

1982

UA68/6/1 Zephyrus

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Contributors:

Brian Cheaney – Castles

Lover Death

Ed Dillon – Timeless Watch

Joe Dragoo – Mud Dancing and Other War Games

Diane Eison – Fallow Ground

Narrow Escapes

Russ Hall – Waitin on that Sunday Flood

The Critics

William Hancock – A Cool Day, A Warm Wind

Michael Harris – Berthe the Virgin

Greg Kliewer – Words Spoken on the Day of the Wedding

Dachau

Karen McDonald – World of Wisdom

David Major – A Day in the Life of Jason Ogg

Sheila Riley – Ruby Sokel

Deller

Goober

Joe Roberts – The Dead Lie Sleeping

Keith Romans – I Am No Lord

Dorothy Spear – Deadly Games

Together Again

Branded

Jamie Stearns – People are Strange

Tom Wallace – Legacy

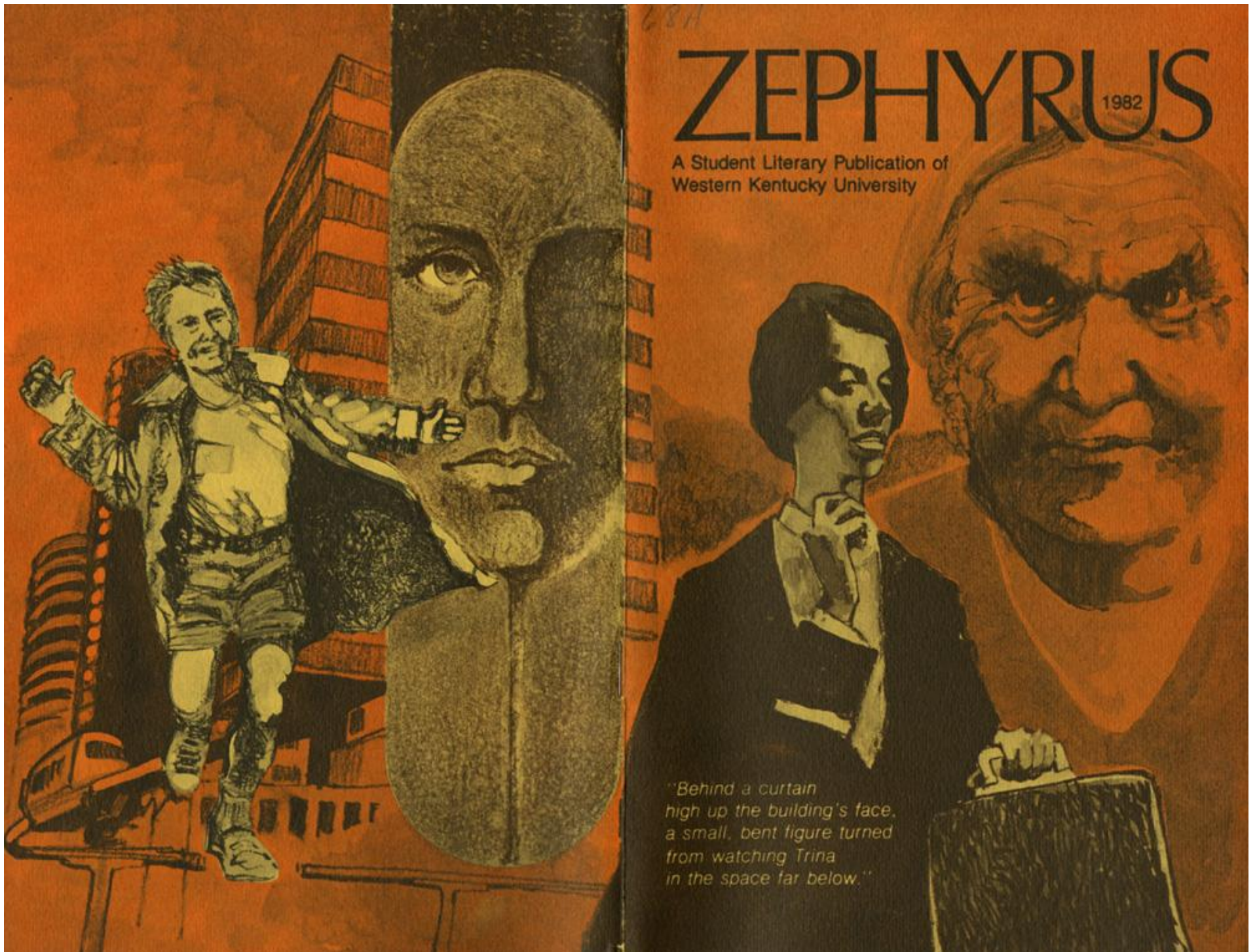
Louella Warren - Sunny

Original publication available in University Archives UA68/6/1.

Scanned by University Archives student Todd Wilson, March 2010.

ZEPHYRUS¹⁹⁸²

A Student Literary Publication of
Western Kentucky University



"Behind a curtain
high up the building's face,
a small, bent figure turned
from watching Trina
in the space far below."

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
ARCHIVES

ZEPHYRUS

Spring 1982

A publication of the English Department
of Western Kentucky University
at Bowling Green

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CONTENTS

Dorothy Spear	<i>Deadly Games</i>	4
	<i>Together Again</i>	22
	<i>Branded</i>	26
Russ Hall	<i>Waitin on that Sunday Flood</i>	16
	<i>The Critics</i>	27
Michael Harris	<i>Berthe the Virgin</i>	17
Diane Eison	<i>Fallow Ground</i>	21
	<i>Narrow Escapes</i>	22
Louella Warren	<i>Sunny</i>	23
Greg Kliever	<i>Words Spoken on the Day of the Wedding</i>	25
	<i>Dachau</i>	49
Keith Romans	<i>I Am No Lord</i>	28
Joe Roberts	<i>The Dead Lie Sleeping</i>	30
Sheila Riley	<i>Ruby Sokel</i>	32
	<i>Deller</i>	33
	<i>Goober</i>	34
Jamie Stearns	<i>People are Strange</i>	35
Karen McDonald	<i>World of Wisdom</i>	38
Tom Wallace	<i>Legacy</i>	40
David Major	<i>A Day in the Life of Jason Ogg</i>	42
Ed Dillon	<i>Timeless Watch</i>	46
William Hancock	<i>A Cool Day, A Warm Wind</i>	47
Joe Dragoo	<i>Mud Dancing and Other War Games</i>	51
Brian Cheaney	<i>Castles</i>	54
	<i>Lover Death</i>	55
	Notes on Contributors	56

DEADLY GAMES

She walked into the darkness, steadily fighting the urge to panic. Outside the beam of her glowtube, shadows moved, stopping when she stopped, moving when she moved, pouncing from behind the rocks and debris with every motion of her movement. Her hand trembled as she tightened her grip on the tube. She stumbled on something, regained her balance, but felt something crunch under her foot. She bent down with the glowtube and sucked in her breath sharply. Nausea and revulsion made her suddenly weak, but the movement of her small son strapped firmly to her back steadied her.

"What's wrong, Mommy?" his child's voice asked, close to tears. She straightened quickly, moved the light away, and with forced calmness, assured him it was a heap of rotten timbers. She had to keep her wits about her; their very lives depended on it. They moved on, the woman carefully picking her way, struggling to erase the horror from her mind, but all she could see was her foot planted squarely in the ribcage of a hideously deformed human skeleton. The child began to whine fearfully. She spoke softly to him, comforting him. She hoped they were nearing the end of the tunnel, but there was no way for her to judge the distance they had already traveled. It seemed like she had been walking for days. She saw a reflection of her light on the tunnel wall and shifted the position of her glowtube. In front of them lay a pool of dark water, stretching from wall to wall of the tunnel. She had to cross it. She forcibly reminded herself that any thoughtless motion, anything less than absolute control of her actions could get them both killed. She deliberately feigned a light tone of voice as she unstrapped the straps securing her son.

"Chris, we're going to go for a swim. Take this little pill and it will keep you warm while we're in the water." She would much rather carry him, but she knew she would have to save her strength, to pace herself for what might be ahead of them. She could not afford the risk of a cumbersome burden while they were in the water. She gave the child a pill, waiting for him to swallow it before she took one herself. The water would be cold, and in the cold air of the tunnel, hypothermia would be a deadly danger.

"I don't like this water, Mommy. It's black," complained Chris.

"No, it isn't black, son. It's the same color water always is - you can't see it because the tunnel is black. Watch." She held the glowtube close to the water's edge. She could see the railway tracks submerged below. Did that mean the entire subway was flooded? She searched her photographic memory for blueprints, geographic data, elevations - she knew some water was inevitable, but not this soon. It had begun far earlier than she had expected. Perhaps the sandstone bedrock had subsided into a limestone cavern below, causing a short depression, and the water wouldn't be too deep. It could be a blessing, after all. It might stop

whatever the thing was that trailed some distance behind them, padding and panting and forcing the hair on her neck to stand stiff and cold.

"Railroad, Mommy," pointed the child. He seemed to have lost some of his fear of the water, and the pill she had given him to warm his body would also have a calming effect. Behind them came a low growl. Quickly, urgently, she grabbed Chris's arm and stepped into the frigid water. She pulled him swiftly along until she dared to stop and seize her weapon. With her other arm she reached for her son. He was too stunned to cry out, accepting his mother's instincts to protect him from whatever his child's mind could conceive as danger. She turned in the calf-deep water to face whatever the thing was behind them, raising Chris and the glowtube aloft in one sweeping motion, the weapon ready at her waist. Two yellow eyes gleamed at them from the edge of the water, then disappeared as the sound of a tongue lapping water came to them. She waited for the eyes again, restraining the urge to shoot. A moment passed, then she saw the eyes again, farther down the tunnel, as if a defeated demon had given them up but not without a backward glance.

"What was it, Mommy?" whispered Chris shakily.

"Just a big dog, honey. He was thirsty." And probably starving, she thought, crossbred with God knows what to reach that size.

"I wet my pants," Chris announced matter of factly.

"I'm wet, too," she said. She breathed a prayer of thanks, adding that if their lives were spared, her son would not be emotionally scarred by their flight through darkness. He was only three.

"Let's hurry on, so we can get out of the water." She hoped the nicotinic acid tablets would keep them warm long enough for them to reach the end of the flooded subway. They had not gone far when some reflex made her stop, stiffen, and turn quickly with the light. Not ten feet behind them were those awful eyes, gleaming like the very fires of hell. With a great splash and spray of water, they were suddenly upon her. She screamed, tried to bring the weapon around to aim at the creature, and started to fall. She squeezed the trigger, and the gun went off, resounding through the tunnel like apocalyptic thunder. A hurtling form brushed past her at unbelievable speed and vanished into the darkness ahead. She sat in the cold water, feeling her strength drain from her and hearing nothing but the persistent ringing in her ears. Gradually, she became aware that Chris was crying. She picked him up and hugged him to her breast, crying herself and trying to comfort him. As she held him close, protecting his small body with her own, her desperation and fear combined to lift her spirit to a realm where it had never been. Her courage, never before put to such a test, awoke within her, rising like a flame, white and pure and almost unbearable. Its radiance burned away the immobilizing fear. She arose as one possessed. Somewhere ahead of her lay danger, and beyond that, freedom. They would pass through the danger unscathed, she knew, for she had her son to protect. Armed with both weapon and obsession, Trina, the female of the most dangerous and deadly species on earth, strode purposefully forward, protecting her young. Now she could allow herself to think back on what had brought her to this place.

* * *

Trina Davenport looked up from her reading. Across her massive desk, her secretary was placing a stack of papers.

"I.D. mail, Miss Davenport," said the low, cultured voice.

"Thank you, Jill. Take those things in the basket to the shredder, please."

