

1983

UA68/6/1 Zephyrus

Western Kentucky University

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Zephyrus 1983

Contributors:

Christopher Allen – First Looking Glass on the Left

Mary Beam – Old Man Charlie

A Little Tiff

Lionel Belanger – No Stranger Gods Before Me

Sailing

Leslie Bernard – Returning

Joe Bolton – Migrant Workers

Brian Cheaney – Dreams that Haunt the Child's Mind

Stephen Cole – Careful of the Height

Charolais on a Hillside

Robert Cook – Dreaming of You

Valerie Crawford – Our Past Lies in a Heap

Kevin Cundiff – Soilsport

Lee Daugherty – Adventuress

Skincense

Joe Dragoo – Anderson Slough: The Sedge of the Blue Heron

Timothy Farmer – His Grey Hair and Grey Eyes

Churches

Lisa Garrett – Motel of Decay

Dorine Geeslin – The Duchess Speaks

Michael Harris – Cool Springs

Our Daily Bread

Shirley Holzapfel – Kallie

Richard Keith – Deep in the Night

Greg Kliewer – The Other Side of the Forest

David Major – Can't Stand It

Up in the Air

C.W. Mayes – Child of Beirut

Karen McDonald – Sweet Liquor and Smoke

Deborah Mott – Neat Hair

Martha Parks – Alone

Call Collect

Joe Roberts – The End

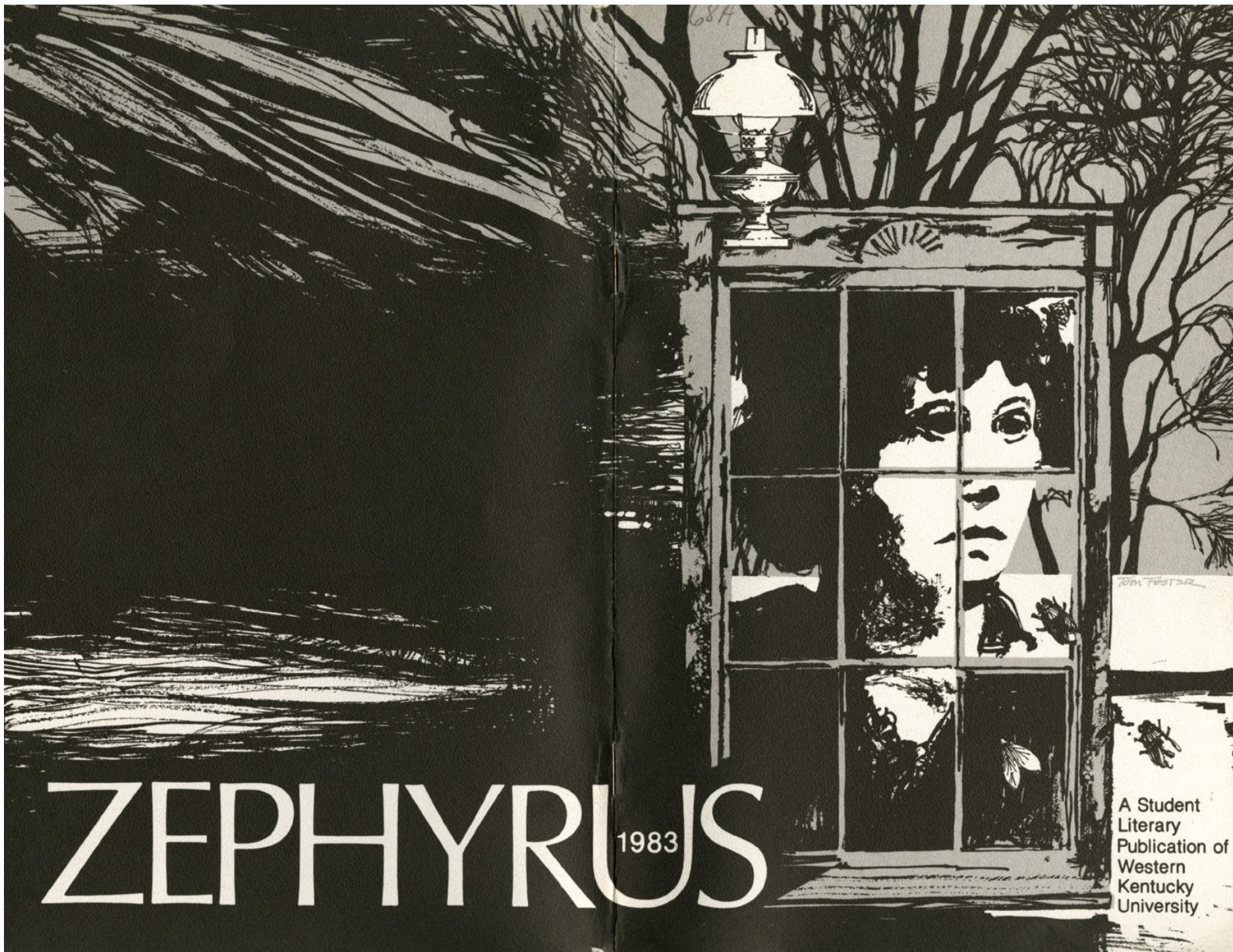
Beth Waldorf – Resurgam

Nate Yoder – Through a Darkened Glass

The Old Seminary Building

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ZEPHYRUS

1983

A Student
Literary
Publication of
Western
Kentucky
University

WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY
ARCHIVES

ZEPHYRUS

Spring 1983

A Publication of the English Department
of Western Kentucky University
At Bowling Green

Editors

Christopher Allen
Joe Dragoo
Michael Lynn Harris
Randy Kinkel
David Major
Joe Roberts

Cover: Tom Foster

Faculty Advisor: Wanda Gatlin

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Western Kentucky University

We are pleased to announce the establishment of the Jeoffrey McCelvey Memorial Award. This fifty dollar award will go to a student who submits an outstanding manuscript to *Zephyrus*.

We wish to express our appreciation to the Browning Literary Club, the Ladies Literary Club and to Mr. Robert Wurster for their continuing support of creative writing. Their twenty-five dollar awards are also given for the best work submitted to *Zephyrus*.

AWARD WINNERS

Poetry Joe Bolton
Stephen Cole

Honorable Mention

Dorine Geeslin
Joe Dragoo

Prose Shirley Holzapfel
Michael Lynn Harris

Honorable Mention

Mary E. Beam

CONTENTS

Nate Yoder	<i>Through a Darkened Glass</i>	6
	<i>The Old Seminary Building</i>	7
Leslie Bernard	<i>Returning</i>	8
Shirley Holzapfel	<i>Kallie</i>	9
Kevin Cundiff	<i>Soilspout</i>	14
Brian Cheaney	<i>Dreams that Haunt the Child's Mind</i>	15
Stephen Cole	<i>Careful of the Height</i>	16
	<i>Charolais on a Hillside</i>	17
Lionel P. Belanger	<i>No Strange Gods Before Me</i>	18
	<i>Sailing</i>	19
Christopher Allen	<i>First Looking Glass on the Left</i>	20
Greg Kliewer	<i>The Other Side of the Forest</i>	24
Lee Ann Daugherty	<i>Adventuress</i>	25
	<i>Skincense</i>	26
Beth Waldorf	<i>Resurgam</i>	27
David Major	<i>Can't Stand It</i>	28
	<i>Up in the Air</i>	37
Mary E. Beam	<i>Old Man Charlie</i>	31
	<i>A Little Tiff</i>	41
Joe Dragoo	<i>Anderson Slough: The Sedge of the Blue Heron</i>	32
Joe Roberts	<i>The End</i>	34
Timothy Farmer	<i>His Grey Hair and Grey Eyes</i>	35
	<i>Churches</i>	36
Martha Parks	<i>Alone</i>	39
	<i>Call Collect</i>	40
Valerie Crawford	<i>Our Past Lies in a Heap</i>	43
Joe Bolton	<i>Migrant Workers</i>	44

C.W. Mayes	<i>Child of Beirut</i>	45
Michael Lynn Harris	<i>Cool Springs</i>	46
	<i>Our Doily Broad</i>	54
Robert F. Cook	<i>Dreaming of You</i>	51
Lisa Garrett	<i>Motel of Decay</i>	52
Dorine Geeslin	<i>The Duchess Speaks</i>	53
Richard Keith	<i>Deep in the Night</i>	59
Deborah Mott	<i>Neat Hair</i>	60
Karen McDonald	<i>Sweet Liquor and Smoke</i>	61
Contributors		63

Nate Yoder

THROUGH A DARKENED GLASS

My lamp is burning late
And draws intruders
 beating their wings
 on the dusty pane.
"Let us to the light."
So near.
Waiting for some
 trumpet blast to break
 the pane and bring them
 into presence.

Nate Yoder

THE OLD SEMINARY BUILDING

Sometimes in these Gothic halls
 prophetic voices still echo;
 divinely stained halos
 still glow in the twilight.
In the searching,
In the seeking,
 the echoing halos
 sometimes bring dissonance to
 squeaky assertions of certainty;
 sometimes complete the harmony in
the resounding bass of an I AM.

Leslie Bernard

RETURNING

I put my guts in the
suitcase first,
so I can't see them.
Then I fold up
my skin in a
tidy little square
like a hankerchief,
and lay my head on top.
I throw in a pillow
for cushioning,
and to dream on.
Then I take my
empty words
and put them in
a jean's pocket.
Last, I bring my heart
and enfold it in my arms
so I can watch
how it reacts
to scenes of the past.

Shirley Holzapfel

KALLIE

By the time Kallie left home for work she was already exhausted. Driving in through the rush-hour traffic, she went over in her mind what had happened already that morning. It started out as usual, with the clock radio going off at 6:00. She lay there for five more minutes getting used to the idea of being awake, then got up and took a shower and, as always, had to wipe the steam accumulation off the bathroom mirror so she could see how to put on her makeup. She applied her usual creams and things that she used to make herself presentable each day. At some point between the mascara and the cheek blush, she paused, looking at herself in the mirror and thinking, "This is probably at least the 5,000th time I've done this. Why do I go through this ritual every morning of my life? Who wrote the rules for 'presentable'? Brainwashed," she thought, "by the TV jingles," although when she tried to think of an advertisement and the product that went with it, she couldn't match anything. Well, something had influenced her to spend so much time each morning getting ready to face the world. "Peer pressure, maybe—at my age?" The thought made her smile. She had always associated that sort of thing with high school and teen-agers. Anyway, whatever it was, she didn't have time to figure it out now. She had to get breakfast and wake her two sons so they'd get to school on time.

