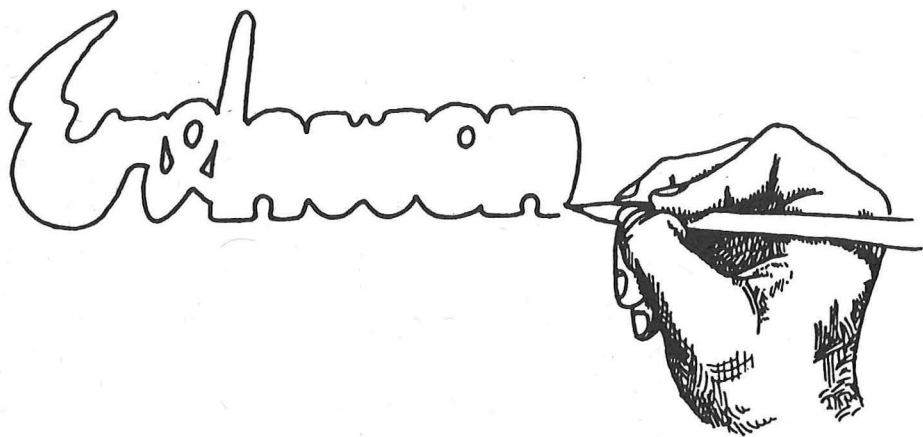


Erehwon



A Magazine of Creative Arts

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*Winners of the Winter Writing Awards

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Erehwon extends special thanks to Donald R. Jeffery for deciding the winning entries for the writing contest. Mr. Jeffery is the resource teacher for the English department here at Churchill. He graduated from St. Louis and Catholic Universities and is a serious fiction writer. He has papered three of his library walls with rejection slips from some of the most distinguished publishers in this country and Canada.

Eva Corn

A Morning Ambush

In silent darkness, he creeps unseen
Among day and night, he stands between
He's at your side, with lance in hand
Awaiting the sign — the battle planned
A digital tick, like Death he shrieks
His icy breath, under blanket sneaks
As you roll to dodge his shaft of light
The bedside wall checks your flight
And fight you must, for as you've heard
Who wins at six is the lucky bird
who gets
the worm.

Hugh Lynch

Sex, Fruit and Wheaties

A rape.
I stole her from her home
Next to the Red People
And the Women With Fat Hips
And peeled the yellow garment from her body.
Infatuated
With the white flesh beneath,
I dropped her in my Wheaties
And ate her.

Daniel M. Levin



Caty Ford

First Place—Poetry

Lament for the Unknown Soldier

The dusty streets were sprinkled with arsenic
and the sunrise tinged with cyanide
the day he died.

His hair was brown, his face was green,
as he lay in the brackish water
or perhaps, the empty eye sockets
ripped to shreds by the skull of a grenade;
or, perhaps, gnashing teeth
devoured his ragged thigh,
He staggered through a nightmare of darkness.

Where did the flower of his breath go,
or the gravestones of his teeth?
That such a mouth could chew and swallow Death,
a mouth that might have sneered at Time
and measured it by the chattering of its tongue.
He was a saint, a criminal, an eyeless swan,
but to us he is a white, faceless shroud,
which stops the heart and snatches the breath in one swift grab.

And we cry for him.
Because he died, we lament him
and the images that hover around him like phantoms-
not the blankness, but concrete pain of familiar faces.
And the white, white,
blinding volcano of horror
that explodes our imagination
until only a poisonous stupor settles over our vision.
From his icy grave he cries out
a lament for the unknown race.
He sees too late.

Deborah Satinsky

Maps

Curlicued water spouts leap
Out of the mouths of bloated fish.
Distorted coasts of twisted continents,
Lined with loving care.
Inked in furious pale red and orange,
Stand the monsters,
Glorious and terrible, to frighten
The bravest captain.
Yet someone dared -
For now our fingers roam the edge of charts
And lips of land,
Going farther, amused.
But when they first stood firm
(And did not fall off the watery bubble)
I wonder what surprised them most -
That the cartographers were wrong
or that they listened for so long.

Erica Schulman

I shook the paperweight violently, then clunked it down on the tabletop. Glittering snow drifted down over the plastic Magic Kingdom. My eyes moved to the window. The scene was almost the same. I reached for the coffee cup, but realized that it had been empty for ten minutes. The pot was across the room, but I wasn't, so instead I swished my tongue around inside my mouth to quench my thirst, and rubbed my arms to warm myself. A dizzying yawn shook my body, and when I opened my eyes again, they were looking outside. The snow was drifting in waves, as thick as cream.