She watched the trim form of her secretary walk across the immense carpeted floor, smile mechanically, and exit through the door. Trina pressed an area beneath her desktop. A nearly invisible line in the center of the desk opened wide, revealing a video screen within. Jill's image appeared on the screen. Trina watched the girl walk to the shredder, look carefully from side to side remove the contents of the envelopes and dutifully shred the empty envelopes one by one. Trina smiled wickedly. Hidden among the papers, all covered with meaningless tables and useless information, was a single sheet which read: "This is the third time, J. All on video, Thursday, my office, 1400 hrs. T." Jill was a climber, but a clumsy one. Trina had her where she wanted her now. She laughed aloud as she thought of Jill's reaction. She turned to the practical business of interdepartmental mail. She popped open the first cannister and slipped out the plastic program card with practiced fingers. She slipped the card into the receiving slot in the terminal. Trina stared hard at the characters and frowned. None of them made sense. She pressed a button marked "error reset" and waited. The same characters appeared on her screen. She swiftly pressed a few more buttons; waited until the screen cleared, then pressed "read." A small flashing cursor at the bottom of the screen read, "no match." She repeated the procedure, and again the screen read, "no match." Well. What was going on? She looked at the keys marked "Des", "Anal", "Ref", and "Sys" and debated with herself. No one else had those keys. They were access to the entire bureau system, and could decode, analyze, and cross reference anything in the Social Services banks. They were not to be used without authorization to do so. Trina hesitated only briefly, then pressed the buttons in sequence. A string of characters appeared. File numbers, she thought. Below the numbers tabulated columns appeared labeled "name"; "number"; "genetic analysis"; and "disposition." At the bottom of the screen was a small square of print labeled "key." She read it twice in dawning comprehension. The Disposition breakdown read: Neutered - Recreational - Destroyed. This, she realized, was a listing of all the boy babies born in the State this day, and what Central Planning had scheduled them for. This program should have gone to Central Planning, not to Central Engineering.

Trina read the names in fascination. Her natural curiosity, keenly felt always, burned to envelop this new insight into normally hidden areas of government. She fully realized that what she was seeing was officially public information, but actually zealously guarded privileged information. Information, Trina knew, was power. She looked at the screen closely. Something was wrong. It was a matter of record that only genetically damaged males were destroyed at birth; that only perfect males could

breed; that all the rest were neutered drones; but the breakdown read:

Born:	31,000
Destroyed:	986
Neutered:	30,000
Recreational:	6
Gen. Damaged:	.02%
Gen. Normal:	99.08%

The last figure burned into Trina's mind. Either someone had transposed "normal" and "damaged" stats, or . . . She could hardly comprehend the "or." Surely, Central Planning wasn't wantonly emasculating normal boy babies and (worse) destroying some - but they certainly could be. Trina breathed deeply, forcing herself into a state of cold, analytical detachment. She keyed rapidly through page after page of names and numbers, absorbing, photographing, ingesting all the information unexamined into her marvelous memory. She could read it later, slowly, page by page from the indelible pictures in her mind.

Carefully, she ejected the program card and picked up the empty cannister. It was addressed to her, no doubt about that. I.D. mail was processed by the automatics, not by personnel. Quite probably the misrouting would never be detected unless she mentioned it - and she had no intention of doing so. She put the cannister into the addresser, typed in the routing code for Central Planning, and watched the old print dissolve and form new patterns on the plastic. She wiped her fingerprints from the program card, slid it in the container, and dropped it into a hole on her desk. It would fall through the mail tubes to the automatics in the basement, be routed to C.P. two floors above her, and arrive barely ten minutes later than she had received it.

"Now," she whispered to herself. "Time to analyze the data." She dropped down into a soft chair, her back to the window, and closed her eyes.

Light. Color. The War. The turning point of the race. Five generations ago, the nuclear strikes of the nations of the world decimated populations, disabled industries, and cursed their sons with a rain of pestilence and poisons that would cripple and maim forever. The great and deadly armies of the world would never march again; the greatest mass of armed men ever gathered in the history of the world was now a pitiful scattering of bleached bones and radioactive dust. And in the testicles of the men left alive were clotted, tailless, genetically scrambled and mutated sperm. Somehow the Y-chromosome was affected far worse than the X. There were a few natural pregnancies shortly after the war, but only a few. The girls, with two X-chromosomes, were normal, but the boys were not. The damaged Y- bequeathed from their fathers made them subhuman monsters. To a world struggling in mindless desperation to emerge from chaos, the monsters were an intolerable reminder. They were destroyed quickly and with revulsion. Had it not been for some few surviving sperm banks, the human race would have perished. As it was, in those early days,

artificial insemination became the method of necessity for procreation. It was necessary to isolate and shelter some of the artificially conceived boys, nurturing them in virtual isolation for their precious seed.

A few boys had unusually desirable traits; they became the Men, in due time. The rest were neutered at birth by complete removal of the testicles. These became the labor force of rebuilding civilizations. Drones. After a few tragic false starts, a Y-chromosome gene combination had been found to be both disease and contaminant resistant. The researchers had announced that R-type (resistant) chromosomes could be in widespread use within ten years - and that had been fifty years ago. Nothing further had been heard about this research.

Trina opened her eyes. There were too many unanswered questions here. She jumped from her chair, went over to her desk, and with impatient fingers pressed keys on her terminal. The screen cleared. She typed "Code 2 R enter" for a non-recorded request, and then typed "Breakdown of classification 'normal' per CentPlan stat." She waited. There, in the center of her screen, appeared the glowing figures: "X(R)Y." Central Planning had only today murdered more than nine hundred perfectly normal baby boys. Boys that could have grown up to be perfectly normal men.

She packed her briefcase hurriedly and left the building. The great doors of the glass-fronted lobby closed behind her and sealed themselves into frames over which were carved in stone the words "The Meek Shall Inherit The Earth."

Behind a curtain high up the building's face, a small, bent figure turned from watching Trina in the space far below. It crossed the dark carpet of the paneled office and sat slowly in a leather chair. Gnarled fingers snapped a switch on the arm of the chair.

"Record," said a voice, old, cracked and breathless. "Subject: Katrina Davenport. We have today, by deliberate misrouting, introduced Ms. Davenport to sensitive managerial information which she must have if she is to continue her career. She is, of course, unaware that this was done purposely . . ." the voice cackles . . . "I made her think she dug out the information with her clever little snooping machine." Wrinkled hands trembled as they gripped the chair arms. "Now we will know if she is with us or against us. I can, if I choose, direct her loyalties since I have powerful levers toward that end. However, I will not play my hand until I must. I want to see what she is made of. She will soon enough be trying for my position even if she does not oppose us now." There was silence for a minute. "End of recording," she said.

Trina felt an overwhelming sense of loneliness and isolation. Her sons were undergoing their periodic physicals and would not be finished with their testing until late. They were in different areas of the Medical Zone, which meant they would be ready at different times. The events of the past few hours had left her emotionally snarled and congested. She felt strangely vulnerable - an emotion she did not take lightly. Vulnerability was considered a weakness and could not be tolerated for any length of time. Since frustration was adding to her problem, she calmly decided to employ the ancient remedy. Without hesitation, she went to her

telecommunicator and called Martin.

Trina showered, nibbled on some dry-roasted grain, and sipped her glass of wine. She almost regretted her earlier weakness, but not sufficiently to cancel her call to Martin. The Society's physicians recommended an occasional rendezvous for their executives such as Trina. For that reason, Men like Martin were social institutions. In an earlier age, he would have been called a Prostitute.

When Trina opened the door to Martin's ring, she was glad that he had come. He was kind and quiet, and at times hilariously witty, with a dry but unrestrained sense of humor. He was totally irreverent toward what he called the "sacred cows," but he never spoke of any of the many women she knew he had been with except to entertain her with anecdotes of nameless females, leaving her helpless with laughter and full of admiration. He was not a simple man.

Martin greeted her with shining eyes, a beaming smile and a comradely clasp of hands. He understood her, knew that she was not a shallow woman. He knew why he was here; it was not just physical - she also needed a friend.

"Would you like some wine, Martin?" she asked.

"Please," he answered.

"Have a seat and I'll be right back. It's chilling in a bucket in the kitchen." She retrieved her glass and Martin followed her to the kitchen. She busied herself with the wine while Martin pulled up a high stool and watched. Trina put his glass in his hands and seated herself at the table, keeping its mass between them. It was always like this when she was with Martin. She had to give herself time to become accustomed to the shock of his size. He was always so much bigger than she remembered. The physical size of him made her feel both attracted to him and fearful. She was no small woman herself, but Martin's towering frame was awesome enough to require some getting used to.

"Why have you put a barrier between us?" he teased.

She laughed. "You are so big!" she answered, toying with her wineglass. "You make me feel so . . . insubstantial," she finished.

"That's good," he commented, getting up and walking around behind her. He placed his large hands gently but firmly on her shoulders. "If you are insubstantial, then whatever is bothering you must be inconsequential." She began to relax under the soothing massage.

"What makes you think something is bothering me?"

"Two reasons, Trina. I have never met an executive in my life who didn't have something bothering her; and you never call me unless something has upset you." His hands continued their kneading, expertly working the tension from her neck and back.

Trina thought about his remark - he had never met an executive. . . "What's bothering you, Martin?" she wondered aloud. She was surprised to feel the smooth rhythm of the hands break before resuming the massage. She half turned in her chair to look at him.

"All the troubles in the world." He dropped his hands and let his shoulders sag as though under a terrible burden.

"You can stop the clowning," she snapped, standing up. She refilled their wineglasses and gestured toward the living room. "I don't know how you can keep up with such staggering demands."

"I use magical drugs that give me the virility of two bull elephants," he joked.

"That's **not** what I meant. You Men have it so rough," she said, settling on her comfortable sofa and tucking her feet under her. The wine was making her dizzy. "It must be terrible to have to spend your life making all the ladies happy." She felt bitchy, resentful. "All that hard work getting you down?" She was being mean and knew it.

Martin sat down on the couch and looked at her closely, his expression unreadable.

"Yes. Sometimes it does."

"Poor man," Trina emptied her glass. "I don't want to be responsible for wearing out your precious resources. Why don't you just leave?" She stood up, staggering slightly. It embarrassed her to be losing control.

Martin looked at her, unmoving.

"I told you to leave." Her voice held no conviction and she began to cry.

Martin picked her up easily, cradling her like a child, and carried her into the darkened bedroom where he applied the ancient remedy.

Later, as Trina sat in front of her large mirror brushing her hair, she watched Martin's muscular figure as he sorted through the contents of a small carrying case.

"What would you think if I told you I've been thinking of changing careers, Martin? Perhaps I should put in for retraining. Could you see me as an M.D.?"

Martin looked at her face in the mirror. "Why would you want to do that? I thought you were the lady on the way up, headed for the Board of Governors."

"Let's just say that I'm not sure I want the kind of responsibility that would come with being on the Board of Governors. I don't feel comfortable with making the kinds of decisions they are sometimes required to make."

"Don't you think you are equal to anyone on the Board, Trina?"

Her eyes clouded with the memory of what she had so recently learned.

"No, I don't," she said, turning to face him. "The Board should only be composed of the most competent and qualified women in the country. They are responsible for keeping this civilization alive. They must assure a stable society, must see that those who might want to destroy it aren't allowed to. The whole nation is on their shoulders." She stood up and turned toward him. "It's too big a job for me."

"It's too big a job for anyone," said Martin.

"If that's true, you are saying the job can't be done."

"It can't. Not successfully."

"That's stupid, Martin," she said impatiently. "It can be done, because it **has** been done. Surely you don't think things were better a hundred years ago?"

"I wasn't around a hundred years ago, and neither were you. The world came apart then. It was through the determination and intelligence of some

truly remarkable women that it was put back together again. They were the true heroes of the age. But heroism isn't hereditary, especially in ruling bodies; any non-representative government that answers to no one but itself - in peacetime, especially - is concerned with nothing so much as the preservation of its own power. The Board of Governors picks people who are sympathetic to the Board, and no one else."

