

Erehwon

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— Beyond the Line —

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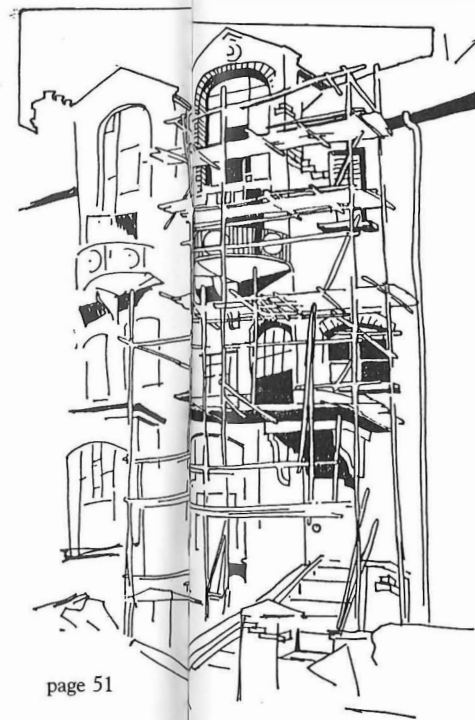
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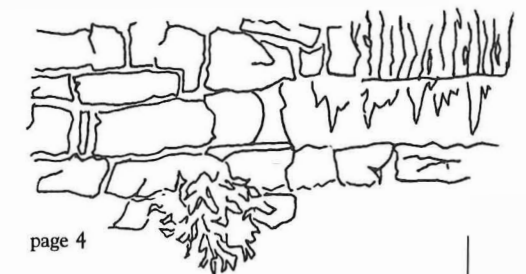
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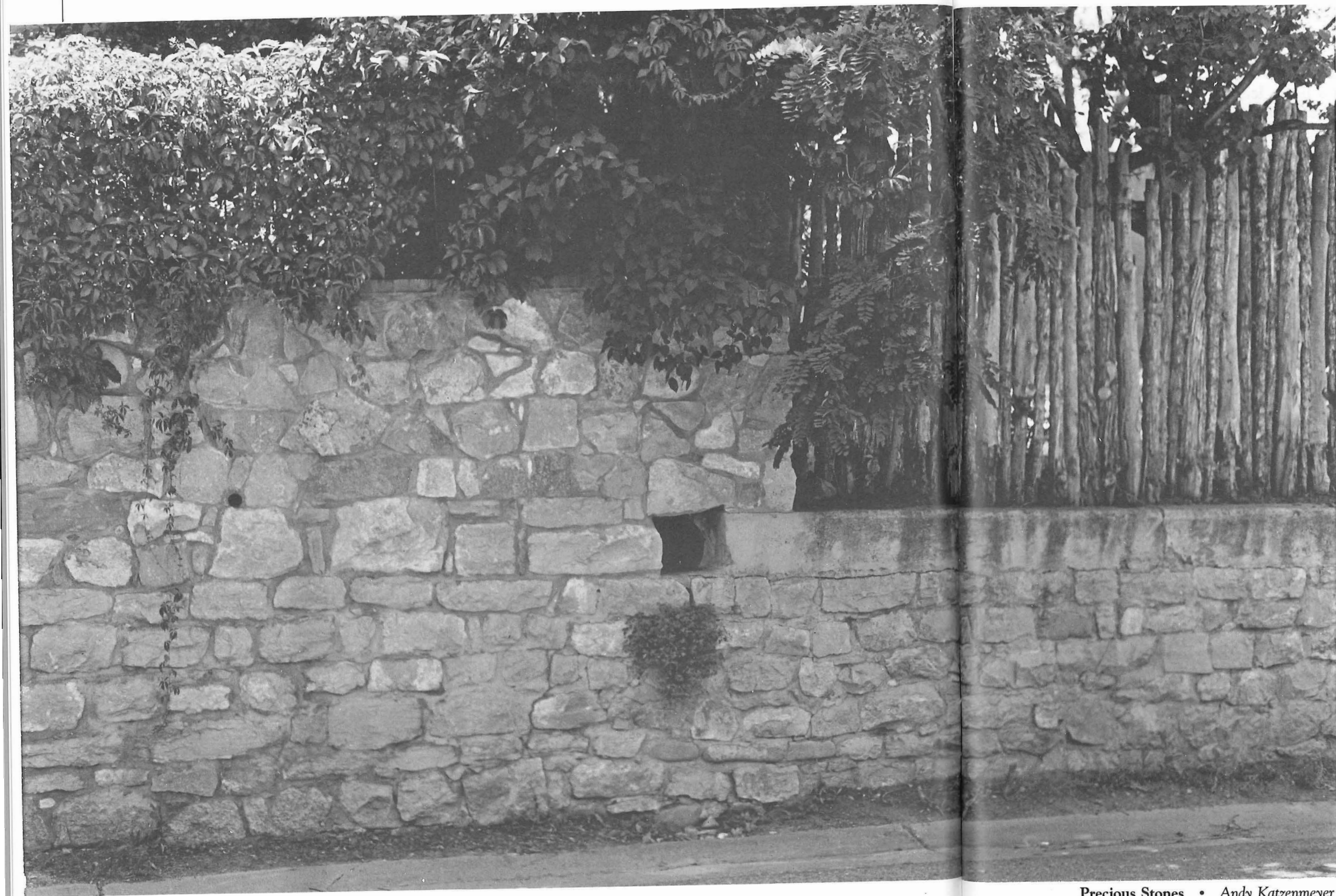
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Precious Stones • Andy Katzenmeyer

Beyond the Line

To travel "beyond the line" is to transcend limits. But the "line" does not divide two neat halves; it simply separates regions. On one side, familiarity dominates; one knows what to expect and how to react.

But life on the familiar side often grows tiresome. When writers and artists travel beyond the line, they transcend limits and enter new regions. Crossing the line satisfies the need to explore the metaphoric, the satiric, the horrific, even the fantastic. For the audience, crossing the line challenges the imagination to ask: what lies beyond the line?

The Editors of *Erehwon*

After Sunset

What I search for sits in a white china flask trimmed with gold, sprinkles the air with honeysuckle mingled with pine, touches me like smooth hair woven into silk, reminds me of a sky blazing blue at twilight. I search down the slick black road through the sapphire beyond the lights leering white whizzing past into darkness. my eyes chase the rafters of the roof of the old farmhouse where the tree once stood years ago. I had come to gather the dainty blossoms, those tiny pink skirts, only wanting to take two but she had come there before, had breathed their air and taken many. my hands saw, my ears felt, my nose tasted, my eyes touched those flowers she had flung. in the flash I wrenched the branches, stripping the bark unevenly, discovering wild vitality in the twilight.

Michelle Kao

Deepening

Snowy night
unbinds her hair,
casts it like a net to catch
the moon,
loosing frosted flowers in the sky.

Wrapped in your velvet hush,
fisher of the silver stars,
gather my dreams
into your crystal arms.

Robin Suleiman



Dancers • Cheryl Anne Levin

Wounded Knee

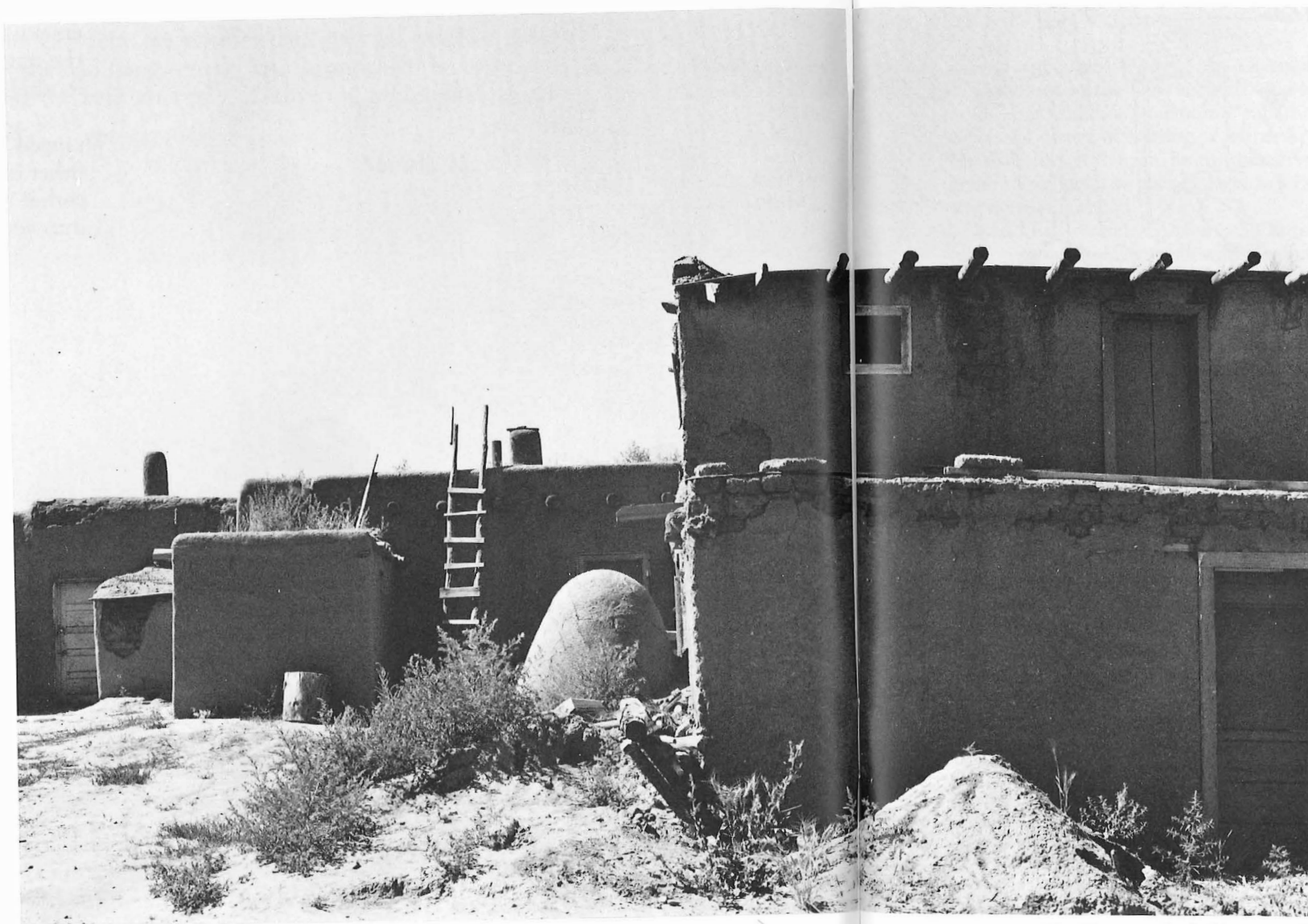
The ancestors shall be again.
They rise, singing
The passing of older sorrows.
The spring, earth-loved,
Before me.

Above the red moon climbs—
Infant's head bursting the heavens.
The sky whirls, and the sun
Is a burning
Crucifixion.
The circle, forgiving,
Mends itself;
The rolling earth comes
To bury unbelieving.

The first to rise, He said,
See my scars
And know that
It is time.

Listen.
He spoke truly.
They have come.

Erik Goldner



Pueblo • Andy Katzenmeyer

Nostalgia

La mia vita é adesso,
osservando quella stella che a mia madre piace,
e chiedo a me stessa dove sono.
Ho promesso di portare il suo amore con me
in questa parte di mondo
perché non ci sarà mai fine al mio viaggio
anche se il mio sogno cade.
Trattengo un nuovo vento nelle mie braccia
mentre tocco la sua faccia
stampata sulla fotografia appesa
accanto al mio letto.
E ho imparato che per morire
mi basterà un tramonto.

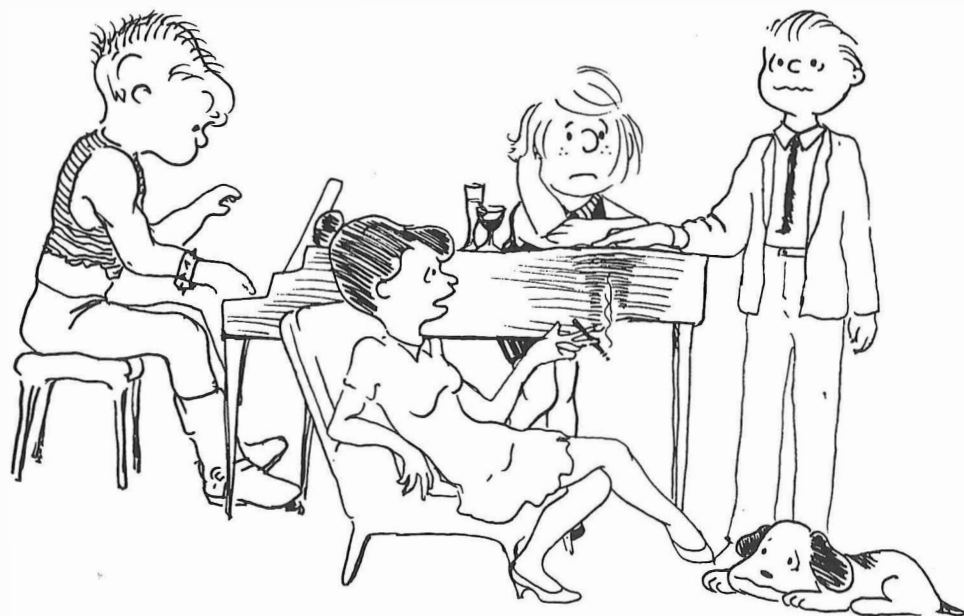
My life is now,
while I'm looking at that star my mother likes,
and I ask myself where I am.
I promised to carry her love with me
to this part of the world
because there will be no end to my voyage
even if my dream falls down.
I am holding a new wind in my arms
while I'm touching her face
printed in the picture hung up
next to my bed.
And I've learned that for dying
a sunset will be enough.

Marzia Vianello

The Big Roast

Todd Pruzan

"Oh, it's terrible, Linus.
Charlie Brown is dead."



Roasted Peanuts • Cheryl Anne Levin

While I was dining at Wladislaw's at lunchtime, the call came in from Lucy, my sister in San Francisco. It wasn't good news. This I gathered from my secretary, Trisha, whose face was grey when she gave me the message of the phone call upon my return. "She sounded worried," she told me. Of course, nothing ever sounded like good news; I decided I'd try to grin and bear it, whatever it was. Also, I decided I'd make it quick, as a board meeting had been scheduled. Before I'd even sat down, I dialed my sister at her house. The maid answered.

"Can I help you?" she asked, with a thick accent of some Hispanic country or another.

"Get Lucy, please. It's long distance."

"Oh, she's been trying to call. One minute."

In one minute, Lucy was on.

