

IDOL '86



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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Food Service for their help with the Idol Cafe.

Mrs. Marra for understanding our financial difficulties.

Thora Girke

EDITORS' NOTES

It has been my intention this year to try something different and put out two issues of the **Idol**: one expressly devoted to literature, and the other to arts in general. If all goes well, there will be a spring issue of the **Idol** in which arts are represented in the style they deserve, that is, on high quality photographic paper. In order to accomplish this the **Idol** will once again be having a fund raiser, including the ever popular Idol Cafe.

I would just like to encourage everyone to take a part in the **Idol**. It is your magazine, and it needs your support.

Yours truly,
Tony Dunaif

This issue of **Idol** is the product of the caring and labour of people who understand the importance and vitality of literature. Without the likes of Harry Marten, Jordan Smith, and Adrian Frazier, this **Idol** might not be the article of inspiration that it is.

It is my wish — and the wish expressed by many others — that this **Idol** mark the resurgence of literary interest at Union College. There is a surprising amount of very good writing on campus. Because people risked submitting their work, we've been able to bring some of it to you. Bon appetit!

Yours in sanity,
Joy E. Runyon

The Sole Master

A huddled mass lay between the dunes
of the virgin white sands.
The faded gray cloth that drapes her frail body
is reminiscent of the pinks and blues she once wore.

In the prime of her life,
she withdrew from all that surrounded her.
The tones of disappointment that her family once expressed,
no longer echo in her mind.

Now, she is only aware of the undulating water,
seeping into her bones.
The monotonous hum of the sea
penetrating her ears.
The continuous wind off the ocean,
drying her skin.
She successfully blocked her family out.

They told her that she did nothing well.
She proved them wrong.

by Jane Kissel

Hudson Revisited

I wish I could make you all disappear!

The same houses stand,
stagnant odour pervading,
their colours never changing except
to change to a duller hue, a hue of vomit.

The poor get poorer
while the rich get duller.
Your brick houses should be red,
natural red, forchristsake!

But no; you all chose
to paint the brick sickly white —
a cover-up, no change allowed.
When a fleck of white chips off and exposes
red — a change — you
paint it over. No red allowed, not even

RED BRICK!

All so confident the town will stand,
will be eternal,
free from change.

You lock up minds like you lock up
your grandmothers' souls in the attic.
Pitiful, bestial instincts to stay close to the putrid nest:
that's what you foster, gladly, proudly, joyously.
Let them watch "All My Children" and "General Hospital"
so they can see how brutal
the world is outside.

An education might allow your pocketed joeys
to jump unrestrained:
godforbid any useful ponderance for change
should enter what we generously call "their minds."

Lock them up in your Pandora's Boxes,
pray no one will ever open them.
Then die your petty deaths,
get buried in your back yards,
make your children tend your gravesites
so they know right where to die.

I wish I could make you all disappear!

by Joy Runyon

Vodka

Come back with me to the years
when your father was alive

Remember him — his breath
reaking of distilled potatoes?

You drink now too
Haven't you learned?

The father is in son
The son now a man

Foolish clod, see his clump
Stretched in garden mud

like your newfoundland dog
avoiding the sun

The potato liquor in his blood
courses through veins

blood shot eyes
And deteriorating brain

Come see his life
drowned in the waters 86

A 1/2 gallon a day
There now, see him

Naked in the kitchen
rumaging through the frige

Skinny legs supporting
a fat sunburned body

like a tomato on toothpicks
"Scratch my back!"

He always yelled
No ball playing here

Think of him
when you drink

see his face
in your glass

look then in a mirror
Are you naked too?

by Tony Dunaif

Untitled

Rocks fell down silently
pieces of the cliff face
cracking off like the front of a glacier crawling to the sea

Three splashes erased by waves crashing
waves, crashing into the bottom of the cliff
where the plateau grew out of the ocean
the waves eating away at it for a million tides

Tropical undergrowth blowing in the constant breeze,
waving to the night sky
a kelp bed in a steady current

The house set into the cliff side
sitting on the shelf which was the plateau
growing out of that peak
as if just revealed from the chunk of rock
by a sculptor's chisel
or half a fossil relic newly exposed to air
by an archeologists brush

The white stucco was smoothed by the moonlight
and the orange tile roof muted
no longer screaming as in the heat of the
Mexican daylight

The back lawn, giant tongue of the cliff
greens cut,
natural carpet

Mist rose slightly off the pool swirling
holding needles of yellow green pool light glow
— within —
she swims naked
water crystal clear
fluid, perfect

Sidestroke scissors cutting the fabric of the pool,
ripples echoing her perfect contour
towards the porcelain sides,
bone china against the onyx black sky

And while I watch her
swim flip turn and push off,
glide up to the surface and swim again
the stars twinkle eternally
and I shrink in the lawn chair

A speckle on the green tongue above the wave
and
write a poem

by Jeff Bernstein

The Last Autumn Ride

Three layers separate me from the night
It's cold
Vacant faces follow me
The same ones I saw last month

I can't help but think
That my face articulates my soul
It's always been like that

Familiar sensations en route to Albany
The bus plunges forward
Through muddled gray

Letting go is hard —
Even harder when
You've got the change
In your pocket

A Beginning?

