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The Forum: Spring 2001

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Dan Lucy

Tornado Watch

By late afternoon
conditions were pronounced

optimal—the syrupy air, the opposing
winds, each intent on the other.

A collision unasked,
Unavoidable; a bald sky

gone passionate. Lightning pirouettes,
thunder applauds. A violent

romance, this storm,
an atmospheric orgasm.

Such winds always electrify. The prairie
night turns furious and tropical

as the funnel dances
La Sylphide, a bellowing

ballerina. The local siren wails
like a colicky newborn.

* * *

Channel 11 acts as instinct;
a blonde instructs calmly what to do:

*garage the car, bring in the potted
plants, bolt doors, avoid windows. Take shelter*

*in the deepest part of your home,
behind your bulkiest possessions,*

*the heaviest things you own.
If you have a basement, a basement will do,*

*though its walls are musty as a lovebed.
Seek the deep freeze in the far corner.*

* * *

Leave the wind to comb the trees over
like thinning hair.

Leave the rain to firecracker
the empty streets.

Leave the sky to hail its stones,
being without sin.

Stay in.
Wait it out.
Stay in.

* * *

Soon enough the sky
will bleed its rainbow. Following
such ferocity: inevitable indigo.

Timothy Gerlach

On the Other Side of the Counter

Rarely in life do we get to experience being put in the place of a person in a different social class. I was given such an opportunity recently when I was invited by my flight instructor to go to a local homeless shelter and volunteer for the dinner shift. When he asked, I was apprehensive, in the sense that I had not volunteered like this before. I said yes to it almost right away; I had nothing to do with my time other than send some e-mails, and this was a great opportunity to enjoy a new experience. So around 4:30 or so, Peter and his friend Gretchen picked me up, and we headed off to our destination, a homeless shelter located in downtown Grand Forks.

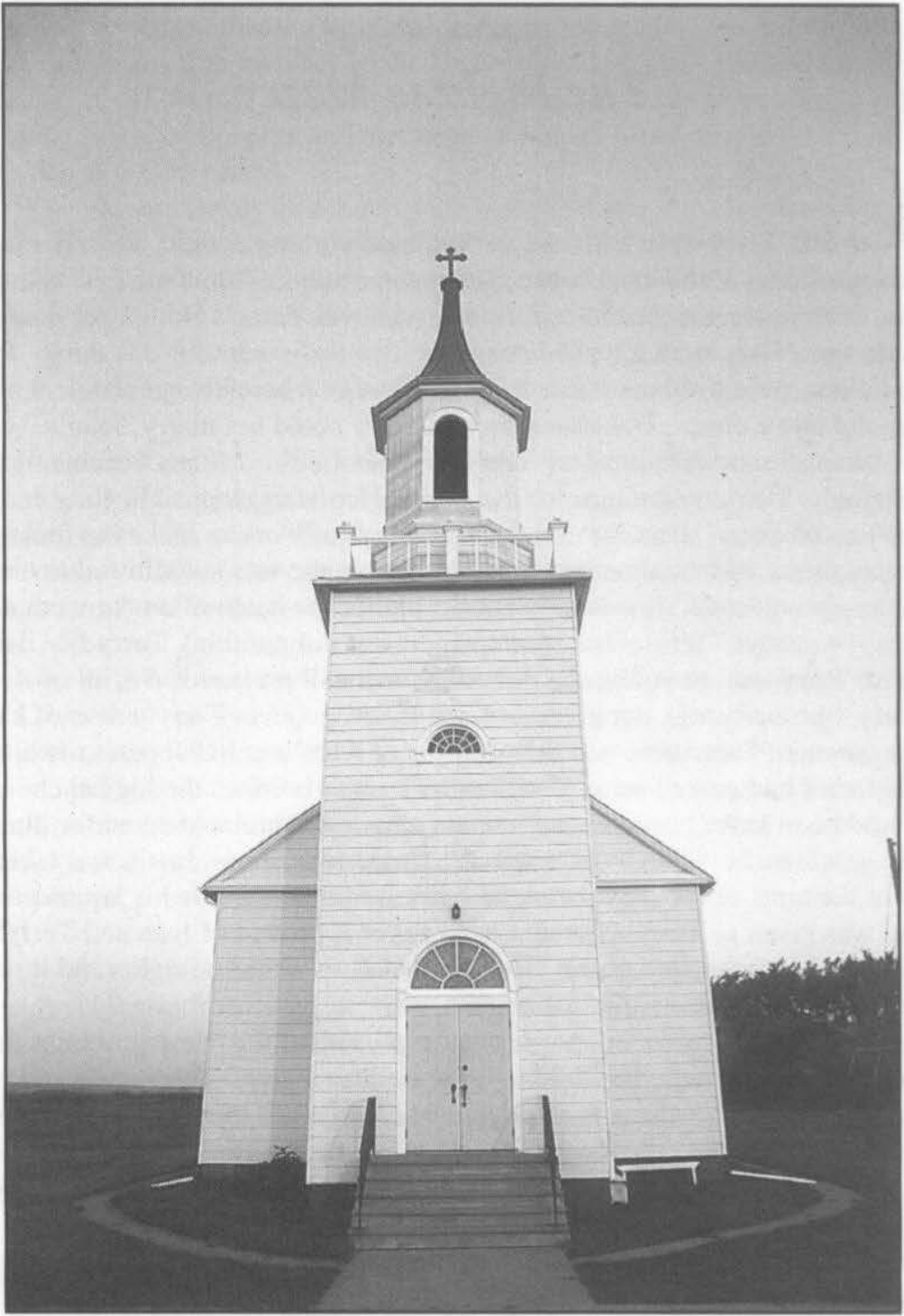
When we arrived there, we were greeted by the woman who was working in the kitchen for the evening's dinner. At the moment she was making a very, very, large helping of mashed potatoes. In fact, it was the largest amount of mashed potatoes that I have ever seen in my entire life. We introduced ourselves and asked what we could do to help. She said that she would see if there was anything, as she continued moving quickly around the kitchen, getting things set up for the incoming dinner crowd. I felt rather bad as she ran back and forth getting the food ready, as if I was just a spectator, so we asked if we could do anything else and once she got all the food out, she showed us the procedure for dishing out food. That evening's dinner consisted of leftovers donated by a local church: pork chops, chicken patties and crispy drumsticks, spinach, corn, beans and, of course, the infamous mashed potatoes. Pete, Gretchen and I poised ourselves at our stations, Pete with his potato scoop, me with my tongs, and Gretchen with the ladle. The dinner went well, and the rest of the details are unimportant compared to a couple of events that transpired in the two hours I was there.