"Sit down. This is bad. This is bad stuff." She'd been crying, I could tell. I know my sister's mannerisms.

"Lucy, my God! What's wrong?"

"Oh, it's terrible, Linus. Charlie Brown is dead."

I awoke over Los Angeles several hours later, following a restless, unquiet sleep in first class. I ran my hand through my thin hair and straightened my tie and fastened my seat belt and extinguished my cigarette. A slender woman next to me cleared her throat and peered out the

window. I could make out the skyline through the smog when I gazed over her shoulder, but my mind raced among other things. Lucy had avoided going into details concerning our friend's untimely death.

After all, everyone knew that he wasn't the sort to get into trouble; he was clean, so to speak, for all intents and purposes. I'd never known him to get into trouble, except once as a child when a bully had tried to steal a baseball of his, signed by Joe Shlabotnik. Come to think of it, he'd also made Miss Othmar angry at one point when he stood in front of the class, trying to impress us, and chalked up some integral calculus without the slightest clue of what the hell he was doing. As peers, we always subjected him to scathing tortures—especially Lucy, who was always first to point out faults and abuse him. But to me, he'd always been a great friend; we would spend hours sitting at a stone wall discussing our lives and philosophies. (At the age of seven, children can be very intense.)

Once in L.A. International, I happened to catch up with Patricia, a childhood friend who, for some peculiar reason, had always been referred to with the epithet "Peppermint." She'd flown from New York—also in town for the call—and was waiting for her luggage. We had a bit of an emotional scene there, what with her crying all over the place.

"How could this happen to Chuck?" she wondered aloud. She blew into a Kleenex and tossed it to the floor; I held

her hand with both of mine. She seemed oblivious to my comforting.

I tried to explain it just the same. "Well, I guess we never got around to thinking about death. I mean, when you're a kid for—what, thirty, thirty-five years..." She shut her eyes and giggled, still sniveling. I smiled sadly. "It's just not something you want to think about."

"Chuck...poor Chuck," she whispered raspily. She draped her arm over my seat and sighed. "Worst damn baseball player I've ever seen." It was my turn to laugh; she smiled again.

"Hey, I was on the team. I knew what it was all about." I pondered. "Remember when they put up that tree on the pitcher's mound?"

But it was time to get the luggage.

Patricia and I rented an Oldsmobile together and drove to the little suburb that was the source of all our childhood memories. Charlie Brown, the late successful owner of a string of barbershops inherited from his dad, had still been living there. We passed the old grammar school, we passed Patricia's house, we saw the whole neighborhood.

And finally we closed in on the Brown residence. The place was swamped with gleaming automobiles—save one very filthy olive Plymouth Duster, presumably belonging to someone I once knew as a child (Pig Pen, as it were.) We parked alongside the house and stepped out. As soon as we reached the front door we were met by Franklin, who greeted us with a sad smile, and Marcie, now apparently just another of us yuppies. "Hi, Patricia," she said shyly.

"Hey, you didn't call me 'sir,'" Patricia pointed out, and I then recognized the same thing. Marcie said she had come to grips with the women's liberation thing, and had ceased to call any man "sir." She paused to look into her glass and rejuvenate it with a plastic swizzlestick.

"Who else is here?" I asked Franklin. He showed me around. In the space of a few minutes I caught up with time. I learned that he himself was a brain surgeon. Schroeder was a member of a hardcore group called the Space Shuttle 7. Surprised by this, I commented on this departure from his interest in classical music as a youth; Schroeder simply yanked his earring and said that he'd been a "messed-up kid." Lucy was there, dragging on a cigarette. I said hello to my sister.

"When'd you get in?" she asked me.

"About an hour-or-so ago."

"Bad flight, I suppose?"

"Under the circumstances, not too terrible."

"Surprise, surprise. You sure look like sewage."

"Well, may I apologize profusely, dear sister."

"And your eyes look like India ink."

I ended the discussion there, and decided I'd go straight to see Sally Brown-Schwartzberg, now wife of a famous defense attorney. She chatted with our friend, Violet, a rising film actress, and Tapioca Pudding, a down-and-out secretary. She was sitting off to the side with some other friends, wearing a black polka-dotted dress. Her face was red and splotched, and she hugged each and every one of us who'd made it to the condolence call.

"Linus!" she cried. "Linus, my sweet babboo!"

"I'm not—" Lucy kicked me, and pushed me in Sally's direction. She mashed Revlon all over my face, but declined to run her fingers through my thin hair. Just as well.

I motioned her aside, and whispered in her ear.

"Who is that delightful young woman next to you?"

"Where've you been, Linus? She's my sister-in-law. That was my big brother's wife of four and a half years!"

"Sorry, but I just can't remember..."

"Ruby."

"Ruby..."

"You know that little girl he always talked about?"

I thought—and then my eyes widened and my mouth dropped. "The little red-haired girl!" I whispered rather loudly.

I strolled over and took her hand. (There was a used tissue in it; I wiped my palm on my slacks.) "I'm so sorry, Ruby."

"Thank you so much for stopping by." It sounded as if I'd dropped in from down the street rather than across the country. "Charles would be so glad to see you all here. He really would appreciate this." She dabbed her too-made-up eyes.

After a few minutes of gentle conversation with her, I excused myself and sauntered over to the piano. Schroeder was seated at it, and Lucy was off at the other side, head on the piano, staring into the ceiling. She was fretting about some guilt trip of hers; the fact that she'd always yanked the football away from Charlie Brown when he'd run up to kick it.

I pulled a chair next to Schroeder. "What's the story on Charlie Brown?"

"He apparently had a heart attack, they say."

"How'd that happen?"

"Kite flying."

"What?"

"Yeah. Got caught in that tree, y'know?"

"Now wait a minute. You're saying he had a heart attack because he got a kite caught in a tree? I think that's a bit—"

"No. No. He got caught in the tree. The one he used to claim would try to eat his kites, and he'd get wrapped up in it."

"The kite-eating tree killed him?" I asked, incredulous.

"No, it didn't kill him."

"He got strangled?"

"Well, the tree did try to lynch him—it's an ugly story. The tree did try to..." He gestured.

"Hang—"

"Hang...Charlie Brown, but...he had a massive coronary first."

My mouth dropped again. "Poor guy," I mused.

"He never could handle himself too well, could he?" asked Schroeder.

And I couldn't deny it.

For the first time I noticed a somber beagle at my feet, a dog I remembered was called Snoopy. He still had his wits about him; this fact I recognized when he shoved his face into my hands. I scratched his neck. And I think I have an idea about what was going through his mind:

"Here's the World War I Flying Ace at his captain's wake." ☉



An Inverted Myth of Pygmalian and Galatea

The sculpted trees pose, silhouetted in a thin, light rim of evening rose by the waterside jagged branches fan upward like dark veins in the sky their leaves, now frozen mid-float and a cold, stone body of overgrown emotion is planted on the brittle ground nearby standing in the movement of awkward balance, his face slightly carved to a tilt staring down into a palm of gentle outreach the fingers, delicately clinging to the sense of she who had calmly passed by, catch a drop of silver surrounding him are footsteps, fossiled in the ice and he waits silently for the tear-like trickling paralyzed, he can only frame her face with his windows.

Craig Enger



Evangeline • Cheryl Anne Levin

Christmas B.C.

Long, at Solstice, I have stood
Upon a Cornish cape at eventide
And watched the dark descending like a
hood
To cloak the sarsen circle spreading wide.

The sea explores the crags with icy fingers.
The shadows stalk the standing stones.

Once, the plain was populous with oak,
The holy sire of the mistletoe,
And bearded druids, as the dawn awoke,
Exhorted favor from the gods below.

The spectre of The Maid about them lingers,
Of Cerridwen who reads the bones.

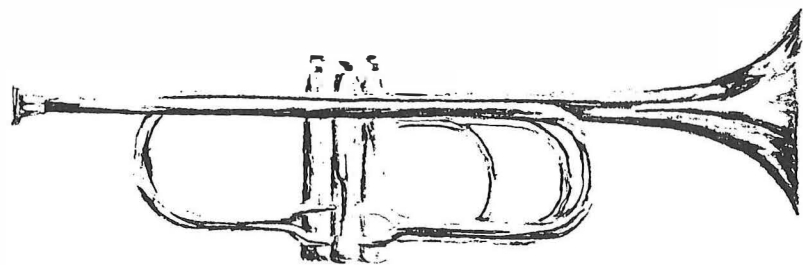
Today the heath is barren of
Its mystery; the stones, down-hove.
The gods below, for God above,
Are banished from the sacred grove.

The Maiden now is chaste, and other bringers
Of Spring to life exult in raptured tones.

Still the ocean gnaws the cliff.
Still the Maiden keeps her rite.
Though the altar-stone is rift
And silent lies Midwinter Night.

One loyal bard is yet great Nature's singer
And holds the solemn watch alone.

Robin Suleiman



It's All in the Family

Alison Buckholtz

An elephant is roaring downstairs, and it is a little hard for me to finish my math.

My brother Josh just started playing the trumpet. Actually, playing is a relative term. Blowing? Buzzing? Creating horrendous screechy sounds? Yes. All of the above.

The first few nights that he practiced at home I reacted normally—stormed down the stairs yelling louder than the offending instrument: “You want me to do my homework?! You want me to get into a good college?! Get that thing away from him!” I grabbed the trumpet from my surprised musician and threw it into the coat closet, then ran back upstairs and slammed my door. And then, through Josh’s tears, I heard him whimper, “I listened to you when you played it . . .”

Ah yes. Sixth grade.

Elizabeth Otterbein and I slept at each other’s houses on weekends, traded clothes, and fought constantly. We were best friends. When the middle-school band director and her troops descended on our fifth grade class, Elizabeth and I watched the boys rush for drums and the girls queue up for flutes. We considered clarinets, but marched on to trumpets. “Buzz your lips,” Mrs. Harrison instructed at the trumpet station. “No, no, pucker. Don’t blow. Buzz. Well, almost. OK, Who’s next?”

And we were labeled as trumpets.

Josh came with me to pick up my prize instrument from a family we had located in the classifieds. I snapped open the olive-green case, fingered the worn red velour, gave the trumpet a practice toot, and nodded to mom. I had myself one fine horn.

At home, Josh joined me in my room to admire the gleaming brass. An idea struck. “I’ll name her Teresa,” I told the three-year-old. “Is that a good name? Teresa the trumpet.” Josh nodded thoughtfully. “Will you play Teresa at your ballet class?” he asked.

During this exchange, Elizabeth was buying a cornet, and she rushed over to compare and blow—er, buzz.

Lizza and I were kicked to back row after the first week of band. But once a day (or was it once a month), I would drag Teresa over to her house, and after setting up the stands and the books, grabbing some Oreos, and discussing the hunk factor of the male band members (that part always finished the quickest), we would blast “Mary had a little lamb” while strutting across her attic. Those were proud days.

The two of us—three, counting Elizabeth—took lessons, and although Teresa and I preferred to lounge in last row, Lizza jumped to third chair.

Next fall, Mrs. Harrison switched me to baritone. ●

The Ballad of Fair Ian MacIntosh

Th’ Scottish town o’ Stuartshire
Is home t’ nigh a lot,
Aye, none like Ian MacIntosh
Could down their whiskey shot.

’Twas teatime, Sunday afternoon
The day, passed years ago,
When Ian drove his Ford Cortina
T’th’ seedy Cock And Crow.

As Ian stepped thro’ th’dim pub’s door,
Men dropped their darts aye stared
For tall, red Ian winked a’th’ maid—
Ev’ryone knew Ian there.

She smiled aye said, “Good day, old man.
You’d like a nip, my friend?”
He low’red his gaze to meet her eyes.
“Right: Let’s hav’a bot’le, then.”

Now Ian, he ne’er stopped with just one
For puir Ian’s life was hard;
He swallowed twelve in nigh one hour,
Aye slammed ten pounds o’th’ bar.

He pushed his stool fro’undr’ himself
Aye turned to talk fro’ there.
He harkened once; the girl, she called,
“Oh, Ian! Fair Ian! Take care!”

He started up his noisy car,
His mind, he let it drift;
Fair Ian, that Sunday, drove his Ford
Off a lush, green Scottish cliff.

The heather grows upon that hill,
The briars lie thick aye deep.
Aye underneath th’ high green grass,
Fair Ian, he does sleep.

Th’ Scottish town o’ Stuartshire
Is home t’ nigh a lot,
Aye, none like Ian MacIntosh
Could down their whiskey shot.

Todd Pruzan



Joey Green • Peggy Pfeiffer

Hellbent on

JOEY GREEN

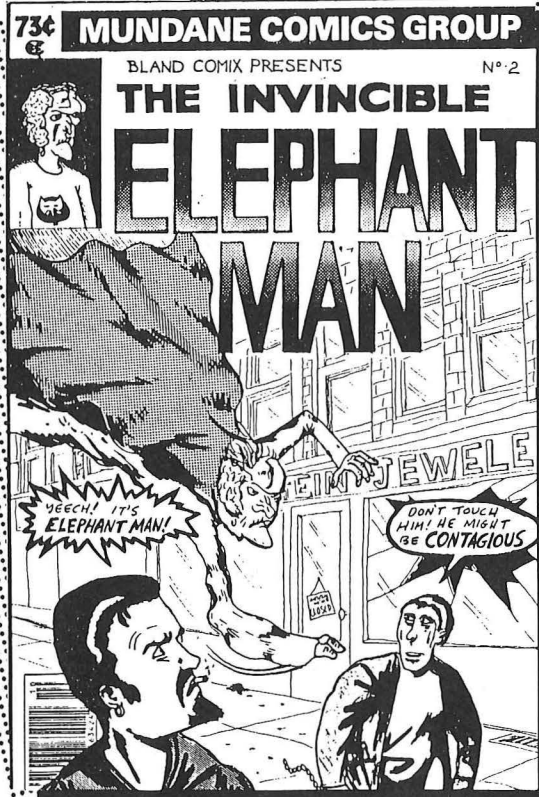
by Matt Jaffe

INTERVIEW

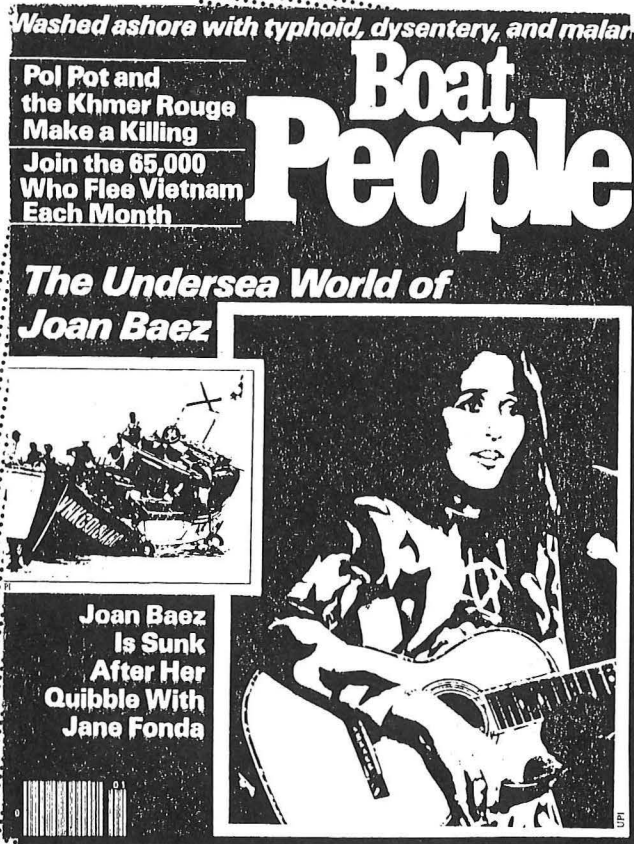
Joey Green, left, was interviewed after his recent appearance at the Magnum Opus/Erehwon Apprentice Writer's Workshop at the Smith Center.

