


1985

# UA68/6/1 Zephyrus

Western Kentucky University

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Zephyrus 1985

Contributors:

Rebecca Boggs – Two Brothers

Paul Bush – Just a Thought

Lookin' Back

Train

The Mental Block

Daniel Curry – living on kentucky street

Marjorie Early – Tenacity

Tom Foster – cover

Celeste Green – Large Concept

Beckie Hendrick – New Bethel

The Weight Lifter Asleep

Imperatives

Permanent Press

Teresa Klimowicz – Merciless Eyes

My one-time teacher has gone

Karen McDonald – Gray Drizzle

Alicia Neat – Between Fairy Tales and Wedding Veils

David Parrish – St. Petersburg

Eighth Floor Ward B (VA Hospital)

Robert St. John – Let the Fat Boys Wonder

Invasions

American Boy

A note to pigs

Wind

Coming In

House Cats

Amy Wallace – Still Life with Desire

Leave Us

The Same White Wound

Antiseptic

The Lake

Nate Yoder – The Adjustments I Haven't Made

Martha Zettlemyer – Mother of Four

Ladies' Man

Misery & Company

The Fields Behind our House

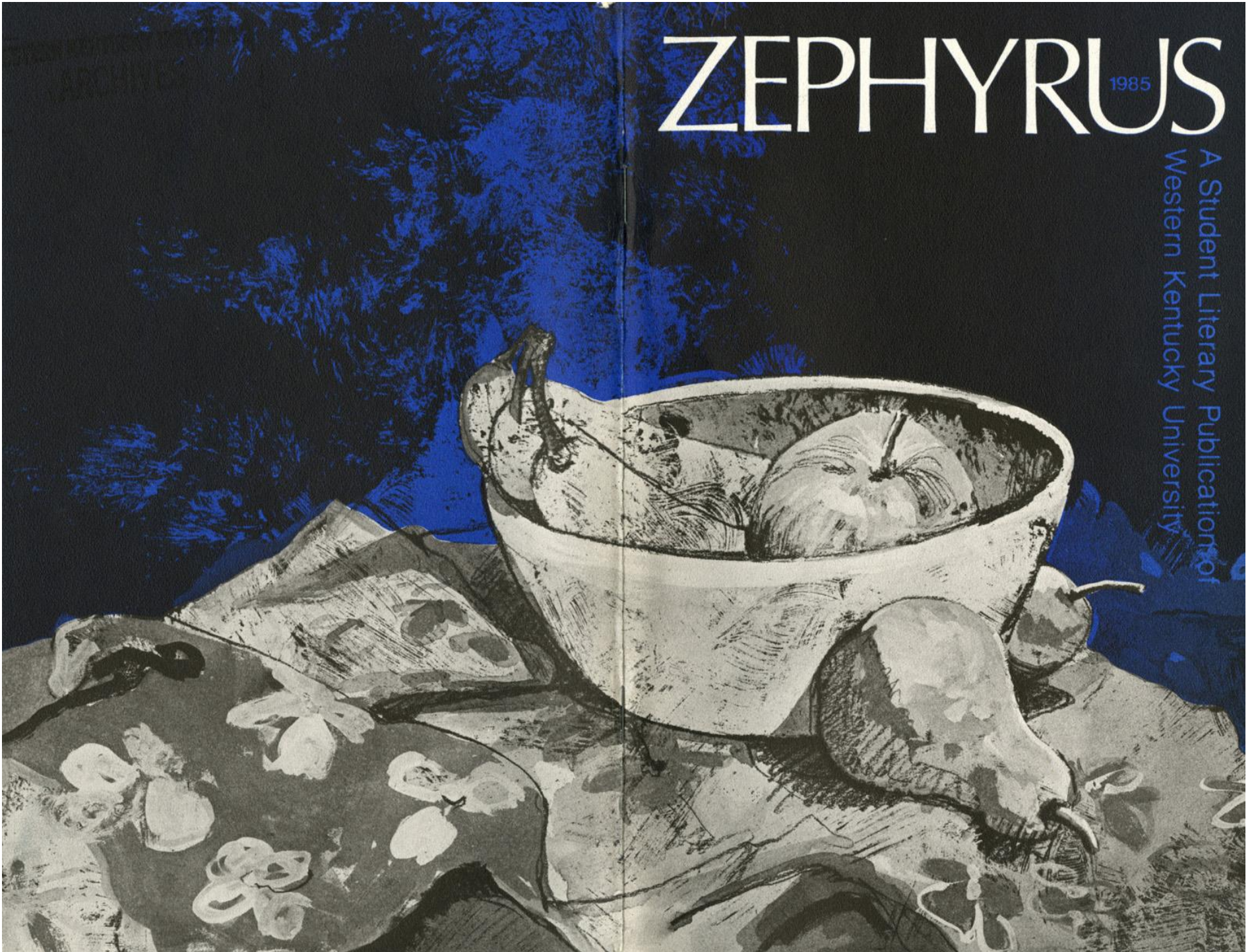
Conversation about the Dippers with my Nephew who is Three

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

Scanned by University Archives student Todd Wilson, March 2010.

# ZEPHYRUS<sup>1985</sup>

A Student Literary Publication of  
Western Kentucky University



WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY  
ARCHIVES

# ZEPHYRUS

SPRING 1985

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

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Western Kentucky University

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#### AWARD WINNERS

Geoffrey McCelvey Memorial Award  
Amy Wallace

Browning Literary Club Poetry Award  
Martha Zettlemyer

Ladies Club Fiction Award  
Robert St. John

Amy Wallace

STILL LIFE WITH DESIRE

There is a language for everything  
we draw—glass, drapery,  
the human figure.

\*

Please don't eat  
the pears; I'm using them  
in my still life.  
I'll call it  
"Still Life With Pears"  
though I could use anything.  
Why not you?  
Isn't that what I want—  
elegance on a card beside you  
saying I did it.  
Though I wouldn't. Not nude.  
Well, maybe for an artist.

\*

I am the voyeur of soft masses.  
I darken and erase their delicate  
edges, where the skin just begins  
to cover the fruit.

In the middle of all this gold green  
lie down naked, and as I work  
I'll try to explain  
the madness  
that wants to cut it all into slices,  
see the juice dripping like tears.  
Remember our impulse to devour the pears  
and leave the teeth-worn cores.

\*

If poetry is just  
telling what happened, why can't I  
throw the moon in  
the way it looked that night  
we talked for hours,  
clouds tinged from behind—  
the negative of a day storm  
you said. And I can talk about  
your name, which is nearly *time*  
which was nearly that moon  
nearly ours.

\*

I will wait  
until I can capture the feeling,  
feel the rhythm of the way  
your hands are resting  
or remember them lingering  
across me.

I will charcoal a line along your shoulder  
that disappears and emerges  
so beautifully, I could never  
sit this far away.

Amy Wallace

LEAVE US

A negligee of leaves  
covers the streetlamps  
in the park at midnight.  
Death changes people  
we decide.

A voluminous moth  
half-bat  
lands into one of my  
convenient metaphors.  
And if I told you how  
it is like death  
told you how they are  
both pale  
and light and circle  
something brighter  
waiting heavy on trees  
in the days

This is true  
portrait light  
though it is too dark  
to draw those pearls  
rearranging your mouth  
your eyes as you speak and  
turning, blow smoke

away like a bad dream  
we wish would leave us

drawing on it  
exhaling  
old habits the mouth  
can never push far  
enough from the heart.



Amy Wallace

THE SAME WHITE WOUND

Having failed again at waking you,  
I try the typewriter. The sound  
of skin on skin was nothing,  
so I rehashed the old floor for creaks.

I sit and watch you sleep and  
all I can remember is the way you cough  
your heart out to me at night  
like a cancer we know

there is no cure for. It's eating  
away at me, this verge of something  
like flowers you feel sure  
must open at night and close again before

anyone has the chance to see them.  
I know they're blooming in the dark  
at the same time my words are beading up  
on the lawn. Erasing this fire

with the same white wound, the pigeons  
shake out their wings; there's a weight  
they can't get rid of, like my words  
beating at the door for me

so I can dream at night, apropos, attempting  
flight, unfolding, never waking.

Amy Wallace

ANTISEPTIC

"We were like sores to each other."

— Thoreau

A Letter to Emerson

We have only opened up  
the wounds inside us. I thought  
with pressure lovingly applied

or some caressing of my inner  
life, my deepest nerves could be  
revealed and I could believe

in anything. So much can never be  
made clean, infections not even  
the strongest scotch can discourage.

