brighter,  
    More like sudden bursts of silvery sun.  
The Mercury lights go out for a moment,  
Tricked by the sly impostor,  
    thinking it is day.  
But listening,  
    they realize that night is still apace  
For tree frogs and crickets cry in cracked and husky  
  tones,  
    for the soothing drink they know is on its way.  
The harbinger comes before,  
    sweeping the streets and walkways,  
Slamming doors to warn the slumbering ones.  
And none too soon, for right upon his draft  
Comes the rhythm of the band  
    tapping on the glass like peeping-tom.  
Hesitating momentarily--  
    then giving all it has to "Summer Rain,"  
The tender purr of the atmospheric kitten  
Has metamorphosed to lion--caged too long.  
And with all hint of patience gone,  
Gives way to amplified, vibrating blast.  
With one last, grand crescendo  
They slip off in the darkness, leaving the trees  
  refreshed  
    and grass all bathed.  
They will not get to see  
    the multitude of diamonds in the field  
When the golden rays fall on their deposit  
    At the dawn.

# Garland White's Autumn Afternoon

Greg Loomis

Crack the window,  
spread the splintered shutters wide--  
allow a bit of smoke pink twilight  
to stir and spotlight the fine particles  
and traces of matter which gently glide  
in suspension  
(the slough of our skin and hair, the dust  
of our breath).  
In random jumps and swirls it cascades so lightly,  
settling on the slumbering oak chiffonier,  
clouding the former glow of soaking oil into  
its browned pores, now showing dry ridges and splits  
as if still in thirst.  
The mirror, yellowed at the edges, darkens  
Your white reflection, elongated and bent.  
You pass by the faded wallpaper with its stains,  
carrying a silver tray with bottles and gauze  
over the thinning maroon carpet so quietly.  
And I try to rise and thank you--  
but the bed squeaks as it swallows me,  
and the voice allows not a whisper.

# GREENLEAF FILES

Greg Loomis



It was while I was sorting through the photographs that the similarity suddenly caught my eye. I went back through them again. Out of the six pictures four had yellowed from age. The other two, including the one of the only alien ever found alive, were more recent, and because they were in color the common trait was further emphasized.

After rubbing the night's grit from the corners of my eyes I carefully spread them on the desk, side by side. I blinked and looked closely again. A slight churning of excitement welled in my stomach, and I felt a trickle of perspiration on my forehead.

The first one, a closeup taken in 1953, showed a young Oriental woman, maybe 25 years old, lying on a morgue-type slab and clad in one-piece olive green garment. The second and third pictures were of a middle-aged couple recovered from the craft that was discovered in June of 1959. Like the first one it was a black and white shot, except this one was taken near the location of the craft itself. They appeared to be of East European, perhaps Slavic stock. Also in a prone position, the man was wearing a dark, three-piece suit; the woman a plain dress. Next to them lay an open suitcase full of papers. The fourth and fifth photos were of the "Family" found in the autumn of 1966. The first color view was of the parents, who could pass as average looking whites, maybe of Scandinavian origin. The second closeup was of the "children," who both appeared to be in their early teens. The young male's eyes were slightly open, as if he was taking a peek. The whole clan looked frighteningly wholesome.

The sixth photo was the most striking. While the others looked like stiffs, their arms neatly folded over their chests, this photo showed a man of about 30 years of age standing and looking squarely at the camera with a touch of a mysterious smile on the corners of his mouth. This was the alien found at the site of the 1974 landing in Panama who remained alive for only 46 hours. Dressed in a casual suit without a tie, he could have been taken for a young American or English businessman.

I glanced back at the photo of the teenage children, and then at the one of "Smith," the Panamanian alien. At first I hadn't caught the likeness between the picture of the teenage boy and the one of Smith, but now it was clearer. In both, their eyes gave off a rather strange blue-green refraction. It made me think of how upset I would get when regular snapshots came back from the developer's showing red glints in the pupils of people. It happened all the time with cameras using that sort of flashbulb, particularly when taken at close range. I had never seen reflections of this color before.

