

Fall 1981

## PenQuest Volume 1, Number 2

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Judith Gallo

Charles Riddles

Jerry Connell

Laura Woods

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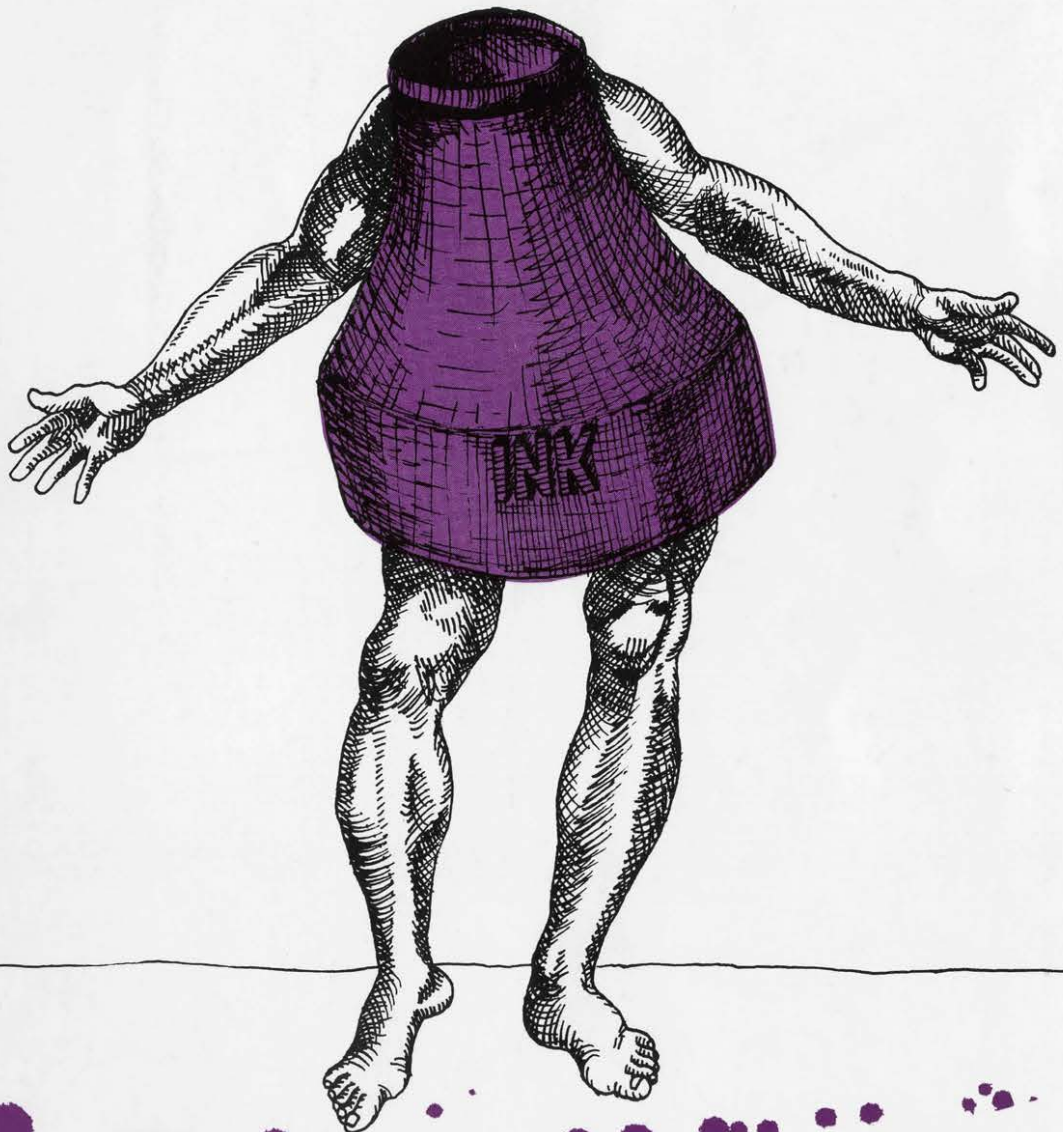
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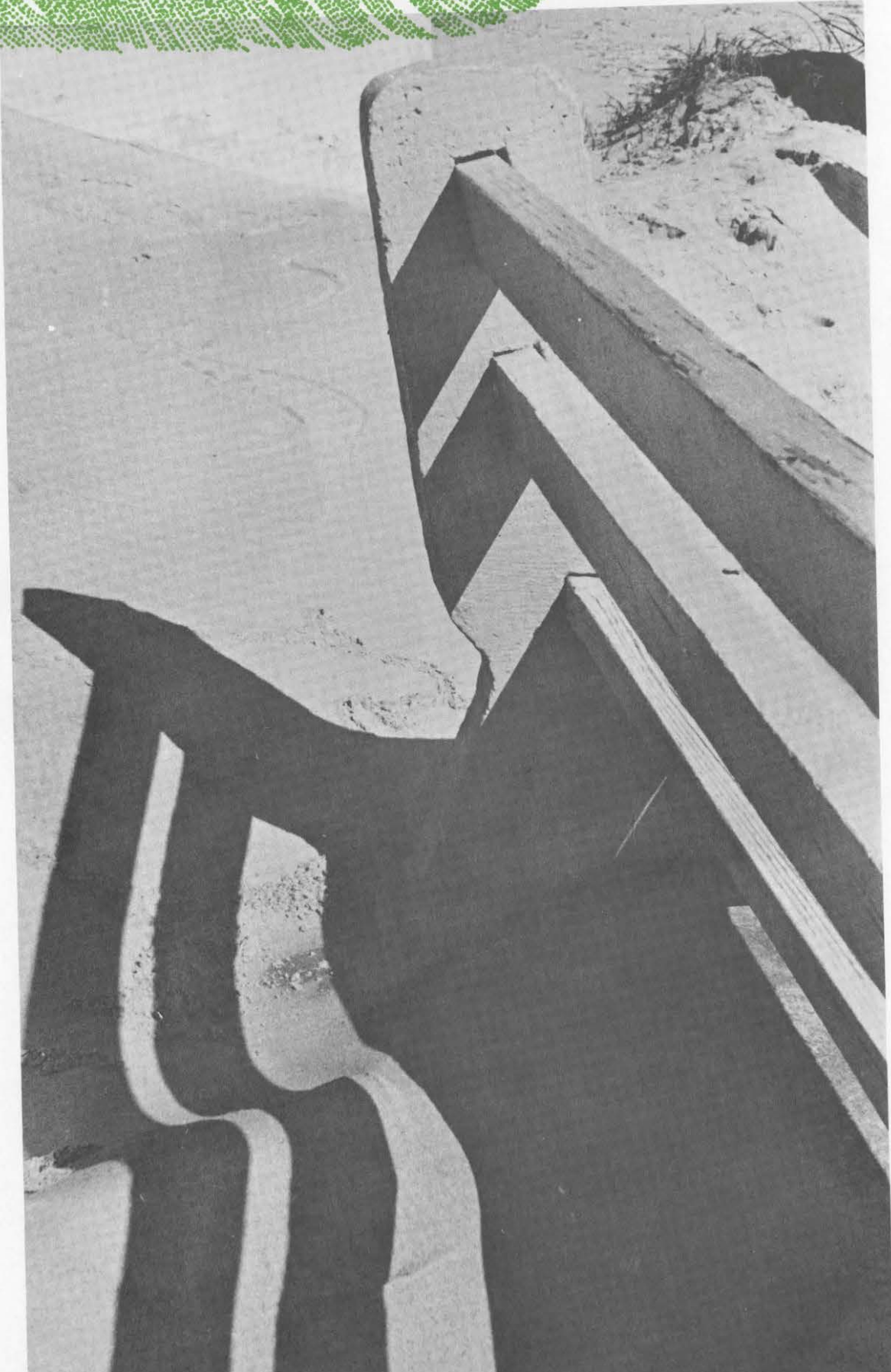
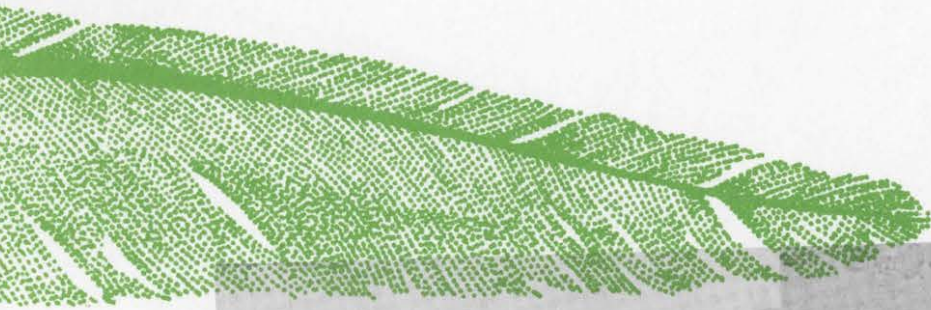
# Pen Quest

Vol.1 No. 2, Fall 1981



K. Blumberg

Julie Ambrose



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**PENQUEST is designed to provide a showcase for student creativity in the fields of literature and graphic arts.**

**The staff would like to thank all those who contributed to this issue, both in creative material, time, and moral support. We also encourage the continuing cooperation of both students and faculty, with the hope that this magazine will remain operative at UNF.**

**Unfortunately, because of lack of space, we have been unable to include all the material that has been submitted to us.**

**But again, we want to thank all for their interest.**

**Contributions can be submitted to the Language and Literature Department in Building Eight, room 2649.**

**Submissions should include your name, address, and phone number.**

**No submissions can be returned, so be sure to keep a copy of your work.**

## Night

In the night  
Familiar objects in my room  
Shed their commonplace disguises  
And take threatening poses.  
The black shapes of chair and dresser  
Grow and grow  
until their evil edges  
Join the darkness.  
The clock face glows  
Green and mocking.  
The mirror, too,  
is changed and changing  
To reflect hollow eyes  
In the face of a pale stanger.

By Judith Gallo

**the shamans**

in januarys season  
two wild duckssit in sunlight  
on the south bank  
of a lake

their gold and green feathers  
shine in the sun  
the sheen  
of burnished brass

their heads reversed  
beaks tucked into back feathers  
breathing warmth

they sit  
with open eyes  
midst twigs  
cigarette butts  
and cold mud  
open eyes  
seeing  
samadhic stares  
their tracks come  
from the water

Charles Riddles



Jerry Connell



Laura Woods





## Wicked Bird

which stole its way  
into my house silent with sleep.  
You danced your wickedness  
around my windows;  
your scratchey, three-toed feet  
wearing the curtains  
threadbare before their time.  
Black feathers tipped with gray  
brushed against the ceiling  
until the plaster flaked and fell,  
exposing the cobwebbed darkness  
sleeping fitful dreams  
in the attic.

