



***ALEMBIC***

Alembic

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## *Gehenna*

*Roll out the streamers!  
Strike up the band!  
The hero's coming home from war  
Let's all give him a hand!*

*Sister got the flowers  
Mother holds his head  
Bobby's back from living hell  
Forty-four hours dead.*

*Stephanie Pazienna*

## *The Problem With Wet Trees*

I

tired morning.  
the pines look wilted.  
everywhere the bark is saturated  
from years of drizzle.  
gray rocks/are shining  
like iceburgs/  
a rolling mist darkens bended cattails.

II

the wet trees  
shiver  
while drenched birds  
gargle songs

III

I am alone in this shower stall  
with the rude taste of  
four comercial pop wines  
still clashing in my teeth.

the drunken trees are freezing to death  
while the world goes to hell!

will I spend the rest of my life  
quiping one-liners at parties?

Drew Maciag

*Poem: for John Browning*  
(1950-1975)

There is no eulogy  
this bright morning; we shiver  
listening to some priest read the Bible.  
I look at the small crowd  
and at "the guys"-  
tall, strong young men  
and think of your slight frame;  
you weighed less than I did.  
Light throws rays onto the pews,  
yellow rays, like the van  
we always rode through the East Side.  
We'd take the cameras  
and shoot a few rolls  
to develop later, over beers.  
You seldom drank any.

I remember the day I found you  
asleep, in the office —  
your hat covered your face and  
for a pillow, *The History of Russia*.  
I laughed  
and you woke, angry  
you had to finish it for your master's —  
but we spent the afternoon drinking,  
sodas, in the cafe, making plans for graduation  
and putting our picture in the yearbook.  
When I finally rose to leave you grinned,  
said, "Take care, Ana."

Snow covers the place  
we take you to be buried.  
The wind bites. I think of May  
and sunnier days  
and a picture that will never be.  
John, John.  
I would have given my strength  
to make you well,  
to dance with our diplomas  
and celebrate the spring.  
Instead I freeze now  
in this drafty church  
and curse a bitter winter.

Ana Margarita Cabrera

# The Unwanted One

Collins Avenue is a snake, slithering its way through a cemetery garden. On either side of it stand white-washed stucco buildings; the black-lettered names are faded. Colorless and sometimes torn awnings shield the hotel windows against a hot, indifferent, Miami sun. Before each graveyard, inhabited by pathetic and sad-faced elderly, is a porch. Out in full force, the rocking-chair brigade stares forward into the noisy night. Visions clouded by cataracts, minds burning with memories of an unretrievable past--these are the forgotten, lost souls of South Beach.

From northern cities they have come to the Gold Coast, these women with their bright, lively clothes attempting to dispel the darkness of looming death. And the too few men, lost in the midst of an ocean of conniving widows. They are the survivors of 'Operation: Bootstrap'. Their once upright, proud immigrant backs are stoop-shouldered; their eyes are dry and red, all tears were spent years ago; the few meager dollars they managed to save is their blood money.

A highly competitive atmosphere hangs about each South Beach hotel. Men and women jealously vie for companionship. The days of lovers are lost to the past, to the days of their first spouses' courtship--only friendship is sought now, to drive away the loneliness of the wind-down years. Childlike and adolescent, they flirt and tease and pout as youthful emotions are removed from the stifling air of society's mothballs. Fervently, they race against time, against the time when the piercing shrill of the rescue squad will claim them for the *Malach A Movos*.\*

Benjamin Jobson and the *Malach*\* are old, very old, friends.

Every morning when Benny awakens he curses the sunlight, he curses the warm breeze, he curses Creation, and he curses God. He curses because his prayers have gone unanswered for thirty-four years.

When the Storm Troopers entered his small Hungarian village, Benny was a proud man. Prosperous tailor, devoted father to his son and daughter, and loving husband, he blessed God in his prayers, then. The day his village was rounded up and placed in cattle cars, Benny pleaded with God.

"Please spare my children, dear Lord. Protect my wife and children. Please . . ."

God did not answer.

Benny pleaded with the black-leathered devils. They did answer . . . by bludgeoning his face.