\*

What was that Greek water you made  
me try? clear licorice on ice.  
Sometimes I wish you were back

in that alley cracker box. Now your ceilings  
are as lofty as your choice of art  
instead of life. Remember what you said

you'd name a son? Try writing  
your accounts of other men's lives  
when you say the name.

\*

I write the same poem over and over  
about our love that wasn't love  
as if to punish the child in me

for talking when it shouldn't have.  
*I will not talk during class*; instead  
I will fall down on the blacktop

and have my knees painted red  
from a little brown bottle  
the teacher keeps in her desk drawer.

It works because the color is painful,  
and it stings like a fireball. The scrapes  
will heal because she put something

on them like a scuffy valentine without  
the lace, to love the way I hurt. See how  
my red hands burn all over this page.

Amy Wallace

THE LAKE

Barely moving, the boat  
turns the corner of the trees,  
grows distant.  
At this late hour  
the water and rowboat  
become a white vision.  
Light obscures the man.  
He looks straight ahead  
until he turns,  
but the light is so strong  
I cannot tell what he is asking.

One day he rowed her out  
to the middle of this lake  
and said she'd do it or drown.  
That's how it was.  
No, I believe I saw a knife—  
he held a knife at her throat.  
She struggled and knocked it  
into the water.  
So he tied her wrists  
while she screamed (loudly)  
as he made her watch him  
peel not one orange,  
but at least three.  
She came home  
with flesh under her nails  
and in her teeth.  
That's exactly what happened.  
Unless, of course,  
you mean the time  
she seduced him on a barge,  
when she dressed up like Cleopatra,  
bought a black wig,  
and drugged his wine.  
Then cruelly she buried him  
in orange peels  
until he could not breathe.

Once, they arranged orange slices  
carefully, one after another  
on empty plates.  
And when the plates were full,  
they swam back to shore  
and smeared each other with sand  
until they were anonymously dark  
and could not be identified,  
even in a photograph.

Forever they peeled oranges  
(though there was no reason)  
and left the fruit on the sand.  
They kept peeling, even when  
the sour smell made them ill.  
Such a long time ago.  
He is gone, and she stands here  
in rotten fruit the color of fire  
and soft moss,  
the kind they might have slept on  
once, agreeing.

Robert St. John

#### LET THE FAT BOYS WONDER

For years now, the boys had been growing fatter, overly slopped, like hogs. Well over a decade ago, they had gotten bored, and they thought again about how to leave the room. None of their minds were up to it. The door was shut tight, like it had simply been drawn on the wall. There was a crack beneath it, but only darkness on the other side.

Many, many times, they had bent to look through the crack.  
"I can't see anything!" blubbered Walrus.

The others just laughed, even though they, too, liked to creep to their knees to peek. Ernest was the only one who never looked.

"Ain't you gonna look—ever?" asked Hippopotamus one day.

"No," said Ernest, quietly.

And Ernest never did.

But Ernest wrote letters.

To Whom It May Concern:

Why are we here?

Your Friend, Ernest

Ernest would fold the letter with his careful hands, and then, he would inch it into the envelope. He did this every week. He did it for many, many years. He ran his small pink tongue across the fine edge of glue, and pressed the envelope shut with his palm. Then he would slip it through the crack and it would disappear.

The others gathered around him for the first few times, bumping into each other.

"Hey, Ernest!" bellowed Dirigible, "sending another letter? Haw haw haw!"

"That's right," answered Ernest, smiling.

"Who you sending it to?" drooled Walrus. "You got relatives out there?"

All of them went "Haw haw haw," jostling each other into the walls. They slapped their knees at the fun they were having. One day, crawling from the pile, rubbing sleep from his eyes, Walrus noticed something. He nudged Beachball.

"Hey! Look at Ernest!"

"What's wrong with him?" asked Beachball, sleepy, but still loud.

The others stirred, wobbling the pile.

"What's going on?" asked Lardo.

"Ernest is getting thinner!" said Walrus.

"He sure is!" howled Dirigible, looking closer.

Ernest now began to wake. He opened his eyes and peered up at the bellies jiggling above his head.

"What's the matter?" he asked.

The others looked about, tittering.

"You tell him," giggled Beachball, clutching his pudgy knuckles in a bunch.

"Walrus, you tell him. You noticed it!" snickered Porkbelly.

"I ain't gonna tell him! Haw haw haw! It might hurt his feelings!"

"Tell me what?" asked Ernest, getting to his feet and rubbing the back of his neck.

"Well, Ernest, old boy," began Walrus, "well, I don't know how to tell you this. . .but, you're getting thinner!" he suddenly blurted out.

"I know," answered Ernest, sitting down to write another letter. The others bumped about.

"You know!?" hollered Lardo.

"What do you mean by that?" asked Porkbelly.

"There's more to life than being fat," replied Ernest.

The others roared. Haw haw haw, they went, shaking and bobbing, bouncing off of each other with delight.

With tears in his eyes, Beachball finally said, still laughing. "Ernest, old pal, why you've busted a cog. There is nothing to life at all."

"Right," said Walrus, agreeing, "You don't really mean what you said, do you, Ernest?"

Dirigible stepped up. "Ernest and his letters!" he wailed. "Haw haw haw!"

But Ernest ignored them and calmly, he lifted his pen.

To Whom It May Concern:

What's it all for?

Your friend, Ernest

And he slid it beneath the door.

"Haw haw haw!" said the others, rocking.

The next week, Ernest was even thinner. Black circles ringed his eyes. As a policy, he began to ignore the others when they asked him questions.

"Hey, Ernest, do you feel okay?"

And Ernest just sat there.

"Yeah, you don't look so good."

But Ernest didn't answer.

"C'mon, Ernest, say something."

"Leave me alone," he would eventually say.

He moved slowly now, barely holding up the lids of his eyes.

To Whom It May Concern:

Who are you?

Your Friend, Ernest

The following week, Ernest began to look brittle. His knees buckled slightly as he worked them. Bones poked out beneath his skin.

The room was quieter now, more solemn. The fat boys felt fat for the first time. They began to whisper. While Ernest wrote a letter, Walrus took the others to one corner of the room.

"I think Ernest is dying," he said.

"What?" cried Lardo, hoarsely.

"That's right. I think he'll be dead by next week."

"What do we do?" asked Dirigible, his mouth small like a squirrel's. Walrus stared at him.

"Stupid. What do I know about death?"

And they all nodded. No one had ever died before.

Meanwhile, Ernest wrote.

To Whom It May Concern:

Are you getting my letters?

Your Friend, Ernest

As Ernest sealed this last letter, he breathed a heavy sigh. The others, gathered into their corner, turned their heads with eyes like cantaloupes.

No one spoke. Ernest stood, crossed the room, and slipped the letter beneath the door. No one moved. Ernest seemed suddenly more thin than possible, wafer thin, paper thin, mist-like. He wavered, like a sail caught in a faltering, changing wind. He buckled, like water rippling, and he fell a bit and stumbled forward.

Walrus moved to catch him, but too late. Ernest, grown parchment thin before their eyes, snapped back, swayed, then fell. Then, as if drawn out, pale and lifeless, he disappeared on a wisp of wind, quickly, like a letter, travelling beneath the door. Head first, he slipped through the crack and was gone.

"Ernest!" cried Walrus, bending to see. But Ernest could not be seen through the crack. As always, the other side was dark.

The fat boys huddled together, stunned.

It was at least three days before one of them found anything to laugh about. But by the end of the following week, they had forgotten all about their quiet little friend. They bounced against the walls again, making fun of each other, passing gas.

Haw haw haw, they were all saying, when Lardo cut them off with a scream. There on the floor, a letter, pushed into the room from the outside, through the crack beneath the door.

The room grew silent. The fat boys swallowed. They backed away from the letter, whimpering. Walrus, twisting his shirtfront into a knot, stepped forward and picked it up.

He looked into all the fat, staring faces. Shaking, he carefully opened the envelope, tearing at the side. With a quivering voice, he read it aloud.

"To Whom It May Concern: Having a great time. Wish you were here. Your friend, Ernest."

They ran at the door at once, stampeding, crying to be let out. Years later, they died in the room, fat and rotting on the floor. After a while, the janitor unlocked the door and hosed out the mess, smiling, collecting them into a bucket.

Robert St. John

### INVASIONS

In the corners we used to watch wasps walking  
like brown men worried about the hut,  
and incomplete, we wished ourselves  
dangerous, and we saw our days  
like comics, with sounds we had to  
make with our mouths, and bold,  
we invaded, we ran with sticks, we squealed  
for years, and we got stung when they caught us,  
we swelled, our skins excited and red.  
So walking ourselves on wasp nests,  
our own pupations, own huts,  
the driven touch of the wasps seeping  
into us  
We have stopped our invasions,  
but our eyes now will not give up  
not these eyes—  
There are children below us and  
they have sticks and  
they do not understand. So we will  
watch them, brother,  
we will sting them, and furiously, we will  
pass it on.

