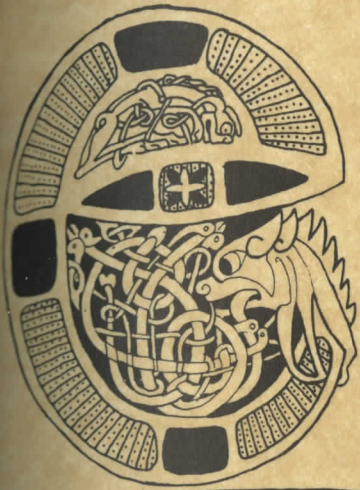


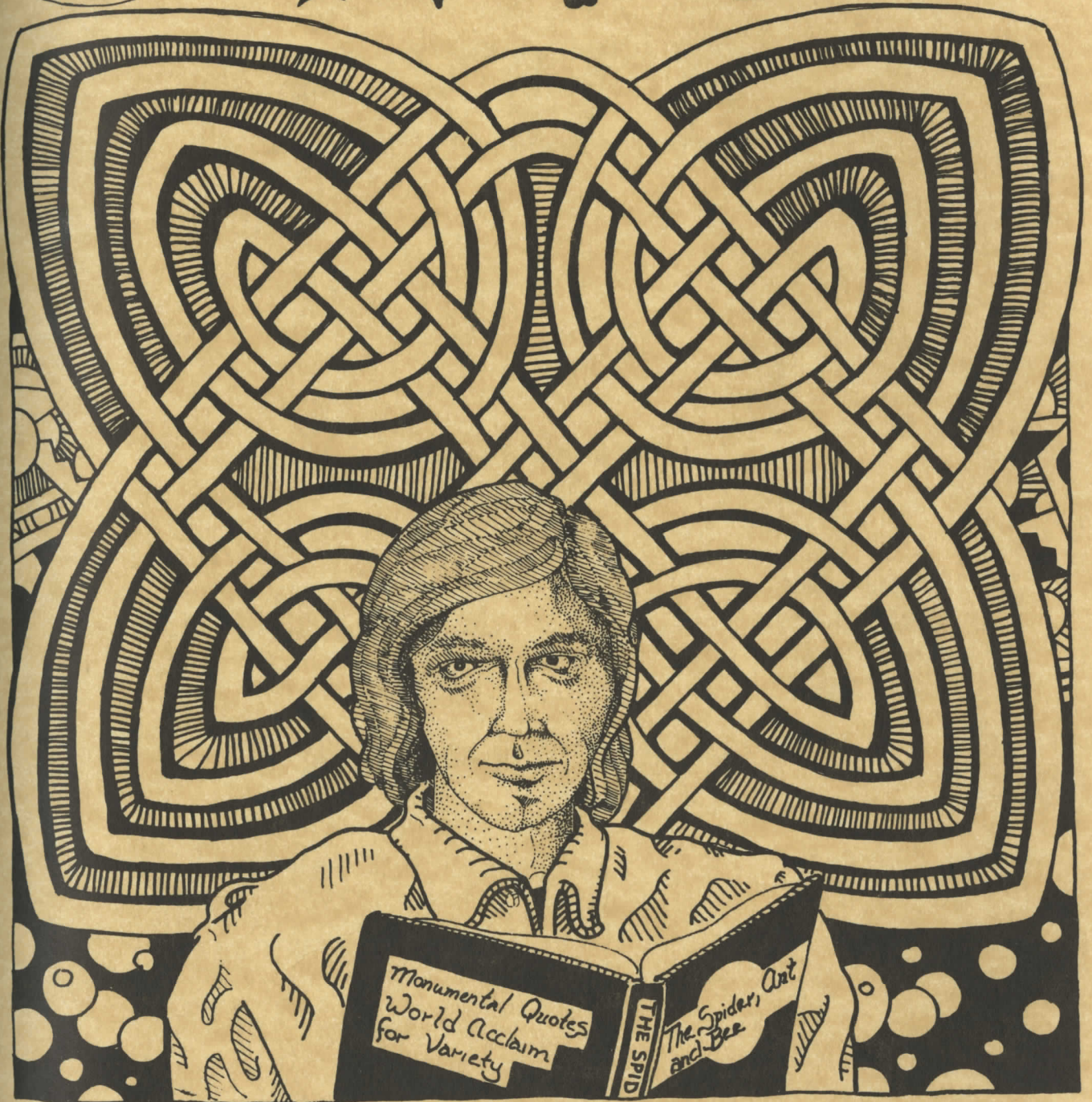
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GRANVILLE, OHIO



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Group Poems From Sake Circle

In this stark season The naked willow's woven web —
IS FROZEN ALSO, **AND BROKEN BY THE WIND.**
 "So what?", you ask. "So what.", I answer.
BUT THAT "WHAT" IS ESSENTIAL TO THE PEACEFUL NATURE STATE
 What do you do for the weeping willow? To dry its tears
 destroys its essence.
WEEP WITH THE WILLOW!
 Chop down the sullen willow! Let the white pine raise
 its noble head.
DON'T CHOP DOWN THE WILLOW FOR AFTER THE CRUEL WINTER
HAS TAKEN ITS TOLL THE WILLOW SHOWS ITS ENDURANCE
 And takes on the cruel summer.
MAKE A WILLOW WHISTLE AND PIPE TWO COOL NOTES
INTO THE HEAT HAZE.

The clouds swiftly swept the sky.
AND WITH THE CLOUDS WENT ALL MY WORRIES.
 Approaching my Cheops, Fujiyama, my vulcanized rubber soles crush
 Juniper leaves shamelessly.
JUNIPER BERRIES CANNOT TALK BACK!
 Without a whimper they leave their stain,
RED, DEEP SCARLET CRIMSON LIKE THE EARTH YOUR HOME,
 In that stain is told the true message of life:
ALL THIS FOR JUST THIS!
 Until a mountain, pregnant with snow, falls on me,
€ WITH THE AVALANCH WENT ALL MY WORRIES.

Monologue. Polylogue. Mollylogue.

(or: A musing of a young writer
as a poor man. Hee hee hee.)

Brrring. Brrring. Brrring. Too early but. Things a day a do. See Bob but oh . . . no twelve lunch. Nothing to do about nothing. Brush top brush twoth too.

Out. What would I say. Yes oh? For a living? Well I'm an aimless wanderer. Yes about town, up down allaround. Springtime. Buds mud and skimpy duds. Look! Oh beauty wraparound skirt. Winds blow, skirts flow, up up whoa! Catch a glimpse. Alisa, if you only knew. I know it well — I've got a boyfriend at home, blah blah woof woof. But you're lonely. I could change that but. No. Ah well. It wouldn't be right . . . Right left wrong right rite write. Words. If she only knew.

Old man on that bench daily. Not even any ducks to feed. Bet he's had many a duck feeding day in his day though. Eyes. Old Ancient. You can't look like that if you try, comes with time. Son, I can remember wan't no goddam cars, jus horsenbuggies. No damn television neither, wanteda know somethin hadda talk to folks or read, not jus hit the damn switch. No smell like petroleumfarts. Hell no! I betcha never smelled the world, have ye? Ever smelled the earth? Fresh plowed earth? Smelled a cow, not the plastic milk jugs and indy viggily rapt slices of cheese. No boy it aint the same namore. Was a time wasn't no bench here, just a rock. And folks was folks too. Say howdy to ya, stead athinkin yus gonna murder 'em or somethin. Women wuz women too. All ya got now's a buncha damn plastic makeup. Can't see their faces. Bet they go to sleep at night'n wake up with their faces stuck to the pillers lookin back at 'em! Hee hee! Why in my day folks was jus folks.

Kids though, look at that little girl. Onesies, twosies, threesies look at all the treesies. I wanna be a actress when I grows up. Movies and T.V. And I can stay up late whenever I want. I donwannaidonwannaidonwanna goto bed O.K. you don't have to. Evereverever. And I can get dirty and eat what I want. I want two choklit milkshakes and a snickers bar — all at once O.K. And I wanna car. A big red one. And I won't let any boooyos get their cooties all over it. And I wanna big white house and a husband, and a dog, and a kitty, and two birds and a goldfish. Foursies, fivesies.

Need smokes. Deck a 'boros. Though some things in life transcend, some inspire, some dopress, 'boros are always there, always the same. Gasoline, jesus, buckenahalf a gallon! Then they have the guts to sell you hi-octane gas. Here folks, our regular gas will make your car hesitate and ping. BUT for a few cents more, we'll sell you our "extra". It's the same gas we used to sell you for fifty-seven cents. But a Marlboro is a Marlboro is a Marlboro. Sure the price goes up, but the quality doesn't go down, at least.

The Stuff Store. What a place. Lots of stuff. Foodstuffs to stuff yourself with until you're stuffed. Then you try to stuff into your clothes and stuff. Then you go inside and since you've got all that stuff on, everything feels stuffy. Bad stuff, man. Weird stuff. Good stuff.

X-rated theatre. All through elementary school, middle school, and high school, the most infuriating thing is the pursuit of x. There it is. Wonder what x³ is like. Maybe x is love, all elusive, uppressive. The best to have the worst to lose. Y is a hot fudge sundae. With nuts.

An alley filled with boxes. Worked in a box factory once. Yes sir, I drive a forklift in a box factory, but I hope to move up to metal containers someday. But metal containers come in boxes! Everything comes in boxes. See that car over there? All the parts? Came in boxes. Even boxes come in boxes. Boxes of boxes.

Why are there holes in swiss cheese? Who puts 'em there?