And there was one other thing. Every photograph of the aliens depicted a slight sheen or glimmer around them. Like an electrical glow, the light seemed stronger around the boy and Smith. I didn't know if it had to do with the age of the photos, or how they were taken, or even if it meant anything. It just seemed strange--stranger than this whole story I was beginning to doubt anyone would ever believe.

The thought of it. This could be it! Maybe, just maybe, please let this be the link--the one method we could pick them out from the "swirling mass of grays and black ones" as Jagger had sung.

I grabbed for the phone, my fingers pecking so nervously I had to start over and dial again. After a couple of rings someone answered.

"Marlon?"

"Yes."

"Ben here. You'll never guess..."

"Oh, hello Ben. How are you this evening?"

I caught myself. As usual Marlon was calm, tranquil to the extent he almost seemed sedated. Skittishness was one of many behaviors he had a low tolerance for.

"Fine, just fine Marlon." I tried to downshift. Being calm and rational would be most effective.

"Listen, Marlon, I hate to bother you this late, but I think I've come across something that may be the solution to our problem."

"Really Ben? What would that be?"

His voice had a note of weariness. "Well, I was going through the photographs, you know, the ones you gave me?"

"Yes. Of course."

"Did you ever notice any particular similarities between them?"

"Among them? No...not that I recall."

He always had a subtle way of correcting me that was unnerving, even though I admired him for his fastidiousness about things like grammar.

"Have you ever noticed color snapshots, ones taken with a flash, how people's eyes sometimes give off a red reflection, you know, their pupils look like little red pinpoints?"

"I don't think so, Ben. I'm not too familiar with photography."

"Well you see, the color shot of the kids from the family, and the one of Smith--there's something there, but it's not, uh, the same."

"In what manner?"

"You know how the one kid's eyes are still open? And so is Smith's. Both were taken with a flashbulb. Anyway, there's this reflection in their eyes, but it's

a strange blue-green, almost aqua color."

"That is interesting, Ben. What do you suggest it means?"

"Nothing I suppose. I just thought it was odd. Never seen that kind of color before."

"I suppose with your background in newspapers you've seen quite a few photographs."

"We mainly deal in black and white--hell, Marlon, everybody's always showing you Instamatic shots of their vacations and families and dogs, that sort of thing. You've probably got some laying around, check it out."

"No, I don't think I do. I don't own a camera. Ben, it could be coincidental. Why don't you consult with a photography expert. Without showing the photographs to anyone of course."

"I thought of that. But I'd have to show them..."

"Ben, you know our agreement." Marlon found being stern toward me came naturally.

"Sure, Marlon. Look, I have a very close friend who'd be perfect for the job. Besides, they look pretty normal otherwise. He'd think it was a police case or something."

"I don't know..."

"Oh, except for one other thing."

"What is it?" His voice picked up in alertness.

"The pictures show a sort of glow around the bodies, especially around Smith and the kid. Like there's this band around them that's lighter than the background. This light coming off..."

"Such as a halo? Do you presuppose this could be a pagan staging of the second coming?"

I wanted to say "Shit, Marlon, get off it," yet I knew better. The one problem we ran into while working together was that he had this attitude of having already covered every possibility. Often, when I came up with an idea or theory he would quickly and efficiently defuse it, never letting me forget that he possessed the far greater intellect. I had to remind myself it was he who had come to me, and if he wanted cooperation he was going to have to be more open to suggestions.

"No, I don't. Listen, what else have we got to go on? We're at a dead end and you know it. We do know there's probably hundreds of them walking about all over the world right now--grown men and women, children--and we still don't have one damn idea why, or what they're doing. And worst of all, we don't have any way of identifying them. They're not carrying 'Air Cosmos' travel bags..."

"Ben, I'm well aware of the situation."