When we first arrived a woman by the name of Marcy came in to the kitchen and struck up a conversation. She lived at the shelter with about 15-20 other local homeless men and women. Eccentric is the word I would choose to best describe her. As we stood there waiting for something to do, she was telling us about a ghost that she said she had seen around the building. As she explained, the shelter was formerly a hospital and she conveyed that the spirits of those who died there still inhabited their former home. My first thought was, wow, this woman is crazy, as most outsiders would most likely view her. Yet, as her story continued, I could not help

but think that she was saner than many of the people I know, because she was genuine. To think, this woman was poor, unemployed and homeless, yet she was so pleasant and kind to us. One has to admire that type of attitude; as she was leaving she mentioned that she was going to be baptized the following day. What a special woman, to still continue her journey of discovery, despite the obstacles placed in front of her.

Perhaps the moment that most impacted me was when, through the dinner line, came a woman I had seen before. Where had I seen her? She works at the dining center where I eat every day. For a brief moment, I was on the other side of the counter; I was serving her dinner. To see the types of people who came in to eat was impressive, people from all different walks of life, age and gender. When I looked out at the 30 or so people eating their dinners, I could not help but contemplate where they have been and what led them to come here. Some were mentally handicapped, some were couples, and others were elderly. Why did they end up here? Did they lose their money on a bad farming crop? Were they uneducated? Were they laid off, with no other way of getting a job? I did not know the answers, and I hope that I will never have to find them out myself.

Visiting a place such as this allowed me to take stock of what I have and how privileged many of us actually are, to be able to choose where we are going in life. It also frustrates me, when I see my peers squandering their education and their opportunities to go party or have fun at the expense of their future. The woman at the shelter explained that she has a monthly budget of 1,000 dollars a month and has to feed some 60 people a night. It does not take a math expert to see the disparity that the shelter has to work with. I am not proposing that we put more funding into our homeless programs, I merely propose to all who have the opportunity, take a couple hours out of their evening and volunteer at a shelter, you will be surprised at how inspirational it can be. As I left the kitchen after dinner and clean-up, one of the people living there said, "God bless you and thank you, you are very kind." I felt like I had truly earned my dinner that evening by helping someone else in need get a meal. It was and is one of the most satisfying feelings one can feel. Sometimes the simplest things in life are the hardest to learn.



Jason Signalness

Chris Pieske

The Right to Marry

Jean and Terry were a loving, caring, hardworking couple. Jean was a vice-president at the local bank. Terry was a stay-at-home mother, taking care of their three-year-old son, Justin, who was Terry's from a previous marriage. They were a typical American family, except for one thing. Jean and Terry were lesbians. One day Terry was in a horrible car accident and slipped into a coma. Because Jean and Terry could not marry, Jean's health insurance did not cover Terry's medical bills. Money became tight. Suddenly, Terry took a turn for the worse. Her heart stopped beating and she passed away. Jean had to take a week off of work to make the funeral preparations, but the time was unpaid because she was not allowed to use bereavement leave. It was only applicable for the death of an "immediate family member," a role that Jean's supervisor did not think Terry fit. Because Terry was so young she did not have a will prepared. So, all of Terry's property was not given to Jean, it was given to Terry's next of kin, her parents. Then there was the question of what was to happen to Justin. His father had passed away shortly after he was born, so the logical choice would be to leave him with the woman who loved him and cared for him and in whose home he lived, correct? The answer is no. Justin was taken from the arms of the only parent he had ever known beside his late mother and was given to Terry's parents, who never approved of Jean and Terry's relationship in the first place. They denied Jean visitation rights and it was years before she ever saw Justin again.

The fictional account above illustrates some of the many problems associated with denying homosexuals the right to marry. There are many passionate individuals on both sides of this issue and there are many arguments, valid and invalid, both for and against the legalization of same-sex marriages. I will present some of these arguments as an explanation of how I, a conservative, Christian, heterosexual man, have become a proponent for the legalization of same-sex marriage.

By virtue of the fact they are not allowed to marry, homosexuals are denied many economic and political rights that heterosexual couples take for granted. The Supreme Court of Hawaii defines marriage as "a state-conferred legal-partnership status, the existence of which gives rise to a multiplicity of rights and benefits." According to a Hawaiian commission, banning same-sex marriage cuts them off from health and retirement bene-

fits, life insurance, income tax, estate tax, wrongful-death benefits, and spousal and dependent support. That means law-abiding, tax-paying Americans are being denied benefits, just because they are attracted to people of the same sex, that are available to other Americans. As Barney Frank, an openly gay member of the United States House of Representatives, put it, "If we pay taxes, if we work, we simply want to be able to get the same financial benefits and the same responses other people do." I believe that is a fair request.

When homosexuals do not have the right to marry they are denied another right that most people do not think of, the right to divorce. There is no set of legal rules for a homosexual couple to divide up the income and property brought by each party in a relationship when that relationship ends. Also, the end of a relationship lacks the finality that legal divorce brings. As one gay attorney said, "We're left out there to twirl around in pain."

Jonathan Rauch, in his article "For Better or Worse?," states the two main benefits of marriage in our society are domesticating men and providing caregivers. He says, "Both purposes are critical to the functioning of a humane and stable society, and both are much better served by marriage . . . than by any other institution." Firstly, marriage, no doubt, domesticates men. Most men go through a period of "sowing their wild oats," then find a partner with whom they want to "settle down" and spend the rest of their life. Then they are given the title of "husband." It is a sign of maturity, a rite of passage. That man has become an adult, has committed to another person, and is now "off the market," that is if he is heterosexual. We do not allow homosexual men the ability to make that extra commitment in return for that special title and recognition. As for Rauch's second purpose for marriage, providing caregivers, he says:

If marriage has any meaning at all, it is that, when you collapse from a stroke, there will be at least one other person whose 'job' is to drop everything and come to your aid; or that when you come home after being fired by the postal service there will be someone to persuade you not to kill the supervisor.

This is bolstered by the evidence that, according to U.S. News & World Report, "Heterosexual partners bound by law to care for one another are less likely to ask for government assistance when one partner becomes ill or loses a job." It would only make sense that homosexual marriage partners would follow the same trends. In addition to legally binding people to care for each other, marriage creates kinship. If someone falls ill or loses his/her job, oftentimes his/her spouse's family will feel a desire and need to care for that person. Marriage creates an entire network of caregiv-

ers that a casual or non-sanctioned relationship cannot.

