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They were gathered on the hill where the trees hung low. And while they talked of the woods and of the rivers of their land, a gentle fire flickered in the center of the circle they had made when sitting. Most were grown men, although there was a boy, and the one closest to the fire was very old.

"Tomorrow the moon will be full," said the old one.

"Yes. Good catfishin'," said another.

"Why do you suppose the woodcocks are scarce this year?" asked still another.

"Not sure. Some years they come, some they don't. I can't quite explain it," said the old one.

"Too many hunters these days, that's why," said one.

"Maybe," said the old one, "but there was just as many this year as there were last. And there was plenty of them then."

"Maybe they were scared off too fast."

"Who?"

"The woodcocks."

"Could be. But I don't think so," said the old one.

"Why not?"

"Well, there were plenty when the season closed. And the wardens clamped down on out-of-season hunting," said the old one.

With sticks they had cut in the woods they poked the fire, watching the sparks fly up and the ashes crumble.

"Strange how no one got killed this year, uh Mr. Arseneaux?"

"Yep. Sure is," said the old one.

"How come? Do you know?"

"Can't tell. It fluctuates from year to year. I thought I used to know, but now I can't say I do."

"Maybe," said the old one.

One of the men brought out his pocket knife and began to whittle. Another started to smoke and not long afterwards another started to smoke.

"You know, I honestly and truly believe that the gars are becoming more numerous all the time. Why, just last Wednesday night I caught at least twenty. Not big. But still at least twenty. And I saw thousands, just thousands of them swimming around along the bank."

"Hell, Jack," said the one against the tree, "that ain't nothin'. Down by my place you can't hardly even see the damn river for 'em. Just all over the place. Millions and millions of 'em."

"Somebody oughta get rid of 'em. The government or somebody."

"Yeah. I'll second that," said the one setting crosslegged like an Indian.

"But how? Poison? That'll kill every fish in the river."

"I know!," said the one by the tree, "put some other kinda fish that'll eat 'em."

"Now what's gonna eat a gar? Not even humans eat 'em."

"Well, I don't know. But there must be something that will. The government will know."

"The government? You think those bastards care about how many gars are in some damn river? Sh-h-h, you'll never get them to care, not by a long shot."

"Yeah. I guess so."

One of the men got up, said he had to leave, and walked away into the woods.

"How far away you think that star up there is?" said Bill to the boy who had been silent throughout the conversation.

"Don't know. Pretty far, I guess."

"How many miles, though?"

"Oh, about a hundred or so."

"A hundred or so! Why boy, that star there is the North Star. And it's millions and millions of miles away."

"I knew that," said the boy. "I mean I knew it was the North Star. Grandpa told me. He said anytimes I'm lost to just follow it. And it'll bring me to a road or a house or a railroad track."

"Sure it will. But it's millions and billions of miles away," said the man.
"Sure 'nough," said one of the men who had his mouth open after he had spoken.

"Why sure, Jim. Even the moon is billions of miles away. And see that star up there, the one that's all red? Well, it's not a star at all. It's a planet."

"No kiddin'. I thought planets had rings around 'em."

"One does. Pluto. Pluto has the rings."

"Pluto? I thought Pluto was the little--"

"I thought Saturn had the rings," said the old one.

"Yeah, Saturn has the rings. And the red one is Mars. Or Venus. I can't quite remember."

"Venus?" asked the boy.

"Yeah. Venus."

"Well, I studied in school that there was a sculpture by that name. It didn't have any arms or anything."

"Well, I don't know anything like that. I just know that there's the planet Venus."

"How far away you say that star was?" asked a different man.

"Oh, I don't know the exact distance and all. But it's millions and millions of miles away. There's even some stars out there that's so far away we can't even see them."

"Really?"

"Oh, sure. You see, we aren't really anything. I mean our planet and all. We're just one planet and there's--oh, I guess there's hundreds of other planets out there besides us. Some even have people on them. We aren't really anything."

"Where'd ya hear that?" asked the boy.

"I read it. You see, you gotta learn that kinda stuff. You just keep goin' to school and you'll learn."

A silence ensued while the heat of the fire warmed the soles of their boots.
"No. I told grandpa I'd be late and he didn't say anything."

"You believed all that stuff I was talking about tonight, don'tcha?"

"Sure."

"Aw-w. No you don't."

"Sure I do. You were sayin' about how the earth was real small compared to the other planets, and all."

"You said that star out there is millions and millions of miles away. Well, how come we know it's that far? I mean did somebody go out and measure it or somepin'?"

"They do it by mathematics. You see, the scientists don't measure those kinds of distances in miles. They use light years. That's how far light travels in a year. Anyway, it's all estimation. They don't know it to the inch or anything. In fact, they couldn't. You see, stars are always moving away. It's all part of the Big Bang."

"The Big Bang?"

"Yeah. It's a theory about how the earth came about. How it was formed and all."

The boy said nothing.

"Well, as I said, you'll learn soon enough."

"Yeah. I guess so."

Somewhere in the woods a rabbit screamed as it was caught and lifted into the air. But the man and the boy could not hear it. All they could hear was the leaves stirring in the tree-tops, an occasional rustling through the leaves on the ground, and the popping and sizzlling of the fire. Then, still gazing into the fire, the man started to talk. The boy listened.

"You know, Tom. You don't really have to know all that I was sayin' a while ago. I mean, it's nice to be smart and know a lot of things, but the best things in life are right at your finger-tips. You know. The woods, and the fresh air, and a fire just like this one. You don't have to be a big-time-operator either. All you have to do is appreciate what you have. And use it the best you can."

"Grandpa tells me things like that. Just about the same way you did."

"You believe us? Don'tcha?"

"Sure I do."

"Well. In time you'll understand."

"I understand," said the boy.

The man said nothing to this but after the moon came closer to the evening star he resumed talking.

"You see, Tom. It's just that life has so much. But you can't never have any of it if you don't know how to get it. Sure, all those things I was tellin' you about are important. But you have to have other things besides."

"Yes. I understand."

"It's just like I was reading not too long ago about the galaxies. It said that there's a galaxy for every grain of sand on all the beaches of the world. Now, that's a lot of galaxies, of course. But what need do I have for it? Uh? None. None, at all."

The man was still gazing into the fire, hardly glancing from it at all. His wife had been dead for two years and he was not actually speaking to Tom, but more or less to the fire.

The boy listened to every word, though not quite understanding. The man had been silent for five minutes and the boy could think of nothing to say. He thought of standing up many times but never could bring himself to do it. Then, after a few more minutes, he stood up. When he did he could see the night dark over the flat country beyond the river and the dark trees along the edge of the levy.

"What time is it?" asked the boy. It sounded like a bomb.

"A little after eight. Why?"

"Well. It's just that I told grandpa I'd be late. But he always worries. So I think I'll go on home."

"Yeah. You'd better. He's gettin' pretty old, ain't he?"

"Yes, he is."

"How'd you come over here, boy?"

"T-Breaux brought me. I told him I was gonna stay late and he said I could use his boat to get back home."

"Sure. But watch for the snakes. They're out plenty now."

"Sure. O.K."

"You goin' huntin' tomorrow?"

"Yeah. Me and grandpa. That is if he feels up to it. He said I could go with you if he didn't want to. Is that all right?"
"Sure. Love to have you. We could try that place where you got those two rabbits."

"Yeah. Thanks. I'll be by the Big Tree at seven if I come."

"Be watchin'."

"So long."

"So long."

The boy began to walk away.

"Remember now. That's the deepest river in the world. Don't go and get drowned or anything. We'd never find ya."

"I'll remember."

The man watched the boy walk away into the night.

When the boy was finally at his little boat he paused to gaze out over the river. A thin fog floated over the water so he could not see the mainstream nor barely the opposite bank. He thought how different it looked from the bank with no one by his side. Though he had heard much of the river there was nothing he could remember hearing that would be useful in the crossing. The novelty of it thrilled him but again looking out over those waters the novelty seemed to vanish.

He untied the rope and pushed the boat out on the river, perched on the stern. When the mud bottom of the river ceased to slide against the boat the boy carefully crawled to the seat a little less than half way up the boat and started to paddle downstream. After about twenty yards of paddled water the boy brought his paddle from the water and laid it across his knees, the wet end dripping into the river. He thought about every grain of sand representing only a single galaxy in the Creation and of his body no more than a worm. Then with eyes skyward he studied the stars that were bright enough to shine through the fog. As his deep creases came between his eyes and on his forehead.

The boy paddled on. Soon after, by a fear he knew nothing of, he happened to turn his head back at the oncoming fog. It was like a slow tidal wave of a flood of cotton. And with it came the wind as if it were the soul and the very spirit of this great imitation ghost, Shivering the boy pulled the collar of his coat up around his neck. The sound of his paddle in the water grew louder and quicker.

Coming to the mainstream the little boat tipped and swung as it cut through the sharp waves and felt the wind pushing it from its course. The wooden joints squeaked and groaned. Then the first few flurries of the fog drifted over the boat. The boy could feel the cold caress of it brushing him in his face and somehow felt that the message it had to deliver was like the sweet talk of witches. The density of the fog grew thicker. As the boy paddled on across the river the bow of the boat seemed to dissolve and, moments later, the stern gradually disappeared in the mist. Only the sound of the paddle gurgling through the water disturbed the stillness of the night. Then from both sides the fog slowly wrapped itself completely around the boy and lay silent in the light of the big round moon that had fixed itself high in the sky.

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A WORLD AWAITS

A new brave world awaits me with joys and sorrows filled.
A new peace is waiting...
Dare I pass the sill and move on to this world where each must find
A place?
Where things are suited to my taste and better yet, to my way of
Life, of living, the very essence of life, called love,
Dictating the way in the new world to go.
And yet, a gentle way of life is before me, too, let none misunderstand
Or misconstrue.
A life where peace is found at home, with a wife and children, and
A deadened desire to leave and roam, but rather a want to stay, to
Nourish the life, that exists within those walls.
And dread in a secret way to leave, knowing that when I do I have
Left part of me in that gentile world - and I might not return to the
Same warm world that I left because I had left it.

Still, I cannot turn aside and fail to meet this world.
I must up and overcome it, place this world within my stride,
And with my Love beside me and the Lord Above my guide, I shall
Not fail the taking of this world within my grasp.

Joe Wiles

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APPLES

Give me apples
Of the only song I sing...
Three verses of a cold, black tree.
A moon
And purple grapes
Passionately crushed
And kissed with warm lips...
Give me green apples of the last night together,
Solemn black dreams
Painted on blue velvet...
Stars that hang on threads
And antique gold
On sun-tanned hands.
Give me green apples
with a core of bitter moonsong;
Silver rain,
Dew on paper grass...
Then there is sun
And summer...
Give me apples
Redder than blood and lips.