The cars were lighted by a few rays of indifferent sunlight that stole their way through the uneven wooden slats. The floor was slippery with human waste. Many of the sardines died from the stifling heat, nauseous odor, and poisonous bilge. Benny's wife lay cradled in his arms. She was dying. He pleaded for her life.

"God! Why, God? She's a good woman. So young, so pretty. Take me instead. Take me . . . take me . . . me."

When the doors were opened at the Camp, her limp and putrid body was hosed out with the waste and other bodies. Benny and the *Malach* had been formally introduced.

After the car-load was placed in groups, Benny saw his children for the very last time. His son was sent to the 'hospital' for experiments, his daughter was sent to a field whore's barracks. She, unfortunately, was her mother's daughter--too pretty to go unnoticed. And Benny, he was sent to a forced labor camp.

He worked hard during the day, and at night he sewed for the devils, in order to seek favors for his children. He said blessings over the extra morsels of food that would be smuggled to his son and daughter. The devils tormented him to say them aloud.

"Praised be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe who watches over the innocent."

\*Angel of death

Their black shiny boots kissed his body. They laughed at his follies, because they knew there was no God. His children died the day the first smoke was puked from the chimneys he had helped build. Benny's nostrils burned. He washed his deformed handsome face with his own tears and his own saliva.

"Why, God? God! Why, God?"

There were no answers. He had pleaded for their lives to be spared; he had been willing to die in their place! Yet, there was no answer. The *Malach* was impatient for his friendship.

After the war was over, after he was turned out of the Camp with the ever-faithful *Malach*, after the DP camps, after the curious eyes of soldiers and people penetrated his clothing to see the number tattoo and his scars, Benny began his exodus across Europe.

In a lonely railway station outside of Paris, Benny met Hannah. She was a solitary, frightened woman. The rain caressed her anguished face with utter indifference; her clothes were as shabby as his. Immediately they were drawn together. They had, they had had, much in common. She was a Jew, widow, and the mother of a dead daughter and a dead son. Her flesh was scarred, her identity written on her arm, too. Hannah and Benny had been to Hell and back--a Hell not of their own making. What more could God have in his arsenal to scare them?

They spoke and cried the few remaining tears. As their lives were joined, Benny looked about nervously. He searched for his jealous friend, *Malach*, in the darkness. Benny did not see him quietly lurking in the shadows.

Hannah and Benny were married. Together they worked hard, carving out a place in society. In New York they were able to buy a small tailor shop. Benny and Hannah slowly built up a comfortable business. He began to pray to God again.

"Than-thank you God for this much."

He and Hannah thought of beginning a family, but the *Malach* was jealous. A boy and then a girl was stillborn. The couple went childless. Benny pleaded with God. No answer. He bargained with his old friend, but he was also unyielding.

"Shorten my life . . . I'll do anything . . . I'll go without . . . just let Hannah have the children she longs for! Please?"

The *Malach* melted into the background.

For fifteen years the Jobsons were happy, as happy as their memories allowed. Benny was untroubled by his friend.

"Maybe after all he has done to me, at last he is giving me peace." The *Malach* smiled at Benny's words. He waited.

They decided to move to Florida. Their abused bodies needed the warmth of the Miami sun. Men and women their age would be in South Beach. With no regrets and with their blood money in hand, they left the northern city.

Collins Avenue seemed beautiful, then, to Benny like a garden paradise. He had Hannah, she made a pleasant home, they had sunshine and a few worthwhile memories. Back then, the awnings were not torn nor were the names of the buildings faded. For the first time since before the war, Nature actually seemed to care.

The *Malach*, too, was happy. He followed Benny to the Beach. Now there were lots of people for him to introduce himself. He made many friends. South Beach, under his influence, became a cemetery garden. Benny looked on helplessly. He had unleashed a wolf among a flock of stupid, bleating sheep.

The rescue squad squealed every hour, delivering new friends to the *Malach*.

However, as long as he and Hannah were safe, Benny grew as indifferent as the sterile white buildings.

But the *Malach* never forgets an old friend. He was merely waiting for an opportune time to reacquaint himself with Benjamin Jobson. The opportunity soon came.