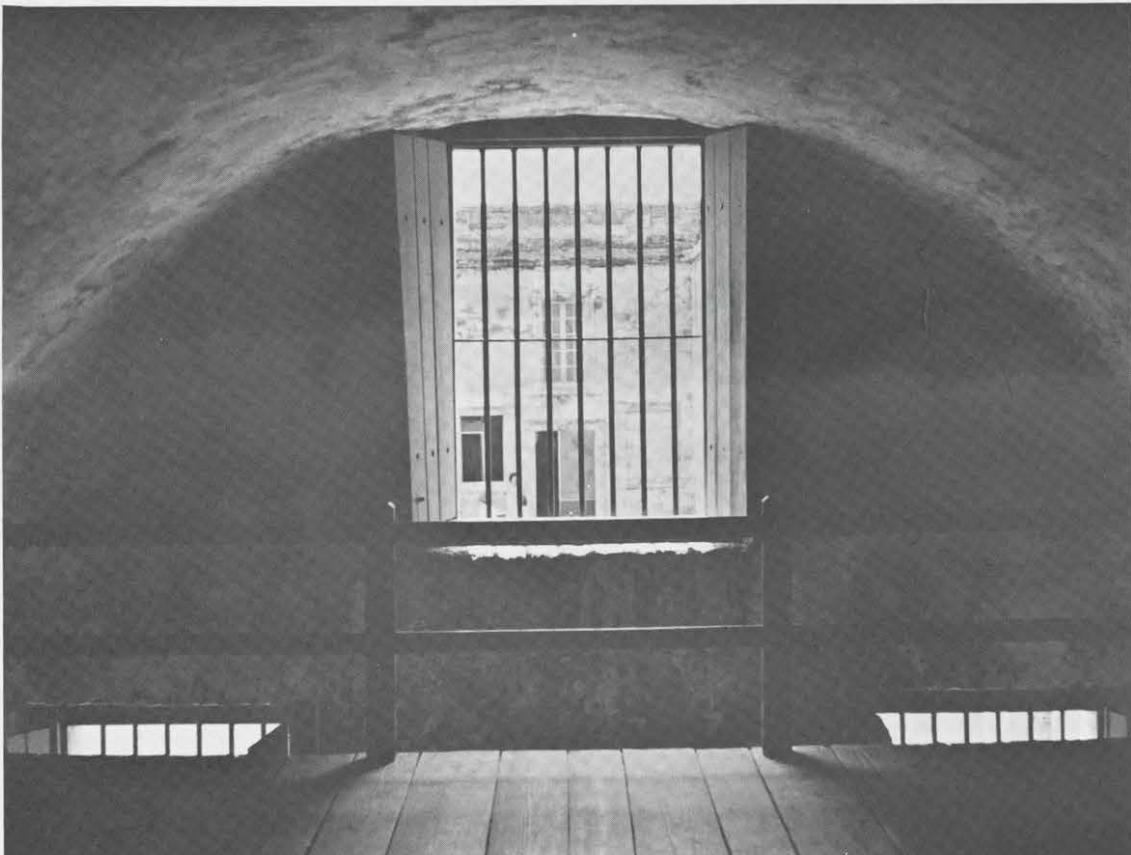
Wicked bird,  
which leached my house  
of untried blood red as  
the heat of the sun,  
you picked among my ruins  
until the columns lay  
crumbled at your feet.  
And now you circle the remains,  
your two-pronged beak clicking,  
your wild eyes unable to see  
that what is left is surrendered.  
For dreamers never abandon dreaming;  
only dreams overgrown with intrusion

of weeds and wicked birds.

By Laura Jo Last



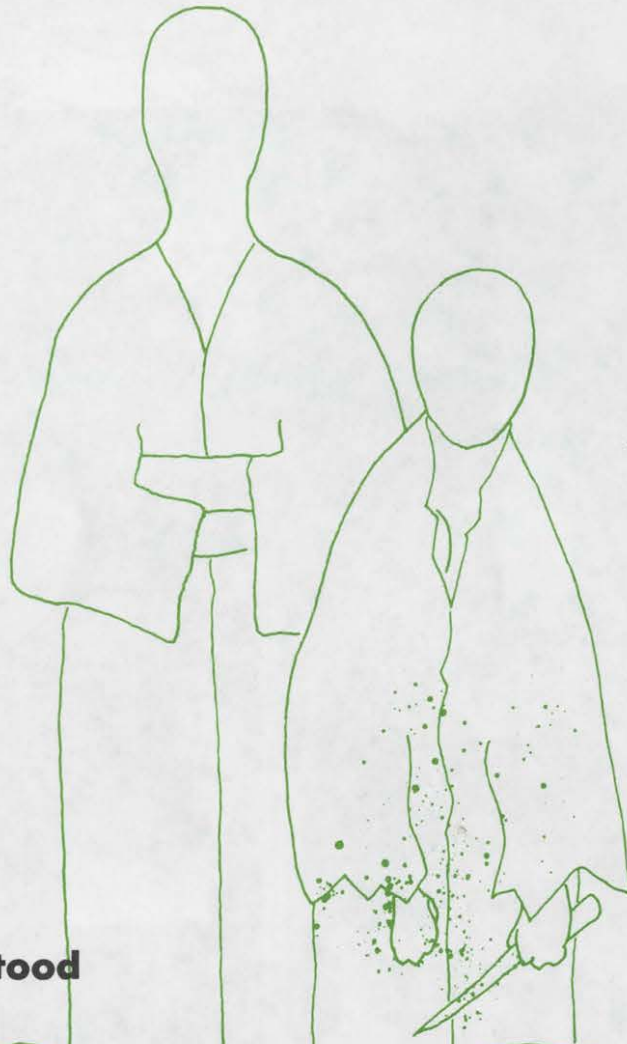
**Rick Dentos**



**Jeni Moody**



Bettie W. Kwibs



## The Protector Stood

Joann Stagg

tall, silent beside the altar;  
arms crossed in reverence;  
directing the priestess-ewe  
through the high mass  
with a nod, a neutral smile  
and the flash of his eyes.

Yes, his eyes told her,

yes, lift the knife  
with its cunt-cutting blade,  
place it there,  
there,  
yes, there

The priestess-ewe obeyed  
in faithful, keeping rhythm.  
Blood splurged clitoric red  
on her tattered shroud  
dousing the fire in his eyes  
to an eerie calm,

unaware was he  
that the fig tree dies not  
when its fruit is plucked  
or fucked and falls over-ripened  
from its branch

They played the ritual  
over and over—  
the protector and his priestess-ewe.  
The same. The same. Always the same. Until  
her hands passed over there,  
raising the knife to her side;  
blue steel separating supple flesh;  
free hand lost with knife inside,  
producing from the wound  
the bone. The Bone. The BONE.  
The protector's rib

shaking hands of uncrossed arms;  
eyes choked unspeaking with panic;  
a sure and gentle hand encloses  
the palsied grip around  
the unprotector's rib

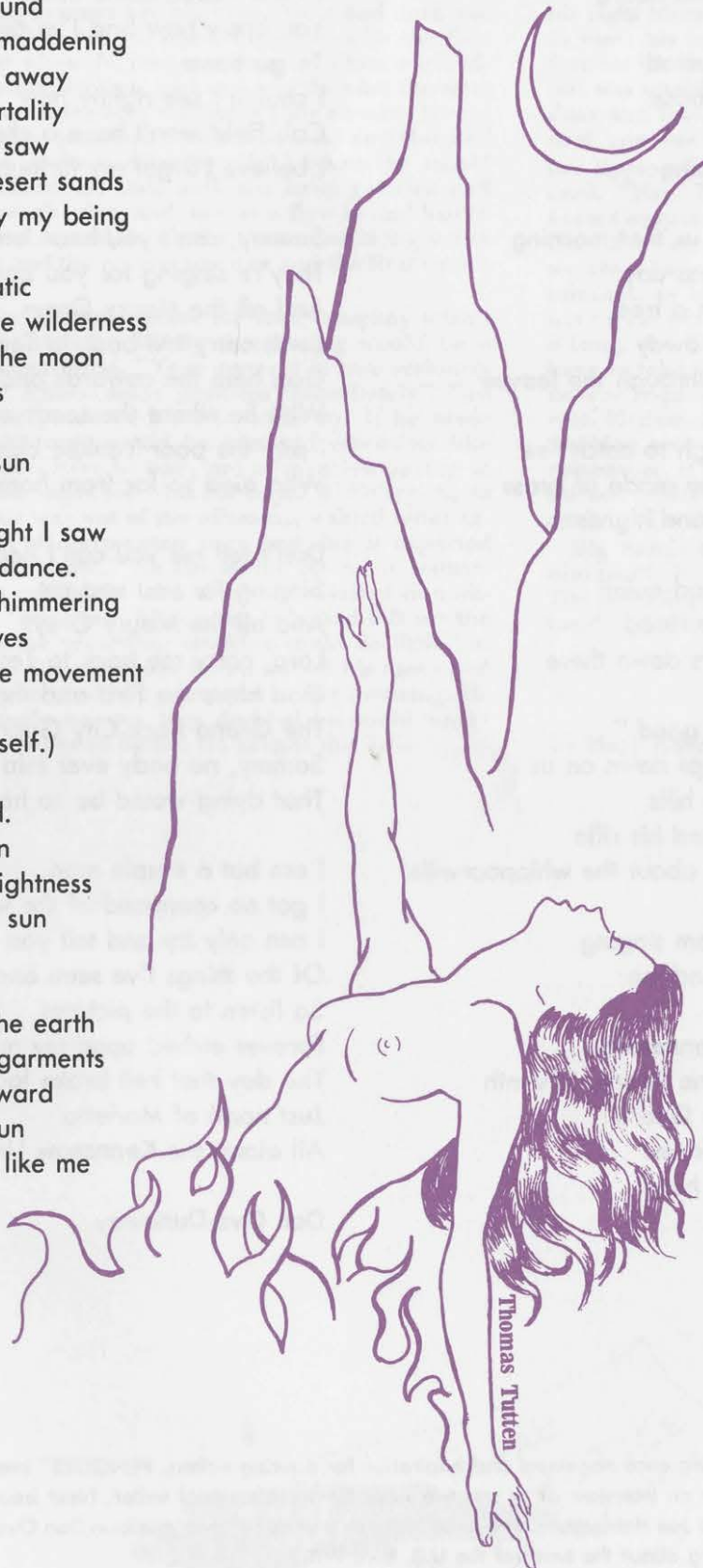
By Laura Jo Last

## Visions of Salome

Once I wandered  
in desert places  
where mountains  
airy prominences  
shot skyward to heaven  
visionary I found  
the blinding maddening  
light burning away  
fetters of mortality  
God's face I saw  
in burning desert sands  
burning away my being  
I wandered  
a raving lunatic  
through sterile wilderness  
hiding from the moon  
in dark caves  
seeking only  
the burning sun

(Once I thought I saw  
the universe dance.  
It was only shimmering  
sun heat waves  
that made the movement  
thus I spake  
myself to myself.)

Years passed.  
I saw the Son  
He whose brightness  
outshone the sun  
He who  
like the sun  
rose out of the earth  
In glistening garments  
shooting skyward  
toward the sun  
He who was like me  
all of fire  
all of fire



In strange dark dreams  
not born of desert's  
bright heat  
I again saw  
the universal dance  
embodied  
in moon-pale flesh  
white limbs  
weaving intricate patterns  
on cold marble floors  
hands and feet fluttering  
around me  
like white moths  
circling a flame  
in darkness.  
I awoke in terror  
of truth  
again and again  
visions  
strange dark dreams  
rode me  
the dancer  
shedding flesh and blood  
stripping down  
to a death's head  
evil grin.

(I woke from waking  
to see  
the moon's pale cold light  
dancing on passive pools  
like the sun's heat haze  
on sand)

But how different, this dance  
I will not will not will not  
acknowledge you  
dancer in darkness  
gleaming virginal limbs  
weaving the web of my fate.

O you death-breathed murderess  
I toss and turn  
wake to dreaming  
my head rolling  
in its last nightmare  
and still even now  
you woo me  
with your lies  
and I and I  
despair.