Stationery store. (E for Eaton's corrasable bond). Cards. San Francisco. Uncle Fred. He's a gambler down inside. He played blackjack with me that time I passed through. What a family. Memumndad raised me liberally. Her sister, auntie, Fred's wife, totally opposite. They adopted John and Peter and raised 'em strict as hell. Same age as me. I show up in San Francisco, P & J go to bed at nine. I'm up 'til twelve thirty dealin cards with Fred. That was the first time I realized what playin cards was. We weren't playin for cookies anymore we were playin for matchsticks, ya know? The real stuff.

San Francisco. If Shakespeare had been a Californian, Romeo and Juliet would have committed common law suicide after a T.M. meeting by O.D.ing on secanol and sangria. Love them cable cars though.

Look at that woman! My God. What I could . . . guess I shouldn't think like that. Ah bullshit, everyone does; either that or they're a better person than I. Nah they're just lyin. But . . . I don't . . . wow I. I can never just fantasize sexually about a woman. I always start thinkin about us together, handinhanding it down the road. Up the altar. I wonder. Excuse me miss, I was just fantasizing about what you and I would look like as a middle aged couple. Old couple. She'd call a cop!

Oh well. Woof woof ahrrahruff. Hey dog. I'll bet you're an enlightened being. Just hangin out. Keeping an eye on the world goin by your window, huh? How is the dog's life? Whatta ya think about? You must think we're all crazy (no visible response). Tell ya what, we'll switch. I'll hang out bein a dog and you be me. How's that? You're not talkin are ya? I know you can. You just don't wanna be on the Johnny Carson show answerin alot of dumb questions. You've got the best kept seret in the world. Even the C.I.A. doesn't know you can talk. Hey, you think if I got some long ears and a collar and trucked around, all the people might pat me behind the ears? No you're probably right. You got a monopoly, kid. Wellp, see ya later.

Bet he knows the english word that rhymes with orange. I shoulda asked him the answer to that riddle: Say you have three sacks of gold coins. Two of the sacks contain real gold. One is fake. The fake coins weigh one point one ounce each. The real ones weigh an ounce each. It is impossible to tell by feel which weigh more. You have one of those scales into which you insert a penny and it gives you a card, telling you the weight. You only have one penny. How do you decide which sack contains the fake coins?

Popcorn and candy. Do you make popcorn with butter? No, I make it with Olive Oil. Sly dog, that's Popeye's girl. Hee hee! To do is to be, to be is to do, to dobedoobeadoo!

Think I'll buy a knick knack shelf for my odds and ends. Twelve odds and ends on the knick knack shelf; eleven fall off. Whatta ya got, an odd or an end? a knick or a knack? a kit or a kaboodle?

New apartments. Snapemtogether. Fall apart in two years. Probablyhave all the same pictures above the fireplace. Cheap moaningleaser repros. Eight forty three a.m. husband kiss wifekids bye bye. Pick one of the two sedanwagons and vroomoff to work at the inn sure aunts cumpnee. Marty and Tina for our lunch. Back behind the desk 'til five then back home for frozen din-din with the famby. Two hours T.V. To bed for a good ole american manontopgetitoverwithquick then nightly night 'til tomorrow. Not me.

Must be havin fun there on the dock. Fishin's fun I like to fish, doo dah doo dah, I think fish is just delish oh dee doo dah day. Love to fish all night . . .

Seagulls. Wish I could fly. Soaring high, swooping low, gobblefishes Flappity flappity flap whoooooosh! Wind on the feather-wings sleek and silky. They can walk too. Fish can swim. People can walk. But birds can fly AND walk. What a life. Suladed. Nothing worse than to be a bird in a cage.

Look! Another beauty. My lucky. Excuse me miss, I think you'd look great in a bikiniky. Would you mind taking off your clothes? Aw c'mon. How bout your shirt then. Oh please. Well . . .

These are supposed to be liberal times. But even now you can't. Or even. Not without getting. Or. Next thing you know you're. And having. Getting. Getting a. Drinking too. Lonely. My grandmother probably had less hangups. But. What can one do.

Oh shit. Well. Think I'll cop a squat. Ah better. Wandering can be tiring you know. Clouds. Looks like . . . Boyoboyo, it's been too long. Must do something about this suchyouation. They do though, no denyin that.

Remember the first time. Scared? Oh yeah. Thirtmeen. Oldher. Have you ever? Before? Uh, sure lotsa. No. Relax. Let me!!?!?! Laid back looking at the sky. All of the sudden. Surrounded. Halleluja! Halleluja! Hahlay loo yaa! Long blonde tum-mytickling. Reach up never felt anything softer, smoother. Irontense. Sounds uncontrollable. Up down all around. Sweatsweat. That sweet smell of success. Rapture! Finally. Aaaaah ex. I found it! XXXXXX. Then Marlboro. The one I'd wanted for years.

Do you smoke after sex? Don't know, never looked. Hee hee hee!

Thanks for the mamemories.

Feel so sorry for Beautiful women. Like Lori. She's SO foxy, smart and together. Every guy I meetsays — Hey! Who's that? what's she do? who's she go out with and on and on. Pisses me off! She probably has to be defenseful all the time. Lecherous guys sniffing around like poodles, tryin to get behind her levizipper. Just wanna hump and split. No wonder women are edgy around us male types. But we're not all like that. All I wanna do is fall in love. But how do you bridge that void? Like when. O.K. You got a close friend, you'd like to get closer, and you think maybe she would too. But you're happy just to spend any time with her at all. You don't want to blow what you've already got together. 'Cause you know if you bring it up, and she's not into it, then she thinks you're just another tailchaser. Something will have changed. So what you had once is gone. Oh hell, everyone's so uptight. Whatta ya do? I guess if I knew that I wouldn't be livin on memories. Oh well.

Three sacks. One penny. One card. Hmmm.

Nice stream. Moving fast! Must be lots of snow in the mountains. Wild, wet, winding, Whoooooosh! wending sshrruhoosh! Can't tame that thing. Dive in and go with it, flow with it. Our around down through the rocks, logs and frogs, fish and leaves. Can't stop 'til the end, maybe it won't. O.K. go with it.

Trees, hundred years old. STanding tall. Leaves come, leaves leave. Branches strong yet supple. Tough yet tender. Dancing through the moonlight, sunlight, rain, sleet, snow; bending rarely breaking; willing to shelter. Wonder if they get bored standing there all that time. Never get to travel. No conventions (International Oak Association). The Colorado Home for Wayward Saplings call toll free. If you're down, out, ready to snap, tired of life — don't take the plunge. Reach out to us — Magnolia Anonymous — we can help (a branch of the National Association to Prevent Cruelty to Trees).

Rub my face in somebody's new mowed lawn. Weird tradition that. Mow the lawn with the ridearound, catch all them clip-pins in the catcher, take 'em to the dump. Stop at the hardware store on the way home and buy some Scott's Quickgro. go home and spread it on the lawn. Same thing in the fall except its leaves then. Guess it keeps the kids off the street — justify allowance.

Rainbow in a sprinkler. Suburban rainbow. Have both ends in the front yard. No pots 'o gold in the suburbs though. Make a tornado worth it, if you got over the rainbow. Auntie Em . . . Ran once, yelling, going blinzak in very intoxicated craze, through a sprinkler at night — fell flat on me face. Flat face.

Bubbles. Millions of little bubbles dancing through the air. Zipzooming, colliding, stickingtogether — tune inn one! cascading down into the white frothm. Good head, inches. Nothing can quench like ice cold beer. Bier. Schmeckt. Schmeckt gut. Schmeckt immer gut. Trinken; trunk, ist getrunken. Schlecht!

Does anybody really know what time it is? Who decides? Spring ahead fall back. Couldn't just say: okay everybody, come in-to work an hour earlier and you can go home an hour earlier. People wouldn't understand. But twice a year, because God knows who decided, we move time around. People so uptight about time. Who cares? Abritary. Obituary. Mortuary. What timed jagit home? Oh, bout dinnertime, Where were ya? Some party. How many people were there? Just enough. Not enough. Too many.

Who's counting?

Wonder what'd be like to be a monk. Most religions have 'em. Hang around all day and become spy rachelly enblighted. Sit under a tree by a stream in a brown robe with a brown bood, rap with the animals, dogs and Gods. Be alright. Vows of chastity though. Somehow I don't think that'd work out.

For you to discover the meaning of the riddle please find the meaning of x.

d r a w o
n e
co i n
f r o m
t h e f i
r s t a
c s k
t w o f
r o m
se
co n
d a n d
t r e s f
r o m
l a s
t. p
ut a l l
o n t h e s
c a l e i
f t h e i s f a k
e the
c a r d
w i l d
r e a d s i x
i n t o n e o
u n
c e s e t
c.

Oh wow, its seven twenty five! Now I'm a gonna be late. Ah who cares.

Chris Brougham

One Marriage

After sex

he pinched her cheek
and slept with breakfast plans,
and his naked dreams
took
her
breath
so she lay wasting
with him
and his unborn children
between her legs,
When her tears were noticed
he fed her a larger station wagon
but she starved
with the silver fender poised gracefully
down her throat.

Becky Hinshaw

In a Room

She relaxed back into the bedspread and the matching pillows welled up around her. He lay on his back on the warm floor listening to the sounds one flight below. Distant, apart, and not just because the room separated them. Her long and stiffly thick blond hair did pushups on the patterned pillow, red with little green dragons spitting out gold flames through white teeth. The bright bed lamp burnt about her, etching a halo over her hair and stabbing her face with sharply highlighted yellows, blond hair accented by the rich colour of the bulb.

The green of the carpet resembled the dragons, only it was somewhat darker, like an olive, only the lint spotted the colour, making it seem lighter until examined closely. But the visitor was on his back, his head cradled in his arms. Studying a tarot card on the wall. A large angel, praying. The eyes were confused. Big and wide, but not even: the left eye was too high, and slightly too far to the right, away from the nose. "High 'n' inside!" The face was beautiful and the wings of the angel perched around it in an arc as though to ward off the frame's edge, and the rest of the wall.