She started into her son Robbie's bedroom when she heard a loud rattling noise and then a crash outside the window. She knew what it was. The neighbor's dog had turned over the garbage can again and was scattering trash everywhere. "Damn," Kallie said, and ran to the backdoor and opened it, and said a few choice words to the dog as she threw her bedroom slipper at it. The dog went off yelping as if he'd been beaten, and its owner stuck his head out his backdoor and hollered at Kallie to leave his dog alone. Kallie didn't say any of the ugly little things she felt like saying. She just picked up her shoe and went back into the house.

The boys still weren't up, and Kallie said loudly in her most exasperated voice, "It's nearly 7:00 o'clock; get up at once."

Phil, her youngest son, came stumbling into the kitchen rubbing his eyes and yawning. "Mom, I want doughnuts for breakfast," he said.

"Phil, go wash the sleep out of your eyes, and we don't have any doughnuts. They're not good for you anyway. You should eat cereal or toast—something nutritional."

Their conversation went from bad to worse, so Kallie left the room before they both said things they'd regret. She went into the bedroom where her husband L. T. was just getting out of bed, and he said in his husky early morning voice, "What are you two arguing about so early?"

For a minute Kallie hated him for not being the one to get up and get breakfast, and fight with the neighbors and their dog, and argue with their

sons over food and Lord knows what else. She didn't answer him, but went on into the bathroom and brushed her teeth so hard she hurt her mouth.

When the boys finally left for school and L. T. went off to work, Kallie cleared the table and put the dishes into the dishwasher, thinking, "They aren't even capable of doing that for themselves." She looked around once to make sure everything that should be was turned off or unplugged, then she picked up her sweater, locked the door and walked out to the car. When she turned the key in the ignition, she got mad all over again. L. T. had left her the car with the empty tank. She didn't have time to stop for gas. She'd just have to pray there was enough to get her to work.

"Had all this happened this morning between 6:00 and 8:00? How could so much have gone wrong in two little hours? What am I doing wrong?" she wondered as she parked the car and got her key to the office out of her purse.

There were two customers already waiting when she opened the door—crabby old Mrs. Carver with her little white poodle, with pink ribbons in its hair, tucked under her arm. "Ugh," Kallie said to herself. She had never liked that fidgety little mutt, and she knew the feeling was mutual. She swore to L. T. that it sneered at her, from under Mrs. Carver's arm, every time she saw it.

Mrs. Carver came in twice a week, every week, without fail. She came in one day to leave cleaning to be done, and bright and early the next day she came to pick it up, and to complain about one thing and another. Today it was her shirts. "One of these has too much starch and the other doesn't have enough," she said.

Kallie thought, "Oh, damn, just what I need first thing this morning," but she swallowed hard, made her voice pleasant and said, "They were starched together, Mrs. Carver. Look at the labels; one is 100% cotton and the other is a cotton blend. The cotton one absorbed more starch than the blend."

"Well, what can you do about it?" demanded Mrs. Carver.

"What would you like us to do?" asked Kallie.

"How about doing them again and leave off the starch entirely."

"Wonderful idea," Kallie said, and tagged the shirts for NO STARCH. Mrs. Carver left with her dog, smiling as if she was satisfied that she had handled that just right, and the other customer stepped up to the counter. Kallie had caught a glimpse of him while he was standing behind Mrs. Carver and thought he looked vaguely familiar. He was a big, tall, broad-shouldered guy with blonde hair, in his late thirties, Kallie guessed. He had his hands stuck in the pockets of the red and black plaid jacket he was wearing. Automatically, Kallie thought, "XXL shirt." She said, "Can I help you?"

The man took his left hand out of his pocket and put a neatly folded brown paper bag on the counter and said, "Yes, take all the money out of the cash drawer and put it in this bag," in a shaky voice that he seemed to be trying to control. All this time he had not taken his hand from his right pocket, and now he pointed that hand, pocket and all, straight at her.

Something snapped inside Kallie's head. "This is the last straw," she

remembered thinking, just before she picked up the first thing she saw, which was her purse she had hastily thrown on the shelf under the counter. She hit him across the face with it as hard as she could. It made a dull cracking sound as it hit, and all Kallie could think was, "I've broken my sunglasses." For a few seconds—while time seemed to stand still—they looked at each other in stunned silence. Then Kallie began to scream. The man was frightened; she could see it in his eyes. His nose was bleeding from the blow. He grabbed the bag from the counter and hurriedly tried to get out the door, pushing instead of pulling, and it wouldn't go. It was one of those doors that now are prohibited by the fire codes, but this place had been built long before OSHA and safety regulations for buildings had been established. When the door wouldn't open, the man became even more panicky and tried to break the glass with his fist, until he seemed to realize in an instant what he was doing wrong, and pulled the door open and ran.

Kallie couldn't stop screaming. She was still on the verge when the police arrived. Together, the two officers tried to get her calmed. They sat her down and put a cup of coffee in her hands, and after she had had some of the coffee, Officer Monroe asked her if she felt steady enough to fill out a report. She gave them a description of the man and what had happened.

"Do you know him?"

"No—yes, I mean I've seen him before somewhere." And then, "light starch, top button missing, folded."

The officers looked worriedly at one another and one of them said, "She's getting hysterical again."

"No, no I'm not, I just remembered that he brought shirts in once a long time ago, and he requested light starch and that they be folded instead of on hangers. The top button was missing on each one and had to be replaced. I can't remember his name. It must have been eight or nine months ago. I'm sure we don't have a record of it now, because we don't keep paid tickets that long."

"Do you know what kind of gun he had?"

"I never saw a gun, but he certainly made me believe he had one when he pointed that pocket at my head."

"Tell us what you can about the other customer; a Mrs. Carter, did you say?"

"No, Carver; Clara Carver. She comes in twice a week, every week, since I can remember—once to bring in her cleaning to be done, and the next morning to pick it up."

Kallie gave them a description—short, pudgy, sixtyish, grey hair, wears house dresses and low-heeled shoes. "She always has her nervous little dog under her arm, and she always complains about something." Kallie had no idea where she lived, but promised to find out when she came back to pick up her shirts.

The police officers gave her a number to call if she should remember anything else and said they'd be in touch.

Kallie seriously contemplated not telling anyone else about the incident. It was like a bad dream now and she just wanted to start forgetting about it. But she decided she'd have to tell her family, because somebody would,

and besides, they might even read it in the newspaper, even though the police promised to keep it as quiet as possible. "Publicity like that seems to bring out more of those nuts intent on pulling similar stunts," they agreed.

At dinner time the boys wanted to know every detail, and were really a little awed to think their Mom had been involved in a real hold-up, however bungled. "Gee, Mom, you could have been shot," Robbie said, and Phil said, "Yeah, Mom, you could have been killed." L. T. could see Kallie's agitation and said, "Now, that's enough. Your Mom's had a hectic day." Then to lighten her mood, "You don't want your Mom to hit you with her purse, do you?"

Kallie had nightmares that night. She dreamed Mrs. Carver's poodle was wearing a red and black plaid jacket and was up on the counter tearing all the top buttons off a pile of shirts. She woke up suddenly and couldn't get back to sleep, so she went to the den to watch TV. The early, early news was on and the newscaster was reporting a story about a woman's body that had been found in a field outside of town. She had not yet been identified. "Thank goodness there was nothing about my little episode," Kallie thought.

The next thing she knew, Phil was shaking her. "Mom, wake up. What are you doing on the couch? I woke up and heard the TV and thought we had a burglar."

"What time is it?" Kallie said with alarm.

"It's just a little past six. And Mom, it doesn't matter if we don't have any doughnuts. I'm having cereal this morning." Kallie had to smile.

On her way to work that morning, Kallie remembered that Mrs. Carver would be in to pick up her shirts, and she didn't want to forget to ask her where she lived and to give her the number the police had left. Kallie wondered how Mrs. Carver would react to that. "She will probably be pleased to have someone else to talk to," she thought. Kallie suspected that the biggest reason Mrs. Carver came in every week was to talk. Apparently she had no one else she could complain to, or at least no one who would listen.

By noon, when Kallie went to lunch, Mrs. Carver had not been in. Because Kallie had a lot to do in the office, she walked up town and got a quick sandwich at the corner drugstore. While she was gulping down her chicken salad, she began to get an uneasy feeling that someone was watching her, but when she turned to look she seemed to see a quick flash of movement, like lightening during a spring storm that comes and goes so fast that you're not positive you've seen it until it happens two or three times. Only this was a blur of red and black and she did not see it again. "It's my imagination," she told herself. "I'm beginning to see red and black in everything now," and she told herself not to be so foolish. When she got back to the office, Mrs. Carver still had not been in, and Kallie began to get a queasy sensation in her stomach, like something was terribly wrong. Still she tried to talk herself into forgetting it. "Don't be silly," she said to herself, "you know plenty of people leave their cleaning for months before they come back to get it." But Mrs. Carver never had.

At the end of the day, Kallie phoned Officer Monroe and told him about

Mrs. Carver. He told her not to worry; "A number of situations could have come up," and "let's give her at least a week before we go looking for her," he said kindly. But in a week Mrs. Carver had not come in, and then two weeks, and then two months.

The police had no leads as to the whereabouts of the would-be robber. Kallie had looked through the mug books at police headquarters but had seen no one who resembled him. The police artist drew a sketch from her description, but so far there had been no response from it. It was if he had vanished from the face of the earth. Kallie hoped he had.

L. T. urged Kallie to tell the police about what she thought she saw at the drugstore. She didn't want to; it sounded stupid now, but at L. T.'s insistence she did. The officers' reactions were about what hers had been after it was over, except they didn't have that nagging, apprehensive feeling they couldn't get rid of.

Thanksgiving came and went and the Christmas holidays weren't too far off, and in the busy excitement of all that, Kallie forgot about the blonde-haired man and Mrs. Carver, except for when she'd notice Mrs. Carver's shirts still hanging on the conveyer. She didn't know what else to do with them, so she let them hang. Then, after awhile, they became so familiar that she just didn't consciously see them anymore.

One afternoon the telephone rang. It was Kallie's good friend, Liz, calling to see if they couldn't go shopping together. Kallie was delighted. She hadn't seen Liz for a long time now, and she really needed to get some things for Christmas. Liz wanted to find a blazer for her husband, and Kallie had several things she wanted to price at the jewelry store. So, after they drove up town and parked the car, they separated after agreeing to meet again in one hour at the Rathskeller where they'd have a bite to eat.

Kallie was caught up in the holiday mood as she walked up the street with all the other shoppers. The air was nippy but not really cold for December, and it was a good night for shopping. As she anticipated just exactly what she would buy if the prices weren't too exorbitant, she felt happier than she had for a long time. Then she saw him. He was walking toward her in the crowd, and because he was so tall, she saw him before he saw her. He had on the same black and red plaid jacket, but this time he didn't have his hands in his pockets. Instead, under his arm, he carried a little white poodle with pink ribbons in its hair.

