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Expressions

Student Work

1978

Expressions 1978

Sandra Bench

Gloria Blumanhourst

Kathy Fitzsimmons

Deb Galloway

Voncille Jones

See next page for additional authors

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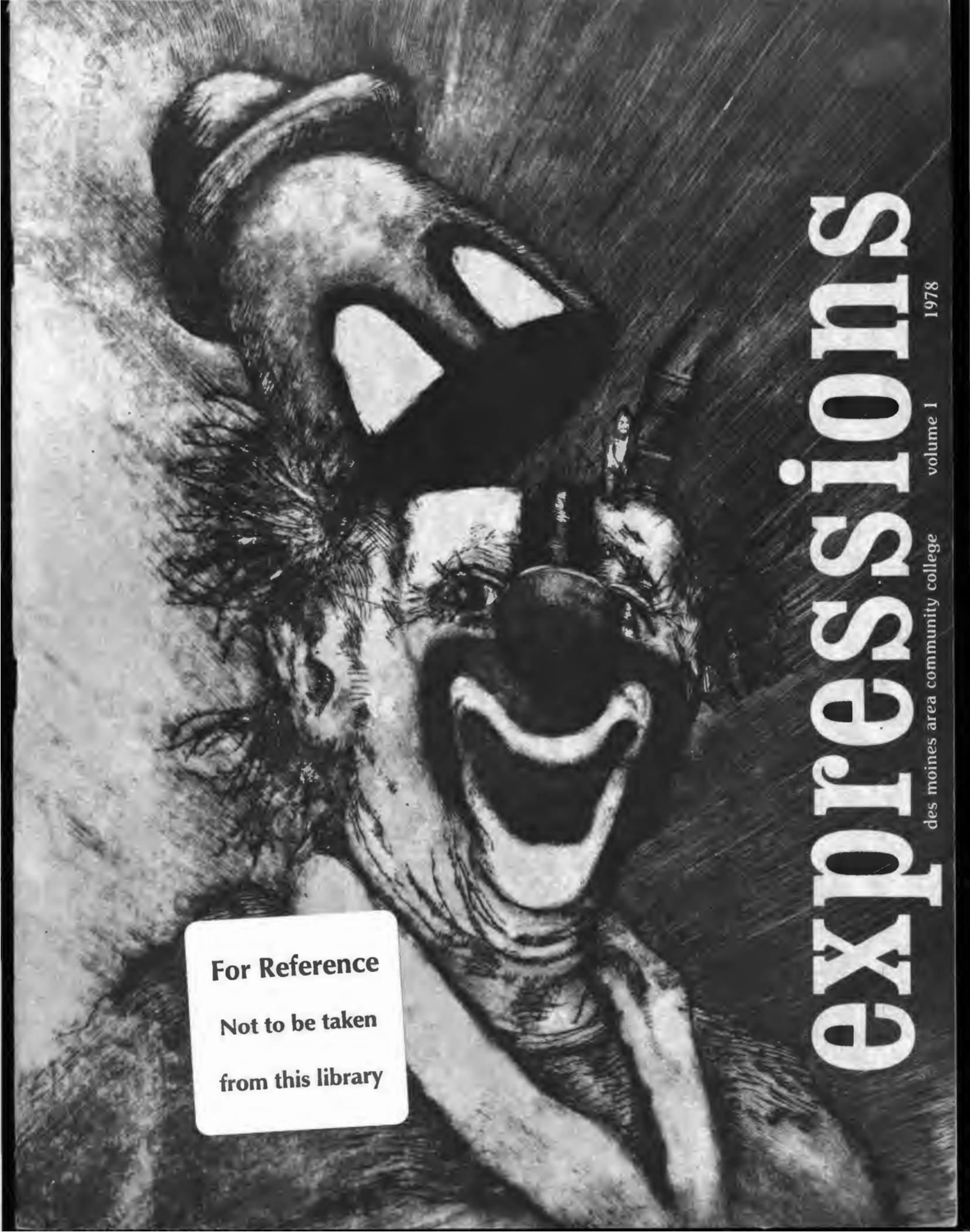
Recommended Citation

Bench, Sandra; Blumanhourst, Gloria; Fitzsimmons, Kathy; Galloway, Deb; Jones, Voncille; Kaplan, Richard; Leach, Mary; Lloyd, Mary Jo; Miller, Cheryl; Moore, Orville; Neil, Martha; Olson, Doug; Seely, Claudia; Sniffin, Tom; Adams, Michael; Christopher, Lori; Collins, Sandy; Cunningham, Robin; Hutchins, Susan; Lueder, Steve; Nelson, Bob; Rinquist, Jan; Risdal, Lori; Steffen, Dave; Stroud, Donna; and McKnight, Bill, "Expressions 1978" (1978). *Expressions*. 1.
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expressions

des moines area community college volume 1 1978

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Cover illustration by Bill McKnight

Expressions contains selected work from some of the Creative Writing Contest winners and honorable mentions along with Commercial Art students at Des Moines Area Community College. Design, topography, and layout was accomplished by Journalism students.

Staff members include: Dianne Petersen, co-editor; Terri Seiwert, co-editor; Mary Jo Lloyd; and Ann Sammon.

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Expressions was published at Carter Press with student newspaper funds provided by the Student Senate.

Bill McKnight

Twenty-five Dollar Piece of Candy

I was crazed! I was blind with lust! I bounded up three flights of stairs and bolted down the long hallway past seedy hotel room doors. The room at the end of the hall was the one I wanted. The letters pasted on the door over the two-way mirror spelled out "Trucker's Health Club, Members Only, Private." My hand involuntarily reached out for the bell. This time I didn't allow myself a change of heart.

A hatchway opened up wide enough to let a gruff voice sound an unwelcomed, "Yeah, what do you want?" I told the voice I was a trucker and I asked him if they were open tonight. The door opened and a crooked old man stood before me.

"You don't look like no trucker," he said. "You got any identification to prove you is who you say you is?" I showed him my license and motor carrier certification card and the old man eyed me suspiciously.

"You a member here?" he said.

"No," I replied and continued on telling him how I heard of this place. About halfway through my explanation he turned his head back over his shoulder and yelled out for Candy to come up front.

A rough looking woman, who was probably younger than she looked, came into view. She was wearing a skimpy black leotard with high heels and nylon stockings that had seams running all

the way from her heels to where they met the leotard. She introduced herself and then began telling me of the benefits of having membership in "the club."

"Honey," she said, "you pay your twenty dollar membership fee one time and it's good for the rest of your life. The membership entitles you, for a small charge, to a shower and a massage and all the coffee you can drink." I gladly paid my twenty dollars for my membership card and followed her into the "truckers' lounge."

The lounge had a broken television set along with a couple of chairs and a torn old couch. A couple of drivers were sitting around drinking coffee. One driver kept refilling his cup from a pint bottle of Jim Beam instead of the coffee pot. I stood there awhile out of place and feeling stupid until Candy reminded me to sit down. I picked up a back issue of **Playboy** and was thumbing my way through it when Candy brought me some coffee. Oh boy, I thought to myself, all this and free coffee too.

