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Expressions

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1985

Expressions 1985

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Volume 8

Des Moines Area Community College

1985

E X P R E S S I O N S

PHOTOGRAPH BLIZZARD

This family album of pictures
Is like a storybook I've read
With all the lines I've memorized
Illustrated in my head.

This world has no color
It only knows black and white
It's truly a photograph blizzard
That I solely call my life.

It's time that's spent
And then borrowed back
It's those days
That didn't die -
Page after page preserved
With emotions, wrapped tight like a nursery rhyme
Inside a bordered glossy, taped in time.

A moment here seems forever
And dreams never age here
You'll find a laugh and a cry
Among most every year.

As each page passes a milestone
Each second worth hours
I close the book and put away
The photograph blizzard.

It's time that's spent
And then borrowed back
It's those days
That didn't die -
Page after page preserved
With emotions, wrapped tight like a nursery rhyme
Inside a bordered glossy, taped in time.

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BEV CRANMER "The Dry Soap" - "Making Room" - "Mother Goose On the Loose"
LESLIE EVANS - "The Witness"
KRISTANNE GARRISON - "A Domestic Crisis" "On A Rainy Sunday"
THERESA HELEMKAY "Rabbit Pursuit"
DEL L. MATTERS - "Photograph Blizzard" - "Rhymes That Don't"
SAM MC CROREY - "Fat Camp"
BEVERLY MCPHILLEN - "The Decision"
SONJIE MEYER - "The Last Ride"
LOLA PETERS - "Image"
MARY K. TYLER - "Bal Harbor" - "The Winter's Tale"
LIL TERPSTRA - "Lessons"
PAT UNDERWOOD - "Winter"

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BAL HARBOR

MARY K TYLER

It was supposed to be a trip to celebrate his victory of a malpractice suit. (I don't know just exactly what he allegedly did wrong to his patient, but the poor old guy ended up losing a leg. It had something to do with a cardiovascular problem -- I remember that -- he said a couple of doctors agreed (privately) that it was really the cardiologist that goofed up -- but the doctors all stick together pretty much so nobody got stuck. Well, nobody, except for the old guy that lost his leg, of course.)

The other purpose of the trip, then unsaid, was whether he wanted a divorce.

*Milano,
San Tropez,
Rome,
Paris
-- and Bal Harbor*

Bal Harbor. I hadn't thought of it for a long time, but tonight I was looking at a **Vogue** magazine, and there was an ad for a very expensive little watch which was available in Milano, San Tropez, Rome, Paris -- and Bal Harbor.

It was Al's idea to go there. I had never been to Miami -- and had never really been to the ocean.

Miami at Christmas is strange, different, for a gentile, because it is terribly Jewish -- well, Miami Beach is, I mean, It was strange to me because there were hardly any Christmas decorations and what there were were pitiful, scrawny little afterthoughts.

We stayed at the Americana -- a light little brown building that rose straight out of the water. Little refinement exists here. The colors were all pastel, bland, without any rhythm or feeling. Maybe it was to avoid any thought of death -- because there are no reminders there. There are no churches, no cemeteries. People go elsewhere to do that -- Winnetka or White Plains, I suppose.

*It lies there
a dead black box,
like a sacrificial
offering*

The beach, though, is beautiful -- peach pink (couple colored) and I can hear the noise of the water all night. That, too, is strange for an Iowa farm girl. He wanted to buy me things -- and he did. He bought me two swim suits -- one had tic tac toes on it. White and Black. But he wouldn't look at me. Walking along the beach one day, a man met us, an executive type. Al has a camera, the man says, "Give it to me." (He thinks we are lovers. I can tell).

Al makes no response.

He takes it from him -- just reaches over in a deft sort of way and takes it, moves back, snaps a picture and hands it back. he turns and walks on down the beach.

Al throws it into the sea. A wave sucks back and flings it to the shore. it lies there, a dead black box, like a sacrificial offering.

We went downtown the next day. I read somewhere someone described Miami as total Art Deco. It is. Its period of style came between the wars and it isn't hilly. Somebody told me that they had a hill somewhere but I forgot now where it was.



STAN HANSON

4 E X P R E S S I O N S

Downtown Miami -- I always have to see downtown anywhere I go and I had to see downtown Miami. So we did. I would have gone without him if he hadn't come. (Glimmers of strength.) Having a soda at the five and dime, the clerk told me I was brave to wear my "rings."

Teenagers are hanging around. They don't appear to have any money. Cuban men chat in groups. They seem aimless. I am not comfortable with what I see. All these banks and poverty all around. It is unsettling. I wonder what kind of money it is.

When you leave downtown, you are convinced of one thing: whatever Miami is or will be, it is in the hands of our southern neighbors.

At the beach, the Doral Hotel is lovely. I have always been a push over for elegant hotels -- my palaces, I suppose. Bellhops are dressed like members of the royal brigade. Red and gold uniforms, braided cords at the shoulders. The whole place breathes elegance. The entrance leads to a pink marble lobby - potted trees everywhere -- an atrium with azaleas. Bronze elevator. It is utterly beautiful.

*"I would dance
with you, but
they are not
playing anything
suitable." His
glance is hot, bold.
The silk of his shirt
winks at me
from the cuff.*

We go to have dinner late at night. There is an orchestra. He says "I would dance with you but they are not playing anything suitable." His glance is hot, bold. The silk of his shirt winks at me from the cuff. The waiter brings French onion soup. The cheese lies on top, satin smooth. I can

feel my face resume that bright, haggard look. I cannot speak. Nearby, I hear the ting of crystal; the orchestra strikes up Anniversary Song.

*"Let yourself go."
There is no space
between us.*

Back to the hotel, past wrought iron and palm trees, strange birds perched silent on the posts moored in the bay, a mock Italian villa, apartments standing cheek by jowl and out in the ocean a night freighter from some faroff island.

To bed.

I tell him, "I love you."

There is no reply.

My words lie clotted on the pillow.

On the plane, he is asleep. I think of my honeymoon a long time ago -- another hotel.

"Come then," he whispers. "Have you taken your things off?"

"Yes."

"You're beautiful."

"Well, then I'll take my things off, too."

"No, I'll do that that." (Oh, God, his touch. He's petting my hair and I can feel myself quivering inside. I really don't know about this terrible intimacy and I wonder what it's like for a man -- the awful power to dominate).

"Your cheek is so soft."

"I couldn't . . ."

"This time we have a long time."

"Oh, God, what it is to touch you."

"Please."

"Do you like it when I touch you?"

"Yes, yes."

"Say it."

"I love it when you touch me."

My hands are down his back -- beauty, God -- what beauty. Unspeakable. I am trembling. Sweet. Slow, oh, God.

"Let yourself go." There is no space between us.

"I love you." he whispers. "I love you." ■

ON A RAINY SUNDAY

KRISTANNE GARRISON

*This chrysanthemum
has dried,
its petals becoming fragile
like fingers of
ash
and giving the appearance of a
woman
with unkempt hair
who tries to brush it with a
fountain pen
but
the petals scream,
crumbling
into the palm of
my hand
so that I may wrap them
in wax paper
to give to you.*



LINDA NEVINS

THE LAST RIDE

SONJIE MEYER



ALAN LAMPE

As fifth gear slides in, the bike jumps to sixty-five, purrs contentedly and then levels out. The evening is cool; a breeze brushes my cheeks lightly as the road, open and empty, unveils a solitude that brings a contentment to my soul. The steady beat of the bike's metal heart and a star-filled sky are my only companions. Autumn fragrances remind me it is late September, a thought that filters sadness through me as I turn on to the last stretch of open road before home. This will be my last ride: a biker's tribute to a year-round love. Smiling with anticipation of next year's excursion, I slowly open the throttle, lean into the turn and point the bike towards home.

E X P R E S S I O N S 7

FAT CAMP

SAM MC CROREY

Lose weight and have **Fun** too!

Up, down, side, side, side, front, back,
shoulder, shoulder.

Fat camp is so hard, they really make you work.

The ad said: "*Have **fun** while you lose 20-40 lbs.
this summer!*"

Don't you believe it!

Get up,

breakfast of grapefruits,

a sweaty morning exercise session,

lunch of cottage cheese salads,

rest,

an even sweatier afternoon exercise session,

free time,

dinner broiled fish or broiled chicken with rice,

free time,

bed.

"A warm personalized camp with a caring staff."

Counselors who go to town on Tuesday and Thursday nights for pizza and beer. Some of the bolder ones take boats out on clear, starry, moonlit nights and row to a small peaceful island. They make-out while those of us with binoculars drool over Ava or Misty or Joni. They make fun of the bigger ones saying: "*Hey big guy. You could have me if you lost about 40 lbs. and got a new zit free face.*" I want to come home! I've been here for two weeks and I've lost 6 lbs.