The phone rang. I pushed myself out of the chair and answered it after two rings. "Hello," I mumbled.

"Hi, is Mrs. Dewey there?" someone mumbled back.

"Got the wrong number."

"Hmm. Sorry." They hung up. Silence followed, then a hollow tone. I listened to its whine for a while, until it started yapping. Putting the phone down, I fell back into my chair. As soon as I had collapsed, I realized I should have gotten coffee while I was up, and swore aloud.

The phone rang again. This time, it was starting a fourth ring before I grabbed it.

It was for Mrs. Dewey a second time. It was still the wrong number, I informed the caller.

"Oh. Sorry to bother you again," said the voice. It registered on me that it was a girl. "Wait a second -- is this 494-2708?"

"Yep."

"Gee. And there's no Mrs. Dewey here?"

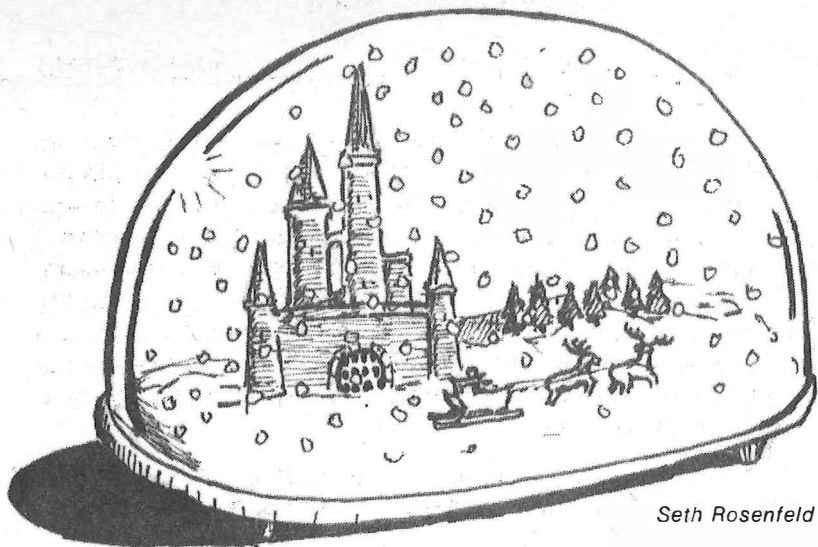
"No," I said.

"Damn. I guess I copied the number wrong or something."

"Guess so." I was really eloquent today.

"Well, so much for that. Goodbye," she replied.

"Bye."



Seth Rosenfeld

I went to the coffee pot. The coffee was already cold, so I dumped it in the sink and returned to the table. The Magic Kingdom was still. It seemed like it was waiting for someone to shake it up.

Before I could sit down again, I heard the phone. "Hello," I challenged it.

It was the girl. "Hi. Listen, I'm sorry to call you again, I just -- are you alone?"

"Yes," I confessed.

"Well, so am I, and you sounded alone, and it's snowing and all, so I wanted to talk to somebody. If you don't want to, I'll understand, but I just--"

"Sure, yeah, I can talk," I hurriedly told her. "What's your name?" She said it was Becky. A nice name. A great name, actually.

She giggled. "This is funny. Um...so how's life?"

"Oh, fine," was my automatic response. Considering my present state of affairs, though, I saw that wasn't quite true. "Actually, kind of boring at the moment. And too busy. I'm getting really harried at work."

"Yeah, I've got a lot to do these days, too," the girl said.

"So, you're busy too?"

"Yeah. A lot of demands on me. I mean, everyone seems to think they own me." I knew just how she felt.

She continued, "I mean, yesterday, my boyfriend--"

A frown bent my face, drowning out the rest of her sentence. But next she said, "So, I broke up with him."

"Oh! That's good."

"Huh?"

"Nothing. So, where do you work, Becky?" I wanted to speak her name another fifty times.

"I don't work," she told me.

"Oh. Unemployed, huh?" Now that was a dumb thing to say!

"Not exactly." I decided I'd better shut up about it.

"Anyway," she asked, "what are you up to?"

"Nothing," I laughed. "Nothing at all. Not till you called, that is." Looking at the hand that held the phone, I noticed my white knuckles. With my other hand, I was tossing the paperweight up and down.

