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Expressions 1998-1999

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Expressions

VOLUME XX 1998 - 1999

Expressions is an annual student literary/art publication of Des Moines Area Community College in Ankeny, Iowa. Its purpose is to showcase and celebrate the talents of its students.

Each issue also features an Iowa artist as a source of inspiration for students, and as a way of sharing with our communities the gifted contributors to our state and national culture.

A special thanks to Steve Gerberich for his communication and cooperation with providing materials throughout the year.



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THE BEGINNINGS OF LIFE ~

Rebecca Nau / Best Poem of DMACC creative writing contest

i.

peel back the edge of old photographs crusted with age and burrow inside
push between the dimpled rolls of baby fat
wiggle in among the elfin mass of downy soft white curls

close my eyes and lead myself back to the origin
slip behind the curtain into the blackness beyond where the mind rests

so many tears have been shed that it is time to return to the water from which i came
everything is flushed out with increasing waves
until i feel nothing but a separateness

dig up all learned lines, start at the beginning and say them backwards
all prejudices, all fear, all self-effacement, all mental roadblocks shattered
the great mass disintegrates, crumbles to powder soft as white beach sand

i look back and see imprints of two small round feet, left as i passed through
each toe a distinct little coin
planted firmly and evenly, their direction sure
i followed the beckon of the song of trickling water

my consciousness falls away from me as i slice to the depths
to that place full of virginal power where the seed is planted
to the pure untainted earthy brown center from which all growth begins

the place that smells of wet soil and blood

the beginnings of life



ii.

it fills the center of each vertebrae, pushing out the spongy soft chord
replacing it with a core from this mighty infallible tree

its branches wriggle up the back of my neck intertwining with my sinew
raising my chin high

its leaves and twigs reinforce my arms stretching them further
pulling the skin taut
protruding to the ends of my fingertips

i am supported by my own rock-solid roots

iii.

the calm whispering song fills my ears, soothing
slowing my thoughts

my new green eyes are unbound slowly and brought to the light
they fill with fresh cool liquid air

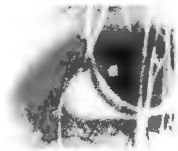
i am able to feel all

i soak up pleasure and knowledge through every thirsty pore

tiny electric currents run through every cell, teasing
tickling as they dart and skitter over my skin

my decayed and tired mind melts into a thick coating that lines my skull
cushioning my budding thoughts and infant questions

definition is now found in a strength that glows with rich and vivid tints
grabbing energy like rekindled embers glowering fiercely in the breeze



A TREE FOR SHELLEY~

Linda Jacobs

Elegant willow, stirring magic
on the hillside, share your
mysteries with Shelley.

Her seasons are so new and
her babies gaze at the world
through curious eyes.

Tell her how you laugh while
weeping, how you cool your
gentle core while basking in
the sun.

Let her see you sheltering
innocent creatures in the
cascade of your feathery
umbrella,

and watch as you spring back
after the storms, bowing
gracefully, oblivious to your
wounded limbs.

Show her how you bend without
breaking, dance with fireflies
to the cadence of heartsong, not
to fill the world but because
you are filled.



photo by Heather Biggar

AND THE WHITE DRESS HAD RUFFLES ~

Dorothy Brogden

How strange, a boy in a dress at age maybe one and a half
Bare feet showing while he stands on that table
A large curl designed with care nestles on his head
And his white dress has ruffles.

His chubby arm is around a bearded man's neck
Who is this man?
Neither he nor the boy is smiling
How long has he stood there?

As I look closely, I see a tiny smile
And his eyes are blue with sparkle
Is he pinching the back of the man's neck?
Are his bare feet cold?

The man's beard is as white as his dress
He does not have a smile
He has stood there for 98 years
Staring out, staring out.

Does he look down on all that pass?
Does he wonder what they think?
Why a little boy such as you
Has a white dress with ruffles.



CHICKEN COOP, CIRCA 1990 ~

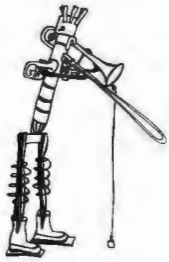
Sherry Lee Corbett



You stand there
defiant against time,
leaning into the wind,
denying your need to crumble and fall.
The wounds of time leave you gaping,
open to predators to steal pieces of you
and run away into the night;
building a shelter of their own.
The cologne you wear comes to me on a breeze;
the stench of age,
like an ancient attic,
or a buried treasure.
Inside you hide your history;
animal droppings and crushed bird eggs,
rusted nails and rolls of wire.
You once stood so strong.
I run my hand across your walls,
slivers of wood prick and pain me,
but remind me you are in agony too;
for what you've lost from your youth must bring great sadness.
A north wind comes up
and sends your door hurling through the air.
You've lost another piece of you to time.
Through all of this
you must know that he loves you;
that little boy, who spends hours within your battered walls.
Pretending and exploring,
seeing life as it used to be.
He digs and builds,
stores and stacks,
giving you a new sense of purpose.
Your demise is inevitable,
but in the short time you are still here,
you give that little boy a refuge
and act as a reminder
of a life that we can only imagine.



photo by Shirley Craig



On the Move

with Steve Gerberich

interviewed and written by Carey Swanson



object he discovers inspire the idea for a great piece. Tea kettles, for instance – Steve’s trademark. Taking the common tea kettle, he flips it upside down, the spout thus becoming the nose. Then by adding other sundry parts for eyes, ears and mouth, he composes myriad “faces” of people from every walk of life. In 1996, a display honoring the Beatles, located at the Kaleidoscope in downtown Des Moines, featured the *Gadgets*, a mechanical group of moving “kettle-heads,” which epitomized the 60s rock sensation. The Des Moines Art Center, in 1997, hosted a Gerberich exhibition: *The Gerberich Grand Orchestra*, a diverse group of musicians toting banjos, guitars, drums, saxophones, trombones and other instruments. The *Orchestra* was installed, complete with a conductor waving his baton. Gerberich was excited about this invitation to exhibit his work at the Art Center saying, “it’s hard for a local artist to get into the Art Center, but Debra Lehmann had the vision to include this work.”

Toasters, plow parts, tennis shoes and stationary bikes. Golf clubs, forks, spoons and building cornices. All of these and other items – the list could go on for miles – have played interesting roles in the mechanical sculptures created by Steve Gerberich. Steve, an Iowa native, possesses the extraordinary genius of transforming an everyday object found lying around the house or yard into a mechanized something or other that captivates audiences young and old. He’ll use just about anything available to create unique sculptures, either by coming up with an idea and finding the right part, or by letting the

I first met Steve across the street from the hardware store in Waukee. He was in a blue and white – and slightly rusting – Chevy pickup, sitting very casually, left elbow hanging comfortably outside the window. After introductions, I hopped in my car and followed Steve, leaving the “Triangle” behind and heading west on Highway 6, toward his studio, which is hidden among honey locusts and tall grass.



Arriving at his property entrance, a large blue fish, high on a post, greeted us at the gate. Further up the path toward the studio, various images of ducks, nailed to the occasional tree, swam airily through the woody ground – mostly unpainted, wooden cutouts, although one was painted teal with a bright orange beak. The clay bust of a man, poised in sentry position, rested on one post, partially hidden in the trees. Picture frames were hung in a carefree manner from other fence posts, with the surrounding countryside as the “paintings” they encased. Along the west fence line, work boots, a green pair of gloves and a cap that said *Athletics* with a picture of a beaver, were tacked on the posts between strands of barbed wire.

Following this rather capricious trail, we bumped over the short, coarse path until we finally approached a quaint, two-room shanty surrounded by things – lots of things.