I miss my dog,

my cat,

my ice cream,

my 7-Up (not diet),

my Burger King and

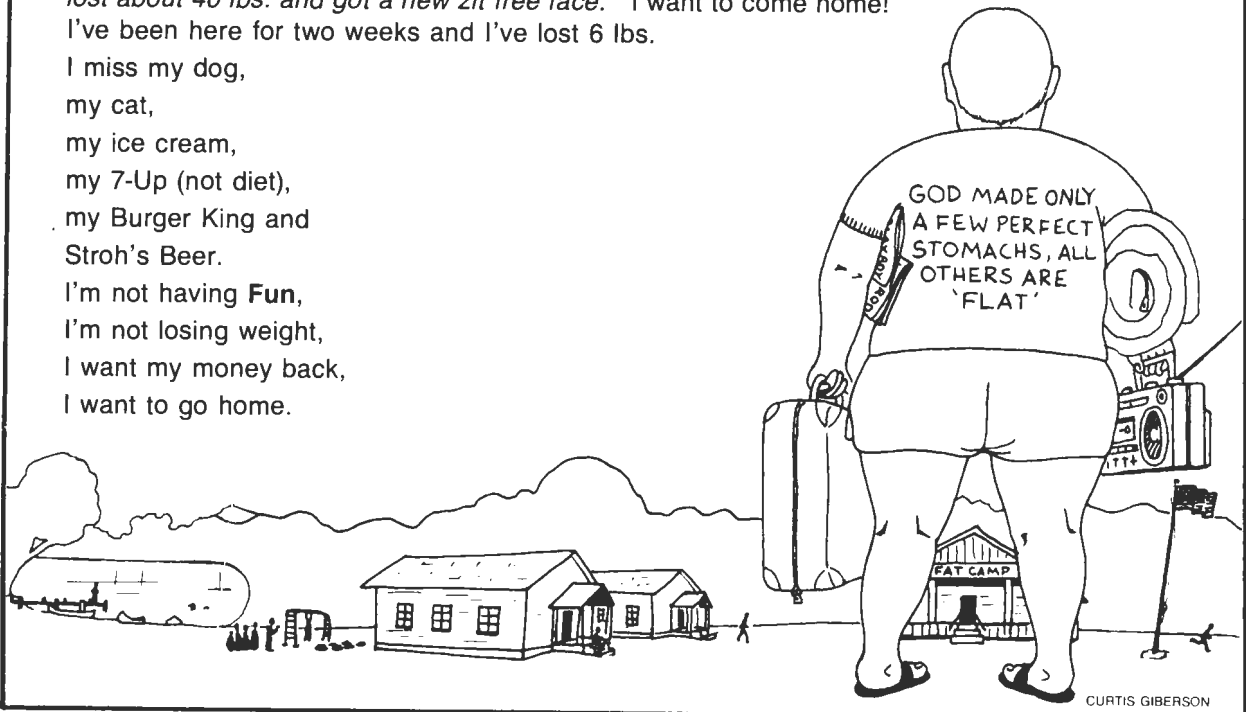
Stroh's Beer.

I'm not having **Fun**,

I'm not losing weight,

I want my money back,

I want to go home.



RELEASING BLACK BALLOONS

JUDITH CARTER

I notice the portrait on the wall of his waiting room. The portrait of the German man with a crazy smile. Appropriate having that picture in this office. I look around the room at Dr. Coleman's two other patients - a young woman twisting a damp Kleenex and an older woman with an enormous handbag. As she's searching through it, I think I see the glint of gun metal and I shrink into my chair. The three of us women, all here to see Dr. Cy Coleman. Cy Coleman, cycoleman, psycho-man!

Then my name is called.

I felt a chill, as though someone had walked on my grave.

I step into Dr. Coleman's office, as always, with a feeling combined of dread and relief. It's always a relief to spill your guts with someone who won't take any side. He just smiles and nods and says, "You're probably depressed because your parents disapproved of you being an actress. And then your husband left you." All this, and I get to pay him \$50 an hour.

At the same time I dread this painful process of yanking out past bad experiences - like an old, decayed tooth. Then discuss them till they're clean, fill in the holes, and put them back in, neatly this time. Every week I think of making up some really interesting problems, like being raped when I was 11 years old. But I don't. Instead I talk about the fear eating my stomach since my husband left, and about the last 35 years of parental rejection. Dr. Coleman says my problems stem from the fact that I'm too passive. My problems. They seem so trivial with this busy man when they were monsters in my empty apartment.

I remember one time - I was really distraught (a medical term - I saw him write 'distraught' on my chart). I'd come in for an emergency session with Dr. Coleman. I was toying with the idea of suicide (romantic suicide, I think now. You know, where you take an overdose of pills, call the great love of your life, and he comes over to rush you to the hospital just in time). Anyway, the girl ahead of me was just leaving; she was standing in the doorway arguing with Dr. Coleman. She looked hysterical, her hair flying around her face and her hands gesturing wildly. She looked like I felt.

But Dr. Coleman just looked hurried. And bored. He kept looking at his Rolex watch, glancing toward me, then looking vacantly (stupidly, I thought) at the girl. Kathy Mitchell; I remembered her from Rusty's, a bar where I had once worked. It had been a couple of years since I had seen her, but the change in her was dramatic. She had been a real Italian beauty; but she looked bad now. Her clothes were old and wrinkled, her face haggard. She was clutching his arm and pleading.

Every week I think of making up some really interesting problems, like being raped when I was 11 years old. But I don't. Instead I talk about the fear eating my stomach since my husband left.

But Dr. Coleman just wasn't interested, and she finally turned away. I could see she was reluctant. As she passed me, our eyes met. I felt a chill, as though someone had walked on my grave.

Then she was gone.



ERIC SWANSON

Now as I sit in this dark wood office, I study Dr. Coleman sitting across from me. A small man, he sits behind an enormous oak desk. (Solid oak, I'll bet. With personal stories and innermost thoughts whispered into its wooden grain.) He is tense as his manicured nails grip his pipe. But it's his eyes that have always hypnotized me. Behind the gray tint of his glasses, they're a vivid green. Like those see-through blue eyes, only these are green. Just looking at the gold slivers in those eyes makes me cold.

We start the session as we have every week for the last 5 years.

"How has this week been?" He uses his father-patting-daughter-on-the-head voice. I hate it.

I answer, "This week hasn't been too bad. Things at work have gone a lot smoother."

"Well, how are you getting along with your husband gone?" His eyes are hidden by his glasses as he continues, "You look good."

"Sure, I'm on a new reducing diet. It's called divorce."

A small smile cracks his cheeks. This is surprising. This man who holds my delicate mental balance in his appointment book rarely shows any of his own emotion. It passes quickly and we're back to business.

Our session progresses through parent problems, boyfriend problems, girlfriend problems, until I'm stripped of problems. Now I'm down to my suit of self-respect. It feels like a bikini.

Today as we're talking something unusual happens. We're interrupted by Dr. Coleman's secretary buzzing his desk. In the hushed room, the buzz sounds unnatural. It sounds urgent. I hear only Dr. Coleman's conversation.

"Julie - You know I don't like interrupt-"

A long pause and Dr. Coleman starts to sag. His cool hands are trembling and blood drains from his face leaving his neck chicken white.

Slowly he hangs up the phone. Those green eyes look stunned. And something else. Fearful, maybe. Could this man in control, who controls the lives of us crazy people, be afraid?

The moment passes.

"We're going to have to cut our session short today," he says. "I have an emergency. Julie will set up your next appointment." He pushes back in his leather chair and walks with me to the waiting room and Julie's desk. Their eyes lock, then he goes into his office shutting the door carefully. Cool as a cucumber.

But Julie's not. Her eyes are red and Kleenexes are wadded in her wastebasket. Quickly her fingers punch keys on the adding machine, and she hands me my bill.

As I lay my checkbook on her desk and begin writing, I glance at the pink phone message pad. "Message for: Dr. Coleman; from Dr. Bennett, Coroner's Office," it says. Interesting. I read on, "Patient Kathy Mitchell" Here the writing becomes illegible; then it stops. And I catch my breath.

*No more
problems.*

*No more
cold people.*

*A quick shot
of a gun.*

I look at Julie's face, think back to the last time I saw Kathy - hysterical - and things click in my mind. Oh my God. She did it. Call it a gut feeling or woman's intuition. I know what has happened.

I scribble my name on the check, rip it out of the book, and leave as fast as I can. Now I'm shaken and fumble to get the car door unlocked. When I finally fall into the front seat, I let my head drop onto the headrest and close my eyes.

I think of Kathy asleep forever. No more problems. No more cold people. With the quick shot of a gun or the slow dreaming of carbon monoxide. In a strange way, I'm jealous.

