



Summer 2000

## The Forum: Summer 2000

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# the Forum

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## Contents

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Kelly Jane Swenseth<br>Painting                          | Cover |
| Daniel Lucy<br>Poetry, <i>Implosion</i>                  | 3     |
| Rebecca Gunderson<br>Essay, <i>What Side Are You On?</i> | 4     |
| Nicky Sailer<br>Fiction, <i>Shattered Promise</i>        | 7     |
| Jason Signalness<br>Photograph, <i>Stormtracks</i>       | 8     |
| Jessica Gunderson<br>Fiction, <i>Comets</i>              | 9     |
| Erik Hinzpeter<br>Essay, <i>Science and Religion</i>     | 12    |
| Steven Dennis<br>Fiction, <i>Wrongly Accused</i>         | 15    |
| Andrea Widdel<br>Drawing                                 | 17    |
| Justin Baesler<br>Poetry, <i>Re-Creation</i>             | 18    |
| Adam Paulson<br>Fiction, <i>The Scar</i>                 | 19    |
| Kelly Jane Swenseth<br>Chalk Drawing                     | 22    |
| Hannah Kramer<br>Essay, <i>Urban Life</i>                | 23    |
| Erika Butler<br>Essay, <i>The "Udder" Story</i>          | 26    |
| RoxAnne Moore<br>Poetry, <i>Changing Shores</i>          | 30    |
| Lucy Esberg<br>Oil painting                              | 31    |

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Daniel Lucy

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*Implosion*

A quarter-century old eyesore and so destroyed.  
Your concrete veins smoked and convulsed  
a split-second before you collapsed  
inward. Quite the sight—  
even gutted—and people crowded  
at a safe distance to see you release.  
When you came down, the debris  
of your last booming breath  
spread as far as it would.  
Your thunderous swan song  
shook the streets, as if to prove  
how colorless the skyline would be  
without you—how contained  
you actually were—one time,  
one time only—  
before your broken body dusted the streets,  
and people ran  
as they cheered—ran and cheered  
as you died. Just a building, whose  
only beauty was in its engineering.  
A building whose beauty was,  
as few men can claim, truly  
on the inside.

Rebecca Gunderson

---

## *What Side Are You On?*

A little nose and small fingers push up against the glass on the monkey cage. "How come the monkeys have hair missing, Momma? Aren't they supposed to be hairy? Why is that one sitting in the corner? He's a funny one, Momma. Look at the way he moves back and forth." This may be a typical scene in a zoo—the child asking all sorts of questions, the parent making up a silly excuse that even she doesn't believe.

As a child, I loved the zoo. All of the wonderful and mysterious animals that I had only seen in picture books were there for my viewing pleasure. I would stare at the scene in the cage in front of me, dumbfounded, until I was nudged onward by a time-conscious parent. Turning, I'd continue my walk down the winding, concrete path, mesmerized, and take in spectacles of the animal kingdom housed on either side.

Zoos, which are loved by everyone, bring parent and child together in the adventure of exploration. Many animals shown at zoos are exotic and a parent is able to comprehend the childlike wonder of seeing these animals for the first time. However, because of the excitement generated by viewing animals and the fact that most people who attend zoos have never seen the animals in their natural habitat, visitors don't suspect that the animals are being treated badly or are unhappy in their environment. A mistreated animal's cries for help may be misinterpreted as the sound of its laughter. It is easily assumed that the animals are acting the way they would even if they were in the wild when, in fact, their behavior is wholly abnormal.

As an outsider looking in, I never thought that zoos would fail to take care of the animals they had in the cages. Why would they mistreat the animals when the animals were what brought in money? Besides, all of the animals were unique and different; who would not want to take care of them? (I know, I wanted a pet tiger.) The cages were all authentic to the animal's natural habitat as far as I could tell. The animals were guaranteed their food and water everyday—what more, as a creature on earth, could they want?

Animals are complex and different from each other. This diversity means different kinds of food are needed to keep animals healthy. Obviously, a bird does not need the same kind of food that a hippo does. However, even animals that are from similar species also might need dissimilar kinds of foods—just because one animal looks like another does not mean



that they need the same things. For example, painted horses and zebras look a lot alike. Nonetheless, since they are from very different parts of the world, they are adapted to different kinds of grasses and therefore need different nutrients from the food they eat. Giving an animal food doesn't ensure the animal is getting the proper nutrition.

Proper care of an animal also varies with a species. For example, individual lions in the wild each require many acres to live on in order to survive. Pigs need a lot of fresh water to bathe in so that they do not overheat in the sun. Most animals need trees or other shelter for shade in the afternoon. Some kinds of birds will only nest in certain kinds of trees. Zoo officials need to be aware of all of the individual quirks of an animal species when accepting it into their park.

So let's assume that a zoo is attuned to their animals—the animals are receiving proper care and proper food for the proper nutrition. The zoo still may not be providing for the animal's mental health. A zoo can actually be destructive to an animal's mental development in several ways. To make the situation even more complicated, an animal's physical health is directly related to its mental health.

One study performed by Animal Aid as documented on their website "shows an Asian elephant violently swaying her head and rocking neurotically back and forth—probable symptoms of extreme mental suffering we witnessed at several other zoos." Animals, like humans, need stimulation to be satisfied—they need things to do. This elephant may have had nothing to do all day but pace her cage. In the wild, organisms have to survive; since this is taken away in captivity, animals aren't challenged. This absence of natural challenges doesn't support the mental health of animals, especially the more socially evolved creatures.

The evolution of monkeys has resulted in the inquisitive and intelligent creatures we know today. At Blackpool Zoo in England, an orangutan named Victoria got out of her cage by piling boxes up and climbing over the top of her pen. Because she escaped, when she was recaptured she was put in a much smaller hutch by herself. She spent the day huddled sadly in the corner of her cage, facing away from the public viewing window. Many animals in captivity are physically abused in ways similar to this because of their evolutionary characteristics—they are acting out of instincts they were born with.

Most of the elephants witnessed in the Blackpool study were paired off at the zoos, eliminating the group herding while retaining the mate-for-life way of existence known to them in the wild. Typically, when one of the two died or was moved away, the other would become hard to deal with and display signals of emotional distress. This distress would have been reduced if the animal had the chance to get closer to others of its kind. Elephants are not the only animals who live and work together in groups in the

wild. However, it is not feasible nor is it good business to house groups of animals in zoos. First, there is usually not enough space for the existing animals, let alone whole groups of them. Secondly, each animal depletes resources, food and medical expenses being the most expensive and obvious on that list. Animals in groups are just not user-friendly.