The arguments against same-sex marriage are many, but I believe they can be refuted under close examination. The most ardent argument against same-sex marriage is that it violates the laws of every major religion, that homosexuality is a sin, so it should not be sanctioned. The Bible pretty clearly states its stance on homosexuality. "In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion." The Bible also says:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

It is fairly evident that Christianity views homosexuality as sin. The question remains, though, does that matter? The Bill of Rights provides for separation of church and state. Many of our laws are based on the laws that come from our Judeo-Christian tradition, but many are not. If we are in the business of outlawing sins, then adultery, divorce, lying, and certainly abortion should also be outlawed. You cannot have it both ways, outlawing one because it is a sin but allowing others. The question of legalized same-sex marriage is a civil one, not a religious one. Churches and synagogues cannot be forced to change their doctrine or to perform same-sex unions inside their walls, but civil marriages should be allowed.

What is the purpose for marriage? Some say that the basic purpose for marriage is to foster procreation. Because a homosexual union cannot biologically produce a child, same-sex marriages should not be allowed. Is that the view of the law, though? In June 1965 the United States Supreme Court, in the case of *Griswold v. Connecticut*, struck down a Connecticut law that prohibited the use of contraceptives by married couples. Through this ruling the Supreme Court stated that, in the eyes of the law, procreation is not a necessary aspect of or purpose for marriage. If procreation were necessary for marriage sterile people would not be allowed to marry, women who have passed through menopause would not be allowed to marry, and couples would be required to indicate their intent, or lack thereof, to have children before a marriage license would be issued. Obviously these practices do not take place, so procreation cannot be used as an argument against same-sex marriage.

A homosexual union cannot biologically produce a child. That is a fact. It is also a fact that there are millions of children that are looking for

loving families to adopt them. In this instance same-sex marriage would be functional for society by providing orphans and children given up for adoption with families. The argument over whether gay couples should raise children is one for another day; I will say this, though: I believe that having two loving, caring, nurturing parents, no matter what sex they are, is preferable to having no parents at all or being shipped from foster home to foster home. We should have the best interests of children in mind.

Another argument against the legalization of same-sex marriage is that it threatens the institution of traditional marriage. James Q. Wilson, in his article "Against Homosexual Marriage," wrote:

It would make more sense to ask why an alternative to marriage should be invented and praised when we are having enough trouble maintaining the institution at all . . . I suspect such a move would call even more seriously into question the role of marriage at a time when the threats to it, ranging from single-parent families to common divorces, have hit record highs.

Let us look at Wilson's first point. How is same-sex marriage an alternative to traditional marriage? I agree with Andrew Sullivan when he says, "There's precious little evidence that straights could be persuaded by any law to have sex with—let alone marry—someone of their own sex." If same-sex marriage were to be legalized, I, as a heterosexual man, would not run out and marry another man just because I could. That is just plain ridiculous. So, I have yet to see how gay marriage is an alternative to straight marriage. Also, I do not see the connection between single-parent families, common divorces, and same-sex marriages. I think it is an absurd notion that a large number of people would decide to divorce their spouses just because homosexuals were given the right to marry. In the same way, I can find no direct link between the legalization of same-sex marriage and the decision of a woman to start a family on her own or a man to leave his wife and kids, creating a single-parent family. Divorce and single-parent families are a threat to the traditional family, but the link that Wilson tries to draw between them and same-sex marriage is simply not there.

In his article titled "For Better or Worse?," Jonathan Rauch points out another commonly used argument against same-sex marriage, "Perhaps it is enough simply to say that marriage is as it is and should not be tampered with." However, Rauch provides his own refutation of that argument, "It implies that no social reforms should ever be undertaken. Indeed, no laws should be passed." Also, as E.J. Graff points out in his article, "Retying the Knot," traditional marriage is not even truly traditional:

Very little about marriage is historically consistent enough to be "traditional." That it involves two people? Then forget the patriarch Jacob, whose two wives and two concubines produced the head of the twelve tribes. That it involves a religious blessing? Not early Christian marriages, before marriage was a sacrament. That it is recognized by law? Forget centuries of European prole "marriages" conducted outside the law, in which no property was involved. That it's about love, not money? So much for centuries of negotiation about medieval estates, bride-price, morning gift and dowry.

So, if we are to keep tradition for tradition's sake, parents should arrange marriages, and my wife should be considered my property, along with my many slaves. I am sure that no one in his or her right mind wants that. The concept of marriage has changed and evolved over the years and the legalization of same-sex marriage would be just another step in that constant process.

I will touch shortly on the financial issue of same-sex marriage, for I believe it is of minimal importance when compared with the greater social arguments for and against gay marriage. The June 2000 issue of the National Tax Journal reported that the legalization of same-sex marriage would provide the federal government with an increase in income tax revenue of between \$0.3 billion and \$1.3 billion, "with the likely impact toward the higher range of the estimates." The study does not indicate how that increased revenue would be counteracted by increases in Medicare, Social Security, and other government benefits for married couples; but, as stated earlier, married couples are less likely to ask for government assistance when one becomes ill or loses a job. So, the federal government could possibly still see an increase in revenue by the legalization of same-sex marriage, or the federal treasury could feel no impact at all. Of course, any revenue increase would be eliminated with the elimination of the marriage tax penalty, as advocated by both of this year's 2000 presidential candidates.

One of the most controversial arguments against same-sex marriage, especially marriage between two men, is that gay men are not either able or willing to provide the commitment needed for a successful marriage. Simply put, they are too promiscuous. Besides this being a dangerous generalization and stereotyping of a diverse group of people, there is statistical evidence that points to the contrary. In 1994 the gay-rights magazine The Advocate conducted a poll of its male readership asking if they would marry if given the legal right. The results of the poll indicated that 85% of respondents answered either "yes" or "maybe," which means that only 15% of the

male readership of The Advocate would be opposed to marriage. In fact, nearly two-thirds of the respondents said they would definitely marry. That does not seem like the attitude of a community devoted to promiscuity. In fact, in Denmark gay marriages are more successful than their straight counterparts, with the divorce rate for same-sex marriages in the decade after legalization being lower than that of opposite-sex marriages. If we work under the assumption that gay men are naturally more prone to promiscuity than straight men, then marriage would be a natural device to curb those urges. Marriage not only sanctions but also promotes monogamy. When a person has entered into the legal contract of marriage there are very real consequences for adultery. These include possible loss of property and income through divorce and the public knowledge of one's infidelity through court records. Usually when a person decides to "settle down" and get married, they do settle down. There is no reason to believe that a homosexual would act otherwise.

