

JANUS

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THE RITES OF LIFE'S PASSAGE

by Carolyn Bannister

You're born.
Brought into this world—put on this earth—
With no choice.
You're told to crawl to Daddy.
Chew on your binky and snuggle with your blankie.
"Go to sleep . . ."
Will you tuck me in?
You know I'm afraid of the windows and closets.
The BOOGIE Thing!
Everyone is afraid to ride the big, yellow, crowded
Bus.
Barbecued Bologna, Scrambled Eggs, and Turkey Suprize
Shoved down our throats because our trays have to be clean.
You eventually learn your way to school—
And then how to get back.
"Don't talk to strangers."
"Look both ways before crossing the street."
"Remember dues for Indian Princesses."
Girl Scouts and After-school Sports are now over.
It's now time to study.
And study.
And study.
Tears abound when there is no invitation to Homecoming.
Mom and Dad are now the enemy.
They can't and won't say anything right.
That would be too easy.
Instead—they have made nagging into an
ART FORM—A SCIENCE—and RELIGION.
First "relationships" can be a real pain in the ass.
I mean butt.
No, I mean rear end.



You're told to then go off and find your way.
 (on your own).
 With their money and old Guidance
 The kid in the candy store syndrome still sets in.
 The words "party," "man," and "suck" now pepper your
 Vocabulary.
 Vocabulary. This and other big words also sprout
 Out of your mouth from remembering what you've been told
 to read.
Metaphysics, The Complete Poetical Works of Robert Burns,
 and
 Even *The Light in the Attic* sit on the shelf.

What happens when this is over?
 There isn't a leash around your neck anymore . . .
 No fence around the garden . . .
 And no lock on the door.

This is your world now.
 The one you didn't choose to come into . . .
 But the one you're in now.
 No one else is watching,
 What happens next is up to you.

HUMID WEATHER

by Kristi Smith

I hate to talk to my grandma. Don't get me wrong, I don't hate her. I just hate talking to her. We don't have anything in common; a generation gap, I guess. So we never really talk to each other. And as we play spades in the humid August air, I want to cry . . .

The year was 1977, I was four years old, complete with green polyester shorts, skinned kneecaps, and blue sneakers. I sat on the sweaty vinyl seat of the old Maverick, the window down to feel the breeze, my shaggy long hair flying, tangling to spite my center part pigtails. I always got to sit in front, even if other adults went on one of our "excursions."

The car shook to a stop, the engine seeming to die in the heat of the day, shaking the sweat from its carburetor and axle. And with all of my childhood strength, I clasped the handle and pushed, freeing myself from the windy white cage. Grandma rushed to take my hand, the cracked roughness of New Mexico skin encompassing the fair cushion of my small palm. This was the best part of our trips, my reward for being a "good girl" (which to Grandma meant only asking for one candy bar and only one plastic, worthless do-dad, both of which she bought).

She pushed the door open and behind it rushed the chilling welcome air conditioning at the yellow and pink Velvet Freeze. I half skipped, half ran to the counter, Grandma sitting me atop the glass. The ritual began: Grandma asked me what flavor I wanted, and with the movie star innocence that every four year old knows she possesses, I answered, "I don't know." I sampled at least five flavors, always ending with bubble gum but ordering mint chocolate chip (. . . although, once I got Tiger Stripe, not because it was

better than mint, but because my Aunt Blue said the Halloween concoction of orange and dark brown "induced vomit").

While the countergirl scooped cool green onto the sugar cone, my grandma chose her flavor, and I sucked all the ice cream off the few chunks of bubble gum and secretly slipped them in my pocket, an added treat for later. With a small unsteady arm, I raised the cold relief to my tongue. I was in heaven, my grandma the head angel.

My Grandma takes the last spades suit, winning as usual. She asks me if I want some iced tea as she heads for the kitchen. She passes. She stops. The tough New Mexico skin touches the growing roughness of my twenty year old hand, and I can almost feel the mint chocolate chip on my tongue.



photo by Matt Kuhl

A PLACE I GO

by Cynthia Ottens

There is a place that I go to watch the fall leaves turn into
snow
Where the dead become nothing at all.
In the deep wood, my wolves call.
Their sorrow cuts through the silent air. It is often more
than I can bare.
Over my shoulder, his warm breath—there stands Death.
His eyes pierce my soul. It is my hunger he stole.
Let go, my friends, move on.
We only last as long as the dawn.
My brethren, your mysteries lie beyond the pine white.
Beyond the day, beyond the night.
Be swift, be brave, be bold, be one.
The Badlands is where I must run.
Same time next year, I will return for your cries.
Today your leader dies.

photo by Jay Kish

ASYLUM-DWELLING GIRLFRIEND

by C. Anthony Leminger

10/30/94

Dear Asylum-dwelling Girlfriend,

When you rip out my heart,
don't burn your hands;

it's on fire with love for you.

And when you pick out my brain,

don't laugh too long;

it's twisted that way

from thinking of you.

You know I'll always forgive you, Babe,

for shoving my cat down the trash compactor.

I was getting tired of Fluffy

coughing up hairballs anyway.

And you know I could never

hold a grudge against you

for hacking Granny to bits;

she'd lived a long life, and

it was just her time to go.

Just know I still love you, Girl,

and, if you find another man

who thinks you look

so sexy in a straightjacket,

I'll understand.

Just don't forget me,

'cause I'll always be your

livin' in reality man.

UNTITLED

by Carolyn Bannister

One who hurts another hurts oneself. What in the hell is this supposed to do? I just ate a Chinese dinner and now I'm getting the third degree from my damn FORTUNE? What kind of fortune is this? I think I got really gypped, screwed, & weaseled out of something really good-sounding. It serves me right for eating the MSG-infested-sodium rich-can't identify if its dog or chicken under this brown sauce meal. Who on God's great earth decided that they had to give me this crummy "fortune" after I ate this CRUMMY MEAL? The Chinese food police? I wanna know what wise old fat sumo wrestler wrote this and decided it would give someone some wisdom? Was he always this much of a pain in the ass-or did he really think he could save the world by writing this kind of shit on little pieces of white paper and stuffing them in cookies? By the way, these cookies suck! I think that the reward for eating this dry cracker caught in your mouth with a bad aftertaste cookie should be a good fortune. What about the kinds of fortunes you're supposed to get? Where did they all go? You will be loved if you love . . . Someone will give you luck three times this week . . . The sun and the moon will collide and you will be there to see it . . . Where the hell did they all go? I'll tell you where-down the toilet along with my meal.

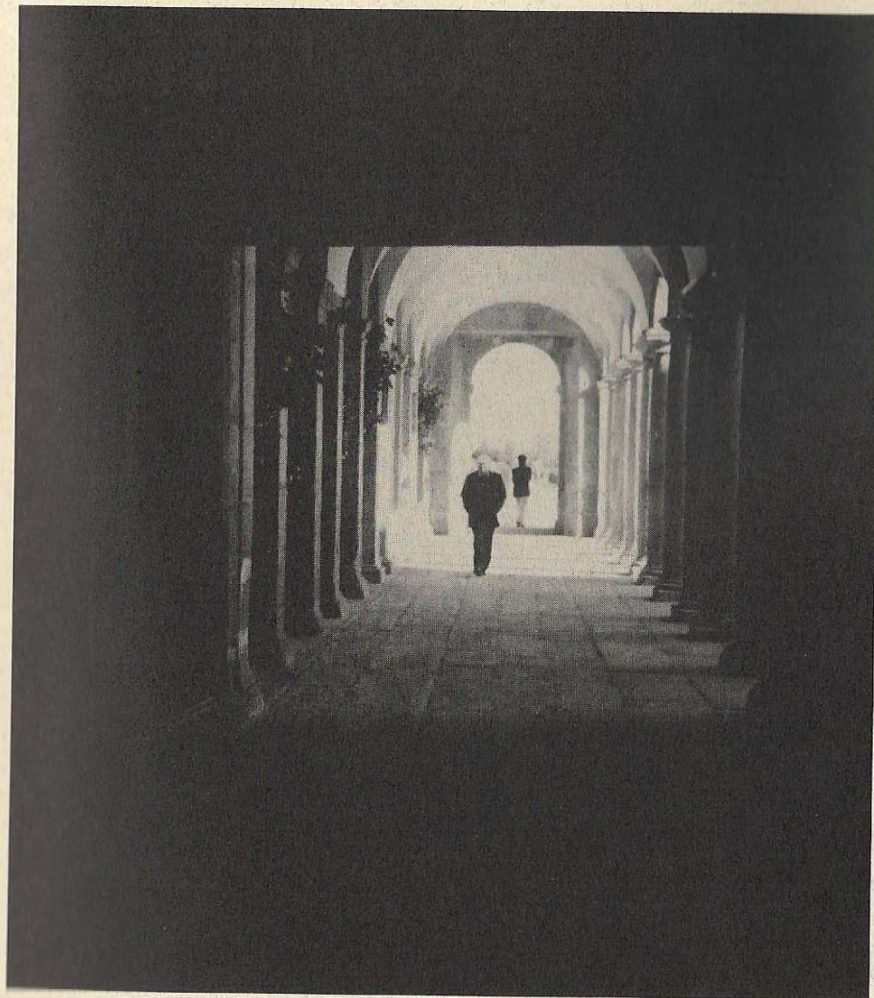
BROWN-EYED BOY

by LJB

Brown-eyed boy of my dreams
Are things really how they seem
Have I lost you in a cold dark place
Where all I see is the memory of your face?