Hannah caught a cold which left her with a persistent cough. At first it hardly made her notice; but as time went on, it became more painful and frequent. She treated herself with "Buddy remedies," as Benny called them. Honey and lemon, cupping, salt water--nothing worked. Benny begged her to see a doctor, but Hannah refused. Some Camp memories were vivid, especially those of the 'doctors' and their experiments.

Benny grew nervous, glancing into the night's shadows and into corners for his friend, *Malach*. He felt the other's presence. When Hannah grew noticeably thinner and her color became putty, Benny took matters into his own hands.

He rushed his beloved second wife to the hospital in an ambulance. He cradled her in his arms in a futile attempt to keep *Malach* away. *Malach* did keep his distance, though. He and Benny had a score to settle. After all, Benny had not been friendly for over fifteen years.

Hannah's case was diagnosed. It was a terminal case of lung cancer.

Benny tore at his balding head.

"Why, God? Why? God Almighty, Why?" There was no answer.

Benny prayed. Benny bargained.

"Please God, not Hannah too! Please . . ."

Again, no answer. God was indifferent to him. Benny's years of bitterness filled him with hate. He cursed God, morning and night. There was no answer. So, the black devils of his memory had been right; they knew. There was no God.

Benny brought Hannah home from the hospital. There was nothing left for them to do but wait. It was up to Benny now; he knew that he must keep vigil over Hannah, so that *Malach* would not snatch her from him. She was all he had . . . there was no more to give up to Heaven or Hell.

Late one evening, *Malach* came. Benny felt his presence, only Hannah saw him. He was a shadow, beckoning to her, promising her release from a pain-wracked body, tempting her. Benny and *Malach* battled wits until dawn over possession of Hannah. She was tired and began to slip from Benny's hold.

His deformed face was wet with tears, sweat and saliva. His lips were caked with blood droplets from the tears he had inflicted upon them by gnashing his teeth. Benny pleaded with his friend. He begged the *Malach*.

"Why? Why are you doing this to me! Take me, please take me instead of Hannah. She's innocent. Don't punish her . . . it's me you want."

The *Malach* smiled. He brushed Benny's face with his cold hand. His ears were deaf to his friend's pleas and curses. He turned his back on Benny and stood over Hannah. Benny looked on helplessly as his wife yielded herself to the *Malach A Movos* . . .

Each morning as Benny awakens, he curses God, Creation, and the sunshine. There is nothing left to him to thank God for--with two children and two wives dead. Benny is a solitary figure in a cemetery garden. Everyone dies but him; he has no companion except the ever-faithful *Malach A Movos*.

Only the *Malach* knows the secret of their friendship. He only takes those who do not want to die . . . and poor Benny, he wants to die so badly.

Ann Frank

## Glass

It was a sickening morning and he couldn't see an end to it. There was a putrid odor coming from the food left on the tray outside the room occupied by the people directly across the hallway. Through the thin curtains that veiled a huge window, came the sunlight that faintly lit the room. The furniture seemed to take up more space that day, as if the room had slightly shrunken during the night. He remembered awakening at about three o'clock from an insulin reaction that made his pajamas all cold and sweaty. But the incident hadn't disturbed his father from his bear-like snores who had slept in the bed about three feet away.

His parents and his brother and sister were in the adjacent room now, watching the midmorning television programs, reading the newspapers, and talking about going downstairs to the ground floor for breakfast. The air conditioner, which kept the hotel room chill and dry, was blowing an insistent breeze on his pallid, young face, as he gazed out on the city from behind the dense glass. But the window really wasn't as thick as it appeared. It was actually made up of two panes, each ten feet high and twenty feet long, with an inch and a half void in between. His mind pondered on the empty space between the window panes. He conceived of it as a great vacuum, a different universe, a perfect and clean world sealed off from corruption and ugliness.

But then he realized it really wasn't an ideal and immaculate world after all. For there at the bottom of the void was dust, and on the right was a tiny crumpled piece of yellow paper; probably a chewing gum wrapper, he thought, deliberately left behind by one of those large, ugly, ignorant men who install windows in hotel rooms for a living.