I start the car and slowly pull out of the parking lot. Lighting a cigarette, I turn on the radio only half listening to the music and news. An ambulance shrieks past, red lights screaming in the dusk. A heavy feeling settles on my shoulders, and I'm comforted by its sweet whispering. I think; if she could do it . . .

I pull into the driveway and slam out of the car. I bend my head against the bitter wind and scuff my boots through the snow. Damn apartment maintenance. They should have had this cleared by now. A feeling of helplessness sucks out my breath.

When I reach my apartment, the mailbox is stuffed. A large manilla envelope catches my attention. "Smith, Lainson, Pearson; Attorneys at Law" is in the upper left corner. Vaguely, I wonder how much it costs to have a return address printed in such elegant type. I open it and read. It's lawyer talk - but I know what it is. It is the end of my marriage. It is the end of my life. Final papers. The End.

No tears, no hysteria. I feel feverish and dimly notice how cool the door is when I lean my forehead against it.

Sheba rubs against my leg and mews indignantly. "Feed me, now," she says.

"Okay, little kitty." I kneel down and scratch behind her ears. Her favorite spots. She rewards me with a deep purring and I hug her fiercely.

I used to read about him in Tiger Beat and Teen.

I turn on the T.V. and switch to **The Phil Donahue Show**. One of his guests is Vince Edwards. I remember him from a show I watched as a kid. Dr. Ben Casey, I think he was. He had been a romantic womanizer. I used to read about him in **Tiger Beat and Teen**. Now he is gray and bloated. As an actress I find this depressing. (The actor's prayer, "Please never let me be like that. Take me out before they carry me out.")

As I watch the show, I pour food into Sheba's bowl. (I could pour enough food to last a few days, I think. Someone would find her by then.) Then I fill her water dish. Her paws skid on the kitchen linoleum; she can't get to it fast enough.

I walk down the hall and go in to use the bathroom. I start to leave the room, then a thought hits me and I turn back. A scene is running through my mind. (I open up the lid of the toilet.

Sheba's watching from the door, licking tuna cat food off her paws. "Sheba, if your water runs out, I know you. I know you'll get up here and drink out of the toilet even though I've thrown you out a million times. This time it's okay.)

Like one of those paintings, he seems to watch me wherever I move.

When I walk into the bedroom, the first thing I notice is his picture. Sitting on the shelf of the waterbed headboard, it's reflected in the mirror as I undress. Like one of those paintings, he seems to watch me where ever I move. (He had been a whirlwind; I had been a tree. He blew through ripping out my roots and leaving me standing hollow.)

My skirt brushes the carpet as I step out of it and my silk blouse rustles to the floor. I hang everything up, put on my old robe, and lie on the bed.

Reaching behind me, I pull open the cabinet on the waterbed and pull out a bottle. When my marriage started to break up, Dr. Coleman gave me this prescription for Valium. For my trouble sleeping. For his trouble in taking my frantic phone calls. Now I fondle the bottle, rolling it in my hands. Blue and yellow capsules against each other.

My thoughts again turn to Kathy. A paralyzing cold spreads through me. (One by one I could pop each pill into my mouth. No romance, no phone call to my great love. Just an eternity of sleep.)

I come back alive as Sheba jumps onto my stomach. Her purrs now are deep and satisfied as she kneads her claws into my soft robe. Her contentedness contrasts with my thoughts. With a certain amount of reluctance, I release these thoughts. They float away in black balloons and disappear. I'm not Kathy Mitchell.

The gelatin cap of one of the Valium sticks in my throat. A glass of water left by my bed last night helps the pill slide down. I start to relax.

Thank you, Dr. Coleman. ■

THE WITNESS

LESLIE EVANS



LAVOLA RAY

**Condensed into
unfamiliar clothes
I float into
the courtroom.
I sit in an
unaccustomed chair
Face the strange faces
And finally see . . .
my fear
looking back
at me.**

DES MOINES PLAYBOY CLUB

JUDITH CARTER



MARK GALBREATH

GIRLS!
 Playboy Club
 Opens here November.
 A "bunny hunt"
 For 80 women/needed
 To wait on club members.
 (A chosen few)
 So put on your bunny ears
 Striped leotard
 Shiny nylons
 High heels
 Wind blown
 Sun streaked
 Flowing hair.
 Add puffy cottontail,
 Come on down.
 The Sheraton wants you!

MEN of the world!
 Rogues and rascals.
 The Playboy Club
 Opens here in November.
 Four short weeks left
 To receive your "key" -
 A card
 With a bunny on it.
 Only room for
 "300 keyholders"
 At \$35 apiece
 The first year;
 \$25 annually thereafter.

Des Moines now
 "sophisticated" enough
 For PB Club.
 Need proof?
 Mark Guild,
 Pres. Guild's Hotel
 Management Co.,
 Omaha, Nebraska
 Compares DM sophistication
 To success of
 East Lansing's Club
 Who
 Has its own place in the market.
 Des Moines ranks.

And what a Club this will be!
 Cabaret seating
 For evening shows.
 32 stools
 At the social bar.
 Best of all,
 "soft seating" -
 No straight-backed wooden chairs
 For Des Moines' Playboy Club.

"Eatery also to offer
 meals with no bunny."
 What?
 A meal with no bunny?
 Unimaginable
 In a Metropolis
 Like DM.
 But wait -
 That's just for members
 Uncomfortable
 With a
 Rabbit Waitress.

Franchise bunny clubs
 In hotels and motels
 The future PB Clubs.
 A bunny
 In every restaurant
 At every
 Holiday Inn.
 A Club in every Motel 6.
 Deposit a quarter
 Playboy bunny in "tails"
 Pops out of the closet!
 "Hi. I'm Tina."
 And dances
 A quick bunny hop.

A DOMESTIC CRISIS

KRISTANNE GARRISON

Grandmother shrieks in anger
at the dust which has begun to settle
into the creases
of my grandfather's face.

which she so carefully irons
each morning

to insure that he looks the part of chief inspector
as he sets off to make his rounds
at the airplane factory.

But when he comes home,
nasturniums
have begun to sprout from the creases.

The dust is so fertile.



RUSS JOHNSON

RABBIT PURSUIT

TERESA HELEMKAY

*before memory breathed in my body
your essence was present
hiding in a midnight niche
entombed by gory silken fronds
waving softly
the quickening rhythm of respiration
was your requiem
you and your slower sisters
waiting
for an acid scarred Hermes to jolt you with a voltage
still unknown to man
or woman
traveling unaware until a less organic intrusion
lent you the skill of dying
don't take it personally
the undefinable are always expendable . . .
accompanied by a steel degree of sorrow*

*p.s.
although she tried with tuna cleverness
the Cheshire Cat could not be coaxed
into solidification
poor Alice
blinded by a splinter from her looking glass.*



AMBER HEWITT

THE DECISION

BEVERLY MCPHILLEN

Standing alone in the middle of the room, I surveyed the boxes and crates that contained our lives.

They were stacked everywhere waiting to be unpacked. We had taken time to put only the perishables away. The girls were upstairs, sleeping soundly, each one in her appointed room. The last box had been unloaded from the truck at four o'clock in the morning. Our friends had taken the truck back to Perry. Now, at five-fifteen a.m., we were alone. Only four people knew where we were; as for all others, we had vanished.

At first, reluctant and fearful, the girls rapidly became enthusiastic when they finally found out about the house I had chosen. A three-bedroom duplex, located on the outer edge of town yet deep enough within the city not to be found by mere chance. It offered us a chance at freedom, and an escape from a nightmare. Here we hope for a happier life.

Slowly, as realization came to me of just what had happened, fear and doubts crept into my mind. Once the decision had been made, it had taken only four days to move. It was a panic flight. I hadn't thought much farther ahead than getting my girls to the safety of the big city.

I sat down on the floor and leaned back against a stack of boxes. My mind rolled back time to the turning point, and I remembered...

"I can't stand this anymore!" sobbed Kristy as I gently washed away the blood from her swollen lips. "I didn't say anything wrong. Why did he hit me?"

"Mom," sobbed Becky, sitting on the floor holding ice to a bruise on her thigh, "this hurts. Why did he kick me? I wasn't even in the house when he and Kristy got into their fight."

"I don't know," I said gently as I put my arms around both of them. Tears welled up in my eyes. This wasn't the first time I had come home from work to find my house in an uproar of anger, tears, and bewilderment.

"He's drunk again!" said Sheila as she slowly slipped a shirt down over her chest. "He always grabs at my clothes when he's that way. He just

wrecked another bra and shirt."

Hank was passed out on the couch again. Beer cans were scattered all over the floor. I looked at my daughters standing close together and fearfully watching. I knew I must do something.