The frustration of spending months trying to unravel this amazing situation must be getting to me. After all, it was Marlon who first let me in on a story so



fantastic I still had my fits of doubt as to whether any of it could be true. I'd taken a leave from my reporter's position on a large daily to devote full time on what could be the biggest story since, well, what in the hell could I compare this to?

"Yeah, you're right."

"It is your journalist's instincts--which is fine. I wouldn't have trusted you with even a hint of this if it was not for my faith in your investigative ability. I consider you one of the few friends I have ever had, Ben. Getting to the bottom of this, and making the world aware of it, has been my obsession for so long. That is why caution must be maintained."

"True, true. But we have no idea what sort of time factor we're working against."

Immediately I felt embarrassed about the goof I'd made. For we had a time factor over our heads from the beginning. We didn't know if the aliens were on a timetable, but Marlon definitely was. It was the main reason he had come to me with the story--he had no idea how much longer he had to live. He had mentioned cancer, without elaborating, while making it clear in the aloofness he could turn on in a second that it wasn't to be discussed. One stipulation was that I couldn't print anything on the story while he was alive. It was a rotten deal from a professional standpoint. What chance would a second-rate reporter have of getting this story taken seriously, even by my own editor, with the main source dead?

"I'm sorry. You know what I mean."

"Sure I do Ben." His voice had that soft, reassuring quality it often developed when he was dealing with people he had to be patient with.

"What do you say about this friend of mine taking a look? He won't know anything we don't want him to."

"I suppose you are right. We don't have much time. Just be sure not to let on to anything. If word gets out my channel of information would dissappear, not to mention I could be court-martialed."

"Sure Marlon. I'll be careful. I'll call you when I find out something."

"If you do Ben, we will have to meet somewhere. Talking too much over the phone is unwise."

"Right. I'll let you know. Thanks Marlon."

"Goodnight."

I hung up the phone and walked over to open a window. A clear night in June, with a few stars shining through the glare of city lights. I tried not to gaze at the stars too long.



Before calling Max I tried to think of what I would tell him if he asked questions. I wasn't too worried. He had done favors for me before, and he wasn't too inquisitive. God, he'd never believe me anyway. I thought of Marlon, and this whole mess, and how I'd been waking up to the alarm every morning since it began wondering if it was indeed a dream, wondering if the phone would ring with Jack, my editor, on the other end chewing my ass out for not working. Whenever it did ring it was usually Cheryl, an energetic little secretary who I met in the county clerk's office a couple years ago. I liked her because we got along-- she was tolerant of my erratic hours and accepted that whatever it was I would be working on had to stay secret.

I lit a cigarette and poured a short glass of Maker's Mark-- the one luxury I had insisted on when Marlon said he would cover my expenses.

I first met Marlon some ten years ago at college. He was on an academic scholarship, while I was washing dishes, flipping burgers, and borrowing money to get through. We had a biology class together-- in fact, we first met while doing research on mutations. To most people he seemed a bit odd, which was true of anyone who came on too intelligent. We never really socialized much, but I remembered he was lively in a droll way when we went out together to some campus bars once in awhile. He dated the same girl all through college, and he spent most of his other time reading and studying. I used to call him the last of the Renaissance men, for he had an unsatiable hunger for knowledge. He read everything he could get his hands on, and could readily quote scripture (Bible, Koran, you name it), Shakespeare, Darwin, Marx, Plato (in Greek if you so wished), the names of all the Oscar-winning films and baseball stats--hell, even in the same damn conversation! Once he single-handedly emptied the student cafeteria by expounding on a connection he saw between Leakey's anthropological discoveries and Cold War politics. Needless to say, he was often too verbose for my taste, and I felt awkward, even inferior around him (who didn't?), but he had an easy going, understanding air that made him bearable.

After college I never heard much about him, except he had gone through officer's training in the Air Force, and that his girlfriend had died shortly after graduating. Then, around last Christmas, I received a letter from him. He had kept up with my activities, as he mentioned some of my stories he saw. He said he was still in the military in a "roundabout way," and said he'd be in town and wanted to see me. I wrote back without getting a reply.

