

# EREHWON

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This publication is dedicated to those whose  
work was not published in it. Keep writing.

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# EREHWON 1980

Winston Churchill's literary magazine

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## FIVE

*Anne Lowther*

But before I continue, let me tell you something about myself. I was born in a Kansas barn; my father was watching my arrival while holding a pitchfork. My uncles were not concerned with this untimely birth; they kept on milking the cows, for it was five o'clock.

My life continued in bizarre sequences. When I was five years old my brother was born in my bedroom. Why there, I don't know. I didn't understand why my mother was sprawled on the floor but I remember my father brought in a book to read.

When I was twelve I had my first spill. I was rollerskating in the upper hallway when it seemed as though the floor popped up and hit me. I laid there stunned; my arm felt broken. My father came and gazed down on me with his hazel eyes. He clicked his tongue and said, "Uh huh." My mother was the one to call the doctor; my uncles were in the barn again.

I went on my first date when I was in tenth grade. I wore my new dress that mom had made. My father greeted my boy caller with a stiff handshake and "Uh huh." I departed with my date and we went to the theatre. At the movies I discovered my father sitting five rows behind us. I politely asked my date if I might powder my nose and left the theatre to return home.

When I was nineteen, I was to be married to a very nice man of twenty-nine years. During the ceremony the preacher asked if there were any objections to this union. My father clicked his tongue and said, "Uh huh." My mother cried and we all went home. I changed my clothes and went to the barn. It was five o'clock and I decided to join my uncles milking the cows.



THE CREAM-FILLED FEET

Lock your doors and sound the alarms!  
Hide in your basements and wait.  
For the cream-filled feet have taken up arms  
And the gods shall decide your fate.

They grew from the sneakers and bakery crumbs  
That were left, by the wealthy,  
in poor people's slums.  
Their childhood poverty; wet, gray and dim,  
Has made them both calloused and grim.

Shoeless and free, they run through the streets  
Shouting, "Lucky are those I have missed!"  
For they stamp on the toes of the mean that they  
meet  
'Cept for Harvey the podiatrist.

*Frank Lantz*

*Maral Kibarian*

Perfect days are hard to come by. Summertime sky and sunburned cars to the beach.

"Pile in everybody," said Daddy. "One-two-three, and in you go."

Everyone was in his place playing billboard alphabet until Chipper said that he won because the last van he saw had a bumper sticker that said, "Zombies do it in the Nuthouse."

"You didn't win because there wasn't anything with a z," said Chris calmly.

"I did too."

"Then how come no one else saw it?"

"Because you weren't next to the window and you couldn't see it as fast as I could," he replied quickly. He was young, but not as dumb as he looked. It was getting itchy.

"Then let me sit next to the window."

"No, get away. Take Muffie's window. This is my side."

Chris started to pull Chipper away from the window, and Chipper was going to hit him over the head with the Kleenex box, but the front seat interrupted. "Cool it back there. All of you be good."

"Hey," Daddy said, pointing to the colorful summer spectacle in the distance. "Who wants to go to the carnival?" Immediately the back seat said yes, but the front seat didn't hear them because they were delicately draped with a soundproof ice castle curtain.

"Darling, do you really think we ought to?" said Mommy breathingly.

"It'll be fun. Don't you think so? We haven't been in years, and the kids will love it."

"Well, it's just that we said we were going to the beach, and I think we should do what we said we were going to do."

"It doesn't really matter. You-do-what-you-like," Mother whispered each word, a succinct piece of ice clinking into a chilled glass.

"What sort of commit—"

"I'm hungry," bolted Chipper like a hot sneeze. He dug his chin into the front seat. Relievedly, the curtain dropped away. The morning sun had lost its hopeful tint as occasional clouds breathed through the sky. But the hot afternoon glare still remained.

"O.K. Chipper," said Dad. "Where do you think we should go?"

"Can we go to the place with the horses and onion rings that we always go to?"

"Oh yeah," Chris said. "Gulliver's."

"Gulliver's?" I don't know where that is, but maybe we can find it."

Mommy rubbed her eyes and said with pinched words, "You wouldn't know where it is would you, Sweetheart. It's difficult to remember where anything is when you are home so rarely."

Daddy tight-roped through a sigh. "What is *that* supposed to mean, Sweet-ie?"

"Nothing, really." Whispers don't always mean what they seem.

"Why don't you just *tell* me where it is?"

"Oh, it's too far away. It doesn't matter at all."

"*Certainly* it does," he said white-knuckledly. "What did you mean when you just said . . ."

"Daddy, I'm freezing," Muffie interrupted.



He turned around absent-mindedly. "Baby doll, it's ninety-eight degrees outside. Here, I'll lower the AC, and it'll warm up in a minute."

It didn't seem like summer anymore. It looked just as shiveringly cool outside as it was inside. A lone brown leaf, rolling across an empty highway, could be seen from the corner of your eye. They had been traveling for years, and now, never having been anywhere, they were returning. The beach was forgotten; it wasn't such a good idea anyway.

"I can't wait until we get home so we can run on the new carpet in the basement and get electric shocks," said Muffie hopefully.

Chris slowly turned away from the window and said with John Lennon eyes and punctual words, "You're so stupid."

"You don't have to. Chipper will."

"He's dead, dummy," he replied authoritatively.