Light, admitted by anxious glass
Awake to the expected

Clothes
Littered by eager need.
Hungry escape to —
Oblivion
Insulation from gray confusion

Coffee
Stagnated by futile effort.
Bottomless night defeats —
Faltering Mugs
A violated dawn beckons

Blades
Fractured by desperate strokes.
Stained steel infects —
naked texture
An injured reflection of mood

Steps, condoned by hesitant feet
I'd rather go back, than on.

by Eric Feingold

Silent Longing

Thread spinning in the wheel
a complex tapestry to behold
a new sunset of color
with the finish of each fold.

A stream of crimson kisses
as champagne that charms too much
fluttered free 'top an angel's breath
fled like a bubble not to touch.

A burst of ripened energy
fed an impulse to cross the sea
the water boiled inside my soul
but could not take you with me.

The endless miles could never ease
the ripple of love's last embrace
two figures with moistened memories
a dream that she could not erase.

Thread tangled in the wheel
ecstasy woven with a crystal tear
parched lips told of an impulse
and silent longing he couldn't hear.

The colors of the sunset
bled together in a careless blur
drooping petals of red and white
and crimson kisses that once were.

by Carol Levy

ODE TO ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER

by Jonathan Fink

Concentrate — I was futilely trying to fight off growing madness. I'd be forty in a week and I still wasn't sure who I was — what I was meant to be. My body grew apathetic and expressionless, numbed by the intrepid rain outside that began to flood my front lawn and then my soul. Defenseless against the infinite droplets attacking my window, I had a sudden urge to squeeze the cat that rested innocently on my lap, ignoring its ensuing cries.

"Jesus, I'm freezing," I thought for a transient moment as I stared myopically outside and into the future. Nothing. I hated hate as much as I hated paradoxes. I needed to be trained, to be tuned. All I could think of was passion and lust. I knew I was impetuous, yet somehow this implied impatience had no negative consequence on my being. Still, I sat pondering, my eyes watching. An absurd thought came to me: What would my father do in a similar situation? After all, he was no fool. Although obstinate and inexorable in his ways, his rashness was curtailed by his sagacity. Christ! He would smoke a cigar or call a friend.

Unfortunately, I neither smoked nor had any friends. I was forever friendless; I had to be, of course. Friends could be dangerous or in danger. For example, I once had a friend who was killed with an icepick because he knew me. After that, I decided: no more friends. Sex, yes; friends, no! Not a smooth mixture, but it worked.

I was sitting in one of those oversized leather chairs, the kind that has a footbed that pops up when you pull the lever. I wondered how many animals had died so I could sit dissatisfied in a leather chair with a pop-up footbed.

"Okay," I thought, "concentrate. Stare at the oak wall, the one with the VanGogh painting of the boy sowing seeds. Concentrate, dammit! Become one with all that surrounds you; dissolve the boundaries." Humidity had caused my rate of breath to increase so that I was almost gasping for air. It became a struggle.

I was now a fat boy at a circus, mindlessly engrossed in consuming a large pink ball of cotton candy that my fickle, yet caring, mother had bought for me. It tasted good, but it caused acute pains in my teeth. Concentrate!

Suddenly, I was on a couch. What's the goddamned material? Leather, my hands said. Oh Christ, more dead animals; it was genocide. What the hell happened to the

chair I was in? Everything had changed. The walls were now white, the room ominously cold. I hated white. It was too superficial and restricting. I saw it as a kind of cop-out. Anyone could get away with white; it was clean and smooth and went down real easy, too easy. I wanted more bite — something more vicarious and internal.

Thunder and lightning ripped through the sky, forever trying to turn night into day. Turmoil . . . chaos . . . destruction. Total annihilation corroborated by visceral instincts. I was no longer in control. I felt a tap on my shoulder. It was a woman. Without a second thought, we embraced, lips adhered by instinct. Two tongues searching for need out of despair. Dual seduction covered with beads of sweat and spewing the results of prurience and perhaps even love. A bell rang; I think it's the phone.

