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May 1982

Golden Anniversary

**"READING MAKETH A FULL MAN. . .
WRITING AN EXACT MAN."**

FRANCIS BACON



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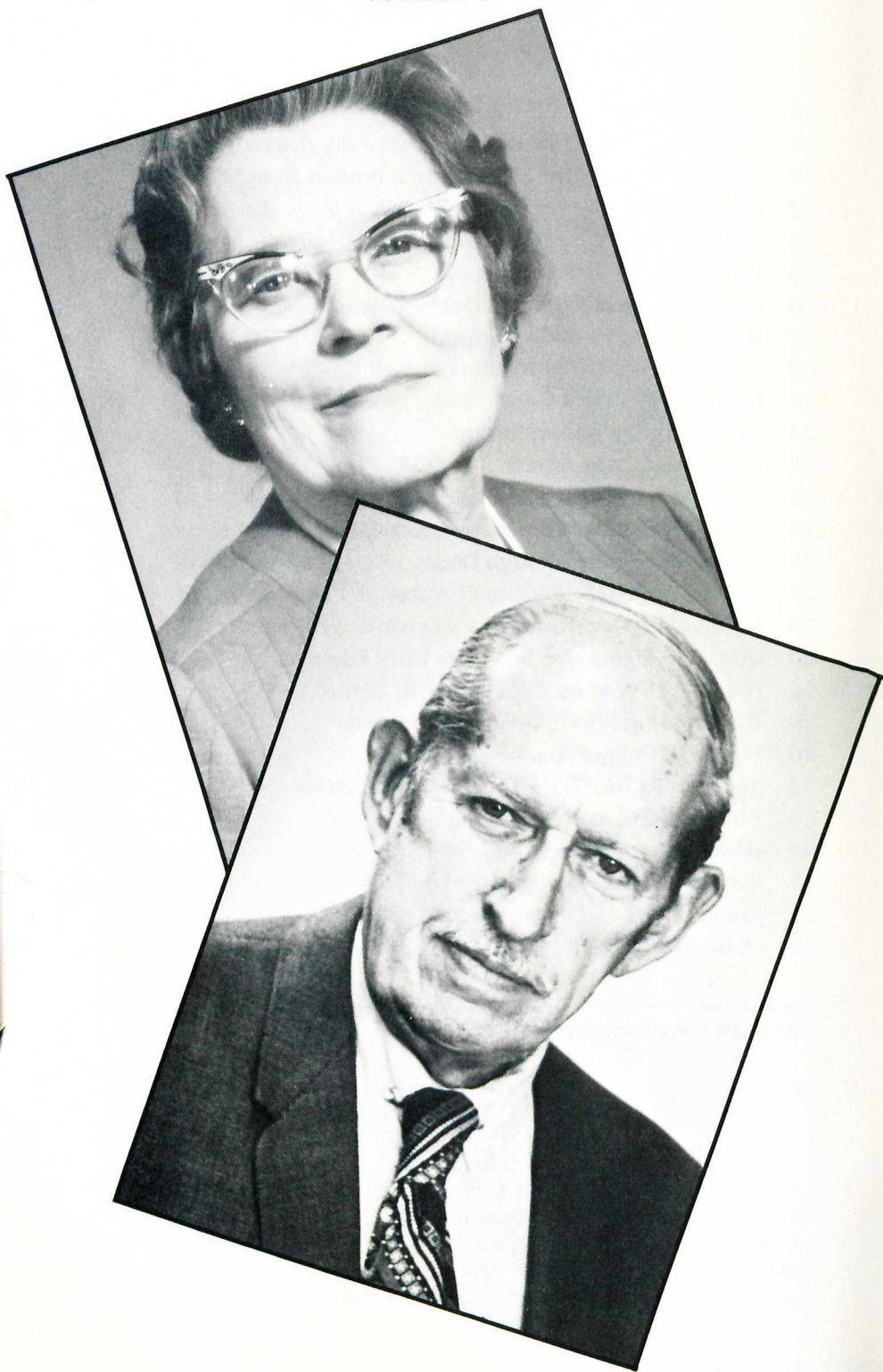
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*Denotes Freshman Writing



The History of MSS

Fifty years ago, MSS, Butler's student literary magazine, was founded. Since its beginning it has grown and changed, considerably. Over the last fifty years its literary merit has repeatedly won statewide acclaim and honors. In commemoration of the magazine's golden anniversary, the 1982 editors interviewed the faculty founder of MSS, Dr. Allegra Stewart. The following are comments from that meeting.

"I was asked in 1933 to back a student initiated literary magazine, I said, 'Of course I will.' I taught Creative Writing at that time and most of the advanced work came out of my class. I enjoyed working with the young people very much. We also would publish the winners of the writing contest in each opening issue of MSS.

"We were strict about material. The Freshman editor worked with the Freshman themes. We had a section of excerpts, paragraphs that were well written. The purpose of it was to encourage good writing. We never meant to make writers out of our young people; we just meant to interest them in writing well. Students were always interested in MSS, but it didn't sell much. It was never meant to be a commercial publication. We did everything. We ran off the pages, corrected them, did all the lay-out. The only thing we didn't do was set the type. We sold copies for 15¢ a piece.

"Remember, it was the Depression. Everybody was hard up. Butler was different then. I look back on that time and think of it as a time of innocence."

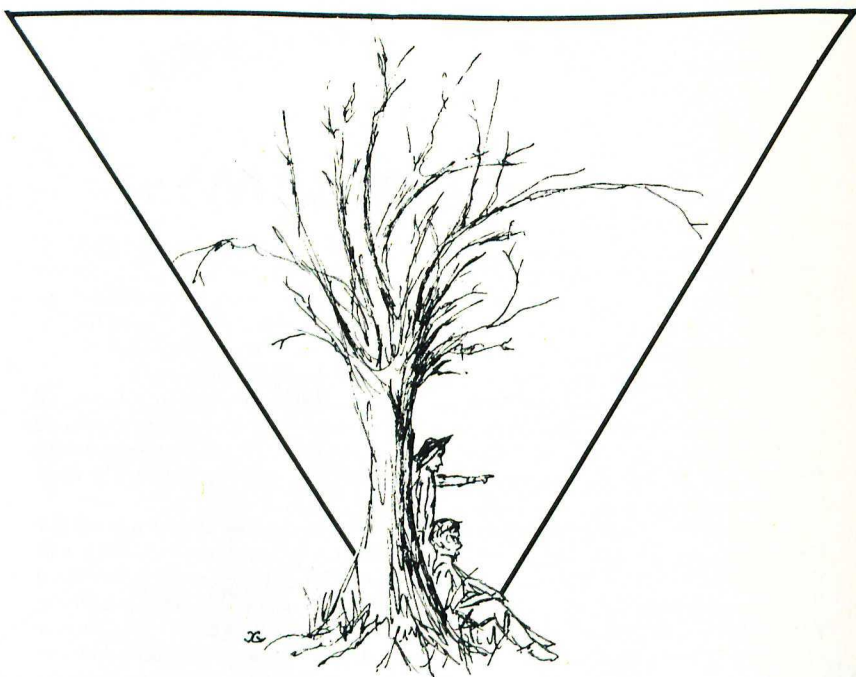
Dr. Werner Beyer, present faculty advisor of MSS, added:

"Increasingly in my many years as its advisor, MSS has become a showcase for good student writing and especially for imaginative creative writing by students interested in becoming professional writers, editors, public relations people, as well as teachers.

"MSS has provided a means for breaking into print, and a number of stories that have come out of my Creative Writing classes and first appeared in MSS have subsequently been reprinted in national magazines. At least a baker's dozen former MSS staffers have become professional writers or editors in the magazine and book publishing worlds.

"In recent years MSS has repeatedly received statewide recognition in competition with other college literary magazines.

"Best wishes for a scintillating future!"



UNCLE HARVE

by Charlie Young

Daylight had just brought color to the low hills that rose on the side of River Road. Ground fog covered the river and the low places of the other side, mocking birds were beginning to sing, and the world was coming to life. There was still a chill in the air and the vegetation was wet with dew. They crossed the road toward the bottom lands to hunt rabbits, and soon Bif's overalls were wet to the knees. If it hadn't been for the effort it took to work his way through the brush and clinging briars, he would have been chilled clear through. He didn't mind though; the boy would have suffered anything to spend some time with his uncle Harve, especially if the time were used to hunt or fish. A few hours with Harve was an education; Bif learned natural lore along with a little history, philosophy, and some social skills.

In spite of the chilly nights of late fall, the northern Georgia sunshine warms things up pretty good during the day, and this morning was no exception. The sun had been up for several hours and Bif was getting hot and tired when he shot his second rabbit. Harve thought that was enough for the day, and Bif took the rabbit down to the river to clean it. He was squatting on the bank when he spotted a slight movement from the corner of his eye. He froze and waited for whatever it was to show itself. His patience paid off as he watched

a beautiful doe step out of the brush. She saw Bif on the other side of the river and stared at him. She turned, as if to leave, stopped, and stared at Bif for a few seconds. She raised her head, tested the air, and turned the other way.

Bif remained in his position as if he were stone. The doe retreated into the brush, came back and stared at Bif for a few more seconds; she put her head down to drink, raised it quickly, and stared some more. Finally, still nervous but partially reassured by Bif's immobility, she drank. When she had finished, she turned her head toward the brush and without a sound a smaller deer slipped down to the water, and secure in her friend's vigilance, delicately touched her muzzle to the water. While the smaller deer was drinking, the doe didn't take her eye off the object on the other side of the river that didn't move, though she was sure it didn't belong there. Then they silently slipped back into the brush.

After the deer had gone, Bif finished gutting the rabbit that he had killed, washed it in the river, and slipped it into the bread sack that he carried for that purpose. Harve had told him that any time an animal was killed it should be dressed right away. It could be hours before you got home with it and the blood and entrails left in there that long could spoil the meat. He picked up his shotgun, climbed back up the bank, and found Harve sitting under a tall pine tree with his shotgun leaning on his shoulder. When Harve was out in the woods he didn't lean his shotgun against a tree or lay it on the ground; he wanted it handy if he needed it. He had been in a good position to watch Bif and the deer.

Harve squirted tobacco juice off to the side from his ever present chew and said, "Right purty, wasn't they?"

"Yeah, like to of took my breath away."

"Reckon you could shoot one?"

"If I needed the meat and if I could kill it clean. Wouldn't want it to suffer."

"Wall, don't ever shoot one 'less you got a gun heavy enough to do it then."

"Reckon you could git close enough to kill one with rabbit shot, Uncle Harve."

"Naw, and don't ever try it—unless—wall, they is one way."

"How's that?"

"Wall, you got to be keerful or you'll kill yoreself 'stead of the deer, but I reckon I can show you how."

Harve took a paper shot shell from one pocket, his knife from another, and proceeded to demonstrate. He said, "Now ye know that the powder is down to the bottom of the shell and they is a wad of packin' on top of that, then they is the shot on top of that. Wall, ye take your knife and cut a little place around the shell just about where the wad 'tween the powder and the shot is, 'bout the middle of the packin'. Now ye got to be keerful and not cut all the way through the shell or the damn thing will blow up the gun. Just cut a groove around the shell 'bout half way through the paper. When ye shoot it the shot will come out in one solid lump. It's about like shootin' a slug and it will take keer of anything at close range. Don't try it 'less'n it's an emergency, son, cause it's dangerous." Harve put the shell he had cut into his shotgun and neatly cut down a sapling about twenty yards away. *(This is very dangerous and will not work on modern, plastic shot shells, so please don't try it.)*

Bif and his uncle Harve sat in the cushion of pine needles, enjoying the late fall sunshine, the peacefulness of the woods, and just being together. After a few minutes of silent companionship, Harve took a pint bottle from his back pocket and after squirting a stream of tobacco juice, took a swallow of the clear liquid. He replaced the bottle, heaved a long sigh and said, "That there is another thing, son, guns and whisky don't mix. Now, we're done huntin' and

soon on the way home or I wouldn't a'done that. Guns by theirselves, and when handled proper, is a good thing. An a little sip of whisky, now and then, never hurt nobody neither. But put 'em both together and they ain't nothing worse. In yore life time yore gonna run into some men that cain't handle neither one. Them's the kind of people you don't want to hunt with or drink with."

Harve was known as a laconic man; few people had ever heard him say much more than what he needed to, but with the boy he felt the urge to teach, to try to explain life and the best way to handle it. This morning he wanted to get a particular point across.

"That calls to mind a little rumpus that happened a few years back, when me and yore daddy was boys of about sixteen or seventeen, I guess. Ye've heard stories told about yore granddaddy. I reckon, he got shot before you was borned. Wall, Paw was a heller and maybe he warn't no good, but he was my paw. However, the time I'm a'tellin you about, Paw found some whisky that was hid from the revenue agents. The man that hid it was gonna take it to Chat'noogie and sell it when he thought he could git away with it, but the agents was watchin' him purty close right about then. Paw know'ed whose whisky it was, but he took me and yore paw up there and we loaded it in the wagon and took it to Chat'noogie and sold most of it. Paw kept some for his own use.