Robert St. John

AMERICAN BOY

With my sneakers, my dirt,  
cockleburs in the cuffs of my jeans,  
like a bug I was drawn in,  
the power, the voltage,  
of baseball at night  
at the little league park,  
cars parked, double, triple,  
and dads, moms, granddads  
with coolers, with ice,  
with folding chairs,  
and the boys in white  
with red caps in the  
deep green grass,  
chattering at the batter,  
and the catcher leads it,  
and the blue helmet swallows  
the boy with the bat,  
his uniform is like a flour sack,  
and he socks at the ball,  
and it goes through the  
shortstop's legs and into the  
grass, not quite rolling  
into centerfield and  
the heavens rock  
as the boy rounds those bases,  
leaning, his blue helmet  
bopping while the outfielder  
gropes at the ball,  
and the helmet winks  
at the white bug circled lights  
and the dots on the scoreboard  
and I go for a hotdog  
with free onions from  
a styrofoam cup, a little boy  
in America, looking for a fight,  
for a homerun ball.

20

Robert St. John

A note to pigs

Don't let the butcher look at you  
with his hungry look,  
Say, may I help you,  
baconlips,  
and send him on his  
pudgy way.  
Don't let the world take  
its own sweet time,  
spin it, ride it,  
you yowling  
wee wee wee  
all the way home.

21

Robert St. John

WIND

Once there was a little boy who  
was raised well with Mickey Mouse  
and Big Bird.

He lived until one day, he saw an  
old man who could not move and who  
was hollow just like a stump.

As the wind went by, it began to  
gather up the old man, pulling bits  
away like sand.

And the particles piled up all  
over the staring little boy.

When Mickey Mouse and Big Bird  
came back, the little boy was complete  
and the muscles of his cheeks, like  
rubber bands, stretched toward earth.

They left him there, alone and  
empty, looking for a little boy to  
cling to.

Robert St. John

COMING IN

Making the long drive straight,  
with headlamps swimming ahead for me,  
and I am dark, passing through  
the falling rock zone,  
coasting on the downgrade,  
the curves at ninety and the  
radio talking, and with the smooth  
wheels I night dream  
of a friend of mine  
with her head upon my lap,  
and the stations fade, and  
the mountains drop,  
and we are alone, and driving,  
but the ghost of the simple  
face with the sad eyes  
sleeps on me, behind the  
lights,  
coming in, like radio  
from Chicago.

Robert St. John

#### HOUSE CATS

Yes, there are neglected cats around my house,  
in the walls, ghosts, of course.  
I have taken their lives from them  
and here they are, no needs anymore,  
but we know why they are back,  
and they will not leave, not this time.  
There is no reasoning with  
damn dead cats, leave them alone,  
you know me and  
I have earned them all.

Rebecca Boggs

#### TWO BROTHERS

Michael tossed restlessly in the old four-poster bed. It was strange being back on the ranch — just a year away at college had made the once comforting silence of the country almost disturbing. Some noise from the next room drifted out into the darkness, and he knew Hank was up too, probably sitting on the side of the bed with one of his ever-present cigarettes dangling from his thin lips. A long time ago, Michael would have welcomed the company of his brother on a sleepless night. When they were younger and unable to get to sleep, Hank would always get up and fix them some hot chocolate, Michael's favorite treat. Then they'd sit there in the darkness, huddled under a thick sheepskin blanket, whispering about things boys talked about until sleep finally overtook them. But that was before everything changed, and before they had grown into two very different adults.

As boys, they had been inseparable, although Hank was five years Michael's senior. Then their father had died a few days after Hank's sixteenth birthday, and everything suddenly changed. Hank had worshipped his father with blind devotion, and his death had left him so withdrawn that even Michael couldn't penetrate the wall Hank had put up between himself and the rest of the world. He could still feel the bitter pain he had suffered from his brother's constant rejection, but after years of trying to reconnect the bond, he had finally given up. It was then he had decided to escape the loneliness of the ranch and enroll in college. Hank, of course, would stay on the ranch, his large, husky body made-to-order for the long hours of work he seemed to enjoy rather than endure. While Michael had grown tired of the blistering sun and endless work, Hank had seemed to glory in it and eventually became a loner on the Montana plains, preferring to work alone and always being careful to keep his distance from the ranch-hands.

Michael sighed heavily. It was just a few hours away from sunrise and he was still wide awake, nervously dreading tomorrow. It would be the big day of the round-up. Each year around this time of October, the wild mustangs passed through the dusty plains on their way to better feeding grounds, and word had reached the ranch that the herd was heading their way. Michael had always hated the round-up, and wished he had been able to visit his family earlier in the month so he wouldn't have to see the proud animals brought to their knees and stripped so callously of their freedom.



He reflected back on the first time he had seen the mustangs. He had been just a boy, but his father had let him tag along with Hank and the younger, less-experienced ranch-hands. He could vividly remember the way his heart had leapt at his first sight of the sturdy horses pounding across the plains in a billowing cloud of dust, fighting with all their strength to escape the shouting men. With a heavy heart, Michael had watched the heaving mustangs slowly losing their lead, except for a few horses in front of the herd that were displaying unusual stamina. It was these horses the men would prize the most. One colt in the front had caught Michael's eye, his sleek ebony coat only tarnished by a small white patch circling his right eye, reminding Michael of a one-eyed pirate. The colt seemed to represent all the freedom and spirit of the wild Montana plains as his long legs carried him easily past the leader of the herd, who nipped at the little horse angrily. The colt obediently fell back a few paces, but he still held his proud head high as his streaming mane licked at the wind. Spellbound by the horse's beauty, Michael spent the rest of the day at his father's side, begging him to spare the colt. To break the spirit of such a fiesty young horse would be too much trouble, Michael argued. There were plenty of other horses for his father to choose from, weren't there? But his father had only laughed at his son's pleading and continued to urge his men on to "catch that little black devil." What had hurt Michael even more than his father's laughter was that of Hank's, who had joined his father in calling him a soft-hearted sissy. After the black colt had skillfully dodged all attempts to capture him, Michael breathed a heavy sigh of relief, trying hard to suppress a smile as his father kicked angrily at the dust with his big black boots. As Michael finally tore his eyes away from the colt, he made a silent prayer that he would never have to see that proud spirit broken on his father's ranch. It was true the little horse had gotten away this time, but after news of the fast colt got around, everyone would be watching for him next year.

For some reason, the graceful image of the black colt flying across the plains had haunted Michael's dreams for weeks, and many a night Hank would have to shake him awake as he cried out in his sleep at faceless cowboys bringing the colt down on his knees. When Hank had finally realized how upset his brother had become over the colt's fate, he had pulled out his knife and made a solemn blood-oath that he would see to it that the horse would never be captured. It was only a fifteen-year-old making an impossible promise, but back then, Michael had believed his brother could do anything, and had returned to bed reassured.

But later that year their father had died, and Hank was no longer

the protective brother watching over him. As Hank continued to keep to himself, Michael found himself frequently alone with plenty of time to daydream. One summer morning his thoughts returned to the stirring vision of the black colt racing for his life. A sudden inspiration overtook him, and he found himself putting down on paper all the feelings he had experienced when he had first caught sight of the wild mustangs. On a whim, Michael entered the poem in a national contest, and it surprised him by taking third place. For the first time in his life, Michael felt as though he had a purpose, and everyday he wrote in a journal to improve his writing skills. An English teacher had shown a special interest in his writing, pushing him whenever he became discouraged. When his teacher suggested that he enroll in Worthington college as a journalism major after his high school graduation, Michael felt as though he'd finally found his place in the world.

Through the years, though, Michael had never forgotten the colt who had played such a major role in the discovery of his writing abilities. Each year after the round-up, he had braved his brother's cold eyes and asked him about the stallion, but all his brother would say was that no one had seen the horse. Michael received the same answer year after year, and would have presumed that someone, somewhere, had finally caught the horse, but tales continued to spread throughout the plains about a huge, fierce stallion with a white patch around his eye leading his herd with unusual courage.