He asked: "Why are the eyes on the picture fucked up? Did the artist screw up or something? Or do tarot cards really look like that?"

The golden head lifted out of the bulk that had formed a wall over the lower half of its profile. The brow lost the spotlight first, diving into shadow as the whole face rose up. Strangely, she kept her head parallel to the bed, as though she were still resting against the bed's surface, until she had lifted her neck and shoulders high enough, when she straightened up her neck, visibly contracting her neck muscles, as though her head contained a great weight. For a long moment she stared at the colours and features of the picture, not looking at the whole, but rather at the individual components.

"My mother painted that picture, you know."
He didn't try saying anything — hadn't he made an ass of himself enough already. He just watched her study the overblown card.

After a moment, she added that "Actually people don't have symmetrical features. There is nothing on our bodies that is perfectly symmetrical. Have you ever noticed that?"

"Not really. I never thought about it. I just assumed we were at least somewhat symmetrical . . ."
She explained: "No not really. Actually," (and she drew out the word so slowly, as though it were the beginning of a point that needed to be analyzed carefully as it was expounded) "there's really little evenness to our bodies at all. You know, you should really try taking a photograph of someone's face someday and cut it in half and compare it to the negative of the other side. You might not even see the resemblance."

He looked at the ceiling for awhile. Jesus, had he fucked up. Damn. Her mother. "Yeah, I'll do that someday," he lamely answered. She laughed, the deep, cold laugh she possesses. More an amusing cackle than a laugh, one which might fit a witch with a sense of humour, if such a thing exists.

"My, but you are easy to distress. Poor dear."
He studied ever more carefully a crack in the ceiling. His groin itched slightly.

She hopped off the now-disarrayed bed: a pillow popped into the air and landed behind her heel. Carelessly she placed the needle on the record. Static and Debussy shot out of the tiny speakers until she lifted the tonearm again to create silence. This time she cued the record more carefully, and only noise resulted. After a moment, the orchestra faded into the room.

She laughed. "You look so depressed. Don't you ever have a good time?" A spin of the heel and she corkscrewed herself into a sitting position on top of the bed. "Come on now, I don't know if you'll ever get by if you keep on stuffing everything up inside of you."

He rolled off his back and into a slight fetal position facing her feet. His watch was digging into his wrist and it hurt. He pulled the winder button out of the skin at the base of his hand and moved the watch farther down his arm. A difficult act, for he had his arms extended in front of him as he lay on his side. So it was not surprising that he had completely tangled himself when the intercom exploded into the room.

"—?"
"Yes, I'm here."
"You have a call on second outside."
She acknowledged the call, and laughed at him as he unraveled his body. Still amused, she walked the length of the room, humming along with the record. When she stepped over him, he didn't even bother trying to look up her skirt, and she laughed again.

"I'll be back in a minute."
The door closed and he thought. He got off the floor, turned off the light, and laid down again on her hard carpet. The light at her bed lit up the various dragons frying each other on the red background.

Robert F. Youngblood

The Escape

The sun filtered through the trees like gold glitter, peeking in between the leaves. She couldn't see how blue the sky was when she was squinting into the light. It looked more like a pale, yellowish green. She blinked again. It was bright and warm against her small body. Her hands, clasped behind her knees, suddenly flung back and she flopped into the rustling grass. It tickled her smooth face, but she didn't mind - she was outside, away from her mother. If only she could see her now. She'd be angry. She blurted out a weak giggle and scratched her nose. Staring into the blueness above her, she tried to see the end of the sky, but couldn't. How far does it really go? she wondered. Rolling onto her side she toyed with a long green leaf. It felt soft on one side with the tiny hairs. A small, red bug with two black spots slid up the side of the stem. She pulled the leaf closer to her puzzled face and inspected it. Perhaps it had thought there was something wonderful at the top of this particular leaf. She wanted to touch it, but as her thick finger neared the thing, it pulled out two perfect little wings and shot by her face. She flung herself onto her back again, laughing into the wind. She felt very enclosed in the grass and heard nothing but the scratchy sounds of the leaves next to her ears and the faint calls of the birds high above her. Thy sky was so enormous. Where does it begin? Where does it end? Her face tightened as she pondered this. In the back of her mind she could barely hear her name being called, "Maria...Maria...MAREEEEEEEA!" She lifted her head above the green bed and saw a minute figure plowing through the meadow. She slowly raised herself up on her elbows, hoping she would not be seen. As she saw her mother start to walk back towards a cluster of trees, she stood - her knees weak, and her small frame lost in the sea of green. She wanted to sink back into her nest again. The space where she had rested was imprinted by her figure. The grass was pressed against the ground but it slowly began to rise with jerking movements. She began to gallop through the twined grass, her arms flailing through the breeze. Her long hair flew behind her and her ears were filled with the loud humming of the wind. Something felt different in her legs though - as if they were not moving at all. She quickly looked down and noticed that she was not on the ground but moving swiftly above it! The trees were gradually dropping beneath her. She knew she'd laughed loudly, but could barely hear her own voice since the wind was rushing around her so rapidly. The sky was a part of her and she moved through the emptiness like silk along velvet. Her arms sailed at the sides of her tilted body, the wind lapping every inch of her with sleek softness. The long dark hair trailed behind and she rose higher and higher. As she soared into the blueness and the yellow light, she glanced below, finding the exact spot she was buried in and the vast green surrounding that one space. The huge trees that had gathered the sun before, were now mounds of rustling bushes. Her own house, her flower garden, were mere patches against the green. She saw the red truck her father owned, pulling into the dark line of the driveway. Two tiny, black dots emerged from the red form and made their way towards the house. She felt so free from all of her brothers, and her mother would probably still be searching for her in the meadow. Her face was now wet with the watering of her squinting eyes. The wind was so cool, so dense. Her legs did not feel as if they were a part of her since they were just two solid forms, following her gliding body. The air swelled around her and she felt alone amidst all of the space. She eased her shoulders towards the greenness and descended, carefully making her way towards the patches where her family would be. Her mouth was dry from the wind, but she was smiling anyway. Her fingers were bigger than any of the trees, but were gradually becoming smaller and smaller. She was abandoning the blueness and grandeur of the sky, and dove towards the firmness of reality.

Anne Gilson

When he approaches
to touch your face
your skin pulls out to meet
that fingertip trailing
wet promises
of hard night rocking
and thigh flooding,
and in that rushing moment
when his fingers melt your cheek
you can only smile
and smile
and smile.

Becky Hinshaw

A Cruel Hand

Around noon on a mid-August day, Evelyn Perkins sat on the front porch of her house in Brooklin, Maine, drinking strong coffee and leafing nervously through a back issue of *Life Magazine*. Ms. Perkins was a robust woman in her late forties, whose strong body was indicative of a strong spirit as well. She had borne stoically the death of her husband, who was killed in the Second World War, and had managed to endure the bitterness of divorce with her second and last husband. At a time when she had needed companionship most, her daughter had married and gone off to California. She hadn't been back to visit since, although she never failed to phone her mother on birthdays and at Christmas.

Evelyn Perkins had lived alone in the great, white house for years. It bore many coats of paint which often peeled due to the salt air. Inside, a venerable smell hung in the air. The house was so large for her needs, that she was apprehensive about entering certain rooms that weren't frequently used since that action only served to heighten her feeling of loneliness.

Ms. Perkins finished her coffee and stood up to stretch. She leaned on the porch railing with both hands and surveyed the land with a glance that betrayed her satisfaction. Ms. Perkins had a right to feel contented. Today her son Abel was coming home from the war and he hadn't been hurt.

Clouds scudded like tall ships across the blue sky and the sun shone down on the emerald lawn in a mottled pattern which made the shaded areas appear blue. She saw a vehicle coming down the road so she moved over to the top of the steps and leaned against a support. A few moments later, Hiram Lingley's grey Willys crunched up the seldom used, sea shell covered driveway.

A lean but muscular man with cold green eyes hopped out of the jeep and heaved twin duffle bags on to the lawn; dull, olive, green against waving emerald shoots. Ms. Perkins, arms outstretched, waddled down the steps, cut across the grass and threw her arms around her son. They embraced for a long time, Abel submitting to this near suffocation. Her arms moving like pistons, she pushed her son away from her in order to get a better look at him.

"God, look at you!" she exclaimed, scrutinizing him with care. "My boy is gone for four years and now he's suddenly a man."

Evelyn walked around to the driver's side of Hiram Lingley's jeep and said, "Thank you so much for picking Abel up at the airport. That was a great help."

"No bother at all, Evelyn."

"Won't you come in for a cup of coffee?"

"Thanks but I ought to be heading home just the same."

"Looks like rain, don't it?" queried Evelyn, trying to detain Hiram just a bit longer.

"Eah, that it does Evie. I gotta be sure to get my fertilizer spread and put the tractor in."

"Oh well, sorry you can't stay. Thanks again."

"I'll be by before too long to take you up on that offer." Hiram said, starting up his Willys, "Take care now. Welcome home Abel."

Hiram's jeep rolled smoothly down the driveway, backed up, paused, and whined on down the road to his home, Amen Farm.

"Come on honey, let's get your things inside. I've got a roast in the oven and Sam Bemiss brought over some of his potatoes this morning. You must be starved." Each carrying a duffel, the two walked along the concrete walk and up the stairs. The garter snake that had been sunning itself peacefully earlier, slithered through the white, lattice slats that covered the front of the porch at their passing.

The two walked through the dining room, one of the guest bedrooms, which served as a T.V. room and headed up the stairs, Ms. Perkins in the lead turning on lights as she went. On the right they came to Abel's room, opened the door, and dropped their loads on the enormous sleigh bed.