A quarter of a mile away was a forty-story tower and the sunlight was being reflected off its glassy walls. He wasn't quite sure, but it was probably an office building. All office buildings have that bold look of determination and purpose about them. He thought about the people that might be in the tower; all the men and women with secure and successful jobs, with moderately large incomes and a home waiting for them at night in the suburbs. For a moment he thought that he would like to be successful and have a respectable job someday. His father wanted him to go to college, to become successful, to become his mirror image. He wanted what the men in the glass tower had and yet he didn't. Thinking about all this made him extremely apprehensive and finally sick. For he felt there was somehow, something terribly wrong.

"Are you coming with us or not?" half-shouted his father, as they were preparing to leave for breakfast.

"I'm not ready yet. Go ahead without me. I'll meet you downstairs later on." the son answered.

His mother gave him a disturbed look and then mumbled something to his father. After a moment, they agreed to meet later on. He wasn't finished dressing and they were planning to leave the hotel before eleven o'clock that morning. There wasn't any time to waste. They closed the door behind them and left him there alone in the cool, dry room. He silently and slenderly opened the door, and then closed it decisively, after he watched them enter the elevator.

Immediately after entering the bathroom, he reached for a towel and accidentally shoved his glass syringe into the sink. He gazed at the object for awhile, and then began looking through it, then beyond it, to other times and places. His mind was now dissociated from his body and had become a veritable time machine. The weak and small-framed body was again left behind by the time traveller. When his mind had returned, he took the syringe and plunged it into the toilet bowl and flushed it.

He felt a panic coming. But there was nothing he could do, and there was nowhere to go now, other than that frighteningly large, cold and lonely house. Then the thought came to him that he should write a letter or note of some kind. There was nothing meaningful to say, however, he thought, and they probably wouldn't understand his feelings anyway. There wasn't much time.

He sauntered to the window and looked at the tower again. There was a sign at the top of the structure but he couldn't read it. His sight had diminished, for up until the preceding day, he hadn't worn his eyeglasses in four months. There was an indurated floor lamp close by and he grabbed hold of it with his hands. Then there were several determined crashes, memories, a dive - and then nothing.

After a breathless moment, and upon realizing what had happened, three women screamed and some small children were led into the hotel by their mothers. Then a group of people in bathing suits and sunglasses, at first reluctantly, and then, when quite sure of themselves, closed in to have a better look. The boy's body had crashed down about three feet outside the edge of the shallow end of the swimming pool. He was badly cut, mostly by the pieces of broken glass.

# Smoky Chowder

Her life was like pots of smoky chowder:

born as a sliced Killarney potatoe,  
mixed in Naples with tart bay leaf powder,  
stored near salt pork in British frigate holds  
sailing to New England, home for haddock,  
(so fresh and tasty when smoked and filleted);

a hot-spice fire in cabin paddocks,  
warm shore pleasure after cold ocean days.

Sitting alone on a bleak, misty shore  
where windy surf chills and rubs my skin raw,  
I roll wobbly onions down sandy dunes,  
pockets filled with salt and white plastic spoons,

while longing for the thick broth and soft meat,  
waiting for my evening's delight to heat.

Kevin Tierney

## *blue sky at night*

where is the boundary when blue becomes  
black  
(where does the sky end and the body--)

begin?

at the mouth of the dragon  
with the flame at the center of the eye  
where the sun creates  
color

where the sun creates blue  
darkness of night  
where your vision reaches into  
the eye of the other

silver ice of the moon    white  
ghost of a cloud    the body  
ends and the sky begins

Kathleen Mele

## *Loom*

Amid the snows of that grand design,  
I am blinded by such illumination.  
In one instant, I can perceive each pattern  
Of this bold filigree.

Suddenly,  
In clouded desolation,  
My eyes melt, running over the lace pattern  
Of what I once held to be truth.

(I sometimes wonder if I  
Can pick up its thread in the  
back alley;  
then I see the rats scurrying,  
the radiators spitting out their  
cynical remarks,  
I see the raw scabs of souls rusting  
in gray dawns of repetition;  
And I withdraw again into the security of  
scheduled appointments.)

I find the thread amid every hysteria,  
My exaltation webbed with fear that  
I may lose it again.  
And so it weaves.