Judy Beth Gibson
SEA III

Boards, yellow and beaten and
Gull-whorled
Stand creakingly still in a
Wonder-impression
Beaten by the spraying surf of
A God-Sea...
Feeling the sting of water so
Pigid—burning and hurting
Each life into a ecstasy-cry
Loud, carried sandpiper-winged
And resounding from seaweed-rock
To whispering, white-capped waves
Finally disappearing into the
Fog-mist atmosphere...
Life so different and so real
One can only stand awed—
Tingling and pulsating...
Plunging sand-deep into
Omnipotent sea-feelings

Sam Edwards

VELVET AS NIGHT IS

Velvet is the night...
There is softness in the songs
The trees sing with many voices...
The stars say with cold quiet,
Gentle is the night.
Billows of mist
Are breathed by the dark presence
That lies upon the land
With a quiet passion
Felt but unseen...
Thrilling softness of the night
Lies wrapped in vital life,
Sleeping yet awake;
Sleeping in fluffy dreams of velvet,
Awake with infant vitality,
Wrapped in fragility...
The night stirs and cries
In yellow anger
To be taken up into the arms of day.

Judy Beth Gibson

THE WALK

I walked with God at evening time
To see the sun go down,
To see the fields like patchwork quilts
Of springtime green and brown,
To see the rain-washed meadow touched
With glitter by the dew,
And to see the night’s deep purple
Engulf a sky of blue.
My God and I walked slowly
In the twilight’s cooling breeze,
We heard the song of whippoorwills
From dark and far-off trees.
We talked, Enoch-like,
As friends are apt to do
In the quiet of the day.
He held the world before my eyes
And taught me how to pray.

Judy Beth Gibson
THE BULRUSH CROWS

"Away with you! Away with you!"
I hear a bitter tide
Ring in and out
Like steel on steel, "Away with you!
Away with you!"
But not away...
But I must stay; I cannot leave,
Not yet, not yet,
The Bulrush grows,
Its form it shows
Along the marshy bank,
And I must stay,
Or drift away
Along the murky plash.
"O, go away! 'Tis death to stay!
Where Bulrush green-men grow.
'Tis death to stay. 'Tis death to stay!
Away! Now go away!"
But I chose not to go away
From beauty
Others shunned.
I waited, waited on the bank,
Where humming insects sunned,
"Away with you! 'Tis death to stay;"
The throats of warblers spoke.
"Oh, go away. 'Tis death to stay;"
I heard a grey frog croak.
But I refused to leave the sand,
Despite their anxious cries.
The Bulrush nods above the sand
And there my body lies.

Judy Beth Gibson

SAGE

Ashamed of youth, I waited for that stage when wise, I would don the sage attire:
Pipe, Ph.D., receding brow; and then retire
Amid my pensive, sure, philosophy.

Ashamed of age, I now await. The stage:
Receded brow, pipe, Ph.D. And thus attired,
I wait, when wise, I might a sage retire
Amid a pensive, sure, philosophy.

Charles F. Whitaker

SANCTUARY

Bright, sunny autumn days
Chant the dirge of the
Dying leaves
That remember greener moments
Held tumbling and easy in
The summer surf of a somewhere Seashore
When the trees were gilded
Green in the gentleness
Of innocence
Running along the beach
Toward the surrounded Seasweed island.

Sam Edwards
A FAREWELL TO SUMMER

I plucked your velvet blossoms
I wore them in my hair.
The beauty of the summer
I gathered from your crown.
While reveling in their brilliant
color and sensing summer all
around.
Today your stem is slightly
bending, your petals are
browning.
A gentle wind has flushed your
cheek
A hidden hand has touched your
leaf.
The quiet little butterfly
finds no nectar within your bounds.
All alone with bended head and dew
upon your cheek.
The silent autumn creeps.
Even though your splendor's gone
Memories are in my heart
And all the wintry winds cannot make
me with them part.

De'Vonne J. Olson

DEJECTION: A PLEA

To all that I once was
And long to be once more,
I beg you
Take me back.
Let me live again
In that sweet pocket of darkness
Which sheltered me
In a cradle of seclusion.

My self is patched but bleeding.
My backbone aches and bends.
Catch me please
Before I fall
And shatter like other men.
Mama. Oh, Mama!
Make me your child unborn again.

Joyce A. Reels

BLUE

The words come cool and beautiful
Linking melodiously blue into
An absinth-tinged life
Words not only blue but
Ultramarine lovely
Flowing water-like
Through white, feeling
Hands that wash them
Again to melodious
Sounding.

Sam Edwards
Short Story By Bruce Davidson

From the back of the classroom I could see Rosemary turn sideways in her seat on the front row and peep at the instructor near the window. She stuck her chubby little arms straight up in the air and then, grabbing her ponytail by its tip, she attempted to fan under its bright green ribbon with her English lit book. Her hands were sweaty, though, and the book fell to the floor with a bang. "Miss Swartz!" the instructor said as he stopped to peer at her. "What do you have to say about Donne's imagery?"

Rosemary smiled her cute way—it made the mole on her lower left chin slide gently upward—and picked up her book. She had no idea what he was talking about because she was only concerned with one thing: she was hot. She was always hot. Hot Rosemary, all the kids in class called her. The only reason she had gone to summer school in the first place, I had often heard her say before class, was because the dorm was air-conditioned. I believed it, too, for I had never seen her out of the place except the few times at the walk-in movie downtown (which was also air-conditioned) and at her classes. She had previously proclaimed our lit classroom a fiery den our teacher always finished his lecture early, but he had the unnerving habit of just standing, winding his watch while he waited anxiously and quietly for the bell to scream through the steaming walls.

"Dumb?" Rosemary smiled again at the instructor, "I don't believe I know that answer... But I could probably answer another one, though. Like if you asked me to recite some J. D. Salinger, I could."

Rosemary, we all knew, quoted prose with great enjoyment like some people quote poetry. Before the instructor could say anything more, she bounced up to face the class. She straightened out her pretty purple-flowered, low neck, long-sleeved muumuu that had gathered in rolls around her plump little body and began reciting Catcher in the Rye, standing on the toes of her petite Weejuns and rocking slowly to and fro, talking faster as she quoted page after page. I just couldn't resist noticing how cute she looked as her tight-legged slacks pushed out from under her muumuu when she stretched to stand so tall and so nobly. The ability to remember so much and recite it so exactly excited me enough, but the particular way she lengthened her "o's" and slurred her "r's" made me have goose bumps.

The instructor rudely made her sit down and he angrily wound on his watch until the bell finally rang. Everybody else jumped up and went out laughing, but I waited to compliment Rosemary. Actually, I didn't know exactly what I was going to say.

"Need some help?" I nonchalantly asked just as she dropped all of her books off her desk. She started stomping all over the tail of her pretty muumuu as she squatted to pick them up. I smiled at her.

Her mole slid slightly upward again (I could tell she was a little bit shy) and she said, "Hurry, let's get out in the air!"

I slowly pushed her and her load of books through the crowded hallway out onto the walk.

"Do you have a car?" she quickly asked.

"Sure," I said. I had just repainted my Studebaker a light purple and I instantly thought how much she would like the shade. "Over in the parking lot," I directed her.

I dumped our books into the back seat of the car and got really excited about riding her around. She fixed her triangular corner window so that she would get a lot of air and I also opened the lower vent on her side all the way. She sighed heavily and said that she was getting really cool.

She acted even more modest after we were riding because she didn't say anything. Finally, though, she did say, "I'd sure like to be able to drive in and get air like this whenever I wanted to."

I kind of took this as a hint, so after a little while, I told her we'd drive out into the country so that I could teach her. She became overjoyed at this and started giggling and everything on the way out there.

Actually, I was real embarrassed when she couldn't get under the steering wheel. It took me at least ten minutes to find her seat size: if I pushed it back too far she couldn't reach the gas pedal. Rosemary learned about the gears and everything pretty fast and she was driving along as pretty as you please when she suddenly sneezed. The ditch she guided the car into was deep.

"Well," she said almost crying, "did you ever sneeze without closing your eyes?"

For a long time I just stared out the windows at the gravel road above and the dry grass and yellow sheep-weeds on either side of the car. Then Rosemary said that I was a little mad so she started quoting again—this time something about King Arthur and how he saved ladies in distress. I must admit that I couldn't stay mad for long after the cute way she started putting on and taking off her bright green rhinestone bracelet as she quoted. I couldn't keep my mind on how badly the car was torn up.

Finally Rosemary stopped reciting and whimpered, "Around my neck is hot! And I simply must get a cold bottle of pop or some ice to chew on. Oh, I'm about to smother to death in this car." She shoved the car door back against a big rock in the ditch and pulled herself up on the bank to the gravel road, cleaning her white glasses and wiping her neck with the tail of her muumuu as she went. I followed her.
“What do we do now?” she began. I could tell she was getting hotter by the way she was kicking her feet in the dust. She waved her hands at a sweat bee around her glasses; her neck, face, and pierced ears began to acquire a red glow from the heat and the sweat and the wiping.

“Now don’t get excited,” I said. “We’ll get someone to pull us out.”

Acres of pines lined the road on the side of my car; on the other side was a hay field for what seemed like miles. Somewhere—perhaps a mile or two—down the winding road I could see a big store-building. I grabbed Rosemary by the sleeves of her muumuu and turned her toward it. “You wait here,” I said, “and I’ll go over there and get someone to pull us out.”

She made a face at me and tried to unrinke her muumuu. “But I’m hot and I want a bottle of pop,” she whined. “And I want a cigarette too.” She leaped back down to the car and retrieved her pocketbook, a carved leather bag with an enormous shoulder strap, and rummaged in it for a cigarette. When she found one, she didn’t have a match.

“Never mind,” I said. “It’ll just make you hotter, anyway.”

But Rosemary was determined. I had started down the road toward the store when I looked back and saw her running into the field where a few dry shriveled-looking hay bales burned in the sun. I started back to her.

“I found a light!” she screamed. She was headed for a little gas well on a mound of dirt between two bales. There was a flame at the top of its pipe.

“You’ll set that field on fire,” I warned her. But she continued trying to get a light, bending to the flame with the cigarette hanging from the corner of her mouth. Her pony’s tail bobbed beautifully as she moved her head.

Before I knew what was happening she was screaming past me that she’d singed every hair on her head, that her cigarette had fallen down the neck of her muumuu, and that a black snake had chased her around two hay bales. She jumped the ditch in one big leap and limped down the road. Her new purple muumuu was flapping in the dust.

I know it’s hard to believe, but Rosemary was a fast runner. She doubled up her little fists and picked up her feet high off the ground. From behind, this adorable figure looked almost like a cloud floating up the road. The only thing I could think of as I chased her was the smell of the apricot perfume Rosemary was wearing that day.

Rosemary was seated on the store porch with her legs daintily crossed when I arrived. Above her, on top of the porch roof, there was a gigantic tin sign erected by a soft drink company that read: HENRY EARLE JOHNSON - GEN’L MERCHANDISE - SINCE 1919.

I tried to sit down beside her, but Rosemary grabbed me by the sleeve of my sweat shirt and pulled me through the rusty screen doors of the store.
Waiting, Rosemary found a fly swatter near the mammoth cash register on the counter behind her and started fanning herself with it.

"School! Am I hot!" she gasped as she shook flies from the swatter. She hit me on the leg with it playfully and pinched her back on her foot (for then she was on Henry Earle's leg and had her legs daintily crossed again, rubbing the dust from her shoes). That sort of made her mad so she really batted me one on the head with the heel of her Weejun. She was so cute when she was mad!

We heard a car drive up out front and honk. Henry Earle came from behind the counter and left the building almost running.