The point of a zoo—other than an idea dreamed up by a capitalist in order to make money—is to bring animals closer to the world humans live in. This is so people who do not want to track endless miles through wilderness to see one species (all the while risking limb and disease) can view animals instead for a few hard-earned dollars. The problem with this idea is convenience: the convenience of seeing all different kinds of animals on a few acres of land forces many zoos to be small. In addition, the showmanship of the animals is important; if there are animals and there are people, but the animals aren't ever visible to the public, what good is that zoo? Cages have to be small in order to allow animals to be seen.

Animals cannot tell you that they are being abused. A person can easily ignore the signs that an animal is being mistreated either because that person is not looking for disturbed animals or because he/she assumes that the zoo knows how to properly take care of the animals. They also assume that the zoo will then, in fact, do so. Because the purpose of a zoo is not for the animal's well-being, the animal's best interests may be thrown overboard when those interests are not useful for making money. Maybe we should all think about spending a little time on the other side of the glass.

## Nicky Sailer

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### *Shattered Promise*

**T**he shattered promise. It's a lot like the first time you find out your mom doesn't really love your dad. From crumpled evidence secluded from wanton eyes, you find that their partnership was only matched because of a bet she lost during high school. She claims that at the time, marrying Bob seemed better than running her bra up the flagpole. Sometimes while lying in bed hearing her screams, you had dreamed their love to be perfect. Silly girl.

Nothing is perfect. You learned that in school when your love found himself another. But, you learned soon enough that what you witnessed in the confines of your much too tiny home was a relationship that only developed because a cynical teacher assigned them as partners in Chemistry 101. A forced relationship like this never truly binds . . . there is no chemical bond like those found in the most molecular structures of the universe. Forced relationships are held weakly by a kindergartner's glue. If you take a fighting brother and sister, for example, and force them to hug . . . they may partake in the action, but they never partake in the bond. The glue is only a temporary fix, a medicine for the incurable man. They're found stuck in a position where they were unwillingly placed, much like glue. At times like these, the atmosphere is greatly weighted by invisible particles, hanging like a dead man at the end of his noose. It causes tension in surrounding persons, creating caution like a Dead End sign. A person will realize his ever-growing weight dangerously stands on the brink of revelation; all it takes is a single drop of water (from the rain gutter he forgot to fix) and the glue quickly dissolves. The leaky tire will someday give way. I figured a patch would do. I can tell you, the dream of role models and family, the luster of glass slippers and happy endings will suddenly burst. Just like the child's carnival balloon that got too friendly with the flame.



*Jason Signalness*

## Jessica Gunderson

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### *Comets*

**Y**ou could taste the wind when you walked out the door that day. It almost blew us backward as we walked from the school to Kohoutek. The sky was gray and seemed to swoop down every time the wind blew. Kohoutek wasn't far from the school and I was glad of that because it would be a little warmer there out of the wind. I was tired and my legs were sore from playing soccer in the wind all day. I didn't really know why Mitch wanted to go to Kohoutek, but he said he wasn't tired. I guess he wouldn't be. He was a sophomore and already a starter on the high school football team. Sometimes I wished I was big like Mitch, but I didn't really like to play football anyway, so that was okay.

The trees grew thicker and the road turned to gravel when we neared the hideout. The leaves had started to change colors and the wind was blowing them off the trees and all around us. There was a small bridge up ahead that was so old it looked like it was going to give way every time a car drove over it. Sometimes you'd see people fishing off it, but the creek was so small that I don't see how they ever caught anything. I don't even think there were any fish in it. We usually didn't cross the bridge to get to Kohoutek because there was a shortcut just downstream where it was narrow enough to jump across. We turned off the road and cut through the trees on a path that was almost invisible now, it had been so long since we had been here. I wanted to ask Mitch why we were coming here, but he seemed in such a hurry that I just stumbled along after him. I figured I would find out soon enough anyway. We had discovered Kohoutek a long time ago, right after Mitch moved in across the street. I don't really know what the name stands for, but Mitch said it was some star or comet or something that you can't see when you look at the sky. He said it was named after some uncle of his over in Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia or someplace, and that his uncle was the astronomer who discovered it without a telescope or anything, just with his own eyes. Mitch says that they have really good eyesight in his family and that's why he's so good at football.

We got to Kohoutek and I sat down and watched Mitch rummaging around under a pile of leaves.

"What are you looking for?"

"Hold on, Will. You always ask so many questions." He pulled out a small bottle and unscrewed the cap and took a drink. He wrinkled his nose and handed it to me.

"What is it?"

"Whiskey."

"Oh." I took a drink and it kind of tasted like dirt and leaves.

"Take a bigger drink. You barely swallowed any."

I took a bigger sip this time and it warmed my throat and stomach and it felt kind of good because I was so cold.

"Where did you get whiskey?"

"I took it. From your dad's liquor cabinet." He grabbed the bottle from me and took a huge swig.

"You took it from my dad?"

"That's what I said."

"My dad will be pissed."

"Your dad will never know. He's always drunk."

"He might notice."

"No, he won't. You won't get in trouble anyway. Your parents let you do whatever you want."

We sat there and drank from the bottle for a while. Mitch lit a cigarette. Mitch had started smoking after he had gotten onto the high school team. He said all the players smoked. He smoked the menthol kind and sometimes I would have one too because they tasted pretty good.

"You still like Sarah Mills?" Mitch asked. Sarah sat behind me in biology class and sometimes she passed Skittles to me under her desk.

"I don't know. Kind of."

"Are you gonna ask her out?"

"Maybe."

"I fucked her. Right under that tree."

"You did not."

"I did. Look, you can see the stain on the ground where all the blood and sperm stuff spilled out of her."

"I can't see anything. You're lying." I snuck a glance beneath the tree but all I could see were leaves and a few patches of brown grass.

"Well, I did. You don't have to believe me if you don't want to."

"Did she like it?"

"Yeah. She hollered."

"Oh."

"Let's go home. I'm cold and I'm supposed to go out with the team later."

"Okay. Are you drunk?"

"Yeah. Are you?"

"Yeah."