Angela Dias

*Cooking Sunday Bacon;  
thinking about Monday*

Now you've declared a day of rhyme  
How can you think that I've the time  
To fiddle with the metered word  
My good Doctor, that's absurd

You "Englishmen" indulge in trickery  
Use punctuation much too thickery  
You toss your commas here and there  
Those crafty tails lurk everywhere  
They nestle in the strangest places  
Marry clause, then court the phrases  
Without a thought to settle down  
They chase in series, verb and noun

You squander with your words abundant  
You don't mind if they're redundant  
With no mind for sweet economy  
English rules with such automony!!  
Eliminate your indentation!  
Strike unneeded punctuation!  
Use left hand style, not the right  
Help save the dollar from its plight

When in the future I aspire  
To plod about your literate mire  
I'll do so with the best of graces  
(Unmindful of those nasty faces)  
I'll paragraph: I'll paraphrase  
I'll worship all your Hemingways  
The fleeting comma there will be  
Set down with my Fitzgeraldry

As your student, I'll be deft  
With no D - over F  
But in the meantime, please be very  
Mindful of your secretary

P.S. Though I assail with plagiaried Nashery  
My lines, you note, contain no dashery

*senior citizens pediatrics ward*

the waiting room doubles as a dressing  
room. they emerge slowly from each rainbow  
cubicle with backward johnnies and sit  
on plastic stools with knees  
touching chins.

there appears to be a frog  
in the room. everyone hears  
the croaking but  
no one looks up. all  
just listen to that strange  
noise from the corner stool.

an eye rises slowly and peeks  
toward the direction of the noise. she gasps  
and returns quickly to the diabetic  
world of the glucose monthly.

in the corner stool sits  
an elderly woman who is not content  
watching everyone. she must invade  
their domain of silence  
with a most peculiar  
sound ever to rise up from a diaphragm.

soon every eye is cast  
upon the elderly  
belcher in the corner  
the sounds she emits  
are becoming more boisterous and rapid.

the drab  
overweight nurse calls the fearless  
belcher and she yields one last croaking  
brrrrup as she leaves  
the room.

undaunted she hobbles into the patchwork  
x-ray room. soon dr. jekyll  
appears with red goggles  
covering mr. hyde. they play  
musical examining tables  
with dr. jekyll probing  
and prodding with his sterile  
boxing gloves. for her prize  
she gets a delicious strawberry  
chalk shake.