Rosemary didn't like his leaving without giving her a drink at all. She stood up and walked to me. Pulling on the ravelings of my sweat shirt sleeves, she gently shoved me down on the keg and pushed her index finger to my nose. And then she made her voice real high-sounding and said, "All right, big boy, I'll get you a drink. ... Make youself right at home... !" She twisted right over to the ice box and made faces at me from behind the lid and waved her fly swatter in the air above her. I thinking Rosemary was imitating somebody then, but I'm not sure just who it was. She did it real well, though. Actually, I got a little embarrassed and got goose bumps and just stared at the sack of Idaho potatoes for a while.

"Ooh! This is so cool!" was the next thing I heard Rosemary say. She was leaning over the ice box with her head and arms down the little door on top.

"The only thing that really cools me off is ice,\," she continued, pinching off little slivers of frost from the sides of the refrigerator and slapping them on her neck. "I sometimes think about how I'd like to cover my whole self in lots and lots of crushed ice and just sit there till next winter. I sometimes think I'd like to do that."

While she opened a grape soda on the side of the box, I thought about how talented Rosemary was. She could recite things, she was neat and had a way with clothes, she was really graceful, and she could think of smart things to say, like the ice. And the way she looked when she smiled was so comely, I thought.

"No. That would be just awful—all that melted water," she decided as she handed me a Coke. "Let's go get some air." She slammed the screens in my face.

We found Henry Earle standing by an old gas tank and looking down the road at a moss green '55 Chevy slowly pulling away in the dust.

"Them was my neighbors, Jewel and his wife and kids. She does the driving and gas buying, and he takes care of the younguns," he grinned as he got up on the porch and looked at the Coke-bottle thermometer hanging on a post. "Jewel's old lady was washing his ears with a wash rag while I was putting in the gas, and he got so embarrassed about it that, to get my mind off it, he told me his oldest youngun puked in the back seat because his new car was going so fast in this heat... That old rattle trap wouldn't go 65!"

Rosemary was getting tickled. She had wrapped her muumuu around her legs as tight as it would go and was pulling her pony's tail upward. I tried to calm her. She usually bounced and cackled so much when she got started laughing—the kids at school liked to get her tickled because of this—that sometimes she would nearly pass out. She was hot enough as it was.

I took the pop bottle from her and tried to get her to drink instead of laugh. But then she got straightened and mad and she stomped on my toes. This time, I mean, she was really mad: I could tell by the way she stuck her fingers in her ears and yelled at the top of her lungs.

Henry Earle just chuckled and looked at the thermometer some more, but I was still a little shook up. She was by then holding her breath, too, and her face was turning red.

"Your face is turning purple," I said. "It's just the shade of your beautiful dress." (It really wasn't that color at all, but I told her that anyway just to get her to quit.)

She took her fingers out of her ears finally. I grinned and she grinned and that little mole on her lower left chin slid almost to her ear. She got tickled again after that—still wiping and fanning and all—and she blew hot grape pop all over the place.

"Around my neck is not and sticky and I want some ice!" she exclaimed, stomping again.

And then the big red and blue truck came up the road from the direction of my car and slowed down. TAYLOR-MADE ICE CREAM the sign on it said. The driver, a big Negro about 24 or 25, poked his head out the window.

"Do you sell gas here?" he yelled at Henry Earle over the knock of the truck engine.

"Sure do," Henry Earle yelled back. "Right over there."

The man pulled up to the gas tank and got out. Before Henry could get the nozzle in, the Negro asked if he took credit cards. The old man answered, "No, don't reckon I do. Gas man don't come very often, but I don't reckon he ever said anything about credit cards. I don't remember it if he did."

I was moving off the porch toward the ensuing argument, leaving Rosemary sulking and alternately wiping her neck and unwrinkling her muumuu. After hammering and hawing over whether he should use his own money or not, the big Negro got back into his truck, slammed the door, and left Henry Earle standing there with the gas hose in his hand.
I was looking straight at the truck as its red and blue blurred up the road, but I didn't notice until after it had passed us and was gaining speed: standing on tiptoes on the metal running board in the rear of the truck with her head and arms stuck all the way through the little refrigerator door was Rosemary! Her purple muumuu was flapping in the wind.

At first I was upset. But before I had chased her very far, I heard Rosemary's sweet little voice in echo from her frosty chamber. She was beginning to recite the first page of Catcher in the Rye and I just knew she was very contented.

Rosemary came to class several days later and she looked real cute in her new long-sleeved, low neck, red and blue striped muumuu. She wasn't mad at me or anything because I hadn't been able to find her that night. She did say, however, that she had a hard time getting bus connections back to the college from Miami—especially since she didn't have her pocketbook with her. "It was real hot down there and it makes me hot to carry a pocketbook, anyway," she explained.

I sometimes wonder where Rosemary is now. She didn't return to school that fall, but someone told me they heard she had joined a kind of lecture company and was giving lengthy recitations from Ayn Rand. But someone else told me she took a job with some fur storage company in eastern North Dakota.

ALLONE

All there is to do... is sit
And wonder if someone will drop by.
It's been such a long time, that
I'm sure they will pass on.
No one ever comes anymore.
But there was a time... all came.
That was before the war... mostly.
A few dropped by for a while, afterwards,
Then they stopped.
I can only sit and wait now,
But time seems no longer to hurry.
Each year takes a little longer.
There surely aren't many more.
Well, since I must,
I'll hang around some more,
....And wait

Jim Asher

SOFT AUTUMNS

I remember soft autumns
When the crescented moon
Would dip and angle
Through tinking, glass
Moments
Piecing them into that
Certain quiet gentleness
Existing in the hallowed,
Humming sounds of dusky,
Autumn sighs.

Sam Edwards
I AM A WINTER BLACKENED TREE

I am a winter blackened tree
Growing from the frozen earth,
Lying dormant
With the season.
I remember summer
The sound of music
(and I clutched in my hand
a frail bird nest
and felt life begin
within my fingers' clutched arc).
I feel the approaching spring,
A movement of nectar
Upward from my buried feet
Until each bare,
Dark facet of my being
Is budded with new life,
A small potential flower
Risen from the dark earth.
And when spring is truly here
And I am a bride in white
With cherry blossoms
Perhaps then I shall dream of now,
And of a moment of perfect quiet
And of how I held the silent snow
Until it melted through the dark fingers
Of myriad slender branches
And left me dark and bare

Judy Beth Gibson

COMPARISON OF CYCLES

The day is young and lively
but suddenly grows old as
Ancient Greece. It exists
and then explodes in color
as if it were a man in ex-
cruciating pain before death.
Its color and pain dims and
becomes dead.

The splashes of light move
on the highway as would
pallbearers carrying the
remains to its final des-
tination——
Then all is silent and
finished.

A second passes and color
explodes once more, not in
pain but in birth. The day
is smashed on its back by
the sun and is brought forth
again...

Suzie Williams
A DESCRIPTION OF DAVID

And it was there lying somewhere in the darkened reality of his mind, dangerously drifting toward a velvet, green curtain of cold, crushing blows of the melancholy eyes that seemed to lurk lasciously in the uppermost corners of densely over-hanging trees...he lay there sobbing, face-down in the ice-glazed streets until his face stuck fast and he savagely tore away the flesh of hurt which billigerently badgered the wholeness of his being...holding the hurt helplessly in his hands, crying God-words to the opening of the soggy sky that could only drip and explode the hilarious laughing of the rain.

Sam Edwards

THE STRANGER

Writhing like the side winder, with face against the sand, he emerged in the presence of an abandoned oasis. Crumbling bits of remembrance littered the old well as fragments of past human vigilance lay bleached and broken nearby. In the withering shade of a decayed, sunbaked wall, the figure lay quietly still as parchment fingers dug deeply into the soft bed below. And now before the sunken eyes, there rose a sea of green mist that glared in the light of the sun and danced tantalizingly in the waves of brown surf. It showered and drenched him while laughing and calling his name, but never resting to be touched. He heard a roaring rush that broke the silence of stone ears and just beyond the plain there came a majestically clad, white capped wave which lapped with its great tongue to cover an old domain. When the last stretch of desert was washed and the sea was calm once more, the stranger lay at the bottom, drowned by insanity.

De'Vonne J. Olson

HEURTEBISE

When white-edged waves swell to meet the beach, And kneaded shelves of stone are brushed With hands that have their daughters' sides. Driftwood stands balanced on the dawn. I bade her bear The child of our affair alone. The waves will swell again, When time has lapsed, To mend the untimed birth of still another wrath.

Can Angel Heurtebise act now, With sterile sight through Orpheus' Swollen mirror to Eurydice's stone seat? The harp wraps pregnant notes in tunes And sends its notes To Zeus and Venus, Who, with bolted doors as ears, Remain immune, Waiting for time to seal the shattered dream. What majestic death is tuned to god's Who bid the hands of blame To seize upon the pregnant mother's womb And suck its treasure from her? The tomb is filled with salty drops That trickle from the deeper wounds. The clock has run its course; Yet notes still strain to reach the break. When acted parts were written out, Did Heurtebise wait in the wings, Or did he speak out knowingly, To save the fated minute's final breath?

Sorrow's lips stretched to toothy grins As tender muscles flex to meet the child, Born between the water's wrinkled edge And another's sword hand. Where is Venus now? For want of still safer tide, And Zeus, the god, to stay the hand? We ran across the beach with silent words, Hoping Heurtebise would show To face the shattered looking glass With the new child of time.

Can Heurtebise find the door?

The sword has cut the rope; The knot is whole, Tighter than it was before. The child dangles. The shore juts into oak roots And cuts the roots with water's edge. Heurtebise laughs now, silently. Standing on the sodden ledge of time, The harp's notes reach him. The minute's wait is not too long. At last, he plunges to the shelves. White-edged waves swell to meet the beach; Angel Heurtebise has found the dream. Angel Heurtebise is left alone.

Can Angel Heurtebise find the only door?

Frank Bonasso
WRAPPED IN STEEL

I. For snow still falls
upon the grass
and touches my hand
with the same touch
felt by da Vinci
The mountains
look the same
as when Aristotle
looked upon them.
Caesar saw and felt
the same sun
I know today;
Great Sol knows
no change.
I stand alone
and view
Cleopatra's sky,
azure and infant-like
in blue.

II. A vapor trail
may cross
the sky's tree-framed
blue bowl,
as a jet plane streaks
on its swift
unwavering flight.
Snow melts to grey-smoked slush
on salted asphalt.
The sun glares from shining
aluminum roofs.
Iron-meshed towers
climb the mountains
with stilt legs
seventy feet long,
dragging
steel cables over their shoulders.

III. I should hate progress
and despite the cold steel
that entwines about
this earth,
if it could ever halt
the fall of snow,
change the color
of the sky,
or lift one mountain,
dashing it to ruin.
I comfort in the thought
that modern man
has not the strength
or will
to forfeit beauty
or subject to change
the ancient,
fundamental splendors
Nature gives,
for progress
wrapped in steel.

Judy Beth Gibson
VESPERS THIS EVENING

Vespers this evening.
"Why should I come?"
It's Sunday, of course.

The wind that spurred the leaves in Autumn is still now.
It blew itself out.
Reds and yellows: they dipped, hesitated, dipped again.
Like parchment, they huddled together around green shrubs;
They freeze in their own fire.