Michael got out of the creaky bed and threw on a pair of jeans and his favorite flannel shirt, deciding a walk out in the moonlight might ease the tension that being back home had brought him. As he walked past his brother's room, he paused for a moment outside the door, knowing Hank had heard him get up. He stood there expectantly, somehow hoping Hank would join him in the cold hallway and offer to fix them some hot chocolate like the good old days. Then they would finally talk, and be brothers again, instead of the strangers they'd somehow become. But only silence greeted his ears, and he suddenly felt very lonely and proceeded out the back door into the cold darkness. The fresh air revived his spirits and he felt that free, wild exhilarating feeling that came over him whenever he was alone with just his thoughts under the stars and the air so brisk that his breath turned into frosty clouds. He made his way past the old pond, the gentle murmur of the crickets and frogs seeming to welcome him like an old friend. He walked on towards the barn, glad his mother had finally installed lights around and inside the building. As he opened the old creaky door, the sweet fragrance of hay filled his heart with a strong, painful yearning he couldn't quite place. It had always

made him feel safe to be in the warm barn surrounded by all the horses eager for just the touch of his hand on their soft noses. Now the barn was just about empty, but he found old Blue's stall and was surprised to hear the Appaloosa whinny eagerly. They had spent so many days on the plains together, Michael pretending to be a great Indian warrior on his spotted war horse. On sudden impulse, he led the big horse out of his stall and saddled him, enjoying the smell of the old leather. It had been quite a while since he had ridden, but a long ride out in the fresh air might clear his thoughts. He decided to ride out to the "secret" valley he and Hank had "discovered" years ago. He remembered with a smile how as kids they had really believed that no one else knew about the valley, and how disappointed they had been to see one of the ranch-hands and a woman sneaking down the one little narrow pathway after a party one night.

Low on the horizon, a blood-red sun melted the morning mist. Michael stopped Blue at the ridge of the tiny valley, marveling at the beauty of the fall leaves decorating the valley's one clump of trees by the entrance. He tied up Blue and settled back against a large rock, watching a few buzzards circling lazily above the valley. Suddenly a flock of birds shot out from the cover of the trees, breaking the silence and startling him so that his heart began to race. The sound of pounding hooves followed, and a huge black horse entered the valley. He came crashing through the stillness, wild-eyed and nostrils flared. He looked like a piece of black coal thrown amidst the fiery-orange flames of the October scenery. When Michael caught sight of the white patch circling his eye, his head seemed to spin from the shock of seeing the stallion again in his full glory. His ebony coat seemed blacker than ever, outshining the scattered leaves which swirled by in showers of red, rust and gold in the constant wake of his strong lean legs. Michael stood up shakily, as moved by the sight as he had been as a child. Then another horse galloped through the entrance, and Michael felt his stomach drop as he recognized the familiar blue hat of his brother come into view. Hank's presence sent the stallion reeling back on his powerful haunches, his forelegs striking angrily in his direction. He was cornered now by all three sides, and Hank was blocking the only way out. Michael suddenly felt sick to his stomach — it was like he was living one of his childhood nightmares. Somehow, he had always known he would witness the stallion's last stand, but he had never imagined it would be in the hands of his brother, even though he had the reputation of being the best horseman in the state. A million thoughts flew through his mind at once as he watched Hank labor for an hour putting up a very high iron gate he had pulled out of the bushes. Hank had obviously

planned this all ahead of time, and Michael had to admire his brother for having devised such a perfect trap. All four sides of the valley were much too steep for any horse to climb, and the only narrow entrance was taken care of by the sturdy iron gate. Unless the stallion sprouted wings, he was trapped, and he wasn't taking it very well at all. Michael had never seen a more furious animal than the stallion as he circled his prison, his eyes darting frantically with fear. It took everything Michael had not to run down to his brother and demand that the horse be freed. He couldn't believe that his brother could do this to him, knowing how deeply he felt about the horse's freedom. He watched Hank sit down by the gate and light up a cigarette as the horse pranced nervously across the dew-covered ground. His fear made him even more beautiful, if that was possible.

Michael sat down too, making sure he was out of his brother's view. He tried to collect his thoughts, wanting to stop the anger that was coursing through his veins. On one hand, he hated to see the horse finally broken, but he also didn't want to cause any more trouble between himself and his brother. There was already enough distance between them to overcome. He tried to remember the deep love he had felt for his brother so long ago. He painfully recalled the nights he had heard muffled sobs from his brother's room months after the funeral. He had wanted so badly to go through that door that used to be always open to him, but the door remained locked and none of his words could move Hank to open it.

His anger at his brother slowly subsided. He suddenly realized that he had been so busy being angry at his brother's withdrawal that he had not really taken the time to just try to understand his brother's pain. He recalled with embarrassment how he had tried to punish Hank by constantly bringing friends home from school and making sure that he saw he could have a good time without him.

The stallion snorted angrily down below, temporarily breaking his train of thought. He knew that since their father's death, Hank's life had held few pleasures, robbing himself in his grief from the companionship of family and friends. How could he possibly deprive his brother of the joy he would have in being the only man in Montana to capture the great stallion? Michael would be leaving tomorrow to return to school, so it wasn't like he would be around to see the stallion being broken. He returned to Blue without looking back — there would be plenty of time to see the stallion back home in the corral.

As the afternoon wore on and there was no sign of Hank, Michael began to worry that something might have happened to his brother. He found himself running out to resaddle Blue, urging the old horse

into a gallop. He was already halfway to the valley when he ran into the ranch-hands returning back from the round-up on their sweating horses. He was just about to ask about his brother when Hank appeared from behind them. Michael took a deep breath, prepared to listen to his brother boast to the men about capturing the prized stallion. But when one of the men asked Hank where he had been all day, he only shook his head angrily.

"Been all over these damn plains looking for that stallion. Seems like he's gone and disappeared on us again." A few of the men cussed about once again being outsmarted by that "black devil," and with weary faces they turned back towards the ranch. Michael was burning with curiosity, but for some reason he decided not to question his brother as Hank told the others he was going to check the cattle before turning in. Michael caught Hank looking at him with a strange look in his eyes, and then he was gone in a cloud of dust. Michael continued to head back with the others, but as soon as Hank was out of sight, he turned Blue back towards the valley, curious to see whether the horse was still there. Maybe the horse had somehow escaped and Hank was too embarrassed to mention his failure to the rest of the men.

It was getting dark by the time he returned to the valley, but he could still make out the dark shape of the stallion moving about in the shadows. The dark figure of a man was standing by the gate, and as he spoke in soothing tones to the horse, Michael recognized the voice of his brother. It was hard to believe that soft voice belonged to Hank. He was wondering what in the world Hank was up to, when suddenly Hank opened the gate and stood aside. Everything seemed to stand still for a long moment, then Michael heard the horse whinny loudly and gallop up the pathway onto the open plains. The two men continued to just stand there, listening to the stallion gallop across the plains until once again there was only silence. Then Hank took out a flashlight and began the long chore of taking down the gate and pushing it back under the brush. Michael stared down at the man below, the realization of what had just happened beginning to make sense. Now he understood why every year no one had seen the horse during round-up time. Michael's vision began to blur as the man below finished his work. Quickly Michael pulled himself and Blue behind the larger rocks, where they waited quietly until Hank was gone. He kept Blue down to a walk all the way home, needing the time to sort things out. All those years he had thought his brother had just stopped caring, when every October he had put in a long day's work to protect the freedom of the one horse he would have done anything to have for himself. All those years of silent devotion. . . .

When he reached the ranch, he put Blue back in his stall and joined everyone at the supper table, resisting the urge to run into his brother's arms when he saw him sitting quietly there beside their mother. As usual, Hank kept quiet during the meal as the other ranch-hands chattered tall tales about the round-up. Later, as Michael helped his mother wash the dishes, he racked his brain trying to think of some way to approach his brother without making a mess of things. He couldn't mention just yet what he had seen in the valley — it would only embarrass his brother. By the time he had finally decided what to say, he noticed Hank's room was dark and it tore at his heart to think how exhausted his brother must be after his very long day. Michael felt tears of frustration spring up in his eyes. His plane ticket was for early in the morning, and he had to talk to his brother before he left. But he was afraid. He raised his hand to knock on the door, but the old fear of rejection sent him retreating back to his own room.