Possibly the most powerful argument against the legalization of same-sex marriage is that if gay marriage were allowed, what legal and moral basis would we have to deny other forms of marriage such as polygamy and incest? As the conservative commentator William Bennett said in his article "Leave Marriage Alone," "Broadening the definition of marriage to include same-sex unions would stretch it almost beyond recognition—and new attempts to expand the definition still further would surely follow." Two simple arguments against polygamous and incestuous marriages would be they are simply immoral and they stray too far from the traditional idea of marriage. The same-sex marriage advocate, though, cannot use these arguments because they are the same arguments used against same-sex marriage. Andrew Sullivan provides a logical argument. He makes the case that homosexuality is not related to polygamy and incest. He says that homosexuality and heterosexuality are states of being. There are people that are only attracted to members of the opposite sex and there are people that are only attracted to members of the same sex. No one is attracted exclusively to groups of people or to their own relatives. So, polygamy and incest are actions. It is okay for the government to outlaw certain actions, but we should not discriminate against someone for who they are. Also, polygamy and incest would not benefit society. Looking at it from purely legal and political standpoint, polygamy would cause problems. Would a polygamist and his two wives all file taxes jointly? If one wife was to request a divorce, how would the property be divided up and how would child custody issues be settled? Would she be entitled to a portion of the income of all of the other people involved in the marriage or just one? Would the other members of the marriage be considered parents for each child, even if they were not biological parents? In the case of incest, legalization of incestuous marriage would destroy the traditional relation-

ships between relatives. The relationship between a mother and son cannot be healthy if they are viewed as potential lovers. The same goes for a father and daughter, brother and sister, or aunt and nephew. Incest truly does threaten the traditional family because it fundamentally changes family roles and relationships. Homosexuals are already members of functional, healthy families, so they are not a threat to the family as we know it, as some critics have said.

I will offer one final argument for the legalization of same-sex marriage: it is the right thing to do. I have gay friends and it confuses and upsets me when I think that I can enter into the bond of marriage with someone I love, but they cannot. I am looking hopefully and anxiously toward the day when I can marry the person that I love, but it is a desire that I take for granted, because there are those that are not allowed to take part in that. Is my sincerity and love for another person any better than theirs? I do not think so. Hannah Arendt spoke of the importance of the right to marry in the context of the Civil Rights Movement and the ending of anti-miscegenation laws, but her words are applicable to this debate also. She said in her article "Reflections on Little Rock":

Even political rights, like the right to vote, and nearly all other rights enumerated in the Constitution, are secondary to the inalienable human rights to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence; and to this category the right to home and marriage unquestionable belongs.

The right to marriage is a basic inalienable right and it is an injustice that it is being denied to homosexuals. Legalizing same-sex marriage, to put it bluntly, just makes sense. I say it is time to end this discrimination against homosexuals. In the immortal words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Amy Gieske

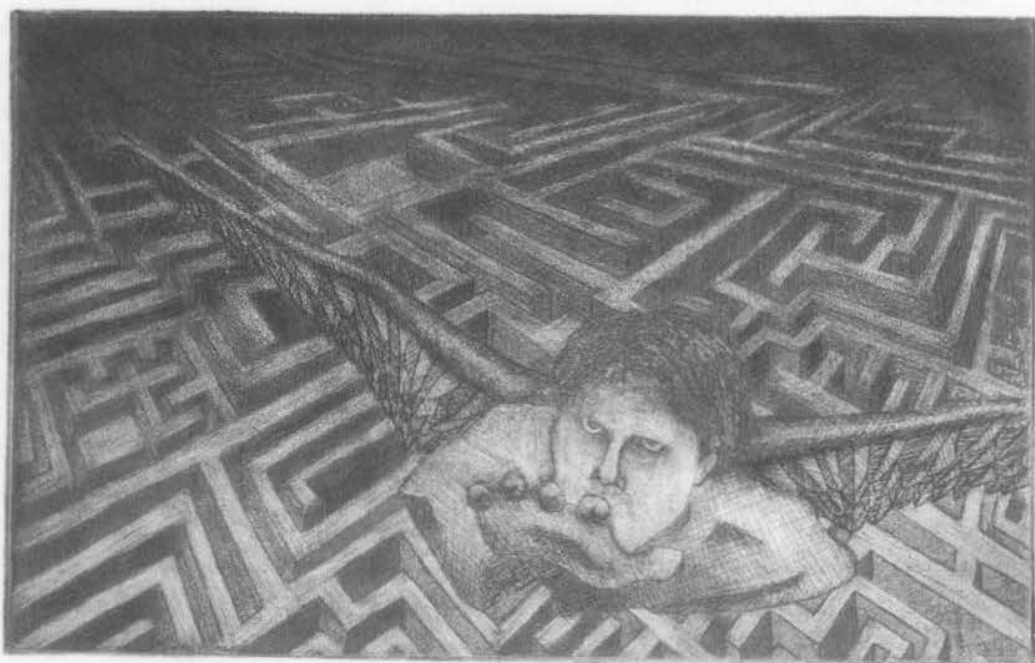
Orchestra of Fireworks

I step carefully out of our family's faithful station wagon, and instantly, the sounds of the fireworks rush at me and turn into a full-fledged orchestra. The fireworks bursting in the sky provide the percussion, some noisily booming and others crackling like cellophane being crumpled up. Fireworks being set off from the ground are the brass and strings section, whining and whistling on their way up. The delighted spectators provide the wind instruments when they "ooh" and "ahh" over the splendid colors and designs. My dad walks around the car, his feet crunching the gravelly dirt, to stand by my side. He gives Layna, my invaluable chocolate-brown and black guide dog an absentminded pat on her head as he looks worriedly at me. Layna whines deep in her throat, feeling anxiety at the crowd of people congregated on the grass. I have ambivalent thoughts. Why am I here, if I can't even see the "wondrous" colors of all the fireworks? There is no reason for me to say, "ooh," and "ahh," like the rest of the crowd is doing right now.

The odor of sulfur is so thick that I can almost taste it as it drifts over to me on the cool breeze of the night air. My dad puts his comforting arm around my shoulder, and I grip the end of Layna's soft, comfortable leash in my sweaty palm.

Going to these fireworks is a big step for me. You see, when I was a little kid, I was at a fireworks show when one exploded too close to the ground. My precious life had become a permanent darkness after that tragic night.