Vespers this evening.
"What is the subject?"
Well, it's Sunday.

Autumn lies in its own decay; trees, cathedral spires,
Are bleak against the grey sky.
Autumn, the passion of their time, is past.
Leaves, once flushed with their own lust, now lie hoary
With the frost of Winter.
Vespers this evening.
"Why are you going?"
It's Sunday, of course.

Charles F. Whitaker

CORPUS DELECTABLE

A Short Story By Labron Miller II

A crisp cold wind ravaged it way down from the northeast the evening
that Baron Von Sunderman stood in front of his huge fireplace, trying to thaw
the numbness from his weared bones. He wondered why he had gone out in that bone-
marrow piercing cold when he knew quite well that all the game would have been
driven south or into their dank, musty, but warm lairs. If he caught a chill at his
age, it could prove fatal. But what was a man to do when he had to keep the facade
of youth before his lovely wife and his two adorable children?

The wind, as it made assault after assault on the well-worn buttress of
the Gothic edifice, lent an air of loneliness to the atmosphere. The prospects of
this evening held little appeal, for his wife had taken the children to visit her uncle
in a neighboring town. Knowing that they would not return for several days, the
Baron was beset with a gloom that overcomes a father who, loving nothing more
than to spend an evening watching the recreation of his children, finds himself
suddenly deprived of their company. The friendless halls and warisome chambers
left, little hope for his finding any sort of self-entertainment, he mused, as he
lit his pipe and settled himself restlessly into a chair before the fire.

The fire sent red-orange tongues leaping up the dark chimney flue, only
to die like a falling star blazing the sky for the last time, as the icy breaths that
buffeted the castle enveloped the sputtering coals. Like northlandic barbarians,
the attacking draughts forced their way down the chimney and formed a mass of
dying embers where once had been a roaring bonfire. Then, the faint crackling of
the dying embers faded into a dull roar of nothingness, lulling the Baron into a
semi-hypnotic state.

As in a dream, he arose, and began searching the long corridors and
musty cupboards for something, anything, to drive from him this restless and
ply from him the pangs of remorse and sheer boredom.

As he walked from room to room in his large poorly heated home, he
began reminiscing about his past life. His mind skipped from event to event of
those days when he had nothing more to do than seek the pleasures of youth.
From time to time, he made a conscious effort to meditate upon the problems of
his office as leader of a community, but failed to do so miserably. For all his
vallant efforts he kept returning, in thought, to his youth.

Wandering into parts of the castle that had long since fallen into disuse,
he found himself in a room filled with the dust and cobwebs of neglect; he made a
mental note to report his finding of the laxness of his servants to the major-domo
when he and the other servants returned in the morning. This was soon swamped
from his conscious mind, however, as dim memories of the past drove those pre-
viously important thoughts from it. All the memories of the long dead past
huddled on the brink of remembrance, between conscious and subconscious, then
flung themselves headlong into an active and eager mind.
This was the room of his youth. Sweet memories of the many happy hours that he spent there were vividly etched in his mind against the stark bareness that now surrounded him. The Baron now let his eyes sweep slowly around the room, drinking in its sights, until he saw the fireplace.

A point for the servants, there were still logs in it, and kindling, too. Why not build a fire, and here, try to relive those most pleasant days of the past? Although it was strenuous work for a man of his age, the Baron finally achieved that little spark that separated the warmth of the past from the coldness of now. Soon the room was ablaze with the brilliant reflections and refractions of the fire. The room was transformed into a warm chamber of joy, where seconds before had stood a cold empty apartment.

Now that there was warmth, and light to see by, the Baron began slowly meandering through the many compartments. He found faded clothes that had been his as a child. Here was the woodensword he had practiced with so diligently. In the far corner was his rocking horse, now faded from its once brilliant white to a dull off-grey, matted with dust and cobwebs.

As his explorations sent him into the long untouched sections of the room, the lethargy of inactivity left his mind. It was replaced by thoughts of the past, forgotten dreams, and unregainable joys. It was as if the hand of time had crept out of its solitary counting house, turned the hour-glass of life, and had begun a reversal of those sands which are forever seeking out what measure of existence we have allotted here.

He slipped into a revery of re-creation of those youthful days; and his mind became dulled to any and all other sensations when his eyes beheld that set of toy soldiers that had been his most prized possession and dearest companions. There they stood, straight and tall, proud in their perfect rank and file, even though the intervening years had tarnished their brilliant array and dust now covered their once glorious raiments.

A pair of cold, wet, clammy, but anxious hands, arthritic with age yet made nimble now by the spirit of youth, went out to those staunch men. The small general of this midget army was carefully lifted to the inspecting eyes of his field commander of old. The Baron noted that there was no change in the chief-of-staff of that victorious army. How would he look if he were once again at the head of his conquering legions? One at a time, his fellow officers and their troops joined the general in battle formation on the floor.

They were quickly joined by the opposing army of many years past. They looked good in this formation, but something was missing. They were too posed. How would it be if they were arranged for a real battle? Wouldn’t this be a more realistic formation to meet the attacks of a hostile enemy? No, maybe this, or this way or...

Once again the floor became the scene of historic events and dramatic deeds, ringing loudly with the cry of battle. Brilliant points of strategem and appalling blunders were committed by both of these Lilliputian armies. Great Caesar was put to shame by the genius of the attacks and forays that account for victory or defeat, all guided by the skillful hand of the Baron.

Long battles never once dulled the tactical skills of either of these small combattant men of war, nor the wit of their geniuses field commander playing the part of Zeus in his direction of mortal affairs. When the first grey streaks of dawn cut the swarthy blackness of night, the Baron was still absorbed in the actions of his little men.

It is said that an army travels on its stomach, but the rigor of the Spartan life lead by these veteran campaigners left little time for empty thoughts of food and drink. And what general would allow his army to become better than he in their training or self-discipline?

As a bitter siege was taking place on this glory-covered field, activities of a different sort were happening in another part of the castle. The servants had just returned from their bacchalic revelries brought about by their evening of freedom. With minds still dulled by the activities of the night before, they set about their various tasks.

When the Baron failed to arrive for breakfast at the usual time, the major domo decided that he wished to be served in bed. Immediately the orders were given to prepare breakfast, and within twenty minutes it was being carried to the Baron’s empty room. At first there was little commotion concerning the absence of the Baron. When his bed proved not to have been used the previous evening, it was concluded that he had spent the lonely night with some friend. But when he had not returned by late afternoon, panic struck the dull-minded Myrmidons and the soldiers of the castle guard were sent for.

An alert captain-of-the-guard ordered the premises to be searched, starting with the favorite haunts of the Baron. As the search progressed, so did the day. Afternoon faded to evening, and soon the dim light of the winter sun waned and cold bright stars took its place. Even these had begun to dull when the.searchers, in their slow methodical way, finally came to that long unused door that now opened onto a great battlefield.

There before them sat a pale thinning man with a strange feverish glowing in his eyes, very plainly unaware of any presence save that of his soldiers. Panic set in among the servants, but was soon quelled by their very stupidity and lack of understanding of the problem. It was evident to them, however, that from the Baron’s physical state, there was a problem and that it must be dealt with immediately.

Food was their first thought, but it was with much persuasion that the war was postponed briefly and the Baron accepted nourishment. His ranting and raving that an army could not survive, even for a few moments, without its leader frightened the servants. They were dedicated to the Baron and feared he would starve; yet they feared his wrath even more should they intrude in his private world again. Then, in a moment of rare genius or divine inspiration, one servant was awarded a field commission for his suggestion that food be brought up to the Baron. This would enable him to eat while the fighting was going on.

This became the routine for the next several days. The Baron kept his semi-retirement in those gloomy chambers, caught up in his war. Occasionally,
he would boast of a great victory or cry about a defeat as his food and other necessities were brought to him. Soon rumors were being spread about the war. Servant told merchant, merchant told villager until the whole story was being discussed and debated by everyone. As it so often happens, many half truths were told, and the people were clamorous in wanting to know the complete facts. Finally, the Baron made a rare public appearance to declare that the fate of the people rested on the war effort, and nothing was to be spared in its successful progression. Being a sleepy town in want of excitement, this stirred the citizenry. The war, as wars have a habit of doing, took preference over all. It was now in its fifth week, when...

Dark shadows filled the courtyard outside. Threatening clouds moved ominously from the distant hills. The sun, beginning its plunge toward the western seas, was caught up and smothered of its hazy winter glow by the ever-grey-clouds. A fine mist began to fall as a prelude to the fog that, even then, could be seen working its way down the mountains to the hushed valley below. It rolled as the tide, being caught off by the gentler breezes of evening, retreating an inch only to gain twelve on its next lunging. Its undulating, ebbing, and flooding soon overtook all that stood before it. It settled in the hollows of the valley and enveloped even the parapets of the castle with its shrouds.

Maybe it was the darkness that filled every nook and cranny of the castle; or, possibly deceived by the early darkness, a misjudgement of time, but the battle scene now gained presence of a lone grey mouse, and not much of a mouse either. Its skin was stretched taut over its tiny frame. There appeared in its features, the gaunt look of savage ferocity that often accompanies the starving creatures of the wild. Yet in its features, there appeared something: a grey coloring that still showed the molley brown of juvenescence under it; or the youthful features of its head, out of proportion with any other part of the body; or a great number of other qualities that proclaimed immaturity. These were so foreign to the look of ferocity that it became pathetically humorous to the point of absurdity. This, then, was the setting; and the actors were now on stage for another unveiling of one of life's many minor tragedies.

As Clotho, the sister Fate who spins the threads of life, would have it, that evening the Baron supped on melted cheese and bread. Not an exotic meal, but one that he enjoyed as much as anything else. A lull had come over the day's battle, but this was no time for lagging. The troops must be inspected for loss and injury. The Baron was holding one of his staunch defenders into the light cast by the fire, when as decreed by Fates, a chilled wind swept through the room. In a fit of shivering, the Baron dropped the soldier into the bowl of melted cheese. The mouse seeing, or rather sensing as mice do, the presence of his favorite food, darted toward his intended meal. The speed of his attack completely surprised the Baron, and the cheese was left unguarded. As the Baron turned with a start, he kicked over the bowl of cheese. This was all the more advantageous for the mouse, and as he bit into the cheese, something hard met his teeth. He bit harder, and suddenly the toy soldier was severed from his cheesy leg.

"No! My God no!" cried the Baron in a voice so filled with terror that all the guards of the castle came, fully armed, to his aid. When they arrived, they found him in tears, the toy soldier and its leg resting reverently in his hands.

"To arms, all of you, and catch the villain that has perpetrated this murderous deed on so great a hero as he who lies here in my hand," was the Baron's excited command. There was a scattering of confused soldiers searching, but not knowing what they were looking for. In this mass hysteria, the mouse might have made good his escape had it not been for one observant man. The Captain-of-the-Guard, wishing to please his master, immediately set out in pursuit of the scampering fugitive mouse. It was no hard task to catch the dazed mouse, and with the gleam of one about to be rewarded, he showed his captive to the Baron.

"Take that treasuable fiend to the dungeon, and guard him well if you value your necks," bellowed the enraged Baron. As this was done, a tenderhearted, contrite and loving general carried the remains of the recently departed hero to the castle chapel.