Mitch put the bottle back under the leaves and we walked through the trees back to the road. Mitch didn't live across the street from me anymore because his parents had gotten a divorce and he lived with his mom in an apartment on the other side of the school. He turned off on his street and I kept walking toward my house. The wind was behind me now so it wasn't so cold and I was feeling a little warm from the whiskey. When I got to my house I sat down on the front steps because everything was blurry and I felt dizzy. When I started to feel better I went inside. My dad wasn't home yet but my mom was lying on the couch.

"Hi, Mom."

"Hi, Willie."

"How are you feeling today?"

"Not so good. Can you bring me a glass of water?"

I walked to the kitchen and poured her the water. I hoped she wouldn't smell the whiskey on my breath and ask me about it. I knew my dad drank whiskey so she was probably used to the smell.

"Can you turn off the light when you go upstairs? I'm going to sleep now."

"Okay. Good night, Mom." I turned off the light and went upstairs. I hoped my dad wouldn't wake her up when he got home. She had been sleeping on the couch ever since she had gotten sick a year ago. My dad usually knew to be quiet when he got home but sometimes if he had a really good night he forgot she was there.

I laid down on my bed and tried to go to sleep. I felt like I was on a ship that was swaying back and forth. It made me sick to my stomach so I sat up. I sat down by the window and looked out at the trees and the streetlights. It was so cloudy that you couldn't see any stars, but one peeked through the clouds once and then it was gone. I wondered if maybe it was Kohoutek and maybe my eyesight was as good as Mitch's and that's why I could see it. Pretty soon I saw my dad drive up in his pickup. I waited but I didn't hear any voices from downstairs and I was glad that he hadn't woken her up. I thought about Sarah but that made me sick too, so I crawled back into bed and watched the ceiling swirl around until I fell asleep.

Erik Hinzpeter

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## *Science and Religion: The Question of an Argument "Older Than God"*

*The problem of making sense out of the seeming chaos of experience reminds me of my childish desire to send someone a parcel of water in the mail. The recipient unties the string, releasing the deluge in his lap. But the game would never work, since it is irritatingly impossible to wrap and tie a pound of water in a paper package. The more one studies attempted solutions to problems in politics and economics, in art, philosophy, and religion, the more one has the impression of extremely gifted people wearing out their ingenuity at the impossible and futile task of trying to get the water of life into neat and permanent packages.*

—Alan Watts, *The Wisdom of Insecurity*

On any given Sunday morning it's not difficult to find any number of religious leaders preaching endlessly on the deep need to go back to the days of religion and return to faith in God. This strikes me as a particularly rotten thing to tell people to do since for anyone with any sort of inquisitive temperament, once a serious question has been raised it's simply not possible to forget about it without a good answer. Unfortunately for us there really are no good answers for the questions commonly posed to our contemporary form of Christianity. (I mention Christianity because it's the only major religion I've had a lot of contact with. I don't really know the state of other religions in America, or outside America for that matter, but I can only assume the situation would be similar in a like environment.) The simple fact of the matter is that faith isn't about being a "good, accepting Christian." It's silly and harmful to ignore the deep feelings of doubt and skepticism many people find once they begin questioning and thinking.

The United States is a land ruled by logic. We've trained ourselves not to believe just anything we're told, whether it's advertising claims or political promises. Although it's naïve to say this stems from only one source, certainly one of the biggest has been our emphasis on science and the scientific method of searching out the solid facts and basing our practices on those. It's no wonder that in an intellectual climate such as this many



Americans find themselves torn between the cold, unyielding logic of science and the questionable precedent of established religion.

This question of religion and spirituality in an age of science and logic has been argued so thoroughly and at such great length over the past 100 or so years that it seems almost pointless to restate what's been said so many times before. However, I'm of the opinion that this is something that's really important to our survival as a society and therefore deserves every bit of the attention being given to it.

While gathering research material for this paper, I picked up a couple of books that were so old I immediately assumed their arguments would be so outdated as to be laughable. What I found, though, is that even a book like *Religion and Society* by Joseph le Conte, published in 1891, contains many of the better arguments I've heard on this subject, and many arguments I've seen restated in articles published within the past few years on exactly the same topic.

So why does everyone keep going in circles with this? It seems that no one is really listening to each other and even worse no one is taking anything that's said to heart. Perhaps it's just the nature of argument, but it seems to me this quite likely IS the root of nearly all the problems facing our country and therefore demands a lot of serious consideration. Issues like gangs and drugs and violence on TV all fall into place once you figure out what lies at their heart. All I can think of is that this needs to be a personal undertaking, instead of one done by society en masse.

I don't in any way mean to undermine or offend people who are truly devout in their religious beliefs and who possess true faith. However, what I see in many people is a kind of desperate denial that their faith is anything but 100%. This is the sort of person I'm talking about and whom I feel is put in a really uncomfortable position in this old but ever so modern conundrum.

So, what's to be done? It would seem that once doubts have been raised in people's minds they have only two options. One is to attempt to regain the previous unquestioning faith they once held. Since they can't very well accomplish this without simply deluding themselves, they end up trying to have faith, which seems a bit oxymoronic when you think about it. It's a lot like the child-logic, "If I close my eyes and can't see it, it can't see me either and won't be able to hurt me." Sure, it always worked with closet-monsters, but it seems unlikely that a schism rooted so deep in our lives and mind will vanish so easily.

The other popular choice is to give up spirituality all together. For some, the absence isn't a big deal, and they may in fact feel liberated by it. Many scientists assert their ability to find sufficient cosmic comfort in their assessment and categorization of the universe, or may simply feel the wonder of their discoveries is enough and that they can be happy without the

notion of a higher power. Quite often, though, nihilism or some such equivalent fills the space and we end up with people who express their feelings of emptiness as crime, violence, or simple destruction. Although I kind of hate to agree with the "Christian Right" on things, it does seem likely that the rise in violent crime and hard drug use may be related to the lessening influence of religion on people's personal lives. What I don't agree with is the mindset that since we didn't have this exact problem 50 or 100 or 200 years ago, what worked then will work now. Our world has changed, and it only stands to reason our spirituality needs to as well.

Now, I feel it's important to make a distinction between the terms "religion" and "spirituality." A religion is most often the result of one person's or group's original sense of spirituality. Religions tend to have the disadvantage of being clogged up with centuries of politics, dogma, needless ritual, and outright manipulation, making the original spiritual precepts difficult to grasp and the entire package very hard to swallow once you start looking at it up close. Spirituality could be defined as your own personal sense of God, and although it can be gained from an established religion it really doesn't have to be.