Joey Green is a passive comedian. He doesn't get on a stage and punch out one-liners, and he's never been on Saturday Night Live. But Joey Green can make you laugh. And as long as you're laughing, Joey's happy.

He believes it's important for people to laugh "just so you don't take life as seriously as everybody does." Joey may have a harder time making people laugh than other comedians because he's not particularly funny looking, and he doesn't have a weird voice. He looks like somebody who's been out of college and into the real world for a couple of years—gaunt, overwhelmed, in need of a haircut.



Spoof from *Cornell Lunatic* featured in Joey's book, *Hellbent on Insanity*.



Here, Joey makes a satirical comment attacking the media's trivializing of tragic events and attentiveness to insignificant ones.

Joey is twenty-eight. He's written for *National Lampoon*, *Rolling Stone*, and is currently employed by *Spy* magazine. He was the editor of his college humor magazine and he's edited a book of college humor. He wrote a movie and sold an episode of *Night Court*. "I get my ideas from the morning paper," he explained. "I mean there are at least five funny things in the headlines each morning."

Comedy is Joey's way of getting his message across. "I usually start off with something I'm upset about," he said. "And I think, 'How can I make people aware? And how can I get people to do something about it?' I prefer to poke fun at the larger issues, such as the political situation. To propose them in a way—to exaggerate them to show how stupid they are—so we can move onto better things."

Joey started in political satire at Cornell when he was editor of the humor magazine, *The Cornell Lunatic*. Although he likes to joke that he majored in political cartooning, he was actually a fine arts major. While editor of *The Cornell Lunatic*, Joey formed a nationwide council of college humor magazines that met once a year. Although there were only fifteen members, Joey claims the meetings "gave us an excuse to have a wild party. We did some pretty wild things."

But Joey didn't call a meeting everytime he wanted to do something outrageous. To raise funds for his magazine, for example, Joey published bogus football programs and sold them to over 2500 Cornell Alumni at the Cornell-Yale game. "We sold ours for a dollar and the real ones were two dollars. Who could refuse?" He was almost expelled for his hoax. "Before I did it, I thought out what the consequences would be. I don't think you should ever pull a prank without knowing what's going to happen to you," he advised. "The administration wants you to take it seriously because they can get you to stop being the joker—and then they've won."

Joey stuck to his philosophy and at the next Cornell-Yale hockey game, he was back with his programs. "I figured if I was kicked out, I'd make headlines and I'd be hired. You always hear those stories about the guy who does something crazy and the next week he's editor of *Newsweek*."

Joey's stunts didn't get him on the *Newsweek* staff, but they did help land him an intern job with *National Lampoon*. He worked there until he published an article in *Rolling Stone* about why *National Lampoon* wasn't funny anymore. Joey had felt that though once the best magazine for political and social satire, *Lampoon* was and is still using sex to sell magazines. "It was full of bad humor—tasteless nudes and gratuitous sex. Really in bad taste."

Bad taste is one of Joey's favorite subjects. He wrote a parody of *People* magazine, satirizing the plight of the Cambodian refugees. He called it *Boat People*. "My *Boat People* was definitely in bad taste, but it wasn't bad taste for the sake of being bad," he said. "It wasn't poking fun at the boat people. I was saying we've got to do something. And it makes you wonder, 'What can I do to correct the situation? What can I do to help?'"

"I think a real mistake in this country is that nowadays a lot of people have a real Michael J. Fox/Alex P. Keaton syndrome where all that's important is making a million bucks and retiring," he continued. "You know, 'I'm gonna get an M. B. A. and make a lot of money and not learn

anything about life.' There's a lot of people coming out of college these days who know nothing about life."

Joey hasn't taken that route, though. When he went to the Soviet Union last summer he concentrated his attentions on the Refuseniks, the Soviet Jews. "I was in Russia for a week and it felt like a month," he recalled. "There's no freedom of speech there. People would come up to me—they knew I was Western—and they would want to talk with me. It's illegal for Russians to talk with foreigners. And these guys want information—stupid information. Like this one guy—he had an old Grace Jones tape, 'Leatherette,' and he wanted to know what the word meant. How do you explain that?"

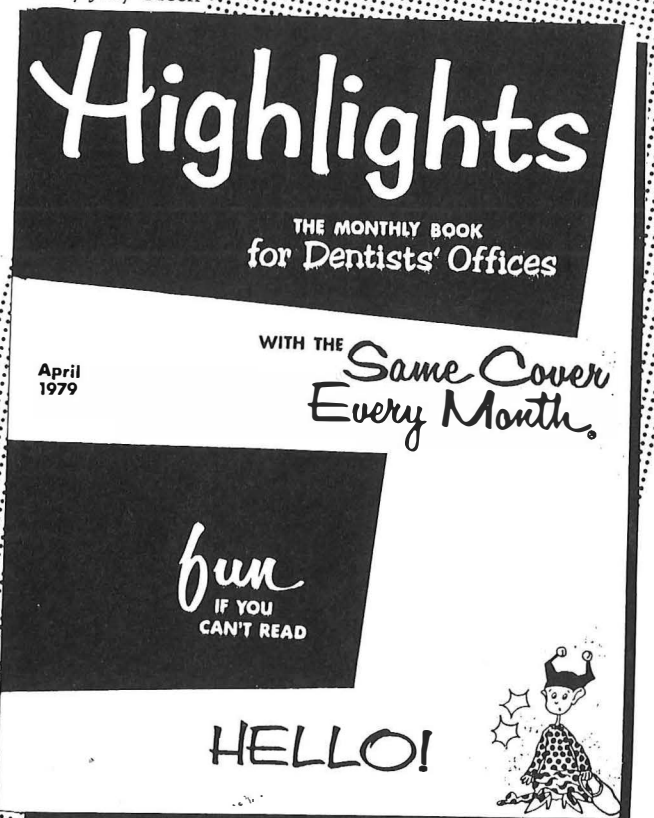
Joey talked passionately about his travels in Russia and Europe, the lack of freedom in the Soviet Union. "A Russian asked me, 'Is it true that in America you can go to the White House and scream 'Ronald Reagan is an idiot!' I said yes, no problem. No one's going to arrest me. And the Russian couldn't believe it.' To counter the Soviet Union's repression, Joey smuggled a Monopoly board into Moscow. "I gave it to a kid, he must have been twelve or thirteen, and he had actually played Monopoly before. I hope he doesn't get caught with it—he'll be in big trouble."

He remembered two different kinds of Russian humor. "There's actual Russian humor and printed Russian humor," he said. "The printed humor magazine is, by our standards, not funny. It's like if the United States Government published a humor magazine. Not funny!" But the humor on the streets is against the government."

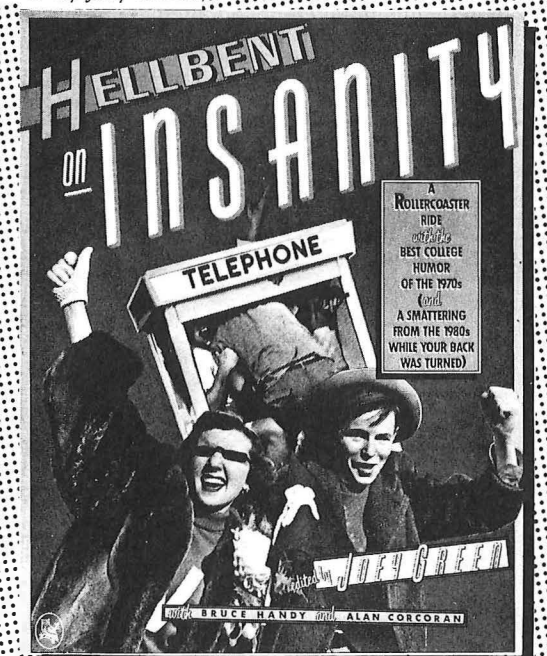
Joey is planning to cross Russia on the Trans-Siberian Railroad next fall. But now that he's back in America, he's working—writing for *Spy* magazine. He writes at home, though, and admits that it's a lonely job. "It's very hard to discipline yourself to write for nine straight hours," he said. Joey wrote and produced Burger King commercials. Before that, he edited *Hellbent on Insanity*, a compilation of the best college humor. His next book, *The Official Gilligan's Island Handbook*, is due out next summer. "I had to watch all ninety-eight episodes of *Gilligan's Island*," he laughed. "The book is about all the flaws and discrepancies on the show. There are chapters on each of the castaways. Like, how much money did Mr. Howell have on the island. All the rescues *Gilligan* ruined. All the visitors that came to the island and how come they never left. All the things the castaways find on the island or fish out of the lagoon. Every movie *Ginger* has been in—she's been in about thirty and she's only thirty years old. I wrote essays about sex on the island—how come *Ginger* and *Mary-Anne* never got pregnant? Was there birth control? Who was sleeping with who? What kind of government did they have on the island? Was it democratic or communist or socialist? It's all very exciting."

Joey's work with comedy and the whole art and literary scene has been very exciting. "I just got into it," he said. "It's just something I enjoy. I think it's important to do what you enjoy doing." Making people laugh is almost enough for Joey Green. But for him, comedy has to have a higher purpose. "Through satire we examine ourselves—criticize our flaws."

When Joey learned his interview was going into *Erehwon*, he smiled and said, "Why, I'll be honored to appear in that pretentious, elitist publication."



Exaggeration of the familiar: a parody also featured in *Hellbent*.



Joey's collection of the best college humor.

Natural Progressions

Spring.

Pink lights
glow,
Sing to us.

Shy, I peek
through boughs
hoping
to catch
your eye.

Buds poke
through earth
sending sweet smells
to our
selves,
and we deepen
into

Summer.

Ripe golds and greens
drip,
Call us from husky throats.

We sink in damp meadows
heaving hot
words from our
lips.

Arms of trees brag,
gaudily laden
with treasures which
ooze
until they can

Fall.

Rich reds and rusts
open,
beckon to us.

We rise from meadows
to groves
whispering wisdom
in our warmth.
The wind caresses
the trees
from roots
over strong trunks
to tender twigs,
arousing depths
of color.

Dive
through leaves
deep into
climax
of

Winter.

We reach
blue and violet
streams.

Fullness of feelings
shiver
in clear air as
fresh winds
blow,
leaving us with the
clean
cold,
finding love
between life
and life.

Bare,
we kiss
and dance
into the sunrise
of

Cheryl Anne Levin



Natural Progressions • Janet Kalman

Waterfall

Listen

The waterfall sings
in long musical ribbons
whispering voices
chanting a mantra of solace

It calls your blood in pauses
between silent breaths
a thin wisp of poetry

Streaming with the sun and sky
shifting around
over
under
boulders
like they are pebbles

Always seeking obstacles
washing the slippery hillside
spanking the lichen stones
spraying mist in dewdrop beads
on slick green moss

No one can cease the flow
of wet light
swarming under the clouds
descending with the rain

Listen to know

Alex Gibson

Sunpainting

Each ray a bristle
brushing light on canvas night
touch by touch, the day.

Craig Enger

The Night Shift at Hot Shoppe's

Behind me, four women
In therapeutic sneakers and floral prints
Order boneless chicken and mashed potatoes.

A fat mother and her three chubby children
Cram into a booth.
The youngest connects-the-dots
On his placemat.
Next to him, his sister
Mashes peas into putty.
They stick to her fork.
Too late, the lady in the blue hat dodges—
The green grenade splatters
Her wiry wig.

The door admits
Two men in faded fatigues
And faded faces.
Their Jordache honeys
Crack their gum and head toward the restroom
To revive their hypo-allergenic smiles
And replenish the neon on their lashes
And lids.

The man with sandpaper stubble
Shouts for coffee
As he wobbles past the kitchen.
I have seen him here before.

Outside,
The signs invite
And the headlights stare
Through the glass.
I wish I could tear up my order pad,
Strip off my uniform
And stumble out into the buzzing night
But I've been here so long
I've forgotten what lurks out there, between these windows
And mine.

Karen White



Waiting in Line • Amy Klein

Waiting in Line

Standing on my
hot, restless
feet.
facing forward
someone
no one
to meet.
glancing at the
shiny
dial of my
watch
quick.
trying to
muffle the
Coke I
sip.
pretending
not to
care.
I would
look, but
I know
you, too,
shuffle
watch
wait.

Michelle Kao

Pilgrimage

Under the tenement steps, my arms heavy with grocery bags, I stumbled upon the woman. In the nervous half-light, her head lolled and her hair broke apart with filth, her tatters reeked like swamp-moss. Ancient, her eyes swam—she cradled her only child, a bottle wrapped in brown paper, which suckled cozily at her side. I turned slowly and rounded the landing to my apartment, shut the door. Yet when I returned that night, a notion breathed in my head that I was a pilgrim to a holy place; and, darkly, I crouched in prayer as she ranted before me, ranted like the preistess of a long-dead religion. Rising, she opened her eyes, as black as sepulchres, and screamed her drunken sermon.

The next day, I found her again, trudging the sidewalk. The neighbors' children had stolen from flowerboxes and crowned her with daisies—she wore them like a goddess.

Erik Goldner

Spinning Yarns

Nicole Green

I'm quite an artist they tell me. Masterful, creative, and when I stitch a tapestry, I leave out not even the most intricate detail. I've created new lives, different worlds, and other emotions by twisting and weaving the threads of my profession. And I quietly, some mistaking it for modesty, agree that yes, I am good.

I have had such practice though, having practically been born with a loom in hand and producing materials of the richest kind. Weaving is my life, and I spin off cloth as easily as the lies. I entwine thread with the same perfection as I do words, a piece of workmanship bonded carefully with deceit.