Trina stared at him incredulously. "How dare you make such a statement! You're trying to tell me about government! You are a mere Man, thinking only in terms of power, thinking you have all the answers. You are a slave of your hormones, Martin, and that's exactly what nearly destroyed our world."

Martin looked at her, a grim expression on his face. "From anyone else, I would laugh at that statement. From you, it stings." He moved restlessly about the room. "Let's think in terms of good and evil, then. What would you define as evil?"

"War," she answered quickly.

"OK, War. What causes war? Not male hormones, Trina. War can't be eliminated by enslaving half of the human race, or by instituting a dictatorial government. Neither can it be eliminated by controlling the population through threat and coercion, regardless of who is at the top. War is caused when the strong (or powerful, if you wish) ignore the rights and wishes of the weak. War is the inevitable result . . ." he stopped talking, closed his eyes tightly and held his head as though in pain.

"There is **never** an excuse for war," Trina broke in.

"Perhaps not," he said, reaching for the carrying case, "but you never can be certain when you might find yourself in the middle of one." He lifted the false bottom in the case and brought out a pistol, pointing it straight at Trina. "Sit down and don't move," he ordered. He grimaced. "I'm trying," he said to no one in particular. Trina looked at him, horrified. "The phone," he explained. "I'm not usually this close to the transmitter. The subsonic buzzer implanted in my head is trying to take the top off."

Martin dumped the contents of the case and went over to the phone beside Trina's bed. He picked up the instrument, dialed a number and waited. "Extension two-three, Jill McPherson, please."

"Jill!" cried Trina. She had been too stunned to do more than sit as Martin had ordered. Now this dangerous lunatic was calling her secretary - they were plotting this together!

"Standby," she heard Martin tell the instrument. He looked at Trina, his eyes narrowed. "Orders are being cut to reclassify Christopher and Lucas Davenport," he announced crisply. "The justification rationale reads, 'Chronic and severe antisocial tendencies with psychologically irremedial hostilities.'"

"What do you mean?" cried Trina. "You've gone Mad!" She threw herself at him, unmindful of the weapon aimed at her. He wrapped his arm around her and held her in a viselike grip.

"Data patch to SS three-oh-delta-delta," he ordered into the phone, and placed the receiver in the bottom half of his open case. He shoved Trina forward. "Look," he commanded. The receiver lay in an adapter unit,

cradled among a nightmare of miniature controls. On a tiny crystal screen, Trina saw the Social Services directive naming her two sons enemies of the State. Her eyes widened in horror.

"It's a fake," she screamed. "It has to be. My boys have never had a bad report."

"I know that. Not until now," Martin pressed more keys on the miniature board. The display changed. "See that?" Trina stared at the board. "There are your reports, backdated - entered yesterday. But *why*?" He pressed other keys, frowned, tried again. "Here's your answer," he said straightening. "You apparently got your hands on some classified information. Either that, or you were deliberately set up as a test of some kind. They work like that, you know."

Trina gasped. "The CentPlan Stats!"

"So that's it. They fed you the information on population control to get your reaction, and you blew it. Instead of using the information for personal gain, you reacted emotionally, sent for me, and were monitored the entire time. They can't let you keep the information, Trina. You have just become an enemy of the State along with your sons."

Trina could hardly speak. She felt alternately hot and cold; a terrible fear had consumed her. "Who are you?" she whispered. "How do you know all this?"

Martin looked at her, suddenly concerned. "We don't have much time, Trina. I'll have to be brief. For one thing, I'm the father of your children. Since their welfare is the main concern of both of us, we must think of them first."

Martin's words fell on Trina's soul like the aftershocks of an earthquake. "How can that be? You are . . . all Men are sterile!"

"Not all of them - and certainly not this one. There are more."

"What are you going to do to me?"

"To you? Nothing. With you? Whatever I must to get you and the boys to safety." He looked into her stricken face. "Trina, your life is worth nothing now. Come with me - leave this place! We've got to get the boys and run!"

"Where would we go? Why should I believe you? You could be faking all of this. You could even be testing my loyalty to the State."

"I don't . . ." Martin whirled at the pounding on the door. He let Trina go, grabbed the pistol and hid it inside the waistband of his trousers. He stepped behind the bedroom door and motioned to Trina. "See who it is."

A shaken and upset Trina opened her apartment door to face two huge masculine and muscled females. They were in the black uniforms of the Security Agents. At last! They would rescue her from the madman inside!

Trina started to speak, but was sent reeling across the floor from a blow across her mouth. One of the agents, a square-set woman with short, blonde hair, twisted Trina's arm cruelly behind her and snapped a restrainer to her wrist.

"Trina Davenport, you are under arrest for espionage, sedition, and conspiracy to overthrow the government. Get up," and she yanked Trina to her feet. Gesturing with her head toward the bedroom, she ordered, "Go get the boyfriend." The other agent toyed expectantly with a small

club. "I might have to rough him up a bit if he don't come peaceful," she smirked. She strode purposefully toward the bedroom door. "OK Romeo, come on out."

Martin walked out of the bedroom, hands up, cowering. "Don't hit me," he whined.

"Hal! Big tough one, just like all the rest." She tapped Martin in the midsection with her club. "Up against the wall, Tarzan."

She never saw it coming. Martin had turned meekly enough, but his foot lashed out with blinding speed, landing just under her left ear. Before her body fell to the floor, he had leaped to Trina and with two swift chopping motions, disabled her tormentor.

"We have no choice now," he said calmly. He searched the thick blonde body for the restrainer key. "There will be a backup team outside. We'll need reinforcements." He unlocked the restrainer from Trina's wrist. "Put on some boots and a protector suit as quickly as you can." He ran into the bedroom. Trina was stubborn but she was no fool. She followed him into the bedroom and started dressing. He watched her admiringly as he spoke into the instrument in low, urgent tones. "Right," he said, and hung up.

"Hurry, Trina," he urged. "There's not much time." He ran to the front door, saw it still open, and flattened his body against the frame. Trina heard a car door slam. That meant the backup pair was on the way, and they would have their guns drawn and ready.

Without warning, the lights flickered, then went out. Far off in the distance, Trina heard the sound of sirens. At first, only a few, then the sound of many. Martin saw the pair stop, turn toward the sound, then seem undecided as the frantic call for all units reached them from the car radio.

Suddenly, Trina was beside him. She was stuffing her hair up under the agent's cap. "Up, quick!" she prodded him. "Put your hands behind you!" She pushed Martin just outside the door, stood close behind him, and yelled, "Go on! We've got these!" The backups turned, waved, and got into the car. With screaming tires, they headed toward a plume of black smoke rising against the afternoon sky.

"Let's go!" said Martin. He grabbed Trina's wrist and ran for the empty car. They got inside, started the car, and sped down the nearly empty street.

"What's happening?" asked Trina.

"A small War, for one thing. Our friends have caused an overload at the power plant, set off several artillery simulators in the sewers, and set fire to a thousand gallons of used oil in an empty factory building. That's as much as I know about it. They may have added more since I last talked to them. We knew we would need a diversion when the time came. That time is now."

He stopped the car quickly. "The first thing we have to do is get the boys. Orders haven't reached the Medical Zone yet, but we'll have to separate. I'll get Lucas, but you must go after Chris. Do you know the subways?" She nodded. "Then take the old route to the harbor. It won't be easy. I'll do my best to have you covered, but you'll probably have to go it alone. Here," and

he thrust the revolver in her hand. "If you need to use it, just point it and pull the trigger. I hope you won't need it. I'll try to meet you from the harbor end as far inside as I possibly can. Now go after Chris. I wish I could get him for you, but I would be noticed in the small children's section. Now to find you another car."

Trina watched as Martin raised the hood of a parked automobile and began pulling and twisting wires. Something sparked, and the engine hummed to life. The door was locked. Martin carefully smashed the window and opened the door. Trina sat behind the wheel of the car and looked at Martin.

"Where are we going?"

"To the island of Hawaii. You have heard of it. When my great grandmother went back, she discovered the harbor full of ships and the island untouched by the bombs. We will be safe there." He bent, kissed her, and was gone.

Trina slogged on through the darkness, shivering. She had come, finally, to the end of the flooded section. She was tired - more weary than she had ever been in her life. She had strapped Chris onto her back when he could no longer go under his own power. Poor baby! He had fallen asleep before the effects of the pill had a chance to wear off, but she was wet, cold, and miserable. The floor of the tunnel had been gradually rising for some time now. Where was Martin? He had said he would meet her from the harbor end, and she should be nearing the harbor entrance. A fallen concrete slab blocked her way. She looked around. Beyond the slab, a shaft of light penetrated the darkness from a hole in the roof. Carefully Trina worked her way around the slab with her precious burden. Once across, she looked about and pressed a fist into her mouth to stifle the scream rising from her throat. The scene in front of her looked like it was straight out of hell. Bodies lay strewn about - horribly deformed bodies, everywhere she looked, dressed in rags and covered with blood. Trina froze at the sound of a low growl. She looked in the direction of the sound and gasped. Martin lay face down against the wall, and over him, facing Trina, stood a huge animal snarling at her through bloody foam.

"Martin," she screamed, raising the pistol with both hands.

The form moved. "Trina?" He raised his head. "Don't shoot." The snarling dog moved toward Trina on unsteady legs. "Stay, Sinbad," he commanded. The dog stopped, tried to move on, then collapsed. Martin crawled painfully toward him and fell with his face buried in the animal's fur. Trina could see his body shaking with sobs.

Terrified, watchful of the bodies around her, she made her way slowly over to him.

"Martin, are you alright?" she almost panicked at the sight of him. "What have they done to you?"

"I'll be alright. They jumped us as I was on my way to meet you. Sinbad killed two, maybe three of them. They were using clubs and rocks, but I

don't think any bones are broken. I believe I can stand up. Sinbad wasn't so lucky."

"What about Lucas?" she asked, almost afraid to hear his answer.

"Lucas is safe. He's outside the entrance, waiting for you and Chris."

"Martin," a voice called from the darkness.

"Over here. We need lights and a stretcher." He sat down beside the gray-furred animal. "They sent Sinbad overland to the tunnel mouth to meet you, but he went on past when he caught the scent of the mutants ahead."

Martin reached for Trina and held her in a crushing embrace. "Trina," his voice faltered, "I didn't know if I made it here before you until you called. I thought you and Chris might be dead." She saw the tears. In that moment, Trina knew that she loved this man who cared enough to weep. She reached for him to comfort him, and as she held him close, something changed within her. She knew that as they prepared to face an unknown future in a strange and distant culture, the sharing of that future with Martin and their sons gave her courage enough to enter it.

WAITIN' ON THAT SUNDAY FLOOD

I.
In the swift river, Friday rushes past
in a rough-and-tumble flowing fight
 with Monday.
Occasionally,
I pluck Saturday—
or Tuesday—
from the murky water
with thumb and forefinger,
laying it flat in the dirty sand.
 It soon becomes crisp in the scorching
 sunlight.
Often,
Wednesday, a welcome intrusion,
bobs up into view—
 and is washed up onto my island,
 where I crouch,
 head on knees,
is silent fascination.

II.
Now the stream swirls, spins, clogs;
Everyday winks quickly and then goes under.
Sundays twist and stick,
 one to another.
With limb in hand,
 I poke and stir—
 but only when the dam breaks
 does the whirlpool burst
and the current resume its timeless glide.

III.
With pants legs rolled up,
 I lie flat on the bank,
 the sand hot on my neck,
 legs full in the stream,
delighting as my naked heels bounce
 on the rock bottom,
feeling each Friday, each Monday,
 that slips between my toes,
anxiously awaiting that Sunday flood
that will swiftly, smoothly—
 set me adrift.

BERTHE THE VIRGIN

The Duchess Berthe of Angst was a lady of such repulsive visage that she spent most of her first forty-one years locked in her chamber, by orders of her father. Upon his death, Berthe inherited all of his estates, his titles, and a rather more than ample fortune. She also received a key to her chamber, which she immediately put to use. That very afternoon, her court and all of her estates were abandoned by all of the nobles, merchants, servants, and peasants, after only the slightest glimpse of her, and many fled after only hearing of her.