Everyday items of today and yesterday were strewn all over, but not in disarray exactly; each piece seemed to belong where it sat. Long, brimming tables of sun-worn and rusting

parts: wheels, coffeepots and tea kettles, hinges, colanders, silver ware, farm implements – whatever – were everywhere I looked. There were a couple of small fishing boats in the yard (the river’s close by) and an old, decrepit red tractor sat out in the field not far from the studio surrounded by tall grass.

Steve jumped out of his truck and in the waning sunlight I noticed his camp shirt. Against a white cloth background, swimming back and forth, were fish – all kinds, all sizes. It reflected his surroundings and an emerging facet of his personality: eccentricity. We stepped through more tall grass as he led me across the threshold into the living quarters of his studio. Once inside, I breathed in the wonderful blend of age and wood. The place was rustic, with exposed ceiling beams and a rough, wooden floor. I noticed a small pile of anthill-type dirt on the floor. Nonchalantly, he told me he had termites, totally unaffected

by the fact. There was no running water, but Steve had outfitted his cozy home with a television, telephone and fireplace. Across several walls



Steve Gerberich seated comfortably in his Adel Studio. His collection of paint-by-numbers adorn the walls. Above left: Steve's Helicopter was created with a 706 International tractor cab, a basketball hoop and a Westinghouse fan inside. Moose antlers grace the front and a cream separator makes up the front turbo which is powered by three canoe paddles. Above right: Made more simply, Steve's Birdie is fashioned from golf drivers and forks.

top two photos courtesy of Steve Gerberich, bottom photo by Heather Biggar



George the fisherman was designed as a memorial for one of Steve's friends, now deceased. The sculpture sporting waders, a camera and fishing lures fishes the banks of the Raccoon River. The sculpture was displayed this past winter and spring at Baltimore's new children's museum, Port Discovery.

hung Steve's collection of paint-by-numbers: horses, seascapes, European cottages, *The Last Supper* and a variety of birds and animals – truly unusual collectibles.

Moving through the side door, I followed Steve into his studio which houses shelf upon shelf of more things. This is not junk. And, although several articles are written about his unique way with junk – one author calling it “animated junk” – Steve is very sensitive about the word. “I’m really defensive about using the *J* word,” he said, and then emphasized the word by spelling it out: “J-u-n-k.” Acknowledging former interviewers liberal use of *junk* in reference to his work, Steve commented, “They love to [use *junk*], but objects that I use are clearly overlooked common objects.”

In the center of the studio, on a long work-table, laid George, a yet-to-be finished project for his exhibit at Baltimore’s new chil-

dren’s museum called Port Discovery. Now finished and displayed (at publishing time), George, at the time, looked more like what the flying monkeys did to the scarecrow in the *Wizard of Oz*.

George was created as a memorial to one of Steve’s closest friends, George Haupt, who a few years ago took his life, an apparent victim of manic depression. “He was one of my close, close art friends,” Steve recalled. “We went to school together. And he knew me so well. I could bounce ideas off of him. He was just brilliant. He was manic-depressive and he left the earth early by choice.” Steve encouraged George to spend time at his Adel studio and smiled as he remembered how George would leave little treasures around the place. “I still won’t find everything that he’s left me, secretive, clever outdoor installations. So this is a memorial to him.”

George was installed at Port Discovery as a hands-on work. By turning a meat grinder crank, a child could set in motion a series of movements – pulleys and gears turning – eventually reaching George’s arm, who then cast the fishing lure. The lure was also hooked to a bunch of fish with flapping mouths and wagging tails – “all being produced by one crank,” said Steve.

Steve Gerberich, who grew up just outside Waukee, also lived in Des Moines for a few years when he was very young. Former neighbor Wenda Ryan remembered the Gerberich household – in particular Betty Rose, his mother – as a home that encouraged creativity.

“She had the most marvelous laugh,” Ryan recalled, “and was the most unconditionally loving person that there was. She encouraged the creativity. It was a really cool environment. The boys [Steve and his brother, Tim] were wall colorers.” Ryan noted that most children color on walls from time to time, but Betty Rose *allowed* them to do so.

“She enjoyed her children. She must have just cleaned up after them. There was no stifling creativity.”

According to Ryan, the Gerberich home was atypically non-sexist in the very sexist early 60s. When Ryan’s daughter, Deanna, was about three or four, the same age as Steve, she received a *Budding Beauty Vanity* for Christmas. It consisted of a child-sized vanity with mirror and stool, complete with jewelry and makeup. When Steve saw it, he wanted one, too. He received one for his birthday in the spring and gave the makeup and jewelry to Deanna. Ryan remembered that he liked having a special place to comb his hair – “he liked to sit down and groom.”

Steve’s chosen career as a mechanical sculptor didn’t surprise Ryan. “It shows what can happen when parents don’t place limits,” she said. She then referred to his use of the commonly worn *Red Ball Jets* sneakers, that Steve “shoed” his *Flying Reindeer* with and exhibited a few years ago at the Kaleidoscope. “The kids in the 50s and 60s wore *Red Ball Jets* shoes, so they could ‘run their fastest and jump their highest,’” she said quot-



In 1997, The Des Moines Art Center hosted The Gerberich Grand Orchestra, a diverse group of “musicians” playing instruments led by a “conductor.” Next page, a look at the musicians clockwise from upper left: Kettleheads play the barp, guitar, accordian, saxophone, violin and electric guitar. The conductor is in the center.

photo courtesy of Steve Gerberich



ing the *Red Ball Jets* slogan . . . a good choice in footwear for reindeer.

Tim, Steve's older brother, according to Ryan, was the neighborhood organizer. He planned fun things to do – like the game pirate ship. "He incorporated all ages of kids in the neighborhood in the play," she said.

Steve idolized his brother while growing up and credits Tim as the motivation behind his work as an artist.

"He was my inspiration," said Steve emphatically. I went through that whole older brother syndrome, where I was always his assistant and he was always coming up with these creative things to do – as a kid, as a teenager, as a college kid. He was always the blatantly spontaneous one of the family. I was always behind him, always enjoying being with him."

Tragically, Tim suffered a serious head injury in a traffic accident, leaving him severely physically impaired. "The accident was 18 years ago," Steve remembered. "It was an incredibly severe head injury and he was in intensive care for months, and in the hospital for a year and a half. It was so severe, so much brain tissue was removed – almost half of his brain was removed. I couldn't even say that for years."

Tim, however, remains Steve's inspiration. "He can do some amazing stuff. He does left-handed drawings since he had to switch everything over from his right to his left hand and side."

Steve's dad is also a help and inspiration "He helps me design things. I built a 30-foot Christmas tree last year. I don't have patience for doing these intricate drawings, so he helped me design this tree and did the drawings for it. I can always call on him for advice – electrical and sometimes mechanical."

Steve began his career as an artist in college and decided to make a go of it in New York, where he has lived for the past 14 years. After earning his Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree at the University of Northern Iowa, he and a friend decided to move to the major city where they felt they had the greatest opportunity. They settled on New York, said Steve, because "it is the art hub of the world. I had my BFA, and, if I could exist or survive there for a year, I'd consider it my graduate school – just go to as many galleries and try and meet as many artists as possible and just enjoy the cultural diversity."

He survived those first few years mainly by doing odd jobs, such as plumbing or painting, even photo assisting and managing *Metropolitan Home Magazine's* photo studio. Then he got a job cleaning out an old printing company so it could be sold. There he uncovered a boarded-up display window. "I cleaned it up," said Steve, "and asked the owner of the building and the supervisor on the job if I could do an installation in it. They agreed and I slowly creat-



High school art students in Indianola, Iowa, under the tutelage of Steve, created this Vacuumasaurus. The students' instructor, Bob Kling, who is a long time friend of Steve's, noted the making of the sculpture was a joint effort. Not only did Steve instruct the students in the design, the students were able to instruct him on the art of welding. "He was a great guy to work with," said Kling.



ed this environment that was called *The Great White Hunter*, which was kind of an anti-hunting theme. I took all these hunters pointing at some little deer – they were plastic figures, little plastic buffalo and trophies with hunters in the shooting position. That was the first window I had done. It was a breakthrough.”