Muffie glanced at Chipper leaning against the window. "He's just sleeping."

"You're retarded," he said disgusted. "He's dead."

It was true. "Shut up!" she shouted violently. It was so easy to pinch. She got an elbow in his eye and scratched his arm.

At the loudest yell the front seat cried hoarsely, "Cool it you two. Be good."

"She's punching," Chris said righteously.

The front seat sighed together. The summertime sun had given up to stenciled trees that etched the winter sky. Mother said tiredly, "You children fight so much you spoil what could have been a perfectly lovely day."

PART TIME PARENT

Once a month I come to visit your apartment  
stale with cheap perfumes and cheaper wines.  
Greying beard scratches as I drown in your  
curious warmth.

Motorcycle ride to the laundramat, engine screaming,  
laughter melting in the wind.

We dine on hot-dogs, potato chips and coke. I get  
to wash, blowing flimsy bubbles to the ceiling and  
watching them pop.

Curl up together in bed, bowl of pop-corn between us,  
watching the late show as I am swallowed in  
dreamless sleep.

*Debbie Lynn*

MY MOTHER

My mother unwraps prepacked laments in her fragile  
corner

Careful not to spill Grace this and Ruth that on the  
faded green tapestry

But the stains on the rug are those of seasonless  
struggles

Of giving warmth and receiving burnt pot roast

She skips the laundry waiting in philosophical mounds  
to rescue a choking percolator

*Marion Jacobson*

NEWSREAL

The news said today  
that seeds were growing  
in the desert  
while African women  
gave milk from naked breasts  
into mouths of empty tin cans  
I tried to reach them  
through the screen  
begged them to see the black holes  
but white milk gave us  
different languages,  
created subtitles  
without translation  
I opened a Coke  
and feel asleep to the peaceful  
monotone buzz of machineguns  
in a movie from some war

*Maria Osterberg*

## THE RAIN

*Nancy Zusman*

Rain is the culmination of the sunny skies. It doesn't wash away and make everything beautiful like the sun or snow does. Its tears fall, making me feel lonely and yet it is lovely. There aren't any racking sobs to accompany a winter shower. The drops fall onto the rainbow puddles sending out circles. I can almost hear the echoes as they vibrate quieter and softer than the previous ones. I sit and enjoy it; loving nature for allowing me to witness the simple splendor.

Listen to the trees wavering in the wind, and the water falling on the metal pipes and cement walks. Watch the children splashing in the puddles, and the lovers holding hands oblivious to the weather. Smell the wet leaves, and the smoke from fires in cozy fireplaces. Taste the cool, sweet water as it falls from the sky, and the wet, salty tears of a little boy who slipped in the rain and cut his knee. Or simply feel the damp hair sticking to your head, and your warm, dry boots keeping your toes comfy, while around you the precipitation falls.

Life is a series of beginnings and endings, like the rain. A new opening yawns before an old one has even shut and locked itself in my mind. A large segment of my life, like a book in a series, is terminating. A door is closing, but before it does I want to reflect on the novel's content. What is significant to

me? The blank page of the future sits before me waiting to be filled. Slow down. Let me just read the past for a bit; don't force me forward when I'm not ready.

I'll let the rain fall, bringing its sorrows and joys with it. Don't let the sun shine or the snow start just yet. Some people never look back and take stock, they make the same mistakes over and over again. Others live in the past rewriting the script until they don't know what they started with, and are only satisfied with an impossible perfect. I merely want to reflect, no repeat performances, just proofread the rough draft. No corrections will I make.

The rain continues to fall. A little girl sits watching it spellbound, the drips caress her curls. She has no problems, a true lover of life. No concerns trouble her smooth brow. She doesn't even realize she is missing anything. Innocent of the ways of the world, she catches the water on her tongue. It is better not to tell her of the chemicals in her refreshing drink. Try to get her to understand that everything isn't pure and simple, black and white.

An older version of the girl sits beside her. The sky's tears mingle with her own. She has just learned the lesson that not everything in life is permanent. Life goes on despite the dragging of her heels. Time can't be made to stand still, no matter what the reason. A frown encompasses her brow leaving a wrinkle or two in its wake. Shades of gray and off-white

cloud her horizon. Try to tell her everyone has their downs to go along with the ups. You make her comprehend the emotion hate, and while you're at it explain why everyone doesn't love everyone else.

Next to her sits a larger young lady. One leg is crossed over the other, and a small smile resides on her lips. She thinks the rain cleans everything up and leaves life brand new. No one has taught her that her little life and surroundings aren't the center of the universe. Never has she had to make an important decision, other than what color dress to wear. You'll need plenty of patience before she realizes that other people might actually count on her for something, or she might have to witness something distasteful, or do something repulsive, on purpose.

Apart from all the others, a young woman sits. Her face shows the lessons she has learned. Thoughts chase themselves to and fro in her head, like puppies chasing their tails. She looks happy and yet anxious. People can depend on her in emergency situations, and she deals with life the way she sees fit. No longer does she live on dreams, but on reality. She isn't afraid of death, and she doesn't consider herself the center of the world. I reach out to pat her on the head, but she merely shakes her head and smiles.

I love the rain. For a few moments I sit contemplating my past and wondering what my future holds. Sometimes I wish upon a star or hold my breath while we're passing a cemetery. So many things are a

part of my life now, I know so much, and yet I know nothing. If I had everything to do over again, I think I would do everything the same. I am satisfied with my lot in life.