"I'm not doing anything either, I guess. I was trying to call this Dewey lady 'cause I was supposed to baby-sit her kids, but I'm stuck because of the snow."

"Baby-sit, huh?" I said. "How old are you?"

"Seventeen. What about you? What's your name, anyway?"

"Tom. Thirty-one."

"I like your voice," the girl said. I didn't answer. It was a stupid comment. I missed a catch, and the Magic Kingdom fell from my hand and rolled to the wall. I looked out the window. Snow.

"Well, I'm gonna try and reach Mrs. Dewey. It was nice talking to you," said the voice from somewhere else.

"Yeah. Bye." I hung up first.

I sat down again, yawned, closed my eyes. The Magic Kingdom lay on the floor by the window. I didn't pick it up. Ten minutes later, the phone rang, but I didn't pick that up, either. ★

Functions and Fantasies

I dream of trigonometry

Glistening visions of wavy hair
In two directions flowing
Like sine and cosine graphs in a pair
I dream more heavily

Pis, thetas cloud my imagination
Endless tangents, secants, radians
There is no time, there is no inspiration

I dream a trigonometric nightmare

From the sky, above, divinity
Appears a shining sphere
Roars, booms in startling clarity

I hear the trigonometric voice

"Thy penance for sins committed
Find phase shift, period, and frequency
Then against the graphs shall you be pitted
Be wary, I expect continuity."

i am no longer dreaming

From the sky, a huge white graph
With brilliant axes X and Y
descends upon me, then a laugh

The trigonometric God speaks again

"Now your trigonometric skill shall be revealed
Fear not, if intelligent thou be
But if thou art not
In hell your doom be sealed."

i feel the trigonometric cross

My legs, my arms are glued
Hyperbola in shape
Yet how my flesh turns blue

O why can i not awake?

The darkness ends
The sky turns red
And fate impends

i hear someone calling, but i cannot answer

Flames leap up, tangent to the sphere
Red, celestial, ominous
Then slowly disappear

i am now beyond trigonometry

My body, it is enveloped in flame
Thought, feeling, consciousness
How they wane

Where will it end?

In the distance i do see imprisoned
In a circle, a body
and shadow dancing aboriginies

i am stopping

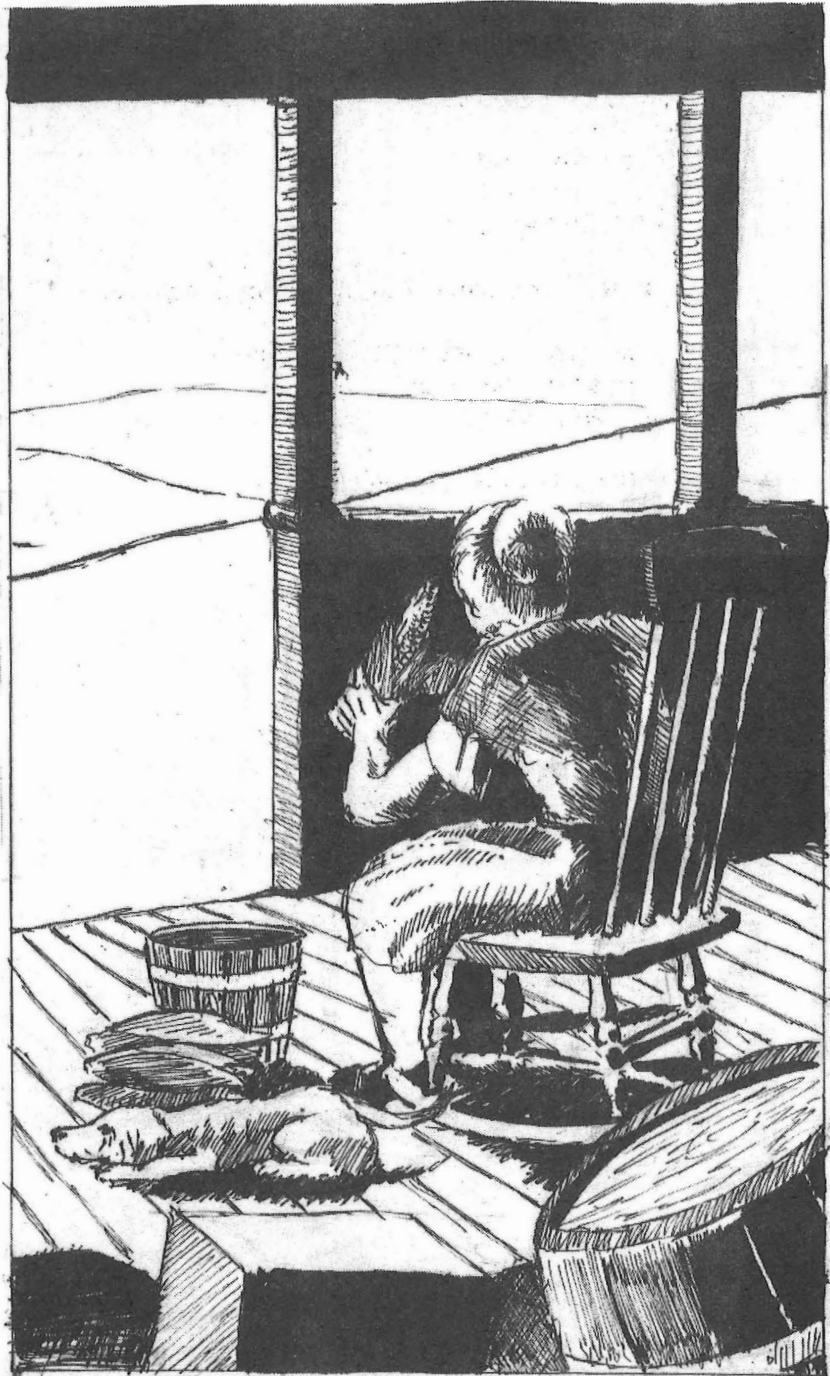
The dissolving body...
The scream
The fading image