Installations have been Steve's passion since college. While at UNI, he constructed an installation in an old closet. “I set up little environments in windows that were typically display cases for ceramics or 3-D media. I'd turn them into these installations, setting up objects that I'd been collecting for years, and telling little stories with them as well.” The public has sustained Gerberich's fervor for these constructions. “I love public sculpture. Doing a window is so accessible. The hours of a window exhibition can run all night if I want. It does not discriminate. You don't have to go inside some pretentious gallery or 'important' museum to see it. Anyone off the street or driving by can experience it. That's why I love the window format.”

Currently, Steve's New York studio is located in an old shoe factory in Brooklyn, where he has 1600 square feet to house even more stuff and to create sculptures. In Manhattan, he has also installed displays for Bloomingdale's, Grand Central Station, and Broadway and Madison Avenue windows. Various other works have been displayed or permanently installed in other cities around the country as well as in Europe.

Steve Gerberich has a great zest for life, involving himself in many activities outside of his work as an artist. He loves to roller blade in Central Park in New York – “There are millions of people circulating throughout the park. It has gotten such a bad rap. But I've never had a problem.” And also, here, in Iowa, he spends time on the bike trails by Dallas County. “I think that's such a salvation for me. It's good exercise and my thought processes are very freed up and open. I can really resolve things while I'm on those trails.” Tennis and golf are also among his interests.

On one occasion Steve was a guest in my home. This time I glimpsed yet another side to his personality – namely his unabashed curiosity. Once inside my home he became the interviewer, passing through

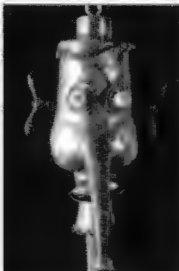


Looking much like a melancholy pig, this dog was commissioned by a man in honor of his dog, Linguini. The head goes back and forth by a crank which is part of a peanut roasting machine. His muzzle is a wick holder from a kerosene lamp. Above left: The French Poodle. Though this piece looks very unlike a real French poodle, look closely at the tiny replica of the Eiffel Tower on the collar around the pooch's neck.



every room in my house, examining all that I owned, asking questions about every displayed picture, every displayed object – even my kitchen cupboards did not go unnoticed – seemingly more interested in the interviewer than I in the interviewee. Not nosy, either, but caring – about people. And Steve’s great fascination about people and who they are, takes his “Gerb-o-matic” creations into a dimension beyond gears and pulleys and tea kettles.

He breathes life into them.

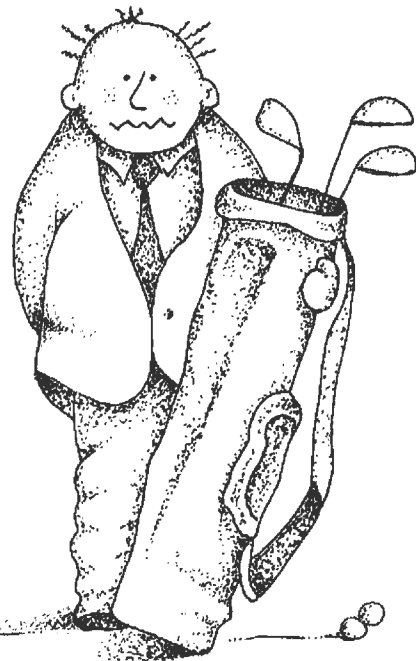


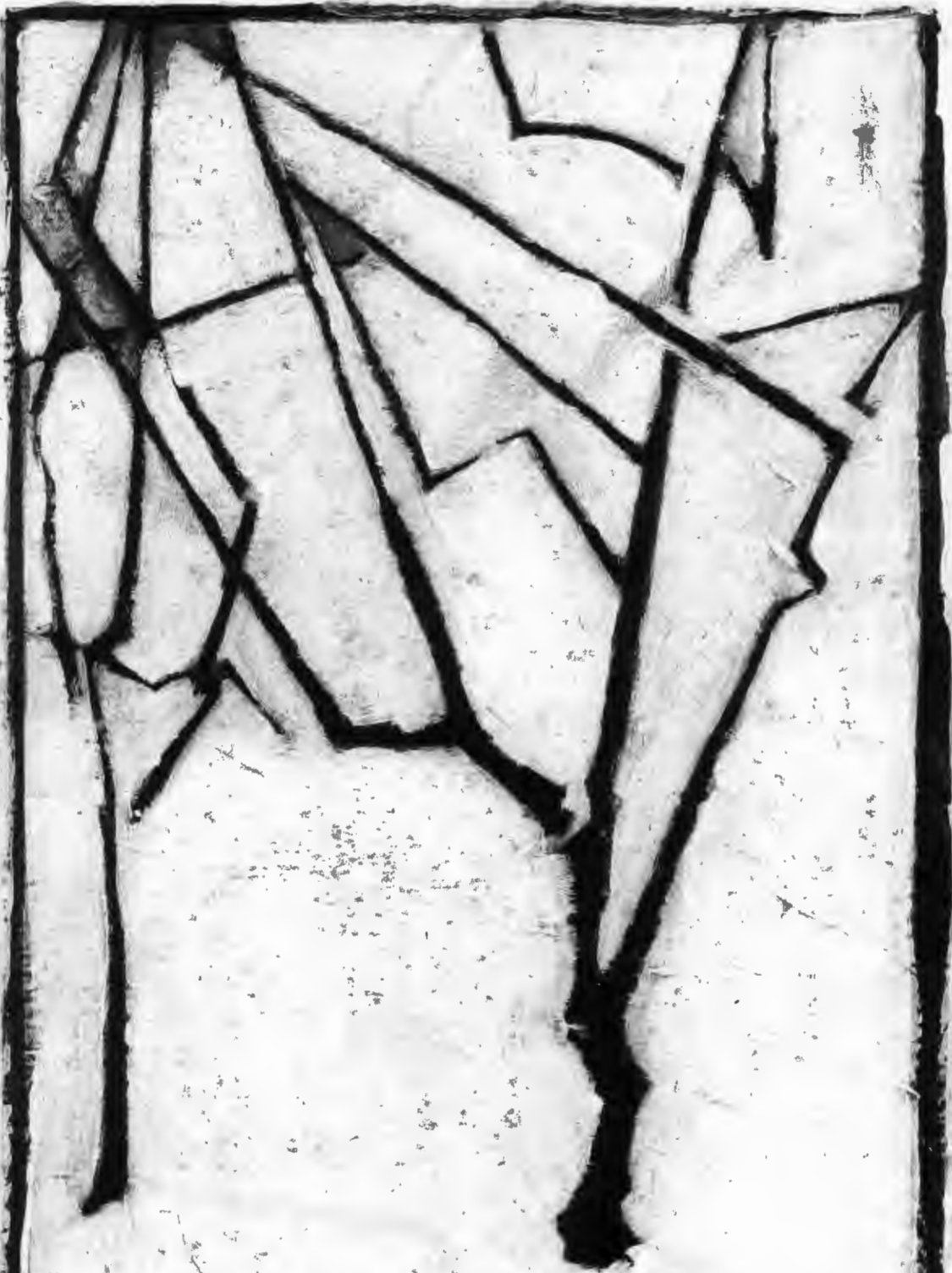
photos courtesy of Steve Gerberich, signature by Steve Gerberich

OFFICE GOSSIP ~

Connie Small

Precocious Pen
whispered
to Dull Desk
of their type-A
tycoon who
warped
beyond overdrive as he
chanted
a mission statement,
beat
paper with scissors
then stone,
gnawed
off Bookshelf's corners,
announced
tastes like chicken,
marched
to the men's room
where he
saluted
Colonel Urinal.
Overachieving idiot
waltzed
to the thirteenth hole,
genuflected
at Golf Cart,
drove
it onto the middle of rush hour,
and has not been
seen since.