The rain is my perfect ending for my present book in the series. It allows me to speculate on the places I'll never go, and the people I'll never meet, and the things I'll never do. No matter what happens I'll still have my dreams, my memories, my hopes, and my fears. The rain makes sure no one can take them away from me. Troubles may cloud my vision, but the rain will eventually come and help to wash away my problems. It doesn't make them go away, it merely allows me to see them from a different point of view. I can then get a more objective sight of them. My perspective is altered, and various possible solutions occur to me. People will apologize for their wrongs, and I will accept their "I'm sorry's," as they will accept mine. I may not know my own destiny, but I do know the rain will fall again.



OLD WOMEN

Pale gargoyles in the morning windows,  
smiles fold in their gentle chalk and  
cameo skin.

They trod the dull lilac of lobby rugs  
to brunch rooms where they suck at cigarettes  
like thermometers.

Slow as sundials, churning at the days  
they browse through life . . . little patent  
leather penguins.

They are rimmed and buttoned into their suits of  
arthritic armour.

Their widow rings welded to their fingers  
where the blue veins twine like brooks.

*Rebecca Bogart*

OVER THE EDGE

A leaf reflects  
its veined hand  
in Winter windowpanes  
wondering,  
when its fingers shall grow  
to reach out  
and grasp the windowpane  
to push it open  
and grab the sun

*Sandy Kaul*

AN IDIOT'S ANTHOLOGY

*Anne Lowther*

We sit and talk and act like student. But you  
know what we really think,  
"Springsteen, look out guy,  
The sylphs will get you every time."

Girls wear flowers in their spaghetti hair. Boys wear  
cut-off net shirts. (Count the hairs on their chest-  
boy-they're-macho.) Lovers write in paper wads, "P.  
S. I luv U." It is summer. Sandy ground. Lunatics pour  
7-Up on the sidewalk and watch the foam. Friends  
play in the gutters of warm rain. Administrators  
corner students in the halls. No food in the stair  
wells, please. Jocks get into okra.

(Let's dream about prairie dogs)

The floor show from Woodies arrives, Knits in,  
polyester suits out. You'll look better in the clothes  
you wash with Woolite. It is fall. Rich dark earth.  
The world yawns rusty leaves. The Beatles play, "Back  
in the U.S.S.R." Let's take a trip through bathroom  
tile tunnels.

"What? A job? Where do you work?"

If only someone could bring in a wheatfield for show  
and tell.

(Let's dream about porcelain.)

"Clint Eastwood is back in Potomac.

There are jujyfruits on the bottom of our shoes.

Wear the Britain flag.

Let's go blonde.

(Let's dream about warm cottage cheese)

An epitaph from the high school crowd. A pa-  
thetic gurgle from the grave. The priest reads in a  
stretch gabardine voice and adults giggle. The guard

rails cry. Teachers check the date from their electric watches. Shrug at the parent's words,

"It's O.K.

We don't need them anyway.

We don't even understand  
their absurd irrelevancy.

**THEY LIVE BEYOND THE NORM."**

First day of winter. Bitter winds. So? Where is the snow anyway? There is only cold hard ground that we cry on as we write the suicide notes for the season. Thusly the scratch reads,

"Christmas is here. Electric candles in the windows. Old ladies cry to blinking lights. We are dying inside our beanbag chairs."

Let's hear it for "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen." Hey, no-way-man-we're-Jewish-shalom (yeah Israel). Gentiles say it "Bernard's Birth." The brave Macabees. Time it was and what a time it was it was a time of innocence. It reminds me of the youth I never was.

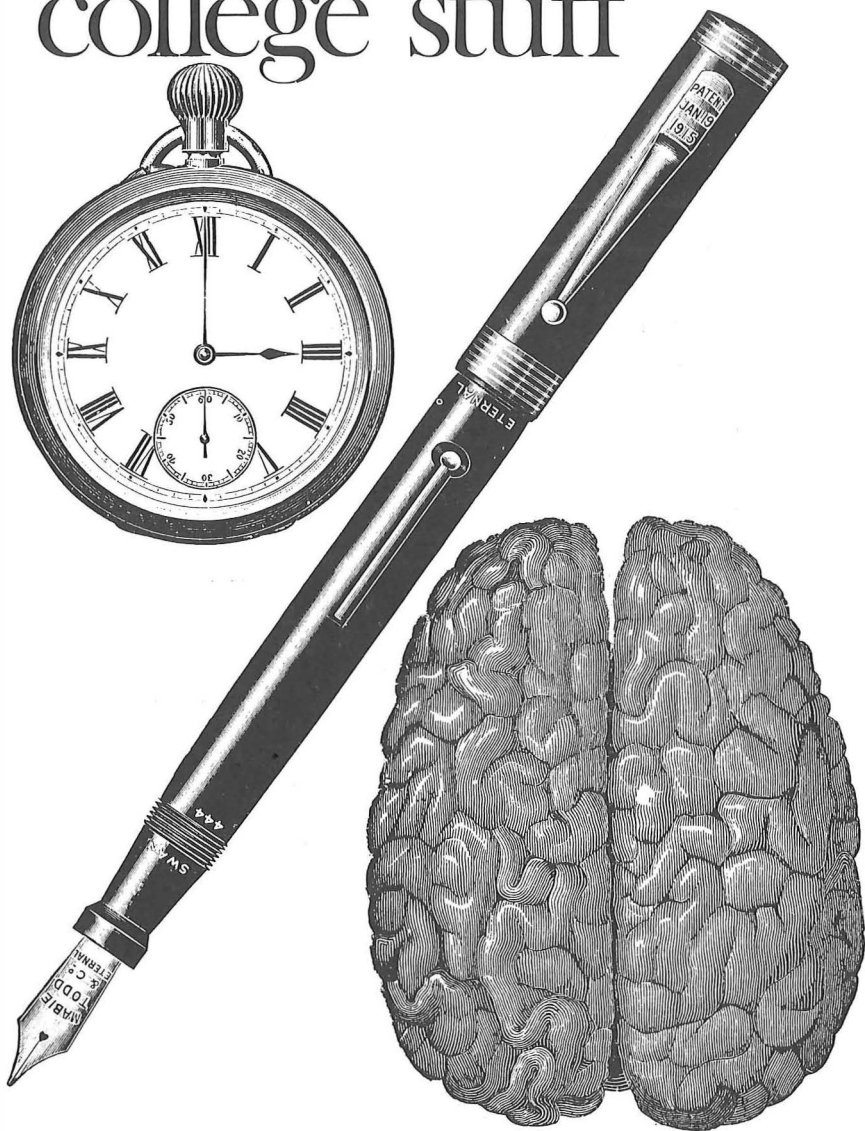
(Let's dream about kerosene lamps)