Funny: no one on the other end. Wait a minute. Who the hell are you? I didn't let you into my house.

In front of me sat an extremely gaunt man dressed impeccably in a three-piece suit — looked to cost about five hundred, maybe more. His bald head gave him a rather dissatisfied air. His upper lip provided a meticulously trimmed moustache. Between two bony fingers rested a thin cigarette.

"I don't like him," I mused.

Then, without warning, the man who sat with his legs crossed began to speak, while all the time never waning in his intense, assured stare through me.

"Well, Abraham, you know what the bell means." I looked at him, his body the epitome of anti-pulchritude, if such a thing existed. Wait a minute. How does he know my name? Hardly anyone knows my name — especially bastards in three-piece suits.

"Abraham, I'm sorry, but I'm afraid your time is up."

Suddenly everything made sense. A smile came across my face. "You're wrong!" I was now on my feet yelling. "Your time is up."

Then, as quickly as a breeze can change an arid day into one that is quite comfortable, I pulled an ice-pick from my pocket and stabbed the man incessantly until death consumed his body. The fact that his suit, now covered with blood, was virtually worthless gave me great satisfaction. Concentrate, Abraham, concentrate! I knew the rain had stopped.

Doubles

Smiling out from under an umbrella
that could lift him to the heavens
on the next brash bluster of wind,
the lily-white boy slushes around
in big boots.

Where's the bus? he wonders
as he waits for what seems hours.
Twenty minutes later, his mother,
dressed in morning frock
and slab-solemn face,
rescues him from the rain . . .

"Darling," she says — she
has called him darling ever since
his father left them together in the pool
as he traipsed out the front door
with only his aftershave, razor, toothbrush,
and underwear in his briefcase —

"darling, there's been an accident."

As the dropping rain dampens her bare frock
and makes everything clear, she finds it hard
to go on. She merely tells him
that he need not go to school today. He smiles.

"But I'm not sick, Mama," he tests.

"I know, darling, but the schoolbus
won't be here today. Something
happened and now
a lot of the other children on the bus
can't go to school.

They're sick."

She shuddered in the warm spring shower.
And it did not cleanse her.
And her darling did not sense this.
And school was let out early today.

by Joy Runyon

Nighthawk

It is the Nighthawk poised so calm
Which used to perch on the dead birch bark
And caw like a widow in the mustard dawn.

Silent Satan in feather dress cries an empty song.
Eyes fixed strangely in human mock,
Some profess you are the Devil's spawn.

In dream darkness it is Daddy's song
That which the Nighthawk shrieks
Bastard cawking and then a solemn calm.

Its cry is electric, a mourner's song.
But why does it gasp as if trying to talk
And where is the light of the sickly dawn?

Its shadow still shows through drapes drawn
To block the flight of the Nighthawk
And deny the light of dawn.

Framed in the light of a mustard dawn
It comes to my window: the Nighthawk
Poised erect, in a dangerous calm.
But I cannot silence this black bird's song.

by Kerrie Ticknor

The Dent-Maker Tolerates Post-Nasal Drip

Tears slithered down
like star-spit on the moon.
Simplicity was the dictator
of trust.

Expensive cream-coloured chintz
rose up around the soft body
that dented the big chair.
Out in the Appian-length hallway,
I rode the oriental carpet: I rode it
all the way
to the filled chintz chair, to the guard
in the dent.

Instead of giving you words
so you can help me,
I give you tears and post-nasal drip
on your favourite shirt.

And now I cry harder when the dent-maker
encircles me,
and now I know that the tear-maker
cannot hurt me, for I
can now lie here
in the arms of the dent-maker.

That pile of warmth in that dent
is now dented by my pile of grief,
grief sledge-hammered
into this once-young body.
Now it is my duty
to mend the worn spot
on your favourite shirt of foam green
and sad Caribbean blue.

My tears and post-nasal drip
eroded two of those squares:
one of each colour.
God, my fragilities must have been
so symmetrical,
so structural.

Is there any sewing thread
good enough to handle that tear?
But you have washed
your favourite shirt,
so perhaps I should say,
"Sew it yourself."
I heard you, the dent-maker,
whispering sometimes (to whom?).
I wondered if you were angry at me
for always riding the carpet to you.

And now the dent-maker is gone.
And now stars spit fire at the moon.
But now tears slither down and melt
over the great chintz sidewings.

by Joy Runyon

Before, I Visited the Eggman

Before, I visited the Eggman,
Who told me of the Walrus
And of "Shoes and ships and sealing wax"
And of the crafty Cheshire cat.