"Go to bed girls and lock your doors. You'll hear us leave in a while, but I'll be back. Shh—now go. Quietly, but hurry."

I watched them as they tiptoed past their father and scooted up the stairs. I sat down beside him on the couch. Knowing what I had to do, I reached over and caressed him in a way that I knew would arouse him.

"Hee ya, babieeee," he slurred as he reached for me. "Have I got somptin for youu. Ya gonna let me take ya to our lil ol' hotel hide-way, aire ya?"

Two hours later I returned home alone. Closing the door softly behind me, I headed for the stairs. I needed a shower; I felt dirty.

"Mom?" said a frightened voice.

"Yes, honey?" I said as I turned toward the couch and sat down beside Sheila.

"What did you do with him?" she asked.

"I left him sleeping it off at the hotel. We're not going to be together anymore," I answered as I put my arm around her. "I ..."

"Don't!" she screamed and jerked away from me. "My back!"

"Take that shirt off, young lady!" I ordered as I snapped on the small lamp beside us. "Oh, my God!" I sobbed when I saw the bright red welts across her back and round bruises starting to darken. "Did he do this to you?"

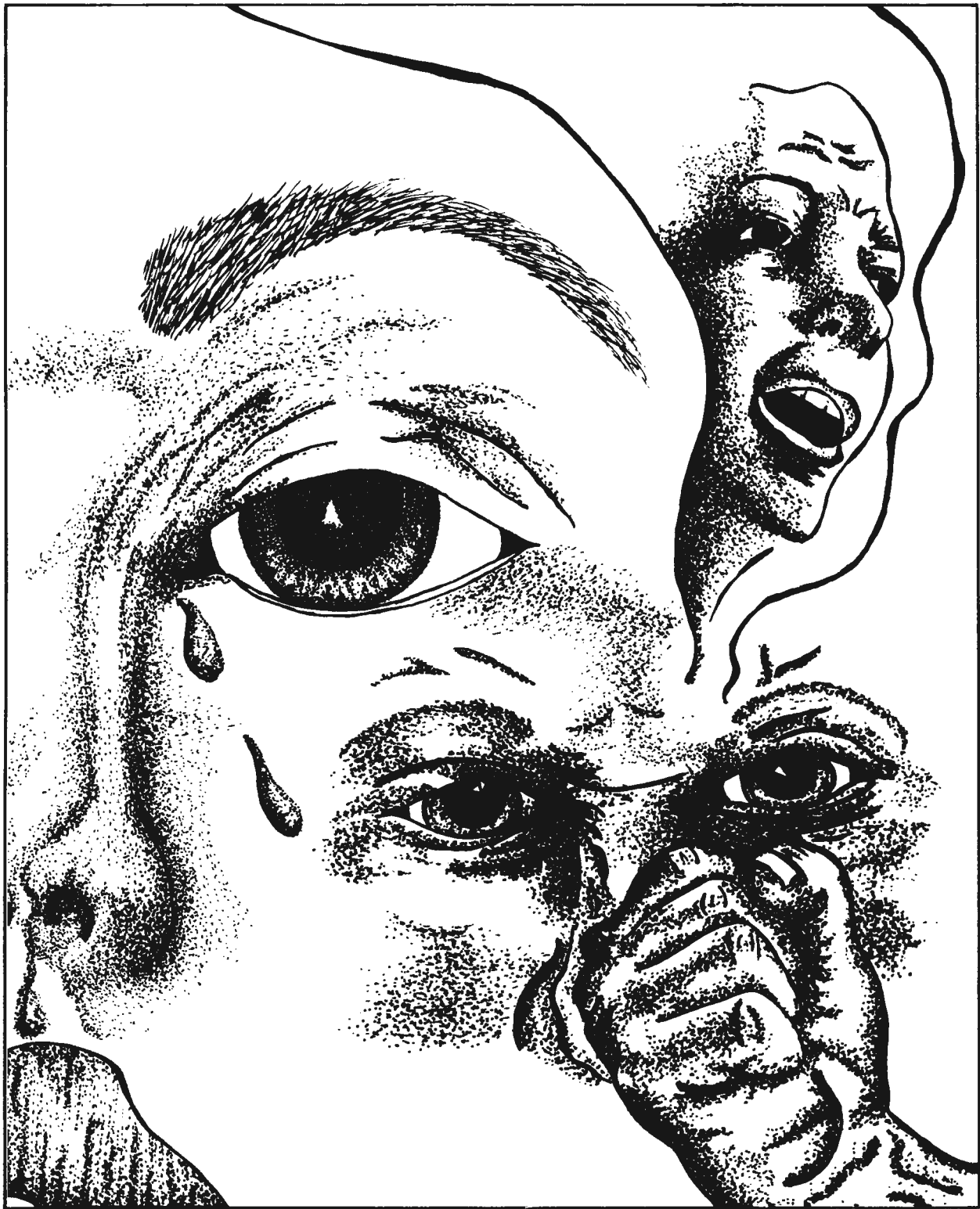
"Y-y-yes," she sobbed. "I spilled his beer and he started hitting me with his belt."

Red fury washed over me. This had to stop! I could take no more of this—my girls could take no more of this. "Put your shirt and robe on! Find your shoes!" I commanded as I raced for the stairs.

I burst into the twins' room and flipped on the light. "Get up!" I snapped, yanking the covers from their beds. "Get up! Move it! Put on your shoes and robes! Hurry up! Tie your shoes in the car! Get yourselves downstairs! Go on! Move it!" I answered no questions as I hurried them along the hall and down the stairs.

"Get in the car!" I said to the three of them standing together and watching me anxiously.

They ran for the car and got in. I didn't bother to stop and shut doors or turn off lights. My girls had been hurt for the last time.



BECKY RAY

"If you ever need me, you know how to find me. Don't hesitate. Get into your car and come get me," he had said not very long ago.

Now I needed him and I was going. I sped

toward the hospital, not slowing for corners, stop signs, or a police car with lights and sirens on, hot on my trail. I screeched to a halt in the emergency drive at the hospital, got out of my car,

and ran toward the door to ring the buzzer for help. The policeman, his lights and siren silent, got out of his car and walked over to my sobbing girls. I kept pushing the buzzer. It was a frantic cry for help. I was losing control. Two white clad nurses came running around the corner and up the hall toward me. The door slid open and I rushed in.

The policeman and my girls followed me into the hall. They hid fearfully behind his familiar blue uniform. The nurses ushered us into a big, white room and gently sat the girls down.

"What happened here?" questioned a nurse softly.

"He did this to them while I was at work. I came home and found them like this," I said as I started to pace the floor. "I can't take this anymore! This shouldn't be happening to them, they're just children. He has no right to slap them around whenever he feels like it. He's always drinking now—more and more. I can't take this anymore! I can't stand to have him touch me. It makes me sick. I left him passed out at the hotel, but what's going to happen now? I don't know what I'm going to do, but I have to do something. He's used a strap on her! Look at her face—and he kicked her! Lord only knows what else he did or tried to do while I was gone."

A nurse stepped over to the phone and made a quiet phone call. I continued to pace and rant and rave. I could feel myself floating away, detached and adrift.

Suddenly, a large man stood quietly in the doorway, surveying the scene. My girls, silent, wide-eyed, and fearful were once again clinging to the policeman and me, pacing, ranting, and now hysterical. He strode over to me, grabbed my shoulders, spun me around, and said, "Beverly! Calm down! Tell me what happened!"

"Don't touch me!" I screamed, trying to jerk away from him. "Leave me alone! Stop it! Let me go! Nooo---" I tried to kick him. I felt I had to get away from him. We struggled for a few seconds before he took an alternative action.

WHACK!! My teeth clicked together, my head snapped sideways, and a painful realization shot into my head. I had been slapped! I focused on the man who still held my shoulders in an iron grip with both of his hands. I knew then that it had been done with concern and caring for me and my girls. The world and its past events came back sharply into focus.

I collapsed against the chest of our doctor-

friend and started to cry. He put his arms around me, stroked my hair, and said, "Go ahead and cry, dear; you need it. This has finally gotten to be too much for you. Now I will do what I told you must be done. Let me take over for a while and help you."

He continued to hold me and pat my back while I sobbed my sorrow over a good thing turned bad. He murmured an order, and a nurse quickly prepared an injection. I paid no attention to the two orderlies when they entered, nor to the nurse who rolled up my sleeve. Feeling the sting of the needle, I looked dumbly at my arm and then up at the doctor's face.

"Just a little Valium to relax you. I want you to go with these handsome men and lie down where they tell you to. I'm going to take a look at your beautiful daughters," he said as he nodded his head at the two men standing beside me.

Each one taking an arm, they led me back to another room with a bed in it. I laid down and a soft, velvet blackness settled over me.