"Why don't you change out of those clothes? I'll be downstairs if you need anything. How would you like some milk and cookies? I just baked some this morning."

"That sounds great, Mom. I'll be right down." The room was exactly the way he had left it. It looked and smelled the same, although a thick layer of dust covered the smooth, dark brown surfaces of his dresser and bedside table. He went over to the window and looked out over the spacious back yard. The lawn had been mown the previous week by Hiram Lingley's son Jason, so it was sufficiently neat. The recently painted lawn furniture was arranged in the same manner as always, and near the rear of the barn, which served as a garage, the same, dull, horn shaped piece of granite grew out of the lawn.

Abel creaked down the stairs, walked to the kitchen and sat down at the table. His mother brought over a plate with a glass of milk surrounded by chewy toll house cookies.

"You been getting much rain this summer?" Abel asked.

"Not as much as usual," his mother replied. "There's been quite a good catch of lobster though. Earlier this summer, Harvey Tompkins, who owns the Barnacle restaurant, found a blue lobster in one of his traps, which he ended up selling to the New England Aquarium."

"Those cookies were great, Ma. I think I'll take a walk down to the point before this rain moves in."

"Okay, hon. Dinner won't be ready for quite awhile yet."

Abel walked out of the kitchen, down a hall, out the side door, onto the driveway. He took a right and began to walk the four miles to the point.

The air was clean and smelled of rain as he came to the top of the hill where the Naskeag Cemetery is. His father was buried in there. He peered through the rusty gates at pure white gravestones, covered with brilliant gold and orange lichen, and surrounded by a carpet of moss. He continued down the road and after a time came abreast of Amen Farm, which was easily recognized by its neatly painted barn which has written on it, in black, painted, sheet metal letters, the words "Amen Farm"

with the silhouettes of a witch and a cat on either side. The place had a cheerful aspect to it, due largely to the rose garden and the towering, bright, yellow, sunflowers in front of the house. In the field across the road, Hiram Lingley's bull paused in a grazing to look up at Abel and continued to graze leisurely on the thick, rich, grass. In an adjacent field, Hiram's cows lay in a circle around the water trough. Abel continued on the road and came up over a rise. From the top he could see the ocean. From there it was a short, winding walk down to the point, along this dead end capillary of road. When he got to the beach, he took off his shoes and scuffed around in the sea shell covered sand. The tide was coming in and the boats, moored in the bay floated around with the wind in the grey, green water. The last boats were coming into their moorings and the unloading of their catches was supervised by a dark visor of cloud.

Abel started on his way back up the road. The late afternoon sun illuminated the bright white houses along the way, causing a sharp contrast with the charcoal grey sky, and dark green pine and spruce. He took long strides and reached his driveway just as the first light drops were beginning to fall, peppering the road with dark flecks.

Inside his mother was flying about the kitchen, in her printed apron, inspecting the roast, baked potatoes and green beans. As if that weren't enough to keep her busy, she asked Abel if he would like a beer and whisked over to the refrigerator to pull out a bottle of "Miller's" she had bought for his homecoming.

"Did you have a nice walk dear?" Evelyn said.

"It's beautiful as always down on the point. It looks as though Hiram just put in a new bed of flowers by his front porch."

"Oh, you noticed that, did you? He put that in about two and one-half weeks ago."

"Can I help you with anything Ma?"

"No that will be quite alright honey. Just sit down at the kitchen table and relax."

Soon the timer on the oven pinged and Evelyn hefted out the huge roast and wrestled in onto the cutting board. She selected a long slicing knife from the knife holder and pulled the sharpening steel from its place in the drawer, built into the counter. With quick expert strokes she honed the knife sharp, making an uncomfortable whining noise in the process. Abel's body felt bruised and cold in the presence of such deadly, unforgiving steel. Evelyn commenced cutting the thigh sized portion of beef. Abel couldn't help but shudder as the knife slid easily through the firm red flesh.

Soon, dinner was served. Abel sat down as his mother heaped portions of juicy roast beef, fresh baked potatoes and succulent beans onto his plate. After serving herself, Evelyn sat across from her son at the huge, circular table. Outside, rain was streaming down the windows, while over the dinnertable, the large, electric chandelier flickered ominously.

"So, what are you thinking of doing in the way of a job?" Evelyn asked.

"Oh, I thought I might try to get work at Sylvester's Gulf station or maybe Olgilve's lumberyard."

"That sounds fine dear, but don't just rush out and get work until you've had some time to yourself to relax and see some of your friends."

"Okay, Ma."

After this brief exchange of conversation, the brittle clink of silverware against china predominated for the rest of the meal. When dinner was finished the two moved into a small, cozy reading room. Abel started a fire in the small fireplace, while Ms. Perkins brought in strong, hot coffee and homemade coconut brownies. They sat down; Abel on a sofa, and Evelyn in a soft voluptuous easy chair. They shared brief snatches of conversation and then became absorbed in their readings. Abel thumbed through the most recent issue of *National Geographic*, while Evelyn continued her novel.

Abel was startled by a nudge from his mother. He had dozed off on the couch and his book had fallen to the floor. Evelyn nudged him again.

"Come on, Honey. You ought to go up and get some rest. You can sleep in tomorrow and I'll fix you some blueberry pancakes for breakfast."

Abel rose slowly to his feet, stretched, yawned and rubbed his eyes. He made his way to the kitchen, carrying their cups and plates. After rinsing their dishes, Abel and Evelyn made their way through the dining room and the T.V. room, then they opened the door to the drafty, musty smelling stairway and creaked up the bare wooden stairs. In the hallway, they kissed each other goodnight and got ready for bed. As Abel brushed his teeth he recognized the slightly rusty flavour of the water, which gave him a sense of security since he knew now that home was the same as when he had left it four years ago. Evelyn went through her before-bed ritual which involved donning a hairnet and applying facial cream. After this procedure was complete she retired to her room and would usually read for an hour before going to sleep.

Abel lay down on the huge, soft sleigh bed, which took up most of the room. Originally, it was made to be used as a double bed. The sheets were clean and soft as Abel pulled them over him and moved sideways towards the center of his bed. In no time he was fast asleep.

During the night, the storm outside began to escalate. The wind grew stronger and rain hit the window panes as if it had been thrown from the trees. The thunder sounded off in the distance, while the lightning flared up like phosphorous. Around 2:30 in the morning, Abel suddenly woke with a scream. He had broken out in a cold sweat and lay in bed shivering. His mother, who was awakened by the scream, put on her robe and slippers and padded swiftly down the hall to Abel's room.

She opened the door and flicked on the lights. She was shocked to see her son in such condition. He lay in bed, wide-eyed with fright and his knuckles were white from clutching the sheets so tightly.

"Honey, are you Okay?!"

"Don't worry, Mom. I just had a nightmare."

"It looks to me as though it was more than one's usual nightmare."

"I know, Ma. It's just that with all this thunder and lightning I must have thought, for a moment, that I was still back there."

"Oh, I understand. Well try to get some sleep now. That's the best thing for you. I'll see you in the morning."

With that, Evelyn turned off the lights and left the room. Abel lay in bed wide awake, but it wasn't long before sleep mercifully overtook him.

When Abel woke up in the morning, the sun was just peeping over the windowsill, illuminating dust particles like a movie projector. It wasn't long before the whole room was bathed in clean white light. Abel was well rested. It seemed as though an eternity had gone by since he had first gotten into bed. After an invigorating shower, he made his way downstairs, to the kitchen.

Evelyn was standing over a grill while she dropped plump blueberries into pancakes with great diameters.

"Good Morning, Mom", Abel said. "Those pancakes smell great."

"Thanks, there's some orange juice in the fridge to tide you over."

Abel opened the refrigerator door and poured himself a small glass full, which he downed quickly. Soon several stacks of golden brown, blueberry pancakes graced the dining room table. They both sat down and Abel ate his stack of pancakes hungrily. He said:

"I'm feeling energetic today Ma. What can I work on around the house?"

"There really isn't much to do, Dear; Jason Lingley mowed the lawn recently. However, there are some trees that have fallen over in the clearing in the woods out back. They are fairly well seasoned and would make good fire wood."

"That sounds like my kind of job," Abel said enthusiastically.

"Good!" Evelyn replied. "You don't know how good it makes me feel to have a man around the house again."

After a second enormous stack of pancakes, Abel was satiated. He resolved that he was too stuffed to begin working immediately so he decided that he ought to take a drive into Blue Hill, stopping at Sylvester's Gulf Station along the way.

"Is it okay if I borrow the car to go into town, Mom? I figured I'd stop at Sylvester's along the way and ask about work."

"Of course, Honey. That sounds like a fine idea. Do you suppose you could pick up a jar of face cream for ma at Richardson's?"

"Sure, no problem."

"Oh, and don't forget to check the oil and fill up with gas on the way back."

"Okay, Ma."

Abel took his dishes into the kitchen, rinsed them and put them in the dishwasher. He then got the car keys out of his mother's purse and bid Evelyn good-bye. He walked down the hall and made his way out the side door. He walked between two, black, half-barrels on either side of the door, which served as planters for pink geraniums. The air outside was clean and warm while the sky was a deep blue and a slight breeze ruffled the trees. Abel opened the huge swinging barn doors and moved inside. The barn smelled of musty hay as a barn should, and Abel could also detect the smell of tarred beams and miscellaneous odors from fertilizers and gasoline.

Abel opened the door to his mother's white, '67 Mustang and eased into the driver's seat. He was amazed at its condition. One might have thought that the car was brand new, when in fact she had owned the car for just over 5 years. It owed its good condition to Ms. Perkins' driving habits which consisted primarily of weekly trips to town.