But things are different.
Humperdink sits on the billboard,
Stupid Eggman with painted eyes.

Alice doesn't live there anymore.
What they told you? It's all lies.
She's joined the plastic people
And wed the King of Spades.

But I did chat with the Eggman,
Who told me of "Twiddle Dee and Twiddle Dum"
And of the magic "tasting cakes"
And of the Cheshire's sum.

Humperdink was not so dumb:
"Beware the Cheshire cat," he said,
"It grins as it kills. Did you know that?"

But Alice never listened,
Stupid child with plastic head.
She's joined the hatter in the garden
And I believe he wants some tea instead.

by Kerrie Ticknor

The Wreck of the Porsche

I drove fast
to get rid of the tension.
Things were getting to me.

You just left,
no goodbye, just the note
and the ring.

The ring was burning a hole in my pocket.
It was dusk, red dusk:
the perfect ending to a shitty day.
My face burned.

You said you'd be back Thursday during the day
while I was at work, to get your stuff.
That hurt.

I realized work was too much for me;
you shouldn't have had to put up with my bullshit.

By the way, that day, I found out
that all that work I did
on the pineapple crop projection
was shot to shit by a typhoon in Thailand.
Pretty funny, huh?

Fuckin' pineapples.

It was my fault and I knew it;
It let the car know it, too,
and it felt good.
I was almost done with payments.

It started drizzling and I slowed down
a little.

I drove down the exit ramp
to the Grand Central.
It was a tight curve.
The concrete in front of me
looked like wet glass.

I lost control of the car
and skidded. The car spun.
I hit the left curb and the car
tumbled towards the Grand Central.

I woke up a second later,
laying against the curb
on the shoulder of the Grand Central.
I was so shocked by the whole thing
that I didn't even feel my arm.

II

I watched while the Porsche
was hit by an eighteen-wheel
St. Johnsbury truck
going fifty-five.
It flew into the air about twenty feet,
rolled about three times,
and landed on the roof.

A giant shiny paperweight.

The flames started in back, crawling up
over the back fender
like a pack of army ants.
Soon the whole car was on fire;
blue flames poured out of the wheel wells.
My poor magnesium wheels.

Then smoke, fire, and glass
exploded out in all directions
and

I just watched, deafened.

My Vuarnets landed
about four feet in front of my face:
lenses cracked, frames melted black.

A cloud of burning gas shot up
like a whale spout
and swirled in the air.

And I didn't really care about my car —

I only care that I was alive,
and that I might get a chance to see you again.

III

That's the story.
My arm's healed now.
I guess you heard I quit my job.

I bought a beautiful little house
up here on Martha's Vineyard by the dunes.
There's even an old lighthouse out the bedroom window.

I'm painting now.
You always said I had talent.

Maybe you'll come and visit sometime.

by Jeff Bernstein

She got up from the booth and noticing my amusement glared down at me. She then turned this stare down at the silenced man, turned and floated out the door as she had come in. I saw the wet footsteps reflect off the dull greasy tile.

Have you ever felt
the way I do
about something someone else wrote
because you know it's in you

It makes you think
but it holds your mind
like icy blue water
on the frozen lake of time

Do you know how this feels?
of course, you know it well
it's over you too
like sylvia's bell

by Bruce Fina

QUEEN FOR A DAY

by Bruce Fina

It all takes place when I was eating lunch in that famous five star restaurant in beautiful downtown Springfield, Massachusetts called Friendly's. It's the one with the people you knew in high school working for minimum wage sliding across perpetually greased floors to serve J.Q. Public himself of Suburbia U.S.A. I always notice the graciously framed prints not only hanging on the rubber papered walls but bolted on possibly for sanitary reasons. There is the constant clash of the cash register and the muffled complaints of the kitchen staff that add to the pleasure and excitement of Friendly dining.

As I was sitting taking all this in, this woman, wearing an electric royal blue dress that hung on her quite like a tablecloth, floated in through the door like a queen in her court. Her whole existence gave her the look of middle aged promiscuity. An arrogant flowing motion probably attractive to an almost successful man in his midlife crisis.

She knew exactly where she was going as she continued to float to the booth just in front of me by the window.

"Hello," she said almost gracefully to the man already sitting there, "sorry I'm a bit late but I just had a case to finish that's in court today."

I hadn't noticed the man before, probably because he was average looking in every way, from his receding brown hair to his gray poly-wool suit. He had tried to stand as the lady approached but found it quite impossible to do so in a booth. When he did this I did notice the tattered brown shoes on his feet. This was his only feature that was less than all-American looking.