What conversation there was between the other drivers and me was confined to shop talk. The last thing I had on my mind was trucks. I mumbled to Candy, asking her when I would get my massage.

"Anytime you're ready," she said.

I could feel the stares of the

others on my back as I followed Candy into a room off the side of the lounge. She closed the door behind us and began explaining the options I had.

"Fifteen for a 'french,' twenty for a 'straight,' and twenty-five if you want it 'around the world,'" she said.

"Since I just came in from Dallas I may as well go 'around the world,'" I told her.

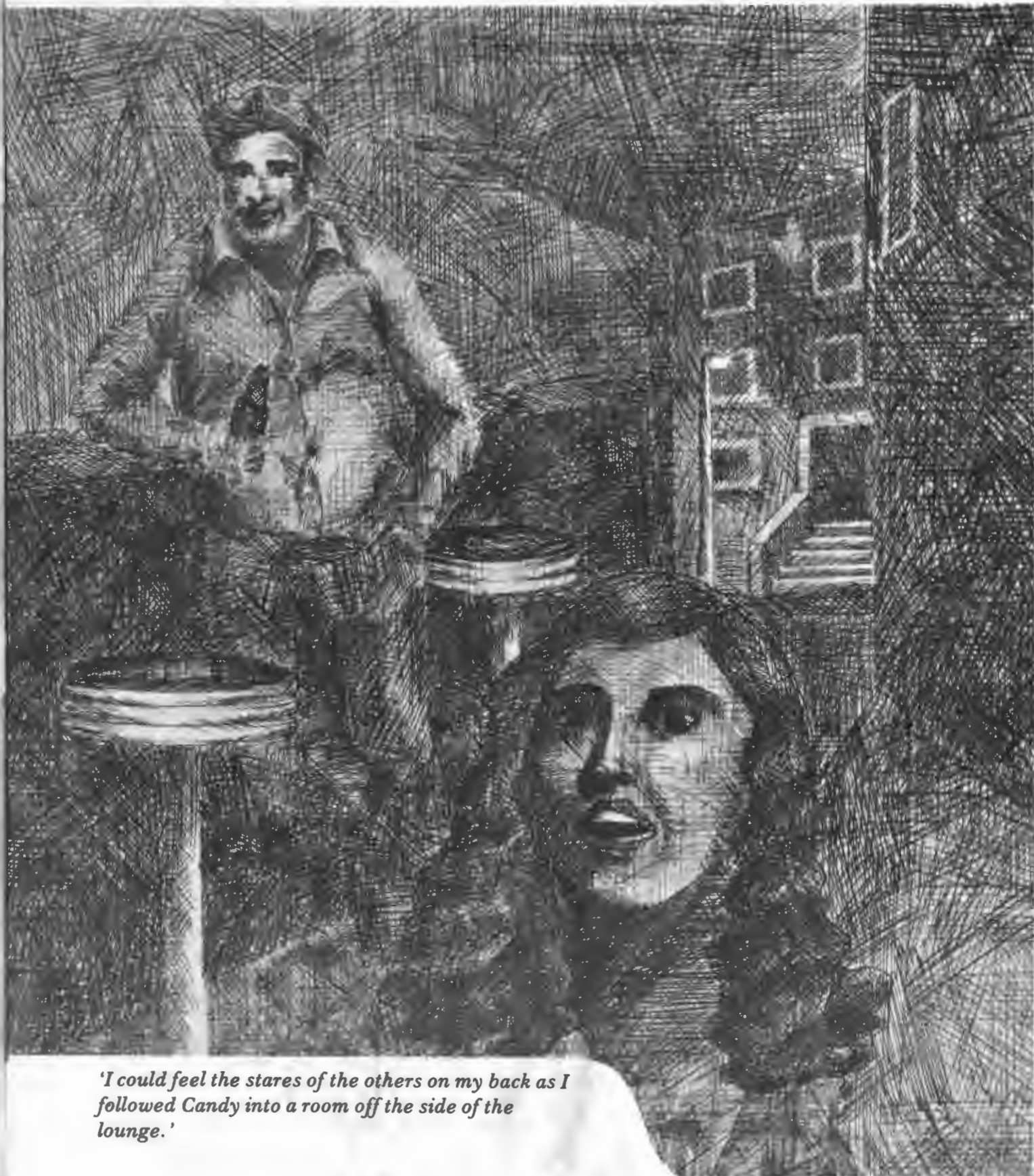
"Just leave the money on the dresser and take your clothes off," she said without smiling as she walked out of the room.

As I was undressing I couldn't help but feel I was in a doctor's office preparing for a physical examination rather than a quick jump between the sheets with Candy. She came back into the room to find me naked on the bed awaiting the next move.

She carefully laid her outfit on the dresser top and motioned for me to follow her into the bathroom. My last attempt at conversation with Candy came when she was washing me where my mother had washed me as a baby twenty short years ago.

We went back to bed and I got my twenty-five dollar trip "around the world." As I watched Candy dressing I saw her tuck my twenty five bucks in between her breasts and it made me realize just how expensive a twenty minute trip can be.

Richard J. Kaplan



'I could feel the stares of the others on my back as I followed Candy into a room off the side of the lounge.'

Lori Christopher



Dave Steffen

sharing

I have opened
my every petal
to you,
yet I feel
something (more)
softly pulling me,
tantalizing
as that night's
golden moonbeam touch,
bending way
for the sun to crest.

Kathy Fitzsimmons

clouded sunshine

i've more than enough umbrellas
if i wanted shelter

but i choose to walk
 bare-headed and shoeless
 in your grey morning

even the occasional lightning
 and accompanying *thunder*
are tempered by the gentleness of your
 summer smile
 and i'd almost swear
i saw the glimmerings of a rainbow

there can't be any reason for
forty days of rain unless it's the
creation of a fresh-washed sunshine
 sliding off a rainbow
 into one more
 golden glow

Gloria Blumhourst

when. . . .

unmany hours to
geth
 er
we have learned
no
thing
and much of nothing
about us
we know your name
and mine
and your touch
and mine
and our joy
and pain
but of you
or me
we know nothing
teach the
 why
of my need
i'll teach the
 wherefores
of your desire

after we've taught
and learned
enough
will we prefer
the when
that we were
mysterious
unworried
and charmed
by our names
and touches

Gloria Blumhourst



My mother got one of her random urges to clean. I came to visit her that Saturday morning, and soon found myself sorting through stuff from closets into separate piles; one for the Goodwill, one for trash, one to stash back in the closet from which it came. I asked her what she thought about me cleaning the front porch closet. Naturally, she thought that was a pretty good idea, so I headed for the porch.

Clothes and shoes, and more shoes; a couple of old, stale-smelling photo albums; my old Monopoly game. I reached for the Monopoly game, remembering the talent I once possessed for putting little red hotels on valuable real estate, thereby forcing my opponent into bankruptcy.