After lying in state for two days, the miniature soldier enjoyed a funeral, the likes of which had never been seen in the small baronage. Even though there were dark storm clouds above, and the misty fog still covered the countryside, there was a turnout of the entire village. Farmers left their plows to come to that memorable funeral. Dignitaries from the surrounding baronies were present, at the request of Baron Von Sunderman. Among the important guests was the Arch-bishop, repudiated to be one of the most able speakers and orators of any holy man alive at that time, who was to deliver the eulogy. Anxious ears strained from every corner of the church as he began his mournful dirge. Everyone wept bitterly as they heard the little soldier compared, in immaculate rhetoric, to the great Achilles in his bravery and his fate. Softly murmured curses could be heard throughout the assembled villagers and dignitaries as they were told of the appalling happenings of that tragic day. Finally, the crescendo of the curses rose, a hysterical set in, and a hush for vengeance for the tiny defender was orated. Tears, again, swept through the crowds as Beethoven's "Funeral March" was played while a golden casket, emblazoned with the Baron's crest and motto, was carried out. In the churchyard, this casket, containing the brave soldier, was placed to rest in the Baron's family crypt.

After the customary period of mourning, the proceedings for a court martial were begun. A jury of twelve soldiers was chosen as a review board. The prosecution was to be conducted by Ludwig Schlieman, one of the most successful and famous lawyers and jurists in the land; while the defence was placed on the shoulders of a young junior lieutenant. All phases were to be carried out in a most legal manner, with the precision due a trial of any great criminal. No effort was spared to see that justice was carried out, and that the mouse was convicted.

On the first morning of the trial, the prosecution called upon the still grieving Baron to relate the events of that day of infamy. He cried out the whole story. He told how that little soldier had held his position when others would have run. He told how the mouse had attacked with cunning cruelty, with ferocity, and with murderous intent. Then, how after a long hard pressed battle of man against savage beast, the cruel deed was done.

The jury and members of the court had been on the edge of their seats.
during the whole proceeding. Shouts of "Lynch him!" came from the crowds hoarded in the courtroom. Then the Captain-of-the-Guard was called. He told how he had seen the villain escaping toward the closet and how, after a ferocious battle, he had captured the assassin of his dearly beloved little comrade-in-arms with his helmet.

Then the prosecutor spoke long and slowly to the jurors. His voice rose in emotion as he reviewed the facts of the case, emphasized the merits of that wantonly murdered warrior. He closed his summation with a plea for the death sentence that would have made the Prince of Darkness quake with fear and shudder with horror.

Pandemonium broke loose in the courthouse, "Huzzahs!" went up for the prosecuting attorney. All the oaths and curses imaginable were called down upon that small mouse. It looked for an instant as if the mouse would be executed on the spot, but order was finally restored to the scene.

Then, a slight young man came to the center of the room. His haggard look, sallow almost greyish complexion, and gleaming eyes make him look the human counterpart of the defendant. He, too, had that starved look, that taut, stretched skin, and the ragged look of a savage; yet it was more of a piteous sight than one of ferocity.

No witnesses were called, for there were none to be had. The fate of the poor mouse hung perilously by a fraying thread. It was up to this poor peasant boy, serving his term in the glorious army of the Baron, to plea for the life of this small, unimportant mouse. With a voice so soft that it was scarcely heard, this timorous junior lieutenant made his plea.

"Great and Noble Baron, benevolent jurors; behold a mouse. Not just an ordinary mouse, but one accused of a crime that we are lead to believe is of a hideous nature. One condemned to die for an act of wanton aggression. One who, viciously and savagely, attacked a soldier who was already exhausted from several days of battle, and murdered him.

"There was but one witness to this deed. One man saw this act, this gruesome drama, this bitter end of a poor soldier's life. One man saw this, yet we believe all he says, for he is our beloved Baron. What intent could cause him to lie or distort the truth? There is none; therefore, the mouse did commit the crime of which he is accused. But why?

"Look at him. What is his age? One year, two, five? No, none of these. He is but four months old. Four months, yet he attacked a seasoned veteran of what the Baron claims is the best trained army anywhere, and killed him. But still, why? Why this heinous crime of passionate violence?

"From his gaunt look, we can see he is starving; not from the lack of a proper diet during his period of confinement, but from a life of poverty. It is plain to see that he has never had a decent meal. It is quite probable that he has never had enough food to constitute a meal of any sort.

"Then we have that bold soldier tempting this mouse with cheese, the natural succor of misedom. This poor child, driven by want of food, came forth. The will to survive gave him the strength that filled his thin frame, and he snapped.

An act of war? No, for this creature had no interest in the affairs around him. Treason then? No, he was merely in search of food. It was nothing more than an act of nature, of instinct, brought on by a taste tempting hero under the watchful eyes of the general.

"This is the consequence. Can you condemn him for this? Can you condemn your child when, filled with hunger, he eats that which is not his? Can you condemn hunger? If it is a crime to feel the need of food, then do so; and condemn yourselves and everyone else in this room. If you can do this, you condemn him justly. I think not! life is innocent!"

There was not a sound in the court room. So moving were his words that none, save the Baron, were without tears. The jurors sat frozen; then, the Baron smiled, not a smile filled with warmth of friendship, but one that was malevolent, ruthless, and haughty. No smile of humor could be mistaken in that cruel upturned lip, or the devilish glow in the eyes of the Baron. A shiver went through the whole crowd. A tremor of terror overtook the jury as they left the box for the consultation room. They returned very quickly and very silently; and handed down the verdict.

* * * * *

The mists of early morning were being pierced by a fine rain. The grey ghost of dawn had just begun to quell the dominion of the night. The sun had not yet to show its opaque face nor penetrate the dark clouds of night that still covered the valley. The cold permeated all present, and there were many, for this was the climax of the drama. This was the ultimate victory, the liberation of emotion, the release valve for the feelings pent up for so long a time. Today the condemned would meet his maker, and be damned by Him for his sins. Today, justice would be sweet, and humanity would conquer the savage beast.

The staccato raps of a drum broke the morning silence. Its death roll, slow, even tempo, and foreboding, was ominously echoed by the knell of a far off church bell calling its early morning worshipers to prayer. It added to the already somber mood of the scene, and caused a few of the vigilant onlookers to cross themselves hastily. It seemed strange that these people should be here to witness such an awesome act of vengeance of such terrifying consequences and yet remain so quiet. Not even the murmer of a prayer could be heard, but only the drum, the bell, and the hushed breathing of the gathered crowd.

As the bell grew fainter, the creak of the dungeon door sent shivers and chills into the waiting peasants. Even the disciplined soldiers grew restless at its sound. Then, from the wet moss covered gaol came the condemned. Rough hands forced the peasants aside, and the convicted was carried to the scaffold. The man covered with a black cloak and hood placed that terrible noose of strangulation over the head of the victim and slipped it down to his neck. Its rough fiberous strands hurt as they were pulled tight around the condemned neck, and a strange squeaking sound—not quite a whimper, but enough of one to tell of fear—came from his throat. Then all was quiet again.
Even the roll of the drum had ceased as the Baron raised his head to look at the crowd. A grim smile passed his lips and his eyes showed amazed expectation. A chill hit him, and he remembered, suddenly, that first chill that had sent him into that fateful room so long ago. Or was it yesterday? He no longer remembered, or cared. He now turned toward the shivering mouse. Contempt, vengeance, hatred, and a thousand other despicable feelings showed in his eyes. He smiled hauntingly at that poor mouse and damned it to rot in eternal hell, at the same moment that the executor gave the signal for the trap to be sprung.

There was a painful squeak and a sharp cry as the Baron felt the floor fall from beneath him and the rope cut deep into his neck. His legs kicked convulsively and his body careened from side to side. He managed one more painful shriek then, nothing...

* * * * *

All was quiet in the barony after that fateful morning. The wind swept the sky clean of all the threatening clouds that had filled it only a few short days before. They were replaced by fluffy white tufts brightened by a radiant sun. Breezes now gently stirred the dust of the road, swirling it around the bushes showing a precocious arrival of spring. The glowing sun had warmed the land so that even the birds filled the meadows with their cheerful chirping, blending harmoniously with the songs of the peasant farmers. These melodious strains drifted through the sonorous village and captured the ears of the lethargic population.

The villagers were moving about the town in somnambulic processions, dazed by the warmth of the weather. Idleness affected everyone from the thriftiest shopkeeper to the industrious blacksmith. Haste became a product of this past era, better to be forgotten. Indolence took its place and joined a people who wanted nothing more from life than the shade of a large tree, and congenial gossip about some unimportant subject.

Yet nothing had really changed. All these tendencies had been there before, but now they were released to seek free expression. The hoi polloi had rid itself of that yoke of tyranny and replaced it with a form of democracy. Never again would the threat of a dictator hang over the heads of these happy-go-lucky people. They were free to live their lives as they saw fit.

The new mayor-council form of government suited the people. It took its time carefully discussing any and all items when ever it met. But why should it have to meet very often since its constituency was perfectly satisfied with life as it was? There was no need for any hasty change, nor really even a slow one. There had been only two things of major importance taken up by the council since its establishment. Its first session had proclaimed the mouse as the patron of the community, and had placed him in the splendor of what was once the Baron's magnificent home. This met with cheers of a grateful people toward the little deposer of despotism. Now they were debating a resolution to have all mice declared sacred. Its passage seemed imminent for the whole town was behind it with slogans, demonstrations, and campaigns.
PORTRAIT OF DEIDRE

I saw her walking toward the ocean's lip
Where gently laps a tongue of water warm
Just as a kitten laps the foam of milk.
My thoughts were that I simply watched the form
Of some small cherubin that fell to earth
While chasing moonbeams on a cloud of silk.
Sight gave no valid clue to mortal birth.
Her earthly age could be no more than ten.
Although her body had an air of grace
And every movement spoke of music sweet.
She wore a smock of filmy mist and lace
That barely reached the dimples of her knees,
All pink and misty thin and plainly neat.
This angel neared the ocean by degrees,
Now stooping to a flower at her feet,
Now looking upward at a winging tern.
But her hair, her hair so touched my heart;
The golden paleness of it made me yearn
To crush her to me with a tender hold.
So long, and sculptured, like a work of art,
The tresses framed her lovely head in gold.
I watched her, ageless as she seemed to be,
And wished that any child could be so old,
To stand, observant of the earth and sky,
How like a woman, look aloof and cold
And be so lovely and composed about it all.
Then as I watched the child and wondered why,
And heard the sea gull give a laughing call,
Fair Deidre, in her dainty dress of frills,
Sat down abruptly on the warm wet sand,
Leaning the grime and water soak her frock.
Then with a softly skillful dainty hand,
The lovely maiden, with great care and pride
And patience, dug a hole to catch the tide.

Judy Beth Gibson

STILL THE WORLD IS WHITE

Still the world is white...
I have looked into the white
Recesses of the painted woodland
Hung with myriad prisms
Too small to see alone
And yet the hosts of them
Have engulfed every tree and bush
And the frail limbs
Are pencil lines
Drawn in the white fluff.
I have seen the white world
Rush by me in breathless glitter
As I sledged down the slope
Of a long crystal hill
And then at the bottom,
Stop and rise about me,
Tall cedars carrying in their arms
Such loads of snow
As if to try to bear it all away
Yet it slips through the green fingers
And with a crackle,
Shatters on the crusted white beneath,
Raising a small cloud of flying snow
To the breeze.
And still the world is white
And still.