"That's okay, I've only been here a minute," he said catching himself as he sat down again.

"How's your morning at the office going?" she asked.

"Oh fine as usual the same action day-in and day-out, but I enjoy it."

"Well I can't believe we're here," she tried to laugh, "All for that speeding ticket."

"So tell me anyway, how did that ticket ever get past the judge?"

"Well for yours, Mr. McCarthy only needed to call the D.A. and the Judge, but usually he appears in court for most cases."

"Tell me more about your job there in the office," he inquired.

"Well it's all pretty exciting," she said with a low-budget movie smile, "handling all types of criminal cases and meeting some really neat people. I enjoy being a secretary now, and these lawyers really know how to party too."

"It sounds interesting but how do you stand those arrogant lawyers?" he asked.

"They are great once you know them, really. I think they are really a lot of fun and Harran and Greenman are just hilarious around the office," she replied.

"I guess they think that they are out of my league and I just don't know them well enough, but they think they are so far above everyone," he said with an insulted look on his face.

"You'll get to know them better if you come out and party with us," she said as she crossed her legs so they overflowed into the aisle.

Finally sensing the awkwardness of the conversation about lawyers she asked, "Tell me about your job. Is it exciting?"

"Well for me, yes, I think that engineering is interesting and the people I work with are some of the most intelligent in the world. But for most people it would seem like very tedious and boring work."

"I just think that all those nerds and all those numbers would be unbearable. I just couldn't deal, ya know," she said as she chewed her gum in between words.

"The people in my office are brilliant and sensitive individuals. Social standing just isn't that important to them as it is with your lawyers," taking a deep breath as he finished.

With perfect timing the waitress arrived and saved their drowning conversation. As they ordered, she an "only salad, will be fine, thank you" and he, the "burger and fries" I started to imagine the possibilities of her past.

Her last 'boyfriend', for lack of a better word. Probably a 39 year old insurance man with an overweight wife and two children by the blue-green pool of the local public country club. He took her to an Allstate convention at the Howard Johnson's of marvelous Glens Falls, N.Y. for 3 days and 2 nights of romance soap opera style. She knew all along about his marriage but was more than happy to be queen for a day.

As the waitress in that familiar blue dress arrived with their orders I looked up to see that the pleasant smiles have returned. They were hardly honest smiles but they were at least pleasant.

The two hardly talked while they ate and the woman just tried so hard to be elegant as she cocked her wrist back with the fork in hand. The man told her of a new experiment with IBM or ATT or something that seemed very interesting and exciting to him but hardly aroused her.

"Yea . . ." she said at the end of each remark he made. I now recognized her distinct Westchester accent.

"So," she said after a pause in his speaking, "what are you going to do this weekend? I was wondering if you would like to come to a party with me at Linda's place on Friday after work."

"Who's Linda?" he asked.

"Linda works at the office with me. It should be a great party, like I told you before, these people play hard," she replied.

"I'm sorry, but I have to finish some business for that experiment this week and I'll probably be working late on Friday."

The waitress returned again and cleared the dishes as the woman watched her with a scornful look.

As she started to walk away the man said, "Excuse me, could we have the check please?"

As in all Friendly restaurants the waitress carries the checks and is always prepared, so she turns to the man and flips the paper over on to the table.

The man put his hand down over the bill and looked up smiling gently to the woman.

"I'm sorry that I can't come with you on Friday but on Saturday I would really like to take you to a movie and then out . . ."

"To a what?" she interrupted, "To a movie."

"Yes, to a mov . . ." he started to repeat.

"You have the . . . you want me to go to a movie," she stated with a loud outraged voice.

Mystery reeks in the air
fractured thought
heartbeats
there is no rhythm

Clean is the day
formal and tight
when it tires
into the night

cold
or too hot
I swim through
the wall breaks

There is no wall
it's in the mind
in the darkness
there's only time

The sun burns in
try to catch the fog
it slips from the palm
or turns to dry air

is ten hours
of the full day
justifying
for foul play

I am your thrill
humor falls
only serious
in closed doors

the sun comes to
you filter out
see you anon
see you no doubt

by Bruce Fina

CASE DISMISSED

Keith Young

Alex Thompson sat slumped in his rocking chair, moving back and forth in a slow, dull rhythm. He was sitting on the porch of his home, a small, undistinguished cottage lost somewhere in the Adirondack Mountains. The porch, which spanned the entire length of the front of the house, about eighteen feet, was just wide enough so that Alex could lie across it without having his feet extend over the edge. Made from dark gray wood that was now old and battered, the porch had a weather-beaten appearance, the way faded blue jeans look after they have been worn for several years. Alex was wearing such a pair of jeans, along with an untucked, dark blue flannel shirt. Wearing neither shoes nor a belt, his face unshaven and his shoulder-length hair uncombed, Alex's appearance was as natural and unpretentious as the house in front of which he sat.