He laid there in the darkness for hours, cursing himself for being such a coward. He reached up to turn on the lamp beside his bed, and in doing so knocked over his clock-radio, which fell with a loud crash onto the wooden floor. He heard some noises from the next room and he realized he had woken up Hank. He listened to him get up and open his door, and Michael knew there was no way Hank could not help notice that his light was on. His heart fluttered as he heard his brother pause outside his door. After a moment, the footsteps continued on down the hall. Michael got up and began pacing the floor, preparing himself to join his brother in the kitchen where he heard him moving about. He couldn't believe how frightened he was to talk to his own brother, but sweat trickled down his back as he heard the footsteps returning down the hallway. When they stopped again in front of his door, Michael just sat there in the dim light, his heart seeming to pound in his ears. He slowly stood up; an eternity seemed to pass before his hand found the cold metal door-knob. He hid behind the door like a frightened old woman, suddenly not sure what to say. A sweet aroma rushed inside the room as he finally opened the door in a sudden burst of courage. Standing back in the shadows was his brother, who slowly held out to him a steaming cup of hot chocolate.

Martha Zettlemoyer

MOTHER OF FOUR

My mother was young once.  
I saw pictures.  
Long legs propped up on a beach towel  
Which caused my father to beg introduction.  
Mystery moons under Irish eyes  
That looked into and through and  
Beyond as they pleased  
Which caused my father to beg a date.  
At first she was embarrassed and laughed.  
Later she put a spray of buttercups in her hair  
For my father to smell instead of permanent wave lotion,  
Hair, oooh, so soft and sexy it was a shame  
To draw it up with chemicals that way,  
Or maybe that made it sexier, wanting it loose.  
He admired the smooth and easy way she went  
On her long legs, and sure, her eyes were  
Dark magnets, her hair a fragrant web,  
But what my father could not live without  
Was that succulence of the skin peculiar to  
Young women on the verge of loving completely  
Which my mother swears she lost between babies,  
She forgets which ones.

Martha Zettlemoyer

LADIES' MAN

What I know of my grandfather  
is that he passed his days  
painting the outsides of houses white  
and porches gray and shutters  
black or surplus green  
then came home to my grandmother  
in her light blue shift  
that quit flattering her figure  
two babies ago  
and kissed their eight open mouths,  
the smallest of which was my mother's,  
congregated with them around  
pork chops, mashed potatoes and greens  
then scrubbed his fingers pink  
and squeezed the cook on the hock  
through which she may or may not  
have felt his gratitude;  
then it was off to the Moose Lodge  
for a look at red wallpaper  
flocked in fleurs-de-lis  
and a shot of blended whiskeys  
to pave the way for half a dozen  
or so amber beers and  
conversation with a small-breasted woman  
with a cigarette voice and  
waist-to-knees parentheses  
that led him boom-chug-a-lug-locomotive  
to a soft red corner, to velvet,  
to paper, back up through the beers,  
to white exteriors, to his own white house  
where his own white wife lay  
between white sheets,

to their eight open mouths,  
six of whom were boys he would soon take  
to his trade, to his lodge, and share  
with them the secret of life which is  
to work in black and white and dream in color  
and show them how with a mouthful of salt  
you can blow the head right off a beer  
and how to read what's in parentheses  
and the difference between kisses for  
wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, and  
small-breasted others.

Martha Zettlemoyer

#### MISERY & COMPANY

I buy lots of things in aluminum cans  
And I don't keep leftovers, as a rule.  
I take out my garbage almost nightly to delight them,  
He and she who pick and choose their way  
Through my neighborhood's garbage each morning  
As if it were *ex officio* theirs,  
And I guess it is.  
Clad in ill-fitting cast-offs  
Which, no doubt, they picked and chose  
From the Salvation Army Store,  
They look similar enough to have been born together  
Or to have been married in some way  
For a long, long time.  
The sight of a new parcel  
Brings youth and mirth back into sun-wrecked faces  
(Or is it the memory of innocence  
and the mystery of Christmas?)  
Their ash-blue eyes meet, lit with love,  
The kind of love old misery has for old company,  
And so that's what I call them:  
He is lean misery, she, spare company,  
A pair who prove insubstantial  
The claim that beggars can't be choosers.

Martha Zettlemoyer

THE FIELDS BEHIND OUR HOUSE

Oceans of milkweed and cornstalk stubble,  
miles of dirt trail we blazed ourselves  
reforming Emily's ex-cart-pony, Dusty—  
he was ornery and old and unused to  
children riders (or anything) on his back.  
We wooed him, finally, with Orange Crush  
and watermelon rind and Sour Balls.

I wanted a pony, too, bad,  
and could have a fat, spry one  
for thirty-five dollars,  
according to the classifieds.  
But my parents were ogres.  
So were Emily's. They wouldn't  
help us plead our case.

I drew a picture of a dream-white pony  
and taped it around an old coffee can,  
in which Emily and I intended to secrete  
the proceeds from digging up  
every dandelion in the neighborhood,  
a dollar a bag. Tedium, broil,  
child sweat, toil, blisters, coffee can  
looming too large around a too small fortune.

Plan B:

We got permission for a camp-out,  
pitched a musty tent, borrowed bedrolls,  
invested our small fortune in picnic supplies.  
They laughed, so many provisions. But,  
at first light, we'd saddle up Dusty  
and be on our way to the hazy plains  
(they wouldn't miss us before supper)  
to pick me out a high-backed slender-nosed mare.

And with no concern for highways to cross  
or shotgun-shouldered farmers with  
firm convictions about private property  
(wasn't expansive America just like  
the fields behind our houses?)  
we'd camp and ride and camp our way to nirvana  
or California, whichever came first.

And we'd be famous in film and rich  
enough to buy all the ponies  
our hearts desired,  
and then,  
oh boy,  
would  
they  
be  
sorry.

Martha Zettlemyer

CONVERSATION ABOUT THE DIPPERS  
WITH MY NEPHEW WHO IS THREE

"What's that?" he demands, pointing skyward  
with an important finger  
that hasn't grown fully into its flesh yet.

"Why those are stars, little imp,  
strung into two ladles, one big, one little,  
lip to stem, stem to lip," I say—  
and think, in addition, *so we might understand them.*

He condenses his face to make thought and viewing come easier,  
and I wonder if I should answer the "how" and "why"  
that will surely come by saying,  
"Accidentally, and for your pleasure,"  
or maybe, "Of their own free will, because they must."  
But I'll be a good Aunt and not confound  
his already labored imagination.

When he does ask "How come?" I say,  
"Because the Moon asked them to come."  
Slowly he unshrivels his face,  
laying ponderousness aside, for now,  
in favor of admiration.

After a respectable pause, I say,  
"It's time to go in and brush your teeth  
and scrub your face—" *which*, I think  
at this moment, *is as*  
*planeless and fine as a porcelain plate*  
*and just as shiny by the touch of fire*  
*in tonight's sky.*

By way of consolation, or maybe apology, I add,  
"The Dippers will be back some other night."  
He won't budge until I answer "When?"—  
I say, "Soon," and "Aren't we the Cherub tonight?"  
and laugh a little and prod him along,  
up the front porch, down the hall, into the bathroom.

Already he's bristled up against me,  
thinking I might not have told him  
the whole, complicated cosmic truth.  
My heart breaks that I can't, but he can't understand that  
any more than I can explain the workings  
of the cosmos, or its mystery.  
For now, I lay aside my desire to weep  
In favor of a bedtime story and a kiss.

Maybe I should make up a story  
about a teller of tall tales who,  
in the end is forgiven by his listeners:  
but that one's already written.

Maybe I should tell him this, the honest version,  
that, *some night in some late season,*  
*after you've been prodded and stretched*  
*and chiseled into a man,*  
*when the sky is this painfully blue-black again,*  
*the atmosphere sweet and clear*  
*and affectionate of the senses as ether,*  
*when the moon invites the stars back again,*  
*the stars will bid you, child, come again;*  
*Then you will know I told you the truth in the first place—*  
*all there is to tell of it.*

BETWEEN FAIRY TALES AND WEDDING VEILS

It was the night of the Big Date—her first date to be exact. She sat at the makeup table frantically applying coverstick to that horrible red protrusion that had taken up residence on her face. Worse still, it was right above her lip. Not only did it make things look bad in the good-night kiss area, but she knew he'd never listen to a thing she said; he'd be watching that zit bob up and down. Thank goodness it wasn't a whitehead. If it were he'd be sitting there the whole evening wishing she'd pop it. Finally she covered it with a second thick blotch of coverstick, hoping the lights in the movie theatre would be dim.

On second thought, she'd heard about guys in movie theatres. Her best friend, Casey, had gone with a guy to see the movie *Jesus* and had to fight off an octopus in the seat next to her during the crucifixion scene. So maybe dim lights weren't such a good idea. Just in case, she'd better be prepared. She reached into a drawer and got out the flashlight she used to find the bathroom on those nights when some moron had turned off the night light. One hand on any region of her body covered by clothing, and the light would go on. A comment like "But you're tiny!" would stop any hanky-panky from an overamorous Cassanova who spent his time trying to convince everyone that it wasn't his *shoe* size that was a perfect "10."