In *The Wisdom of Insecurity*, Alan Watts discusses this as an alternative to our first two choices. He asserts that we are poised in the perfect position to adopt a new and higher level of spirituality based on the perennial philosophy of religion. This is a theory that says that all belief systems are essentially the same at heart. Theologians have contemplated it since modern anthropology presented evidence suggesting that despite the languages and clothes being different, everyone was basically talking about the same thing. It's the lack of understanding for this aspect of our basic humanity which makes us feel like we need something more in life no matter what we get. It's this sense of absence that drives us to pursue pleasure in the form of material goods and drugs, and in certain circumstances the frustration experienced due to lack of fulfillment comes out as violence.

As mentioned before, I'm speaking from experience limited only to what I've seen in organized Christianity in America. However, what I do know about other countries, especially those with fairly "American" ways of life, suggests similar states. When I was in Japan, I didn't notice their Buddhist/Shinto religious base as being particularly better in these regards.

While the insecurity brought upon science has in many ways been distinctly negative, it has also put us as a society, and potentially as a world, into the unique position of having almost no choice but to search out deeper levels of spirituality since by the nature of our situation we are unable to regress in our mindset. Of course, a regression such as this would be possible in the event of some sort of fundamental collapse of civilization, which is quite possibly where we're headed if a new sort of spirituality isn't adopted, and soon.

Steven Dennis

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## *Wrongly Accused*

*“I* mported oils give your skin a soft and supple shine . . .”

Drip . . . Drip . . . Drop . . . Drip . . . . Like the laser-guided bombs on CNN, globs of designer shampoo bombarded the Serpent Men. One after the other hit the waters of Bathtublandia, spreading their liberating, destructive force like miniature mushroom clouds, leaving behind a deadly fallout of white bubble-foam, just like the bottle said they would. “. . . for a luxurious bathing experience . . .” KABLOOEY! The evil Serpent Men were vanquished and Bathtublandia was finally ready to begin the painful process of rebuilding its culture.

And besides, it was creeping up on bedtime. I was forced back to a porcelain reality, my seven year-old mind reeling from the imaginary battle which had just taken place in the bathtub of 1369 Clayton Street. I had been told that this was to be a quick bath since my sister, who bathed prior to me, had taken so long. But there is always time for a quick pretend. After deciding the day's battle would be against the Serpent Men, something caught my eye.

At rest on the floor next to the claw-foot bathtub was a gem of imaginative possibilities. It was a bottle of expensive bath lotion, the kind that smelled like something you could eat (I tried—you can't). Although disagreeable to the stomach, this bottle of whatever did make the most amazing shapes when dropped bit by bit into the waters of a bathtub I remember being as an ocean. So I played, washed, put the bottle carefully back where it belonged, and made it to my bed before the count of ten (I was mischievous, and very accustomed to the rhetoric of “I'll give you to the count of ten”).

And now the stage was set for an impromptu trial. I had barely snuggled my cold toes to the warm spot where the cat lay, when a voice boomed through the house, as if the Emperor of the Serpent Men was back from his watery grave to take revenge.

“WHO Poured OUT MY NICE LOTION?”

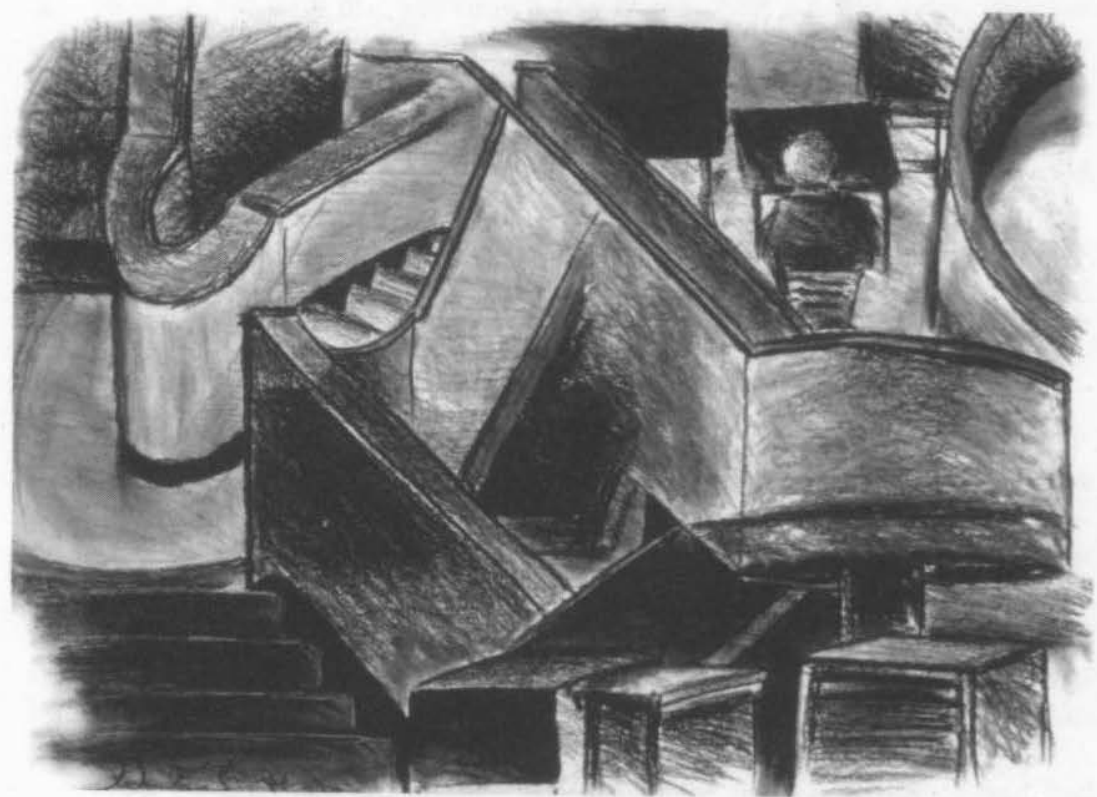
First came panic, then terror. As footsteps came down the hall toward my closed door, panic returned, followed by a more intense terror, then logic: My little sister and I bathed consecutively. This bought me time to think of something. The door flew open.

"Stephen William Dennis, did you pour out my nice lotion?" Mom asked in a hurt and aggravated manner. I had to think. I racked my brain for the best defense, something that was plausible, yet allowed for a margin of pity, something brilliant.