WINTER

Colleen Looker / Runner-up best poem of DMACC creative writing contest

The intricate weavings of the tree's long, spindly fingers
reach towards the sky.

A white blanket of silence covers the world.

The sheet of silver river is calm.

The faint cry of a bird pierces the stillness.

I stand alone in my winter.

acrylic by Jason Roe



INCANTATIONS ~

Ruth K. Hauptman

Inspired by our leaders, we practice our craft, working magic with words; striving for balance, illumination, perfection; seeking spirit with sounds and symbols.

We meet under each stage of the moon, new or waxing, full or waning, in a circle of at least thirteen. Holding our shadow books close to our hearts, we guard the writings that are drawn from our lives, then concentrated like herbs – squeezed, crushed, preserved, until we are ready to share their distinctive taste, their restorative effect.

In mutable moonlight, each one of us intones a celebration of earth or air, wind or fire. As we fall under the spell of sayer, a moment comes when there is no past, no future. The words cast us into now, in harmony with the life force, stars and the space beyond.



intaglio print by Teri Templeton

Adventure Marty

a story by S. T.

marker illustrations by Scott Irwin

It had been nearly three years since the tragedy, but Marty Langlade was still haunted by nightmares. To this day, he wondered why he had been allowed to live and so many others had been chosen to die. As he sat up and ran a hand through his unruly hair, screams permeated his head. He put his hands over his ears, but to no avail; these were the screams of the innocent as they died, the screams that haunted him more and more with each passing day.

Glancing about his modest apartment, he focused on the articles, clippings and artists' renderings of the night three years previous. In his mind, the screaming swelled. He prayed for forgiveness for having survived. He prayed for forgiveness for his sins. He prayed for the screaming to stop.

Today, of all days, Marty had to be able to keep his appointment – the same appointment he'd kept every Saturday for the past three months. Work could be missed, but his Saturday appointments were an entirely different matter. He could no more miss a Saturday appointment than pull his teeth.

"All right, Adventure Marty," he muttered softly, using the nickname given to him by the children, "up and at 'em. Saturday is Adventure Day, and you have a new band of kids just waiting to take the tour."

Swinging his legs over the side of the bed, he slowly rose. With a yawn, he walked toward the bathroom to shave the night's accumulation of whiskers.

Little Janelle was ecstatic, if ever a word was sufficient to describe the elation she felt that

morning. Today was the day, the day she had waited nearly a month for, the day that she felt would never get here, a day more exciting and anticipated than her fifth birthday last week.

Today, this very day, July 17, 1915, Janelle was going to be part of the group that everyone wanted to be in, the gang, the chosen few who had waited in breathless anticipation for their names to come up. Today, she would find the Holy Grail of childhood, the ultimate gratification, the it's-all-downhill-from-here state that her Daddy talked about when he'd made all that money.

Today was the day that Janelle was going on a journey being led by none other than Mr. Adventure Marty, a man more famous than Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny combined in the town of Massena, New York. From what she had heard, no child had ever returned unhappy, and all claimed to have taken an incredible journey of imagination because Adventure Marty told great stories while on these walks and had a different way of looking at things.

All kinds of funny rumors were spread about Adventure Marty. Janelle had heard her Mommy once say that Adventure Marty was really an angel from heaven, and that he took children to heaven through a secret door that only angels and saints could see. Janelle hoped it was true, because then she would get to meet her Grandpa, "Big Papa" Opus. He died a few years ago when a boat he was on sank, and Janelle hardly remembered him.

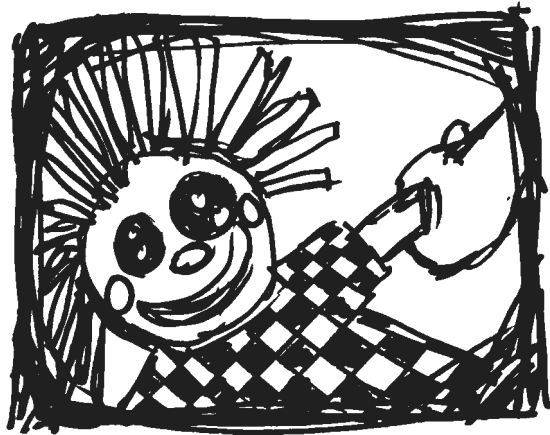
"Janelle!" called her mother. "Are you almost ready?"

"Yes, Momma! I just want to bring Raggedy Ann with me!"

"Okay, but hurry! We have to be at Clive's General Store in ten minutes!"

"I'm hurrying!"

Janelle grabbed her favorite doll, the one she'd had since she could remember and declared,



"I wouldn't miss this for all the birthdays in the world. C'mon, Annie, we gotta go!"

Raggedy Ann just kept smiling, her button eyes staring blankly into space.

Marty walked up to the counter, laying his usual provisions out to be tallied. Clive grinned and said hello. Marty smiled back.

"Out for another adventure today, Mr. Langlade?"

"Yes, sir, Clive. I've got my dried beef, some apple cider and some horehound candy for the children who behave. I'm ready to inspire young minds – maybe make the next Abraham Lincoln."

Clive began to ring up the purchases.

"It's a good thing you're doing, Marty. I think they should erect a statue in your honor. Before you came to town, most of these kids spent their free time stirring up trouble. They'd been out shooting windows with slingshots and whooping and yelling and screaming, 'The Injuns is coming! The Injuns is coming!' down at the old vacant lot and scaring the life half out of Old Man Jenson, unhitching buggies and slapping the horses."

Clive chuckled.

"Ah, youth. We've had our fair share of little rascals here in town. Made me wish they'd build a park or a library or finish building that new school, Twin Rivers. But since you started Adventure Day tours, things are a lot quieter.

It's almost like a miracle."

Marty pulled out his money and began to count it out.

"Not a miracle, Clive. I just show them the world in a slightly different way. I guess they're left a little awestruck. To them, it's like they discover a world they've never seen before."

After paying and receiving his change, Marty nodded back, sat on the edge of the porch and began to fill his canteen with apple cider.

"Good morning, Jebediah," said Clive to a burly man entering the store. "I didn't expect to see you this early in the morning. Why, it's not even . . ." Clive glanced at his pocket watch. "It's not even 8:30 and here you are. I thought you'd sleep in today so you could get ready for church tomorrow."

"Morning, Clive. I wasn't expecting to get up this early either, but the missus told me that I had to bring Luke here to go with that Marty fella."

"You mean Adventure Marty? You just walked past him on your way in."

Jebediah glanced back at Marty, who was nibbling at the dried beef and talking to Luke. Luke was absorbed in the conversation already. Jebediah swelled with pride. Only ten years old, and big for his age, and smart. Luke could match wits with just about any man. His mother kept saying he'd be a lawyer someday, and Jebediah saw no shame in having an educated man in the family.

Turning back to Clive, he asked, "Where does he take them, anyway? And what does he do to those kids?"

"Marty's a little sparse on the details. I can't imagine why, but he claims that no one should ever take the path without him along. They start by climbing that big hill where the mines used to be, along the path that goes up the side. Then they cross the big open field, go into the woods, and follow a trail into the woods until they hit the West Racket River. After that, they do an about face and head for home. I've never seen him return any time before five in the afternoon, so I imagine he makes certain to take breaks along the way. When the kids get back, they're so tired they go straight to bed and fall asleep. By the next day, the children seem to have a greater curiosity

about the world and are more eager than ever to learn."

Jebediah was happy about the last part, but still a little apprehensive.

"Has . . . uh. . . anything ever happened to any of the kids?"