The slow green pollen blurs arrive late. Dig up your convertible and let's peel out. Beach, baby. The Pike and Captain Bob's—groovy. Spring is here. And we mow down the chewed clover on the ground that is soft, damp mud. Sixth graders weave grass chains,

"Sееее? I'm a QUEEN."

We wish for a time when our hair no longer curls in sticky, humid sweat. We pray that it will rain on the kickball game in front of the house. Let's go swaying to the tune we are singing.

# college stuff



BREAKFAST

*Janine Jackson*

Cast of Characters:

Father

Mother

Jenny (daughter)

(Mother stands at stove. Jenny enters.)

Jenny: Good morning, Mother.

Mother: Salutation.

Jenny: What's for breakfast?

Mother: Itemized list.

Jenny: Can I bring the turtle in for Show and Tell?

Mother: Denial.

Jenny: Why not?

Mother: Denial.

Jenny: But why? I won't hurt him.

Mother: Denial. Weak attempt at appeasement and introduction of new subject.

Jenny: I'll show my new watch then.

Mother: Warning.

Jenny: Oh, I'll be careful. I won't even take it off my wrist.

(Father enters.)

Mother: Acknowledgement of new presence.

Father: General Salutation.

Jenny: Morning, Daddy.

Mother: Complaint.

Jenny: Yes, Daddy, we *must* get it fixed. It's burned

four pieces of toast this week.

**Father:** Noncommittal comment.

**Mother:** Whine.

**Father:** Grumble.

**Mother:** WHINE!

**Father:** Expletive!

**Jenny:** Billy Henderson showed a worm last week.

(Pause) Miss Crane said it was interesting and Billy showed off with it all day. That's why I wanted to bring Henry, so I could show him off. (Longer pause) I don't think a slimy old worm is that interesting.

**Father:** Inconsequential question?

**Jenny:** Well, he had it in a box.

**Mother:** Irrelevant comment.

(Silence. girl shifts uncomfortably.)

**Jenny:** Well, I'm going to go. The Show and Tell person is supposed to be there early.

(She rises from the table. **Father** rises also and kneels in front of her; squeezes her shoulders.)

**Father:** Blatant plea for affection.

**Jenny:** Hee hee. Yes, Daddy, I'm your honey bear.

**Mother:** Cool comment on immaturity of scene.

**Father:** Angry remark.

**Mother:** Personal attack.

**Father:** Challenge to argument.

**Mother:** Acceptance of challenge.

**Jenny:** (Leaving) My watch is better'n a dumb ole worm any day.

IDIOT'S DELIGHT

Presents from iwas to inow come at  
curious intervals  
Those neat packages  
(filled with hidden cacophonies)  
which are tightly wrapped with  
opaque grocery store paper land  
taut finger-pinching twine unravel and  
Krazy-glue which sequestered them in sequenced  
cubbies (with witty catch-all phrases)  
begins to melt  
And  
the crackle of cellophane bitten open  
subway—deafens my ears  
disso<sup>nati</sup>ngforced calm  
The betamax in my brain turns on  
to contaminate sterilized thoughts  
Today we are watching Love and Death  
Tick-tock, seven o'clock, time to get up  
the sun explodes into black obscenely early  
Except for Friday  
Oooh, Friday feels just like a blanket of champagne  
Kevin M. stabs me with a pencil today  
He likes me  
Love hasn't changed  
Now they use mechanical pencils that leave their  
lead (or is it graphite?) points inside to  
pierce your skin forever  
It hurts.