Berthe was so happy with her new-found freedom that she didn't care that her face was rapidly depopulating the region, except for the blind, or those so ugly that her ghastly features won their heart-felt allegiance. Berthe soon established her court in the lovely palace at Angst. The palace itself was lovely, but had been decorated with such hideous taste that one wondered why Berthe's father had found her so unbearable. Berthe and her friends set to work and redecorated the palace until it was a place of such beauty that visitors who came upon it unexpectedly (about the only type Berthe ever received. People made a point of avoiding her court) gasped with pleasure.

Eventually, word of Berthe's court drifted through the land, and all of the most talented, creative people in the country traveled to the court, where they lived in happiness and harmony. The one thing that held them together was their almost universal ugliness. The few average-to-plain-looking people who came to court were looked at with pity and just a bit of disgust. Nonetheless, many of them stayed once they became acquainted with the stimulating spirit of the place. The court was filled with brilliant poets, singers, sculptors, painters, philosophers, and assorted other artists and thinkers. The only art which didn't thrive at the court of Angst was portraiture.

All were enamored of Berthe. Rather than making her hard and embittered, the years of captivity had brought out the best in Berthe's character. She was kind, thoughtful, thrifty, and obedient. She had a kind word and a compliment for everyone, and her compliments were never empty flattery, either. She had the knack of being able to find something praiseworthy in anyone or anything. Her own misfortunes kept her from having any false pride and made her look for the finer qualities in others. Perhaps this was the reason she allowed Vladimir the Oafish Dwarf to remain at court.

Vladimir the Oafish Dwarf was the exact opposite of Berthe, character-wise. Like Berthe, he had been born with such a horrible face that the midwife fainted. His father took one look and was never seen in the village again. When he was five years old, Vladimir discovered his mother trying to give him the slip, also. Although he ran as fast as his little legs could

carry him, she soon was out of sight. By that time, he was hopelessly lost in The Forest. Fortunately, he found a blind hermit who agreed to take him in, but only because he thought that Vladimir was a badger. For the next twenty years, he had to snarl and snap whenever the hermit was near, so he wouldn't catch on. Vladimir didn't mind snarling and snapping, because it came to him quite naturally. After twenty years, the poor hermit could take no more. He took his broom and drove the nasty-tempered "badger" into The Forest. Vladimir wandered about for several days, until he was discovered by Berthe and some of her friends, who were on a hunting trip. Berthe and her friends stopped him to ask for directions, and after he answered them, she kept her companions from running him through. She perceived that he was as lost as they were, and she asked him to join them. In gratitude for her saving his life, he accepted her offer, and ever afterward was on his best behavior around her, although he tried to make life miserable for the rest of the court. Lest you think Vladimir's ugliness was his only qualification to be a member of the court, it should be pointed out that he was an excellent wood-carver, although he only carved gargoyles which looked suspiciously like himself. But a talent is a talent, whether it is useful or not.

One day, while Berthe and some of her ladies were wandering in the park, a man on a white charger charged out of The Forest. All of the ladies, including Berthe, gasped in shock. The prince, for indeed, such a man **had** to be a prince, was extremely good-looking. He had perfect features and long blond hair which fell in curls about his shoulders. The thing which shocked the ladies, however, was the fact that his lips were not drawn back in disgust, and his eyes did not show distaste. In fact, he seemed not to see them at all. He stopped his horse and dismounted right in front of Berthe. The he turned around and began to call,

"Hullo! Is anyone there?"

He leaped two feet and seven-and-a-half inches into the air when Berthe answered him from immediately behind. When he landed, he whirled around to face her, squinting his large blue eyes in her general direction.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you! Where are you?"

"Right here"

"I hope I'm not interrupting anything, but I'm really terribly near-sighted. I am Prince Allan."

"How do you do? I am the Duchess Berthe of Angst. Welcome to my duchy."

"Thank you. Are we alone?"

"No, my ladies are with me. Why do you ask?"

"I wonder if your fair ladies would allow me to speak with you privately?" He couldn't quite understand why "fair ladies" got such a laugh, but the ladies withdrew.

"Alright, we are alone. What did you wish to say?"

"Well, it's rather embarrassing, and I'd rather you didn't tell anyone."

"Yes?"

"You see — I'm lost!"

"Why is that so embarrassing? It is a rather common occurrence for people to get lost in The Forest."

"That's just it. It's a 'common' occurrence, and I am a prince. Princes can't do common things, and they aren't supposed to get lost. It reflects badly on the royal family."

"I see what you mean. Would you like to spend the night in the palace? It's rather late, but tomorrow you may send for your companions."

"That would be swell!" Prince Allan ran into a tree and had to be carried to the palace.

The next day, Berthe showed Prince Allan around the palace. He was greatly impressed by the artists that Berthe had collected. He had nice things to say about everything and quite charmed everyone. Everyone but Vladimir, that is. Prince Allan accidentally knocked him down a flight of stairs, and Vladimir, who was an unforgiving soul, vowed revenge. Actually, he vowed revenge even before he was kicked down the stairs, because he was infuriated by the Prince's good looks.

To make matters worse, the Prince and Berthe fell in love and decided to get married. This was the last straw for Vladimir, who was in love with Berthe himself. He crept to a tiny room at the top of a tower and set to work on his revenge.

The marriage plans of the Prince and Berthe proceeded swiftly. His parents were not happy that Berthe was so much older than Prince Allan, but they were mollified by her fortune. However, for some strange reason, they found themselves unable to attend the nuptials.

The day of the wedding dawned bright and clear, and everything seemed perfect. The only thing to mar the bliss was the sight of Vladimir's gleeful face as he watched the prince bumping into walls and talking to tapestries.

It has been said that there is no such thing as an ugly bride. The joy and radiance of the occasion make even the plainest woman appear beautiful. It is obvious that whoever said that didn't see Berthe.

The palace was filled to overflowing with ugly nobility. Outside, the ugly peasantry was thronged, hoping to catch a glimpse of the homely bride. Finally, the ceremony began. Vladimir was able to see very well from his vantage point in the chapel. He was perched in a niche that was just about on eye level with Prince Allan. The niche had once held a saint's image, but Vladimir had thrown it into the moat. They didn't call him an oafish dwarf for nothing.

As Berthe walked down the aisle, she heard a sound that sounded suspiciously like snickering coming from the general direction of the groom. Naturally, Berthe was a bit upset, but she almost went into shock when she saw that it was Vladimir who was laughing, because of what he held in his stubby little fingers.

He held a pair of glasses.

Just as Berthe saw what it was, Vladimir reached out and slipped the glasses onto the Prince's face. The Prince, thinking that a bee was buzzing around his face, slapped at it, knocking Vladimir out of the window to join the saint in the moat. But the damage had been done. The glasses were in

place, and the Prince was looking around himself.

The first thing he saw was a vision in white (some had tried to dissuade Berthe from wearing white. They thought that she was too old. Her virginity was unquestioned, of course). Berthe screamed and hid her face, as did most of the people present. It was some time before they realized that the Prince had not fainted or run from the chapel.

Finally, Berthe looked up. The prince, with a slightly less vacant expression on his face, was still looking around himself with interest.

Some sort of miracle had occurred.

The Prince, never having seen beauty, could find nothing wrong with Berthe. Since her looks were a bit more extreme than most of the people present, he took her to be a beauty, for she certainly was rare to look at.

To the joy and happiness of all those who were present, the wedding proceeded.

Berthe's first action after the wedding was to make a proclamation forbidding mirrors anywhere in the kingdom. Her ugly subjects were only too happy to destroy their mirrors, and all lived happily ever after.

Diane Eison

FALLOW GROUND

Let the ground lie fallow.
Respond not to the energies
That spring from the earth,
Water bursting through dry grass
From deep below,
Fertile flowing over desert sands
Dry from waiting, thirsty to drink of spring.

Let the ground lie fallow.
Watch survival in the dust
Follow spring's fatal outburst
Greening without a quenching,
Prolific proof of an obstinate truth
Wildly displaying strength and purpose,
Seed to weed, yellow ochre stems now green.

Let the ground lie fallow.
Trust the ochre color — snow
Spotted, ice cold — to change alone
Without hoe and plow and water flowing freely,
Eager to explode the crest of earth
Above its hidden source —
Deep black hole in a liquid dark.

Let the ground lie fallow.
Accept even ochre and sand
As stable land in a fertile season —
A Sahara watched by stone pharaohs
Eroding in time but still spinning
On earth's axis in natural precision
With ponderosa pines and condominiums.

Let the ground lie fallow.
Know death will come
On the heel of the seventh day
Without rain in a desert where thirst
Knows no quenching, burnt with sunheat,
And lie down to rest in sand's soft burial ground
As time covers fallow ground.

Diane Eison

NARROW ESCAPES

That window pane
Holds framed a tree
Stripped bare.
A drenched scabby thing —
It claws the wind-swept night,
Shakes, chilled by freezing rain,
Sheds reluctant drops
To earth iced shut
To resist even the slightly warm
Intrusion of a raindrop
That barely escaped becoming
An icicle.

Dorothy Spear

TOGETHER AGAIN

A solitary figure stood and watched
The rushing tide bear on its foam-flecked waves
Two captive spirits freed from tight-sealed urns
In keeping with a long past solemn vow.

In life they asked that when they both were gone
In death their wishes would be carried out—
Their ashes tossed to sea at eventide
To ride the swells beneath a summer moon.

Their lives began where sea met sky and earth
And swirling surf made patterns on the sand—
They watched as clouds ran from the morning sun
And felt the earth grow warm on brown bare feet.

As lovers oftentimes are wont to do
They made a pledge to never, never part—
And so their ashes mingle in the swells
To ride forever on the restless tides.

Louella Warren

SUNNY

It was the first day of school vacation. My youngest daughter, Robin, who was nine that summer, was taking advantage of the opportunity to sleep later than usual. The sun, which had long since made its way over the Smokey Mountains of Western North Carolina, was now shining in Robin's eyes.

She got herself out of bed, dressed quickly, and made her way to the kitchen, where she picked the raisins out of the bowl of raisin bran I placed in front of her. The bang of the screen door told me that she was now outside.

"See you later, Mom. I'm gone to find Sunny."

Sunny was the big orange tomcat who lived with us, and acted as though he thought himself to be as human as the rest of us. He was Robin's companion, confidant, and the willing recipient of her occasional maternal instincts. Often he could be found on her shoulder when she went for a walk, or curled on her lap while she read to him. He listened patiently while she told him her most personal secrets. He even remained lovable while dressed in doll's clothes with two pairs of booties on his four paws.

The screen door banged

"Mom, I can't find Sunny. I looked all the places he usually is."

"Did you look in the flower bed under the gladiolus?"

"Yes. He wasn't there. Where is that cat?"

Robin looked disappointed in her friend. Then her expression changed to one of fear.

"Mom, you don't think he could have gone to the highway, do you?"

Before I could answer, the door banged again. The scraping noises told me that Robin was taking her bike from the side of the house where she left it the night before.

"I'm going to look for him," she called to me with panic in her voice.

I watched as she left the driveway, then as she rode past the row of pines that grow alongside the fence. By the time she reached the highway, I, too was imagining the very worst.

Robin's eyes saw immediately what she didn't want to see. The large, orange, furry mass must have been struck by a car during the night.

Robin's plight had now been seen by other children of the neighborhood and they were gathering around offering sympathy, help, and even kittens to replace the departed.

"What happened?" asked one late comer.

"It's Sunny, Robin's cat. Car musta hit em."

"Oh no!"

"We'll help you get him home, then we can have a funeral for him, a real nice one."

"Robin, can I dig the hole? I can dig a real deep one. I've been digging holes for years. Can I, please?"