i can no longer think

i am ashes strewn in a cotangent wave
spread, speared against
a great black cross

wind comes
i am no more
lapped like a crumb
on a vast mathematical shore

Ross Forman



Seth Rosenfeld

The Hillbillies

"I do pity them, Mike,"

Said Carol as she leaned back on her orthopedic velour seat cushion, gripping the padded wheel of her '82 Datsun.

"They've got no autos from Nippon,

Nor flushing johns to sit upon.

Their children have no baby smurfs,

Nor games to play on astroturf.

They live without a cuisinart,

I feel for them with all my heart."

"I do pity them, Zeke."

Said Ida as she sat on her straightback rocking chair, pulling back another cornhusk . . .

Steve Cosson

Hero

William Judy

We will get out of here someday. They are strong, but they are not perfect. They will make a mistake.

The others blame me for this. I suppose that is their right. If I had not made the decision to surrender, perhaps the others would not have followed. We could have stood our ground, but that would not have saved any of the lives that have been lost. It would only have been quicker.

Malachi is leaning against the bars. He still reaches for the cigarettes in his back pocket sometimes. But he no longer shows how disappointed he is that they are not there. We all have our habits — Simon still looks for his glasses when he cannot see something. I still reach for Alison when I am asleep.

We all move slowly. We do not acknowledge each other. We do not speak. Anything worth saying, anything that might help, anything that might change our situation has been said. The decision was made weeks ago that our only hope of escape is the guard. He is getting sloppier every day. We are no longer a threat to him, as far as he can tell. We are monkeys in a zoo to him — listless and apathetic.

When the guard comes with our food, he stops to taunt Malachi, like an ill-mannered child teasing a zoo animal. Malachi plays the game well. He lets the guard have his fun, and all the while he is waiting, patient as an old fisherman, for the guard to come too close.

The guard is here now, playing with Malachi. He coos and smiles, trying to make Malachi react.

"Good morning, hero," he says, "Like to hear the latest news from the high command?"

Malachi stares past the guard, and rubs the stubble on his chin.

"It is very good news, hero," the guard says sweetly.

Malachi looks at the guard's shoe, studying the way the light reflects off its armored toe.

"I will tell you anyway, little hero. The information we got from your young friend Mary proved instrumental in the last offensive against your heroic army. The last of your people have been removed from our planet."

Malachi's gaze slowly travels up from the guard's toe. The guard is smiling like a playground bully.

"Don't be sad, hero. Just think! Now that you are no longer a threat to the rest of us, you will be free to go in a matter of days."

The guard leaned forward to see Malachi's eyes.

"Maybe your military genius can be of use with our fine army? That way you will have at least some one to lead, no?"