No, love hasn't changed, and I still have knee  
socks that fall down  
Today we go to the zoo  
to see the panda bears who've lost their hair  
In the car speeding trees melt together  
If you close your eyes in the sun, mish-mashed  
yellow kaleidoscopes puncture your blindness  
Can you pretend to sleep without blinking?  
And then-hostage  
Kidnapped (temporarily) by a rope of finality  
We crystallize the connection for a minute  
Just for a (strained over shoulders)  
flash of blood  
or a shocked person's dead fish eye stare  
Remumble the details (everyone knew her because  
she was dead)  
You've got to be there to walk away  
But someday we won't . . .  
STOP!!!!!!!!!!  
Only fools watch re-runs  
It's an idiot's delight

*Devey Wing*

*Rebecca Bogart*

And so it seems that throwing myself into a ditch this morning had set me to thinking. A ditch is like a bistro at a French airport . . . you never seem to meet anyone you know there. But this morning I longed for such a simply stupid thing. I just wanted someone to walk by and ask me "What's wrong there, you, down in the ditch, there?" And I would say, "There is nothing wrong" from under the clay and ferns and of course, they would say, "But you are in a ditch and you are thin and covered with woods and crying." And I would smile so riveted and hard and say, "This is obvious. And, but, how, now for, nor neither, may I say I don't understand why crying is so censored and run from. Crying is a daily outing for me . . . like the yacht club for some others. Crying is just filling the voids with tears, and tears are the fish of the soul. And how else can I cripple these distractions that run like banshees and thieves through my head? Did you ever think that just because I'm crying doesn't mean I'm sad? Maybe I'm just in awe in a very moist sort of way. Maybe I've never had such such a nice place to tear up. Maybe I don't sweat enough so I need the volume by water displacement by crawling under rocks and displacing myself and watch people slip on the water as they are out for morning tennis. Did you ever wonder exactly what this crying is? Well, now you know—it

just comes from being a longtime acquaintance of impossibly beautiful things. And I'm saying beautiful because beauty is worth the effort of crying and one should waste one's time trying to think of a better word for beautiful than just beautiful . . . like *exotica el enchantissimo*."

And after that little oration the person who'd asked me like a proper samaritan would think, "She's probably too busy thinking up that nonsense than to be worried that she's in a ditch." And they'd tip their hat, shawl, nose, and teeth and go to the place they work to type on Sanka and pastry.

But, regarding all around me and regardless of myself, I get amazed when I cry and at the same time am thinking that I wouldn't have myself any other way. I am too good friends with this ditch idiot who follows me. Maybe I'm not a ditch idiot at all. Maybe I'm not any of the any's I've been since kindergarten. I think I am my own probation officer and I'm in the coat pocket of some person who looks like me and goes around jumping into ditches and asking forever "Is it O.K. if I just . . . ?" and then crying when I get the answer. And boy do I get the answer. It slaps me hot as a taco from the electric summer stands at Rehoboth.

But now let's say I write most of what happens to me down. Let's say I don't mind doing it but a little gratification would be nice. And then career men with corroded skin come and put it between corroded,

well-displayed covers and then half the world buys it and gets fooled by thinking that I had a fun as "hell with no penance" time writing it. And then the career men type up articles about my *FUN* and how " . . . we really need these lunatics to yarn us out from time to time. . . ." And the people think that once I've described pain that I don't need to bother with it any more and it surely doesn't need to bother with me. Me and pain just sort of shake gloved hands and slink away. And then I get isolated and put pain like stacatto notes on music sheets. And I play on it by pressing the keys, which are the faults I thought I'd gotten rid of and the remembering that opens up from behind me like a fiery blue lotus. . . . a blue flower always wins any emotion from me. And I set in the dark part of the stain-lighted, candle-soaking church and listen to the Saints like loud weather trotting upon the roof. And I wake up in March and stare at the moon as it wrinkles on my carpet. Then I trip over old shoes and wretched strips of houseplants I neglected. . . . and I write descriptions of the moon on paper towels and empty record covers because all my paper is used up from writing other moon wrinkled descriptions. And the words are nice company, but wouldn't it be better for someone to come and sit here, both of us in slippers, and not talk and not be artists . . . but just wrinkle together like the light and carpet and papers ripped from novels and sketch books? When I think about it, asking

someone to sit with you every time the moon comes out is not a universal record in greed. It's quite simple; just like wanting someone to ask you why you're in a ditch. And you tell them "Why not??" I suppose all is reasonable as long as someone asks. Ask. Answer. That's all there is around town right now.

So. I really hate ending on a sad G-seventh minor key so I'll tell you this. You'll never get much of anything, anywhere, or anyone by fearing regret that might result from what you do. Learning and regret are synonomous . . . the more you learn, the more trophies of, "Oh, good Lord, why did I?" you have to pile up on your fireplace. And by the way, did you ever wonder if *galoshes* and *scissors* are plural?

## CASTLE IN THE AIR

I journeyed on a zephyr wind  
To a castle in the air.  
And though my problems followed me  
They could not find me there.

The castle's sparkled brilliance  
The guards in white array  
The flowing robes I now was in  
All made me want to stay.

I entered court and humbly bowed  
To the king and to his queen.  
Beside them was an empty throne  
For the prince, who few had seen.

At the banquet feast that very night  
The atmosphere serene  
The handsome prince, magnificent  
Alone to me was seen.

He beckoned me to come to him  
Outside the garden gate.  
I followed him in the dark of night  
In him there lay my fate.

He told me of the love he bore;  
He said we should not part.  
And he offered me the gift of all  
A divine, immortal heart.