It was a modest and simple house, having just one story and extending backwards from the porch only thirty feet or so. Having been painted long ago in a pale shade of yellow, the house, with its plain, undecorated windows and small, narrow, off-white door, seemed to sink back into the surrounding landscape, rather than stand out as something noteworthy. Leaning back in his chair, Alex looked out over the rolling hills which were his sidewalks, the setting sun which was his streetlight, and the high-reaching oak trees which were his neighbors. He loved to sit on the porch at the end of the day, enjoying the simple comfort of his rocking chair and the natural beauty of the lush scenery. Closing his eyes from the brightness of the fading sunlight, Alex let his body soak in the sublime pleasure of not having to worry about anything. He thrived on the simplicity of being alone, for without people there were no complications.

After dozing off for a few minutes, he was awakened by the low rumble of a car, slowly pulling up the rugged dirt road which stopped abruptly about one hundred feet from the porch. Alex opened his eyes to see a silver BMW come to a slow and careful halt where the road ended. A man who appeared to be in his late twenties got out of the car and began walking hurriedly along the plush, green grass towards the porch. He was wearing black dress shoes, dark pressed slacks, a white designer shirt, and a pinstriped vest. Alex smiled as he watched the man brush away the dust from his pants as he approached the porch. As the man came closer, Alex noticed that he was wearing a cherry red tie, loosened at the collar, with a pattern of small blue racing boats.

"You gotta do something about that road, Alex," the man said as he walked up onto the porch. "It takes a damn tractor to get up here. I just hope I didn't do any damage to the car."

"Hi, John," Alex said, still smiling as he stood up from his chair. "Nice to see you again." The two men shook hands.

"Yeah, it's good to see you, Alex. How 'ya been?"

"Oh, not too bad," Alex said casually. "Would you like something to drink?"

"Yeah, how 'bout some Chivas Regal," John said wryly, bringing laughter from Alex.

"I'll get you a Pepsi." Alex walked into the house and emerged moments later with two cold Pepsi's, handing one to John. "Have a seat, John," Alex said, pointing to

the rocking chair. "We can talk out here since it's such a nice night, all right?"

"Yeah, fine," John said as he sat down in the rocking chair. Alex sat on the floor a few feet away from John, his back leaned up against the front of the house.

"So how are things going at the firm?" asked Alex.

"Busy," John replied, taking a sip of Pepsi. "We're still working on the Newsweek case. Boy, it's a stickler. It seems like everyone is filing a libel suit these days. We could really use you on this one, Alex, First Amendment, that's your specialty."

"I would have thought you'd have finished that case weeks ago," Alex said, ignoring John's last statement.

"Yeah, well, it's really dragging out. We're gonna bring in a bundle though if we win, which we will. Newsweek will pay anything to keep its journalists free to write whatever they want."

"Are you sure you'll win?"

"Yeah, we'll win," John said as he looked out over the landscape. "It's just too difficult to prove that a writer has been 'intentionally malicious' in making a story. When it comes down to a decision between freedom of the press and —" John paused for a moment, then looked at Alex. "Why am I telling you this, you know this stuff as well as I do." Alex, who had been looking at John, turned his head away and said nothing. "Really, Alex," John said, "we could use you at the firm."

"Aw, John," Alex moaned, "we're not going to go through this again, are we?"

"Look," John said, leaning forward in his chair, "this is coming straight from the top. All of the senior partners are in agreement that you're a top-notch lawyer and that you'd be great for the firm. Alex, they *want* you."

"I've told you more than once," Alex said, putting down his can of Pepsi, "I have no intention of joining Hewitt and Lehrman, or any other firm for that matter." Alex looked straight at John, his voice marked by a particular emphasis. "I don't want to be a lawyer."

"But Alex," John continued, "think of what they're offering. They're prepared to take you back as a practicing lawyer, not some researcher or legal errand-runner, like you were before. We could be working together." John sat on the edge of his chair, his eyes fixed on Alex. Other than their friendship, John had no personal motives for wanting Alex to go back to the firm. With a wife, a car, a job, and a cushy home in the suburbs, John was set, his life planned out ahead of him. He wanted Alex to go back to law because he felt a certain sympathy for him, a kind of pathos, as though Alex were floating away at sea without a life preserver. Looking around at the worn-out porch and drab cottage, John felt that Alex was ruining his life, or at least wasting it. "What is it about this place that attracts you, anyway?" he asked.