"No . . ." I stammered. She stormed to Heather's room. Damn it, now I was committed to a lie. Not even a half-truth or white lie, but a 100% lie—the worst kind. So much for the pity margin. When the truth came out I would be beheaded, or given the rack. Perhaps I could escape out the window, but wait . . . what was this? Mom was yelling at Heather, my little sister, the creature I'd been forced to "love" since it came into my house and made the nest much smaller. Heather had a lying problem, and the wave of relief washing over me as I realized that Mom would take my word over hers was delightful.

In retrospect, I don't know how I made the transition from interstellar war hero to lying scumbag so easily, but I had. My sister cried. My mother yelled. And I slept like a baby.

Heather didn't get the rack, but she did get "no friends over this weekend" for the shampoo and "no TV tomorrow" for lying. If that's not incarceration, I don't know what is. And I can tell you something else, between you and me. The true villain is still at large and rumored to be living in the north central United States.



*Andrea Widdel*

Justin Baesler

---

*Re-creation*

**C**lutching the ground  
My hands turn the raw earth  
And twist the dust of ages,  
Chips of unknown minerals  
And ancestors slide  
Wetly between my fingers,  
Twisting the cold earth  
In the featureless form of God,  
As He twisted and twirled  
Us between cold fingers and  
Placed us wet and soft on  
This raw, turning earth  
That slips between my hands  
And down to the ground,  
In a wicked attempt of  
Re-creation.

## Adam Paulson

---

### *The Scar*

I've gone out with this girl only a few times. She's a few years younger than I am (I'm a senior and she's a freshman) and I can tell that she's a little skittish and self-conscious around me. I don't know if it's because I'm a bit older, but I suspect that it is. It seems to be getting better though. She seems to be more comfortable each time we see each other. I'm getting over my nervousness too.

I met her in one of my classes. We went nearly the whole semester before I asked her out. She was a freshman in a class that was for seniors. I admired her courage. I also admired her from across the room. Her unique looks intrigued me deeply. The combination of her hair and eyes. Beautiful.

Usually I would stay on my side of the room. From there I could admire her and also remain a good distance away, inconspicuous. It felt like a piece of security glass ran through the center of the room, preventing anything but looks from passing through. But as the semester rolled on, I became more daring. I began to slowly navigate the u-shaped seating arrangement, bringing me closer and closer to where she sat every day. I did it skillfully, trying to get the people I usually sit by to follow without them knowing my intentions. It was a success. Eventually, I ended up next to her, and before class we would exchange sentences.

Then I called her one night. We talked for quite a while. I had had conversations with other girls that had lasted longer, but this was a good conversation. After a few phone calls we went out. I don't think it was an official date, she had mentioned that she loved Chinese food and had never been to what I believed to be the best place for Chinese food in town. So we went.

And the next weekend we went to a movie. We saw each other in class, we talked before and after, and we sometimes talked on the phone at night. Good conversations. The next weekend we went to a play. A production of a classic that I had seen before but she had not, but one that we both enjoyed. That was Friday. Then on Saturday she came to my place for a movie. We rented the new thriller that had just come out. My roommate was gone so we had the place to ourselves. But I had no ungentlemanly intentions.

We sat on the couch with a cushion's width between us. I asked her if she wanted a beer from the six-pack I had bought for the night, and she said yes. I got up and when I sat back down with the beer I moved closer to her. When I returned with our second she had moved closer to where I was previously sitting. That made me happy and nervous. After I sat down she slumped in her seat and partially leaned on me, resting her head half on the couch and half on my shoulder. That made me happier and more nervous.

We stayed like that for most of the movie. Then it was time for me to take her home. I drove to campus, and since it was a very warm spring night, I parked at the campus's edge so we could walk to her residence hall and enjoy the evening's end. We walked and chatted about this and that. I began to hold her hand about halfway to her dorm. When I first grabbed it she turned to look at me but I was too nervous to look back. I could see her out of the corner of my eye. She turned her head away and squeezed my hand.

Outside of her dorm we sat on the small brick wall that ran around its perimeter. We talked more, realizing that there wasn't anything that we didn't want to know about each other. While she was talking about her brothers and sisters I began to look at the scar she had on her upper lip. I was sitting on her right and the scar was on the right side of her lip. It ran in a small straight line from about a half-inch in from the corner of her mouth at a forty-five degree angle and stopped just before, and above, the spot where her two lips met. It was a small scar, easily missed yet still noticeable. It didn't harm her beauty in the least.

She turned her head to look at me while she was talking and I think she noticed where my eyes were. She brought her eyes down along with her head and moved her hand to the scar in an attempt to make it disappear. I felt horrible that she saw me looking at it. The scar made no difference to me, I had never asked her what it was from, nor was I more than just passingly interested in knowing the story. There was a sense inside of me that told me that she was very self-conscious about the scar. I could feel how she hated it and how it made her feel ugly when it in no way did. She was beautiful.

We continued to talk. While I was trying to catch her gaze she was trying to avoid mine. I put my left hand on the small of her back and that caused her to look up at me. We sat and looked for a while, then I moved towards her slowly, titling my head to the side, hoping she would do the same. She did, and we began to kiss. Softly. The way you do the first time when you don't know the other's lips. It was our first. We let our lips linger, touching but unmoving. I slowly opened my mouth, and so did she. I released my tongue hesitantly, and so did she. My tongue met hers in a moment of wet closeness, then I moved on. I ran my tongue across the underside of her upper lip slowly, from right to left.



I don't know what made me do it, but I did. I pulled my tongue back far enough to escape her lips and then placed it where the scar began. I traced a slow line along the scar, feeling it, exploring it with my tongue. I went from where it started to where it ended and started back.

She pulled away. She pulled away and looked at me. Our faces were still very close. I pulled back a bit to a more comfortable position where I could see all of her face. We studied each other, but mostly she studied me. I tried to see what her face was saying, with a furrowed brow, uncertain eyes, and parted lips. I was having a hard time deciding if she was saying "Thank you" or "How dare you?"