Something was lying there on top of the box, wrapped loosely in a

tattered, pink baby blanket. I pulled the object out and let the blanket fall to the floor. A doll was revealed. She still had a bowed red smile on her painted lips and her black ringlet hair was badly in need of a little girl's attention. Her image grew fuzzy, then, and a tear fell down on the Sunday dress she was wearing. In the stillness, my mind raced back to a time when I believed I was the center of the universe.

I was six, maybe seven and ran to kiss my daddy as he came home from work. He smelled like great steel machines do when they whine at full speed. His face was prickly against my cheek as I hugged him and he hugged me. This must have been Thursday, because he was in a pretty good mood; having almost ended the hard working week.

Stopping to cash his paycheck, he always arrived a little late every Thursday night. He winked at my mom as she served up supper.

"Go look in the car, Cookie," he said to me. I ran out the door and into the driveway, throwing open the door of the '56 Chevy with all my strength. A large sack was inside. I grasped the top of it and drew it over to me before I tore off the brown paper from the prize inside, I looked up at the kitchen window to see my mother and father standing side by side with smiling faces, watching me. "Go ahead and open it!" daddy yelled through the screened window. With one stroke I tore the wrapping off of the prized parcel, all the while thinking that this had to be the doll I had wanted for months. She could



walk, talk, eat, and cry! She was a Little Baby Betsie!

But the doll who looked back at me when I finally uncovered my treasure was not a Baby Betsie. She was just...a doll. She didn't do anything wondrous at all. Her hair was not golden, but black. There was a tag around her wrist which read "I need a mommy to love." Well, I wasn't going to be her mommy. I tossed her back into the car and my tear-filled eyes glared up at my daddy's face. The smile was gone from it, replaced by something I had never seen there before. He didn't yell at me or come bolting after me like he did when he got angry. He just looked at my mom, turned around, and walked away from the window and my view.

My mother tried to explain to me in the backyard, then, what I had done. I went to bed that night with a strange sensation in my stomach that I'd had once when I saw that red-haired neighbor boy make fun of a crippled old man. I wished I had never seen them advertise Little Baby Betsie on television.

The next evening my father came home as usual, with his lunch pail in hand. He stood in the doorway, and I looked at him from across the room. Then I ran to him. I hugged him a little harder than usual and was relieved when he hugged me back. "How's my girl?" he said, as usual. I was fine. I never saw the doll again after that.

Until today. When reality returned to me, I had nearly soaked the little doll's dress with my

free-flowing tears. I held her very close to me.

"Oh dad, she's the most beautiful doll I've ever seen. Thank you...thank you daddy." My dad smiled down on me from the window once again in my mind. I was filled with sweet memories of the love we shared through the years we had together.

I wrapped her up in the old blanket, picked up the Monopoly game and went outside. I placed her carefully in my car, right beside the driver's seat.

"Did you find anything we can get rid of?" mom yelled out the kitchen window.

"Just an old Monopoly game." I looked up at her as she stood in that window, alone.

Claudia Seeley

It was so hard to sit in the rocker and watch the old man sleep. How long had Danny sat there, with the silence of the room threatening the slightest squeak of his chair? The pair of tiny eyes quickly checked the clock which murmured with the passing seconds. Hmm...if the long hand had started at the five and is now at the eleven, Mommy would call that "half a nap long." Gee! was Grandpa's nap just half finished?

Across the room, the afternoon sun crept in though an opened window and frolicked among shadows in the far corner. The ghost of a hot breeze jostled the curtains and hurried across the short distance to ruffle the child's hair.

Waiting on Grandpa's Nap

Danny squirmed sideways in the chair and rested his head on the arm. Maybe Grandma was right. If he had grabbed a pillow and lay beside the old man on the couch, the time would not have shuffled by so slowly. Mommy must have told her to say that, he suspected. After all, how many times had he been told that his nap time would seem shorter if he would sleep through it? He giggled to himself at the thought. Mommy was always saying silly things like that.

A squeak of his chair applauded the quiet laughter that shook the



Jan Rinquist

small body. In turn, the room's silence echoed a reprimand and turned the child's thoughts back to the sleeping man. Grandpa's head was propped atop a pillow held in place by an extended arm. Danny's young eyes seemed not to acknowledge signs of age — the thin white hair combed over as it had been for years, or the weathered face currowed with the worries of past years, or the bushy eyebrows, of the tired eyelids that hid the old man's cloudy eyes. Only the wide mouth drew Danny's attention. Even as the old man slept, a faint smile clung to the corners of his lips. Perhaps he was dreaming a funny thought, or maybe Grandpa had been smiling when he fell asleep and that was why a shadow of the smile lingered.

An irritating fly lit on the old man's hand and buzzed a drunken dance, as if in celebration of a safe landing. Danny stetched his bare toe to chase off the pest. Had it been an accident or an unconscious desire to hasten the afternoon that made Danny's probing toe waken Grandpa? The child quickly pulled his leg back as the old man's eyes fluttered open, but a deep chuckle revealed that he was hiding his offense in vain.