"Now I don't hold with stealin' nothin', but Paw was givin' the orders and we didn't argue with Paw, less'n we wanted to have to whoop him, and we couldn't do that. So me and yore daddy went along with him. Wall, it warn't long after that that Paw got drunk in town one night and run off at the mouth about stealin' that whisky. Purty soon word got back to old Tug Whirley, the man that the whisky had belonged to.

"Tug was about like Paw, dirt farmer, never had a pot to piss in, meaner'n the devil, and he brought his boys and come a huntin' Paw and us. Course he knowed where to find us, but Paw found out he was a'comin and we met 'em back in the woods over yonder on the old place by the river. Us boys didn't want no part in it, but we had to git our guns and go along or we would'a been laughed out of the country. Them Whirley boys was just as mean as their paw was, but I don't think they wanted to kill either me or yore daddy cause they was all shootin' at Paw.

"Anyway's we was all out there in the woods just a'blastin' away at one another with rabbit shot, and first one thing an' another, we was too pore to have much else. The leaves and pine needles was fallin' out of the trees and ever once in a while Paw would take another drink out'n his bottle and Old Tug Whirley would take a drink out'n his and they would cuss each other for a while and shoot some more.

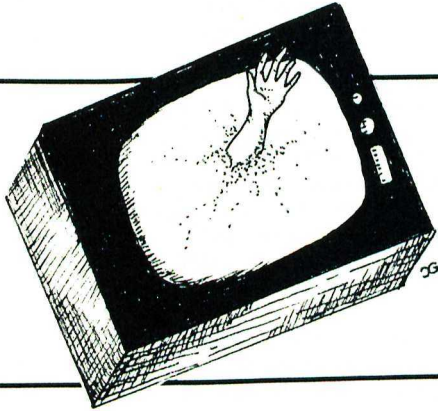
"Then old Tug Whirley started gittin' brave, or drunk, one or t'other, and come out from behind his tree and set on a stump. He set his bottle down beside him and he would shoot a couple times and take another drink. He never had much sense no way, and he was a'settin' right out there in the open, jest a'shootin' up a storm, when Paw cut one of them shells like I jest show'ed you and shot him off his stump. Like to of killed him, but he lived over it. Wall, his boys dragged him home and that ended the battle for that day but they's been bad blood between us ever since.

"You know yore daddy is a drinkin' man, jest like Paw was, and every time he'd run into one of them Whirley boys while he was a'drinkin' they'd be a fight. That's why he's up north now. The last time they went at it, yore daddy pulled a knife and cut one of them Whirley boys might near to pieces. The sheriff had enough of 'em fightin' like that and was gonna run yore daddy in. I

kept to myself, most the time, didn't do no drinkin' with folks like that, and still don't, so I never had no trouble with 'em."

Harve squirted another stream of tobacco juice, took another short pull from his bottle, stood up and said, "Take them rabbits home to yore momma. Reckon it'll be a change from beans for supper. Come the right time I know where they's a big buck deer ye might be able to git this year."

On the way back to the River Road, Bif followed along behind Harve wondering to himself if any other boy in the world had ever had such a wonderful uncle.



I Won't Turn Off The T.V.

by Bruce Braden

I won't turn off the t.v.
 it's the only thing
 between me and lonely
 t.v. keeps me company
 while I'm going through feeling empty
 watching characters developing roles
 one show is like so many other shows
 only the names have been changed
 something like you and me
 We used to watch friends parting ways
 we passed our reviews
 'til it all became old news
 Now, we've got the script
 we say the lines that seem to fit
 only the names have been changed
 . . . can we protect the innocent?

LOVE, TIMOTHY

by LeBron Benton

The telephone rang lamely as Joan fumbled for her keys in the hallway. The grocery bags she was carrying were heavy and one of them was splitting on the bottom. As she finally shoved open the door, the bag broke and a cascade of oranges and frozen boxes fell out all over the floor. The telephone was still ringing as she rushed over to answer it.

"Hello?" she asked as she lifted the receiver to her ear. She wondered who would be calling since everyone knew she worked until five-thirty.

"Hello?" she asked again as there was no reply.

"Hello, who's calling please? Hello? Yes, this is Joan. What?—No...I don't know who you are...my what? But I don't...who is this? What...um...oh God...oh please...no...stop please...oh God you're sick...**shut up**..."

She felt sick at her stomach and rushed into the bathroom. She breathed heavily and put her head between her knees. As soon as she felt a little better she sat up. Tears welled up in her eyes as the full force of the call hit her. Why her? she thought. Why did some sicko have to call her and tell her his fantasies? People like that were just sick though, that's all. Don't let it bother you. Call Mother, that's it, call Mother and tell her; she'll make you feel better, she decided.

She cleaned herself up and changed into her bathrobe. Suddenly she stopped and looked at herself in the mirror. She looked down at her twenty-seven-year-old body. What a homely face—she looked about forty. She'd never marry. Mother would have to do without grandchildren. If that sicko only knew—boy, would he never call again. She had to make a joke of it somehow.

She went back into the living room of her small apartment and picked up the groceries that had fallen. She took them into the kitchen and poured them onto the counter. As she did so, tears began to well up in her eyes again. She tried to hold them back so as not to be hysterical when her mother answered the telephone.

"Hello?" she asked over the static on the line.

"Oh, hello Joan," answered her mother, "I'm glad you called because I wanted to remind you that we're going to see Winnie at the hospital this Sunday and you promised me you'd..."

"Oh Mother, shut up!" Joan half screamed into the telephone. "Please listen to me just a minute." She was already crying hysterically. Poor Mother, she didn't know what was going on (stop yelling and calm down.)

"Mother, a man just called and asked if I knew who he was and I said I didn't and he said good, but then he was my—lover—and I said I didn't have one and then he...oh God Mother he was sick! What if he calls back? What do I do?"

"First of all, calm down," her mother said, half crying herself. This was going to be a rough one to handle.

"Are you sure you didn't recognize the voice? You know it's usually someone you know that does something like this."

"No," said Joan, "I'm pretty sure it's some sicko. Oh God, Mother, why me?"

"Just whenever he calls, hang up right away—he'll stop soon enough."

"You mean you think he'll call again? Do they do that a lot?" said Joan with renewed panic.

"Honey, I don't know if he'll call back, but he will stop soon enough if you just ignore him."

"Okay, okay." Joan paused, making sure she was calm enough. "Okay, I'm alright now. Okay, I'll um...be sure to pick you up on Sunday."

"Alright, you just calm down and call me if anything happens. Love you."

"I love you too, Mother. Bye."

She breathed relief as she replaced the receiver. What a mother—she'd gotten her daughter out of more problems.

She began to empty the grocery bags and put things away. As she did so she tried to calm herself down—not by trying not to think about it, but by saying to herself that the guy was sick probably and really harmless. No problem if he called again.

The next day when she came home she thought again about what had happened at the same time the day before. She had been thinking about it on and off all day long, but she had been fairly calm until now. Now she wondered if he knew her schedule and was waiting for her. What if he was in the apartment? No, it was locked and there was really no way he could have gotten in. She unlocked the door and looked immediately at the telephone. It just sat there. No, it wasn't going to ring—he wasn't going to call. But would he call at a different time? Didn't they usually pick a time and call at the same time? Mother seemed to know more; maybe she could call her. She sat down by the telephone. No, she thought, don't make her paranoid too. Maybe they have some brochures on it at the hospital or something. That's it. On Sunday she'd pick up some pamphlets or something, without letting her mother know. She could get some comfort from them maybe, or at least she could find out what—

"Riiinnng!!!"

Oh God.

"Riii-iiinnng!!!"

She was frozen in her seat. Should she answer it? What if it was only her mother? No, why would she call? It must be him. She decided not to answer it. No, he wasn't going to get to her. He wasn't. But the telephone went on ringing—he wouldn't stop. Finally, she decided to answer it. She'd just see if it was him and if it was, she'd hang up right away. She reached abruptly for the receiver and lifted it to her ear.

"What!" she said sharply, ready for anything he might say.

"Honey, are you alright? Has he called back?" It was Mother.

"Mother, for God's sake I thought it was him. That's why I took so long to answer. I'm sorry, but I've been thinking about it all day."

"Oh, I'm sorry, I shouldn't have called."

"It's okay, Mother, I'm glad to hear your voice and not his. And no, he hasn't called."

"Alright, I just wanted to make sure. I'll see you Sunday. Love you, bye."

"Bye, Mother."

She put down the receiver and got up to remove her coat. Thank God it wasn't him, she muttered. Great timing, Mother. She threw her coat onto the sofa and started for the kitchen. Suddenly the telephone started ringing

again. Probably Mother, calling to remind her of something. Honestly, she always did that!

"Hello? Oh no...oh please...mister please...don't...oh just piss off!!!" she slammed down the receiver in disgust.

Damn him! How long would it be before he left her alone? He was just sick in the head though—some pervert. Some pervert who didn't have anything better to do than call up women and say things to them—just to prove his own masculinity or something. Don't let some pansy sissy get to you...you're stronger than he is. He's just so sick. A sick pansy who can't—

"Riii-iiinnng!!!"

Twice? So, she hadn't put him off enough before, was that it? Alright, she'd show him. She started for the receiver—what if it was Mother again? Well, she'd just have to find out.

"Hello?" she said coldly.

"Hello, Joan? I'm sorry to keep calling, but did you get that needlepoint finished? I thought we'd take it to Winnie this weekend and—"

"Mother, he called again just now. Right after I hung up. I told him to piss off."

"Oh I'm so sorry, honey. But you just keep ignoring him." Her mother sounded like she was pacifying a child.

"Mother, how long is this going to go on? I can't just sit here and leap out of my skin every time the telephone rings. Isn't there something I can do?" There was a touch of desperate whining in her plea.

"Well, do one thing at least—call the police. At least they can start looking for him or trace the calls or something."

"Will they bug my telephone?"

"Yes, and they'll probably want you to stay on the line longer so they can trace the calls." Her mother was trying to be a little more reassuring. She was really just as confused and upset as her daughter—but she couldn't let her know that.

"Mother! You mean I'll have to speak to him?"

"Maybe not speak, just listen...rather hear but don't listen. Just give the police time to trace it."

"Do you think it'll work?" Obviously her mother wouldn't know—what was she asking for?

"I'm not sure, but you'll have to try—it's the only thing you can do." Her mother emphasized "only" in a way that made Joan think there might be another way out.

"Alright, Mother, I'll call them right away. See you on Sunday. Love you. Bye."

It was two weeks later when Joan again found herself fumbling with groceries and keys outside her apartment while the telephone rang inside.

"Just a minute!" she yelled as she finally burst through the door. She put down her bags in the kitchen before they ripped and walked over to the telephone. She took her time answering because experience had taught her that this guy was really patient and would ring that telephone all day if he had to. She lifted the receiver and heard the familiar click which meant that the taping machine was working. He started in on his usual obscene rampage and she half listened, half sorted groceries. She had actually become quite immune to his talk—it still bothered her to know he was waiting to call her every day. What if he ever decided to come to her apartment? He had mentioned it a while ago and she had become very upset about it for a time. But he never came. He just kept calling. And calling, and calling, and calling,

Why couldn't he pick on someone else for a change? Why hadn't the police been able to do anything? Actually, they had explained that to her earlier in the week. He apparently called from a different pay telephone each time and they could trace the locations, but by the time they got there he had already gone. They had told her to be patient and to try to talk back to him so they would have time to catch him. But this guy was tricky—he never spoke for more than five minutes or so. In fact, he had told Joan that he knew someone was probably looking for him. He even told her that he was calling from different booths each time. The police really hadn't been a help. Nor had her mother. Nor had the silly brochures. Nothing or no one had helped her.

Maybe it was time she tried to get herself out of this. Maybe there was another way to get rid of this guy. But what? She had tried patience—he never got tired of talking to her. She had tried, both pathetically and sternly, telling him to just leave her alone. She had even tried hanging up immediately when she knew it was him. That didn't work either because he would just call again—besides, the police said that was more a hindrance than a help.

His five minutes were just about up now so she decided to go ahead and hang up. So what if the police told her off. They weren't doing any good anyway. She had to do something for herself.

"Hello, Timothy. How are you doing? Honestly, I've had the longest day—how about you? Really? Well that's good to hear...that's real good, Timothy. Remember, don't get so upset when someone turns you down like that...yes...I'm sure you've turned people down yourself...ha ha...come on, Timothy, it's not that bad...How do I know? I don't know, I just know! Ha ha...where are you going tonight? Oh, really? That's a nice place—just stay calm, okay? Alright, have fun. Bye!"

She put the receiver down and smiled smugly. What a neat guy. Well, not really, he still had a long way to go—but look how far he'd come. And she had done it! No psychiatrist or social worker or anything! And look at him now—going out to the same singles' bars she went to—with half a chance as well.

It was strange to think that the same man who had given her obscene telephone calls was now someone with whom she was deeply involved—psychologically at least. It had been a long road—three weeks from obscenity to counsel. It started with Joan asking him questions about his childhood, his schooling, and his sex life. At first he didn't respond at all; he just kept telling her what he was going to do with her. But eventually he started answering her questions. "Yes" and "no" answers at first, then longer answers in which he told her just about everything there was to know about him. She eventually began to anticipate his calls—she became anxious if he didn't call. She told him this too.