"Jeb, I can assure you that nothing bad is going to happen to Luke. If you're worried, though, you can make him stay home. Marty will understand. I remember the first time he did this, only a few people would trust their children with him. But when those three kids came home, grinning like the cat that ate the canary. . ."

Outside, the ten children who had been chosen for this week's adventure were assembling into a line behind Marty, with Luke in the lead and Janelle bringing up the rear, clutching her prized doll in her left hand. They began to walk toward the old mine.

After they left, Jeb had a few more questions.

"What's the story on Marty, anyway? Up until a few months ago I'd never heard of him. But his name rings a bell."

Clive rubbed his chin, thinking.

"That's the funny part. The way I heard it, from Marty himself, it doesn't really make sense, like something out of a science fiction story. But at the same time, it makes absolute perfect sense. Do you remember the ship that Big Papa Opus was on, the Titanic?"

"Yeah, got ripped open by an iceberg from what I heard."

"On her maiden voyage. Tragic. Anyway, from what he told me, Marty was on that ship too. The part that doesn't make a whole lot of sense to me is how he survived. Now, you'd expect that he was one of the lucky people who made it to the lifeboats. But what Marty told me was that he was giving this demonstration on the uses of balsa wood."

Jebediah frowned.

"It's this real thin wood, almost as thin as paper. Marty claims that if you build something right with it, it's stronger than any pine or oak you can buy. To prove it would work, he said he'd build a dinghy out of it and set it afloat in a fountain. A few hours later, when they were yelling, 'Man the lifeboats! Women and children first!' he ran back to his room, grabbed the dinghy, lay down on the deck

inside it, and let the water rise, all the while reciting the Lord's Prayer over and over again."

"I take it his boat worked."

"Oh yeah. He was found by the rescue ship, and they say as soon as he was pulled on board, the dinghy broke apart. It was by the grace of God that he's alive today."

"So that's why everyone thinks he's an angel."

"Maybe," said Clive, "or maybe it's something he shows them in the woods."

Several hours later, they had reached the woods. Marty was in the midst of telling the children about how they were bears, lurking though the woods looking for honey, when suddenly he paused. They had arrived at a large clearing, which formed an almost perfect circle.

"This is it, kids."

He turned his back and sighed. This was the part of the day he hated, dreaded, feared the most.

"But a deal's a deal," he whispered.

He remembered walking these same



woods three months ago, stumbling onto this secret place, the place where the children now stood in breathless anticipation, waiting for the great secret to be revealed. He remembered the bargain he had made, crying and pleading for his life to be spared.

With tears welling up in his eyes, Marty turned to face the children and said, "I'm

sorry, kids. I wish it didn't have to be this way."

Luke, who'd been leading the group suddenly became suspicious. When the bushes around them began to rustle, Marty swore the boy knew everything – why he'd led them here, why he was sorry, why he never took the same child on this adventure more than once.

Marty forced himself to watch the moment of dawning horror on every face as the trolls appeared, their razor-sharp teeth bared, their long claws readied. He wrenched his gaze from the children's fear-filled faces to look into the yellowed, soul-less eyes of the head troll, now emerging from the shadows of the bushes.

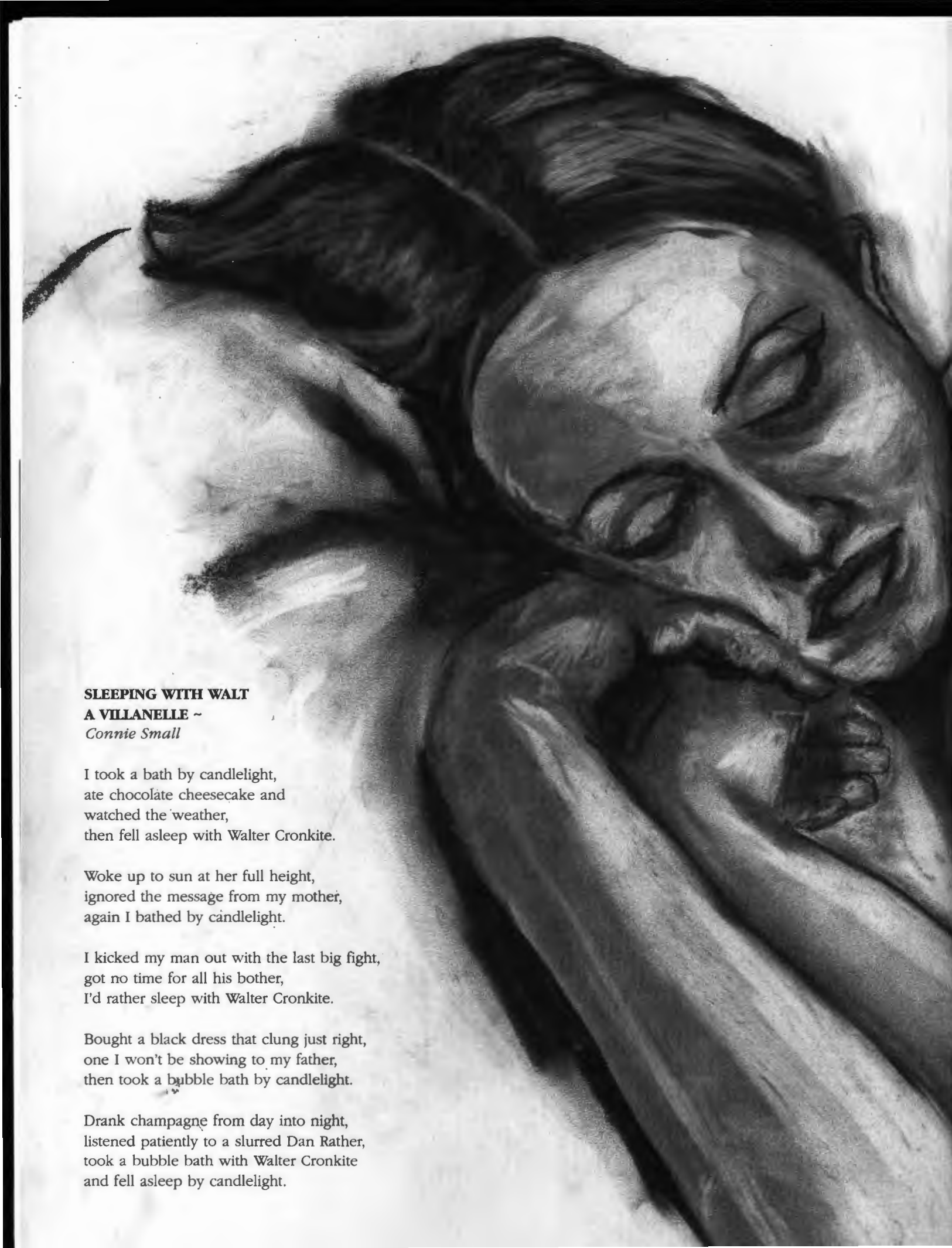
A brief acknowledgement passed between them and the troll paused briefly in anticipation as he stared at Marty. Then, Marty, almost imperceptively, nodded his assent. In unison, the trolls sprang from the brush and fell upon the children.

He forced himself to watch the children being devoured, listening to their screams of pain and horror. He forced himself to watch as the trolls began to transform into the exact likeness of the children, starting with Luke and ending with Janelle. He knew that these screams would soon join those that had haunted him every morning for the past three months.

When the troll-Janelle picked up the forgotten doll, it was time to go. Adventure Marty began to lead the new recruits toward the river, continuing his spiel about bears and honeycombs, knowing next week would bring another appointment.

And Adventure Marty never missed an appointment.





SLEEPING WITH WALT
A VILLANELLE ~
Connie Small

I took a bath by candlelight,
ate chocolate cheesecake and
watched the weather,
then fell asleep with Walter Cronkite.

Woke up to sun at her full height,
ignored the message from my mother,
again I bathed by candlelight.