As Grandpa yawned, his outstretched arms seemed to push off

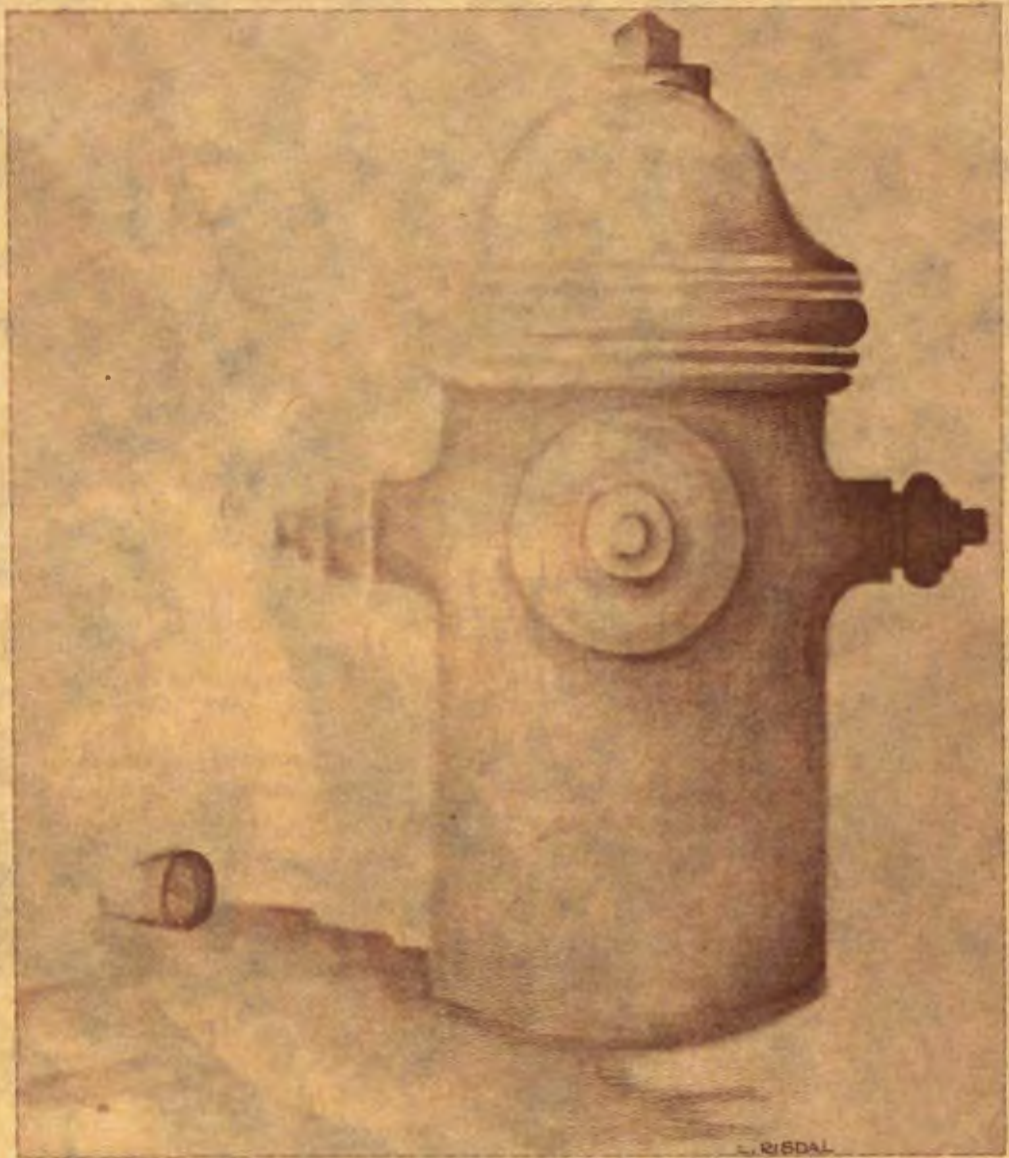
the cocoon of sleep. Danny scampered down off the rocker and climbed onto Grandpa's chest just as the old man's arms fell back to the couch with the completed yawn.

Feeling the child's body melt against his own, Grandpa embraced him in an attempt to hold him yet closer. His crusty palms pressed the child's face under his chin and into the warmth of his neck. While his thoughts accustomed themselves to the daylight, knarled fingers wandered through Danny's silken hair, delighting in the golden curls that soothed his tires hands. For a moment, the little boy in Danny allowed the caress, but soon he began struggling free and the old man's tender expression of love was hidden beneath the child's laughter.

At last, Danny crawled away from the old man's teasing clutches. In exhaustion, the child fell to his knees beside the couch and laid his head once again upon Grandpa's chest. Ancient eyes met youthful eyes, and together they laughed at their games. A short silence framed the moment's beauty, and then the child whispered, "Grandpa, can we go fishin' now, like you promised? Huh? Can we?"

Deb Galloway

**and
in
return**



Lori Risdal

i sat down
and talked to a fire
hydrant
and unleashed my mind
out to him (or her).
i could have gotten
a drink of water
for a nickel
but
i only wanted
his unspouted attention.
i told him

that all evil
was not
hoses and dogs
and all good
not the flailing
of legs
day upon day.

we talked and talked
and at one time
i drank
and kept the nickel.

we were friends
and both in need.

i'm not sure
what the life span
of a hydrant is
in comparison to me
but

we sit together often now
and i bring my own cup
and tell him
of life's beauty

that
he cannot see
and feel

and there is good
in hoses and dogs
as there is evil
in even pretty legs.

Doug L. Olson



W

10

Sandy Collins

Grandmother

“te-te-te-tum, te-te-te-tum, te-te-te-tum”
Over and over again, gently rising and falling,
Fading and reviving from the bottom of a dry mouth.
Her prayer.
Her very personal link with here and there.
A fragile verbal chord.
If she’s here: “te-te-te-tum, te-te-te-tum.”

Oh Grandma, Grandma, Grandma,
There’s a few things I’ve been wanting to say to you.
You’re old. You’re old. You’re old.
The glasses have grown larger on your nose in recent years,
You’re a little baby again dressed up in mamma’s clothes.
You’re so old, dear Grandma.
Your arms like raw chicken or chicken gravy,
Running over the ends of the wheelchair,
Holding tight to vinyl and metal.
You look like Daddy.
If Daddy were a wrinkled little woman with curly white hair;
And when Daddy’s drunk and his head moves from side to side
not knowing where he is. Smiling.
If you had a mustache, (a thicker one I mean),
You might look like Albert Einstein.

You’re in bad shape though, really Grandma. You can’t even
put yourself to bed.
You’re losing the rest of your hair and your sense;
You’ve lost the best of your teeth and your reason to live;
Your husband.

But Grandma, remember we love you.

But we just hate what we see in your eyes,
Although we never verbalize
It is there to everyone.
Death and Dying.
The boredom that comes of knowing these are the only things
you have to look forward to.
The only things you’ll recognize when they come.
You certainly don’t know us,
I mean not really
When we come.

We come every two months,
tell the same jokes,
endure old anecdotes,
and sleep.

“I remember when you kids would come and stay with me in
the summer. Do you remember that?”
“Yes I do Grandma, that was a lot of fun.”

Your mind is clear in a time a thousand years away
And a light year’s distance from today.
A little boy who came in a cowboy suit
To pull pig’s tails and shoot
At elephants in the weeds.
The little girl who’d jump rope all afternoon
by the well
in the sun
while you watched.

A little boy blue now;
The little girl lost, is
In a world she never grew up to.
But we never clue you how we are now,
Being warned what the cost is
Of telling you anything new.

Twice a day, at ten and two, take a pill
If you’re sick or well.
Three times; at seven, eleven and five,
Wheeled in for food if you’re still alive.
And then,
at ten,
it’s back to sleep again.

“te-te-te-tum, te-te-te-tum”
Softly, quietly now, as they lift her down to bed.
“Say good-night, Grandma.”
(Good-night she says.)
Good-night to the te-di-um.

Orville Moore



Michael Adams

ADVICE

Remember that...

Young men

make

good lovers;

That...

More mature men

are

ideal husbands;

And that...

Older men

are superb,

With a little sauce.

Sandra Bench



Maroon Fingernails

Her fingers looked like tools, purley utilitarian - and yet the nails were painted a haphazard maroon. My main objection to them was not the appearance as much as the fact that one of them seemed always pointed at me. These fingers issued edicts, guidelines for my future.

I tried to look at her face as she spoke, but my eyes always strayed to that shaking finger which had a rhythm all its own. "You must...I see you needing to... You shouldn't...You'd better...When are you..." It shook on and on.

The pathetic thing about all this was that I took the edicts and the guidelines as truths. I was convinced this woman with the rhythmic fingers knew what was best for me.