Promises of the future and words of love
Sing in the air like passion's dove.
Lost forever, you're all I want
Not for better, you invade my every thought.

We met in summer, you came on a breeze
that blew the past far away from me.
With you, time was nothing and distance even less
Without you, loneliness is all and my love for you I need not
confess.

*photo by Bridgett Chapin*

ELUDED

by LJB

YOU expect me to embrace the very institution that I have battled all my life. NO. I am not one of your achievements on the fireplace mantle to collect the dust of your successfullness. HEAR ME.

I tried to catch the stars for you, but they eluded me.
I cried a thousand rivers for you, but the rain never came.
I played a beautiful song for you, but it could never be.
I wanted to win the match, but was beaten by the game.

Now I don't care about the stars, and the rivers have all dried up. The song faded into a night sky, and the thought of winning your game was just an illusion. I could never be what you wanted, so I stopped trying. You wanted something that would never talk back or argue. You wanted something that would never leave. You wanted money, and prestige, and honor. All these things you have now, but you don't have me.

I tried to catch the stars for you, but they eluded me.
I cried a thousand rivers for you, but the rains never came.
I played a beautiful song for you, but it could never be.
I wanted to win the match, but was beaten by the game.

MOVEMENT

by Mary Kay Propst

STEP, STEP
WATCH HIM GO, SLOWLY, WOBBLY, SLUGGISHLY.
A BABY NO MORE IS HE.
STEPPING WITH CARE, ONLY TO FALL IN DESPAIR.
SOON HE WILL WALK PRECISELY LIKE A CLOCK WITH PRECISION PARTS.

DRIVE, DRIVE
WATCH HIM GO, SLOWLY, UNCERTAINLY, CAUTIOUSLY.
A CHILD NO MORE IS HE.
DRIVING WITH VIGILANCE, ONLY TO BE DISCOURAGED.
SOON HE WILL DRIVE AS WELL AS A RACER IN HIS CAR.

PUSH, PUSH
WATCH HIM GO, SLOWLY, WEARILY, PAINFULLY.
IN HIS PRIME NO MORE IS HE.
PUSHING WITH CONCERN, ONLY TO DESIST.
SOON HE WILL PUSH HIS LAST, NEVER AGAIN TO START.

AP'LACIA

by Shannon Byrd

Here leather'd men sport toothless grins
And bunn'd women yell Hallelujah! Amen!
While proud pimply rednecks careen the Mini Mall
Hoping a blond miracle will jump in the pick-up.

Here wild innocent limbs swing on grapevines—still—
And mothers in Dollar Store sundresses pick raspberries
for the cobbler.
Paws arrive, stark white eyes laughing 'neath the soot.
Black lung the town cancer—a natural, masculine part of life.

Here out-of-state license plates the spectator sport.
And bets are collected on the outsider—Clyde's oldest boy.
Weeded up graveyards family heirlooms,
A real archaeological dig.

Here long-legged panting dawgs fresh from the hunt—
(No sissy dogs here).
And ginseng roots dug up from beneath the trees
Sold for medicine to plant new gold tobacco.
Old dawgs emerge from the moist shady mountains by
their master's side.
Here Old-Timers trade guns for knives at Sat'day's Flea
Market
And spit tobacco on one another's shoes.
'Genuine' Gucci shades for two bucks—eight tracks a dollar.
But nothing cheap 'bout the guns—can't!

Here Ap'lacian clouds settle over gravel in the morning,
And sometimes even shroud the defacing mines!
Miners drive home to their families under this veil
Set'ling in to Ap'lacian life.



photo by Jay Kish

THOUGHTS FOR RYAN AT FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING

by Andrea Wiley

Tonight you went to a big party.
I stayed in to study for my biology midterm, oblivious to
your whereabouts.
You waltz into my room at three o'clock in the morning—
drunk—wasted—
and wake me up from a well-deserved rest.
You kiss me as if nothing has ever happened.
Where did you come from?
You haven't even known me since last year
when you left me . . . alone.
How can you possibly expect me to sleep with you after all
this time?

I am not your Terry on the beach in Michigan.

I refuse to give in to your sexual advances
Although I know how good we were together.
You try and try and try.
But not this time.

You get angry and say you're going to leave.
I say, "fine."
But really, you are not the one doing the leaving at all.
I've left you . . . behind.
Meaningless sex and empty promises
are not the games I'll play with you anymore.

You put your shoes back on and your sweater . . . slowly . . .
as if you're waiting for me to ask you to stay like I used to



Not this time.

I am not your Sarah.

Make sure no one sees you leaving my room.
you have a rep to protect like you always said.
Don't let the door hit you on the way out . . .
I slam the doors now.

You won't give this another thought in the morning (if you
remember it).
But, next year when you're working at your computer com-
pany in Kansas City
and none of your superficial friends are around,
you'll be the one left . . . alone
and you'll realize how good we were together.

But it's already too late.

Your scent lingers in my room long after you've left.
It breaks my heart, but I did the right thing.
Didn't I?

WORKS IN PROGRESS

by C. Anthony Leminger

9/19/94

Nobody's listening to the ringing bells.
 No one is watching shadows cross the grass.
 Nobody's stopping to smell the roses.
 No one is seeing the world through stained glass.
 For there are works in progress
 in the world today, and nobody in the whole town
 has the time to stand still in the hurrying press
 or even to think to slow down.
 So they pass the world by just as fast as they can,
 content in their spiritual violence,
 but, with all their running, they forget to make an
 appointment with peace and silence.
 They never remember to laugh at a storm.
 They must be reminded of the pleasure fun gives.
 They do not recall how to make their hearts warm.
 They have all forgotten to live.

THE PROMISE

by Amy Wagner

His dark, tired eyes
 scanned the western horizon;
 his tanned, wrinkled face
 never moving.

The old leader thought
 of the long-ago promises.

As long as . . .

Silhouetting the flaming August sunset,
 he gazed over the canyon.

Echoes of children's laughter,
 buffalo hunts,
 and ghosts dances
 sounded throughout.

As long as . . .

Closing his eyes,
he felt again the power.

For the frozen spirits,
and the massacred souls,
he raised his arms.

For a people lost,
he prayed.

For the promises
of land and life,
he prayed
to the mighty heavens.

As long as . . .

The grass grows,

And the water flows.

The promise.

VIDEO SUPERSTAR

by Brad Buckner

So, you think being a rock n' roller would be a neat thing to do? Lot's of money, plenty of girls, and maybe a little bit of fame thrown in here and there. That would be great, if it actually happened.

However, if you really want to make it big in the music business, here are a few tips to follow. First, move to New York or Chicago. If you're going the punk route move to California. These cities have the best places to play, lots of connections for a record label, and plenty of freak-os to keep you busy. Second, drop out of school. You won't have time for any bullshit classes getting in the way of your late night gigs. Third, leave your girlfriend/boyfriend because they will never understand your labor of love and why you would rather spend a night with your drum set rather than a candle light dinner with them. Fourth, save your money. Trust me, you will need every last cent to survive, because you will be living day to day in a box, and eating macaroni. It takes money to make money. Fifth, and most important, you have to want it more than anything else in the whole world.

If you follow these tips, you will better your chances of getting signed to a record label by about 2%, raising the possibility of getting discovered to 3%. The other 97% is luck.

I did my time in the gutter with Bartlby for about two years. We traveled, put out a relatively successful cd, but things just did not go our way. It was and still is one of the best times I have ever had in my life. I loved to play live. I loved it more than my own mother. That is the kind of feeling it gives you. I mean there were some nights where we were jamming the hell out of our songs, and it was so fucking heavy it almost made me cry right there behind my drum set. If someone could market a drug that makes you feel like you're playing a great show in front of an attentive audience, they would wipe out the use of all other drugs combined.



I was fairly confident that Bartlby was getting somewhere. We played a show this past summer in Omaha, Nebraska that showcased thirty of the best unsigned bands in the country. We played like shit. But it was a great experience talking to all the other bands, exchanging numbers, and swapping stories. I had been in two other serious bands before. Both of which were very talented. The first band broke up because the bass player moved to New York. (See rule #1.) The second band split because my parents wanted me to get a good education and "...do something with my life." That band went on to become voted best rock band in Kansas City. Bartlby was unique in that we had an original sound with some very accomplished musicians. Those two ingredients usually equal getting signed, but we broke up due to personal conflicts within the band.