Due to Sylvester's tender care, the car started right up and Abel rolled slowly down the sea shell covered driveway. He then headed up the point road and took a right towards Blue Hill, passing in the process, the small, town center of Brooklin with its General Store, Post Office and Fire and Police Station. The car continued smoothly down the road, past several houses, until it reached the long straight-away where Sylvester's Gulf station was situated. Here the road went up and down, in little dips, as far as the eye could see. On either side of the road were expanses of grassy meadow. The stalks of knee high grass moved like waves, with the wind. It was a scene that seemed much more appropriate to the plains of Kansas than Down East.

Abel honked his horn as he whisked past Sylvester's and continued down the road. Presently, he could see the ocean if he looked down to the right, and pine trees predominated the horizon to the left. He drove past the Barnacle Seafood Restaurant, which was still the same weathered maroon color. Further along, E.B. White's house, which enjoys a prime piece of real estate, on a bluff overlooking the sea, had obviously just received a new coat of white paint. Its green shutters had been done also. When he had passed Grange Hall number 56, he knew he was close to the concrete bridge that spanned Blue Hill Falls, a small stretch of tidal river that rushed into the bay in a tumult of white water, when the tide is going out.

When he reached the bridge Abel pulled off the road and walked out to the center of the bridge. The roar of the water was deafening. Abel was surprised to see in this swirling froth, a number of canoeists trying to successfully negotiate this extremely short, but treacherous section of rapids. The canoeists wore brightly colored wetsuits and life jackets which showed that they were prepared to get wet. As it was none of the parties made it through the rapids without overturning; at least while Abel was there. Whenever they tipped over they would patiently gather their gear together and make their way upstream for another run. Abel simply could not understand this obsession people had of trying to run the Blue Hill Falls, so he got back into his car and continued uphill, across the top of a plateau and eventually wound his way down into the picturesque town of Blue Hill.

The town of Blue Hill is the epitome of classic New England beauty. The small town clings to the hill above a rick rimmed harbor while the whole scene is presided over by the magnificent Blue Hill, to which the town owes its name. Abel pulled into Richardson's Pharmacy, which lies along the curving main street. and walked inside. He purchased his mother's facial cream from a young lady who seemed familiar, but he couldn't recall where he might have seen her. She gave Abel a warm "Thank you. Come again soon," as he walked out, jingling the sleighbell festooned door.

Abel walked out on the sidewalk, he noticed that the road had been repaved recently, since the tar was still soft in spots. He looked uphill and was happy to see that the church, where his mother had been married, was still strikingly beautiful. It stood white and immaculate against a dark green lawn. Its grounds supported thick-trunked maples. Abel decided that he should stop in and see Mrs. Lindsey, a longtime friend who was like a second mother to Abel, at her gift shop/antique store called the Mole Hole.

He placed his hand on the thick brass handle and pulled open the bright red door. At first, Mrs. Lindsey had difficulty recognizing him, but then she came out from behind the counter, where she had been polishing a brass lantern, arms outstretched. She gave Abel a big hug and proceeded to interrogate him as to his state of affairs. He responded cordially to her volley of questions and added with affection that he hoped she might stop by sometime soon.

"I'm sorry I can't stay and talk with you longer," Abel said, "but I promised Mom I would get some work done around the house."

"Good for you," Mrs. Lindsey said. "I'm glad you stopped by. Take care and give my best to Evelyn."

"Sure thing," Abel said.

Once again Abel stepped out into the sun, and after a brief stroll along the wharf, accompanied by wheeling, screeching gulls, he made his way to the car and drove to Sylvester's.

Sylvester was a bear of a man. When he saw Abel pull in he reared up from the car he was slouched over, gave his hands a quick wipe, and lumbered over to Abel. He extended a huge greasy paw to Abel while swiping him on the shoulder with his other hand at the same time.

"Well goddam my eyes if you han't grown, young Abel! You look to be in fine shape."

"Thank you, sir," Abel replied. "I was wondering if you couldn't use me to help around the station some this year."

"Well, I'll tell you, Abel," Sylvester replied, returning to the car he was working on, "Things are a bit slow now, but starting in October I could use somebody from Monday to Friday, from 11:00 - 5:00, working through the winter, until the end of next August."

Abel marveled at the daintiness with which Sylvester removed a nut. He held it between his thumb and forefinger, pinky extended, while he scrutinized it with one eye closed.

"Sounds fine to me," Abel responded.

"It's settled then. We'll see you the first Monday in October."

Great, Thanks so much, Mr. McClean."

"No problem, Abel. Give my best to Evelyn and don't go stripping the gears of your mother's car now."

Abel hopped into the car and drove out the gravel driveway, leaving a suspended cloud of dust. He gave Sylvester a few toots on the horn while he waved from his stance next to the gas pumps.

After a brisk drive home, Abel ate a quick luncheon of sandwiches and milk, which his mother served, and he was ready to begin work.

From the barn he took a fairly large "D" shaped logging saw, a splitting maul and a light Hudson Bay cruising axe. With these tools in hand he walked around the side of the barn, which was covered with moths, to the backyard. He looked to his right and saw that Jason Lingley had also put sheets of greased aluminum around the trunks of the small trees, which stood in a row, forming the border between their house and the Hathaway's who lived next door. The purpose of these greased strips of metal was to prevent porcupines from climbing into the upper branches and eating the tender twigs. He walked past the lawn's own granite disconformity and looked back into the woods, which began just beyond the fringe of the lawn.

The clearing lay before him like an altar. Large white clouds were moving in, causing the sun to shine down through the trees in twinkling rays. The trees which he was supposed to cut were good sized cedars that lay across the clearing's floor. The clearing itself consisted of granite slabs overlaid with delicate, pale green, elk horn lichen and spongy moss. Blueberries grew in the large longitudinal cracks that split the granite.

Abe padded along this fragile landscape and set down his tools. He then rolled up the sleeves of his work shirt and picked up the saw. Then he went about sawing the trees into manageable lengths for splitting. At about this time, little Joey Hathaway who was around six years old, and his playmate from down the road; Gordon Parsons, tore out of the Hathaway house for a game of cowboys and Indians.

Abel continued to work, making good progress. Although a light breeze had picked up, sweat streamed down his back. He finished splitting the stubby, cut lengths with the heavy maul and started in cutting off the braches of his second tree with the Hudson Bay axe. When he had finished, he stood up straight and stretched his back and shoulders. Then he stood there admiring the beauty of the clearing while the axe hung down in his right hand.

At his moment, Joey and Gordon came crashing through the woods behind him. Joey wore a fringed western style jacket, made of cotton, that had a rearing horse and a thunderbird embroidered on the front of it in bright colored thread. A floppy, felt cowboy hat covered his sandy hair. In a holster on Joey's side was a shiny, lifesize revolver. Its magazine held a long role of caps. Gordon wore a blue jean jacket, and his face bore two parallel streaks of red on each cheek. He had a dyed yellow feather in the leather head band he wore.

"Whatcha doin'?" Joey piped up.

"Oh, I'm just cutting up some of these dead trees for firewood. How about you? Are you having a good game of cowboys and Indians?"

"Sure we are. Gordon's the Indian and I'm the sheriff trying to bring him in dead or alive. Watch!"

With that Joey pulled out his pistol and shot Gordon three times. Gordon obligingly moaned; "Uhh. You got me." and stumbled backwards rolling down on the soft moss. The acrid smell of gunpowder came to Abel's nostrils causing a rush of Adrenalin. Suddenly, Joey brought the gun to bear on Abel, the glint from the barrel flickering in his eyes.

Without warning, Abel let loose with the reflexes of a panther. With a strong forehand swing he struck the axe into little Joey's chest. Joey didn't even have time to scream. The axe had slipped in with a dull thud and he stood quivering on the end of it like a speared fish. Then his legs buckled beneath him and he fell to the ground. The blood started to well up, soaking his clothes. It made the prancing horse on his jacket, which was stitched in brilliant yellow thread, turn the color of a withered autumn leaf.

Gordon, who had just regained his feet, looked on the scene with horror. Although his legs felt like lead, he compelled them to move. They pumped furiously as he ran stumbling and shrieking through the woods to the Hathaway's house.

Abel was horrified by the scene before him. Joey lay on the ground, mouth agape as his blood was being soaked up by the thirsty earth and sawdust. Abel was beginning to grasp the seriousness of the situation and thinking quickly, he tore apart Joey's clothes and crammed his workshirt into the smiling wound. Soon it too was soaked through. Abel pressed hard against it, but Joey's eyes already bore the opalescent glaze of death.

Abel stumbled aimlessly out of the woods, hands stained with blood, just as Sheriff Nelson Adams' car pulled over on the side of the road, its siren wailing.

The doors flew open before the car had come to a stop and the sheriff and the deputy, George Eastly, rushed out of the car. The sheriff ran back into the woods, while George contained Abel, who offered no resistance whatsoever. Ms. Perkins who was alerted to the commotion outside, scurried out on the front porch to see Abel, shirtless, bent over the hood of the police car, his hands cuffed behind his back.

"What's going on here?" Evelyn demanded.

"There's been an accident out back. Joey Hathaway may be seriously hurt." George replied. At this moment the sheriff strode quickly, back out of the clearing.

"George, call in an ambulance and wait for it here. Ms. Perkins, you'll come to the station with us."

Nelson seated Abel and Evelyn in the car and walked over with a final word for George. In a brief aside to sheriff Adams, George remarked:

"That lady sure has been dealt a cruel hand in this life."

"Ain't that the truth George. Well keep charge of things here while I attend to business at the station."