I wept and cried and turned away  
For the anguish and the grief  
My heart was torn, my soul in two  
I knew 'twas no relief.

I could not take his immortal heart  
Or his eternal love return.  
My life belonged to mortal men  
The life of gods I spurned.

He silently vanished then  
And I was left alone.  
Until two guards accompanied me  
And returned me to my home.

The zephyr wind that guided me  
Was the same that brought me there.  
It brought me down so gently  
From the castle in the air.

*Suzie Mulholland*

CASTLE IN THE AIR

High above the eagle's perch,  
A lost and lofty lair,  
The borders of my mind enclose  
My castle in the air.  
The castle walls are silver-grey  
And pearlescent hues,  
With rooms filled full  
Of jewels of thought  
And stories of pure gold are wrought;  
Where battles fierce  
Are never fought  
And skies are painted blue.  
A castle in the air, dear friend,  
My castle in the air.  
Come take my private train of thought  
And I will meet you there.

*Jennifer Knaff*



## THE SYSTEM

*Karen Levy*

He handed me the manuscript of a speech that he wanted to recite that night at our grandparents' 50th anniversary.

I had just woken up from a nap and was not exactly in a receptive mood. I skimmed through the speech and said, "I think it stinks."

"I didn't ask. Besides, when did you start being an expert on writing?" Taunts, dating back to when we were younger. Back to when my brother was the only boy that I would watch at baseball and football games, back to when we'd walk to elementary school together and he'd ward off any dog who dared attack me.

"I said it stinks, it's totally irrelevant to this occasion." I rolled over on the couch, trying to get back to sleep.

"Thanks for all your help," he muttered, and stormed into the bedroom.

While I got dressed, a few minutes later, I reflected on my behavior. "Oh, well, he's going back to New Haven tomorrow; we won't have to talk to each other too much more."

I thought of how many times we'd used that system. I hardly ever talked to him on his weekly phone calls from college. "Some sister," my parents and sisters would often scorn. "Won't even speak to your older brother."

How was I to explain to them that it wasn't the same over the phone? Sure, once in a while I'd write him, and tell him how Churchill was holding up without him, but I could never speak to him on the phone. Long distance, he was the golden boy, "Infallible Andy," and I was unworthy, because I personified all of the high school characteristics that I knew my brother hated.

Even up close, he and I would limit ourselves to one very serious discussion per vacation. The most memorable one took place during a long walk at 12:30 on a Saturday night. We discussed our family, ourselves, society and its pressures; things I could never talk about with my sisters or parents.

The rest of his break would be spent in silent reflection. When we spoke, it would be of irrelevant things like the guys I met at parties, or new clothes I had just bought. He and I had accepted this system after his first visit home, and, inevitably, the serious session would turn up each time.

Later that night, at the party, he read his speech. For some reason I cried, and thought, "This speech is beautiful." Perhaps it was the way he read it, or just the fact that *he* read it, that made me cry. I quickly wiped away my tears, and smiled. I don't think I complimented him after it, and I never took back my remarks.

The next morning, my father drove him to the airport. I sat in the car and watchd him leave. I didn't kiss him goodbye; we had accepted the system.

## A MATTER OF HIDE

*Theodore M. Cooperstein*

I have, in recent times, had occasion to travel and view many sights. One of the most fascinating of these experiences was my visit to the Gladstone Nauga Farm, located in southern New Jersey.

This farm, I am told, is somewhat typical of its kind, breeding and training a moderate number of naugas of all colors in preparation for slaughter. Naugas are most prized for their hides, which when properly treated, make coats and furniture of excellent quality. The hides of brown naugas bring the highest prices in the market, and for many years were the favorites of the furriers, preferred to those of black naugas. These are fewer in number, and in general produce lesser quality hides. Black naugas were for long so despised as to be slaughtered at birth, or else bred and raised solely for dog food.

The nauga industry enjoyed considerable attention and development after the war, and the demand for hides increased considerably. In response, breeders conducted studies of quality improvement methods, and they discovered an astonishing link between intelligence of the nauga and its hide. The nauga's aptitude for mazes (so the latest Gladstone brochures assure me) is directly proportional to its outer coverings, the more brilliant beasts sporting the more luxuriant furs. Programs were quickly instituted to test maturing naugas by means of placing them in two

mazes: a vertical maze and a horizontal maze. By assigning scores arbitrarily upon observation, naugas may thus be compared for the quality of their hides, and selected accordingly for furrier purchase, dog food, or breeding.

Naugas, being animals of some slight intelligence, attach much import and gravity to their tests, and they enjoy competing for the more coveted relegation to future fur coats. Brown naugas performed better at the tests, while the black ones performed miserably, preferring to run in exercise wheels and fight each other. Contempt in the industry for this lower-quality sub-group grew, until coats were almost exclusively of brown nauga. To be sure, a select few black naugas with promise were slaughtered for the furrier, but such coats found their ways into the collections of eccentric fur-owners, who merely display them for their novelty.

It did not take too long for black naugas to become resentful of the brown naugas; outbreaks of violence between the two groups increased, and many naugas were killed in scuffles. Tension grew, finally resulting in frequent incidents of black nauga rebellion, overrunning the feed stores, gnawing through fences, and biting off ears of brown naugas or fingers of trainers. The market was paralyzed, as investors can well remember, and the ASPCA initiated a full-scale investigation. Terrified, nauga farmers instituted widespread reforms. Henceforth, no nauga was to be subject to

prior judgement—selection would be based solely upon the nauga's aptitude, interaction with others, and previous behavior.