Being in a band is more work than everyone notices. Most of our shows were on school nights, out of town, and lasted very late. We had a show in Lincoln, Nebraska on a Thursday night one time. We finished our last song at about 11:30. Considering the five hour drive back to Fulton, the group of girls at the bar, and the famous "free drinks for the band tab", I got drunk, stayed at the other band's bass player's house, and drove home the next day.

Some gigs we had 200 people really digging our stuff, then other times we had two people watching a hockey game in some shit hole bar. We never made too much money, usually enough for a tank of gas, and a meal or two. And the thing about getting all the girls after the show is crap. I never got laid even after our best shows where the place was filled. I don't think anybody does unless you have a tongue like Gene Simmons, or lips like Mick.

Even after the heartbreaking gigs, long tiresome drives, and not making very much money, I do not have any regrets. I wish I could make a living at playing the drums, but now at 21, my window is closing. I either have to decide to stay in school for two, maybe three years to get a good degree, or go for my dream. And I'm still debating with myself every time I wake up in the morning.



If you ever have kids who want to be musicians, back them up 100%, because they will have a gift, and such an overwhelming passion to practice and perform that they cannot be reasoned with.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who supported Bartlby while I was at school here. It was truly one of the best experiences I have ever had with a band up to this point, and maybe I will get the chance to do it all over again.

"A musician, if he's a messenger, is like a child who hasn't been handled too many times by man, hasn't had too many finger prints across his brain. That's why music is so much heavier than anything you ever felt."

—Jimi Hendrix, 1969

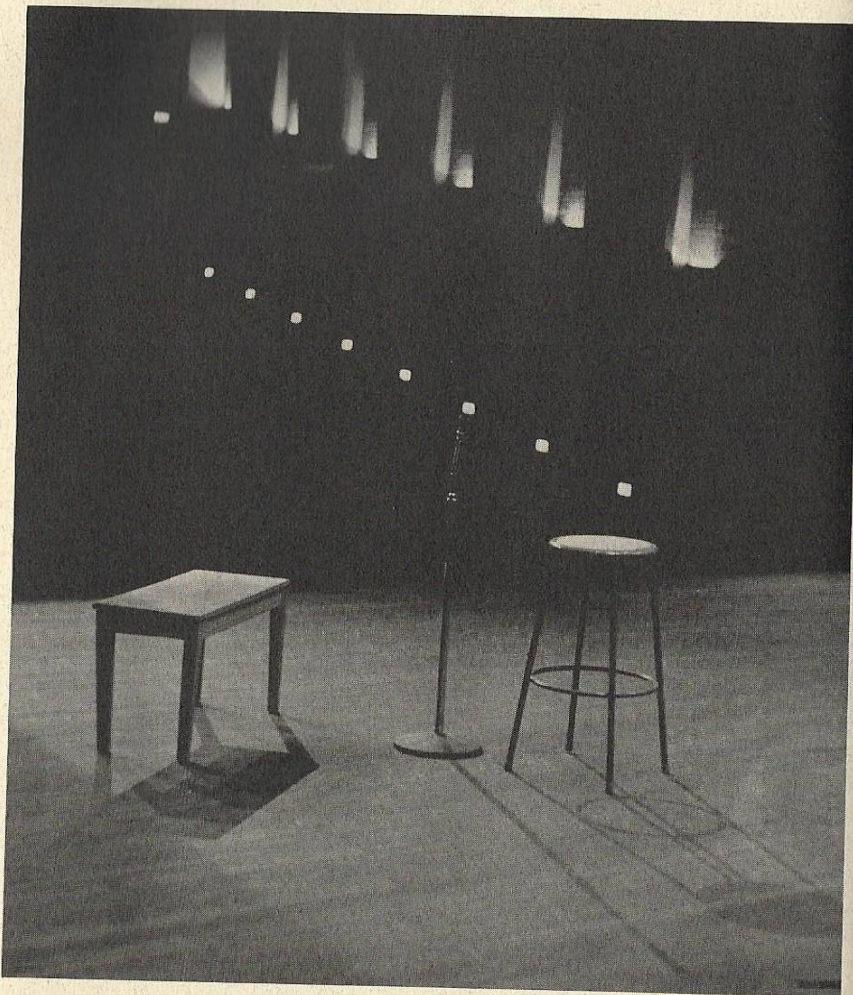


photo by Mike Lising

CAPTURED SOULS

by Amy Wagner

The outstretched hands
raised to the sky
were bent and gnarled.

They had tried
to escape
and only succeeded
in finding more blood.

Now in desperation
they reached to the sky,
praying for freedom
or asking to die.

The dark, tall wires had succeeded.
Enclosing
the prisoners
and stabbing
their spirits.

The children's hands
raised to the sky
begged the heavens
to return
their
captured souls.

ODE TO POTSOU

by Kelly Hines

We appear to be twins,
But looks can be deceiving.
Our personalities are unique—
She's reserved while I am a nut.

We consider ourselves odd but lucky,
For unlike most sisters, we never fuss or fight.
I support her and she supports me.

From basketball to swimming to volleyball
I've been there for her.
And from golf to field hockey to softball
She's been there for me.

July 9, 1991 was our saddest day as she took the oath of a
midshipman.
Proud as I was of her—
I hated to let go of our friendship.

But today I look back on that day

And realize all the doors she has opened—
All the sights she has seen- All the memories she has made.

It reinforces the importance of letting go.
By entering a new segment of life
She has realized how important her time is with me.

As each day passes by she is closer to being commissioned—
A minimum of five years as an active duty naval officer.
Who knows where her commission will place her . . .
The Atlantic? The Adriatic? The popular Persian Gulf?

I do know that with the turn of the century
Comes her biggest decision to that date—
To stay or not to stay in the Navy will be the question.

She deserves what is best,
For she is the best.
And what can I give her?
I can give her **me!**

UNTITLED

by Carolyn Bannister

I have seriously cried all day long.
 The kind of crying that can't come out all at once.
 It trickles in and out throughout the day.
 It's not what has been termed, "A good cry."
 Instead it's the kind of cry that makes words paralyzed from
 Exiting your mouth.
 My eyes tear at listening to anything.
 This is the kind of crying that people want to ask—
 "Is everything alright?"
 "Yes," you reply.
 But you know the answer should be, "Life stinks, nothing is
 going
 Right, I'm at the end of my wick, and I want some sympathy."
 I want you, and you, and you, to be extra nice to me today
 Because I've had a bitch of a day.
 Thank you.
 And when I got home,
 I shut the door,
 And cried some more.

CAPTURED SOULS

by Amy Wagner

The outstretched hands
 raised to the sky
 were bent and gnarled.

They had tried
 to escape
 and only succeeded
 in finding more blood.

Now in desperation
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 Thank you.
 And when I got home,
 I shut the door,
 And cried some more.

LIBRARY JOURNEY

by Tonya Smith

There is a delicate history
 in between the lines
 of a library check-out card.
 Today as I opened a book
 of Silko/Wright letters, I found
 that my friend Stephen had discovered it
 back in May of ninety-two, maybe
 while he was staying for post-term.
 I found Scotty (the promising young
 grad student at Columbia) in a work
 by Marvin Bell, Sandy in an April perusing
 of Joy Harjo, and Gretchen in some Dickinson.
 And now they are gone, the people that is,
 writing their own lines,
 making their own history.

DISTANCE

(for Stephen)

by Tonya Smith

Up is like down when you walk into the room
 and say the simplest things
 or when you send a letter about the nothingness
 of your day, but the somethingness
 of a larger picture.
 Poet, philosopher, friend,
 Agape companion, how is it when we can argue
 and watch a sunset without mixing the two emotions?
 Or read to each other, poetry that the other hates,
 and fall in love with it without a hitch?
 Up is like down when the mountains, rivers, plains,
 coyotes, and elk separate us.
 We are both sad in our own ways.



illustration by Steve Tanner

AN APOLOGY

by Cynthia Ottens

Sometimes in your eyes I find
A secret lost in your mind
Frustration mixed with tender thought
It is the truth you sought.
You searched my soul for some peace
Instead in my fear, your anger increased
And I in my selfish intention stood
While you tried so hard to make it good.
It is my fault that you are gone
For it was I who was wrong
And yet I could never say it then
All I have is the wish to go back again.