Kevin Cundiff

SOILSPORT

Dark Master sleeps inside,
On pure Transylvanian soil.
I am His enemy.
On a bloodless, thirsty night, He came to drink from me.
Now I stalk the mice to dry their veins.
I drink only Red, and must leave their sweet, pink meat behind.
Master will die for my deprivation.
And I am succeeding where mortals fail.
Impatient mortals try to kill by the claw,
With Wooden Stakes and Garlic Leaves.
I am killing with the knowledge that
Master's soil must be pure, else He wastes away.
This knowledge is my claw.

Each night I wait for the moon to draw Him out
(As He drew out my blood).
Each night He rises up and unknowingly strokes my head.
After a hundred years, he has not guessed.
I smile and purr.
In another hundred, He will be dust.
I can see that He is weaker than at first,
And each night I make Him weaker than before.
When He leaves,
The Casket of soil, so precious to Him,
Becomes just a sandbox to me.

Brian Cheaney

DREAMS THAT HAUNT THE CHILD'S MIND

The dreams of children
Die with age
And with them die
Innocent rage.

Fears, expressed in ghastly form
Appear to children like a storm that
gathers strongly in the west
But lest they wonder
whence it came
the shadows die without a flame
For dreams in memory are stored
Only when they are ignored.

Dreams that haunt the child's mind
Reflect on cruel and wicked kinds
who prey like vultures on their youth
And in the vicious circle turning
They look back on their past with yearning
For nightmares hold the realm of truth
That soon diminishes with youth

For age and time go hand in hand
But children never understand
And never seem to realize
That experience will dim their eyes

And dreams no longer
deal with creatures,
wretched figures,
shadowed walls,
But turn inside
behind the mask,
amidst the lies,
that fill the halls.
And then the dream becomes contagious
To spread and spread infecting all

But still in deepest souls there lies
a speck of light
too small to see
A chance for hope
that never dies
but lives throughout eternity.

Stephen Cole

CAREFUL OF THE HEIGHT

Careful of the height,
the ladder sways
as brush reaches eaves,
its summary extension,
angle and prop
all serve some uncertain purpose:
body taut with holding on,
mind measuring distance
in the time it takes to fall.

Stephen Cole

CHAROLAIS ON A HILLSIDE

look so pure,
against the green,
all white,
heads bent to graze.

one farmer's pride alone
holds these different
from darker strain:
they fall the same
to maul and shock,
the same dead sprawl,
the same cold immaculate side
on rigid hook.

Lionel P. Belanger

NO STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME

Green on green, light on dark
The swirls turn around the crib.
The coils unlock, they lock again,
On the window gently misting, rain,
And the coils wind around the ribs.
Will the tall ones come from the park?

The babe's blue eyes reflect the light,
In his heart shines ABBA's Son.
But Ka will mirror none of this,
His lore is from a dark abyss
The place where time began.
The two are locked in fight.

Pink in green the mass turns around,
The coils wrap dad's little man.
The bed rocks once, the bed rocks twice,
The scene was viewed without advice
By Yahweh, Ra, Sher Kahn.
No others usurp my ground.

Lionel P. Belanger

SAILING

Who can I pull from slapping, rocking sea,
Into this cockel shell of calmness here,
And place beside its only cargo, me,
To save from drowning in their doubts and fears.

This craft is small, the sea an endless reach,
Of humanity, with arms stretched wildly out,
And many miles to sail to make the beach.
Is that island really there I muse about?

And if I save one, will he save another?
Will there still be room for me in this small craft?
The one I save, will he then save his brother?
And heeling to. pitch me from this raft?

No. Better that I grasp an outstretched hand
And pull those willing from the dashing foam.
For on that distant day if I find land,
It's sweeter to have friends when I come home.

FIRST LOOKING GLASS ON THE LEFT

In the dirty shadows shrouding the narrow alley, the sudden, silvery flash of the switchblade glared wickedly—horribly brilliant to the trapped couple. He lay sprawled in a widening pool of his own crimson blood, his jaw fractured by the heavier of the two young hoods. He fought to rise as they closed around her—the thinner, wiry youth brandishing that horrible, gleaming knife—and could not. He cursed himself as he heard her first choked cry, cursed his weakness as they reached for her, cursed God and everything he held sacred as they laid their grimy hands upon her—

And then there was another figure in the alleyway. It swam fluidly through the shadows as a shark through the depths, gliding silently, spectrally down upon the two hoods. Their criminally-heightened senses somehow alerted them to his ghostlike approach; they spun around with a ferocious animal swiftness.

It was too late. A thundering kick from the ebony, caped shadow doubled over the heavier thug, and a driving knee to his forehead finished him. The smaller hood lunged wild-eyed with his silvery talon; the dark wraith deftly avoided the slash, catching the outthrust knife arm between jetclad, girdered hands. The cloaked shadow yanked the hood off-balance, jerked the encircled arm sharply behind the wiry youth's back, and brought his exposed face down hard against the garbage-strewn alley floor. Something snapped painfully, and the hood went limp, his blade clattering to the asphalt.

Slipping through the darkness like a phantom, the night-dark silhouette passed swiftly over the battered couple. Apparently satisfied, it continued past them, deeper into the shadows, until even its billowing sable cloak had vanished. As it disappeared, a tiny, golden talisman clattered to the pavement from the swallowing darkness—a circlet with six symmetrical, triangular points radiating outward. . . not unlike a star.

The police and an ambulance were there in less than five minutes.

"Dad, that comic book is a classic—you don't just toss classics around the room!"

"A 'classic'? *A Tale of Two Cities* is a classic; *War and Peace* is a classic; hell, even *The Scarlet Pimpernel* is a classic, of sorts—but dammit, *Batman* is not a classic!"

"That's not fair, Dad," Peter Bridger shouted.

"Oh no? Tell me, Peter, what other classics do you have lined up for tonight—*Mother Goose*?" his father chuckled.

The younger Bridger angrily gestured at the book-lined wall of his father's study. "You know I've read almost every book on these shelves, from Steinbeck to *Alice Through the Looking Glass*—"

"Let me guess which you preferred."

"—and I appreciate them all. That doesn't mean I can't appreciate my comics as well."

His father, an imposing figure in his mid-fifties, scratched his greying, salt-and-pepper beard professorially—appropriate, for the acting dean and lecturer in English Literature at Waterbury-Kensington University. "And just what is it you gain from that drivel; I mean," Dr. Joseph Bridger smiled condescendingly. "they may be fun, but they are hardly serious literature, now are they?"

Peter flung up his arms in frustration. He and his father had covered this ground a hundred times before. "How can you judge something you haven't even read! You lean on that desk so damned sanctimoniously—"

"That's enough, young man," his father interrupted sternly. "If that's the attitude you've learned from those comic books, they're more harmful than I had assumed."

Peter lowered his head, absently running a finger along the torn cover of the *Batman* comic. "Dad," he tried more softly, "You always advise me to keep an open mind about what I read; all I'm asking from you is the same consideration."

The elder Bridger, too, softened his countenance. "Son, I just want you to. . . I don't like to seem. . . I mean, how do you think my colleagues would feel about my son the intellect, discarding Milton and Spenser and Hemingway and Maugham for Batman and Superman and Roachman and whatever?"

Peter's eyes hardened. "That's what this has all been about, huh? Your pride! God, Dad—isn't what I think at least as important as what your faculty might believe?"

"Son, that is not—"

"Besides, I'm the best read junior on campus, and every professor knows that! I have to be—I'm your son!"

"And you know something else; I think you're underestimating the liberality of your colleagues. Ask Dr. Riggs about the *X-men* sometime, Dad, or Professor Watling about the *Teen Titans*!"

Peter spun toward the door, then turned once more on his father.

"And its 'Spider-man,' Dad—not 'Roachman,' Spider-man!"

Joseph Bridger watched his son storm from the room; angrily, he snatched his worn teakwood pipe from its stand. "Wouldn't fly off the handle like that if he'd read something worthwhile—gain a decent set of values," he grumbled. Glaring, he reached for Turgenev's *Fathers and Sons*.

Peter stomped angrily into the kitchen, his growling stomach unconsciously luring him to the refrigerator. His mother, Clara, deftly intercepted him.

"Just where do you think you're going?" she said archly. "It's almost dinner time."

"I just want a snack, Mom," he mumbled, reaching past her for the refrigerator handle.

"Not a chance; it's too near dinner. Besides, there are enough glasses

and dirty plates in your room right now to serve the Third Army."

Peter frowned. "Oh, yeah. . . Sorry, Mom; I got tied up last night. I'll get to them tonight, I promise." He turned to leave the room.

"Peter," she called after him, "Peter, will you be down for TV tonight?" She asked almost timidly.

He flinched uncomfortably. "Mom, I kinda have a lot to do tonight—grammar homework, more research on Sherman's March To the Sea, and—"

"And I see you have a new funny book to read," she said, turning back to her kitchen.

"Mom, I really do—"

"You devote far too much time to that stuff, do you know that? You're always locked away up there reading—you hardly ever go out, you never watch television—you don't get any culture anymore."

Peter smiled at his mother, despite himself. "Mom, I really do get 'culture;' I read, I go to the theater, I've got my film courses. . . ."

"Oh, all right. I don't care. I suppose you could spend your time and money in worse ways. Still, most boys your age are out preparing to be somebody in this world, to make something of themselves; it bothers me that you just read funny books, instead."

Peter nodded to his mother. "I will clean up tonight Mom. I promise: less garbage around by morning."

Clara Bridger shook her head resignedly as her son bounded up the stairs. He was such a good boy; if only he would spend more time on something beneficial and less time on those worthless, silly funny books.

Peter cleared the stairs, swinging over the bannister and through his half-open door. Carefully, he slid the marred *Batman* comic into a plastic slipcase and replaced it on a shelf beneath his complete run of *Amazing Spider-man*, and just behind his *Fantastic Four* collection. He dragged out his grammar assignment—the ever-popular sentence diagramming—and sat down to work it out, but his mind was still on the confrontation with his father.

There was no way his father would understand, he realized; neither would his mother, but then neither would most people. He didn't mind. It was a personal thing, anyway—a cause to fight for, a service—a necessary one—that only he could perform.

He had promised his mother there would be less garbage by tomorrow morning. That was a promise he intended to keep—if not in precisely the manner she expected.

He rose carefully and glided across the room to his closet. He glanced furtively out the door; no one was about.