I could hear murmuring coming from the other room. I felt strangely calm and no longer angry or afraid. Things slowly began to take an orderly place. The anger and helplessness now gone, I knew what had to be done. I slowly sat up and slipped my shoes on.

I walked into the room where the girls now sat sipping juices. Dr. B. stood talking to a man dressed in a suit and dark overcoat. Two policemen stood on either side of him.

"Bev," the man said, "I have some papers for you to sign."

"The restraint orders?" I asked, knowing that was what it had to be.

"Yes," said the man. "I'm Judge Thomas. Dr. B. called me and explained what had happened, so I drew them up and brought them here. You need to sign these on the blanks here, here, here, and here."

"When will these take effect?" I asked as I signed the papers on the lines he had pointed out and handed the papers and pen back to him.

"Immediately," he replied as he affixed his signature and seal to the papers and handed one set to the policeman on his right. As they left, he turned back to me and said, "The boys are going to deliver them and will patrol the house for a while. What is your next step?"

I looked at my girls, at our beloved doctor-friend, and clearly I knew what we must do. "We're going to move to Des Moines!" ■

IMAGE

LOLA PETERS

I love you

In your gray pin-striped I'm-in-charge-here suit
with the matching bankers vest
In your blue dress shirt, that matches your eyes
In your just-polished black wing tipped shoes
In your almost striped tie where the blue slides into the gray

I love you

In your jeans with the ink stain on the pocket
In your turtleneck with the hole under one arm
In your needing-to-be-replaced plaid flannel shirt
In your insulated boots with the snow tire tread
In your I-wish-I-had-known Daniel Boone hunting vest
In your farmer cap

I love you

In your lake clothes grubbies
In your get-away-from-it-all cut offs
(with the mud stain on the seat)
In your almost matched socks
In your tennies covered with grass stain
In your bare chest trickling with sweat

I love you

In your jogging suit that you never jog in
In your T-shirt that you never drink tea in
In your I'm-comfortable deerskin slippers
(propped up by the fireside)

I love you

In your smile
And your nothing at all



DANA Z. BEHRENDSEN

E X P R E S S I O N S 21

WINTER

PAT UNDERWOOD

When you were only 16, you wanted to know my father better. Two years passed before you drove through the deep of January's bitter chill to clasp my father's extended hand, to savor Mom's rich stew. I was eager to see you, my cousin, again. You were not used to country roads with blankets of snow stacked in layers. Only your face held heat from your cheek's blush when my father pulled your car from the snow and brought you with him to greet us. You rubbed your frigid hands briskly together holding them over the large iron grate that loomed in the center of the hall floor. I swallowed a chuckle as I saw your frozen pride return, not knowing I was watching a kindness grow. It was what seemed to us a short stay. Time melted the winter as we talked late into the night.



Just now as the receiver finds its nest, I feel a January snowstorm creeping into my bones on this June morning. I want the hands that rubbed so briskly together to still the tremble of my hand. But, no, we will wait separately for this coldness to pass. It is the summer of my father's death.

RANDY STANDLEY

MAKING ROOM

BEV CRANMER

Pat sat on the worn couch, staring toward the window. Shivering, she pulled the afghan up over her shoulders and clutched it under her chin. The afghan was beautiful — warm golden tones crocheted in a zig-zag pattern. It had been a wedding gift from her grandmother, who had predicted that the gifts would out-last the marriage.

The windowpanes were frosted white, hiding the icy blackness of the night. The wind was flinging sleet against the house and wisping under the door, wrapping its chill around Pat's hands and feet. Not even the muffled giggles of David and Allison from their beds or the sweet milk-breath Katie asleep close-by, could warm her.

It had been over a year since her husband had moved out. He had handed her a scrap of paper with a number scrawled on it, saying she could reach him there in case of an emergency with the kids or something. When he was gone she dialed the number. A woman answered. Pat crumpled the paper in her fist and flung it into the waste basket. I'll never need him that badly, not anymore, she vowed to herself. But the next day she retrieved the paper and tacked it onto the bulletin board beside the number of the lawyer that a friend had given her.

She had spent a winter-full of cold nights since then. At times she actually felt okay, normal, whole. Maybe she was getting used to the aloneness. Each night she soaked warmth into her body with a long scalding bath just before bed — the sheets warmed up faster then. And she was still nursing Katie. Pat hadn't really decided to nurse her past one, there was just never a good time to stop. Sometimes, in lighter moments, she would imagine Katie saying, "Mother, couldn't I drink milk from a cup like other children?" Pat would answer, "Someday, but you're not quite ready yet."

Then Pat had started going out in the evenings, not on dates or anything like that, but to church activities. There was a singles club she liked that met in the basement of St. Paul's. It was there, at a pot-luck, that she first noticed Jim. She was setting her chicken casserole on the serving table when he walked in carrying a grocery bag.

He pulled out potato chips and onion dip and put them on the table. A man's concept of pot-luck, thought Pat. He looked up and caught her smirk.

"They told me to bring a vegetable. I brought potatoes," he said, eyebrows arched over his deep brown eyes like those of a child pleading innocence. Then his whole face, rimmed in tossed hair and beard, burst into a wide grin.

A few weeks later, at an all-church picnic, David and Allison had wandered off. When Pat found them on the swings (the first place a mother looks for a lost three- and four-year old), it was Jim who was pushing them, and several other children, to the squeals of "Higher, higher."

"Are some of these kids yours?" asked Pat as she helped out with the pushing.

"No, I have a son, but he lives in Memphis. I don't see him very often."

"These two are mine," Pat said.

"I knew that," he said smiling, "they look just like you." They talked away the rest of the afternoon around the swings, the jungle-gym, the sandbox and the slide.

After that there were phone calls, at first short and to the point (What was the name of that book you were telling me about?) and then long talks, at night (Yeah, I know what you mean. After my divorce...). Soon Pat found herself taking a quick shower as soon as the kids were asleep, then moving the phone to her nightstand. Some nights she would just be sliding in between the crisp sheets when the phone would ring. Other times she would read for a while and then call him. She liked how he would say "I'm glad you called," and she would hear the TV click off in the background and they'd talk, and talk. And talk.

Then there were dates—movies and concerts, every Saturday. Finally, Pat invited him to supper, with smothered porkchops, rice with mushrooms, cheesecake with strawberries—and the three kids. Pat had fussed over the meal and the house and the kids all day. It had been so long since she had put together a nice meal. But it had been just as long since Jim had eaten a nice meal. He raved over each bite and had seconds of everything. After supper Pat got the kids ready for bed, telling Jim to just make himself at home.

When she returned, he was putting the last of the dishes into the dishwasher.

"Why did you do the dishes?" Pat asked, the surprise in her voice almost sounding like anger. Jim shrugged.

"You just wanted me to stand around and wait?"

After that, Jim joined them often for supper. Pat liked having him there. He was so comfortable, so quick with a joke and always flashing that boyish smile. Maybe it was the way he knelt down to talk eye-to-eye with David, or the way he'd let Allison reach into his shirt pocket for a stick of gum, or how he'd come by after work and take the fussy baby out of Pat's arms while she finished cooking. She couldn't help herself, she was falling for him.

But all that didn't matter now.

Katie stirred beside her on the couch. Pat rubbed her tiny back until she settled down. Kids, these kids, thought Pat, hating herself for the resentment she felt. For the past year, her life had revolved around those kids. Their need of her had sometimes been her only reason for living, but tonight that same dependence hung like a huge

chunk of ice around her neck. She was sure that they had come between her and Jim. She remembered the silence the night before, as they unloaded the car, too cold and too tired to talk. A much different pair than the two chattering lovers who had set out for the mountains a week ago.

Pat had layered the back of her station wagon with blankets and sleeping bags for the kids. David and Allison had picked some favorite toys and had stashed them under their pillows near the front. Katie was buckled into her carseat between Pat and Jim. The back of the car was neatly and tightly packed with suitcases and pampers and boxes of gifts for Pat's relatives, who would be joining them at the lodge for Christmas and skiing.

The whole family was waiting to meet the new man in Pat's life. Rumor had it that they were serious, whatever that means, and that Jim had even been seen changing one of Katie's stinky diapers. Pat was glad that Jim would be with her this year. She hoped that his presence would shield her from the piercing stares of certain family members who had once bragged "a family this big and not one divorce." She knew they would like Jim. Why wouldn't they? He was everything she wanted, and more—he really did change stinky diapers.

The excitement of their first trip together kept them laughing and chatting as they sped along the highway. The morning sun poured drowsiness over the kids and soon they were all asleep. The hours and the miles flew by in a peaceful rush. Finally they veered off the highway and into a little town to find a gas station.

"Only four more hours and we'll be there," said Jim as he got out to fill up the car and get a couple of cokes. A blast of December wind blew in through the open door and woke up Allison.