While at Gladstone, I was quite curious to see the selection process. The trainer chose a medium-sized brown nauga and a lanky black one to race in a set of vertical and horizontal mazes. (I call the gentleman a trainer, as he and others of his trade seek to improve the results of naugas' tests, in hopes of enhancing their product.) The two creatures were released; the brown one swiftly and surely negotiated the maze, making few mistakes, if only to take a longer, yet still valid route, while the black one bumped into a wall thrice, reversed direction five times, and at one time sat down, until eventually he found an exit. The brown nauga was quite contented to eat the prize carrot at the end of the maze, which it had justly earned. Yet the trainer promptly placed the black one in the receptacle marked "FURRIER SHIPMENT." When I, totally surprised, asked why, he replied, "This is the best black one this week. All the others run away and go to an exercise wheel, and my percentage of black naugas is mandatory; so I take only the black ones of clearly superior quality and merit." However, I complained, was that not selection on basis of color? "Absolutely not!" he replied, "we're forbidden to *exclude* naugas solely by shade, but are not prevented from *including* naugas using shade as a basis for judgement and helpful indicative criteria." The

brown nauga, he added, would most probably be included following comparison with more naugas. I asked of him, are other characteristics such as this, unrelated to merit and aptitude, taken into account? To which he responded that he most certainly must, in order to provide naugas perfectly representative of the farm and including all variations of the species. I inquired further, should he not simply pick the best qualified nauga, regardless? Of course, he answered, he does so already—choosing the best black naugas, the best female naugas, the best white naugas, the best offspring of previously chosen naugas, and, finally, allotting remaining space to the best brown naugas. At this I became quite appalled, and I irately told him so, condemning him for repetition of previous indiscretions which caused nauga rebellion and war. He, and others too, I deduced, sought to redress imbalance with overcompensation, and in restitution for the injured greatly harmed the remainder. Undoubtedly, I professed, revolution would occur and trigger the collapse of the industry. The trainer, though, had heard likewise before, and was prepared, answering me calmly. While production of black and inferior nauga increased, he stated, brown continued to be the greater selling nauga, for many more may now purchase black nauga, but they continue to merely display, scarcely to wear them. Nonetheless, to this very day, no matter the cost, I seek to acquire suede or leather rather than nauga-hide.

VISIONS AND SHADOWS

I.

Yesterdays:  
round triangles and  
circles that look  
square  
but mustn't.

II.

Todays:  
half-truths  
shading an age  
of surprises  
overblown balloons  
red  
with envy  
of monotone  
dripping faucets  
at one a.m.

III.

Tomorrows:  
four leaf clovers  
gift-wrapped with a bow  
handing out  
a free ace of spades  
to every hand  
that needs it.

*Danny Anker*

JAGGERESQUE

The cool air brought the smells  
of sweat and ink and stale cigarettes  
from inside the damp brick cave.  
Inside, young men stood,  
Jaggeresque,  
making noises like electric guitars.  
Further out, in the sun,  
young women sat on a cold  
concrete step,  
like so many Stevie Nicks.  
Their soft hair caught  
the light and  
their long cotton skirts  
fluttered  
in the breeze.

*Kathleen O'Neill*



SURPRISE

Surprise  
you said when I  
walked in the  
room.

And you held  
out your hand  
offering all you  
could give me  
Me.

I don't like  
surprises I  
said and  
walked away,  
leaving you  
standing  
there empty  
handed.

You never  
did understand  
just why I

did that.  
Leaving both  
of us with  
full hearts,  
but lonely.  
I did it  
for you.  
You.  
Please believe  
me when I  
say it  
is probably  
better this  
way.  
I'm sorry.  
So sorry.  
It hurts  
me too.  
Too.

*Nancy Zusman*

OF STONES AND OTHER MATTERS

A gem, found lying among some stones,  
cut and shaped by random winds, catches the sun  
and shatters it, sprinkling silver shards through  
the air and into my eye.

Picking it up, I find it radiates with the cold  
that burns, my hand jerks away and it falls, tumbling  
and sparkling, striking stones and sands, and lighting  
them, so they shimmer and reflect in an imperfect  
mimic of a perfect gem.

When the sun slowly wheels from the sky,  
battered from the air by fists of age-old stone, the  
gem sucks light and life from the air to maintain its  
perfect radiance.

Even as the cold reaches out to enfold my heart in the  
chill of a deeper night than ever have I known.  
It beckons me into perfect facets, a perfection of  
geometry, a bliss of forevers frozen in crystal for all to  
see. Falling, falling deep into angles and lines,  
acute and piercing to make a life like its life.

A darkness filled with silver shards, piercing  
battering, falling with me as I smash through  
the barrier 'twixt flesh and stone  
A coldness as my limbs stiffen and freeze.