She found out through these little sessions—some of them lasted an hour or more—that his name was Timothy, he was born and raised in town, and he worked at the Post Office. He had been married twice, but he was now a thirty-seven year old divorcee. He had no children, no relatives in town, and very few friends. Joan still didn't quite know why he had isolated himself so much. He wasn't particularly secure or social—sometimes he was really boring.

He had literally picked her name out of a telephone directory. He said he wasn't sorry he'd called her now because she had helped him so much. He was sorry he had upset her though—said he couldn't imagine doing that to

anyone now. Indeed, Joan had come along way in those few weeks. It was hard to build someone's confidence without really knowing them—but she had, and look where he stood now. Yet, she still wasn't sure she wanted to meet him in a bar or anything.

As ever, the telephone was ringing when she returned home on a Friday evening.

"I'm coming!" she yelled as she rushed into the apartment, "Just a minute, Timothy, okay?"

She put her groceries on the sofa just as one of them split open. Silly bags, they never gave you anything strong enough.

"Hello, Timothy! What? Who? Oh, hello, Guy. I'm sorry, I thought you were someone else. How are you? Good...I'm fine...tonight? Where? Okay, sure that sounds like fun...yeah..Timothy? No, I'm not...well, he's sort of a friend of mine...well, it's a long story...really Guy, you wouldn't be...well, he's this, um, man who gave me an obscene telephone call and I couldn't do anything about it...what? Yeah, he's a friend of mine you see because I tried to help him and now he calls me every day and we talk...what...what...hey! No...look, it's not sick...no Guy we just...Guy! It's not! Guy!—"

She slammed down the telephone and reached into her pocket for a handkerchief. What a bastard! And she really liked him too. Idiot! Just when she was getting somewhere with him, and he has to butt into something he doesn't understand.

She picked up the receiver and called her mother.

"Mother, it's me. Hi."

"Is anything the matter?" Her mother was aware of her daughter's relationship with Timothy, although she didn't really approve of it.

Now she was worried that something had gone wrong and that Timothy had upset Joan again.

"No, not really, Mother. Remember Guy?"

"The boy you met last week. I thought you two were getting on fairly well."

"Well, we were. In fact, he just called and asked me out tonight."

"Well, now what's the problem—is it getting too involved?"

"No, nothing like that, Mother. See, he found out about Timothy and he said it was sick and to just forget everything."

There was a brief silence on the line which told Joan her mother was thinking, "I told you so."

"Mother?"

"Yes, I'm here. I don't know what to tell you. You know how I feel about this whole thing right now."

"Yes, Mother." She didn't want to hear a lecture right now for Christ's sake.

"Mother, what should I do?"

Another pause, a long pause, as her mother thought. Finally she answered.

"Arrange a meeting. Lunch or dinner or something...make sure there are plenty of people around. Get things sorted out once and for all, Joan."

"Am I supposed to tell him to leave me alone?"

"No, not necessarily. Just make the relationship something more than 'I get calls from this obscene friend.'"

"I see. But what if he won't?"

"You'll just have to see."

"Alright. Bye, Mother."

"Hello, Mother?" This wasn't going to be easy for either one of them.

"Hello Joan, you're back already?"

"Mother, he never showed. I waited for two hours and he never showed. And he didn't call me at six tonight like he always does."

"Joan I just can't help thinking he didn't call you because he's calling some other poor lonely woman."

"Mother—"

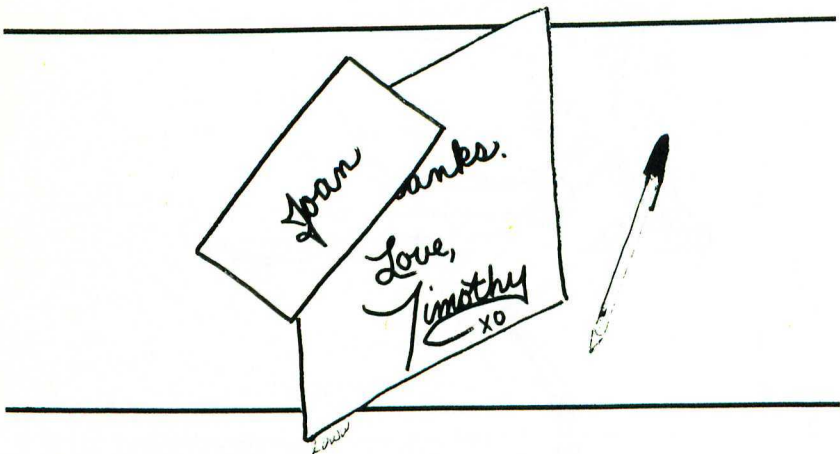
"No, Joan! Get it into your head that this guy's just another sicko. He's just another one of those—"

"No he's NOT!!!" Joan slammed the receiver down, furious with her mother. She hadn't understood anything from the beginning. She had just kept up this facade of support to appease her daughter as you would appease a child. Well, Timothy was not sick—at least not any more. If there was anything she knew about him, it was that he was not sick.

Joan sat for a while, still angry with her mother. She sat, staring at the telephone, knowing it wasn't going to ring. She still didn't understand why he hadn't shown up. Was he that shy? Embarrassed? Entirely helpless?

As she sat there, her eye was suddenly caught by the movement of a piece of white paper sliding in under the door from outside. She jumped up and ran to the door—the paper was actually an envelope with her name printed boldly on the outside. Immediately she flung open the door to see who had delivered it. All she saw was a young boy about ten years old, running off down the street and around the corner.

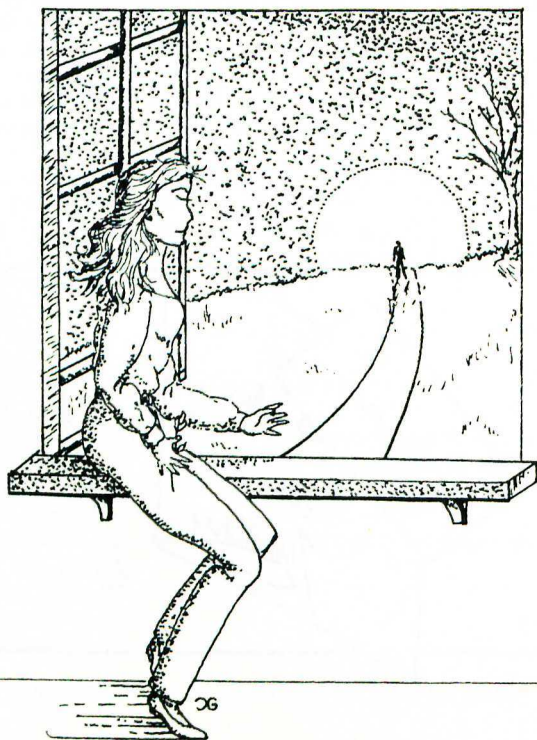
She looked back at the envelope and slowly opened it. Inside was a small white card which read, "Thank you Joan. Love, Timothy."



SOFT, THE TOUCH

by Sheri Leidig

Soft, the touch
that whispers to my skin
Warm, the moist sigh
that drifts upon my neck
Sweet, the eyes
that with innocence behold me
Gentle, the man
that loves me





The Roach

by Robert Roach

He moved through his environment with the stealth and prowess of a jungle cat. The fluid, strong strides and gestures made him seem more like a shadow than flesh and blood.

He wore a trench coat that draped about his form and accentuated the angles of his body. The coat, which seemed more like a cloak, made him look like a caricature. An awe-inspiring caricature.

He stepped along the ghetto's garbage wearing black patent leather button-up shoes. The cigarette he smoked wasn't a link in the chain of a bad habit. It was more for his image—his mystique—in the neighborhood. For it was hard for a white man to gain respect on Chicago's South Side, even during the Depression.

He peered up and down the street out of the cloth mask that partially concealed his features. "A poor man's Zorro" would have been an apt description of his disguise. The coal gray fedora with its black band sat poised on his brow at the correct angle for the proper effect. It shaded his eyes and face. The hat, the mask, the trench coat, and the meticulously clean and well-

fitting deep blue, three piece pin-stripe suit he wore were appropriate for the lean, smooth-muscled man.

He exhaled the acrid smoke. It billowed before his cold, taut face. The man had high cheek bones which angled sharply toward his thin, but expressive, lips. His slender nose set off his hard, gray eyes. His face and form were handsome, but his expression and demeanor were uncompromising.

He watched a certain door to a certain house with extreme intensity. As he stood in the shadows with only the glow from his cigarette to hint of his presence, a young junkie-thief named Rollo bumped into him. The black turned toward the man with a stinging epithet on the tip of his tongue. The black's words froze in his throat as he recognized the man. With a mumbled exclamation, the junkie-thief beat an extremely hasty retreat.

He saw the sign he was waiting for. A simple matter of a light switching on and off quickly. The man was instant action. As he ran, it seemed as if his feet scarcely touched the ground. A grim smile haunted his expression as he rushed toward an encounter with death. Whether death or he would get the better of this meeting he did not know. And that's what made him smile.

He took the stairs four at a time. Each wooden plank groaned as he planted his foot on it. He didn't even bother with the rickety banister for he doubted that it could withstand a child's weight.

He slowed as he reached the third floor of the tenement house. Whereas before his speed betrayed his passing, he now moved swiftly but in total silence. The strong scent, a mixture of human stench, smoke and excrement, assailed his nostrils. But out of the smell he caught the trace of expensive cologne. This he followed to the room 3B.

He paused at the door to listen. His acute hearing distinguished the voices within. It was who he wanted. Wasting no more time, he kicked in the door, simultaneously drawing his gigantic, handcrafted gun.

He stood in the doorway, allowing the significance of his presence to sink in. The men in the room simply stared at him—in hate and in awe.

"The Roach!" one of them gasped. The others went for their weapons.

He smiled as a cold wind whipped through the dilapidated building. Shots rang out, shaking the structure and waking its inhabitants. Five minutes passed and order had returned.

He walked out the front of the building and lit a cigarette. Many of the neighborhood's denizens, both predators and victims, watched the Roach as he walked away from the deteriorating facade. Some of them watched thankfully, others watched spitefully.

He melted into the darkness and became one with the shadows.

Deceptive Destination

by Debbi Schimpf

Spheres, big and small with a mixture of hues;
Transparent blues splashed with clear emeralds,
Silvery pinks intermingled with lucid yellows;
Riding on a gentle breeze with an unknown destination.
They float and drop and float again higher
Surveying the earth from their own unique angles.
But fate has a way of creeping in
And just as one is about to take a rest from its sky ride
It bursts on a blade of grass.

Untitled: #21

by Shawn Stroud

How funny;
That after it all
I'm not

As adult about you

I thought
No—I knew didn't I—
my dreams

Hadn't
been answered. By anyone. . .
not even by

Me.

So Picasso's "Blue"
can't touch me—do I grok
sadness?

But behind
my meaningless banalities
I'll cry tonight

It's so funny
to play unrequited
lover.

Since I thought I'd grown up
could take rejection. . .



Funny.



Character Sketch

by Melinda Russell

"So . . . This is it?" He held up the bottle of pills in front of my face.

"Sam, I can explain —"

"Oh, there's nothing to explain, lady. It's called suicide."

"No! Listen to me," I begged.

"How long? How long ago did you quit?" Sam went out of the kitchen into the den.

"Sam —"

"Answer me!"

"A few weeks ago. I don't know." I followed him.

"A few weeks . . . Ha, ha, ha! Oh! Brilliant joke, lady. The whole time pretending to me, lying to me!" He turned on me.

"Don't be hurt, Sam. Let me talk —"

"Hurt? Oh, right . . . Sure, think nothing about it. I quit taking the pills, so just stop thinking. I have cancer, but let's just forget that, too. C'mon, babel! I'm not stupid. Do you know what those pills do?"

"Yes! I damn well know what they do . . . Better than you do! They drain me, make me shake and mess my whole system up so I don't know what to expect next from my own body!" I pointed at the pills in furious contempt.

"Uh! I can't take . . . You're so utterly selfish! You think nothing of us, just —"

"It's for you I did it. I quit for you and —"

"And the kids, right? I hear the holy martyr in you alright! What else have you been lying about?" he accused.

"I don't believe you . . . I'm not going to talk about this anymore." I went back into the kitchen.

"What else? I have a right to know. I have a say in this. What about the radiation treatments, the rest of chemotherapy, too? The shots?" Sam grabbed me by the wrists.

"Call Dr. Saxson. You'd never believe me anyway!" With a long cold glare he let go of my wrists.

"You did . . . You quit the rest, too." The horror in his eyes pierced my heart. I looked away, biting my lip. "Hell, why didn't you just cut your wrists?"

"Will you listen to me? Hear me out."

"You just gave up! I can't believe the woman I married and the woman I love would just lie down and be defeated! You have three children out there! Two boys, ages seven and four and a precious little girl who is barely walking! You've got a fantastic home, a husband who loves you more than anything in this world. You've got so much, babe! How can you lose all of that without. . ." He was pale and frantic as he paced back and forth.

"Don't you think I know that? Don't you think I'm hurting - torn to pieces inside about dying?" I faced him.

"I'm not so sure anymore."

"Sam, give me a chance here to talk. Just a few minutes. . ."

"No! It's settled! You start taking the pills again. Tomorrow you'll go back to the doctor, apologize and start all over again. That's final!"

"I can't do that. . ."

"Take the damn pills! Now! So I can see for myself." He thrust the bottle into my hand. I let the bottle drop. "I thought you loved us, cared for us. . ."