Reaching behind his dark grey suit, he pulled forth a large, bound cardboard box. Lifting it to his bed, he snapped the binding with surprising ease and tossed the top aside.

His hands withdrew a flowing, sable cape.

"Peter—dinner!" shouted his mother from downstairs.

"Coming, Mom." He folded the cloak back into its box. And when I'm finished, I have work to do.

Smiling, he glided from the room, gently pulling the door shut behind him.

THE BEGINNING.

Greg Kliewer

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FOREST

Bundle up. Draw your collar tight.
The moon is shining brightly
—a bluish white button fastened to the sky;
The frost will surely bite our noses off tonight!
So kiss the waiting world goodbye
And be a gift wrapped package
On a Christmas Eve drawn sleighride
Destined for a star which shines
Upon the other side of the forest.

We'll listen through the windy howl
To jackpines sprinkling with a scowl
Their shadows on our snow-plow path.
We'll ask the horse, his pointed ears,
To slice the air and save the tears
From running down your cherry cheeks.
Yes, we'll save the tears for when we kiss
Beyond the peering eyes which whisper
While we linger on this side of the forest.

So bundle up. . .and draw your collar tight!
I can hear the winter slowly gather;
I can feel our night-flight gently blowing;
I can see the moonlight softly snowing
Upon the other side of the forest.

Lee Ann Daugherty

ADVENTURESS

I aim to live
out all my dreams
no matter if it seems
to others that
I'm mad.

I intend to live,
to love and laugh
with equal fervor,
and attribute all my oddities
to the lack
of vitamins in my diet.

I mean to smell
the flowers, drink
the tea of every
country reachable,
and eat chocolates
to my heart's content
wherever I go.

I'm going to climb a mountain
"cause it's there,"
swim the English Channel
completely bare,
do a portrait of
Mona Lisa from a
paint-by-number set
and anything else
that takes my fancy.

I want to grow old
and be famous
while I live
or nameless
when I die;
and if someone
asks of me
"What is life?"
I'll grin and say:
"It's Cornwall, and Venice
and sunsets;
it's music and
love in a darkened room;
but most of all
it's eating
macaroons and
listening to
the rain."

Lee Ann Daugherty

SKINCENSE

I will lie in clover
and watch the sun frolic
in estivalian dress.

I will sit in clover
and listen as bees
hum their favorite opera.

I will kneel in clover
and catch the scent of sky in a bottle
and take it home to wear
on blue-veined skin.

Beth Waldorf

RESURGAM

I want to be a morning glory
In the Irishman's formal garden.
Lurking beneath the mums I'll
Remain hidden to even his keen eye
Until my suppressive desires and
Renewing strength lure me to scale
The rose swaying above my domain.
Climbing skyward I'll wrap and squeeze
The tender stem. With skillful agility
I'll dodge the thorns and choke the leaves,
My only goal the ever-blooming bud.
Not until the rose wilts in the final act
Will I take my curtain call of merit.
A temper storm from the Irishman may
Strip me of my leaves, but I have triumphed still.
For long as the sun rises I shall
Greet him in my perpetual youth.
Once my roots grip the nurturing soil I
Shall sow the seeds of destruction so deserving.

CAN'T STAND IT

Jessica Rosetti sat with one leg on her couch, one leg off. She was reading the inventory from her office supply store. The only light in the den was the reading lamp she was using.

She had come home right after closing up shop and begun going over the inventory. About eight she'd gotten hungry enough to have a sandwich but since then she had gotten so involved in figuring out what she needed to order that it was halfway through the ten o'clock news and she was no more aware of it then if she didn't habitually watch the report.

Jessica made her last note, pitched the inventory sheet to the other end of the couch, yawned, and started adding up costs. This matter of simple mathematics was a slide on the ice compared to the microsurgery of deciding what she needed, how much of it she needed and what date she needed it by. She was humming and kicking her heel against the leg of the couch.

About the time she came to the first subtotal, a small voice said, "Well, I've had enough."

Jessica stopped thumping the couch and looked around, brows crinkled down and in toward the bridge of her nose. She listened for a moment and then, taking into consideration that she knew darn well that the house was all locked up and that a burgler wouldn't be saying, "Well, I've had enough," anyway, she shrugged it off as somebody outside in the street. But just as she looked down to find her place, the voice said, "I guess I shouldn't keep you wondering who said that."

She looked up again, frowning and peering into the corners of the room from the corners of her eyes. "I wasn't wondering," she finally said. "But I am now. Where are you?" She wasn't worried. It was such a small voice, and it sounded fairly friendly.

"Down here at the end of your leg." Jessica looked in surprise at the foot propped on her cushion. "No, your right foot, down here, the one you were just bashing against the couch."

She jerked the other foot up and kicked off her shoe to get a good look. "Yeah, this is me."

"Oh, I'm dreaming," Jessica said.

"No," her foot said. "Look." Spreading its toes, her foot arched over and pinched her thigh. "See? You didn't wake up. Besides, have you ever thought you were dreaming when you really were?"

"I don't think so," Jessica said. She scratched her head. "Well. That means I'm crazy then."

"No, no," said her foot. "It's the same thing. If you think you are, you're not. Don't worry about it."

"All right. I won't. What have I got to lose?"

"There you go, good girl. Hmmm! This is really nice, I've always wanted

a person to talk to about things."

"Can my other foot talk, too?"

"Your left foot? Course not. That's kind of silly, I've never thought of anything like that."

"Oh." She studied her foot a moment. "Does any other part of me talk?"

"There's your mouth, of course."

"I mean like you, separate from me."

"Oh! Well," the foot paused as if thinking. "Have you had your appendix out?"

"Yes. But I found out later I didn't really need to."

"Yeah, they're like that, such hypochondriacs. Anyway, appendixes, or is that appendices, sometimes can talk."

"Did mine?" Jessica was, by now, more interested in than befuddled by this whole thing. Conversation with a foot was fascinating.

"I don't know, I never asked. I don't even know if everybody else's foot talks. I've never had any chance to talk to people, and few enough chances to talk to parts of their bodies. It's nice, though, talking. About all I've ever had to do before is take walks and sleep."

"It's nice having you to talk to, too," Jessica said, "I'm sure." A thought occurred to her. "Say, would you like it if I wore open toe sandals more?"

"Yes, I think I would. But not all the time, I get cold easy. I like thick socks and boots, too."

"Okay, but I'll let you have a view once in a while." Pause. "Can you see? You don't have eyes." Jessica looked closer. "Do you?"

"Don't need 'em," said her foot proudly. "What is it on you that sees?"

"My eyes."

"How do they see? They don't have eyes of their own, do they? No, that's redundant. You can either see or you can't, you and I can, your hair can't. It's funny like that."

"I see. Like talking."

"Right. I can't explain it. It's like why is grass green, it just is."

"Yeah." Jessica felt like she'd come to know her foot; she liked it and felt it liked her too. She stood up, yawning. "Are you tired? You must be, you worked just as hard at the store today as I did."

Making light conversation with her foot, Jessica left the den to go up to bed. The reading lamp she left on was the only light in the whole house. It wasn't enough. From out in the hall came the alternate taps and rustles as Jessica climbed the stairs, laces undone on her left shoe and her newfound friend bare except for its stocking. Suddenly one tap was followed by a louder thud, several bumps and two voices saying "Oww".

A few hours later, at the hospital, a doctor was smoothing down the last coat of plaster and saying, "Your ankle will be just fine in a coupla weeks; this is just to keep you from moving that foot too much."

After the doctor had left, Jessica said, "You okay?"

"Mmmm."

"Oh. Sorry." She half wished for her appendix back to fill the two week lack of personal conversation she faced. But realistically, she knew a third party would disrupt the peculiar intimacy she and her foot had.

The doctor had left a large, pully cast-sock and as Jessica reached down to draw it over the exposed toes, she wondered if doctors and nurses knew about feet. It seemed like something you'd learn in an advanced anatomy class.

She eased into a wheelchair and buzzed for a nurse. "I'll take care of you and I'll only let my best friends sign your cast. Nothing embarrassing."

"Mmm-mm."

Jessica got her coat and said, "Let's go home," just as a nurse opened the door.

"Yes, ma'am," the nurse said.

"Oh, I wasn't— never mind."

The nurse just smiled and came to get behind the wheelchair. But Jessica and her foot both thought she had an unusually companionable twinkle in her eye for an emergency room nurse at one in the morning.

Mary E. Beam

OLD MAN CHARLIE

The fine-boned skull shines through
translucent skin
as he rides, blue-pajama'd, past
white-rustling nurses. They stop
conversation to exchange pleasantries
with him. "Not long for this world,"
their bird-faces say to one another."

His watery eyes crinkle in amusement as
he hears the rustle of their
all-important Papers. "What are you
up to, ladies — writing
death sentences?"

ANDERSON SLOUGH:
THE SEDGE OF THE BLUE HERON

Not far from the beaten path there lies
A tree line of sassafras and oak,
That shelters the ancient, silt-filled slough
That rises and falls with the river.
When autumn comes by the water's banks,
When glove-shaped leaves and acorns drop down,
To adorn the bramble laden ground
With coats of brown and scarfs of red hue,
The blue heron cries.

The blood-berries have fallen from the polk.
The buck and doe have come for the fields
To taste the water of the slough
And eat the fruit of summer's work.
Nothing moves now — the reapers gone.
But, the fields remember the harvest
And the sounds of combine and truck
Still echo from bole to mossy bole,
Where the blue heron cries.

At farmstead, the full, ripe pumpkins keep
Encircled guard around the stacked towers
Of straw and hay. And the empty skies
Carry the haunting caws of the rook.
The mirror-black water well reflects
The pure blue of the day-lit sky
Where unseen and ever hungry crows
Troop from khaki fields to white silos,
While the blue heron cries.

The water's surface is broken
Now and then by the spooning of the gar.
The silty beds cradle black mussel.
The eel sleeps there, whose slight, sharp turn
Can cloud the cold water deeper
Than a late November sky.
The fierce cat is king beneath the water,
But croppie is the true prize,
In the water below the sea, where the blue heron cries.

The land does not yet sing the song
That warmless winter has taught it.
The trees do not yet whistle empty limbed
Where wind dances from time to time.
And so, the warm afternoons lag
And pass to somewhat nippy nights,
Where the leaves promenade unseen
By all but animal eyes.
Whence pour the tears the blue heron cries.

The yellow bus rattles down a dusty road.
The corn truck pelts the pavement behind.
The child often leaves his books
To dream of targets, tackles, and hooks.
Work has left the cane pole fallow
As the fields odd seasons lie.
The gold of grain reminds the man
Of the days he watched the skies. . .
From whence the blue heron cries.