Neither the lies nor the weaving came easily at first. I made mats and tapestries, since burned, with gaping holes and odd colors. And such difficulty it took in creating them! The truth, like missed stitches, would come out as well, too often perhaps, until I learned.

Papa taught us well, my sisters and me. We lived in a small town, and Papa did not encourage association with the townspeople unless the purpose was solely business. He sat at his large, handmade loom with the four of us crowded around, watching in fascination. Lisabeth was the oldest, and the first to be taught.

But it was not Lisabeth's talent, nor the others'. It was mine alone, and Papa rewarded me with yarns and materials and sometimes special privileges that were granted only to me. Papa put a belt to us often, but in time it became bearable. The pain had to be tolerated because I depended on his teachings too intensely to allow physical feeling to interfere with my work.

Papa, I suppose, depended on me in a manner of speaking. It was in an obscure way, a dependency so repressed it was almost perverse. I carried out his intentions, the things he could never quite bring himself to do. We never spoke of these feelings; it remained our silent understanding.

Papa gave me money occasionally, and sent me into town for supplies. As I said earlier, it took time to master my skills, but master them I did, and I often carried them out during my visits to the general store.

Good afternoon, Miss Jessica," the store owner, Mr. Calvin, would say each time I entered the store. "What may I do for you today?"

And I'd glance at a list, casually thinking over just what he could do for me today, reciting each item slowly. He would go about gathering each item and putting them into my basket, while I retreated to the far reaches of the store.

Something in the back would always catch my eye: a pipe for Papa, thread of gold and metallic splendor, and other such things. When I arrived home, whichever object I had been paying closest attention to would appear in my pocket or buried in my shoe. I could never remember taking the things later on, and I suppose this was one of the developments in my nature.

"Order's done, Miss Jessica," Mr. Calvin would yell towards the back. "Would you like me to ring it up?" And I came immediately up to the register.

"Yes, please, Mr. Calvin," I replied. "I'd appreciate it."

He got chatty towards the end of my visits, perhaps because he led a lonely life working by himself in the store all day.

"How is your lovely mother doing?" he asked, referring to a picture I cut out years before from a book of fairy tales. "Is she still plagued with those horrid symptoms?"

"Mother's a bit better," I said. "We don't give her medicine anymore because it serves no purpose really. She's dying, you know. Although some days she seems much stronger than others, so that gives us all hope."

He looked at me sympathetically, knowingly. Then he would always put an extra piece of fruit or candy into my basket.

"That's for you," he said. "You stay strong and healthy to help out your Mama, hear?"

I'd thank him, nod, and leave before the smile spread across my face lighting my eyes.

Papa maybe suspected the stories. But he never knew. Not then, anyway.

Thoughts can fester and eat at the mind for a long time. I'd consider different ideas, testing them as I wove shawls and sweaters and rugs, all the while experimenting in colors and techniques. I soon developed a plan, beautiful and alluring, that I was determined to complete.

The face of the bottom image was hard to discern, but I knew Papa would have no difficulty. It was me at the bottom, the lowest yet the brightest.

I worked all through the night, twisting the thread and yarn and even rope in places through the designs of my masterpiece. When it was complete, the threads in places had unraveled from rubbing against coarse rope, but the images were clear. The colors for the most part were bland, ordinary. And a family of four blended into the background of unimportance. But in the lower right hand corner was a design of such magnificence, it was temporarily blinding. The colors lashed out, drawing eyes toward it, then stabbing them in return. The face of the bottom image was hard to discern, but I knew Papa would have no difficulty. It was me at the bottom, the lowest yet the brightest.

The whip was suspended in midair, and I drove my fingernails into my palms, later surprised at the bloodied, half-moon marks I made. The bark, as the cliché goes, is certainly not worse than the bite. The anticipation never prepared me for the agony to come. The belt made a terrifying cracking sound as it confronted my skin, but the gashes on my back told the real story.

"I'll teach you to steal!" Papa was screaming in humiliation. "I raise you good, I teach you a profession, and you turn your back on me. You ain't anything but a thief!"

"Yes, sir," I replied softly. "You're right, Papa. I'll never do it again. I love you, Papa."

He lowered his hand slowly, and fumbled to rehook his belt. His face was still red and bloated with anger, yet I could see the other side, the insecure, caring side more clearly. My abilities had surpassed even my own beliefs. Papa was able to believe those last words, the biggest lie of all.

"You go and clean up now," he said, his voice rusted from the yelling. "I'll be in to check on you later."

I nodded and turned away, walking out of the room. Later, I came back to him with my work in hand. He shook his head and then let the material fall to the floor. He said nothing melodramatic, nothing even poignant. The sunlight broke in through the window, trapping dust in its

prism and falling against his body in heavy lines.

He dragged his feet wearily toward the door and gently closed it behind him. But I knew I had triumphed, and I smiled in a way that never touched my eyes. I was through with my apprenticeship, and he knew that I had learned well.

The nylon stocking was strong, capable, but not frightening. He seemed to realize what was coming, and through his dreams I broke in carrying Papa across the bridge into a new world.

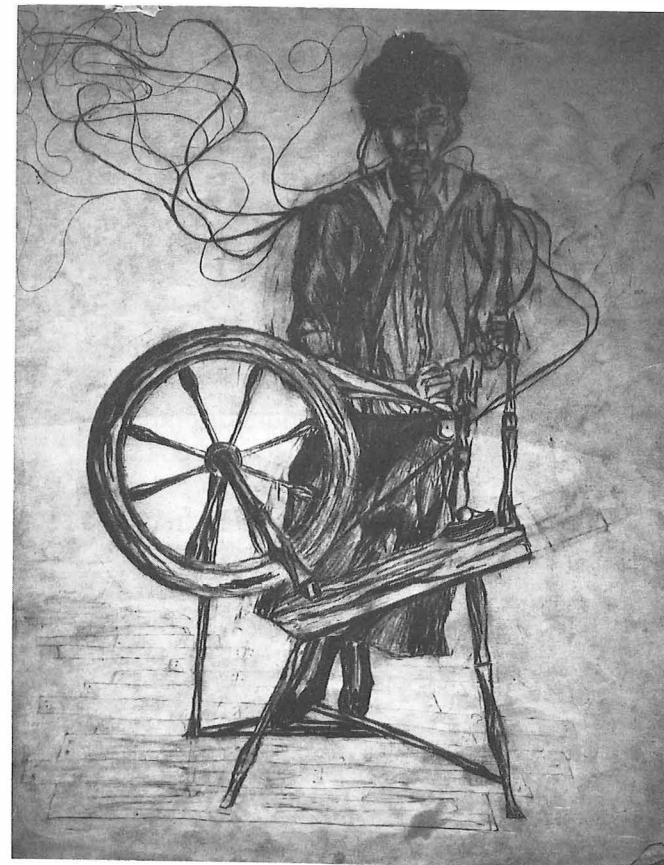
I crawled back into bed, feeling the cold sheets grip the backs of my legs. My sisters would awaken soon, and I knew I could continue with my work then.

The police arrived with the coroner. "Standard procedure," we were told. And we answered questions. Endless questions dragging on into evening's light.

"No, sir," I said. "I slept through the night and was not awakened by any noises." The nylons were back safely in my bureau drawer. "I'm lucky to have survived, aren't I?" A tear slipped out, glided down the smooth surface of my cheeks.

The police left soon afterward, and I returned to Papa's loom. To my loom.

Now with nimble fingers I lead the willing thread into endless patterns to create the stories. Regret does not haunt me, nor the reiterated dreams one hears about, and this enables me to complete the deceptions with a beauty beknownst to no other art. ●



Spinning Tales • Alex Gibson

I awoke in the orange light
and lumbered downstairs
to light your candle
but he was already there, it was
already glowing, he was
drinking coffee

He did not say "Happy Birthday."

Today is my seventeenth
but we will not celebrate
because this day is not for talking
he has taught me that.

Or maybe I've known since my
first morning—
I remember; they say I can't
but I do:
out you heaved, and in you breathed
your final breath
and I squawked
wanting to steal the scene
not knowing that the ringmaster just resigned

And he, red-splattered like an artist
in his smock
climbed onto the mattress with you
crying to go too
begging to go too.

Then I was staring into a crystal dome
my own clear planet, my clean new home
but I yelled to get out
I wanted to go too.

So he drinks his coffee
and that morning, any mourning
doesn't exist
except for the candle dripping wax,
tears that somehow escaped.

You are a plastic picture frame,
but last night I saw your lips mouthe my name,
your eyes wink to me, your hands reach,
out, out, farther, to me, almost
but
missing.

Today is my seventeenth
And finally I need you
I wish it wasn't true
But I want to know you too.

Alison Buckholtz



Hortense • Jeffrey Scott Simmons

The Quiet Girl

Today she spoke
Faint offerings
From her orderly collection
Of what she's been told
As the truth
And nothing but

Mike Spirtas

Melted Wax Remains

Anger is a candle
lit by a match
that flares in a bulb of sungold
quiets down
flickers, its reflection dances in the window
drips, first fast and then it slows
as it becomes dry
old and crumbly
Soon there is nothing left
except melted wax remains

Later that night it snows
My breath makes the glass frosty

Franci Weitz

Sasquatch

Matt Jaffe

At night the wind blows—picking up snow and swirling it around. Leaves scatter over the drifts and bare tree tops grind against each other. The wind picks up other things too. Sounds and smells and smoke. Dogs bark far off like weak thunder, but they come closer tonight.

Sometime soon, Spring will be in these woods. Snow will melt away and the ground will reach out warm and breathe. But in the meantime, to keep myself warm, I sing. It is a song the Forest Men taught me. I was their Great Spirit, their Thruum Twao.

An owl flutters down next to me. She has brought a mouse. The blood is still warm when I crunch its bones.

Yesterday, Spirit Man came stomping through the woods. I thought it odd that he was alone. Usually, the Forest Men came to me with shells and feathers, and built a searing fire, dancing in front of it like clouds passing over the sun.

"Where are your feathers?"

He sat on the rock and did not look away from his feet. His hair, beaten with ice, hung over his eyes. It looked like a field after a winter rain. His breath puffed out in quick blasts.

Spirit Man had been the oldest of the Forest Men. He was the tallest tree, sheltering the rest.

We sat together until the sun set behind the fields. And when it was dark, before the moon came up, Spirit Man lifted his head.

"We're leaving," he said.

Even in the darkness, I saw the red of his eyes and knew he had been crying.

"If that is what you must do."

"New men have come into these woods." He held up two tight fists. "Small men, filled with hate. But they will kill us if we stay."

"How will you live without all this?"

"There are other woods." His head bowed down again. "We will live." He stood up like a wilted tree. "Good-bye, Thruum Twao." And before he was gone, he turned and saw me sitting on the rock. "These men," he shouted and the wind churned his voice. "They mean to own these woods."

Maybe it is good that I will not be here to see the rocks upturned, the trees chopped down. But I will fight to stay. I am the Great Spirit. The Thruum Twao.

The dogs off?" Farmer Thomas asks as he folds a length of leather strapping. "Aye, they're gone," Farmer Richard says, removing the yoke from his strongest ox. He looks across the field to where the woods stand over the snow like a tangled wall of grasping arms.

"Maybe f'good." Farmer Thomas pulls his hat down so the shadows cover his eyes. "What d'you think?"

"They'll get him. Ye heard what Farmer Lloyd said. There's only one Hairy Beast in the forest. And all of our dogs can surely take down one Hairy Beast. Just look a' what they did to the Indians." He slaps Thomas' hat and laughs.

"Just the same, I'll be saying an extra prayer b'fore I sleep tonight," Farmer Thomas says and then tramps off through the snow.

The dogs are close now, very close, and I hear their paws tearing through the snow and their jagged voices screaming like a fast storm. I have heard these dogs before. But when they chase a deer, their howls are distant. Voices are hard when they're after you.

A while ago, I heard noises moving into the edge of the woods—the new men settling in. They came to these woods, coughing and spitting and singing cruel songs. Everywhere they went, a fire consumed trees and brushes and blazed over roots and sent black smoke into the sky. For that I call them Burners. To them, fire is like thunder is to lightning—a partner that cannot be without the other. I think that without fire, the Burners would be dying animals caught in the winter.

Burners hold fire in their homes. I have seen them—short blocks of deadwood, spouting smoke from their roofs. The houses are built far away from these woods, and each day the distance between the woods and the houses grows. Each day, the burners come and tear trees away and pluck the stumps out, and then rip the ground with ploughs.

Maybe it is good that I will not be here to see the rocks upturned, the trees chopped down. But I will fight to stay. I am the Great Spirit. The Thruum Twao.

Across the field, a dog wanders out of the woods—a brown shape limping, almost drowning, in the smothering pale snow. The sky is like dead skin, and the sun has not been out past the clouds all morning. He fights up to the houses—dragging himself past the rows of square cabins—and inches up the steps of Farmer Richard's hut.

Farmer Richard sits next to the fire, listening as the dog's claws clack against the wooden door. Richard opens the door and his wife rolls in bed.

The dog is on the top step. His hair flat and frozen, tail curled between his hind legs, front paw smashed useless. He holds something in his mouth. Farmer Richard looks at the dog and frowns.

"Well boy?"

The dog drops a clump of hair at Richard's feet. Brown hair, almost like a cow's, but longer and stronger and rooted in frozen blood and thick muscles.

Farmer Richard goes down to one knee. He takes the dog by the shoulders and hugs him. But his eyes stare across the field at the wall of naked, grey trees. He smiles and thinks someday he will look out from his front door and never see another one of those trees again.

"Good boy," he whispers. ●

Fire and Rein

White fire soaks his feet,
His body burns chestnut red.
His mother, the sun,
Kisses his forehead
And her white blaze races down
And licks his nose.
Raising a flaming head to his beaming parent,
He leaps and flickers in her arms.
He rumpled the earth's green skirts,
A prince of fire.
But when I touch him,
He is no dragon.
I see myself in his quiet emeralds
And wonder if I really extinguish his kingdom
With my rein.

Karen White



Leavings

When you left that morning she said you needed to be closer to work—I didn't even know you had a job. Those mornings very early when you'd be up before all of us with your coffee and you'd let me taste the last drops I still can't swallow those last sips of coffee. She doesn't like coffee or sitting quiet or zoos. She likes dancing and noise and things I just don't understand. She has left me behind many times in marriage or madness but never so far as you went when you took your suitcase to work.