When he showed up at my apartment at five a.m. on a Saturday in January I was more than surprised-- I was shocked. It was Marlon all right, standing against the doorway in a brown overcoat, a tie hanging loose on his neck. He had aged remarkably. His tall, lean frame had grown leaner, his pale cheeks sunken and showing a ragged beard growth. His eyes still possessed that shimmering, piercing inquisitiveness they had years ago, and I was glad to see him.

How did I ever recover from the jolt of what he told me after we settled down with some coffee? "Ben, this may be hard for you to fathom, but you are the only person I could turn to, and there has to be someone." The tone of his voice and the seriousness of his strained face told me he meant business. He had been working in military intelligence---OSI, or Officer's Special Investigations, and later with the CIA. Retiring from active duty (due to the "illness") he retained a source of information on what was called the "Greenleaf File."

The file was started in 1947, when an American destroyer on patrol in the south pacific near Truk Island sighted what appeared to be a meteorite. Upon investigating they recovered a "capsule" approximately thirty meters long and fifteen meters in diameter. Marlon explained that it was referred to as a capsule because it didn't contain a propulsion system, rather it appeared to have been launched or dropped. The craft wasn't opened until delivered to Pearl Harbor, where inside were discovered the bodies of two "beings," who in all apparent structure looked human. "Needless to say," Marlon had said, "the authorities were puzzled, if not alarmed." The whole matter was hushed up, with only top Pentagon and CIA personnel being briefed.

"For all they could tell from examining the bodies they were human," Marlon said. Further testing revealed the lungs to be larger than normal, as well as the brain size and weight. Thus, there arose a conflict of opinion on whether they were of earthly origin.

Since the Truk recovery seventy-four similar capsules had been recovered. Some were larger in size and contained baffling rocket and guidance systems although, Marlon had said with disappointment, his work had been limited to the "Beings," or Aliens as he called them rather than with the landing craft. He made a point of telling me he never had any doubt these bodies weren't from Earth.

"Here is the clincher," Marlon said, his usually calm restraint evaporating as he had paced the room. "Out of the seventy-four craft, sixty-two were found intact. They've been bound all over the planet--from Nebraska to Burma--and we don't know what the Russians

or Chinese have. Of the sixty-two undamaged capsules only fourteen--fourteen--still had beings inside. Do you realize what this means?" His eyes grew fiery, and he was rubbing his hands together frantically; the type of behavior I would never have expected. "The other forty-eight were empty! Already opened! Some of them were large enough to have transported twenty-five aliens, and we don't have any notion what has happened to them!"

He had grabbed ahold of the back of a chair, his long white fingers gripping the upholstery. I mentioned the possibility of somebody else getting to them before U.S. agents, but he was a step ahead of me. "No way. They showed no signs of being forced open, and let me tell you Ben, it took them a week at Pearl to get that first one open. They were opened from the inside!"

All this time I watched Marlon, pouring hot coffee down his throat, trying to push aside the images I had of movies...Invasion of the Body Snatchers and the like. This wasn't Hollywood. This wasn't some hack screenwriter trying out a plot on me. Seeing it as a journalist whose job included being able to tell when someone was on the level or feeding me crap, it looked like this character had lost control. But this was Marlon--the composed, erudite scholar who I'd never known to get this excited about anything. This was different, and the idea it could all possibly be true had me stunned.

While he was no longer actively involved in the case, Marlon still had his source to let him know about any progress or new recoveries. "They are not so concerned with where they are from or their means of travel, but their purpose or mission. From a military standpoint it could very well be a security threat. They seem to have grown more successful in landing them safely--the last twenty craft were empty." Marlon had lit a cigarette after draining his coffee, a habit he used to call "unbearably disgusting."