"I do."

"Then prove it! If not for me, for the children's sake! For them!" His voice cracked.

"That's why I stopped, Sam! I thought it over and over. I talked with the doctors and shrinks. I even went to the Priest, Sam! The drugs just weren't working, Sam. Dr. Saxson wanted to start a whole new stock of experimental crap! I just couldn't take that again. Nothing is working. I've grown immune, even to the radiation. They had to increase the dosage three times in just nine months! And they wanted to increase the radiation again!"

"I know it's hard, babe."

"You don't know squat about it! You've managed to escape me as much as you can. . . Work, band rehearsal, bowling league. You don't know! I spent hours in the john getting sick. When I was not in the john, I was collapsed on the couch near exhaustion. Just picking up Molly for a kiss tired me! And to look at me then? Don't you think I knew why the boys didn't invite friends over anymore, and why Kit never told me about school open-house or plays?" I was quivering uncontrollably. "My hair fell out in clumps which were like patches of dry, dead weeds. I have bald places like some old man, places which I can't cover over anymore! Why? Because I don't have enough left to cover! And I was losing five pounds each day. I couldn't keep my food down or hold my water in. Even now I'm skin and bones. Clothes hang on me like I'm a sorry scarecrow. I'm a walking skeleton!"

"Honey —"

"No, don't interrupt me. You still turn the lights off when I get undressed.

You never touch me or hold me unless I plead with you, and even then you're cold and stiff about it. . . And I couldn't cope emotionally. I blew up at the slightest thing. The kids were scared to death of me. If I was not yelling, puking or panting, I was crying. They never knew what to expect from me. I couldn't remember anything. I couldn't have told you what I did yesterday if I were still on chemotherapy! The radiation turned me yellow and made me sick. The pills drained and confused me. The shots. . . Well —"

"But you're alive!"

"At what cost, Sam? You knew that wasn't me. Molly cried whenever I picked her up. Kit and Jamie winced when they had to be in the same room with me. They hated me. They wanted to hide me, escape from me. What kind of mother is that? They are still ashamed of me. And you're not any better. The band never comes around anymore or any of your friends. In fact, you're rarely here. I know where you've been at nights. I like Claressa, too, and I don't blame you."

"She means nothing to me. I love you, not her. Who is she?" He was nervous.

"You must sleep with her for a reason. I would hate to think you chose just anyone to mess around with, Sam. I can't blame you. I disgust myself. I'm ugly and not much of a wife. We fight daily, and I usually start it. I'm to blame. Right now we have no marriage. It's gone, but I want it back. I want you back. I want to be me again, to live and feel right again!"

"What you're doing is no better than suicide, Kate. You'll die!"

"I'll die anyway. With or without drugs, I still have cancer."

"But the drugs prolong the time we have with you. Time for your children to have a mother and for me to share my love with you. Time, babe. . ."

"The longer those artificial means keep me alive, the longer the torture would be for all of us. I feel good today, Sam. Haven't you noticed a change? Look! See my arms. There are no more bumps, red patches or knots. I don't feel like some unimportant pin cushion, and I haven't gotten sick in four hours! Four hours, Sam, think of it! Four extra hours for me to spend with the kids or you and not in the john. I played all morning with Molly. Honey, she didn't cry a sound when I held her. Jamie wants to bring Gavin over for lunch tomorrow. My weight has been steady for three days. Kit broke his milk glass this morning at breakfast, but I cleaned it up and kissed him good-bye. I can cope! I didn't yell or cry! Don't you see, babe?"

Sam just stared at me, not answering.

"I feel good. . . No, fantastic! This afternoon, I'm taking Molly to the park. It's a beautiful day. I've missed so much, Sam. It's like being reborn all over again. And my senses - I feel, smell, hear and see so vividly! I'm me again. I can think clearly again. I wrote poems last night while you slept. Poems, Sam! How long has it been since I've even tried to write again? Don't take this from me, Sam. I'm alive! I'm living and breathing."

"Probably for only three months since you stopped the treatment."

"But what full, joyful and intense remaining months."

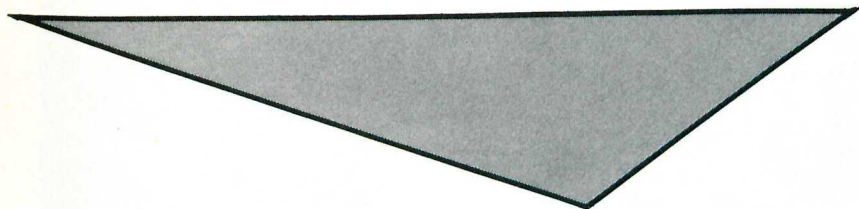
"Weeks, maybe."

"Yes, maybe days! It doesn't matter anymore as long as I have time enough to leave the memory of someone happy, fulfilled and beautiful. Each day now is like a precious gift that I can't afford to waste. I want to be ready to die, Sam. Ready to say I lived the best life, and I'm ready to move on. I don't want to hold regrets or worries on my deathbed."

"But can't you even fight back? Isn't life worth that much to you? To fight back?"

"It's worth living in, Sam. It's worth living to live. Fighting is like war or crime. It's death, not life. You're dying when you fight, so caught up in defeating death and in not dying. Death is the preoccupation, not life. I'm tired of dwelling on death and tired of struggling against an enemy I can't possibly beat. I'll live with cancer, but I refuse to die with cancer."

Sam turned away, silent. Moments later his shoulders heaved, and he sank down into the chair. He was sobbing, choking, and cursing.



Brothers

by C. Gard

Drawn together for reasons never understood
Times shared, battles fought, happiness found.
Friendship is taken beyond its limits
It becomes something more—we become brothers.

Months pass—freedom is lost
Distances grow, caring deepens, strength increases.
We brothers are torn apart—as are our hearts
Struggling to survive—we triumph.

Reality is not to be trusted
Tears fall, embraces linger, voices sing.
Keep yesterday alive, but forget not tomorrow
Love survives—as do we brothers.

We are brothers, you and I
I live for you, and you for me.
Failures are shared, successes also
We are one, we can never again be divided.

The worries are many
Live through Monday, past Wednesday, for Friday.
When the two halves become again whole
We brothers are again united

Brother, my life is yours, yours mine
Living, Loving, Laughing, Crying.
All is shared, secrets are nonexistent
We will always be brothers, and together we will survive.

P.S. Mother sends her love

NURNBERG

by Shawn Stroud



Like every Dürer
painting lost in some dusty
museum

Nürnberg is vibrant
only when you gaze at it.
The cobblestones

In the street
aren't — concrete rivers run there
now. . .

But somewhere
(I know where) is a Gasthaus
with

A streetsinger
who knew me. And
he

And Nürnberg
wait expectantly for us to
walk in;

Witness his
art, and let him
live.

WOLVES

by Craig Pierce

Timber lined forest
Dotted with glowing-
Peering eyes.
Like stars through an opaque sky.

Howling. . .
They sense and stalk relentlessly.

Howling. . .
The pack moves in like a vise.

Howling. . .
A confrontation between predator and prey.

In the Shadows

by Sheri Leidig

In the shadows
of places unknown
I hide
The thoughts of the day faded
melted into puddles of memory
I'm lost
in a feeling I can't find
in a need I can't satisfy
In places warm and safe
I hide
In the shadows

To All Men From Woman

by Laura Guyer

I look into the mirror and I know there is Beauty.
I listen to the voice and I know there is Wit.
I explore the brain and I know there is Intellect.
Then why, in your eyes, is there none of it?

Character Sketch Through Dialogue

by Shawn Matheny

The two rode around the small empty town in silence. At the beginning of the evening they had been talking, and laughing, and enjoying one another, but then she had, as usual, said the wrong thing and he had become silent. She had decided long ago that his moody silences were worse than his quick outbursts. While he stared straight ahead and deliberately steered the battered red truck, she sat in her uneasy silence. At first, she had stared out the window past the levee towards the dark mountains. Then, she stared at her clasped hands resting on her lap, and finally she looked down at the space separating them. Suddenly, she could tolerate the stillness no longer. She had to say something—anything to disturb it.

"Mike, I'm sorry."

Simply continuing to clutch at the wheel and look straight ahead, he didn't respond to the softly whispered apology.

She reached across the space dividing them and gently touched his sleeve.

Mike. . . say something to me. . . please."

He pulled slightly away from her hand and then replied, "Hell Jamie, what do you want me to say? Just tell me, what in the hell do you want me to say this time?"

"I don't know," she said in a small, almost helpless, voice.

With a frustrated explosion he hit the steering wheel hard with the open palm of his hand, causing the truck to swerve into the thick darkness.

"That's right, you never know, do you? You don't know a god damn thing. You don't know your ass from your elbow and you sure as hell don't know what love is. I'm so sick and tired of it. Your lies. Your games. You use me. But let me tell you something right now, babe, it just don't get it with me—not anymore."

She looked up at him for a second with glistening eyes, then she quickly looked away out to the soft summer night.

In a cracked voice she implored, "Mike, why can't we just enjoy being together like normal people? Why do we have to fight every time I come home? I hate this. . . I hate to cry. . . I hate to hurt you. . . and I hate feeling guilty."

Swearing under his breath, he pulled the truck to a stop in the middle of the abandoned road. With only the sound of the crickets in the fields and the water in the canal to break the silence, he turned towards her with dark accusing eyes, but he didn't reach out to try to touch her.

"Shit, don't you understand? Can't you understand? I loved you so much—too much. I still love you and even though I sometimes hate myself for it, I know I'll always love you. And that's what hurts so bad. When you got out of school and I got my job with Mountain Drive, I wanted to marry you. But no, you wanted to go away to school. Then you wanted to date around. After that, you dumped me. Two weeks later you wanted me back. Do you remember how long that went on? Do you remember how long we were on-again-off-again? Well, I sure as hell do! And now? Who in the hell knows what you want. . . who in the hell."

She looked down at her hands and then she looked further down inside herself. She hesitated for a few seconds before she decided to speak.

"Mike, you're right in a way. I don't know what I want. But I do know what I don't want. I don't want this town and I don't want to be the wife of some Mountain Drive worker. I want something more than this... than here. I want to see more and do... do everything. I don't want to spend the rest of my life playing cards and getting drunk or high with your friends. I don't want to forever be watching TV at your parents' house or even... or even screwing around with you on some deadend road in the front seat of this shitty truck. I need... I don't know... something more. But you are wrong about one thing. I do know about love and that's why I can't let go of this. It's not so bad at school, but everytime I come home to see you... I've tried to say good-bye to you, but you won't let me and I guess I won't let myself. When I'm at school I close my eyes and you're there, but always when I open them you somehow slip away. When I'm here you never leave me. You're here too, and warm, and strong and... But I don't want this feeling for you and I don't want the memories. Don't **you** understand, Mike? Can't **you** understand? I need you and I love you, but I could never be really happy with you."

Staring straight ahead once more, he started up the truck and drove through town in silence. Finally, after stopping in front of her dark, large house, he turned to look at her.

"Dave and Jill asked us over for tomorrow night to watch 'Arthur' on HBO. Do you want to go? If you don't want to decide right now, I'll come by the pool tomorrow after I get off work to find out. Okay?"

Without waiting for a reply, he reached across the seat and pulled her into his arms.

"Okay?" he whispered against her hair in a pleading voice.

A minute of silence and then a moment of decision faded away before she answered "okay" in quiet resignation.

Character Sketch: **Likable Character**

by Melinda Russell

His hair was wild, curling about in chaos down to his waist. Still, something about it fascinated me. I admired hair that was clean, lively and healthy looking. I knew he was outrageous, having hair like he did, but I could not help staring. His eyes romanced me in a silent brilliance. Their color was like that of a sparkling mountain lake. The color was clear, crisp and utterly blue. No one could doubt he had blue eyes, not blue-gray or blue-green.

I turned around, horrified by my own interest in him. Somehow he knew, and took pride in my affection. He moved to the table just in front of me and sat facing me. Three times he made a point of strolling by my table so I might have a full view of him. His build made me blush, so sleek, firm and perfect. He had the shape of an athlete with muscles molded with great care over his bones. Ah, such beauty Michelangelo never saw, or surely he would have sculpted a body like his. His body was a masterpiece of creation that any artist would pay a fortune to paint and sculpt.

My thoughts were transparent, I feared, so I quickly escaped to the next floor. He followed me. Even as I found a new seat in the business section, he sat down right across from me and winked. Frightened, I ran to the card catalogue and proceeded busily to search for books. He strutted up next to me. Just like a rooster in a barnyard full of hens, he stood next to me modeling himself.

"Excuse me, but what are you doing?" I politely asked him.

"I want to make sure you've seen everything." He turned wiggling his butt to me.

"Oh, really!" I gasped, escaping once more to the table.

"Yes, it's a hundred percent real. I could detail its ingredients if you like." He followed, just grinning away.

"That's quite alright."

"Okay, then, what's in yours?" He was actually looking at my build.

"Stop that!"

"That's not too hard. There's not much to look at, but it's quality, not quantity!"

"Oh, mother . . ." I grabbed my books, walking away.

"Actually I don't see her much anymore. You're a student here, huh?"

"No!"

"You've got to be. You've got the Catholic virgin walk." He was walking far enough behind me so he could watch me walk.