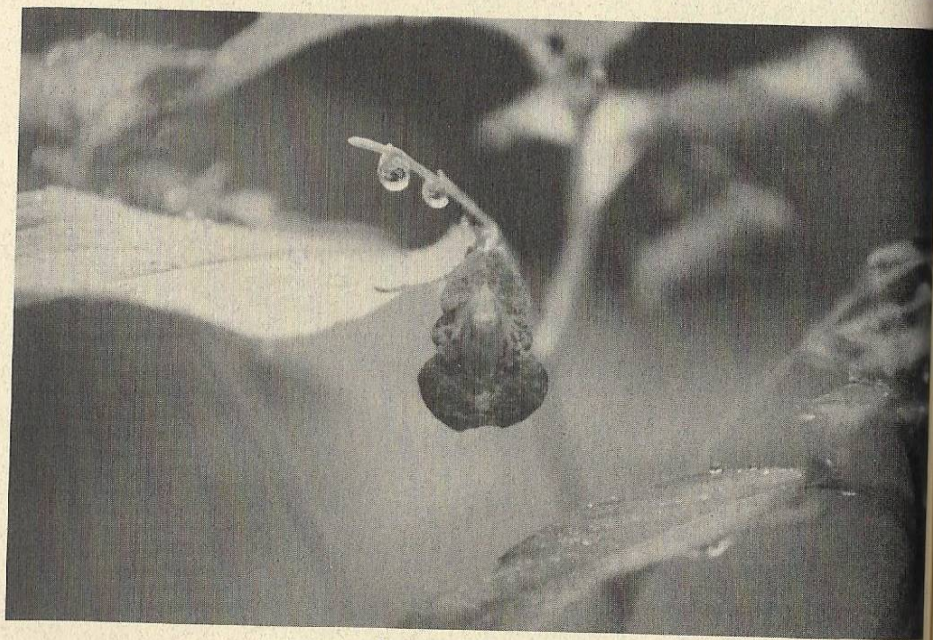


photo by Jay Kish

SILVER GHOST

by C. Anthony Leminger

"I saw the ghost!" The group of small boys raised their heads from the game and looked across the blacktop. Louis came running, wide-eyed, and stopped, breathless, before them. "I saw the ghost!" he shouted.

"Fool, what are you talkin' about?" asked Marcus. Marcus was eight, a year older than the other kids, and they respected his authority.

"I told you!" said Louis, "I saw," he panted, "the silver ghost."

"What?"

"The silver ghost! Where's he at!?" piped Freddie.

"Shut up, Freddie. You're a bigger nut than Louis!" Marcus said. Everyone laughed.

"I'm not a nut, Marcus!!" screamed Freddie, angrily. The other kids were still laughing when Louis spoke.

"He was in the alley behind Polk's hardware store." Louis' voice was gravely serious, and an eerie calm fell over the group. "I was walking to school, and I walked past the alley. I saw this ugly old shoe sticking out from behind a dumpster, and there was a leg attached to it. I thought maybe there was a dead guy back there. So I walked into the alley, and looked behind the dumpster, and there he was, and I swear I'm not makin' this up." There was silence for a couple seconds. Then Lincoln, a tall skinny kid, asked the question.

"What'd he look like?" A great, long-held breath escaped collectively from the group. Everyone had been wondering the same thing. It was not often that you came face to face with a being that was almost as much myth as legend. The story of the silver ghost had been winding its way through the neighborhood for as long as any of them could remember. No one knew who, or what, the silver ghost was, but there was no doubt in the minds of the kids that he was real.

"He was just layin' there in the alley. His face was really



bright 'cause it was all silver. He had on some old shoes, and he had bristles." Louis rubbed his chin to show what he meant.

"Well," said Marcus, "we'll have to have a look for ourselves. After school, we're going to find the ghost."

"I am not a nut," said Freddie to himself.

School was unbearable that day. Louis sat restlessly, fidgeting in his seat. It had to have been the longest day of his life, and he had had a lot of them. After all, he was seven. He looked up at the clock and watched the seconds slowly crawl by. A fire was burning behind Louis' eyes, and he didn't even hear when the teacher called on him to answer a question. Finally, after an eternity of tedious waiting, the bell rang, bringing to Louis a blessed feeling of sweet freedom.

As Louis and his friends walked silently down the street, they wondered what they would find in the alley. Would the ghost still be there? Would he try to hurt them, or would he be nice? Would he look real ugly? Would they be famous for seeing him? Suddenly, they found themselves at the entrance to the alley behind Polk's hardware store. They all stood there for a minute, no one wanting to be the first one to go in. They looked down the alley and saw the dumpster sitting in the cool grey shadows. Finally, Louis gathered up his courage and stepped slowly into the alley. The others followed him, one by one. They came, silently, to the dumpster.

Then they stopped. Everyone stood looking at each other. Marcus whispered, "Go ahead and look, Louis! We don't got all day." Louis looked at Marcus and nodded his head. He took a deep breath and crouched down by the dumpster. Louis slowly moved his head forward so that he could see around the corner of the dumpster with one eye. He quickly drew back his head and looked up at the others.

"He's still here. He's asleep."

"Let's look at him," said Freddie. They stepped around the dumpster and there, before them, was the silver ghost.

His face was silver, and it glowed in the half-light of the afternoon shadows. The boys gazed at him in silent, almost reverent, wonder. In his face each one found something ➡

a little different. Sadness, anger, relief, joy. They suddenly felt as if they had known him a very long time.

"What's that in his hands?" someone asked. They looked down and saw a can of spray paint in one hand and a ziploc bag in the other. They looked at each other, puzzled. Louis looked at the ghost and stretched out his hand.

"What are you doing, Louis. You might make him mad," said Marcus, but Louis didn't hear. With his index finger extended, he reached out and touched the ghost's forehead. The tip of his finger stayed there a minute, pressed into the forehead, then it moved down across the temple and drew a line down the cheek. Louis stood up.

"He's not a ghost. He's just some poor old guy."

"Wake him up," said Lincoln.

"No. He's old and tired. Let's just let him sleep," Louis said. They stood watching him for a second. He looked old, and, as they looked at him, the wrinkles on his face seem to deepen, and the stubble on his chin seem to whiten.

Freddie reached out and gently felt his cheek. "He's cold. I'm going to give him my jacket." He took off his jacket and placed it across the chest and shoulders of the ghost. As Louis watched him, he knew that it wouldn't help.

"Come on. Let's go," he said.

"Why don't we take him home?" asked Marcus.

"Do you wanna leave him on the porch while you go in and tell your Mamma who you brought home for dinner?" asked Louis. Marcus said nothing.

Later that evening, as he sat alone in his room, Louis heard the voice of the news anchor from the TV in the other room. "An elderly man, believed to be the source of the 'Silver ghost' stories which have circulated in the South Dallas area, was found dead in an alleyway behind a hardware store in that neighborhood today. The man, who medical examiners say died of exposure, was found with a can of spray paint and a plastic bag, which police say he used to contain the paint as he inhaled it, causing a silver paint residue to settle on his face and hands." The anchorman droned away into nothingness. Louis lay on his bed and looked out the window at the clouds.

I THE ONE

by Cynthia Ottens

I the one with all the unkept promises
 I the one who sold you
 I the one who told you
 That all I wanted to do was hold you
 I traded you for one kind word from a stranger
 You, my anchor
 in the sea of indifference
 I have lost myself to the Hell of Fools
 Dishonest, ludicrous tools
 Longing to go back and start again
 Shipwrecked on the shores of self uncertainty
 I'd be a hypocrite now to speak of virtue
 Being true to who you are and what you believe
 When I sold you, my soul, to the devil.

A LOVE POEM

by Tonya Smith

Two minutes in Paris,
 a quick jaunt to see you—
 Only, it's not Paris, but
 Chicago (a little less romantic)
 and it is freezing.
 No Arc of Triumph, no Mona Lisa, just
 the Sears Tower and some pushy Boy Scouts
 trying to take pictures for a merit badge.
 No Notre Dame, but the pier
 after the sun goes down and the city turns
 on its shine. No passport needed,
 just a '78 Firebird and your head on my shoulder.



photo by Bridgett Chapin

RAND McNALLY

by Kristi Smith

My parents say I'm at a turning point in my life, as if my life were a simple Fulton street (stop, turn right, turn left), and even if I got lost, I could easily get "back on track." My life is more like a cross-country road trip, and I had everything planned—map hi-lighted from A to B, plenty of gas, and some good drivin' tunes. But in a moment of spontaneity (which at the time seemed thoroughly reasonable), I threw my map out the window. Now I'm on I-70 going 75 miles per hour and there are still cars going faster than me. But I can't go too fast because I might miss my exit. My exit—I don't even know where it is. There are so many exit ramps, and I don't want to get off on the wrong one, especially if it's one of those cloverleaf things (you can get caught, never getting on or off, just there going in circles . . . and when you try to get back on the highway, people cut you off). I choose a destination, get on the ramp, and there's no turning back (at least for now). And who knows? When I finally get there, I may decide to keep on driving. I'm sure I can find an exit, somewhere. But with all my luck, it'll probably be rush hour.