I had tried going to fireworks after that night to no avail. I would always get scared as soon as I heard the first fireworks explode with its noisy boom. Then, Mom and Dad would have to take me home. Either that, or I stayed in the car, covering up my ears to block out the sound. This time though, I am going to conquer my fear of fireworks. I created a plan for tonight; I'm going to enjoy these fireworks like I would enjoy listening to an orchestra. My imagination will take care of that.



Josh Tangen

Jason Signalness

A Vindication for Maggie

A man realizes his mistake, and makes things right

I can't decide between the tuna melt and the salad. They're both good.

"Are you ready to order, ma'am? Or would you like more time?" I look up from my menu and see the waitress.

"No, I'll have the tuna melt and a Diet Coke, please." She smiles, scribbles on her pad, grabs my menu, and walks off toward the kitchen.

I never like eating alone on my lunch break. It's almost like work, boring. I look around the café and notice some truckers smoking cigarettes, drinking their coffee. Some classic rock is playing softly from smoke-stained speakers in the ceiling. I glance out the window and see a few cars drive by and an old woman, pushing a cart of groceries toward the apartments down the street. I take my eyes off the old woman and look at signs and people. A man catches my eye. He is standing across the street, doing nothing. He looks very odd with his dirty, torn, black T-shirt and faded, blue baseball cap. His hands are neatly folded in front of him. But what really gets my attention is his face. He is grinning and staring. He is staring at me.

"Here you go, ma'am. One tuna melt and a Diet Coke. Can I get you anything else?" The waitress startles me, and I jump a little. The man's staring is beginning to make me nervous. Maybe I am just being paranoid.

"No, that should be all. Thank you," I reply to the waitress, and I turn to my food. I can feel his eyes on me. I both fear and crave to peek, to see if he is still staring at me. I turn my head just a bit and see him, from the corner of my eye, in the same spot, gazing directly at me. He must be watching me! He gives a slight nod, as if to acknowledge my peek. This is beginning to scare me. I quickly eat half of my food, open my purse and take out six dollar bills to pay for the food and tip, and lay them on the table.

I stand up, put my coat on, and turn to the door. Through the large front window of the café, I see the man make a quick movement. He is crossing the street! Now I am getting concerned.

I begin walking quickly to my car, digging for my keys. He is getting closer. I can't find my keys! Where are they? I pull on the handle. The car door opens. I don't think. I just get in. I continue to dig for my keys, quickly glancing at the man, who continues his advance from across the

street. Where are my keys?

CLICK!

The door locks click down, but I hadn't touched anything. The man is not in sight. Where is he? I turn my head left, and quickly right, scanning for any sign of movement. I check the rear view mirrors. Nothing. No sight of the man. I need to get out of here! I pull upon the lock, but it jumps back into the locked position, and won't budge. I'll have to drive out of here. But where are my keys? Ah, yes. Here they are. I turn the ignition, but it won't start. I try again and again, but no luck. I don't know what to do. So I sit in silence, scanning the street, which is strangely vacant of pedestrians. Only a car is to be seen, speeding by, too fast to help.

Tap, Tap, Tap.

I jump and turn, to see the man tapping a key on the passengers' window. I can see him close up now. He is grinning. His eyes are baggy and bloodshot. Then he lowers the key from the window and uses it to open the door. He slides into the seat. I am terrified, and I start shaking. Maybe I should try the door again. I begin slowly moving my left arm from my lap toward the door handle.

"You really must be more careful with your keys, miss. I saw you keep an extra key under the seat, and you don't always lock the doors. Oh, and don't bother with the door, you can't open it."

"Get out! Get out! What do you want?" I scream. His grin instantly turns to a menacing frown. His head tilts forward slightly, but his eyes remain focused on me, in a horrifying gaze. He raises his hand, and swings at me. My head bangs against the car window. Maybe someone heard it. Maybe that waitress saw it through that large window. I hope.

"This is rather unpleasant. Please do not be so unkind. I do not want your money or car, and I certainly don't want to rape you. I just have something personal that needs to be resolved."

He is looking at me again, in a strange way, as if inspecting me.

"You are the one. Yes, you are perfect. It's almost uncanny, actually. I have chosen well."

Now I am terrified, and I want to scream. As I take in my breath to do it, I see his hand move quickly toward me, and I hear a sound like racing electricity. I feel my muscles tense, smell ozone, and his face fades to blackness.

As I come to, I realize I can't move. My arms and legs are tied, and there's a gag in my mouth. I'm on a sofa, facing a television, which is playing a news spot about a recent murder. The screen shows pictures of a body, covered by a blood-soaked quilt. Suddenly, the TV clicks off. I can't turn to see if the man is behind me, but I assume it must be him. I hear the sound of bottles rattling together, clanking noises. The sound is terrifying. What could it be? If I could only see what was going on. He

appears from behind me and sits on the floor in front of me, a bottle of whiskey in his hand. I realize, with a little relief, that it was bottles of alcohol making the noise.

"My girlfriend, Maggie. She was truly beautiful in every way," he spoke in slurred speech. "She had short, brown hair, and beautiful blue eyes, everything was perfect. We met at my friend's house, during a party. She was still attending high school then and had been brought to the party by a few of her friends. She got a little drunk, and we ended up sleeping together. She decided it was time to leave home, and she moved in with me. She kept telling me it was only because she couldn't go home. She never told me why. Personally, I like to think it was I that kept her here. We made love almost every night. We went to movies, restaurants. We spent all of our time together. The two of us were a perfect couple. I loved her. Then the bitch—" he breaks off, stands, and paces the room a little. He passes from my view, going behind me again. I hear a slight whimper, a little cry almost. Then the bottle flies across the room, smashing against the wall. The loud noise startles me, and I begin to cry.

"She left me. Or rather, she made the attempt," he said, once again in front of me. His eyes are very red from the tears. "She said she couldn't stand my violent nature, whatever that is supposed to mean. We made a living robbing C-Stores. I think her decision to leave had something to do with the last robbery, when the employees tried to be heroes. She ended up killing the cashier. She was very nervous, I suppose. I can understand. It was her first murder. I congratulated her, and showed her the customer that I had killed with the hammer. It was a great night. But I think it upset her a bit."

I continue to cry. I am terrified, and can't stop. I still don't know what this man wants.

He picks up some papers from a table and looks at them. "Look what I did to her! I killed her."