I stopped walking, totally frustrated by him.

"I'm busy," I said, "I've got no time for you."

"That's alright, I don't take much time. You name the time and I'll float in."

"Oh, mother!" I went downstairs and proceeded to search the shelves for a book.

"We must stop meeting so openly. What would our fathers say?"

He swung around from the end of the bookshelf and practically knocked me over. I dropped my books.

"Who are you?" I demanded.

"Mud to my parents, social rebel to history and a draft dodger to Johnson. To you, I could be just another phenomenon of the era to be researched. Interested?" He had incredible charisma.

"Certainly not."

"Then do you like the usual pick-up lines? Or does the fact that I've got your wallet convince you?" He held up my change purse.

"Hey."

"Ssh. . . You dropped your books. You play cat now." He vanished into the row of bookshelves.

I picked up my books, set them down at the desk, then went looking for him. Before I realized what had happened, he had trapped me against a book corner.

"Oh!"

"Did you know I'm in love with you?"

"Say what? My wallet, give it to me."

He held it up, teasing me, then dropped it into his pants.

"Don't think that'll stop me."

"I got on no underwear. I'm poor." He grinned. I backed away as much as I could.

"You, you hippies are just trouble. You touch me and I'll scream," I threatened.

"Personally, I don't use categories and actually as long as you don't laugh, I

don't mind. May I be original with you?" He was unbearably close. He kissed me.

"Okay, okay. I'll go out with you but, mind you, I'm a good girl."

"And I'm the knight in silver armor. Call me Lancelot. You like me, I can tell. I like you, too. We're perfect." He took my hand, leading me out.

"Wait! My books. . ."

"No trouble. . ." He went to the desk, looked around, then jumped up on the desk. He kicked the books, pens, everything off the counter in a crazy dance. He jumped down wiping his hands. "Bill her."

"Why did you do that?"

"You just met the king of the anti-establishment . . . And love, too, makes me crazy." He took me by the waist, leading me out. I was hopelessly absorbed in his magnetic charm.

Today's Worries, Tomorrow's Dreams

by E. Lersch

Virginity is in my heart.
No dripping faucet today. The water is
turned off. My emotions are at a
stand still.

A man will never know the
hidden image behind
the mirror
A flower on the outside
An interior surrounded by eternity's
four walls No roof, nor bottom
just a key camouflaged in the design of
everyday living.

Depress shun is the major sin.
Is a thorn that pricks
the unhealed womb.

That social society graces are
just so proper
to step above them is a monstrous mountain of
rocks, one cannot help
but fall prey to the vultures who
circle the top of the
Mountain of innocence.

My knight in shining armor
is in a far away dream.
His horse grows anxious to lead the
way to the fallen mare.
But the bridge is out.



Lions and Tigers and Bears

(a fairy tale for my children: Jason, April and Brandy)

by Larry Edwards

It was night time. Even though the moon was full, heavy clouds blocked the dim light. A slight breeze whispered through the leaves sounding as if elves were laughing.

A lone path cut through the forest, winding its way through the dense brush between the giant trees. On the path, holding hands and peering into the darkness, were two little girls. The oldest, her blonde hair now visible in the impish moonlight, stifled a cry and squeezed her sister's hand a little tighter.

Her sister returned the pressure, then asked, "Are we close now, April?"

April nodded her head but didn't answer. There was something about the forest this night which stilled her. There was something . . . she didn't know what. She shivered.

"How much farther, April?"

April looked at the path, then around her. She didn't know. She didn't want to admit it, but she was lost. How could she tell her sister that they weren't on the right path, that they had somehow taken a wrong turn somewhere?

Instead of answering her sister's question, she said, "We'll rest here for a few minutes. Then we'll go on. Eat your sandwich."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't have it anymore."

April peered at her in the darkness, trying to see her face, but all she could see was a dim outline. "Why don't you have your sandwich?"

Her sister shuffled her feet, then answered, "Because I tore it into little pieces and dropped it along the way."

"Why?"

"Because I was scared."

"Why?"

"I was afraid we'd get lost."

"Lost?"

April shivered again, then asked her sister why she thought they'd get lost, but her sister only scuffed her shoes in the dirt. April looked back the way they had come, then ahead of her.

Turning back to her sister, she asked, "Brandy, why did you think we'd get lost?"

Brandy scratched her head, then answered, "Because this isn't the right path. We took the wrong path. That's why."

April sucked in her breath. That's why she hadn't been able to recognize anything. She should have known it. She should have.

"April, can we go home now?"

"You still didn't answer my question. Why did you throw your sandwich away?"

Brandy looked about her, then answered, "Because that's what they do when they're lost. They throw bread crumbs on the ground so that they don't get lost and eaten by the witch."

April felt goosebumps on her arms and she laughed, a bit nervously, then said, "You know that's stupid. There isn't any such things as witches. You just lost your sandwich for no reason at all."

Nevertheless, April couldn't help glancing around her again. What was that? Nothing. Just a bird.

Brandy whispered, "There are so witches."

"No there aren't."

"Yes there are."

"Where?"

"I saw them on television. And I read about them too."

April sighed, wishing that her sister would stop saying the word witch. "That's only make believe. It's not true."

"There are no witches?"

"No."

Brandy thought for a second, then whispered, "There's goblins."

"No! There aren't any witches and there aren't any goblins!"

"Werewolves?"

"NOOOO!"

"I bet there's some vampires in this woods."

"Brandy! None of those things are real! Now will you stop talking about them."

Brandy's face puckered and she started to cry. April hugged her, then said, "I'm sorry for yelling at you, but those things just aren't real. They're only in books, and on television. They aren't real."

Brandy stopped crying, then asked, "Was George Washington real?"

Confused, April said, "Yes."

"Was Abr'm Lincoln?"

"Yes."

"Was Cristo..Cristo...Was Columbus real?"

"Yes. Yes. Yes. Why are you asking me about them for?"

"I read about them in a book too."

April opened her mouth but said nothing. How could she explain to a six year old the difference between real and make believe. April, at eight years old, knew the difference, but was at a loss as how to explain it to her sister.

"What was that?"

April turned, but could see nothing.

"Where?"

"Over there. In front of us. No, it's moved. Now it's beside us."

April whirled. She could still see nothing. Nothing but the outline of the trees.

The trees! They seemed to be reaching out for her with long, snake-like fingers! And they were coming closer!

Without a word she grabbed Brandy's hand and began running. She didn't know in which direction she was going, and she didn't care. Why had Brandy mentioned witches? And werewolves? And vampires?

In front of her one of the trees moved and planted itself before her. Something gleamed in the moonlight. April screamed but was unable to stop herself. She bounced off the tree and fell to the ground, dragging Brandy with her.

"Please, Mr. Tree, don't hurt us. Please!"

Instead of the woody fingers tearing at her body she heard a soft, deep chuckle. Opening her eyes, she saw the form bending over her. In the dim light she saw that the tree was huge, almost as big as a house, and it had eyes that gleamed.

Brandy, looking over her sister's shoulder, asked, "Are you going to eat us, Mr. Tree?"

The chuckling deepened into a booming laugh which echoed through the forest, then the tree leaned over and April saw the vague outline of a head and shoulders, and two arms reaching down to her. And the gleaming thing she had seen was tied or strapped over his shoulders.

The voice, deep and soft at the same time, spoke, "Don't worry, little girls, I won't eat you. I've already eaten tonight."

April felt herself being lifted from the ground as if she didn't weigh anything at all. Then Brandy was beside her and the tree-voice was brushing them both off, its hands gentle.

"You aren't going to eat us?"

"No little girl, I'm not going to eat you."

That laugh again. There was something reassuring about it, yet April felt the hairs at the back of her neck rise. She wished she could see the thing's face.

Almost as if the moon had heard her unspoken wish, light flooded the forest and she saw a large (though not as large as a house) man standing before her. He had long, curly hair which hung past his shoulders, and a great beard which covered half his face. He was dressed in rough work clothes, and over his shoulder was slung a huge, two-headed axe. That was what had gleamed so brightly!

Brandy, her eyes large as dishes, asked timidly, "Are you a werewolf?"

The man laughed again, shaking his head, "Do I look like a werewolf to you?"

Brandy nodded and the man laughed even louder, "No. I'm not a werewolf."

But tell me, little ones, what are you doing in this forest so late and all by yourselves?"

Brandy looked at April who frowned, then said, "We're going to our grandmother's house. She lives on the other side."

"But why so late, little ones?"

April's frown deepened, "But it wasn't late when we left. It was only noon or just a little after. But it seems that as soon as we got into the forest it got dark all of a sudden."

The man said, "Strange things happen in the forest. Here, time has no meaning. Only those who live in it."

April felt her skin tingle and she wanted to leave, but she didn't know where to go. The man, as if sensing her fears, asked if she'd like him to take them to their grandmother's house. April nodded.

He took her small hand in his, completely covering it, and April felt her fear vanish. It was strange. All of a sudden she wasn't afraid anymore.

He took Brandy's hand in his other, then began to lead them down the path. As they walked Brandy asked the man questions, most of which evoked a deep laugh.

"Have you ever seen a werewolf before?"

Before the man could answer, April spoke, "Brandy, I told you there weren't any such things."

The man looked down at her, his eyes twinkling, "Are you so sure of yourself that you can say such a thing?"

April snorted, "Everyone knows there aren't any. And I've never seen any."

The man laughed and squeezed her hand, not painfully, and said, "So, Little One, if you have not seen it, then it does not exist? Listen. Do you hear?"

April listened, and heard the chattering of a bird somewhere in the forest. "It's a bird. So what?"

"Can you see the bird?"

"No."

"But it is there."

"But I can hear it, so that doesn't make any difference."

The man sighed, then chuckled, "Little One, do not say things aren't just because you have never seen them. I have never seen the air I breathe, but I know that it is there. I have never seen that which makes things fall to the ground, but I know that it is there. I have never seen what gives life to myself, and to the creatures of the forest, but I know that it is there. So why do you doubt something just because you have never seen it?"

"It's because . . . because . . . Oh, it's impossible. They don't exist."

They walked along in silence. As they did, the clouds began to disperse and the light from the moon flooded along the path, causing the trees and brush to stand out. It also caused deep shadows to appear between the trees.

"What was that?"

April peered around the man toward where Brandy was pointing. She could see nothing. She said so.

"It looked like a horse, but it had a horn. Right here in the middle of its head. And it was all silver."

April snorted, "A horse with horns."

"But I did see it! I did!"

The man remained silent, but his eyes narrowed. The trio moved along, and soon they came to a small creek over which a wooden bridge had been built.

April gasped, "I don't remember a bridge in this woods. Or a creek for that matter. Just where are you taking us?"

The man said, "To your grandmother's. Besides, the bridge is there. You

can see it. Now you can feel it. So it must be here in these woods."

April didn't know what to think. She knew that these woods were the only ones near and the man couldn't have led them into another one. But she couldn't remember a creek or a bridge.

Crossing over the bridge, they followed the path. April couldn't resist a look back, just to see if the bridge was still there.

No, it couldn't be. Three goats were standing on the bridge, and from under it a voice had called, "Who's walking on my bridge?"

She turned to the man and Brandy but they didn't look back. Hadn't they heard the voice? She asked them if they had heard anything, but they answered "No."

Did she really see something? Taking a quick look over her shoulder, she saw that the bridge was empty. There was nothing on it! It must have been the moonlight.

They walked along for a while, Brandy and the man talking about the forest, April trying to explain to herself what was happening. There had to be an explanation for all this, she just hadn't thought of it yet.

Looking behind her, she saw a little girl with a red, hooded jacket following them. She was carrying a large basket.

April stopped. They would have to see the girl! She pointed behind her and cried, "Look. See the girl?"

But when they turned, all that was behind them was a little red fox sitting in the path. At their movement it sprang into the bushes.

The man said, "What is it you want us to see, Little One?"

April didn't answer for a while. She had seen something. Or had she? Was the little girl like the goats?

April was even more confused than before. She withdrew her hand from the tall man and walked a few steps behind them. It was funny, but the man and Brandy seemed to shimmer in the moonlight, like they were encased in silver moonbeams. Their forms seemed to just float down the path.

April shivered again. A twig snapped behind her and she scurried after her sister and the man.

Taking his hand, April once more felt her fear leaving her, and she felt that strange tingle pass through her body. She glanced at Brandy, but her sister didn't seem to notice anything.

Brandy asked the man if he lived in the forest and he said, "Yes, the forest is my home, as are a lot of places."

"What kind of places?"

"Oh, secret places made of gold and silver, where the rivers and ponds are untouched by man. The water is sweet to the taste. And the creatures are not afraid of man. Why, you can even go up to a tiger and pull his whiskers if you want to. He won't mind. Not in my forest. He'll just purr and lick your hand."

April shook her head in disgust. She had to stop this strange man from lying like that to her sister.

She said, "There aren't any tigers in this forest."

The man winked at Brandy, then said, "Oh, yes there are. There are tigers and lions and bears all through the forest. And other wonderful animals too."

April said, "No there aren't."

Brandy smiled and said, "Yes there are. If he says so there are."

April snorted again, but didn't say anything. From behind her she heard voices saying, "Lions, and tigers, and bears. Oh my."