REGRET

by Trisha Howard

"The beaches in Texas have pure white sand," Sylvia says, surveying the gray shoreline and the dingy blue lake water. "You can see the ocean floor through the water, the way it sparkles. Cigarette?"

I accept and let her light it. I only smoke now when my two children are not around. But Doug, Sylvia's son and my husband, has refused to give up his nicotine fix. I make him smoke outside; I used to think he would quit during the winter months. But the snow and sleet make him smoke faster, to warm his lungs.

The kids are bright dots on the beach; Sylvia and I are sitting at the main entrance, on the concrete patio the recreation department has built for nature-loving visitors. We have swimsuits on, too, but the water doesn't attract me. The kids are old enough and have had too many swimming lessons to drown, or so I hope. I don't like the shock of cold, polluted lake water any more.

"Have you ever visited Texas?" Sylvia asks. I shake my head. "I used to live there. I was raised in San Antonio, so the beach was a special treat. My mother taught me and my cousin Linda how to swim in the Gulf of Mexico." She takes another drag on her cigarette, holding the smoke in for a moment before exhaling. "I had almost forgotten about Linda."

"Don't you keep in touch with her?"

"She washed up on that beach right before I left Texas. The man she had been living with left her for another woman. When Linda found out, she killed herself. We didn't know until they found her body on the shore. I had always thought I would die before Linda — she was so optimistic, so full of life, really. But things didn't work out that way. We buried Linda in San Antonio, and then I left for Florida."

All of a sudden I'm curious. "I didn't know you had lived in Florida."

"I lived down there for about a year. I had met this man, Gene. He was vacationing in Florida when we met — and he stayed because of me. He sent word to his mother and two sisters that he wasn't going home. We were in love. I wasn't exactly a devout Catholic girl then."

"You're not now, either."

"I'm not now, either. Religion didn't seem like such a big deal."

"But this guy was a big deal."

She pauses, snuffs out the cigarette and gets another one from her purse. A smile flickers at the corners of her mouth. "Yeah, he was. And I was so in love. I was trying to get pregnant ... we were planning to get married. Make me legal, he promised."

"And you didn't make this terrific man marry you?"

"No. I couldn't *make* him do anything."

I feel odd, listening to Sylvia talk about her first lover. She is more friend than parent to me, but I can't picture her with any other man except Andy; they have been married for over 30 years.

"Cindy, you've never loved anyone besides Doug?"

"I met him when I was seventeen, Sylvia. I've never dated anyone except Doug."

"Then you don't know what it means to lose someone you thought you wanted to spend your life with. You got what you wanted." She speaks bitterly.

"And you didn't, Sylvia?"

She's silent again, looking out over the beach. I wonder if she is picturing the gleaming shores of some Texas beach.

The kids run towards us; Jessica runs screaming from her older brother Casey, who is armed with a bucket of sand. "I'm gonna get you!" he threatens. I have already extinguished the tiny embers of my cigarette in the aluminum foil ashtray the recreation department provides for every picnic table. I steer the kids towards the shower pole which stands at the edge of the patio so that people can wash off the sand and the grit before getting into their upholstered cars. My kids complain about the hot vinyl, but I'm thankful that they can't

ruin my car seats. Sylvia has started the car and turned up the radio before the three of us get there. She doesn't speak, even when I drop her off at her front door.

The kids are in bed, and Doug is out on the front lawn smoking. I finish the dishes from dinner and wipe off the counters. I swore to myself when I was a teenager that I would never clean fanatically the way my mother used to do. But now that I'm a mother, I feel like my family needs a clean home. And television bores me, anyway. So housework is my hobby.

When I've mopped up the puddles left on the floor by melting ice cubes — the kids don't bother to pick anything up when they drop it, let alone ice cubes — I drag another lawn chair out into the front yard. The porch light and the faint red-orange glow at the end of Doug's cigarette provide the only light. I stand behind my husband and wrap my arms around his shoulders.

"I took the kids to the beach today." He nods. "Your mother was telling me about her year in Florida. I didn't know she had lived in Florida."

Doug looks over at me, his right eyebrow rising slowly. He looks the same as he did when we met during my first summer community theater production. That same eyebrow had lifted that same way when Doug was playing the villain of the melodrama.

"Florida," he repeats softly, thoughtfully. "What did she say?"

"She talked about some man she had lived with when she was young. Gene, I think."

"Don't know anything about it." He drops his burned-out cigarette onto the lawn and fumbles for the pack in his left shirt pocket.

"If you're going to smoke," I say, "at least entertain me. Blow some smoke rings or something." And then the silence envelopes us, just as the dusk has enveloped the yard and our house.

Sylvia calls me at eight the next morning. I'm watching the morning news and reading the paper. "Are the kids up yet?" she asks.

"Not before noon!" I joke. "You had three kids; you know how it goes during summer vacation. I'll let them sleep as long as they want."

"I used to try to get mine up early," Sylvia laughs. "Doug was the worst of the bunch — never wanted to get out of his bed. He would have stayed there all day long if I had let him. Maybe I should have."

"Then he would have been up all night."

"He was always out all night long when he was a teenager anyway. Andy and I finally forgot about his curfew altogether, it was so hard to enforce."

"I hope that's not hereditary. I can't imagine sleeping if I didn't know where Casey was. How did you do it?"

"Pure exhaustion, I swear. So what's the plan for the day?"

Sylvia has recently cut back her hours at the hospital; she had just started working there when Doug and I met fifteen years ago, and she already plans on retiring. She has to be 55 to earn her retirement benefits; she turns 54 this summer.

"I promise I'll call when the kids are awake. Maybe we can go back to the beach."

"If you think Missouri humidity is bad, you should try Florida some time," Sylvia says. "The humidity reaches such high levels that it rains almost daily. And the swimming pools are still warm at midnight, even if you don't keep the heaters on."

"You had a swimming pool while you lived in Florida?" I ask. I entertain notions of a rich, older man buying Sylvia a house with a pool.

She chuckles and taps the ashes off the end of her cigarette. "Gene and I lived at a motel, rented the room by the month. It was a nice little place; each room had a couch and a kitchenette. And we always had access to the pool."

"What did you do while you were down there?"

"Waitressed, mostly. I got off work at midnight and headed for the pool, when it wasn't raining. Then I would take a long, hot shower and wait for Gene to get home from his restaurant. We would stay up until after three every morning and get up every day in the afternoon."

"Sounds idyllic to me. It reminds me of the late nights Doug and I used to spend at that coffee shop."

"Have you been there lately?"

"No, we haven't been back since the week before Casey was born. Thirteen years. I think the owners closed it down right after that. The two of us kept them in business, I think."

"Well, we all have a purpose in life."

"What's yours?"

"I have never figured that out. For the longest time I thought it was Gene, then Andy. You know, making them happy."

"I know it's more than that. For one thing, you've made my purpose in life possible." She looks confused, so I feel I should explain. "Sylvia, you had Doug. Doug found me. We made Casey and Jessica. That's what I have always wanted: a family."

"You had your mom."

"But I didn't have a father. So now I can create for my kids the kind of life I wanted to have."

"I never thought this was the kind of life I would lead. After 54 years, I look back, and this is not the life I wanted at all."

"Why? What could you possibly want to change?"

But Sylvia has lapsed into her own private world again, and my question remains unanswered. I sit beside her on the concrete patio for five minutes more, then go down to the beach to play with my children. And right now I wouldn't even change the cold, dirty lake water. My world — my family — is perfect, and I don't regret a thing.

"I do remember my parents mentioning Florida when I was a lot younger," Doug says when I join him on the lawn that evening.

"Oh," I respond. Maybe I know too much about this al-

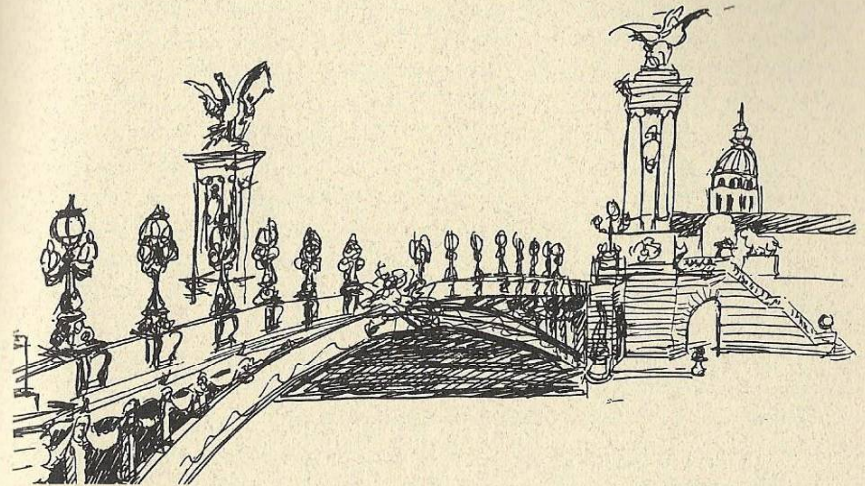


illustration by Brett Stringer

ready. "What do you think ever happened to that coffee shop where we used to hang out?"