"There is another reason I am convinced they are space travellers. They have come prepared, Ben. Birth certificates, passports, cash, credit cards, employment resumes, educational degrees...." He had rubbed the stubble on his chin as he looked down at the floor. "All the forgeries have been amazingly accurate. You see, experts couldn't detect it in the printing. Then they used some new lab methods last year, and they found out the chemical composition of the ink and paper was unlike any ever known of. If the aliens are this advanced in forging documents, could we not assume they would have the expertise to possibly duplicate human beings?"



"They arrive here well prepared to slip into the mainstream of daily life, whether it be in California, Sweden or Zaire. Every attempt to trace them has been unsuccessful."

Marlon had finally settled down, as if to give into exhaustion, his arms hanging limp over the sides of the armchair. In a whispered voice he spoke of Smith. "He was some character. I was a member of the questioning team who talked to him before he died. He was in a semi-conscious state when they finally got him out of the craft. The other six aliens inside were dead." Marlon had begun to gaze out the window at the downtown skyline, and a troubled look crossed his face. "He never said much revealing. It was almost, well...as if he was a rather typical American businessman who had been conked on the head and been out for awhile, with his memory impaired. Most of his conversation contained Earth references. I asked him why he was in Panama, and he said he didn't know, but he knew he was supposed to be somewhere else. He mumbled about a job interview in New York, and a man named Greenleaf he had to call. We never could trace this Greenleaf down, and an enormous amount of time and money went into the effort."

"The file name?"

"Correct. It is changed every so often for security purposes."

Marlon talked more about Smith that morning in a wistful manner--the fish that got away sort of thing. He found it particularly interesting that Smith had insisted on pulling himself up on his feet, smoothing his hair back and smiling in a "queer fashion" while having his photograph taken, which Marlon felt to be "so typical of human vanity."

The story which unfolded before me that day--aliens with passports, spacecraft, Smith, Greenleaf, the whole damn thing--I still found myself feeling as if we were both on the edge of madness now, and I hadn't gotten a decent night's sleep since then.

When Max called back a few days after I had put him to work analyzing the photographs, I was over-anxious for a revelation. At first it seemed nothing turned up.

"The light reflection in the eyes--well, it's pretty damn weird looking, Ben, and some other people I asked about it said they had never noticed such a color, but it probably is due more to the lighting conditions and the flash used--that sort of thing--rather than anything about the people in the pictures."

I caught my breath. "Did you show them to anyone, Max?"

"No, man, I just described the effect. Don't worry about it. I know with you there's no prying until the



payoff, right?"

"Yeah, thanks Max." It looked like a dead-end after all.

"I was wondering about the other thing though."

"What's that?"

"You know, that glow you were talking about?"

"Yeah?"

"Well, it's possible I guess, it may be the same as the eyes, the kind of film used maybe. They reminded me of something else."

"What?"

"Have you ever read anything about Kirlian photography?"

It sounded familiar. I couldn't really place it.

"This Russian, Kirlian, has been working on this process for years where he can photograph what they say is the aura around living things--people, plants. An aura is supposedly the energy or electrical force we all have, and it's supposed to radiate out from the body. He's even developed this sort of viewer you can use to see this aura, and now he's working on motion pictures of them, and three-dimensional pictures. I saw this film clip once of a finger, using the Kirlian technique. It looked like flames were coming off it."

"Like the aurora around planets or stars? Yeah, I think I have read something about it. They did experiments on mummies to detect their 'life force' or whatever."

"You got it. That's what struck me funny about these shots. I looked up some stuff on Kirlian's technique and, to make it simple, if it's that kind of light, an aura, it wouldn't show up like that usually in regular photos."

"Really?" I felt a rebound from my initial disappointment.

"Yeah. See, in Kirlian photography you have to set up a special studio. They use a high-frequency oscillator that makes an electrical field with waves moving as fast as 200,000 cycles per second. Then they have to clamp a living thing--a leaf or a finger, whatever--to special photographic paper and insert it in the field to catch what they call the 'bio-luminescent' pattern."

"Damn. Sounds complicated."