## Kennesaw Line

I am but a simple man  
I got no command of the written word  
I can only try and tell you  
Of the things I've seen and heard  
So listen to the pictures  
Forever etched upon my mind  
The day that hell broke loose  
Just north of Marietta  
All along the Kennesaw Line

The sun rose high above us that morning  
On a clear and a cloudless day  
A peckerwood tapped on a tree  
That would soon be shot away  
The heat blistered down through the leaves  
On the trees  
The air seemed hot enough to catch fire  
The heavens seemed to be made of brass  
And the sun rose higher and higher

Everything got real still and quiet  
My old mess-mate Walter Hood  
Says "I believe them boys down there  
Are up to something  
And I know it's no damn good."  
The storm broke and swept down on us  
And rumbled through the hills  
Walter sighed and dropped his rifle  
He said something to me about the whippoorwills

Sammy, can't you hear 'em singing  
They're singing for you and me  
And all the Maury Greys  
Lord, carry me back to Tennessee  
God bless the First and the Twenty-Seventh  
And the Grand Rock City Guard  
Sammy, no body ever told me  
That dying would be this hard

Sammy, I think I'm hurted real bad  
Ain't this a hell of a day  
You best go and leave me be now  
I think I need some time to pray  
You know how bad I've been wanting  
To go home  
I couldn't see rightly how  
Col. Field won't have a choice this time  
I believe I'll get my furlough now

Sammy, can't you hear 'em singing  
They're singing for you and me  
And all the Maury Greys  
Lord, carry me back to Tennessee  
God help the cowards and the brave alike  
Who lie where the seeds of death are sown  
I pity the poor Yankee bastards  
Who died so far from home

Don't tell me you can't hear 'em  
Singing for you and me  
And all the Maury Greys  
Lord, carry me back to Tennessee  
God bless the First and the Twenty-Seventh  
The Grand Rock City Guard  
Sammy, no body ever told me  
That dying would be so hard

I am but a simple man  
I got no command of the written word  
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All along the Kennesaw Line.

Don Ova-Dunaway

As a means of providing encouragement and inspiration for aspiring writers, PENQUEST intends to feature in each issue either an interview of or creative work by a professional writer. Next issue will carry an interview with novelist Joe Haldemann. This issue features a work by poet/musician Don Ova-Dunaway, who specializes in writing about the times of the U.S. Civil War.

# Stone Blood

It was all so easy. Just sign a few papers and there was a big fat check in your hand. It had paid all the immediate bills and there'd been enough for that trip to Vegas he'd been promising the old lady. Anything to quiet her bitching. Not a bad deal, not a bad deal at all. He was a little late with the first payment when the loan company sent him a friendly reminder. In fact, that was exactly what the note said. "Just a friendly reminder your account is now several days past due." He balled it up and chucked it at the garbage disposer. He'd make the stupid thing tomorrow. But, well, the baby got sick and had to see the doc, and, the boss flew in and had to be treated to a night on the town. One thing led to another and the second was due and the first wasn't made yet.

The second letter from the loan company wasn't quite so friendly. Mildly threatening would be a better description. "Your account is now seriously overdue. Please make payment immediately" Two payments would be hard to come by. If he made them, the rent would be late and essentials like food would have to wait, not to mention having to cancel his night out with the boys. While trying to figure his way out of the dilemma, a third letter arrived. "Full payment on your past due is expected within 48 hours." He almost hit the panic button. A quick call to the loan company resulted in nothing but frustration. All human help had left for the day and the recording machine could do little but offer him the assurance that if he left his name and number he would be contacted in the morning. He felt vaguely uneasy, but, decided he could worry about it better at home. He caught the 3:15.

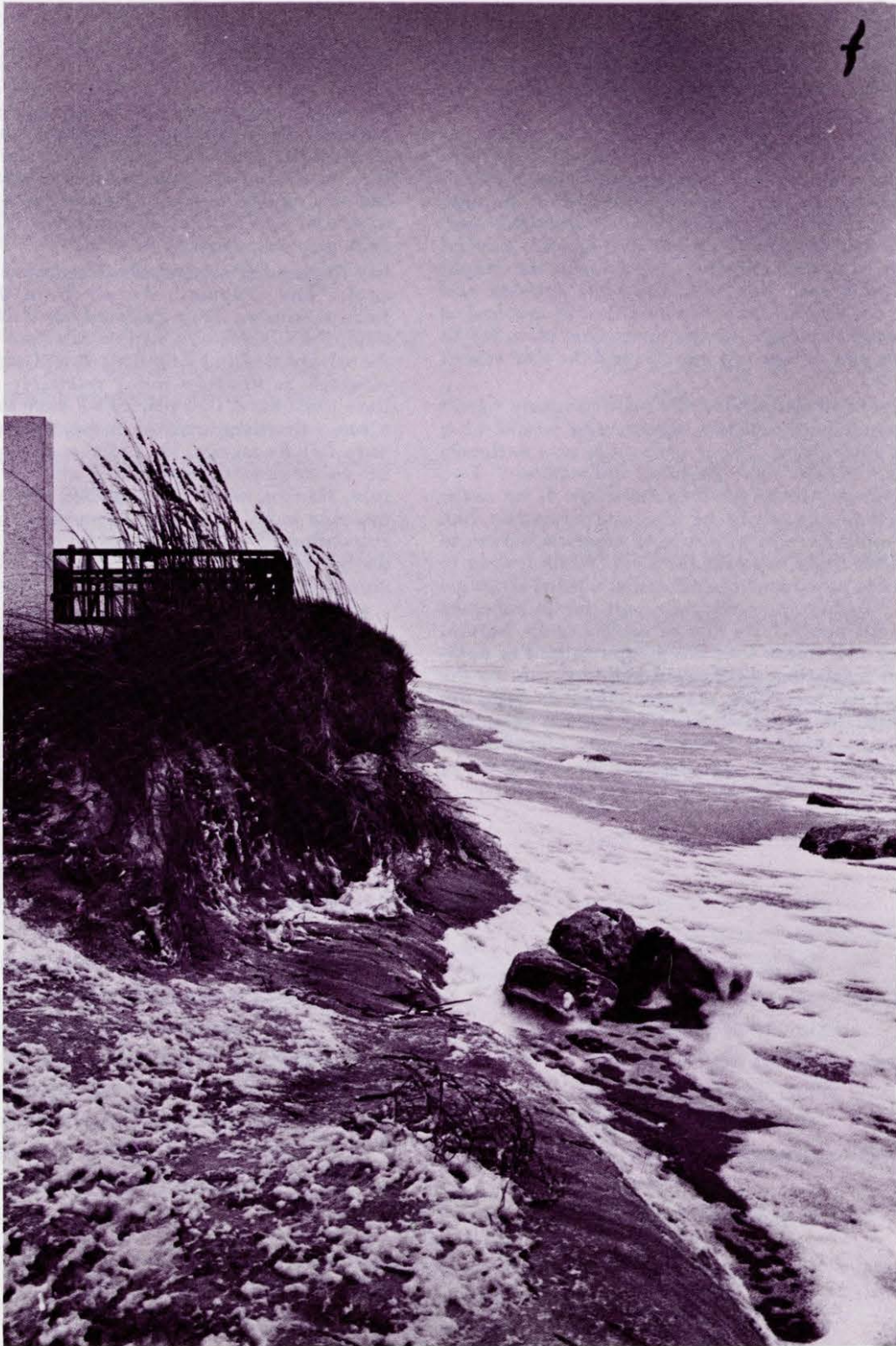
As he turned the doorknob he felt a touch on his shoulder. "Mr. Jack Thomas?" He answered, "Yes," automatically, and knew it was a mistake as the words left his mouth. He felt a sharp sting on his right bicep and then the ground was coming up to meet his face. Two giant hands caught him before he hit the dirt. He could see, hear and think, but was unable to move. He saw his wife open the door and look at him in confusion. Then a small, dark guy was standing next to

her tipping his hat and handing her a small, white card. "Mrs. Thomas? We are from the All Parts Loan Company. Your husband has defaulted on his loan, I'm sorry to say, and we are here to collect, as we are entitled to by the law. It will only take a few minutes, as his loan was a relatively small one. I have a list here. Oh, yes, all we have to remove are a lung, the liver and the heart. Oh, wait, we also have to take an eye. He added some to the amount he was requesting, something about a trip. At any rate, Madam, he will be returned to you with all remaining parts intact and in working order. Please remember, if you have financial need in the future, do not hesitate to call on us." He tipped his hat again and walked out of Thomas' view.

Big hands dragged him along and then placed him gently in the back of what looked like a hearse. The last thing he saw was his wife slowly raising her hand and reading the card she still held.

by Mary Ellen C. Wofford





C. Wingate





Doug Dorey



Music  
and demons  
eating rice  
in chinese dreams  
virile men  
with hairy  
faces  
masturbating and crying  
at night  
alone

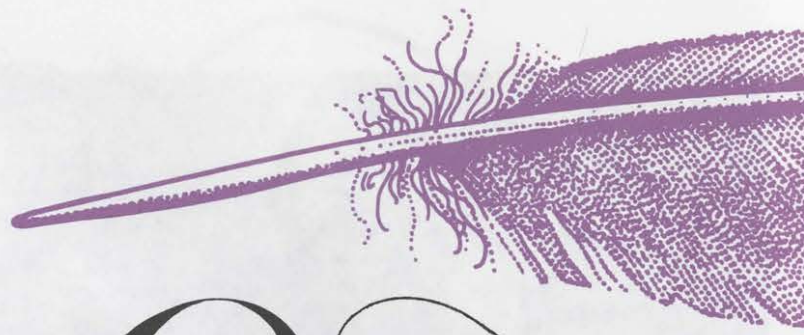
in the house of  
their aging mothers  
who leave on a light in the bathroom still so they do not stumble  
or catch a venereal disease when they are unaware  
of the trolls underneath their beds so they must jump  
to be safe between the sheets where their swollen wives lay  
with a wee one kicking  
fighting  
silent

rotting in the amniotic fluid  
making the house reek unpleasantly  
What would mother say?

by Beverly Oviatt



*Virginia Shriver*



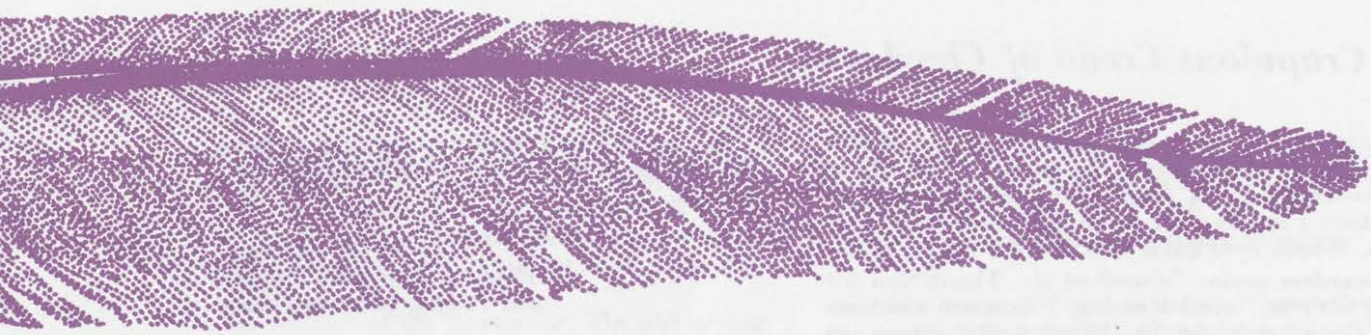
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*Reappears  
in the Spring*

## *The Crapulous Credo of Charles C.*

Disembarking from this perilous plane. Which has transported me across the ocean to this city in the southern U.S. of America. Called Stonewallville. Where I must smear and smite these randy red-necks. Whose eyes burn with lust for my money.

Stewardess saying "Goodbye sir. Thank you for flying with us." And I saying " You are welcome Miss. On a lovely day like this." And she eyes my retreating back. That such an elegant gentleman speaks courteously to her.

Entering the air terminal. Crowds are shuffling. And bumping each other out of the way at the baggage stand. Where I retrieve my suitcase containing clothes and pounds of papers.

In this large country transportation must be had. So much bigger than little Ireland. I go to the Rent-a-car to speak to the smiling young lady and make my needs known. So that they may be fulfilled post-haste. And she saying " Im afraid a vehicle of that description will take a few minutes sir. If you can come back in half an hour. And leave a deposit." And I pull out my notecase. And give her a hundred dollar bill. So that my will may be done.

A large sign flashing COCKTAILS. A cozy nook to wait and plan strategy. And consume a double Haig and Haig. Which costs me four dollars. In this land of opportunity.

Fingers feeling the letter in my pocket. Which says these words. In its threatening long yellow envelope.