"Mommy," she whined, "my tummy hurts." Pat turned around just in time to see the clotted milk and donut spout over Allison's chin and down the front of her shirt and overalls. Pat lectured herself for forgetting the motion-sick medicine as she grabbed the Kleenexes and wiped Allison's round, flushed face, then began undressing her. Pat had a wet washcloth and clean clothes in the diaper bag just for little accidents like this. I'll have this cleaned up before Jim gets back to the car, she thought. But just as she pulled the sour-smelling T-shirt over Allison's head, the rest of her breakfast bolted up, making a rancid pool on the sleeping bag. Pat jumped out of the car. She



CHRISTINE BOOT

opened the back door, picked up Allison and sat her, not too gently, next to David, who was awake now. He was holding his nose and driving his little truck on the window ledge. Pat felt a flush of desperation creep up her neck as she looked at the mess. Tears stung her eyes.

"I just wanted a peaceful trip!" she screamed at everyone and no one, as she tried to mop the vomit with a handful of Kleenex. Jim walked up behind her.

"What's happening back there?" he asked. He leaned down and smiled at the half-naked Allison. Then the smell caught him. He stood straight up, gasped for fresh air and exclaimed, "Whew! Car-sick?" Pat nodded apologetically. Jim said not to worry and ran back into the station. A minute later he returned. He jumped into the car saying, "Okay, roll down your windows and wrap up in your blankets. There's a laundromat a few blocks from here."

In an hour and a half, they were back on the road, kids perched on the Downy-fresh sleeping bag, still warm from the dryer. But now they were awake and hungry. Afraid to let them eat very much, Pat rationed out soda crackers and little sips of coke to silence their fussiness. By the time they reached the lodge, the car was strewn with cracker crumbs, which were stuck like confetti to Pat's sweater. She could feel them crunch under her each time she moved. She felt like screaming, but Jim was still chipper—talking about the great-looking snow and getting out on the slopes early tomorrow. He unloaded the car while Pat opened cans of ravioli and threw together bologna sandwiches. They ate in their rented condo, then changed clothes for the evening.

The whole family was gathering around the fireplace in the main lobby, twenty-seven of them in all. Pat introduced Jim all around and soon he was laughing and telling about their laundromat episode and about the exciting rounds of Pac-man he and David had played while waiting for the dryer to finish. Listening to his story, even Pat was almost convinced that their drive that day had been fun. She visited with relatives and chased kids from one end of the lobby to the other, overhearing comments like "And he's cute too" and "Where'd she ever find him?" Aunt Harriet said that she couldn't tell if he was handsome or not with all that hair on his face. Grandmother Harris wanted to know how many times he had been married. Pat's sister said, "Relax, he's holding his own and that's an accomplishment with this bunch." Pat's younger brother, who had

traveled with her and the kids before, asked, "Is this guy for real?" Pat, too, wondered how much Jim could take and still come up laughing.

The next morning, they got up early and excitedly got ready for a day of skiing. Jim skipped breakfast.

"The altitude always gets to my stomach," he had said, but by noon he had taken off his skis and had gone back to the condo. "It's not the altitude, it's the flu—the kind that gets you at both ends," he announced to Pat when she and the kids returned that afternoon. For the next two days, all he did was run from bed to bathroom and eat tapioca pudding, for which Pat's brothers nicknamed him 'Puddin'. (These were the same brothers who had greeted Pat's first date at the front door sporting shotguns, asking the pale-faced sixteen year old what his intentions were with their little sister.) The rest of the week it was "Hey Puddin, I'll race ya to the bottom" or "Good run, Puddin." Jim just shook his head and laughed. It seemed his good humor would never end.

The night Pat burned supper, he convinced the kids that it tasted good that way, as if it had been cooked over a campfire. And when Katie cried all night for no apparent reason, he took turns with Pat, walking the floor, bouncing Katie gently, singing Jingle Bells in monotone. And when David dumped a salad into Jim's lap, bleu cheese dressing and all, he said, "Hmmm, I think Thousand Island would have looked better with these slacks." And when Katie's soggy diaper made a big wet spot on the front of his new ski jacket, he said, "Smile Katie! I think we're on Candid Camera." On Christmas morning, when the sweater Pat got him was a size too small and the only other gift he got was an engraved lighter (he had just quit smoking) he said if he had kept smoking he would probably be thin enough to fit into the sweater.

Finally, on the sixth day, when Pat and her mother had words over Pat's inability to discipline her children properly, Jim suggested that they leave a day early. Maybe they could pack up and drive part way that night and then have a short, easy trip home tomorrow, he had said. So they left with quick good-byes.

In the car, Jim said, "Aha, now I've got you all to myself," and immediately began looking for a motel where they could put the kids to bed early and call up room service for a late romantic dinner. But each motel they tried was full. Didn't they know this was their busiest season, the desk clerks told them. With each stop, Jim's dark

eyebrows carved deeper lines into his forehead. Pat fumbled in her purse for aspirin. David and Allison were squabbling over toys and blankets and who was touching who. Katie was wearing her last diaper. After eating greasy chicken and cold biscuits at fifty-five miles an hour, with only one spilled coke, the kids fell asleep. Pat watched urgently for vacancy signs, talking constantly to keep from exploding into tears.

Jim stopped at a gas station. When he returned, he was frantically chewing some minty-smelling gum. He madly tore open another piece. He stuffed it into his mouth. Then another, and another. A minute later, he rolled down his window and spit out the whole wad. He pulled a pack of cigarettes from his coat pocket and lit one. When it was almost gone, he lit another. Pat watched in silence now. She wanted to make some kind of a joke about how lucky he was that her mother had given him that lighter, but she couldn't think of any funny words to use, so she pretended to be asleep...until finally she was. When she awoke, they were in the driveway of her house.

They didn't talk much as they unloaded the car. Jim had mumbled something about calling her later as he left. Pat stood for a moment, staring sleepily at the cluttered mess in the living room, then turned out the lights and went to bed. The next day she numbly unpacked suitcases and started some wash and sorted through the pile of Christmas boxes, some still holding on to remnants of bright red and green wrappings. She found a crushed, but full box of Pampers and a familiar-looking box. In it was Jim's too-small sweater. "What's this doing here?" she asked out loud. She was glad that no one answered.

She absently played with the kids as they tried out their new toys. All the while she was wondering if Jim was sleeping all day. Was that why he hadn't called? Next thing she knew, she heard herself screaming, "You've broken it! You just got it and now it's broken!" David's eyes filled with tears as Pat stomped out of the room, slamming the door behind her. She called her ex-husband, asking when he was going to celebrate Christmas with the kids. Yes, they'd come home a day early and no, no one got hurt or anything and yes, they'd had a wonderful time. She told him that she could have the kids ready whenever he wanted them. Okay, tomorrow would be fine, but after she hung up she wondered, why not today?

She found a package of hotdogs in the freezer

and boiled them for the kids' supper. They squealed with delight, flooded their plates with catsup, and ate with their fingers. Pat tried to eat some yogurt, but it wouldn't go down.

The warm water felt good on her icy hands as she bathed the kids. She fought tears as she tucked David and Allison into their beds and kissed them on their soapy-fresh cheeks. Allison had clasped her hands around Pat's neck and wouldn't let go for the longest time and David must have said I love you, mommy ten times before Pat forced out the words, I love you too, and turned out the light. She had given Katie a drink of milk out of a cup and had rocked her to sleep so she wouldn't cry. Pat couldn't listen to crying, not tonight. Then she laid the sleeping baby at the end of the couch. It was too cold to walk clear back to Katie's room.

The whole house seemed cold. It had been all day, Pat thought. Maybe it was the sleet pelting the windows that made her shiver.

The shrill ring of the phone split the icy air and swirled around her like the wind. She reached for the phone. She lay her hand on the cool white receiver and waited for it to ring again. And again.

"Hello," she said softly, her heart pounding, threatening to crack the wish that was frozen in her chest: Let it be Jim.

"Pat, this is Jim. Are you busy?"

"No, I'm just here on the couch with the baby."

"Any room for me?"


"Yes," she answered. Yes...yes...yes, she sang as she swept little Katie into her arms and danced her to the bedroom. Katie nestled her warm, sleep-filled head into Pat's neck. Pat held the baby close and kissed her fluffy head and satiny cheeks and nose and her milky-smelling mouth. She must have said I love you ten times before David appeared at the bedroom door.

"Mommy," he said, rubbing his eyes with one hand and pulling up his droopy pajama pants with the other, "Someone's knocking at the front door."