Judy Gibson
THE DIVINE ERASER

Grass! Green grass!
Tall, thin blades shimmering in spring;
Sleeping under a blanket of snow;
Stretching and reaching toward the sun;
Sweeping softly over hills and plains;
Blanching to yellow under a summer sun;
Bathing in torrential rains of March;
Healing scarred battlefields of forgotten wars;
Green grass... peaceful grass;
Come... come... and hide my grave.

Bill DeArmond

STANDARD BEARER

Could I die for a cause of my own choosing
I would bear a standard,
And be crucified, nobly.
For the sake of broken-down shoes and creeds,
Saved and cherished
Because they fit so well,
Never rubbing and causing thought-provoking blisters,
For Valentines and Old Times' Sake
I would die, victimized by Ayn Rand,
Clasping my thumb-worn Edgar Guest
As a feeble, valiant sword

But martyrs aren't the fashion now.

Pam Picard

WHITE WATER

Before understanding the complete absurdity of it,
I was walking through the crystal etchings of a life,
eye-deep in the gray water that I never actually saw
or understood except, in sparse moments, when certain
words would turn the water a blinding white—blanking
out the phoenix gray.

But in these sparse flashes, I saw the birds die and
agonize with up-turned futile cups
and forests all spidered with the mists of moonlight and
sometimes (in early spring) the cool violet of Lenten
nights spent in the ecstasy of holy words that could
not be spoken but lived only in a tear or drop of rain.

And as he once said, there was time — not much — but
time to try to understand the impossibility of it
all -- the laughter and the light, the green and the
gutters, but most of all, the intensity of the written
life -- not quite so absurd, not quite so crystal — but
real and illuminated in white water...

Sam Edwards
A Short Story by Loreca Arnold

"Dead. My dad's dead."

But no-- can't be. Eddie's father couldn't be dead. Not Mr. Carry. And that's what he had said, "My dad's dead. He shot himself."

When Eddie and I were first engaged Mr. Carry joked, "Julie, better watch Eddie's roving eye."

Can't be dead. It's a mistake. It's the imagination playing tricks.

The after effects of that murder movie.

Mr. Carry couldn't have killed himself. Talked with him Sunday. I knew it was Sunday because I wore that green hat with the peacock feather and Mr. Carry asked me if I had been raiding his chicken yard.

But that's what Eddie had said, "Dad's dead. Killed himself with a shot-gun."

I'll call Eddie. That's what I'll do. Now what is the number 274-4358, no 274-4358 or is it 274-4385? Never can remember numbers. There's got to be a mistake. He couldn't be dead for on Sunday he made me laugh with his coon hunting adventure. Imagine climbing a bee tree to get a coon.

Why would Mr. Carry shoot himself in the stomach? He had cancer, doctors said six months but he didn't know he was going to die.

Mr. Carry's not dead. It's that movie. Dreamed about it all night. Talked with him Sunday--two days ago. He gave me that bottle with the ship in it I always wanted.


Had coffee with him on Sunday. He was O.K. then. Talked with him.

He told about the new swimming pool at Whitebox. He always liked to swim. Mr. Carry dead? No. But Eddie said, "Julie, my dad's dead."

It's that movie. Just imagined the phone rang.

It's 5:30. Alarm doesn't go off till 7:00. It's cold. What am I doing over by the phone? It's part of the dream. Sleep-walking.

That's it. That's why I have the phone in my hand. Just thought I talked with Eddie.

Know phone rang. Answered. Heard Eddie say, "Julie, my dad shot himself."


Mr. Carry can't be dead. Talked with him Sunday--day before yesterday. He played "Jailhouse Rock" on the banjo for me. But that's what Eddie had said, "My dad's dead, Julie."

Call Eddie. What's the number? Can't remember. Can't remember numbers. Can't be dead. Talked with him on Sunday...
AND THIS TOO SHALL PASS AWAY

Time filters through the hourglass of life,
Nations come and go,
New orders replace old
And pass into oblivion.
A breath, a heartbeat, an erratic pulse
And the brazen trumpet heralds another death.

Alexander the Great,
Astride an Arabian steed,
Conquers soul and mind
And rides on into the night.

Napoleon marches from victory to his Waterloo.
Greece is a forgotten Balkan country upon whose heart
the feet of timeworn philosophers once tread.
The glory that was Rome is of another day;
Thebes and Sparta are no more;
Carthage is in flames;
Constantinople is in ruin.

A shell-shocked paper hanger, inspired by his own rhetoric,
Ravishes the continent of Europe;
But ends all with a bullet in Berlin.
Naziism, Socialism, Communism-
Cancerous growths that destroy themselves.
Freedom, Democracy, Independence-
Sand-written words washed away by the tide of time.

The lion devours the lamb,
And meets death at the end of a spear;
He who rides the back of the tiger finds himself inside.

The Great British Empire-
On whose soil the sun never sets.
Idle boasts from a passe world power.
The England of Shakespeare, Elizabeth, and Churchill
Has taken permanent residence in the back of the bus.
Big Ben peals a mournful dirge over fog-shrouded London.

America - the hope of the free world;
That proud nation we salute on the Fourth of July.
Americans murder Americans while Americans urge them on;
The greedy, grasping hand is rewarded;
Draft cards are burned and the flag is tred upon.

Taps are blown on the battered bugle of liberty's foremost brigade;
The ship of state volleys a final, farewell salute;
The glowing embers of ancestral courage die in the black bowels of despair
As the black caisson completes its final journey.

And he commanded his priests to draft an axiom
true in all cases and situations;
And they presented him a rolled parchment upon
which were written the words:

"AND THIS TOO SHALL PASS AWAY."

Bill DeArmond

RUNNER-MAN

A red-eyed Mars looks down on you, runner-man;
Puppet-like, you jog from street light to street light;
A shadow, handless, with arms flaying, you jog.

Thin-soled feet shuffle, scraping unseen cinders;
The echo of your progress returns to you, lessened
And cast aside by neighboring rigid-walled domiciles;

Your breath, easy at first -- then self-restrained --
Came regular, in rhythm with the poetry of your body;
Then came, calling with heavy gasps your momentum's path.
Now, runner-man, your mouth drops agape; uncontrolled,
The breath comes quickly, rasping witness of your race;
Sing the ecstatic hurt, and run, thin-soled runner-man.

Charles F. Whitaker

SUMMER

Summer stands yawning --
Wide-mouthed with golden
Green-treed days
Engulfing and smiling me
Into waters so new and
Thrill-spent that I --
Stand puppet-toed, writhing
And turning
Knitted new and long into
The fervent, fateful philosophies
That only summer brings.

Sun Edwards
The Man from Albuquerque

Short Story by James Russell Reed, Jr.

It had been an unusually exhausting trip for supersalesman Frank McGuire. After five days of failure in his competitive world, McGuire was physically and mentally defeated.

Without a radio, the rain had been a lonely and disgusting companion on his trip from Corpus Christi. He was partially hypnotized by the inevitable sweep of the wipers as he reflected on his failures with the Gulf Coast Shipping Line.

"A change of my approach might be helpful. Wise up McGuire, a change of jobs might make your dream house a reality."

The rain suddenly intensified and shifted to thunderstorm caliber. As he reached to turn the wipers to high speed, McGuire caught sight of a hitchhiker, a precarious yard on the pavement.

He hit his brakes and swerved to the left. He caught a backward glance at the man. His drab green uniform was barely discernible through the torrent. McGuire's love of his native Marines coerced him to a sliding halt on the right shoulder.

Unlike most hitchhikers, the man slowly walked to the waiting car. This particularly struck McGuire funny, for the wind and rain had now taken on the characteristics of a moderate hurricane.

In what seemed more like five minutes than one, the stranger slowly opened the door, hesitated, and uncomfortably settled beside his new companion. As he did McGuire carefully left the dangerously eroded shoulder and breathed easier as the tires connected with solid pavement.

"Out of gratitude if nothing else, he should start the inevitable conversation."

After reaching normal speed, McGuire turned to study his new found companion. The rain had done its job on the man and his uniform hung heavily from his shoulders. The soldier was quite tall, easily three or four inches over six feet. He was blessed with large, powerful shoulders, although they were slightly stooped. It's doubtful that this was acquired poor posture... probably the weariness of his journey or the added weight of his soggy coat. The stranger had a heavy beard; at least a two day growth. His chin was rigidly set as that of any stern sergeant. The sunken eyes were set deep under a proud, protruding forehead. His wet hair smelled of salt, and hung smoothly over the top of his brown bushy eyebrows. McGuire guessed his age at around 35.

McGuire then noticed his huge hands crossed humbly on his leg. His right hand merited attention for he had seen only four like it. A layer, one inch in width, of dead, calloused skin extended from the top of his little finger to the wrist. Another layer of dead cells began on the thumb of the same hand, across the top of each finger, and finally connected with the ruddy epidermis of his little finger.

It had perhaps taken this man a year of painful, dedicated work to mold his right hand into a lethal weapon. McGuire had witnessed in Korea the explosive violence of karate. A man armed with one powerful thrust, returned his hand clutching the entrails of a Chinese infantryman.

"I'm glad he's on our side," McGuire thought to himself.

Five minutes of silence brought with it restlessness and a touch of anxiety. It was his job to take the initiative.

"Nasty weather isn't it?"

From the corner of his eye he caught a slight nod of agreement, but no facial change or reply.

Again he tried, silently begging for response.

"You stationed far from here?"

No nod or even so much as an audible grunt came from the silent giant. His eyes didn't stray from the road. Had it not been for the intermittent blinking of his eyes, a coma could classify his condition.

Frank McGuire, tough in business, and tough in Korea, still had no fear of his eccentric, and now unwanted, companion. But his state of restlessness had now developed into a state of anxiety. Even the quality of anxiety was alien to McGuire, and he found himself uncomfortable with his new-found state of mind.

"He's got to be going somewhere. Maybe if I asked where, the crazy bastard will give me some kind of answer."

"Where're you heading?" he questioned, with a tinge of urgency in his voice.

"Albuquerque."

The reasons were twofold for McGuire's relaxed breathing; the sound of the man's voice broke the increasing tension between the two; also they were just approaching the suburbs of Vaughn and Albuquerque lay only forty miles ahead.

An outgoing personality was a prime requisite in McGuire's profession. It subconsciously compelled him to attempt conversation.

"Care for a hump?"

The stranger studied the extended Camel. Without any indication of slight gratitude, he slowly removed the cigarette from the pack and lit it. He examined the smoke as a scientist might scrutinize a new alloy.

Suddenly his stolid expression became one of urgency. He held the hot
tip painfully close to his eyes, then pulled it back. He slowly repeated this process three times; each willful move strengthened the intensity of his face.

His dark eyes took on the color of the lighted tip, and soon took the appearance of small hot coals. His forehead wrinkled, and under the weight his brows and lashes were pressed close to the eyes.

"A quarter of an inch more and the small coals will ignite first the eye lashes, then the brows. Wish I'd never given him that damn toy."

McGuire focused attention on the road just in time to dodge an oncoming truck. The sudden shift of position jarred the cigarette from the sergeant's fingers. It hit the floor, rolled under the seat, and remained hidden.