*Kelly Jane Swenseth*

## Hannah Kramer

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### *Urban Life*

Within the first week of my freshman year of college, I had visions of the kind of life I wanted to lead as a student. Surprisingly enough, the scenes that ran through my head were not as I had always thought they would be: dorm room slumber parties, Monday night sorority meetings, and late nights at the library. Instead, I pictured myself in the corners of novel coffee shops, reading and daydreaming while acoustic guitarists sang about faraway places and unrequited love. From the moment I stumbled across 324 Kittson Avenue and stepped inside Urban Stampede, with its chalky red bricks and half moon windows, I knew that I had found my niche. At first, I was just another customer, poring over my books and sipping warm lattes, but before I knew it, I was behind the bar, packing espresso shots, chatting with regulars, and loving every minute of my newfound job. As the year progressed I spent more and more time at the coffee shop, sticking around after my shifts to eat something and do some homework or just stopping in to talk with whomever was working. It was there, perched at the glazed wooden bar or scurrying around the reflecting mirrors and diverse tables, rag in hand, that I felt happiest and most like myself. Strange as it may sound, I found a home in Urban Stampede.

I think that the reason I love Urban so much, so unconsciously, is that my senses soak it up. The sight of the place, the smell of it, the way I smell after I've spent hours there, the rich taste of the coffee as it stings my mouth and slaps open my throat all rouse me from whichever unwanted mood I happen to be in and remind me of who I am, my individuality, me. How exactly this is accomplished, I'm not quite sure. Yet what I do know is that I look forward to going to work. Even though I have to clean constantly and saturate my hands with smelly bleach water and wait on people that aren't always nice to me no matter how hard I try to please them, I still love being there. The fact is, I walk on frothy clouds while I am at work.

Some might say that the only drawback to my job is my newborn addiction to coffee. However, I'm happy that I've found my nicotine, my wine before dinner, my crutch. I'll never forget the morning that I woke up and the only thing I could think about was that black steaming cup of caffeine and how I was going to get it. I stumbled down to Wilkerson and picked up a nice sized cup of plain old coffee from the "To Go Café." I knew that there was no turning back when I drank that coffee on the way to

class, black, naked of cream and unsweetened, and it tasted good. It tasted so good, in fact, that I closed my eyes and let out a quiet “mmmmm” from my upturned lips. To be perfectly honest, I’m not always in it for the caffeine, but simply for the comfort that comes from having my hands around that mug and the way the steam hits my lips right before I take a sip. It reminds me of home.

Not only do I love drinking coffee, but I love making it as well. It is an art form and nothing feels better than creating a fine work of art. I’ve learned the basics at Urban: how to make lattes, mochas, au laits, americanos, and the most beautiful of all, cappuccinos. Often, with so many flavored syrups at my fingertips, my creativity runs wild and I lose myself in drink making. I have so much fun making a racket at the counter, frothing the milk and clanking the Torani bottles together as I snatch them up and tip them upside down so that they may gurgle their liquid sugar into the mugs. Syrups aside, the trick to making a true espresso drink is all in the shot. The little bit of coffee has to be packed down as tightly as possible in the wand. Then it is wedged into the espresso machine and water seeps through it, turning into a thick brown liquid, known as the espresso. I try so hard to pack down my shots that I practically double over with the effort. More than anything, I want my drinks to be good. I will bend over backwards for the customers and most of the time it’s because I want to and not because I feel like I have to.

Sometimes when the regulars line themselves up along the bar waiting semi-patiently for me to make their usual drinks “just the way they like them,” I feel like a mother behind her kitchen counter with a bunch of thirsty kids on the other side. And like any mother, I put care into what I make for them. As soon as I spot Ian, a regular who writes for the *Grand Forks Herald*, coming through the door, I grab a mug and fill it with dark roast so that I can set it down in front of him just as he sits down to the paper. Then I stick an onion bagel in the toaster for him, making sure that it’s the kind with the onion bits on top because he likes them the best. I love it when Kim Holmes sits down at the bar because he’s one of my favorites. As I empty two packets of Equal, or two “blue units” as he calls them, into his quad mocha, he tells me about his experiences living in Europe as a young man, fresh out of college. He knows that I hope to live there myself someday and he’s always encouraging me to go for it.

Because I’m friendly and I enjoy talking with and listening to people, I never tire of the conversations I have at Urban. Their distinctive feature is that they hardly ever consist of small talk. They are usually different, interesting, and relaxed. The customers will talk about the most fabulous things. Every time I voice some anxiety over not knowing what to do with my life, Dr. Eric, a young diabetes specialist, reminds me that he spent seven years in undergraduate school before he finally decided to go to med

school. He had two majors and four minors when he graduated. Clark, a regular who comes in most afternoons, talks with me about working in the Peace Corps in Costa Rica. I always want to go sign up when he finishes telling me about the beauty he saw and the lessons he learned from helping the people there. It's a welcome arrival when Pastor Bob and Pastor Dan show up. They seem to put everyone at ease. There have been a couple of times that I have asked Bob for advice on something that's going on in my life. I could never substitute anyone for my father, but I think that on a very small scale, Bob has been a father figure for me. Finally I must mention Rick. Rick comes in to Urban at least four or five different times a day. He gets free Mello Yello or hot chocolate for the odd jobs he does around the shop. At first I wasn't quite sure what to think about him because it seemed strange that he would hang around so much. Now I realize that he is a fixture in Urban and if he wasn't there bringing me Cadbury eggs or dragging in some books he found in an old apartment that he thought one of us might like to have, the place just wouldn't be the same.

When it comes right down to it, it's the people that I work with that make not only the Urban world go round, but my world as well. Fate could not have put me with a more ideal bunch of people at this point in my life. When I got the job at Urban, I also got myself a family. Now, I confuse myself by saying that I'm going to work when really, I'm just going home.

Erika Butler

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## *The "Udder" Story*

**M**ilk . . . it does a body good. As Americans we are subjected to countless advertisements which pound that exact thought into our brains, but how much of it is true?

With the twenty-first century dawning, one could look back throughout the last hundred years and marvel at how technology has advanced our food production methods. A great deal has changed in these past decades; farms are no longer of the family type. Instead, factory farms are doing the most business, all of them striving to produce the largest quantity of food for the lowest dollar amount. It makes one wonder if anything has happened to quality along the way. Do the methods that these farms use to reach such high productivity rates taint their products, jeopardizing our health as consumers? It seems that one of the growth hormones used by the dairy industry to increase milk production may do just that.