"It is. So it's unlikely anyone would be able to reproduce an aura using standard equipment. Listen, Ben, I know I'm not supposed to know anything about what you're working on, but if someone is trying to pass this off as some kind of Kirlian pictures, then they're frauds."

At once I was caught up with the possible implications of this angle. Maybe there was something about

the aliens' "energy field" that would show up in regular film prints. I was also amused at Max's curiosity.

"No, Max, I don't think anything like a forgery is involved, but it could be. Your findings will help a lot anyway."

"Glad to be of help. I'll drop the shots off to you later, and if you need anything else just call."

"Sure. Thanks a million, buddy."

"And Ben?"

"Yeah?"

"When you get it all figured out and the story's ready, fill me in, would you?"

I tried to imagine me telling the burly, pragmatic photo wizard the story of humanoid visitors from another world. And while the thought was comical, I also wondered if there ever would be such a story rolling off my typewriter.

"Sure, Max."

For a week after talking to Max I checked into my new lead. Hours at the library turned up mountains of material on Kirlian photography, auras (which the Hindu scriptures called prana), and on photographic techniques in general. I didn't realize how deep this could get. Reich's orgone energy theories, matter exchanges in open systems, the effect of magnetic fields on biological organisms--it all became overwhelming. In one book I found this passage: "These discharges, which appear in the form of a bluish flame, were apparently first noticed in biblical times. Miraculous fires, such as the burning bush Moses saw on Mt. Sinai, and the flames which allegedly appeared upon the twelve apostles could, in reality, have been occurrences of this phenomenon. It is, very possibly, this mysterious fire which Renaissance artists attempted to depict when they painted nimbi or aureolae encircling the heads of divine religious figures."

Whew! I really needed Marlon on this, but I hadn't been able to reach him. There was something in those photos. If the aliens had a different neurological makeup it could definitely affect the brain wave and electro-neuron charges they produce, which could explain why their auras would show up in regular photos.

I began to take a close look at any photographs I came across--in newspapers, magazines, books--even in stores and windows. All the while I had that familiar gnawing feeling of hesitancy when trying to make the pieces of a puzzle fit. I knew that one of the major pitfalls of any reporter, or detective for that matter, was trying to make scattered parts fit into a preconceived whole. Once, while working on a murder story, I had tried to make the few available clues fit a hunch

I had from the beginning. The eventual mistake almost cost me a job. Oh, what the hell. There was no way every alien would turn up distinctly in photographs I could get ahold of at random, but if there was just one I could identify, and if Marlon and I could locate the alien, well....

Cheryl called me up on Friday and really let me have it. I had been virtually ignoring her for weeks, and besides, she said, you need a break from whatever in the hell it was I found more attractive than her. I had to agree with her.

She was having a birthday party for her sister tomorrow night, and I absolutely had to come, and "please bring Marlon along too." The idea sounded good. Marlon needed to get away from the volumes of notes and data he was organizing for me. I had finally reached him and we didn't talk much on the phone. I was eager to discuss the photos with him, and I thought we could get a chance in private at Cheryl's.

He grudgingly gave in to the idea, objecting at first that his health had taken a turn for the worst and that he'd probably be a "bloody pedantic bore," but after a while at Cheryl's modestly furnished, though homey, flat he actually seemed to be having a good time. He joined in on a couple of anecdotes about our college life, made an eloquent yet devastatingly funny toast to Cheryl, her sister Susan and myself, and generally seemed to enjoy looking on the relaxed merriment of a dozen or so people having a drunken good time. We found little time to talk over my discoveries, for he spent most of it detailing what he was turning over to me: all his files, transcripts, memoranda--everything he had on "Greenleaf." He told me he would have the stuff delivered after he was finished, writing explanatory notes and so on. He would be leaving town for a week or so to fill in his information source with the OSI, who had already "been informed about you." I felt a twinge of sadness, for this was Marlon's way of signalling me he didn't have much time left.