"Isn't it still open?"

"I thought they closed it after Casey was born."

"Maybe. About Florida. I can't believe I forgot this. My parents separated for a few months when I was fifteen. Mom told us it was because Dad was drinking pretty heavily again. But then he came over drunk one night and started screaming about Florida and about Mom seeing Gene again. It ended when he punched out our front window and she had to rush him to the emergency room. She never really explained what had happened, but at least my parents got back together after that night."

"Do you think that's what was best for them?"

"Yeah. Who else would they fight with? I don't think they could be truly miserable without each other."

"Was your mom really seeing Gene again?"

"I don't think so. Dad was just paranoid because he had been drinking so much and Mom had been travelling out of town for some nursing seminars. She quit her job after that, for Dad's sake. But whatever was going on, they fixed it and moved on."

"Have they?"

"They never mentioned it again. No one ever even thought about it again."

Except Sylvia, I want to correct him. Except me.

Casey and Jessica are attending day camp this week, and Sylvia has taken the day off so we can go shopping for her birthday. We never make the pretense of surprise anymore; it's much easier to get something that the other actually wants.

"I can't get Florida off my mind," she says abruptly, turning down the car radio. I almost cut off another car while I'm trying to merge into traffic.

"The humidity?" I joke awkwardly.

"Gene." We're silent for a few minutes. "Gene. Cindy, I don't belong here. This isn't right."

"Have you talked to him lately?"

"He's dead. He's been dead for four years."

Then why is he in your mind all the time, I want to ask. I listen instead.

"I need something to drink. Pull over at the next exit."

"Sylvia, are you okay?" I'm trying to comfort her and steer through mid-morning traffic at the same time. She's crying.

"I need a drink."

I pull into the parking lot of a McDonald's. Neither of us opens our car door. "Is the drive-through okay?" I ask.

"Please, no. Can we just sit here for a few minutes. Please?"

I nod and dig for a kleenex in my purse; it's not cold season, I don't have any. Sylvia pulls out her cigarettes and offers me one. We light up and listen to the traffic whiz by on the highway.

"I've made some mistakes in my lifetime," she finally says.

I nod, trying to act reassuring.

"Cindy, I think I'm going crazy. It's been months now, years, and I can't get Florida out of my head. It's all my fault. He said, 'Go home, wait for me to call. I'll call soon. I've just got to take care of some family problems. I've got to take care of my family.' His mother had lost her job; he wanted to help her out. He always was a devoted man; I loved that about him."

"He — Gene?"

"Yes. But I was hurt because I thought he had chosen his family over me — his mother and sisters, more important than his future wife! I remember Linda's funeral, resenting that man who had left her behind. I didn't want to die like her, alone and angry and afraid."

"So I took off in the opposite direction and ended up waiting tables in this small town in West Virginia. Danny's Diner. It was an all-night coffee shop, just like that one where you and Doug went. That's where I met Andy." She puts out her cigarette; mine is only barely burned down.

"He was working as the cook on my shift, night shift. I'd hang around afterwards to have a cup of coffee and smoke a cigarette. When the place was empty — and it almost always

was, except for me and Andy — we'd talk a lot about what we wanted out of life. One night I brought up Gene and how he'd left me in Florida to 'fend for myself.' I think that's how I put it. I guess I made him out to be a real villain, because Andy all of a sudden started promising me that he would never treat me like that, he would never desert me.

"Then the first letter came. I didn't open it, just set it down on the coffee table in the little apartment I had started sharing with Andy. He found it there and got mad, so he went out and got drunk. We had a big fight, and then we burned it together. So when the next letter came, I sent it right back to Gene. I wasn't interested any more."

"Then why do you still think about it, Sylvia? It's been so long, almost ..." I pause.

"Thirty-five years. And I know, he's dead. After I sent the letter back, and after I married Andy, I thought I had Gene out of my mind.

"But he called me one day while Andy was at work. He had hired someone to find me, even though he was married and had children of his own. I hadn't talked to him or heard from him for almost fifteen years. But he had missed me all that time. He had still loved me, even when I had sent the second letter back. He understood why I had chosen Andy."

"So what did you do?" I couldn't help asking, but I dreaded the answer. I thought about the fight Doug had told me about. I thought about the nursing seminars. I thought about Gene.

"We wrote back and forth for a few years. I always checked the mail before Andy came home, and threw away the letters in the dumpster outside our apartment building as soon as I had read them. Andy would have known if he had found the letters.

"Then we came up with a plan, right after I graduated from college. That was when Doug was about fourteen, so ... eighteen years ago. I was going to a weekend seminar, and Gene planned to meet me at the hotel. After one weekend, I knew I had been stupid and stubborn. I had given up my chance for a life with Gene because I had been afraid of being alone."



Sylvia lights her fifth cigarette. "I started making up a lot of excuses to go out of town; I had to skip work a lot to do it, but I needed Gene, I needed that relationship ..."

"And Andy found out."

"Yeah. He wanted to know why the hospital wasn't paying me anything for the weekend seminars. I think he suspected something. We separated for a while. Then he had the flu one day and showed up on my doorstep wanting me to take care of him ... I was at the store buying him chicken noodle soup when the mail came ... he recognized the name on the return address and read the letter and figured everything out. So he pulled out this bottle of wine we bought on our fifteenth anniversary to drink on our twentieth. He had downed it by the time I got home. By the time the kids came home from school, he was working on a bottle of whiskey. The only thing that forced us to make up ..." She chokes on the words, coming faster now.

"He busted out the window and you had to take him to the hospital."

"Right. Doug still remembers. Andy threatened to tell Gene's wife if I didn't stop our affair. So I had to break it off with Gene; I couldn't hurt him by getting his wife and kids involved. I quit my job at the hospital — they were going to fire me anyway — and stayed home for a couple of years, until Andy trusted me again. I only talked to Gene that one time, ever again. And then he died, and I felt like my life was over.

"His wife sent me this a few weeks ago. I don't know how she knew my address." Sylvia hands me a yellowed letter; I open it and read. It is dated 1959.

"I want you to join me up north with my family," I read. Sylvia nods for me to continue. "I've arranged for you to stay with my grandmother until we get married. Go to the ticket office at the airport and pick up your ticket. It's already paid for. Call me and tell me when to expect you. Love, Gene."

Sylvia rolls down the car window and turns her face to the breeze. "I missed my chance. I missed my plane ticket."



I drive back to her house; it is after noon, and I have to pick the kids up from camp for lunch. At the park, Jessica runs toward me, holding out a picture. "It's our family!" she tells me excitedly. Stick figures of the four of us smile from the pink construction paper.

"I'll hang it up on the fridge when we get home," I promise, and hug her. This is my family. This is my dream.

I don't regret a thing.



photo by Matt Kuhl

SEASONS

by Mary Kay Propst

FLOWERS SWAYING SILENTLY
ON WINDY DAYS.
SUNSHINE DANCING DELIGHTFULLY
IN MANY WAYS.
LEAVES FALLING FRANTICALLY
THROUGH THE AIR.
SNOW GLIDING GENTLY
LANDING WITH CARE.