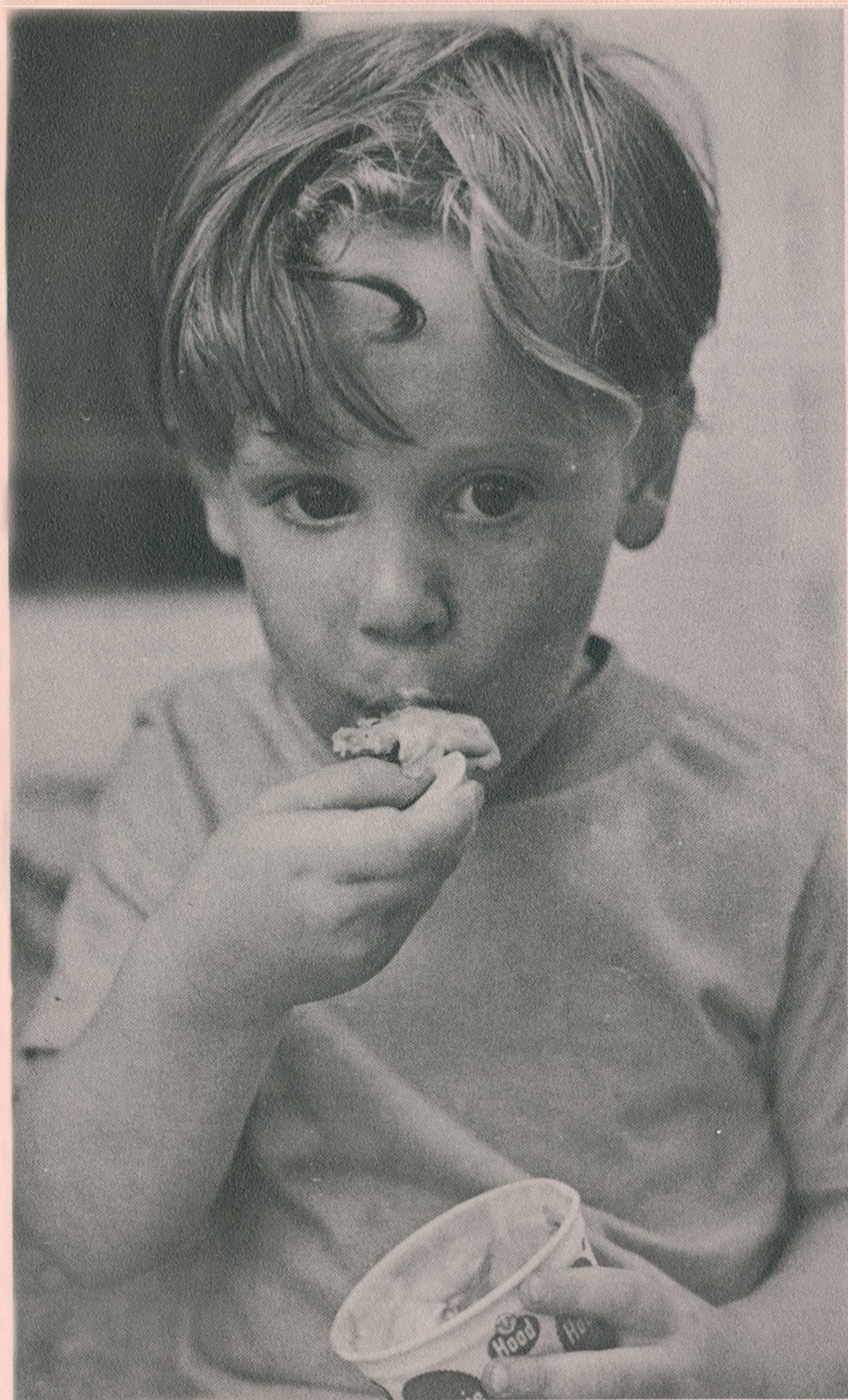
they whirl her into space until finally  
she crash  
lands into the black and white  
forest of tiny trees etched on the waiting room  
wallpaper.

the gray elephant reappears with her high  
pitched voice to finish the game  
she and the fearless belcher disappear  
behind the forest.

out she comes dressed in pink the  
white socks match her tangled hair and the  
worn black shoes match the circles  
under her eyes.

she follows the nurse to the exit  
door and glances  
back one more time as everyone slowly resumes  
his knee-locked mold in his plastic  
stool.

Maureen Keane





## *Music of the Spheres*

Eternity breathes music,  
The melodious hum of movement breeds all sounds.  
Within the dancing sphere of moon  
Crab and bear bound to the organic tune,  
Comets weep to leave their stars  
And Leonids steeped in gaseous vomit  
Cry in unknown anguish  
That they will dance no more.

Poor mankind,  
Trapped in terrestrial lunacy,  
Sore from hopeless contumacy.  
Fingers to the dykes!  
Man must patch the wall  
That breaks the lingering monotony of the fall.

I have turned my head,  
Pricked my ears as a dog might.  
    The music isn't there for me.  
How is one accustomed to what one has never heard?  
The Realm of Aether translates the Empyrean tongue,  
And I'm sick of sight that lags behind,  
And envy Castor and Pollux.

Michael Woody

## *Conch*

What a mouth to remember  
falling past planets and arriving  
in water: the lips of a chitinous  
god.

More than mouth: a space ship  
chipped and hurled, the soul of an Egyptian  
priestess whispering inside  
and along the walls, infinitesimal  
hyroglyphics: the story of water  
waking as bone.

Looking at four or five of you in a row is seeing  
a bas-relief of the birth  
of sexual parts.

Still, you fill my cupped hands  
your stoney mouth; your barbed lips that surrounded  
the soft inner life: the animal  
that stumbled as you spun  
deep like the throat of the first  
rose.