Maybe, just maybe, things would go great. Images of her and her date locked in a passionate embrace inflamed her imagination. She was wearing a low-cut gown which strained over her padded AA-sized breasts. He would be saying something like "My love, I've waited so long to find thee" as the setting sun snickered behind them.

The doorbell rang, and her mother answered it. "Wait a minute, please. I think she's in the restroom." She cringed. It sounded so crass. Why couldn't her mother have told him that she was polishing her nails or brushing her hair? What if he had already guessed that she was in the bathroom because it was "that time of the month," and she wanted her new white dress without polka dots? She'd just die. Nevertheless, without flushing the toilet, she walked to the top of the stairs, checking quickly behind her to make sure she didn't have the heel of her shoe hooked to the toilet paper and wasn't unrolling a white carpet as she walked. She had heard of that happening in a book before. Her palms were sweaty. She made a mental note to

avoid holding hands for the next few minutes. In fact, last night she had bitten her nails to the quick, and her hands looked so hideous that she'd better put them in her pockets. Of course, her hips looked bigger with her hands in her pockets, "butt. . . ."

Her knees cracked at every step and she almost pretended to tell an imaginary grandmother to get some exercise, but she didn't because she was already at the bottom of the stairs. He knew she was there. Only a deaf person could have missed her triumphant descent accompanied by the melodious creaking of her joints. She peeked around the corner. Darn it! If she'd known about the zit sooner she'd have told them to dim the lights in the living room.

She saw him. He was standing with his hands in his pockets respectfully listening to her father lecture on his support of the statutory rape law in Kentucky. She wondered if he bit his nails. Glancing up, he spotted her, and she waited for him to make some casual comment like "How doth thy wondrous beauty cause my fair heart to swoon," but he just stood there staring. A little itch insinuated itself on the end of her nose, and she was filled with a horrible suspicion. Pretending to look in her purse for something, she made a hasty swipe at her nose and was greatly relieved that everything was still intact.

"Are you looking for something?" he asked.

She frowned for a moment, not wanting to be honest about what she'd been searching for but hadn't found (Thank God). "Yes, a watch. What time is it?"

Simultaneously they peered at his bare wrists. "I'm not wearing a watch," he said but he had to check to make sure first. Checking a bare wrist for a watch was as stupid as asking a person without a watch what time it was; they were even.

"Speaking of time, what time do you children plan to return?" her father asked.

She cringed at the word "children" and the question. Her dad was blowing it for her. In a minute he'd be asking the guy if he minded being fingerprinted for future reference.

"I think ten o'clock is a reasonable hour for a fourteen-year-old."

"I'm sixteen," Prince Charming said.

"Not you, her."

"Make it eleven."

"Ten-thirty."

"Ten forty-five."

She felt as if she were being auctioned off. Finally, they agreed on ten forty-one and thirty seconds, and she and her possible future lover/possible future octopus got to the door to leave. Her father



made one parting remark about what a good lawyer he had and then told them to "Be good." She flinched. However, when she saw Prince Charming's coach she almost snickered. He must have seen her lips twitch, because he said defensively, "It looked better before I ran into a car from behind last month." The front of his car looked like the nose of a bulldog.

She tried to be casual about it and not embarrass him. "Oh yeah, it's one of those models with a huge sunroof, right? Was it a Trans Am?"

"No," he replied, peering between the tape that held the front window together. "It's a Chevette. They don't have sunroofs."

"Of course." His did. Had he been hit by an airplane? A long, embarrassing silence followed. Then she said, "How about some radio music?" As soon as she'd said it she knew she'd done it again. Their eyes met on the vacancy in the instrument panel. He had no watch on his wrist and no radio in his rattrap car. She wondered if they'd have to wash the movie screen to pay for the tickets.

He was a fast driver. In a way she was glad, because she'd die if any of her friends saw her in this car. However, at the way he seemed to be red-green color blind when they came to stoplights, she might be dead in a few minutes anyway. Finally, they pulled into the parking lot of the theatre. When she tried to stand up, she felt a little dizzy. They hadn't hit any of those specks they had flown past after all. Even though she wasn't Catholic, she crossed herself. Somebody Up There liked her enough to let her live another two hours.

Sitting in the theatre, she became aware that the couple in front of them seemed to be trying to occupy the same seat as well as chewing the same piece of bubblegum. She watched as they passed it back and forth between their interlocked mouths. Then they split it and wound it around their tongues until they met in the center, and the whole process began again. Bubblegum sharing, she decided, was probably a contributing factor in the venereal disease epidemic and the decline of western morality. She giggled to herself; she sounded just like her father. When she felt a big warm arm settle behind her back, she clutched her purse more firmly. The flashlight bulged it in a strange way, but she didn't care. It was a small enough weapon with which to protect her virtue. Also necessary was her line about how small his weapon was with which he intended to steal her virtue. It wasn't one of the comebacks listed in Teen magazine but a virginal original of her own invention. Of course, logically she shouldn't have agreed to go out with a guy she didn't trust, but heck, he was cute. When a guy got "handsy" it was necessary to hit 'em where it hurt, so to speak. Literally, that was Plan Number Two. A flashlight could

be a club as well as a light. One rap with the ol' flashlight, and he'd most certainly keep his hands to himself. She smiled to herself in anticipation. She almost wished he'd try something. . .

"Uh, want some popcorn?" he asked.

"Only if you do," she replied judiciously; she didn't want to seem like a pig.

Apparently he wanted some (popcorn, that is), because he excused himself and left her alone. She pulled out her compact and checked her lipstick, pursing her lips and whispering, "Kiss me, you fool."

Dabbing on another quick layer of coverstick, she took another quick peek up her nostrils. Quickly she put away the mirror, afraid that he would think she was vain—which she was, but that was not public knowledge as yet. He came back a few minutes later carrying a huge tub of buttered popcorn and a large Coke, interrupting a sudden bout of fingernail biting. She took a drink of the Coke and left a bright pink stain on the rim. Then she took a couple of bites of popcorn, eating daintily with her pinkies out. Her eyes followed him when he picked up the cup to take a drink. She was disappointed when he didn't put his mouth on the lipstick print. She probably wouldn't get a kiss either. Darned zit.

The movie started. It was her first R-rated film. It was dirtier than she had expected, but then what had she expected when the title was *My Tutor*, a lesson in algebra? She kept stealing glances over at her date to see if he was drooling in his cup; he wasn't. . .yet. However, she could have sworn that the hand on her shoulder was moving a little closer to her chest. She knew she was so under-endowed that he could try reading the Braille system on her bosom and decide that she was a blank page. Her bra fit better backwards. Nevertheless, she clutched her purse a little more closely. What he didn't know wouldn't hurt him, and what he tried to find out, would. Besides, why was he interested in her molehills when there were all those mountains on the screen? His hand went no farther. She sighed audibly in relief.

"Tired?" He pulled her head down on his shoulder which was nice. She smelled his aftershave and smiled dreamily. He shaved! After all, he was sixteen. She left her head on his shoulder for as long as she was physically able, ignoring the literal "pain in the neck" the position was giving her. When she finally straightened up, he reached over and took her hand. She wished he hadn't. She could just hear him thinking, "Yuck, she bites her nails." Gradually, she relaxed and almost enjoyed the movie. With her eyes glued to the screen, she reached to take a handful of popcorn from the tub he held in his lap only to find that the tub was now on the floor. From then on

she only pretended to watch the movie. She was trying to figure out how to disappear into the floor, even though he hadn't said anything. Well, after all, what could he say: "Pardon me, ma'am, but thou hast placed thy hand on mine genital area"? She was a fallen woman—no longer quite so innocent as she had been. The scarlet letter "A" should be placed on her chest for "asshole." She set her purse on the floor with the virtue-protecting flashlight inside. It could save her from him, but it couldn't save her from her own stupidity.

Finally the immortal words "The End" flashed on the screen, and they left the theatre. Climbing into the car, she crossed herself again and said one "Hail Mary." On the way home, they discussed the movie briefly. Then thunder rumbled and suddenly rain began to pour down through the Chevette's mock "sun roof," drowning all conversation. Her carefully curled hair clung to her head like seaweed. It was just her luck.

"I'm sorry," he said sincerely. "This happens all the time. I've got the solution." He got out an umbrella and with one hand on the wheel, he put it through the hole in the roof and opened it up. "Would you mind holding the handle so it won't blow away?"