*The year of our Lord  
Stonewallville USA*

Dear Mr. C

*Inasmuch as and heretofore we are behooved to inform you that your sins are not unnoticed. Your slanderment of our fair city in your recent interview on CBS television has, we are informed by Chamber of Commerce, cost many dollars in tourist trade, as who would want to go to a city that has been called by you the Chamber-Pot of the South?*

*Beside all this lamentable loss of revenue, the mayor of our town, the Right Most Very Honorable Massa Cap'n Boss Zeke Boldhogg, has been occasioned a severe attack of hives and hemmorhoids as a direct result of your scurrilous statement, and has also been rendered allergic to wet paint, preventing him the exercisement of his principle duties.*

*Henceforth and insofar as the abovementioned, this firm has been empowered to seek settlement of \$235,000.34 in partial recompense for your vile slanderment, as we know you are a wealthy man who can afford it, besides the fact that you are a dastardly foreigner who has bad-mouthed the South.*

*We hope you will desire to see justice done, and will acquiesce in the admittment of your wrongs.*

*Yours for fair play,  
Bleeder, Cheetum, Bitcher  
and Poope, Lawyers-at-Law*

And not a pence will they get out of me. Because the best defense is the truth. Which I have always told. Even on CBS television. Who do they think they are to get any of my money. Who worked so hard to make it. And wasbrought up in the Bronx. Where I was sneered at by my neighbors because my father drank. Until I went back to the land of my ancestors and became rich and famous. And when I returned to visit New York, the former sneerers called me Mr and asked me to dinner. And I laughed in their faces. And in Dublin when I first arrived I bought a can of corn. And rationed myself nine kernels each meal. Because I was so poor. And now every son of a bitch that can write sends me letters. Wanting a piece of my pile. Which they will not get.

A half hour elapsed. Leaving the refuge of COCKTAILS, I am accosted by an unpleasant man. Who carries a big black Bible. And asks me:

"Are you saved."

"From what."

"Have you let Jesus into your heart."

"No."

"Wont you kneel down right here and now and pray with me."

"No."

"I saw you coming out of that nasty old lounge. Wont you repent of your sins and join us in worship at the First Baptist Church, the largest Sunday School in the South."

"How dare you interfere unasked into my affairs."

"O sir, I am concerned for your soul. You are a sinner and are going to the hot place. You have strayed from the straight and narrow."

"I will make my foot stray into your arse, you sneaky little bastard."

"O my dear friend. Admit that you are a sinner."

"I am a sinner. I am a boozier and a wastrel. I beat my wife and children. In my misspent youth I swived the bung-holes of beer barrels, as well as empty Cork Gin bottles, large size. At college, I whored and cheated at cards. And prowled the quays for old men. Whom I invited to sport with me in my rooms. And hope someday to commit murder. Now are you happy."

Bible toting man shrinking back from this madman.

"You are bound for hell. You are unclean. Unclean."

Charles C. moving toward him. With threateningly elavated boot. The man cowering. And swiftly turning to run. Over his shoulder as he goes calling "Hell bound sinner. Unclean. Repent."

Mr. C. walking back to the Rent-a-car. Nasty little sneaking fart-faced bastard. Who called me unclean. When I bathe every day. Sometimes twice. Would that I had carried my gnarled briar cane. Good for punishing such offenders against the dignity of man.

At the counter of the Rent-a-car. The girl saying "Yes your car is ready, Mr. C. Just sign here and here." Putting name on paper. And carrying my bag to the huge black limozine drawn up at the kerb. Its motor quietly purring. And it has three seats. I like plenty of room. And respect from other motorists. Putting bag on middle seat, seating self in front and purring away. To climb swiftly the entrance ramp to the expressway. That will take me to a hotel. Now lets just see how fast the limozine will go. Mr. C. pressing gas pedal to floor. Car leaping ahead, outdistancing other traffic. Which hoots horns angrily at the presumption of this black behemoth of a car. Who does he think he is.

Mr. C. happy for a fleeting moment. Til an irritating sound intrudes upon his ear. Sounds like a banshee. Lights flashing blue behind the limozine. Whoops. Must have been going a trifle over the speed limit. Pull over to the side and stop. As with derisive hoots of horns, motorists whom I have passed go by in great glee. Sons of bitches everyone. An Officer of the Law approaching my window. "OK buddy where were you going and why so fast."

"Where I am going is my own business."

"It may or may not be your own business buddy."

"I assure you it is."

"Why were you going so fast."

"Well."

"Come on speak up."

"I may have been speeding a trifle."

"A trifle. You just bet you were. Do you have any idea what the speed limit is."

"Well."

"Its fifty-five. Do you know how fast you were going."

"Sixty."

"Sixty you say. You were going a hundred and ten on the Boulevard of the Beach. Ive chased you for miles."

Mr. C's heart beating faster with glee. At this foolish man. Who has delivered me out of his hands.

"I beg your pardon. I have not been on the Boulevard of the Beach. I have just come from the air terminal. Where I rented this vehicle."

"The hell you say. Just you step out of this vehicle."

Officer going back to the official car to talk on the radio. Coming back. To say:

"Well OK buddy. Youre just very goddam lucky because I just discovered I'm all out of tickets because I've already given out all the ones on my pad so I dont have one left to give you. So go on. But just you watch it."

Mr. C angry at this sham excuse. Why the man doesn't even know how to do his job, I hate incompetence. Throw the fear of God into him.

"Give me your name and badge number."

"What?"

"Your name and badge number immediately. I was proceeding peacefully along the public highway when you retarded my forward motion and subjected me to humiliating and horrendous harrassment. Without due cause."

"Without due cause hell. You were speeding." "On the Boulevard of the Beach you say." "Hell no. How was I gonna know there could be two cars like this."

"You may tell it to your superiors. I have been subjected to stopment without cause. Making me miss an appointment with the Right Most Very Honorable Massa Cap'n Boss Zeke Boldhogg. Your name and badge number."

"Officer Outlaw. Number 714. But you got no right."

"I have every right. And may I hope to see you in church Sunday."

"I go to the First Baptist Church. When I'm off duty. Largest Sunday School in the South."

"Well. At least you realize you are a sinner."

"You bet I do."

"Well. In that case. Have a nice day."

Mr C rolling up window. And proceeding on his way. Laughing merrily to himself. That the tables have been turned on Officer Outlaw. Who will now live in fear for a day or two. That the rich gent with connexions in high places will make mischief for him. Charles C proceeding along the highway at a slower pace. To the downtown area. Where he found the large hotel awaiting his arrival. The black limozine. And his reservation cabled from abroad. Meant he was a somebody. And bell-boys ushered him to his suite. Flinging back drapes, turning on air-conditioner and lights. To receive of his bounty a portion. Mr C. unpacking papers and clothes. An appointment tomorrow with his attorneys. Who would surely put the fear of God into these chiseling rubes. There would be counter-litigation on his part. For aspersion. For he only spoke the truth in saying this town was the piss-pot of the South. And had no malice aforethought. These pious Baptist twisters would be made to defray his expenses. Now it was time to go out for a drink. Because it was good for you and would surely warm the cockles of your heart in this strange town so cold and bare of friendly faces. Where signs on the roadside said Prepare to Meet Thy God. Charles C. strolling along streets. Past a blind man with a guitar and tin cup. Mr C. putting a bill into the cup. Because the blind man sang a little song.

Get rid  
Of grifters  
Give the world  
A gift.

Smite all  
Scoundrels  
Do the world  
Some good.

Shar Cottrell

A bar ahead. Which does not have a flashing neon sign. A quiet place to sit and commune with a drink. Where he would not be bothered. A pleasant faced barmaid. Who smiled at this well-dressed gent who ordered a Bass Ale. And paid with a fifty dollar bill. And then sat and drank in silence. And seemed so content. The Bass Ales are good, thinks Mr C. I shall have several more. The only familiar thing in this god-forsaken town of rubes and grifters and chisellers. Where they spend thousands of dollars painting the surface of streets. To be walked on for only one day. And where they slipped you a tract with one hand and a finger up the arse with the other. A small unloud band began to play. A piano, saxophone, some drums, a bass. Playing small quiet tunes. Mr C. relaxed and unwound. And the pleasant barmaid said "Would you like me to bring you a nice fresh frosted mug with your next one Sir." Mr C. saying "Please." Giving her a ten dollar bill and saying "Keep the change."

An obnoxious red-faced man with black greasy hair sits down next to me. He drinks a cheap canned beer. And tells a story of how he just got out of prison. I say polite things. Wanting only peace. And he tells me of how he cut a man across the face with a razor. And how the blood spurted. Wants me to be impressed. I am silent as he says, "Me number one mean man. Me can pick up girls. Me can fight anybody here."

Mr. C moving away down the bar. And the man calling after him "Whatsamatter buddy. You too good to talk to me." Charles C finding a new seat. Beside a friendly young woman. Who tells him her husband plays in the band.

"Thats him playing the piano. We both go to school. And he plays here and makes extra money. Although his real interest is classical music. Are you a musician."

"I fear not. Just seeking a quiet port in the midst of this stormy world. But I enjoy music. And think your husband plays very well."

"O you speak funny. Are you from out of town."

"Yes. Actually. I now reside in Ireland."

"O how interesting. What do you do. For a living I mean. If you dont mind me asking."

"Not at all. I am a writer. I am well known. My books are in public libraries. I have a farm in Ireland. And a house with an inside swimming pool sixty feet long. As stated in my interview 1975 *Paris Review*, fall volume. And I write for money. And think the world a strange and graceful place."

"O dear. Are you making fun of me."

"No. I assure you. But I know no one here. And have been hounded most savagely since my arrival. By preachers policemen politicians and prisoners."

"O Im sorry."

The obnoxious man. The ex-prisoner. Comes up to Mr. C Says, "Well found a lady friend. Come and dance with me baby." The young lady saying, "No thank you." Ex-prisoner saying, "Aw come on. Dont waste your time with this wimp." Young lady saying "No." And the ex-prisoner says, "Well you arent shit Miss High-class. You stupid slit bitch."

Charles C inflamed with rage.

"How dare you speak to this young lady like that. When we were having a quiet talk. And her husband playing in the band."

"Are you trying to give me problems buddy. You stuff-shirt bastard. You think youre better than me."

"I know I am. You mindless ape. Leave the presence of myself and this young lady. I warn you."

The man sizing up Mr C. Thinking me a well-dressed wimp who can be pushed around. When I only desire peace. Doesnt know I was the golden gloves champion of the Bronx in my youth. With fourteen straight knock-outs. Thinks he can beat me up. And I know better. And will tell him so. In fair warning.

"Leave this establishment at once. Or I will be forced to belt the top of your greasy head so hard youll have to open your shirt to eat."

The man pretending to be scared. So he can try an old trick. Thinks I am a rube. Doesnt know I have fought in every pub in Dublin. The man turning around as if to leave. Saying "OK OK calm down." And then wheeling swiftly. Swinging for my face with his fist. Which I am expecting. And I catch his fist in my left hand. Twist it as hard as I can. Hear bones crack. As with my right I fill his mouth. With a knuckle sandwich. Teeth coming out. And rattling on the bar like dice. Evil man falling down on the floor and screaming.

"Ill kill you. Youve hurt me. Im not an ex-con. I teach Sunday School at the First Baptist Church. O God."