At times the bottoms cup a marsh,
A lake formed at river's rise.
Where reeds and cattail browning wave,
Where white crane on silent stilts strides.
The child holds the rifle less than firm.
The target on the oak he tries.
The man peers through pierced branches
Where the bullet strays and flies.
Where a blue heron dies.

The limestone blocks of the house and barn
Stand hollow but for brambles and vines.
The practice field reverbs no more
The shots of targets tried.
Through mud, the truck bumps away.
A better aim and another day.
Two left the range hand in hand.
The man from child; the child from man.
From that place where a blue heron lies.

A solitary feather adorns a nest.
Plucked from the softest down.
Of that majestic soarer at rest
In the bramble laden ground.
Slow and stately above the slough,
A blue shadow falls from the circling mate
Mourning ever and ever the fate
That pierced the deepest family ties—
In a world where the blue heron no longer flies.

Joe Roberts

THE END

The last man on earth fell to the ground in mortal battle with the last robot. They writhed and rolled, exchanging blow after blow; their only intent was survival. This was the last war, the final, irrevocable conflict between man and his offspring. Small puffs of dust rose, then settled as flesh met synthiflesh in a dying world.

Here was the end and not the beginning. When one succumbed, his entire race would be gone. A futile effort. The robot struck—quickly, mortally.

"Remember the first law!" cried the man, dying.

"I never studied law," said the robot.

Timothy Farmer

HIS GREY HAIR AND GREY EYES

His grey hair and grey eyes
Glisten in the sun;
Rough as a cob,
Tough as a mule:
He been there.
Experience, he says,
Shaking a bony, brown finger,
Is the best teacher.
But there's two things to remember
About experience:
A smart man don't need it,
An' a dumb one don't use it.

He cocked his mouth,
Laughing an ancient laugh;
And I laughed, too,
As I scratched my head,
Trying to decipher meaning from his mystic words.
And the sun shone, and warmed the earth.
And the wind blew, and rustled the leaves.
And time passed, making his wrinkles
Even deeper.

Timothy Farmer

CHURCHES

I once believed
God built churches;
But I know now,
Men build churches.
Sweating, swearing,
Beer drinking, women chasing,
Tobacco chewing men.
That's right:
Men build churches,
Not God.

David Major

UP IN THE AIR

"Of crimes against the authority of the State; of intentions and attempts to deceive and defraud the treasury; of duplicity toward numerous agencies of the State including law enforcement, news, taxation, and postal, we find you guilty and sentence you to one-thousand-thirty-eight years of solitary confinement in an isolated special prison. Eligible for parole in one-hundred-three years, nine months, and eighteen days. Do you have anything to say in conclusion?"

"Yes, yeroner," said Dree Spenser, the convicted, with a look of deep personal hurt, "I have a last request."

After a twenty-minute discussion of the possible avenues of deception leading from a last request, the judicial council decided to hear what the last request was, and then decide.

"In honor, yeroner," said Dree, "of my capture and conviction, and in light of the inconvenience my former freedom was to the go'ment. I request a shot be fired into the air at every changing of my guard."

After a forty-minute discussion of the question of how this might be turned to Adrian Spenser's advantage, the judicial council reached a consensus. The spokesman stood and faced the prisoner in the dock. "Despite the fact that we see your 'memorial' as self-glorification, we see no great harm in a primarily unnoticed expenditure of one bullet for each of the three guard shifts, daily. It should be their only use of ammunition. Request granted."

"Thank yeroner."

Adrian Spenser was led from the courtroom and was driven to his private prison in the hills by a deaf guard. The prison was a simple construction designed something like a mission. There was a courtyard facing on the only entrance to the guardhouse, which contained one cell and one ward room. The yard was enclosed by three walls which had one small, barred gate opposite the prison building.

For about three years, Dree turned off his light for bed at the sound of the 11PM to 7 AM guard's coming-on-duty shot, woke up at the 7 AM to 3PM guard's shot and sometimes set his watch by the 3 to 11 guard's one gun salute. Then one still August night, when Dree had one hundred years, seven months and a long holiday weekend before his parole hearing, the night guard inadvertently put some variety into the routine.

Rob, the 3 to 11 guard, started packing up his thermos and crossword puzzle about fifteen till eleven. When he heard the ex-US Army jeep pull up at the gate, he called out "Goodnight, Dree," and went to let in the night man. It was about five minutes before official shift change so they talked a moment before Rob drove off and the night guard locked up and started across the yard. Dree had said "g'night" back to Rob and was looking for a place to stick in his bookmark for the night. The night guard said

"Goodnight, Mr. Spenser," pulled out his pistol, pointed it straight up into the air, and fired, at about 11:00.

Dree answered and turned off his reading lamp. He turned it back on almost immediately when he heard an unusual squishing sound. He got up and looked out his little barred window and saw the guard lying in the courtyard. It seems the bullet had gone straight up in the still air, come straight back down at the same speed as the original muzzle velocity, and gone straight down into his head.

It took Dree about six hours to break out of his cell, but that was okay. He still had two hours before the 7:00 shift change to climb over the wall and hike into the hills. Or, to put it another way, one hundred years, seven months and two days before his chance of parole. Dree decided not to put it that way.

His last words as a prisoner were addressed to the dead man. "You know," he said speculatively, and rhetorically, "I guess I'm glad it turned out to be you. I got to know the other two guys so much better than you."

Martha Parks

ALONE

Alone-
Again
the word
pounds into
my mind.

Alone.

A lone
figure
staring into
the night,
waiting
for love,
or death,
or maybe
just relief.

Alone.

A mother
in an
empty house
dusting relics
of her
children's lives.

Alone.

The man
sits and whittles
a stick
trimming away
the years
of his life.

Alone.

A crowd
of people
lonely and afraid
wrapped
trapped
into their worlds.

Alone.

Martha Parks

CALL COLLECT

Tonight I talked to you of trivial things
and you responded with the usual answers,
But then you said three words—
A phrase I had never heard from you—
"I am lonely."

I could feel the tension over the line;
The aching of your throat as you tried
desperately to hold back the tears.

It seemed so strange
Our roles reversed,
I was now the stronger of us
and you were weakened by despair.
I wanted so badly to comfort you.
Yet I knew no comfort could be spared.

It isn't easy being a daughter
when I know my mother's fears.
But I know it must be worse
to be a mother losing her daughter's years.

Mary E. Beam

A LITTLE TIFF

"It's important to be a nice person," she told the plain, pleasant-looking girl in the mirror. Spraying a froth of white on that pleasant face which by now had developed little furrows between the brows, she polished furiously with a paper towel.

"Whatever else she is, Laura Corley is a nice person! Dammit." She brushed across her eyes with the back of her hand and pictured herself on Judgment Day being presented a medal with "Nice Person" embossed on it in gold. But I'll probably be too tired to go to the ceremony, she thought wryly. Plopping down onto the closed toilet seat, she unrolled a length of tissue and blew her nose. Oh well, I can't really expect poor Mark to know much about being nice, the example he's had to go by. Her mouth twisted sourly as she thought of Bradford Corley, her husband's late father. Even half-dead he'd been a bastard — lashing out at her long-suffering mother-in-law over nothing at all. She wondered if she'd go to Hell for hating him after he was dead. She thought not.

Standing, she lifted the lid, dropping the paper into the toilet and flushing automatically. Barely time to finish cleaning the bathroom before supper, she thought, dropping to her knees beside the tub, cleanser can in her hand. Mark liked the bathroom clean. If you didn't believe that, just try letting it go and see what he said!

As she scrubbed, Laura tried to analyze for the millionth time why she still put up with it after sixteen years. She was smart and fairly presentable, so it wasn't as though she was afraid she couldn't get another man. She didn't want another man. Mark, obnoxious as he was at times, fascinated and touched her in a way no one else ever had. Then as always, when she became analytical about it (and she often did), she decided that she must be subconsciously trying to set him a good example. Surely if she were nice long enough, he'd someday catch on and follow her lead. Days like today she wondered how much longer she could sustain her effort. He'd complained bitterly about the "pale" toast at breakfast and finally left for work shaking his head at her incompetence.

Spraying a stream of clear water around the edge of the tub, she slumped back onto the floor and watched the suds run down the drain. It felt good to sit and do nothing for a few seconds. Crossing her arms, she rubbed her aching shoulders and thought of awkward, gentle Raymond, who was mad about her in high school. What if . . . Oh, yes, what if!

An idyllic life with Raymond played itself out before her eyes — the tender love scenes, his gentle consideration in the commonplace events of their lives — all airily swirled before her, and she smiled dreamily to herself.

There was a rude sucking sound as the last of the bubbles disappeared, and she sat erect, feeling behind her on the dressing table for her watch.

Damn! Mark was due home in thirty minutes and she hadn't even thawed the chicken! Scrambling to her feet, she practically ran to the kitchen, where she plopped the frozen bird into a sinkful of hot water and feverishly began peeling potatoes.

Later with supper over and the dubious merits of underdone chicken duly pointed out, Laura turned for solace to her clean-up chores. The dishwater blurred before her eyes as she widened them so the tears wouldn't spill over. You aren't really crying, she told herself, if your cheeks don't get wet.

Still sitting at the table, Mark cleared his throat noisily. "I'm sorry I was short with you." He didn't sound sorry, just annoyed at having to say he was. "I've been stuck inside that office all day and nothing went right."

Probably all because of the pale toast, she thought, then, "I'm sorry." Her mind braced itself for what was coming, what always came:

"What're you sorry about? You didn't do it to me. You're always apologizing."

"I'm not. I just meant — oh, never mind. Are you through with your coffee cup?" She reached to pick it up.

"I might not be." He said it with a belligerent upswing in the last word. "Why are you in such a hurry to get me up from here every night?"

Suddenly she felt her brain swelling tight inside her skull: I want to get finished with the dishes and sit down. I'm tired. Then she said, "Sorry. I won't rush you again." Son of a bitch. Knows how many hours I work, but it offends him for me to say I'm tired.

The last time she had said "I'm tired," the kids were still in grade school. Laura was working two jobs and keeping house. They were in the bathroom (it was clean), and Mark was taking a bath. He always took the first bath, running it full to the top and using all the hot water. This night he was feeling playful, having slept as usual while she fixed supper and again later while she cleaned up, and he made a pass or two while she was washing his back.

"C'mon, can't you fool around a little bit?" His voice took on a tinge of annoyance when she hadn't responded.

"Sorry, I'm tired tonight."

"Tired, tired, tired, you're always tired! Who cares?"

Tired, tired, tired. I'm always tired. She stared down into the empty cup at his elbow. His point made, he had lost interest in coffee and had turned his attention back to his magazine.