Jennifer Sainato

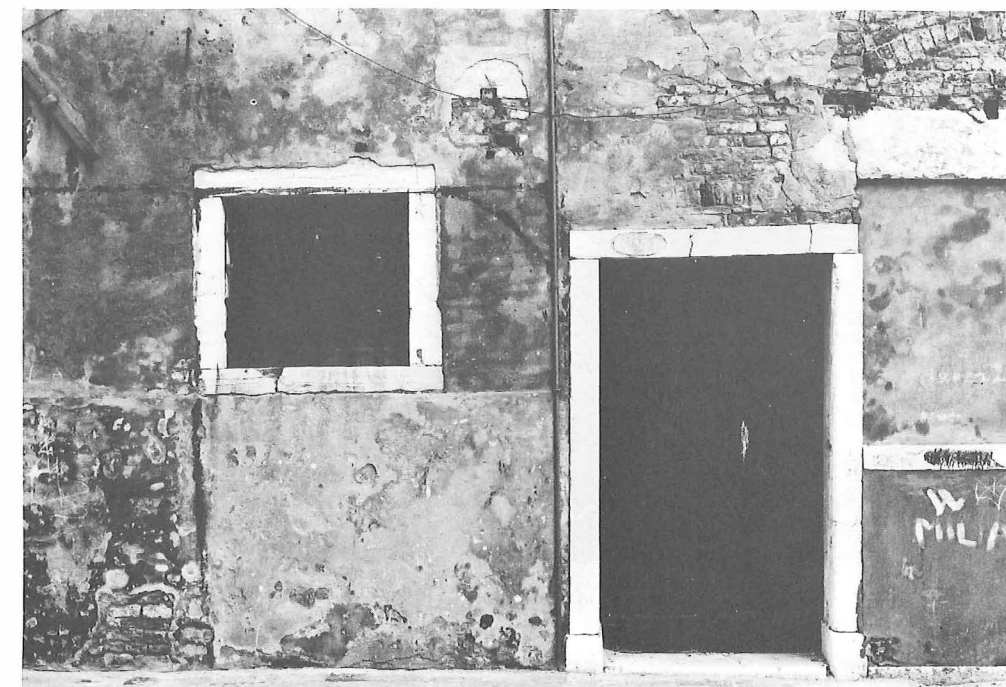


Freed

Never free
My shackles scraped the asphalt
As I followed your unrelenting pace.
My iron-clasped arms
Had too many times
Been stopped mid-blow.
Your strength had too many times
Doused my flame of defiance.

And though my bones
Will me to collapse
I will not surrender
To my weak frame.
I flee, chains and all,
Refusing to be bound
By your depiction
Of the weak soul
You perceive me to be.

Cate Marvin



Doors and Windows • *Andy Katzenmeyer*



Dachau • Andy Katzenmeyer

Confessions to a Jew: A Villanelle

Behind this iron mask a heart resides
 I closed my eyes, shut out your misery
 But I never tried to have you crucified

For though I scolded when you cried, inside
 I wept to see you wilt, a winter tree
 Behind this iron mask a heart resides

Barbed wire wraps us tight in fratricide
 I merely follow orders, earn my fee
 I never tried to have you crucified

And when I hold your file my thoughts divide;
 My brain adheres to law. My heart would set you free
 Behind this iron mask a heart resides

Your disillusion is proven justified
 Points all your anger racing back to me
 Because I signed to have you crucified

Please teach me where you find courage to try
 To conquer human vulnerability
 Under this iron mask, my heart has died
 I never tried to stop, I crucified

Joanna Schaenman

The Florida Connection

Marc Star

Old men, old women, almost twenty million of them in Florida. Why do they go there? What brings them there? Is there like an old people magnet that just zaps them from where they are in September to a rocking chair on the porch of some motel named "The Admiral" until March of the next year? Or maybe they're like salmon and, for some reason (which they don't know), instinct leads them.

It's not like they go to swim in the ocean or build sand-castles. They don't even go to any nude revues down Biscayne Boulevard. But they go, and they sit, and they sit some more. Not that I have anything against sitting; in fact I love to sit, but not from 9 am to 6 pm. So . . . why do they go? What makes old people want to sweat?

What makes old people like lemonade so much? If they're not making cookies, they're making a "fresh batch of tangy lemonade!" I once saw an old man chug a gallon of lemonade. I thought he was going to have a heart attack, he got so excited. And I don't know why he got so excited.

Nobody on the porch was cheering him on or anything, just a bunch of old women monotonously saying "That was good George" or "Going for the world record George?" or "Pass me my Ascriptin, George." George was the only person smiling on the whole porch. You'd think someone would literally blow up if a grin were to escape. So, why do old people go down to Florida if they don't want to have a good time?

Do they hate Florida natives? Or do they just want to kill the locals? Old people seem to like using their 1960's bombers to run over pedestrians. I've heard rumors that the old people in Florida have their own version of Deathrace 2000—and plenty of them are racking up the points. But those are just rumors, right?

Okay, so I'm not for that over 65 ban that's spreading around Miami. In fact, I like old people. Just not in Florida. Florida possesses them. Florida corrupts them. Maybe we should saw it off America and move Jai-Alai to D.C. ●



Bench Potatoes • Marcelo Gomes

Breakfast Serial

I saw you gazing at a box of Froot Loops the other day.
But I am the cheerio, floating in your breakfast bowl.
You can shove me under with your silver spoon, but I will not sink.

Your mother always said I was good for you. And I've been on your shelf as long as I can remember; I'm a part of your daily life.

So please, don't give me up for the Froot Loops—
I may not be sweet,
But I have
Good taste.

Karen White

Another Meaning of Life

On the first day, the lord created life
Just plain ole' life
On the eighth day, after awaking from his little nap,
The lord gave us another life, a board game
From Parker Brothers
For ages eight and up to learn about life
Insurance that is
On the tenth day, after he recovered from his appendectomy, the lord gave us life,
The cereal
And Mikey
And six proof of purchases from a sundae
From Dairy Queen
Finally, on the eleventh day, the lord did fulfil his prophecy of deliverance,
Of a punchline to his joke
For on the eleventh day the lord gave us
Monty Python

Phil Silberman

Service

Enlist you
duncical
beef-witted numskull.
You
dullard dumbell.
Pinheaded simpleton.
Be all
You
can be.

Ian Henyon

Mason Funeral Home, 14th and Park

A rosary on her folded hands, waxy hands
 Doll's face
 And we, too, with hands folded
 sat in the wine-colored room
 Genuflectors by the casket
 And the hushed voices:
*Santa Maria madre de dios ruega por nosotros los
 pecadores ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte!*
 pray for us
 the sinners now and in the hour of our death amen.
 outside the exhaust fumes
 and the smell of impending pizza
 & the procession snakes slow
 IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER
 (ennombredelpadre)
 THE SON
 (elhijo)
 AND THE HOLY GHOST
 (yelespiritusanto)
 dirt, by shovelfuls, covers the pine box
 and we wonder when the rain will start.

Deborah Wassertzug



Crosses • Andy Katzenmeyer

Cross Aid

Somewhere
 in Africa
 a camera
 consuming
 a man leaning on a twisted
 crutch with an empty ankle
 veiled by
 red cloth
 He is a
 blackened
 tree with
 dead limb
 burn skin
 and eyes
 so green
 have not
 yet seen
 the ocean

Somewhere
 in Texas
 preachman
 leaps on
 a camera
 Good Book
 in flames
 fanning a
 throng of
 followers
 embracing
 them with
 promises of Jesus in Africa
 and poor man's hunger ended
 he smiles
 like God
 just says
 send cash

Matt Jaffe

Writers Working Together

by John Mufti

Writers should work alone," Ernest Hemingway once wrote. Write only what you know, he said. But Hemingway wasn't always right, and for the second year in a row, local writers have ignored his advice. At Rockville's Smith Center this past April 24th through the 26th, eight published writers shared with 45 beginning writers what they have learned about the creative process. The Second Annual Apprentice Writer's Workshop, sponsored by *Erehwon* and Churchill's Magnum Opus, a creative arts club, attracted students from high schools around the county and Northern Virginia.

Although workshops were the focus of the weekend, readings and lectures framed Saturday's writing sessions. The readings on Friday night commenced the weekend's events. Diversity of style among the writers added to the pleasant evening. Edward Gold bounced out a poem brimming with ironic humor, and the audience laughed. Dan Johnson carved the air with fragile strokes, and the audience listened.

After the readings and throughout the weekend, writers used free time to get to know students. This they found mutually rewarding. "I liked coming in as a writer [rather than a teacher]," said Sarah Maté, who taught at Churchill in the seventies. "I had lots of fun with the kids—they were interesting, sharp and sweet to work with."

Students funneled into individual workshops throughout the day on Saturday. Ed Gold, who taught creative writing at the University of Maryland for many years, worked with young poets, analyzing their poems line by line and suggesting changes. "Basically what I'm doing in the workshops is a condensed version of what I did in the courses I taught at Maryland," Gold explained.

Getting a good poem out of words with "double meanings" was the subject of Sarah Maté's workshop, "Seeing Double." Maté challenged her writers with "a lot of short exercises designed at free-flowing thoughts, away from structured writing."

Junior Ilene Bush said that Maté "didn't make us feel intimidated by writing. She made us want to write." In his session, "Welcoming First and Second Thoughts,"

From Richard Grant's workshop: "I always have the fear that I'm turning perfectly good bond paper into garbage."—writer Charles Bukowski.

Dan Johnson gave photos to his writers and had them write thoughts about them to develop into poems. Joyce Renwick, who lead "Making Something Happen: The Heightened World of Fiction," encouraged her students to write incorporating all six senses, including intuition. Fiction must not merely regurgitate reality to the reader," Renwick emphasized. "Fiction is drama, those choice bits of exciting reality spotlighted and colored and thrown at the reader. Fiction can depress us," she conceded, "but it must also inspire us."

The diversity of the workshops gave students a chance to try something new, according to participant Bill Dodge who attended Tim Kugel's "The Lyric Situation: Combining Words with Music." Kugel "gave me new insight on the musical scene of today and ideas about where I should head if I want to be a musician," Dodge said.

In "Finding and Fueling by Fooling Around," Marty Galvin, creative writing teacher at Whitman, helped his writers find ways into poems by having them write prose about something they hated. And for those interested in imagined realms, science fantasy writer Richard Grant shared with his students ways of "Inventing a Fictional World."



Brian Orlove

Writers Richard Grant and Joyce Renwick chat between workshops.

Sandwiched between morning and afternoon workshops was Joey Green's presentation on some of the ways he has used wit and writing skill in his career as a satirist. Included in his talk were slides of parodies he had written for the *Cornell Lunatic* and *The National Lampoon*.

Green, a resident of New York City, was the only "imported" writer at the Workshop. "I met Joey last year at Columbia University's Scholastic Press Convention," recalls Peggy Pfeiffer, the organizer of the Writer's Workshop. "His talk at Columbia was hilarious. The house was packed, kids were standing in the aisles. I decided to ask him if he'd come to Maryland and give the same presentation. I told him about the Workshop, he agreed... wouldn't even accept payment for his time... that Joey, what a guy."

In the evening the laughter continued as participants gathered in the dorms, the lodge and on the fields of the Smith Center's spacious grounds. Talking and joking, laughing and dancing continued deep into the night. As Jeff Pruzan put it, "This is the kind of thing you can only do at 3:30 in the morning."

Sunday morning Rick Peabody, editor of *Gargoyle*, "Washington's premier literary magazine," according to the *Washington Post*, talked about publishing. He started by saying that the traditional writer's bible, *The Writer's Market*, is "worthless. It's not realistic. It lists all the big names that no one gets into, like *The New Yorker*, and some of the rest. The real writer's bible is *The International Directory of Little Magazines and Small Presses*, which lists just about every publication imaginable."

Peabody talked about the realities of getting work published, getting money for it, and actually getting people to read it once it's published. "No one makes any money writing poetry," he said. He strolled by the rows of obscure "little magazines" he had strewn on a table, saying, "Just

Sarah Maté: "I'm not sure what value (my work has) to anyone but me. It is painful to me because it is so lonely. But I want people to like what I do. I admire Dan's attitude [that what counts is whether the writer is satisfied with his work], but I don't function by it. If I never showed anybody anything but what I believe in, I would never give anything."

remember, if you want the world to read your stuff, it's not going to. But if you get published in my magazine, you'll get read by people who count."

Peabody ended his talk and the 2nd Annual Apprentice Writer's Workshop with one other observation he has made as an editor and writer. "Last year I read over 8,000 stories submitted to *Gargoyle* in a six-month period. And about half of those were Raymond Carver imitations. Not all of them were bad, but enough is enough." He joked about suburbanites trying to write stories about being down and out or being poor Polish immigrants.

"Give me a break," Peabody scoffed. "Why don't you write stories about what you know?"

Write what you know? Write alone? Perhaps the Workshop didn't ignore Hemingway's advice at all. All the talking and sharing (even the laughing and dancing) prepared participants for the writer's struggle alone. ●

Vicariousity

The Poet came today
He weaved his piece
With long, sinewy fingers
And we listened
Intently wondering what
It is to
Paint
With words

Mike Spirtas



Cheryl Anne Levin

Dandelion

Wilted red roses found no fertility in the sterile white room as if they knew too that they will not come, they will not come again those fancy suitors bringing flowers for their pretty one only to find a shattered face, glass-carved into terrible lines that time will never erase. They avoided the dead eyes, but listened to dead voice repeating mechanically, "Thank you for coming. It means so much to me." But how much more if the eyes of the giver held old admiration, not new horror. The red roses tore like a new wound, added to fresh wounds, piled on old wounds, how many more til she becomes numb?

Now slippered feet peeking beneath hospital gown shuffle toward her bed with a nurse's aid. "I picked it for you," says her newly blind roommate, extending the dandelion in her small chubby hand. Funny how the sunny flower flourishes in a glass jar that used to hold wilted red roses.

Jennifer Dixon

Valentine

On Valentine's, Grandmother died.
Oh, not her body or her brain,
Only the death of her love.
She fell—

a break of the hip, the heart,
fell through the gaping hole in her own joy
to spend a space in hell.

In hospital
among the faces showing nothing.
the stainless walls
that showed us to ourselves
we waited
to hear what I already knew—
stoutly sewn with gut and wire mesh
a spider web holds part of her to here.

She convalesced
rotely rounding to her therapy
then floating up to highlit dungeons
where she spent her days.
They brought the body's food
to fill a want of will.
She starved
although a hero's feast was offered.

In time we brought her home
where she still starves
here in her garrett
alone with her emptiness
her deathhead warder
and a clock with a luminous face.

Robin Suleiman

Heads

Robin Suleiman

Grammy Tucker looks up from her nod, takes a peek at her jailor, and a smile, sly and lopsided, creeps over her half-hidden face. Dolores is standing with her back to Grammy, talking on the phone and looking out the big window.

"Oh, sure, Ms. Grace. You mother doin fine. Cranky as ever."