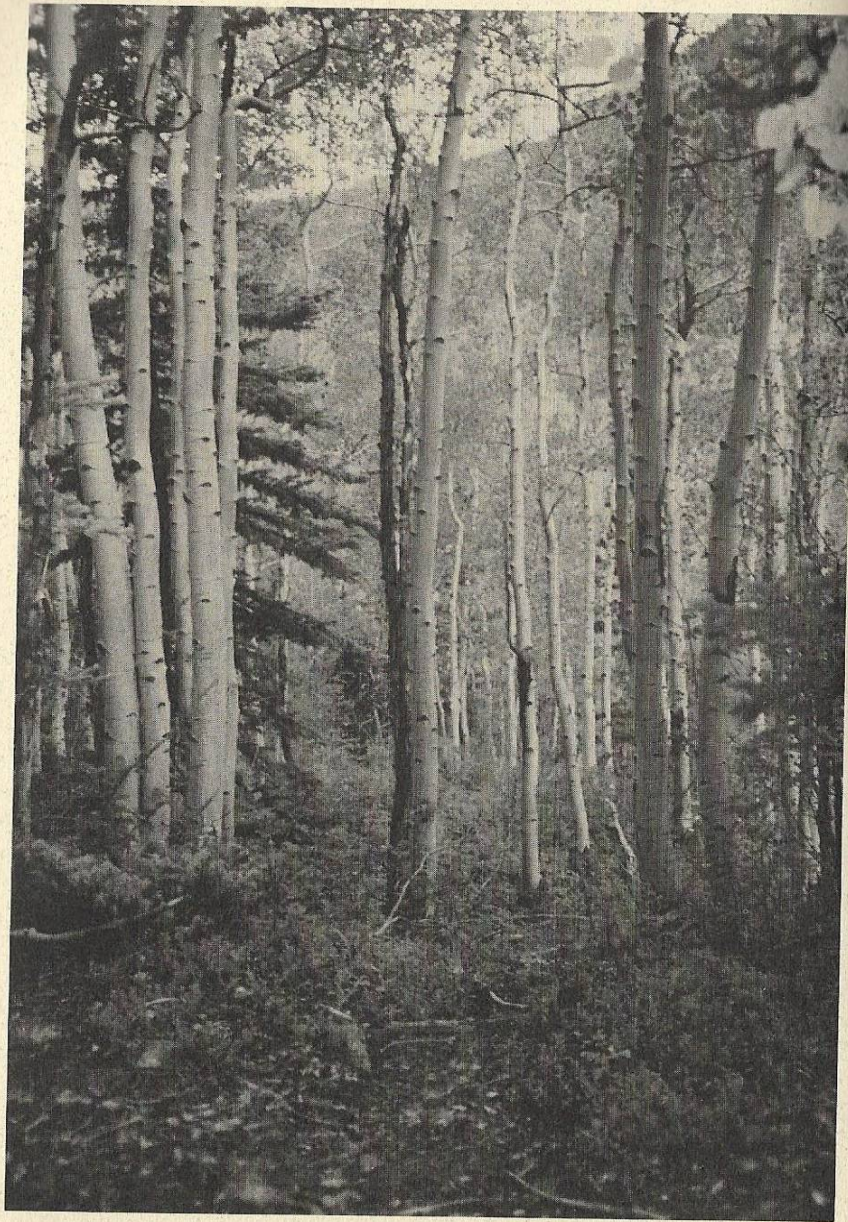


photo by Bridgett Chapin

WINTER

by Tonya Smith

Riding on this train
 through this James Taylor
 song
 wishing that Carolina was
 on my mind
 I'm moving away from your body
 on the platform
 in the cold Chicago
 With only your handprint overlapping
 my handprint on the window
 next to my windowseat
 It is some celestial
 traveling companion, that has to take on
 the burden of the northern snow
 from Illinois to Pennsylvania
 Not disappearing, but reflecting
 in the light. Staying as the flakes
 turn into streaking droplets of water
 on the warm window, past the reflection,
 holding on to me.

THE DOCTOR CHILDREN LIKE TO SEE

by Kristi Smith

When kids go to bed, and books are read,
Green Eggs And Ham are what they're fed.
The Cat In The Hat is the sight they see
 When they sit on the cushion of daddy's knee.
Yertle the Turtle sits in a shop,
 Along with the favorite *Hop On Pop*.
 "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish,"
 Suzy starts reading, fulfilling her mom's wish.

I wrote these books, so I should know
 What children's minds need to grow.
 They need a story which tells a tale
 Containing a moral without fail,
 Words that rhyme and are fun to say,
 Funny characters who save the day,
 Imaginary lands of Hortons and Whos,
 And buildings filled with dark green ooze.

Parents and teachers read my books
 In the corners of classrooms and breakfast nooks,
 And children listen with their eyes aglow
 Imagining the wonderful places they'll go.
 Each child lives on a Mulberry Street
 With new things to do and new people to meet.
 They learn that the world is theirs to see.
 In their own minds, they can be free.

I did not write for fame or for money;
 I wrote to make learning exciting and funny.
 I did not write for the stores in the mall;
 I wrote for the kid, the kid in us all.
 And though I am buried--my body is dead,
 I live in the heart of each Jenny and Fred.
 Children who grew in the worlds that I made--
 Each hero a child who laughed and who played.



photo by Matt Kuhl

SHATTERED IMAGE

by Bethann Bowman

She awoke one morning terrified
of both the things to come and of those behind.
Indeed, it took her quite by surprise,
the pristine reflection of her polished lies.

It isn't me . . . she couldn't be
the person that I claim to be . . .
She listened to the sound echo through an endless breeze
Her voice, her soul, lost between
the land of her and the sea of me.

I must go on,
but where do I begin?
She leaves, forever? I cannot know
the questions may never end . . .

She sleeps now at night, content to know
that truth well becomes her soul
And its newness must not be quenched
by aged lies and past offense.

Still when morning comes to light
And I must face she
I see the shattered image staring back at me,
the image that threatens still
to separate her dreams from my reality.

. . . Brashae

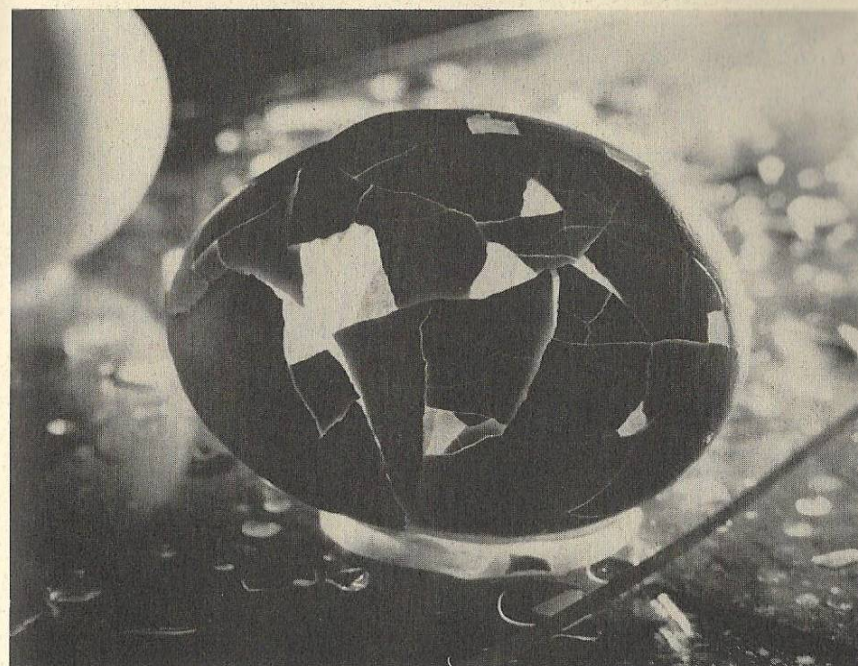


photo by Mike Lising

THAT BURNING WIND

by C. Anthony Leminger

11/8/94

Now begins the frozen death.
 The grey night stalks down from the north,
 and the world slowly begins to die.
 Yet, I have never been so much alive.
 For the wind bears down upon me
 and carries away my heart.
 The falling leaves rush by above,
 and all around, and through me,
 and I see every color,
 and I hear every rustle.
 Autumn, we are brothers, you and I.
 No other sky mirrors my heart
 as yours does.
 No other wind
 bears up my spirit
 upon its wild, untamed wings
 like the wind of deepest Autumn.
 And I will breathe deep
 that burning wind.
 And I will drink deep
 this chilling rain.
 And I will walk far
 through lonely woods
 'til earth
 in snow bed is lain.

SUCH IS GOLF

by Kelly Hines

Waking up for an early tee time—
 Only to be right behind the slowest threesome on the earth.

Hitting bucket upon bucket at the range—
 Only to duff your first approach shot.

Spending long hot hours on the practice green—
 Only to three-putt just about every hole.

Paying a professional for private lessons—
 Only for him or her to ruin the only good parts of your game.

Being even par through seventeen holes—
 Only to triple bogey the eighteenth and lose the match.

Such is golf.

APRIL 15, 1912

by Lisa Wyckoff

"The Lord is my Shepherd."
 In a blur of shouts and chiffon
 I was put into a life boat with many strangers.
 "I shall not want."
 Lowered into the water where lights dance,
 The cold wind makes my cheeks tingle.
 "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures."
 Through the soft lapping of the waves against the boat
 I can easily hear the band playing ragtime on the giant
 vessel.
 "He leadeth me beside the still waters."
 There is a splash as another
 Lifeboat full of women and children hits the water.
 "He restores my soul."
 The hull of the ship is high in the air now,
 As the sea captures the stern, pulling it under.
 "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness."
 How could this happen?
 They promised it was unsinkable.
 "For His name's sake."
 The lights still glitter across the water
 Like flickering fairies of hope.
 "Yea, though I walk through the Valley."
 The band is playing a hymn.
 My tears are freezing.
 "Of the Shadow of Death."
 I hear pianos crashing against the walls
 as people try to avoid falling into the dark water
 Which slides like a giant black hand
 along the nearly vertical deck.
 "I fear no evil."
 There is a great cracking like a legion of souls pulled apart,
 as the ship breaks in half.
 "For Thou art with me."