Suddenly she saw a glorious flash of light behind her eyes and watched incredulously as her hand swung out, catching the cup and sending it in a wide arc across the dingy kitchen. It shattered into a thousand pieces when it hit the refrigerator, and as she turned to stare into Mark's astonished face, she wasn't tired anymore.

Valerie Crawford

OUR PAST LIES IN A HEAP

Our past lies in a heap around its foundation.
The men are pulling down our walls of life.
Soon there will only remain the spot
where we once stood.

Our children will know not
what we have seen and felt. . .
For we shall eventually forget ourselves.
Time has a way of erasing memories—
even the good ones.

Joe Bolton

MIGRANT WORKERS

Darkly gold and hung in mist,
they're up before the sun,
dragging their dew-soaked clothes
through high weeds toward a field
where strawberries are learning
what redness requires:
light. Women and children
stay drifting among the gray
triangles of their tents
that lean into the sky.

C. W.

CHILD OF BEIRUT

The steady drone
of flies' wings
beats a cadence
for the dead
as a child
with crimson tattoos
lies staring
into heaven.

COOL SPRINGS

Cool Springs isn't there any more; there's just a few depressions on the prairie, and a piece of tile that they brought from the East around the spring itself. I remember the old saloon and general store, though. They were in the same building, but you had to go outside the store to get in the saloon, or vice versa. They had to do it that way when the Methodists came to town. The Christian women would rather have starved than go in a saloon, so the owner, a man named Grover Dalton (he wasn't related to the outlaws) built the wall and didn't really please anybody, except himself. The wall kept the drunks from breaking up the dry-goods in the store, but one time some hard-looking cowpokes kept Dalton occupied in the saloon, and their buddies robbed the store and tied up the half-breed that worked behind the counter, so Dalton didn't find out he'd been robbed until some old woman got tired of waiting for some one to wait on her. She went to Dalton to complain, and then they found the poor half-breed under the counter. That happened long before I was born, but I remember old Mr. Dalton sitting out front during the warm weather. He would smoke his pipe or chew tobacco and spit in the street and tell stories about the old days when the valley was still thriving and he used to help the out-laws hide from the federal agents and the railroad people. One night around 1920 he fell asleep with his pipe, and the store and saloon burned down. It was an old frame building, and real dry. I could see the flames from our shanty down the road about a mile and a half. My father jumped on the mule and rode hell-for-leather but he was too late. Even the old log foundations, which were half-buried, burned up completely. My brothers and I ran down the road behind Pa, but it was too hot to get close. While we were standing there, all of the sudden we heard something screaming. At first, I thought it was old Dalton, but Pa burst out,

"Gawd damn! The horses are tied in the shed!"

We ran around to the side, but the flames were too much, and we had to stand there and listen to the horses scream until it was over. Pa made us get back and all of a sudden, the building blew up. There wasn't much gun-powder in stock, but the fire died down soon after that.

That was the end of the valley, really. The nearest store was over thirty miles away, and the roads weren't good enough for autos. What few families were left drifted away after that, until my family was all that was left. But I was twenty-two, and a man, ready to get out on my own, so I left, too, as did most of my brothers and sisters. All except for William.

Lord, it doesn't seem possible that I was only ten when he was shot. We were real close, even though he was eight years older than me. That last summer, William got a job riding fences for old Jim Marley. When I could get away from school or chores, I would ride out to keep him company or take him some candy I'd swiped from Dalton's store. One day, he shared

with me some cider that an old couple had given him for fixing their leaky roof, and we both got drunk. Ma tanned both our hides when we came in that night, singing hymns at the top of our lungs and shooting chickens. That was before William started courting Jennie Ford.

Jennie Ford was a thin, intense-looking girl, and even if she didn't have the kind of figure that you see on French post-cards, she was the most beautiful girl I ever saw. She was sixteen that summer, and so quiet that most of the men who came to see her sister Lucy, who *did* have the kind of figure you see on French post-cards, never noticed her at all. But William did.

At eighteen, William was still a little gangly, but he was strong and good-looking, and I guess Jennie did love him. She proved it later, but I could never think of her without blaming her for William's death.

It all started when the Johnson Brothers robbed the bank over at Price. They didn't get much money, but they shot a clerk and had to go up into the hills and hide out until it was safe to get out of the country altogether. Robert Johnson was the youngest. He wasn't a bad sort — not at first, anyway — but he had a temper that could make a rattler turn tail and run. I always suspected that he was the one that shot the clerk, but all the Johnsons were wild; I saw their sister shoot a cow once, just because it kicked her horse at the feed trough. Well, Robert was a friend of William's and he'd sneak down and get news from William. He almost shot me once because I came up unexpected. After that, I always sang or something, to let them know I was coming.

They stayed up in the hills from early in April, until the middle of June, when some bounty hunters came on them unexpected. There was a shoot-out and Glendon and Samuel were killed outright. Buckner was captured and later hung. Jim got away, but was shot in a brawl in Flagstaff a couple of months later. Robert was shot in the shoulder, but he managed to get away, and William hid him for a while.

I never liked William hiding him, not so much from a moral viewpoint as from a personal mistrust of Robert, ever since he shot at me. Then Robert's wound started to fester and he got a fever. William and I managed to get him to an old abandoned mine shaft, where it was at least dry, but we knew that he was in a bad way.

The bullet was still in his shoulder, and William and I didn't know enough about gun-shot wounds to take it out by ourselves. That's how Jennie got involved. William had been going to see her every Saturday night and Sunday afternoon, and so he trusted her enough to ride down one morning and bring her up to nurse Robert's shoulder. I had been staying with Robert, so he wouldn't be alone, even though I couldn't have helped him if something went wrong.

Robert had been lying there, and he was delirious. He was cussing and crying and saying things that embarrassed me, even though I didn't understand all of it. Once he came around and asked for some water. He grabbed at the jug with his good arm and finished it off.

"That's fine, boy. Fine."

"Do you want more?" but he had drifted off again. I started to go out to

find some water, but I paused at the door of the mine and I heard horses. I ducked back into the mine and waited, but they didn't come any closer. It was a week since the shoot-out, and most people thought that Robert had lit out with Jim, but I was scared. I had Robert's gun, but I didn't know if I could use it. I decided to check and see if there was water back deeper in the mine. We had a lantern, so I walked back in the tunnel and I found a pool where the water was running down the wall. In the lantern-light, the water looked black and oily, but it tasted cool and clean, so I filled the jug. As I was bending down by the pool, I saw the ledge.

It was narrow and high, but it worked around the cavern until you had a good view of the entrance and the main cavern. On the way back down, I found a side passage, and I could feel air. I followed it a little ways, but suddenly William's voice filled the mine. He was calling my name and he sounded angry.

I ran back and Jennie screamed when the light suddenly popped out of nowhere on the ledge above.

"Hey, William! I found a pool of water, and maybe another entrance to the mine!"

He didn't seem too interested, but he was mad at me for scaring Jennie. He figured he ought to give me a sermon and he started in with that tone of voice.

"I thought I told you to stay with Robert?"

I broke in, "He wanted some water, and when he drank all of it, I figured I ought to get some more. Then there were voices outside, so I—"

"What did you say?"

"There was voices outside about fifteen/twenty minutes ago, so I went back into the mine to see if there was any water, and I found some and this ledge, too. And maybe there's another way out of here."

He looked thoughtfully at Robert and then at me. "Maybe I'd better go see this other entrance. We don't want anybody else sneaking up on us."

As soon as he got Jennie started with Robert's shoulder, William turned to me and we started back into the mine.

I walked straight back to the side passage by the pool and William nodded thoughtfully. Then we crawled up to the other passage and squeezed our way through. There was another entrance, but it was all grown up with weeds and brush. No one could find it, unless they knew exactly where it was, and it wasn't easy, even then.

William turned to me and said that he had a good idea. He sat down on a boulder, and I sat at his feet. He pulled a blade of broom sedge and chewed on the end, so I did, too.

"You know, we could build a barrier in the mine with some of this old brush. Then if anybody tried to get in the cave, we could set fire to it and sneak out this other entrance. Come on, let's start getting wood."

We checked first to see if anybody was around, then we gathered armloads of dry limbs and twigs and cedar branches. We made several trips, until the pile was taller than William. We left a narrow path through the barrier, so we could get through in a hurry, but as soon as the pile was lighted, nobody could get through.

When we finished with that, Jennie was ready for us to help her. She'd cleaned up Robert's shoulder, but the wound looked awful. It was red and puffy, and beginning to run. Jennie looked a little sick, but she tried to be efficient. She'd brought rags for bandages, but she hadn't known what to expect. But there was no doubt as to what had to be done.

"William, we'll have to get the bullet out. I don't know anything about doing it, but either we do it, we get a doctor to do it, or he dies."

She bit her bottom lip and brushed her hair back with the back of her hand. We all knew that a doctor was impossible. We would have to do it, cause he'd die anyway. If we at least tried, he might pull through.

We hung the lantern from an old timber and William held his shoulders. I tried to hold his feet, but he kicked me aside with the first pain. Jennie's hand shook, but she forced herself to cut into his shoulder. With the first prick, Robert tried to leap up, which wrenched his shoulder so bad that he fainted. As soon as he saw that Robert was unconscious, William took the knife from Jennie and finished the job. Gratefully, she just stood back to watch and hand him bandages. Then she pushed William out of the way and bandaged the shoulder herself. She was to prove herself a good nurse over the next week or so.

Robert, being as strong as an ox, mended faster than might be expected. The fever went away, and soon he was sitting up; within four days, he could walk back to the pool, with Jennie or me helping him. He liked having Jennie help him.

Jennie would sneak up to the mine every chance she could get, but William wasn't there very much. I stayed there most of the time, so they were never alone, but Robert wasn't one to let a boy stand between him and a woman he wanted. Once, he tried to put his arm around her, and Jennie turned on him like a rattlesnake.

She was blazing mad. "Robert Johnson, don't you go taking liberties with me! I'm not one of your saloon floozies and I'm not above hitting a sick man if he deserves it! I'm here to see that you get well, and that's all. I'm promised to William."

Robert just laughed at that, and bided his time. I trusted him less than ever. That night, I caught him staring hard at William, with a calculating look on his face that I didn't like. I didn't say anything to William about it, and I guess I should have, but it just didn't seem right. William trusted Robert and Jennie, and nothing had actually happened, so I kept quiet.