Nelson squeezed into the car and drove the two and one-half miles to the police station. The trip seemed to last just seconds and soon the three of them were cramping into the small, bare office space. Then began the tedious process of fingerprinting, filling out forms, signing statements and filing reports. When this had been completed after, what seemed like an eternity, Nelson led Abel over to one of two small cells and locked him in. The lock clicked home with a terrible sense of finality.

"We'll have to keep him here until the arraignment." Nelson explained.

The two walked outside. Just as she was about to walk through the door she looked cautiously backward, just as Orpheus must have, to see Abel with his face turned towards a corner, his forehead supported by his clenched fists.

The two got into the black and white car and drove quickly home. When they got to Evelyn's house, Nelson let her out at the bottom of the driveway.

"Take care Evelyn. I really am sorry," Nelson said in a sincere and solemn tone.

Evelyn stood on the end of the driveway, watching the police car float noiselessly down the road. When it had disappeared over a final rise she felt something inside her snap. She didn't want to be alone. She, of all people, didn't deserve to be alone. She began a slow walk up the driveway. The sky had become considerably darker and the wind whipped the weathercock around in a chaotic fury that showed the disharmony of the fickle wind. As she came nearer to the house she believed that it was overhanging its foundations. When she passed through the huge doorway, it appeared as though the great white house had swallowed her up.

Chad Hussey

Want

Wearing a chemical straight jacket
I laugh in a ball,
My madness radiates against rubber barriers,
Stark, oppressive,
I contemplate blank pages, turning them to find nothing,
Where Good Humor men shovel cocaine
And white rabbits run in snowstorms,
The artist paints with invisible ink.
I dread too late,
My mind peeled away like a strip of acid.

Roger Butler

The Coming Age

I would be a witch —
apple in an eye that I am —
practicing birth control and
beckoning hallucinogens from weeds.
I need no virgin sterilization.
I am cleansed body and soul together
showering with the plants I sing to,
Naked before thirsting stamen —
no harm done in brushing with a bush.
I am Eve
and in this age
I'm claiming my garden

Lynn Greene

Seduction

Sleek body twined about my feet.
Nose, head, then tail rub against my shins.
With what have you marked me?
Ebony animal,
Warlock what have you done to my heart it burns!
Warm body slither into my lap,
Drawing caresses from me with incantations.
Ah, your back arches with the tempo of my strokes.
Cat,
Why do you squirm from my lap?

Jacqueline Ondy

Pointless Polarities

She searched for food to live
He lived on food for thought
She said we must fight
to live or die
He asserted life is round
no beginning, no end.

He calls the crowd to march
for peace
She crawls into a hole
with a gun.

It begins.

Two children die in the heat
of their quarrel.

Ruth Wick

The Ladies from the Fairmont Unitarian Church Poverty Relief Fund

The good samaritan box
is painted brown and orange,
and is brought out once a year
for the can drive —
cans don't spoil.
All the members of the congregation,
carry bags filled with fruit cocktail, yams
and cranberry sauce - fit for the holiday spirit
but enough for eight nourishing meals.
After the sermon they come forward with their gifts,
like gladbag wise men,
trying to ignore the runaway bartlett pears
rolling back down the aisle.

The ladies from the Fairmont Unitarian Church Poverty
Relief Fund,
deliver their poor people's thanksgiving day turkeys
on the friday after.
Filling their station wagons
they drive to where the needy live.

The ladies from the Fairmont Unitarian church Poverty
Relief Fund,
are disappointed.
They thought the poor
were always at home.

Sharon S. McCartney

Confessions of a Book Burner

It started out so simply - a single page torn and removed and set afire. Quickly the blaze would then settle into embers of ashes and dust.

So brief, so brilliant, so consuming - the elimination of words, thoughts and ideas through the cleansing purity of fire.

I work in a library reshelving books. Late at night I burn a few of the oldest volumes I can find in the furnace down in the coal cellar.

The old leather-bound classics burn the best. They burn the brightest because of their thin brittle pages. But they also burn the longest because of their thick leather coverings.

I'll never forget the joy and exhilaration I felt when I burned my first dictionary. The entire English vocabulary reduced to the purity of yellow flame.

People die and turn to dust just as their recorded words must turn to dust and blazing embers.

Damned idealists, damned intellectuals, may your works die and burn in hell.

Your glorified works are but spiderwebbed collections of musty rotting paper.

I burn them nightly with joy in the darkened coal cellar of the library

A. Acker

The Congress of the Gods

This story was originally published
in a book called *Book*, written
by Tage Danielsson.
Translated by Ari Kokko.

It became time for the Congress of Gods, and gods from all corners of heaven came along the Milky Way toward the festively illuminated House of Gods, which is right next to the Andromeda Galaxy, the first turn to the left, and there it is, the large house on your right hand.

It was an important Congress coming up. The first item on the agenda was namely the question of whose fault World War II was — this was the first Congress after the end of the war, because there is, as you all know, no hurry out there in the universe.

The speaker, an insignificant little wrinkled traditional god, who had gotten into the Congress because some wild tribes in Bechuanaland believed in him (one has to have at least 10,000 votes to become a god with a seat in the Congress) hailed everybody welcome. Right thereafter Buddha demanded the floor.

—Your Honor, Gentlemen! The Christian party has again proved itself unworthy of the confidence it enjoys among the voters by letting a World War break out. Is it negligence, or is it general incompetence, or does My Lord (he took off one of his shoes, hit it on the table and pointed it at the God of Christianity) does My Lord think it is the way it should be? Don't you have peace on Earth on your program, do you? Now lots of innocent Buddhists and others have to give their lives just because My Lord doesn't take care of his job. We demand an explanation and a guarantee it doesn't happen again! Otherwise we will use all our resources to mission you off the surface of the heavens!

General mutterings of approval and scattered applause. The attacked Lord looked wrathful (although good and forgiving at the same time of course). Buddha's plump face regained its usual content wrinkles, and he sat down with his legs crossed.

Our Lord scratched his beard and demanded the floor.

—Your Honor, Gentlemen! It is not my fault! It is not my fault! How could I know it would end that way? This guy Hitler wasn't really any ungodly fellow from what one could see in the beginning, and wasn't Mussolini a pretty nice dude to, or so my own pope in Rome said. What is one supposed to believe. (He began to lose his temper — it takes a while for gods, but it comes!) And by the way, what do you really expect? How in heaven's name can I be all over and everywhere? One must trust one's co-workers, mustn't one? And one is getting old too! One forgets things. And not even a computer to keep count of all the souls. No no, one is supposed to memorize them! Who do you think I am? A magician? You Gents can go home and mind your own business, because I can't stand any criticism. If one is almighty, then one is. Go to Hell, heathens!

The mood was now quite agitated among the Princes of Peace.

—Shame on you! And another thing: what is My Lord doing in South Africa? Aren't all people supposed to be equal, isn't that too part of your post-war-program?

Our Lord subdued the tone somewhat.

—Yes, yes, but that's none of my business. Africa is almost a Christian colony, in the periphery, you know, so I let them mind their own business. But I don't eat their oranges, I really don't!

The Speaker cleared his voice.

—Would the congregation agree that we can write off the Second World War on our Christian brother's account, because, after all, his followers were the ones who began it?

Everyone voted yes, except for Our Lord, who voted "don't know".

The Speaker stood up with a serious look on his face.

—My Christian Lord! I have the honor to inform you that there now are ten major wars on your account since you last did penance.

The congregation held its breath.

—No, don't tell me that! Is it really ten? Oh, my, my!

Everybody applauded expectantly. The Speaker continued:

—My Lord, you know what this means. You have to pay up again. This time, you jump on one leg and crow like a rooster at least a hundred times.

—Bravo! a voice from the congregation exclaimed.

Our Lord stood up in grief, pulled up his gown which was hanging all the way down to his feet, stood up on one leg, and started to jump and crow, at first hesitantly, then with more zeal.

Buddha slapped his knees and yelled of laughter. A South American Indian god was caught in ecstasy of laughter and scalped himself, rolling around on the floor. The heaven was filled with a roar of laughter, so that the stars were flashing and the satellites feel down.

When Our Lord had finished jumping and crowing, the congregation broke up, and the gods went back home, each to his own. Buddha left the Congress with the words: —I haven't had this much fun since the Trojan war when Zeus had to stand up and say "I'm a shithead! I'm a shithead!"

Thereafter everything was, as usual, quiet in the heavens.

Marble Bags

Dot had her usual hard time finding first gear as she swung the old bus around; fighting with the clutch, she watched her fender imperil the trading post porch and then come up scant inches short of an out-thrust pine trunk on the other side of the trampled, lifeless dirt of Times Square. She glanced at the nearly empty seats in the rear view, then pulled up at the seething line of kids scrambling in the dirt for their dinner buckets and tattered books. The door opened with a hydraulic sigh. Dot, impassive behind sunglasses, did not greet the dozen children representing almost as many ages as they pounded up the steps and scattered for seats. Dot heard marbles clacking as they passed. 'Marbles in October!', she fumed, cursing Walter Moyses's irreverent disrespect for spring ritual when the week before he had rattled up to the bus stop with his impressive Carthage Bank money bag swinging from his hip. This spark in a tinder box saw forgotten caches looted, coffee cans employed and leather pouches wheeled with the fruit of chipped piggy banks. Walter Moyses maintained an undiminished swagger throughout the self-perpetrated renaissance, the inexorable depths of his bag rewriting Carthage Elementary mythology. Rumors spread of the rarely glimpsed individually sorted pouches of ball bearings, bumblebees and crystal boulders nested in the sorely strained fabric of the brightly lettered sack. A bag of bags assured Walter's playground apotheosis, but more significantly, Walter Moyses only played keep-

sies. The bus lurched south from the square, jostling kindergartners and eighth graders alike, though moreso the older children who dominated the rear seats, distancing themselves from the ham-fisted driver whose burly scorn radiated through her sunglasses into the all-seeing rear view. At North Junction another gaggle of scholars climbed aboard. Dot leaned back in her seat, watching overhead the kids absorption into the dwindling supply of seats. The McCafferty and Savage broods, three and four respectively, flowed by her with unheeded trouser zippers and trailing shoelaces, their baggy jackets leaking kapok and organic stuffings. Paper sacks of lunch showed moisture where, if the contents had been of more substantial bulk, the cheap bagging would surely have given way. Dot levered the door closed, found first and lumbered away. She grimaced as Len Savage, a sixth grader with a black mane of hair like a rabid dog, foolishly rattled his Maxwell House can with its meager horde of cat's-eyes. Walter Moyses had abdicated the back row, his usual station, in favor of the penultimate seat, which allowed for a more centralized position and a larger audience to witness his dealings. Norman McCafferty, a malnourished twelve year old with a shock of pumpkin hair, was going a few perfunctory rounds of odd or even with the demigod of North New Boston, losing handfulls with impunity. Walter soon tired of such small potatoes and suggested numbers. Excitement coursed the aisle as Walter went elbow deep into the Carthage Bank depository and, with both hands, maliciously shook the contents in front of Norman's vacantly rapt face.