"You shouldn't go to school yet! You should stay home with your husband and kids. You need to get in touch with your reasons for escaping responsibility. You'd better look at your selfishness." Even her spoon ring looked authoritarian.

I left her office and went to my car. Determined. Who needs school? I will like being a housewife. I will - I promise I will. To be sure, I stopped at the store and bought housewife paraphernalia befitting Mommy Brady and her Bunch. A place for everything and everything in its place, was my motto. An assembly line of Rubbermaid turntables, shelves and containers lined up on the checkout counter along with paper towels, dusters, ten kinds of sprays, scrubbers, polishers and cute little decals for the refrigerator door. Were these items purchased by an irresponsible person? Hell, no! I was a happy housewife, a good woman. No more maroon fingernails and a spoon ring shaking at me.

I pulled into my driveway and was greeted by my two lovely sons, the children to whom I was intending to devote the rest of my days.

"Could you fellows help me carry this stuff in?" I asked.

"Dad's gonna be mad you bought all this junk."

"Just carry it in please - with no





Donna Stroud

comments." I cheerfully requested.

In true Brady Bunch form we carried the packages into the house and began to put things away.

"Have you flipped?" asked one son.

"What is all this bozo stuff?" asked the other.

"Guess what, kids," I said. "We are going to get organized around here. I decided not to go to school."

"Oh, rats. I thought Grandma was coming."

The laughter started as they unwrapped the decals. "You can't put these any place," they said. "They're perverted."

"Stupid."

"You gonna start selling Tupperware?"

I fluttered to the kitchen in a Total sort of way, and said, "You don't understand, my dear. I decided not to go to school. I'm going to make this house a home."

"Mommy's gonna sell Tupperware, and stick perverted junk on the refrigerator."

"I'm not! I'm not!" I insisted. "What's all this bullshit about Tupperware?" I was beginning to sound less good womanish every second.

"Mommy said 'Bullshit!' Mommy said 'Bullshit!' Ha ha ha, ha ha ha!"

"Go to your room!" I was screaming. I had to get a grip on myself. I owed my husband some peace and quiet. The book said so.

"Jesus Christ, Cheryl. Did you buy this stupid book?"

'Mommy's gonna sell Tupperware, and stick perverted junk on the refrigerator.'

My "good woman" feelings were dissipating, and fast! Armed with a copy of *The Total Woman* loaned to me by the soothsayer, I went upstairs to take a bath. It, the book, was choked full of helpful hints on how to seduce your husband out of household appliances. Furthermore, the author claimed that Jesus would help me. I thought fleetingly, only fleetingly, mind you, that if I was going to prostitute myself, I would rather have money than a blender - with the help of Jesus, of course.

Back downstairs, I laid the copy of *The Total Woman* on top of the autobiography of Tennessee Williams and went to the kitchen to prepare a hot, nutritious meal for my life's work - my family.

I got a flash of Marlon Brando's sweaty t-shirt in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and went to the bedroom to peek at Tennessee's memoirs. I lay down and read, completely ignoring the fact that I should be inventing sensuous ways to prostitute myself upon my husband's return from a hard day at work. Sorry, Jesus. Sorry, maroon fingernails.

I heard him - my man - come in at the back door. "I thought you hated Tupperware Parties," he yelled.

Oh no, I should have hidden Tennessee Williams. Laughter, he was laughing. He always did think gay folks were funny.

"Want a drink, dear" I inquired.

"Only if you deliver it in a bunny suit," still laughing.

Where was ole spoon ring when I needed her? I fixed his drink and took it into the livingroom. Oh, sweet Jesus! He was reading *The Total Woman*. "Did you win this at the Tupperware Party?"

"God damn it! I don't want to hear another word about Tupperware. You try to do something nice and looks what happens. Ridicule. That's what. A bunch of God damn ridicule!"

"Mommy said 'God damn.' Mommy said, 'God damn.' Ha ha ha, ha ha ha!"

"You'd better get out of here real quick, or I'll break your "Free to be You and Me" album. Simpletons! I'm going to school!!!"

"Thank God," said my man. "It would cost me a fortune to keep you in Saran Wrap.

Here's to you shaking finger. May Blance Du Bois haunt you for the rest of your days.

Cheryl Miller

A Twelve-pack Night

The young man plops down in his green vinyl easy chair and pops the tab off a Pabst beer. He tips it to his lips and takes several deep swallows before he sets the can down on the nearby end-table. Beads of beer cling on his mustache then drip down his chin. He makes an unsuccessful attempt to brush the drops away with his shirtsleeve.

He reaches for the can again, but tips it over instead, the contents streaming over the edge of the table and soaking into the carpet. His tobacco-stained hands set the can upright while bumping an overflowing ashtray onto the beer-soaked spot.

"Oh, sshit!" he slurs, hardly holding open his bloodshot eyes. It's only the second beer he's spilled that evening, but then he can't remember if he's already drunk nine or ten.

"Go get me another beer!" he growls at his wife.

"No, you've had enough!" she snaps back.

He hurls the now empty can at her and narrowly misses the back of her head.

"I said, get me another beer, bitch!"

She stands up in submission and goes into the kitchen. She opens the door of the copper-toned refrigerator and extracts the last can from the clear plastic beer bra. She closes the door and leans against it as tears sting her eyes. Her hands are clenched tight, the knuckles white. Her body shakes, and her breath comes in shallow, crying gasps.

"Where's the beer?"

She straightens up and wipes the tears from her cheeks.

"Where's that beer, bitch?"

She goes into the bathroom and blows her nose.

He staggers into the kitchen and knocks over a chair. He tries to kick it and topples to the linoleum instead, passed out for the night. His wife picks up the chair, turns out the lights and gets ready for bed. Her sobs can be heard for the next hour while he snores away his drunk on the kitchen floor.

A few hours later, he struggles to his feet and heads for bed. Passing out all over again, he slumps onto the inviting covers still completely dressed.

Sunshine streams in, striking his face and awakening him. He turns over to his wife, but she's already up for the day. He cradles his head in his hands, pressing his throbbing temples with his thumbs.

"Oh, shit," he moans as he rolls out of bed to stumble to the bathroom.

It's Saturday morning, and she is vainly trying to scrub the ash-covered beer stain out of the carpeting. "Just one more time," she addresses him as he enters the livingroom. "Just one more time that you pull a stunt like you did last night, and I'm walking out that door."

"You'll never leave me; you love me," he drawls sleepily. "I know you won't leave."

"Don't plan on it," she counters. "I'm fed up with you and your drinking and your slovenly ways."

Little is said between the couple the

from his hurting grasp. He swings her around and shoves her into the wall, and her forehead thuds against the wall-papered wall. She crumples to the floor, crying, and he kicks her in the back. Stepping over her, he goes into the kitchen and starts banging pans around.

She lies there silently sobbing for a few minutes before crawling to her feet and slipping out the front door. She runs to the blue Chevy parked in the driveway, gets in, and starts it up.

He comes storming out of the front door as she backs out of the driveway.