He holds a paper in front of me. It's a photograph of a woman lying in a pool of blood, tied much like I am. She has cuts and wounds all over her body, and is stripped of her clothing. Then he shows me a newsprint photograph. It is the same scene from the television. I squirm, pulling at the ropes. Then I notice her face. Her face is my face. "Maggie" looks exactly like me. I try to scream, to break free of the ropes. He sees my concern, and realizes I notice the resemblance. "Oh, yes. See. You are perfect. You're an exact match. You look just like my Maggie. The problem is, I killed Maggie, and she went to hell. She was not a good girl. It was that murder that did it. I am sure. She didn't have a chance to repent. She cannot have gone to heaven, but I have been watching you. You attend church every week. You love your kids, your husband. You are an angel in comparison with Maggie." He pauses.

"I hate my life. It should be ended; I deserve hell. Maggie didn't. I'm the reason she went there. I can't die knowing I did such a horrible thing. I want to commit suicide, but I can't. Not yet."

He walks behind me again, and I hear rattling bottles. Then I hear another noise, the sound of metal. Could it be the sound of kitchen knives being jostled about in a drawer? I'm straining to pull free of the ropes and I feel them give a little. I pull harder, but my hands are very sore from the strain. I try to twist my head around, to see what he is doing. Only his back is visible, nothing else.

He reappears in front of me, this time with two knives, a bottle of pills, and another bottle of Jack Daniels. He sets the knives down, tosses about half of the pills into his mouth, and takes a big drink of the whiskey.

"O.K. Time to get this going. I've got about a half an hour until the drugs end me. I believe that I must do a good deed before I go. I sent Maggie to hell. I am sure that by killing you, I will send you to heaven. I will break even, the way I see it. I will not have to think about Maggie anymore. I will be vindicated for that horrible crime. I can sit in hell thinking only about the victims I didn't know personally. It will be much more pleasant."

My arms may be bleeding from the ropes. I can't tell. I have lost feeling in them, so I pull even harder at the restraints, which seem like they could be giving a little, but I am not sure of that, either. I yell for help, but the gag keeps my plea muffled, too quiet to be heard.

He suddenly doubles over, falling to the floor. "It appears—" he breaks off, grimacing with some apparent pain. "That I took too many pills. I'll have to be quick."

Maybe he will die before he can harm me. A glimmer of hope makes my heart jump. That hope quickly fades as he manages to grab one of the knives and stagger toward me. Using the knife, he slices my shirt open, and feels my breast. His breath reeks of alcohol. "Perfect match in almost every way." I scream inside, terrified.

Then I feel it. The first cut. It is horrible, the metal parting the flesh. I can see my blood spilling on my pants. Now the next cut comes, and my head begins to feel light. Cut after cut I watch, yelling into the gag that bottles my plea. He isn't just killing me. He is cutting me up first, like he did Maggie. He stumbles and falls to the floor. The pain is so terrible. I can hardly hold my head up from the loss of blood. The pain is terrible. I hope I don't die this way, slowly.

"No! I've got to finish," he mumbles, on all fours before me. He picks up the second knife and staggers toward me. This time, he brings his hand back, preparing to strike. I am quite sure this is the end. My poor family, I hope they don't see my body here. Not like this. The blade strikes my chest and he falls onto the floor. I can't feel anything now. Please, God.



Kelly Jane Swenseth

Tiffany Hinderer

Lord Galvin

Looking back now it's scary, because you see at the beginning it wasn't, it just seemed out of place. Things were so different then; my world wasn't as elegant as it is now, it might even have been considered meager. I lived in a small house on the edge of the village Dovenkof. My father was away most of the time, and my mother and I didn't have anyone to help us with the house and land. Or rather, there was no one until he came.

He seemed different, like a hawk among doves. He was young, but very much a man—at least that's what he seemed to be. He was tall, with broad shoulders that were used to hard labor. He had hair as black as a raven and eyes like the darkest slate.

He just appeared one day, walking toward the village along the road we lived on. It was very chilly that day—as are most days just before winter—but he wore no coat or gloves, yet he didn't seem chilled at all. That should have been my first clue that he was to be eluded.

When he got to our house he called out, "Hello, the house!" The fact that he called out—a custom commonly used where we lived—seemed to declare him a good man, at least in our eyes.

My mother called out the proper return greeting, "How go you, stranger? Come and tell us your news." So he entered our home, and letting him enter was our gravest mistake.

He sat down and took some ale with my mother. I served them; since I was not betrothed or married, I could not partake of refreshments with any man outside my family. As they drank and talked, he asked my mother where my father was and why he had not fixed anything recently. Mother, who normally is offended when someone remarks on our threadbare living conditions, started to cry and after looking at me, turned and told him, "I just found out that my husband died of the plague a few weeks ago, and we have no one to help us." Mother had not told me: In shock, I dropped my tray and the ale pitcher broke, cutting my foot in the process. The ale dribbled out of the pieces and mingled with the blood from my foot.

Then the man, who called himself Galvin, reached down and picked up a piece of the pitcher. Looking at my mother, he said, "I could stay and help you, but you must invite me in," and crushed the piece in his hand. Some of his blood dripped down to mingle with my own.

When he said that I froze, as a child I had learned from the wise woman that witches would help people but must be asked in first. I looked up and straight into his eyes. He must have seen that I knew what he was, because he smiled and said, "Go and care for your foot, Kiara. Then clean up this mess." I got up and ran to the kitchen, bandaged my foot and grabbed our broom, then returned to the front room and cleaned up the mess. After I finished cleaning, I got more bandages and went to Galvin to care for his hand. When I went to bandage his hand, he looked at me and asked, "What are you going to do?"

"I need to bandage your hand. You cut it when you crushed that piece of the pitcher," was my answer, but it wasn't what I wanted to say. Somehow he was controlling me!

"But I haven't hurt my hand," he said, "and I didn't crush any of the pitcher. You are the one who was hurt." He was so detached, and sure enough, his hand wasn't cut.

My mother was watching me with troubled eyes. I suppose I was acting fairly strange, but I had no control over myself. Then I realized what he had made me do. No maiden ever tended a wounded man unless they were betrothed, and I had just claimed in front of my mother that he was hurt and that I would tend him. My face paled and I looked from my mother back to Galvin, he just looked at me, but in his eyes I could see that he knew what would now have to happen. I shook my head, aghast at my actions, knowing what had to be done, and he smiled.

I never knew that a smile could be so chilling, so evil, that it froze my bones. I knew then that he had planned it all; why he did, I have no idea, but he did. I also knew that my father had not died from the plague, it was something that Galvin had done; he was the reason my father was dead. I have no doubt that, had my father not died, this man—this Galvin—would not have come. But my father was dead, Galvin was here, and because he had manipulated my actions, I would be forced to marry him.