"Oh...oh. Thank you, honey," she said as she laid Katie down and snuggled her under a heap of blankets. "You run back to bed now," she said to David as she hurried down the hall, combing her hair with her fingers. She stopped at David's room and watched as he crawled into bed and pulled the covers up under his chin. "Now," she said in a loud whisper, "Get to sleep!" Then she ran for the front door, calling back over her shoulder, "Luv ya, Davy." ■

MOTHER GOOSE ON THE LOOSE

BEV CRANMER



*Thirty days hath September
And other things I must remember
Like mailing the check to pay the rent,
Where did you say Matt's gerbil went?
It's 'I' before 'E' except after 'C'
Before we go shopping make Alex go pee.
Remember your coupons if you want ten cents off,
And cover your mouth with your hand when you cough.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
Does anyone know where my car keys are?
Star light, star bright,
I saw them, Mom, in the yard last night.
Hey diddle, diddle, the cat and the fiddle,
Walk around the mud, don't jump in the middle.
Jack be nimble, Jack be quick,
Can't you get to the bathroom before you get sick?
Jack and Jill went up the hill,
How many glasses of milk did you spill?
Rock-a-bye baby, on the tree top,
Don't stick out your tongue. Now stop. I SAID STOP!
About that old woman who lived in a shoe,
If I were her I'd know what to do.
I'd find a new house and put down a deposit,
As for having more babies, I'd give up what caused it.
Now leave me alone! Go on and play.
We'll read more rhymes another day.*

AMBER HEWITT

THE DRY SOAP

BEV CRANMER

I sat on the front row, glowing with love for her. The feeling was so wonderful, so rare. Each note from that raspy voiced little girl on stage sent a wave of pride splashing over me. I wanted to stand up and shout, "Yes, she's mine!" I was almost drowning in the flood of my own feelings. How I wanted to capture the warm waves and savor them bit by bit, but each one broke, rushing away from me, as if returning to the sea, leaving behind the old hurts and scars like barnacle-covered shells on the sand.

My mind flipped through scenes of the past, searching for a memory, longing for another wave to soothe me. But the memories weren't soothing. She had never wanted my cuddling unless my arms were full of laundry. She had never wanted to talk to me unless I was on the telephone. She'd always scowled at the clothes I picked out for her and made barfing noises when I told her what was for dinner. When I'd kiss her she'd pull away. "Your breath stinks," she'd say.

I joined in the applause, wondering if she had said the rest of her lines right. She bowed at each curtain call, smiling as if she knew, for the moment, we were all under her spell. I waited for the crowd to clear and went to the dressing room.

"We need to go, Katie," I said. "You can take your make-up off at home."

"I've already started it now," she said as she grabbed the jar of cold cream and globbed some on her cheeks. I stood by the door tapping my foot as she smeared and wiped her face. I watched as the charm that had won my heart from the stage disappeared with the make-up, landing in a pile of dirty tissues.

She raced me to the car and turned the radio on. Loud. She punched one button after another, watching my face. I rolled my eyes at one song. She immediately deemed it her favorite.

"Will you turn that down?" I snapped. She grunted. With one touch I created a silence that neither of us cared to break.

"Get into the tub now - it's late." I said when we got back into the house.

"Why can't I have a snack first?" she whined.

"After your bath you can."



LAVOLA RAY

"But I've already got the milk on," she said as she clattered to get the lid off the jug and drown the Cocoa Krispies. She played in the bowl of cereal for a while, then declaring it too soggy, she headed for the bathroom.

"Are you done in there?" I called through the locked door.

"You want me to get clean, don't you?" She made sudden splashing noises.

Later, I sat on the edge of her bed to hear her prayers.

"Dear God, thank you for helping me grow long fingernails so I can scratch Allison better. Amen."

She reached for her diary and thumbed through it to the page entitled "My Friends." She began her nightly ritual of crossing off, in permanent black marker, the names that no longer belonged there. She smiled at me crookedly and then added 'Allison' and 'Mommy' to the bottom of the list, so that we could be scratched off again.

I picked up her underwear and towel from the bathroom floor. I felt the bar of soap. It was dry. As dry as my heart. ■

A WINTER'S TALE

MARY K. TYLER



JANA BROWN

That day the sky was
vinous blue
and the earth's
ice carapace
cracked beneath
my feet as I
walked home from school
. . . to get my
mittens that I
forgot because
the teacher made me
go and get them.
It was really cold
that day, and since
I had no mittens
my fingers froze
brittle as twigs.
But the lesson that
I learned came later
when in loving you,
I came too well to
understand how
. . . forgetting
to cover up against
the cold
can hurt.

LESSONS

LIL TERPSTRA

Ah, it was a springtime. To city dwellers that means flowers, freshly mowed lawns and new beginnings. But it means a whole lot more to farmers and their wives, faithful creatures all.

To a farmer's wife, at best, it means lots of cooking for extra help, long hours being a "go-fer" girl (as in Go for this, Go for that) and choring. At worst, it means helping out in the field and driving a tractor.

Working side by side with one's mate has a certain solid ring to it, I thought, as I was being pressed into service. I hadn't really ever helped out in the field, but with the hired man hospitalized, I was talked into it. Drafted, more like it. I was needed -- I felt so heroic, sort of like a pioneer woman following her man into the frontier. I pictured myself a perfect helpmate. And what better way to work on a tan?

So naturally I'd need suntan lotion and lots of moisture cream. I mean I wasn't going to *look* like a farm hand. Of course, I would also need sunglasses, so I didn't get squint lines, and a big floppy hat to protect my newly frosted and perm-ed hair. And who could do without a tube top and shorts? Oh yes, I needed a radio and gloves -- and lots of pop.

Thinking I was ready for anything, I manned - or - womanned -- my post. In reality it was like putting a horse and a mule in the harness. Let's just chalk it up to inexperience and naivete!

First on the agenda was my filling the tractor with gas. Not so tough, I told myself. With a stern admonition not to "use the wrong barrel," I was left to my own speculations on which hole was the gas tank. I gambled -- and lost. After Larry had calmed down, still grumbling about, "How am I going to flush the gas out of the radiator?" I was banished in disgrace to the north 40 with the other tractor.

Again the instructions were sketchy -- just a "Stay out of the wet holes." Now I didn't know a wet hole from a dry hole but valiantly carried on until the tractor sank -- up to its axles. I brilliantly deduced this was a wet hole. After sitting helplessly for about 15 minutes, I heard Larry ap-

proaching. There's good news, I thought. Obviously the tractor wasn't any worse for its beverage intake and Larry would help me out of this predicament. Sizing up the situation and amid scathing remarks and mutterings, he hooked up my tractor to his log chain. Deciding I should drive the lead tractor and he the stuck one, he gave me a fatal set of third instructions: "Take your foot off the pedal slowly."

I thought it was slow.

He didn't.

It wasn't a pretty sight.

What a contusion I left in my wake as I tore across the bumpy plowed ground. After the first great jerk, chain dragging, the hook straightened out, leaving Larry halfway on dry ground and halfway in the mud.

To put it mildly, he was getting testy.

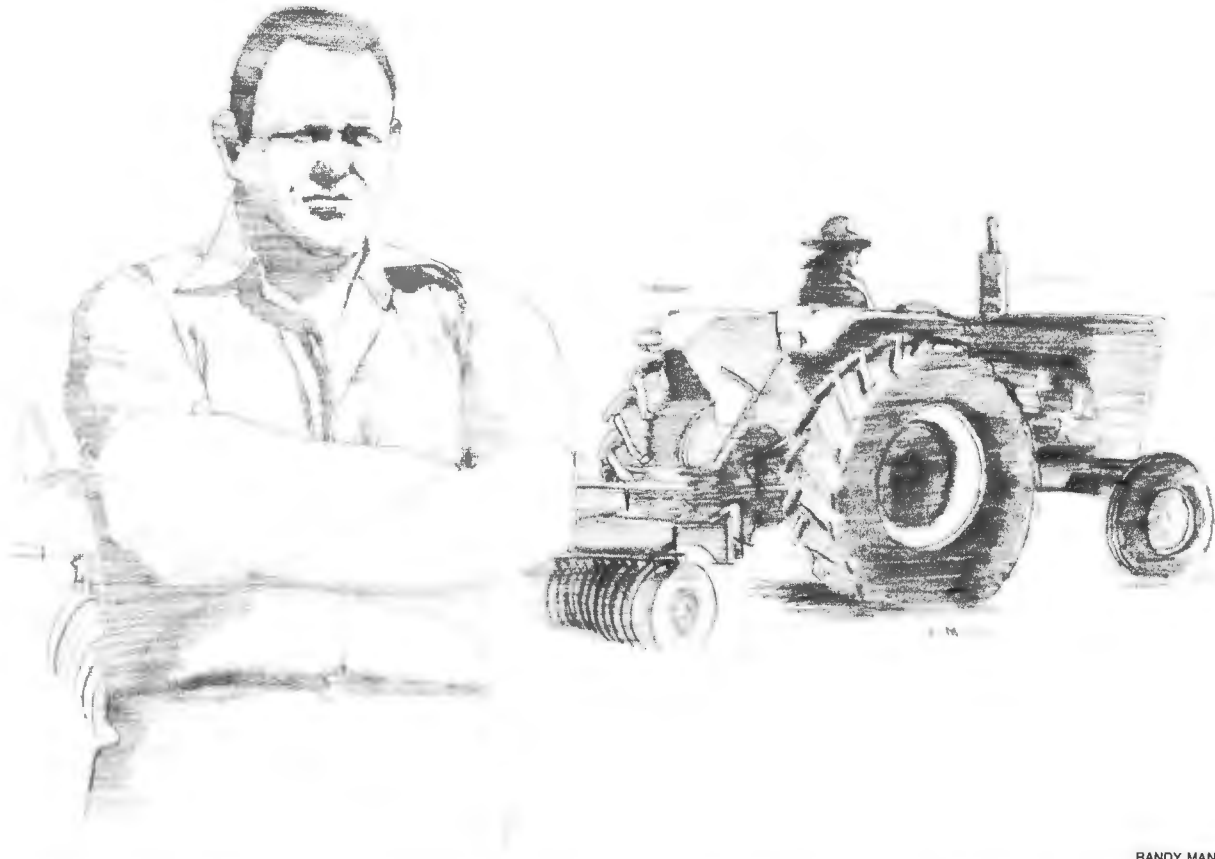
Amid howls of rage or pain - I don't know which, Larry held up his broken log chain and shouted I had ruined it. In addition, he was sure he had whiplash. Thinking I could be helpful and assuage his rage, I offered to run into town and have the hook curved again. To this he scowled, "You can't, it's lost its temper." Well, that hook wasn't the only thing that had lost its temper.