"Get out of that car, bitch!" he hollers over the roar of the engine. "You'd better not leave. You'll be sorry, bitch! Come back here, bitch!" he desperately screams after her as she takes off squealing the back tires. He chases after the Chevy shouting, "I'll get you back! You can't leave me!"

He finally goes back to the house, slamming the door as he stomps in. He reaches for an ashtray and hurls it

'I'm fed up with your drinking and your slovenly ways.'

rest of the day. She does her housework and prepares lunch, rebuffing any of his attempts to be intimate with her. He finally leaves, angry and hurt, only to return hours later plastered to the gills.

He bursts through the front door and demands, "What's for supper?"

"Nothing. I didn't know when you would come home, so I haven't fixed anything."

"Well, get off your fat ass and go fix me something!" he orders.

"Fix it yourself. I'm watching the movie."

"I said, fix me some supper, bitch!" he growls as he grabs her by the arm and jerks her to her feet.

"Let me go! Just leave me alone!"

She wriggles, trying to free her arm

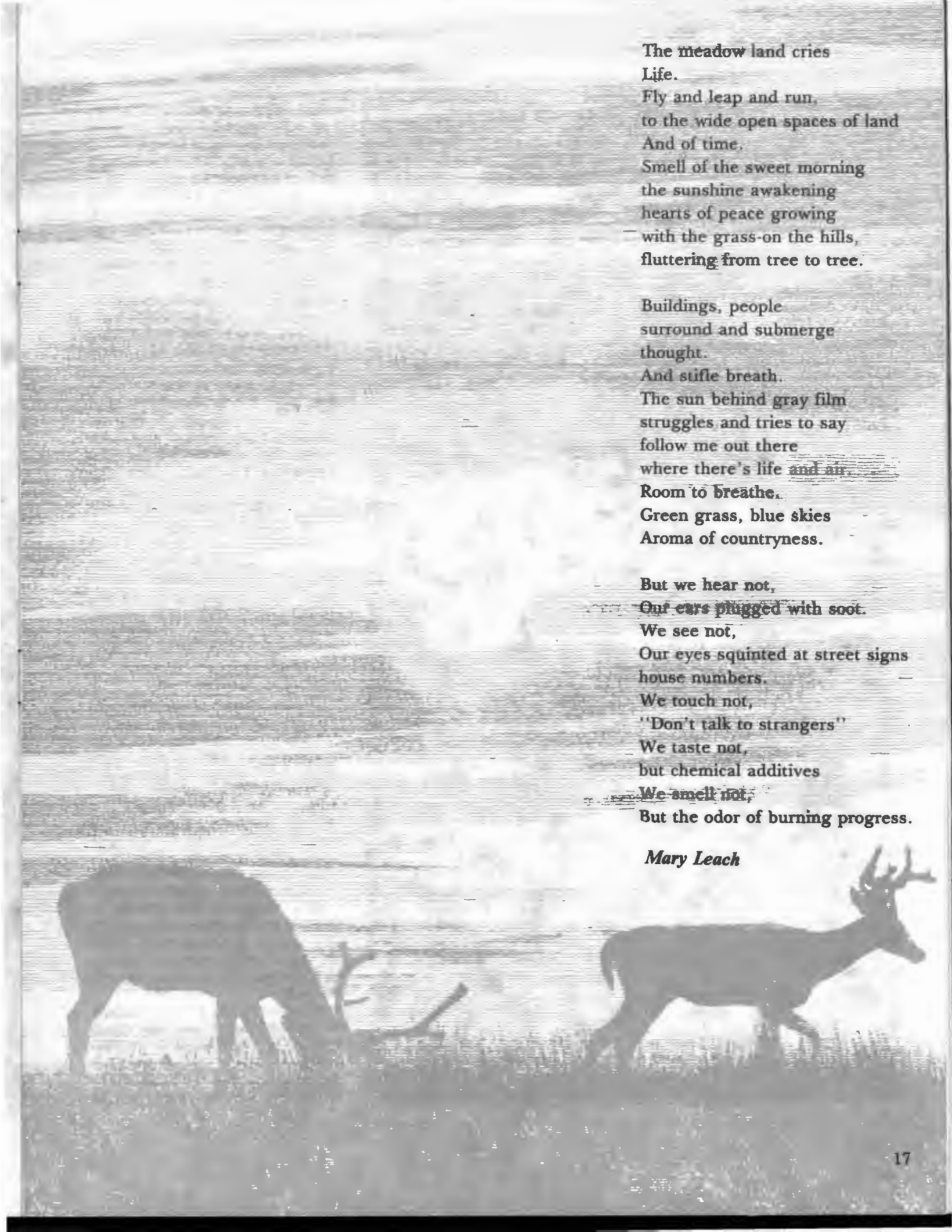
through the front window. Shattering glass flies everywhere. He mutely collapses into his green vinyl easy chair, his eyes drooping and head lolling around in confusion. He passes out -- again.

He doesn't hear the squad car pull in the driveway. He doesn't hear their voices as they approach the front door. He's oblivious to their loud rapping on the panel of the door.

"I hate picking up drunks," a tall officer remarked while waiting for the door to open.

"I don't particularly like it myself," his chunky partner replied.

Martha Neil



The meadow land cries
Life.
Fly and leap and run,
to the wide open spaces of land
And of time.
Smell of the sweet morning
the sunshine awakening
hearts of peace growing
with the grass-on the hills,
fluttering from tree to tree.

Buildings, people
surround and submerge
thought.
And stifle breath.
The sun behind gray film
struggles and tries to say
follow me out there
where there's life and air.
Room to breathe.
Green grass, blue skies
Aroma of countryness.

But we hear not,
~~Our ears plugged with soot.~~
We see not,
Our eyes squinted at street signs
house numbers.
We touch not,
"Don't talk to strangers"
We taste not,
but chemical additives
~~We smell not,~~
But the odor of burning progress.

Mary Leach

Charlie arrived with Neil at 6 p.m. He said he couldn't get any grass but had gotten some THC.

"We should all get stoned together while you're not pregnant," he said.

"Well it's not certain that I'm not pregnant. It could just be too soon to know."

"You won't be able to get stoned for months once you are pregnant. Relax," came from Neil. I answered him, looking straight at Charlie: "Neither will you."

They took this as yes. Charlie took one tab; Neil and I split a tab; and Neil took another.

At first I felt nothing and thought we'd been ripped off. Then I felt warm, tingly and good. I stared at the globe light on the livingroom ceiling. It got a little fuzzy, glowed and started turning around and then it turned purple.

"Charlie, if this were acid would you tell me?"

"Could you handle it if it were acid?"

Neil stepped between us. "Charlie's just putting you on. Calm down."

"Good night you two." Charlie was making the exit Neil had cued him to make.

"Charlie said this might be cut with a little mescaline. Let's make out the couch and listen to some music here."