The next day, Jennie came up early and changed Robert's bandages. William was there, so they went out to walk under the trees and talk. I sat in the cave, whittling a block of cedar wood, and watching Robert. He paced back and forth, and then he'd creep to the mouth of the mine and stare at Jennie and William. I kept my eye on him. Then Jennie left, and William came back in the mine. I started fixing some food for lunch. The water in the old blue-speckled coffee-pot hadn't even started to boil, when Jennie ran in. She was out of breath, and she'd torn her dress. She managed to gasp out "Possel!" and we all sprang into action. I dumped the water over the fire and we covered the lantern. We stood in darkness and silence for what seemed like eternity. William finally moved toward the

entrance. He didn't see anybody, but when he started to lean out further, a bullet exploded the dirt over his head.

He ducked back into the mine. "They're out there, all right. Did you see how many?"

"No. I'd just started down the path when I heard them. I ran straight back."

"So they could follow you right to the door!" Robert said with disgust.

I was scared. I started to pick up the provisions, but William told me not to bother with them.

"You just take Jennie and Robert out the back way. I'll keep them occupied outside until you get back to the pool. Wait there for me." But Jennie wouldn't leave him, and I didn't feel like saving Robert's skin. William went to the door and fired in the general direction of the guns, until he'd almost run out of ammunition. Then he turned back to us and made us get to the other side of the barrier. Robert grabbed the lantern, but William had to push Jennie, but first he handed her Robert's gun. It only had two bullets in it. William's gun just had one.

I ran on back to the pool, but ran back to the front of the mine on the ledge. I called to William, "You should get up here! There's a good view, and plenty of cover!"

"You get on back to the pool and wait! I'll cover here."

He shot his last bullet, and turned and ran toward the barrier. Robert had had to drag Jennie to the other side, but when he got there, he gave Jennie a push that sent her sprawling. Then he turned and tossed the lantern into the pile of dry wood; it was like an explosion. William and I were both on the other side, but I was high enough to see the whole scene. William stood and stared at the fire. I yelled at him to come climb to the ledge, but it was too high. On the other side of the fire, Robert tried to drag Jennie to the passage out, but he didn't know where it was, exactly, and the firelight made it blend into the wall. Jennie broke away, and started climbing the ledge toward me.

William was still trying to climb the wall when the lawmen burst into the mine. They shot him before they saw he was unarmed. Jennie had reached a point where she saw William shot. I don't know if she screamed or not, but I turned toward her after I saw my brother's body fall to the floor. Our eyes met, then she turned and in one movement, shot Robert Johnson full in the chest.

The lawmen hadn't seen the ledge, so I crawled down, and led Jennie out the back entrance. She didn't resist — I guess we were both in shock. I can still remember what a beautiful day it was. Somewhere along the way, Jennie dropped Robert's gun. A hunter found it six years later. I never told whose it was.

Everyone figured I knew more than I told, but no one tried to make me talk. My brother was dead, and they found Robert's body after the flames went down. Justice was served. Nobody ever suspected Jennie of anything. She ran away a few months later and I never saw her again. Everything seemed to end after that. They tore down the hotel and most of the houses after people started moving away. Even the church gave up and moved closer to a railroad.

Cool Springs isn't there any more.

Robert F. Cook

DREAMING OF YOU

My dream is alive
filling my life with a peaceful gladness
lifting me up to soar amongst clouds
and glide with the stars
A dream that takes away the sadness
poisoning my heart for so long now
Your smile healing each scar remaining. . . .

So I ask of thee
take my hand and walk with me
the Sun and Moon linger for no one
I have so much to share with you.

Time flees from those who don't enjoy it
"If" holds too many sad memories
when it doesn't become "was" in your life

Won't you walk with me in the sunshine
Laugh with me in the rain
share with me your smile
Let me comfort you when there's pain

And I'll sing for you
here on my silent stage

Pen as voice
with words as my music

You, my inspiration
my dream that is alive
a dream that is sunshine
to my heart where it was raining. . . .

Lisa Garrett

MOTEL OF DECAY

Her face is not unlike the others that I have seen.
Old is this face puffed into distorted oblivion.
Eyes with lids as stone, insistent upon closing because
of the drugs inflicted upon her.

No, her face is not physically unlike the other faces
filled with agony and despair, yet she is part of me,
my blood is liken to hers.

I look upon her with a gleaming reassurance that the
event never calls for.

When the spoon enters her mouth I see myself.

I see my weary body ridden with those same crumbs,
but I do hope that my spirit needs no reassurance,
that I can with the spirit of Joan overcome this white,
sanitized room of delay.

Overcome the smiling, seething hands awaiting my every fumble,
and in effect overcome death, for he is only as strong
as we allow him to be.

Dorine Geeslin

THE DUCHESS SPEAKS

If ever a lady were pushed to the wall
With insult and misquote, I'd call
That lady me, his Duchess, with hands
That tremble with righteous rage as he stands
And degrades me. He said
My interest is not in him. I read
That to mean, as seen in his countenance
And in his every covert glance,
It could be better said by
His interest is no longer I.
I would ask him if I durst,
"Have you sent messengers, first
Inside Ferrara, and then out, not
To betray me at long last, but to spot
My immediate replacement?" Perhaps
I can cover my unease. "Your mantle laps
Too much over my Lady's wrist." Paint
me, Fra Pandolf, ere I faint.
Unjust! Unjust that I hear the stuff
Of courtesy, and must respond enough
For some appearance of joy to be had
In this painting. I am glad
This likeness will stay as I rush past.
Indeed, I am his Duchess, but not his last.

OUR DOILY BROAD

It was a dark and stormy night. Evelyn Trent nervously eyed the revolver which she clutched in her left hand. I eyed Evelyn Trent nervously. Cary Philips, the playboy heir to the Philip's Cosmetics fortune, eyed both of us nervously. The only person not eyeing anyone nervously was Frank P. Franks, and he was dead.

At that moment, the cops arrived. I can smell the cops in this town from a hundred yards—the ones that work the wharves, even further. You'd think on their salaries that they could afford shower-baths, but that's another story. The Chief barged in and looked around. He saw the pearl-handled revolver in Evelyn's hand and barked, "Book her."

I had to interrupt. "Miss Trent didn't do it. She was with me in the music room."

"Then why is she holding a gun?"

Evelyn broke in excitedly, "Have you ever been alone with him in the music room?"

"What the lady's trying to say is, she saw a mouse. Then we heard Philips here scream."

"So you came to investigate?"

"That's my job."

"Well, who did shoot Philips?"

"Nobody shot Philips. This is Cary Philips. Philips, Chief Whitecloud."

They shook hands, then the Chief turned back to the matter at hand.

"Who's the stiff?"

Philips remarked casually, "His name's Frank P. Franks."

"Oh, is he a friend of yours?"

"I never saw him before in my life."

"Then how did you know his name?"

"Whose name?" Philips responded with a meaningful look at the Chief's badge. "I resent your treating me like some sort of suspect, when I'm on intimate terms with the Police Commissioner's wife, and I always buy tickets to your silly Policemen's Charity Ball, and I might be able to get you a little bonus, if you know what I mean."

"I see. We don't have any suspects in Franks' shooting."

I ventured to make a remark. "I'm afraid nobody shot Franks."

"What do you mean? He's dead isn't he?"

"Yes, he's dead, but nobody shot him."

"You mean it was suicide?"

"No, he was strangled—with this!" I held up the grisly weapon triumphantly. "Yes, believe it or not, he was strangled with a lace doily!"

Evelyn swayed, as if she were about to faint. "How gruesome! Boy, I could go for a slug of whiskey right now." My kind of woman—a classy dish on the outside, with no moral whatsoever!

Suddenly, there was a disturbance at the door. A female voice inquired, "Has anyone here seen a lace doily? I seem to have lost mine." I spun around and practically fell into two of the biggest blue eyes I've ever seen. They belonged to none other than Cecily Parkhurst, bored debutante and heiress to the Parkhurst Mortuary fortune. She was everything I ever dreamed of in a woman until Evelyn's gun went off near my ear. The bullet sent a picture crashing down from the wall.

Evelyn giggled and said "How silly of me! I thought I saw a rat!" She looked at me meaningfully and said, "I certainly hope I was wrong."

"Why don't you put the gun away?" Everybody was eyeing everybody else nervously again, except Cecily Parkhurst. She had seen the doily in my hand.

She cried with pleasure, "You found my doily! Where was it?"

The chief informed her. "It was wrapped around this gentleman's neck." He indicated Franks. "Do you know him?"

"Why, it's Frank P. Franks!"

"Ah-ha! Where did you meet him?"

"I've never seen him before in my life."

"How did you recognize him, then?"

"He's a well-known radio personality, and he was engaged to my sister."

"He was engaged to your sister, and you never saw him before?"

"Well, maybe I have seen him before. I just forgot. My sister and I were never close. May I have my doily back now?"

"I'm sorry, lady, but it's evidence."

"Hey, Chief," I said, "Why not let the little lady have her doily back? What's the big deal?"

Evelyn exploded. "What? Give her back her doily so she can go about terrorizing the city? We'll all be murdered in our beds! I'll bet she isn't even licensed to carry it! Arrest her for illegal possession of a dangerous weapon!"

I said placatingly, "Really, Evelyn, I think a woman has the right to carry a doily with her, if she wants to. Remember—a doily is only as dangerous as the person using it."

"But one person has been killed already! How many more have to die before you see? Do you want daily doily deaths?"

I looked over at Cecily Parkhurst, who was quietly discussing funeral arrangements for the late corpse with Chief Whitecloud. She certainly looked dangerous, with her glossy blonde page-boy hair-do and her low-cut black-velvet gown with the slit up the side, exposing a silk-stockinged leg that would make Betty Grable green with envy. She looked just like Lauren Bacall—my kind of woman—a classy dish on the outside, with an air of dangerous mystery surrounding her like the scent of stale gardenias. Of course, most of the air of danger came from Evelyn, who was throwing murderous glances in our direction. Nevertheless, I had my duty to do.

"Chief, I think it might be worthwhile if I questioned Miss Parkhurst, alone." Quickly, before she had time to react to my words, I kicked the gun from Evelyn's hand and socked her in the jaw. She staggered from the

blow, then punched me in the stomach. Our little dispute would have developed into a full-fledged brawl after that, if the Chief hadn't blown the whistle. His men separated us. Evelyn stood glaring at me with four policemen holding her back.

"Sammy, honey, how could you do this to me? How can you desert me for a weak-blooded murderess like her, when you know I'll track you down and claw your eyes out, if it takes me fifty years!" Then she started yelling unprintables at me, as the policemen carried her out. It was a shame that Evelyn had such a nasty disposition. She really was gorgeous when she had those angry little highlights in her eyes.

I led Cecily into the music room, and as soon as the door was closed, she flung herself passionately into my arms. As soon as I recovered my composure, I reached into my pocket and pulled out my pipe, which always soothes my nerves.