Instantly the small bright coals became even hotter as they frantically searched for the concealed cigarette.

Suddenly its position was made known via a small steady stream of smoke. The tranquility of the smoke was soon broken by an irregular, larger flow accompanied by the stench of burning paper.

The stranger, in a violent and uncalled-for frenzy, began kicking at the origin of the smoke. He dislodged it from its hiding place with his left foot; then, with his right, he began to choke out the small flame. Soon the other foot joined the senseless trampling. Again and again his heavy boots came down hard on the smoldering ashes, until at last, he was satisfied.

The paper bag, in its original state, had contained two Corpus Christi hamburgers.

"This guy's not even in left field; he's out of the ball park completely."

Fear, anxiety, distrust, and a sense of imminent and increasing danger combined to force the speedometer to a jeopardous 75 miles per hour on a "slippery when wet" highway.

After five minutes of skillful and expeditious driving, McGuire once again observed his passenger through his slight peripheral vision. The scene he inconspicuously caught was both unexpected and unbelievable. Without quite knowing why, McGuire suddenly felt compassion for this man.

Large tears were forming in his eyes. When they became crowded in the sockets, large oval bodies, one by one, escaped down each cheek. The tears on each side of his face seemed to be released simultaneously and slowly raced one another to his now, not rigid jaw. The race usually ended with a tie, and both tears appeared to crystallize, dissolve, then disappear.

The large tears, extinguished the small burning coals that had been his pupils. They returned to their natural color of dark, rather attractive, brown. The tears, in fact, appeared to have enlarged his eyes.

Approximately ten minutes had passed since the cigarette incident.

During that time McGuire had managed frequent glances at his highly peculiar passenger. The feeling of built-up anxiety seemed to be washed away, for the most part, by the sergeant's silent tears. Being less apprehensive, McGuire watched the speedometer, as if it sensed the drop of tension, lower to average road speed.

McGuire's glances now became more frequent. He, with increased interest, observed that the man had not taken his eyes from the dispersed ashes on the floorboard.

Although considerably less rigid, McGuire's native outgoing personality had shifted to the characteristics of an introvert. He concluded his withdrawn disposition would only be temporary. His "old self" would probably be recomposed after he left Albuquerque. But still McGuire remained understandably uncomfortable.

The tears had grown less frequent until they ceased altogether, and slowly dried on his cheeks. No attempt was made to brush them away. Without crying, the silent giant was still the personification of remorse and intense grief.

His deadly hands were locked and again placed humbly above his knees. His eyes, after fifteen minutes, were still fixed on the scattered ashes below, his prominent forehead continued to push down heavily upon his eyebrows. It gave him the appearance of a man in deep, profound thought.

"They say there's a thin line that separates genius from insanity. Maybe this man is an example of that theory."

It had taken McGuire twenty minutes since the cigarette incident to regain his composure. Finally he spoke:

"According to that sign we're just four miles from Albuquerque."

The man slowly raised his head and began surveying the extremities of the sprawling city. McGuire obeyed the speed signs and slowed to 45 miles per hour.

"Just let me know where you want out."

If he gets any ideas about going on, I'll tell him this is my destination, Never did tell him where I was going in the first place."

While he continued his scheming, the man held up a huge forefinger indicating the next street to the right.

It was an average looking street in an average residential section. McGuire took notice of the dead end street sign and decided to drop his passenger at the corner.

"No use in taking any chances, although if he was going to try something, he would have probably done it before now."
The car eased to a stop adjacent to the curb. The man rolled down the window, slowly reached for the handle, wavered, and opened the door. He released his grip watching the door swing out over the sidewalk, hit its catch and, against gravitational force, slowly return to the car. The door would return to about half the distance of the car and then fall back towards the sidewalk.

The man patiently watched this process until the door remained suspended on the latch and was wide open. Only then did the stranger untangle his long, apparently weary legs. Altogether it took him thirty seconds of effort to extract his huge frame from the car.

The compact car seemed relieved as the small giant made his exit. The complaining springs squeaked and strained during his slow departure. Once relieved of their burden, they seemed to sigh with comfortable satisfaction.

With his back to McGuire, the sergeant gently closed the door. He then slowly turned, rested his arm on the door, and stared at his confused companion. His eyes left McGuire's, fell heavily upon the ashes, then back to McGuire's.

"Forgive me."

With that the stranger slowly turned and walked down the street.

McGuire turned away from him, lit a cigarette, French inhaled deeply, and pulled away from the curb. Instantly he received the blast from a threatening horn and swerved back to the curb.

He glanced to see if the loud report had startled the sergeant. Evidently it hadn't, for, in the light drizzle, he could see him slowly, calmly, almost against his will, climbing the steps of the house on the corner.

As he leaned to roll up the window, McGuire watched the Marine hesitate, open the door, and walk in.

Across the road from the white frame house, seeds were planted for a new shopping center. After checking his gauge, McGuire steered for the first completed structure. He was in hopes of some information as well as gas.

"Buenos dias, senor. May I be of service?"

"Fill 'er up."

"Will do."

"Tell me, amigo, do you know the soldier across the street?"

"Oh st!, everybody knows Sergeant Warwick. Is terrible thing that happened to him."

McGuire was going to ask what when he glanced across the street. From his new angle he could see that almost half of the house had been recently burned away.

"What happened to the house?"

"This is what I try to tell you. Is such awful thing to happen to fine fellow."

Two, maybe three nights ago, senor Warwick's little girl, Fax, such a pretty senoretta; she was smoking in the bed. So I guess she goes to sleep and maybe forgets to put out her cigarette. Anyways, she is burned up in the bed. Before firemen can get here, whole side of house is burning."

"Was anyone else injured?"

"I come to that. The Sarge's old man was not home when it burned. He was downtown at bar and hears about fire over radio."

When he gets home, firemen have fire almost out. The tequila had drowned half of his senses. Anyway, he pulls out pocketknife and is on the Sarge's wife. Took three firemen to pull him off. He blamed her for letting the child smoke and not saving her when the house burned. Senora Warwick died before she got to hospital."

"Hope the GREAT SOCIETY can do something for that man."

"Pardon?"

"Nothing."

"That's $2.18. Do you know the Sarge?"

"Yes... I know him..."

Frank McGuire, tough in business, and tough in Korea, was a less stout man as he drove away.
FUNERAL

They all came ---
The black ones,
Feet light with joy
And heavy with deceit ---
And hovered smotheringly over the coffin
Like malevolent Vultures
Waiting for a moment
When I was unwatchful
To take a taste a bit of
Of the bloodless corpse,
And I stood there smiling,
Screaming silent agony,
While they blow dry noses
On black trimmed herchiefs
And had a carnival
Of the heart.

Beth McDaniel

I KNOW

I know of a naked spring
Spreading himself over fragrant virgin hills,
Of summer, shimmering sweltering in the heat
Of her passion.
I have seen autumn waltzing
In a russet, rustling gown,
And winter, aloof,
A drift of
snow
in her hair.

Pam Picard

PARADE

Spinning ribbons
Red
BluOrange
Crimson
Slither across ethereal space
Blue space tinted
By White drums sounding
Distant thunderous rites
Approach
Waiting eager-nevred tense
Laughable children watching
From
Adults
Dour-faced shoulders
Closer and arrived, kangaroo
Steps of twirlers
Chubby legs
Blazed footed spangles
Grinning flesh, pompous
Exultation
At Being displayed
Soldiers
March
In weared countless cadenced
Times, hoping to rest soon
Stop at the town square
Statues
Of famous Americans, no Indians
In the fountain laden mortality
Herded into around the
Little stand, to hear the
Bitter mayor, happily announce
His
Pride
At the home-town boys
Claps, yells, sweaty palms
Greet the mayor
Tipping
His
Grey worn hat
Acknowledged
Cheers, for
The nothing he
Said.

Earl Paulus Murphy
A SOLITARY SOUL

The desolate Soul
doomed
to wander
Across the Universe, looking
For the first grains of sand
A huge clock, he carries
In his
perspiring hand
Time stands
still
His clock It doesn't tick
It's carried for prestige
The sand-wanderer
Crosses his meandering
path with
another's
A maniacal Soul
Called
Darkness
Who is lost
Because
He cannot see
or
Read Braille
All Darkness wishes
Is to see
As he pursues his Green Eyes
Around the
Horizon is
A solitary Soul
More stationary, but no
Stranger
To the rest

This is Keats
pondering
composing
upon some Pinnacle
A happy-sad Soul
Detached
In youth, from
brilliance
Perhaps, he saved his mind
but now
forever silent
except
to himself
Peter floats languid
Says Grace to Keats
The light in his head
Still shining
but
growing dimmer
He threw away the Bible
It made no sense
It was in Arabic
Now he reads
Rilke, Berdyaev
Sartre
And understands even less
Some Soul named
Rhameses
Ga-glazed-eyed Pharaoh
Proclaims he is God
Peter says jesuschrist
not that again.

Earl Paulus Murphy
I sought for God where men most often seek Him,
In cloisters and the holiest of places,
Where martyrs spilt their blood and prophets ragged
Pronounced their words of wrath on sinful races.
I sought Him in the temple and the tower,
And scanned the valleys deep and summits jagged,
I journeyed with the rivers, caught the flower
In all its incense, soft and pastel graces.
I heard the storm when cloud to cloud was speaking,
And yet I found Him not for all my seeking.

I sought for Him where anthems rise from choirs
Above high places, where the people pray
From altars draped in gold and candle fires,
I called to him amid the fading ray
Of many colored windows, and dismay
Was all that answered, for He answered not.

I sought for Him in corners of the town,
Where godly men were busy in their preaching,
Exalted in their words and high renown,
While pleading, scolding, quarreling, or beseeching,
Collecting or distributing or teaching,
They neither sought for God nor of Him found.

And so I sought where generations seek him,
In cloisters and the holiest of places.
At nature's temple there I paused to greet Him,
Twixt earth and sky where grow the woodland races.
I even sought to trace Him from afar,
And carefully I marked each constellation,
I probed the silver furnace of a star,
And found within its fires no consolation,
Save only one, that once on their creation,
His hand had touched them all, both fire and ice,
And yet His fingerprints would not suffice.

At last I sought for Him among the people,
Through tears, unworded prayers, and expectations.
I moved through sweating crowds of young and feeble,
And heard the words of children and of nations,
And found God where men would seldom seek Him.
Not in the temple or the sacred places,
In all their holiness I could not reach Him,
Nor at those alters where the woodland races
Meet in prayerless, preacherless congregations,
Nor did the heavens hold Him, nor did earth,
Though both by Him were fashioned, one of clay
And one of mist, still they in all their worth
Were not a fit abode for such a guest,
The sky's pavilion and the earth's broad nest,
Held nothing there to make Him pause or stay.
Nor could men's words in eloquence beseeching,
Describe Him well, nought but the heart's own teaching
Could thus reveal, for there He chose to rest.

Where love abides there God has found His dwelling,
In palace or in poor and humble places,
Come view in child and man His true fulfilling,
And see His resurrection in their faces.
Where infants dream or feeble men are sleeping,
There God may watch, if love her vigil traces,
Where men stand round a grave alone and weeping
There His tears also fall, there He is speaking,
Not where the winds shake hills and sway the grasses,
Nor in earth's mysteries, though of His creation,
But in men's lives where soundlessly He passes,
Where mind and soul are but His looking-glasses,
The heart, His habitation.