If I had had any other mother, she would have found a way to save me. But it was rumored that my mother was of a higher class than the other women in Dovenkof, that she was the youngest daughter of a foreign lord, but whatever her origins were, she followed the customs of our village down to the strictest letter. She either would not or could not stray from the boundaries of custom, so in this I knew I would have no help escaping from Galvin.

It was with this knowledge that I awoke to every morning for two fortnights. During this time my mother and I made my marriage gown, while Galvin tended to the house and informed the priest. For one fortnight before the ceremony was to take place, at the beginning of every mass the bans announcing our marriage were read, and every time my heart felt like it was being torn apart within my breast.

Finally, the night before my marriage arrived, and I could barely sleep. I needed to find some way out, but only one thing could stop this and that was if I announced that I wasn't a virgin. I was, but no one ever needed to know that. Suddenly, with that decision made I found that I could sleep.

Unfortunately, he somehow sensed what I planned to do. In my sleep I saw him, saw him as I'd never seen him before. He was dressed completely in black—boots, pants, shirt, gloves, and a cloak with silver lining—and he beckoned me come to him. Try as I might to resist, I couldn't and I found myself beside him. I was in a silk gown, black with trimmings of silver. He led me to a chair and sat me down, then he looked in my eyes, and with a voice like tempered steel told me, "Don't ever try to lie to me, or even to think of doing it. I shall always find out and punish you for it. I can sense you, sense your feelings, and while you may not believe me, your soul belongs to me." Then the dream faded and I awoke knowing that if I followed through on my plan that I would probably die.

The morning passed as preparations for the feast were completed, then it was time for me to dress in my gown and go to the church for the marriage mass. When I arrived, he was there waiting for me, he pulled me aside, and told me that if I tried to tell my lie that he would kill me. I knew then for sure that my dream had not been a dream, but a warning from him. The mass began, it seemed to last forever, but then it was time for the vows and he placed on my finger a ring of gold edged with silver. Never had I seen such a ring, but it was like a brand, marking me as his.

At the end of the mass, the village followed my bridegroom and me to my mother's home. It was here that they would enjoy a feast unlike any other, for Galvin had paid for it and gotten the finest cooks to prepare it. The foods were from a foreign land, the wine was the finest in our land, and the sweets were sweetened with real sugar instead of local honey. It was during this feast that my mother saw the wedding band upon my finger: she took me aside and told me the truth about her past. The rumor about her origins was true, and she said that the workmanship of the ring was that of her father's neighbor, the Lord of Gascon. Only the heir to the estate could use the type of ring Galvin gave me.

Galvin came up to us as we spoke and told us it was true, his father had wanted to him to marry a member of his neighbor's household, but none of the "silly, empty-headed flirts" that were my mother's nieces held any appeal to him. So, he set out with his knowledge of where the lost daughter was last seen and with the help of his magic found her and her only daughter.

After the feast he took me and we left Dovenkof and went to his home, where I have lived ever since. We received a letter from my mother telling us that my father had come home, the news that he was dead had been false—a ruse sent by Galvin to upset me, and only me. Since that time

Galvin has been kind but always there is something that he has kept back, and unless I discover and stop the evil that lurks in him, he may well destroy us all—I fear for the life of my unborn child. That is why I have taken the time to write this, so the truth may be known.

Numerous times he has worked magic of some kind, usually to the destruction of an enemy. He has forced me to give my blood in one such ceremony, saying that the magic in my blood would make the spell even more powerful. I don't know what he meant by that, I've never worked magic and no one else in my family has either. The night following that ceremony is the night that I conceived this child. I fear he may have forced some of his evil spirit into my womb. May this child never be subjected to the evil of its father's soul. May the world know the truth of its father.

My wife was a fool and I shall keep this as a memento to her spirit. I told her that if she ever even thought to defy me that she would be punished. Right now her life is in limbo, she will live but only until my heir is born. Then, I shall raise him, teach him what magic is for, and make sure that he shall obey my wishes and never try anything as foolish as his mother did.



Amy Gieske

Brie Black

Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy

Have you ever had a classmate that seemed to be sick all the time? Who was constantly in and out of hospitals? Whose mother was the warmest, most caring person you'd ever met? Perhaps beneath that loving surface, lurked a terrible psychological disorder—Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy. Today I would like to examine three main points of Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy: what it is, a classic case of it, and how to identify and deal with this terrible form of child abuse.

Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy is a psychological disorder in which parents deliberately jeopardize their children's health in order to satisfy their own overwhelming need for sympathy and attention. In some cases, these parents crave a perverse relationship with doctors or other hospital staff. Their child victim often ranges in age from birth to nine, and is often too young to talk. According to Hurting for Love: Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy, by Libow and Schreier, in more than 98% of MSBP cases, the perpetrator is a mother or female caretaker, ranging from twenty-five to forty years old. In the typical scenario, the perpetrator creates medical emergencies by inducing physical symptoms such as breathing abnormalities, false bleeding, claimed seizures, diarrhea, fever, rashes, and vomiting. These symptoms are usually caused by near suffocation, placement of blood, and injection or poisoning. In the May 30, 1998 edition of Self-Help Magazine, Dr. Marc Feldman stated that he knew of a case in which the mother scrubbed her child's skin with oven cleaner to cause a blistering rash that lasted for months. Perpetrators often take the victim to several different hospitals to prevent medical staff from noticing a pattern and try to establish a strong reputation, appearing to be the "perfect parent." The mother welcomes any painful and expensive treatment or testing done on her child and is very familiar with medical terminology. Even when test results are repeatedly negative, medical personnel often fail to notice that the symptoms disappear when the mother and child are separated. In the April 29, 1996 on-line edition of U.S. News by Shannon Brownlee, in a study of 200 Munchausen cases, 10% of the children died at their mothers' hands and those who survived suffered emotionally, often from post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms.

The Children's Hospital in St. Paul, MN and the FBI's Minneapolis

Division released Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy: Cases and Accounts in which several classic cases are outlined. JC, a 2 1/2 year old boy, suffered from asthma, severe pneumonia, mysterious infections, and sudden fevers. He was hospitalized 20 times in an eighteen month period. Doctors soon realized that JC's mother had been involved in the medical needs of an older sister who died due to a brain tumor twenty years prior. During her son's hospitalizations, the mother was obsessively involved in medical matters and hospital routines. When JC finally complained to a friend that his thigh hurt because his mother gave him shots, the authorities were called. When searching JC's home, investigators found medical charts, information, and hypodermic needles. It was also believed that the mother infected her son through the catheter doctors surgically inserted to give JC constant medication. JC was removed from the custody of his parents and has remained healthy. His mother denied any wrong doing until investigators produced evidence. Kathleen Bush, the mother of a poster girl for Hillary Clinton's campaign to reform health care, was charged with inducing her 8 year old daughter's ailments resulting in more than 200 hospitalizations, 40 surgeries, and the removal of the child's gall bladder, appendix, and much of her intestines. Bush is currently facing up to 45 years in prison for aggravated child abuse and fraud. Her attorneys are currently appealing her conviction.