"Of course not," she said. She gripped it tightly with both hands. The umbrella was trying to blow away. At any moment a teen-aged Mary Poppins would rise out of a Chevette and float through the city. Well, at least no more water came in. She looked down at her pretty white dress that was now bordering on transparency and giggled. Wait till she told Casey about this one.

They pulled up in her driveway. "I'm sorry about the rain," he said "I brought you home early to score points with your Dad. He seems pretty protective."

"He is." His wanting to impress her father was a good sign. "I'm his little girl."

He grinned and eyed her until she squirmed, her hand still holding the umbrella handle. "You don't look so little to me."

32 AA actually. She gave a sigh of relief when he took the umbrella handle from her. "Don't worry," he said. "I'll tie it to the gear shift," and he did—with his belt.

Go ahead, ask me out again, she screamed inside. Tell me you can't live without me. Lie. Tell me you had a good time.

"I'll walk you to the door," he said, but she shook her head, listening to the rain pound on the roof.

"No thanks. My father will probably be standing just inside waiting for me." Besides, his pants might fall down if he stood up without a belt, and she was educated enough in that area at the moment. She had blown that kiss though. Guys always kissed girls when they

walked them to the door, or so she'd been told.

"Well, I guess I'll see you later then."

Ask me out again, fool. She hated to have to ask for him to ask her out. He should read her mind like they always did in those Harlequin romances. "Oh, will you. . . see me later, that is?"

He grinned and said, "Sure, why not? How would you like to go to the stock car races tomorrow with me?"

"You aren't driving, are you?" she asked, and he stared at her for a long, humiliating moment. "It's a joke. Ha ha," she prompted, and he finally laughed.

"I'd like to be a race car driver in a couple of years."

That wasn't surprising. "Oh, I'd love to go," she said. Was that too gushy? "That would be nice."

He told her what time he'd pick her up and how to dress, and then he started staring at her mouth in a speculative sort of way. She wouldn't have felt half as jittery about that if she hadn't felt a burp swelling low in her throat. There were several moments of absolute silence when she fervently prayed that she wouldn't burp and spoil her first kiss. Finally, he put his arms around her and kissed her, and he kissed her, and, my goodness, she hadn't expected *that*. It wasn't really as gross as she had always thought it would be, though. Maybe sex was like that. It sounded silly and embarrassing until you actually did it. Then even if it were silly and embarrassing no one wanted to admit it. With the increasing population someone had to believe in "try, try again." The kiss probably would have been quite nice if she had known what to do back. However, he seemed quite experienced, so she relaxed and didn't worry about it for long. When he finally pulled his lips away and came up for air, she smiled tremulously, thanked him very prettily for the date, and told him she'd see him tomorrow. She opened up the car door and ran for the house, her heels squelching in the mud. She heard his car start, but she didn't hear him drive away; he was watching her. She reached for the knob and turned. . . and turned, and she rattled it. . . and she banged on the door. Some fool had locked the front door and left her standing in the rain. Thanks, Dad. She rang the bell and looked behind her. He was gone, thank God. Her lips still tingled where he had kissed her. She wouldn't mind marrying a race car driver. She just didn't like riding with him, that was all. Fourteen wasn't so young. At fourteen Juliet had met Romeo. Of course, look at how that had turned out. . . .

When she finally got into bed that night, she wondered if he really liked her. Well, of course he did. He had kissed her. Boy, had he kissed her! But suppose (oh horrible thought) that he really didn't like her after all. Suppose he kissed every girl like that. Or, even worse, what if he had kissed her and asked her out, because he didn't know that she had really been reaching for the popcorn! What if he thought. . . oh well, there was always the flashlight.

Paul Bush

JUST A THOUGHT

I keep saying to myself  
there is somewhere  
else I'd rather be,  
naked by a creek  
with minnows  
wishing they  
were somewhere  
else.

Paul Bush

LOOKIN' BACK

Back in Luchenbach, Texas  
a grey-haired leather face again  
spits brown tobacco syrup  
on cracked, dust-covered concrete.  
Hawaiian shirts mumble "How quaint!"  
and play hopscotch  
as the old cowboy thinks,  
"Dance, pardner."

Paul Bush

TRAIN

I've never ridden a train  
but I imagine it's  
like making love  
to a dark woman.  
Inside, swaying in her lap,  
while moonlit boughs  
whip by in individual solitudes. . .  
satisfied, I sit back to light a cigarette;  
she moans through night  
aching to reach Topeka.

Paul Bush

THE MENTAL BLOCK

Molding clay had been slowly hardening in his dreary studio for days. The old man's trembling hands frantically hammered and pushed the lifeless lump into a hundred vague mounds in his futile attempt to mold the intangible image playing hide-and-seek with his failing memory. Frustration blocked the creation for the town square. Grey hairs matted with clay as the poor soul's head canted forward.

Morning filtered through the open skylight onto stiff grey locks. At his still feet gathered tranquil pigeons; and dust particles followed sunbeams settling on stiffened clay. At first the town council gasped in delight. . .

Beckie S. Hendrick

NEW BETHEL

The hymn was sweet, and the way the choir sang,  
off-key and slow, hardly mattered. My father,  
dressed up in his green plaid suit on the left.  
My mother, on my right, not caring, looked away.  
Religion moved them then, or at least these rows  
of pews and orange carpets made the prayers come  
easier somehow. The sermon, delivered by the youthful  
minister, who would someday be tempted by a woman,  
was the same. Sometimes the sameness of these things  
was the sacred part, the Jesus they spoke of  
the background. The hand moved toward mine slowly,  
so little touch between us then. Me, the daughter  
fragrant in her Sunday dress. He, the farmer,  
long past the days when sleep was an afterthought.  
I counted the wrinkles on the reddened hand,  
callous upon callous from days spent chopping cedar in the  
woods; nights spent counting pennies in the attic.  
I felt that I shouldn't touch this man whose life  
was so fraught with danger, with love. The sweet hymn  
revives me. The hand recedes to the oaken pew  
and gathers itself into a fist, clenched until the tune  
ends, then spreads open like a white carnation.

Beckie S. Hendrick

THE WEIGHT LIFTER ASLEEP

Impossibilities of the body,  
the delicate motions of silence lie above  
the bed, curling from your open mouth  
as you sleep. That circle  
of breath you would tell me rests  
smooth as the crimson on a glass

window; its clarity and its shattering  
separate the same air. Also a circle,  
our pasts are a weight we must  
pull towards us in pain without  
dropping, with the same proud

strength that poises the world  
along your wrists—or a woman's shoulders,  
your heavy chest riding its own beams.  
The skill is in not lifting her,

not holding on so tight she might become  
the pillow you bury your face in.  
If I could ever carry you

far enough, you would stretch out like now,  
relaxing your elbows and

putting all your weight on me.

Beckie S. Hendrick

#### IMPERATIVES

Be brave

not exactly stated  
but implied.

Do not

under any circumstance  
let her see you cry.

Watch your voice

don't speak too softly  
or  
laugh too much  
or  
talk about things  
that she can't do now.

Try to be a mixture

of a loving daughter  
a concerned friend  
an innocent bystander

Never

(regardless of the desire)  
sit beside this woman,  
take her hand in yours,  
and pray  
that tomorrow  
or in June  
she will still be around—  
to watch you act brave.

Beckie S. Hendrick

#### PERMANENT PRESS

She walked into Sal's Laundo-Wash alone. Her light blue raincoat and clean white sneakers looked out of place in this world of polyester bell-bottoms and iridescent sweaters, so she smiled. She felt herself above all of the hideous degradation that associates itself with unpaid bills at Morris's Grocery, occasional trips to the Salvation Army thrift store at Elm, and of course, Sal's Laundo-Wash. Her thoughts raced to the new dress that her mama had bought her. It was truly beautiful. Although it had cost her much more than would have usually been spent on clothing, it was well worth it. It was like she had told her mama, new clothes set one apart from the rest. A sweeping view of the crowded laundromat confirmed her point. She knew she was better than these people of the streets.

"Have ya got a light there, sister?" the orange haired woman with hot pink lip gloss questioned. She lifted her eyes very deliberately toward the woman and flatly replied "nope." She really didn't feel like getting into any discussions with these nobodies. After all, she was someone special.

Only last week her dad had told her that things were getting better. Sometimes when he talked of money, she didn't listen. Endless lists of things they had to pay and equally endless lists of things they couldn't buy distressed her. Good news made her smile. Things getting better. . . .now that meant new shoes, new blouses, maybe even another new dress. How those girls at school would envy her. Why she'd. . . .

"Hey, is this your dryer?" She looked across the washers and saw the huge black woman with her white spring purse pointing toward one of the dryers.