I told myself, if I got too high I'd go to sleep. I closed my eyes. I was more stoned. I saw colors flashing by. The sounds became colors and colors became sounds. Speeding purple. Brown. Pink and reds, appearing, swirling together and zooming past: Bob Dylan. The room was like a low sounding tuba environment.

I closed the door to the small downstairs bathroom. I was getting lost in the twenty by forty livingroom. I slept in the bathroom on the cold floor. I don't know what time it was. Time didn't exist for that.

I was surprised to find out how pleasant Neil's night had been. He had been up till dawn on an "old record album trip."

We discussed whether or not I might be pregnant.

"We should make up our minds before the second test results as to what we'd do," said Neil.

No thought was given to the fact that abortions were not yet legal in Florida. In considering what we'd do, I thought of a hospital and doctor and possibly having

to travel to New York to obtain an abortion. On the other side, I thought of a baby born deformed. I thought of the guilt we would share together daily and eventually of Neil leaving me to face it alone. The decision was made.

The results were positive. Calmly, I told my doctor's nurse, "I don't want to be pregnant. I'd like some information."

"We do abortions. If you're sure, I'll make you an appointment."

I would never have guessed that besides bringing babies into the world, my doctor was doing abortions for a \$1,000 fee.

"My girls seem to prefer Friday night," my doctor was saying. "That way their husbands can baby-sit over the weekend."



I was shocked and amazed. I was terrified and knew I didn't dare get emotional with Neil. I was alone. Neil would say, "You're just deliberately making yourself sick. Don't think about it."

I thought nightly of what my child would have looked like. I cradled my slightly enlarged abdomen -- a boy, the son I would never have in life.

Time had actually whirled by. It was Friday. I felt uneasy but tried not to show it as we headed for the hospital.

Neil left me in Admissions. "I'm sure there'll be a lot of paperwork involved that you won't need me for. These insurance claims are partially pre-typed; you shouldn't have any problems with them. Call me at the office if you think of anything you want."

I stared in amazement at ceilings and walls and hospital fixtures as nurses passed by my door. I certainly was finding out a lot about abortions, that I hadn't known anything about. Lying in my bed Friday night, I was sure I would never forget or forgive myself for this.

Visiting hours came and went. Neil didn't come and he didn't call. It turned out that we had company at the house.

Music reached my ears from our livingroom. I identified Charlie's voice, which was enough by itself to set me off.

"Listen, have Barbara watch the kids and come up here. I need you," I found myself saying.

"I can't. Don't be angry....Ragina didn't come with Bob. He's here alone. I don't know what's wrong with him. He's so stoned, he's got me worried."

"That's great Neil, you worry about your friends. I don't want to see you--have a party!"

I started crying, which angered Neil. "Look Amy, I'm not going to abandon Bob by trusting him to Charlie and come chasing up there for nothing. You'll be alright. You're just getting emotional talking to me. I'm going to hang up. You relax for awhile before they do whatever needs to be done tonight. I'll come up in the morning before they do the DNC. Calm down. I'll see you tomorrow."

Abandon! God Damn Him!

The time was nearing ten o'clock. A tall thin nurse came. She gave me a shot and left. Emotional person that I am, I said good-bye to my unborn child... asking him for understanding and forgiveness. I wondered, in my non-religious mind, if we would ever meet in a hereafter.

A tall severe looking nurse that I had never seen before and never saw again came into the room with a wheel chair. When I stepped into it I felt woozy. She took me down two dimly lit corridors and then we arrived at the door of an intensely lit little room containing little more than an examination table and an instrument stand. Dr. Martin was seated on a roll-around stool--the only chair in the room.

Dilation of the uterus, which causes it to abort the fetus, took only fifteen minutes. I stared directly into the examination light, afraid to close my eyes for fear of dreaming, yet not wanting to watch the nurse or Dr. Martin. It was not

extremely painful; no anesthetic was used. To keep my mind busy, I thought of others who would be in the hands of butchers for this. How lucky I was to have a competent doctor and sanitary hospital. I got through it. I was back in my room and immediately fell asleep. I didn't care about the next day's surgery or Neil or anything, now. I had killed my baby. I slept so as not to cry all night. What good would it do now. I realized I was past tears. Oh, to be able to fall asleep and just never wake up again!

I remember my bed on wheels being pushed down halls and into an elevator. I remember the room and being moved onto an operating table. I remember a nurse and the anesthesiologist, both very hazily. The nurse smiled down at me and her voice reached me in delayed motion, echoing from some distant place behind her: "Why aren't you asleep by now?" Nothing seemed real. I watched as the needle for the sodiumpentothal was taped to my arm. I was out before he finished injecting it.

I couldn't figure out where I was. I hadn't thought of waking up in the recovery room. I kept waking up and falling asleep. I'd dream of climbing a hill and falling down it, over and over again. As it was, my blood pressure was doing just that--rising and falling, dangerously. When I was awake all I wanted to do was go back to my room, but they kept refusing to take me there.

Finally, I woke up in my room. Two bottles of glucose hung above me and nurses checked my blood pressure every twenty minutes. It seems I had suffered "post operative trauma."

Neil hadn't come that morning. Maybe he didn't have time. Maybe he called and I had already gone. He called in the afternoon from the office to see how I was. He had gone straight to the office, early; something important was happening at work. He was telling me but I wasn't listening.

I reassured him that I had been alright the night before and this morning without him. I apologized for the hysterics of the night before. He forgave me. I was pleasant. He believed me. I would never trust in him again. He was happy I was becoming so mature. I hated him.

Mary Jo Lloyd



Robin Cunningham



Steve Lueder

A Time of War

have you ever seen me
on that mountain top
three years time
by a beggars crawl?

Press my head between your hands
and feel my strained memories
of yesterday
and maybe a few minutes more.
buried.

in artificial snow up to my nostrils
until i was inhaling
paralyzing flakes-
and i became a pallbearer
of life
the tax collector
of the dead.

i had an eye in each hand
and shells left over
from a time
the red sea was black,
and the ten commandments were four.

yesterday
and a few minutes more-
i watched the grain fields open
with a thousand naked
soldiers
and a thousand armored horses.
they camped at the foot of my
self-made escalator
and their voices of pre-war anxiety
came to my eardrums.
a night of warmth from under
horses bellies
and they left...
a departure the same as all
i've witnessed from my
perch.

tomorrow
i shall send god down
to pick up
a thousand empty lemonade cartons.

Doug Olson

War

I think war is great;
It causes us to originate
New ways to eliminate
ourselves.

Orville Moore

Lost Parable

I am
but that lost parable,
the phrase
not quite clear.
The unintelligible language
of some fixed soul
on a poisonous vendetta.
Speak me not harsh,
nor let your tongue
wipe out my existence;
for what I see,
I know not,
and what I know,
I am blind to.

Kathy Fitzsimmons

Choices

Tripping through the thicket,
what choice was made
that rules us here?
Somewhere in a garden
visions were made
bought and paid for.
Who screams for the living?
And if no one was there,

Kathy Fitzsimmons



Betsy and I live in a sixteen story place down on Madison Avenue. I think we have the best floor in the building, the seventh. None of the girls on our floor have kids, and Betsy won't let me play with the rest of the kids in the building. She says I'm too sweet for them.