"Twenty one," Norman ventured hesitantly.

"Gawd, I scassly dowdit!", Walter hooted derisively, spreading his palms to reveal that Norman had indeed been short, by seven. Norman coughed up his due, cat's-eyes chipped from previous springs on asphalt playgrounds. Walter smugly bagged his prize and proceeded to send both hands in elbow deep, shaking the Godawful load before Norman's watery eyes.

"Fawty faw.", Norman winced, sensing incredible personal loss and ruin, already reaching for his small leather pouch.

"Gimme your hat," Walter snapped at Lucien Derosier, who had been hovering over his shoulder to view the counting out.

The marbles went into the hat and came out individually, everyone with a view chanting "forty two, forty three forty four!" Norman and Walter sat face to face across the aisle, their knees wedged together, the latter a full head taller than his scrawny foe.

"Lucky guess, weasel piss."

"Yeah, I 'magine." Norman grabbed the leaden hat, drooling with stupid gleeful shock, and filled his pouch to bursting. Walter turned away; struggling for composure he pulled a dog eared *Daddy Loved Me Best*, with pictures, from his overcoat and proceeded to enlighten two sixth graders who shared the seat with him. Norman turned upon his audience, suavely wiping the snot from his upper lip, and tried to find challengers.

Dot kept watch in the rear view, grinding a non-gear as she turned off the Carthage road onto the smooth blacktop of the ski area's new access road, oblivious to the din that welled up behind her.

"We wuz playin funsies!"

"You're a stinkin fairy, Carlton Bishop!"

"Three crustul bodas?"

"She puts it in her mouth?"

"Thisiza ball bearin from a Army tank."

"That's nothin', lookithis . . ."

"Jeezum Crow!"

Dot turned off the access road onto an equally smooth stretch of blacktop conspicuously marked SYLVAN WAY by a bright white on green sign. The bus hummed cleanly on the winding road, passing through well tended pines before emerging into a clearing, fifty yards of finely manicured lawn that stretched up a gentle slope on the left. Through gaps in the trees one could make out snatches of houses, a massive field stone chimney, a wide stretch of screened porch on high stilts, walls that appeared to be all glass. The bus grew silent as it pulled up to the confluence of three crushed stone driveways that met at the pavements end. Ursulla Albers kissed her seven year old daughter Helga on the mouth, but couldn't catch Rudy, a year older, before he scampered onto the bus. Ursulla straightened, patting a bothersome whisp of her long blonde hair back into place, trying to relocate it where it had slipped from her tight bun. A blue wool suit hugged her statuesque frame luxuriantly, dark leather walking shoes carressed her naked feet. Helga labored up the bus steps in her dirndl and slippers, with a tiny rucksack slung on her back. Ursulla found herself waving at the olive drab flank of the bus, not ten feet away, unable to see her children for the glare from the windows. She flinched as she met the staring hungry eyes of a boy, maybe thirteen years old, that refused to be averted, gripping hers with deep unflinching longing. As the bus turned its back on her, a half dozen pale faces were frozen in the rear

window. They watched her turn and followed the progress of her long, slender legs returning up the drive to her home.

Rudy plowed down the aisle, then felt an iron clamp on his bicep and he was being pulled forcibly into a seat with Jimmy Thibeau, a monstrous bovine creature, and Joe Michaud, a short, wiry seventh grader with thick glasses and a hoarse horn of a voice.

"Howya doin', Hymie?", Joe bellowed into Rudy's startled face. Rudy gagged at the older boy's foul breath, which bore no trace of tooth polish, or even food for that matter, but which radiated a hot blast of staleness like when Rudy's electric transformer overheated. Joe smashed Rudy up against the massive thighs of Jimmy Thibeau, who grinned foolishly next to the window. Jimmy wrapped his massive left arm around Rudy and bearhugged the little boy into his lap, rasping his knuckles across the blond scalp. Rudy could smell the manure of Thibeau's cows and Thibeau's own urine wafting from the denim encased legs of the older boys legs. Rudy played dead, suppressing tears, and Jimmy released him. He tried to ignore Joe, who asked him about the 'Nazys' and tweaked him painfully on the earlobes until his whole head burned. Across the aisle, Dawson McCafferty, who felt destined to be a sheriff, saw Rudy's stifled heaving and wet eyes, and told Joe to leave the little Kraut alone. Dawson was big for his twelve years, bigger than Joe, but he bled and cried easily. Joe fixed his confused lens-blurred scowl on the beady-eyed red face of propriety, and faked a jab at the fragile bulbous nose, which caused Dawson to flinch severely, and subsequently took the fight out of Joe. Joe looked around for support but found no following, even Jimmy Thibeau had gone back to staring out the window as the bus entered Carthage, so he amused himself by cleaning the dirt from his fingernails and flicking it on Rudy's new corduroy trousers. Dawson bumbled off towards a misty burning sunset, Marshall McHero, confident he had saved from harm the little Kraut, the rich Kraut's son, the irrefutable link to the beautiful blonde, the very sight of whom made Walter Moyse clap his knees together, flap his thumb-in-armpit wings and crow heavenward with painful desperation.

Dot pulled the old bus, Macwahoc County #17, to a stop in front of Carthage Elementary, a shambling brick and board edifice that entombed six hundred students on any given school day it didn't snow. Dot paid no attention as her charges were absorbed into the milling children waiting for the first bell, most vanishing quickly in the drab whirl of overcoats and wool hats pulled over eyebrows; others, like Walter Moyse, advanced with a cautious swagger into the throng, one weary eye peeled for any strutting roosters with bigger bags swinging from their hips.

Mike Augusta

Monsters

He learned the fear
from fascination — spinning,
spinning past the inner threshold
warm then cold going
around
once more.

The mother with her three bags
from other stores and
seven more gifts to buy and
only fourteen shopping days left

pivoted.
"If you do that again I'll!"

A threat is enough
to avoid the blades of glass and steel.

Keeping fingers in tight fists,
gingerly pressing the handle,
he learned to jump out quickly — looking back
as the monster flapped metallic arms
around
once more.

Sharon S. McCartney

Uncion

Dispelled, I blink
And the spiral cactus I squeeze
For cuts and burns in the kitchen
Shocks the air.

I dream I smolder as the wheel of winter
Grinds the sorrel straw. Spindles wind
A gauze between the trees and clatter
as the pour of the sea.

In the predicament of an accused witch,
Your mouth intoxicates like pure dew,
The resinous poppy bulbs of light's traces.

The cycles of lore about you now
Quickens like the night. How dense
In this high forest! The boughs, like your hands,
Hummer and chant. Only your form is constant.

Our tongues stumble in a dark castle,
The shadows cast on the expanse of a grey wall
Flicker like skirts we wear.
We dance along tile snakes and horse hoof flames.
In layers, we pulse on the cathedral ceiling.
You wear gold around your strong arms
And the amulet of the chained basement.

The oil of your touch is the unction.
Like crushed pearls, sandalwood,
Or the fingernail of the half-moon,
You reach me by balms,
The syrup of darkness
Over the sharp seconds of your absence.

Bruce Leonard

Dust of Allah

Ghosts of Persian rugs
haunt our floor
with the
dust of Allah.

They dwell with
the harmony of dirt clods
and congregate
under the wrath of my broom.

A. Acker

Buffalo Mountain

It has snowed on Buffalo Mountain.
The ancient matron's face has been changed in her sleep.
The wrinkles of her jaw and forehead
are covered with a porcelain that rounds out
her sides giving her unseasonal youth.

The dwellers at her hem discover the morning oddity
last.

Those passing through remark,
"snow in summer, of all things."
Pasting bumperstickers on their howard johnson cars
they drive on
liking the postcard version better.
Those who stay,
wonder out loud, wonder how deep, how much,
how long it will last.
And as if mountain wise,
shake their heads knowingly — rocky weather.
Hoping the run off will fill the resevoir.

Yet above them the coiled lady stands stolid,
bearing a welcome burden
that muffles the sounds from below.
And knows that few will wish to climb
in the cold weather.

Sharon S. McCartney

Slowly she wakes up, sun brightening her skin as her eyes begin to focus. Quickly covering herself, she cuts across the room to examine the mirror to see if her face has changed, or if it remains at all. After several design alterations, she opens the stage door, hoping that the face will stay the same and that the audience will applaud. Not comfortable with theatre in the round, she searches for a corner to stand in. The audience barely notices while the main character divides the stage into three parts and loses himself thrice. She hears him pick up the bottle and drop it like a child. His footsteps come closer . . . the audience stiffens . . . she whirls around with her hands clutched . . . opening her eyes she watches the movie screen as the heroine runs out of the theatre, leaving the audience bewildered. The screen shows a grove of trees, the dawn beginning to break, and the woman sitting by a stream. She rises from her seat before the movie finishes, checking her reflection in the box office window before walking into the afternoon sun.