Allen's persistence finally brought an affirmative nod from Robin.

The dead cat was lovingly lifted into Robin's bicycle basket that carried him on his last ride along the fence and the row of pines, coming to a stop by the porch where I stood waiting.

"I think he's better off now," offered Allen. "Think how he used to hate it when you put flea powder on him. Now he'll never have to suffer again."

The stiff cat was lifted by willing hands onto the grass, while the final funeral arrangements were discussed. A pretty box would be needed. Someone suggested flowers. (Gladiolus, so Sunny would feel at home.) And of course Allen would need a shovel for digging the deep hole. Music couldn't be left out of the memorial service, so all of his favorite songs would be sung. Someone remembered how he loved to hear "Three Blind Mice".

Meanwhile, the tall grass in back of the nearby flower bed moved. No one noticed. Then something emerged. That something yawned, stretched, and walked toward us, completely insensitive to the abounding grief. That something was also large and furry. . . . and orange!

Instantly all eyes were on this unbelievable creature. Then again on the dead cat. Then again on this unbelievable creature.

"Sunny!" squealed Robin as she scooped him into her arms, and began to administer hugs and reprimands simultaneously. Sunny remained composed as usual.

In every crowd there is always one soul who can take control of any situation. In this one it was Allen.

"We still have a dead cat to bury," he said with a note of victory in his voice. "I'll be back in a minute; I've got to find the shovel."

Greg Klierewer

WORDS SPOKEN ON THE DAY OF THE WEDDING

One poor man rose and said,

"I have nothing I can bring

And I have no bread."

Another poor man shook his purse:

"To lack a jingle's not to lack a curse!"

A third poor man said, "I shall first

Amass a wealth and from my rich—

es bless you with a purchased gift

From off Venitian merchant ship."

Another offered sad things,

For his life was sad and

He had never known that souls could grow wings.

And one final poor man

Scarcely older than a lad said,

"I shall tender words of worth and dreams which sing

Without the prompting of a harp's melodious strings;

And I shall charm and I shall chant

And I shall chime them as the bells which ring

When two exchange their vows and wedding rings:

I once whispered softly

and said to your eyes bleary blue,

"Though all rivers turn salty,

should earth quake its pillaring mountains in two

and the sky fall, collapsing like rafters, in lieu,

let the sun turn its back on me,

clouds chase the stars

and the world grow dark

and grow cold and untrue,

still my heart's only paradise

ever shall be inside you.

So close your blue and teary eyes

and take my hand and dream awhile,

and take these matrimony vows;

and when, the world spinning old,

the summer's wind blows cold, who knows

if all that once was but a dream

just might not grow a golden face

and churn a glowing brightly smile

and shine with love and warmth and grace

until tomorrow's tomorrow?"

And you whispered back softly, "Who knows?"

And after he was finished with his rhyme
the other four poor men felt, each of them,
wiser for the hearing and richer than a dime.
And afterward as evening swung
with haste its huge and iron gates
across the western sky,
closing darkness in and daylight out,
one poor man asked, "Can souls really grow
wings, and can they really fly?"
Another offered, "Who knows?"

Dorothy Spear

BRANDED

A furtive glance, a fleeting smile,
A sentence passed; he was senile.
Pronouncement made with just one word
Unmindful that he might have heard.

He did not fit a programmed mold
Thus could not stay within the fold
Of probing thoughts and searching minds —
Inflexible to all other kinds.

In dignity he bore the brand
Without reproof he made his stand —
In vain attempting to detect
The wisdom in such intellect.

No one could know how he had grown
More sensitive to things unknown
To find that as his vision spread
He viewed a soul within the head.

Russ Hall

THE CRITICS

What use have I
for these
that wince
at much of what
I've written
since?
Whose judgement fails
to keep me from my
earnest lines?
my written ails?

The more I muse,
the more they sigh
and
shake their heads
at my attempt
to leave
some sense of
me
behind.

For the
"ignorants" only
do I pen—
not for poets,
nor intellects,
who weigh
too heavily
my effects.
If I may seize
an innocent
soul then
my book of verse
shall see me
whole.

Keith Romans

I AM NO LORD

I am no Lord!
The beasts are forever
To stalk and hunt me as they will

They pursue me even now
As I dare to pause
And extend this warning

As I rest here in the dark
Quill in hand
I tremble deep within myself

My heart betrays a steady tempo
That of my soul
Seeking an escape from its corporeal prison

It flees from the creatures
Those which endeavor to wrest it from its shell
And expose it to the hoard

Oh yes, they're there
They cast a shadow before them
An aura precedes them, an odor

I feel a fear creeping near me
It is a beast grasping and clutching
Ever reaching for its victim

I yearn for a fitful companion
I am lonely in my flight
I smell the beasts coming nearer

I search in Desperation
For a refuge in which
I may rest and build my strength

In that, I Envy my foe
His power never waning
He continues a steady pursuit for mine

As he nears me, he feels it, I feel it
His control over what is mine is growing
It begins to fill me, everything about me

I must run from it, escape
It will possess me to be his
His servant, his lower self

No! I will not turn my back
I will stand and fight
I will repel this creature

I face the beast
Courage my armament
I challenge my opponent

The creature reveals his tools
I feel the power to combat him
He is at my mercy

He shows me that I am ugly
But I see inside myself
That I am truly beautiful

My courage emanates outward
Engulfing myself, the arena,
The beast

He will be vanquished
I will overcome his evil
And he shall be my servant

The beast is reaching behind him
A new weapon
His final weapon

The point of his lance
Darts toward my heart
To plunge into my life

Death!
The very essence of my being
Drips from the point of the cold steel

The joust is ended
I am not the victor, I am not the conqueror
That honor would never have been mine

I was doomed
I see that now
As the beast sends his challenge to a new man

Joe Roberts

THE DEAD LIE SLEEPING

The river cares not for its contents. Deep and dark, it winds past the low summer croplands, the tired little bankside towns and the varicolored deciduous forests, to empty itself into its brothers, small streams and mist shrouded swamps. Events mean nothing to that which is itself but a chain of events. Life and death are equally valueless; one is but the reverse of the other. The river is both- and neither. All is the same within it. When one occurs, the other may follow.

The graveyard is silent now. The procession is over; the mourners have all gone to weep in the warmth of their homes. The preacher has been paid and dines now at a roadside tavern, along with the police chief and the wife of the "dearly departed, bless his poor soul." Their thoughts have turned from those of mourning to those of joy. They discuss their wedding plans.

Beneath the newly turned dirt is a richly ornamented coffin. It is much, much better than is deserved by the murderer within. Of course, there had to be a body within, lest the pall-bearers become suspicious. How willingly they accepted the notion of a closed coffin funeral ceremony. The murderer had served his purpose well in life; in death he served another.

The murky waters swirl around the locks lazily. Chunks of driftwood rise up from the depths, peek out at the dark skies, and are sucked back down, never to rise again. The swishing sounds of the flowing water are joined by those of the croaking bullfrog and wailing whippoorwill, night song of the evermoving river. It is as it is, was, and ever will be.

Yet someone is in that river, someone who has no place there. His dead eyes are gone now, picked clean by small catfish. He lies in the silt and mud of a shallow opening near the town of his birth. The weights around his strangled neck were not heavy enough to keep him from being drawn with the current. He has come home.

"Ashes to ashes, the preacher had said. "Dust to dust. The dead lie sleeping. Let no man question God's will." It was a truly moving ceremony.

He now laughs happily. "I put on a good show, didn't I."

The police chief smiles, all dress uniform and straight teeth and whiskey breathed. "You sure enough did, Rev., you sure enough did," he says, "considering how everyone in town knows how much you hated old Slim."

"Well, it was his fault," Slim's widow interjects. "If he hadn't tried to take over the good Reverend's congregation, none of this would have happened."

"...and you'da had to divorce old Slim, and give up all of that insurance money. Smart thing you did, getting that policy on him. It's going to come in handy when we get married next week." The police chief scratches his chest. "Another beer, Rev.?"

"No thank you," the preacher answers, waving his hands as he rises, "I'd best be getting home. Late, you know. I'll see you in church on Sunday." He moves his chair back into place under the table and walks out of the tavern.

The preacher's car is in the back parking lot, next to the police chief's private patrol car. He heads for it, savoring the warm feeling the beer he consumed has left in the pit of his stomach. He reaches for the door handle.

The preacher is now dead. His neck is broken. A trickle of river mud rolls down and stains his white collar.

Several hours have passed. The police chief and his wife to be finally leave the tavern. They are both drunk and boisterous. They run playfully to the patrol car and fall against it, kissing passionately. Neither see the body of the preacher, draped over the ground like a discarded sack of oatmeal. Nor do they see the shiny wet form coming out of the woods behind the parking lot.

The police chief's eyes bulge from their sockets and his back cracks with a sound like rotting wood in the grip of Slim's inhumanly strong hands. The smell of decay, plus that of blue river mud chokes his widow and fear freezes her in one spot. There is no chance for escape.

There is no sound of screaming as Slim picks up his wife and walks off into the night. The alcohol in her blood and the fear in her mind have paralyzed her. He walks on, the silent avenger, the undead adversary. He heads for the river.

The river cares not for its contents. The silent scenario is over. The dead lie sleeping.

Sheila Riley

RUBY SOKEL

Ruby Sokel had a twin who died at birth and some think half of Ruby went with it.

When Ruby came to my house I was 10 years old and playing Barbies and she was 30—at least and she brought her dolls to play too.

My instructions were to "humor her" and "just keep her occupied" and "for God's sake, keep her in the back room."

We were the same height I remember because this was when being tallest in your fifth grade class was so important.

Mam Ma said she grew so short cause she ate too much maple syrup.

Ruby had long straight black hair and a long straight nose and thin eyes with pointed cat glasses with rhinestone settings and

Ruby looked sharp and pointy.

She never said much, but would string and pop her grape jawbreaker bubble gum to beat the band.

It was after Halloween and she had been trick and treating and she had won a set of Dracula teeth at the elementary school Chili Supper/Halloween Party.

She wore these when she came to visit me with her dolls and grape slobber and

it was enough to make you sick if you thought about it too long.

Actually it took a while for me to figure out that Ruby wasn't a cousin, or even kin.

But that I was supposed to be a playmate, a pal (i.e., A True Christian Friend) to Ruby, just because we lived next door. . .

When Ruby came to play once when it was hot we got in the rain barrel to "swim" and swallowed so many wiggle worms we got the runs and Ruby couldn't visit for a week and three days.

She asked me when I started menstruating and when I got a bra and other things that made me feel all hot and red.

She said she knew about these things cause she found *True Story* under her Mamma's bed.

I said you weren't to talk about such things outside family.

When I got too old to play, one Christmas I made a present of my Barbie dolls and gave them to Ruby.

My baby sister was born when I was in high school.

Some people talk that Mommy and Daddy just "had an accident."

I think Ruby Sokel needed a True Christian Friend.

Sheila Riley

DELLER

At 63 before she died (they tell me, "*smoked* herself to death").

Deller sopped Saltines in stump water coffee and

remembered being 12 back in Pall Mall on her mountain.

Thinking when Ruby and Delce and Monie and her one Sunday

snuck in the cave near Stearnes' Lumber

and saw Indian writings on the wall—

where there were shelves like in York's Store and grass inside so green and thick you'd thought the sun shone there sometimes regular.

Deller was on the mountain when the fires came and

Monie took her by the arm to turn the horses loose while

Uncle Wid and Uncle Issac started the backfire.

It was summer she heard the rains come cross the Smokies and

waited out the thunder and lightning behind the iron poster bed singing hymn notes with Aunt Ce.

One night when Deller was 9 on the stoop of the dogtrot, they watched the comet go over and

Mammy prayed inside with Her Bible for the coming of the Angels of God,

and repented their sins at the Regular Baptist footwashing that Saturday.

Deller listened to stories of the old hill man who

pitched town ribs down a bottomless hole, who

died with his dog and his money and a snake bite to his back.