Bovine Growth Hormone or Bovine Somatotropin is a protein hormone that is produced naturally in the pituitary glands of cattle. It functions in growth, development, and health maintenance. Technological advances have made it possible to create this hormone synthetically. This form of the hormone is known as rBGH/rBST. After the FDA approved the use of rBGH/rBST in 1993, a company by the name of Monsanto began to market the product to dairy farmers under the name of Posilac.

Injecting cows with rBGH/rBST may increase their milk production by five to ten percent. Approximately three million cows in the United States are injected with this hormone twice a month. Meanwhile, both Monsanto and the FDA claim the use of rBGH/rBST in milk production poses no harmful threats to human consumers, but conflicting opinions are everywhere.

Monsanto does claim that the use of rBGH/rBST shortens the life of the cow while also causing an increase in cystic ovaries, disorders of the uterus, digestive disorders, enlarged hocks and lesions of the knee, and most detrimental to humans, an increase in clinical mastitis. Mastitis is an infection of the udder and must be treated with antibiotics. What this means is an increase in the amount of pus and antibiotic residues found in milk. Treatment of mastitis could lead to new antibiotic resistant bacteria which the Center for Disease Control calls a major public health crisis.

However, Monsanto claims that this increase in the use of antibiotics will not be a problem since a "comprehensive government monitoring system assures milk safety." Monsanto claimed on camera that every truckload of milk is tested for excessive antibiotics, but Florida dairy officials and scientists report that to be false. It seems that state antibiotic monitoring programs only test for drugs like those in the penicillin family. Many cows have already become resistant to these types of antibiotics and some dairy farmers are using illegal drugs which go undetected. Is the small increase in production worth the increased risk of becoming resistant to antibiotic treatments?

According to ABC reporter McKenzie, when the FDA approved the use of rBGH/rBST they "relied in part on an unpublished animal study done by the Monsanto Corp." There seems to be much controversy surrounding the relationship between the FDA and Monsanto. Could the FDA be covering up some of the rBGH/rBST harmful side effects for Monsanto?

The FDA reported to the American public that during testing, rats were fed high doses of the hormone over a ninety day period and there was no evidence that any of the animals absorbed the hormone. Yet when the Health Protection Branch of the Canadian government performed the exact same tests, they came up with very different results. They concluded that twenty to thirty percent of the rats actually did absorb the hormone into their bloodstream. Some of the male rats developed cysts in their thyroids and had higher levels of the hormone in their prostate. Results like this have caused the Canadian government to ban the use of rBGH/rBST in the country. Some Canadian government officials even claim that Monsanto tried to bribe them, offering one to two million dollars to gain approval of rBGH/rBST in Canada.

There have been no long-term studies done on the effect of rBGH/rBST on humans. The Congressional General Accounting Office has warned that there may be risk of human hazards from the consumption of milk or flesh from rBGH/rBST treated cows. They even went on to say that the FDA should not have approved its use.

The use of rBGH/rBST causes increased levels of another growth hormone called IGF-1. This hormone occurs naturally in both humans and cattle and it causes cells to actively divide. In humans, elevated levels of IGF-1 has been linked to breast and colon cancer, hypertension, diabetes, gynecomastia, and breast growth in men. In January of 1998, a study of 15,000 men published in *Science Magazine* reported that those with elevated, yet still normal, levels of IGF-1 in their blood are four times as likely as the average man to get cancer of the prostate. Since 1994, Monsanto has publicly claimed that milk from cows treated with rBGH/rBST does not contain elevated levels of IGF-1. In the British journal *Lancet* in 1994, Monsanto researchers said "IGF-1 concentration in the milk of rBST-

treated cows is unchanged and there is no evidence that hormonal content of milk from rBST-treated cows is in any way different from cows not so treated." Yet in a published letter, a British researcher reminded Monsanto that in its 1993 application to the British government asking permission to sell rBGH in England, Monsanto itself stated that "IGF-1 levels went up substantially." Even the FDA acknowledges that IGF-1 levels are elevated in milk containing rBGH/rBST. This may lead one to come to the conclusion that Monsanto is trying to cover up important information so that their product is more widely accepted.

Since it appears that use of rBGH/rBST might increase the rate of cancer in humans, one might think that the FDA would have done a standard cancer test on it. That would require two years of testing and several hundred rats, but, as mentioned before, it was tested for only ninety days on thirty rats. It looks like the FDA wanted this drug to not only be approved, but also approved fast.

Dr. Richard Burroughs, a staff veterinarian and senior scientist at the FDA, oversaw the analysis of industry-sponsored tests. He claims that the FDA didn't assign reviewers with enough expertise to evaluate the data and voiced some concern over the safety of rBGH/rBST. On November 3, 1989, he was told that he was slowing down the approval process and fired. Dr. Burroughs later stated that it used to be that the FDA had a review process, not an approval process, and he believes that the FDA is not performing comprehensive, honest reviews. The woman who replaced him, Dr. Margaret Miller, was a former Monsanto researcher who was still publishing rBGH papers with Monsanto at the time of her appointment. This practice of former Monsanto employees working for the FDA does not seem to be an isolated case. Some even returned to working for Monsanto after finishing work with the FDA on the rBGH/rBST approval process. Even the FDA regulations against labeling milk as rBGH-free were written by Michael Taylor, an attorney who worked for Monsanto before and after his job as a FDA official. One has to wonder if Monsanto didn't just send him there to make sure that the labeling of their competitors wouldn't hurt their sales.

While a few cover-ups, lies, attempted bribes, and threats have already been mentioned, there are even more reasons to suspect foul play. For example, Monsanto tried to keep British researchers from publishing important findings regarding the increased risk of mastitis in cows for nearly three years, in an effort to keep the public uninformed. They did nearly the same thing in 1997 when two reporters from Fox TV in Tampa, Florida worked for over a year on a series that was scheduled to air on February 24, 1997. They planned to cover the link between rBGH and cancer. However, three days before the series was to air, Fox TV received the first of what would be two threatening letters from Monsanto. It stated that Mon-



santo would suffer enormous damage if the series ran. Although WTVT had been vigorously promoting the series, the program was canceled at the last minute. The second letter warned of severe consequences if the series aired. Fox lawyers then tried to water down the series and offered the reporters pay if they would leave the station and keep quiet. They refused and were fired. On April 2, 1998 they filed their own suit against WTVT.