Before we rejoined the party I told him a little about the photos, and he seemed to be very interested. He was aware of Kirlian's experiments and bio-energy fields--"you really might have something, Ben. We'll work on it when I get back."

He mentioned one other aspect he had been studying. "I don't think the aliens are aware of being aliens, if you understand what I mean. I believe they've been expertly programmed or conditioned to the extent they have no awareness of being anything but children of Earth. There's the possibility, though, that they may not be entirely on their own. Some recent investigations



on some unusual short wave radiation indicates it is being beamed from an artificial source, and it does not seem to be the Russians or anyone else involved."

"You mean they could be receiving messages?"

"Exactly. The aliens may not be aware of it, but it's quite possible their thoughts, behaviors, actions are being subconsciously manipulated by, well, whoever sent them here."

When we went back to the party I quickly downed a straight bourbon to combat the dizziness this idea had thrown me into.

There was much to be done before I could ever think about breaking the story--hiring legal protection, getting the support of Jack and the paper behind me. I could run into more flack from the government than Daniel Ellsberg ever came close to with the Pentagon Papers. Marlon agreed that the military should be funneled the info about the photos before breaking the story, and to wait and see if anything happened. If they managed to locate any live aliens, then that would be the time to let the whole thing out of the bag.

When we had left Cheryl's that night, I promised her we would take a couple of days off together alone--some place up in the mountains where we could sleep and play and make love endlessly. I didn't tell her that I planned to let her in on the story then--I was going to need a close ally with Marlon gone. I also didn't tell her that this could be the last time for quite awhile we would be free from care or worry about what loomed before us.

By the next Thursday I had gathered all of Marlon's material. Even though I was tempted to jump in and begin reading it all, I went ahead and locked it up in a heavy-duty metal filing cabinet in my office. Jack made some caustic remarks, but he seemed impressed by the sheer amount of material. Items of particular value, such as the photographs, I dropped off in a safety deposit box. I was having fears of search warrants and subpoenas being issued once the word got out.

When I arrived at Cheryl's to pick her up I tried to calm myself and get my mind off the story. I was eager to continue with the investigation, yet apprehensive over what the CIA and the military might do with the photo angle. In one sense I was still extremely distrustful and critical of their possible reaction. If they had gone to so much trouble to hush it up this long there was no telling what measures they would resort to in keeping it covered. I was vaguely fearful. Tangling with the U.S. Government over highly classified information such as this--my God, was I up to it? The panic



it could cause. Every single person on Earth being suspicious of everyone else, not knowing if their best friend, husband, wife, children, hell--even himself--could be "one of them."

I tried to clear my head. Whenever I got too serious about something I had a habit of looking at the humorous aspects, and as I pulled into Cheryl's driveway I grinned thinking of a hilarious scene--millions of people rushing out and taking snapshots of each other. Photo developers would be deluged! Kodak stock would skyrocket!

Cheryl looked great when she answered the door, simply resplendent in blue jeans and a T-shirt, and what I kiddingly referred to as her "sexy hiking boots."

"Hey, Ben, this is great. We're finally getting away. I can't believe it--just you and me."

I began to carry her gear down to the car while she finished packing groceries in a box. When I came back up she grabbed me and threw her arms around my neck.

"I'm so glad to get out of here. It was beginning to feel like a siege." She looked around the room to make sure she wasn't forgetting anything.

"Oh, I almost forgot." She went over to the kitchen counter and picked up an envelope. "I just got these back today." She pulled out a stack of color snapshots. "There's a great one of you with birthday cake all over your face."

"From the party?" I remembered Susan taking shots of everyone cutting up after the countless toasts to her success at making it through another year.

I leafed through the first ones, laughing at the expression on Cheryl's face in one as she downed a glass of champagne.

Then I stopped.

"Everyone had a good time, didn't they," Cheryl said. "Look, even Marlon had a laugh."

She was right. Marlon was laughing in the picture. A slightly crooked, almost painful, eerie smile. I looked closer, and suddenly I felt sick in the pit of my stomach. I threw the pictures on the kitchen table, scattering them apart.