Grammy turns the big wheel of her chair slowly with her one good hand, swivels into the hall and heads for the kitchen. She stops in front of the refrigerator and listens again, turning her working ear back toward the distant sound of broken English trickling from her room like water over stones. She smiles again and reaches for the latch to the freezer. The sudden rush of cold takes her breath and for a second she is afraid she will choke and give herself away. But the feeling passes and she peers into the frosty cave, moving freezer bags, chucking unwanted items haphazardly around the smoking compartment. She knows Dolores would hide it in the back, behind the frozen vegetables maybe. She reaches farther in, her hand aching with the cold, her whole body jutting forward into the little space like a witch into her oven. She is working with singleminded purpose and doesn't notice that the trickle of monologue has stopped, nor hear the tiny click as the phone slides back into place next door. She spies her quarry, jammed into a far corner as suspected, and claws the little round box of ice cream bonbons out into her lap, digging the top off like a starving waif.

"Now, Ms Tucker! You know you not sposed to eat no sweets, and you diabetic!" Swooping down on the old lady like a pterodactyl, Dolores snatches away the open box of bonbons. Taking out three or four for herself, she reaches across the struggling Grammy and replaces the ice cream in the freezer.

"Now go back to your room and behave," she says, and gives the wheelchair a shove in that direction.

"Bitch," Grammy spits, and wheels herself slowly back down the hall. Behind her the freezer door snaps shut.

Grammy turns the corner into her room and finds herself facing the telephone, receiver still warm from her daughter's call. She looks at it darkly. It has betrayed her. Hasn't held the enemies at bay long enough. Hasn't let her know, with the familiar click, that her time was about up. Like a smoking gun, she mutters.

Now she turns, looking apprehensively at another enemy, a life-sized clay bust sitting on a small stand near the phone. The head's empty sockets stare back. The mouth returns a wistful smile, and the only one in its repertoire. It mocks her with its likeness, with its difference. It is a pleasant Grammy, with the classic granny expression, skin a little flaccid at the jaw but still smooth across the strong facial planes. The Grammy of the nursery rhymes, that strokes your hair, whispers "hush" and whose goodnight kiss and warm comfort cling when the bedroom light goes out.

Monstrosity, Grammy sniffs. Foolishness and vanity!

But Grammy is remembering, remembering the things that are easy to remember. Sometimes she forgets Dolores' name, what day of the week it is (Don't matter a damn, anyway, she tells herself. All days are the same), what she had for lunch. But the time of the head she never forgets.

It was right after her heart surgery. She remembers the pain, the smoky semi-consciousness in which she floated much of the time. She was home in bed. Grace was taking care of her. Wonderful recuperative powers, the doctors had said. Should be fine after recovery. And she was recovering. Slowly. The doorbell had rung and a few minutes later, Grace had come into the bedroom.

"Ma. There's a young man outside. Says he's in the neighborhood and looking for work. He's a sculptor. Does busts. It's your birthday next week. Why not have him do a quick head? You have to stay in bed. It will be easy to pose, and he'll be company for you while you're getting better. What do you say?"

Bother was what Gram had said. Damn fool woman. But in the end, she had agreed. And so, every day for twelve

days he came, sat in front of her bed, propped up his stuff around him, and began working the gray-green plasteline with his long bony fingers. He hardly ever smiled. Only pushed and worked the clay over the wooden form, looking up from time to time with eyes that burned into hers.

Work went on. The face was appearing out of the lump of clay, with a roughed-in mass for hair that looked like coils of rope. But Grammy found herself wishing that the sittings would be over. A strange lethargy had come upon her the last few days. The doctor called it post-operative depression. Said that heart surgery patients often exhibited this behavior. But she didn't know. She felt listless, worn out. Her skin was moist and clammy and the room swam around her almost as in a dream.

Grace said it was probably tiring her too much to have that strange presence in her room for so long each day, so she decided to postpone the sessions. The fellow agreed, saying he would return in three days. Grammy slept most of that time almost in a swoon. On the third day, she awoke feeling more perky, more in touch with the world, and for the first time in weeks, looked forward to breakfast.

Grammy could move only one foot and one hand, the fingernails of which had grown like claws. She wouldn't allow them to be cut.

That morning, the sculptor was back. The head that he brought in with him was almost finished. He had been working it up from memory. It only needed a few touches. The smiling mouth held an enigma. The hair, still only suggested, was a nest of clay coils about the face, a face that was lifelike, with skin that almost breathed. Only the eyes were not yet finished, still only roughed-in by two gouged holes beneath the brow. They made the expression tentative, as though the eyes were the key, the necessary ingredient to make the sculpture live. With its tendril hair and greenish skin, it looked now more like a strange tuber that, if pushed into the earth, fed and water, might grow, become alive.

Grammy, looking at the head, became convinced that it was more alive already than she was. In fact, it seemed to have taken on life even as she was losing her grip on it, as though in some unholy process of transfusion. A kind of dread curled inside her. And Grammy screamed.

She screamed and called Grace, begging, pleading for her to send the fellow away. She hadn't the strength for any more, she lied. Reluctantly, Grace agreed, telling the young man that she would take the head as it was. The sculptor became surprisingly and wildly agitated, raking his fingers through his mousy hair, protesting that it was impossible.

"It isn't finished," he said, "until it's fired. And the eyes. The eyes must be put in and I must fire it. Do you understand? If it isn't fired, it can change. I mean," darting

a ferret look from Grace to Grammy, "the clay is soft. Its shape can shift..."

But Grace finally prevailed and the sculptor left, still arguing nervously that the head not be left undone.

"Temperament," Grace said shaking her head, and placed the bust on a small stand near the phone facing the bed where Grammy could see it. Its coiled hair and hollow sockets hung before her, above the *giacoma* smile.

The next day, Gram had the stroke.

It didn't take her off, as predicted. But she never walked again. One side of her body was totally dead; the other, limp and attenuated like a dying vine. But, as Grace frequently remarked when she thought Grammy couldn't hear, above the neck Grammy was alive as ever and had become pure vitriol. She had gotten mean and spiteful, suspecting even the kindly act. Everyone was *they*, and was her enemy.

They got her a wheelchair, and a caretaker, and rearranged her one-floor little house so she could get around. Which she did less and less. Grammy could move only one foot and one hand. Her fingernails had grown like claws—she wouldn't allow them to be cut—and the stricken hand lay idle in her lap curled like a dead bird's foot, its talons clicking when they touched.

But Grammy had not lost her appetite. In fact, she seemed always to be ravenous these days. Only for sweets, the taboo delights that were always stashed just beyond her reach and guarded by that dragon, Dolores. Dolores, who now ate her ice cream, her chocolates, and sat munching and watching TV, not paying any attention to her when she called. Watching TV or talking on the phone in Spanish to her friends. Dolores was the enemy. Dolores and Grace. After all, if Grace hadn't called in the sculptor, she would never have had the stroke. It had sapped her strength, that's what it had done. Even the doctor had said so the day they found her in bed with drool dripping from the corner of her mouth. Grammy suspected that Grace had done it on purpose. Didn't want to be saddled with her, that's what.

So here she is, prisoner in her own house, every morning waking to the mocking image of her greener self, staring at her with empty eyes.

What was that? A sudden movement, small but deliberate, just at the corner of her good eye. She moves her head, she thinks. Yes. There. Just at the base of the stand. A mouse. The tiny creature, duped by Grammy's stealthy movements, pokes his nose again around the side of the stand and up, sniffing, foraging for what he knows is always here—crumbs that Gram cadges and hides from Dolores, food that Dolores nibbles and hides from Gram. The mouse raises himself on his tiny back legs and stretches toward the bust. Then, with one little leap, runs up the stand to the plinth at the base of the head.

That's all I'm good for any more, Grammy thinks. Rodents. Go on. Eat me up, she snaps at the mouse and closes her eyes in disgust. There is a squeak and a dull thud. Grammy opens her eyes to find the head lying on the floor on its nose.

There. That's done it, she thinks. Now maybe they'll take the damn thing away. Mashed its nose, at the very least, I'd guess.

She rolls herself over to where the statue has fallen and reaches down to turn the thing over and view the damage. There, a tail and two black legs protrude from under the massiest part of the bust. They are still twitching but go limp as she watches. Got the little bugger, didn't you, she grunts, and rolls the head over with her hand.

The face, surprisingly, seems unscarred. But something is different about it now. Grammy has to look at it for some seconds before she realizes what it is. The eyes, that's it. Now, it has them. Lids, lashes, and eyeballs, all gray-green and looking right at her. She jerks her hand back to her mouth and stares.

The head's new eyes seem to be following her. A new eyebrow is raised, a slight twist of the mouth, and on the chin a trickle of blood oozes, sticky and vermillion.

Must be the light, she finally makes herself believe. Just the light. Look closer. You'll see. She does, and sees the mouse body fully revealed where the statue had been lying. But the mouse's head is gone. Not crushed. Gone. Severed from the neck and nowhere to be found. Grammy wheels her chair around the area for some minutes, looking for where it might have rolled. Nothing. Only reluctantly, and after much circling, does she return to look into the hard clay face upturned on the floor. The head's new eyes seem to be following her. The features, always bland and mysterious, have become subtly malignant. A new eyebrow is raised, a slight twist of the mouth, and on the chin a trickle of blood oozes, sticky and vermillion.

Dolores comes pelting down the hall at the sound of the screams. They aren't right. Not like Ms Tucker's usual demanding yelps. These go on and on.

Breathless she bangs into the room to see the old lady cringing in her chair over a toppled statue lying on the floor.

"Ms Tucker. Ms Tucker, you stop that screaming! You give me horrid turn. What you scream for?"

"That head. It's alive. It eats mice"—and Grammy continues to scream and point, cowering in her chair. "Get it out of here."

"No such thing, Ms Tucker. What would Grace think, she sit store by it, that head. You only knock it over, is all. You always getting into things you got no business. Such a nice head too. Look like you alot. And you never like it. *You break it up, right?*"

"It's changed," Grammy snaps, shaking but recovered. "Can't you see that, stupid?" It's sneering, and its got eyes!"

"Nonsense. You just fonny old lady. You look out Grace don't send the institution men for you!" And Dolores picks up the bust, taking it to the window to inspect.

"Looks like good as new. Miracle with you dashing it and all. Now you leave it be!"

The next is all slow motion. Grammy feels suddenly exhausted, drained. She cannot seem to make the effort to open her mouth to speak. She lolls in her chair as though bound and gagged, watching as Dolores clutches the head to her body, carrying it carefully so as not to drop it. Watches as she walks with the head to the pedestal, as the well-shaped cupid's bow clay lips slowly part and dainty clay teeth sink into the soft skin of the housemaid's throat at the artery. Dolores doesn't scream long—not nearly as long as Grammy had earlier and not as loudly—before her screams become a gurgle and her lifeless body crumples to the floor still holding her grinning destroyer. From her chair a few feet away, Grammy gets a front view of the horror glazing on Dolores' frozen face and of the clay hand, mouth opening as though on a hinge, opening wider and wider like a snake's, to accommodate the head of the lifeless maid. Disgust washes over Grammy in a wave. It makes her retch, but it also breaks her trance. For at least two seconds, anger wins out over fear. In one lunge, she pushes forward to the fallen body and savagely kicks the bust away, then watches, shaking and whimpering, as it lobs across the floor to lie rocking softly at the foot of its stand. Its face is turned upward, the vapid smile catching what is left of the light.

When grace comes that afternoon, she finds the wreckage and Grammy sitting in her box-seat staring but seeing nothing. It takes several hours before Grammy can speak or do anything but stare and moan.

The emergency squad pronounces Dolores dead of an unfortunate fall while carrying a heavy statue. The coronor confirms that the statue must have fallen on top of her, crushing her windpipe and puncturing an artery. A freak. Could never happen again. Just a freak. Dolores is hauled off to the morgue, the statue returned to its stand, apparently undamaged.

Grace stays a couple of days, just long enough to arrange for Meals-on-Wheels and the visiting nurses to provide for Grammy's care until a new caretaker can be found. She has to get back to her job and family, after all.

Morning. The night nurse has just left. Grammy has been fed and washed. She is wearing a paper panty "just in case." She should be fine for two or three hours. At eleven, the Meals-on-Wheels will be coming with her lunch. All she has to do is let them in. Grace will call frequently to check, and it won't be long before a new caretaker will be found, all right?

Grammy spins through the house, feeling giddy with freedom. She goes to the freezer and crams all the remaining ice cream bonbons into her mouth one after the other until matted chocolate drips off her chin. She smacks her lips with the delicious taste of rebellion. Then she rolls up to the sink in the kitchen and rinses her hand under the tap, smearing a wet paper towel across her chin and failing to remove the telltale chocolate mess. She is free if she stays out of her room. Can not be alone with the head. The head that she knows, has always obscurely known, is out to get her. It had taken time, but Grammy guesses she has

known all along that she is supposed to be dead, not paralysed. She had fooled it. And the head had waited, its task, like its visage, unfinished. Waited its chance. And finally, that poor foolish critter had given it. One bite, one little taste of blood, and the gorgon was loose—waiting for her.

But, don't worry. She will sit in the kitchen until the doorbell announces her lunch. Then she'll let them in, eat and wait for the afternoon nurse. They can help her to the bathroom if she needs it. Don't worry.

And then the phone starts ringing.

Grammy freezes, and the dormant curl of dread begins to nibble again. The phone. On the wall. In her room. Only one. On the wall. Next to the stand. The head. Must reach over to answer...

I won't, she hears herself saying. Who would it be, anyway?

But she knows the answer. Has to be Grace checking in, as the ringing goes on, long past the reasonable five or six rings before giving up. Grace would ring on and on and then come over to see what was wrong. Don't want her here. Enemy. She and the head. And the head. All her fault. Probably in cahoots with the head all along. Grammy takes a deep breath, gets herself in check.

I'll answer. Don't want her here. Rather do battle with that head than her. At least the head doesn't have legs, she thinks and suddenly, after all this time, feels that she can. She feels strong, stronger than she's felt since the sculptor came. She flexes her one good claw. She seems to be seeing clearly, her world rounding out as though seen through a crystal ball—muted, mildly distorted and with the edges of things fading off, but alive and in focus. Like her.

Grammy is already whizzing down the hall to her room. Turning the corner, she stops for a second and looks. Room neat, clean, everything in its place. Bed, night table, head looking vapid like a kindly grandma, phone on the wall above it, ringing, ringing.

She wheels across the room, past the bed and the night stand, the wheels on the chair whispering shush...like the old woman in the children's book, Grammy thinks, the one she used to read to her grandkids a hundred years ago. Goodnight moon. Goodnight chair, goodnight old woman...But nothing is moving. Nothing on the floor except what is supposed to be there. All right.

She reaches the opposite wall and locks her chair into place. She has to prop up on her good foot and balance out of the wheelchair, forward over the void, to reach the height of the phone on the wall. But she can do it. Heaven knows she's had a lot of practice. Just like getting into the freezer. Even with that monster guarding it. Just like this monster set to guard the phone, she thinks. With clay eyes that focus to destroy. She reaches out her good arm across the emptiness, over the top of the bust. Goodnight moon. Goodnight phone. Almost there.