It is done in a second. Malachi's hand leaps out like a lizard's tongue, grabbing the guard's throat. There is a hollow sound of his windpipe crumbling in Malachi's grip, and the gurgling as he chokes on his own blood. And he falls, slowly, as if he were drowning.

Malachi takes the keys from the corpse's belt. He looks at them for a time, then he throws them out of the cell. ★



Andrew Cooper

That Foul Eclipse

Squinting to see across the room,
her imaginary lens on zoom.
This is the second — love at first sight,
the handsome vision in uncertain light.

To a dusty mirage of moisture she crawls,
blind to a thousand waterfalls.
Always just inches and inches away,
the Perfect Stranger, hers someday.

And when the illusion begins to crumble,
towards another silhouette she'll stumble.
Oh, how I hate that foul eclipse
that keeps the water from her lips.

Behrouz Montakhab

Evolett

Would I refuse? Would he?
Thought I:
Me and him coming here. Dare I?
This time — first (and last?) one
For him and me.
Holding hands with him
Him with hands, holding.
Me and him for
One (last and) first time, this!
I dare, here coming, him and me.
I thought
He would refuse. I would.

Julie Schulman

Man Speaking at November 7th Party

"America has voted

"Last night I did not stand up
and be counted.

November 6th has come and gone

Instead I stretched across a
rattling grid
among the muttering, mumbling men
absorbing heat that
trickled up

And from your smiling faces

the gubernatorial races have
no bearing
when your fingers are too
swollen to pull a lever.
We are so many but not enough

I think you know the outcome!

Just give me a tepid room
and someone who pretends to
know me

I am grateful

But, no.

for the chance once again

We clot together into
leper colonies-
rancid but warm.

to give a piece of America

We have been unknowingly
damned to be charter members
of the unchosen few."

to each and every one!"

Leigh Cheng

Nature's Web

Like a sudden storm
 you said goodbye.
Like dry earth
 my heart crumpled.
Like the wind
 you drifted out of my life.
Like a volcano
 was my anger.
Like the waves
 you appeared.
Like the sun
 you warmed my heart.
Like a tornado
 I am caught again.
Like quicksand
 my heart is deceived.
Like a mirage
 is your sincerity.
Like a rock
 I am falling.
Like the melting snow
 is your love.
Like a winding river
 will it ever end?

Nancy Beecher

A Pack of Camels

Platinum sleekness
Reflecting the spectrum
Sometimes in many different colors
But most often in a single ray of
Bright
White
light
Filled with smoke
Which pierces the eyes
And later the lungs

Daniel M. Levin

In the beginning, there was chaos. And the Lord saw to it that there was order out of the chaos. So there was order. But the Lord saw that in the midst of His order, the universe was a pretty dull place. So He then created the earth, and saw that it was good. However, He was slightly myopic in one eye. The earth was populated by hordes of hairless, bipedal creatures that spent most of their time eating Big Macs at McDonald's and contemplating the cosmos. Then they discovered sex, and that kept them occupied for a long time.

God sprang off the stool in front of the display case and ran to get his hat and coat. The Sentient Superbeing lunch break began at twelve-thirty, leaving him five minutes to hustle down the street to Big Louie's Bar and Grill. He whizzed out through the open door, secure in the knowledge that the first bastard to raid His house would have to deal with the IRS man coming to see him today. Prescience does have its advantages. He rounded the corner and burst through the front door of the cafeteria, breathing heavily. Suddenly, it dawned on Him that He'd missed daylight savings again. All eyes were fixed on him. He grinned.

"Hi, guys," he panted. They led him to his customary seat by the window and plied him with grilled cheese and root beer.

"Is it finished yet?" they asked him. "Can we see it? Is it ready?"

"Gimme a break," he protested. "I've only had one lousy week. What do you expect in one week? It took longer to build the damned parking lot! What do you expect?" He sipped His drink. "I even had to cut corners just to get the DNA complexes to form properly. You want a miracle?"

A heavysset, balding man entered the room from a back door and made a beeline for His table. Louis sat down and lit a stogie.

"Not ready?" he queried.

"Well, I've got everything licked but this one problem that keeps popping up. It's got me stumped", He mumbled through the last of his meal.

"A whole week!" sighed Louie in disbelief. "Do you know how long it took the Hoboken club to finish theirs? Three days! And it hasn't broken down yet!"