She spun, quickly but there was nothing behind her. She turned to Brandy and the man. They were both watching her, and their faces were smiling.

"You did hear it, didn't you? You did."

Brandy smiled her biggest smile and said, "Heard what?"

April didn't reply. She felt her lips begin to tremble, and her eyes stung. Why were they doing this to her? Her own sister! It was that man. It had to be him. They had to get away from him.

April took Brandy's hand from the strange man and said, "We want to go home. Now!"

The man smiled and said, "You are home."

"What do you mean?"

Instead of answering, the man just nodded his head to his right. April turned and her mouth fell open. Not ten feet away was her grandmother's back yard! And it was daylight in the yard!

The strange man gave the girls a gentle push and said, "I told you I'd take you home. There it is. You'd better go now. Your grandmother's probably worried about you."

"But how. . . I mean, why is it. . .?"

He laughed, then winked at Brandy and said, "Do not ask how. Just enjoy the what."

April saw her grandmother walk around the corner of her house, so she pulled on Brandy's hand, urging her from the forest. At its edge, she stopped and turned back to the man, "I don't even know your name."

The man spoke, softly, "Jason. It's Jason."

April frowned, "I used to have a brother named Jason. Daddy said he went away a long time ago."

"I know, Little One. I know."

"But how could you?"

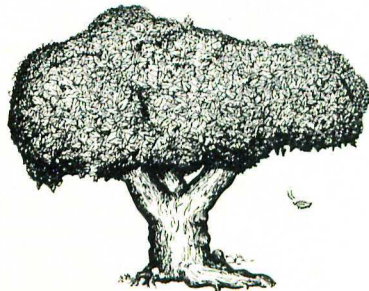
The man didn't answer. Instead he pointed towards the girls' grandmother, then turned back toward the forest. Before he had taken three steps, April was at his side, tugging on his hand. He bent and she kissed his cheek, then turned and fled after Brandy.

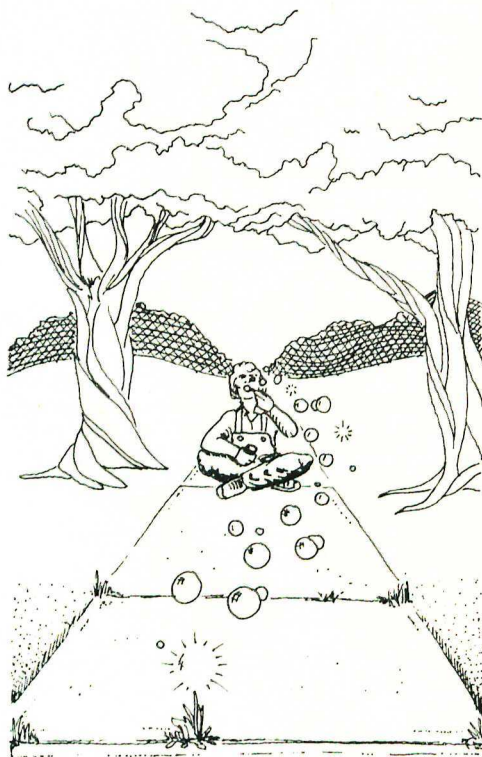
When she reached her sister's side she stopped and looked back toward the forest, but the forest was gone. Or rather, the forest was still there, but it wasn't the one she and Brandy had just come from. The one she was looking at now was narrow, barely one hundred feet across. She could see her house through the trees, and the highway beyond that. She looked at Brandy, but her sister was already running towards their grandmother.

Nearing her grandmother, April heard her saying, "Why lands-sakes, but you made good time. I just called your mama and she said you left but ten minutes ago."

Ten minutes! But they had been in the forest for hours! Hadn't they?

With one last look at the forest, April turned and followed Brandy and their grandmother toward the house. As they walked, she heard Brandy humming a song under her breath. Listening hard, she heard her sing, "Lions and tigers and bears, oh my."





Prisoner of War

by Christopher R. Lientz

When I was sent to prisoner of war camp, a training program for the United States Marine Corps, I nearly lost control of my emotional stability. I had been a hospital corpsman with the marines for twelve months when I became a member of a "super-squad." A "super-squad" is a group of thirteen marines and one corpsman who are chosen to represent their battalion in world-wide marine corps competition. The training for this competition lasted six months and involved vigorous mental and physical training programs. One such program was to prepare marines to cope with the physical and psychological problems of being a prisoner of war. Prior to this training I considered myself emotionally stable; however, after a few hours at this camp I considered myself emotionally disturbed.

When I arrived at this "marine corps disneyland" I was greeted with a blindfold and obscene language. I was instructed to take off every article of clothing I had on. This procedure was rather humiliating, but I considered it endurable. A rope was tied to my arm, and I was led off into an interrogation room where I was set on a chair and tied securely to it. After several minutes of being completely immobilized with my arms tied to my sides, every inch

of my body began to itch. I tried to think of something else; however, the need to scratch my nose was becoming unbearable. I sat uncomfortably for several hours when I heard someone open the door. The next event I considered unnecessary; however, my captors believed otherwise and slapped me across the face. Normally I would have responded violently; but, my response to such unexpected treatment was limited because I found myself on the floor, still tied securely to the chair. My captors set me back up and began asking questions concerning my military organization and government. In order to maintain my patriotic loyalty, I refused to answer their questions; consequently, I received their so-called "deserved slap and floor visit." After several hours of periodic interrogation, I was told I could go to bed.

I never thought the word "bed" could mean anything different than a mattress, two sheets, and a pillow. I soon found that my bed consisted of a three-foot square box with a three-inch window. The thought of sleeping was irrelevant at the time. I just wanted to get away from my inhuman captors, so the idea of being locked up in a box was appealing in that I'd finally be left alone. With my blindfold removed and hands untied, I "crawled into bed."

My bare buttocks against the cold metal floor and my knees up against my chest to keep warm were only a few of the annoyances I endured throughout the night. I heard other members of my squad screaming as they were led to their "beds." I began to think of claustrophobia and realized what a terror it would be to have claustrophobia and locked up in such a small box. After two hours, my captor's humane characteristics were shown when I was served supper, a slice of beef jerky. At about the same time, I became aware of another discomfort. The need to urinate was creating a significant problem inside this locked box. I screamed at my captors trying to explain my situation; however, no one answered. I tried to convince myself I didn't really have to urinate, but after several minutes I realized what had begun as an urge had turned into a very painful physiological problem. Having outgrown the adolescent stage of "peeing the bed," I came to the conclusion that I must attempt to rearrange myself so I could urinate through the three-inch window. The result of this attempt was far worse than "peeing the bed." I finally managed to get some sleep, but this was interrupted when my captors put a small white mouse in my box. Having just awakened with what seemed to be a two-foot rat crawling all over my naked body, I became hysterical. I began screaming and begging, proclaiming I'd give them any information they wanted.

Sharing a three-foot box with an unknown animal is one of the most terrifying experiences I've ever endured. An animal crawling all over my naked body was the limit in keeping my sanity. I tried to kill this creature with my foot; however, mobility in such a small box was nearly impossible. I must have sounded like a child scared of the dark screaming for his mother.

The door to the box was finally opened and I came out screaming and hitting anybody in sight. My captors managed to subdue my hysterical behavior by tying my arms and legs. I was led into the interrogation room again, only this time I was more than eager to tell them anything they wanted to know. I began to rationalize my behavior, and after talking to other squad members I found that everyone had reacted the same way.

I have often thought about this experience and I've questioned my behavior during this incident. The emotional misery I had in that box lasted only a few minutes; yet, my confidence in my own emotional stability was altered permanently.



The Dressing Room

by Joyce Anderson

I walked into the room,
What memories it held,
Of good times and laughter,
Time began to fly backwards. . .
I sat down in a chair,
And gazed into a mirror,
Remembering how many people I'd been,
But those were just dreams,
Long ago dreams. . .
I rose and walked towards the costumes,
And my fingers touched what had been,
My fabrics of fantasy,
But were now faded glitter. . .
This place had once shone,
And I was its star,
It had shared my success,
My name was boldly printed on its wall!
But I left it behind,
I waltzed onto some other stage,
Perhaps bigger and better,
I was running after the sunshine. . .
And shadows always come,
My dreams were shattered,
I began to see through my hazy windows of the world. . .
A sigh escaped from my lips,
And I left the dust-covered room,
Why had I returned to the past?
Suddenly I locked the door, and left,
I had a new role to act now. . . reality. . .



HAPPY BIRTHDAY PAPA

by Laura Guyer

The dull clang of the phone shattered the silence of the dim and gloomy room. The old man looked at the phone as if it were his enemy, and then scuffled across the room to answer it. A liver-spotted hand unhooked the receiver and pressed it to his ear. "Yeah, hello?"

"Papa, is that you?"

"Who else would it be?"

"Stop it, Papa. I just called to wish you a happy birthday."

Silence.

"Well, don't put yourself out, Linda."

"Papa, please don't be hateful. I've told you why I can't be there tonight. It's just that . . ."

"It's just that you got more important things than my birthday. So go. Have fun. Maybe I'll go visit your mother, may she rest in peace."

"Papa, please stop."

"Listen Linda, I'll talk to you tomorrow."

"Happy birthday, Papa."

He placed the receiver back in its cradle and walked to the closet to get his coat. "I'll take myself out to dinner; I'll show her," he grumbled.

The November wind nearly knocked him off his feet when he came out the door, and the sky held the somber hue of dusk. "Damn this weather," he cursed. Slowly he plodded the two blocks to Joe's Cafe. The cafe door opened into a grimy room filled with noisy people. The aroma of burnt food

permeated the air, and the jukebox blasted "Satisfaction" by the Rolling Stones. The old man took a stool and drummed his fingers on the stained formica while he waited for the waitress.

She was avidly flirting with two men who closely resembled Neanderthals in denim.

"Uh, Miss . . ."

"Just a minute." Pause. Blush. Titter.

"All I want is a bowl of soup."

"I said just a minute."

"But . . ."

"Look old man. . ."

The old man's eyes glazed over. "Just because you're young you got no respect for your elders. You're just like my Linda, no love or respect; you only think of yourself!" He whirled his stool around and blindly pushed his way out of the cafe.

"Old fart," said the waitress under her breath.

By now it was dark and the two blocks home seemed longer. "Damn kids," he muttered. "Damn weather." His house was a dark silhouette in the night and he stumbled up the steps to his porch. "Damn steps." He groped for his key and pushed the door open. Then, from the darkness behind him came a distant piercing scream. He flipped his porch light on and stared down the street into the black night. He saw nothing, no struggle or crime. Then it came again from far away, a scream and then a young woman's voice.

"Oh God, someone help me—"

The old man flipped off the light and bolted his door. "She probably asked for it," he said as he headed for bed.

For a second time that evening the clang of the phone broke the silence. The old man fumbled for his watch and then clawed at the telephone. It was only 11:00.

"Yeah, hello?"

"Is this a Mr. Harold Goldman?"

"It is."

"Is a Miss Linda Goldman your daughter?"

"Is my Linda in trouble?"

"Mr. Goldman, this is Lt. Clark down at the police station. I'm sorry to have to tell you, but uh, your daughter Linda was murdered tonight. . .Mr. Goldman, are you there?"

"Yes," a feeble voice whispered.

"I'm sorry sir, but we need you to come down and sign a release for the body. Oh yeah, and you can pick up the things that were left in her car too. Do you think you can do that?"

"Yes, I'll be there soon."

Harold Goldman dropped the phone and slowly put on his clothes. He was silent as the tears streamed down his face. He thought it was funny that the same day that could bring you life could also take it away.

When he got to the police station, he was taken directly to the morgue, where he identified his Linda. They told him she had been dragged from her car, strangled, and dropped just outside of town. They'd identified her by a caterer's receipt in her pocket with her name and number on it. Harold could barely look at her. He thought of the words they had had that evening and his heart nearly broke.

"Mr. Goldman, if you would sign for the things we found in her car, you can go on home."

Harold followed the officer into a room abuzz with activity. The officer

handed him a form and said, "Sign by the X please. Thanks."

Mr. Goldman looked up at the policeman. "Officer, why didn't you come tell me about my Linda yourself. Why did you have to call?"

"I'm sorry sir, but tonight we were all busy and we couldn't spare a man."

"You were so busy you let my Linda get killed. No one cares anymore; no one cares. . ."

"I'm sorry sir. Look, I'll have 'em bring her stuff out."

The officer disappeared into a back room. The old man hardly saw the people around him; he could only think about his Linda.

"Mr. Goldman, if you'll follow me, you can pick up her things."

Goldman tottered and steadied himself. "Officer, where did they find her car?"

They passed into a room filled with tagged articles waiting to be claimed. "It was over on Oakmont, I think."

"Oakmont? Why, that's a block or so from where I live. Why weren't you people patrolling over there? No one cares, that's why. First my Linda, and you know I heard another poor girl attacked by my house tonight—"

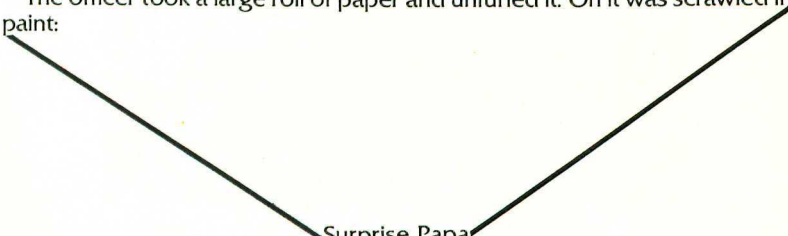
He stopped talking and froze in fear. It couldn't have been her; why would she have parked so far away? No, no. It's the police's fault 'cause no one cares.