I kicked my man out with the last big fight,
got no time for all his bother,
I'd rather sleep with Walter Cronkite.

Bought a black dress that clung just right,
one I won't be showing to my father,
then took a bubble bath by candlelight.

Drank champagne from day into night,
listened patiently to a slurred Dan Rather,
took a bubble bath with Walter Cronkite
and fell asleep by candlelight.



**SWEET AS THE RED SAUCE IN THE CHINESE PLACE
DOWN THE STREET ~**

Ray Weikal / Overall Best Writer of DMACC creative writing contest

I dreamed that dark brown man
 in the crisp, khaki uniform
Had not been swallowed
 by the South China
 Sea.

I dreamed that he returned jubilant
 to his cracked, twisted home
On Talbot street in the August Oakland
 of my tiny, pink
 existence.

I dreamed that that dark, uniformed man
 dripped sweaty, salty odors
That clashed with our incensed home of
 tiny dancing beads over empty
 doors.

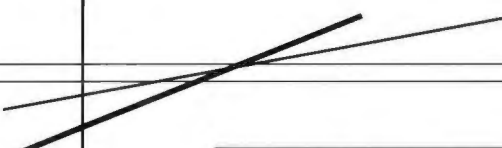
I dreamed that my blue-jeaned mother
 wore a clean, white t-shirt
That embraced her damp olive skin
 made darker under late summer
 sunlight.

I dreamed that this man, my father,
 and this woman, my mother,
 filled the open front door of brown and red trim,
And squeezed each other tight,
 like long amorous
 anacondas.

And I dreamed that Mother spilled silent
 tears tinged by Pacific winds
That to Father tasted sweet as the red
 sauce in the Chinese place down the
 street.



photo by Arianne Robinson



Charlie

by James Edward Asbille / Best story of DMACC creative writing contest

Charlie Walek started working in the Kane at the age of five. He was an apprentice to his father who was the director of lighting. There he met Marlene Dietrich and Lionel Barrymore and other stars of stage and screen. The theater became his whole life; he spent his days and nights there. When everyone else went out after the shows, he would stay and secure the equipment. Later, he would just sit in the catwalks, staring into the cavernous theater. Sometimes he would fall asleep, only to wake up the next morning in time to start all over again. He dropped out of school at the age of fourteen to become a stagehand full time. He watched his father obsessively, gleaning everything he could about the craft and adding a few tricks of his own. Eventually, Charlie became the director of lighting. He built a reputation as a hardworking perfectionist and loner. As the fortunes of the Kane fell and the staff dwindled, Charlie was kept on. He knew everything about the theater and didn't seem to mind working longer hours and taking on more responsibilities for the same pay. To the company, he was cost effective. To Charlie, it was all he knew and all he ever wanted to know.

Today was Charlie's birthday, though only he knew it. It had been 60 years of make-believe, 60 years of brilliant stars and not-so-brilliant stars. Sixty years of up-and-comers and 60 years of has-beens. He had seen people come and go in an endless parade, but he'd stayed on forever. "Charlie, you seem to be made for this place," his father used to say. And, he was right. The years had changed his thick dark hair to a thinning band of white that encircled his head like a crown. His once sinewy muscles now held up sagging, wrinkled skin. Stooped by time, his once tall, muscular frame was now two inches shorter and 20 pounds lighter.

Charlie's eyes were what set him apart from the ordinary, though. They were an intense blue, like the colored gels he put in the broad lights, the ones he used to simulate the sky. His stare was cold and distant, always pondering some otherworldly concept of light and shadow.

"Hey, Mister, you Charlie?"

"Yeah."

"I've been sent to see you. You're s'posed to show me the ropes."

"Oh."

Charlie went back to adjusting a stagelight. The young man extended his hand to offer a handshake. Charlie never noticed.

"My name's Robert. I was just hired for the summer." Robert stood awkwardly for a moment, hand outstretched, unsure of what to do. Finally, he put it down. "I'm going to college over at the University, to study communications. My teacher said there was an internship here. Doesn't pay anything, but it looks good on the resumé." Robert noticed the man paid no attention to him, but kept adjusting the light in front of him, never finding satisfaction with the results. "What are you doing up here anyway? I was told the theater was ready for the next performance."

This question surprised Charlie and brought him back to the moment. No one had ever asked what he was doing on the catwalk. He was Charlie. Why wouldn't he be here?

"I work here."

"I realize that, but doing what? I mean, I don't know much about this job, but it seems once the lights are aimed for a show they pretty much just stay there."

"Some might say that."

"And what would you say?"



Charlie considered the young man for what seemed a long time. He was a wiry, strong boy with the fresh-faced look of youth. He also was very intense, with dark penetrating eyes and hair. He reminded him of pictures he had seen of his father as a young man. He was constantly fidgeting, full of energy. Robert played with the keys in his pockets and rocked back and forth.

I should teach him to stand still. You must be steady as a rock up here. Dad was like that – always nervous. Couldn't stand still to save his life. Skittish as a cat and always driving us hard.

"Come on, Charlie! We don't have all day! I need more focus on that pin spot!"

Charlie's daydreams were becoming more vivid lately. He kept reliving things in his mind. This time it was Marlene Dietrich's three-day, one-woman show and Charlie couldn't wait for opening night. His father was driving the lighting crew mercilessly. With all the movement and tempo changes on stage, the lighting had to be meticulously arranged. Marlene had specific marks to hit and he must hit them with her.

"All right, Dad, don't have a fit!"

Charlie was the only one on the

crew who didn't mind the way his father pushed them. It was these difficult shows where his dad got really creative. His father always told him you had to make the stars look better on stage than in real life. Charlie knew instinctively how much to focus the light and how much to adjust the fixture compensate for the narrowing of the beam. He breathed deeply. The smell of burning dust from the dangerously hot lamp was a drug for Charlie.

"Perfect, Son, you read my mind.

Now go help Tommy. He doesn't have a clue what I want."

Charlie and his dad understood each other all right. Charlie's mom had left them when he was five, and Charlie had gone to work with his father. "I just couldn't stand to lose you, too, even if it was just for a day," his father had said. They were together all the time. Sometimes it was like they shared the same brain.

"That's it. Tommy, are you paying attention to what Charlie just did? You boys should listen to him. He knows what I need."

Dad understood.

Charlie, like his father, was never satisfied with the lights and constantly adjusted and readjusted them. At the height of the Kane's success, Charlie was highly respected as someone who could bring the best out of a performance through his skillful choice of light. But now, no one seemed to care for the subtleties of stage lighting. It merely had to be lit.

"Well? What gives, Old Man?" asked Robert, breaking into Charlie's thoughts.

Charlie realized that the boy had been expecting him to say something. Talking had become more difficult over the years. He just never had the ability to make others understand what he felt. Now only he and the theater shared the secret.

What can I teach him in a summer? Why teach him anything? He'll just go away and get a job somewhere else – like all the others.

"It's just that you see things – things you didn't see in rehearsal. You change

things, sometimes just a little here, a little there. Sometimes you redo everything. But when it's just right, you know."

For Robert, an awkward silence hung in the stagnant, dusty air. Stillness enveloped the space just below the vaulted ceiling. But silence was what Charlie loved – the lack of motion. It was calculable to him, understandable, concrete. He just sat there looking at the stage, lit only by the houselights. They were yellow and weak. The stage carried no magic now. Only when the full power of thousands of foot-candles of light illuminated the stage was it possible for mere human beings to skim and dance across the floor and weave their spell on an unsuspecting audience. Charlie had always believed that the final magic to a performance came mystically flowing out of the barrell-snouted lights that he hung endlessly.

Dad called it the sorcerer's wand.

"Well?"

"Well what?"

"You know what."

It hadn't occurred to Charlie that he had been vague. He knew what he meant, but when he talked it never came out the way he intended it. It was so clear to him, but what should he say to this young man?