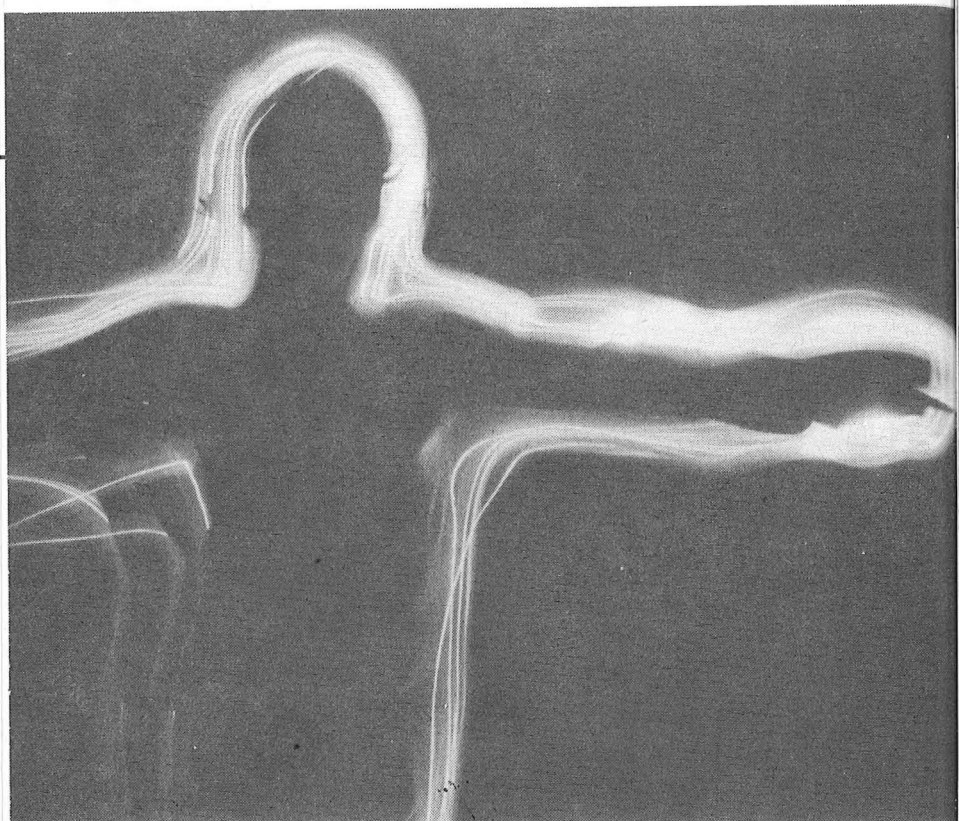
"I think it has something to do with adjusting the intelligence ratings," He rambled. "Stop by and have a look. If we want a better product, it may have to be superior in quality. We don't have the time to develop a more sophisticated entry." He rose from His seat and left through a side door. Louis left the assistant manager in charge and hurried outside to God's house.

In the front hall, he could see the big man Himself seated at a table in front of a wide display cabinet filled with an utter blackness that at once gave the impression of being very small, yet infinitesimally large. God glanced over His shoulder and beckoned Louis to sit on the stool beside Him.

"This," He said, indicating a small television screen mounted on the table," is the magnification display. Here's the first trial." He adjusted knobs on the top of the display. The picture came into focus, revealing a blackened, flawed orb. The background lights showed that it was swiftly darting through space. "It's not in orbit," He added. "It came loose after some really strange quakes. Axial rotation stopped and the whole ecosystem just died. Here's trial number two." An identical picture filled the screen. "And number three." The same. Ditto for four, five, and six. "And the odds against this happening by chance are absolutely astronomical. Six times? Utterly impossible."

"The quakes must be a product of the life forms, then," muttered Louie thoughtfully.

"This is the current one," He announced. The screen now displayed a bluish-green orb covered with patches of brown and black. The surface itself was obscured by white streaks floating above. God indicated a single large patch of black. "There. You can see it setting in now. Another hour and a half and it'll be just another lifeless lump of rock floating through space. I just can't understand it. It happens every time." ★



James Lee

Heaven

Is a club
And God is the bartender.
He's six foot one
and looks a lot like
Ernest Hemingway
And just a bit like
Jimmy Stewart
All his jokes are old
But most are still funny
He won't solve your problems,
But he'll listen all night

Hell

Is a strip joint
And Satan is the bouncer.
He looks like
the motorcycle gang
in your most sickening
Nightmares
all rolled into one
with a beer gut
like a boulder
and muscles
like bridge cables
The girls onstage
are as beautiful
as Venus
glowing in the morning sky
And they call to you
as unashamedly
and persistently
as kittens mewling for milk
and you wouldn't
touch them
for anything