"Here you go, Mr. Goldman."

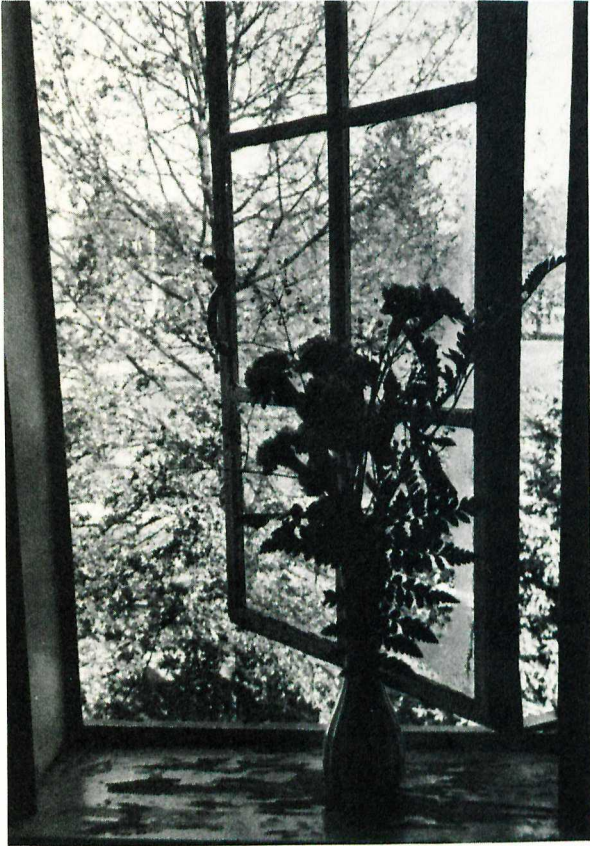
Harold Goldman looked down at the table. There he saw a present wrapped in brilliant paper, a cake with rosettes, and two packages of streamers.

"Oh yeah, and this was in there too."

The officer took a large roll of paper and unfurled it. On it was scrawled in paint:



Surprise Papa
Happy B'Day
I LOVE YOU



Sonnet: To Turn Back Time

by Laura Guyer

Would that I could turn back the hands of time
To that starry night as we slowly strolled
The Italian promenade and you told
Me your radical dreams, oh so sublime.
Together we would rid the world of crime
And hunger and give it the uncontrolled
Joy we shared with one another. Your hold
And kiss betrayed and my heart was not mine.
Now you say, "Are you not just a good friend?
You are gone and I have found another
So do not cry, my bella, and live on!"
But no other lover could ever mend
The scars you left. I'll have no other,
For never again will I be the pawn.

Time Undone

by Mary E. Perna

Look not upon these lands—
Gaze not upon these roads—
The curse of unseen hands
Still weaves its evil spells.

But turn to memories ever-fair:
Rolling hills and wind-swept plains;
The golden hue the meadows wear
Only the fleeting visions tell.

Once the skies of crystal haze
Mirrored seas in waves of blue.
Gardens bloomed in brighter days—
But only songs of such remain.

Forgotten halls of an earlier race—
Kings shrouded in legends of stone—
Of the mighty days lies not a trace
Upon the realms my Fathers held. . . .

Untitled

by Shawn Stroud

Police my dreams,
Conscience—I'm blown before evershifting
winds like a leaf

Cast out, cashed in
Beaten, bored, regretting even
what makes me

Dream.

Police my dreams,
Conscience, for she whom I dream
of,

Dreams not of me.

Return to The Veldt

by Larry Edwards

He walked with quick, short steps down the dim hallway. The cane clutched in his left hand sounded time to the soft whisper of his steps. The knuckles of his right hand were white from the pressure of holding an old, leather briefcase.

As he passed a door, he glanced at the number above it, then at his watch. He was five minutes late.

Coming to Room 136, he paused and set his case down. Withdrawing a greyish handkerchief from his back pocket, he daubed at his face as he listened to the sounds coming from the other side of the door. He jerked when he heard a loud crash followed by laughter. Wiping his face one last time, he returned the now sodden handkerchief to his pocket and took a deep breath. It did no good. His heart still beat in his ears.

Retrieving his case and shifting his weight to his right leg, he twisted the door handle and pushed it open. The noise hit him like a slap in the face.

For a heartbeat he stood in the doorway, his eyes taking in the whole room in a single glance. Desks were pushed back against the walls; some were overturned. Books and papers littered the floor. In the middle of the floor crouched two boys surrounded by their jeering classmates. One of the two held a knife in his hand; the other had a chair before him.

Someone said, "Cool it," and the knife disappeared as if it had never been there. Then all eyes turned toward him—eyes which seemed to say, "Who the hell are you and what right do you have to come busting in where you don't belong?"

He cleared his throat, then smiled—or at least he tried to smile. His lips felt as if they were made of parchment.

Looking at the boy still holding the chair, he said, "Uh, I think that chair belongs on the floor."

The boy stared back, then sneered, "Izzat so? Well, I'll be damned. Nobody never tod me that afore."

The boy casually tossed it to one side, nearly hitting the one who had held the knife.

"Watch it, fool!"

"Who you callin' fool, fool?"

The two faced each other again, but before they could come together he shouted, "That's enough!" then more softly, "Uh, I mean, it's getting late. Time to get to work. How about moving the desks back where they're supposed to be?"

Saying that, he walked toward the large, wooden desk in the left-hand corner, his cane sending low taps throughout the room. Setting his case on the floor beside the desk, he turned to the class and said, "I believe that chair belongs up here. Would one of you mind bringing it here?"

The boy who had been holding it shrugged and said, "It's over there."

For a second their eyes locked. His were the first to drop. Walking to the chair he dragged it behind his desk and set it down. As he did this he heard the class chuckle and he knew he had made a mistake. Mentally shrugging, he stood behind his desk and waited until the students had arranged their desks in a haphazard manner and had taken their seats.

Looking once more into all those eyes staring at him, he got the feeling he

shouldn't be there, but it was too late now. He licked his lips, glanced at the door, then looked back at the students before saying, "Good morning. My name is Mr. Stark. I'm uh, going to be your teacher for the next two weeks while Mrs. Bradley is away."

Their faces were blank, but their eyes said, "So what?"

He cleared his throat again, then opened his briefcase and brought out the instructions Mrs. Bradley had left for him, glanced at them, then said, "Uh, Mrs. Bradley has left instructions on what she wants us to do in her absence. There's quite a lot, so I guess we'd better start."

He sat and looked at the papers again, then said, "I guess we'd better start with roll call. Okay, Miss Johnson."

There was no answer. He placed a check after her name and called the next name on the list. "Mr. Washington."

Again there was no answer. Another check on the paper and he called, "Miss Wilkins."

He frowned when no one answered. Nor were there any answers for the last eighteen names. After calling the last one he smiled and asked, "This is the sophomore English class, isn't it? Or do I have the wrong room?"

Finally one of the students, the one who had held the knife, said, "Yeah, man. That must be it. You done got the wrong room. We ain't even here."

The rest of the class laughed—a wicked, vicious laugh—and started talking, "Yeah, man, we ain't even here."

"Yeah, you gots the wrong class."

"And the wrong school."

He sat quietly for a while, the paper shaking in his hands. He saw the students laughing at him, not paying attention to him. He felt the sweat sliding down the middle of his back, sending a shiver down his spine. He felt his stomach tighten and the bile beginning to rise in his throat.

Then the voices gradually faded until they were just a droning in his ears. The faces before him blurred until they were a swirl of light and dark, night and day.

...okay you bums you think this is just a game you think that because they're so short they can't hurt you listen up and maybe half of you will live to go back home and get some girl pregnant...

"Hey, man, you spacin' out on us? Like we says, you gots the wrong school."

He rubbed his eyes, then peered at the face bending over his desk. When did he walk up here?

He tried to smile but it came out more a grimace than a smile. Licking his lips he croaked, "All right, uh, we've had our joke for the day. Now it's time to get to work." Glancing at the second sheet of instructions he continued, "Uh, in your literature book, on page 213, is a short story by Ray Bradbury called *The Veldt*. Let's start there."

He waited until they finally opened their books and had found the right page, then asked, "All right, who wants to read first?"

No one answered. He turned to the student closest to him and asked, "How about you?"

"How about me what?"

"Uh, how about you reading first?"

"Man, you gots to be jokin'."

Someone in the back of the room piped, "Man you gots to be jokin'! Ole Leroy cain't read! All he do is look at the pi'tures."

He licked his lips again. This wasn't the way things were supposed to turn out. They had told him that he would have an easy time of it, and that it would

be a good experience for him. They didn't say that it would be like this.

He avoided Leroy's stare and looked at a girl sitting in the front row, just to the left of him, "Uh, how about you, Miss?"

She snapped the gum she was chewing, then leered, "Are you trying to proposishun me?"

"Yeah man, you tryin' ta start somethin' wi' muh woman?"

His eyes travelled from the girl's face to Leroy's, then back again. He could feel the blood rushing to his face. He could feel the blood pounding in his head.

"Uh, all I'm trying to do is. . ."

One of the boys in the second row had stood and was walking toward him, "We knows what you is trying ta do, man. You is tryin' to steal our women. An' we don't like that. Do we?"

"Hell no we don't!"

"What right he got comin' in an' tryin' ta steal our women?!"

He stood, his hands clutching the edge of the desk, his face flushed. "All I'm trying to do is to teach you about literature. I'm not trying to steal anyone's girl."

Leroy joined the other boy and began walking toward his desk, saying, "What's the matter? Ain't they good enough for you?"

"I didn't say that. I didn't say anything like that. All I was trying to do was. . ."

His voice was drowned out by the angry hum of voices as the rest of the students now stood and began to advance toward him. He started for a second, thinking that this couldn't be happening. They were actually threatening him! And they were so young! What were they trying to prove?

He tried once more, "Look, all of you. I want each of you to take your seats. Now!"

"F--k you man!"

He shot one last glance at them, then grabbed his cane and started to back toward the door, saying, "I'm your teacher. And I want you to sit down!"

The knife had appeared again, its blade glistening in the dim light. Another boy had a sap in one hand, pounding it against his palm. They came nearer. And nearer.

Finally he broke and ran out the door, his left leg dragging on the floor and his cane beating on the floor like a machine gun. Behind him the students were laughing and sending curses after him. "Run muthah f--ah!" and

"Lookit the muthah run! Looks like a crab runnin'."

Then the voices were lost among the echoes of his cane. The hallway faded, faded, faded, then turned a deep green and he heard the angry whine of bullets flying low over his head.

...get down get down hit the dirt you asses where are they they're all around m'god im hit im hit medic medic look out they're behind us get up fire fire don't just lay there get up watch out watchoutwatchout watchout imhitimhit...

"Mr. Stark. Mr. Stark. Are you all right? Mr. Stark."

He opened his eyes. Bending above him was a face that he recognized, but he couldn't place it.

"Mr. Stark, I heard the noise and came to investigate. When I got to your room all your students told me that you just suddenly jumped up and ran out of the room for no reason at all. Are you okay?"

"My room?"

"Yes, Mr. Stark. Your room. My God, man! Are you all right?"

He sat up, then looked around. He seemed to be in a closet of some sort.

Looking back at the face hovering above him he asked, "How many of them did they get?"

"What did you say? How many did who get?"

He shook his head. The man didn't understand. Then he looked down. His gun was gone. Someone had taken his rifle! He had to get his rifle back!

"Rifle! What are you talking about? Did one of those hooligans have a rifle with him?"

He shook his head to get rid of the cobwebs. He looked back at the concerned face. He knew who the man was. He was Dr. Adams. The principal. What was he saying? A rifle? There was no rifle.

He smiled and said, "Did I say something about a rifle? I'm sorry. I think you just misunderstood me. I said a trifle."

Dr. Adams looked at him, frowning, then said, "Alright. You said trifle. But what was all that noise about? And why were you hiding on the floor in a broom closet?"

He didn't answer. What could he say? That he had freaked out again and run away. Away from a classroom full of kids.

Dr. Adams looked at him, then said, "Why don't you just take the rest of the day off? Mr. Tompkins can take the rest of your classes today."

Before he could answer, Dr. Adams continued, "No, no arguing. And don't worry. It'll be okay. Everyone has the jitters the first time they face a classroom."

He licked his lips, then asked, "Do, uh, do you still want me to come back tomorrow?"

Dr. Adams nodded his head, then helped him to his feet. Glancing around, he noticed that he had somehow lost his cane. He asked Dr. Adams if he had seen it. He hadn't.

Keeping his weight against the wall, he allowed Dr. Adams to help him into the hall. There it was, about ten feet from the door. Dr. Adams retrieved it for him.

As he limped away, Dr. Adams told him once again to get some rest and not to worry about today. He mumbled something, then trudged toward the door and out into the sunlight.

The next morning he was at his desk a full hour earlier. His eyes were red from lack of sleep and his stomach growled. A slight pounding echoed in his head and his mouth tasted like a stale cigarette.