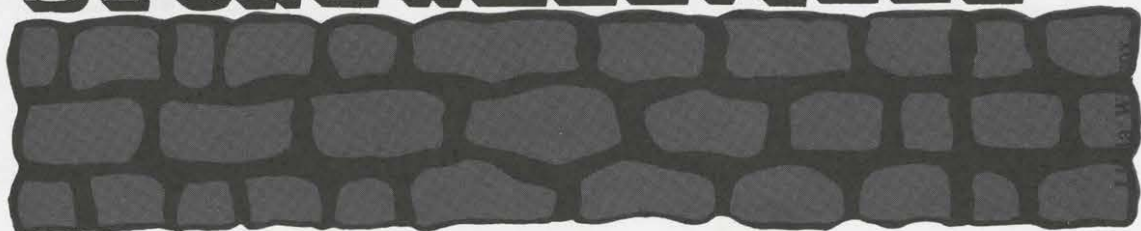
Faces staring at Mr. C. Who stamps the wicked mans unhurt hand hard with the heel of his boot. On the way out. Make sure he wont punch anybody for a while. Mr C out the door. Dodging around a corner. Away from the carnage. And he had to come in just when I was beginning to feel a little at home. In this city of shysters. My knuckles bleeding. Walking in the darkness. A little tipsy. Bass Ales rumbling within. Past an alley where a street lamp fizzled and spluttered. And a bum scabbled in a dumpster. Past the place where the blind man sat. And sang. Songs of innocence. Into the air. And I would have liked to take him for a spin in the limozine. Away through the black night. That He could

Not

See.

By Charles Riddles

# STONEWALLVILLE





## the brave and the true

i stand straight and true  
sometimes pointing finger "I Want You"  
embracing immortal liberty  
"I Won't Give Up My Gun"  
fearlessly facing doom's demon mist  
fists on sides, cape fluttering for truth, justice, and the American  
Way  
ambitious, steadfast  
"Who knows what evil lurks in the heart of man?"  
ever proud yet humble  
often looking for a few *good* men  
loving, compassionate  
father knows best  
an ideal unattainable  
crushing the spirit of man

By David Reed

Charles Gutierrez



## Canoe Creek

Bare soled  
we walk along the road.  
The sand smooth  
in two paths like  
hollows of thighs  
with grass between.  
The paths are cleared by  
humpback sedans  
Ford pickups  
two or three a week.

In July silence  
we walk the road  
around the sky high cypress  
and pines that drip pitch  
in pots hung under  
crusted scars.  
We cross the range of  
Hindu bulls.  
They thrive on heat and  
move as slow as thunderheads.  
They watch us from  
the corners of their gnatty eyes.

At the place where  
the bridge spans the creek  
we wind and skewer worms  
on hooks.  
Varicose  
they drown without complaint  
at the end of the line.  
Our poles are so still  
the Bream are tricked by  
our familiar shapes.  
Tea brown water moves through  
the white sand bed  
forms V's behind our dayglo corks.

One day a pig went by  
nudged and bumped  
by underwater logs  
its feet  
upturned to the sun.  
It took a long time and so  
we didn't finish.  
We sit so still dragonflies  
even snakes  
forget we're here.  
Our legs hang down  
from the silverwood bridge.  
Shadows and echoes cool our heels.

By Patricia Kraft



Linda Bobinger

## The Man in the Iron Lung

There were four sets of wide, glass doors, two on each side of the ticket booth. Standing in line I could see inside the lobby. Lights the colors of Juju Babies bounced off mirrors all around the candy counter.

I was a little nervous waiting to buy my ticket. Three weeks before, the lady had made me pay adult admission. My friend Norma happened to have extra money, so I didn't miss "I Married a Witch" with Veronica Lake.

When my parents found out what happened, they were outraged. They made me go back to the theatre with them, where they showed me to the manager and the ticket lady.

"Take a good look," my mother said. "Delia never lies."

They returned the money, but every Saturday, I dreaded the appearance of a new ticket lady who might accuse me of lying about my age and make me miss the show.

I always kept my stub in case they challenged me. If my dress didn't have a pocket, I would hold the stub in my hand until the end of the picture, even if there was a double feature. I was many blocks from home and at the mercy of strangers.

They all wore uniforms; all the Alhambra employees . . . Short gold jackets with gold braid frogs and black trousers or skirts. The ticket takers, the ushers, even the girls behind the candy counter.

I had to throw all my weight back to swing open the heavy doors between the lobby and the foyer of the theatre. The doors were padded black leather with amber studs, and they moved soundlessly, so that no one inside would be disturbed.

Frosted glass lamps in the shape of flaming torches were set high along the walls of the theatre. They shed a subdued light, but I liked to wait a little while at the top of the aisle for my eyes to adjust. I used the time to select the place I wanted to sit, a little more than half way down and in the very center of the row. My friends and I came early so we could have the seats we wanted.

We always entered at the left. The steep, silent descent on the padded carpet gave me a pleasant feeling of weightlessness, a slight rubberiness from the waist down. It was kind of like riding in our car over the tops of hills on a certain stretch of road near my aunt's house.

Always, little kids had to run up the aisle to the bathroom or someplace. Their muffled thumping by torchlight was disassociated in space. It could easily have been the sound of the palace guard running along a passageway.

I never bought popcorn or candy, preferring to just sit in the comfortable seats waiting for the matinee to begin, anticipating Bud Abbott and Lou Costello, or re-experiencing that strange feeling when the Storm Troopers threatened the beautiful French girl who worked the Underground.

The faces of my chums were tinged with starlight from beyond the Moorish skyline. Clouds swept across the tops of deserted minarets. It all looked so real.

How did they make the clouds, I wondered. Was it my imagination that made them seem to move? If they moved, they couldn't be painted. But if they weren't painted, what then?

I chose a particular tower, a particular cloud. I would not look away until I saw for sure.

But every time I was distracted, by thumping, or by Stanley Nelson offering me popcorn.

The torches dimmed and sudden fear gave me a rotten little jab. Last Saturday Franklin Delano Roosevelt had appeared in a selected short subject about Infantile Paralysis. I dreaded seeing his pouched eyes and flecked skin, hearing his presidential voice in the role of victim triumphant over great odds. I dreaded those painful feelings.

The heavy velvet curtain parted, then, one after the other, the translucent inner curtains, red and glittering gold in swirls of folds and pleats.

"Time Marches On." I was safe.

There was a feature about the plucky girls of the Women's Air Force Ferry Service. Then there were chimpanzees wearing clothes and riding bicycles. A boy of eleven put out an incendiary bomb in record time.

But just when I had forgotten all about him, there was Roosevelt.

There was the man in the iron lung.

He lay on his back, only his head sticking out of the polished steel cylinder. A large mirror was mounted at an angle over his face, so that he could see reflections of things behind him. When the camera moved in close, we could see that his expression was serene. He showed no horror or despair or disgust.

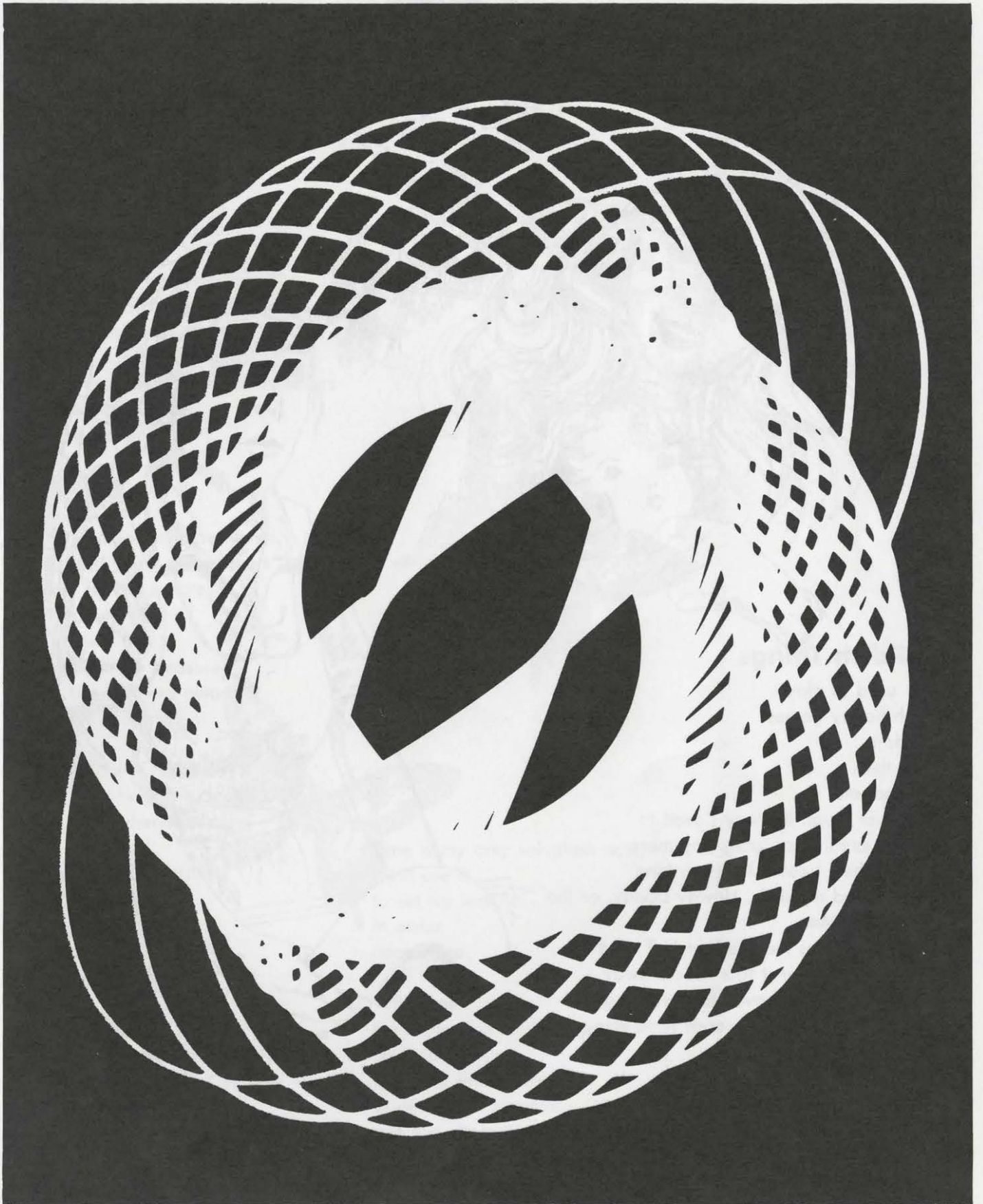
"Hwaaughdue to thehwaugh many generwhaugh contribuhwaaugh of folks likehwaugh . . . ."

The lights came on. Ladies with March of Dimes boxes passed up the theatre aisles. Like deacons they passed their boxes back and forth through the rows while, despite my most valiant efforts, tears of pity streamed down my innocent cheeks. I tried to prevent the escape of audible sobs. Last week I had contributed my bus fare home. I was sorry for him, but I didn't have anything to give.