The fact that large corporations can scare TV stations into rewriting the news causes one to wonder what other lies we have been fed. However, Monsanto has not only threatened TV stations and researchers, but also those milk producers that label their milk rBGH/rBST-free. They brought two lawsuits against dairies with this kind of labeling, resulting in the dairies giving up and removing the labels. Monsanto then sent letters out to other dairy organizations stating the outcome of the lawsuits. Obviously Monsanto felt that this would keep other dairies from trying the same thing. However, later on-camera Monsanto officials claimed that they had not opposed any dairy co-ops who labeled their milk rBGH/rBST-free. As early as 1981 Congressman John Coyers publicly charged the FDA and Monsanto with suppressing and manipulating animal health test data. There had been a leak in Monsanto's information which revealed that a confidential study found serious pathology in cows that were injected with rBGH/rBST.

On August 18, 1999 the UN Food and Safety Agency (which represents 101 nations worldwide) ruled unanimously in favor of a ban on Monsanto's genetically engineered milk. Why is it that these countries and Canada feel that the consumption of rBGH/rBST treated milk is unsafe? Why is it that their studies show such startling results in comparison to Monsanto's and the FDA's? It seems frightening to think that we, as Americans, may not even be able to trust our government's FDA, whose duty is to protect us from any and all harmful products. Is it possible that a protection agency like this could be bought out if the price is right?

All these lies, cover-ups, threats, and tainted employees all seem to point in the same direction . . . Monsanto does indeed have something to hide. In light of all the above, I believe that it is time for an agency independent of both Monsanto and the FDA to initiate extensive testing to determine the safety of rBGH/rBST. If it is done without letting Monsanto and the FDA know, then hopefully the experiment would be both reliable and valid. The government and the dairy council owe it to us to ensure that the milk we are drinking is still doing a body good, and not just benefiting a corporation's pocketbook.

RoxAnne Moore

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*Changing Shores:  
A Villanelle*

Waves come crashing against the moonlit shore,  
And grains of sand pause briefly between my toes.  
How does your faith hold answers you look for?

I know not yet, and still I search the core.  
In the ebbing of the tide I find new lows,  
While waves come crashing against the threatened shore.

Your pallid face when I walk through the door,  
I know the future's now our greatest foe.  
Yet faith still holds the answers you look for.

I hold your hand, look sadly at the floor,  
Outside a cold harsh wind now fiercely blows.  
And waves are crashing against this darkened shore.

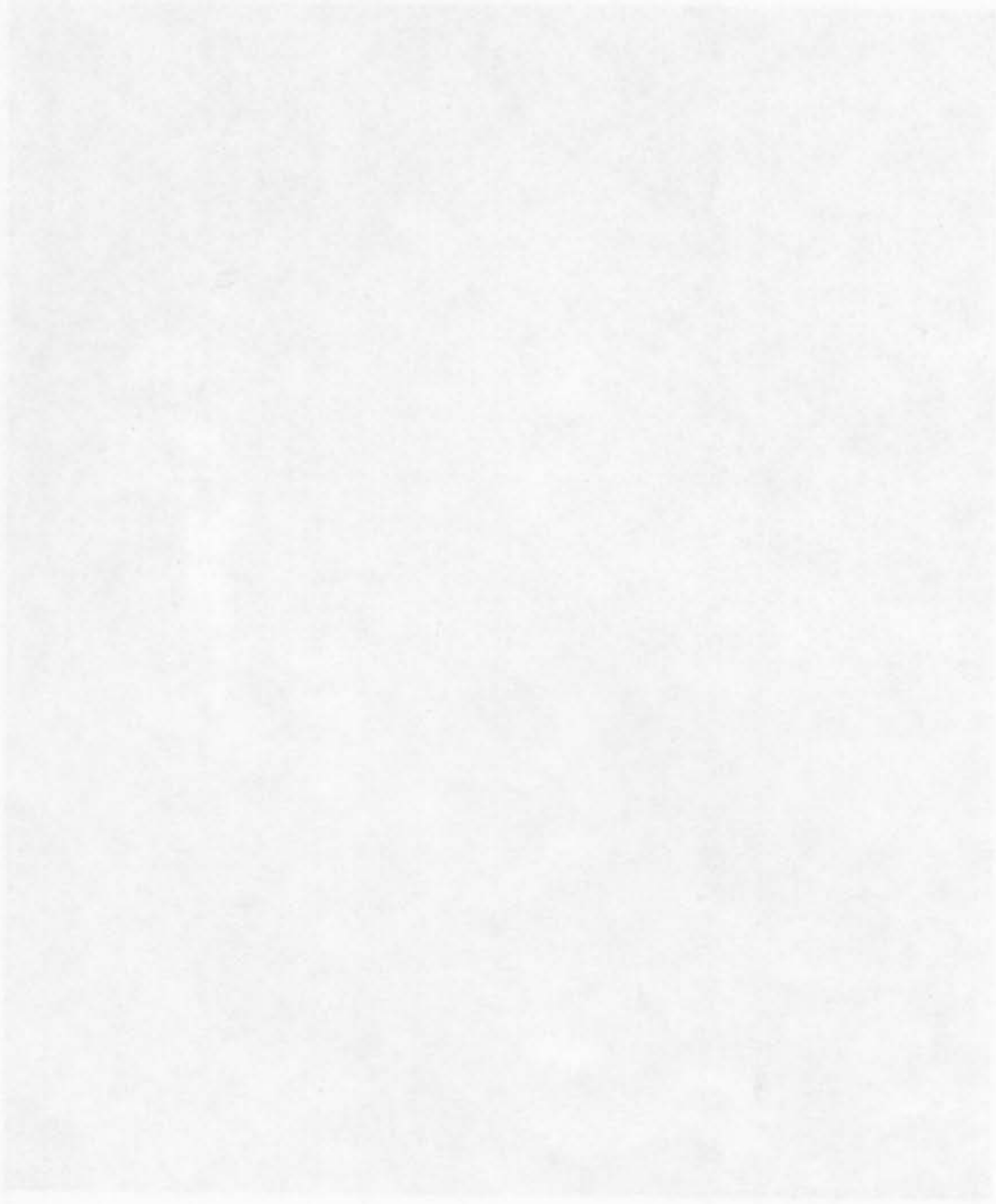
I sit beside your bed and yearn for more.  
Sweet mother's love this oldest child knows.  
Still faith remains the answer you look for.

You close your eyes in sleep forevermore.  
My tears of grief an endless river flows.  
Waves keep crashing against the lonely shore.  
Why was just faith the answer you looked for?



*Lucy Esberg*

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Page 100



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