The hull has righted itself now that it is free of the lost stern.
 Maybe this half will float.
 "Thy rod and Thy staff."
 We must row quickly to avoid the suction
 As the rest of the ship disappears into the sea.
 "They comfort me."
 The mighty ship just sank with no more than a gurgle,
 Like a baby after its bath.
 "Thou preparest a table before me."
 It is so dark now.
 The icy waves frighten me.
 "In the presence of mine enemies."
 People are freezing, but there is no help for them.
 Their screams fill my heart with daggers.
 "Thou annointest my head with oil."
 Shrieks of pain and horror
 Fill the huge dark night.
 "My cup overflows."
 The last cry has ended.
 They are all gone.
 "Surely goodness and mercy."
 The stars are bright and clear in the silence.
 There seem to be more of them now, more souls newly ar-
 rived.
 "Shall follow me all the days of my life."
 There is an immense blackness.
 I am cold.
 "And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord."
 I am cold.
 "Forever."

CORNCHIPS

by Trey Herweck

when I'm alone and no one's there
I feel their presence in the air
I'm looking for them everywhere,
CORNCHIPS.
whenever things are looking gloom
morning, night or afternoon
I want them and I need them soon,
CORNCHIPS.
if I need a little snack
and all I need is to just kick back
with a bag of these and a six pack
CORNCHIPS.
they keep me up when I am down
they always make that crunchy sound
oh, only if I could just drown in
CORNCHIPS.

FIREFLY

By Jennifer O'Donley

Flashing sparks—
everywhere—
here—there—
signal fires in the night—
We were eating our supper on the porch
when they appeared.

Glimmering taunts,
they struck against the night sky,
and we chased them,
running barefoot in the cool blades of grass
and the sticky summer air—
conjuring them up with children's skill,
we reached into the dark to pull them in—
their lights now magnificent glow rings upon our fingers—

Fading,
we cry for their lost spirits,
engulfed by the dark—
and we run away,

HEAT WAVE

By Bill Lowe

The heat is immovable and
drops its dead weight
at our door,

unnaturally
shut out by double windows
and the fearful machine in the closet
that fights the world with forced air.

We are victims, too,
in our imagination,
of weather prognostication,
and high pressure,
the uncanny omega
from the south.

And then
all is transformed.
The lines move like grace.
The pixels glow and dance
in the brisk Canadian breeze.

We shut off the TV.
We break the seal and
step into the lively air.

Listen! The tops of trees
ruffle and flutter their wings
like angels.

THE LADDER OF PAIN

By Jason Frank

In life You start at the bottom where happiness shines
brightly in the distance.

On the First rung You gain knowledge to guide You on your
long journey.

The Second rung is one of self growth and uncontrollable
suffering.

The Third rung is where You release your emotions in an
unanticipated scream.

The Fourth rung is where You either gain relief or
You are back to the First rung and must relearn and retrace
your steps.

Once however You reach the top You are at eternal happi-
ness which You have longed for

Through your entire life.

Once You have worked your way to the top You will never
again be subjected to the pain which

You had experience through the workings of each rung.



photo by Jay Kish

ONE FOR MY BABY

by Kristi Smith

"... It's quarter-to-three ..."
 the tempo slows
 as we dance on the patio
 stars above us
 a soft summer breeze
 keeping time with Sinatra

you twirl me out
 and back in again
 laughing as we move closer
 "... No one in the place 'cept you and me ..."
 trying to find the rhythm
 our feet unsure of the beat

"... Got the routine ..."
 I flip off my sandals
 immediately feeling the prickly cement
 on my feet-wishing it away
 until you smile playfully
 stepping on my toes

my ear rests on your chest
 heart-racing
 breath-slow
 "... Can't you make the music easier ..."
 two conflicting tempos
 aching for control

I step back suddenly
and look at your startled face
"... I could tell you a lot ..."
but the big of your hand
finds the small of my back
our feet find the tempo

I tilt up my chin
searching for Orion
the stars becoming
brighter and more numerous
"... Well that's how it goes ..."
you kiss my forehead

"... And one more for the road ..."
the music fades away
we sway in silence
you take my hand
open the patio door
and lead me inside.

VICIOUS CIRCLE

by LJB

My memory moves in a circle that won't let me forget
your life of sorrow and the tale of your regret
On dark drowning evenings i always recall
the feeling i had as i watched you fall
into a well where only i couldn't see
the only thing you wanted was to be treated like me.

You, the talented and beautiful one,
one they always turn to in times of need
had tried too hard at not becoming their pawn
instead, it was jealousy to which you didn't heed.

i never thought about a world without you,
i didn't think it was your well i was falling into.
i wish you had been standing with me on that cold winter's
day
just that once i'd have let you wipe the tears away

The tears were for you, as they always are now
i wish i could think of ways to make it better somehow
but that is foolish, for you are gone
and now i am their pawn.

AFTER SEEING CHAGALL'S
HALF PAST THREE (THE POET)
AT THE PHILADELPHIA ART
MUSEUM

by Tonya Smith

Your head is upside down.
Imagine that!
Trying to hold in that line,
the phrase that would make
the perfect poem.
Afraid that it will spill
out of the mind's eye
like the wine spilling out
of the bottle
on the geometric table next to you.
Heart in your stomach,
cat at your side, the images come
so quickly that, like a pinwheel,
you begin to spin.

U B 6 I B 9.
No, U B 9 I B 6.

by Michelle McMillen

Come, nestle your head between these thighs.
Place your lips against mine.
Kiss me;
Sip me;
Savor my flavor,
the essence of the aroma.,
Let my tea come down your chin.

If you prefer cream in your tea,
I'll handshake the rain-dancer,
kiss,
tease,
and play on your playground—
where the grass doesn't grow.

PROCEDURE FOR STARTING THE FIRE

by M.Z. Williams

She awoke at 9:00 o'clock, put on her robe, and went downstairs to the family room. She vaguely recalled that he had kissed her lightly in the wee hours of the morning, shuffled about the kitchen a bit, and was out the door with his bags and headed for the airport. Another meeting of the "mathematicians," this time in San Francisco. He'd left a fire blazing in the stove, and a note under the matchbox on the hearth. She stooped to get the note, which she knew was for Peg, their daughter, and read:

Procedure for Starting the Fire

Peg:

1. If chimney and fire box are cold (no fire in a day or so), then build a short, hot fire with crumpled newspapers.
2. Load fire box with smaller pieces of wood, in a crisscrossed fashion.
3. Insert the starter block in between two of the logs, near the bottom.
4. Light the starter block. (Long matches are beside the stove, on the hearth.) A gentle scratch on the bottom of the matchbox is enough to strike the match. Move slowly to the starter block with the match, so as not to put out the flame. It helps to cup your free hand around the match so the draft up the chimney won't put it out. Hold the match slightly below and away from the starter block so as not to snuff it out inadvertently.
5. Open the draft screws to full, to ensure a vigorous start to the fire. Low, smoldering fires tend to cause creosote build-up in the flue.
6. Finally, close the fire box doors. Check fire a couple of times not too long after starting it to make sure it has caught vigorously. Logs may need to be shifted some in the beginning to get a hot fire going. Don't overdo this part, however! Too much shifting can put the fire out.

Back next Thursday,
Dad



She read and re-read it, searching for some sign of emotion, some human touch, something real. Nothing struck her. It was typical of him. Professorial. She felt as she often did, like one of his students. Passive. Taking notes.

She felt like adding a personal note at the bottom of his directive. Something like, "Take good care of Mom and keep the home fires burning! I love you, and will see you soon!" But it was Peg's note, so she left it there.

Later that morning, she watched her daughter, drinking in hot cocoa along with the words of her father. She watched for signs of disappointment, but saw nothing but that same, self-assured look of her husband. This was Peg's first time tending the fire without her father there, but she showed no apprehension.

"Dad left good instructions, Mom." Peg was pleased. She knew exactly what to do. Just like her father. She was her father. It was as if she were born of his brain alone, bypassing her womb entirely. Minerva-child.

She looked at Peg, thinking of academic days long ago, of her struggle to understand mathematics and the sciences. It was the same now as it was then. One long string of formulas, interrupted occasionally with lifeless exposition. No passion. No "humanity." Her daughter, however, grasped it all immediately. She was already studying calculus with her father.

While her daughter went to get more wood, she picked up the note and read it once more, unmoved. Peg saw in its precision and austerity something passionate, something exciting. Why didn't she? She had no answers, as usual. But this she knew—they would stay warm these next few days, with minimal creosote build-up.