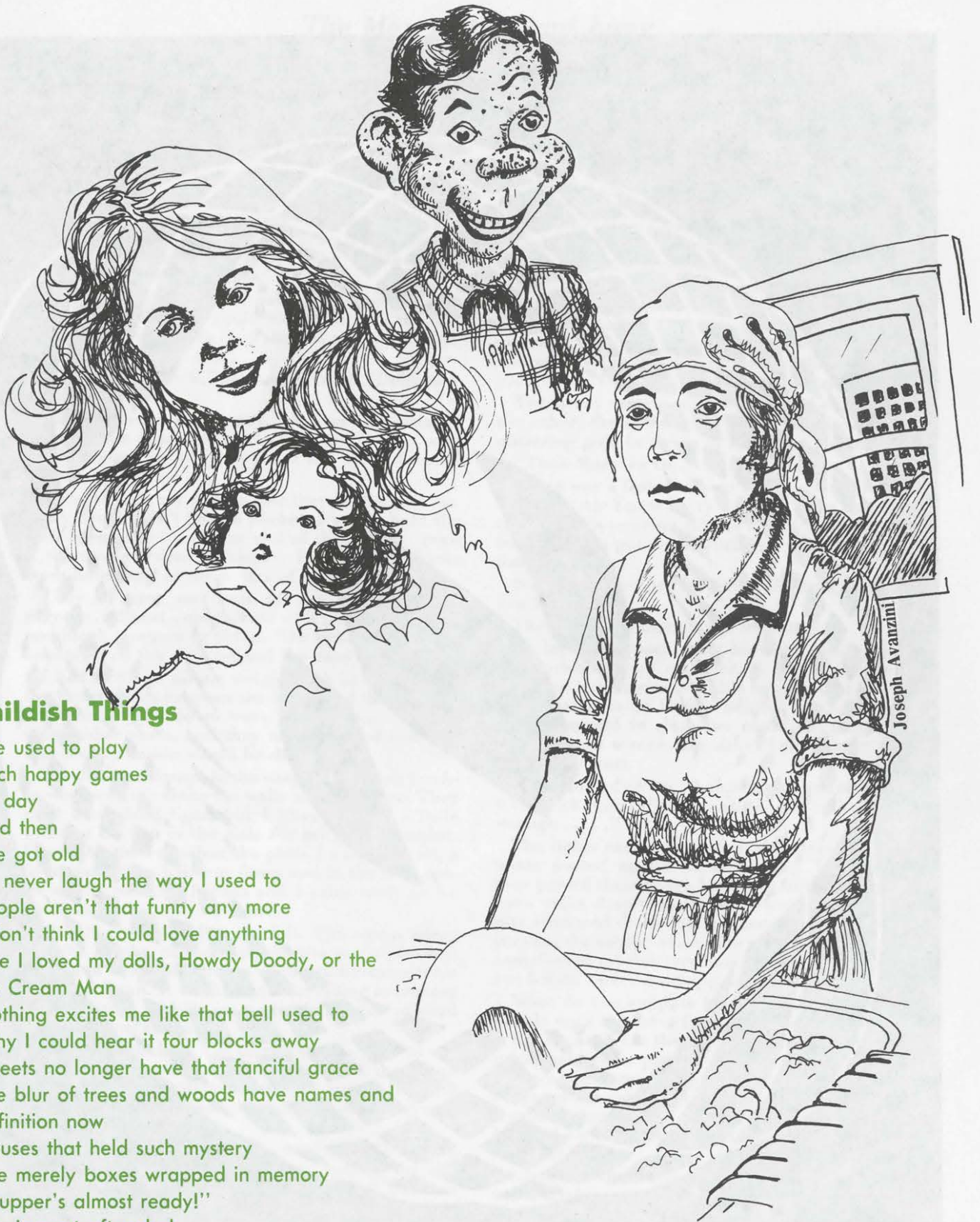
What do you suppose happened to those canned people once the drive for funds was over? Cinematic has beens. Were they breathed in and out in lonely reminiscence, parked next to the beds of their spouses (in name only)? Were all people in iron lungs put in one place, a rally of miniature Airstream trailers? Were they kept in a row in some hospital in Bethesda, Maryland, until finally they expired?

I imagine their breathing synchronized; sucking the curtains in at the window, then raising the quilts, like Looney-Tunes snoring. Breathing so deeply and rhythmically, did they attain enlightenment?

By Patricia Kraft



Roger Whitt, Jr.



## Childish Things

We used to play  
Such happy games  
all day  
And then  
We got old  
I'll never laugh the way I used to  
People aren't that funny any more  
I don't think I could love anything  
Like I loved my dolls, Howdy Doody, or the  
Ice Cream Man  
Nothing excites me like that bell used to  
Why I could hear it four blocks away  
Streets no longer have that fanciful grace  
The blur of trees and woods have names and  
definition now  
Houses that held such mystery  
Are merely boxes wrapped in memory  
"Supper's almost ready!"  
Staying out after dark  
Stretching our days into magical night time  
And tempting secrets

Kathleen Gay

## The Lover

This body is my temple.  
It is the place  
where I really exist  
in this world.  
It is the fortress I use  
to protect  
my mammon trinity:  
the inner sanctums  
of mind, heart, and soul.

You came to my temple,  
dressed in ordinary faded jeans  
and old sneakers,  
looking, for all the world,  
like a thousand other life travellers  
who have passed  
by my place.

And so I let you in.

Your intuition was awesome.  
You said you'd never been  
in my temple before;  
yet you seemed  
to know  
where all the treasures  
had been locked away  
for safe-keeping.

Your slight-of-hand  
was mind-boggling.  
Out of nowhere  
you produced  
a thousand butterflies  
and loosed them  
in my temple.

Then you were gone

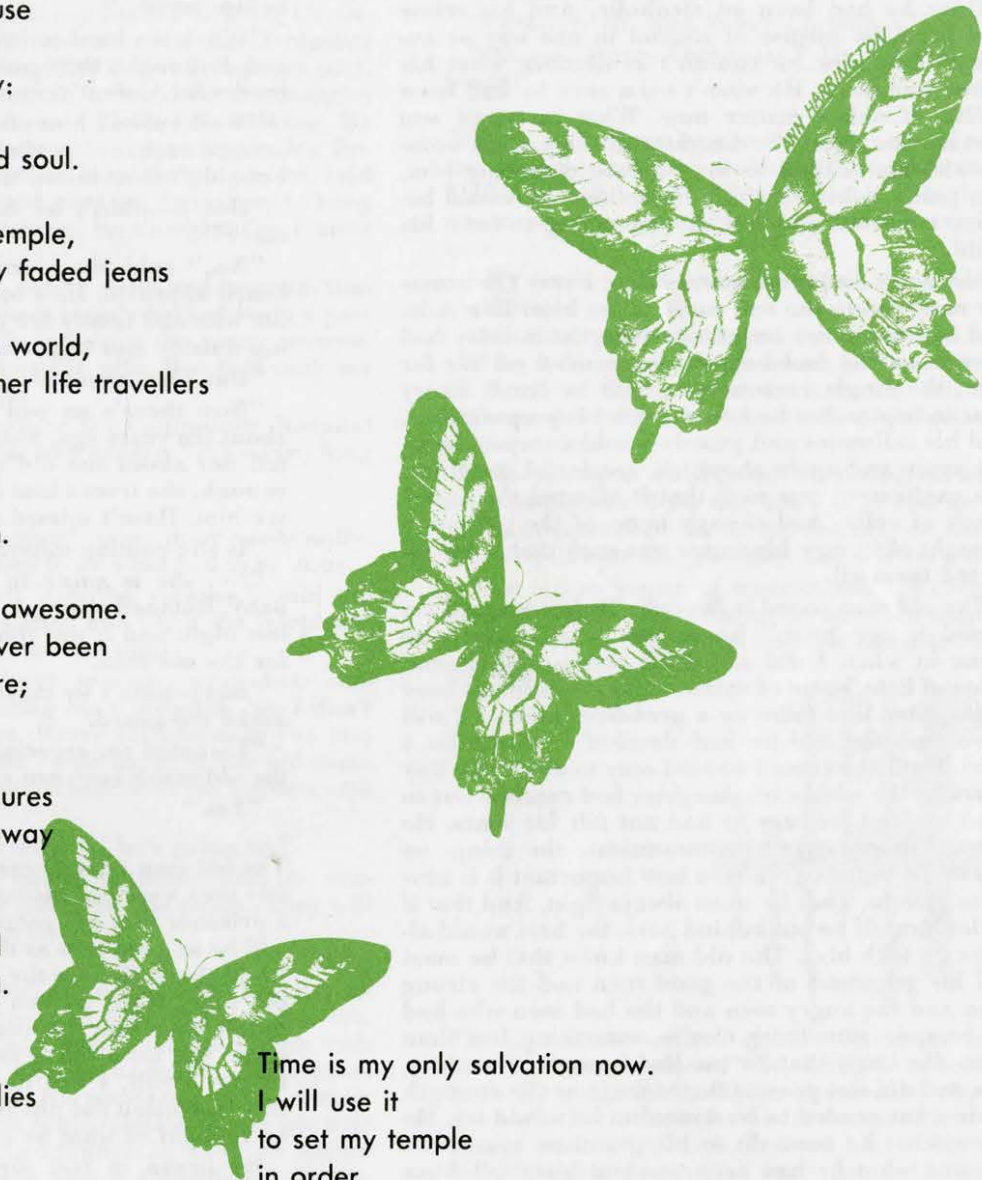
And I was left  
to deal with the confusion  
and fanciful flight  
of the butterflies.

Suddenly my temple  
became unfamiliar to me.  
I could find no door  
or windows  
through which to free  
these overwhelming creatures.

Time is my only salvation now.  
I will use it  
to set my temple  
in order  
once more.

With time,  
the butterflies may disappear  
on their own,  
or I may find a way  
to give them freedom,  
or I may become comfortable  
with them  
and let them teach me  
how to fly.

By Mary S. Aken



## *And He Taketh Away*

The old man was very unhappy. His guards and cellmates were worried; he'd never been unhappy this way.

Once he had been an alcoholic. And his crime had been the misuse of alcohol in one way or another. But now he couldn't remember what his crime had been. He wasn't even sure he had been guilty. It didn't matter now. What mattered was that his daughter, the daughter of the patient woman who had waited so long before divorcing him, was going to have a child. Sometimes he would become confused and feel she was going to have his child.

She alone had remembered him. Every Christmas for many years she had come to see him. Her visits had become more important than the holiday had ever been. She had become the symbol of life for him, the single reason for which he lived. Every year in September he would begin his preparations, and his cellmates and guards would weary of hearing again and again about his wonderful daughter. His excitement was such that it affected the entire block of cells. And though none of the prisoners thought of it, now his worry was such that it too affected them all.

The old man paced in his cell. "It is not that I am afraid to die here," he thought, "all those who came in when I did are dead; some of loneliness, some of hate, some of sorrow. But they did not have a daughter like mine or a grandson such as I will have (months ago he had decided it would be a boy). Until she came I wanted only to die." The tiny spark of life within his daughter had reached out to him, revived feelings he had not felt for years. He wanted desperately to communicate the things he knew. To tell his grandson how important it is never to give in. That he must always fight. And that if he let himself be put behind bars, the bars would always be with him. The old man knew that he must tell his grandson of the good men and the strong men and the angry men and the bad men who had all become something else — something less than men. He knew that he too had become something less and did not possess the courage or the strength to do what needed to be done; but he would try. He knew what he must do so his grandson would not become what he had become. And tears fell from the old man's eyes while the prisoners and the guards worried.

"Well warden," said the sergeant, "it looks like the old man may finally be going over the edge."

"No, not Carter?"

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

"Damn. That old man has been here longer than I have."

"Well, he's depressed and withdrawn."

"You know he's been here over forty years."

"What in the hell did he do warden?"

"I'm not quite sure. His records were lost in that fire when the old prison burnt down. He has been eligible for parole for fifteen years."

"Why is he here?"

"He never wanted to go before the parole board. I guess he must have had one of those sentences they used to give with a twenty five year minimum before parole."

"It's damn hard to imagine him hurting anyone, and I thought they only gave those kind of sentences for violent crimes."

"Well I asked him about it fifteen years ago. He seemed unsure — probably didn't remember — and I couldn't bear to tell him the records were lost."

"But shouldn't he have been released in that case?"

"No," said the warden, "Not without parole board approval. He's one of those sad cases where the wife and family are gone. Told me he had nothing outside and might as well die in here."

"But what about his daughter?"

"Now there's an odd case. She started to come about ten years ago. Seems the mother would never tell her about the old man. So when she got old enough, she traced him down and started coming to see him. Hasn't missed a Christmas since."

"Is she coming today?"

"No, she is going to give birth to a Christmas baby. Damned shame too, because I only found out last night and it was too late to arrange a furlough for the old man."

"But couldn't we make an exception in his case?" asked the guard.

"I wanted to, especially after I saw the look on the old man's face, but you know how red tape is."

"Yes."

The old man worked carefully over the plans. Actually they were not his but had been given to him by a prisoner that had escaped many years ago. "They will be as good now as they were then," he thought. "And they still have the same drawback now as they did then. What do you do when you get out?" He didn't have that drawback now. But the other escapee had been young and agile, and he was old and brittle. "Still, I will do it for my grandson." But this resolution did not stop him from shaking when he thought of what he must do.