As he waited for the first student to arrive, he thought about yesterday's fiasco for the hundredth time. Little beads of sweat popped out on his brow but he didn't notice, not even when they trailed down into his eyes. What had he done wrong? What? Was it him? They had told him that it wasn't his fault! They had told him that! He hadn't meant for them to die! It hadn't been his fault! It hadn't!

behind you lookit behind you more of them more more get down can't get down got to run got to run snake get over there keep firing keep firing don't just throw your rifle down keep firing or i'll put a bullet through you myself the little bastards are every watch out keep together move back move back keep together lay down some fire there air support keep it up saved back until keep it hit hit medic told you get you out alive some of you half ten kidding more that two more died no not true not true fortyeight dead fifty mygodno...

"Well, well, well. Lookit who's back again."

He looked up into the eyes of Leroy and felt panic take hold of his mind. No! Not this time. I will not! I will not!

He looked beyond Leroy and saw that most of the class had trooped into the room. How had they come in without his knowing?

They were looking at him again! With that same kind of look! Can't they understand that he had a job to do! It wasn't his fault! It wasn't!

...sgt stark honored to present medal of honor valor above beyond duty but they died all but two fiftysix kids died medal of honor nononono grab him grab him all right mr stark 'scuse sgt stark not your fault we know medal of honor means nothing nothing all dead but two but two all kids kids kids don't belong marines kids dead medal honor dead dead dead not fault medal dead jungle vc dead kids medal...

"You gonna space out like you did yest' day?"

The rest of the kids had surrounded his desk. They were all staring at him. Sneering at him. Waiting for him to crack again.

Then they walked to their seats. Turning, he saw Dr. Adams standing in the doorway, frowning.

He looked from Dr. Adams to the kids, then cleared his throat.

"Uh, I believe that today's assignment is still *The Veldt*. Page 213."

Dr. Adams asked, "Is everything okay?"

He nodded, then said, "Er, I believe so. Yes, I think so."

Dr. Adams turned to the class, "I'm warning you right now. I don't want to hear of any of your tricks today. Got it? Especially you, Leroy! And you, Scat! And you, Thompson!"

The three mumbled something about not doing anything, then were silent. But their eyes weren't. As soon as Dr. Adams turned and left the room, they turned their eyes on him again. And their eyes were talking! How they were talking!

He shivered, then tried to smile. He couldn't. Taking a deep breath, he said, "All right, who wants to read first?"

No one answered. Not again! Not again!

"I said, who wants to read first?"

They jerked with surprise at the authority in his voice. He was surprised at the authority in his voice. Did he say that? Was that his voice?

Leroy, with a troubled look in his eyes, said, "Man, nobody here knows how to read. Why don'tcha just lay off us?"

The others looked confused too. Why?

Another student, the one who had held the knife yesterday, added, "Yeah, man. Nobody knows nothin' 'bout no reading noway. 'Sides, what's the use of reading' 'bout a-a whatever-ya-call-it?"

He looked at the class. They weren't threatening him! Was it because of Dr. Adams? No. Dr. Adams wasn't standing in the door any longer. Were they afraid of Dr. Adams? And his threats?

He smiled, then said, "It's *The Veldt*. And there are plenty of reasons to read it."

"Name one."

He smiled again. They acted like they were going to listen to him today.

"Well, for one thing it's about communication. Or the lack of it. And misplaced love."

One of the students jeered, "Ole Leroy knows about misplaced love. He's gotta have more li'l misplaced Leroy's runnin' 'round than they is weeks in the year."

"Watch your mouth, sucker!"

He stood, clutching the desk, and shouted, "That's enough of that! Now quiet down! All of you!"

Leroy's eyes burned a hole through him, "Man, he bad-mouthed me. Ain't nobody can do that to me!"

"Leroy, I want you to take your seat. Now."

Leroy glared at him, then started to sit, but as he did the one who had mocked him snickered. Leroy jumped to his feet and lunged for the boy. In his haste he banged into another student, causing him to fall from his seat. Then the whole class was into it.

He stood at his desk, not knowing what to do. It was happening again! Again! He wouldn't let it! They were going to listen to him this time! They would! They would!

He shouted, "All of you, back to your seats! Now!"

But no one paid any attention to him.

"I said in your seats!"

Half of the class members were pushing and punching at each other. The rest were standing against the wall, egging them on.

He had to stop them! He had to get them to listen! He'd make them listen! They weren't going to die! Not this time!

He limped around his desk and pushed in between two students. A fist came from out of nowhere and sent him rocking back on his heels. Someone kicked his left leg, sending pain racing through his body. He felt something hot strike his hip and when he looked he saw blood. And a knife glistening. ...all died because wouldn't listen wouldn't listen to me tried to tell them died wouldn't listen wouldn't listen not my fault not my fault died kids fault...

There was silence broken only by a few moans. He looked around and saw that the kids were all staring at him, their mouths open. Leroy lay at his feet, a dazed expression on his face. . . . In the corner lay another student, holding his arm against his chest and rocking back and forth, moaning to himself.

"What in hell is going on in here!"

He turned and saw Dr. Adams standing in the doorway. Before he could say anything, Dr. Adams stormed into the room and repeated, "What the hell is going on! It sounded like World War Three! Mr. Stark, are you all right? There's blood on your shirt! What happened?"

He looked down at his shirt. There was blood on it. And on his arm.

"What are you doing with that knife?"

Knife? Where? He looked around the room, at the kids, but he didn't see any knife. Wait! It was in his hand. How had it gotten there?

He looked back to Dr. Adams.

"I-I. They wouldn't listen! They wouldn't listen to me! It wasn't my fault! They wouldn't listen!"

He stood there, a knife in his right hand and his cane in his left. Voices, screams, cries of terror and anguish tore through his head. Then one long scream. His own.

Thrusting past Dr. Adams, he hobbled through the door and down the hallway. He couldn't let them catch him! He couldn't bear to see their parents' eyes anymore! He couldn't! But he always did. Especially at night. When he slept. Those eyes, all blaming him! But it wasn't his fault! It wasn't! They just hadn't listened to him!

He found himself in a cold, sterile room. There were mirrors on the wall. In each mirror was a face, and they were all staring at him! Blaming him! Why had he lived when so many had died! And all so young! So young! It wasn't right! Not for him to live when they had died!

He backed into a corner and covered his head with his arms as if warding off those eyes. Then the voices started.

"Stark? Where are you?"

"Stark! Come out!"

"Mr. Stark, you need help. Please call out to us."

But he wasn't going to be tricked! He knew they all blamed him. But it

wasn't his fault! It wasn't! He lifted his head and saw the eyes staring at him. Still staring. Why wouldn't they leave him alone? He had said he was sorry, hadn't he? Hadn't he?

He looked down and saw the knife lying on the floor beside him. Its cruel blade mocking him! Mocking him! Just like the eyes. And the voices!

Touching it with a finger, he felt the cold, hard blade. What was on it? Was it blood? Was it the blood of those kids? Was it?

He screamed, "Nooooooooo!"

Grabbing the knife in his right hand he brought it before his face. Little tiny eyes stared back at him. Even there!

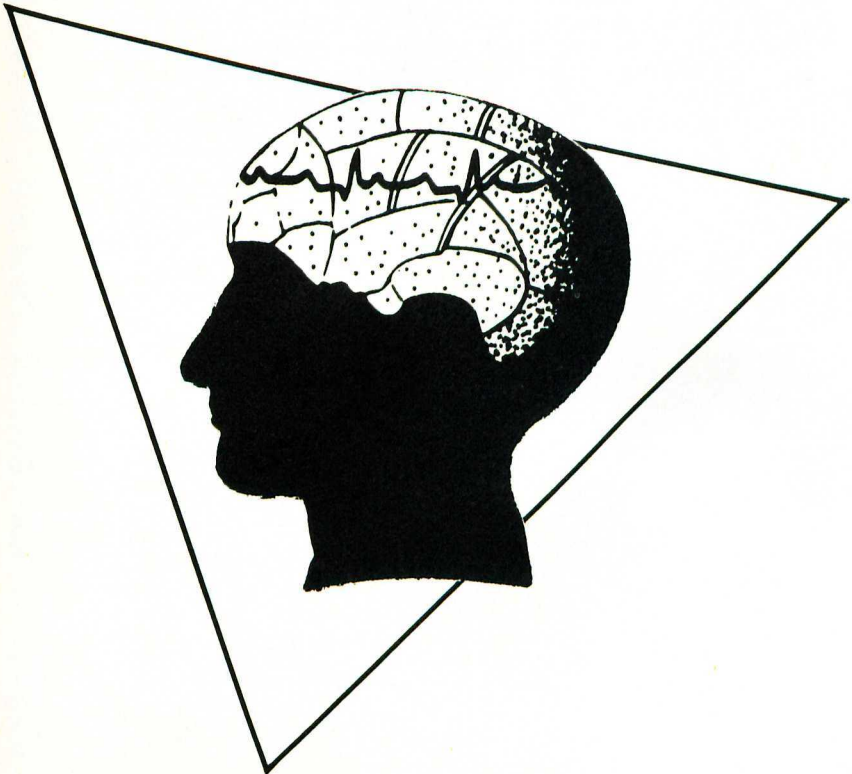
He heard voices! Coming closer, closer, closer. He wouldn't listen to them any more. He couldn't! He couldn't!

Bringing the knife to his chest he counted up four ribs, then paused for a second.

"It wasn't my fault. It wasn't! Please, God, tell them it wasn't my fault."

Then the voices became louder. "Mr. Stark, are you in there? Mr. Stark, are you there?"

Then the voices were no more.





Untitled: #15

by Shawn Stroud

People change just
like leaves when time frosts tree
limbs. Age perches

On one like
late snow: January elms are
the loneliest trees,

Reaching out
over empty evening fields
As I do. . .

To you.

HAIKU

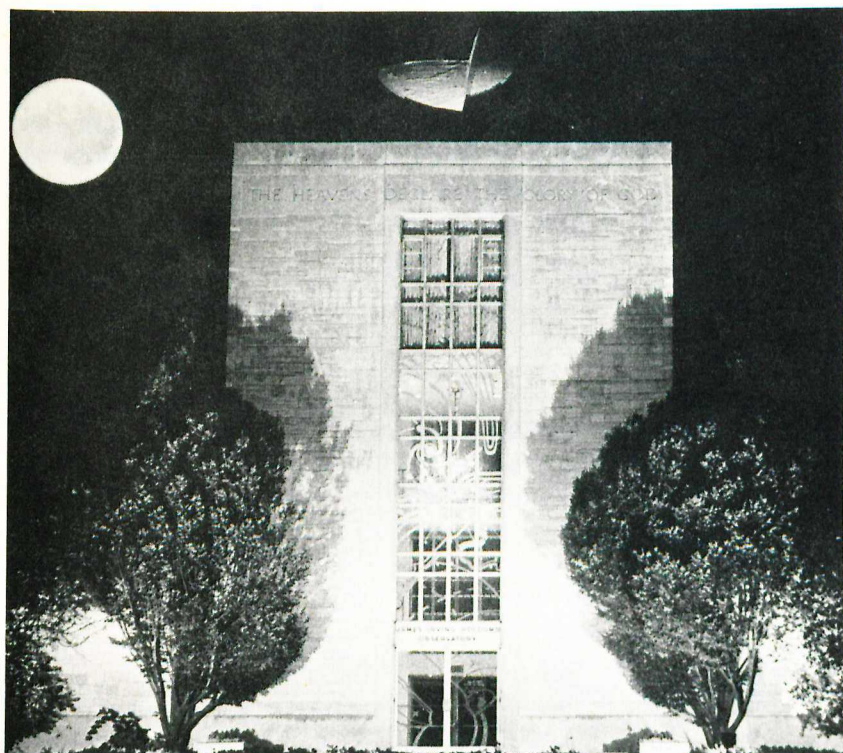
by Craig Pierce

POSSUM

Possum playing dead,
only the headlights coming
call the possum's bluff.

SKYSCRAPERS

Skyscrapers tower
above the meek humanity
scurrying about.



ART CREDITS

page 4 Mr. Bob Stalcup
page 6 Chuck Gard
page 9 Chuck Gard
page 15 Lisa Wagner
page 16 Chuck Gard
page 17 Robert Roach
page 20 Ute Finch
page 24 Alfred Ironside
page 30 Ute Finch
page 36 Tim Levandoski
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page 53 Rich Miller

THE USE OF LITERATURE

The use of literature
Lies in its conveyance of every truth.
It expands the horizon to make space infinite,
And serves as a bridge that spans a myriad years.
It maps all roads and paths for posterity,
And mirrors the images of worthy ancients,
That the tottering Edifices of the sage kings of antiquity may be
 reared again,
And their admonishing voices, wind-borne since of yore, may resume
 full exppression.
No regions are too remote but it pervades,
No truth too subtle to be woven into its vast web.
Like mist and rain, it permeates and nourishes,
And manifests all the powers of transformation in which gods and
 spirits share.
Virtue it makes endure and radiate on brass and stone,
And resound in an eternal stream of melodies ever renewed on
 pipes and strings.

Translated by Shih-hsiang Chen
From *Essay on Literature*, "The Use of
Literature," by Lu Chi, 300 A.D.