Jane Lunin Perel

## The Reunion

It was right after the rain; the late afternoon seemed lit by a rainbow, or whatever it is that makes that peculiar sort of light which balances what is left of an overcast atmosphere with the beginning of sunshine. That light was change held for a moment, I thought, until the clouds returned, making the sea look like an immense rippled sheet of the khaki green plastic that the army uses to make air mattresses. Then there was sunlight again on a sea blue, swishing, lulling. But soon the bare trees across on Prudence Island began to grow into black Indian ink skeletons against the scarlets and purples of sunset. Like arms their branches noiselessly wrenched what remained of daylight into themselves, quietly seducing the light until there was only a dark grey sky and Mars glittering like a yellow piece of glass in a child's toy ring.

"And what will happen now?" a voice behind me asked.

"Maybe the moon will begin to rise, orange and swollen, until it rests right above that tree," I replied, pointing, "finally white and round, perfect and inviolable."

"Despite all your poetic words, it'll be gone tomorrow morning."

"Just like me."

"And you aren't afraid?"

"I saw you tonight in the branches of the trees, and I know you won't be there tomorrow morning either. There'll be little squirrels running up and down them instead. You always lose, ultimately. So I'm not afraid."

"You were the first time."

"I was naive then."

"And you know that you're still naive now. But you won't be later. No one ever is."

"Not even children?"

"Not even children."

"Why didn't you make me go the first time?" I asked, turning to him. He was seated on some rocks above me that were just jagged black edges in the pale glow of a moon not yet seen above the horizon. "I've never forgotten you. You were there in the afternoon sunlight coming into my room when I was six and half delirious with scarlet fever. The colors of everything became almost palpable in the murky afternoon light. The colors weren't sharp, or clear, but . . . dense, enveloping objects and making them bloated with a nauseating oppressiveness straight out of a Sartrean universe. And the objects came closer and closer, but never close enough to give me the relief of actual contact with them. They just mockingly threatened to unexpectedly crush me out of existence. But what was most frightening was that I had to face you alone. Somehow I thwarted you, but I felt you in my room, brooding, for months after that when I'd come home from school and change my clothes in a hurry so that I could get out of the room again. But you've changed your tactics. Now you're patient and sure of yourself, and now I'm not afraid of you because I know what's going to happen later." I got up. "You don't have to walk me home."

He laughed. "Just like that little girl fourteen years ago you believe that the evil in the world never has touched you and never will. But tonight you intend to write a story in which your main character will lose her naivete. I've waited fourteen years for you to be able to create her. She'll be you."

I smiled at him, although he could not see me in the darkness, and began to walk away. I could smell the salt in the sea air that was beginning to surround me as fog. After walking several yards, I called back to him, "How will she lose her naivete?"

"By talking with Death, of course," he said with a snicker that melted with the darkness and followed me as I walked down the street uneasily to my house, where I could see my father sitting by the window, reading his newspaper under the lamp.



*in memory of anne sexton  
and sylvia plath*

let's face it.  
we're angels doing pantomime  
into the fire.  
two minstrels acting  
our way into the grappling flames.

insanity shines  
like a moonshadow hitting the silver  
face of a clock, furiously  
beating the hours towards the sun.

eyes open wide with determination  
always  
bleed before they see.

Debra Prevey

## *Dancing On The Heads Of Cockroaches*

Room  
Again I return,  
My promise broken once more.

Hello cockroaches,  
Still here I see.  
I'll dance on your heads  
If you don't run.  
Don't trip on your friends  
Who can not move,  
Results of my dancing.

No sheets on my bed,  
I will freeze tonight.  
The window is broken.  
Smashed in a rage.  
No money to fix it,  
A bottle instead.

Now I lie down  
To die;  
Until tomorrow.

Robert J. Asman

## *Light Gathering*

Finally sleep comes. Sleep always comes  
after many mountains, after many clouds  
have made moving shadows across the faces of mountains,  
after the last truck lumbers by and the room  
has settled into broken blackness.

The moon changes sides in sleep,  
shifts to a darker position,  
sighs for a reason unremembered.

I wonder just when the street lights  
go out, imagine how close they burn to dawn.  
Some nights, (certain that sleep will not come)  
I think I will know this very moment of light gathering.

But finally sleep comes. Sleep always comes.

Patricia Slonina

Patn



Charlene Dineen '75