He began to feel the strain on his back from bending very close to the paper. He had suffered much over the years, but there was still light in the eyes that had seen so much suffering and a smile on his lips when he thought of holding his grandson. He stood up, shook himself like an old terrier and cleared his mind as best he could. It was time to go and fix the lunches and then do what he hadn't dared do in forty years.

The guard in the kitchen did not see the old man climb into the truck, nor did the delivery man know he was helping a very old prisoner to escape. But the old man knew, and had it not been for the urgency of his mission he would have wanted very much to be discovered. His frail body shook and his teeth chattered as he waited to see the world for the first time in forty years.



When the truck stopped, the old man opened the doors and stepped onto the street. Who would have dreamed it would be so easy, he thought. The driver went into the company office to get his Christmas bonus. He was looking forward to a big Christmas dinner. The old man stood in the December cold and cursed his stupidity in not bringing a coat. "I had forgotten how cold it could be, he thought; or perhaps I never knew." He began walking. He didn't know what to expect — stares, pointing fingers — but no one noticed him. People passed, said "Merry Christmas" and went on. I must try to keep my teeth from chattering, he thought, for I must ask directions.

He approached a young man and woman that looked very much like a couple he had been a part of many years ago. He looked at the young woman. For a moment she was his wife. But it is only my weak eyes, he thought.

"Can you tell me where the Community Hospital is?" The girl looked at him kindly. "It's a very long walk," she said.

The warden and the guard shook their heads sadly. Neither of them wanted to do what had to be done.

"Well I damn well hope he escapes," said the guard. The warden sighed and lifted the telephone receiver. After a moment he said;

"That's right. About seventy, gray hair and beard, probably heading for a hospital. No, I don't know which one. Yes, Merry Christmas to you too. And please remember — no harm to the old man, OK? Thanks." The guard looked at the warden with a wry smile.

"You know which hospital he's going to."

"Perhaps I should have told them," said the warden, "But I think he deserves this much. They will find out soon enough anyway."

The patrol man turned down the volume of the radio he was not supposed to have in his patrol car. Jingle Bells faded and impersonal call letters took its place; following was the name and description of an escaped convict. He wondered why a convict would be going to the same hospital where his wife was having a baby. And though he knew he should not worry, that it was just a coincidence, he responded very quickly to the call.

The old man was getting very close, though he did not know it. All he knew was that he was cold and tired. Too tired even to be afraid.

"I must go on," he said aloud. "Surely it can't be much farther." Then on his left he saw the building. A very pretty young lady sat behind the desk marked "INFORMATION".

"May I help you?" she asked.

The old man tried to speak. "Damn you teeth. Stop chattering," he thought.

"Can you tell me where my daughter is?" It sounded like someone else had asked. The girl smiled.

"Certainly sir; what is her name?"

"Why it's. . . it's. . ." (now you've really done it, forgotten her married name), "it's Mary. She is going to have a baby."

"Oh yes," said the young lady, overlooking his embarrassment, "She just came out of recovery. It's on the fourth floor."

"Thank you," he said.

"Certainly sir, and Merry Christmas."

"Oh yes, Merry Christmas." He felt strange saying it.

"That's right, gray hair and beard, very thin," said the young patrolman to the girl behind the "INFORMATION" desk. "Fourth floor? Thanks." He was moving too quickly to hear the "Merry Christmas".

"My God — she's on the fourth floor too," he thought.

Her hair spilled out into a fan about her head as she lay half asleep. "How much like her mother," he thought. The baby lay by her side. His daughter's sensitive face lit with a smile of surprise when she saw him.

"The husband is not here," he thought, "and that is good because I do not know him and he might not understand." Then he looked at the tiny, pinched face of his grandson and felt very foolish.

"He is too young to understand." Words came uncontrollably. "But I must try to reach him." And he smiled and reached to take his daughter and his grandson in his arms.



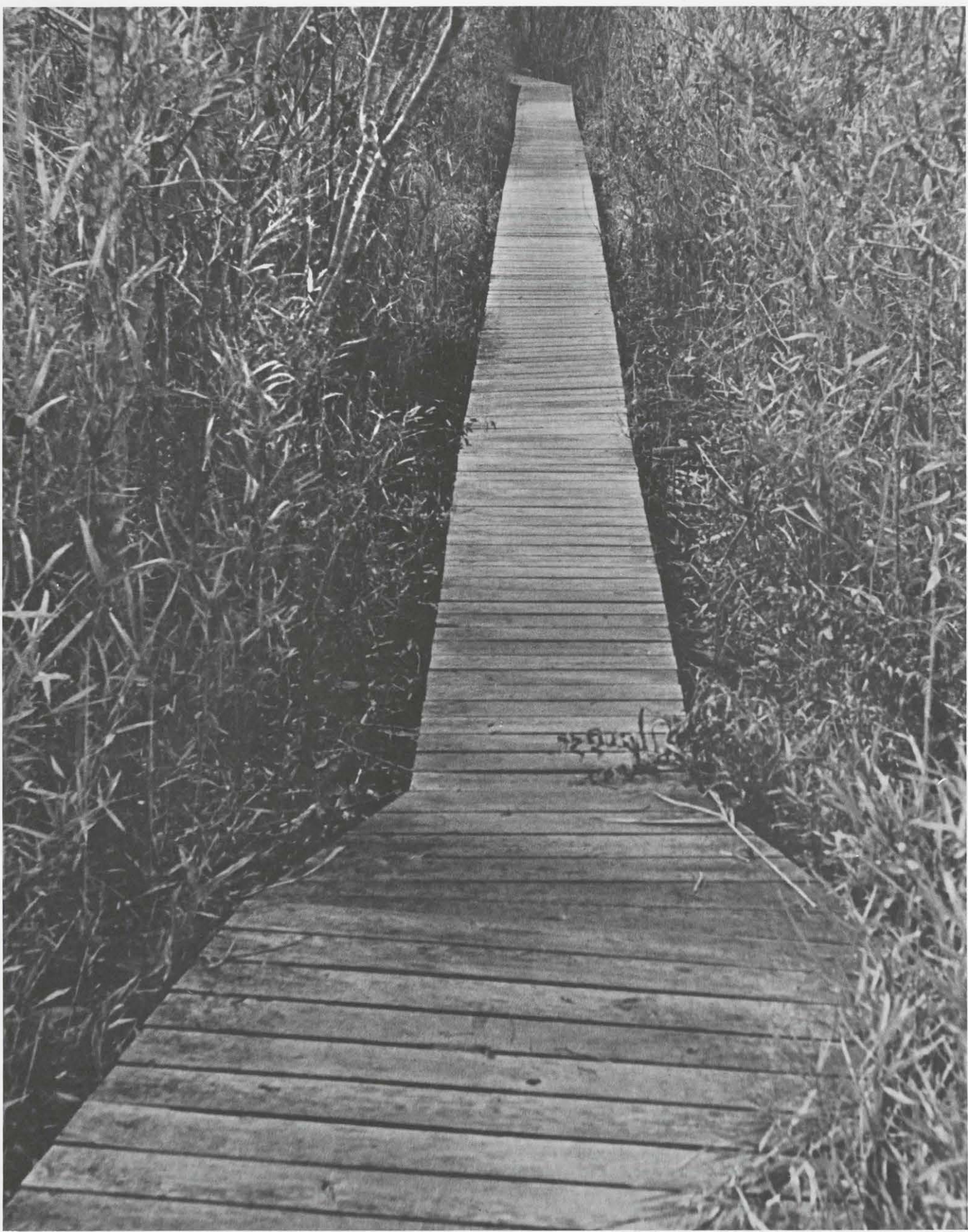
The patrolman walked quickly down the hall. "I must not cause alarm," he thought as he fought back the panic. He could see the door at the end of the hall. He worried over the expression of the plump nurse that had directed him. "She senses something's wrong. She can't know he is an escaped convict, or perhaps she does know and that is why she seems worried. But why would he tell her he is Mary's father?" He drew his gun.

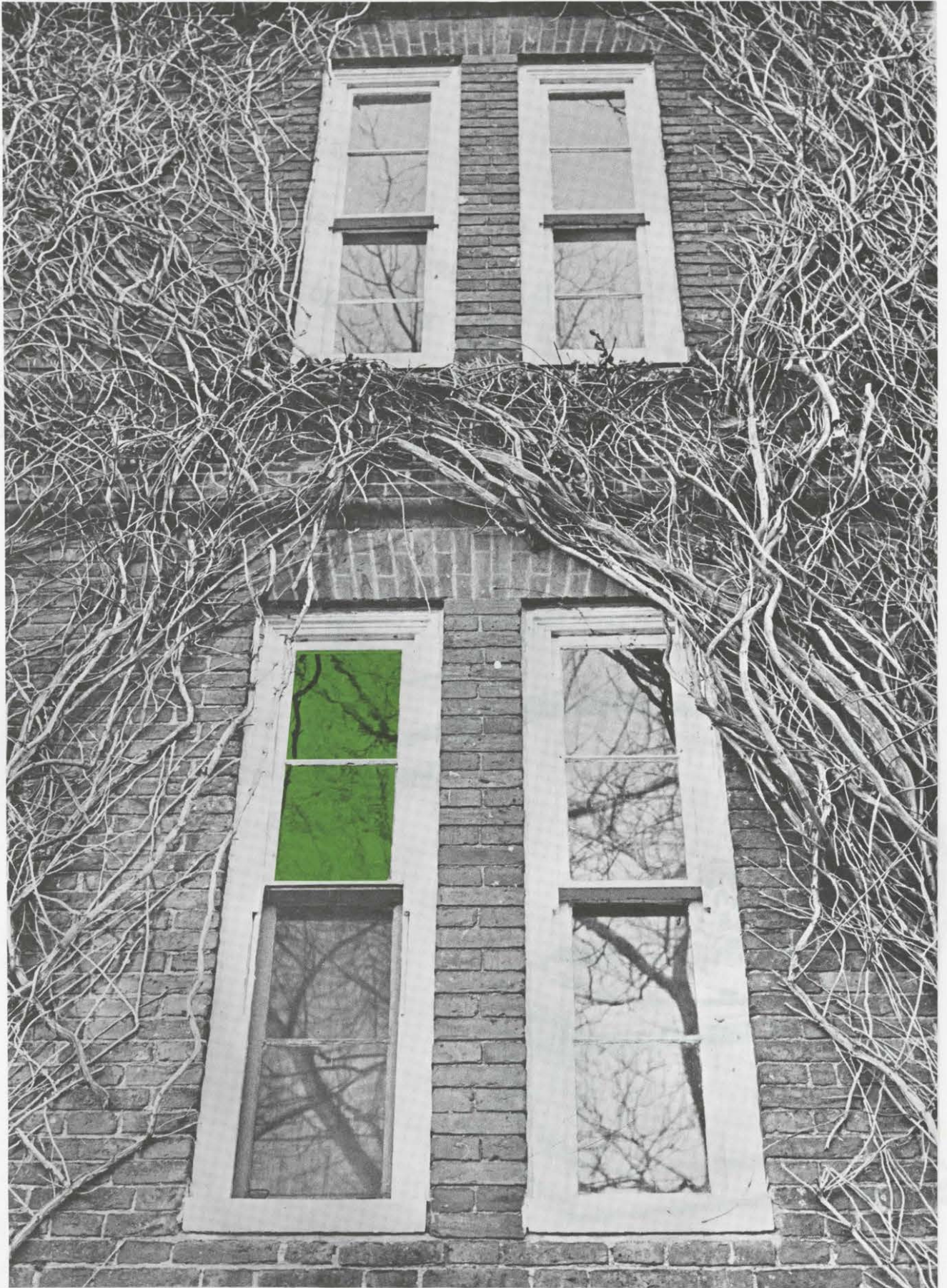
"There's so much I have to tell him," said the old man. His daughter smiled knowingly. Neither of them heard the door open, and it wasn't until the 38 caliber bullet had taken control of his body that he knew he would never say what he wanted to say. The old man fell to his knees — one hand still held by his daughter. She looked from the father to the killer and back.