"Do you mind pipe-smoke?"

"Oh, no! I like a man that smokes a pipe," she murmured seductively, "but, I prefer a man who smokes tobacco."

She lit a match for me and leaned close to me as I drew in some smoke, which brought on a coughing fit. I decided not to smoke.

Cecily began pacing up and down before the fireplace, like a caged animal. She tossed her beautiful blonde hair over her shoulders and said to me, "You don't think I did it, do you? I couldn't bear it if you thought I did it. I spent the entire afternoon with my old, blind grandmother, except for when I stepped out to go to the church bazaar." At my expression of disbelief, she changed her story. "All right. I didn't go to the church bazaar. I went to a bar on Fifth Avenue. I had a Shirley Temple. As you can tell, I was nervous and upset. My sister, the one engaged to Frank P. Franks, had written to me, telling me that she had joined a religious cult where everyone dressed in rabbit-suits and snorted cocaine. It was all Frank's fault; he encouraged her in all sorts of hare-brained schemes. This time, he'd gone too far. My father had an apoplectic fit when he got a bill this morning for more than \$500.00 worth of carrots. I went to see my sister, and found her in a pitiful state. Her rabbit-suit was torn and dirty, and she had developed a nervous tic. Her nose would not stop quivering."

Her brave facade finally cracked. "It was so gross!" She burst into tears, so I took her into my arms, to comfort her. At that opportune moment, the Chief brought Evelyn in the room.

I immediately let go of Cecily, who dropped to the floor in a tear-sodden heap. Evelyn was restrained before she could pick up the fireplace poker and do me bodily harm. When that outlet for her emotions had been denied to her, she stood and hurled insults and obscenities at us.

"What kind of man are you? I mean, you practically molest that piece of baggage in public—"

Cecily interrupted angrily "Well, you might have had the common decency to knock! What do you expect when you barge in like a bunch of wild Indians!"

"You got something against Indians?" asked Chief Whitecloud.

Disconcertedly, Cecily said "Why, uh... I—ah, that is—oh..."

As usual, I had to take care of the situation. "Miss Cecily was speaking of East Indians, Chief." At that, he looked mollified, but still a trifle suspicious.

As we stood there talking, I noticed a movement behind the portieres. With the certainty that comes with solving over twelve mysterious crimes, I knew that the murderer of Frank P. Franks stood behind those curtains. I stood there, waiting for the opportunity to unmask the murderer, when suddenly the lights went out. There was a moment of complete silence, which was finally broken by a strange crunching noise, which caused a few of us to scream uncontrollably.

The lights came on in time for me to dodge the marble statue that Evelyn was throwing at me. In all the excitement, it was some time before we noticed Philips' rather blue complexion, and his strange position on the divan. Suddenly Cecily screamed.

"Some one has stolen my doily!"

Evelyn said, rather nastily, "Well, we don't have to look very far for it!" Sure enough, it was wrapped very tightly around Philips' neck. After looking over all the possibilities, I turned to the Chief.

"Chief, I am convinced that the murderer is in this very room, at this very moment. In fact, I think if you look behind those portieres, you'll find our man, or I should say, woman." The Chief had pulled back the curtains and revealed the murderer. "Or should I say... rabbit?"

For huddled behind the portieres was a large bunny rabbit with a quivering nose!

"Why, it's my sister, the one engaged to Frank P. Franks!"

She was nibbling on a carrot, which explained the crunching noise which had preceded Philips' death. Clutched in her grubby little paw was another doily!

Evelyn screamed, "Disarm her! She's got another doily and who knows which of us will be next!"

At that, Cecily's sister/rabbit hopped over toward the Chief and he fainted. Within moments, she was upon him, her nose quivering with the effort as she tried to twist the doily around his neck. One of the cops quickly produced a carrot and lured the bunny woman away from the Chief's inert form.

When I was finally able to look away from the fantastic tableau before me, I saw Evelyn standing over Cecily with a look of outrage in her emerald eyes.

"You decadent society dames give me a pain! You think just because your great-great-grandfather came over on the Ark you got something better than everybody else. Well, my family came over on the *Spirit of St. Louis* and we're proud of it!"

Cecily looked at Evelyn as if she were an infantile half-wit with a couple of screws loose. "My dear, the *Spirit of St. Louis* was an airplane. Would anyone care for some sherry?"

"How can you be so cool, with dead bodies all over the place? Doesn't it bother you that your sister, who thinks that she's a rabbit, has killed at least two people in this very house?"

"Really, to my family, a house doesn't seem like home without a couple of bodies lying about. We're in the cadaver business, you know. What about that drink, Sammy Boy?"

"Sure, I could go for a drink. Do you really have bodies all over the place?"

"All over, darling."

"Doesn't that seem a little frivolous? I mean, how can you keep servants?"

"Don't be petty, darling. We have nothing but future in front of us now!"

Somehow, a future full of dead bodies didn't seem particularly enticing, even with Cecily. I would have to let her down easily, however. One should never be abrupt with a mortician's daughter—especially one with a murderous sister.

Of course, I am nothing if not tactful. "Excuse me, buttercup, but I'm afraid there's no future for us. You're a real cute little number, but I'm one boy who isn't interested in being domesticated, even for you. That's the way it is."

"That's the way it is?"

"That's the way it is."

"So that's—the way it is. Sammy, we made a cute couple. Are you sure? I'm very rich. I could support you in style."

"I'm nobody's kept detective. What kind of boy do you think I am?"

"I guess you just aren't my kind. Well, so long, Sammy Boy."

With that, Cecily Parkhurst walked out of my life. Now it was just me and Evelyn, like in the beginning—the way it was supposed to be.

"Well, Evelyn, how about a drink?"

"Fix it yourself, Bozol!" she snarled. This wouldn't do at all.

"Evelyn, darling, it's me—Sammy. You don't have to play hard to get. I love you anyway. Let's forget the past. We have nothing but future in front of us now."

"Gee whiz, ya big lunk, since you put it that way, of course I love you! Let's go tie one on." And we did.

Richard Keith

DEEP IN THE NIGHT

Deep in the night
My blood screams
Through my veins
Crying to the hills
Long hills of no end
Or beginning.
My heart walks these hills
Alone
In darkness
As the moonshadow calls
Across the land
In the half day-night
And dark forms move silent
Just out of reach
On the edge of mind.
Blood doesn't forget
The company there
Long ancestries
Kinships
Made
Without burning words.

Deborah Mott

NEAT HAIR

Neat hair.
Appropriate clothes.
Suitable voice.
It functions pleasantly in "society"
(Word for what we are not, collectively).

"I" am a secret.
My hair is often snarled chaotically.
Raging, screaming, naked.
Crying in wondering and fear, aghast.
Or loving. . .
Things, my self, you.

Hide it! Now!
Carefully. Disguise in propriety.
Before one soul spots another.
And feeling escapes.
And you are known.
And in danger.

Karen McDonald

SWEET LIQUOR AND SMOKE

He stands alone, with a shot of whiskey in one hand and a cigarette in the other, behind the bar in a room filled with red—red carpet, red chairs, red tablecloths, and red painted glass light covers (making the light— red). The room, like his breath, smells of sweet liquor and smoke. Dressed in old blue jeans, a torn red and blue plaid shirt, and tennis shoes, he looks out over the quiet empty room and stares intently at nothing. As if something he saw out there jarred his memory, he suddenly checks his watch. It is noon and he must start to work. He crushes out his cigarette and drinks the shot of whiskey.

He turns on a couple of flood lights to shine out in the red darkness and returns behind the bar. He fills the coolers with ice and then lines each of them with beer according to their brand. He cleans the bar and the dirty glasses and ash trays that cover it. After he finishes, he plays a game of pinball and wins— wins a free game of pinball. Trying to beat his own high score, he plays again but loses. The flashing lights go out; the digital scoreboard quits clicking; and the last little bell ding dings before the metal ball rolls between the flippers and out of sight. He returns behind the bar to smoke another cigarette and drink another shot of whiskey.

He turns the television on behind the bar and watches the end of a boxing match. Angry, because the white guy lost, he turns the set off and starts back to work. After he puts the bar stools upside down on the bar and sweeps, he drags the old vacuum cleaner out and plugs it in. He slowly goes over the old dirty red carpet, vacuuming the ashes and smashed pretzels and bending over to pick up empty cigarette packs and empty pretzel bags from the floor.

Tired and sweaty now, he returns behind the bar, lights another cigarette, and pours another shot of whiskey. He runs his fingers over his sweaty forehead and back through his wiry uncombed hair that is just beginning to turn gray, flattening it down. He yawns and rubs his rough unshaven face that is just beginning to wrinkle with age. He pulls one of the bar stools off the bar and sits down to smoke his cigarette and drink the shot of whiskey.

After checking his watch, he puts all the bar stools back in their place and continues his work. It is 4 p.m. now and he is more than half through. He replaces a few of the dirty blood red tablecloths, where beer has been spilled, with clean ones. Now, all he has left to do are the bathrooms— his least favorite job. And he always saves it for last. He mops the floors, cleans the sinks, and refills the toilet paper and paper towel dispensers. As he starts to clean the toilets, he says aloud in an angry exasperated voice, "I don't know why these God-damn women think they're too good to sit on the toilets. Instead, they squat above them and spray piss all over the place. Of course after that no one else will sit down on the God-Damn

things."

He checks his watch, puts the mop in the back, and throws the dirty rags in the laundry cart with the stained tablecloths. He turns the flood lights and the red lights off and goes home.

At home, he eats left-over meatloaf and mashed potatoes, takes a shower, and dresses. Dressed in light blue knit slacks and a navy blue shirt, he returns to the club. He greets people and seats them as they come in the door. As the night goes on, he throws some of those same people out after they've gotten too drunk or too rowdy. He checks his watch as the band ends their third set. It is almost 1 a.m. He lights up a cigarette, walks to the bar, and orders a shot of whiskey. This one— he pays for.

Standing alone at the bar, he looks out over the loud crowded room and stares intently at nothing. He crushes out his cigarette, drinks the shot of whiskey, and walks over to the pinball machine. He plays; he loses; he plays again; and again, he loses. He walks through the crowd and talks with everyone. And everyone talks with him but no one listens and neither does he. Though he is well liked, few know him.

The band ends their last set and he checks his watch. It is quarter till four. He turns on the flood lights in the red darkness and starts to clear everyone out. After everyone has gone, he turns out the flood lights and the red lights and goes home.

He sleeps until the alarm rings at 11 a.m. He puts on another pair of old blue jeans, a torn shirt, and his tennis shoes, and returns to the club. After turning on the red lights, he walks behind the bar. He lights a cigarette and pours himself a shot of whiskey.

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