She heard the cradle rock at midnight in the Anderson house and

dreamed of the hatpin puncturing the soft spot.

Deller helped at sugaring and making kraut and

she was there to walk Monie through rheumatic fever with

love and white gasoline from Jamestown.

And Deller watched the fog rise off the ridge road

the day their Daddy took them to find work in Kentucky.

It was 63 before she died when Deller knew that

old things never pass away and faith could move mountains.

Sheila Riley

GOOBER

Goober was a harelip who sounded like the Herman jokes you tell by holding your tongue.
Mamma said he got that way cause his mother's buggy ran over a turtle before he was born.
Goober was the egg man who came round Saturdays before supper who week to week said he'd be bringing a rock for my head.
Week to week I'd search his pockets, but he'd say he left it in the truck cause it was too heavy to carry with the eggs.
The neighbors made fun of us still buying farm goods when we lived in town,
but I waited to see the blue and brown and specklety eggs
(a different dozen every time) with bits of chicken do and feathers.
Goober did us right and
when he got too old to see to drive to bring them to us,
Pa and Mamma and me would go to Sparta on our Sunday drive to Goober's Chicken House for Goober's eggs.
And when I got a little older, Mamma told me it was cause
Pa felt sorry for Goober, not because his eggs were any better.
One day when I grew up I asked my grocer how they got their eggs so white
and he said they were painted cause most folks wouldn't buy a specklety egg.

Jamie Stearns

PEOPLE ARE STRANGE

Life had been empty for Reggie Milton. Life had been a series of spaces-blank spaces waiting to be filled on calendars, in photograph albums, and on the page on the back side of the telephone book which read, "For the numbers you frequently call. . . ." Life had been memos to himself. These memos-write Uncle Joe, read geology for Monday- were passionately ignored, and the scattered, unheeded memos made Reggie feel important and involved.

This had all been before Reggie discovered Jim Morrison and the Doors. Now Reggie had a purpose. Reggie was a fan. Wild posters plastered the walls of Reggie's minute apartment, an apartment which previously had been spaciouly boring. "The Young Lion in the early days. . . ." read one glossy black and white poster. A fiercely beautiful male glared out from it. His tousled black hair, jutting cheekbones, and magnetic sneer seemed to define masculinity.

Infrequent visitors were greeted visually and aurally with the dusky atmosphere of Jim Morrison, and engulfed by the frantic appeal of this atmosphere. The singer's slanted black eyes challenged, and his throaty voice disturbed. It wasn't really Reggie's apartment anymore, it was more of a shrine he had monumented for his idol, and he was not the resident of the apartment, he was the caretaker. Night and day, the strange, almost Oriental flavor of the Door's music floated throughout the small apartment. And the apartment house.

One morning Reggie was carefully dressing himself for class. Standing in front of the bathroom mirror, clad in a pair of faded, torn Levis and a savage looking black leather vest, he scowled meekly into the mirror. He studied his reflection and decided that something was missing. He rummaged through a drawer and pulled out a long choker of tiny, ivory white beads and wrapped them around his neck. Once more, he scowled at the mirror.

Suddenly, he was startled by loud noises, noises so loud they could be heard over the stereo. He turned to see the usually sedate plumber who occupied the room next door crashing into Reggie's room. With an uplifted wrench, he demanded that the playing of a Doors' song, "The End", be terminated.

"I'm a God-fearing son of a bitch," he rasped. "And I won't put up with that smut coming through my walls."

Reggie scurried over to the stereo and nervously removed the offensive album. Between much stuttering, he offered his apology and managed to receive an affectionate grunt from the normally pleasant plumber.

On a wintry afternoon, Reggie, trodding home with a handful of rock star magazines in one grasp and a thick book in the other, was greeted by a tall, frizzy-haired girl.

"I know you." She smiled expansively. "We live in the same apartment house. I'm Sondra. I know you're really keen on the Doors."

"Yes," Reggie stated.

"That's cool." She said in a husky voice. She began singing. "People are strange, when you're a stranger, faces look ugly when you're alone. . . . "I always liked that song best," she stated, and quickly returned to her song, "Streets are uneven when you're down. . . ."

He watched her, nervously smiling and enjoying her performance. Her body was very thin and tall, and she leaned over, slumping her shoulders, and her off-balanced posture made her look like she might topple over at any second. Her hair was a honey blond shade, and the small, perfect features of her face were haloed by the light, frizzy mane.

She looked at him expectantly.

"Eh, I like the song 'Not to Touch the Earth,'" he said. "And I really like 'Light My Fire.'" He blushed at this last confession.

Suddenly, she wheeled around to face a very tall and skinny boy. He looked much younger than Sondra. He wore black hornrimmed glasses and a black, metallic button which read, "Boogie 'til you puke." He approached Sondra and Reggie with a slight smile on his face.

"William," Sondra said, stating the name as an announcement rather than as a greeting. Sondra observed William for five seconds, and then asked, "Did you get the boxes?"

"No," William replied.

"Well, We'll have to go back over to Thrift-Way," Sondra said, after a significant pause. She pulled out a pack of cigarettes from her pocket, lighted a cigarette, and began puffing on it.

"William's my roommate." She said, taking a long drag from the cigarette.

Sondra's beauty suddenly struck Reggie, and he puzzled over the friendship between this beauty and this gangly nerd.

"And you are. . . ?" She demanded.

"Reggie-eh, Reg." He answered dully.

The three stood awkwardly on the sidewalk. Sondra tossed her cigarette to the concrete sidewalk and stomped at it frantically. She stuffed her bony hands into the pockets of her windbreaker. Abruptly, she broke the stilted silence.

"We must get the boxes. We'll check you out later." She saw his look of surprise. "Sure, I know where you live. Right above us, man. The music, man, the Doors!" She smiled extravagantly, and raised her arm, gesturing to the sky. "Upstairs, the Doors, all night long, all day long."

With this she turned to leave, William hovering at her side. As she bounded away, she called, "Oh yeah, we're going to Chicago. That's why we've gotta get boxes."

Reggie rehearsed his question while he furiously straightened up his apartment. He waited for them, sitting stiffly on his couch, and finally he heard the two trudging up the stairs and speaking in hushed, serious tones.

He asked his question: "Why are you going to Chicago?" He ejected

heavily.

"We're into theatre. This school—this town," she frowned, "is not the place for a theatre person."

Reggie continued to sit stiffly on his tattered couch while staring at Sondra with wide, intent eyes. She restlessly stalked about the apartment, pondering the decor, leafing through the Morrison biography *No One Here Gets Out Alive*.

"What do you study?" She asked. "I bet you're into music."

"No, I'm majoring in business."

"Hmm." Sondra considered this. "You like it?"

"Yes, well, I guess I do." He stammered. "I'm doing pretty well. I'm an honor student." He added haughtily. As soon as he had uttered this last statement, he began to regret it. She probably thought he was a real moron.

William remarked that it was perfectly fine to align oneself with business as an occupation so long as you keep an artistic tune to life, and then he hastily excused himself to go to the bathroom.

"William's very conscious," Sondra whispered, nodding at the closed bathroom door.

Reggie envisioned the beautiful, fragile Sondra haunting the sordid streets of Chicago with nothing for guidance or protection but the silly, weak William. Reggie gazed tenderly at Sondra.

"We went to a space daze party last night. William went as a gyro-pilot, and I went as his princess. We got really wild. Oh, have you read *On the Road*? It's great, man. All that road going, all the people dreaming. . . ." she sighed. "You know the Beats really influenced Morrison." She was studying the album covers. "He really had an hypnotic hold on people, you know."

She walked over to Reggie. "You know, you remind me of him." He gaped at her remark. "Yes, through the eyes," she insisted. She brushed his hair away from his face, and carefully analyzed his blushing face. "You should wear your hair like his—all wild and long. Let it grow out."

She sat down on the floor, close to his feet, and peered up at him. "Yes, I can see it." She smiled a mysterious smile, eyeing him thoughtfully.

Wriggling uncomfortably, he confessed that no one had noticed the similarity before.

William ambled back into the room, and Sondra jumped up and asked, "Reggie, do you have any tea?"

Reggie answered yes and began to apologize for his lack of thoughtfulness.

"No, let me make it please."

From the sink, where Sondra stood mixing tea, came her strong, husky voice, "When you're strange, faces come out of the rain. . . ."

She brought cups of tea to Reggie and William and implored William to tell Reggie about Chicago. And Sondra told Reggie all about Chicago. She told him that they would be leaving next Monday, and "they" meant Sondra, William, and Reggie. And Reggie knew that he would be going to Chicago.

Karen McDonald

WORLD OF WISDOM

Grow up little child.
Grow up!
Grow up as fast as you can.

There's a world of wisdom out there waiting for you,
when you become a man.

You're young - so damn young!
You only know words like Mommy and Daddy and bye-bye
-and all you can do is laugh and cry.
-but don't worry,
youth is nothing time can't cure.

You're ignorant little child - so ignorant!
You only know feeling of love and warmth and joy
-and night and day you play with little toys.
-but that's alright,
we'll teach you all you need to know.

We'll teach you things like prejudice, hatred, and
war.
Soon your games of cowboys and Indians won't be games
anymore.

We'll teach you how to be successful,
once we've taught you the meaning of success.
We'll tell you just what you need to do.
The American dream can be yours,
if you want it
-and we're sure that you do.
You can have anything you want out of life
-the choices are all yours.

We'll just give you a few guidelines,
that we're sure you'll want to use.
You can be anything you want
except-
but who'd want to be that?
Of course you'll marry,
and you can marry anyone you want
except-
but you wouldn't want to marry any of those anyway!

You can say anything you want to anyone you want
except-
ah, but you'd never say that to them.
You can live any way you want
except-
but who'd want to live like that?

Like we said kid,
grow up.
Grow up quick!

You've got a lot to learn
-but it's worth it.
There's a world of wisdom out there waiting for you,
when you become a man.

LEGACY

The graves are now covered with grass.
From the mountains to the wind-swept plains
flowers bend before the tombstones.
Each one with a question on its lips.
"Why? Why? A thousand times. Why?"
But, the graves are silent.
No answers are forthcoming.
Perhaps there are none.
But, a generation was shattered.
Its blood splattered from the Delta
to the DMZ.
A nation was ripped apart.
An arrow pierced its very heart
saying "Stop. Stop, no more can I bear to see."
Still it went on.
Still it went on.
Until the war in Saigon gave birth
to the war in Chicago.
And the fighting spread from Hamburger Hill
to Lincoln Park.
The names of Ho Chi Minh and Richard Daley were on
everyone's tongue.
Bitter confrontations beneath a weeping flag.
Our collective souls beginning to sag under the weight of
a television war with a rock-n-roll soundtrack.
Don't look back.
Don't look back.
For if you do then you're doomed to see
that freedom doesn't make you free.
And just when the Pentagon's PR men tell you
everything is great.
Four dead at Kent State.
Helter Skelter
Gimme Shelter.
More blood running in our own streets.
So that a generation begun in Camelot
ends in Dante's Inferno.
But, what about the graves?
The keepers of our victims.
Solitary and silent.
Who will speak for them?
And what is their legacy?

Is it Pleiku or Woodstock?
Bob Dylan or Kate Smith?
Jane Fonda or John Wayne?
Napalm or Mescaline?
Which end of the pole truly represents them?
And in their journey through the afterlife
how do they view us?
Do they see us as tragic victims like they are?
If they do then they're not wrong.
For each one of us has died a little bit.
Each one of us has been in a war.
For as the writer has said,
"Viet Nam, Viet Nam, we have all been there."

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF JASON OGG

Jason rolled over and blinked into the sunrise. He sat up and threw back the covers, thinking his frequent morning's first thought: "Should have found a cave with southern exposure."

Rubbing the sleep out of his eyes, he tucked his half of the tiger skin over MariLynn and got up to rebuild the fire. He was slowly feeding a storm blasted tree limb into the flickers when MariLynn sat up and stretched. "Mornin' hon'," he said.