Betsy takes me to see my special friend Jamie. She lives three blocks over, so Betsy would take me there with a change of clothes and my night gown. From Friday night to Sunday morning we'd read, eat pizza, tacos and other good foods and play games. On Sunday morning I would wake up early because I know Betsy would come to get me, fancy clothes and all. Sometimes I don't want to go to Jamie's, but Betsy says she needs time away from me. I don't ask Betsy to stay home anymore because she's been crying lately.

One day Betsy sent me off to school. I don't understand why; I was good and everything. She told me every kid goes when they get my age. I don't need school. When I got there I saw all kinds of neat little toys to play with but some of the kids I'd seen in the building wouldn't let me play with them or the toys. Some even whispered bad names in my ear about Betsy. At the end of the day a little white kid called me and Betsy names; I pinched him. The teacher pulled us apart.

That night Betsy gave me a bath and powered me down. Then she brought out a big brown sack;

in it were a pair of pink pajamas, and a robe and slippers to match. I put on those things so fast that Betsy had to laugh to herself. She said, "Slow down, baby, those p.j.'s ain't going nowhere." Then she stopped. Right then a tear rushed down one of her plump brown cheeks. Her long thin arms slowly reached out for me; instinctively I ran and smothered my face, that looked a lot like hers, in her soft warm bosoms.

"I love you little girl, you know that?" she said.

Crying, I nodded my fuzzy undone head. Pushing me away she said, "Now get yourself and those pretty little p.j.'s in your bed."

The next morning I was awakened by a clattering; sounded like wheels, wobbly ones. My feet slapped the cold floor as I ran in the front room. My heart was racing as if it knew what had happened. Entering the room, a big tall man with a big bushy beard reaches down and sweeps me from my feet. Awake and terrorized, words tumbled from my mouth, "let me down." I gasped for breath but instead of breathing, hot tears began to emerge from under my eyelids.

An onlooker whispered, "Look, I didn't know any of them had kids."

Then they went on. "Poor kid living under sin."

My body frozen with shock, began to shake for I knew Betsy had gone and left me for good.

Opposition

*Voncille
Jones*

The Day We Met Sergeant Barnes

It was our third day of basic training, and we had just been assigned to our units. About fifty of us in the third platoon, had been informed that a Sergeant Barnes would be our platoon sergeant.

We were milling around in fatigues, which had been issued to us the day before. Fatigues are the army's version of work clothes, and each of us had a unique way of wearing them. Some shirts were buttoned, others unbuttoned, some tucked into trousers, others left hanging out. Obviously we were in desperate need of some leadership.

About then a drill sergeant approached the front of the group. He stood erect with his feet slightly apart, his hands clasped behind his back. In those clasped hands he held a brass tipped swagger stick. He was about five foot eight with a stocky build. He was also wearing fatigues, but his were starched, and had military creases. He wore bloused pants over black spit-shined boots, and the whole uniform was topped off by his Smoky the Bear hat rakishly tilted to the front, the bill shading his ruddy face from the bright sun.

"Good moanin fellas. Ah'm sorry ya'll had to stand out heah in the hot sun." He said in a thick southern drawl.

"Gee, I thought. He seems like a pretty nice guy."

"Mah name is Sergeant Barnes, and ah'm gone to be yo daddy fo

the next eight weeks, he informed us. Now would ya'll kind of get yo selves into five rows facing me?"

"All right you shitheads!" he exploded. "I want five rows facing me, ten of you duds in a row. Goddamn it, now do it!"

"Holy cow," I thought "the party is over." We were circling around like a bunch of drunken square dancers, but somehow we managed to get into some semblance of a formation.

Barnes eyed us, as if we were carriers of the plague.

"Let's get somethin straight raht now. For the next eight weeks you ass is gon be grass, and ah'm the lawnmower. Ah they anah questions?"

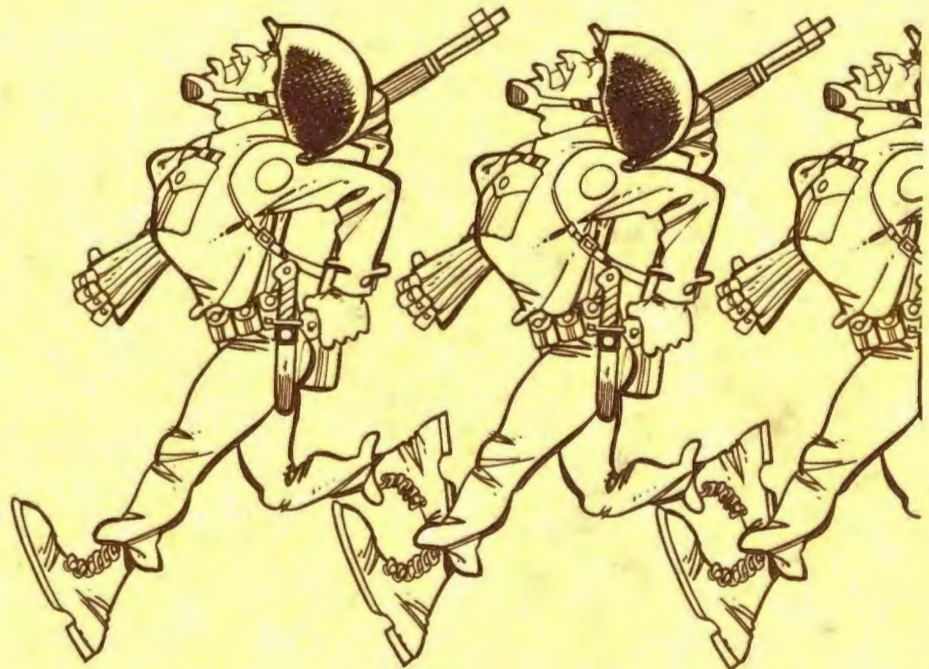
We shuffled around, not really accomplishing much. I noticed out of the corner of my eye that Sergeant Barnes' face was getting redder and redder.

Needless to say, we had none. Hell, we weren't even breathing at this point.

"Good," he said. "Today is gonna be the wust day ya'll have evah spent, and ever day hereafta will get worse."

I never became very fond of Sergeant Barnes, but I'll say one thing for him. He was a man of his word.

Tom Sniffin



Words to a Clown

*Oh, laughing clown,
You with the terrible nose.
You with the lips frail from smiling.
Your smile pinches upward and
your eyes boast exaggerated squints.
How difficult it must be to keep your sorrow hidden!
You are only a clown,
and clowns cannot cry.
With a certain skill you have painted yourself a smile.
But, dear clown,
It is your eyes that betray the man hidden within you.
They look through and beyond the laughing faces.
Your face is carved with deep furrows,
and you cannot cover them with your magic paints.
Oh, laughing clown,
Your man is sneaking out.*

Deb Galloway