"Nope," she answered.

These interruptions were fast making her irritable and uncomfortable. She detested their resignation to their lowly status almost as much as she did their loud children and their failing deodorant. This resignation led them to talk. They asked about your parents, your school, your future. They didn't really care about you; they just wanted to find someone who owed more money than they did. They were irritating. She casually picked up the novel she had enclosed in her purse. She dared any of them to question the title. They spent all

of their time engulfed in "Family Feud"; they knew nothing of Hemingway. She smiled. She was again on top of things.

The old man who lived across the street from her caught her eye as she glanced up to see who was watching her. He smiled at her and briefly scanned the scene outside the laundromat. "Think this snow will stick?" he asked.

She liked the old man. He had been her neighbor and friend ever since she and her family had moved into the community. When her father had been sick last Christmas, it had been the old man who had brought the fruit basket from the church to them. She wanted to say something nice to the man. She wanted him to like her. The eyes of the others closed around her. In the back of the room, a group of people were laughing at her haughtiness. Everyone was watching.

"Nope," she dead-panned. She settled back into her chair to finish her book. She was glad she wasn't poor.

Karen McDonald

GRAY DRIZZLE

Gray  
drizzle  
—unlike the thunderstorms  
of my youth

through windows  
that should've been cleaned  
in the Spring

with white paint  
overlapping  
onto the glass  
—a sloppy painter's  
hurried work.

But there were houses  
and houses  
and houses  
yet to paint.

And now  
the painters  
are paid by the hour  
—no longer hurried  
but sloppy still

And oh  
it doesn't matter.

When the last ones  
are done,  
the paint  
on the first ones  
has cracked  
and peeled

and it never ends.  
It  
never  
ends.

Oh gray sky  
I long to see lightning  
smile across your face  
—or even frown.

Oh to hear the thunder  
of your lungs  
—your taunting laughter.

You knew  
all along.

But I see no expression,  
hear no sound.  
No sound.

Only the steady gray drizzle.

What emotionless tears  
you cry!

Oh tree  
how your brown leaves  
droop  
—so sad and heavy  
like a hundred  
wet puppy dog ears.

A good trim  
is what you need;  
perhaps you'll get one  
in the Spring.

And the old clock chimes  
out of tune.

And it's twenty past  
—not time  
for it to chime  
at all.

I must take it  
to be repaired.

And oh  
the front porch stairs  
and. . .

I remember  
the tornado watches  
of Spring  
long ago.

Our young wide eyes,  
filled with fear  
and excitement,  
would watch  
out the window

as we listened  
to the radio.

And now  
it only drizzles  
—gray.

And I spend my days  
rationalizing away  
the carefully thought out  
regrets

in between the re-runs  
of the re-runs  
of "M\*A\*S\*H"  
and "Love Boat."

And all the plans  
—all the detailed plans,  
and the thoughts,  
and all the mornings  
I slept so late.

The sun would spill  
through my window  
and over my body  
like mustard  
onto a hotdog

and I would  
pull  
down  
the shade.

Now  
I awaken early  
with the shade raised  
but it only drizzles  
—gray.

Celeste Green

LARGE CONCEPT

My grandma died when I was seven.  
Such a large concept  
For such a small child.  
But I knew that  
The woman who let us  
Watch Walt Disney  
In the living room  
With our supper  
Was gone.  
The only woman who cooked  
Better than Momma  
And said "yes"  
When Daddy said "no."  
The only woman who made  
Million dollar fudge at  
Christmastime  
And winked back at Grandpa.  
They all said—the "adults"—  
That we were too young  
To understand.  
But the empty chair at dinner was  
Enough.

Daniel Curry

living on kentucky street  
  
just any day now  
that yellow concrete mixer  
could hit you—  
could barely miss  
missing you  
as you step off the curb.  
sometime  
at the moment of impact  
something  
would grab  
your you  
away from your body.  
then all your tissue must stop  
making new tissue  
and all your utilities  
will be turned off  
and someone poor will  
get your rags—  
after the man on  
the concrete mixer  
calls someone  
to come  
and put you in  
an envelope and  
mail  
you there.



Marjorie Early

TENACITY

Waters rise and consume.  
Volcanoes erupt and cremate.  
Tornadoes strike and ravage.  
But man,  
    like a persistent weed,  
lives on.

Nate Yoder

THE ADJUSTMENTS I HAVEN'T MADE

Five months ago I became a father. And I've done a pretty good job of adjusting to my new role. I change my share of the diapers—even the surprise ones; I mix up formula and feed Gerber's vegetables without too much of a mess. I can even pick out baby clothes which almost coordinate. Even though I haven't quite mastered being cheerful on the 2:00 AM shift, I'm working on it. In spite of all my flexibility, I have yet to adjust to one part of fathering.

Sometimes while I hold Paul John at the end of one of his sweaty, active, slobbering, growing days, when he's had his bath and his hair smells of Johnson's tearless, then sometimes while I hold him as he nestles against my shoulder, sometimes then I feel it happening. Little baby octopus roots burrow their way under my arms and through my ribs. As the roots grow they gently push the lungs aside to surround my heart, and finally they push right into the chambers and pump them full. And I rest back into the rocking chair and feel like both the most contented kitten in town and a world champion all at once. Then just as I feel the roots attach themselves deep inside me the idea that I haven't adjusted to comes along.

It's one thing to deal with my mortality; it's another to deal with my son's. Maybe sometime those roots will need to pull loose again. How will they manage that? Will they politely disentangle themselves and slip away through quiet passageways? I doubt it. In the past, roots which weren't embedded as deeply as these refused to leave quietly. They ripped and tore and tormented as they came apart. As those roots left my body, bits of flesh clung to them as though they were made of barbed wire. Molten scars heal so slowly.

No. It daren't happen again. But it's too late to keep the roots from entangling. This kid's already tamed me. I'll need to try something else. I'll protect him; there will be no accidents. Paul John, be sure to always look before you cross the street—look both ways. Paul John, never climb a tree unless I'm there to help you. Paul John, don't play around the stove, and definitely leave the matches alone. Never ride a sled on ice, just on snow; you may hit a fence post. Don't use so much salt; it may cause high blood pressure. Never eat food from strangers, and always stay with me when we are in a crowd.

Protecting children is a noble thing to do, isn't it? I'll get him a tricycle with training wheels and rubber bumpers. I'll fence in the

yard and fence out the world until he's mature and coordinated—probably when he's about twenty-five. By then it should be safe to risk letting him go a bit. When he understands how much he means to me I'm sure he'll be careful not to hurt me. But until then being a good dad does require protecting myself—I mean my son—doesn't it? I'm sure he'll adjust to it.

Teresa D. Klimowicz

#### MERCILESS EYES

Left to the mercy of your eyes  
oh, how they dance  
pause with a glance.  
Lifted brows  
like gathered skirts  
seize the moment  
before roaming once more  
across the dance floor  
across a widening expanse.  
"Here is our chance,"  
they whisper  
they flutter.  
Shimmering satin,  
warm wool  
flowing taffeta  
gliding silk  
could not compare  
to your costumed emotion  
almost covered  
except for what the eyes lay bare.  
In this, our dance  
in this, our glance  
innocence charmed by this company  
of a dancer's eyes.  
This dreamer sighs  
and waltzes bye-and-bye.

My one-time teacher has gone

My one-time teacher has gone.  
My fellow dreamer  
dreams alone  
in a bed she's not made  
in a bed not her own  
in a hall  
of a floor  
of a nursing home.

Active to passive voice  
imperfect tense  
mumble, jumble, then  
a long silence.

Eager eyes  
desire communication  
even as  
visits provide  
the sole occasion  
to revise  
old lesson plans,  
to inspire  
new work.

If only the spirit  
could convince the flesh  
not to nod, not to droop,  
not to fall into sleep.

Yesterday's dreamer  
in today's nursing home  
led by another  
down a path she's not made  
down a path not her own  
in a hall  
of a floor  
of an old-age home.

ST. PETERSBURG

I watched a pelican on the pier today—  
With one leg, a hook in  
His wing trailing a fathom of line,  
Still standing  
In a stately way.

And the old men  
Fishing with live bait  
Catching live bait.  
Thinking of their children  
Who never think of them;  
Except at Christmas or Easter  
Or never.

EIGHTH FLOOR — WARD B (VA HOSPITAL)

Deafening silence  
Broken by  
Occasional laughter  
Or crying.  
Thorazene-powered house slippers  
Shuffling aimlessly  
Down the isolated corridor.

Jingling keys.  
Locked doors  
Containing the Men  
Who wished they had died  
For their country.

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