"Don't start with me, John."

"I just don't get it," John said, his voice sounding a bit edgy. "You're being offered a solid position by a prestigious firm, a great starting salary with lots of time to move up, plus all the company benefits; free meals, paid vacations, company car." John, his voice becoming increasingly louder, rose up out of his chair. "Do you see that BMW out there?" he said, pointing to his car. "Do you see it? Do you want it? It can be yours! What color do you want, red, blue, green, pink, violet? Just name it!" Alex, somewhat startled, looked on as John gestured frantically with his hands. "Whatever you want, Alex, you can have! BMW, Porsche, Corvette, Camaro, take your

pick! Work for a couple of years and you can even get a Mercedes!"

"I don't want a Mercedes," Alex said gently, "I'm happy living here." John shook his head in bewilderment. He walked to the edge of the porch and looked out at the burnt red sun, which had almost completely disappeared behind the sloping landscape.

"All I want to know," John said softly, his back facing Alex, "is what was all that hard work for, college, law school, the Bar, why did you do it all if you were just going to end up here?" John turned and looked at Alex, who was staring out into the darkening sky.

"I don't know, John, I really don't know. I guess I was just doing what I thought I was supposed to, and that someday I might end up liking it. But it wasn't what I wanted, I have no desire to be a lawyer, or anything else in the business world."

"You just don't want to have anything to do with the world at all, do you?" John said bluntly. "You don't want to have anything to do with people, isn't that it? What's the matter, Alex, is the human race not good enough for you? Are these trees better companions than people? Would you rather 'commune' with nature than be with your friends?" John stood silent for a moment, looking at Alex. "What is it, Alex, why have you chosen to live this way?" Alex, still sitting against the front of the house, stretched out his long legs and looked up at John.

"I don't know what to tell you, John, I just like living in the country."

"Well that's just great," John said sarcastically. "Real terrific. You want to live in the country. Seven years of college and law school and you want to live in the country. One of the best law firms in the country offering you seventy grand a year and you want to live in the country. Where do you hang your degree, one one of those trees over there?" Alex got up from the floor and stood up straight, his muscles tight with tension.

"Why is my life so hard for you to accept? Why can't you see that this is what I really want?"

"What you really want?!" John exploded. "This is what you really want?!" he said as he looked around him. "Some trash-heap of a house in the middle of nowhere?! Digging in the dirt from morning 'til night?! Look at this place, Alex, look at this run-down porch, this ridiculous rocking chair, this pathetic cottage! Look at you, look at the rags you're wearing, your face, your hair, you look like some kind of vagrant, a damn migrant worker!" John stopped suddenly, thinking that he might have pushed Alex too far. Alex stood staring at John, who was standing a few feet away, breathing heavily, beads of sweat forming on his forehead. The long, heavy silence seemed to last an eternity. Finally Alex spoke up.

"Did it ever occur to you that I might be happy with my life? Did you ever think that this might be what I want?" Alex's voice was gradually becoming louder. "Did you ever consider the possibility that there might be alternatives to joining the business world? That there might be some other way to do things than to work in the city, live in the suburbs, and vacation in the Bahamas?" Alex paused, his eyes fixed on John. "Ever since I quit the firm and came up here to live, you've been coming up here every month or so to try and convince me to go back. I don't try to convince you to leave the firm and come up here to live with me, do I? Can't you see that I don't want to leave this place? I'm happy here, John, this is what I want." Alex continued to look at John, whose

face had lost all expression.

"OK, Alex, all right," John said softly. The two men stood on the porch in silence, the increasing darkness of night setting upon them. A sense of understanding had come between them which had not existed before. They both knew that their friendship would never be the same. Realizing it was getting late, John spoke up.

"Well, I guess I better get going. Lorraine will probably think I'm out with the secretary again." Alex smiled and laughed lightly. "So long, Alex," John said as he stepped down off the porch and began heading towards his car.

"Good-bye, John." Alex watched as John walked to his car, got in, started the engine and executed a three-point turn. Just before driving away, John rolled down his window and looked up at Alex, who was still standing on the porch.

"See 'ya next month?" he shouted.

"You bet," Alex said, smiling.

Time Zones

Standing astride
two time zones now.

"See?" I said.
"It is so possible to be
in two places at the same time."

But you contradicted me,
saying,
"You are actually
in one place
at two different times."