Deciding I wasn't ready for the north 40 yet, we proceeded to a big hilly field across from "the bog." This was more like it, I thought, even though I was discing and pulling some archaic contraption behind the disc and Larry was planting further down the hill.

My beach-turned-field-supplies were rapidly failing me. After a half day of working in the dust, my face had a real mud pack. The floppy, brimmed hat blew off and ended up under the harrow; my pop upset and soaked my cookies; the tractor was so loud, I couldn't hear the radio; and the worst -- I broke a fingernail in spite of the gloves. Besides all that, I was acquiring the dreaded "farmer's tan" because it was too cool to strip to my sun clothes.

However, things were going well for the most part.

As Larry and I were going around the hill in opposite directions, I'd gaily wave at him and he



RANDY MANNING

would grudgingly lift his hand in recognition back. He didn't trust the calm before the storm, so to speak, but all went uneventfully for at least an hour.

As I started to relax, he'd wave a little more friendly, until he was getting downright animated. He'd wave -- I'd wave back -- a perfect scenario of marital peace and harmony and helpmatedness. Oh, bliss! This wasn't so bad - a beautiful spring day and husband dear was over his snit.

As I rounded the curve of the hill, there he stood, legs firmly planted apart in the plowed ground ahead of me, with a look of utter amazement on his face. How could a grown woman of even dubious intelligence have lost her harrow (that archaic contraption) and never noticed? And furthermore, I was off the furrow, he pointed out, and was about to run over it! Didn't I know I would blow all the tires if I rode over the spikes?

Well, I could figure that out, but in all fairness to me, he had probably tied it on with twine! Now I was getting steamed. I hopped off my tractor and flounced (as well as you can flounce in a coverall three sizes too big) home. Good tactics -- he soon

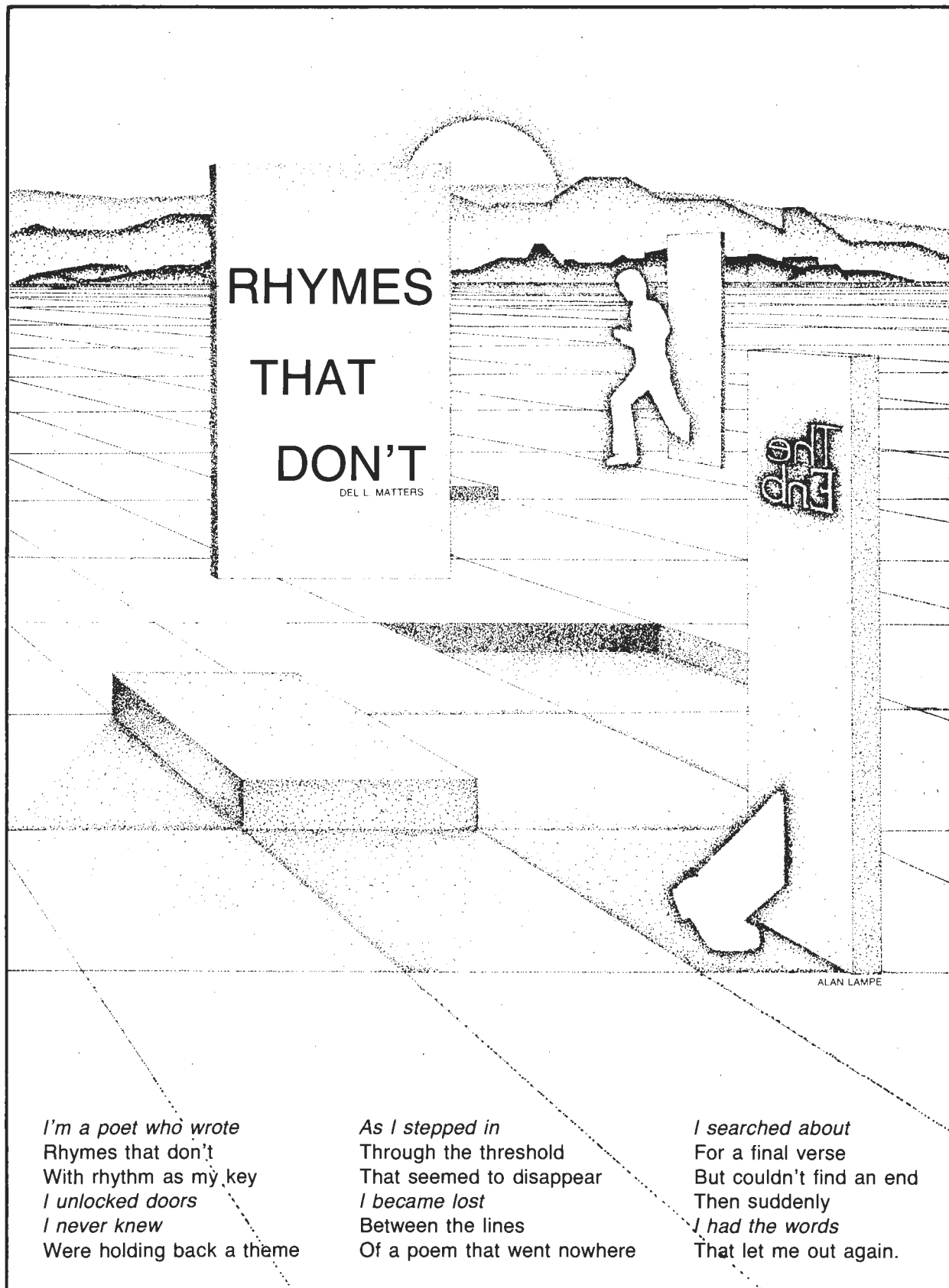
came around -- after all, he had 100 acres more corn to plant. I learned another lesson: don't throw temper tantrums two miles from home. It's a long walk.

We renegotiated. Brave soul that he was, he exiled me off to the back 40. Surely I couldn't possibly screw up there, as he so picturesquely put it. He warned me I was really on my own now. He would be working several miles away and there was no one else around.

While doing my time in solitary confinement, the weather changed drastically. It began drizzling and blowing. I was freezing and feeling really miserable. I couldn't go home, as I would have to travel a busy highway. I'd had enough adventures for one day.

I tried braving it out, wavering between feeling very sorry for myself and feigning stoicism. When what to my wandering eyes should appear but my husband, walking laboriously across the rough ground, waving a pair of long johns and a sweatshirt.

City women may think love is flowers and candy. Farm wives know love is a pair of fleece-lined long johns and a warm sweatshirt. ■



RHYMES
THAT
DON'T
DEL L. MATTERS

DEL L. MATTERS

ALAN LAMPE

*I'm a poet who wrote
Rhymes that don't
With rhythm as my key
I unlocked doors
I never knew
Were holding back a theme*

*As I stepped in
Through the threshold
That seemed to disappear
I became lost
Between the lines
Of a poem that went nowhere*

*I searched about
For a final verse
But couldn't find an end
Then suddenly
I had the words
That let me out again.*