William Judy

Infested Waters

Scott Bowen

It was different this time, much different. The gentle swaying of my bed seemed more pronounced on this night. Below me, the vastness of the ocean depth engulfed my rectangular citadel, propelling it smoothly over the curls of green water. Tiny fingers of tension crawled slowly from my stomach outward, tightening my every muscle. The hope, which usually flickered quietly and died, burned brightly and fiercely on this night. The crisp, clear effervescence of seawater permeated every corner of my bedroom. Moonlight glittered radiantly on the water alongside my desk, exposing a harmless young porpoise frolicking with his mate. A beam of moonlight glinted off an advancing object. The triangular fin sliced menacingly through the waves. My playmates submerged abruptly and the moon was suddenly blanketed by a bank of thick clouds, throwing my room into utter darkness. A preliminary wave of fear of mammoth tearing jaws subside slowly into a dull and familiar sense of dread. Resisting the fear, I rolled on my side and peered through the dense blackness, a twinge of regret temporarily replacing my terror when no sign of my beloved sea was

within sight. The ringing in my ears obscured any notes coming from the water. My mind was torn between clashing emotions, between anxiety and longing. Desperation prevailed, and my hand slipped effortlessly over the side of my bed. Downward it descended, searching intensely for the substance of all purity, the element to prove my fantasy real. It was there. My fingers skimmed lightly over the sweet wetness of the cool water as chills rippled through my body. Lifting my hand delicately from the ocean, I placed the first three saturated fingers in my mouth and sucked. The sea — simple, unadulterated and pure. My taste buds tingled as the saline liquid glided easily down my throat. Extracting my fingers, I placed them once again in the water. Searing pain. Flashes of red. Visions of powerful, clamping jaws. Tearing flesh. Snapping bones. Clenched teeth. Blood rushing to my head — pounding, pounding, pounding . . .

Pounding, pounding. With a jolt, I was wrenched from my reflection, knowing without looking up who was banging at the door. Sucking on my thumb, I stared vacantly at the spot where my first three fingers should have been. "Stupid bastards," I thought. "They just don't believe me." A key turned noisily as the heavy door swung open. A sallow, pale-faced orderly stopped quickly and deposited a gray time of pallid food.

"Lunchtime, Bowen," he muttered, slamming the door closed behind him.

In the hall, the orderly regarded Dr. Wesley. "He looked perfectly normal to me, Doctor."

"They all do, Johnny," the doctor sighed. "They all do."

"What's wrong with him?"

Dr. Wesley gazed into the distance. "Mr. Bowen is convinced that a shark attacked him."

Johnny snorted. "Is that true?"

"Of course not." The doctor studied his shoes and then lifted his head and stared Johnny in the eye. "We found Mr. Bowen's first three fingers in his stomach."

Crouching in the corner of my aseptic room, I sucked harder and harder on my thumb. The wonderful, saline taste exhilarated me. Simple, unadulterated and pure — the sea. ★

The Pay Phone

It watched him
Through a circle of numbered eyes;
It leered
Through a mouth of printed instructions;
It sucked his dime
Through an icy slit
and clicked it down.
"Hurry up," he said.
It swallowed,
It clicked,
It buzzed, and buzzed once more, a zigzag buzz,
and laughed through its circle of eyes.
"No one's home," it said.
He seized its neck,
A tight rubber wire;
He pulled,
His knuckles blanching.
He punched;
his fist shattered the plastic eyes
and dove into the metal guts.
"You damned machine," he said.
It screamed,
It vibrated,
A spring flashing copper beams sprang out
and spiraled round his neck.
"Help," he cried.
They came,
Unwound the constrictors.
Some, with laughing sympathy.
Damned the machine.
Others entered the booth,
And gazing into the splintered circle of eyes,
noticed the panel of once useful directions.
now crumpled like glittering tin foil.
"Stupid fellow," they said.

Naomi Wittes

Grounded

"I hate life," he said and
walked out on his wife.

"I can't stand your
demands," said he.