"You must tell him," said the old man. The pain was gone now and he was very sleepy. She looked deeply into his eyes.

"He understands," she said. But the old man could no longer hear. The daughter looked at the patrolman who was speaking. But she couldn't hear over the rushing in her ears; and she could not bear to look at her husband's face.

By David Reed

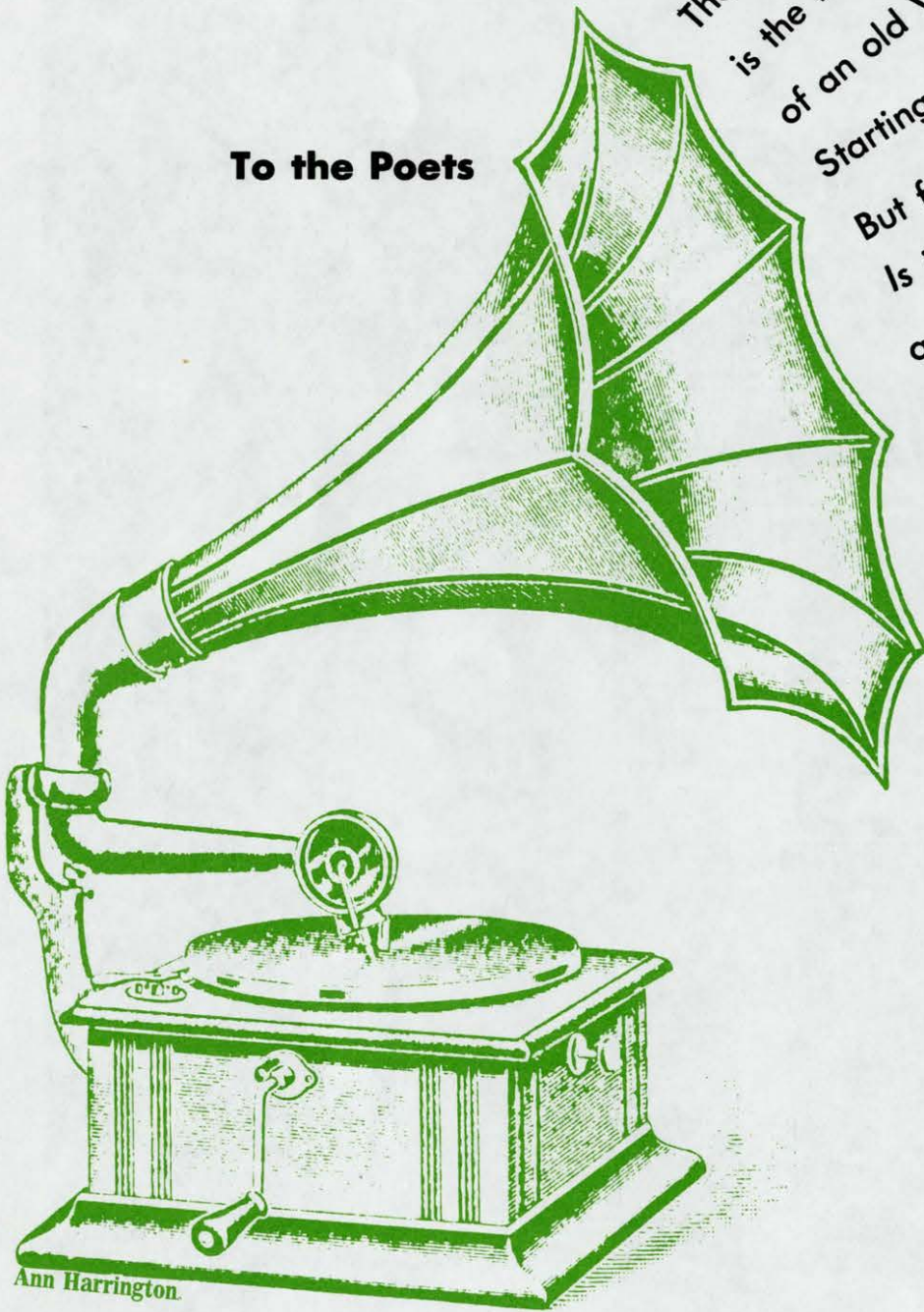


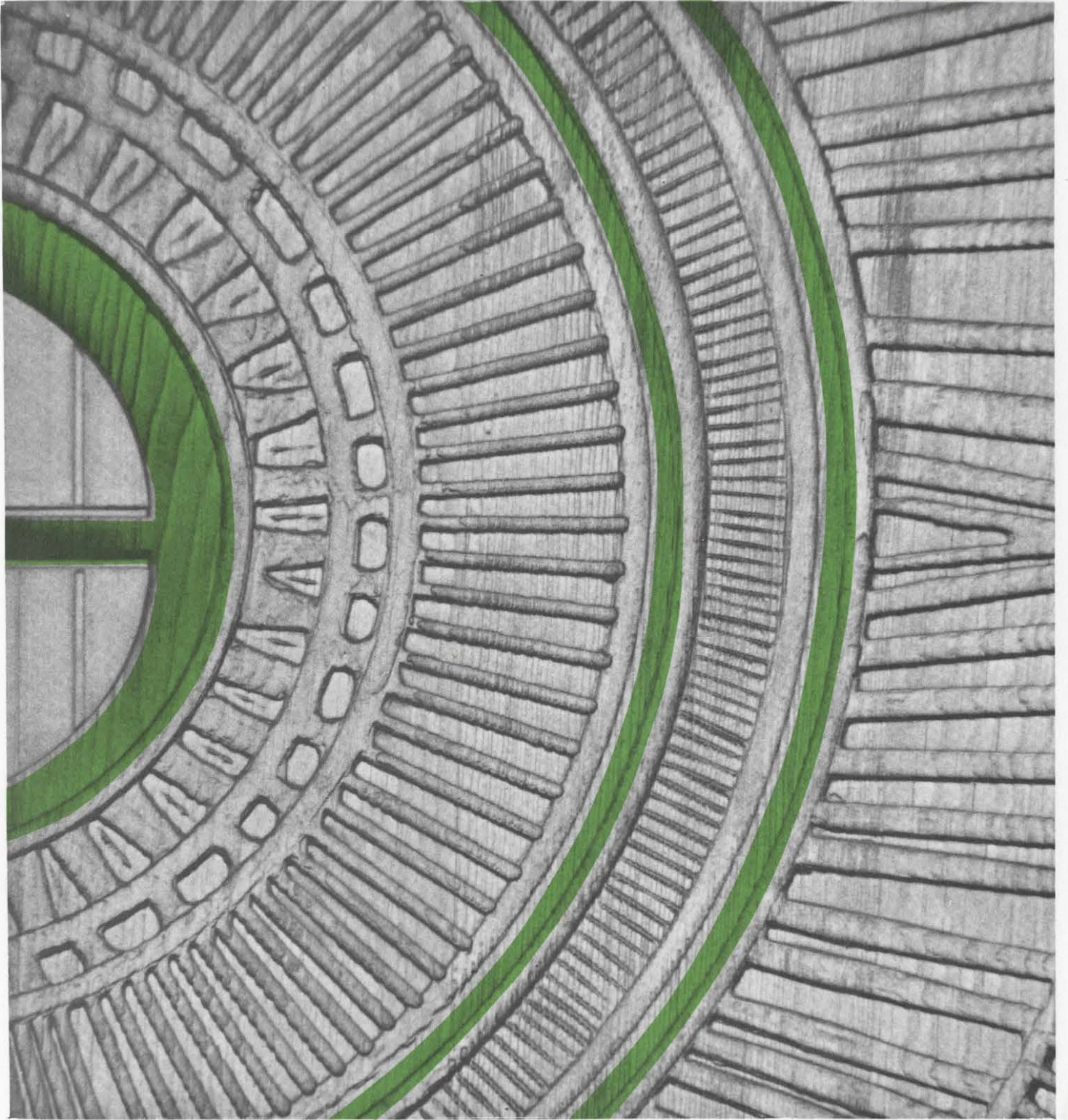


**To the Poets**

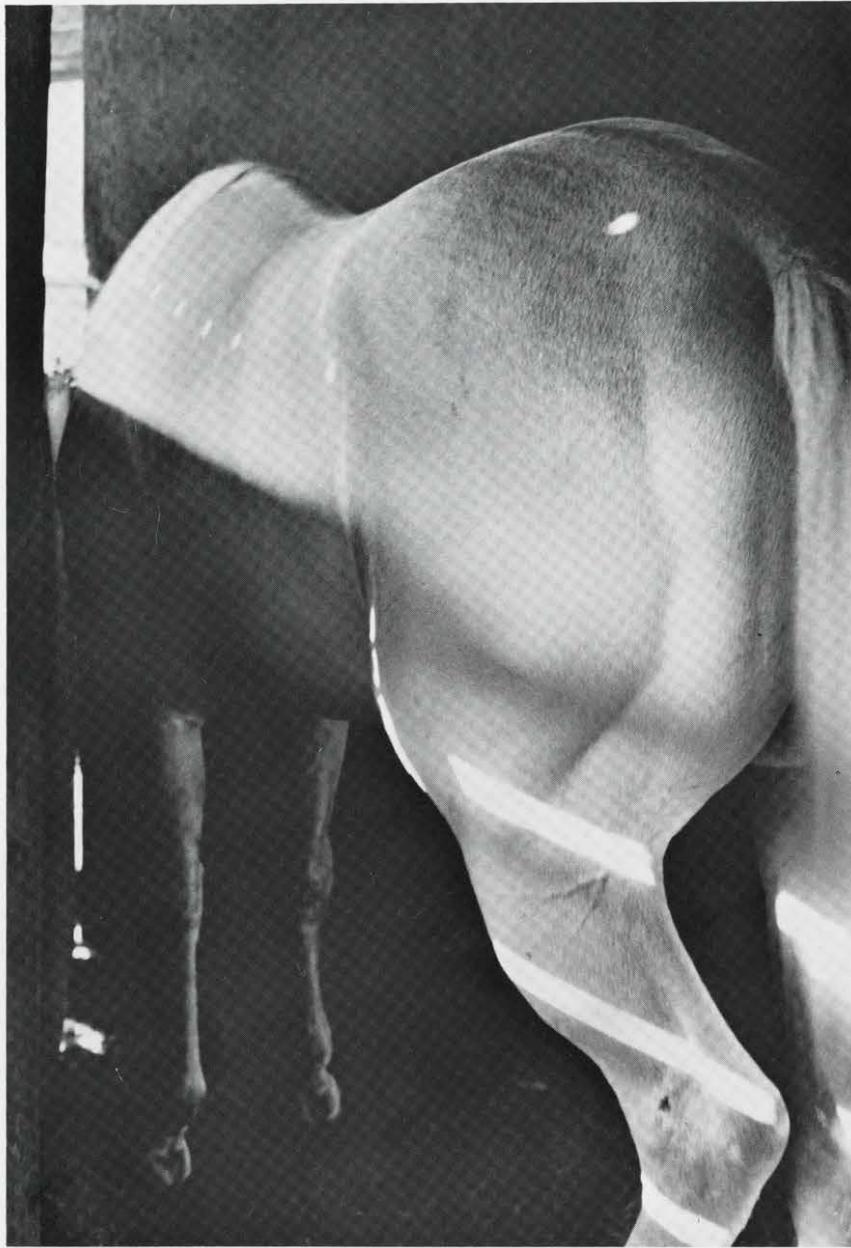
The song for me  
is the thin tin tune  
of an old Victrola  
Starting, stopping.

But for you  
Is it for you  
a rich and constant music?  
I want to know  
because your voice  
is earth-pure  
and you sing  
with such assurance.  
By Judith Gallo





Ann Harrington



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