The phone is still ringing, but her fingers are almost where they can grasp the receiver. Almost free, she thinks, wondering why she thinks that. Then the room spins and she is falling. In a desperate try for stability, she heaves herself forward for the wall, knocking the phone free of its cradle. It falls with a crash, toppling the head off its plinth.

Grammy slumps heavily to the floor at its foot. She has a fleeting impression of a profound silence. The ringing has stopped. Only a tiny voice now comes from the receiver dangling lazily from its cord. Hello? Hello? As she hits the floor, a sharp stab of pain wracks her side. Oh, Lord, I've broken my hip, she thinks, and looks up just as the head, dainty mouth widening, eyes gleaming brightly into hers, rolls off the stand and falls into her face.

The wheelchair, rocked over onto its side, shushes, its big wheel rounding slowly to a halt. On the floor, a head lies smashed into shards of hard porous stone. The mask, the largest fragment, stares out with eyes bulging in permanent horror, its mouth open in a a terrified and frozen gape.

She is propped against the wall. Her body is unmoving except for her hand which is curling and uncurling rhythmically, the long nails clicking as they touch. Her head however is all movement. She is breathing heavily and her tongue rolls out of her open mouth at each aspiration like a hideous party favor. Saliva drips from the long jagged teeth. Her eyes, beneath the beetled brows, glow like fires searching to destroy. In her head, a crowning glory of scaly coils writhe and hiss sinuously in the gloom. On the long pointed chin something is smeared that may be chocolate.

The phone still dangles from its cord near her ear.

Hello, hello. Mother, are you there? Are you all right?

"Grace, I'm so glad you called. You must come right over. I'm just dying to see you." ●

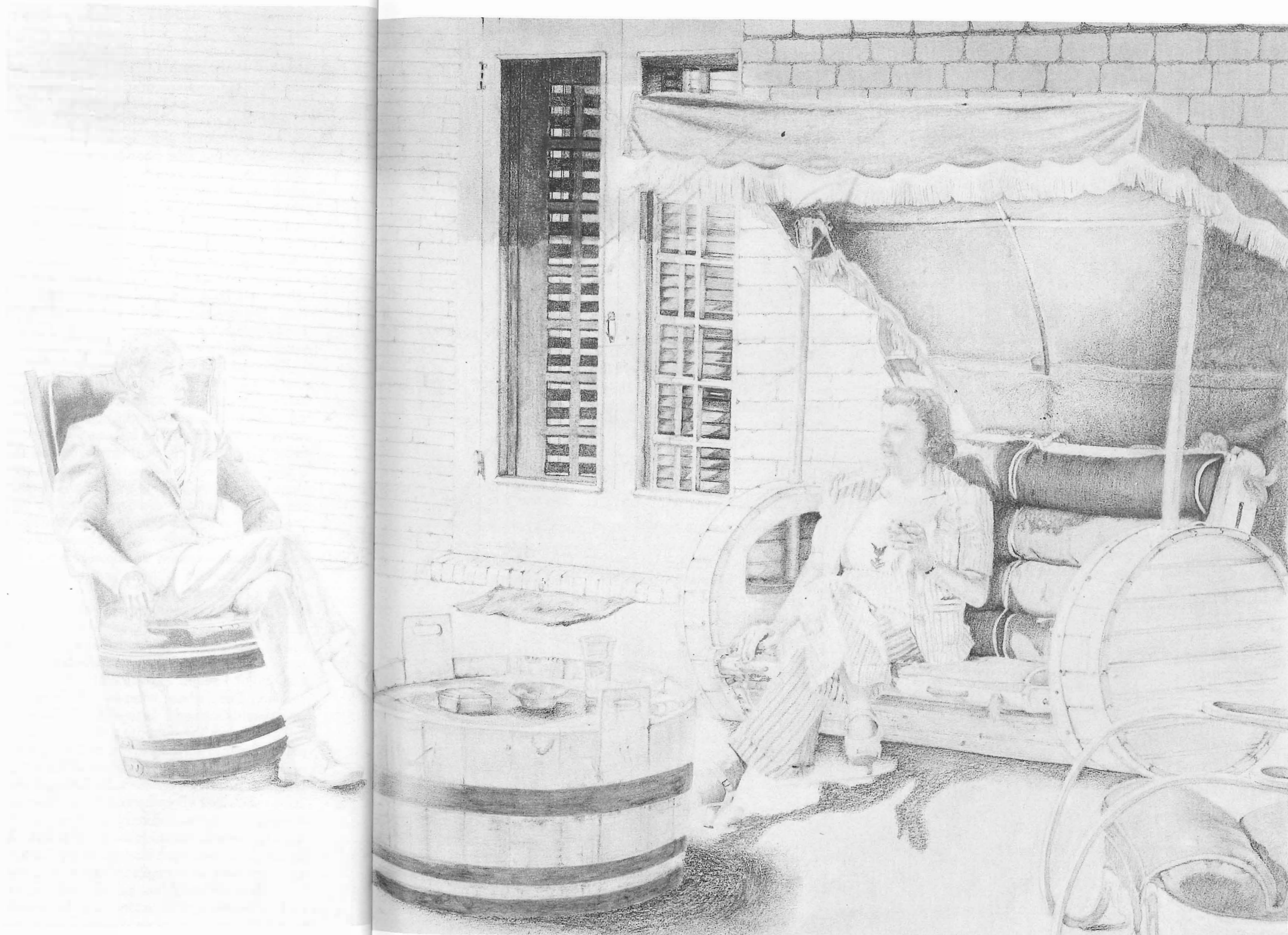


Cheryl Anne Levin

Remembrance

We formed a semicircle around the table.
 Staring into silence.
 The electric fan whirled continuously
 interrupting thoughts better off not spoken.
 Five flights had been tiring for
 four aunts, five uncles, two sons and a daughter-in-law
 and sleep was unfathomable,
 Even after phone calls breaking into
 2 o'clockness.
 The overstuffed chairs, facing one another as
 two old men
 reminisced about the "good ole days" and
 balanced green Depression glass
 on their arms.
 Photographs smiled from scattered positions
 unfolding wedding stories
 baby pictures and moving days.
 Staring contemptuously from its corner
 the new model television recognized
 its incongruity
 and discontinued its issue of static last week,
 Just as Grandma did when she heard the news
 of diseases sneaking into once-healthy bodies.
 We just remained silent,
 listening to old war stories.

Nicole Green



Noon Tea • Fariba Hamedani

Scaffolds

Jeff Pruzan

The minute I picked up my pen to start writing this down, the clanging finally stopped. It's goddamn four in the morning right now, too. I thought workers stopped to sleep now and then. Anyway, I was going to complain about all the racket the scaffolds are making inside my building, but I see that I don't have to anymore. All I want to do is put down these words and then drift. Today I nearly strangled myself trying to do a limbo while unlocking my door. How long has this renovation been going on?—four months, I don't know. They started a while ago, anyway, on the outside of the building, making it obscured and masked in grey metals. So then they decided to use some scaffolding on the inside, to make the renovations go faster. I nearly strangled myself.

Every day I find more and more bars across my door, or blocking the elevator. Like today, we decided to start using the stairwells, a seemingly hidden solution to all this bother. But we started walking down and there were *more* scaffolds! And I just stopped for a minute and couldn't help shouting "Goddamn it to hell! Renovations! No one even *uses* these! Renovations!" "Isn't that something." "You ever use these steps?" "Nope. Hey—how 'bout you?" "Nope. Hey Shirley. You seen this before?" "We can't get out." "You do a limbo?" "These scaffolds. . . ! Shirley!"

The phone was ringing. I had two arms filled with bags, groceries, I was trying to find the keys in my pockets, where were they anyway, and setting the bags down. The phone rang. I couldn't put the bags on the hall floor because there was no room. I leaned them at precarious angles on the scaffolding itself, found the keys, bit off my glove. I ran in to get the phone, and, predictably, I was too late, maybe two rings too late. Cursing in a hushed city voice, I stepped out to retrieve my overturned bags, to find four bottles smashed and leaking.

Yeah (they told me today): I'm real sorry but we can't do anything about that. Yeah. Uh-huh well look, uh, I can't do something I mean it ain't up to me. Yeah. Well look. Call the boss Mr. Fredrickson on Monday during business hours an I'm sure he'll talk to you about your salad dressing bottle and your coke bottles and maybe reimburse you the diffrence. Sure.

A brick fell on my foot.

This clanging is driving me nuts! I can't do anything. I can't listen to music. I can't watch baseball. I can't even concentrate on vacuuming the carpet, it's so loud. All those stupid workers out there with their wrenches, banging and clanging for no good reason. I mean you can see progress when it's being done. But it isn't.

I picked up the phone and said to my next door neighbor, "Hey. Feels like we haven't seen each other in days. You know?" and he says, "Yeah. I know. And we haven't." I think I hear him smiling and so I say "What's so funny?" "Nothing." "Well, just want to know how it is over there. Stop in for a drink or something." "How the hell d'I get out? Carve a hole in our wall? Christ, we'd have scaffolds in here for years." "Christ."

Today a scaffold dropped and fell on top of some woman's baby. She screamed, and pried the scaffold off her kid, who wasn't crying, wasn't conscious either. A friend of mine saw the scene but couldn't help out or anything. So he just watched. I bet the lady looked like she was climbing a jungle-gym. Or the Eiffel Tower or something, I don't know.

I saw somebody else moving away. They had somehow managed to contact every neighbor living directly below them—maybe ten or twelve floors, I don't know. Everyone stood on their balconies. The lady would take a vase, hand it down to the woman below, who handed it down to the

woman below, etc. When it got to the bottom, the man would take each item and put it into a big truck, the kind designed for moving and things. When it came to the mattresses, the woman just heaved it off the balcony. When the end was over, I clapped and smiled. The woman couldn't hear me above the clanging. To get down and be with her husband, he and several others had put out a huge safety net for her. She jumped, bounced, and then stood with her husband. Then they moved.

I woke up to the most tremendous crash I'd ever heard in my life. It scared me so much that I couldn't get back to sleep for hours. I think it was something that fell, that

She screamed, and pried the scaffolds off her kid. I bet the lady looked like she was climbing a jungle gym. Or the Eiffel Tower or something, I don't know.

must have been it. It must have been something falling, either falling off a scaffold or the scaffold itself. That must have been it. Anyway, when I got up the ceiling in the hall was concave and heavy, saved from free fall by the scaffolds holding it up.

I don't see the workers as much anymore, I only hear the noise of the bars smashing together over and over and goddamn over again. It's enough to drive me nuts, but I have my composure. I've kept it for this long, I'm not turning back now.

Somebody is going mad one or two floors above me right now. Or maybe it's just a violent domestic argument, I don't know. But I can hear smashing, screaming and sometimes laughing. Yes, I think it is probably insanity. It's probably insanity. It's probably caused by hearing the clanging so constantly or something. Perhaps in a few days, something will happen to me. My building was never supposed to become a jail.

The baby who was crushed is dead now. I heard that Miss Trope is going to sue the building. They'll laugh in her face cause she's unwed, an unwed mother, and they don't like unwed mothers, even when they're unwed mothers of dead children. The system sucks, but that's how it's gotta be, Miss Trope. You lose, Miss Trope. You'll get traduced and then maybe you'll sue even harder, I don't know.

It finally happened today—they started bringing the scaffolds into my own personal apartment. A man knocked on my door very early this morning, but not early enough to beat the beginning of the clanging, so it was already clanging away, I was up. He came in, a nondescript-looking man with a set of bars in boxes. He set up the scaffolds, only they were right in front of my cabinets where I keep my dishes and glasses. I told him that I needed to get at my dishes and glasses, but he said he couldn't do anything about it. I said, "Oh." Then he snapped his fingers and said "Wait" and went out for a minute. He came back with a few bags of paper plates and styrofoam cups. I thanked him and paid him. He left.

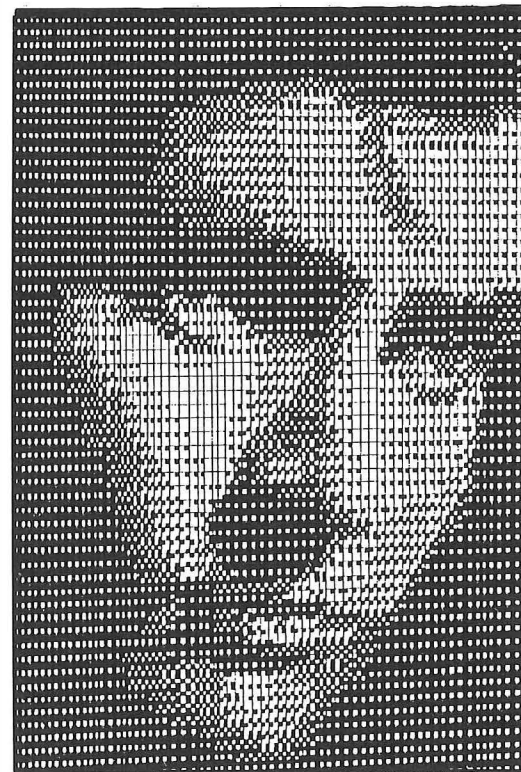
They came in with more scaffolds today. I was on my balcony enjoying some fresh air—no view anymore, of course, but some air at any rate. The men came in and set up scaffolding in the corner of my living room, and actually enclosed my television set. I wasn't pleased when I came in, because I found that there was no way I could open the scaffolds up and get the television out. I'll have to do without t.v.

Tonight I'm in a hospital bed because I broke my leg on some scaffolds yesterday. I also broke my hip, but that doesn't count because it hasn't started hurting yet. Every time I hear any noise I want to scream. I am, once again, watching t.v. Shirley Poole is actually down the hall from me, cause she broke four ribs while tripping downstairs a few nights ago. I guess I'm lucky. Now and then I pick up the phone and call my next door neighbor, see how he's been doing. He was awfully sad to hear I'd broken my leg, wanted to know how I was. I heard banging in the background. I called him seven times since two this afternoon. It's 10:35. Now and then I wince. My hip just started hurting, beating out a painful, slow throb. I don't know. I think this is going to be one helluva complex lawsuit. ●

Loss of Innocence

When did it happen
gradually
Soon I no longer
said please for everything
Or thank you
for just anything.