"You know," he began, "you know that you have done it right and everything looks the way it should, and you, uh, just know."

Robert chuckled to himself, looking down into the theater and shook his head.

"Let me guess. You've been up here a long time?"

Charlie nodded, "Yes, a long time."

Forever.

Charlie had been young once, like this boy. Now he was old, though not decrepit or infirm, just old. Like the Kane, he had his peak during the 1940s and 1950s. The Kane sat prominently displayed in the Lower District of the city. The wealthy elite spent their evenings in joyous pursuit of pleasure here. Presidents, kings and all manner of international dignitaries could be

found meandering the streets, and they all ended up in the Victorian splendor of the Kane. First his father, then Charlie himself, would light the great plays, working with his crew, watching the actors, walking the catwalk. Charlie thought he would paint the lights on the stage forever. He didn't know how many times he had walked those catwalks or aimed those lights or swept the floors or watched the shows. It had been a lifetime.

Forever.

Charlie had lit a great deal of famous plays, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Glass Menagerie*, even *Death of a Salesman*. No one knew the true skill of his craft; Charlie never blew his own horn and he always kept to himself.

There was that once, though. *She* knew what it meant.

Charlie lit a short-lived run of *Sunset Boulevard*, with Gloria Swanson reprising her screen role. He worked diligently to get her lighting just right. He remembered her



great performances years before with his father's lights, and now it was his chance. He struggled during rehearsals to capture the madness of Nora Desmond, to accentuate her character visually, to bring out the genius in Miss Swanson's already brilliant performance. After the closing night's show, Charlie was finishing up when he heard a husky woman's voice below him.

"Where is he? I must see him, I tell you!"

"He's probably on the catwalks, Miss Swanson. We never see him after a performance. He's an oddball. Please, Miss Swanson, there are some reporters from the local papers who want to talk to you."

"Not until I see the man who did my lighting!"

From above, Charlie looked straight down on the aging star. He was crushed. He must have done something wrong, missed something. Why else would she want to see him? Miss Swanson was so demanding during rehearsals. He had used every light in the house and pulled every trick he knew, digging deep inside to find just the right touches.

I thought I had it right. They felt right.

Charlie climbed down. This was *the* Gloria Swanson, after all. He would not hide in the catwalks from her. She saw him coming down the ladder and he started over to the landing. She glided more than walked, with the grace of a great lioness. She held her trademark diamond-studded cigarette holder and still wore the sequined close-fitting hat she'd worn that night on stage. She had slipped into a silk, fur-trimmed bathrobe, but had not removed her stage makeup. She was stunning and radiant – a star.

As she neared him, her eyes bored into his, seemingly to discover something in him, some memory. Suddenly, her face lit up.

"Are you Charlie Walek?"

"Yes, Miss Swanson."

"My god, young man, I didn't know it was you! I remember your father. He was a master, like Michelangelo!"

"Yes, he was, Miss Swanson."

Charlie was having trouble looking her in the eyes, feeling sure the next moment would spell doom.

"These pipsqueaks call me 'Miss Swanson.' You may call me Gloria. You have your father's touch, young man. Your lights so caressed my face tonight. I simply floated on them. Such an inspiration!" Charlie raised his head and stared into her powerful eyes.

She knows!

"Young man, you are even better than your father; you brought out the true Norma Desmond. I absolutely had to thank you myself. Make that awful little man you work for give you a raise. Tell him Gloria said you should be paid a king's ransom!"

She was waving her hands about, pulling in the whole world to witness Charlie's triumph. Then she kissed him on the cheek, spun around and left in a whirl, leaving only the scent of sweet lilac perfume and the tingle of a kiss that would remain in his memory as the sprinkling of fairy dust on an earthly creature. He would never be the same again.

She really understood.

Charlie came back to the present again.

"Well, Robert, I guess we can start by looking around."

Charlie showed Robert the catwalk system, the fader packs, the fader board, the dressing rooms, backstage and below stage. He showed the boy everything, but told him nothing about the grandeur that had been. Or the decline. He didn't talk about the toll time had taken on him and the Kane. That meant nothing to this boy.

He doesn't want to hear about the past; he's all hormones and excitement.

They finally ended up in the old projection booth. The Kane had once shown movies here, mostly *Bushy Berkely* dance extravaganzas and the like. The screen would lower from the ceiling and cover up the stage area. When it broke down in the 60s, the owners decided that revenues were too low to justify replacing it. Charlie had set up a table, a couple of chairs and an old sofa that served as a bed on more than a few long nights. He also liked it because he could look out on the Kane, maintaining the solitude that he had on the catwalk. Robert once again broke his reverie.

"So what d'ya think of the news?"

"What news?"

"Charlie, don't you talk to anybody? You are aware that this whole district is being rennovated, don't you?"

"What do you mean?"



photo by DMACC Photo Department

“Try looking around when you come to work. This area is going to be turned into a hot spot. Warehouses are going to be made into lofts and clubs. Pretty soon money will start flowing in here again. I’ve seen it in other areas. There’s talk about making this a tourist trap as well. But most important of all, to you anyway, some big company is going to buy this place.”

“The Kane?”

Again.

This had happened many times in the past, each time at a lower price to another company, promising to bring back the old Kane. Each time cutbacks were announced and people lost their jobs. But now, surely



no one could lose their jobs; there were barely enough people to run it now.

Maybe they would remake the Kane.

“Yeah, the boss told me. He said this company was looking for an investment in entertainment down here, that this was going to become a boom town and they wanted in on it. He said they would keep him on to run the place and oversee renovations. He’s even talking about a computer-controlled system. It sounded pretty cool. Maybe they’ll even fix up the projection system and show movies again.”

Charlie got up and looked out of the projection window at the old theater, which had seen better days. The seats were worn, the stage sagged in the middle and the walls were faded and dirty. Age had done its damage. He thought about the place being restored to its original grandeur and knew he should be happy, but he felt a growing

sadness inside. He could never be restored. A coat of paint would not cover his sagging flesh, nor would new upholstery replace his gray hair. No new woodwork could fix his arthritic back. The Kane would be remade. It was immortal. He was not. Suddenly, he thought of his father. The Kane had swallowed him up and now Charlie wondered if it would happen to him, too.

Why’d ya leave me, Dad? It would have been so simple to stay with me.

He remembered it was late and he was helping his dad clean up the catwalk after the run of some play.

Funny, I can’t remember what play.

They had to take a rather large klieg light down off the grid. It was easier to do it right then so they wouldn’t have to worry about it in the morning. They had hung it farther out – more than usual – in order to get a special effect, and had not been able to get a safety chain around it. Charlie’s father was even more jittery than normal.

“These lights are expensive, and they are the mainstay of our arsenal. We need to make sure we get it in so nothing happens to it.”

“Be careful. That thing weighs a ton.”

The light was dim and the smell of tobacco and alcohol had mixed with the dust to create a noxious odor. It was one of the few smells in the theater that Charlie detested. The grid was creaking angrily as they pulled the light.

“It isn’t loose enough, I’ll have to release it completely.”

As the bolt was unscrewed, the movement of the grid started to swing the light. Charlie looked out. The grid was swinging one way and the light the other, giving the impression of a ship swaying at sea. His father, misjudging the weight of the light and how much he was reaching, pulled it off the moving grid, fearful that it might fall any second. The grid made a ringing sound as the clap slid off and Charlie’s father said only, “oof!” He and the light spun downward to the floor below in the low, yellow glow of the houselights. Charlie watched helplessly. They appeared to dance in the air, pirouetting towards the floor. He

felt a strange sensation and for a moment it seemed he was looking up and his father and the light were rising in the air, the only noise the ringing of the grid, like sirens calling his father away.

CRASH! His world, along with his father and the glass lens of the klieg, shattered in a deafening cacophony. His father lay on the floor, arms outstretched, surrounded by millions of gleaming, sparkling stars. And the silence returned.