(his wife kind of stood inside the
door watching him go)

and he floated away from the
gravity of the situation
like a Kitty Hawk bird

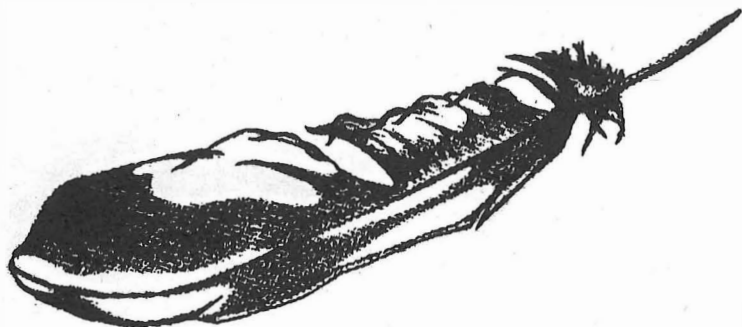
"I'll have fun," he said and
drifted toward the sun.

"I've escaped the
rape of my freedom," said he.

but he burned and learned
Icarus' lesson

(his wife, and Icarus, and Wilbur, and Orville
clucked their tongues and changed the channel.)

Jeff Rosenberg



Brad Englestein

Around me, the land is flat and barren. The sky above betrays no depth; no light mars its perfect face. And all is silent and still. I open my mouth to speak, but dust spews forth instead and obscures my vision. I gasp, and the ashen cloud fingers my soul.

With a sigh I opened my eyes and stared at the blank paper in front of me.

Why can't I think of an idea for this story, I thought? I tossed my pencil onto the paper and lay back in the grass of the yard. The blue sky spread like a canopy above me. Glancing again at the paper, I tasted dust on my tongue. White wisps raced high in the air, twisting in random contortions as I watched. They never took the same shape twice.

I thought I was a good writer, but what's happened to me? The jocks at school--eyes half-squinted, the touch of smile at one corner of their mouths, swaggering walk--they've got their girls and championships. The brains--eyes roving and drilling with intensity, their political statements--they've got their GPA's and scholarships. But where are people like me with something more? Or less?

In the barren land I crawl on, drinking the dirt, etching my way across the plain.

I grabbed up pencil and paper, touched point to page, then released them again. The trees around me danced in the wind. Their leaves glowed a milky jade in the sunlight.

A story about the woods, or wilderness, I wondered. No, I've done that before. This time I want something different. Laughter rose from the yard next door. Several little children raced and tumbled with each other. A woman approached the cheerful mayhem, gesturing for one to come with her. His smile reversed direction and the boy plodded after her, leaving the in-different chaos of his playmates.

Children leaving their blissful ignorance and learning a harsh reality of the real world, my mind proposed, then it groaned in disapproval. Too common.

I listened to the crickets and birds chattering on, oblivious to my dilemma. The bitter sandy taste in my mouth wouldn't go away.

The brown land stretches forever, but I keep scrambling across the desert in the feeble hope that someday I will find my oasis. ★

I Want to go to an Artsy-fartsy College Where the Girls Don't Shave Their Legs

I want to go to an artsy-fartsy college where the girls don't shave their legs.

Where students talk until 4:00 am about subjects that they know nothing about such as:

- the Ultimate Perfectibility of Man
- the Fate of the Human Race
- the Existence of God
- the Absence of Truth in Society
- the Relative Value of Insight over Knowledge
- and Dipilatory Procedures for Unwanted Body Hair.

Where students hold ineffectual rallies to protest inevitable evils of society such as:

- Prejudice
- Poverty
- War
- Government
- and Razors.

Where students demonstrate their disregard for absurd social conventions and mores such as:

- Cosmetics
- Grey Flannel Suits
- Sobriety
- Monogamy
- and Shaving.

Where students fight to protect the downtrodden, the weak, the liberal, and the fashionable, such as:

- Hispanics
- Blacks
- Poor People
- Homosexuals
- George McGovern
- Whales
- and Hairy Legs.

I want to go to an Arsty-Fartsy college because yesterday I cut myself shaving my legs.

Sue Doanim

Paper Boy

Louis said:

that there is no Santa Claus
that there is no Easter Bunny
that there is no Paper Boy

but I have seen

the presents

the eggs wrapped in red and gold sitting under the twinkling tree

the newspaper painted with blue and yellow hidden in the verdant bushes

printed in black and white lying on the concrete porch

and today I saw Him

the Paper Boy Himself

He was riding a bike
and He had a huge orange bag
and He gave to every home a newspaper in water-proof plastic

And then he rang the bell of his bike
and He disappeared.

Behrouz Montakhab

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