Cate Marvin



Youth • Michelle Shih

Scavenger

Beauty will fly with talons made for fools
And heroes who follow will pay their dues
Heartache and bliss are hand in hand, love's tools
To churn the heart of steel till gloom ensues

Beware! Beauty must mask a mournful snare
A mesh of golden hair and glances fair
All pray, pity him caught in Helen's stare
High soars the scavenger with claws that tear

Shed tears for those ensnared through specious eyes
The vulture circling sees her match is won
Her descent is slow with piercing shouts and cries
And peace, and joy, and Troy, are gone for one

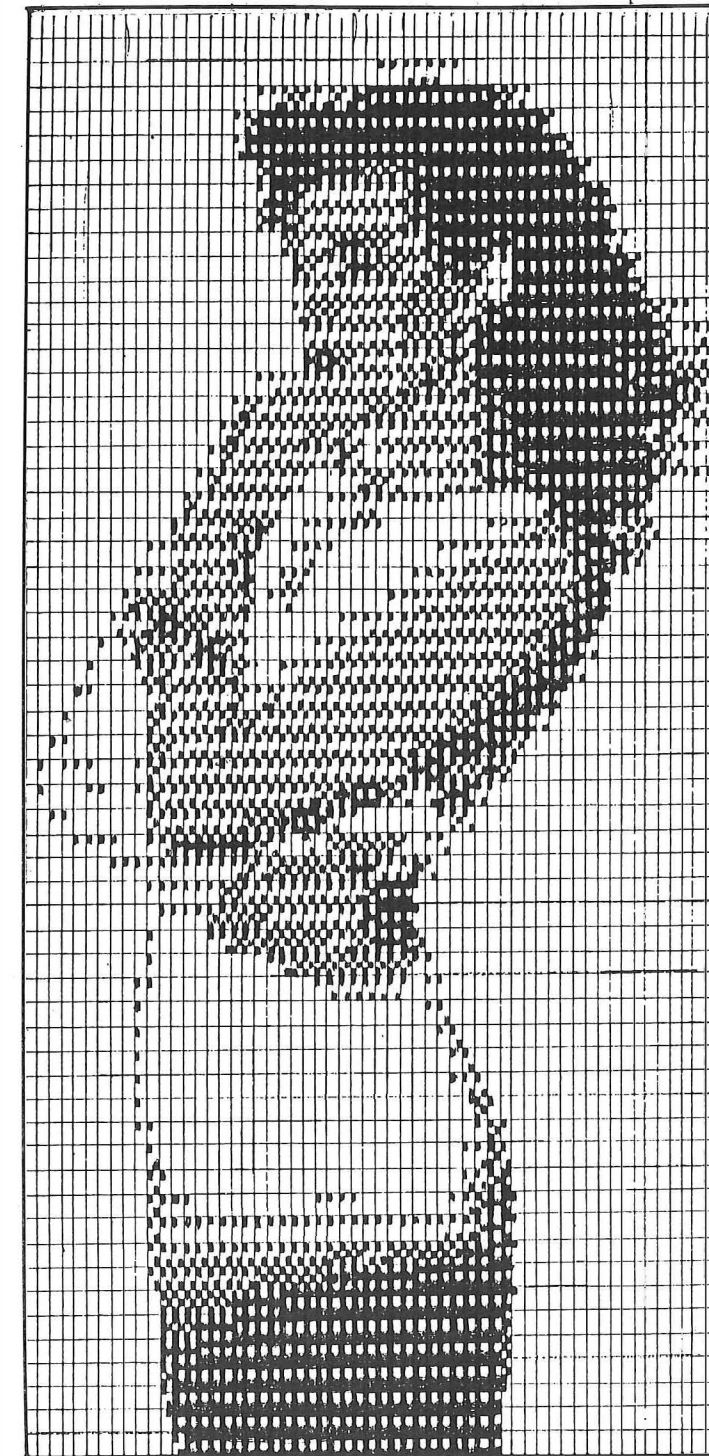
A kiss's price is pain should lovers dare
Beauty is made for looks, not touch—beware!

Alex Gibson

Elements of Style

You are the latest Paris fashion
Assorted bangles and scarves
Cover your fine frame
Compared to you
The others are worn remnants
Of half-price mark-downs
You parade down the runway
Showing off your wares
I make a bid
But you just walk by me
Leaving only Jean Paul and Ralph
To wrap themselves around your body
For Neiman-Marcus never
Carried anything so lovely
And Saks-Fifth so extravagant.
People say, "Your eyes I dare not meet in dreams"
But I can't help it.
I could never afford
Your fine threads.

Ian Henryon



Contemplations • Frank Midgley

The Lesson

Kristen Tucker

Hot, lazy June is with us, and along with the advent of summer come long, sweaty days. Mothers sign up their children, who are rarely willing participants, for swim lessons at the pool. These lessons may be, as they were in my case, the beginning of a sport that will last them the rest of their lives.

He sits quietly on a yellow lounge chair near the edge of the pool. My nephew, five years old, timid and shy, scrawny and pale, glances at the water. Only a glance, then he resumes staring at his Sesame Street beach towel. In the scene depicted on the towel, Bert and Ernie are also at the pool, but they are playing in the water, a level of swimming ability which my nephew has not yet reached. His lesson begins in five minutes.

The lifeguard beckons.

"Hello everyone, my name is Sue. Today's lesson will be spent determining the class in which your child belongs. Let's have all the kids sit over here on the edge of the pool. Mothers, I'll take your checks and registration forms, while Leslie will tell your children what to do."

At this mention of the coming lesson, Matthew's eyes become wider and fill with tears. He looks at me pleadingly, but I shake my head. He has to stay. I guide him to the edge of the pool and he takes his place alongside the others. As I hand in the check and registration form that his mother has given me, I look at him. He looks the part of an angel. His hands are folded loosely in his lap and his red hair is tousled as usual. The freckles cannot be seen today, hidden behind the veil of pink nervousness. There are three children in front of him, two girls and another boy.

"Mary, what I'd like to find out is how well you can swim so we'll put you in the right group," the lifeguard explains. "Can you put your face in the water?" The child nods. "You can? Wonderful. Will you show me?"

Mary dutifully places her forehead, eyes and nose gingerly in the water. Beaming, she wipes the water off her face.

"Very good. Can you float on your stomach?"

Mary nods yes once again. Time after time she demonstrates that she is a capable swimmer. The guards confer and decide she doesn't need to take lessons, that she is talented enough to join the swim team, and she and her mother are sent to the coach. The two boys quickly show

their skill. One is classified as a beginner, the other an intermediate. They are told what time their lessons are, and who their instructor will be. Now it's Matt's turn. My palms sweat, and like an anxious mother I pray he will not be embarrassed, that he will do well.

"What's your name?" she asks.

"Mathu," he whispers.

"Hi, Matthew, now this is what I'd like you to do for me. First, can you show me how you put your head in the water?"

He begins to suck his thumb. I blush, feeling the same pain that he is. Why didn't she ask him if he'd ever taken lessons before, if he knew how to swim, if he was afraid of the water. Then he could have told her, and she would have known he was just a beginner. I wish I could just run over and scoop him in my arms, but I know that this is impossible. I wait to see his reaction.

Matt looks at me for reassurance, chewing on his cracked lip. I smile, and motion for him to go on. He takes a look at the guard, swells his cheeks like a chipmunk, and plunges his entire head, face, neck, hair and all, into what must seem to him to be an ocean of water. A second later he emerges, coughing and spitting water, but smiling nonetheless. He has accomplished a feat which to him and me is more meaningful than if he had just smashed the world record in the 400 m. individual medley. The lifeguard smiles, as she pats his shoulder and congratulates him on a job well done. I don't know if she knows that he has never even gone in water above his knees before, and maybe she just isn't used to the small miracles of a child's life, but I want to think that somewhere she understands the special importance of the event that she has witnessed.

"Now, can you float on your stomach?" she asks.

He shakes his head no, but without any shame. He knows his limits, and so is placed in the advanced beginners, his only reward for his feat of bravery. This may be but one step towards swimming excellence for him, but it is the first, and so will always be foremost in my mind. I cannot remember my first swim team practice, much less my first swim lesson. However, I am sure that along with my mother's pictures of me grasping my high school diploma is a memory of my first plunge into the water. ●

The Leaking Roof

My mother says I've grown too old for home
The rooms have shrunk; my fingers fill the holes
In the leaking roof—so now I'm on my own.

I never thought I'd feel so much alone
Afraid of the dark and the dust and the cold
But my mother says I've grown too old for home.

So I bought myself some rooms, I got a loan
But I couldn't stand the rain and the mold on
The leaking roof—so now I'm on my own.

I begged her to let me back—I should have known
When I couldn't get my shoulders through the door
She'd say I'd grown too old to come back home.

I tried to nest with another bird who'd flown
He'd kick me out of bed to fix the holes
In the leaking roof—so now I'm on my own.

I thought life would be better once I'd grown
My shoulders would strengthen and break the hold
Of the leaking roof—but now I'm on my own
My mother says I'm just too old for home.

Jennifer Sainato

Ocean City in February

I stand on the beach of your love
Watching it dance towards me
Flicking at my naked feet
Shimmering in a celebration of splashy exuberance

I won't ride this wave
It's too cold for my tastes
I suggest

But the truth is
You'll just bring me back to where I was

Just a little bit wetter

Mike Spirtas

Desert Love

Now
your fingers
touch me
and sea meets sand.
Once dry,
now a saturating,
devouring
sponge.
The delicate tendrils
recede
and I am left
soaked,
bubbling,
firm enough
to kiss (?)
you.
But the sun
is looking
and I
am dry
again
for your return.

Rob Sondik

Tide

It is quite obvious
Just who was meant to be
here
Obviously
We waft in this
sea of fools
They drown in
their own despair

We
Supernatural
Walk upon the water
Flow with the tide
That slams some
On the beach

You and I
Barely touch the sand
Our toes
Graze the shore
lightly.

Cate Marvin



Beaches • Greg Chang

**Spring, 1987 PTSA
Creative Writing Awards**

Poetry

First: Robin Suleiman
Second: Alison Buckholtz
Third: Debbie Wassertzug

Mark Baechtel judged the fiction selections. He is a freelance writer and editor and most recently worked as editor of *Carousel*, a publication of the Writer's Center. He has had articles published in *Dossier* and *Family Life*, and his poetry has appeared in *Poet Lore*. Currently he is working on his first book of poems.

Fiction

First: Nicole Green
Second: Robin Suleiman
Third: Matt Jaffe

Joyce Renwick, who judged the fiction selections, teaches creative writing at the University of Maryland and is director of programs at The Writer's Center. John Gardner, with whom she studied at George Mason University, selected her work "The Dolphin Story" to be placed in *Best American Short Stories*. In 1986 she was a winner of the PEN Syndicated Fiction Project Competition and received the Andrew Lytle Award for best short story of the year from *Sewanee Review*. She has published short fiction, book reviews and interviews of writers.

Erehwon is a member of the Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA), the National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA), the Maryland Scholastic Press Association (MSPA), and the American Scholastic Press Association (ASPA).

The 1986 *Erehwon* received the following honors:

Silver Crown, CSPA
All-American, NSPA
Marylander Award, MSPA
First Place, ASPA
Award of Excellence, National Council of Teachers of English

Special thanks to Michael Foo, Andy Katzenmeyer, Dan Johnson and Whitey Olsen.

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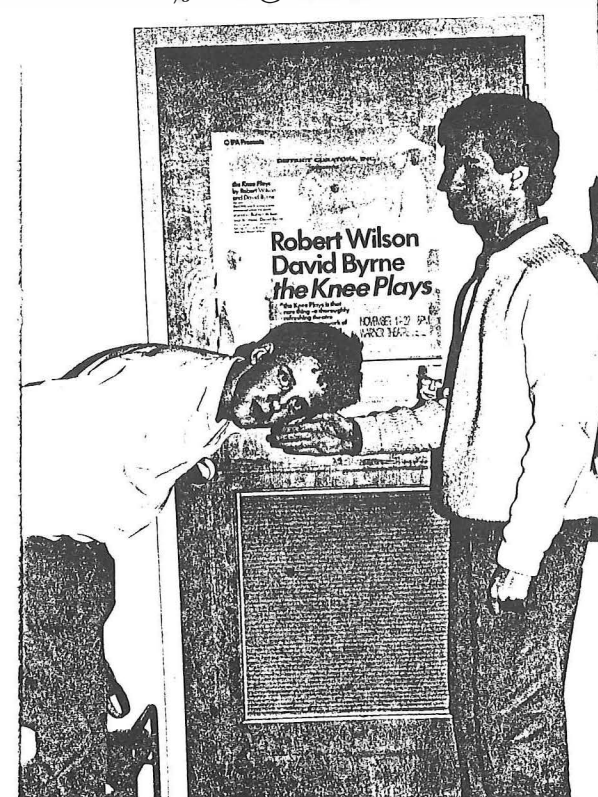
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Debbie Christie	Slaver-lord
Becky Cohen	Co-Monty Python Humorist
Jennifer Dixon	Mary Magdalene
Bill Dodge	Vice-Chairperson and HIS Director
Stefani Englestein	Minister of Philosophy, Literature, and the Occult
Laurie Ginsberg	Slaver-lord
Dan Goldstein	Director of Agriculture and Mining
Nicole Green	Immoral Majority Member
Joanna Haas	Slaver-lord
Ian Henyon	Grand Poobah
David Hirsch	Holy Man
Stacy Hirschberg	Slaver-lord
Richard Hsu	The Gang of One
Jennifer Hutkoff	Coordinator of Committees
Stefani Irwin	Slaver-lord
Matt Jaffe	President of Public Facilities
Hargaret Judy	Minister of Putting Things On Top Of Other Things
Jennifer Jung	Slaver-lord
Michelle Kao	Keeper of Lost Hinds
Mark Katz	Minister of Celestial Explorations
Cheryl Anne Levin	Official Keeper of Balls
Laurel Mackintosh	Slaver-lord
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Chirag Patel	Chief of Underwater Operations
Handy Patterson	Spender of Public Funds and Yearbook Drafter
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Todd Pruzan	Minister of Tripping Down a Flight of Lords
Justin Resnick	Slaver-lord
Robert Ritter	Rubbi-in-Chief
Jaanna Schaeffer	Director of Fisheries
Tina Shih	Priemere Pragmatist
Gene Sobn	Lord of Dormant Members
Rob Sondik	Parliamentarian
Diane Stepakof	Executor of Bizarre Humor
Mark Thompson	Minister of Saving Small, Meaningless Things Having No Social Redeeming Value
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Debbie Wassertzug	Slaver-lord
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“ I had to watch all ninety-eight
episodes of Gilligan's Island. **”**

Joey Green

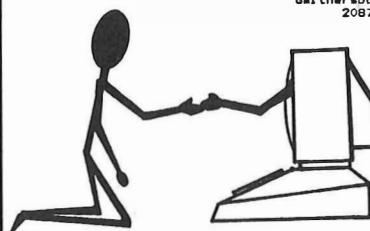
To: N.W. and M.F.,

who have each been an important
influence for me, not just this
year, but for always. The lessons
in life, love and skiing won't be
forgotten.

Love you both,
Jojo

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