Judy Williams
Short Story by Gary N. Hunt

Lieutenant Sheldon Price walked out of his longhouse command post which stood in a small Montagnard village somewhere along an ill-constructed road between Ban Don and Plei Me, South Vietnam. An early afternoon rain had just finished and the air seemed fresh. He felt good, there had been no sniper fire, or for that matter, any other trouble the night before and he had received a good night's sleep. He walked to the edge of the village where a Montagnard guard stood staring across a clearing into the jungle.

"Hello," said the lieutenant.

The Montagnard tribesman turned and smiled, showing his stained teeth.

Price tucked his thumb into the belt which held up his forty-five caliber pistol and rolled his tongue around in his mouth as he squinted from the afternoon sun. He spoke casually in the local dialect as if he knew it fluently, which he did not, "Is everything all right?"

The tribesman nodded as he held his constant stare at the American. "Good," said Price, and he patted the soldier on the shoulder as he walked on. The guard returned his never-ending glare toward the jungle.

The lieutenant walked the entire perimeter of the village then turned inward and walked between the longhouses. He stopped in the midst of a small crowd and listened to an American Army Staff Sergeant conduct a class in First Aid. Price didn't understand everything that was being said as the class was being conducted to the village people by the sergeant in the local language. Price watched the people's faces; they looked as hard as bronze but he felt sure they were paying attention.

The sergeant looked up and noticed him, then nodded while continuing with the lecture. Price lifted his hand in a waving gesture, then walked on. He peeped in the open end of one of the longhouses where the previous night's patrol was sleeping. The men were spread out on wooden slabs with their weapons and equipment dangling from pegs in a wooden pole which hung crudely above them. He smiled at their child-like sleeping positions.

As he walked back toward the headquarters building, a young American soldier came trotting up. "There you are, lieutenant," said the soldier, "I was beginning to think you had deserted."

Price smiled, "That sounds like a good idea, Jim, but I'll be damned if I know where to go."

"I heard the VC's got a big crap game going up in the mountains."

The lieutenant laughed, "And I guess if anyone in this camp knew about it, you would."

"That reminds me, lieutenant, I knew I was looking for you for some reason," he reached inside his fatigue jacket and pulled out a letter. He handed it to Price, "You got this in the supply drop this morning."

"Good," said Price, taking it from him. "What's it say?"

The soldier smiled, "Well you know how it is, lieutenant, I wouldn't want to give away any trade secrets. Well, I gotta be gone, lieutenant, those dat-goned VC's 'll steal my radio if I don't get back to it." He turned and trotted off again.

"Okay, Jim, I'll see you later."

Price looked at the return address as he walked on; it was from Julie. He trotted up the steps of the porch and entered the command post.

He stopped for a moment to stare at the letter then took a seat on an empty ammunition crate behind a make-shift desk of various stacked boxes. He glanced at a can opener lying beside an empty olive-drab can of pineapple. Price picked up the can opener and peeked inside the can but nothing remained but a small pool of juice.

The lieutenant lighted a cigarette and replaced the pack into his pocket. He held the letter close to his face, and as delicately as a surgeon placed the point of the can opener into one corner of the letter. Neatly and slowly he slit the top of the envelope. "Fling," he stuck the sharp pointed edge into the wooden box in front of him.

I THINK I ALWAYS LOVE THE FIRST FALL OF SNOW, the letter began. IT'S SO LOVELY AND SOMEHOW EVERYTHING SEEMES SO CLEAN, BUT GOODNESS I HATE IT LATER IN THE WINTER. BUT I DON'T WANT TO THINK OF THAT NOW. IT'S ALWAYS SO DEPRESSING, ISN'T IT? I MEAN LATER ON IN THE WINTER.

He stopped, smiled, and looked to the ceiling. That's it, he thought, just a little at a time. Julie, I love your letters, they always make things so simple. But I don't want to read them too fast. They're the only thing left in this hell to live for. He returned to the letter.

YOUR AUNT CAME BY ONE DAY LAST WEEK. GOODNESS SHE'S AWFUL, ISN'T SHE? EVERYTIME SHE COMES OVER SHE JUST PREACHES ABOUT HOW SHE RAISED YOU AND HOW IF IT WASN'T FOR HER THAT YOU WOULD NEVER HAVE MADE IT TO THE POINT. EVERYONE KNOWS HOW YOUR FATHER DIED GETTING THAT MEDAL AND ALL THAT. SHE STILL SPEAKS OF YOU AS IF YOU WERE A CHILD, BUT YOU KNOW ABOUT ALL THAT.

Price wished he had a soft-backed chair so he could lean back and take it easy. But he didn't, so he just propped one arm on the desk and sucked in another lungful of smoke.
Ah, West Point, he remembered, the parade fields laid out in a neat blanket of snow. And Julie coming down sometimes on the weekends. I guess I'll never forget that shining face trotting toward me. And those Sunday afternoon walks in the park. Her head clad in a scarf. I wonder if that was the only one she had; she always wore a blue scarf. He smiled to himself then returned to the letter.

REMEMBER WHEN WE WERE YOUNG AND WE SAID SOMEDAY WE WOULD GO ALL OVER THE WORLD TOGETHER?

"But don't I remember?" he said aloud, looking out at the thatched roofed longhouses across the way. I'll never forget that fight I got into, he thought. He giggled aloud. That damned fist fight. I don't even remember what it was for, or who it was with. Do remember it was over Julie though. Boy was she mad. No, I don't guess she was mad, just embarrassed. I won the damned fight and she started crying. Isn't that like a woman? I had to give her my prettiest marble to shut her up. Wow! Were we young then, weren't we? He lighted another cigarette and looked back down at the letter.

ANYWAY IT LOOKS LIKE WE WON'T MAKE IT NOW. GOODNESS THIS HURTS ME. WHY COULDN'T YOU HAVE BEEN AN ORDINARY SOLDIER AND WANTED TO GET MARRIED WHEN YOU GOT OUT OF THE POINT? WHY DID YOU HAVE TO KEEP POSTPONING IT? OH, I KNOW YOU JUST HAD TO GO TO THAT SPECIAL FORCES SCHOOL. I CAN UNDERSTAND THAT, BUT THEN YOU WERE SET UP TO GO TO VIETNAM. I JUST CAN'T WAIT ALL MY LIFE!!! I'M SORRY.

"What is this," he thought, as he continued reading.

ANYWAY MAMA KEPT SAYING I REALLY SHOULD GO OUT SOME, YOU KNOW, SHE DIDN'T WANT ME TO FEEL LEFT OUT OF THE COMMUNITY. I DIDN'T WANT TO, REALLY I DIDN'T, BUT MOTHER PERSUADED ME IT WAS BEST, SO I STARTED DATING THIS DEVINE (she had crossed out the word "devine", but it was still legible) JOURNALIST ON THE PAPER HERE. WELL THAT WAS ABOUT SIX MONTHS AGO. OF COURSE IT WASN'T SERIOUS AT FIRST BUT YOU KNOW HOW THINGS WORK OUT. HE'S SO NICE AND ALL. I'M SURE YOU WOULD ADORE HIM. ANYWAY HE HAS ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM. GOODNESS I WISH THINGS COULD HAVE WORKED OUT. I HATE SO MUCH TO TELL YOU ABOUT ALL THIS, BUT IT'S Best, ISN'T IT? THE TRUTH IS ALWAYS BEST. WELL, THERE ISN'T MUCH LEFT OF THE STORY. NOW WE'RE ENGAGED.

Sheldon Price couldn't believe it. He read back over the last paragraph. He didn't move, he just sat there staring into space and holding the letter in one hand. He remembered the social events she spoke of very well, and how beautiful she looked dressed in an evening gown, he remembered coming home Christmas and attending the parties, and how everyone spoke about how charming a couple they made. He remembered their walks in the park at West Point. He remembered graduation day and how proud Julie was of him. He remembered, all too well, the planning of their marriage after the Special Forces school, then Vietnam.

Yes, he thought, I had to plan so perfectly.

The letter slipped through his fingers and fell in his lap. He got up and unconsciously walked to his cot where he threw himself down. "This isn't... No!" he thought, "How could she do it to me? This is too much. Who the hell does she think she is?"

He lay there silently and watched a rat skip across the floor. "That's great, that's just fantastic," he thought. "Why the hell don't women have an obligation in war? Good grief, this just can't be."

The same sergeant who had been giving the First Aid instructions earlier that evening, entered. Price sat up, rather slumped, and held his head in his hands.

"Didn't you get any sleep last night, lieutenant?"

Without looking up Price slowly answered, "George, have you ever had the whole world fall out from under you?"

"A few times," he said walking over to lay his carbine against the make-shift desk.

"What would you do if, say your wife ran away with some other man?"

The sergeant grabbed a tin cup from the desk and knelt beside it where a metal container of coffee set. "That's not likely," he chuckled. "Ever seen her picture?"

Price was silent, feeling that his older friend was not going to be helpful.

The sergeant walked around and had a seat at the desk. Holding the cup in both hands he commented, "But if I had troubles and I was in Saigon I'd get drunk. If I was home I'd belt the hell outa some peaceful pickets. But since I'm here I'd go down to the dispensary and look at the desperate faces of some of those stragglers that came in from the highlands today."

Price looked up as if someone had called him a dirty name, "I've seen enough desperate faces. I'm sick and tired of the whole lot. I feel like I just want to lie down and die. And you know what, George, I'm in the right place to do it. The next battle we get into I'm going to stand up and fire my rifle until I go down like a man."

"Yeah, that'd make a good movie scene. Naw I gotta better idea, you go ahead and do that and I'll write a story about you and send it into SAGA. You got any snapshots for the article?"

Price stared a long stare of disbelief then looked away and drug out another cigarette.

Speaking in a tone of voice to regain his friend's confidence yet still put his point across, the sergeant said, "Sheldon, you don't have to be dramatic to
die over here. If you don't have a reason to live you'll die soon enough. Every soldier goes into war thinking he's going to die, realizing he's not going back but remembering he has a reason to go back for, just in case he does make it. If a soldier had to worry day in and day out whether he was going to make it or not, he'd kill himself before the enemy had a chance.

"Naw, you gotta go back, lieutenant. And if for no other reason, you should go back just to prove to yourself that you can change your life for the better. That you can heal your wounds."

Price lay back on his bunk. "You can't change my mind, George. I've simply got nothing to go back for."

"Good," said the sergeant standing, "Then the world will have lost nothing, you'll just be flesh going to dust, no more and no less, merely a process of nature." He set his cup down, picked up his carbine and walked out.

As Price lay there he heard a "thud" sound immediately followed by the distinct crack of a rifle. As if by reflex rather than motivation, he jumped up and ran to the doorway, stopping cold just inside. He dropped to the floor and nervously reached out, grabbing the limp and lifeless body of his friend by one foot. He pulled and jerked until the body was in the middle of the room. He came to his knees and clutched the top of the desk breathing hard and fast. His knees uncontrollably knocked against the floor while fear climbed up his spine like a ladder and grabbed the back of his head with tingling numbness.
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