Chris Paul

Experience

When you've risen before the sun
Burns droplets from the stalks,
And paced across frigid planks
To stoke Survival.

When you've gathered milk
From a fist of warm flesh,
Pumped the shivering steel
For a crisp gulp of water,
And splintered logs
With a rusted tool
Between throbbing hands
So that you might eat.

When you've leaned heavily
On those you hardly know,
Acquired full boots of snow
Trudging a heaped sled of supplies,
Trekking miles after midnight
To embrace the day's slumber.

When you've trod deeply in my footprints,
You may clench my heart
and voice what you feel
Between your tingling fingers.

Barry Paillet

The Wings

When I woke this morning
It was no longer dark
I yawned and stretched
I began to scan the room
with my tired eyes
I stopped at the chair
where the punch bowl sat
and then I remembered
trying not to think
about what happened
I got up to dress
when I shook my shoulders
I could feel my wings
beating against my back
I was surprised that
I still had them
I stood on the chair
and looked into the mirror
expecting to see them
covered with ashes
or stained with blood
but they were snow white

Leonora M. Cravotta

The Tale of Frankenstein's Average

This story was originally published
in a book called *Fairy-tales for
Children Over 18*, written by
Tage Danielsson.

Translated by Ari Kokko

Dr. Frankenstein was a man of supernatural qualities. He was a statistician at the National Bureau of Standards and com-
jured effortlessly forth statistical symbols - small blue men with mystic meaning: sometimes the little man contained all the
teetotallers in the state of Georgia, other times the little man could depict all Americans voting for the Republicans, in which
case it was accompanied by another little man representing all Americans voting for the Democrats, though this little man didn't
have any head. So you see, Dr. Frankenstein really was some kind of sorcerer!

Dr. Frankenstein had for a long time kept hidden in his most secret and sheltered laboratory where he had been puttering
with mystical tables and magical formulas. He had for a long time been occupied with nothing less than the culmination of his
life's work: to scientifically create a statistical man in natural size. Meticulously he mixed all the statistical facts about the
American man in exact proportions, poured them into test-tubes and retorts, stirred, decocted the mixture, and procured
thereby a tough dough out of which he skillfully moulded a man who then lay lifeless on a table in the lab.

In another test-tube he had a mauve liquid, made up of all the statistically computed qualities and characteristics of the
American man.

"Now when I drop this liquid into the eye of the man, he should according to all calculations become alive, from a statistical
point of view," Dr. Frankenstein hissed in a voice muffled by ardor.

He dropped. The figure sat up with a drowsy look on his face.

"How are you doing?" the figure said.

"It all works!" Dr. Frankenstein exclaimed. "Phrases with high statistical frequency are consequently the first ones to be ut-
tered!"

"Well, bottoms up!", the figure said.

* * *

Dr. Frankenstein called his creature Paul-Ernest Average (PEA). Paul-Ernest was a man of medium height, with normal
physique, brown hair, and a slightly stooped walk. He was wearing a medium gray cheviot suit, a striped tie, and rather un-
polished shoes. He was fairly nice, quiet, secure, and 48% Democrat. He liked football and the Benny Hill Show, and every other
Sunday he went to Church.

Dr. Frankenstein now took Paul-Ernest Average to his normal house with three bedrooms and one and a half garage, which
had been prepared in advance in connection to Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory at the National Bureau of Standards. Paul-Ernest
Average immediately sat down in the armchair in front of the TV-set and smoked one and one third filter cigarettes.

"Now, let's get some things straight, Paul-Ernest" Dr. Frankenstein said. "I have created you out of all the means and
averages at the National Bureau of Standards, and you are constructed to always live according to what the statistics say, and
they never lie. You have a job here in a medium-sized factory nearby, you go to the movies three quarter times a week, and as
soon as I can I will make you a statistically exact wife and two and a quarter children. But remember: I am your Master and you
are to unconditionally obey my figures and formulas!"

"I'm fine. How are you, buddy?" Paul-Ernest Average answered in his statistically charming way.

For some time Paul-Ernest Average now lived according to his built-in statistics. He read 1.35 daily newspapers and was a
little bit bored, just as everyone else. But of course, it became a little bit more lively once Dr. Frankenstein had completed his
wife (who had six fingers on her left hand because of the surplus of women) and his two and a quarter children. Little Quartie
was not much of a problem, that is true, but the two others cried in accordance with the statistical averages and soiled 7.68
diapers per day.

Everything worked according to Dr. Frankenstein's calculations for some time, and statistical study groups occasionally
visited the Average's house to witness Dr. Frankenstein's miracle. Also at these occasions, Mr. and Mrs. Average behaved
quite normally, shaking everybody's hand twice, once when they came and once when they left.

"See you later, alligator" Paul-Ernest Average said.

* * *

After a few months, Dr. Frankenstein noticed a certain unrest in Paul-Ernest Average, which seemed to be more serious
than what was indicated in the tables. To begin with, he explained the irritation with the half cold Paul-Ernest suffered from
every third month, but eventually Paul-Ernest showed such signs of nervousness that Dr. Frankenstein became worried.

"Remember, Paul Ernest", Dr. Frankenstein said, "that you are under the command of my figures. If you deviate from the
pattern you also disturb the divine harmony which rules the world of statistics. Beware, Paul-Ernest!"

But Dr. Frankenstein had not taken into account the normal opposition to authority he had built in to Paul-Ernest Average.
Paul-Ernest bided his time. Finally, Dr. Frankenstein departed for a whole week, en route to the International Statistical Con-

gress for the Determination of Average Precipitation in Lombardia (ISTDAPL), which was held in Tokyo.

Now Paul-Ernest saw his chance. Over time, he had grown more and more frustrated with all the decimals and fractions he
was constructed to live after. Dr. Frankenstein was caught in his own trap: he had not considered certain facts pertaining to nor-
mal human reactions versus statistical patterns of behavior. If one is intimate with one's wife 0.21 times a day, as Paul-Ernest for
a long time had been, statistical proof indicates that one finally becomes rather frustrated.

That was why Paul-Ernest now rebelled against the decimals in his life. He began a Saturday night at 8 o'clock not by wat-
ching 2.6 hours of television but instead by drinking two whole beers (compared to the dictated 1.37). Thereafter he made love
to his wife two whole times (an increase of 1.79 times!), took a whole bath (compared to the usual one third), smoked two pipes
of Dunhill Mixture (instead of the three Marlboros) and finally went to bed without a pajama (not the prescribed 0.75 pajama).
He felt rather good by the time he fell asleep.

The behavior of Paul-Ernest Average turned out to have unforeseeable consequences for the patterns of behavior for all other
Americans, because Paul-Ernest was the national standard for all American life. TV polls showed all time lows, the consump-
tion of beer increased so much that AAA had to call an emergency meeting in Boise, Idaho, sales of prophylactics boomed, and
pipe smoking, bathing and sleeping naked experienced a renaissance. And when Paul-Ernest decided not to go to work the
following Monday, the production of the country stopped as if by a stroke of magic. So much loafing around has never before
been seen in the United States of America.

* * *

When Dr. Frankenstein came home from Tokyo he was, as statistical evidence shows most people would be, in dismay.
What should he do? He could not well dispose of the Averages, because that would do it for the whole American population.
He could hardly even quarrel with Paul-Ernest Average, because that would mean running the risk of provoking him, and thus
all American men, to anger. And one knows what an angry American might do, not to talk about what 75 million could cause!

Dr. Frankenstein settled for the only possible solution: he talked gently with Paul-Ernest Average with compromise in mind.

"Tell me, what do you want?" he said mildly.

"Just whole numbers" Paul-Ernest replied. "No decimals, just whole numbers. Rounded off to the nearest larger integer.
Shoobidoo."

So if you feel like having another drink before bedtime, remember that it is thanks to Paul-Ernest Average.

Shaking Heads in Copley Square

Three,
Three piece and pin-striped vested
Minds left their lunch to
Frown.

Frown
Upon roller-footed youth skating and be-bopping to
Funk music spilling their fluid joy into the
Bricked square unaware they were being
Jiggled.

Jiggled
Back and forth by arrogant eyes which
Then
Snuggled back to the news
Content.

Uncontent
I
Frowned
And
Jiggled
The
Three.

Gregor Macdonald

Cornpoem

They came to cut the corn this morning,
only the rain could stop them.
international harvester teeth
razor sharp
stalking
stopped
by the grey clouds and northwesterlies
spitting on the open-cabbed driver.

At noon the sun broke free.
the sturdy ford tractor
freshly painted barnyard-strutting firetruck red body
perched insect-like
between firestones girding corn yellow hubs
(‘Maize yellow,’ the t.v. indian corrects me)
trundled throatily
back to the aborted morning cut.

Jumpsuited khaki and pennzoil dark
Sutton’s boy
flapjacked and coffeed
jumped off the ford
fastening the umbilical cord
expectant
to funnel the tall thin rows
into the knives and rollers
to strip and squeeze the ears
from the fibrous waste of pale gold wrappings
frosted brittle-
the hard ears thump dully
into the hound-faithful trailer.

Working outside in,
Sutton pauses
only to hitch another trailer to his train-
the golden square thins before his blades
leaving trampled husks,
muddy silk.
Save overlooked cobs
and stubs of stalks once tractor high,
the corn is gone
when Gilligan’s Island comes on at four.

Mike Augusta