If you had only let go.

Charlie realized he was ignoring Robert again and turned around to look at the boy. He actually seems to be quite patient with me.

"When does the new company take over?"

"Don't know. The boss said they've been inspecting the building to get an appraisal, and when that's done, they can get a time frame for the repairs."

That made Charlie nervous. He didn't trust new owners. After all these years, money had never done right by the Kane.

The next week, walking on the catwalk, he sensed an uneasiness surround him. Something was disturbing the timelessness of the air. When the lights were low, Charlie usually saw the Kane as it had been, but now it felt old and tired, just like him. As the days wore on, though, his tension eased. Robert was coming along well. He paid attention and learned quickly. He had even stopped calling Charlie, "Old Man."

Perhaps he's the one – somebody to pass my knowledge to.

He had always been aware that without a son or an apprentice his craft would die with him. He had often fantasized about having a boy to teach his skill to, but he knew it was just a fantasy. Now there was hope. Robert played around on the catwalk like a monkey, doing things that Charlie hadn't done in years. His youthful energy, steely strength and unabashed daring made him perfect to learn his craft.

That's it, then. I'll talk to him about learning my trade.

Robert was just coming down from rehangng some fill lighting, as Charlie made up his mind about the apprenticeship. He

was covered with dust and sweat, looking more like a mechanic than a lighting hand.

"Robert! I want to talk to you. Come over here."

Charlie waved the boy over to a couple of seats behind the control board. His father always gathered him there for their serious talks.

"I got everything in position. We can go over the focusing any time you want."

"Good. Take a break. I want to talk to you for a minute. I've been watching how well you've been doing. You learn quickly and look real comfortable up top."

"I am. It's really nice up there – free like. No one tells me what to do or where to go. Except you, of course."

Charlie thought he saw a blush cross Robert's cheeks.

"I understand and that's what I want to talk to you about. I'd like you to become my apprentice. You could learn my trade and when I retire I'll know that someone is taking care of things here – someone who really cares. These lights are my brushes, the stage my canvas. I'd like to think someone I can trust will take over for me."

Robert was becoming visibly uncomfortable. He shifted his weight from side to side, crossing his legs one way and then the other, eyes rarely meeting Charlie's. When they did, Robert looked quickly to the floor for refuge.

"It's just that I've grown fond of you in these last few weeks. I think you can be great – better than me even. You'd like that, wouldn't you?"

Noticing Robert's discomfort, Charlie's confidence failed and he fell silent. Maybe I'm embarrassing him, Charlie told himself, but he just wasn't sure.

"I've grown fond of you, too, Charlie. You've been good to me, better than my own dad ever was. And I like doing lighting. It's a blast. But, I've gotta think of my future and there just doesn't seem to be one here."

There it was. What he had feared was true. There would be no successor.

"You've got to know that you're the last of a breed, Charlie. Besides, no one

appreciates what you do up there. When you're gone, they'll hire somebody at minimum wage and treat 'em like dirt. There's no future here for anybody but you." *And maybe not for you either, Charlie*, Robert couldn't help thinking.

Charlie had considered this many times, but it cut through him like broken glass to hear it from this boy he had grown to admire.

"I'm sorry if I'm hurting you. I know what working here means to you. You are a master at what you do. It's just that the world stopped caring a long time ago."

Charlie's head spun in a whirlpool of sadness and doubt. What was happening? Everything was unraveling. Thick air seemed to surround him, heavy, suffocating.

He looked up at Robert. "You go ahead home. I'll finish up tonight."

"That's all right. Let's do it together."

"No, you're right. There's no future here for you. Go home and be with your friends. I'd like to do the rest myself, anyway. It helps me figure things out."

"You sure?"

"Yeah." He looked at Robert again. "Yeah. I'm sure."

That night Charlie slept on the catwalk again. He had troubling dreams of crumbling catwalks and falling lights. His father was falling again, and this time Charlie went with him. Just before hitting the floor, he woke up. He felt the building closing in on him, cutting off his oxygen. Suddenly, Robert's voice startled Charlie into wakefulness, but he still floated dream-like somewhere else.

"Charlie, wake up! There's a meeting downstairs!"

"Dad?!"

Robert was climbing up the ladder to the catwalk. Concern for Charlie crevassed his face, making him look older than his 20 years.

"Something about the new owners, I'll bet. Come on. We'll never know hanging around up here."

Charlie was afraid; he couldn't move, emotions spinning out of control. An inky blackness flowed from his precious lights, swallowing him whole. He was losing himself.

I'm falling.

"It's over, you know. It's all over. They won't fix the Kane. They'll tear it down and put up a movie theater – one of those multi-screen places. Or maybe they'll build a mall for people to spend lots of money on junk that has no meaning. Or maybe it will just become a parking lot for all the other trash that will be here. But none of it will be wondrous; none of it will be mysterious."

Robert bent close to Charlie. God, he looks so much like Dad!

"Charlie, calm down. What's the matter?"

Charlie was near panic now, his heart was beating too hard, blood coursing dangerously through his entire body.

"You just don't understand! No one understands!"

Charlie felt closed in, no longer feeling his body or having a sense of what was up or down. The air boiled around him. Then he saw

the stage. *Macbeth* was being performed, or maybe it was *Othello*. He wasn't sure. Barrymore was there. And Gloria. And Marlene. They were all there, all the greats who had graced the stage in the heyday of the Kane. Charlie rose over the railing and floated down to the stage on a beam of blue light. Everyone welcomed him with cheers and hugs.

"Good old Charlie. We couldn't have done it without you!" It was wonderful to see them all again. Charlie cried at seeing the Kane in all its glory – extravagant, bold, polished – like the day it opened!

Robert had only known the old man



for a couple of months, but by his behavior, it was obvious that something was wrong. He was pale and pasty, slurring his speech and shaking badly. Robert reached out to him. Too late, Charlie crumpled from the couch to the floor. By the time the paramedics arrived, Charlie was gone.

Hello, my friend, so good to see you looking so well.

Charlie whirled around and there stood Dad.

"She's a beauty isn't she, Son?"

"Dad, you're here! I've missed you so much."

"And I've missed you, too, Son. I've waited for you all these years."

"I've been wanting to ask you something, Dad."

"Shoot, Son, no secrets between you and me. You always understood everything."

"Well, it's just that . . ."

Charlie searched for the words, but didn't find them until he stepped into the light of the klieg.

"Why didn't you let go of that light?"

"Funny thing, I just never could let go of anything I loved."

"Yeah. . . . I understand."

Soon after, it was announced that renovating the Kane would be costly and unjustified. The new company would gut the building and use it as the shell for a shopping center. Robert stayed on until the theater closed. Occasionally, he thought he felt the presence of the old man as he walked the catwalks and manned the light board.

The place was soon emptied, void of life, like a giant mausoleum. When the renovation crews began working, Robert retrieved some of the bricks from the orchestra pit. It seemed fitting to mark Charlie's grave with a part of the Kane. The inscription read,

*For I have had too much
Of apple-picking: I am overtired
Of the great harvest I myself desired.*

— Robert Frost



THE BOOK ~

Lorraine Powell

The leather-bound book is so soft to the touch.
It feels so good to rub my fingers across it.
The little bumps of the dried cowhide
remind me of life's lows and highs,
of its sadness and joy.

Inside its leather covers
are found both truth and lies,
good and evil,
sadness and happiness,
discouragement and faith.

The stories contained within its covers
are reflections of many different lives,
from many different viewpoints,
from many different places and times.
Yet, within these leather covers they are all one book.

The book has the reputation of having sold the
most copies; they say it will never go out of print.
But one thing is for sure:
one day the lies will all be exposed
and its truths will shine forth as gold.



charcoal by Jason Roe

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