"Ben, what's the matter?"

Here was another one, and another. Three photos of Marlon at the party. Close together the similarity was unmistakable. My legs grew heavy, and it seemed the floor was moving out from underneath me.

In all three photos the other people in the frames had that common red reflection in their pupils from the flashbulb. With the dark background their outlines were sharp and distinct.

And there was Marlon, with an icy aqua-blue gleam in his eyes, smiling his strange, wistful smile, while a halo of golden light rays radiated from his head, like so many effulgent flames dancing off the surface of the sun.

Even after a few months of rest and relative inactivity I was still fighting a complete nervous collapse. I still didn't know the answers to so many questions. The story was still under wraps, even though I knew the CIA had tracked down four aliens by back-checking on old suspects and analyzing their photographs.

I may never know about Marlon--whether he consciously knew or not. Perhaps he had been directed to reveal the secrets. It was likely. One fact that had emerged was that the aliens had great difficulty adapting and surviving to the Earth's climate.

Marlon was dead, and I never told him what I knew. I started a file of my own in his memory, named after him, of photographs I knew were important.

I had some real prizes: the young congressman from Utah, the Arabian oil magnate, the Chinese ambassador to the United Nations....

# One Last Favor

Sylvia Wilson

He clutched the soaked covers with his fist,  
his knuckles white.  
He clutched them like he'd clutched his money  
and the clothes of all the women he had known--  
Except for her--and the one he should have loved.  
Each fresh surge of pain arched his back  
and stretched him to his full six-three.  
He stretched as he had stretched so often,  
proud of who he was and what he had--  
Except for a wife and four kids  
who were his burden.  
He always hoped that no one knew.  
He'd say he made a living and gave us shelter.  
And he was right--a living and a house  
but not a life and a home.  
His face was blue for lack of air  
and he gasped and choaked.  
Only groans and incoherent sounds  
escaped his lips.  
But he'd always had the strength to scream  
his orders,  
And expected us to fall in line  
like soldiers.  
His glassy eyes riveted on me as if he asked for help--  
help from me, his youngest--  
Who had never known a helping hand  
from him.



Al Westerman





Al Westerman

# Grandpa's Room

Cathy Figg

My Grandpa's radio  
always played news.  
Big and black--  
it sat on the nightstand  
beside his bed.  
I wasn't allowed to touch it,  
but every time he turned it on--  
nothing but news.

My Grandpa's chair  
had a big grease stain  
behind his head.  
It always smelled like Brylcreme,  
but my head was too short  
to reach it.  
I'd sit up on top,  
my legs dangling on his shoulders  
while he read the paper  
or listened to the news.

Grandpa's bed was  
high as the window,  
always open on summer nights  
with a dry, cool breeze  
flowing through the room;  
flower smells from the backyard  
mingled with cigarette smoke from Grandpa.  
In the day  
I'd lie on the bed  
and throw bread to the birds  
out the open window.

And Grandpa's TV  
always went off at 10:30,  
after the news.  
At 5:00 and 6:00  
he watched the news too.  
On Sunday night, though,  
I'd put newspapers on the floor  
and watch Wonderful World of Disney  
and eat Campbell's soup.  
Grandpa had the best room in the house.

But now,  
things are different.  
The bed's still high  
but the window never opens  
because the air-conditioner's always on.  
The grease on the chair  
is faded and dirty  
and the radio plays music  
and the TV stays on.  
It used to smell like  
after shave and cigarettes--  
just like Grandpa,  
but now it just smells old.

## Thirty-Ninth Floor

Sylvia Wilson

A four-inch stage for a brief performance.  
Not much to hold on to--but then  
I'm not here to

hold on.

A strong Manhattan wind.  
Microscopic humanity flitting around  
like amoebas.

Why are they pointing?  
Thirty-nine winters--that's enough.  
No springs.

Just winters.

An asphalt trampoline.  
Out of the way, you spectators.  
"Going down?"



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