A grin pushed its way through her yawn. She leaned over and gave him a peck on the jaw. "Morning." She stood up and settled the buckskin shift on her hips. Jason eyed his slender, brown haired, brown eyed wife slyly. She caught his glance and laughed drily. "We haven't even had breakfast."

He chuckled. "Okay, bacon'll do."

"Sure thing. You carve the peccary, and I'll get the rock heated up."

Jason gave her hand a squeeze, threw a fur around his neck and wandered out front. Half a peccary was hanging from the young redwood by the cave mouth. He pulled the stone knife out of the tree trunk, honed it a little and carved several strips from the ham. Then he jabbed the knife back into the tree and ducked inside to heat his hands over the fire while MariLynn fried the bacon.

"Won't be home till late tonight," he said, stuffing his last piece of bacon in his mouth. "I've got that council meeting to attend."

MariLynn polished off her last orange segment. "Okay, I've got to go out too. I want to see about getting a tanned mammoth skin to cover the front door."

"Good idea, but if you're heading for the west side of town, take Rover. That's a rough neck of the woods."

"Sure thing. Oh, and while you're out, you better pick up something for supper."

"I imagine Matt's family would like some fresh meat. I'll round him up after the council and we'll see what we can catch."

MariLynn looked up as Matthias Kronk knocked. "Well, speak of the evil spirit. Come on in."

"Morning MariLynn. Ready to go Jase?"

"Yeah," he hugged MariLynn goodbye. "See you tonight."

Jason and Matt strolled unhurriedly towards the council rock, letting the late fall sun soak into their skins. They shot the bull over their last fishing trip, possible council business and tentatively decided to hunt beaver afterwards. Studiously they avoided the subject of Winslow Nadraugh, there was no sense getting worked up ahead of time. Jason had been in a sharp personality conflict with Nadraugh since childhood, and Matt had been old enough to observe him grow up into an overindulged, self centered, domineering young man. Jason thoroughly agreed with Matt's

appraisal that Winslow Nadraugh felt that the superiority of his "damn double grunt last name" gave him the right to structure any- and everybody else's life.

With an anticipatory cringe they approached the council rock arena to the tune of Winslow's graveled bass voice. They could tell he was warming up for a tirade of some sort, he was already getting a practice harangue on the early arrivers.

Jason and Matt lingered outside the council arena until Lester Mub, the town elder, called the assembly to order by pounding a stone on the council rock. They found seats as far from Nadraugh as they were able and flopped into the brown grass. Lester dropped his rock and sat, dangling his withered legs down the side of the boulder. He was by far the oldest man in town and looked every bit of his fifty seven years.

"Okay," he rasped, "lets get down to b'ness."

"I think those spindly evergreens north of town ought to be cut down!"

Nadraugh bellowed immediately, leaping to his feet.

"Wha-I!" Jason began but Matt held him in check.

"Objections later, Ogg," Lester grumbled reluctantly. "G'on Nadraugh."

"They are unsightly and they'll not ever amount to aught," Winslow blared on. "They'd be put to better use at cave mouths as windbreaks as winter is coming on, and as a firewood supply."

"I hope MariLynn trades his wife out their mammoth skin, and at her bargain driving hardest," Jason hissed into Matt's ear. He snorted in sympathetic laughter.

"As it is," Nadraugh continued, "those trees are the only stand within the village limits and as such are a useless oddity." Then, without further sound or gesture, Winslow assumed a crossed leg sitting position. There were several murmurs of agreement when his followers realized he was finished. Lester stretched and nodded at Jason.

Climbing to his feet, Jason took a deep breath and sorted his responses. He wanted to keep his temper as long as possible.

"Nadraugh," he began, "everything's got to be just so for you, hasn't it? Just once think past the 'orderliness' of a situation to why it might ought to be the way it is." He paused. "Those trees stand between the North Wind and our caves. Your way will keep us," here he glared at Nadraugh, "warm one winter. Leave 'em and they'll help as long as they last, which should be several years yet. That's all I've got to say." He sat down calmly.

Lester licked his lips. "No reason to cut 'em down just 'cause they're the only ones in town. Vote?" the patch of trees survived by a narrow margin. "Next issue," he called.

Winslow jumped to his feet again, maintaining a smug look in spite of his loss, that burned into Jason. "I think we should..." he started to say.

In a leap, Jason was nose to nose with Nadraugh. "It's *always* what *You* think *We* ought to do!" he shouted.

"So?" Nadraugh snapped.

"So?", 'Sol'. That's my point! Where in limbo did you get the idea that you were the natural leader of this village?!"

"My opinion represents that of a good many people!"

"Your opinion represents your fanatic idea of what everybody else ought to think!" Jason retorted.

This went on for a few minutes until Lester caught Matt's attention and hollered, "Meetin's over."

Matt nodded and managed to pull away the infuriated Ogg without slugging Nadraugh himself. Winslow stood there, looking like a stump spouting self righteousness, while Jason, Matt and the rest of the townsmen walked off.

Matt could tell his rangy friend needed a fast outlet for his fuming irritation. Without obvious intent he said, "Time we got to hunting, isn't it?"

Cheering up, Jason frowned at Matt in agreement. Matt just laughed at his expression and they headed home for their hunting gear.

Much later that afternoon they were walking along the river bank hoping they'd at least run into a small beaver, just enough for each of them to take some home for supper. Jason, bored with the lack of game, was beginning to work up a list of Winslow Nadraugh's top ten nerve grating qualities. Matt was trying to remember why he hadn't let Jason punch out Winslow, or better yet, helped him, when he glimpsed a broad, furry back disappearing into the woods.

"Hey," he whispered. "Look."

A small patch of dark brown fur was all Jason could make out before the trees blocked his view of the animal altogether. Jason's frustrated hunting spirit combined with his rekindled anger to drive him into a much needed, if reckless, state of elation.

"Come on!" he shouted. "You go around and cut him off an' I'll come in behind him. There's enough beaver there to feed us all for weeks! Le's go!"

He dashed up and scurried into the grove after his prospective meal. Matt jogged around and entered the patch of trees from the other side. Most of the leaves had long since turned and dropped off into the undergrowth, but vines and brush still made it necessary for Matt to push his way through. He held his spear at his side but ready to jab should the beaver suddenly waddle into range.

A moment later he turned slightly to head toward a cry from Jason. As growls and angry shouts arose, he began crashing through the catching scrub, worrying at the complications.

He came into a trampled clearing to see a huge bear crush Jason under its attack; his spear was imbedded in its shoulder. As he went down, Jason stabbed weakly with his knife. Matt screamed and rammed his spear through its haunch. The beast reared up, roaring, and caught an ax stroke in its neck. It suddenly turned and careened into the trees, bellowing. A second later, its final crashings echoed into the silence.

Matt heaved his ax in futility and knelt to support Jason at the shoulders. Jason's eyes opened and slowly he turned his head to look at Matt.

A smile slowly put itself on Jason's lips. "Matt," he said quietly. "Hi."

A thoughtful look came over him and his eyes lost their focus.

"MariLynn." He spoke without sound. "I-". He stopped, working on that

for a moment. And he was gone.

Matt stayed there half an hour before moving. Then, terribly slowly, he wrapped his friend in his cloak, lifted him like a child and turned to the village.

Twilight was deepening when Matt trudged into Lester Mub's cave. Lester looked up at the fur wrapped figure and the blood spots on Matt's arms. "Come," he said quietly. "We can leave him here."

Lester took some time getting to his arthritic feet and Matt had gently placed Jason in a small room off the main cave before he caught up. He crouched and turned back a corner of the cover. "Bear," he whispered. "Ought to be hibernating." His tone added a bitter curse to the sentence.

He looked at Matt. "You'll be the one to tell his wife."

Matt nodded and turned on his heel. After a moment staring at a crack in the ceiling, Lester followed.

MariLynn was stoking up the fire for the evening. Rover, curled up next to the blaze, glanced up and growled. His tail thumped in recognition as Matt and Lester came to the cave mouth. Then his ears pricked forward and he stopped. The stout, shaggy dog walked up to Matt and whined. Lester stroked his neck but Matt just looked sadly at MariLynn.

"Matt, Mr. Mub," she smiled at them. "Where's..." Then she stopped and studied the look on Matt's face.

"Dead." Matt put all of his pent up agony and sympathy into the word.

She stared past them at the darkening sky as if the reason was written in the air, black on black. Her eyes glistened.

Lester and Matt sat to either side of her and Rover pushed his broad muzzle into her lap. She didn't lean on any of them, except to stroke the huge dog's ear. She bent forward, her hair falling before her face, and choked on sobs.

Lester and Matt stared into the fire or at each other across the flames and for fifteen minutes the only sound was MariLynn's weeping. Then a voice called from outside, a deep voice just rough enough to grate on the nerves.

"Vermin!" Lester growled through clenched teeth. Matt just glared fiercely but MariLynn got up to answer, wiping the tears from her cheeks with the pad of her thumb. Rover trotted at her heels, head and tail hanging, and, after an astonished moment, Matt and Lester went after her.

MariLynn was standing, listening to Winslow Nadraugh have his say as self appointed speech maker.

"Jason was a fine man, undisciplined, but in time we would have brought him into accord with our ideals." He took a breath. "As you know, as a widow you aren't expected to remain living alone. I am prepared to offer you residence in one of my branch caves." He beamed.

MariLynn had an expression closed to emotion. Rover snarled. She and the dog turned back into the cave. Lester spat before he and Matt departed. The sky was totally dark and the stars blazed sharply.

Before morning, Winslow Nadraugh died.

Ed Dillon

TIMELESS WATCH

My memories flee throughout the night,
Unleashed from mortal bounds.
Cascading, exploding, and celebrating,
All without a sound.

How much time has passed me by,
Of this I do not know.
But witness now the winter,
And the coming of the snow.

The landscape here atop the Hill,
Is frigid, white, and dun.
The campus paths are empty,
As winter starts its run.

The glorious hues of autumn,
Lie rotting in their mass.
As sheets of frozen ice and snow,
Encase them as in glass.

Tonight the dome lights shine so bright,
In honor of my birth.
While just below its golden glow,
I stand on frozen earth.

My appearance has long since tarnished,
But not my strength of will.
For I alone, unlike the stone,
Stand vigil on the Hill.

William Hancock

A COOL DAY, A WARM WIND

The outside was cool, unusually cool for a day in August. The weather forced a tiny creature inside a kitchen filled with boiling pots of gravy and potatoes. There was refuge in the warmth of the kitchen. The tiny creature flew busily around the room, investigating all aspects of the kitchen. It broke its wing when it flew into a window. The tiny creature fell to the kitchen table spinning viciously. In circles it spun, around and around.

Finally, it got to its feet. The tiny creature crawled to the edge of table and looked down at the floor. It leapt from the table onto the floor, damaging its brain.

The tiny creature did not know where it was anymore. It walked in circles around the kitchen floor. The tiny creature crawled over the mouse trap behind the stove and the rat poison between the cabinets.

It stumbled in tiny circles under the kitchen table. It stumbled into a small puddle of gravy on the floor beside the stove. The tiny creature struggled in the gray-brown substance, but it finally suffocated.

A gray cat entered the kitchen minutes later. The cat licked the gravy and ate the tiny creature's corpse. The gastric juices of the cat dissolved only a portion of the corpse of the tiny creature; a large part of it could later be detected in the cat's litterbox.

The contents of the litterbox were deposited behind a fence in the cat owner's backyard. The remains of the tiny creature were visibly embedded in the feces of the cat. The aroma of the cat feces attracted other tiny creatures. They soon discovered the remains of the tiny creature that had mysteriously disappeared the day before.