Generally, the average length of time to establish a diagnosis of MSBP exceeds six months and often times a sibling has died of mysterious causes. Psychiatrist Marc Feldman of the University of Alabama stated in the April 29, 1996 on-line edition of U.S. News, that Munchausen mothers are accomplished liars who know what they are doing and conceal the horrific abuse their children endure. Munchausen Syndrome can be identified so that the perpetrator can be prosecuted. Investigators suspecting MSBP can find out if other siblings have died or been hospitalized, review medical, insurance, and family records, especially paying close attention to information about diagnosis, the victim and the perpetrator. Some warning signs are:

1. Diagnosis of symptoms that do not make clinical sense, consist of rare, multiple disorders, and result in repeated hospitalizations.
2. In the victim's recurrent illnesses, symptoms cease to exist without the presence of the perpetrator and do not respond to treatment.
3. Discrepancies exist between clinical findings and the view of the perpetrator, who welcomes painful medical procedures, is less concerned than the physician and is constantly at the victim's side.

Investigators may set up video surveillance in the hospital in accordance with state law and involve as few people as possible. Health care

providers are required by law in all fifty states to report concerns when suspecting MSBP. When convicted, the perpetrator receives a minimal prison sentence and extensive psychotherapy since virtually all MSBP parents have personality disorders.

Today I have examined what Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy is, a case of it, and how to identify and deal with it. According to the National Center of Child Abuse, Munchausen Syndrome by Proxy accounts for fewer than 1,000 of the more than 2.5 million child abuse cases a year. Although these cases can be hard to detect or diagnose, the number of MSBP cases is growing due to public awareness. Health care officials are still searching for a cure to this disorder but so far the only solution is to keep their eyes open and reach out to the victim—an innocent child.

Dan Lucy

Far from Eyes

Memorize
the shape

of my body
my faceless dance.

Bound marion-
ette, I

embody escape
for you who are

mesmerized
by the eyes of my chest.

What you don't see
while you stare

is that behind me
my limbs elongate

into ropes
of white lightning.



Tanya Alm

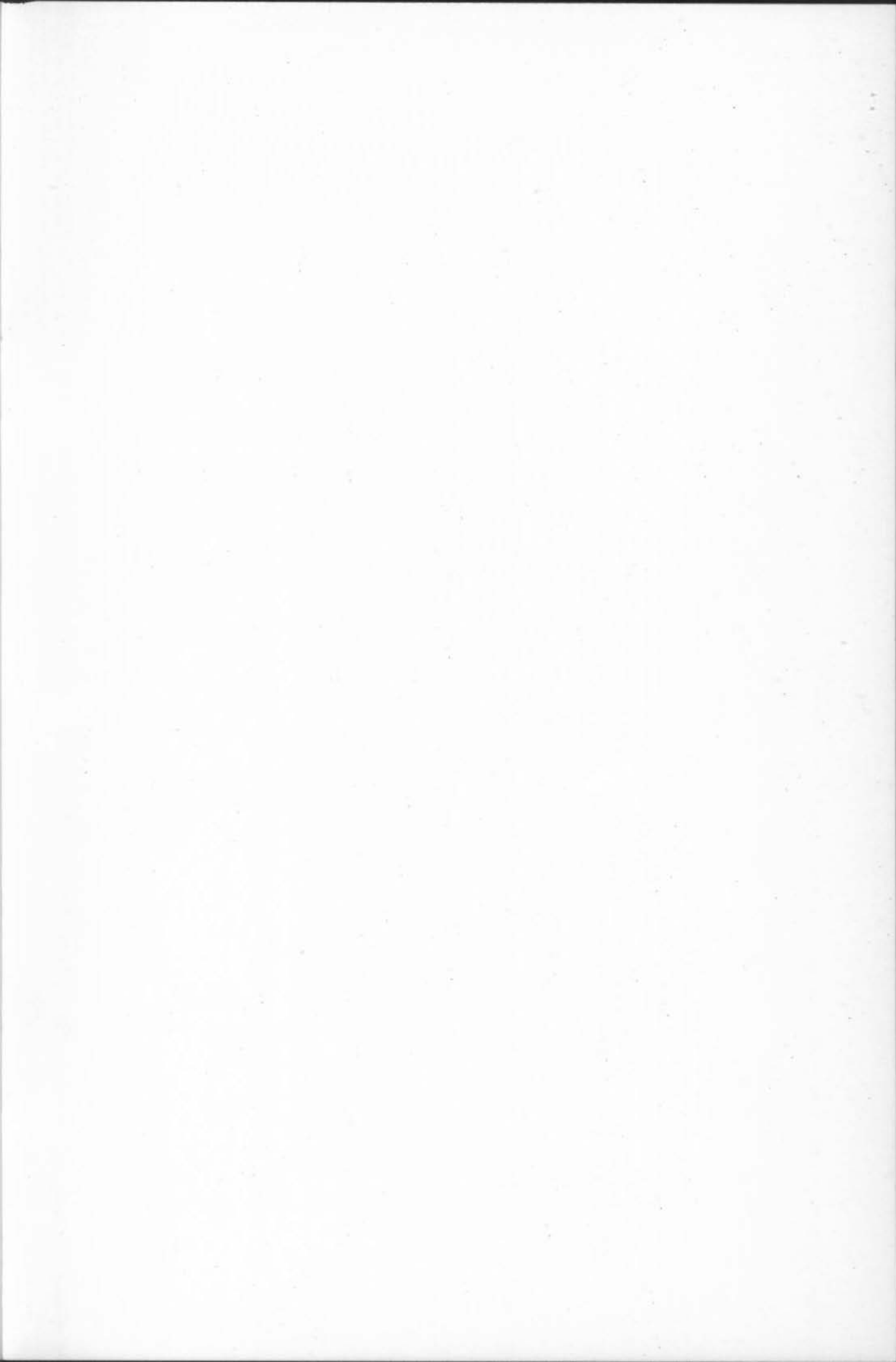
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