Of course, you were right.
I placed one foot on yesterday —
exactly 11:36 p.m. yesterday —
and one foot on tomorrow's 12:36 a.m.
"So where is today?"
I asked of you.

You told me
that I was today.

I was awakened (rudely)
by the megatone
of your radio alarm.

"Yessir," the droning announcer
screamed in my ear,
"today is gonna be
a real mean one — hot and sticky."

You laughed,
but I didn't understand why;

so I laughed anyway.
That was a week ago.

by Joy Runyon

In The Blink Of An Eye

A train rolled past the outside world
the willow trees dropped helpless tears
bared by the wind as it puffed.
I peered too slowly out my window
too many details in one frame
the frame too quickly disappearing
looking back with anxious eyes . . .
the train would not stop for me.

Not for the hungry horse
not for the fading green pasture
patched with brown bandaids
the train would not slow down
thoughts flashed past the window pane
I had never stopped to think —

Many scenes lost in a blur
they were not my reality, afterall
the brook inside the woods
the water caught by jagged rocks
the window trembled with perspiration
the rattle would not leave me alone.

People were inside those paint-chipped houses
leading lives I could not see
then the house was gone
before I could step inside.

by Carol Levy

Daddy Dreams

An alcoholic's promise all I've got left
Of him. His face fades from fatherly memory
Doesn't Daddy denote devotion in my dreams
There he's still lucid, clear, salient in my slumbers
Startlingly sober as he sways in son's subconscious
Demonic depiction if his death did not occur
He winks while I wilt in descended dream-state
Letting on to his little joke. Laughing he
Comes back living in my life to live again
Wanting back waned power with holding Why
He went. Where he stayed . . .
In my head.
He never died, but went away
To rehabilitate as if he could
When he does he comes back
Wanting to be what he never was
But now Pop has no place
But I feel bad. Sad that I don't want him
Anymore. Tell him stay away.
I thought you dead, destroyed, deceased
Ashes upon mom's mantle piece
No room left for you not even in Daddy dreams

by Tony Dunail

May 25, 1985

The open window beckons me —
Come with me, be a part of me . . .
What would happen if I *could* grow roots into the ground?
I think, if I could,
And if I could choose where, and with whom,
I'd want to sit under that tree in the corner of the yard,
With my back against your chest
And your arms around me
Clasped together on my stomach.
I always loved to be held that way.
If we could do that, what would we talk about
For all that time?
Probably about the things we don't discuss now —
Like how it feels when the sun dries you
Right after you get out of the water,
Or how one time when I was lonely
I saw a map of New York on the 6 o'clock news
And I started to cry
I said, "I want to go home".
Would you understand?
Last night you said you wanted to sleep with me . . .
I wonder if that should make me happy
When what I'd really like is to jump into your car
And to drive with you to Wiscasset
And to eat biscuits on the rocks
And to wonder how the lobster traps don't get tangled
And to tell you that I want to grow roots
With you.

by Janice C. Thompson

FRAGMENTS FROM A CONFESSIONAL

by Jeff Bernstein

"Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It has been three weeks since my last confession. Father, I have committed a great sin against my family and my lord. This weekend I became a philanderer."

"Spare no detail, my son, and your soul will be cleansed."

"I don't know, Father, this is pretty bad."

"No sin is too great if you are truly repentant. Don't be afraid, my son."

"Well, Father, it all started Saturday night when my wife asked me to go get some donuts so we'd have them for Sunday breakfast. I said okay and went down to my car, but I forgot my keys, so —"

"My son, don't be concerned with the background what of your sins."

"Well, I went to Dunkin' Donuts. It was late and I was the only customer. There was a young blonde girl working behind the register. I was trying to figure out whether to get three jelly donuts, three chocolate crullers, and three bavarian cream, or three jelly —"

"The girl, my son. What about the girl?"

"Well, Father . . ."

"Yes, yes, come come, my son. Don't fear!"

"Well, I finally decided on three jelly, four chocolate crullers, and five bavarian cream."

"My son, God is willing to forgive those willing to confess their sins. You must remember He has already witnessed your every action. It is now up to you to confess and show your good conscience and remorse, so out with it. The girl!"

"Well, father, she was wearing a very short skirt and she purposely bent over exaggeratedly when she went to get the chocolate crullers. I could see her firm . . . uh . . . well . . . uh, you know."

"Go on, my son. Purify, purge, and sanctify yourself."

"Behind, yes, behind. Well, she turned around, winked, and licked her lips. Overcome by lust, I jumped over the counter and ripped open her Dunkin' Donuts dress and"

"Absolved."

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