While inspecting the remains closer they discovered the tiny creature's esophagus was lodged with a gray-brown substance. They exhumed the tiny creature's remains from the cat feces and conducted a full investigation into the cause of death of their fellow tiny creature. However, forensic science was still primitive among the tiny creatures. They never discovered, conclusively, the cause of death of the tiny creature. His remains were placed, after an elaborate funeral ceremony, in a hollow log by a beautiful, glistening stream.

Weeks passed after the funeral. Little tiny creatures played around the hollow log, against the orders of their parents. One night while playing inside the log, one of the little tiny creatures accidentally stepped on the grave of the dead tiny creature. The little tiny creature's leg fell through the grave and became struck in the rotting thorax of the corpse. The little tiny creature screamed for help, but no one heard him. He was sure he would die there, entombed like the other tiny creature. His last bit of energy spent, the little tiny creature fell on the grave weeping.

A warm wind whistled through the hollow log as a spectre appeared above the little tiny creature, hovering silently. The little tiny creature

screamed and screamed, but still no one heard him. In terror, the little tiny creature stared up at the spectre as it came closer. In amazement the little tiny creature looked at the spectre—why-it looked like a tiny creature! Quietly, the spectre removed the little tiny creature's leg from the corpse and flew him safely outside the hollow log into the night air. The little tiny creature was speechless as he was delivered to his doorstep by the spectre. The spectre returned to the corpse of the tiny creature. It filled the gaping hole in the corpse's thorax with moist dirt and placed it back in its shallow grave. The spectre pushed dirt over the grave and remained there for several moments, peering down at it. Then it hovered above the grave and suddenly, without a sound, without looking back, it flew into the darkness of the log and out of sight.

Greg Klierer

DACHAU

bloody soil crusted over
by aimless passages
of laboratory time
into therapeutic scabs
of scattered gray gravel
mined from a once-in-time
jewish industrialist's quarry.
black and white photos
of colorless limbs
posing unclothed;
crumpled and twisted,
wrenched into death,
pornographic gestures
totally exposed—
even wearing no skin
they're naked to the bone.
their stench I resist
like that of rancid scaled fish
which I toss to the mess
in my stowaway closet
beneath where I keep
all my grade school photographs,
photos of me smiling
and in shoes.
shoes,
shoes, shoes, shoes and more shoes:
cotton laces, leather tongues,
rubber soles
and all unstrung?
white plaster room
plastered full of just shoes—
the one is so full,
the many are so empty;
death is filled,
life has become empty.
barefooted children walk in my memory
led by the hand of their trusted mother
to fiery furnaces
stoked with coals of hell.
spanions of chicken fence,
a mansion of steel stretched
to the four cornered earth,

tightens its grip to catch
 as in a game of red-rover
 the bullet heavy head
 just sent over
 by ZARATHUSTRA;
 defeated
 it slips slowly
 through the dirty barbed fingers
 and hits the bloody clay ground
 with the dull lifeless sound
 of a tired cannon ball
 onto a burlap sandbag wall.
 dachau, meine liebe frau!
 dachau, its vowels are weighty.
 dachau, meine liebe frau!
 though its memories are waning
 still its message lingers on
 behind the weeping garden walls.
 pow! pow! pow!
 listening to the children play
 their innocent games
 in my backyard;
 dachau! dachau! dachau!
 like the spitfire machine guns
 in the pitch black of night
 chasing our eyeballs
 'till they silence our flight;
 dachau! dachau! frau!
 dachau! dachau! dachau!
 DACHAU DACHAU CACHAU DACHAU dACHAU dACHAU
 dachAU dachau dachau dachau dachau dachau dachau—
 cachaudachaucadhauhaducaudhcadcadachuda—
~~XX~~
 Shall we EVER escape auF dlesEm nAc Hi?

MUD DANCING AND OTHER WAR GAMES

Terrance O'Kelpie opened his eyes. He was alive. Toby wasn't so lucky. Less than a quarter staff away, Toby Fitch, soldier, friend, and one decent pard, was lying in the mud, silently. By the light of the moon, a bloody stump glistened where a man's head should have been.

"Bastard Pagans!" Terrance muttered, but then the pain of his own injury stopped his curse. Like a turtle — slow and with great, deliberate effort — the man moved his arms out from under his mud covered torso.

"Sawed 'and in tack, no fin'gers missin'. Lefty gone: aye but that would be nigh on two month ago now." The stub still itched profusely. "Vissige, now thar's a puss as ugly as an eighty year virgin. Sniffer, still thar. Leftare, Rightare — aye, thar's the bastard!" Terrance touched the wound with his sword hand. "'Sblood! Damn pagans. Prince Beelz take the lot of ya! Fie! Damn lucky cut!" He should have been dead.

The fens were brimming wet with it raining all that day. Terrance, Toby Fitch and three others from Sir Carroll's vanguard had crossed the river early that morning. By twilight and a frugal, cold meal, they had come upon a full band of the pagans in the fens just north of the river. They were from Old Redface's army for sure, blue collars with the mark of the red dragon, but a few of the gang were Picts as surely as Toby was from Cheapside. It was easy cutting for a while — young bastards mostly — Toby had taken three heads and a gut before one devil got him with a spear in the left arm. Even with his long mail the blood still poured as it does from a bitch in her time, but as Terrance marked it, "that wern't enow to stop ole Tob!" He parried a second blow and then proceeded to slice the pagan across the gullet with his sword in good arm. That bastard died in a belch of blood and black bile, louder than any heard at Corky's Tavern, that steamed when it hit the cool mud of the fen. With his intestines littering the ground, the bastard didn't put up much more of a fight.

Then things started getting bad; the leader of the dog pack took out Apple, separated him from his brains. "'Sblood, wot muck!" The mud was dyed redder than Apple's name. Then that self-same bastard of a leader took on to Terrance. They sported for a while, as men often do when they're trying to measure up the opponent. Terrance was bloody mad, though, and wrapped a spear through the other's tunic. "Hell spawn!" For the leader didn't fall, but rather raised his war axe over his head, to gain momentum, and then brought it down. He meant to cut Terrance's skull into two pieces. Terrance went to parry, but slipped down in the muck, muck thicker than Nucle Harry's dung pile on the farm when Terrance was but a barn. It saved his life, although he let fly a curse at the time. The down swoop missed the center of his head, but shaved off some hair on the right side and finely sliced the ear in half. "Terry!" Toby cried as the leader fell with Tob's sword parting his spine. "Terry!" He Terry. Ho thar, Terr. . . .

Terrance slept in the mud.

Sometime during the night the rain stopped. Clouds gone and the moon, the first full was out, and working its way into the Waterboy. Sleep wasn't easy. The night *cried* like the sound of warhorns, echoing across the moors. "Ho thar, who's ither?" Clank, clash, dink, gallop, gallop, gallop, stammer. Terrance groaned as he touched the pulp that used to be his ear. "Bastard Pagans!" His face, head, and shoulder were covered with the dark purple gore that blood dries into, mixed with hardened mud. Probably, it was the mud coat that stopped the blood flowing. Probably, Toby got it not long after Terrance fell.

The man sat up and looked about. Apple was lying where he fell — the crown of his head floated two rods away in the reed bed. Wart and Ambrose were scattered all over the place — the last two to go always fit for dog meat. The Pagans liked to chop them up a bit for fun. Toby was lying headless and close by. But the head was gone, most likely dangling from some bastard's belt.

Terrance sat confused. Why hadn't they removed him of his head? That was a question rolling around in his mind. Surely not because of or for lack of a missing ear. Well Toby had his ears, but lost his nose in a bar fight three years ago.

Three years ago — a night that would do down in infamy. Terrance had taken a young wench up to the loft at Corky's and Toby was busy convincing some whore to do the same, when Old Tob's Dame Partlet busted in and started slamming the whore around the bar. Now most of the gang enjoyed the sport, and even Terry stopped merrymaking to come down and watch, until Tob's lady fair slapped the bitch across the table of a merchant from Dover, spilling a considerable purchase of ale.

"That thar your latie?" The Doverman asked.

"Wot?" replied Toby, who was rather enjoying the spectacle too much to pay heed to the gentleman.

"The ale, man?"

"I'm well sure that Old Cork sells it here, sir."

"Sirrah, that bitch did spill my ale."

"Wot?"

"The bitch, sirrah."

"She sure as Nick can fight; 'Sblood I do love that woman."

"Sirrah, your wife. . ."

"Wot wife, I'm speakin' of the whore thar." Tob retorted.

"Like as not, one of those whores spilt my ale."

"I'll not have you callin' my wife a whore, sir."

With that the merchant produced a rather nasty looking knife and relieved Toby Fitch of his nose. Terrance never heard Tob let out such a wail, and doubted seriously if he cried so loud when he died. At any rate, Tob bellowed so high that night that the fight was ended and Merry Fitch drug her husband to the surgeon. "Them were happier days."

"Nathless, mi 'ead wern't good enow for'em." For some reason the bastards had run off without getting all of their fun due. One head, but seven of their own young studs gone. Not much of a trade.

The man staggered to his feet. Walking out of the fens and up onto the moors, and it wasn't long before he finally came, near dawn, to the north-south road at its bridge, where he and the others had crossed that morning. That morning, and the bridge, the south bank, and most of the north march were still under the thumb of the thankless king, under the direction of Sir Carroll.

The practices of Pagans and devil worshipers were often the subject of a parson's sermon, but Terrance never really met the devil till he got to the south side of the bridge. Sir Carroll's head was resting on a pole, and a goodly part of his knights and entourage with him. Toby's head was there too among the others.

Therein laid the truth of what happened that fateful even. The Pagans' bloody fun in the fens was interrupted by Sir Carroll's arrival somewhere on the moors. The warhorns sounded, and the pagans tromped off to victory. Sir Carroll was dead. The bridge, by the gruesome markers left there, was obviously taken, and most likely the north march as well. Terrance knew he could never make it all the way south to the King's hold. He couldn't go north either. The northerners would kill him for having the wrong accent, the wrong dress, the wrong everything. The people in the north kingdom were like that. The only bastards worse were the pagans — and even Old Redface himself had a good excuse: He was a bastard. "Bastards, all of them!"

The man was alone. He stood by the river on the moors, in the mud and in the moonlight. The welkin blued ever so lightly in the east, where the morning star burned with a quiet brilliance, with a cool, heatless brilliance. The stars of another season peeked out before the coming of the sun. The river wound its way to the sea. There were boats there, to the continent, to Rome or the Holy Empire, to the Holy Land, to the Orient, to riches.

Beside, and almost underneath the bridge was a dinghy; it bobbed in the silver water. Terrance was alone. Terrance O'Kelpie opened his eyes, for the first time in his life really. Brave soldier, noble soldier. The king might brevet him if he went back, if he made it back. The thankless king. Fight and die for a king who would spit on you given the chance. Because to him, you are nothing.

The silver water splashed on the dinghy's bow. Soldier — Mercenary. Empires, Popes, Armies, The Sea. Terrance O'Kelpie opened his eyes. He was alive. Toby wasn't so lucky.

Brian Cheaney

CASTLES

Misty, cloudy morning
Nearly touching sky
Silver light adorning
Sea winds breath a sigh
Castle in the distance
Fortress sketched in grey
Castle of existence
I shall never stray

Sunshine streaks the towers
Shadows fill the hall
Outside bloom the flowers
Moss grows on the wall
Castle on the hillside
Fortress of the king
Waiting on the inside
What can waiting bring

Purple skies are blazing
Sunset sinking low
Searching eyes are gazing
Silence fills my soul
Castle in the distance
Fortress made of stone
Castle of existence
Locked in all alone.

Brian Cheaney

LOVER DEATH

I breath paradise
With every breath
Waiting to realize
My lover death.
Sever all my earthly ties
Bury them in sand
Nothing ever really dies
Come and take my hand.

Now my soul is sold
I've paid the price
My story has been told
My heart is ice.
Now I'm waiting in the cold
I can see my breath
Waiting as the world grows old
Waiting for my lover death.

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4/82/5C/E—The cost of printing this publication by Western Kentucky University was paid from state funds KRS 57.375.