Shock; a warmth of light radiates from behind,  
from the ground where once I stood and watches the gem.  
It draws me, a small golden flower, a rose  
sprung up in the night,  
giving its own light to a darkness born of stone.  
It draws me, fleeting in its life, imperfect  
in its beauty, infinite in its radiance.  
Perfection, the coldness of forever,  
A tearing feeling without, no need for decision  
within. For as its life, so too is mine, fleeting.  
To stand beside it, bathed in its warmth, caloused  
fingers caressing satin petals, there one finds  
perfection, for flowers grow in the dust of a thousand  
gems.

*David Kuhlman*

THE BALANCING ACT

the sky squats hunched  
an uncomfortable position  
a fading balancing act  
brooding over the edge  
the dry grasses whisper  
in parallel conspiracy  
as small fur runs for cover  
the dumb air begs quiet  
but leaves won't hush  
they jump and die  
as a preface to future falling  
traitorous clouds congregate  
about the emperor sun  
knives drawn  
loose things tumble to avoid  
the gory, dripped shadows  
color goes on stand-by:  
and the long process  
of remembering rain  
begins again

*Jeffre Jackson*

BALLAD OF PHILANTROPHY

There is a world beyond the human lands  
filled with cantaloupe dessert  
Pushed down there, as if by invisible hands  
little creatures crawl on their back in the dirt

They bite their spoons, their teeth they clench  
They fight! They scream! They shout!  
For what they've been given they seek revenge  
as they eat their dessert "a la French."

For what we took we gave a fruit  
expensive and healthy as hell  
we gave a spoon and stone a root  
by that we'd done our part and we'd done it well

Nowhere  
in the sea of heaven  
teeny, weeny people like this  
have been eating cantaloupe  
spitting the seeds back on us.

*Maria Osterberg.*

THE RIME OF THE MOOR

The morning glory climbs above my head,  
Pale flowers of white and purple, blue and red.  
I am disquieted.

I cannot come to you. I am afraid.  
I will not come to you. There, I have said.  
Though all the night I lie awake and know  
That you are lying, waking even so.  
Though day by day you take the lonely road,  
And come at nightfall to a dark abode.

I may walk in the garden and gather Lilies  
of mother-of-pearl,  
But mine were the thoughts of a girl.

And then, I used to watch and wait  
To see you passing through the gate;  
And sometimes when I watched in vain,  
My tears would flow like falling rain;  
But when I saw my darling boy  
I laughed and cried aloud for joy.

On the moor is the creeping grass,  
Parched, thirsting for dew,  
And over it the swallows dip and pass,  
The live-long summer through.  
I came out at sunset, fevered with the heat;  
Seeking I knew not what with listless feet.

Down in the withered grasses something stirred; I  
thought it was his football that I heard.  
Then a grasshopper chirred.

I climbed the hill just as the new moon showed,  
I saw him coming on the southern road.  
My heart lays down its load.

On the moor, where thickly grew  
Creeping grass, bent down with dew,  
There a handsome man drew nigh,  
'Neath whose forehead, broad and high,  
Gleamed his clear and piercing eye,  
'Twas by accident we met,  
Glad was I my wish to get.

The dew is heavy on the grass,  
At last the sun is set.  
Fill up, fill up the cups of jade,  
The night's before us yet!  
All night the dew will heavy lie  
upon the grass and clover.  
Too soon, too soon, the dew will dry,  
Too soon the night be over!

On the moor, where the grass creeps o'er,  
With the dew all covered o'er,  
There the finest man found I,  
'Bove whose clear and piercing eye,  
Rose his forehead, broad and high.  
Chance gave us a meeting rare,  
And we both were happy there.

All night in shadows are,  
You said 'Before the night grows late.'  
There shines the morning star.

On the moor is the creeping grass,  
Deep drenched with dew,  
And over it the swallows dip and pass,  
The live-long summer through  
You came at sunrise, ere the dew was dried  
And I am satisfied.

The wind blows from the North.  
He looks and his eyes are cold.  
He looks and smiles and then goes forth,  
My grief grows old.  
The wind blows the dust.  
Tomorrow he swears he will come  
His words are kind, but he breaks his trust.  
My heart is numb.

All day the wind blew strong  
The sun was buried deep.  
I have thought of him so long, so long,  
I cannot sleep.  
The clouds are black with night,  
The thunder brings no rain.  
I wake and there is no light,  
I bear my pain.

My lord has gone away to serve the king.  
But I, I know not when he will come home,  
I live the days alone.

My lord has gone away to serve the king.  
I hear a pigeon stirring in the nest,



And in th field a pheasant crying late.  
    she has not far to go to find her mate.  
There is a hunger will not let me rest.  
The days have grown to months and months to years,  
And I have no more tears.

    He was my mate,  
    And until death I will go desolate.

Yet if so be you are indeed my friend,  
Then in the end,  
There is one road, a road I've never gone,  
And down that road you shall not pass alone.  
And there's one night you'll find me by your side.  
The night that they shall tell me you have died.

    And others reach their journey's end.  
    I wait my friend.

*Tina MacNeil*

ELOV

Darling love me inside out,  
on the ears  
and in the mouth  
For a thousand years  
with cutting shears  
And salty tears  
Through fun and laughs,  
And in the bath.  
Don't leave one seam  
untouched,  
Please, love me inside out.

Together we can lunch  
crepes and wine and fruit,  
Spend bundles of our loot,  
Love wild and long,  
Love calm and strong,  
'Til frayed loose ends  
And spots worn thin  
Need hemming up again,  
Then love me right side in.

*Karina Thomas*

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